SAMUEL AJAYI CROWther, THE CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY,  
AND THE NIGER MISSION, 1857-1891

by

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D. of the University of London
School of Oriental and African Studies
1980
For Elaine

and My Parents
Abstract

The career of Samuel Ajayi Crowther stands as one of the most dramatic and compelling narratives of nineteenth century Africa. Crowther was a pivotal figure in his time and in missionary affairs long afterwards. He played many roles: teacher and missionary, linguist and translator, explorer and commercial promoter, diplomatist and proto-nationalist. His African-staffed and African-led Niger Mission...
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Branded by some scholars as a failure, the Niger Mission was yet marked by considerable success. Crowther's formative years underscore the uniqueness of his experience and highlight his uncommon ability, intelligence, and common sense. His crucial relationship with Henry Venn formed his career and gave him unparalleled latitude in his work. He demonstrated leadership, ingenuity, and sound mission strategy in founding and establishing his Mission. He dispelled stereotypic views of Africans and helped win acceptance for the concept of African agency. He attempted to smooth the wrinkles of a Niger Bishopric which had been formulated in haste and compromise. His notable achievements in expanding missionary operations and moving towards self-support in his Mission were matched by his considerable diplomatic skills as quasi-Consul on the Niger and in other duties which he performed for the Colonial Administration. His most serious weaknesses lay in his inability to develop an indigenous clergy and probably his remaining too long at the helm. But developments at the C.M.S. and in British missionary and Church circles also profoundly affected the course of his career and that of his Mission. Diverse and complex factors led to the Niger Crisis, in which Crowther was both participant and focal point. He died in the midst of the Crisis, his achievements and contributions lost or clouded in the aftermath.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I: Formative Years, 1799-1856</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II: The Establishment of the Niger Mission, 1857-1862</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III: A Bishop for the Niger, 1863-1869</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV: Expansion in the Mission, Re-organization at Salisbury Square, 1870-1879</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter V: Attempts at Moderate Mission Reform in the Face of Challenge and Change on the Niger, 1880-1886</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter VI: The Niger Mission in Crisis, 1887-1891</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I: Church Missionary Society Committee Structure</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix II: C.M.S. Presidents and Secretaries (1799-1892)</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.S.A.C.H.</td>
<td>The Bulletin of the Society for African Church History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.M.S.</td>
<td>Church Missionary Society Archives, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gleaner</td>
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<td>Intelligencer</td>
<td>Church Missionary Intelligencer</td>
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<td>J.A.S.</td>
<td>Journal of African Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.I.C.H.</td>
<td>Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History</td>
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<tr>
<td>J.H.S.N.</td>
<td>Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.P.A.</td>
<td>Lambeth Palace Library Archives, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.A.I.</td>
<td>Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.P.</td>
<td>Parliamentary Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.R.O.</td>
<td>Public Record Office, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proceedings</td>
<td>Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record</td>
<td>Church Missionary Record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.L.B.R.</td>
<td>Sierra Leone Bulletin of Religion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

J.F.A. Ajayi's seminal work, Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891, first opened for me the richness of West African missionary history as well as the remarkable career of Samuel Ajayi Crowther. In this and other writings, Ajayi places Crowther among the most important personages in nineteenth century Nigerian history. Even E.A. Ayandele, who judges Crowther as being too much a "hybrid" and too little a Nigerian or West African, admits that Crowther was a "maker of Nigeria". The present writer agrees with the latter designation and considers Crowther a pivotal figure in his time and in missionary affairs long after his passing. By any yardstick the story of the "Black Bishop" is a dramatic and compelling one. The African-staffed and African-led Niger Mission remains among the most significant and intriguing experiments of its day. Its founder and director was from its initiation a man on trial. His and his Mission's alleged "failure" provided the rationale for no other Black African serving in Africa as a full bishop until after World War II.


3 As late as 1964 Stephen Neill would write that Crowther and his African staff had failed, and that even their linguistic work and abilities had been limited. See Stephen Neill: A History of Christian Missions, London, 1964.
Notwithstanding his critics, Crowther can be considered a nationalist, as well as a missionary, diplomatist, explorer, educator, translator and linguist. He was also in many ways *sui generis*, a product of two cultures, completely at home in neither. In his missionary work he counselled patience and advised his fellow missionaries not to ignore the cultural and religious heritage of the people with whom they worked. As an advocate of Free Trade principles, he welcomed any who would help in bringing "civilization" and modernity to Africa's peoples. As a product of nineteenth century humanitarianism, he made his own contributions to and practical application of that philosophy. He sought to put forward Liberated Africans like himself, not only as missionaries, but also as traders. He first championed them when competition from other missionary societies was non-existent and when European firms were merely a spot on the horizon. He continued to do so throughout his life.

When I examined Crowther's career more closely, the absence of a study which told the story of the Niger Mission through the life and experience of its founder appeared striking. While the Niger Crisis has been the most chronicled event in which Crowther was both a participant and focal point, the Crisis has not been viewed from Crowther's perspective nor, for that matter, in the context of a necessarily wider range of influences. The Crisis's seeds are not simply found in the coming to the Mission of the Europeans, but can be discerned earlier by a careful study of Crowther's life work, the Church Missionary Society and the Niger Mission. In reading Eugene Stock's *History of the Church Missionary Society*¹ it seemed to me that

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developments in British missionary and Church circles had not been fully integrated into the history of the Niger Mission and that this constituted a critical omission. The same appeared true of the religious and theological, philosophical and anthropological, currents which ran through nineteenth century British life. Despite a wealth of hagiographic materials, no balanced view of Crowther emerged prior to J.F.A. Ajayi's work, and even in that study Crowther is not the central figure. The 1908 Jesse Page biography had been based on personal interviews with the subject and his family, but despite its notable, detailed examination of Crowther's early life, it breaks down as Crowther progresses in years and treats in almost postscript fashion the final controversial years.¹

J.B. Webster,² like Ayandele, pictures a somewhat weak-willed Crowther. Both scholars regard the Niger Crisis largely in nationalist and racialist terms, elements which were indeed present, but which do not explain the whole situation. In his doctoral dissertation, Peter Beyerhaus discusses the Niger Mission in a way which, in part, seeks to view the Crisis in broader terms. Nonetheless, as in other accounts, the Mission's history emerges as an episode in a much wider study.³ More recently, Andrew Porter has written on the theological and missiological background of the 1880s. He has singled out the firebrand G.W. Brooke and has sought to explain Brooke's actions within

³ Peter Beyerhaus: Die Selbständigkeit der jungen Kirchen als missionärisches Problem, Wupertal-Barmen, 1956.
the context of the theological ferment of his day. G. O. M. Tasie, in his dissertation and subsequent book, also attempts to revise the established portrait of the Crisis and the events which led up to it. He concentrates almost wholly on the Niger Delta and is critical of the Sierra Leonean agents whom Crowther recruited for the Niger work. While accepting many of these writers' findings and arguments, I would posit, however, that despite the controversy of the final years, the Niger Mission experiment was marked by considerable success, a fact to which other scholars have in passing attested. P. E. H. Hair has, for example, commented upon the impressive linguistic and translational work which Crowther and his colleagues completed and Robert July has discussed Crowther's contribution to the Buxtonian model.

Crowther's formative years clearly underscore the uniqueness of his experience. From the outset he was recognized as a person of unusual ability, intelligence and common sense. He established his reputation in Sierra Leone first by dint of his hard work, then his linguistic abilities, and finally by his emergence as a leader of a growing elite in the Colony. His participation in the Niger Expedition


of 1841 crowned his early work, prompted the C.M.S. to ordain him, and moved Henry Venn to see him as a model for the future. It is one of the aims of this study to highlight these formative years, including the crucial relationship with Henry Venn, and the subsequent remarkable latitude which Crowther was given in the founding of the Yoruba and Niger Missions.

Crowther's career like most was marked by its share of accidents and twists of fate. Notwithstanding the failures of the 1841 Expedition, he passionately believed in "the Bible and the Plough" and exhibited this through his activities in Yorubaland. His successes there influenced him to pursue the same policies on the Niger. Crowther did not expect to do more than lay the groundwork for a Niger Mission when he accompanied the Expedition of 1857. His work in the five years which followed, activity which has not received sufficient notice, demonstrated his leadership and ingenuity, his sound strategy in the selection of Mission sites, his outstanding talent in dealing with local leaders, and his imagination and initiative when unable for lengthy periods to communicate with his superiors in England. An all African-staffed Mission had not been contemplated by the C.M.S., but Crowther saw this developing early and encouraged it by his example. In this way he made his own mark on Venn's widely-heralded Native Church Policy. He dispelled stereotypic views of Africans and by his patient and diplomatic advocacy of African agency helped win acceptance for the concept.

At a time when the C.M.S. lacked any long-range plans, Crowther remained the constant in the Niger equation. He and his Mission became the real testing ground for Venn's policies. The amount of
time which Venn gave to the Mission in the early years was disproportionate to that which he gave to other Missions. Such attention lasted only a few years, however, as the aging Secretary became increasingly infirm. It is for this reason that the events leading up to Crowther's consecration as Bishop in 1864 take on a special significance. The Crowther "diocese" was formed in haste and compromise. Venn's almost unbounded belief in Crowther's ability led him to leave to his protegé the task of smoothing out the wrinkles in a less than perfect plan, a formidable task which was nearly impossible to effect.

An examination of Crowther's diplomatic and governmental activities is long overdue. In his dealings with African leaders, he pursued a policy of starting from the top, even when such an approach proved less than satisfactory. He preferred a strong central government even if the ruler was a Muslim prince. He worked within the established cultural and political framework. His experiences on the Niger won him the regard of the Lagos Colonial Administration. His subsequent efforts in negotiating with the Egbas and in positively changing British policy in that area were notable. This and his assumption of quasi-consular status on the Niger demonstrate a side of his character which has not received adequate attention and which alone earn him a place as a "maker of Nigeria".

In sharp contrast to the controversy of Crowther's final decade, the 1870s witnessed growth and success in the Niger Mission. In addition to his prodigious diplomatic and governmental activity, the Bishop realized that conditions on the river and in the Delta favoured Mission expansion. He took advantage of them. In order to assess
his work in this period, it is important, as at many junctures in his career, to have an appreciation of what was occurring at C.M.S. headquarters at Salisbury Square, and not just in West Africa. Financial difficulties and retrenchment were the order of the day, both at home and in the field. But not for Crowther. Thanks to his many friends in England and elsewhere, and to the existence of a Niger Bishopric Fund, he and the Niger Mission enjoyed a degree of financial independence which other Missions did not approach. The general uncertainty at C.M.S. headquarters was further compounded by the death of Henry Venn and subsequent organizational chaos. All of these developments only served to increase further Crowther's independence of action. He resolutely took up new opportunities as they presented themselves and in so doing frequently circumvented Parent Committee directives. The advent of Edward Hutchinson as Lay Secretary resulted in the first attempt to reshape the Mission with the introduction of two European lay agents. Hutchinson's role in reorganizing the C.M.S. Committee structure and in attempting to remould the Niger Mission adds a neglected dimension to the Niger story. His subsequent discredit and hurried resignation have not been previously fully explored or appreciated, nor have Crowther's own activities and movements for reform in this period.

By 1880 Crowther was at an age when most men would have retired. Instead, feeling his programme challenged, he chose to remain. His age, however, inclined him to the status quo and he did not follow up as strictly as he might have constructive recommendations. His humanitarian supporters gave way to new men, first the technocrats like Hutchinson and Niger Mission Secretary Edward Phillips, then the New Evangelicals, like J.A. Robinson and Brooke. A conflict of ideologies, both
theological and sociological came slowly, then swiftly to the forefront. Crowther at first fared well. Some strong supporters remained on the Parent Committee and his critics frequently overreached. But even the discredit of Hutchinson and others had an unfavourable long-term effect in that they gave him a false sense of relief, and provided another hiatus in which direction from the centre was lacking.

Events in England, both inside and outside missionary and Church circles, have not been given sufficient prominence. They help to explain how Crowther, the Parent Committee and the Mission stumbled into a crisis over which they had little or no control. The turning point in the C.M.S.'s attitude came with the Sierra Leone trial of two former Mission agents for murder. Crowther and the Mission never recovered from the scandal. While the Society shortly thereafter accepted its share of responsibility for the difficulties which the Mission had encountered, they had come to the conclusion that Crowther was either unable or unwilling to effect the reform which they regarded as essential. Although the Parent Committee continued to give lip-service to the use of Sierra Leoneans, the stage was set for radical change within the Mission. Crowther stood as an isolated figure. With the appointment in October 1886 of Robinson as Mission Secretary, the rush towards crisis and the climax of the Crowther story commenced.
Acknowledgements

A bibliography of the books and other materials which I consulted in the preparation of this work is given at the end. I must, nevertheless, here record my debts. With the death in September 1979 of Douglas Jones, the field of African history is much the poorer. I greatly profited from his patient and close supervision during the research and composition of this dissertation. He seemed always available whenever I would call upon him. I prized his friendship and deeply missed his counsel during the final months of my work.

Richard Gray reviewed early drafts of two chapters and offered many worthwhile suggestions. On the death of Douglas Jones, he graciously agreed to assume direction of the dissertation and the viva voce. I am very much indebted to him. Roland Oliver shared his thoughts on missionary expansion and the writing of biographically-oriented works for which I am grateful. Professor and Mrs. Tekena Tamuno of the University of Ibadan provided much hospitality and smoothed the way for me on more than one occasion during my field research in Nigeria. I greatly appreciate their kindnesses. I would also like to thank John Halstead of the State University of New York at Buffalo for introducing me to the riches of mission history and for serving at that institution as supervisor of my doctoral course work.

I am also grateful to various other persons, all of whom I am unable to record here. The following, however, need special mention. Miss Rosemary Keen (Archivist) and Miss Jean Woods (Librarian) of the Church Missionary Society for their patience and extraordinary assistance during the more than thirteen months in which I worked in the C.M.S. Archives and for much additional help on many occasions.
thereafter; Mrs. Annette Percy who typed this manuscript, partly when I was more than 4,000 miles distant; Mrs. Ruth Cranmer for proofreading the typescript and then guiding it through the bindery and finally safely to the Senate House; and Ms. Elaine Holley, cartographer of the Department of Geography at the School of Oriental and African Studies, for the map.

I must also acknowledge the help of the staff of the following institutions: School of Oriental and African Studies Library and Registrar's Office, London; Senate House Library, University of London; Public Record Office, London; Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; British Museum, London; University of Ibadan Library; Lambeth Palace Library, London; Rhodes House Library and the Bodleian Library, Oxford; Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

My field research was sponsored by financial grants from the School of Oriental and African Studies and the Central Research Fund of the University of London. An Additional Award from the School of Oriental and African Studies enabled me to write the dissertation following my field research and then to have the final manuscript typed, bound and prepared for submission. I am very much obliged to these institutions for their generosity.

Finally, I thank my wife Elaine for her remarkable encouragement and support. Through her efforts, I was able to set aside the time necessary to conduct the research and write the dissertation. During the period in which I was so engaged, she not only supported us financially, but also typed many drafts, pored through countless nineteenth century newspapers and periodicals for Crowther references,
ran numerous errands, and proved generally patient and sympathetic.
I am forever thankful.

Washington, D.C.  
5 March 1980  

John P. Loiello
Chapter I

Formative Years, 1799-1856

The final years of the eighteenth century in England witnessed the growth of a missionary movement roughly coinciding with that of the anti-slavery crusade. From the later 1790s until the mid-1840s, the missions excited popular opinion, influenced political and colonial decisions, and generally proved powerful and expansive. At the same time the campaign against slavery - the trade and the institution itself - reached its successful conclusion. Both developments in turn reflected and contributed to a growing interest in Tropical Africa in Europe. Spurred on by the social theories of direct environmentalism, many in the intellectual community believed that the prospects for a rapid advance for Africa towards "civilization" were unfavourable. In answer, the humanitarians came increasingly to the defense of African society, showing that its problems were not insuperable and that, more importantly, the problems themselves were the result of the slave trade. Proceeding with their argument, they declared that the abolition of the slave trade would be the first step in bringing about a cure for the problems of African society. Finally, while accepting the premise that the lack of commerce held Africa back, they contended that the introduction of commerce could push her forward. ¹

The Founding of the Church Missionary Society

The development of the various missionary societies can be

considered as having evolved naturally from the great Christian Revival which swept through Great Britain and America in the late eighteenth century. It has indeed been argued that revivalism served as the "motive power" behind far-reaching social reforms at home and interest in mission work in Africa and abroad. In addition to common aims and purposes, the missionary movement and the anti-slavery crusade shared much the same leadership. The Clapham Sect, composed of distinguished Evangelical churchmen and statesmen, stood at the forefront in the founding of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) and in the direction of the anti-slavery cause. Many of its members also sought to unite both these projects in a single practical experiment in the establishment of the Colony of Sierra Leone. While the Baptist Missionary Society had been founded in 1792 and the "non-denominational" London Missionary Society (L.M.S.) in 1795, the Evangelicals felt, in the words of the Rev. John Venn, Rector of Clapham, that any projected missionary society should be based on Anglican "Church principles". As they thoroughly believed in the episcopacy and the Church of England liturgy, the Congregational character of the L.M.S. did not attract them. At the same time they thought that they could not throw their energies behind the two existing Church Societies, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.) and the Society for the Propagation of the


2 For a study of the Clapham Sect, see J.A. Patten: These Remarkable Men, London, 1949.

Gospel (S.P.G.). While Venn and the others espoused "Church principles", they did not in any way mean "High Church principles". According to the C.M.S. historian, neither the S.P.C.K. nor the S.P.G. would have welcomed, in any positions of influence, persons from the Evangelical wing of the Anglican Church. Both of these Societies were also in this period at a low point in their fortunes with regard to men and resources.

After more than eight years of intermittent discussion as to whether a "Mission connected with the Evangelical part of the Church of England" should be formed, sixteen clergymen and nine laymen met in London on 12 April 1799. With John Venn in the Chair, the meeting passed four resolutions founding what by 1812 came to be known as the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East. The rules adopted established a General Committee of twenty-four persons, of whom at least half were to be clergymen. Thirteen years later the General Committee was expanded to include all clergymen who subscribed to the Society. To act as the "executive for foreign work" - to obtain, train, and superintend the missionaries in the field, - a Committee of Correspondence was created. It was this Committee, which became fully operational in 1818, that was generally known and referred to as the Parent


3 No name was actually adopted at the first meeting, although six weeks later the title "The Society for Missions to Africa and the East" was approved. This, or the shorter "The Mission Society", was used until 1812. Stock: History, I, pp. 68-71. See also: Account of a Society for Missions for Africa and the East, London, 1800.
While the C.M.S. rules provided for a President, this post remained vacant until 1812 when Admiral Lord Gambier was elected. There were several Vice-Presidents. To coordinate and direct the day to day activities of the Society, the Rev. Thomas Scott was appointed Secretary. As the Society grew, so did its Secretariat, and soon the distinction was made between Clerical (ordained) and Lay (unordained) Secretaries. Five years passed, however, before the C.M.S. could actually send any missionaries abroad. It took more than a year to secure the approval of the Archbishop of Canterbury and then the war with France intensified the existing difficulty of securing qualified recruits. During this period, nonetheless, preparations went on apace. Many of the C.M.S. General Committee were involved in 1804 in the establishment of a complementary organization. As its name implies, the British and Foreign Bible Society had as its main objective the widest circulation of the Scriptures, but unlike the various missionary societies it was truly interdenominational. More directly pertinent to its own work, the C.M.S. General Committee decided that, once conditions were ripe, West Africa and Sierra Leone in particular should be the first scene of its labours.

The settlement at Sierra Leone had been founded in 1787. Its

1 Stock: History, I, p. 71.
2 See Appendix II below for a list of the Presidents and Secretaries of the Society during the period covered in this study.
history prior to its becoming a British Crown Colony in 1808 has been effectively described elsewhere.¹ During the first dozen years of its existence, several attempts at missionary enterprise had been made, both individually and through organized societies. By the turn of the century, however, none of these had proven successful.² As the C.M.S. could not resolve its severe personnel problem in obtaining British missionaries, it turned to the recently founded Berlin Missionary Society for mission agents. The first of these recruits, Melchior Renner and Peter Hartwig, received Lutheran ordination and arrived at Freetown in April 1804.³ While the Society had determined to establish a mission in the Susu country (approximately 120 miles northwest of Freetown) and not in the Colony itself, it was several years before they could accomplish their goal.⁴ The pull of, and indeed pressure from, the Colony to work also within its boundaries were strong from the outset, and these greatly intensified in 1808 with Britain's abolition of the slave trade. Under the new legislation the Royal Navy was empowered to seize slave ships, arrest the traders, and liberate the cargo. Since the slaves could not be restored to their homelands, it was decided that they should be liberated at Freetown. Vice-Courts of Admiralty and later Courts of Mixed Commission were established there for these purposes.⁵ The


⁴ Groves: Planting, I, p. 214.

⁵ Peterson: Province of Freedom, p. 45.
landing of these liberated Africans began in early 1808 and grew steadily, the number reaching more than 10,000 in six years.¹ The persistence of the slave trade, therefore, produced a novel situation: a growing population,

not of settlers from the New World, but of native Africans recently torn from family and clans and deposited, friendless and destitute, on African soil indeed, but far from home.² Here was a new demand on the sympathies of the Evangelicals and the C.M.S. The Colony itself had become a natural centre for missionary activity.

By the time the C.M.S. celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, its prestige in Britain had grown considerably. When Lord Gambier became its President in 1812 he was "assisted" by sixteen Vice-Presidents, who included four peers and eight members of Parliament.³ But neither political nor ecclesiastical support for missionary enterprise was universal. The Duke of Wellington expressed misgivings about work in India and a number of bishops were cool to the Society, wary as they were of its Evangelical principles. The mid-1820s also witnessed some intense rivalry between the C.M.S. and the L.M.S. in the West Indies which drew unfavourable public attention.⁴ Finally, the period was an uneasy one for the work in Sierra Leone. In several parishes operations almost collapsed, owing especially to a terrible succession of deaths in 1823-24. In January 1827, the Governor released the Society from official responsibility within the Colony. As the slave

¹ Hole: Early History, p. 597.
² Groves: Planting, I, p. 218.
⁴ Ibid., p. 240.
trade persisted, however, more and more Liberated Africans came into the parishes. On 17 June 1822, a British cruiser entered Freetown harbour carrying Africans captured ten weeks earlier off Lagos. Among them was a Yoruba boy of about fifteen years of age named Ajayi.

Ajayi of Osogun

The story of Samuel Ajayi Crowther's early life was widely chronicled in his own day, largely as a part of C.M.S. propaganda. In his full length, mostly hagiographic, biography of Crowther which appeared in 1908, Jesse Page deftly avoided any substantial or meaningful treatment of the very controversial final fifteen years of his subject's life. The biographer did provide, however, many significant details of Crowther's formative years. In 1889 Page had interviewed Crowther for a shorter biography published in that year. Dandeson Crowther, Samuel Ajayi's youngest son, also supplied much information regarding his father for Page's longer The Black Bishop. In addition to Page's works, as well as the many other less reliable hagiographies, Crowther himself prepared at least two autobiographical sketches which covered the period prior to his arrival at Freetown.


The first of these was written in 1837\(^1\) and the second in 1841\(^2\).

Prepared by a man then in his mid-30s, these accounts were also prompted by the desire of missionary apologists to record "the remarkable story of the slave boy Ajayi".

According to Crowther's own account, he was born at Osogun in the Ibarapa district of Yorubaland.\(^3\) 1806 was the probable year of his birth.\(^4\) His father was a weaver and occasional farmer. His mother was a priestess of the Yoruba divinity Obatala, the god of purity, and claimed direct descent from the last great ruler of Old Oyo, the ancient capital of the Oyo Empire. While Ajayi had three sisters and at least one step-brother, the size of his extended family is unclear.

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1 The original of the 1837 letter can be found at C.M.S. CA2/079/1


2 The 1841 letter, written during the Niger Expedition of that year to Commander Bird Allen of the Expedition vessel Soudan, was printed in A.F. Walls, ed.: "A Short Narrative of His Early Life by Samuel Ajayi Crowther", B.S.A.C.H. II: 1 (1965), 5-14.

3 The Osogun ruins are today quite easily reached by road from Lanlate, some eight miles distant. In August, 1975, the author saw a large sign at the site inscribed as follows: "Osogun: Here is the old Osogun home where the first African Bishop, Samuel Ajayi Crowther, was born in the year 1810. It was 4 mls. (miles) in circumference before the Fulani invaders raided them in 1821".

Quoting extensively from one of Crowther's autobiographical accounts and drawing on Crowther family traditions, Page pictures an ambitious, industrious youth, devoted to his family and a natural leader among his peers. Osogun appears to have been founded in the eighteenth century by settlers coming principally from Old Oyo. At its height the Oyo Empire had extended westwards from Benin to encompass parts of Dahomey and Togo. A limited monarchy, its power rested in its political institutions and army, and in its ability to generate wealth through trade and tribute. When in the late eighteenth century it could no longer maintain its trade routes to the sea, it went into decline. An interregnum in the early years of the nineteenth century accelerated this process. By the 1820s a series of civil wars followed which continued for most of the century. Yoruba cities vied with one another to be the successor to Old Oyo. At this same time the Fulani jihad of Uthman dan Fodio was commencing to the north. This major upheaval had attendant repercussions in Yorubaland. The politico-religious struggle between the Fulani and their Muslim religious allies and the decaying Oyo Empire affected many. Villages like Osogun were easy prey to marauding warriors, and inhabitants who survived such

1 Page: The Black Bishop, pp. 7-8. See also C.M.S. CA2/079/1 Crowther to Jowett, 11 February 1837.


attacks most frequently found their way into the complex system of the international slave trade.  

In March 1821, Osogun fell in a matter of hours to Yoruba soldiers. The teenage Ajayi was separated from his family and taken away as a prisoner. During the approximately eight months which followed he was a domestic slave, passing through the hands of at least half a dozen owners. In December he was sold to professional slave traders and taken to Lagos. He remained there for five months before his Portuguese masters placed him on board a ship bound for Brazil on 7 April 1822. On the next day the Esperanza Felix was surprised by two British men-of-war and captured. Ajayi was fortunately placed on board one of the warships, as the slave ship never reached Freetown, being shipwrecked on the way. After more than ten weeks cruising up the coast, Ajayi and others were landed at Freetown on 17 June 1822. That same day they were sent to Leopold (later called Bathurst) village and placed under the care of Thomas Davey, C.M.S. missionary and Parish Administrator.  

The young Ajayi adapted well to his new environment and, as he tells us, unlike many of his fellow Liberated Africans, took easily and eagerly to book learning. Under the tutelage first of Mrs. Davey, and

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1 Peterson: Province of Freedom, pp. 174-75.


4 Register, p. 13, no. 67.
then her husband, Ajayi was able to read the New Testament with some facility within six months. He became a school monitor and later a Church Clerk. On 11 December 1825 he was baptized Samuel Crowther, in honour of the Rev. Samuel Crowther, Vicar of Christ Church, Newgate Street, London, a leading C.M.S. benefactor. In the following year he accompanied the Daveys to England and for a few months attended the parish school at Liverpool Street, Islington. When Davey brought Crowther before the C.M.S. Parent Committee in September, he requested that the young man be permitted to continue study in England for a longer period of time, a situation "of which Samuel Crowther also expressed himself to be desirous". After some debate the Committee decided, notwithstanding their preference for Crowther's further education, that he should return to Sierra Leone at the first opportunity, "bearing in mind how injurious the climate of this country (England) has been found in former instances to individuals similarly circumstanced".

A saddened Crowther took leave of the Committee less than two weeks later.

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1 On the death of Mr. Davey, Mrs. Davey married another C.M.S. missionary, Henry Graham (Register, p. 27, no. 147). Upon Graham's death, she married Rev. J.W. Weeks, a consistent patron of Samuel Crowther, and later Bishop of Sierra Leone (Register, p. 19, no. 100). Mrs. Weeks was present in Canterbury Cathedral when Crowther was consecrated Bishop in 1864.

2 C.M.S. G/C1/v.8/12 Committee of Correspondence, 9 August 1825.

3 Page: The Black Bishop, p. 19. He was not the first to be so baptized in the Colony, as another Liberated African received the same name in 1818. S.A. Walker: Missions in Western Africa Among the Soossos, Bulloms, etc. Being the First Undertaken by the Church Mission for Africa and the East, Dublin, 1845, pp. 513-14.

4 See C.M.S. G/C1/v.8/434-35 Committee of Correspondence, 27 August 1826 and C.M.S. G/C1/v.8/469-70 Committee of Correspondence, 29 September 1826.

5 C.M.S. G/C1/v.8/483-84 Committee of Correspondence, 10 October 1826. See also CA1/L2/79-81 Edward Bickersteth and Dandeson Coates to Rev. John Gerber et al., 10 October 1826.
When he returned to Bathurst, Crowther was briefly employed as a Government storekeeper. The C.M.S. decided shortly thereafter to revive its training college in the Colony which had originally been founded at Regent's Town. The new Christian Institution, established just outside Freetown at Fourah Bay, was not to be a trade school like its predecessor, but rather a seminary to prepare suitable students for future enrolment at the Society's Training Institution at Islington, London. The Christian Institution would eventually become Fourah Bay College. When the Institution opened its doors on 3 April 1827, Samuel Ajayi Crowther was enrolled as its first student. He was the only one so qualified at that time, as three others were accepted on a probationary basis. The Rev. C.F. Haensel, a Bavarian graduate of the Basle Seminary, took direction of the Institution as its first Principal. Crowther appears to have impressed Haensel from the start, as he was very shortly named monitor over his fellow students. In the first of his quarterly reports on the Institution, Haensel outlined the strict regimen of class and manual work which he imposed.

1 C.M.S. CA1/0108/2 Rev. C.L. Haensel to Coates, 28 February 1827.
3 C.M.S. CA1/0108/7 Haensel to Coates, 23 April 1827. See also P.E.H. Hair: "An Analysis of the Register of Fourah Bay College, 1827-1950", Sierra Leone Studies No. 7 (1956), 155-60.
4 Register, p. 23, no. 120.
5 C.M.S. CA1/0108/5 Haensel to Coates, 11 April 1827 and Fyfe: A History of Sierra Leone, p. 172. Many of Crowther's "monitor" reports, the earliest dated the week of 17 February 1828, are to be found in the C.M.S. Archives at C.M.S. CA1/079/14-31. They represent the earliest materials written in Crowther's hand that are known.
on his charges. His comments on Crowther are noteworthy:

Samuel Crowther is a very clever lad, and it is a mere pleasure to instruct him. He reads quite well, and writes tolerably; he has a good knowledge of orthography and learns Grammar very well. His voice is not good, but otherwise he goes on in singing to my satisfaction. He helps in teaching two others (students) for which he receives a monthly allowance.

In June 1828 Crowther was appointed as a tutor in the Institution's younger school. Five months later, on 6 November, when it was again decided that he should not go to England for further training, he officially entered the C.M.S.'s employ as Haensel's Assistant at the Institution. Thus began a service which would continue uninterrupted for more than sixty-three years.

Crowther remained at the Institution for another year before being transferred to Regent as a Schoolmaster in 1829. During that period he successfully courted Susan Asano Thompson, a liberated Yoruba

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1 C.M.S. CA1/0108/74 Haensel: Report to Quarterly Meeting, 25 June 1828 and C.M.S. CA1/079/29 Crowther: Journal of the Christian Institution, 1-7 June 1828, entry for 4 June. In early 1828 discussion had again arisen over whether Crowther should study in England. While praising his assistant's "uncommon ability, steady conduct, thirst for knowledge, and indefatigable industry", Haensel was uncertain of the prospects. He did not want to lose Crowther's assistance and also questioned whether the young man would achieve "spiritual" as well as intellectual advancement by the move. C.M.S. CA1/0108/15 Haensel to Coates, 12 February 1828 and C.M.S. CA1/0108/24 Haensel to Coates, 9 August 1828.


3 C.M.S. CA1/0108/36 Haensel to Secretaries, 10 September 1829; and C.M.S. CA1/0108/83 Haensel: Report of the Christian Institution to Quarterly Meeting, 23 September 1829. See also M.L. Charlesworth: Africa's Mountain Valley; or the Church in Regent's Town, West Africa, London, 1856.
like himself. Asano arrived at Freetown in 1822 and had subsequently become a Schoolmistress at Bathurst when Crowther met her.  

The couple were married on 21 September 1829. By this time Crowther had begun to correspond personally with C.M.S. Secretaries in London who watched his progress with interest. After a few years at Regent, he returned to the Christian Institution as a tutor and as parish assistant to the Principal, Rev. G.A. Kissling. His parish work very much centred on his fellow Yorubas. He initially brought together perhaps twenty to thirty of his countrymen every Sunday morning, giving religious instruction in his native tongue. Soon the number of those attending these meetings exceeded one hundred. He then began conducting a Yoruba prayer service, which likewise grew in popularity. Clearly considering Freetown as his home, he and his wife purchased land there as security in their old age.

1 C.M.S. CA1/0219/28 Rev. J.B. Weeks: Report for Leopold (Bathurst), 26 September 1826; and Page: The Black Bishop, pp. 41-42. Prior to Crowther's enrolment at the Christian Institution, Susan had been regularly washing his clothes, an activity frowned upon by the missionaries. See C.M.S. CA1/0108/27 Haensel to Secretaries, 24 November 1828.

2 C.M.S. CA1/080/62 Rev. Thomas Davey: Report of the Mountain District, 23 September 1829. The Crowthers would have six children: Samuel (b. 1830); Susan (b. 1834), who would marry Rev. George Nicol; Abigail (b. 1836), who would marry Rev. T.B. Macaulay; Josiah (b. 1838); Dandeson (b. 1844); and Johanna, who would marry the merchant James Thompson.

3 See CA1/L2/194 Bickersteth to Crowther, 17 November 1829; also C.M.S. CA1/L2/209-10 Bickersteth and Coates to Rev. W.K. Betts et al., 18 November 1829.


6 C.M.S. CA1/079/3 Crowther to Kissling, 13 August 1838.
Crowther's industry not only impressed his local superiors, but also the C.M.S. establishment at its headquarters in Salisbury Square, London. A lively correspondence grew up between Crowther and the Secretaries William Jowett and Dandeson Coates, with the latter regularly sending out to Freetown religious tracts and discourses.\(^1\) In 1839 the Society developed plans for a mission among the Temne and determined that this new endeavour should be centred at Porto Loko, some fifty miles northeast of Freetown.\(^2\) Crowther's linguistic ability prompted his selection for this new field and he joined others in 1839-40 in an exploratory visit to Porto Loko which lasted several months.\(^3\) Upon his return he was assigned to Kissy, where he rigorously pursued his study of Temne and began "to mount a craggy rock" by taking up ancient Greek. His enthusiasm for the challenges posed by a Temne mission typified the spirit which would mark so many of his later efforts.\(^4\) But Temne was not to be the scene of his labours. Prior to Crowther's departure for Porto Loko, Secretary Coates had forwarded to him a recently published book quite different from the fare which he usually sent out. Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton's *The African Slave Trade* (and its subsequently published companion,

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1 C.M.S. CA1/079/1 Crowther to Jowett, 11 February 1837; C.M.S. CA1/L3/50-51 Jowett to Crowther, 31 August 1836; C.M.S. CA1/L3/84-85 Jowett to Weeks, 4 October 1837.

2 For a discussion of the Temne and other peoples surrounding the early nineteenth century settlement in Sierra Leone, see Kup: *History of Sierra Leone*, pp. 120-57.

3 C.M.S. CA1/0131/51 Kissling: Journal Extracts for 25 December 1839 and 25 March 1840, entry for 25 February 1840; also Fyfe: *A History of Sierra Leone*, p. 214.

4 C.M.S. CA1/079/4 Crowther to Jowett, 3 July 1840.
Its Remedy) would widely affect missionary and humanitarian thinking and would bring Samuel Crowther back to his homeland.  

The Opening of the Niger

As one writer has observed, the humanitarian programme after 1833 included "the completion of emancipation, the ending of the slave trade and the protection of backward races". By the end of the 1830s, however, the slave trade had revived and was prospering. While the British Navy's West African Squadron had had initial successes, it and the treaty system were failing. Slaving and legitimate trade were incompatible. As a result, Buxton argued that lawful commerce should be encouraged by bypassing the coastal middlemen, penetrating the West African interior, and inducing the hinterland peoples to take up lawful trade. In seeking his objectives of bringing "Christianity and Civilization" to West Africa, he viewed the Liberated Africans as forming a vanguard in the enterprise. Although his scheme involved the rejection of the British colonial policy of non-expansion which had held sway since 1824, its broad outlines had been sketched and accepted by the governmental,


commercial, and religious establishments by late 1838. By the following May Buxton had succeeded in bringing to fruition a plan for a three-ship expedition up the Niger River. It was agreed that the commissioners aboard the vessels should conclude treaties condemning the slave trade, should stimulate legitimate trade with the interior peoples, and should set up a "Model Farm" on the river. Difficulties and delays continually postponed the commencement of the expedition. On 1 June 1840, the African Civilization Society, a Buxton-sponsored group formed the year before, held a momentous meeting at Exeter Hall, the Evangelicals' favourite place of assembly. With the Prince Consort in the Chair, the expedition was formally launched with great excitement and expectation. It was not until yet another year, however, that the vessels finally set sail for Africa on 12 May 1841.

The great looped Niger River begins a 2600 mile long journey in the Futa Jalon watershed, a narrow belt of high ground between the borders of Guinea and Sierra Leone. It flows north and then northeast from its source to Bamako and Timbuctu in Mali, then east to the Tosaye gorges, before flowing southeast through Niamey in Niger. It eventually enters modern-day Nigeria at Malainville. In its final section, (and that which will concern us in this study), the Niger

1 Gallagher: "Fowell Buxton", 43-44.
2 Ibid., 46-47.
runs through a valley between four and ten miles wide. At Lokoja, it is joined by the Benue, its principal tributary, and drops from a 2,000 foot high plateau due south to the sea, some 340 miles away. From Malainville the river passes through gorges, much broken by rapids, until it reaches Jebba, considered the effective head of navigation for larger river craft. For some distance northwest of Lokoja, flat-topped hills run out close to the river. In this area the Niger's "trough" is wider than its channel or its immediate flood plain. The channel varies widely within the season, with high water occurring between July and October on average. The Benue "trough" lacks the alternation of flood plain and restricted channel and when in flood can be accessible by shallow draught steamers as far east as Garua (Garowa). Below the Confluence the Niger is largely restricted to its banks. At low water the channel is broken by low islands and sandbanks which disappear in the annual flooding. The vegetation changes from dry savanna above Lokoja to a form of "transition woodland" and then to tropical rain forest. Approximately 120 miles from the Atlantic, the Niger reaches its Delta, second only in size to that of the Ganges. At this point the vegetation changes rather dramatically to the largest mangrove forest in the world. With its hundreds of streams and tributaries, the Delta provided a formidable barrier to those who wished to penetrate it to the interior.  

In the first third of the nineteenth century, Liverpool merchants

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established a profitable trade in palm oil in the region which they referred to as the "Oil Rivers". The elaborate system of African middlemen through which the slave trade had been conducted was adapted to this "legitimate" area.¹ The discovery in 1830 by the Lander brothers that the Oil Rivers actually formed the mouth and Delta of the Niger River² presaged significant change. European interest in the interior increased substantially. Several attempts to open the Niger to trade were made in the decade which followed, but navigational problems and climatic difficulties joined in defeating these efforts. The indigenous African peoples along the river had mixed views on the European intrusion. Most of them had already evolved commercial and political systems of their own, both among themselves and with the Liverpool palm oil merchants on the coast. With the advent of the Europeans to regions beyond the Delta, therefore, the already unsteady balance in the interior would be made even more volatile. The Ijo people, and particularly those from the Brass city-state who controlled the Nun tributary in the Delta, were in fact committed to preventing any European penetration of the interior. In this they had the support of the Liverpool traders who had commercial relationships with leading Delta city-states and canoe houses.³ The Ibo people at Aboh and the


Igala at Idah were inclined to cautiously welcome the Europeans.\(^1\) While they were apprehensive of their sovereignty, they saw the European presence as bringing certain advantages. While the Ibo's interest centred on the commercial potential, the Igala focused on the strategic factor. The Muslim Fulani had been expanding into their territory and Igala hoped that the Europeans might serve as powerful allies, a situation which the Fulani, farther north, already suspected had been established.\(^2\)

The background and history of the Niger Expedition of 1841 have been chronicled elsewhere.\(^3\) The Church Missionary Society had been invited to send two persons with the Expedition. They first selected the German-born Rev. J.F. Schöhn, who had been in their employ in Sierra Leone since 1832. A talented linguist, Schöhn had been studying Bullom for some time, but turned to Hausa and Ibo studies in 1840.\(^4\) Salisbury Square initially decided that Schöhn should be accompanied by Henry Townsend, an English lay missionary who had gone out to Sierra Leone in 1836 at the age of 21.\(^5\) But in the last months prior to the Expedition’s final departure, they substituted Samuel Crowther.\(^6\)

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5. Register, pp. 41-42, no. 231. See also George Townsend: *Henry Townsend*, London, 1887.

Buxton's ideas on the role of Liberated Africans had strong appeal, particularly with the Rev. Henry Venn who had entered Salisbury Square as a Parent Committee Member in 1834 and who in October 1841 assumed the post of Honorary Clerical Secretary. Venn took an active interest in the Niger enterprise from the outset and he quickly recognized Crowther as the prototype of the Christian African. He and his colleagues were also motivated by Crowther's demonstrated linguistic skills, as well as his "trustworthiness and steadiness as a man of established Christian character". They instructed him and Schön to assess the advisability of a mission to the Niger region by obtaining information on prospective locations, especially at the Confluence of the Niger and Tchadda (Benue) Rivers, and also on the indigenous peoples and population. Finally, they directed the two missionaries to return to England at the conclusion of the Expedition with a view to their going out to establish such a mission with the assistance of Liberated Africans in the following year.

1 Jowett and Vores retired as Secretaries in 1840 and 1841 respectively, leaving only Dandeson Coates as Lay Secretary. Venn moved into the breach. Because of his own independent income, he did not receive a salary from the C.M.S.; hence his title of "honorary" Clerical Secretary. See Stock: History, I, pp. 369-70. For a biography of Venn, see William Knight: Memoir of Henry Venn: The Missionary Secretariat of Henry Venn, B.D., London, 1880. See also J.F.A. Ajayi: "Henry Venn and the Policy of Development", J.H.S.N. I: 4 (1959), 331-42 and Max Warren, ed.: To Apply the Gospel. Selections from the Writings of Henry Venn, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1971.

2 C.M.S. CA1/L3/242-52 Vores and Coates to Schön, 3 December 1840. Samuel Crowther was at this point also emerging as a recognized spokesman of the educated African in Sierra Leone. He had recently signed a petition urging the C.M.S. to improve higher education in the Colony. See J.F.A. Ajayi: "Introduction to the Second Edition" in Schön and Crowther: Journals, p. XIV, footnote no. 2.

As the Niger Expedition began its ascent of the river in August 1841, its leaders had little or no understanding of the political situation or of the effects which their intervention was certain to have on the Niger peoples and the existing trade. Treaties were signed with the Obi of Aboh and the Ata of Igala, and sixty-four square miles of territory was purchased for £45 at the Confluence. A "Model Farm" was there established, settled by twenty-four Liberated Africans from Sierra Leone. Within two months, however, illness and death forced the return of all three Expedition vessels to the coast. Forty-nine of 145 Europeans died. The Government recalled the Expedition and, while approving the two treaties which had been negotiated, repudiated the deed of cession for the Confluence territory. A year later the "Model Farm" was disbanded.

Schön's and Crowther's journals were the first of the several personal and official accounts to be published on the 1841 Expedition. According to Jacob Ajayi, the two missionaries "acquired immediate fame" as a result of their journals. Like others on the Expedition, they had not fully comprehended the potential difficulties from commercial and political quarters, although they soon appreciated the danger from

1 *Fyfe*: A History of Sierra Leone, p. 221. There had been some prior discussion that Crowther should remain at the Confluence and there commence missionary activity, but this idea was not pursued. C.M.S. CA1/L3/272-74 Coates to Weeks, 15 April 1841.

the climate. Schön and Crowther concentrated in their accounts in recording the details of the indigenous peoples' social and religious life as well as their languages. 1 Crowther focused on the Yoruba speakers and subsequently produced a Yoruba vocabulary and Grammar, his first major linguistic work, which was published shortly after his journal. 2 The Society was once again impressed by his performance, and Buxton's argument that the African, if given adequate training, could play a leading role in the development of West Africa gained greater credence. Europeans seemed unfitted for the interior and the renewed reliance on the educated African was probably the most significant result of the ill-fated Expedition. The debacle of the 1841 enterprise also meant that for a critical period of approximately fifty years British missionary societies, rather than the Government, were in the vanguard in European penetration of West Africa. These religious bodies were far more dependent upon the existing African polities:

Their approach was consciously to promote a Westernized African educated élite who would work through the existing social and political institutions in order to spread European influence. 3

While the "Model Farm" had failed, the Expedition had, nonetheless,

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1 J.F.A. Ajayi: "Introduction" in Schön and Crowther: Journals, pp. XI-XII.

2 S.A. Crowther: Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language. Part I - English and Yoruba. Part II - Yoruba and English. To which are prefixed, the grammatical elements of the Yoruba Language, London, 1843. For early Yoruba linguistic studies see: J.F.A. Ajayi: "How Yoruba was Reduced to Writing", Odu, no. 8 (1960), 49-58; and Hair: The Early Study of Nigerian Languages, pp. 4-30.

further aroused the liberated Yoruba in Sierra Leone to return to their homeland. The C.M.S. decided to encourage such a movement, as well as derive advantage from it, by founding a mission in Yorubaland. Once a Yoruba Mission was established it could be later linked to a similar enterprise on the Niger.

Crowther arrived in England in early September 1842. After the end of the Expedition, he and Schön had taken more than eight months to reach Sierra Leone as a result of protracted delays at Fernando Po and Ascension Island. Schön was now a confirmed believer in "native agency", due not only to the disastrous results of the Expedition, but also to Samuel Crowther's notable performance on the river. In his correspondence with the Parent Committee, for example, he emphasized that contrary to popular European belief, the indigenous people on the Niger would listen, and do so attentively, to Liberated Africans like Crowther. Henry Venn was equally delighted with the young African's work and writings, and even before the latter's arrival in England, he pressed his cause for Anglican ordination. Venn discussed the prospects for such a move with the Parent Committee and with the Bishop of London to

1 C.M.S. CA1/079/5 Crowther to Secretaries, 9 March 1842; also C.M.S. CA1/079/8 Crowther: Journal, November 1841 to June 30 1842, entry for 21 June; and C.M.S. CA1/079/9 Crowther to Rev. J. Warburton, 9 April 1842. Warburton was Secretary of the local C.M.S. Committee in Sierra Leone. See Register, p. 27, no. 148.

2 C.M.S. CA1/0195/12 Schön to Coates, 26 June 1841; C.M.S. CA1/0195/14 Schön to Coates, 11 August 1841; and C.M.S. CA1/0195/17b Schön to Coates, 16 October 1841. Others, including Lord John Russell, felt similarly. See S.A. Walker: The Church of England Mission, pp. 495-96 and John Beecham: The Claims of the Missionary Work in Western Africa, and the Importance of Training a Native Ministry, London, 1842.

3 C.M.S. CA1/L3/322-34 Venn and Coates to Warburton, 22 December 1841.
whom he personally presented Crowther in November. Bishop BJomfield,
one of the great Evangelicals, pronounced himself well-satisfied and
accepted Crowther as a candidate for Holy Orders, adding that "if Africa
was to be evangelized, it must be by her own sons".1 Crowther
entered the C.M.S. Institution at Islington on 13 October, and on
Trinity Sunday, 11 June 1843, he was ordained Deacon.2 Rather than
having him engage in the customary year of study before being given
Priest's Orders, it was decided that (being an African!) he should not
risk his health by spending a second winter in Britain. So on
1 October, BJomfield ordained him.3 Despite the haste, the
significance of the event was not lost on Henry Venn. He and other
C.M.S. Secretaries wrote the Sierra Leone missionaries:

The sending out of a native of Africa in the full Orders of
our Church constitutes a move, and a very interesting and
important one, in the history of Africa.4

Little more than three weeks following his ordination, Samuel Crowther
sailed for Sierra Leone, "the representative and first fruits of a

1 C.M.S. G/C1/v.21/329 Committee of Correspondence, 8 November 1842;
C.M.S. CA1/L3/579-87 Venn and Coates to Warburton, 24 December
1842; and Page: The Black Bishop, pp. 70-72.

2 C.M.S. G/C1/v.21/332-33 Principal's Report in Committee of
Correspondence, 11 November 1842; C.M.S. G/C1/v.21/483-88
Principal's Report of Students at Islington in Committee of
Correspondence, 27 January 1843; C.M.S. G/C1/v.22/73 Committee of
Correspondence, 27 January 1843; and Stock: History, II, pp. 72-
73. Rev. C.F. Childe, Principal from 1839 to 1858, reminisced
favourably on Crowther's performance at Islington at the time of
Crowther's death. C.F. Childe: "Bishop Crowther at the C.M.S.
College", The Record, N.S. XI (1892), 39.

3 C.M.S. G/C1/v.22/90 Committee of Correspondence, 20 June 1843;
C.M.S. CA1/L3/414-21 Coates to Warburton, 11 August 1843; and
C.M.S. G/C1/v.22/227 Committee of Correspondence, 17 October 1843.

4 C.M.S. CA1/L3/426-30 Venn et al. to Warburton, 20 October 1843.
Native African Priesthood”. He would not remain there long.

The Founding of the C.M.S. Yoruba Mission

The overwhelming majority of Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone had come from the various sub-groups of the people now known collectively as the Yoruba. The wars and civil strife among the various Yoruba groups in the early nineteenth century led to new towns being founded by refugees from these conflicts. One of the most notable examples of this activity was the founding of Abeokuta by Egba refugees. The Egba had been among the first Yoruba states to attempt to extricate themselves from the Old Oyo Empire in the final years of the eighteenth century. Not surprisingly they were a loosely confederated group, a condition which would bedevil them once they had established their autonomy. In the early 1820s the Fulani invasion brought greater anarchy and disruption to Yorubaland. In the course of the Owu War, the Egba towns were destroyed. Egba remnants from a "new" Ibadan, which had been founded early in the decade, settled at Abeokuta by 1830. Once there they quite quickly consolidated their position and soon moved


3 Ibid., p. 15.

to secure a share of the arms trade with the interior. They clearly sought to establish Abeokuta as successor to Old Oyo vis-à-vis coastal towns like Badagri, Porto Novo and Lagos. Sodeke, the Egba leader, encouraged the settlement in Abeokuta of other Egba refugees. He also welcomed Liberated Africans from Sierra Leone. The first of these Saros, as they came to be known, arrived there in 1839.

Jacob Ajayi has argued that two nineteenth century "revolutionary movements", one Muslim and the other Christian, had as their objectives the reorganization of the social, economic, and political life of what by the end of that century would be referred to as Nigeria. As the Fulani jihad introduced the concept of a trans-tribal state, albeit under "the embrace of a common religion", so too did Christian missionaries promote the ideas of nation-building along European lines. Samuel Crowther had been profoundly affected by the first of these movements - torn from his homeland and enslaved, rescued and taken to Sierra Leone. As a newly-ordained Anglican priest, he now stood poised to become a principal mover, indeed the most significant African one of his generation, in the second of these "revolutions". In the eyes of the Church Missionary Society and many in Government, he had emerged as the prototype of what was hoped would be a new class of educated men who would reconstruct and transform their country.

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As he had prepared for the Niger Expedition in June 1841, Crowther wrote that the coming enterprise greatly excited many Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone. He noted that his fellow Yoruba, particularly those from Egbaland, had been desirous of returning to their homeland for several years and that many had done so. His knowledge of current events in his homeland, based on reports coming from those who had returned, was extensive. To the C.M.S. both in Freetown and at Salisbury Square, the Egba at Abeokuta seemed a fertile missionary field as well as a stepping stone to the Niger. Freetown took the first move when in late 1842 it sent the soon-to-be-ordained Henry Townsend to Badagri. Townsend gained admittance to Abeokuta as well, and returned to Sierra Leone six months later. His encouraging reports prompted the Local Committee in Sierra Leone to declare in July that a mission be commenced in Yorubaland and that Townsend and Crowther be "set aside" for the work. Word of this "suggestion" reached Salisbury Square while Crowther was en route to Freetown.

Crowther spent less than a year in Sierra Leone before departing for Yorubaland in 1844. It was a period of intense preparation and excitement. He had a most gratifying reception upon his return to Freetown. He was impressed with the dramatic change which his life

1 C.M.S. CA1/079/7 Crowther: Excerpts from the Journal for Quarter ending 25 June 1841.
2 C.M.S. CA1/0215/7a-b Warburton to Rev. Henry Townsend, 9 November 1842; C.M.S. CA1/0215/8 Townsend to Local (Sierra Leone) Committee, 31 May 1843; C.M.S. CA1/0215/34 Townsend: Journal while on a Mission to Badagri and Abeokuta, November 1842 to April 1843; and J.F.A. Ajayi: Christian Missions, p. 32.
3 C.M.S. G/C1/v.22/295 Committee of Correspondence, 21 November 1843.
had taken and the new responsibilities which he had assumed. Wherever he seemed to go in the Colony, he was welcomed as "a messenger of Christ". While he did not voice the belief that he had received a special call from the Almighty, he did feel a strong commitment to bring the gospel to his fellow Africans. Preaching his first sermon on 3 December 1843, he took as his text Luke 14:22, "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded and yet there is room". He saw himself as the first of many who would follow. When he conducted the first Yoruba service in January 1844, he was quite overcome. He wrote in his journal:

Although the language is my native tongue ... it appeared as if I was a babe just learning ... The whole proceeding seemed to myself like a dream ... But the Lord supported me.3

The C.M.S. Parent Committee agreed to a mission to Yorubaland, motivated in part by the presence there of the Methodists under the Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman who had begun work at Badagri in September 1842.4 Badagri had been a slave mart at least as early as 1740. It had had an uneasy history since then as a result of intermittent attacks

1 C.M.S. CA1/079/10 Crowther to Parent Committee, 18 December 1843.

2 In 1765 Philip Quaque of the Gold Coast became the first African to be ordained a priest in the Church of England. Crowther saw Quaque's grave at Cape Coast Castle in 1841. Schöhn and Crowther: Journals, p. 265. See also Margaret Priestly, ed.: "Philip Quaque of Cape Coast" in Philip D. Curtin: Africa Remembered, pp. 99-139.


by the Fon of the powerful Dahomey kingdom. By 1840, however, Abeokuta had developed a special relationship with the town in order that it might control an outlet to the sea.\(^1\) As Lagos had by this time become the predominant slave port on the coast, Liberated Africans returning to Yorubaland from 1839 onwards had found it safer to go to Abeokuta via Badagri, a much longer route. Many of them even settled at this coastal village and formed the basis for the Methodists at work there.\(^2\)

The C.M.S. party arrived at Badagri in January 1845. In addition to Crowther and Townsend, it consisted of the German Rev. C.A. Gollmer, two Sierra Leonean schoolmasters, an interpreter, four carpenters, three labourers and two servants. While the group had been instructed to proceed directly to Abeokuta, they could not do so and had to remain on the coast. Sodeke, the Egba leader who had earlier welcomed Townsend, had died just a few days before, leaving the political situation unsettled in the interior.\(^3\) By circumstances rather than by design then Badagri became the first station of the C.M.S. Yoruba Mission. In the months which followed, Crowther took a keen interest in agriculture. He had forest land cleared and

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3 Newbury: *The Western Slave Coast*, p. 45.
cultivated, introduced the plough, and established prizes for the best farms and produce. In eighteen months the station had been established and the political situation had become more settled in the interior. The way was open to Abeokuta.

Travelling for several days in the height of the rainy season, the C.M.S. Yoruba missionaries reached Abeokuta on 3 August 1846. As one writer has observed, the Egba settlement possessed many conditions which were then ideal for implementing the Buxtonian code. The work began auspiciously and progressed steadily. It was lauded in many contemporary accounts, most notably in *Sunrise Within the Tropics*, published in 1853. One of the most moving events of the early years occurred in the first month when Crowther was reunited with his mother and other members of his family after an absence of more than twenty-five years. His mother was among the first in the Mission to be baptized in February 1848, taking the Christian name of Hannah. Venn was greatly moved by these events and wrote his protegé

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1. See, for example, C.M.S. CA2/031/94 Crowther: Journal for quarter ending 25 June 1846, entry for 12 June.
2. C.M.S. CA2/031/95 Crowther: Journal for quarter ending 25 September 1846, entries for 27 July - 3 August; also Page: *The Black Bishop*, pp. 92-94.
5. C.M.S. CA2/031/95 Crowther: Journal for quarter ending 25 September 1846, entry for 21 August; also Page: *The Black Bishop*, pp. 95-97.
6. C.M.S. CA2/031/101 Crowther: Journal for quarter ending 25 March 1848, entry for 6 February; also C.M.S. CA2/031/5 Crowther to Venn, 21 March 1848.
warmly, ending with the hope that Crowther might become "an honoured instrument in the Lord's hand of making known the unsearchable riches of Christ to your countrymen and relatives". Such sentiments were not lost on Crowther. As an ardent Evangelical, he placed complete confidence in the persuasive power of the words of the Bible. His limited education further caused him to rely almost completely on the Scriptures in his catechetical and pedagogical work. While he rarely drew allusions to Biblical stories which illustrated his own place in "God's plan", he did so quite poignantly in September 1847:

For a long time when a boy in Sierra Leone, the history of Joseph was my favourite lesson, not that at that time I had any thought of ever returning to my country, or of ever seeing any of my relations again ... I have patiently waited upon the Lord, hitherto has he brought me back to my poor famished countrymen to feed them with the meat that comes from heaven.  

Nine months after his mother's baptism, nineteen others were baptized. With the exception of one Saro, all came from the indigenous population.  

When the Mission celebrated its third anniversary in August 1849, 500 attended the Commemorative service, of whom eighty were communicants and 200 catechumens.  

On the subject of traditional religion, Samuel Crowther not surprisingly presented a somewhat ambivalent attitude at an early stage in his development. A recent study of Nigerian educated elite refers

1 C.M.S. CA2/L1/47-50 Venn to Crowther, 17 April 1847.
2 C.M.S. CA2/031/3 Crowther to Venn, 18 September, 1847.
3 C.M.S. CA2/031/104 Crowther: Journal for quarter ending December 1848, entry for 19 November.
4 C.M.S. CA2/031/107 Crowther: Journal for quarter ending 25 September 1849, entry for 2 August.
to Crowther as one of a group of "deluded hybrids". While the phrase strikes a responsive chord, it might be argued that he cannot be so easily categorized and was in many ways *sui generis*. A product of two cultures, yet completely at home in neither, the fame and position which would eventually come to him would also make him an isolated and lonesome figure. As an early nineteenth century Evangelical Anglican, he was dedicated to the Church Missionary Society and was guided by a simple faith and a belief in the efficacy of hard work. As a Liberated African, he gradually developed during his years in Sierra Leone and Yorubaland, a definite pride in and even a patriotic respect for African traditions which would later lead him to believe that those traditions should not be ignored in bringing Christianity and its partner civilization to his fellow Africans. In his correspondence with Evangelical friends and superiors, Crowther could be condemnatory of traditional religion, seeing it as "Satan's tool". In practice, however, he would caution patience and toleration. From the outset his descriptions of traditional rites and ceremonies were detailed and remarkably straightforward. They generally lacked the derogatory comments which some of his European colleagues in the Yoruba Mission permitted in their reports.  

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experiences at Badagri and Abeokuta impressed upon him the close
association which existed between religion and politics in traditional
African society. As a result his early tendency towards caution
and respect for traditional beliefs, (a tendency which graphically
illustrates the duality of his own experience), remained with him
and indeed continued to grow as he advanced in age.

Crowther took seriously the instructions which Venn and the other
Secretaries had given him and his colleagues when they had set out for
Yorubaland. They had been told that the Society looked forward to
the employment of "an extensive native agency in Africa" and that the
means at their disposal consisted of the gospel, agriculture and
commerce. Crowther continued to devote many hours to translating
the Bible in addition to teaching and preaching it. He worked
diligently on the books of the New Testament, including St. Luke and
the Acts of the Apostles. After he completed the translation into
Yoruba of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans and the Anglican Liturgy in
1850, Venn referred to him as the "translator of the Yoruba Mission".

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1 See C.M.S. CA2/031/96 Crowther: Journal for quarter ending 25
December 1846, entry for 17 November; and C.M.S. CA2/031/102
Crowther: Journal for quarter ending 25 June 1848, entry for 16
June.

2 C.M.S. CA2/L1/1-14 Venn and Coates to Gollmer, Townsend and
Crowther, 25 October 1844.

3 C.M.S. CA2/031/98 Crowther: Journal for quarter ending 25 June
1847, entry for 30 May and C.M.S. CA2/031/6 Crowther to Venn,
4 November 1848; S.A. Crowther: The Gospel according to St. Luke,
the Acts of the Apostles; with the Epistles of St. James and
St. Peter. Translated into Yoruba for the use of the Native
Christians of that nation, London, 1851.

4 C.M.S. CA2/L1/126-29 Venn to Crowther, 2 February 1850. Between
1850 and 1856 Crowther published at least one book per year of the
Old or New Testament in Yoruba, in the process translating almost
half of the Bible. "These works set standards in orthography and
dialect which have exercised a powerful influence on Yoruba written
literature up to the present day". P.E.H. Hair: "Nigerian
languages and Sierra Leonean Missionary Linguists, 1840-1930",
B.S.A.C.H. II: 2 (1966), 128; also Hair: The Early Study of
Crowther did not forget, however, the other two less spiritual tools which he had been instructed to employ. Thus almost immediately he encouraged the planting and export of sugar cane and tobacco. He worked closely with John Beecroft, who in 1849 was appointed British Consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra. In a period in which the West African Squadron was nearly withdrawn, the C.M.S. had allied with others to have it maintained in order that the slave trade might be successfully replaced by legitimate commerce. In January 1851 Beecroft visited Abeokuta and won assurances from the Egba authorities that the slave trade would not be revived. As in the case of the Niger Expedition, Crowther served as mediator and translator in these discussions and gained valuable experience in the process. In this capacity he frequently expressed dissatisfaction with the factionalism of Egba politics. His experience at Abeokuta very much set his attitudes towards political authority in the future. He decried the lack of strong central authority. In his view both the people and the mission fared better when a powerful leader ruled from the centre. Yet he was consistently respectful of local chieftains and headmen.

1 C.M.S. CA2/031/98 Crowther: Journal for quarter ending 25 June 1847, entry for 30 May.


4 C.M.S. CA2/031/113 Crowther: Journal for quarter ending 25 March 1851, entry for 14 January and C.M.S. CA2/031/13 Crowther to Venn, 8 February 1851.

5 C.M.S. CA2/031/105 Crowther: Journal for quarter ending 25 March 1849, entry for 13 March.

6 C.M.S. CA2/031/102 Crowther: Journal for quarter ending 25 June 1848, entry for 16 June.
And when towards the end of 1849 local persecution against the converts broke out, he counselled patient restraint on the part of the congregation and also his fellow European missionaries. He became very much the peacemaker, holding the Yoruba Mission together through his personal humility and considerable tact, leadership qualities which did not go unnoticed.

After nearly seven years in Yorubaland, Crowther sought in 1851 a leave of absence in Sierra Leone so that he might there see all his family together. He had barely arrived in the Colony when Venn called him to London. In the late 1840s Lagos had continued to plague the Badagri settlement. Abeokuta was likewise adversely affected, having to contend also with the threat of war from the Fon of Dahomey. As Jean Herskovits Kopytoff has argued, public opinion in Britain became "psychologically vulnerable" to intervention in the area due to the extensive publicity given events in Lagos and Abeokuta. While Prime Minister Lord Palmerston was supportive of the missionary position, he was unable to persuade the Admiralty to intervene against Lagos. When he arrived in England in August, Crowther proved a formidable weapon in the propaganda effort. He appeared before the C.M.S. Parent Committee, explained the difficulties facing Abeokuta as

1 C.M.S. CA2/031/8 Crowther to Venn, 3 November 1849.
3 C.M.S. CA2/031/10 Crowther to Venn, 19 April 1850.
4 C.M.S. CA2/031/173-74 Venn to Crowther, 14 June 1851.
a result of the slave trade, and expressed the need for England "to support the independence of the Yoruba nation". Venn arranged an extensive programme of public appearances throughout England and everywhere Crowther drew large audiences. He also had interviews with Palmerston and the Lords of the Admiralty. Finally, he had an audience with Queen Victoria and Prince Albert at Windsor, the details of which in later years Crowther frequently recounted to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Crowther's appearance in England came at a critical moment and helped swing the balance in favour of direct intervention in Lagos. Palmerston wrote him his thanks, while moving for a strict blockade of Dahomean territory and making preparations towards an occupation of Lagos. Venn believed that his protégé had played a significant role in the change in Government policy and had "raised up a very lively

1 C.M.S. G/C1/v.28/32/4 Committee of Correspondence, 19 August 1851.
2 C.M.S. CA2/L1/182-84 Venn to Gollmer, 14 October 1851.
3 C.M.S. CA1/L4/388-92 Venn and Rev. William Knight to Rev. J.U. Graff, 15 September 1851 and C.M.S. CA2/L1/179-81 Venn to Missionaries at Abeokuta, 9 September 1851. William Knight was a Clerical Secretary of the Society. See Appendix II. Graff was at this time Secretary of the C.M.S. Sierra Leone Committee. Register, p. 41, no. 230.
5 P.P., 1852, LIV, "Papers Relative to the Reduction of Lagos by H.M. Forces", Lord Palmerston to Crowther, 18 December 1851.
interest in Africa". Crowther took events in his stride. In addition to his many public engagements, he prepared his Yoruba/English dictionary for publication. With Venn's encouragement and approval, he worked with the African Native Agency Committee in its efforts to promote agriculture, and particularly cotton cultivation in West Africa. The Committee, which had been founded by Buxton, provided funds for cotton gins as well as salaries for instructors in carpentry and cotton cultivation. Crowther also worked closely with Thomas Clegg, a Manchester cotton merchant, and for more than ten years busied himself in varying degrees with this enterprise. As he prepared for his return to Africa in December 1851, he received detailed instructions from Venn on the establishment of a Christian Institution at Abeokuta and the need for self-support and self-government in the Yoruba Mission. The Honorary Clerical Secretary was greatly impressed with Crowther's intellectual growth since his ordination and with the demonstrated talents and zeal of his wife and eldest son.

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1 C.M.S. CA2/L1/182-84 Venn to Gollmer, 14 October 1851.

2 The dictionary and Yoruba vocabulary met with commendation from scholars. The Times praised it as a "most creditable performance". See CA2/L1/105-208 Venn to Townsend, 14 April 1852 and Hair: The Early Study of Nigerian Languages, pp. 16-17. For a list of Samuel Crowther's linguistic works see Bibliography.

3 See C.M.S. CA2/031/b Crowther to Robert Stokes (Secretary, African Native Agency Committee), 9 May 1851; C.M.S. CA2/031/13 Crowther to Venn, 8 February 1851; and C.M.S. G/AC1/9/201-03 Venn to Lady Buxton, 20 August 1851.

4 In 1854 the C.M.S. appointed a Lay Agent to manage the cotton operations in the Yoruba Mission, with Samuel Crowther Jr., serving as his Assistant. While the annual export of cotton from Lagos exceeded one million pounds before the end of the 1860s, the profit margin was small as the soil and climate were less than perfect. As a result cotton did not emerge as a major export crop. See A.O. Anjorin: "European Attempts to Develop Cotton Cultivation in West Africa, 1850-1910", Odu III: 1 (1966), 6; Kopytoff: Preface to Modern Nigeria, pp. 117-20; Biobaku: The Egba, pp. 57-63; and J.B. Webster: "The Bible and the Plough", J.H.S.N. II: 4 (1963), 422.
instructions, Venn added:

May the Native Church once confined to the house of Samuel Crowther, become a national church, but still retaining its character as an aggregation of households.¹

While Crowther sailed for West Africa, Lagos was captured by the Royal Navy and the pro-British Akitoye was installed as King.² After more than six months Crowther finally arrived there, landing opposite the place where so many years before he had been shipped as a slave for Brazil. On this occasion he stayed as Akitoye's personal guest rather than being chained and cramped aboard a barracoon in the harbour. This striking change in circumstances was not lost on Crowther. He wrote Venn:

What a contrast! Thirty years ago I was forced from this town a slave in chains ... now I returned and was lodged in the King's palace and entertained by the King.

He concluded that the Evangelical religion of Jesus Christ had affected this transformation.³ In the months which followed, the work and scope of the Yoruba Mission expanded. Crowther continued to take a strong interest in agriculture and particularly cotton cultivation. His eldest son Samuel soon took charge of these activities as a lay agent for the Society. The young Crowther also later served as an assistant to Dr. Edward Irving who in 1853 was sent out as a medical

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¹ C.M.S. CA2/1/1406-19 Venn: Instructions of the (Parent) Committee to Rev. Samuel Crowther and Rev. Edward Dicher with Mrs. Crowther and Mrs. Dicher and Mr. Samuel Crowther, Junior, proceeding to Sierra Leone, December 1851.

² C.M.S. CA2/031/17 Crowther to Venn, 19 January 1852. For more on the conquest of Lagos, see Alan Burns: History of Nigeria, London, 1929, pp. 115-26 and P.P., 1852, LIV, "Papers Relative to the Reduction of Lagos by H.M. Forces".

³ C.M.S. CA2/031/22 Crowther to Venn, 29 June 1852.
missionary. This enabled his father to devote more time to his beloved transnational work, particularly the book of Genesis, and to travel to areas further inland like Ketu, some fifty-five miles from Abeokuta. By this point the missionaries' persevering interest in the Niger basin had begun to arouse others.

The Niger Again

In 1832 the Liverpool merchant Macgregor Laird had led an unsuccessful expedition to the Niger which resulted in the death of more than eighty per cent of the fifty Europeans involved. The venture nearly bankrupted Laird, but he watched closely the events which followed, including the equally disastrous 1841-42 Expedition, the return of the Saro exiles, the founding of the C.M.S. Yoruba Mission, and finally the "reduction" of Lagos in 1851. Shortly thereafter he proposed to the British Government that he be permitted to establish a monthly mail service between Liverpool and Fernando Po which could also provide limited passenger service for small businessmen, notably Saros from Sierra Leone. He also urged a revival of Niger exploration.

1 See Register, p. 92, no. 468. The younger Crowther's correspondence can be found at C.M.S. CA2/032 and Irving's at C.M.S. CA2/052. As Jacob Ajayi has observed, Irving was ex-officio Consul at Abeokuta and was instructed to assist the Saros and educated Christians "to become a middle class ... (and) leaders of the movement to reform" the indigenous society. J.F.A. Ajayi: "Henry Venn and the Policy of Development", J.H.S.W. I: 335 (1959).

2 C.M.S. CA2/031/114 Crowther: Journal for quarter ending 25 September 1852, entry for 13 September; and C.M.S. CA2/031/128 Crowther: Account of a Journey to Ketu, 5-19 January 1853.


4 See P.P., 1852, XLIX, "Correspondence Relative to the Conveyance of the Mails to the West Coast of Africa".
While the Government concluded a mail contract with Laird's African Steamship Company in 1852, they remained reluctant to sponsor another major expedition. The almost immediate success of the mail service, the consolidation of British authority at Lagos, and the travels of the German Heinrich Barth in the Sudan, however, prompted renewed interest in the commercial potential of the Niger basin. The Church Missionary Society joined Laird in urging another expedition. The Government agreed in mid-1853, making a grant of £5,000. This was to be a much more modest enterprise than that of twelve years earlier, with the hope that annual expeditions would follow. Laird readily agreed to offer free passage to Samuel Crowther, as the merchant believed in the Buxtonian principles of "Christianity and Civilization" and in the role of the Liberated Africans. Samuel Crowther was reluctant to go on the 1854 Expedition. He did not want to leave his translating work and wondered (correctly as it turned out) if his European colleagues in the Yoruba Mission would not prefer him to remain with the Mission. He finally agreed to Venn's request, but insisted that his position in the Expedition be clearly defined and that the necessary arrangements be made with the Yoruba Mission.


2 See C.M.S. CA2/L/1/290-92 Venn to Missionaries of the Yoruba Mission, 23 September 1853; also Macgregor Laird: Remedies for the Slave Trade, London, 1842.

3 C.M.S. G/AC1/11/115-16 Venn to Macgregor Laird, 14 January 1854; C.M.S. CA2/031/28 Crowther to Venn, 28 November 1853; C.M.S. CA2/L/1/317-19 Venn to Crowther, 23 January 1854.

4 C.M.S. CA2/031/30 Crowther to Venn, 6 March 1854, applicable postscript dated 9 March.
Crowther joined the Expedition at Fernando Po on 25 June 1854. As soon as he arrived he learned that John Beecroft, selected to head the Expedition, had died. Direction of the enterprise now fell to Dr. William Balfour Baikie, the senior medical officer. In the four months which followed the Pleiad, the Expedition's single vessel, sailed to the Confluence and then more than 250 miles further up the Benue than any previous European ship. No casualties were sustained, largely through the use of quinine as a prophylaxis. With the exception that it did not meet up with Barth as had been hoped, the Expedition was a success. The Niger had been "rediscovered". While both Baikie and T.J. Hutchinson, another British officer on board, subsequently published their journals, Crowther's account is in many ways the most interesting of the three. He was a key person on the Expedition, was frequently consulted, and often served as chief negotiator and spokesman with the peoples with whom the Expedition came


As Jacob Ajayi has observed, Crowther's journal was the first major descriptive account of the Idoma, the Tiv, the Jukun and other Benue valley peoples, and provided information not available elsewhere. Crowther sketched in a detailed manner a wide geographical area then in political and demographic flux. The uncertainty in the region accounted in part for the even warmer welcome which the 1854 Expedition received over that of 1841-42. Crowther closely surveyed the area for the most suitable sites for mission stations and recommended Asaba, Onitsha, and Aboh, all in Iboland.

While the significant achievements of the 1854 Expedition were considerably overshadowed by the Crimean War, Macgregor Laird's hope for frequent and regular expeditions up the Niger was far from being fulfilled. As he prepared to return to the Yoruba Mission, Crowther saw the great opportunities which would soon develop on the Niger and he understood the tremendous potential there for the C.M.S. as well as for his fellow Liberated Africans. While he himself expected to devote the rest of his life to translational and linguistic work in Yorubaland, he wrote Venn:

I believe the time is fully come when Christianity must be introduced on the banks of the Niger. The people are willing to receive any who may be sent among them ... God has provided the instruments to begin the work in the Liberated Africans in the Colony of Sierra Leone who are natives of the river.

1 See C.M.S. CA2/031/38 W.B. Baikie to Crowther, 28 November 1854 and F.D. Walker: Romance, p. 90.


He continued in an instructive tone:

If the time is allowed to pass away, the generation of liberated teachers who are immediately connected with the present generation will pass away with it also.  

In 1855-56 the Society diligently prepared for the occasion when they could put Crowther's suggestions into practice. They cooperated closely with Laird and their friends in Government. While a few dissident voices like that of Henry Townsend were raised against too significant a use of Liberated Africans, Henry Venn and the Parent Committee were convinced of the necessity and appropriateness of Saro Christians in the work ahead. In the meantime a reluctant Crowther took charge of a new Yoruba Mission station at Lagos in March 1855. He had sought to avoid this demanding appointment, naturally wary of the effect which it would have on his linguistic and translating activities. In his typical manner he was soon, nonetheless, fully engaged in opening chapels, promoting agriculture, preaching and teaching, and also managing to translate two books of the Old Testament into Yoruba. Such continued diverse and productive activity, following his accomplishments in Sierra Leone and Yorubaland, as well as his experience on the Niger, only further enhanced his credentials and position. He had established a reputation as a pioneer in education

1 C.M.S. CA2/031/39 Crowther to Venn, 2 December 1854. The letter is reprinted in part in the "Preface" to Crowther: *Journal 1854*.  
2 C.M.S. CA2/085/25 Townsend to Venn, 19 December 1854.  
3 C.M.S. CA2/031/42 Crowther to Venn, 6 March 1855.  
4 For examples of this work, see C.M.S. CA2/031/46, 47, 53.
and linguistic activity; as a traveller and explorer of uncommon perception and stamina; and as a leader of a nascent educated élite, determined on the betterment of his country and West Africa. He had won recognition as a Christian missionary of remarkable ability. Notwithstanding his own contrary intentions and expectations, Samuel Ajayi Crowther had emerged as the logical leader of any prospective C.M.S. enterprise on the Niger River.
Chapter II

The Establishment of the Niger Mission, 1857-1862

In December 1856, after nearly two years of discussion, the British Government agreed to subsidize five annual expeditions of the Niger River conducted by MacGregor Laird. The Liverpool merchant had been greatly aided by Henry Venn and the C.M.S. in convincing the Foreign Office that only through such a continued and regular effort could the potential for the Niger, "rediscovered" in part by the 1854 Expedition, be effectively realized. The plans for the first of these expeditions had begun to take place in mid-1856. As in the Expeditions of 1841-42 and 1854 missionary, commercial and Governmental interests were joined. Venn, who was deeply involved in the planning, arranged for his protegé Samuel Crowther to represent the Society for a third time on a Niger expedition. Crowther received permission to bring as many as five African teachers from Sierra Leone and to establish two or possibly three mission stations on the river. Missionary plans reflected in general the experimental nature of the entire enterprise. The concept of a C.M.S. Niger Mission, separate and independent and wholly staffed by African agents, did not develop in the first instance. Laird and the Expedition's leader, again Dr. W.B. Baikie, believed that any missionary settlements on the Niger


2 C.M.S. CA2/L2/81-83 Venn to Townsend, 23 December 1856; C.M.S. CA2/L2/83 Venn to Crowther, 23 December 1856.

3 C.M.S. CA2/L2/102-04 Venn to Crowther, 30 March 1857.
should be treated as outstations of the Yoruba Mission. Even Crowther saw his own role in temporary terms. At approximately 50 years of age, he hardly anticipated an entirely new career. Only a few months prior to the announcement of the Expedition, he had written that he wished to retire eventually to translational work at Lagos or Abeokuta. The C.M.S. Parent Committee intended sending European missionaries to assist Crowther as soon as the latter had established some stations on the river. Shortly after the Expedition of 1854, Henry Townsend had urged the Society that any work undertaken through "Native Agency" be done "under the supervision of one or more whitemen", an idea of which he indicated Crowther heartily approved. Finally, the Committee showed a strong desire to maintain a definite tie with the Yoruba Mission when it suggested that the Rev. David Hinderer, their European missionary at Ibadan, should eventually join the work on the Niger.

Crowther Selected as Mission Founder

As was to be frequently the case in the Niger Mission, conditions and circumstances modified, and in some cases completely altered, the designs of both the Parent Committee and Samuel Crowther. Initially, no single leader of the missionary undertaking had been contemplated. Crowther and the Rev. John Christopher Taylor, a Sierra Leonean of Ibo parentage, were to divide responsibility on the Niger, with the former

1 C.M.S. CA2/L2/97 Venn to Townsend, 23 February 1857.
2 C.M.S. CA2/031/66 Crowther to Venn, 5 May 1856.
3 C.M.S. CA2/085/25 Townsend to Venn, 19 December 1854. Even if this had been Crowther's view in 1854, by 1857 his approach to "Native Agency" had moved much closer to the idea of "Native" control as well.
4 C.M.S. CA3/L2/112-14 Venn et al. to Crowther, 23 April 1857.
enjoying a vague superiority due to his age and past experience there. Henry Venn, however, strongly confident of Crowther's ability, convinced his colleagues at C.M.S. House in Salisbury Square that a single leader for the missionary work was essential to its success. Venn later argued (and this may have been his intention from the outset) that a separate Mission should be created. By March 1857 he was able to write Crowther:

The Committee place the whole of the management of the missionary party entering the Niger with you ... The Society has thus undertaken a Niger Mission ... distinguished by its dependency upon Native Agency.1

Venn re-affirmed these decisions, and expanded upon them, a month later in a directive signed by himself and three other C.M.S. Secretaries. According to the new instructions Crowther was appointed Secretary of the Niger Mission. He was also informed that he was to have direction of all its affairs, such as the fixing on localities and the stationing of teachers ... No actual limit would be placed on expenses.2

While Venn did not irreversibly come out for an African-controlled Mission until 1861, it is clear that Crowther favoured this concept earlier. His patron's comments, quoted above, therefore, must certainly have confirmed him in this opinion and also edged him towards a greater commitment to the Niger work.

Despite the more concrete plans, the Niger Mission remained on an insecure footing. In the same letter appointing Crowther as Mission

1 C.M.S. CA2/L2/102-04 Venn to Crowther, 30 March 1857.
2 C.M.S. CA2/L2/112-14 Venn et al. to Crowther, 25 April 1857. Venn's position among the C.M.S. Secretaries was paramount. As the Society's official historian indicates: "The other Clerical Secretaries, able men as no doubt they were, seem to have been virtually only assistants to Venn." Stock: History, II, p. 36.
Secretary, Venn indicated that after a short time Crowther might be replaced on the river by the Rev. Thomas King. Writing to Townsend, possibly to put him at ease, Venn was more explicit: Crowther would certainly be replaced by King, or, perhaps, by Taylor in the Secretaryship of the new Mission. A year or two thereafter, he continued, the Parent Committee would decide on permanent arrangements for the Niger, including whether the Mission would be managed by European or African agency or a combination of both. Reservations expressed by members of the Yoruba Mission added to the general insecurity of the operation. Henry Townsend offered his co-operation only as long as a strong tie was maintained with the Yoruba Mission. He remained uncertain and suspicious of Crowther, his long-time rival. He was certainly determined that Crowther should assume no new authority, especially if it was at his (Townsend's) expense. As the Expedition began he wrote of his own intention to go to Ilorin and reach the Niger overland: "Crowther has just left us. I promised to meet him (at Rabba)."

If the plan for joining Crowther did not materialize, and a strong connection with the Yoruba Mission was not maintained, Townsend warned Venn that "you really cannot expect this (Yoruba) Mission to supply labourers for the Niger even in part." A few weeks later he urged that European participation in the Niger work be withheld and advised that once Crowther had returned to the Yoruba

1 Thomas King was a Yoruba, rescued from slavery like Crowther, and educated in Sierra Leone. He returned to Yorubaland with the C.M.S. and was ordained a priest on 25 January 1857. See Register, p. 302, no. 25.

2 C.M.S. CA2/L2/115 Venn to Townsend, undated.

3 C.M.S. CA2/085/36 Townsend to Venn, 7 May 1857.

4 Ibid. Townsend's words were hardly a hollow threat. Yoruba Mission co-operation was, at that time, considered essential in providing catechists and teachers for the effort on the Niger.
Mission, only catechists should be despatched to work on the river for
the indefinite future.¹

Townsend's concern and reservations concerning Crowther's
attitude towards the Yoruba Mission's role in the Niger were greatly
exaggerated. In fact Crowther greatly favoured and sought a close
connection between the two. His great skill as a missionary planner
is evident in the grand design he had for the vast territory which is
today roughly encompassed within the borders of Nigeria. It should be
noted that at this time it was not only Venn who held Crowther's
judgment and character in high regard. Crowther had only recently
written a lengthy statement on Yorubaland for T.J. Hutchinson, British
Consul at Fernando Po, who was then preparing a book on the area. In
his piece Crowther had persuasively argued the Buxtonian principles of
Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization, adding many refinements of
his own. He was in the process of devising a comprehensive programme
for the Niger to which he would dedicate himself for the next 35 years.
His implementation of and contribution to the ideal of the Bible and
the Plough would single him out, as one writer has noted, more than
any other individual, for having given practical expression to this
guiding principle of the Humanitarian Age.² It was evident that he
had his eyes on the Muslim North and envisioned the connection of the
commercial and missionary work in northern Yorubaland with the
eventual penetration of the Niger:

¹ C.M.S. CA2/035/37 Townsend to Venn, 26 May 1857.
² See E.A. Ayandele: "Background to the 'Duel' between Crowther and
Goldie on the Lower Niger, 1857-1885", J.H.S.N. IV: 1
(December 1967), 47.
To draw out the resources of this country the best way to the advantage of commerce (is) the exploration of those streams leading to the interior, and the improvement of the roads for traffic to the banks of the river Niger, making Rabba the upper establishment in addition to that of the Confluence.

Not surprisingly, Crowther responded enthusiastically to the challenge posed by the Expedition of 1857. More than fifteen years had elapsed since he had first gone to the Niger. During the intervening period he believed that Britain had not complied entirely with the treaties she had signed with the Niger rulers during the earlier Expeditions. The African Squadron of the British Navy had dealt a heavy blow to the slave trade, but the peoples along the Niger expected more than this for their renunciation of the trade. They had been assured that trading steamers would ply the river at frequent intervals, exchanging manufactured goods for raw materials. Also promises had been made that missionaries would establish schools and "institutes" and come to live among them. In all of this Crowther felt a strong responsibility, as he had played an important role in the establishment of the treaties, helping to negotiate and/or witness the vast majority of them. Now, at last, he felt that the opportunity had arrived for an effective implementation of the treaties' provisions. The five year contract under which Laird operated would provide sufficient "seed time" for a Niger Mission. In preparation for missionary work, Crowther drew up a fairly detailed plan of action, including a list of priorities and suggestions, and presented it to Venn.

1 C.M.S. CA2/031/78 Crowther to T.J. Hutchinson, 10 September 1856. Hutchinson's book was published two years later. See T.J. Hutchinson: Impressions of West Africa, London, 1858.
2 C.M.S. CA3/04/5 Crowther to Venn, 19 May 1857.
Crowther's plan demonstrates his own significant contribution not only to the development of the Buxton/Venn programme, but also together with his earlier statement to Hutchinson, presents a grand and original design for the penetration and development of what has since become the modern state of Nigeria. Twenty years before George Goldie would view the Niger basin as the backbone of a united territory, Crowther had already developed as wide a vision. He saw the Abo district, just north of the Delta, and Onitsha, 140 miles from the sea, as requiring first attention. These were closely followed in his estimation by the Confluence of the Kwarra and Tshadda (i.e. the Niger and Benue) Rivers, an important nucleus of trade for the entire Northern area and the site of the "Model Farm" during the Expedition of 1841-42. Crowther believed that a mission station should be established nearby at Igbebe, a trading town on the East bank: "It is better to be among the people at first rather than in a detached settlement". In an effort to proselytize among "pagan" peoples in the Muslim-controlled area upriver, he proposed that a station be established at Rabba, some 420 miles from the river's mouth. He viewed Rabba, as we have seen, as an excellent terminus for communication between the Confluence and Ilorin and the Yoruba Mission.¹ To these initial observations, later additions were made: stations were to be placed among the Igala at Idah, mid-way between Onitsha and the Confluence, and at Eggan, approximately 100 miles downriver from Rabba.² Finally, Crowther would accompany the Expedition’s leaders on a 300 mile journey from Rabba to the Sarkin or "Sultan" of Sokoto.³

1 C.M.S. CA2/031/86 Crowther to Venn, 4 March 1857.
3 C.M.S. CA3/04/8 Crowther to Venn, 7 July 1857.
The First Stations: Onitsha and Igbede

The Expedition departed from Fernando Po on 29 June 1857, after more than a month's delay there. Under the terms of the contract between Laird and the British Government, the former had to maintain a trading steamer on the Niger for five years in exchange for an £8,000 subsidy the first year, which would be reduced annually by £500. Laird intended, however, that in addition to at least one screw steamer, a schooner should also be on the river at the same time. The Dayspring and the George were the steamer and schooner respectively when the ascent of 1857 began. After the success of the 1854 Expedition, the enterprise had more of the ambitious flavour of the ill-fated 1841-42 Expedition with botanists, naturalists, surveyors, and missionaries aboard. Captain (later Sir) John H. Glover was second to Baikie and Chief Surveyor. Including Europeans, Africans and crew, over 100 persons sailed on the two vessels. Despite the Expedition's "civilizing" tone, its major purpose was the establishment of trading factories on the Niger. As such it marked a turning point in British attitude towards the river. The exploratory stage was drawing to an end and the era of trade was commencing in earnest. As Professor Dike has observed, the Expedition also signalled the beginning of an "economic war" between the established traders on the coast and the new inland merchants like Laird. The former, including African middlemen and Liverpool supercargoes, faced serious financial loss because of their existing capital investment in the Delta and on the Coast. Realizing the significance of the hold of the Niger Delta

states on the palm oil trade and the need to break it if Laird was to succeed, Baikie attacked the coastal traders head-on, charging them with incompetence and grave misdeeds. While Laird and Baikie could point to the Humanitarian aspects of their efforts, especially the introduction of Christianity, the struggle between the two groups remained essentially economic rather than ideological. Should the missionary element of the enterprise prove a hindrance or an embarrassment, it was in the view of men like Baikie expendable.

In addition to the then unknown problems which might arise in later dealings with Baikie, events in Sierra Leone also threatened the effective commencement of missionary operations. Bishop J.W. Weeks of Sierra Leone, a former teacher and patron of Samuel Crowther, died in March after serving barely two years in office. Weeks had committed himself and the C.M.S. Sierra Leone Committee to the selection of teachers for the Niger, and without him Crowther's position in the field was greatly weakened. The Sierra Leone Committee met shortly after the Bishop's death and chose not to implement the promise of providing personnel for the Niger. What was worse, the Committee actually hindered potential volunteers from proceeding to the new Mission. Crowther reacted angrily:

> From what I can gather, I believe the Sierra Leone Committee could not have entered into the earnestness of the Parent Committee in their desire to commence their operation up the Niger ... or else they would have handled the matter so differently.

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1 Dike: *Trade and Politics*, pp. 159-71.

2 See *Register*, p. 19, no. 100. Crowther always spoke of Mrs. Weeks as his "mother".

3 C.M.S. CA3/04/5 Crowther to Venn, 23 May 1857.
Crowther went on to suggest strongly "that positive orders" be sent to Freetown to send those who had volunteered for the Niger Mission. As he had already been informed of the lack of support within the Yoruba Mission, Crowther viewed this new setback as particularly damaging to the establishment of a Niger Mission. Taylor remained as his sole assistant, although he was able to remedy this in part by employing Simon Jonas as an assistant to Taylor for the prospective station at Onitsha. The Confluence would have to remain unoccupied as Crowther was himself committed to going to Sokoto and Ilorin with Baikie.

After a brief stay at Tuwon, a Brass village in the Delta, the party arrived at Abo, the most northerly Delta town, on 19 July 1857. Abo, an ally and trading partner of Bonny, was uneasily divided among three factions. Through rather effective diplomatic maneuvering, Crowther obtained an agreement permitting the establishment of a mission station there. He also negotiated the purchase of land from one of the chiefs. Despite the political uncertainties of the area, he felt that the Abo leaders could be relied upon to keep their promises. During his visit to the town in 1854, he had obtained the release of two prisoners, who would have been executed or sold into slavery for their offenses. In the intervening years neither of these men had been bothered and both had continued to live in the town. Upon leaving Abo, the Expedition came to Osomari, an Ibo village midway between Abo and Onitsha. As an example of the existing indigenous trade on the

1 S.A. Crowther and J.C. Taylor: The Gospel on the Banks of the Niger. Journals and Notices of the Native Missionaries Accompanying the Niger Expedition of 1857-1859, London, 1859, pp. 18-22. F.K. Ekechi has argued that Crowther decided to postpone the establishment of a station at Abo until the chieftaincy dispute was settled there and that this contributed to the selection of Onitsha as the site for the premier station. As we have said, however, the question of personnel and the fact that Taylor was an Ibo also greatly affected the decision. See F.K. Ekechi: Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland, 1857-1914, London, 1971, pp. 7-8.
river, it should be noted that Osomari had trading relations with the Igala kingdom more than 100 miles upriver. They met with the "king" of Osomari who offered land for a mission station. Embarrassed by his lack of personnel, Crowther promised that Taylor would return at a later date and set up a station there.

On 25 July Crowther entered Onitsha town, two miles inland from the river, in the heart of Iboland. He found a settlement which he estimated as having at least 6,500 inhabitants. He also learned that Onitsha was at war with its neighbours, the Ogidi. The state of war had a salutary effect on the reception which the party received. A missionary establishment was most welcomed by the people "as their enemies would appreciate the strength" of the European presence in the town. The Obi or king, Akazua, received them cordially. Aware that Onitsha was an important market place in the existing riverain trading system, Crowther wisely sought to divorce missionary activity from trading and Governmental concerns. Speaking independently of Baikie, he assured the Obi's counsellors that the Mission station would be "quite distinct from the trading factory". A house was obtained for Taylor and Jonas, as well as land for the Mission station, on a gentle, airy slope, clear of wood, from which the river could easily be seen. Encouraged by the visit, Crowther took his leave of Taylor and Jonas, as well as of the three Sierra Leonean settlers who promised

2 Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, p. 32.
4 Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, p. 35.
5 Ibid., p. 25.
6 Ibid., p. 28.
to assist the fledgling station whenever possible. In his journal the Mission founder emphasized the responsibility that rested with this group and the departure from European direction which he believed they represented:

This, the first important move of the C.M.S. in planting a Mission from a native ministry, and an entire native offshoot of the Colony of Sierra Leone, is a step in advance of the Yoruba Mission, commenced and worked under European supervision ... May this be the beginning of a rapid overspread of Christianity in the countries on the banks of the Niger, and in the heart of Africa, through native agents.¹

At Idah, the principal Igala town, the insufficiency of missionary agents again proved an embarrassment; promises of future activity had to suffice. As at Abo, a power struggle was in progress, resulting from the recent death of the ruler, the Ata of Igala. While a successor had been selected, he had yet to secure his position thoroughly. Control of the river in that part of the Niger flowing through the Igala kingdom was traditionally divided among the three major Igala clans. As relations between these three groups were intensely competitive and represented a continuously shifting balance of power, the change in kingship naturally precipitated tension and conflict. As one writer on Igala has observed, control of the river meant control of the markets - "one of the economic mainstays of the traditional system of kingship" - and the leading chiefs would of course want access to any new traders on that part of the river over which they claimed authority.² Upon the Expedition's arrival, Crowther met with Ama Abokko, a leading chief of one of the clans, whom he had

¹ Ibid., p. 36.
met previously in 1854. Ama Abokko held that part of the river which included Igbebe, the settlement at the Confluence in which many in the Expedition, including Crowther, were keenly interested. Difficulties arose, however, when the Ata's chief eunuch, who controlled access to the king, let it be known that the new ruler would not receive the party. Baikie, disgusted, and remembering similar problems with Idah on past expeditions, decided that they should move on. Appreciating Igala's strategic importance and displaying an understanding of "royal prerogative", Crowther counselled patience. With the help of Ama Abokko he convinced the Expedition's leader to try seeing the king once more on the following day. After some minor obstacles were overcome, the group was presented to the new Ata early the next morning.¹

The eunuchs opened the discussion with an explanation for the difficulty in arranging an audience: tradition required that the new king mourn privately the death of his predecessor for a period of three years. In the negotiations which followed, Baikie received permission to establish a factory at the town. With regard to a Mission station, Crowther obtained the assurance he had sought, finding the new Ata even more eager than his predecessor "to do good for his country".² The ruler re-affirmed the old king's promises "to receive Christian teachers" and gave the missionary the right to choose any site which was to his liking for a Mission House. Crowther selected a piece of land 200 to 300 feet above the river, with the hope that "the

¹ Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, p. 47.
promises may extend, as occasion may require."¹

Nearly six weeks after leaving Fernando Po, the Expedition reached Igbebe at the Confluence. Crowther met with Wari, Ama Abokko's son, who had charge of the town while his father was away at Idah. The initial meeting began unsatisfactorily, but once assurances were given that a permanent station was to be established, the negotiations progressed smoothly.² Crowther selected a suitable site and workers began clearing the land. On Sunday, 16 August, after holding services on board ship, he went ashore "to make a beginning of public Christian instruction at Gbehe (Igbebe)".³ He took his place on the portico of the house of a leading chief and placed his books in front of himself "after the custom of the mallam". He had with him one English and one Arabic Bible, Schum's Hausa translations of Matthew and John, and an Ibo primer. Preaching in English and using a Nupe interpreter he explained the significance of the Christian sabbath as a day of rest and read in Hausa from the Gospel according to St. John. One of the chiefs in attendance, concerned with more practical matters, inquired if Hausa would be taught at any school which the missionaries should open. Crowther replied affirmatively and showed his appreciation for the invitation by presenting the chief with another copy of the Arabic bible. On the following Sunday, the missionary observed the necessity of gauging the attention span of his audience. Preaching, ironically, from

¹ Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, p. 50.
² C.M.S. CA3/04/10 Crowther to Venn, 26 August 1857.
³ Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, p. 59.
Matthew VII: 12, "Peace I leave with you," etc., he had to interrupt midway in order to break up an altercation which had developed on the fringe of his "congregation":

I kept them long, till I perceived they were beginning to weary, then I ceased speaking and employed the remainder in teaching from the Ibo Primer. 1

With the land cleared and a group of Sierra Leonean carpenters preparing to build, Crowther left Igbebe, perhaps characteristically too optimistically, on 27 August.

Contacts with Islam and Islamic Rulers

As had been the case all along the Niger, a chieftancy dispute lingered also in Nupeland. The long-standing conflict between the half-brothers Usman Zaki and Masaba was only recently mended and the dust had hardly settled. Since his assumption of the throne in the early 1840's from Masaba, Usman Zaki had ruled from Rabba. In 1854 a mercenary captain formerly in his employ, raised a revolt which led to civil war. While the rebel leader, Umar Bahaushe, was initially successful in chasing an embarrassed Masaba from Rabba, he unwittingly united the previously hostile half-brothers. In mid-1857, Umar was defeated, with the aid of Gwandu reinforcements. The uneasy compromise, effected just prior to the Expedition's coming, had resulted in Usman Zaki being restored as Etsu Nupe. 2 The Expedition planned discussions with Usman Zaki and Masaba before proceeding to Sokoto to meet with the Sarkin, the suzerain of the entire territory and the

1 Ibid., p. 63.
overlord of the two half-brothers. At Muye, a small village, the party learned that the former rivals were encamped at Bida. On 30 August, the only vessel which had sailed from the Confluence, the Dayspring, anchored off Eggan. The Bogan, or chief, received them warmly. The town, however, did not impress Crowther: he found it "pestilential" and doubted its value as more than a missionary outpost for the Confluence. After only a few days the ship sailed again. As it did so, the climate began to exact its toll. Several of the Europeans became ill and temperatures above 100°F. for most of the day did not help matters. When the First Mate died Crowther conducted the funeral service which, with a touch of Victorian macabre, was photographed.¹ By the time the Expedition stopped off Wuyagi village, preparatory to the overland trip to Bida, Baikie and nearly everyone else on board was invalided. Only Glover and Crowther could go on. Upon their arrival at Bida they waited for Baikie before meeting with Usman Zaki.² In the audience with Etsu Nupe Baikie explained the purpose of their visit and obtained Usman Zaki's permission to trade in Nupeland.

Aware of his host's religious feelings, Crowther followed with a diplomatic address:

I introduced myself to him as a mallam sent by the great mallams from the white man's country, to see the state of the heathen population, and to know the mind of the rulers.

¹ Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, p. 77.

² The middle-aged Crowther and the young Glover rode all day, to the consternation of their guides, and arrived at Bida at nine in the evening. While waiting for Baikie, Crowther toured the slave market, noting that a woman and child sold for the equivalent of 27. See Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, pp. 82-85.
whether we might teach the people the religion of the Ansara (i.e. the Nazarene). 4

Crowther's appeal to work among the non-Muslim population brought approval. The presence in the party of the two interpreters, both of whom were Muslim, likewise impressed the listeners. Rabba, the Nupe capital, had been destroyed earlier in fighting Umar. Usman Zaki and Macaba intended rebuilding the town at the end of the rainy season. As soon as this was under way, Usman Zaki promised Crowther that he could establish a Mission station there. After taking their leave of the ruler, the party visited Macaba and several other chiefs, who also received them in a friendly manner. The following day the group returned to the Dayspring. On 22 September the ship anchored off the ruins of Rabba. The first thing they saw at the landing place was the skull of the rebel Umar, impaled on a pike. 2 In the two weeks which followed, Crowther busied himself recording observations and writing up translational work. He also assisted Glover in a number of surveys. Both men viewed the rebuilding of Rabba as a significant step in the promotion of commercial and missionary interests. Situated at an important junction of caravan routes, it would provide a centre for European mercantile interests. With Ilorin it would stand as a stronghold of Islam. As such Crowther opined that "it will be an important point gained if Christianity is allowed a place among them". 3 As the group prepared to depart, they sent despatches through Etan's messengers to Ilorin. From there the letters would be taken to the missionary brethren in Abeokuta, who would forward them to England.

1 Ibid., p. 86.
2 Ibid., p. 96.
3 Ibid., p. 100.
Late in the morning of 7 November, after having left Babba several hours before, the Dayspring struck a submerged rock near Jebba Island. The vessel was abandoned and its fifty passengers (twelve Europeans and thirty-eight Africans) spent the night "huddled on a sandbank, in three small tents, shipless". Before the Dayspring became totally wrecked, they were able to salvage several articles. After four days, trips to the ship were declared dangerous. Having encamped on higher ground in the meantime, the leaders decided to sell the wreck and send for the Expedition's second screw steamer, the Sunbeam, which it was hoped would be at Fernando Po or perhaps already on the river. Once the relief ship arrived, the Expedition could continue, albeit on an altered schedule. Within a fortnight Usman Zaki sent messengers to inquire regarding the party's situation and to offer assistance in any salvage attempt. It was, however, too late to do anything with the ship. Crowther sought to make the most of what he believed would be a fairly lengthy sojourn. Baikie asked him to remain at camp rather than go to Ilorin as the missionary would have preferred. Crowther agreed and began to collect materials for the reduction of the Nupe language, working first on a preliminary vocabulary. He hired Henry George, a former pupil at Abeokuta who had been living in Nupeland for the past six years, as a servant cum translator. George spoke relatively fluent Hausa and Nupe, as well as English and Yoruba. A month later Crowther also contracted with one Ibrahima of Jebba, a Muslim master of Nupe and Hausa, as his personal teacher.

1 Hastings: Dayspring, pp. 108-09; At midnight a tornado hit and the group awaited the dawn covering their heads with raincoats, mats and umbrellas. Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, p. 108.

2 C.M.S. CA3/0A/1A Crowther to Venn, 31 October 1857.

3 Crowther eventually published a Nupe Primer (1860) and A Grammar and Vocabulary of the Nupe Language (1864). According to P.E.H. Hair: "The Nupe Grammar was the vehicle for an extremely important contribution to African linguistics, since in the introduction Crowther made his firmest statement about the tonality of certain West African languages". Hair: The Early Study of Nigerian Languages, p. 91.
He became so immersed in his studies that he rejected a tempting opportunity to accompany Glover on an overland trip to Bussa.¹

The enforced stay at Jebba and later at Rabba enabled Crowther to develop and put into practice ideas on dealing with Muslims and Muslim-ruled populations. The years in Sierra Leone, and to a lesser extent those in Yorubaland, as well as participation in the two earlier Niger Expeditions, served as valuable preparation. Crowther’s approach was fairly simple and practical in manner. Possessing a rudimentary knowledge of the Qu’ran, he did not view it or the religious system of which it was a part in a favourable or even sympathetic light. His negative ideas on Islam, however, were confined to his journals and correspondence; he presented a more conciliatory stance in public. Concerned with employing the best possible strategy, he advocated education and toleration as the most effective means with which to deal with Islam. Although he held a firm belief in the inherent power of the Bible if available in the vernacular, he had no illusions about the easy convertibility of Muslims. At the end of the current Expedition he would write Venn:

I knew thirty years ago that Mohammedans are not easily converted to Christianity ... (Yet) I know that Christians can live and associate with Mohammedans as friends and share in the conversion of heathens to the worship of the true God.²

Crowther did not, of course, state or believe that Muslim worship possessed the authenticity of Christian worship.³ Nonetheless, in his


2 C.M.S. CA3/04/43 Crowther to Venn, 5 January 1860.

3 P.R. Mackenzie: "Samuel Crowther’s Attitudes to Other Faiths – the Early Period", B.S. A.C.H. III: 182, 32.
daily life he practiced the toleration which he preached, engaging in friendly conversation, hiring Muslim interpreters, etc. 1

An encounter which Crowther had had several years earlier in Sierra Leone illustrates his early emphasis on practicality and strategy in dealing with Muslims. Shortly after his return from the first Niger Expedition in 1843, he met with several Yoruba Muslims who had come to congratulate him on his recent ordination in England. Crowther pointed to the Expedition as an example of the positive effect of Christianity on those peoples who embrace its teachings. Did not the English people by their actions show their love for all men? Displaying an English Bible, he said that it would soon be translated into Yoruba (realizing that prohibitions existed against similar translations of the Qu'ran). 2 His listeners, while apparently unmoved by his arguments, did express their pleasure at a fellow Yoruba attaining the priesthood within the Church of England. When Crowther invited them to attend his first Yoruba services, they reacted suspiciously. The missionary tried to allay their fears by taking out his copy of Sale's English Qu'ran. Holding it aloft, he exclaimed:

I am not prejudiced against it, but read it, and compare its doctrine with that of our Bible that I may know the difference between them, and which teaches the best religion. 3

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1 His awareness of the difficulties inherent in aggressive proselytizing among Muslims provides a partial explanation for his later lack of appreciation of Graham Wilmot Brooke's plans to convert the Muslim North, within a generation, in the late 1880s. See infra, Chapter VI, pp. 349-50.

2 C.M.S. CA1/079/10 Crowther to Secretaries, 18 December 1843.

3 C.M.S. CA1/079/11 Crowther: Journal for the quarter ending 25 March 1844. Crowther did not, of course, actually say that Christianity was the better!
A few Yoruba Muslims did attend the services. In a few months, however, their visits ceased as they took exception to the Church's teachings on polygamy and the Sonship of God. A year later at Badagri, Muslims also approached Crowther with theological queries. During one such interview in which the missionary patiently attempted to answer all questions, Henry Townsend was also present. The English missionary soon found it all quite intolerable and, in striking contrast to his African colleague, vehemently raised the moot point that Islam lived by the sword! Crowther saved such outbursts for the pen. Writing shortly after his arrival in Abeokuta, he had observed:

The people feel there must be a change in their religion, hence the rapid progress of Mohammedanism, which in this country is a more refined system of idolatry.

As he prepared to found the Niger Mission, toleration had taken precedence in Crowther's thinking:

The beginning of our missionary operations in the countries under the sway of Mohammedan Government should not be a dispute about the truth or falsehood of the one religion or the other, but we should aim at toleration.

This should be coupled, he suggested, with increased educational instruction, especially in the study of Arabic. At Igbebe he noted

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1. C.M.S. CA1/079/12 Crowther: Journal for the quarter ending 25 June 1844. Crowther would later argue that as the Archangel Gabriel, who was mentioned in the Qur'an, referred in the Bible to the Virgin Mary's child as the Son of God, an "undeniable" proof existed for this doctrine. See Crowther: "A Few Notices of Onitsha, Idda, and Gbebe (Igbebe), and of the Overland Route to Abeokuta" in Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, Appendix II, p. 442.

2. C.M.S. CA2/031/90 Crowther: Journal for the quarter ending 25 June 1845.

3. C.M.S. CA2/031/95 Crowther: Journal for the quarter ending 25 September 1845.

4. Crowther privately held the Muslims in contempt: they were bigotted protectors of their religion and masters of their country. See Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, pp. 255-37.
the impression made by his and Baikie’s Muslim interpreters. In an area in which even the mallams possessed only the most fundamental knowledge of Arabic and Islam, the prowess of the interpreters was much appreciated. Crowther dreamed:

What an advantage it would have given if any one of the Christian teachers could have stepped forward and read a few verses from an Arabic Bible.

He urged the study of Arabic at Fourah Bay Institution so that knowledge of that language could be used on the Niger in conjunction with the teaching of local languages which had been reduced to Roman characters. Viewing the situation in his strategic manner, he saw the use of language as a means to meet the Muslims

with their own weapons ... not in vexatious disputes ... but by being able to point out from the Arabic Bible the important truth of Christianity.

On the Niger Crowther worked with what he had. At his first meeting with Islamic leaders at Igbebe, he had presented himself as a Christian mallam surrounded by his books, sitting on a mat with legs crossed underneath him, awaiting questions. That first meeting had resulted in several chiefs requesting the establishment of a Hausa school. Pleased with this approach, he followed it also at Bida, Rabba and Ilorin. He began to see that it was better to attempt to check Islam, rather than try to supplant or conquer it. This was best accomplished by avoiding quarrelsome debates with Muslims, while attempting to present an equal or superior bearing through a display of knowledge and education. An Evangelical of the first order,

1 Ibid., pp. 55-56.

2 C.M.S. CA3/04/6 Crowther to Venn, 22 June 1857. Crowther himself learned Arabic script.

3 Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, pp. 59-60.
Crowther believed strongly in the power of the Bible to win the day in Nupeland and northern Yorubaland:

Judicious arrangements should be made so as to induce a spirit of inquiry after the way of arriving at the truth through the only channel they (the missionaries) have, viz., the reading of the Arabic Bible. The Old Testament should not be avoided, especially those sections which prophesy Christ's coming. By reliance on the Bible, and avoiding overt conflicts with Islam, Christianity would gain a footing amongst the vast "heathen" populations in these areas. Once this had been accomplished, "the imaginary fables of the Koran will be rejected by the people with scorn".

A Period of Uncertainty

As Christmas 1857 neared, the Rev. William H. Clarke, a White, American Baptist missionary from Ogbomosho, arrived at Jebba with needed provisions for those stranded there. Crowther observed that this constituted his first contact with the "civilized world" in more than five months. While appreciative of Clarke's visit, Crowther quickly warned Salisbury Square that if some decisive steps were not soon taken the Baptist missionaries would step in and occupy Rabba before the C.M.S. He confidently informed Clarke of the Society's intentions in the area, which would be finalized as soon as Usman Zaki

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1 Ibid., p. 100.

2 Ibid., p. 237.

3 Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, p. 137 and C.M.S. CA5/07/15
Crowther to Venn, 11 December 1857.
had been more fully consulted. When the Sunbeam, the relief vessel, had not yet arrived with the beginning of the new year, the journey to Sokoto was postponed until November or December. Baikie and Glover felt that when the ship did arrive, it would be better to carry out first the planned exploration of the Benue than to proceed immediately on the overland journey to the North. Crowther made two trips to Babba, one in late January and the other in mid-March 1858. On the former journey he was greatly impressed by the trading activity of the area:

Such a scene of active business is not often seen or met with in Africa; and (if) such sights came more frequently under the notice of enterprising (European) African traders, their opinion as to the general indolence of the African would be greatly abated.

On the second visit he obtained permission from the local chief, Ndeshi, to establish a school. He also received a grant of land for "mission premises". As he found the houses of local construction "stifling", he arranged for the building of five conical huts for the use of any visitors from the Yoruba Mission.

With plans altered so extensively by events Crowther hoped for instructions from the Parent Committee in London. By March 1858 letters began to reach him via the overland route. While including

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1 Clarke felt that the C.M.S. should be imitated in their zeal. As a "dissenter" he did not accept Crowther's invitation to preach at a Sunday service. Clarke commented on the complexity of the Anglican liturgy, while giving moderate praise for Crowther's sermon. Later, after giving a simplistic view of the "industriousness" of the Yoruba, he went on to characterize Crowther as "a superior native". W.H. Clarke: Travels and Explorations in Yorubaland, 1854-1858, new edition edited by J.A. Atanda, Ibadan, 1972, pp. 176-79, 291.


3 Ibid., pp. 157-59; also C.M.S. CA3/04/21 Crowther to Venn, 30 March 1858.
additional instructions, they also brought news of a growing controversy which centred on the activities of members of the Crowther family. Complaints had been made against his sons of a particularly damaging nature which quite naturally disturbed the elder Crowther. Henry Townsend challenged the position and character of both Samuel Crowther, Junior, and his brother Josiah at Abeokuta. The former, as already mentioned, served as a medical missionary and "industrial agent" for the Yoruba Mission. The latter, also connected with the Abeokuta Industrial Institution, acted in the additional capacity as an agent for the merchant Thomas Clegg. While the sons may not have measured up to their father, Townsend's demand for subordination particularly irked these representatives of a new and rising African generation.¹ Townsend sought to terminate Samuel's position as a C.M.S. agent, charging incompetence and immorality.² He claimed that Josiah was "not fit for his station" and attempted to undermine the young man's position among the local merchants and traders.³ He strongly opposed the appointment of the Rev. T.B. Macaulay, a Crowther son-in-law, as Principal of Lagos Grammar School, questioning the latter's experience and educational background while in Sierra Leone.⁴ Finally, it is apparent that even Crowther's wife, Susanna, came under attack. Townsend and others questioned her engaging in trade while her husband

¹ Peter Beyerhaus: Die Selbstdändigkeit der jungen Kirchen als missionärisches Problem, Wuppertal-Barmen, 1956, p. 124.
² C.M.S. CA2/085/55 Townsend to Venn, 24 June 1858.
³ C.M.S. CA2/085/54 Townsend to Venn, 30 April 1858.
⁴ Ibid.; also C.M.S. CA2/049 Rev. David Hinderer to Venn, 31 October 1858. Hinderer, C.M.S. agent at Ibadan, also opposed the Macaulay appointment. He also vehemently rejected a proposed alternative that Macaulay be sent instead to Ibadan.
was away on the Niger. Later Townsend went so far as to accuse her and her sons of employing spies throughout the Mission.¹

As Samuel Crowther rose to the defence of his family, his adversary in Abeokuta became especially vituperative, including the C.M.S. establishment in his invective:

The Parent Committee will have to choose between the united voice of their white missionaries and that of Crowther and his sons. A powerful sympathy exists for them in England ... (yet) we know them better.²

Townsend concluded paternalistically:

We are the nursery governesses, they are the children whom we are expected to teach and to govern, but fond parents (i.e., Crowther, père, and the Parent Committee) stand between us.³

The controversy, long and acrimonious, lasted into the early 1860's. In the end the sons ceased to be missionary agents. Early in the dispute, perhaps seeing its eventual outcome, Venn had attempted to console the beleaguered father. He argued that Samuel and Josiah would be more prosperous if independent of the Society, especially as they were inclined to mercantile pursuits in the first place.⁴ At the same time the Secretary made it clear to Townsend that he deplored the English missionary's conduct in the affair and the method of his attacks:

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¹ C.M.S. CA3/04/59 Crowther to W. Knight, 31 May 1859 and C.M.S. CA2/085/78 Townsend to Venn, 9 August 1860.

² C.M.S. CA2/085/37 Townsend to Venn, 26 August 1858.

³ Ibid. The voices in the Mission were not as much in unison as Townsend states. The Rev. Adolphus Mann at Ijaye excused most of the complaints made against the Crowthers as superficial. He deplored the fact that the elder Crowther was not consulted before the charges were made. See C.M.S. CA2/066 Mann to W. Knight, 23 May 1859.

⁴ C.M.S. CA3/L1/16-18 Venn to Crowther, 22 July 1858.
You must remember that we are none of us infallible. The Committee do not claim it, though you often seem to claim it for yourself.¹

Despite opposition, Macaulay was installed as the Principal of Lagos Grammar School. The Parent Committee abrogated the Yoruba Mission Finance Committee's attempt to send him to Ibadan.² Finally, the Society dismissed charges of impropriety regarding the elder Mrs. Crowther, stating that hers was an "exceptional case, (as) the Committee frequently separated her from her husband" and she had then to support herself and her family.³

The Parent Committee's response to Crowther's request for guidance after the sinking of the Dayspring illustrates the lack of long-range planning which characterized so much of Salisbury Square's attitudes towards the Niger Mission. Writing to Crowther in April 1858, Henry Venn stated that the Committee still considered the Niger Mission as an "extension" of the Yoruba Mission. The Secretary, nonetheless, made it clear that he regarded Crowther as one of the few constants in any C.M.S. scheme for the Niger:

As long as you remain in the Niger, you are invested with sole authority to act and to make all pecuniary and other arrangements.⁴

Crowther could not help finding such letters reassuring, especially in light of the controversy then surrounding his family. His many responsibilities kept him exceptionally busy and no ordinary skill

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¹ C.M.S. CA2/L2/233-3⁴ Venn to Townsend, 23 December 1858.
² C.M.S. CA2/L2/233-3⁷ Venn, Knight and Chapman to Hinderer (as Chairman of the Yoruba Mission Conference), 21 December 1858.
³ C.M.S. CA2/L2/331-3³ Venn to Townsend, 23 May 1860.
⁴ C.M.S. CA3/L1/10-13 Venn to Crowther, 23 April 1858.
would have been required to perform them all satisfactorily. From the outset he was left to his own devices. During this formative period for the Niger Mission his responsibilities gradually increased rather than diminished as Venn had promised they would. The Society's indecision, uncertainty, and inability to control events resulted in their placing by drift not only a heavier work burden on Crowther's shoulders, but also in giving him an authority and influence in his Mission unparalleled elsewhere. This growing authority went unnoticed for many years in part because of the lack of direction and also due to the proprietary care which Venn took of Niger Mission affairs. It would emerge in the late 1870's and 1880's as one of the Society's and Crowther's major problems.

Crowther made several trips to Rabba in April and May 1858, supervising the construction of the huts. He finally took up residence there on 12 May. During the next couple of months, he felt that Usman Zaki and the Nupe people in general welcomed the missionary presence in Rabba. Reporting somewhat naively, he declared that the few that were ill-disposed to the C.M.S. undertaking consisted mainly of slave hunters. As he had not received official sanction for the erection of the huts from Usman Zaki, he should have realized that problems would arise when the ruler's eunuch paid a brief visit to the town in June. According to land tenure custom in Nupe, permission for the construction of modest buildings on land used for non-agricultural purposes was not usually necessary. In the case of "respectable

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1 C.M.S. CA3/O4/27 Crowther to Venn, 28 May 1858.
2 Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, p. 175.
strangers" the approval of the local chief was considered sufficient.¹ As Crowther would have fallen into the "respectable" category, his permission to proceed from Ndeshi might have been enough. The significant difference, however, was that he and his party had initially dealt directly with Etsu Nupe and any extension of the agreement made earlier would have likewise to be approved by Usman Zaki himself. Crowther noted that the eunuch appeared disturbed at Ndeshi's decision regarding the huts, but since the missionary did not receive any official complaint, he did not worry.² Repercussions soon followed. On 18 July a messenger of Etsu arrived suddenly. As requested Crowther hurriedly packed and left immediately with the messenger for Baikie's camp at Jebba. Upon their arrival there an Arabic letter was presented to Baikie from Usman Zaki. After an amicable introductory passage it listed a string of complaints which the people of Jebba had supposedly made to Etsu against the Expedition. One section of the letter in particular greatly shocked Crowther: it requested the missionary to remove from Rabba, ostensibly because he professed a different adini or faith from its inhabitants. An accompanying oral message markedly relieved the situation. The tone was gentle and sympathetic. Baikie and Crowther decided that the written missive had been a report which Usman Zaki had received, but which he himself had not composed. The oral communications represented his true views.³ Both men, nonetheless, now realized that they would have to proceed more cautiously. This applied especially to Samuel Crowther.

1 S.F. Nadel: A Black Byzantium, the Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria, London, 1942, pp. 188-89, 201.
2 Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, pp. 175-76.
3 Ibid., p. 186.
Baikie wrote a diplomatic reply to Usman Zaki. He reiterated the purposes of the Expedition, emphasizing trade and scientific investigation. He pointed to England's exercise of religious toleration in her colonies: In Sierra Leone 4,000 Muslims practiced their faith without interference. Should not Etsu display a similar tolerance towards those who would practice Christianity within his dominions? Despite such strongly-written arguments, Baikie actually began to inch away from full support for missionary enterprise from this time forward. Thus he instructed Usman Zaki's messenger to tell his master that the huts at Rabba had only been erected temporarily. He would discuss this and other questions more fully with Usman Zaki after he had completed his journey to Sokoto.

When Crowther returned to Rabba a few days later, it was not surprising that he should be greatly discouraged about prospects for a permanent station there. Avoiding public contact which might antagonize the authorities, he quietly worked on his translations. At the end of August, however, encouraging news arrived. Usman Zaki sent a message to Ndeshi upholding the latter's decision to permit the construction of missionary buildings. He once again placed Crowther under Ndeshi's care. The missionary immediately resumed a more active ministry and was so engaged when, after nearly a year's wait, the relief vessel, the Sunbeam, arrived on 29 September.

The Sunbeam brought news that Taylor's ranks had been augmented

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1 Ibid., p. 137.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., pp. 191-92.
4 C.M.S. Ca3/04/32 Crowther to Venn, 6 October 1858.
at Onitsha with the arrival of two catechist/teachers from Sierra Leone, Messrs. Thomas and Cole. Three additional catechists were also awaiting Crowther's instructions at the Confluence. While Baikie had originally intended making a visit to Usman Zaki at Bida, he decided instead to proceed directly to Igbebe as the water level of the Niger was falling. Crowther was delighted to meet the three "Christian Visitors", James Thomas, Edward Cline, and Jacob Newland, all of whom spoke Nupe. Ama Abokko promised him that building would commence at the completion of the harvest, in approximately six months. After arranging matters for the three agents, Crowther departed from Igbebe on 21 October with the Sunbeam. The next day they passed the Rainbow, a third steamer, which had been sent from England to join the Expedition. Both ships then proceeded to Idah. The encouraging reception there led to Crowther's plea to Salisbury Square to arrange for two Igala-speaking "Christian Visitors" as soon as possible. Upon arrival at Onitsha, fresh disappointments presented themselves. Thomas and Cole, while waiting for Crowther, had been forced to work on the Sunbeam, as the Captain argued that he was not sure when and if he would receive the passage fees for the two young men from Sierra Leone. As a result of their treatment, and their belief that the salaries provided were insufficient to support their families, they had decided to return to Freetown. While unable to convince the two to remain, Crowther did raise the salaries of all missionary personnel, subject to Parent Committee approval. He also arranged the

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1 Ibid.
2 C.M.S. CA3/O4/53 Crowther to Venn, 25 October 1858.
3 Ibid.
4 C.M.S. CA3/O4/55 Crowther to Holl, 30 October 1858. Crowther argued that the new scale would be similar to that already in force with the Wesleyans.
construction of a small house and school in addition to the one house and chapel already built. Before he left, the day school had been opened and the station had become a part of the community:

Our Mission House and the factory have become neutral ground on which contending parties meet and talk with friends.¹

Not wishing to interfere too directly, Crowther declined several requests by the Obi to mediate in disputes which had been brought to him.

Crowther reluctantly departed for Rabba in mid-December 1858. He had now left the Expedition, and travelled independently by canoe. The journey once again illustrates the difficulties of travel and the tremendous stamina and resilience of Crowther, a man in his 50s. In nineteen actual working days, the missionary travelled in eighteen different canoes. Each change of boat also meant frustrating negotiations for the next one.² Upon his arrival at Rabba, he learned of the death of Usman Zaki and the assumption of full power by Masaba. He decided as a result to postpone an intended visit to Bida. When after more than a week's wait at Rabba, and neither the Sunbeam had arrived as scheduled nor Dr. Baikie had come overland from Lagos, Crowther left for Abeokuta on 13 February. A few days later he developed the symptoms of dysentery and received no medication until he reached Ijaye on 5 March. In the meantime he made stops at Ilorin, Ogbomoso, and Oyo. At the first of these he was cheered

1 C.M.S. OA3/04/36 Crowther to Venn, 2 December 1858.
by his reception. Weakened by illness, the missionary arrived in Abeokuta on 16 March, the same day as did Baikie and the Bishop of Sierra Leone. After a short sojourn Crowther went to Lagos to be reunited with his family. He returned briefly to Abeokuta in May for a conference. While there he decided that he would not accompany Baikie to Sokoto on the next ascent of the Niger, but rather spend longer periods at Onitsha and Igbebe.

At the end of May 1859 the Sunbeam arrived at Lagos and the party prepared for another ascent of the river. No additional Scripture Readers from Sierra Leone had arrived in Lagos as expected. After an uneventful journey through the Delta Crowther found the "Christian Visitor" and Scripture Reader whom he had placed in control of Onitsha, while Taylor was away in England, willing to remain there until Taylor returned. At Igbebe a letter awaited him from Baikie at Rabba. Crowther was told that he should remain at the Confluence. Baikie warned that if the missionary were to proceed to Rabba, or any other part of Nupeland, the Governmental and commercial representatives would be asked to leave. There was little that Crowther could do.

1 Crowther: "A Few Notices of Onitsha, etc." in Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, Appendix II, pp. 441-42. Baikie would later argue, in his growing concern regarding Christian missionaries in Muslim areas, that the rulers had not in fact received Crowther warmly. Crowther had support in an unsuspected quarter. Townsend contended that since Baikie had been "misinformed" regarding Townsend's reception on his trip there, little credence should be given to Baikie's account of Crowther's reception. See C.M.S. CA2/085/70 Townsend to Venn, 6 September 1859.

2 C.M.S. CA3/04/39 Crowther to Knight, 3 May 1859.

3 C.M.S. CA3/01/41 Crowther to Chapman, 2 June 1859.

4 C.M.S. CA3/04/42 Crowther to Chapman, 24 June 1859.

5 C.M.S. CA3/04/44 Crowther to Chapman, 1 September 1859.
but comply with Baikie's "request". He busied himself with convincing the leaders and people of Igbebe of the efficacy of the missionary presence. Certain mallams had threatened the curious from attending Christian services. Crowther tried a different tack. He presented several pieces of English needlework to Ama Abokko and other chiefs. He promised them that if their children were sent to a Mission school instruction in needlework and sewing would be included. Shortly thereafter a nephew of one of the chiefs joined the school classes.\footnote{Ibid.} Crowther remained at Igbebe for nearly two months before joining the party's vessel, the Rainbow, on its descent. He again visited Idah and Onitsha. As they entered the Delta region, however, the Rainbow and the Sunbeam were twice fired upon from the shore. Two crew members were killed and the Sunbeam's Captain and Glover were injured.\footnote{C.M.S. CA3/04/46, Crowther to Venn, 3 December 1859.} Laird's mercantile operations posed a threat to Brass, which held the palm oil monopoly, and to the established Liverpool coastal traders. Tribes allied to Brass were responsible for the attacks on the two vessels.\footnote{Flint: Goldie, pp. 20-21.}

Adversity united Crowther and Baikie once again. After his letter to the missionary requesting him to remain at Igbebe, Baikie and his party were expelled by Masaba and told to remove to the Confluence. Crowther was greatly relieved that he had not gone to Rabba, realizing that if he had he and the C.M.S. would have been blamed for Baikie's expulsion. Crowther also hinted that more than an opposition to
missionary work had led Masaba to act in the way he had. While admitting that missionary expansion may have constituted one of the reasons for the new Etsu's action, he believed it only a partial consideration, "intended to be made a cloak to conceal the whole affair". One scholar has argued that Masaba's decision to expel Baikie was certainly not arbitrary and may have been due to an indiscretion on Baikie's part. Assuming this as correct, the explorer can be seen to be less magnanimous than appearances would indicate when he later assured Crowther that only one party had opposed the missionary at Rabba, but that he, Baikie, had thought it best not to cause a stir. Further, he greatly understated the case when he told Crowther that "even a trading establishment was looked down upon at Rabba and Nupe Country". Crowther thought the missionary setbacks in Nupeland as temporary and gave several reasons for his belief: 1) His absence from Rabba had left no one to argue the missionary viewpoint; 2) the use of the vernacular, the advocacy of education for both sexes, and Islam's lack of success at Igbebe caused jealousy among Muslim religious leaders; and 3) the conquerors of Nupe feared displacement by others. The missionary leader worried far more about the Delta attacks. He wrote the C.M.S., arguing persuasively for British Government intervention to halt further interference:

Shall the petty selfishness of a few barbarous villages of the Delta ... put a check to the fair opening now made to the vast trade and commerce of the Niger to the civilized world?

1 C.M.S. CA3/04/48 Crowther to Knight, 5 January 1860.
2 Michael Mason: The Nupe Kingdom, pp. 132-33; also F.O. 2/32 Baikie to Russell, 22 August and 2 September, 1859.
3 C.M.S. CA3/04/47 Crowther to Venn, 3 December 1859.
4 Ibid.
5 C.M.S. CA3/04/46 Crowther to Venn, 3 December 1859.
Protection was required for those who would civilize and Christianize the Niger.

The attacks on the Delta closed the Niger to any further ascents without an accompanying show of force. Crowther waited at Lagos, working on a Nupe vocabulary and settling the affairs of his children. Venn and the C.M.S. establishment rallied their supporters in Government and Glover had an interview with the Admiralty. The following month brought rumours that Laird would receive a subsidy and a gunboat would accompany his ships for protection. The Government expressed concern that the Laird monopoly should not forestall native traders from using the river more frequently. The Foreign Office and Laird eventually contracted for three ascents per year, with a receiving ship to remain stationed at the river's mouth. Laird also agreed to eschew all exploratory schemes for the time being. The Government promised that a steamer and a gunboat would meet the Sunbeam and the Rainbow on the Coast and that all four ships would then go up the river together.

Believing that the Niger Mission would at last be firmly established, the Parent Committee of the C.M.S. created a Niger Mission Finance Committee to be headquartered at Onitsha. Taylor, then waiting with Crowther at Lagos, would serve as Secretary, with Crowther continuing as Superintendent. The independent Native

1 C.M.S. CA3/0/51b Crowther to Venn, 8 March 1860; also C.M.S. CA3/0/52 Crowther to Venn, 4 April 1860.
2 C.M.S. CA3/L1/58-47 Venn to Crowther, 23 March 1860.
3 C.M.S. CA3/L1/49-51 Venn to Crowther, 23 March 1860; also C.M.S. CA3/L1/58-50 Venn to Crowther, 23 April 1860.
4 C.M.S. CA3/L1/66-68 Venn to Crowther, 23 May 1860; also C.M.S. CA3/L1/77-79 Venn to Crowther, 23 June 1860.
5 Ibid.; C.M.S. CA3/L1/49-51 Venn to Crowther, 23 January 1860.
Agency Committee purchased six cotton gins and other agricultural equipment, as well as a prefabricated iron cotton store for the Mission.¹ Wary of difficulties which had arisen regarding "industrial" activities in the Yoruba Mission, Venn hoped that commercial concerns would not hinder the religious purposes of the Niger Mission. Yet the Secretary remained a convinced Buxtonian: "Had not St. Paul been justified in tent-making?"² Crowther joined the Rainbow off Bonny on 25 June 1860. Delay followed delay as several setbacks developed. In August he learned that the Scripture Reader, Cline, as well as the more experienced Simon Jonas, had died on the river. The Rainbow arrived at the Nun in July only to find that the gunboat had still not reached there. The months for sound navigation of the Niger slowly passed. By November it was apparent that no trip could be made that season. With much of their luggage spoiled, Crowther returned to Lagos, and Taylor to Sierra Leone to recruit more workers.³ Crowther urged the Parent Committee to sanction the establishment of a Delta station at Akassa, which could be used as a "waiting station" for missionaries for the Niger. He blamed the Admiralty for the failure to ascend on schedule. With regard to the delay, he wrote Venn: "I tell you in confidence ... that the whole was a perfect dodge to shun the task".⁴

¹ C.M.S. CA3/L1/66-68 Venn to Crowther, 23 May 1860. The Committee had as Secretary Andrew Johnston, a grandson of Sir Thomas Powell Buxton.
² C.M.S. CA3/L1/75-77 Venn to Crowther and Taylor, 23 June 1860.
³ C.M.S. CA3/04/56 Crowther to Holl, 3 November 1860; also C.M.S. CA3/04/67 Crowther to Venn, 5 November 1860.
⁴ C.M.S. CA3/04/68 Crowther to Venn, 10 November 1860.
Gunboats and "First Fruits"

During the period between the attacks on the Delta and Crowther's eventual ascent of the Niger in 1861, external considerations proved instrumental in determining whether the Niger Mission would emerge as a joint European and African effort or as one solely conducted through "Native Agency". Venn's ideas on this question emerge as ambivalent at best. His belief in his protege Crowther was balanced by a feeling that the novel approach of a fully African-staffed Mission could not as yet be effectively implemented. A "safer" joint programme developed. As stated above, the Rev. David Hinderer had been tapped to join with Crowther in founding the Niger Mission. Hinderer's poor health prevented him from going to the Niger. Venn then suggested that Townsend visit Crowther on the river, hoping to cement the link between the two Missions.¹ In mid-August 1858 Townsend and his wife had set out for Rabba overland. At Ijaye, however, Mrs. Townsend took ill and the couple decided to return to Abeokuta.² In October of that same year the English missionary wrote the Parent Committee that he would make another attempt at the end of the rainy season. His continuing dispute with Crowther's sons, as well as the return of their father to Abeokuta in early 1859, once again precluded such a visit. When Crowther returned to the Niger later in that year, Townsend again let pass an opportunity to join him at Rabba, citing "difficulties" within the Yoruba Mission.³

In the following year he was called to England to discuss with the

¹ C.M.S. CA2/L2/174-76 Venn to Townsend, 23 April 1858.
² C.M.S. CA2/085/57 Townsend to Venn, 26 August 1858.
³ C.M.S. CA2/085/70 Townsend to Venn, 11 September 1859.
Parent Committee his dispute with the Crowther sons. Although Townsend was prevented from, and/or lost interest in, going to the Niger himself, he strongly urged that other European missionaries be sent in his place. Hardly concealing his envy of Crowther he declared that his former colleague's return to the river "will be of small use unless you (Venn) can send a staff of white men". He also warned that if his suggestions were not followed a "second Sierra Leone" would be established on the Niger.

The Society did not need much convincing. Five Europeans were despatched for the Niger Mission in the final months of 1859. All were twenty-five years of age or younger. Two Germans, Johann Martin Fladt and Christian Frederick Lieb, were assigned to Kabbia and Onitsha respectively. Three English catechists, part of the group known as the "Lancashire lads", James Ashcroft, Charles Henry Brierly, and Thomas Oldham, were all to be stationed at Onitsha. As Taylor was then in England, he was to accompany the five to the Niger. While preparations progressed for the ascent of the Niger, Townsend and others communicated with the two Germans, unsettling their determination to serve in the new Mission. Venn moved quickly to nip this problem in the bud. Informed also that agents in the Yoruba Mission had requested Lieb and Fladt for service there, he

1 C.M.S. CA2/085/65 Townsend to Venn, 2 June 1859.
2 C.M.S. CA2/085/63 Townsend to Venn, 30 June 1859. Townsend noted that the English Bishop of Sierra Leone concurred in his views.
3 These consisted of young men who had volunteered for missionary service, but whose education had not been such as to qualify them for the C.M.S. Institution at Islington. Their training was of a "simple" nature, sufficient to prepare them as lay catechists in Africa. See Stock: History, II, pp. 79, 453.
4 C.M.S. CA3/L1/39-40 Knight to Crowther, 23 November 1859; also C.M.S. CA3/L1/42-44 Venn to Crowther, 22 December 1859.
wrote the Germans a stinging letter. He asked them rhetorically, Were they afraid of Delta attacks? - They should not be as a gunboat would accompany them. Did they dread isolation from European society? - They had known this when they volunteered for mission service. Did they distrust the permanency of the Niger Mission? - This did not concern them. While certain aspects of the Mission remained "unsettled", they should proceed step by step and not challenge those plans which had been formulated. As late as May 1860 Venn still hoped for a European and African effort:

It is not to be a Native Agency and European superintendence; or European Agency and Native superintendence; but Native and European Association.

The attack on the Sunbeam, however, proved especially damaging to a joint African/European enterprise. The climate also continued to threaten prospective volunteers. While waiting for the gunboat to go up the river, Fladt died at Lagos. His fellow countryman was invalided to the Yoruba Mission. The three English catechists remained in Sierra Leone due to illness and a supposed greater need for their services there. By mid-1861 Venn was resolved to the inevitable: "God seems to have thrown that Mission on Native Agency".

In January 1861, with the ascent postponed until the end of the year due to the non-arrival of the gunboat, the Parent Committee agreed

1 C.H.S. CA3/L1/51-52 Venn to Lieb and Fladt, 23 March 1860.
2 C.H.S. CA3/L1/63-65 Venn to Crowther, 23 May 1860.
3 Register, p. 115, nos. 571-72; also C.H.S. CA3/L1/88-89 Venn to Lieb and Fladt, 20 December 1860.
4 C.H.S. CA3/L1/120-21 Venn to Crowther, 20 July 1861.
to Crowther's request for a station at Akassa. The following month, however, brought the news of the death of MacGregor Laird. As the merchant's executors had been against the deceased's African ventures from the start, they planned to dispose of his Niger holdings. After some urging they promised to operate for an additional twelve months, as well as transport three African teachers from Sierra Leone. Another firm would have to be found to replace Laird's. Again at Lagos, Crowther finished his translation of the New Testament into Yoruba and revised his Yoruba Vocabulary. He also helped his sons to conclude their industrial work for the C.M.S. and establish themselves independently.

While Crowther was thus engaged two Scripture Readers arrived from Sierra Leone whom he sent ahead to Akassa. On 23 June he left for Akassa, accompanied by six labourers who would build the station there. Three weeks later a party of ten, headed by Taylor, sailed from Freetown for the Niger. On that same day the gunboat Espoir, having joined the Sunbeam and the Rainbow, sailed from Akassa. Crowther and the two Scripture Readers went with the convoy. The disappointment in having been unable to wait for the Sierra Leone group led Crowther to suggest to the C.M.S. that the Society purchase a "little Mission steamer".

1 C.M.S. CA3/L1/97-98 Venn to Crowther, 23 January 1861.
2 C.M.S. CA3/L1/103-05 Venn to Crowther, 22 February 1861.
3 C.M.S. CA3/04/77 C.M.S. CA3/04/83 Crowther to Venn, 9 March 1861; C.M.S. CA3/L1/112 Venn to Crowther, 23 April 1861.
4 C.M.S. CA3/04/86 Crowther to Venn, 6 June 1861.
5 C.M.S. CA3/037/35 Taylor to Venn, 5 August 1861; also C.M.S. CA3/L1/123-24 Venn to Crowther, 22 August 1861.
6 C.M.S. CA3/04/91 Crowther to Venn, 19 July 1861.
7 C.M.S. CA3/04/92 Crowther to Knight, 29 July 1861.
On 7-8 August two of the villages which had fired on the Sunbeam were destroyed after their chiefs had failed to provide the Royal Navy with "sufficient explanation" of the earlier attacks. In the case of another village, the local ruler convinced the Captain of the Espoir that the attack had been launched without his consent. The village was spared. At Abo, where the Laird factory had been looted after the Delta attacks, warnings were given of the consequences should such behaviour be repeated. Arriving at Onitsha, Crowther left one of the Scripture Readers with Smart and Romaine. As his stay was short, he deferred on any baptisms. While eager to record progress, he was conscious of his responsibility and opined that he could not baptize until he could examine the candidates more thoroughly.\(^1\) At Igbebe he found that Newland and Thomas had finished a schoolroom and had won the approval of both the people and the Europeans stationed there. As the party descended the river, the Laird factories were dismantled at Onitsha and at Angiama in the Delta. Smart and Romaine returned to Sierra Leone for their families. Despite the uncertainty then facing the Mission with Laird's removal from the scene, Crowther was heartened by the Sierra Leonian "experiment":

The most reliable, willing, humble and devoted Christian teachers ... are those simple Christians from among the congregations in the Colony of Sierra Leone.\(^2\)

Venn felt similarly. The success of the agents from Sierra Leone impressed the Parent Committee, "making it unpardonable for the Society to withdraw from the river."\(^3\)

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1 C.M.S. CA3/04/96 Crowther to Venn, 30 September 1861.
2 C.M.S. CA3/04/106 Crowther to Venn, 8 March 1862.
3 C.M.S. CA3/L1/130-32 Venn to Crowther, 25 November 1861.
When Crowther returned to Akassa, he welcomed Taylor and several others who had arrived in the Delta while he had been upriver. He now had some valuable assistance and for the next three months he remained at Akassa directing the work there and preparing his new agents for the other stations. King Sese of Akassa presented his nephew for instruction and other chiefs followed suit, sending their sons and other relatives. In a short time both day and Sunday schools were established and the station was placed in the charge of two catechists, Edward Phillips and Joseph Nicol. While Crowther felt hampered by his and his agents' ignorance of Idzo, the local language, he immediately set one of his teachers to collecting a vocabulary. Later, at Lagos, he outlined the difficulties facing the Delta station. The most pressing was the lack of food. According to Crowther the inhabitants exhibited no interest in agriculture and none had even used a hoe. Drawing on a prominent Buxtonian theme, he argued that "missionaries must instruct in horticulture as well as Christianity". He had put this theory to the test in Yorubaland and had found that it worked. Once a sound agricultural base was established, cattle and stock could be introduced and, finally, cotton cultivation. Ever the mission strategist, he concluded that the success of such activities in the Delta would act as "stepping stones" to the interior.

In early August 1862 the Niger Mission party were back in Akassa from Lagos. Once again the promised Royal Navy gunboat did not arrive.

1 C.M.S. CA3/04/730 Crowther: Journal from October to 5 November 1861; C.M.S. CA3/04/731 Crowther: Journal from November to 2 December 1861; also C.M.S. CA3/04/102 Crowther to Venn, 4 January 1862.

2 C.M.S. CA3/04/106 Crowther to Venn, 8 March 1862.
While waiting Crowther had to take strong disciplinary action against two Sierra Leonean couples. In one case the wife had committed adultery, and in the other the schoolmaster was found "untalented". He dismissed all four and put them on the next ship bound for Lagos and Freetown. It was a difficult decision. Crowther knew that it would reduce his staff and force a restructuring of personnel for the Niger stations. It would also serve as a tacit admission that the Sierra Leonean "experiment" was less than completely satisfactory. Crowther's resoluteness in tackling the problem at such a critical juncture for the Mission illustrates a side of his character which is rarely emphasized in contemporary and secondary accounts of his life and career. The more typical picture is that of the "soft" administrator dealing gently with mission agents accused or found guilty of improper conduct. While this latter characterization can find some justification when measured by Crowther's conduct in the 1880's, it does not hold up well against his record in the Yoruba Mission or against that of at least his first two decades in the Niger Mission. At this point in his career Crowther was not on the defensive as he would be in the final dozen years of his life. On the contrary, he was confident of his plans, his men, and himself. When the gunboat Investigator finally appeared, several other Sierra Leonesians had in the meantime joined Crowther. The Captain was not prepared to bring the entire group upriver. Crowther convinced him of the Mission's grave difficulties, especially regarding transport, as no trading company was

1 C.M.S. CA3/Ot/114 Crowther to Dawes, 21 August 1862.

then operating on the river. In the end, one Scripture Reader and
his wife, and two sawyers meant for Onitsha, as well as nearly all of
the party's baggage, were left behind. Crowther succeeded in getting
off three families for the Confluence, plus himself and his youngest
son Dandeson. The Niger Mission was thus augmented by twenty-seven
individuals. The number might have been as much as one hundred but
for those left behind at Akassa and Lagos.¹

After passing through the Delta without incident, the
Investigator anchored off Onitsha on the evening of 5 September 1862.
While Crowther found the Scripture Reader whom he had left in charge
ill, the station had been maintained in the interim. As Crowther had
to depart at dawn, the night was spent in last minute instructions to
the group which he was leaving behind. At Igbebe he discovered that
that station had also suffered no setbacks, even though it too had been
left under the guidance of only one man. As the gunboat then
proceeded to Baikie's camp at Lokoja and thence to Rabba, Crowther had
time to review the work which had been accomplished at the Confluence
before the ship's return. Fourteen candidates were presented for
baptism. For two days he conducted oral examinations. On 14
September he baptized eight adults and one infant before a
congregation of nearly 200 persons; "the first fruits of the Niger
Mission" had been realized.² The diversity of the tribes represented
in the baptized underscored the mixed ethnic character of the Igbebe
inhabitants.³ Shortly thereafter Crowther married a couple according

¹ C.M.S. CA3/04/732 Crowther: Journal from 1 September to 31
October 1862.
² Ibid.
³ C.M.S. CA3/04/118 Crowther: A List of Baptized Candidates, shewing
(sic.) family connection of some of them, and their respective
tribes.
to the rite of the Church of England. An Industrial Establishment which he had set up earlier purchased and cleaned 450 pounds of cotton for the Manchester merchant Thomas Clegg. Encouraged by this success, Crowther hoped that all cotton cultivation would soon be directly controlled by the indigenes. Seeking to overcome the difficulties of transport on the river, he urged the C.M.S. Parent Committee to make passage and freight arrangements with any firm which should be established on the river in succession to Laird. Crowther would not accept the Niger work lapsing simply for want of transport even if it meant travelling on British Naval ships. He told Salisbury Square that if no firm did take up the trade in the immediate future then the Foreign Office and/or the Admiralty should be approached so that passage could be secured on gunboats. The Investigator left Igbebe on 19 October. After the briefest of visits at Onitsha Crowther arrived at Akassa three days later. He was elated. With fully-staffed stations at Igbebe and Onitsha, and a new undertaking at Akassa, he believed that the Niger Mission rested at last on a secure footing.

Conclusion

Samuel Crowther looked on the Niger Expedition of 1857-59 as the means for establishing a Niger Mission. For one entering his 50s, here was the pioneering project to engage his energies before retiring
to beloved translational work. His approach reflected his own exceptionally varied background. An earnest Anglophile he extolled the virtues of "Native Agency". From the outset he was confident of the singular importance of an African staff in any Niger project. In his journals he had frequently sought to dispel stereotypic views of Africa and its peoples by pointing to incidents which gave the lie to popular misconceptions. His patient and diplomatic advocacy of African Agency helped to win acceptance for it at Salisbury Square. Convinced of the necessity of maintaining an independent mission establishment he did not shy from commercial assistance or even Governmental Naval protection. C.M.S. reliance on these interests certainly appeared to many peoples on the river that the missionary effort was part and parcel of British Governmental enterprise. The political and demographic situation along the entire stretch of the Niger which he visited was then in a state of flux. Factors as diverse as the expansion of Fulani power in the North, and the repercussions of the British check on the slave trade in the South and along the Coast, contributed to the uncertainty of the situation and the reception which the missionaries received. Privately scornful of Islam as practiced on the Upper Niger Crowther counselled toleration and education. Peaceful co-existence stood as the best strategy with which to reach the followers of traditional religion within Muslim-ruled areas.

Crowther's employers, the Church Missionary Society, regarded the Niger Mission ambivalently. Their actions in the first five years of its existence reflect a remarkable lack of long-range planning. Many vital questions were left to be answered by circumstance and event: Would there be a Niger Mission, separate and independent from the
Yoruba Mission? How strong a connection should exist with Governmental and mercantile interests? Samuel Crowther emerged, even more than Henry Venn, as the major constant in this project. His eagerness and resourcefulness reassured a Parent Committee anxious to hear the best from their protegé. In the vacuum that existed, the Society established an important set of precedents. Partly out of Venn's reliance on their missionary, but especially due to drift, Crowther was gradually invested with an authority and responsibility unique for a C.M.S. agent anywhere in the world. All this would increase with his subsequent elevation to the episcopacy. The repercussions for the future history of the Mission would be considerable. The unparalleled authority of Samuel Crowther would emerge as an important constituent in the controversies of the 1870s and 1880s as the conditions on the Niger altered, the work of the Mission expanded, and the character of Mission personnel changed.
Chapter III

A Bishop for the Niger, 1863-1869

Henry Venn and a Crowther Episcopacy

The idea that Samuel Crowther should be made a bishop had been mooted as early as 1851. Government and Church at that time were preparing to establish the Sierra Leone Bishopric. Discussions centred on whether a European or an African should be appointed as founding bishop there. The Foreign Secretary, Lord John Russell, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, J.B. Sumner, strongly determined to recommend Crowther for the new post. The African missionary, then in England, had met several members of the Government, as well as Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and had made a highly favourable impression. Henry Venn objected: Sierra Leone was, as yet, too much a British colony for an African bishop. The C.M.S. Secretary managed to stop a Crowther nomination only through several letters and much persuasive discussion. The concept of an African appointment for Sierra Leone remained very much alive throughout the 1850s and 1860s as a succession of European appointees became "victims" of the climate. Government again raised the question of an African candidate in 1857. Venn replied that Sierra Leone remained unready for such a development. The only qualified candidate, Samuel Crowther, could better serve elsewhere. If the Government

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1 The first of several hagiographic biographies of Crowther had appeared the year before: "A Lady": Good Out of Evil; or the History of Adjai, the African Slave Boy, London, 1850.

would appoint Africans to some of the chaplaincies in the Colony, they could thus prepare talented men for episcopal office. With regard to Crowther's future, the Secretary suggested that his talent be reserved for his "homeland". He urged the Government to appoint Crowther "a bishop over the Yoruba Native Church, when it shall have arrived at sufficient maturity".

Henry Venn's ideas on the development of "Native Churches" evolved over a period of twenty years. His basic plans were straightforward yet idealistic. European missionaries provided the starting point. These men were to go individually to communities and begin the work of preaching the gospel. Gradually as small groups of converts increased, these little bands would form "congregations". The European missionary would train the most promising members as native catechists, who would then serve as his assistants. Eventually a catechist, maintained by his congregation, would be ordained and assume full responsibility. With a "Native Pastorate" established, the European missionary would move on to another un-Christianized community. In 1858 Venn asked rhetorically if the Native Pastorate

1 C.M.S. G/AC1/13/190-92 Venn to Henry Labouchere, 12 June 1857. According to Venn, Crowther concurred with his appraisal of the situation.


was the final goal in the establishment of a Native Church. He answered his question in a brief note, "Remarks on the Organization of Native Churches" and in a minute entitled "The Extension of the Episcopate". In these he argued that as soon as Native Pastorates would be set up,

"It will be necessary that their financial organization should be completed and that the ordaining power be permanized (sic) ... then the Episcopate must be native and raised up from among themselves."  

He thought it inadvisable to send European "Missionary Bishops" and argued for waiting until indigenous congregations could select bishops from among themselves. Just as he had maintained that for the good of the flock the Pastorate should be Native, so too he concluded that once the Pastorate had been established effectively, it followed logically that the episcopacy, when instituted, should also be Native rather than European.

A third serious attempt to appoint Crowther Bishop of Sierra Leone was launched in 1859. The Rev. Francis Close, Dean of Carlisle and one of the Anglican Church's most prominent Evangelicals, argued for the Niger missionary's selection. Close noted that Africans had served nobly as bishops in North Africa in Patristic times and questioned whether racial considerations were preventing a Crowther nomination:

"Is it our innate jealousy of colour, notwithstanding our liberations principles? or do we hesitate to make a Negro man 'My Lord'?"  

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1 Intelligencer IX (1858) 36-39, 158-67, 169-77.
2 Ibid. 38-39.
3 Ibid. 166-67.
4 The Guardian, 20 June 1859, 622.
Venn once again answered for the C.M.S. His reply shows that his own attitudes towards a Crowther episcopacy were crystalizing. As before he rejected the appointment to Sierra Leone. But on this occasion, noting Crowther's work on the Niger, he added that

a higher as well as a more appropriate sphere ... was that of Bishop over a Native Church, at liberty to lay the foundation of an African Episcopal Church, without being tied to rubrics and Canons adapted only to this realm of England.¹

The time seemed right to approach Crowther directly. In February 1860, as the Niger Mission founder waited patiently for a gunboat to arrive to ascend the river, he received a lengthy letter from Venn. The Secretary wrote with the fatherly sentiment which his letters to Crowther frequently displayed:

The Lord has honoured you by making you his instrument for opening the Niger to the gospel. Should a Native Church be established there and should He call upon you to preside over it as a Missionary Bishop, you would not be the person to run like Jonah.²

He asked him to think on the matter and to write "his whole mind about it". Crowther did just that, rejecting the idea for several reasons: 1) He was personally unfit for any other post than that which he then held. He had only recently expressed a desire to retire to translation work once the Niger Mission was well established and he contended that younger Africans should be trained with a view to later consecration as bishops. 2) European missionaries had a better claim than himself to the prospective post due to their

¹ Ibid.
² C.M.S. CA3/L1/47-49 Venn to Crowther, 23 February 1860. Crowther did not suggest that any of the Europeans then serving in the Yoruba Mission should be chosen. Reflecting perhaps on the attacks which Townsend and others were then making against his family, he urged that a younger European missionary, after having been out for three or four years, should then be selected as a missionary bishop.
"sacrifice of everything" in coming out to Africa. 3) He noted the opposition that the prospect of his consecration would engender:

As a man I know the feelings of men ... the plan of placing a Native in a higher position where Europeans have to take part in the same field is very premature.

Because of these prevailing attitudes among his colleagues, he had not even shown Venn's letter to any of them. The continuous rumours about his possible appointment to Sierra Leone had made this quite necessary. He felt that the endless gossip had affected his work adversely.

4) For nearly twenty years he had continually left his wife and children to fend for themselves while he was away on expeditions and travels. His family must now attract a greater percentage of his time.

Crowther correctly gauged the opposition which existed to his or any other African being elevated to the episcopacy. Among European missionaries, Henry Townsend proved most vocal on the subject. In 1851, when the Rev. Hugh Stowell, an Evangelical Churchman from Manchester and a C.M.S. Committeeman, publicly suggested an African bishop for Abeokuta, Townsend conducted an "independent inquiry" on the subject within the Yoruba Mission. From his "findings" he concluded that "a mistake of that kind would be a serious evil and tend greatly to retard the real progress of the work". In the years following Venn became so accustomed to this type of comment that he occasionally tried to counter rumours even before they reached Townsend's notice. In one instance, he wrote:

1 C.M.S. CA3/04/51 Crowther to Venn, 4 April 1860.
2 Ibid.
3 C.M.S. CA3/085/3 Townsend to Secretaries, 15 October 1851.
The present ship will probably bring rumours of a Black Bishop being appointed to Sierra Leone, but these are only rumours.¹

After reading Venn's minute on "The Extension of the Episcopate", Townsend declared:

A native episcopate is one of those fancies that need only to be realized, put to the test, to prove a disappointment.²

He went on to say that Venn's and Dean Close's comparisons with early North African bishoprics were invalid. He finally added characteristically that all of the European Yoruba missionaries echoed his views.

When Venn invited Crowther to England in 1863, in order that he might return to the Niger "with increased power",³ opposition to a Black bishop became more public. It did not abate when Crowther wrote that the uncertainties of the Niger Mission prohibited his going to England just then.⁴ Dr. Arthur Harrison, a C.M.S. European Lay Agent and medical advisor at Abeokuta, raised his voice in protest. In addition to positing the supposed inability of Europeans to serve under African stewardship, he questioned Crowther's personal competence to hold such an office. He claimed that the Niger Mission expenses had been extraordinarily high and, in a final thrust, asked how Crowther could run a diocese when "he could not rule his own household,

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¹ C.M.S. CA2/L2/121 Venn to Townsend, 23 June 1857. The Secretary did not succeed in assuaging Townsend's concern in this case. While stating that Crowther would not be offered the Sierra Leone post, he maintained that this was being done because "he must be preserved for his own Native Church".

² C.M.S. CA2/085/62 Townsend to Venn, 13 October 1858.

³ C.M.S. CA3/L1/175-77 Venn to Crowther, 23 February 1863.

⁴ C.M.S. CA3/04/132 Crowther to Venn, 8 April 1863.
his sons having turned out very badly". An undeterred Venn urged Crowther a second time to come to England. In January of 1864 the missionary finally agreed and prepared to leave Lagos the following month. Townsend made a last effort to halt the inevitable. Aware that approaching Venn was a futile exercise, he wrote other C.M.S. Secretaries. Taking a leaf from Dr. Harrison's book, he declared that

The extraordinary expense of the Niger Mission conducted by Natives alone shows what they can do if the purse is placed in their hands.

Even if Townsend could have swayed some members of the C.M.S. establishment (which he could not), Venn's position in the Society was pre-eminent and he would not change his mind on this matter.

As Crowther sailed for England, Venn had several hurdles yet to overcome. The candidate himself had to be convinced to accept nomination. The opposition of the European missionaries and certain

1 C.H.S. CA2/045 Harrison to Venn, 21 November 1863.
2 C.H.S. CA3/L1/193-95 Venn to Crowther, 23 December 1863.
3 C.H.S. CA3/04/150 Crowther to Col. Dawes, 9 January 1864. Dawes was one of several retired military officers who served on C.M.S. Committees. For a list of C.M.S. Secretaries and their relation to the Society in the early 1860s, see Intelligencer XIII (1862), 35-35.
4 C.H.S. CA2/085/111 Townsend to Straith, 31 March 1864. Major Hector Straith, a retired Army officer, was a Finance Secretary to the Society. The Yoruba and Niger Missions had proportionately higher budgets than other C.M.S. Missions. With regard to the Niger operation, this was due in part to Venn's preferential treatment of the Mission and also to the heavy expenses necessitated by the difficulties of transport to and between the widely separated stations on the river.
elements in the press had to be considered, and reduced if possible. The approval of the Government and the Archbishop of Canterbury had to be secured. A Special Bill or Constitution creating the new bishopric had to be approved by Parliament and receive the Royal Assent. Lastly, a semblance of academic respectability had to be obtained for the candidate who up to then had not even received a baccalaureate degree. Crowther's consecration stood as the cornerstone of Henry Venn's Native Church policy. As such the Secretary saw it in distinctly personal terms which led him to direct every detail of the project. He had only a few months in which to complete the critical final arrangements. The lack of time, the pull of diverse factors, and the insistence on personal co-ordination necessitated compromise. The final model would be far less perfect than Venn had hoped. He realized this, but his remarkable faith in Crowther's abilities led him to believe that the drawbacks would fade and all the pieces fall neatly into place once the new bishopric had been established and its occupant installed.

Bishop of Western Africa Beyond the Queen's Dominions

Venn held a private interview with Crowther immediately after the latter's arrival in London. The account of the meeting has been widely chronicled, although not on the basis of the written testimony of

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1 In an editorial The African Times, applauded Crowther's accomplishments, but questioned the timing of the move. Once it was a fait accompli, however, the newspaper welcomed the new bishop warmly: The African Times III: 36, 23 April 1864 and III: 36, 23 June 1864. A Lagos paper printed a letter to its editor which included the most typical reason given by opponents of the idea: a "coloured ruler" over the African Church was "premature". Anglo-African II: 9, 30 July 1864.
either of the two principals. Venn told Crowther that it was the Parent Committee's desire that he be recommended for the episcopacy. Crowther again refused, citing his unworthiness and the belief that Europeans in the field should take precedence. Venn asked him to discuss the matter for a few days with the Rev. J.F. Schün, Crowther's friend and colleague on the Niger Expedition of 1841-42. Two days later Crowther remained unconvinced and so informed Venn. In a scene worthy of the best hagiographies, the Secretary pleaded

Samuel Ajayi, my son, will you deny me my last wishes asked of you before I die? ... With tears in his eyes the missionary answered: 'It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth good'.

The following week the nomination was placed before the C.M.S. Committee of Correspondence. The Committee acted quickly. On 5 April, with Crowther in attendance, it approved of the plan as well as a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Charles Thomas Longley, recommending the establishment of a "Native Bishopric" and the appointment of Samuel Crowther to it. The Archbishop shortly thereafter met with the Earl of Chichester, President of the Society, and both agreed on a letter to Lord John Russell, the Foreign Secretary.

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3 C.M.S. G/C1/v.35/676 Committee of Correspondence, 22 March 1864.

4 C.M.S. G/C1/v.35/680-87 Committee of Correspondence, 5 April 1864. Up until Longley's death in 1870, Crowther and the Archbishop had a particularly warm relationship. See Proceedings XXX: 70, 36-37.

5 C.M.S. G/C1/v.35/700-06 Committee of Correspondence, 19 April 1864.
Government was presented on 28 April. It discussed the need for a new bishopric in light of the already excessive duties of the Bishop of Sierra Leone. It went on to nominate Samuel Crowther giving a glowing report of his more than thirty years service to the Church and stating the Archbishop's approval. The uniqueness of the enterprise was further underscored in that the Memorial suggested that episcopal functions were to be exercised "in the countries in Western Africa beyond the limits of her Majesty's dominions". In response to personal letters from Longley and Chichester, the Foreign Secretary in May indicated his approval of the scheme and his recommendation of a Royal License.

As an established Church, the Church of England operated through Act of Parliament. It had not been until 1786, when the Colonial Bishopric Act had been passed, that the Archbishop of Canterbury could consecrate bishops for dioceses outside the United Kingdom. This authority was further extended in 1841 by the "Jerusalem Act". Under this law the Primate could consecrate bishops for countries not under British rule and the candidates need not even be British subjects.

The final form of the new Bishopric reflected the compromises which had to be made in order to insure the widest support for the project. The

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1 C.H.S. G/AC1/16/121a-d Chichester, Venn, et al. to Russell, 28 April 1864.

2 See C.H.S. G/AC3/16 Longley to Venn, 16 May 1864; also G/C1/v.36/19-24 Committee of Correspondence, 17 May 1864.

3 See 26 George III c.84 and 4 Victoria c. 6. The two acts also served as the basis for a document prepared by C.H.S. lawyers entitled "Minute on the Constitution of the Anglican Native Bishopric on the West African Coast". The "Minute" is enclosed with C.H.S. CA3/04/414 Crowther to Hutchinson, 4 August 1873 and is quoted in full in J.F.A. Ajayi: Christian Missions, pp. 274-77.
new diocese was more than a Bishopric of the Niger. It encompassed a huge territory. The Queen's License defined it just as the C.M.S. Memorial had requested, excluding the British colonies of Lagos, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone. Crowther was to supervise a diocese which extended from the Senegal River to the Equator. Venn sought to appease those who had expressed opposition. In order to allay concern he saw to it that certain provisions of the Constitution establishing the Bishopric remained vague. He also made several personal assurances which he would shortly ignore. He wrote Commodore Wilmot, formerly of the West African Squadron, who had counselled against an African Bishopric over both Europeans and Africans: "We have taken your advice ... for making Samuel Crowther Bishop. It will only be over Black ministers and not white". To the Rev. James Lamb at Lagos he declared similarly that Crowther had accepted appointment only after the Parent Committee had assured him that he would not exercise authority over Europeans.

The question of Abeokuta and Ibadan remained. Here Venn and the Society definitely drew back, perhaps unnecessarily. Strong arguments existed to justify Crowther's appointment as bishop in Yorubaland. As he was himself a Yoruba, his assumption of authority there would be very much in keeping with Venn's ideas on Native Churches. A final decision on Yorubaland was deferred. As the Bishop of Sierra

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1 The License is quoted in its entirety in Page: The Black Bishop, pp. 197-98.
2 C.M.S. CA1/L7/417-19 Venn to Wilmot, 23 March 1864.
3 C.M.S. CA2/L3/351-52 Venn to Lamb, 23 March 1864.
4 Warren: To Apply the Gospel, p. 50.
Leone had been "accustomed to superintend" Abeokuta and Ibadan, such would continue until "an arrangement be made by the two bishops as to the time and circumstances of transfer". After Crowther's consecration Venn tried to expedite this and conveniently forgot his earlier assurances to Lamb and Wilmot. He told Bishop Beckles of Sierra Leone that the Constitution of the Bishopric placed Crowther "over all clergy whether European or Native resident in the country beyond the dominions of the Queen", but because Crowther "declines for the present to exercise such spiritual authority" in Yorubaland, Beckles would maintain control there. In a letter to the agents of the Yoruba Mission, Venn also later attempted to retrace his steps. He stressed the "temporary" nature of the arrangement and hoped that "Abeokuta and Ibadan missionaries will soon be desirous of placing themselves under Dr. Crowther". All of these arrangements placed Crowther in an awkward position. As a Black bishop he was left to settle an important territorial question, fraught with racial overtones, with an English Bishop of Sierra Leone, who would later, in his own diocese, question the establishment of a Native Pastorate there! He would also be expected, through patience and persuasion, to convince the European Yoruba missionaries and their congregations that they should request inclusion under his jurisdiction.

1 "Minute on the Constitution of the Anglican Native Bishopric on the West African Coast" enclosed with C.M.S. CA3/04/414 Crowther to Hutchinson, 4 August 1875.

2 C.M.S. CA1/L7/452-54 Venn to Beckles, 23 July 1864.

3 C.M.S. CA2/L3/569-70 Venn to Missionaries of the Yoruba Mission, 23 July 1864.

4 C.M.S. CA3/L1/214-15 Venn to Crowther. According to Venn, Beckles had a too low opinion of Fourah Bay College graduates. See C.M.S. CA1/L7/465-67 Venn to Beckles, 20 September 1864.
With the more difficult preliminary problems arranged, Venn began to tie up some of the less important matters. In early June he wrote William Jacobson, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, supporting the Society's suggestion that Crowther be awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree. He also enclosed copies of the Crowther journals of the three Niger Expeditions which he had accompanied. He sketched the events of Crowther's life and stressed his role in inducing the C.M.S. to create a Niger Mission and then in actually establishing it solely through African agency. Finally, he pointed to the missionary's linguistic talents and his already published translational works.¹

While preparations for his consecration progressed, Crowther followed an especially busy schedule. Venn made sure that he met with those who would advance his candidacy and the Society's cause. In mid-May Crowther spoke to the C.M.S.'s Annual Anniversary Meeting at Exeter Hall, impressed favourably those in attendance, and won over many who had doubted the soundness of a "Negro Bishopric".² In his speech he made no allusion to his approaching consecration which had not yet been officially announced. But the Rev. Hugh Stowell, who followed him on the platform, was not so restrained. In glowing, Evangelical terms, he praised the "Bishop-Designate of the Niger":

It was the day-dream of my childhood ... and it is now almost the realized hope of my manhood that we should have in these latter days something like the primitive time when an African Cyprian presided over his conclave of fourscore swarthy bishops ... I rejoice to think that

¹ C.M.S. C/AC1/16/154-46 Venn to Jacobson, 7 June 1864.
² C.M.S. C/CE/I/135 Fenn to C. MacArthur, 13 May 1864.

The Rev. C.G. Fenn was a Clerical Secretary of the Society.
we have a bishop so humble, so simple, so taught of God that he is not ashamed to admit to the lowliness of his birth.

Shortly after the Annual Meeting, Crowther addressed a large gathering at Cambridge University, despite competition from "the attractions which generally affect them (i.e. religious meetings) in May Term - boating, cricket, etc". Within a fortnight of Venn's letter to Jacobson, Crowther was formally honoured at Oxford. The honorary Doctor of Divinity degree was granted, although not without some last minute opposition. According to Venn, a European "native of the West Indies" attempted to prevent the awarding of the degree at the ceremony by raising objection from the audience: "But this only brought out the rapturous applause of all the members of the University then present." Not long afterwards Crowther was interviewed at the Foreign Office regarding African affairs. That same evening he dined as the guest of the Bishop of London at Fulham Palace.

Samuel Ajayi Crowther was consecrated a bishop of the United Church of England and Ireland on 29 June 1864 at Canterbury Cathedral. Archbishop Longley officiated. It was an impressive occasion which drew unusual interest: a special train was even put on the London, Chatham and Dover Railway to bring guests from the capital. The fact

1 Stock: History, I, 454-55.
2 C.M.S. Venn MSS C. 40 John Venn to Venn, 8 May 1864. The younger Venn, like his father, would later be admitted to the Anglican priesthood.
3 C.M.S. CA2/13/363-65 Venn to Lamb, 23 June 1864.
4 C.M.S. CA1/L7/442-45 Venn to Julia Sass, 23 June 1864.
5 C.M.S. CA1/L7/443-44 Venn to Beckles, 23 June 1864.
6 The event received wide coverage in both religious and secular newspapers and periodicals of the day. Among these may be noted: "Consecration of a New Bishop at Canterbury" in The Times, 30 June 1864; "Bishop of the Niger" in the African Times III: 36, 23 June 1864; The Church Times II: 74, 2 July 1864; and The Guardian XIX: 970, 6 July 1864.
that a consecration ceremony by the Primate was held at Canterbury was in itself a novelty. Since the Reformation Archbishops of Canterbury had almost always conducted these services at Lambeth Palace Chapel or Westminster Abbey. In addition to Crowther Dr. Francis Jeune was consecrated for Peterborough and Dr. Charles Bromby for Tasmania. Each bishop-elect was presented by two sitting Bishops, Crowther by those of Winchester and Victoria. Mrs. Crowther had not accompanied her husband to England and Dandeson, then studying at Islington, was the only family member in the Cathedral. In addition to Venn and numerous C.M.S. officials others also came who had had an association with the new bishop in his early life. Mrs. J.M. Weeks, widow of a Bishop of Sierra Leone, had taught the boy Ajayi the alphabet and the Lord's Prayer, when she and her husband were young missionaries in the Colony. Admiral Sir Henry J. Leeko, M.P., had been Captain of the H.M.S. Myrmidon which rescued Ajayi from the slave ship Esperanza Felix.

Three weeks following his consecration, Bishop Crowther had a final meeting with the C.M.S. Parent Committee. The Committee re-established a full Niger Finance Committee, thus relieving the new bishop of this increasing burden. This new Committee would meet in Lagos and include in addition to Crowther, the Revs. Lamb, L. Nicholson, T.B. Macaulay (a Crowther son-in-law), and Captain A.P.L. Davies. At the same time, however, the C.M.S. continued to increase Crowther's

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1 The Church Times, II: 74, 2 July 1864.


3 C.M.S. G/01/v.36/92-97 Committee of Correspondence, 19 July 1864.
authority beyond that usual for a missionary superintendent or bishop. As it was deemed too early to establish a Mission Conference like that in Yorubaland, all Conference functions were to rest in Crowther's hands. Equipped with the "increased power" his patron had earlier promised, Samuel Crowther sailed from Liverpool on 24 July.

He received a tumultuous welcome at Sierra Leone. As a Colony newspaper reported:

There was no pomp and magnificence, but there was, without show, a scene grand enough to demonstrate the joy of all Sierra Leoneans.

A formal reception was held at Fourah Bay College for that institution's first and foremost alumnus. C.M.S. agents and pastors presented an address, as did the tutors and students. The Bishop replied to both, noting his long association with Sierra Leone and Fourah Bay. The inherent difficulties in arranging an eventual transfer of the Yoruba Mission were hardly reduced, however, when the local C.M.S. Committee failed to invite Bishop Beckles to the Crowther reception. At the same time, little or no encouragement could be found for an extension of Crowther's jurisdiction at Abeokuta or Ibadan. Townsend at first appeared reconciled, although he still branded the establishment of the Bishopric as premature. With some justification, he noted that

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1 C.M.S. CA3/L1/202-05 Venn and Robert Lang to Crowther, 23 July 1864.
2 Crowther's salary had been increased from £100 to £300. See C.M.S. CA3/L1/201-02 Dawes to Lang, 11 July 1864.
3 "Bishop Crowther at Sierra Leone" in Free Press and Sierra Leone Weekly Advertiser, 16 August 1864, quoted in Intelligencer XV (1864), 233.
4 Ibid. 235; also C.M.S. CA3/04/152 Crowther to Venn, 27 August 1864.
5 C.M.S. CA1/L7/467-68 Venn to Rev. J. Hamilton, 21 September 1864.
I am sorry that the Committee has placed the matter in such a way that the merit of receiving (Crowther) or the blame of not receiving is left with us. Townsend concluded resignedly: "It appears to me at present that our will is now to prepare the Churches to receive the change." Two months later, reinforced by Beckles, he took a more truculent pose:

The person of the Bishop is not acceptable: by acts of partisanship, he has made himself obnoxious to the chiefs and peoples.

Townsend claimed that if Crowther could run a diocese on the Niger from Lagos, Beckles could just as easily continue to superintend Yorubaland from Sierra Leone. David Hinderer was more conciliatory and welcomed the consolidation which "an episcopal head" would bring. He was, nonetheless, relieved that Ibadan would remain under the Bishop of Sierra Leone. While limply saying that he personally would not be adverse to serving under Crowther, he believed that the arrangement would place the European missionary into an injurious position with regard to the natives among whom and with whom he is labouring ... God gives us influence as Europeans amongst them. But if they question a Black man as our master, they will question our respectability.

Hinderer concluded that Black ecclesiastical rule would be acceptable in Yorubaland only when the country had itself been changed and transformed.

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1 C.M.S. CA2/083/120 Townsend to Venn, 3 October 1864.
2 Ibid.
3 C.M.S. CA2/085/123 Townsend to Venn, 29 November 1864; One writer has argued that: "In the feudal structure of that time no traditional social standing existed for a Yoruba bishop". T.S. Garrett: "Some Provocative Thoughts on Nigerian Church History", West African Religion 6 (1956), 24-25.
4 C.M.S. CA2/049 Hinderer to Venn, 15 November 1864.
5 Ten years later David Hinderer would have mellowed. Regarding the opening of Ondo he would say: "What it wants is a good, old faithful native nurse ... Has not the time come when the Native Bishop's jurisdiction should be further extended, especially to his own native soil? ... The feeling has now changed entirely and new European missionaries can easily accept such an arrangement." C.M.S. CA2/049 Hinderer to Secretaries, 18 May 1875.
Exhausted by the arrangements which had consumed his schedule for nearly a year, Henry Venn offered to wait a few years until Crowther would be invited to Abeokuta by "public acclamation". The Secretary's weariness and desire to avoid controversy were evident when he wrote to Beckles regarding future arrangements between the two bishops. Although he spoke strongly in part, he clearly vacillated. In so doing he further weakened Crowther's position:

Bishop Crowther has been invested ... without any territorial diocese. Therefore within the Colonies, Bishop Crowther can only act as your substitute. Beyond the Colonies, you are both in the same position and it must be a matter of arrangement between you not to interfere with each other's work.1

Venn still publicly hoped that Crowther's diocese would be further defined and delimited, but he did little to insure its being done. He did not hesitate to meddle. In January 1865 when Beckles and Governor Blackall of Sierra Leone decided that African pastors in the Colony should be placed under European superintendence, Venn viewed this as a "retrograde" step. Contradicting what he had written only months before to Beckles, he urged Crowther to go to Sierra Leone and make himself "available for bringing about a better understanding between the two parties there".2

The Church Missionary Society had fully financed the Niger Mission from its inception in 1857. Self-support remained the ultimate goal in Venn's Native Church Policy. To this end, it was decided at the time of Crowther's consecration to establish a special fund upon which

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1 C.M.S. CA1/L7/484-86 Venn to Hamilton, 22 December 1864.
2 C.M.S. CA1/L7/465-67 Venn to Beckles, 20 September 1864.
3 C.M.S. CA3/L1/274-15 Venn to Crowther, 30 January 1865.
the Bishop might draw, separate from the Society's Annual Grant to the Mission. The West African Native Bishopric Fund was independent of the C.M.S., but had as its three Treasurers men connected with the Society's work: John Gurney Hoare, T. Fowell Buxton, and the Rev. Henry Venn. The Fund's first appeal listed several purposes for which the Bishop might draw upon it: to encourage local missionary efforts, to engage copyists and translators, to promote local industry, and to redeem Christian converts who may have been carried into captivity. Nearly all of these functions were without the true scope of the C.M.S. Further, it was agreed that if Society funds were employed in such cases,

there would be a danger of checking the spirit of self-reliance and independent action which it is most desirable to cherish in the Native Church.  

While the avowed purpose of the Fund was to encourage self-support, this could only be affected indirectly through the projects for which Crowther chose to utilize the monies. Directly-speaking, the Fund gave the Bishop a flexibility and degree of financial independence which few, if any, C.M.S. Mission Directors possessed. All donations to the Fund were paid to the Treasurers and Crowther could draw on them as he wished, transmitting an annual account of expenditure. Venn wrote to the Bishop that he should not use the Fund for those things which the C.M.S. or the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.)

1 Hereafter simply "the Bishopric Fund".


3 Two "Reports of Expenditure", covering 1867-76 and 1877-81, are to be found in C.M.S. F/FL/TS/A3/1 "Papers, Accounts, etc."
were willing to pay. The latter organization not only gave £200 to the initial appeal, but agreed to print Biblical translations, grammars, etc., for the Mission. In addition to the purposes mentioned in the appeal, Venn suggested that the Bishop also use it for transporting African clergymen from Sierra Leone as well as for his own travel expenses, outfits, etc. A "Special Report on the Fund", issued in 1870, served as an extension of the first appeal. It indicated that £3,298.15.2 had been collected in five years, of which nearly £2,500 had been subscribed in England.

The First Episcopal Visitation of the Niger Mission

Bishop Crowther returned to Lagos in late August 1864 and held his first ordination ceremony, admitting the Rev. Lambert McKenzie to priest orders for the Yoruba Mission. A few days later he departed for the Niger on his first Episcopal Visitation. Seemingly oblivious of possible criticism, he was accompanied by his sons Samuel and Josiah, who were now engaged in private trade at Lagos. With no commercial firm yet established on the river, the party went up the Niger on the gunboat Investigator. The Bishop's major objective in this journey was to establish a permanent station at Idah. He met with the usual difficulties. After a brief visit to Igbebe, where he confirmed twenty-one persons, he travelled down by canoe to Idah.

1 C.M.S. CA3/L1/208-9 Venn to Crowther, 23 July 1864.
2 Included in C.M.S. F/FL/TS/A3/1 "Papers, Accounts, etc."
3 Beckles had been unable to go to Lagos to perform the ordination himself. C.M.S. CA3/04/151 Crowther to Beckles, 21 August 1864.
4 C.M.S. CA3/04/152 Crowther to Venn, 27 August 1864. See also The African Times IV: 40, 22 October 1864.
An intra-tribal feud between the Abokko clan and members of the Ata's family had recently broken into the open. The destruction resulting from the intermittent fighting was visible in the town. A chronic rivalry existed between the Abokko and the Agaidoko, another major Igala clan. The Abokko clan head claimed exclusive rights to deal with all "foreign" traders on the river and also held, as a "fief" from the Ata, the town of Igbebe. The Agaidoko clan head traditionally held the position of "war chief" in the kingdom. At the time of the 1854 Niger Expedition these two clans had been at war. In the years which followed the Abokko had fared the worse. The decline in their fortunes (and the corresponding loss of royal favour) was in part due to the less than satisfactory development of European trade on the river.¹ In order to vent their frustrations the Abokko had turned to skirmishing not with their traditional rivals, but rather with the royal family. When Crowther arrived in the town, a shaky truce existed. The Bishop first met with Ana Abokko who greeted him warmly, but Crowther had to wait for nearly a week before the Ata finally granted him an interview. After presenting various gifts, Crowther discussed the purpose of his visit. Perhaps buoyed by his increased authority, he did not confine himself to religious and educational concerns. In so doing he made it difficult for his listeners to see him solely as a missionary. He told them that he had come to fulfil his earlier promise to the Ata and to his predecessor to build a church and school on land that they had offered. Involving himself in trading matters, he inquired why merchant steamers had not been stopping at the town. He employed the language of a father scolding his children in telling

¹ Boston: The Igala Kingdom, pp. 110-16, especially pp. 110-11.
the Ata to end the internecine strife and to begin rebuilding areas
destroyed.  

The Ata replied cautiously. He reaffirmed the earlier promises
of land for a Mission station and welcomed its establishment. On the
Bishop's second two points, he deferred comment, but indicated that he
would take his suggestions into consideration. While he expressed
kindness towards Crowther, his demeanour as recorded at the time of the
interview does not warrant the enthusiasm which the Bishop notes at the
end of his account of the 1864 Visitation. Idah would require deft
handling. The dispute between the Ata and Ama Abokko certainly did
not provide the conditions for securing a viable missionary establishment.

When the Investigator descended, Crowther visited the town a second time.
The King appeared more agreeable, impressed as he was by the delegation
from the gunboat. He granted a sizeable piece of land to the Mission.

The Bishop was pleased that he had been able earlier to visit with the
Ata by himself, as this gave him, he believed, the opportunity to
present his plans without haste and enabled the Ata to reflect upon them.

It also served to illustrate, albeit in a very limited manner, that
missionary work should be regarded as separate from Governmental and
commercial affairs. This was a situation which the Bishop continually
claimed he sought, but which he could not usually achieve. Crowther
summed up his strategy for Idah and the Igala country:

To know the people of this country you must be amongst
them, mingle with them, study their mode of doing things,
and yield to them according to their ideas for the time
being; when once you have gained a footing, you may then
with success gradually correct them.  

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1 C.M.S. GA3/04/738 Crowther: "An Account of Bishop Crowther's
Visit to the Niger Mission in September and October 1864", pp. 13-
15. (This journal is quoted extensively in Intelligencer N.S. I
(1865), 52-60.)

2 Ibid., p. 24.
In 1860 Baikie had secured land for a settlement at Lokoja, four miles north of Igbebe. He now offered land for a Mission station. Crowther had a great interest in the linguistic diversity of the new town and he accepted Baikie’s proposal. He left his two sons at Igbebe to erect buildings and maintain instruction in cotton cultivation which had been earlier begun there. In October Crowther ordained Adam George Coomber deacon. While Coomber was stationed at Igbebe, the Bishop could not perform the ceremony there as no priest was available to assist him. The Rev. J.C. Taylor filled this role at Onitsha. Crowther was moved by the service, the first for his own diocese. He conducted additional confirmations at the town, but had to alter his plans for an extended stay as the Ijebu War had added to the uncertainty on the river. Crowther had hoped that a trading steamer would have been on the Niger by the end of his Visitaton. When one did not materialize, he decided to continue down to the Delta on the Investigator. At Akassa he reflected on his seven weeks on the Niger and the prospects for the Mission. The Confluence and Onitsha appeared secure and a cautious beginning had been made at Idah. As for Akassa, it remained a drawback, "barren" to the gospel and to education. Crowther advised the Society that the best plan of action for the Mission lay in working downwards from the upper stations, "where success was more assured", to the Delta region. He further proposed reducing the staff at Akassa, while at the same time increasing it for Idah. Onitsha should divide into three stations, with Taylor supervising the central one and two smaller outstations being maintained by catechists.

1 Ibid., pp. 25-26.


Finally, he urged the Parent Committee to sanction, conditional on the availability of personnel, the placing of an ordained minister at Igbebe and a schoolmaster and catechist at Lokoja.¹

In spite of Crowther's plan of securing the upper stations prior to any concerted effort in the Delta, opportunities arose in the South earlier than expected. The King of Bonny, William Dappa Pepple, had as early as 1848 sought missionaries from the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland.² He had no desire for religious instruction, but had been impressed by the Presbyterian establishment at Calabar and hoped to obtain the benefits of education and "civilization" for his own country. Edinburgh, not surprisingly, had its own ideas on how to run a mission enterprise and was reluctant to establish a station where catechetics could not be prominent. The Presbyterians made their position clear through their missionary Hope Waddell, who visited Bonny in 1849-50. The visit failed to produce any concrete agreement between the parties.³ Shortly thereafter the King became ill and his popularity likewise


Author's note: A revised version of Tasie's dissertation was published after all of the present work (save Chapter I) had been typed for submission. The author does not believe, however, in reading this publication, that it either substantively alters any subsequent reference by him to the Tasie dissertation, nor contains any new information which would affect his own interpretations and conclusions. See G.O.M. Tasie: Christian Missionary Enterprise in the Niger Delta, 1864-1918, Leiden, 1978.
began to suffer. A Regency was declared by his family, the Manilla Pepple House. A rival family, the Annie Pepple, refused to accept the new arrangement. The Regency was, nonetheless, established with H.M. Consul John Beecroft giving his "moral" support. While the King's health recovered, his popularity did not. Beecroft executed a volte face: he insured the King's deposition and exile to Fernando Po in 1854. As with other political exiles, the situation offered William Dappa Pepple time for reflection. In 1856 the ex-King visited England. While there he converted to the Church of England. In the meantime the new leaders in Bonny had not aroused any particular devotion. The King was invited back and "restored" in 1861.¹

Having "found religion", the King turned to the Anglican Church in his efforts to obtain missionaries and teachers for his people. He did not write the Church Missionary Society directly. Rather he consulted William Tait, Bishop of London (and later Archbishop of Canterbury), who had earlier baptized him.² A leading Evangelical Churchman, Tait passed the letter to the Secretaries at Salisbury Square. Henry Venn was then in the midst of the arrangements for Crowther's consecration, but he found time to discuss the matter with the Bishop-elect. Crowther promised to visit Bonny after he had toured the Niger Mission stations. Venn advised Tait that Crowther believed that any Bonny Mission could be maintained only through African agency.³

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¹ Ibid., p. 50; also Dike: Trade, pp. 162-63.
connection with his work on the Niger, Crowther had met the King of Bonny, as well as visited his country, on earlier occasions. In 1854, while waiting at Fernando Po for the ships of the Niger Expedition of that year, he had inquired of the King regarding missionary possibilities in Bonny. The exiled leader responded encouragingly to Crowther's suggestions. According to Crowther, William Dappa indicated his

sincerest wish to have a Church of England minister to teach (his) subjects ... as soon as he could get re-instated on (his) throne. 1

Crowther forwarded the King's message, but that offer like others could not be considered at that time. Six years later, while the King was still in exile, Crowther visited Bonny and discussed with the members of the Regency plans for a station. He found the chiefs content with their trading activities. They were "indifferent" when he asked, "Is trade sufficient to civilize a nation without the genial beaming light of the Gospel of Christ?" 2 The Bishop was genuinely surprised, therefore, when he made his promised trip to Bonny in late 1864. He found attitudes had markedly changed in four years. He noted the desire of the King, chiefs, and people for Christian teaching. He signed an agreement with them whereby £300 would be spent to erect the necessary buildings and pay the salaries of the Mission agents. There would be an important element of self-support from the outset. The cost would be divided evenly between the people of Bonny and the Bishop, the latter employing monies from the recently-established West African Native Bishopric Fund. 3

1 C.M.S. CA2/031 King William Dappa Pepple to Crowther, 15 November 1854. For a later account of the invitation, see C.M.S. CA3/04/215 Crowther to Venn, 4 December 1866.

2 C.M.S. CA3/04/59 Crowther to Venn, 9 August 1860.

3 C.M.S. CA3/04/156 Crowther to Tait, 7 November 1864.
As operations within the Niger Mission expanded, personnel remained a problem. After signing the agreement with Bonny, Crowther paid a brief visit to Lagos. Otta, a nearby village under the African pastor James White, had opted to join Crowther's diocese. Igbessa, another Yoruba station, soon followed suit.¹ In order to obtain staff for new stations like Bonny and Igbessa, as well as to expand throughout his Mission, Crowther travelled to Sierra Leone to drum up recruits. After six weeks in Freetown in early 1865, he secured four agents for the Niger Mission in general,² as well as three agents for Bonny in particular.³ Crowther's relations with Bishop Beckles remained cool, although the two men had conversed on the ship from Lagos, where Beckles had been visiting, to Sierra Leone. The question of diocesan boundaries was not taken up. Crowther hardly approved of his brother bishop's negative attitude towards the recently-established Sierra Leone Native Church Pastorate. The Pastorate had been formed in November 1861 when nine African pastors were placed in charge of as many parishes. Beckles had opposed the plan, but could not forestall its implementation. He and other opponents, including the Colony's Governor Blackall, were able, however, to insist that the Pastorate remain under European supervision, contrary to Henry Venn's recommended policy. Beckles appeared to have been unwilling to permit any diminution in his own authority or territory.

¹ C.M.S. CA3/04/162 Crowther to Venn, 12 February 1865; also C.M.S. CA3/L1/215-16 Venn to Crowther, 23 March 1865.
² One catechist, one schoolmaster, and two Grammar School Foundation Pupils. C.M.S. CA3/04/164 Crowther to Venn, 16 March 1865.
³ A Foundation Pupil, an Assistant Schoolmaster and a Scripture Reader. C.M.S. CA3/04/165 Crowther to Venn, 16 March 1865.
He had little positive to say regarding the Pastorate's work. Notwithstanding Beckles' criticism of the Pastorate scheme, Crowther labelled it a success.¹

Beginnings in the Delta

Bishop Crowther visited the towns of the Niger Delta at least once a year in the period 1865-70. He gave his greatest attention to Bonny, the economic and political centre of the region for most of the nineteenth century. In common with all Delta "city-states", Bonny was not economically self-sufficient. The frequently-flooded mangrove swamps were ill-suited for the cultivation of food-stuffs. The importance of the primary agricultural product, palm oil, was reflected in the European name for the entire Delta Region: the Oil Rivers. The Delta states developed a complex trading network. The hinterland lacked salt and protein. For these commodities they exchanged agricultural produce, skilled labour and, until the second third of the nineteenth century, slaves. The coastal states like Bonny, devoted primarily to trade with the interior and as middlemen for the European palm oil traders, were known as "towns", with the farming villages of the hinterland referred to as "plantations". For those not engaged in trade on the coast, fishing was the prime occupation. As in the case of the interior countries along the Niger, the political situation in the Delta was in great flux during the mid-1800s. There, however,

it was contact with the European traders which precipitated rapid change as opposed to the Fulani jihad in the North. The territory over which the Delta states exercised political and economic influence has been referred to as of two types: its tribal territory and its trading empire. The former was a compact area consisting of immediately adjacent villages over which the city-state had the most direct political control. The latter, more widely-separated area, including market communities allied to the state, was no less important. The economic monopoly which it exercised over these villages provided it with its wealth. Urbani, or Grand Bonny as it was known by the time Crowther visited it in the 1850s, was the smallest of the Delta states in area and population. Its great trading wealth, however, made it the most powerful and influential. Bonny's commercial supremacy was in turn based on an efficient military organization, the basic unit of which was the war canoe. Territorially, Grand Bonny was composed of the large village of Bonny, together with several lesser villages surrounding it and many "plantations" beyond. While it did not exercise political jurisdiction over its hinterland markets, it did maintain an effective and exclusive monopoly over them and between them and any European traders.  

Crowther's initial reactions in 1855 to the town of Grand Bonny

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and its environs were hardly positive. He had little respect for the habits of the people, contending that "two-thirds of their time is thrown away doing nothing profitable to themselves or to others".\footnote{C.M.S. CA3/O4/748 Crowther: "The Bonny Mission", April 1865.}

The results of missionary work there during the last five years of the 1860s frequently contradicted this early observation. In 1865 Crowther established a temporary station within the town. A schoolroom was erected and a house for the agents hired. In a departure from his usual policy, the Bishop did not want the Bonny station to be in the centre of the community. He selected a permanent site about ten minutes walk from the town, on drier land, and sufficiently separate "from the irregular habits of the rude population". The temporary school opened with much ceremony, the King and other chiefs attending. True to their promise the leaders had provided the funds or materials necessary for the construction of the building.\footnote{C.M.S. CA3/O4/168 Crowther to Venn, 2 May 1865.}

Several of the supercargoes (river merchants) were present. While some of the traders expressed alarm at the effect which education might have on the population, most supported the work in the early years.\footnote{C.M.S. CA3/O4/748 Crowther: "The Bonny Mission", April 1865.}

The chiefs not only sent their children and encouraged others to do so but one of the House Heads, Oko Jumbo, began taking lessons himself.\footnote{C.M.S. CA3/O4/177 Crowther to Venn, 1 August 1865.}

By Crowther's 1866 episcopal visit, much progress had been made. School enrolment had expanded, a new chapel had been erected and construction of a Mission House had commenced.\footnote{C.M.S. CA3/O4/192 Crowther to Venn, 31 January 1866; also C.M.S. CA3/O4/196 Crowther to Venn, 6 April 1866.} The work did not go
unaffected by political events within the country. The two major Canoe Houses remained antagonistic and at one point in 1866 both temporarily removed their children from the C.M.S. school. From the outset the Mission was tied to the Manilla faction. By staying at the station for periods as long as four months, which he did that year, Crowther displayed his concern for Bonny and its people. It did not go unnoticed. He saw Bonny as a stepping stone to other towns in the Delta. The work had to succeed and he had to use his influence to maintain peace not only within Bonny, but also to discourage Bonny, Okrika, and Brass from going to war with Kalabari (New Calabar). 1

One writer has observed that Bonny possessed "fertile soil for the planting of Christianity" in that the ruler supported its introduction and the partly detribalized society were receptive to it. 2 Conditions did not change when William Dappa Pepple died in September 1866 and his son George succeeded him. The new King had received education in England and favoured the C.M.S.'s work as had his father. 3 Crowther tried to make the most of the situation. His 1867 visit occasioned one of those events in which editors of nineteenth century religious periodicals delighted: the outlaw of iguana worship. 4 The iguana lizard had been considered sacred in Bonny and as such could

2 Tasie: Christianity, p. 70.
3 C.M.S. CA3/04/214 Crowther to Venn, 8 November 1866; also C.M.S. CA3/04/216 King George Pepple to Crowther, 3 November 1866. For an analysis of George Pepple's reign see Alogoa and Fombo: Chronicle, Chapter IV.
4 See in particular Gleaner (U.S.) XVII (1867), 73-76.
not be destroyed. The prohibition extended to all, even Europeans. Only a few months prior to the royal decree, the Bishop had noted increased activity on the part of the traditional priests. The mission work had progressed unaffected. New projects of self-support - a book store and magic lantern shows - were introduced.

On Easter Sunday 21 April, the King declared the iguana "to be no longer Bonny juju". An incredible carnage of reptiles followed. Crowther, while pleased, did not rejoice as heartily as others. He knew that security and success were far from won:

It cannot be expected that all the people had the resolution of the King and his chiefs to act fearlessly; superstition does not soon vanish away.

The very fragile situation which Crowther observed was oddly broken not by forces in the community, but rather from within the Mission establishment itself. When J.K. Webber, the schoolmaster, allegedly raped a young girl, the chiefs immediately withheld their children from the Mission schools. King George saved the accused from certain execution and sent for Crowther who had just left for Lagos a few weeks before. The Bishop persuaded the chiefs to send Webber to Sierra Leone to be tried there by Church law. Through his intercession they also resumed sending their children to the school. The scandal, the first of several which would bedevil the Niger Mission, affected the work at Bonny. Those opposed to the King and the Manilla House

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2 C.M.S. CA3/04/222 Crowther to Venn, 27 February 1867.
3 C.M.S. CA3/04/232 Crowther to Venn, 1 May 1867.
4 C.M.S. CA3/04/238 King George Pepple to Crowther, 13 May 1867.
5 C.M.S. CA3/04/235 Crowther to Venn, 27 May 1867.
received important ammunition for later use.

Crowther's report of his 1866 Bonny visit is a brief three pages and indicates by omission the effect of the Webber affair. The school had resumed normal functions, although the number of pupils (fifty-two) was only one more than three years before. On the "industrial" side, sawyers had been introduced from Lagos quite successfully and the chiefs sought instruction for their own men in this new craft. Crowther was putting into practice what he had earlier observed in Sierra Leone:

A missionary should be a jack of all trades ready to put his hand to work and to do in a legitimate way, anything that might tend to advance the cause of Christ. He personally supervised the construction of a road through an area of thick undergrowth from the Mission station to Bonny Town. The area had previously been a sacred grove. The missionary effort received a significant blow, however, when factionalism between the Manilla and Annie Pepple Houses broke out into civil war in 1869. Both sides employed Christianity and the missionary presence as a propaganda weapon to insure support for their own people or allies. Crowther had visited Bonny earlier in the year before hostilities had begun, but it is noteworthy that he mentioned the visit only briefly in one letter.

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3 This was a typical and gratuitous example of "Christian aggression" in the missionary field. C.M.S. CA3/04/275 Crowther to Venn, 30 June 1868. Somewhat ironically, Crowther was stung by a swarm of bees as the grove was being cut down.

4 For conflicting views of the role of Christianity in the war see Ayandele: Missionary Impact, pp. 72-73 and Tase: Christianity, pp. 65-66.
and did not prepare the customary report.¹

In mid-September Bonny was the scene of heavy fighting for two days. Several chiefs sent their children to the Mission House for protection, although classes had been suspended. In this initial phase the Annie Pepple House, under its leader JaJa, suffered defeat. In the process much of the town was destroyed.² A fragile peace existed for the next few months and school remained suspended as the station lay near a village allied to the Annie Pepple House.³ Both sides continued to make use of the missionary factor. George Pepple appealed to Crowther's dislike of "pagan ritual" and promised that peace would be restored when JaJa, "supporter of juju, had been defeated".⁴ JaJa claimed that he had fought to protect local traditions which Christianity sought to destroy.⁵ The civil war adversely affected the Mission and Crowther had some difficulty maintaining the operation through 1870. While over 200 persons continued to attend services periodically, it was not until 1871, after the Bishop had returned from a brief visit to England and his newly-ordained son, Dandeson, was posted there, that Bonny Christianity began to grow anew.

1 C.M.S. CA3/04/296 Crowther to Venn, 2 March 1869.
2 C.M.S. CA3/04/320 W.B. Carew to Crowther, 27 September 1869. Carey had been recruited in Sierra Leone as a Schoolmaster. He displayed great equanimity when he stepped in to save several of the Annie Pepple adherents who had been captured by the victorious Manillas.
3 C.M.S. CA3/04/321 P.V.J. Smart to Crowther, 16 October 1869. Smart had been born and educated in Sierra Leone and was of Ibo parentage. At this point he held the position of catechist in the Mission. See Register, p. 323, no. 132.
4 C.M.S. CA3/04/326a King George Pepple to Crowther, 27 November 1869.
5 See C.M.S. CA3/010 Carew: Journals, 21 June 1868.
Crowther established a third Delta station in Brass country during the late 1860s. His personal role in the introduction of Christianity here was central. The success which would later be achieved there would give the lie to his "interior downwards" strategy even better than did Bonny. Brass included two important towns, one the port of Tuwon and the other the "capital" Nembe. The latter community was divided into two geographical units, each with a separate ruler. Crowther had first visited Tuwon in 1857, prior to the Niger Expedition which began that year. He observed the "degraded state" of the area and received some encouragement when he suggested the placing of a missionary there. The matter remained dormant as certain chiefs, wary of outside interference, opposed the idea and the Niger Mission had insufficient personnel. In 1861 the prospects of establishing a station at Brass appeared further reduced when a zealous Brass Christian convert, who attended services at Bonny, allegedly stole a sacred tusk from a Brass royal shrine. Crowther managed to placate the deputation which came to complain to him at Akassa. The Brass chiefs did not favour the Sierra Leonean traders who frequented the Delta. Crowther's connection with this group and the stolen tusk incident did not make for a warm reception when the Bishop visited Nembe the following year. These problems reconfirmed Crowther's idea that the Delta should receive the gospel after the Upper Niger


2 C.M.S. CA3/05/8 Crowther to Venn, 7 July 1857; also Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, pp. 3-4.

3 C.M.S. CA3/04/751 Crowther: Journal from November to 2 December 1861, 22 November 1861.

4 C.M.S. CA3/04/115 Crowther to Venn, 30 August 1862.
stations had been firmly established. He did, nonetheless, believe that Brass should not go completely unattended and suggested the possibility of placing a catechist there.

Events were changing in the Delta. Newer rulers were coming into power and the fluid political situation necessitated adaptation. Military might no longer stood as a prime consideration and the availability of European trade meant that Bonny hegemony, which had been based on military prowess, had declined. A new form of state-building was developing and missionary stations and especially mission schools could play a critical part. In October 1867 a new King of Brass, Ochilya, requested the Bishop to establish a station within his country. Others also petitioned Crowther. The Bishop was wary, particularly with regard to the practical considerations of personnel and transport. Venn had earlier warned him that Brass should not be taken up unless naval transport was assured. Crowther decided to

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1 C.M.S. CA3/04/121 Crowther to Dawes, 2 December 1862.

2 Tasie: Christianity, pp. 35-86. G.I. Jones has argued that the attitude of Delta societies towards religious beliefs was and is "open-minded, empirical, and eclectic". A cult was subject to popular feeling and hence quite vulnerable. When people ceased to believe in it, it disappeared quickly to be replaced by another more fashionable or meaningful one. G.I. Jones: Trading States, p. 84.


4 C.M.S. CA3/L4/175-77 Venn to Crowther, 23 February 1865.
Go ahead when the local agent of the recently-formed Company of African Merchants promised to make available frequent passage. ¹ Ochiya and seven other chiefs signed an agreement with the Bishop similar to the one that had been negotiated a few years before with Bonny. Crowther believed in instituting aspects of self-support in his stations as soon as practically possible. In the Delta, where the local authorities actually sought a missionary presence, he was able to pursue a deliberate policy of having the community share the actual costs of construction. Following C.M.S. regulations, he levied a tuition charge, in some cases quite nominal, in all of the Mission's schools. The conditions of the agreement with Brass took note of its less favourable financial position than that of Bonny. Of the £300 estimate for buildings and salaries, the chiefs promised to contribute one-third with the remainder coming from the Bishopric Fund. The parties also agreed that tuition for school children would be £2 and £3 per annum for younger and older pupils respectively.²

Bishop Crowther visited Brass on two occasions in 1868. On the first of these he stayed only a week and reported favourably on the manner in which land was being cleared for Mission buildings.³ In May,

¹ The Company of African Merchants, as well as the West Africa Company, both founded in 1865, sought to replace Laird's operations on the Niger. The former never commenced full operation as it was unable to secure a Governmental subsidy. See Dike: Trade, pp. 178-81; Frederick Pedler: The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa. A History of the Origins of the United Africa Company, 1787-1931, London, 1974, pp. 20-27; Mockler-Ferryman: British Nigeria, pp. 66-68.

² C.M.S. CA3/04/752 Crowther: "Brass River, etc."; also Proceedings XXIX: 59 (1867-68), 25-26.

³ C.M.S. CA3/04/267 Crowther to Venn, 3 April 1868.
while at Bonny, he outlined his plans to a joint meeting of Bonny and Brass agents. His instructions give some insight into his developing ideas on missions and notably his adaptation of and addition to the Venn themes. He saw a great difference between a settled station which had assumed the nature of a pastorate, and a "new missionary field of labour, where a beginning had to be made in everything". In the latter case missionaries must be prepared to help in construction. They must also learn to teach the Christian religion "in a very plain way".1 His appointments for Brass reflected his thinking: Charles Moore, a Sierra Leonean schoolmaster with twenty-one years' experience, took control as superintending agent. Thomas A. John, a Sierra Leonean of Ibo parentage with eight years' experience with the Niger Mission, accepted the post of assistant catechist.2 The two agents had been at work barely a month when the Bishop visited Tuwon and Nembe. At the port town he went among the shipping merchants arguing persuasively for donations for the Bishopric Fund.3 He then proceeded on Ockiya's invitation to Nembe where he was received by the King as well as by the joint "monarch" Arishma. Ockiya broached the subject of a station for Nembe, but Crowther begged off for the present.4

1 C.H.S. CA3/04/271 Crowther: "Instructions to the Missionary Agents at Bonny and Brass Missions", 5 May 1868.
2 John, also known as Johnson, had been trained initially as a carpenter. See Register, p. 523, no. 163; also C.H.S. CA3/04/268 Crowther to Venn, 20 April 1868.
3 He collected over £34.
4 C.H.S. CA3/04/737 Crowther: "Brass Mission, 1868", 26 September - 13 October 1868. Crowther took special offence to the sacred nature of the boa constrictor at Brass. As with the iguana at Bonny, customary law prohibited the destruction of the reptile. The Bishop had the harshest words, however, for Consul T.J. Hutchinson, whom he had accompanied on the 1854 Niger Expedition. In 1856 Hutchinson signed an agreement with the Brass chiefs whereby British subjects would be fined if they tampered with the snakes. According to Crowther, "It was a very great weakness in a civilized Christian to stoop so low ... in such a timid way without demanding equality" for any losses resulting from the reptiles.
Attendance at Tuwon services grew slowly in the first years, but school attendance was more encouraging. The support of Ockiya contributed greatly to the ease of operation. The King again requested a station for Nembe in 1870, but the Bishop did not finally accede to this wish, as we shall see, until 1878.

Akassa, the first of the Delta stations, had been founded in 1861. The station had a dual purpose: to Christianize and educate the people of the area and to act as a waiting station and/or terminus for the stations upriver. Akassa continued to meet these requirements, particularly the latter one, throughout the 1860s. As the Ijaye War spread, however, Crowther's intention of linking the Niger Mission's interior stations with those of the Yoruba Mission through an overland route faded. He visited Akassa yearly, but his comments in 1867 illustrate the value which he placed on it for strategic reasons:

This place continues to afford an agreeable resting place ... as well as a place of necessary short change to the seaside from the interior.

In meeting its first purpose the station was far less successful. The population was small. In order to overcome the dearth of agricultural produce, the missionaries introduced various projects, including poultry raising; but the climate proved especially damaging.

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1 C.M.S. Ca3/04/1 Crowther to Venn, 9 December 1870.
2 See supra Chapter II, pp. 102-03.
3 See Ayandele: Missionary Impact, pp. 11-14.
4 C.M.S. Ca3/04/75 Crowthr: "Akassa Station" in "Onitsha Station Report", (cited in full above).
5 C.M.S. Ca3/04/63 Crowther to Venn, 5 October 1860. It had approximately 200 inhabitants in 1860.
6 Tanie: Christianity, p. 114.
Crowther attempted to establish an outstation at Angiama, a village nearby, but this had to be abandoned in less than three months when the catechist assigned became mentally ill. Language remained a problem, even though the station's managing agent, J.R. During, eventually mastered Idzo, the local tongue. The gravest setbacks came in late 1862 when the King, Sese, and a leading chief, Koko, died. Both had been staunch supporters of the mission. Their death appeared to their successors and the people in general as an ill omen. A ban on church-going was imposed. During persisted in the work, assisted by the Sierra Leonean catechist J.B. Priddy, but school attendance remained low. Crowther observed that as the inhabitants "idolized" their children, they feared entrusting them to others. First baptisms were held in July 1865, although the Bishop does not indicate the number. On a similar visit two years later the candidates for baptism consisted of only three adults. The following year Crowther preached to a "congregation" of fifteen. During and Priddy worked closely together and the death of the latter in 1869 reduced the already limited potential of the station. As the Mission station was fully

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1 C.M.S. CA3/04/91 Crowther to Venn, 19 July 1861; also C.M.S. CA3/04/96 Crowther to Venn, 30 April 1861.
2 During had been educated at the C.M.S. school in Freetown and had worked as a Scripture Reader and teacher for eight years there before going out to the Niger in 1865. See Register, p. 323, no. 161.
3 C.M.S. CA3/03/144 Crowther to Venn, 2 April 1863.
4 C.M.S. CA3/04/177 Crowther to Venn, 1 August 1865; C.M.S. CA3/04/752 Crowther: "Akassa Station" in "Onitsha Station Report", (cited in full above); C.M.S. CA3/04/754 Crowther: "Journal of Bishop Crowther on his Visit to the Niger Mission, July to September 1866", 15 July 1866.
5 C.M.S. CA3/04/315 Crowther to Venn, 30 July 1869.
financed by a C.M.S. grant, Crowther did not consider abandonment. As long as the station remained necessary as a Delta base for the Niger operations, he felt that it had to be maintained.

Onitsha: Internal Dissension and Charges of Nepotism

The interior stations of the Niger Mission provided mixed results in the 1860s. The political situation continued volatile and the mercantile prospects unsettled. As the Yoruba Mission had been the scene of internal disputes between European missionaries, so similar friction developed among Niger missionaries. The discord greatly limited the effectiveness of the work and created political problems as well. Onitsha station, in particular, suffered from this type of dissension, although other internal and external factors contributed to a crisis situation there.1 Crowther made annual visits to Onitsha as he did to other stations, but from its foundation in 1857 he had left much of its control to the Rev. John C. Taylor, the superintending agent. Shortly after Crowther's return from England in 1864, Taylor had written a lengthy report on the station which received favourable attention at Salisbury Square.2 Taylor was strong-willed and could be extremely obstinate. In 1865 reports reached Crowther that Taylor had been embroiled in a dispute between local palm oil traders and European traders which resulted in the former group instituting an embargo. When the Obi of Onitsha had called on Taylor for his assistance, the missionary had allegedly refused. It is clear that

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1 For a discussion of the 1863 "crisis" at Onitsha, see Ekechi: Missionary Enterprise, pp. 31-34.

the Obi and the Onitscha chiefs did not see the missionary activity as separate from that of trading and Taylor's earlier involvement in the dispute only gave added weight to that belief. In this case Crowther ignored the accusations against his agent and settled the problem. He warned the traders and the chiefs of Onitscha that he would "curtail operations" at the station if his missionaries were ever again threatened with "starvation". The Bishop's use of strong words, coupled with an appreciation of the traders' difficulties, led to the lifting of the embargo.1

The following year Crowther held a conference of all ordained missionary agents at the Confluence which Taylor attended.2 On his descent the Bishop briefly visited Onitscha to hold confirmations, examine baptismal candidates, etc. He could not remain longer, dependent as he was on the Government gunboat for transport. Salisbury Square, however, had already begun to show concern regarding the staffing at Onitscha. Henry Venn wrote that Taylor's letters indicated "a depression of mind" and he expressed sorrow at the

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1 C.M.S. CA3/04/739 Crowther: "Onitscha" in "Report on the Niger Mission, 1865", undated. John Whitford, a British trader and traveller, sailed on the same ship with Crowther on the 1865 visit to the Niger. He describes in detail the Onitscha scene and the Crowther meeting with the Obi. John Whitford: Trading Life in Western and Central Africa, 2nd ed., London 1967, pp. 173-79. For an interesting picture of life on the Niger in the period, with many favourable comments on Bishop Crowther's personality, stamina, and abilities, see also Chapters IV - VII.

missionary's inability to get along with the catechist Isaac George. The C.M.S. Secretary urged that Taylor go on furlough to Sierra Leone. 1 Taylor accepted the suggestion, but created further controversy over the payment of his passage to Freetown. He argued that he and all Sierra Leoneans were entitled to a paid furlough just as were the Europeans. Clearly reflecting the attitudes of others similarly situated, he maintained that even if agents were Ibo or Hausa by blood and parentage, those born in Sierra Leone "are perfect strangers to the (Niger) country at large". 2 He noted that only two missionaries then engaged on the Niger had actually been born there. 3

Taylor returned to Onitsha with Bishop Crowther in August 1867. While the two were away, fire had destroyed the central station, inflicting heavy property losses on all agents. Fortunately, the opening of two outstations at Odojari and Obori the year before provided temporary refuge for those displaced. Nonetheless all of the agents were under great personal pressure. An irascible superintendent hardly helped matters and offered a convenient focal point for grievances. William Romaine, a Sierra Leonean of Ibo extraction, had been in charge of the station in Taylor's absence. Romaine and other staff members, including Francis Langley and Edward Phillips, who ran

1 C.M.S. CA3/L1/224-26 Venn to Crowther, 23 January 1866.

2 C.M.S. CA3/037/64 Taylor to Venn, 15 December 1866. Views such as this weakened Crowther's argument that Sierra Leone should provide agents for the Niger Mission.

3 During the eighteen months which he spent in Sierra Leone, Taylor also had strong differences with the Rev. Frederick Schmö, then in London, over an Ibo translation which Taylor had forwarded for printing. Although of Ibo parentage, Taylor had employed an Ibo interpreter in his early work at Onitsha. See C.M.S. CA3/037/68 Taylor to Venn, 16 April 1867; also Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, p. 249.
Odojari and Obori respectively, had several complaints to lay before the Bishop.¹ Romaine had become especially bitter and publicly discussed his complaints while Taylor was in Sierra Leone. He informed Crowther that "the people of Onitsha" sought Taylor's removal. The Bishop had several interviews with the converts. While all denied requesting the displacement of Taylor, they unanimously expressed their displeasure at the inter-missionary feuding. Since they had constantly to defend their conversions to sceptical friends and relatives, the bad example exhibited by the Society's agents had not provided much encouragement. Crowther held three days of meetings with his agents. Morale had reached a low ebb as a result of the fire, but other problems had been simmering for some time. Several of the agents had believed at the time of their employment that the Society would maintain them for the first three years of service as well as pay their salaries. All had been promised free passage to Sierra Leone at termination and/or retirement, but the C.M.S. had recently rescinded this practice. The staff had previously raised these issues with Taylor, but as Crowther observed the complaints "almost proved too much for his (Taylor's) natural warm temperment to bear".² The Bishop replied to the complaints by saying that the Society had never contracted to provide three years of maintenance and that no proof

¹ C.M.S. CA3/04/752 Crowther: "Onitsha" in "Onitsha Station Report" (cited in full above). Both Langley and Phillips were Sierra Leonenses of Ibo extraction; the former had spent eleven years in Government service prior to becoming a missionary. See Register, p. 321, no. 148; p. 327, no. 194.

² C.M.S. CA3/04/753 Crowther: "Onitsha: Investigation of Misunderstandings among the Society's Agents Here", August 1867.
existed to the contrary. As for the question of passage to Sierra Leone, the exigencies of Home finance had necessitated this austerity measure.¹ If any of the agents felt that he could no longer serve in the Society, he could retire honourably. Crowther breathed a sigh of relief when all of them accepted the new situation.

Crowther's hope for concord within the Onitsha station did not materialize. Venn became increasingly concerned. Taylor had written the Secretary that his and his wife's lives were in danger.² Crowther began to be less supportive of his erstwhile colleague. He observed that Taylor was "very touchy", contributing to "dissatisfaction" among the agents, and that Taylor and Romaine frequently quarrelled.³ Crowther knew that there were further difficulties ahead when he arrived in August of 1868. Although it had been customary, the chiefs did not meet him at the port on his arrival. During the past year, Odojari station had had to be abandoned due to an epidemic. Yet results appeared particularly encouraging at Obori and to a lesser extent at the central station, then in the midst of rebuilding. The Bishop soon learned the reasons for the official silence. Several persons attributed the epidemic to the missionary presence, but many more, disappointed with the lack of European trade, had chosen to show their displeasure towards the missionary agents and converts.⁴

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¹ In his Report Crowther privately sympathized with his agents' plight due as it was to this rule change. He saw this as particularly harsh when coupled with the severe personal losses which they had sustained in the fire.

² C.M.S. CA3/L1/250-53 Venn to Crowther, 23 December 1867.

³ C.M.S. CA3/O4/260 Crowther to Venn, 3 February 1868.

again tried to persuade the chiefs that trade and religion were separate and could not be mixed, drawing an analogy with palm oil and water. His listeners not surprisingly remained unconvinced. The Bishop could hardly succeed when all were aware that whenever he visited the town he came either on a Government or merchant vessel. His argument proved even weaker two days later when he accompanied a British Naval Officer to an audience with the Obi. The assembled chiefs lamented the fact that the converts had ceased practicing all traditional religious rites and petitioned the ruler to issue a decree prohibiting Church attendance. The Obi placed some proposals before the Naval Officer and the Bishop. The converts could continue the free practice of Christianity if among other things: they performed the customary rites as well, did not adopt European dress, and if all Sierra Leoneans inter-married with the local inhabitants. The crucial issue of Christian and "pagan" worship left Crowther little room to manoeuvre. Nothing had been settled when he sailed away a few days later. The stage was set for "persecution".

As the Bishop descended the river after his visits to the upper stations, he received a frantic note from Taylor that although the converts were holding fast, the position was deteriorating. All trade had been suspended. He urged that a gunboat be made ready to protect lives and remove agents if necessary. Crowther returned to the town on 13 September. The chiefs rejected all gifts offered by the Government and missionary agents. Persecution of converts

2 C.H.S. C43/04/200b Taylor to Crowther, 31 August 1860.
had spread to include fines to purchase slaves for human sacrifice. The Bishop offered to bow to all demands, and even to remove Taylor as certain chiefs had expressed a dislike of him. The Obi and chiefs asked for time to consider and Crowther again left with the situation unresolved. On 2 October the chiefs, traders and missionaries entered into an agreement, which proved especially favourable regarding trade.

The Obi swore on the Bible, and took a "country oath", to allow no harm to come to the missionaries. Mrs. Susan Crowther Thompson, wife of the Onitsha representative of the West Africa Company, played an important role in the negotiations and she, rather than Taylor, was chosen by the chiefs to inform her father of the settlement.

Isaac George and Romaine appear to have laid the groundwork for the agreement in meetings with the Obi on 22 and 31 September. At the general meeting at which the final agreement was signed, the converts were permitted freedom of worship as long as they swore a "national oath" and adhered to social customs. The agreement affected Taylor's position adversely. The day after the signing he wrote an emotional and even irrational letter to Crowther. He charged all the agents with insubordination and urged their removal. He and Mrs. Taylor would maintain the station, he exclaimed, "even if martyred!"

The following day he urged the Bishop to come immediately. The other agents, apparently united in opposition, made little mention of their

1 C.M.S. CA3/04/280a Crowther to Venn, 21 September 1868. Crowther does not say if the demands had altered since his earlier meeting with the chiefs.
2 C.M.S. CA3/04/280c Crowther: "Agreement Reached with King and Chiefs of Onitsha", 2 October 1868, enclosed with Isaac George and V.G. Romaine to Crowther, 3 October 1868.
3 Ibid.
4 C.M.S. CA3/04/287a Taylor to Crowther, 3 October 1868.
5 C.M.S. CA3/04/287b Taylor to Crowther, 4 October 1868.
difficulties with the station's managing agent.¹

The Onitsha controversy took on a different character with the intrusion of members of the Crowther family. Following the family's disputes with European agents in the Yoruba Mission, all of them had settled at Lagos. The two elder sons, Samuel and Josiah, entered private trade. They received aid and encouragement from their father, who did not shy from using his influence to secure them work with as well as passage on West African Company steamers. The Bishop's relations with Thomas Clegg varied greatly and appear to have been strongly conditioned by the treatment which his sons received from Clegg's firm. Samuel and Josiah accompanied their father on many Niger Visitations and served as quasi-industrial agents for the Mission at the Confluence and occasionally at Onitsha. In early 1867, responding to several complaints which Clegg had made against the Mission and his sons, Crowther wrote the Manchester merchant that he had left the teaching of "secular things" in the Mission to his sons. He went on to question a rule which the West African Company had recently instituted which prohibited the transport of private traders on the river unless they were going to a particular place to settle. Crowther condemned this "prejudice" which he claimed had been exhibited "against the Mission" and denied allegations that room taken up by calabashes belonging to Samuel and Josiah had displaced Company stores. He made the point, not really wide of the mark, that

if it be acknowledged, both myself on behalf of the C.M.S., and my sons have contributed much to encourage the West Africa Company, Ltd., in their attempts to develop the trade of the Niger ...

¹ See C.M.S. CA3/V/287c which includes: George and Romaine to Crowther, 3 October 1868; O.E. Cole to Crowther, 3 October 1868; and Langley to Crowther, 2 October 1868.
Bishop Crowther's typically defensive attitude regarding his sons' activities obscured the nascent conflict between the European mercantile firms then finally coming onto the river and the already present Saro traders. Crowther had encouraged and supported the Sierra Leoneans even before the foundation of the Niger Mission. Notwithstanding his promotion of the Saros, Crowther viewed all commerce mainly in the Buxtonian sense as a purveyor of Christianity and civilization. He believed in the freedom of movement and of trade for all, Europeans and Africans. He was "an apostle of Free Trade on the Niger". As his own thoughts on African agency became more settled, he quite naturally saw this concept extending beyond the missionary sphere. On the Niger and in West Africa in general, African missionaries and African traders were much more closely knit than their European counterparts. In the 1860s the commercial development of the Niger was in its infancy. Crowther's support of his children's trading interests provided an easy and visible target for opponents of African traders competing on the river. Crowther did not attempt to hide his favouritism. Only a few months after having written Clegg in 1867, he was again on his way to the upper stations of his Mission. He was accompanied by all three of his sons, as well as by his daughter, Mrs. T.B. Macaulay, who for a "change of climate" had decided to visit her sister Mrs. Thompson at Onitsha.

1 C.M.S. CA3/04/219 Crowther to Clegg, 3 January 1867.
4 C.M.S. CA3/04/421 Crowther to Venn, 13 July 1867.
Mrs. Macaulay appears to have had other reasons for travelling on the Niger, as complaints soon reached Venn of her trading activities. While noting the Bishop's "simplicity" in such matters, Venn warned that the mercantile activities of his children "have in a measure implicated your character in trade". Crowther, "pained" by the allegations, came once more to his children's defence: All that Mrs. Macaulay did was to make slippers and dresses for sale, something not uncommon among the wives of missionary agents. He declared that he had been "unaware" that he carried consignments for his daughter, but unconvincingly allowed that a "friend of Mrs. Macaulay" did bring her some calabashes from Lokoja.

Samuel Crowther, Junior, arrived at Onitsha in the midst of the disturbances surrounding Taylor. He soon wrote his father that all of the agents under Taylor had been contemplating resignation when he arrived, but that he had personally convinced them to remain at their posts. He charged Taylor with a hoax: having purchased a home in Sierra Leone, he had planned to retire there. The dispute with the Obi gave an excellent opportunity to depart honourably. According to Samuel, when the agreement was signed, Taylor was disappointed. For this reason the chiefs had selected Mrs. Thompson to convey notice of the agreement to the Bishop. In the meantime Taylor continued to write of personal persecution, culminating in a fight in which he

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1 C.M.S. CA3/L1/250-53 Venn to Crowther, 23 December 1867.
2 C.M.S. CA3/04/261 Crowther to Venn, 3 February 1868.
3 C.M.S. CA3/04/287d-f S. Crowther, Jr. to Crowther, 7 October 1868.
subsequently alleged he had been threatened with a pistol.\(^1\) Taylor attempted to sack Cole and Phillips and have them removed to Akassa, but they refused.\(^2\) Bishop Crowther trod cautiously and sought Parent Committee advice. He urged first that Taylor be sent to Sierra Leone to cool down, and unless he would be fully reconciled to his post in Onitsha, not to return to it again.\(^3\)

By late November 1868, however, the Bishop seemed more certain of Taylor's motives. He noted Taylor's house purchase in Freetown and his obvious interest to depart there. Pointing to his "habit for ardent spirits" and "haughty and unstable disposition", he urged the Parent Committee to remove him at the earliest opportunity and to do so by writing directly to Taylor. Displaying an almost naïve faith in his son, he stated that Samuel's letter had gone a long way towards convincing him of the "true state of affairs at Onitsha".\(^4\)

Crowther did not get the quick response from Salisbury Square for which he had hoped. Henry Venn had become increasingly infirm. In 1867 the Secretary had had to delegate some of his work to other colleagues. Two years later he wrote Crowther apologizing that the hands of his fellow Secretaries

\(^1\) C.M.S. CA3/O4/288a-b Taylor to Crowther, 21 October 1868. The other missionaries involved presented a conflicting story. See C.M.S. CA3/O4/288c Cole to Crowther, 20 October 1868; C.M.S. CA3/O4/288d which includes Phillips to Crowther, Romaine to Crowther, both 20 October 1868, and Langley to Crowther, 19 October 1868.

\(^2\) See C.M.S. CA3/O4/288a for seven letters on this subject.

\(^3\) C.M.S. CA3/O4/288f Crowther to Venn, undated, but probably early November 1868.

\(^4\) C.M.S. CA3/O4/291 Crowther to Venn, 27 November 1868.
had soon become filled with the correspondence of our larger missions, and I fear I am to blame for the apparent neglect of the Niger Mission. ¹

Crowther decided to take Taylor with him to Lagos, but the two of them returned to the river in the latter part of 1869.  Taylor must certainly have seen the writing on the wall.  Both Romaine and Langley, as well as Charles Paul of Lokoja, were ordained deacons at the Confluence. ²  When they came down the river, Romaine and Langley were placed in charge of Onitsha.  Taylor returned again to Lagos with the Bishop, ³ where the Parent Committee's request that he leave for Sierra Leone was waiting. ⁴  When Taylor later arrived at Freetown, he charged the Bishop's sons with complicity in his removal through rumour and insinuation. ⁵  He claimed that the Bishop himself, in a letter to his son-in-law the Rev. George Nicol, had said that he would be set aside.  He wrote a long defence of his activities during the persecution at Onitsha and pointed again to a conspiracy:  "I cannot tell what I have done to Bishop Crowther's sons who are fully bent to ruin me."  He alleged that they sought to have Dandeson, Nicol, or Macaulay eventually succeed the Bishop. ⁶

¹ C.M.S. CA3/L1/262-64 Venn to Crowther, 23 May 1869.
² C.M.S. CA3/04/316 Crowther to Venn, 8 September 1869.
³ C.M.S. CA3/04/318 Crowther to Venn, 30 October 1869.
⁴ C.M.S. CA3/037/70 Taylor to Venn, 1 November 1869.
⁵ C.M.S. CA3/037/72 Taylor to Edward Hutchinson, 4 December 1869.
⁶ C.M.S. CA3/037/73 Taylor to Venn, 3 December 1869.

Taylor did not return to the Niger Mission, but was later employed in Sierra Leone, teaching Tbo at Fourah Bay College.  See Tasie: Christianity, p. 509.
Idah and the Confluence: A Shift in Emphasis

After the difficulties that had been experienced in obtaining permission for a mission station at Idah, the Bishop was encouraged by the reception which he received there in July 1865. On his way to the Confluence he stopped briefly to place the Rev. Coomber in charge, aided by catechist Edward Phillips, and an assistant catechist and schoolmaster, William Carlin. The last was one of the few missionary agents successfully recruited on the Niger. Carlin was a Tiv who had been liberated by the Niger Expedition of 1854, received some schooling in Sierra Leone, and returned to work in the Mission. He eventually married an Igbebe convert.\(^1\) Coomber was instructed to begin immediately the building of Mission dwellings and a school. Crowther returned a month later to find that little progress had been made. The people displayed no eagerness to volunteer their services unless compensation were paid. The Bishop had considered this possibility and brought several labourers with him from the Confluence. As opposed to the Delta stations, there was no evidence of self-support in construction of the necessary buildings. For two weeks Crowther personally supervised the clearing of the station site and the erection of a school and houses. On 1 October he held services and opened a Sunday School in the completed premises.\(^2\)

In November of 1869 Dr. Baikie had begun a settlement at Lokoja, near the site of the 1841 Model Farm. It gradually grew to village

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1 C.H.S. CA3/04/179 Crowther to Venn, 2 August 1865.

size.¹ Baikie was recalled eventually and left Lokoja in 1864, but
the British Government maintained the settlement, and John Glover,
then Administrator at Lagos, appointed an Acting Consul to the town.
By the time of Crowther's visit in 1855 the West Africa Company had
established a depot there and a separate market had grown up.
Impressed by the permanency of the settlement, which was under Etsu
Nupe's care, the Bishop decided that it rather than Igbebe should be
the major station at the Confluence. Crowther chose the Rev.
T.C. John as superintendent for Lokoja and Igbebe. The latter
station had been maintained from its founding in 1857 by Scripture
Readers. Crowther placed the experienced Sierra Leonean schoolmaster,
Charles Paul, in charge of the station, which would now serve as an
outstation for Lokoja. He set Paul to work collecting materials for
an Igbira vocabulary.² Crowther left the Confluence greatly
concerned as to the political state there, especially at Igbebe:

   In all directions there are either wars or threats of
   invasion, which must unsettle the minds of the people
   in general. ³

Masaba had threatened Igbebe and had asked Crowther to remove to safety
his agents there, but the Bishop had not obliged. As the inhabitants
of the town were not on good terms with the Ata of Igala, their nominal
overlord, Crowther opined that this could give Masaba an excellent
opportunity to strike.⁴

¹ For a discussion of Baikie's founding of Lokoja, see H.J. Pedraza:
   Borrioboola-Gha: the Story of Lokoja, the First British
   Settlement in Nigeria, London, 1960, Chapters IV and V.

² While Hausa and Nupe were spoken there, Igbira was the language
   of the indigenous population. The linguistic and translational
   work conducted at Lokoja under Crowther's general supervision was
   impressive. See Hair: "Niger Languages and Sierra Leonean
   Missionary Linguists", 131-32.

³ C.H.S. CA5/04/739 Crowther: "Lokoja" and "Conclusion" in "Report
   of the Niger Mission, 1865", undated.

⁴ C.H.S. CA5/04/135 Crowther to Venn, 28 October 1865.
Shortly after Crowther's return to Lagos, the Anaja (head chief) of Igbebe died. He was succeeded temporarily by a local chief, Ashiba. An important constituent in the position of the Anaja was his economic authority within the town and over a wide section of the Niger nearby. As was his right the Ata selected a permanent successor. He chose Akaia, a leading member of the Abokko clan. In so doing he passed over Akaia's older brother, Abaje, who was also a protege of Ashiba. With Ashiba's approval Abaje was "crowned" at Igbebe.

In a move designed to counter the Ata, Abaje then travelled to Bida and paid obeisance to Hasaba. War followed in mid-December with the two parties contending on the outskirts of Igbebe. On 22 February 1866 the town was destroyed and the Mission station plundered. Paul and his assistant narrowly escaped, aided by William Fell, Acting Consul at Lokoja. Crowther received the news with concern, but was relieved that his agents were safe and that a station existed at Lokoja to which they could go. In late July the Bishop visited the ruins of Igbebe where previously as many as 12,000 had lived. He met with Akaia who had succeeded in driving Abaje from the town but had accomplished a Pyrrhic victory at best. Crowther spoke to those assembled on the futility of war and somewhat too self-assuredly pointed to the successes achieved at Lokoja and Idah, where he noted that stations had been in operation for less a time than that of Igbebe.

1 C.M.S. CA5/03/201 Paul to Crowther, 4 January 1866; also C.M.S. CA5/03/200 T.C. John to Crowther, 17 February 1866.
2 C.M.S. CA5/03/200 T.C. John to Crowther, 22 February 1866; also C.M.S. CA5/03/201 Paul to Crowther, 27 February 1866.
3 C.M.S. CA5/03/203 Crowther to Venn, 6 June 1866.
4 C.M.S. CA5/03/203 Crowther to Venn, 23 July 1866.
At Idah the Bishop dedicated a chapel at services attended by more than 300 persons. The Ata, absent in the interior quieting disturbances, had left an invitation to Crowther to come and visit him at his camp. Crowther decided to accept, and accompanied by Taylor who had come up from Onitsha, and Carlin, he set out eastwards from Idah. The daughter of the Ata went with them. Crowther, now over 60, once again displayed remarkable patience and stamina. The guides they contracted took advantage of them whenever possible and the terrain was hilly. After three days they reached the place where the royal party had encamped. Crowther was impressed with the site which he compared to "the tents of the patriarchs". Contrary to custom, the Ata visited the Bishop in the latter's quarters shortly after his arrival. The following day the party were warmly received by the Ata in council. Crowther lamented the destruction of Igbebe and the loss of the Mission station there. The Ata replied that for this reason he had invited the Bishop to the camp so that he could personally assure him that the circumstances surrounding the events at Igbebe were not as bad as might be expected. He took the blame for what had occurred in that he had acted wrongly in passing over Abaje for the Anajaship. Now, however, the Abosiko clan must themselves settle the dispute as they had hereditary title to the area. Crowther requested permission to build additional houses at Idah and the Ata readily acquiesced. Before departing he held services which the ruler attended. He took as his text one which the Ata could not help but have found reassuring: "Fear God, Honour the king". (I Peter 2, v. 17). The party returned to Idah after more than five days at the camp.

1 C.M.S. CA/3/04/734 Crowther: "Journal of Bishop Crowther on his Visit to the Niger Mission, July to September 1866"; also printed in Intelligencer N.S. III (1867), 53-53.
Crowther returned to the upper stations in August/September 1867. He stopped briefly at Idah on his way to Lokoja. Progress had been steadily made during the past year at this Confluence station, making up for the setback suffered at Igbebe the year before. During his visit with the Ata the Bishop had been received cordially, but he remained uneasy:

The unsettled state of the country, unfriendly feelings and constant disputes of the inhabitants and their king ... is a very great drawback to the prosperity of Idda. The two major clan chiefs had both quitted the town, the Abokko to Oko-okein, fourteen miles north of Idah, and the Agabidoko to Igbokein, twelve miles north of Onitsha. Crowther noted that the Ata had no power outside Idah and since the destruction of Igbebe the river between Idah and the Confluence had ceased to be safe. After a short stay at Lokoja Crowther went down to Idah on the West Africa Company steamer Thomas Bazley. As the time did not permit, he did not accept an invitation from the Abokko chief to visit Oko-okein on the way. On 19 September 1867 he left Idah for the Confluence in a boat he had had sent down. He stopped at Oko-okein to pay his respects to Ama Abokko, but received a curt reception. The chief asked for presents which Crowther had not brought. Outside the chief's hut the Bishop's boatmen were apprehended and the boat plundered. Crowther, his son Dandeson, and a Christian Visitor from Lokoja, J. Moore, were taken captive. Once the chief had relaxed, Crowther asked him why he had so acted. Ama Abokko replied that he was "superintendent of trade" for that section of the Niger, but had not

1 C.M.S. C/3/04/752 Crowther: "Lokoja Station" in "Onitsha Station Report, etc.".
2 C.M.S. C/3/04/734 Crowther: "Ida Station, 1867", undated.
been recognized as such by British merchants who slighted him. The Bishop's protest that he had no control over trading matters proved unavailing. The chief argued that since Crowther knew him well he should have represented his interests favourably to the traders. He concluded that as the Bishop "owned the ships and could direct them" as he pleased, he would remain captive until large presents were given and heavy trade opened. In an attempt to demonstrate the separateness of missionary enterprise, Crowther pointed to Idah where there was a Mission station, but no trading factory. Yet he could hardly help appreciating the reasons for his predicament:

I can well account for such erroneous, perhaps wilful, attribution of such power and influence over the ships: It is my being the oldest visitor known on the river. Since 1841, I was known by the people: In twelve consecutive voyages from 1856 to this time, I was always on board, whether in a man-of-war or a trading ship ... To visit the river every year and yet do not own the ship or the trading establishments was what Abokko could not be easily made to believe. 1

The captives spent the first night without food in an open shed with Ama Abokko's canoe boys. The following day Crowther wrote to the Consul at Lokoja, T. Lyons McLeod, who had arrived at his post while Crowther had been at Idah. The Bishop informed him of his predicament and urged him not to give in to any of Ama Abokko's demands. During the next few days various slaves secretly brought food to the kidnapped. On the fifth day Ama Abokko offered them food remaining from a sacrifice he had made earlier in the day. Crowther declined this for religious reasons. On 25 May the Ata's messenger arrived from Idah and, while giving the party some eating implements, aroused

1 Ibid.
Crowther's suspicion. Finally, a representative of the Consul arrived the next day with gifts and a message for the chief. Ama Aboloko made his demands: a ransom equivalent to two hundred slaves or $1,000 to be paid in cowries and materials. Dandeson and Moore were free to leave, but the Bishop had to remain until the ransom was paid.

While Moore departed with the messenger for Lokoja, Dandeson opted to remain with his father. Two days later, the Thomas Bazley arrived, flying the Consul's flag, and bringing William Fell, now the Assistant Consul, as well as the two other Crowther sons, Samuel and Josiah. They told their father that the Consul planned his release without paying any ransom. Fell met with Ama Aboloko and determined not to give any money under threat as it would set a dangerous precedent. As he broke off his conversation the group ran for the ship, in the course of which Fell received a mortal wound from a poisoned arrow. He died as they neared Lokoja.

Ten days later Crowther briefly visited Idah on his way to Onitsha and received a complete picture of events. Coomber came on board and told him that the Ata had informed the Mission agents that his protection of them would be removed as soon as the Bishop returned and that they would from then on have to rely on Ama Aboloko's good offices. The Ata and his rebellious chief had entered into a compact. Crowther immediately decided that

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1 Ibid.

2 For C.M.S. accounts of the "kidnapping", see Proceedings XXIX: 69 (1867-68), 22-23; also Intelligencer M.S. IV (1868), 9-13. Some elements in the press accused Crowther of "skedaddling" in the escape, disregarding in so doing the safety of others. The African Times, however, discounted such "inaccurate accounts" and applauded the Bishop's conduct in the incident. See African Times VII: 78, 23 December 1867. Also, Page: Black Bishop, pp. 218-30; Walker, Romance, pp. 158-39.
abandonment of the station stood as the only course of action. He
would not countenance bribery and hoped that in leaving Idah the
inhabitants would see missionary lack of interest in the place as well
as their separateness from mercantile interests. Leaving behind a
station stocked with more than £150 worth of goods, he took his agents
aboard with him.¹

When Crowther wrote Venn his account of events at Idah and Oko-okein,
he concluded with an appeal for help for the Mission and the people of
the Niger. Commercial development had not occurred as promised. A
growing European trading presence had not materialized. Passing over
the actions of Ama Abokko, Crowther spoke on behalf of the peoples
with whom treaties had been signed on the Niger Expeditions:

They have been sadly disappointed at not receiving
legitimate trade in the room of the Slave Trade ... 
as they had been led to expect.²

While the palm oil trade had been an effective substitute for the
coastal states, it had not been so for the countries of the interior
beyond Onitsha. The Government, he alleged, had not been sufficiently
attentive. As for the trading companies themselves, the West Africa
Company, which had taken over operations from Laird with great
expectations, had not been capable of meeting requirements. It
operated without the subsidy which Laird had enjoyed on the river. As
a result "mission agents have been repeatedly accused of breach ..."
Crowther concluded that his forced detention by Ama Abokko provided
"tangible proof that England is still looked upon to fifil (sic.) her

¹ C.M.S. CA5/OV2; ² Crowther to Venn, 18 October 1867.

Ibid.
part of the Treaty of 1641.\(^1\)

The Bishop returned to the Confluence in August 1868 on the Thomas Banley accompanied by two Royal Navy gunboats. While he had been away, Consul Lyons McLeod had had differences with the Mission staff and had written the Bishop of Oxford suggesting that a European bishop be appointed to Lokoja.\(^2\) Crowther thought the idea particularly unsound: Since the settlement could barely pay the salaries of the Consul and his servants, it certainly could not provide the £1,000 or more which McLeod promised for a bishop.\(^3\) Both the kidnapping of Crowther and the firing on a merchant ship in the Delta the year before had prompted similar actions by chiefs in the Lokoja area. For nearly eight months previous to Crowther's arrival continuous attempts had been made by river "pirates" to plunder the West Africa Company's factory. Masaba had sent reinforcements and the attacks were foiled, but the constant skirmishing adversely affected missionary operations. The Bishop conducted several Sunday School examinations before leaving on 25 August for a visit to Masaba at Bida.

Accompanied by McLeod and the Commanders of the two gunboats, Crowther considered the object of his meeting with Etsu Nupe as no less than "the preservation of the Niger Mission". Eight days after leaving Lokoja the party arrived at Bida which had only been a camp when Crowther had last visited it. Masaba received them grandly and displayed singular trust in the Bishop. Having insufficient

\(^1\) Ibid.
\(^3\) C.H.S. CA\(3/04/279a\) Crowther to Venn, 21 September 1863; also C.H.S. CA\(3/04/739a\) Crowther to McLeod, 24 August 1863. McLeod was an alcoholic and as one writer has argued probably mad. See Mason: Nupe Kingdom, p. 151.
confidence in the Consul's Hausa interpreter, Masaba asked Crowther to translate for him in Yoruba. While the emir understood both languages he insisted that his Hausa be first translated into Yoruba by his own interpreters and then into English by the Bishop. Crowther as a result sat in on all the meetings, both commercial and Governmental, as well as missionary. In his own sessions with Etsu Nupe he presented two Arabic Bibles and asked permission to redeem three slave children with funds sent to him from England and the Continent. Masaba promised future protection for the settlement at Lokoja and revenge on Ama Abokko for his treatment of the Bishop. Crowther reported favourably on the visit and once again showed himself as the pragmatic strategist, extolling a Muslim ruler as a protector for Christian missionaries:

I sincerely hope that Her Majesty's Government will really see the advantage of having such an ally on the banks of the Niger ... if they wish to develop the trade of the Rivers, civilize the people ... and introduce Christianity. It is better to do with one ruler who keeps order and the people in subjection although in tyranny, whether he be heathen or Mohammedan, than to have to deal with a people in a state of anarchy or piracy.1

The two gunboats sought out and destroyed the camps of the two sets of rebels who had earlier attacked Lokoja. In concluding his report of the upper stations, Crowther gave a personal analysis of past problems. No particular group, Government, commercial or missionary, was to blame for the difficulties. He realized, however, that others might think otherwise:

It is not unlikely that some objectors to Christian Missions to Christianize the Africans will take occasion in these journals to pronounce that the African Native Mission is a total failure.2

1 C.M.S. G43/04/755-56 Crowther: "Journal Extracts, 23 July - September 1868". Crowther's suggestions were passed on to Whitehall and in 1871 the Government adopted a policy virtually identical to that proposed by the Bishop. See Flint: Goldie, pp. 23-25.

2 Ibid.
The Bishop argued that such persons should note that attacks on steamers and plundering of factories had first occurred at places where no Mission stations existed. The beneficial change in those areas where the missionaries had settled was obvious and no one who has himself experienced the nature of such a change can with sober reflection call the Mission a failure. ¹

A year later, in October 1869, Crowther felt obliged to defend again the work on the Niger. In a moving "Charge" delivered to his clergy, he noted that success should not be measured solely by worldly standards, but also through the "eye of faith":

Our Divine Master does not estimate our zeal ... by the amount of what is actually produced by us ... He knows well the nature of the soil we have to work upon; but as long as we sow faithfully, He does not make us responsible for the soil on which the seed falls. ²

He cited the progress made in twelve years, during which time five principal stations and two outstations had been maintained despite great difficulties. Money and men remained as grave problems, prompting Crowther to rebuke some African agents who had been urging "Africa for the Africans". The Bishop asked his audience pointedly: "Are the Africans yet able to regenerate Africa without foreign aide?" As far as he was concerned, outside assistance was essential. Sierra Leone could not and did not provide sufficient personnel. Self-support was in its infancy in places like Bonny and Brass. Considering the large areas untouched by Christianity in West Africa, he argued that it was "unpardonable selfishness" to claim "Africa for the Africans" when

¹ Ibid.
² C.M.S. CA3/0V325 Crowther: "A Charge delivered at Lokoja at the Confluence, on the 13th September 1869". pp. 15-14.
the Continent was neither wealthy, skilful, nor enlightened. While self-support had to be encouraged as well as the training of indigenous agents, the appeal to those nations which had contributed to Africa's evangelization must also continue unabated. At the same time, however, Crowther took great pains to point out that Christianity does not undertake to destroy national assimilation ... Where there are (defects) connected with politics, corrections should be introduced with due caution, and with all meekness of wisdom, that there may be good and perfect understanding between us and the powers that be ... 1

In order to underscore his interest in the national and cultural heritage, he pressed his agents to encourage and support already existing local mutual aid clubs. He also urged a better understanding of traditional religious terms and ceremonials as the wrong use made of such terms does not depreciate their real value, but renders them more valid when we adopt them in expressing scriptural terms in their right senses ... 2

The same was true of the stories and proverbs of the oral traditions. He concluded that if judicious use were made of "native ideas", the people's minds would be better reached than by attempting to introduce new concepts which were foreign and unsuited to their way of thinking.

Conclusion

In securing Samuel Crowther's elevation to the episcopacy in 1864, Henry Venn hoped that his ideas on Native Churches would finally be put to the test. The compromises to which the ageing Secretary had to agree, however, substantively altered several of the components

1 Ibid., p. 12.
2 Ibid., p. 13.
of his original plan. At the same time the less than perfect model placed Crowther in an awkward and difficult position. He already possessed great authority within his Mission, as well as the concurrent responsibility. Both of these were augmented by his consecration. European missionaries had questioned his qualifications from racial and personal points of view even before he was nominated as a bishop. Yet he was left to his own devices to convince the Bishop of Sierra Leone as well as the missionaries and converts in Yorubaland that they should voluntarily request inclusion of the Yoruba Mission within his diocese.

During these years the Niger Mission suffered the growing pains of a fledgling organization. Despite initial successes in the Delta Crowther appreciated the uncertainty of the missionary presence and the fragile nature of the inhabitants' interest in Christianity. At Onitsha internecine feuding as well as Crowther's own nepotism sapped the effectiveness of the operation and helped prompt a short-lived "persecution" by the authorities. Further upriver, at the Confluence, the unsettled political situation constantly threatened the work. Crowther's very prominence on the river could pose serious problems. As one who had been on the Niger as early as 1841 and had appeared almost annually from 1857 onwards, he was viewed by chiefs and people as a powerful figure whose influence, it was believed, extended over both European and African traders, as well as the British Government. This general misunderstanding reached its most dangerous point in the kidnapping by Ama Abokko in 1867. Crowther's concern with the political instability of the area impelled him to seek protective agreements with local authorities before establishing a station. In the Delta, where these agreements also included guarantees of
financial aid, progress followed quickly. The main risk in such an approach was obvious: by tying the Mission too closely to a particular ruler or faction, the Society's options, especially in times of civil strife, were limited. Nonetheless, the Bishop continued his policy of "starting from the top", even when deserted by a ruler like the Ata of Igala. He persevered in nurturing his relationship with the Muslim Etsu Nupe, arguing that this powerful non-Christian leader provided the order and stability which were necessary for effective evangelization. He also stressed the importance of working within the established cultural framework whenever possible. At the end of the 1860's he viewed the work ahead as still resting on African agency, but assisted in expansion by financial and material support from the Society as well as the Government.
A Problem of Finance

While Henry Venn held the post of Honorary Clerical Secretary until just a few months before his death in January 1873, he had by the late 1860s ceased going regularly to Salisbury Square and had reduced his correspondence considerably. His colleagues did not take the same personal interest in the day to day affairs of the Society's missionaries, and Samuel Crowther in particular lost a sounding board for his ideas. In 1869 Crowther suggested that he should go to England to discuss the future of his Mission. Venn heartily agreed to such a conference, as did the Parent Committee. The Bishop prepared a detailed list of suggestions for the Committee's consideration. Crowther was concerned that Fourah Bay College had been unable to provide sufficient teachers for his Mission. He proposed that in the meantime men with less formal education, but of good character and sound Christian values, should be recruited. In continuing to rely on the Sierra Leonean connection, he again demonstrated that in his view "Native" agency meant "West African" agency. He argued that the Society could rely on the experienced Christians of middle age from Sierra Leone who can read and write and understand their Bible well. Such men could be trained as catechists in "preparandi" classes at

1 C.M.S. CA3/L1/269-70 Venn to Crowther, 23 November 1869; also C.M.S. G/C1/v.38/570 Committee of Correspondence, 16 November 1869.

Fourah Bay and the Grammar School in Freetown. The service of similar persons in the Niger and Yoruba Missions had already proved invaluable. He pointed to thirteen agents who had first entered secular trades before being called to missionary work. Among them were carpenters, farmers, bricklayers and shoemakers. Even more than their skills, their age and experience had gone a long way towards commanding the respect of local rulers and elders. Crowther believed that these men should be assisted by educated young associates until such time as a fully-trained staff could be developed. From a practical point of view, however, he urged that the position of all African agents be made more attractive. The salaries remained much lower than those of European agents and, more importantly for those coming from Sierra Leone, no allowance was made for furloughs from the Niger. Also few scholarships were provided for agents' children to attend the Grammar Schools at Freetown and Lagos. After Crowther had presented his plan in person, the Committee displayed a reluctance to make any decided policy. They suggested that the Bishop approach the Sierra Leone Finance Committee regarding personnel. As for conditions of employment, they increased marginally the number of Foundation, or scholarship students, at the Grammar Schools and permitted the Bishop to sanction passages for agents to Sierra Leone in exceptional cases.

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1 Ibid.; also C.M.S. CA3/04/329b Crowther: "Salaries of Native Agents", 30 March 1870; C.M.S. G/C1/v.39/99-105 Committee of Correspondence, 31 May 1870. Crowther obtained a promise from the Committee that it would finance the secondary education of one child of each agent in the Mission. See C.M.S. CA3/04/337c Crowther to T.C. John et al., 24 August 1870.
The 1870s witnessed a significant decline in C.M.S. revenues. The Bishopric Fund which had been established at the time of Crowther's consecration in 1864 needed replenishing. The Fund had been used for establishing the stations at Bonny, Brass and Igbessa, as well as for such diverse activities as passages for new agents coming to the Niger from Sierra Leone and the ransom of kidnapped converts. The three stations mentioned did not receive any direct grants from the Society and while self-support had developed to the point where it accounted for up to half of the operating costs in these places, the remainder had to be taken from the Bishopric Fund. Repairs and extensions on any station in the Mission were expected to be paid from this same source. As such construction was urgently needed at Onitsha, Otta, Lagos and Bonny, Crowther issued a new Appeal for the Fund in 1870 while in England. He travelled extensively in its support during the more than six months in which he was in the country. The religious press, in addition to the C.M.S. journals, supported the drive and extolled the qualities of the Bishop and his work on the Niger. At Manchester Town Hall Crowther spoke of the progress made in the Delta, particularly at Brass. Resolutions were passed at the meeting in support of the Fund Appeal and a local committee was appointed. In addition to speaking in Manchester and London, he


2 See especially The Rock no. 232 Supplement, 27 May 1870; also The Church Herald, II: 31, 18 May 1870.

3 The Rock no. 220, 14 April 1870 and "Bishop Crowther on African Missions" in The African Times IX: 105, 23 April 1870.
addressed audiences and gave sermons in Leeds, Liverpool, Oxford, Reading, and many smaller towns in the Midlands and the South. His most generous contributor was the Member of Parliament and merchant T.B. Horsfall who gave £250 for construction of a church at Nembe.\footnote{Horsfall gave additional grants of £300 each year in 1871, 1872, and 1873 for the erection of churches at Bonny and New Calabar (Kalabari).}

As in 1864 Thomas Clegg took responsibility for collecting contributions from among the Manchester mercantile community and raised more than £200.\footnote{C.M.S. F/FL/TS/A3/1 "Niger Native Bishopric Fund: Report of Expenditures and List of Contributions Received from January 1867 to December 1876" (pamphlet) in "Letters, Papers, Accounts, and Printed Matter relating to West African and Nigerian Bishopric Funds".} By the end of the year subscriptions totalling £903 had been received.\footnote{As reported in The Rock no. 226, 6 May 1870. The Meeting showed its approval by strongly passing the Bishop's resolution.}

The success of the Appeal and the progress already made in the Niger led the Bishop to publicly reaffirm his belief in an African-staffed Mission. At the Annual General Meeting of the Society at Exeter Hall in May, he moved that

\begin{quote}
It is upon Native Agency, under the Divine blessing, that the chief reliance must be placed for the building up of the native church, and for the discharge of its highest ministrations.\footnote{The support which Bishop Crowther received for his 1870 resolution, while indicative of the regard with which he and his work were held, nonetheless, also reflected the practical realities of the Society's currently difficult financial and personnel situation. In 1872 the C.M.S. Annual Report "deplore(d) a failing treasury and a scanty supply of candidates". The growth rate of annual income had not kept pace with that of the Society's work. In the ten year period 1862-72 this income rate had declined by nearly one-third over that of 1870.}
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the years 1849-61. In like manner during the earlier period the
C.M.S. had trained 246 European agents of whom sixty-two were
University graduates, while in 1862-72 only 128 candidates, of which
twenty-three were University graduates, became missionaries. 1

According to Eugene Stock the Society had to push forward the training
of its "children" for independence due to the failure of British men to
come forward in sufficient numbers to meet the demand for additional
missionaries. This, coupled with an inadequate supply of funds, led
the Society "to make resolute efforts to throw the Native Churches on
their own resources". 2 With the exception of the so-called "Great
Income" of 1872-74 expenditure continued to grow faster than income
during the 1870s. Deficits grew from £14,000 in 1876-77 to over
£25,000 in 1878-79. The Society's bankers began to issue warnings to
the Parent Committee. Retrenchment emerged as the most immediate
means with which to shore up the deteriorating financial position.

Failing missions like that in Turkey were closed. Reductions were
made in those areas where native church organization had developed, as
in New Zealand and Sierra Leone. Student numbers were reduced in the
missionary training institutions and, most damaging to the prospects
for expansion of the Niger Mission, no new missionaries, either African
or European, were to be sent out, except to replace those who had died
or left the Society's service. 3 The retrenchment measures continued
and reached their most stringent in June 1880 when seventeen newly-
ordained Islington graduates were detained in England rather than sent

1 Stock: History, II, pp. 356-37; also see Intelligencer N.S. VIII (1872), 176-52.

2 Stock: History, II, pp. 413-14; see the same attitudes expressed
in "Economy of Working Power, A Great Necessity", Intelligencer
N.S. VI (1870), 65-59.

out directly to different fields of labour. Very shortly thereafter the situation began to shift as the type of candidate entering the Society changed and their numbers increased dramatically.

The financial difficulties at Salisbury Square placed a strain on Crowther's ambitious plans for the Niger Mission. From 1864 (when it had risen by £200 to £1,200) to 1878, the Annual Grant to the Niger Mission remained unchanged. The Bishop was determined, however, not to let pass the opportunities then presenting themselves for expansion and consolidation. If recruits were available or invitations from chiefs were proffered these must be taken up and financed through a greater reliance on self-support and a replenished Bishopric Fund.

On his way out from England in 1870, he stopped at Freetown and engaged three Fourah Bay graduates as agents. Soon after his arrival at Lagos he received word that not only could no new agents be hired, but that vacancies also could not be filled until further notice. Crowther promised strict economy in all missionary operations, but his words had a distinctly hollow ring. In practice he largely ignored the austerity directives, appealed directly to private benefactors in England, relied more heavily on the Bishopric Fund, and employed the

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1 Yates: _Venn_, pp. 158-59. It was in 1878 that two European lay agents were added to the Niger staff.

2 C.M.S. CA3/04/331 Crowther to Hutchinson, 13 July 1870.

3 C.M.S. CA3/04/339 Crowther to Hutchinson, 11 November 1870.

4 C.M.S. CA3/04/340 Crowther to Hutchinson, 10 December 1870; The Society's _Intelligencer_ was gratified by what Crowther had accomplished with so little assistance and noted approvingly that under him, "African Agency does not intend to linger on the coast". _Intelligencer_ N.S. VII (1871), 55.

5 See, for example, C.M.S. CA3/04/352d Crowther: "An Appeal for Aid, etc.", 10 May 1871. This particular appeal was directed largely at a group of Liverpool merchants.
wide discretionary powers which he had amassed during his years as the head of the Mission. In the same week, for example, that he had re-affirmed his acceptance of the restrictions on opening new posts, he appointed J.R. During as founding agent for a station at Nembe and prepared to place a new agent in During's position at Akassa. While difficulties with King Ockiya of Brass delayed implementation of this plan, the Bishop was not deterred in his resolve to take advantage of similar invitations, even if they so apparently ran counter to the wishes of the Parent Committee. Such determination also applied to the question of agents' salaries and passages to Sierra Leone. At the beginning of 1871, citing their "illness" and need for a change of climate, he sanctioned, at the Society's expense, the passages to Sierra Leone of some agents. Two months later he proposed increasing the salaries of agents at Bonny and Brass, promising that the monies for this could come from the Bishopric Fund. Such unilateral actions had been countenanced by the Society when Henry Venn had been at the helm. With the aged Secretary already passing on most of his duties to others, it would be only a matter of time before newer Secretaries would seek to bring the Bishop and the Niger Mission more into concert with established Home policies.

Crowther did turn to new and more effective methods of self-support. Bonny and Brass set particularly good examples. By mid-1872 new buildings at Bonny had been erected not only through funds

1 C.M.S. CA3/04/341 Crowther to Venn, 9 December 1870.
2 C.M.S. CA3/04/355 Crowther to Venn, 17 June 1871.
3 C.M.S. CA3/04/346 Crowther to Hutchinson, 22 March 1871.
4 C.M.S. CA3/04/352b Crowther: "Proposed Increase in Salaries for the Bonny and Brass Missions", 10 May 1871.
collected locally, but almost wholly through voluntary labour. The Bishopric Fund received donations from places as disparate as Quebec and India. Yet a fully independent pastorate or pastorates within the Mission could hardly be contemplated as in Sierra Leone. Although much financial progress had been made in the Delta, the Bishop was forced in that same year to take a loan from the Society to pay the salaries of the Bonny and Brass agents. Beyond the Delta self-support was merely a dream. Crowther realized that he had to hold substantive talks with the Parent Committee and replenish the Fund. 

Remembering Henry Venn's suggestion made in 1870 that he should return again to England in a few years, the Bishop wrote to his old friend and benefactor. Venn knew that his health was failing and that this would be his last chance to see and give counsel to Crowther. He also hoped that plans could be laid with the changing C.M.S. establishment which could ensure his and Crowther's goals for the Niger Mission. In what was to be his final letter to Crowther, he told him to come at once. The Bishop sailed from Lagos in the first week of January 1873.

Before he arrived in England at the end of the month, Venn had died on the 13th.

1 C.M.S. CA3/04/590a-e Crowther: "Instructions to Missionary Agents Given at Bonny", 27 May 1872.

2 C.M.S. CA3/04/393 Crowther to Hutchinson, 2 August 1872; C.M.S. G/C1/v.40/256-72 Committee of Correspondence, 5 November 1872. The Committee approved a loan of £277, for three years to be repaid from the Bishopric Fund.

3 C.M.S. CA3/04/393 Crowther to Venn, 10 July 1872.

4 Venn issued the invitation without even consulting the Parent Committee, then in recess. C.M.S. CA3/L1/276-77 Venn to Crowther, 10 October 1872. The Committee of Correspondence approved the visit formally a month later. C.M.S. G/C1/v.40/256-72, 5 November 1872.

5 C.M.S. CA3/04/403 Crowther to Venn, 22 November 1872.
Crowther made the best of what was for him a sad visit. He displayed his continued skill as an effective orator and successful fund-raiser during the six months in which he was in England. A third Appeal was launched for the Bishopric Fund. As a recently-elected Vice-President of the Society, he took precedence at Parent and Provincial Committee sessions. At the Annual Meeting of the Society he held a special place of honour, and with the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, delivered an address. He travelled and spoke widely in his direct appeal for the Fund and personally collected more than £1,400. He also received 302 shares of stock in the West Africa Company, Ltd. from the heiress Baroness Burdett-Coutts. In a farewell appearance before the Parent Committee he pledged that the resources collected would be for "breaking new ground", hopefully at Opobo and New Calabar (Kalabari). Buoyed by the success at Bonny and Brass, the Committee voted a special £200 grant for construction there. A recent substantial bequest to be used "to encourage native agency", further enabled the Committee to accede to his request to relieve the Bishopric Fund of the expense of Bonny and Brass by bringing these stations under the Annual Grant.

1 C.M.S. F/1L/TS/A3/1 "West African Native Bishopric Fund, 1873 Appeal" (pamphlet) in "Letters, Papers, Accounts, and Printed Matter relating to West African and Nigerian Bishopric Funds".

2 C.M.S. G/C1/v.40/502 Patronage Committee, 2 May 1873; and C.M.S. G/C1/v.40/563 General Committee, 9 June 1873.

3 C.M.S. G/AO1/18/318-19 C.G. Fenn to Bishop of Nelson, 25 April 1873.

4 The Crowther family had, as we have seen, a mercurial relationship with this firm and would continue to have such.

5 C.M.S. G/C1/v.40/573-84 Committee of Correspondence, 24 June 1873. By the end of the year the 1873 Appeal netted more than £2,100. See C.M.S. F/1L/TS/A3/1 "Niger Native Bishopric Fund: Report of Expenditures and List of Contributions Received from January 1867 to December 1876" (pamphlet) pp. 15-21, in "Letters, Papers, Accounts, and Printed Matter relating to West African and Nigerian Bishopric Funds".
Missionary and Diplomat

Crowther's prominence in political affairs grew markedly in the 1870s as the British Government reduced its presence on the Niger and European missionaries and officials were excluded from Yorubaland. In 1865 a Parliamentary Select Committee established to review British West African settlements had insisted that no further British expansion should take place in the entire area. The Committee's Report effectively stymied the attempt to renew a Government subsidy for any British firm trading on the Niger. It also contributed to the decision to abolish the Lokoja Consulate in 1869, thus ending at least temporarily an important contact with the Muslim-ruled states of the Sudan. Before this withdrawal Baikie and his successors had maintained an agreement with Etsu Nupe whereby the latter gave his "protection" to the trading establishment, Mission station, and settlement at the Confluence. Crowther had opposed the closing of consular activities, and continued to urge the re-establishment of the post throughout the decade which followed. In the meantime he himself became, de facto, Her Majesty's Consul on the Niger. Every year from 1870 to 1876 inclusive, and more sporadically thereafter, he exchanged messages and gifts between the British Government and local rulers on the river, most notably the Emirs at Bida. With great diplomatic skill he succeeded in overcoming the suspicions of the traditional rulers by conducting his work and discussions within the framework of customary laws and politics. As a result, he became in one writer's

view, "perhaps, the most powerful external influence on the Muslim rulers of Nupe" from 1869 until 1883.¹ By dint of his long experience in the area as well as his episcopal status, he enjoyed a privileged position in Government circles unequalled by any other West African at the time. His advice was sought and his good offices employed by numerous Governors and Administrators.² When Crowther stopped at Freetown on his return from England in 1870, he was entertained by the Governor of the West African Settlements, Sir George Kennedy.³ In the course of the interview he learned that Etsu Nupe Masaba had written the Lagos Administrator, John Glover, that he could no longer guarantee the safety of Lokoja and that all British subjects should remove to Eggan.⁴ Kennedy urged Crowther to meet with Glover on his arrival at Lagos.

John Hawley Glover had first met Samuel Crowther on the Niger Expedition of 1857-59. The two had become good friends. The son of an Anglican clergyman, Glover was an ardent Evangelical who during the Expedition carried a portable communion service.⁵ In 1864 he

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² Up to 1866 the settlement at Lagos had its own Governor or Lieutenant-Governor. In that year, however, the Colony was placed under the Governor of the West African Settlements, resident at Sierra Leone, and directed by a resident Administrator at Lagos. The arrangement was again changed in 1874, when Lagos came under the Governor of the Gold Coast Colony, and the resident Administrator became a Lieutenant-Governor. See Appendix N: "Governors and High Commissioners in Nigeria" in Burns: History of Nigeria, pp. 344-45.
³ C.H.S. CA3/04/331 Crowther to Hutchinson, 15 July 1870.
⁴ Masaba had been planning an attack on Idah for some time. See C.H.S. CA3/04/332b Paul to Crowther, 15 November 1869.
assumed the Lieutenant-Governorship at Lagos and had since then held that post or the similar one of Administrator. His trust in Crowther extended also to the Bishop's family. In August 1863 he had appointed Crowther's eldest son Samuel one of the three Commissioners of the newly-established Lagos Petty Debt Court. 1 Eight years later the young Samuel was offered the post of Commissioner of a new Court of Requests, then being formed at Lagos. 2 He declined the honour, no doubt aware of the acute embarrassment which his wife's pending action for divorce was then causing his father and his family. 3 It would appear, however, that the marital problems of his son did not adversely affect Bishop Crowther's position in the eyes of the Lagos Administration as he continued to serve the Government in his quasi-official capacity for many years to come.

Glover and Crowther discussed the problems in Nupeland shortly after the latter's return from Sierra Leone. Glover had an "imperial

1 N.A.I. CSO 8/5/1 Glover to C.W. Faulkner, J.A. Payne, T.G. Hoare, S.A. Crowther, Jr., 28 August 1863.


3 Mrs. Marian Crowther petitioned for divorce on the grounds of adultery and cruelty. She appears to have received little support from either the Colonial Administration or the Crowther family. The Bishop allegedly wrote his daughter-in-law that she was to blame for her marital difficulties. Undeterred, Mrs. Crowther eventually involved the Earl of Kimberley, then Colonial Secretary, in her case. For details of the case see: N.A.I. CSO 1/8/16 Glover to Kennedy, 17 May 1871; Kennedy to Glover, 6 June 1871; and Mrs. Crowther to Glover, 17 February and 6 May 1871. Also N.A.I. CSO 1/8/20 Mrs. Crowther to Kimberley, 22 February 1872. Henry Townsend could not help commenting unfavourably. He claimed that Samuel had been taken to court on a charge of breaking the peace, resulting from arguments with his wife. C.M.S. CA2/085/130 Townsend to Venn, 17 March 1871.
dream" for the Niger basin for which the port of Lagos was to be the base. Good relations with Etsu Nupe were an integral part of his design. Further he had learned that the Khedive of Egypt's plans for invading the upper Nile greatly disturbed Masaba. Advantage should be taken of this seeming division in Muslim ranks and "protection" again obtained from the Emir for the Lokoja settlement. In Crowther Glover knew that he would have an effective personal emissary.

Masaba had indicated in his letter of warning that he did not look kindly towards the Saro traders who had settled at the Confluence. The feeling was quite mutual. Many of the traders, and several of Crowther's missionaries, had complained that Masaba's "protection" was a sham. The officials whom Masaba sent to Lokoja extorted large payments of money and supplies and the inhabitants had no choice but to pay them. Many of the Sierra Leone immigrants (including some C.M.S. agents) formed a "promotion of unity and self-defence" society and presented a petition to the commander of the British gunboat which ascended the river in 1870. Glover was eager that a satisfactory settlement of the outstanding difficulties could be arranged. He gave Crowther a personal message and gifts for Masaba and instructed the Bishop to see what he could do to insure the faithful continuance of the agreements which the Consuls had earlier negotiated. In his letter to Masaba Glover urged Etsu Nupe to permit "his old friend the Bishop" to read him its contents, "because his (Crowther's) word is truth and he knows my heart and yours".

1 McIntyre: "Commander Glover", pp. 77-79.
2 C.M.S. CA3/04/332d-g T.C. John to Crowther, 25 January 1870; also C.M.S. CA3/04/336d "A Petition to the Commanding Officer of the Expedition of the Niger, 1870", undated.
3 N.A.I. C30 8/5/1 and C.M.S. CA3/04/336c Glover to Masaba, 30 July 1870.
Crowther's journey to Bida proved successful both for the Government and for C.M.S. interests. Masaba had already begun to reconsider his earlier warning that Lokoja be evacuated. The Ata of Igala had written to him indicating a more subservient attitude and war seemed more remote as a result. Crowther's visit, and the promise he carried from the Lieutenant-Governor of more regular commercial activity, gave added assurance. The Bishop convinced the Emir to draw up a proclamation which became the precursor of and basis for a more formal agreement between Britain and Nupe in the following year. Crowther's contribution here was extremely significant and has not received the attention it deserves. In the proclamation, which was also signed and witnessed by the Bishop, Masaba renewed his support and protection for the Lokoja settlement and invited those who had fled through molestation to return. He further promised that he would periodically request the advice of resident traders and missionaries. Finally, he appointed Jacob Meheux, a former Government interpreter, his "sub-manager" at the Confluence. In late 1871 the Foreign Office despatched V.H. Simpson, an assistant to Glover at Lagos, to Nupe to formalize the promises which Crowther had won from Masaba the year before. Simpson was clearly impressed with Crowther's and the C.M.S.' accomplishments in the area and considered the Mission's position there as vital to British interests in the future:

It is to the continuous presence of the missionaries, the example of their lives and their ready and patient efforts to benefit and instruct the poor and ignorant, that the prestige and respect which the British name has acquired in these countries, and which will outlive the withdrawal of the naval protection and the Consulate,

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1 C.M.S. CA3/04/336b Masaba to Glover, 12 June 1870.
2 C.M.S. CA3/04/336f "A Proclamation of Masaba", 12 September 1870; also C.M.S. CA3/04/333 Crowther to Hutchinson, 18 September 1870.
and afford the only permanent guarantee in the future for the safety of British lives and property, may be unquestionably attributed.¹

In exchange for protecting British traders on the Niger and for opening the Benue to trade, Masaba obtained the right for Nupe officials and traders to serve as middlemen between Britain and the peoples of the Western Sudan. With the significant internal disputes within Nupe at an end, Masaba had plans for expansion. In keeping with the recommendations of the 1865 Parliamentary Committee Report that self-governing African states should be the agents of British influence, the Government encouraged these plans, seeing them as a stimulus to British trade.²

Nupeland was not the only place where Crowther combined missionary and political activity in this period. The closing of Abeokuta to Europeans (including missionaries) in 1867 caused anxiety both at Whitehall and at Salisbury Square.³ Glover had continued to pursue an anti-Egba policy after the expulsion by placing an embargo on heavy goods to Abeokuta; but his plans were not succeeding. While

¹ As quoted in Geary: Nigeria, p. 171. See also F.O. 84/135 W.H. Simpson's Report to Earl Granville, 21 November 1871 and C.M.S. OAS/04/364 Masaba to Earl Granville, 22 September 1871.


European missionaries such as Henry Townsend were forbidden entry to Abeokuta. African missionary agents continued their work and no persecution followed similar to that in the Delta states. Crowther had much to gain personally from the unsettled events in Yorubaland. He could provide a service to Her Majesty's Government by opening discussions on its behalf and by carrying diplomatic messages, thereby winning a hearing on his project for restoring a Consulate at Lokoja. Secondly he had an excellent opportunity to meet with members of the Church in the Yoruba Mission and perhaps for once and for all settle the question as to whether that Mission should come under his jurisdiction. Lastly, financial retrenchment in the missionary societies and the departure of the American Baptist missionaries due to the outbreak of the Civil War in the United States afforded Crowther a golden opportunity for the implementation of the Venn-Crowther Native Church policy. In late 1870 Bishop Beckles had resigned in Sierra Leone, having succeeded in arousing the ire of both the Colonial Government and the African Establishment with his views on the growing Native Pastorate there. During his episcopate Beckles' visits to the Yoruba Mission had been few. Confirmations and ordinations had been continually postponed.

In the first weeks of 1871 Henry Townsend, who had been forced to remain at Lagos, gained entrance to the Egba capital. When he came back to Lagos he claimed that he had obtained permission for the return of European missionaries to Abeokuta. Crowther was pleased with the news. He had received several invitations to visit Abeokuta from Church members, but had declined, not wishing to stir up trouble with his displaced colleagues or the Bishop of Sierra Leone. Correctly anticipating later events he, nonetheless, cautioned the
Parent Committee to avoid giving too much publicity to Townsend's "gains". 1 Shortly after Townsend's return to Lagos, Crowther received yet another invitation to visit Abeokuta. Townsend encouraged him to go as he was preparing candidates for the ministry whom he hoped Crowther would ordain. He also had become disenchanted with Beckles' lack of supervision and seriously considered "putting in" with the Niger Bishop. Beckles' replacement by Bishop Cheetham caused him to wait and see. 2 In the meantime, hoping to have his cake and eat it too, Townsend persuaded a reluctant Cheetham to permit Crowther, under special license, to ordain in Yorubaland. 3 The Bishop would thus perform episcopal duties without obtaining jurisdictional authority.

In May Crowther decided to visit Abeokuta towards the end of the year and then conduct the ordinations which Townsend had requested. 4 Townsend's grand plan failed, however, when just a few weeks later he was himself again prohibited from returning to Abeokuta. Writing to Venn in confidence, Crowther alleged that Townsend had only been allowed to return in the first instance after missionary agents faithful to the Englishman had bribed local officials. After Townsend had left for Lagos, those opposed to his return were simply able to pay a higher sum to negate the promise which he had received that European missionaries could resume residence there. The entire affair greatly embarrassed the C.M.S. Crowther urged that no further trips

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1 C.M.S. CA3/04/342 Crowther to Hutchinson, 19 January 1871.
2 C.M.S. CA2/085/173 Townsend to Venn, 14 December 1870.
3 C.M.S. CA2/085/180 Townsend to Venn, 17 March 1871.
4 C.M.S. CA3/04/343 Crowther to Venn, 28 January 1871 and C.M.S. CA3/04/550 Crowther to Venn, 12 May 1871.
be made to Egbaland unless free passage was guaranteed by the authorities. He also advised that the intended ordinations be delayed until such time as Bishop Cheetham could himself perform them. Townsend tried to pass on part of the blame to Crowther, arguing that if he had really wanted to be a "true missionary bishop" over the Yoruba Mission, Crowther should have convinced Abeokuta to accept him as such.²

Notwithstanding his own advice against such a visit, Bishop Crowther did unexpectedly go to Abeokuta at the end of 1871. After completing his annual tour of the Niger Mission's Upper stations, he was stranded on the Niger. The ship on which he had expected to return to Lagos ran aground. Crowther and several others on board decided to make the journey overland. Before doing so they travelled to Bida to obtain horses and provisions from Masaba. Etsu Nupe was most hospitable and provided as well an escort for part of the journey.³ Departing from Bida on 21 December 1871, they reached Lagos on 8 February 1872.⁴ The group had to contend with continual problems

¹ C.M.S. CA3/04/356 Crowther to Venn, 17 June 1871.
² C.M.S. CA2/065/18 Townsend to Venn, 3 July 1871. Townsend succeeded in convincing Cheetham that this was the case. The new bishop wrote Venn that Crowther had "failed" in the Niger Mission and was also "interfering" in the Diocese of Sierra Leone. Venn still hoped, however, that Cheetham would "lay aside petty animosities" like those exhibited by Townsend. See C.M.S. G/AC/4/1/17 Venn to Henry Wright, 20 November 1872.
³ The party consisted of "eight Europeans and several natives of position". See C.M.S. CA3/04/137 Crowther to Hutchinson, 13 February 1872 and C.M.S. CA3/04/371-72 Crowther: "Acts of Liberality of King Masaba, etc.", 20 February 1872.
⁴ Crowther's detailed journal of the trip is but another testament to his remarkable stamina (at approximately age 65), as well as to his skills as diplomat and Churchman. See C.M.S. CA3/04/755 Crowther: "Report of the Overland Journey from Lokoja to Bida, and thence to Lagos from November 10 1871 to February 8 1872".
as diverse as obtaining food and shelter, paying bribes, and avoiding kidnapping. They crossed the Niger at Shonga, which place favourably impressed Crowther. He suggested that the town could serve as part of a triangle which would additionally include the Yoruba and Niger Mission stations. During nine days at Ilorin the Bishop preached extensively and met with Muslim religious leaders. As was the case in all of the places where the group stopped, Crowther served as spokesman in meetings with local rulers. After nearly thirty years in the area he was known throughout Yorubaland, the country of his birth, and was respected for his age and position. At Ogbomosho he was elated to find that a small but earnest Baptist community remained, although they had been without ministers for several years. The presence of such steadfastness on the part of a group of Africans came as a surprise to several of the party sceptical of missionary work.

Crowther's role as a quasi-representative of the British Government was made clear at Iwo where the Bale urged the Lagos Government to open trade on the Oshun River and gave the Bishop a letter to transmit to the Governor. The ability of an African clergy to maintain an active Mission was especially notable at Ibadan, where the Rev. D. Olubi had been in charge since the closing of the roads by the Egba and their allies the Ijebu. Over a period of five days Crowther confirmed ninety-four candidates. When the Ijebu authorities refused passage through their territory to Lagos, a similar request of the Egba leaders at Abeokuta brought approval.

The Egba United Board of Management (E.U.B.M.) allowed the party

1 Register, p. 324, no. 171.
to stay five days at the Wesleyan Mission House. The traditional Egba rulers had originally indicated that Crowther could reside at one of the C.M.S. compounds. Before entering Abeokuta Crowther had discussed the two separate offers with some missionary agents and decided diplomatically to do as the E.U.B.M. had suggested. The Bishop was well received, having been absent from the Mission which he had helped found for more than ten years. He called at the three C.M.S. stations within the town and with a few minor exceptions found the work of the Mission progressing steadily. His belief in the efficacy of African agency was greatly reinforced and the Europeans present once again noted that a successful missionary operation could be maintained without European superintendence. In the political sphere Crowther met with the representatives of the E.U.B.M. as well as the traditional authorities. At a meeting with the leaders of the four states of the Egba nation, as well as the representative of the Awujale of Ijebu Ode, the Bishop heard those present open their minds to me as an old friend who used to deal with their deceased predecessors ... (and ask) my aid to represent their matters to the Home Government that a good understanding might be restored between the two Governments.¹

The Egba suffered from Glover's embargo on heavy goods and were disturbed by the escaped domestic slaves who found refuge in Lagos. Lastly, they assured Crowther that the revolt (ifole) which led to the 1867 expulsion had been popularly inspired. While it raged no missionary property was destroyed and when it ended no persecution of converts ensued.²

¹ C.M.S. CA3/04/755 Crowther: "Report of the Overland Journey, etc." The Egba, conscious of Glover's antipathy, insisted on Crowther sending their message to the "Home Government", i.e. directly to the Earl of Kimberley.

² C.M.S. CA3/04/570 Crowther to Kimberley, 6 February 1872.
Crowther noted the Egba rulers' keen desire for a resumption of normal relations with Britain and sought to make the most of it. He promised to convey their message on the condition that they would not interfere with trade from Lagos for a period of three months. In the meantime more substantive negotiations could proceed. The leaders agreed. Crowther thus took a position decidedly opposite to that of his friend Glover. By forwarding these messages from the interior and enclosing a personal note to the Earl of Kimberley, he came down squarely against Glover's anti-Egba policy. And he employed even stronger language in a letter to Henry Venn. He urged the C.M.S. to use their power to induce the Home Government not only to take steps to enter into amicable agreements with the Egbas but also to urge the King of Ijebu to throw a road open through his country for legitimate trade with Lagos.

Glover was hardly pleased with Crowther's actions, especially as he had personally written the Alake of Abeokuta encouraging him to receive warmly the Bishop and his party. He promised Crowther to forward the letters to Kimberley which the Bishop had brought from the interior, but added that he would "have to comment" on Crowther's personal observations on Egba policy as these "might mislead Her Majesty's Government". Crowther and the C.M.S., however, played a significant role in the reversal of the Government's attitudes towards the Egba.

When the new Governor of the West African Settlements, John Pope-Hennessey, paid a visit to Lagos in mid-1872, he inaugurated a new and more friendly approach to the Egba and Ijebu, and Glover soon

1 C.M.S. CS/3/04/368 Crowther to Venn, 12 February 1872.
2 N.A.I. CSO 3/5/2 Glover to Alake, 23 January 1872.
3 N.A.I. CSO 8/5/2 Glover to Crowther, 16 February 1872.
"resigned" as Lagos Administrator. Shortly thereafter the Acting Administrator, Henry Fowler, showed Crowther the Government's plans for opening the Abeokuta and Ijebu roads to trade as the Bishop had earlier urged, and asked him for any further suggestions which might expedite the new policy. In early 1873 the Earl of Kimberley sought his advice on West African affairs and the two met at the Colonial Office. Crowther had become at this point the most influential African advisor to the Colonial Administration.

Crowther's journey through Yorubaland in 1871-72 succeeded in increasing his and the C.M.S.' prestige in Government circles and in moving Salisbury Square to discuss more urgently transfer of the Yoruba Mission to Crowther's episcopal control. Yet there was more talk than action. The decision-making process was at a standstill.

With Henry Venn dying and the C.M.S. Secretariat in disarray, no aggressive action was taken. When Bishop Cheetham visited Lagos in 1872, Townsend was favourably impressed with his determination to be more than an absentee administrator and shepherd resident in Sierra Leone. There were many, nonetheless, who still favoured a transfer of the Yoruba Mission to Crowther. The Rev. Henry Wright, Venn's successor as C.M.S. Honorary Clerical Secretary, suggested that Crowther raise the issue anew with Cheetham when the former visited Sierra Leone in 1873-74. Crowther did just that, but found "His Lordship quite surprised" with the idea and supposedly unaware that

1 C.M.S. CA3/04/399 Crowther to Venn, 2 August 1872.


any such arrangement had ever been contemplated. Obviously embarrassed, Crowther reported the incident to Wright and indicated cautiously (and unconvincingly) that he himself was indifferent as to what should be finally decided.¹

It soon became evident, however, that despite his intentions, Cheetham could not do justice to a part of his diocese so distant from his episcopal seat. In May 1875 the Rev. David Hinderer wrote from Ibadan to propose the opening of the Ondo country of Yorubaland to missionary activity. He considered that Crowther should assume control of any work there. Time had mellowed the opposition to Crowther, for the ageing English missionary went on to ask:

Has not the time come when (that) native Bishop's jurisdiction should be further extended than the Niger ... The Yoruba country and beyond (are) another of those parts ... The past five or seven years surely have sufficed to show that native teachers of Christianity are as acceptable to people and chiefs ... There is therefore no ground why we should not have him as our Bishop now.²

While Townsend soon concluded that Cheetham could do no better than Beckles, his personal antipathy to Crowther could not permit him to accept the Niger Bishop. At the end of 1875 he suggested instead that Yorubaland be constituted a new diocese with the Rev. James Johnson of St. Paul's Church, Breadfruit, Lagos, as Founding Bishop.³

The Parent Committee tentatively agreed and requested Crowther's views.⁴ The Bishop heartily approved and agreed to give up Otta, the only

¹ C.M.S. CA3/01/425 Crowther to Venn, 5 February 1874.
² C.M.S. CA2/049 Hinderer to Secretaries, 18 May 1875.
³ C.M.S. CA2/085/212 Townsend to Venn, 25 November 1875.
⁵ C.M.S. CA3/L1/286-37 Hutchinson to Crowther, 28 January 1876.
station in Yorubaland under his jurisdiction, to the projected new
diocese. 1 While Crowther was writing his opinion on the proposal,
certain decisions were reached in the interim by Salisbury Square.
Reflecting Cheetham's opposition to any territorial loss, as well as
the declining confidence in African superintendence, the Parent
Committee decided in February 1876 to send Johnson to Abeokuta as
"Superintendent" of the Yoruba Mission. Once he had "proved himself",
he could be raised to the episcopacy. 2 This "trial" arrangement
lasted little more than three years. In 1880 Johnson returned to
St. Paul's, Breadfruit. 3 By that time events and conditions had begun
to change dramatically within the Society both at Home and in the
field. The idea of either Crowther or any African having episcopal
control over Yorubaland had been effectively given up.

In addition to his involvement in Yoruba Mission affairs,
Crowther took a special interest in the Gambia and became the central
figure in a sometimes stormy controversy over the superintendence of
the Episcopal Church in Liberia. The Gambia connection resulted
mainly from a personal commitment by the Bishop: his eldest daughter,
Susan, was married to the Colonial Chaplain at Bathurst, the Rev.
George Nicol. 4 The Colonial Chaplaincy was a British Governmental
appointment and Nicol received his salary from Whitehall. 5

1 C.M.S. CA3/04/522 Crowther to Venn, 28 February 1876.
2 C.M.S. CA2/085/216 Townsend to Wright, 26 February 1876.
4 See C.M.S. CA1/164/4 Nicol to Venn, 15 June 1850 and
C.M.S. CA1/164/9a Nicol to Venn, 13 May 1854 for information
on Nicol's marriage and his closeness to the Crowther family.
Also, Register, p. 300, no. 13.
5 See John Gray: A History of the Gambia, Cambridge, 1940,
pp. 315, 494.
C.M.S. did not have an establishment there. Crowther, nonetheless, counselled his son-in-law in the latter's work. Nicol had established a school in the capital and the Bishop encouraged him to set up a second one at a village some nine miles distant. As Nicol had begun work on a Mandingo vocabulary, the experienced translator Crowther gave much advice. The Bishop urged Salisbury Square to watch developments in the Gambia and to consider possibilities there as the Wesleyans displayed interest in expanding their activities in that Colony.¹

When Crowther visited Bathurst in August 1877, the C.M.S. had still not made any commitment to the area. He noted that the two schools continued to prosper, but he did not indicate that any additional expansion had occurred in the four years of his absence.²

The opportunity in Liberia appeared more significant and, initially, rather straightforward. The local Standing Committee of the First Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Liberia wrote Crowther in mid-1877. They sought his help as they had been without episcopal supervision or outside aid for more than eighteen months.³

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¹ C.M.S. CA3/04/426 Crowther to Wright, 5 February 1874. The Wesleyan Methodists had pioneered in the Gambia as early as 1821, but their work there was not particularly successful in this period. Groves: Planting, II, p. 216; also G.G. Findlay and W.W. Holdsworth: The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, IV, London, 1922, pp. 118-46.


³ C.M.S. G/Y/A1/1 Members of the Standing Committee to Crowther, 26 May 1877. The year before Crowther had received a similar request from the American Board of Missions' local committee in Gabon, but had not pursued the matter. See C.M.S. CA3/04/523 D.C. Crowther to Crowther, 21 February 1876.
While in England during that year the Bishop passed the Standing Committee's letter to Henry Wright. The Secretary heartily encouraged him to go to Monrovia. He told him that he saw no reason why he should not comply with the Liberian request to visit there for the purpose of discharging episcopal functions ... (as) it is obvious that the Board of Missions in New York with which they were in connection has now withdrawn its support and left the Church in a state of independence, so that there is no occasion to consult with the Board on the subject. 1

Wright stressed the spiritual needs of the local people, but clearly saw the benefits which could be derived by the C.M.S. quickly stepping in to the apparent vacuum. 2 Despite grave personal problems within his family, Crowther left for Monrovia in January 1878. 3 While in Liberia he admitted two deacons to the priesthood and performed many confirmations. Guided by among others Edward Wilmot Blyden, he visited several of the Church's missionary outstations. In his report of the visit he gave good marks to the local agents and staff for their industry, but strongly opined that self-support could not be expected for some time. He urged the American Board for Foreign Missions (A.B.F.M.) to reinstate their support. Finally, in an action which was bound to cause concern to the A.B.F.M., he enclosed a copy of a letter from the Liberian Standing Committee in which they invited him to assume the episcopal supervision of the Liberian Church. 4

1 C.M.S. G/AC2/4/555-56 Wright to Crowther, 3 July 1877.
2 Ibid.
3 His wife had just recovered from a near fatal illness and his son-in-law, the Rev. T.B. Macaulay, Principal of Lagos Grammar School, had died the week before, leaving Abigail Crowther Macaulay with seven children for which to care. C.M.S. CA3/04/583 Crowther to Wright, 21 January 1878.
4 C.M.S. CA3/04/585 Crowther to the Rev. J. Kimber (Secretary and General Agent of the A.B.F.M.), 12 February 1878; also C.M.S. CA3/04/589 Crowther to Wright: "Notes on Liberia College and the Progress of Coffee Plantation", 18 March 1878.
Crowther's reply to the Liberian Church's invitation, if written, does not survive. He noted as he left Monrovia that a Bishop Pinnock entered the harbour, supposedly coming, he was told, to establish a new mission forty miles north of the Liberian capital. Crowther certainly wished to tread carefully, and awaited instructions from Salisbury Square before proceeding further in the matter. The Liberian Standing Committee, through its Secretary G.W. Gibson, continued to explore alternatives in the meantime. They wrote the Secretary of the Sierra Leone Native Pastorate urging an amalgamation of the two bodies. They noted again that Pinnock exercised no authority over them and suggested that Crowther serve as their Bishop until such time as the Pastorate could act on their request.

The situation remained unsettled and events on the Niger precluded any additional Crowther visits. In 1881, however, the American Bishop G.T. Bedell of Ohio wrote the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Tait, and asked for an investigation of Crowther's activities in Liberia. After receiving Tait's reply, Bedell accused Crowther of interfering in another bishop's diocese while that bishop was resident there! He alleged that Pinnock had been appointed Bishop of the Liberian Church and had already been within his "diocese" (at Las Palmas) when Crowther conducted episcopal functions in January-February 1878. The Archbishop's Chaplain wrote the Rev. Frederick Wigram at the C.M.S. in late September 1881.

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1 C.M.S. G/Y/A1/1 Crowther to Wright, 15 February 1878.
2 C.M.S. G/Y/A1/1 G.W. Gibson to Rev. Dr. J. Williams, 20 July 1879.
3 C.M.S. G/Y/A1/1/3 Bedell to Tait, 9 September 1881.
drowned the month before and Wigram, his successor as Honorary Clerical Secretary, was not conversant with the arrangements which Wright had made with Crowther concerning Liberia. The Chaplain enclosed Bedell's letter "giving particulars of Bishop Crowther's aggression."  

In the end the Rev. J.E. Whiting provided a full account to Wigram. The problem was gradually resolved as the American hierarchy and A.B.F.M. reasserted their influence in Liberia. For Crowther, however, the whole episode had been unfortunate. He had merely followed the directive of Secretary Wright only to fall unjustly foul of his successor Wigram. It was an inauspicious beginning for what was to be a less than satisfactory relationship between the two men.

Post-Venn Re-organization

The death of Henry Venn in 1873, although certainly anticipated by Crowther, came as a great personal blow. The Bishop not only lost the counsel of his friend and patron, but more significantly he and the Niger Mission could no longer expect to maintain the special position which they had had in the Society's mission work as a result of Venn's great personal interest. A year later, in a Charge which he delivered to his clergy in October 1874, Crowther indicated his hopes for the Niger Mission in the post-Venn era. He publicly expressed his and the Mission’s great debt to the deceased Secretary. Calling him "the father of the West African Church", he noted Venn's continuous concern for and faith in the work of African agents on

1 C.M.S. G/Y/A1/1/3 John Ellison to Wigram, 30 September 1881.

2 C.M.S. G/Y/A1/1/3 Whiting to Wigram, 8 October 1881. Whiting also argued that the time had finally arrived for more accurately defining the boundaries of Crowther's diocese. But once again, the matter was let to pass.
the Niger:

The attempt to work this Mission by native agency was well-supported by him, and to be ultimately supervised by a native bishop.¹

Venn's plan for the Bishopric Fund had enabled expansion when and where it might otherwise have been impossible, most notably at Bonny and Brass. Much work remained to be accomplished. Comparing Venn to the Old Testament prophet Elijah, the Bishop said that the spirit of Elijah remained with the people of Israel after his passing. So too would Venn's with the West African Church, and especially with the Niger Mission:

As the Church which he fostered is established, all the agents have the responsibility to continue the work of evangelization in the Mission.²

The Bishop felt confident in this view. In the five years since he had last addressed his missionaries as a group, ordained agents had increased from two to nine and the number of lay agents from twelve to eighteen.

Crowther could not, however, have envisaged the great changes which Henry Venn's death would bring to the Society in general and the Niger Mission in particular. During the approximately eight years which followed, the C.M.S. went through a difficult and sometimes frustrating re-organization. As has already been observed, Henry Venn had been a "super-Secretary" who had kept his hands in all areas of the Society's activities, both at Home and in the field. None had challenged that authority or system while the Secretary was alive.

¹ C.M.S. CA3/04/460 Crowther: "A Charge delivered at Onitsha on the Banks of the Niger on the 13 October 1874".
² Ibid.
But after his removal from the scene a more efficient organizational structure had to be implemented. The diversity and bulk of the work, as well as the pressing financial problems, made this clear. As we have seen the unsalaried Honorary Clerical Secretary had traditionally been primus inter pares with the other C.M.S. Secretaries. Venn raised this status higher. As the C.M.S. expanded, the number of salaried Clerical (ordained) Secretaries increased. As a result of the re-organization which was completed in 1880, mission work of the Committee of Correspondence was divided among three Group Sub-Committees, each headed by a Clerical Secretary or the Lay Secretary. Group III included the Niger Mission. Under the new system the Honorary Clerical Secretary was to be no longer "burdened with the details of foreign work", but was to be free to direct his attention to the Home front.¹ Before these changes took place, some confusion naturally occurred, and smaller missions, like that of the Niger, received less than adequate attention.² Once again Crowther was left to his own resources. Since the founding of the Niger Mission, he had been accustomed to making many important decisions on his own and had accumulated a significant degree of independence. During the period of re-organization at Salisbury Square this situation continued, but the changes which were developing within the Society's structure were to have ultimately a profound effect on the conduct of the Niger Mission and the authority of its Bishop.


² For thirty months, January 1876 - June 1878, Bishop Crowther received less than half a dozen letters from the Parent Committee. See Niger Mission letter book, C.M.S. CA3/L1; also Yates: Venn, p. 138.
Edward Hutchinson, who had become the Lay Secretary of the Society in 1867, set in motion in the 1870s policy changes which challenged and reduced Crowther's position in the Niger Mission and later questioned the whole concept of African agency. Hutchinson believed that Europeans should play at least an equal role in the Niger work. At the time when Hutchinson assumed the Lay Secretaryship, Henry Venn was already in decline. Eugene Stock, who knew Hutchinson well, presents a portrait of an ambitious man eager to implant his own designs for the organization of the C.M.S. in the post-Venn era:

He at once took, not only command, but lead in all the financial, legal, and business of the Society ...
In Hutchinson's view the Lay Secretary was the Secretary of the Society.  

When Venn ceased coming regularly to Salisbury Square, Hutchinson "borrowed" his confidential clerk "who had for years known all the private personalia of the Society". Stock's observations are more than borne out, as we shall see, by the correspondence in the C.M.S. archives.

Among the other Secretaries of the period, Crowther was not without support. The Rev. Henry Wright, who succeeded to Venn's position of Honorary Clerical Secretary just six months before his predecessor's death, had a profound respect for Bishop Crowther. When the Society appointed Crowther a C.M.S. Vice-President in 1873, certain bishops questioned the "propriety" of a "native African" being placed among those of the English hierarchy similarly honoured.

2 Ibid.
3 Notwithstanding Hutchinson's opinion regarding the Lay Secretaryship, Henry Wright, as Honorary Clerical Secretary, stood first in rank and was de facto the administrative head of the Society.
Wright explained that Society practice opened these posts to all Anglican bishops. He also wrote a particularly warm letter to Crowther, looking forward to the time when the Bishop of the Niger would not be the only non-European so chosen. But the exigencies of the internal organization left Wright little time for extensive foreign correspondence. The Rev. C.C. Fenn, a Clerical Secretary from 1864, proved Crowther's greatest supporter in the inner councils of the C.M.S. As Stock later observed of Fenn:

The special value of his service lay in his being the depository of the Society's older traditions, and particularly of Venn's plans and principles in the development of Native Churches.

Finally, another ally in whom Crowther was eventually to place as much trust and confidence as he had in Venn, was the Rev. John Bradford Whiting. Although Whiting did not hold a Clerical Secretaryship, he was an important C.M.S. Committee Member and emerged as Crowther's most devoted champion in the late 1880s.

Consolidation in Nupe and Iboland

When Bishop Crowther returned to West Africa in 1873, he was more determined than ever to consolidate the work in existing stations and to expand into areas from which there had been long-standing invitations. As a new generation of Secretaries was coming into authority at Salisbury Square, so too on the Niger, new African leaders, reared in an environment continually being changed by European mercantile, missionary, and Governmental penetration, were assuming

1 See C.M.S. G/AC1/18/329-30 Wright to Suffragan Bishops of Cashel and Dover and Bishop of Nottingham, 24 May 1873; also C.M.S. G/AC1/18/328-29 Wright to Crowther, 24 May 1873.

political power. Upon his arrival at Lagos in late July, Crowther learned that Masaba had died and had been succeeded as Etsu Nupe by Umoru. Two months later the Bishop met with the new ruler at Bida. In presenting the greetings and gifts of Administrator G. Berkeley of Lagos, he pointed to the cordial relations which Britain, a Christian power, maintained with such Muslim states as Egypt and Persia. Crowther argued that the Muslim states of Sokoto and Nupe should thus easily permit the establishment of Christian missionary stations within their territories. He pressed Umoru to allow construction of a new station opposite Eggon, some one hundred miles upriver from Lokoja. Umoru begged for time to consider the request, but did reaffirm his predecessor's "protection" of the Lokoja settlement. The following year, when he met Umoru at his war camp at Bogun, the Bishop obtained approval for a new station. He chose a site near Kippo Hill, on high, dry land, opposite the "pestilential" Eggon, and placed the Rev. Charles Paul in charge.

Crowther had always had an ambivalent attitude towards the reliance which the Mission had to place on the good offices of the Nupe rulers. As a realist he knew that without it the Lokoja station would have already ceased to exist. Yet the very people at

1 C.M.S. CA3/O4/412 Crowther to Hutchinson, 4 August 1873; Mason: Nupe, p. 270.
2 The Shah of Persia had only recently visited England.
4 C.M.S. CA3/O4/451 Crowther to Hutchinson, 8 October 1874.
Lokoja who were most responsive to Christian teaching were largely those who had fled the force of Nupe rule. In the 1860s Masaba's forces had overrun nearly all the territory that later became known as the Kabba Division. Refugees from many of the tribes in this region came to Lokoja, including Kakanda, Yagba, Igbira and Bunu. The C.M.S. missionaries found the Bunu particularly receptive to their proselytizing efforts. As a result the Bishop encouraged a separate Bunu chapel, in addition to the central Trinity Church in the settlement. On his 1874 visit Crowther noted the success of the project as well as the need to expand the building when the necessary funds could be secured. But the Bunu were never entirely free from Nupe harassment, a factor which led Crowther to observe of Lokoja that "the presence of the King's soldiers do not contribute to its prosperity".

Commercial "prosperity", however, was on the upsurge. It had not suffered from the withdrawal of the Lokoja Consulate as many had feared. European firms engaged in Niger trade steadily increased in number in the early 1870s. Rather than send out European agents, these companies depended almost exclusively on Lagosians and Sierra Leoneans to take charge of their factories on the river. In 1874 when independent Saro traders at Lokoja complained that the Anaja of Igboebe was obstructing their trade on the Benue, several European firms bombarded the town and destroyed it. Umoru's men participated


2 C.M.S. CA3/04/743 Crowther: "Lokoja" in "Report of Bishop Crowther of the Niger Mission to October 1874".
in the looting which followed. As the C.M.S. had to abandon its station at Igbebe, its establishment at Lokoja took on even greater importance. For the next dozen years, prior to the Royal Niger Company's dominance of the town, Crowther's Mission station was the main feature of Lokoja and his position in the affairs of the settlement was considerable. The Bishop, however, could hardly be entirely satisfied as a delicate balance existed between the need for security from external enemies and the desire for freedom from internal oppression for the widely disparate peoples settled there.

Crowther continued to maintain good relations with the local Muslim religious leaders, but became more and more convinced of the need for Mission agents with a solid knowledge of Hausa and Arabic as well as Islam. In order to expedite the publication of J.F. Schönhäus's Hausa Vocabulary, he gave £100 from the Bishopric Fund. The desire of Crowther and other C.M.S. missionaries for more direction on mission practice in Muslim areas led the Society to convene a special Sub-Committee on the problem in October 1875. The Sub-Committee urged the expeditious translation of the Scriptures into Hausa and the establishment of a Primary School for Muslim and Hausa children at Lagos. It requested Bishop Crowther to send Hausa youths for further training to Lagos and/or Sierra Leone and suggested that any African missionaries who displayed sufficient aptitude in Arabic and Muslim studies be sent on student visits to Palestine.

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1 Pedraza: Borricchooala-Gha, pp. 71-75, 78-79.
2 C.M.S. CA3/0/4/61 Crowther to Schöhn, 24 November 1874.
   For the C.M.S. and the Niger Mission's contribution to Hausa linguistic studies, see Hair: The Early Study of Nigerian Languages, pp. 37-54.
unsettled state of affairs at Lokoja did not assist the efforts to obtain Hausa converts. But Crowther did not feel that success depended solely on the number of conversions. His attitude towards the new work at Kippo Hill illustrated this. The station, he declared, attracted a nucleus of different peoples. Its purpose lay not so much for immediate conversions, as for an extensive diffusion of the knowledge of the Christian religion, by means of the traders of the disparate peoples who passed through the place. He also strongly encouraged his agents to spend as much of their time "itinerating" as possible. This too diffused the gospel more effectively in an area where the vast majority of the inhabitants, although Muslim-ruled, practiced traditional religion.

The changing political situation in Nupe had its counterpart in Iboland. The Obi of Onitsha Akazua, whom Crowther had first met in 1857, died in March 1872. The Bishop had consistently sought and maintained good relations with the ruling family. On his death bed Akazua had his sons pledge that they would seek advice of the missionaries and traders after his passing. The secluded nature of the Onitsha kingship enabled Akazua's family to delay for three weeks

1 C.M.S. CA3/04/460 Crowther: "Lokoja" in "A Charge delivered at Onitsha on the Banks of the Niger on the 13th October 1874".

2 Crowther had met members of the Obi's family on the 1854 Expedition, but was not introduced to Akazua until he and J.C. Taylor stopped at Onitsha three years later. See Crowther: Journal 1854, pp. 23-25 and Crowther and Taylor: Gospel, pp. 179-20.

3 Henderson: The King in Everyman, pp. 281-287. According to Crowther: "One common disadvantage which characterizes the Ibo country is want of a king, who is supreme head of a nation, or even a tribe, as in Yoruba, Benin, Nupe or Hausa." C.M.S. CA3/04/460 Crowther: "A Charge delivered at Onitsha on the Banks of the Niger on the 13th October 1874".
the formal announcement of his death. In the meantime they were free to organize the funeral and prepare for an orderly succession. Despite such precautions, Idiari, the appointed successor, was challenged by a "pretender" supported by the Ata of Igala. Not only did the contended succession affect the Mission but also conditions within the central station were greatly disturbed by the untimely death of Francis Langley, a conscientious agent and favourite of Bishop Crowther. While Idiari soon secured his position, his rule proved a short one. When a smallpox epidemic broke out in Onitsha in 1873, he contracted the disease and died. Uncertainty again ruled. "A state of republican government" was inaugurated. According to Crowther the "president" of this new system (a brother of Akazua) sought only a caretaker role and thus exercised little authority. The leaders, however, remained on good terms with the Mission, and its work was hardly affected in the end.

At Osamari, twenty miles south of Onitsha, where Crowther sent a catechist on a temporary basis in 1871, co-rulers held power. As a result the Mission had to hold negotiations and discussions with both. Despite his critical opinion of Ibo government and the financial stringencies imposed by Salisbury Square, Crowther did not hesitate

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2 C.M.S. CA3/04/105a-b Crowther to Hutchinson, 4 December 1872; C.M.S. CA3/04/109 Crowther to Hutchinson, 16 July 1873.
4 On Osamari see Z.A. Ijoma: A Short History of the Osamari People, Onitsha, 1952.
to expand operations throughout Iboland in the 1870s. He fulfilled a long-standing promise to the Osomari rulers and established a permanent station there in 1873. Mindful of the prohibition on expansion, he attempted to mollify perhaps distressed C.M.S. Secretaries by stating that the necessary buildings would be erected through voluntary labour.\(^1\) At approximately the same time he sent one of his Onitsha clergy to Asaba, four miles north of Onitsha, to secure it also. He contended that the original inhabitants of Asaba had been immigrants from Benin and that strong cultural ties continued. He rationalized the station's founding as necessary to any future penetration of Ado or the peoples of upper Benin.\(^2\) Early in 1874 he again tested the Parent Committee's patience when he sanctioned the opening of an outstation at Iyawo, a community quite near Onitsha.\(^3\) Finally, during his 1875 tour of the Mission, he established a station at Alenso, an Ibo town midway between Onitsha and Osomari. He wrote Hutchinson that he felt free to do this as it could be accomplished without hiring additional agents.\(^4\)

Hutchinson did not approve of Crowther's continual disregard of

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1 C.M.S. CA3/04/200 Crowther to Hutchinson, 13 October 1872; C.M.S. CA3/04/413 Crowther to Hutchinson, 10 October 1873; C.M.S. CA3/04/742 Crowther: "Osomare" in "Report of the Annual Visit to the Niger Mission in 1873". The buildings were completed and the station fully functional by 1875. C.M.S. CA3/04/744 Crowther: "Osomare" in "Annual Report for 1875".  

2 C.M.S. CA3/04/419 Crowther to Hutchinson, 10 December 1873. For a brief discussion of Asaba up through the nineteenth century see Elizabeth Isichei: "Historical Change in an Ibo Polity. Asaba to 1885", J.A.H. X: 3 (1969), 421-38.  

3 C.M.S. CA3/04/440b S.S. Perry to Crowther, March 1874. Perry had been a catechist at Onitsha before being sent to Iyawo. He was ordained by Crowther later in the year. Register, p. 327, no. 196.  

4 C.M.S. CA3/04/950 Crowther to Hutchinson, 22 July 1875.
Parent Committee directives and sought an opportunity to restrict such action. He obtained his chance when Crowther pressed for a Mission station among the Itsekiri on the Benin River. In 1872 the Bishop met with Olomu, the "Governor" of the Benin River area. While Olomu desired only a personal tutor for his own children, Crowther urged a school for all. Two years later the Bishop proposed placing two recently-hired catechists there. Probably aware of Hutchinson's growing displeasure, he mentioned the project only briefly in correspondence with the Lay Secretary. He decided instead to go over Hutchinson's head to Henry Wright. While noting that Olomu was then less excited by "book-learning" than previously, Crowther took great encouragement from the support of younger chiefs and considered renting part of a factory for a schoolroom. In April 1875 he confidently suggested the purchase of a trading factory as the basis for a Mission establishment. He noted the Benin River's favourable location as a connecting link between the Bight and the Yoruba Mission and as a door to the Ondo country.

If the money were not available, he urged a loan be made on the Bishopric fund or that he personally come to England to launch a new Appeal. Hutchinson cautiously replied that if Crowther could present a detailed analysis of the prospects for the work, a grant of £500 might be allocated for land purchase.

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1 O. Ikimi: "The Coming of the C.M.S. into the Itsekiri, Urhobo and Isoko Country", *Nigeria Magazine* 86 (September 1965), 205-07.


2 C.M.S. CA5/04/478 Crowther to Hutchinson, 13 April 1875.

3 C.M.S. CA5/04/446 Crowther to Wright, 18 June 1874.

4 C.M.S. CA3/04/473 Crowther to Hutchinson, 13 April 1875; C.M.S. CA3/04/489 Crowther to Hutchinson, 2 July 1875.

5 C.M.S. CA3/14/281-22 Hutchinson to Crowther, 30 June 1875.
At this point Crowther made a decidedly imprudent move. Having been offered a former factory site for £370, he determined to purchase it immediately: "I shall at once settle the bargain and secure it, without waiting to hear from you."\(^1\) A fortnight later he had to retreat completely from his position: Olomu changed his mind and the land purchase and station had to be deferred.\(^2\) Crowther felt constrained to defend his actions in the affair. Responding to criticism, he argued that the project had not been characterized by "fits and starts", but had been thoughtfully proposed. Olomu had "prevaricated", had never been sincere, and had been encouraged to reject a Mission station by some European traders.\(^3\) Nonetheless, Crowther's unsuccessful unilateral actions in Itsekiriiland, coupled with his similar although more promising expansion in Iboland, forced Hutchinson's hand. In the midst of the negotiations for the Benin River station, he "suggested" that Crowther declare before a Consul that he held all Mission lands for the Niger Mission of the C.M.S.\(^4\) The Lay Secretary hoped that this might curtail in part the financial independence that Crowther exercised through the Bishopric Fund. Crowther delayed, but finally made the requested declaration in April 1876.\(^5\)

1 C.M.S. CA3/01/498 Crowther to Hutchinson, 23 October 1875.
2 C.M.S. CA3/01/501 Crowther to Hutchinson, 11 November 1875.
3 C.M.S. CA3/01/503 Crowther: "Attempt to Occupy Benin River as a Missionary Station, 1875".
4 C.M.S. CA3/L1/281-02 Hutchinson to Crowther, 30 June 1875.
5 C.M.S. CA3/04/528 "A Declaration of Land Ownership, witnessed by the Acting Consul for Fernando Po and the Bights of Benin and Biafra", 5 April 1876. The total worth of land and buildings was placed at £1,200.
Persecution and Progress in the Delta

Opportunities for expansion in the Delta also presented themselves in the 1870s, although local political situations initially hindered far-reaching efforts. As the decade began, the civil war in Bonny neared its end. The C.M.S. had been adversely affected during the conflict, but the settlement, while welcomed, brought some additional disappointment. Under its terms the Annie Pepple faction, which included many converts and Church-goers, migrated to Opobo under their leader JaJa.1 Crowther immediately set out to reorganize. In 1871 he had placed Dandeson, his newly-ordained son, in charge of the Bonny station, assisted by the Rev. W.F. Smart.2 By mid-1872 buildings had been completed and salaries settled, almost wholly through self-support.3 Dandeson soon began an extensive programme of itinerating and preaching in out-lying areas. He also established, entirely through funds collected locally, a second, "moderate-sized", church for the English-speaking community.4 Despite such signs of

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2 C.M.S. CA3/04/555 Crowther to Venn, 17 June 1871 and Crowther to D.C. Crowther, 22 July 1871, quoted in Epelle: The Church in the Niger Delta, p. 10.

3 C.M.S. CA3/04/390a-c Crowther: "Instructions to Missionary Agents given at Bonny after the ordination of Messrs. Johnson, During and Smart to Priest's Orders, 27 May 1872"; C.M.S. CA3/04/389 Crowther to Venn, 20 June 1872.

progress, the persecution of converts remained a grave problem and became particularly intense by 1873. Nearly all Bonny chiefs were traders and were displeased when some converts, either their slaves or free employees, protested and/or refused to travel into the hinterland for palm oil when the market fell on a Sunday. More than this, however, they were greatly concerned with what they considered the increasingly independent attitudes among their Christian slaves. Crowther himself noted the appeal which the Mission had for "the poor class of the population (who) seem to feel that their refuge is in the sanctuary of the Lord." In 1874 the chiefs acted: they forbade attendance by slaves at church services under pain of a fine and/or punishment. Crowther quickly attempted to defuse the situation. He met with the Bonny leaders and tried to persuade them that while they controlled the bodies of the slaves, their souls belonged to God. In a more practical approach he asked that the slaves be permitted to attend services on those Sundays on which the market was not held. His compromise was not accepted.

1875 proved the critical year for the Bonny Mission. Traditional religion, Crowther believed, was engaged in a life or death struggle with Christianity. The chiefs contended that more than that was at stake. Their main complaint lay in the civil

1 Tasie: Christianity, p. 71.


3 Crowther told his clergy that the main reason for the new law was that the converts refused worship to household deities. See C.M.S. CA3/04/430 Crowther: "A Charge delivered at Onitsha on the Banks of the Niger on the 13th October 1874".

4 C.M.S. CA3/04/743 Crowther: "Report of Bishop Crowther of the Niger Mission to October 1874".
disobedience of their domestic slaves. The new converts, nonetheless, continued to go to church and the congregations grew steadily. In the midst of the controversy the converts were given a martyr around whom they could rally. Joshua Hart, who had only recently been baptized, refused under pressure to make sacrifice to the deceased father of his master. He was eventually bound and thrown overboard from a canoe; when he did not sink, he was battered to death with paddles. A stiffer persecution followed with most of the chiefs being enlisted. The Bishop sought a meeting with them, but they avoided him and his invitation. Through sheer persistence he finally obtained an audience. He publicly acknowledged that slaves must serve their masters in temporal matters. The chiefs voiced alarm at the swift changes which had occurred with the conversion of so many. No settlement resulted from the discussions.

Persecution of converts continued through 1876 when Crowther again offered to meet with the authorities. In the negotiations which followed, he obtained the release of two converts who had been confined, but the major issue remained unresolved. The Mission had a second "martyr" in 1877 when another convert was starved to death. The Bishop sought the support of the King, but George Pophle simply did

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1 Nasie: Christianity, p. 73.

2 See C.M.S. CA3/04/744; Crowther: "Bonny" in "Annual Report for 1875"; also Intelligencer and Record N.S. I (1876), 163-85; and "Martyrdom of a Convert" in Gleaner III (1876), 92-93.

3 C.M.S. CA3/04/744; Crowther: "Bonny" in "Annual Report for 1875"; C.M.S. CA3/04/501; Crowther to Hutchinson, 12 November 1875.

4 C.M.S. CA3/04/324; Crowther to Hutchinson, 11 March 1876; C.M.S. CA3/04/530; Crowther to King George Pophle, 10 April 1876; C.M.S. CA3/04/745; Crowther: "Bonny" in "Report of Annual Visit for 1876".
not have sufficient authority to be of assistance. The converts, however, remained steadfast and by 1878 Crowther could report that the persecution had abated considerably as "the ranks of the persecutors had been much thinned and their strength greatly reduced".

While it had its share of difficulties in the 1870s, the C.M.S. Brass Mission must surely be considered as Crowther's great success in the Delta during the period. The Bishop attributed the ease in reaching the people to the fact that there were far fewer slaves than at Bonny and that the population had a greater freedom of action.

The two main population centres, the port of Tuvon where the C.M.S. established its station in 1868, and the capital town of Nembe, some twenty miles inland to the northeast, witnessed much progress. The Tuvon congregation underwent a mild persecution in 1872, but the effectiveness of the attacks was greatly reduced by the support of those Brass chiefs who had already become converts and many of the European traders. After his visit to England in 1873, Crowther returned to Brass to find that the persecution had subsided and a new locally-financed building programme had been inaugurated. He conducted a service of thanksgiving. Progress continued.

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1 C.M.S. CA3/03/746b Crowther: "Report of Bishop Crozther's Visitation to the Niger Mission in 1877".
2 C.M.S. CA3/04/747a Crowther: "Bonny" in "Review of the Niger Mission, 1878".
3 C.M.S. CA3/04/783 Crowther: "Report of Bishop Crozther of the Niger Mission to October 1874".
4 C.M.S. CA3/04/761 Crowther: Annual Letter for 1872, 16 November 1872; also C.M.S. CA3/04/359 Crowther to Venn, 20 June 1872.
5 Even this proved rewarding: More than £63 was collected at the service and Ockiya paid long overdue school fees. See C.M.S. CA3/04/742 Crowther: "Brass" in "Report of the Annual Visit to the Niger Mission in 1873"; also C.M.S. CA3/04/416 Crowther to Hutchinson, 19 August 1873.
undiminished the following year despite an alleged plot "to enslave and catch chiefs who were converts" at Tuvon and to burn the town in the process. According to Crowther, King Ockiya "was induced" not to interfere with the plan. Word of the plot leaked, however, and it collapsed. As a result Ockiya withdrew his "support" for Christian converts, while promising continued protection for the missionary agents. The King's declaration appears to have been designed merely as a sop to those who had been checked. The converts rallied in light of their success. One of the most prominent in their number, Chief Spiff, remained in "sanctuary" at Tuvon and conducted his trading activities from there rather than return to Nembe. Many chiefs now converted, bringing with them their large families and households. One can discern ulterior economic motives in the rush to conversion, as Crowther notes that those who had earlier persecuted the Mission were frequently reduced to "penury". In 1876 Ockiya delivered his own household images to Crowther who forwarded them to Salisbury Square. Encouraged by such success Crowther decided to establish

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1 C.M.S. CA3/04/743 Crowther: "Report of Bishop Crowther of the Niger Mission to October 1874"; C.M.S. CA3/04/743 Crowther: "Brass" in "A Charge delivered at Onitsha on the Banks of the Niger on the 13th October 1874". Tasic: Christianity, p. 95, noted that Spiff had been overzealous and had "desecrated" a sacred grove. For this reason he avoided the capital town.


3 C.M.S. CA3/04/565 Crowther to Hutchinson, 7 December 1876; C.M.S. CA3/04/745 Crowther: "Report of the Annual Visit for 1876". P.R. McKenzie has traced the idols which are now in museums in the U.K. and the U.S.A. P.R. McKenzie: Inter-religious Encounters, p. 76, illustrations 2-4. On his deathbed Ockiya was baptized, taking the name of Josiah Constantine. Alagba: The Small Brave City-State, p. 88; also Intelligencer N.S. V (1880), 770.
finally a station at Nembe in late 1877. In so doing he once again acted in spite of the financial restriction which had been placed upon him by the Parent Committee.¹

In addition to the expansion in established Delta stations, Crowther decided to accept an invitation for a station at New Calabar (Kalabari).² In late 1871 Kalabari signed peace treaties with Okrika, Bonny, and Brass. The competition for additional palm oil markets in the Eastern Delta precipitated the warfare which had gone on intermittently for more than ten years.³ In 1872 the Kalabari chiefs made their overture to Bishop Crowther. They were from the outset more interested in education than evangelism and would have been content with just a school.⁴ Crowther had other ideas. He pressed his case before the chiefs when he met them aboard a trading vessel in November 1873. He was accompanied by the Consul as well as the European representative of the newly-formed Company of African Merchants. All too aware of the role played by the Consul and the European traders in forcing the recent peace, the Kalabari must have viewed the representatives of these three concerns as a single group.

The King, Iwaiki IV, and other chiefs signed an agreement whereby they promised a free grant of land, and the payment of £200 (half of the initial outlay for the station) and £2 per annum as school fees for all boys. The C.H.C. agreed to absorb fully the educational costs of any

¹ C.M.S. CA3/04/577 Crowther to Hutchinson, 7 November 1877.
⁴ C.M.S. CA3/04/761 Crowther: Annual Letter for 1872, 16 November 1872.
Difficulties soon arose as to the exact location of the new station. Crowther opted for land opposite New Calabar, approximately nine miles upriver from shipping. As he could not prolong his visit, he left the final negotiations to Dandeson whom he left behind. The Kalabari chiefs did not approve of Crowther's choice, as they feared that European merchants might move across to land near the projected Mission station. So the question remained unanswered.

In 1874 a compromise site was selected and the Bishop assigned the experienced agent, the Rev. W.E. Carew, as superintendent assisted by a catechist. By March of the following year the boarding school had been completed and the chiefs had begun making their payments towards the £200 on which they had agreed. Several leaders continued to fear and question whether their children, once educated, would not desert their homeland. Progress was slow and Crowther grumbled that coastal chiefs could not be relied upon to keep

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1 C.M.S. CA3/04/756 Crowther: "New Calabar Mission Station", attached to "Visit to Bida, September - October 1873".
3 C.M.S. CA3/04/829 D.C. Crowther to Crowther, 27 January 1874.
4 C.M.S. CA3/04/463 Crowther to Hutchinson, 31 December 1874.
For more on Carew see Register, p. 327, no. 195.
5 C.M.S. CA3/04/474 Crowther to Hutchinson, 14 March 1875.
6 C.M.S. CA3/04/479 Crowther: "Brief Statements, exhibiting the characters, habits, and ideas of the Natives of the Bight of Biafra, after ten years observations, and the introduction of Christianity among them", 31 March 1875.
agreements. Amarilci gave only half the amount which he had collected from his brother chiefs. According to Crowther the King used the remainder for his own investment purposes. The station's distance upriver proved disadvantageous, as many prominent individuals ignored it. As late as 1878 the Bishop lamented:

This mission is not yet settled ... The minds of the chiefs are more influenced by secular motives for having a mission.

Crowther tried hard to answer the chiefs' complaints. The "secular" subjects taught in the Mission school were more numerous and diverse than in any other in the Niger Mission. The basic difficulties of location and the payment of fees continued and the outbreak of a civil war in 1879 left affairs even more clouded.

Hutchinson Reduces Crowther's Authority

Samuel Crowther had always been supportive of mercantile houses in the opening up of the Niger. He had worked closely with Macgregor Laird and then later with Thomas Clegg. In the 1870s his two elder sons held positions with Clegg's West Africa Company, Josiah as General Agent, and Samuel as Trading Master. The Bishop encouraged the Niger Mission's Industrial Institutes at Onitsha and

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1 C.M.S. CA3/04/439 Crowther to Hutchinson, 2 July 1875; also C.M.S. CA3/04/444 Crowther: "New Calabar" in "Annual Report for 1875". Crowther eventually received the full amount.


3 Ibid. These included reading, writing, spelling, dictation, letter-writing, arithmetic, and assorted materials from "Dr. Dodd's Sermon on Malt" to "Professor Snuffle's Lecture on Electricity".

4 See especially C.M.S. CA3/04/569 Crowther to Hutchinson, 26 December 1876.
Lokoja to grow cotton, pepper, ginger, and arrowroot, to process Indigo, and to promote carpentry and brickmaking. He believed that such activities not only aided the missionary effort, but also laid the groundwork for the eventual takeover of these activities by European and African merchants. After the removal of the Lokoja Consulate the Bishop, as we have seen, did even more to promote trade with the countries on the Niger in his quasi-official Governmental capacity. One result of the 1865 Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on West African Settlements had been the dismissal by the West Africa Company of nearly all of its European personnel on the Niger. The trading companies for their part were frequently supportive of the Mission during the 1870s. Through contributions to the Bishopric Fund in England as well as through gifts of money and materials in the Mission itself, they had a most beneficial effect, especially in the Delta. Notwithstanding his occasional protestations to the contrary, Crowther knew that the missionaries and the merchants had been largely interdependent in the first two decades of the Niger Mission’s existence.

By the mid-1870s, however, the Niger trade had grown considerably and become increasingly more competitive. Between 1867 and 1875 trade expanded tenfold. By 1879 there were four British trading companies operating on the river. Saro traders who had helped in the


2 Several noteworthy examples of his actions in this regard can be found at C.H.S. CA3/04/755 Crowther: "Report of the Overland Journey from Lokoja to Bida, and thence to Lagos from November 10 1871 to February 8 1872", 5 March 1872.


4 Ayandele: "Duel", p. 47.
Mission’s early work were being squeezed out. Crowther began to show concern also as many of the new trading agents not only did not support missionary endeavours as their predecessors had, but were actually disrespectful, and openly attacked Mission personnel and their work. In 1875-76 the Niger Mission found itself embroiled in conflict with two of the leading firms: Holland Jacques and Company and the West Africa Company. Crowther saw the fault initially as being entirely with the merchants. He observed:

Civilized intercourse through trade has its advantages as well as disadvantages ... (depending upon) the conduct of the Agents employed in the trading establishments.  

The Bishop urged the Parent Committee to use its full influence with the Directors of the different firms in England. Richard Cliff, Holland Jacques’ agent at Onitsha, had a decidedly low opinion of the Mission staff stationed there, characterizing them as drunken, dissolute liars. He no doubt also resented the Mission’s partiality to independent Saro traders resident there. While the Onitsha station at this time cannot be held to have been above moral reproach, Cliff sought to restrict his firm’s African employees from attending school classes. He threatened to conduct markets on Sundays and warned that any employee who attended Mission classes would be sacked. Crowther intervened directly. He wrote Holland Jacques’ Managing Agent strongly condemning Cliff’s actions. The Bishop bluntly asked:

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1 Pedler: The Lion and the Unicorn, pp. 115-16.


3 C.H.S. CA5/O4/496c Perry to Cliff, January 1875; C.H.S. CA5/O4/496d Cliff to Perry, 31 January 1875; C.H.S. CA5/O4/496b Cliff to James Abife, 4 August 1875. Abife was an Ibo convert in the employ of Holland Jacques.
"Is it to be the palm oil traders or the Mission ... must such a choice be made?" He answered his own question with a strong "Yes", if the firm continued to place "impediments in the way of converts." Cliff maintained his invective, however, while allowing his employees to attend Mission classes if held before 6.00 a.m. or after 5.30 p.m.

The problems with the West Africa Company troubled the Bishop, particularly because of his and his sons' long association with the Clegg firm and the Bishopric Fund's shares in it. Here again the Mission's favourable position towards the Saro traders appears to have been at the centre of the dispute. Crowther noted once more the changing attitudes of merchants/agents, and noted forcefully that race stood as a causative factor. John Edgar, the Managing Director, wrote Crowther in April and May 1875. He had received several complaints from unnamed informants and expressed unhappiness with the existing system whereby Niger Mission personnel and baggage were carried on the firm's steamers. Crowther's long and detailed reply stands as one of his most passionate defences of the African contribution in opening the Niger and in the African's right to continue to play a dominant role in the development of his country. The tone was gentleman-like and friendly, but to the point. The alleged acts of drunkenness and "dissolute black women" on Company ships was dismissed as impossible as the Bishop argued that he had

1 C.M.S. CA3/04/496a Crowther to J.H. Hemingway, 19 September 1875.
2 C.M.S. CA3/04/511 Cliff to Crowther, 27 October 1875.
3 C.M.S. CA3/04/497a Crowther: "Extracts from two letters of J. Edgar to Bishop Crowther, 30 April and 5 May 1876".
4 The Bishop and Edgar had met on a number of occasions in England.
himself been on board on the occasions cited. As for the firm's primary complaint that missionaries were engaging in trade, Crowther unconvincingly replied that Company rules against trading only applied to the firm's employees. The C.M.S. had placed no such prohibition on its agents bartering or trading "for their own use". Finally, the Bishop pointed to what he knew to be at the heart of the matter: the presence of African (Saro) trading firms, in competition with European companies, displeased the latter. He said that he found it peculiar that Edgar's informants saw only "Black facts in Black missionary rabblets" and made no mention of the dissolute and "ungodly" behaviour of European personnel. He wrote that "one-tenth of the troubles we have had with such men is not told." He defended the work of those Africans, missionary and trading agents, who had already done so much for the opening of the country to trade: "The path has been well-beaten by Black agents, who had roughed it for years". Now that the health conditions had changed, Crowther persisted, "black men are not capable of managing the business, but (only) Europeans!"

He acknowledged the help that the Europeans could bring, but counselled strongly:

Let not the black man be supplanted out of his post by unjust misrepresentation ... I am above the narrow idea of confining usefulness to one class of people alone to the exclusion of others, without any other cause but that of colour or tribe. 1

Edward Hutchinson was in the midst of his re-organization schemes at Salisbury Square when in the late 1870s he received complaints from Edgar and other Europeans doing business on the Niger. These reports increased already existing doubts which the Lay Secretary had concerning

1 C.M.S. CA/5/04/497 Crowther to Edgar, 3 September 1875.
the Niger Mission and its Bishop. He determined to check Crowther's independence. While Hutchinson's correspondence with Crowther fell during this period, his communication with others - European missionaries in Yorubaland and at Lagos, European merchants, etc. - regarding Niger Mission affairs did not. Crowther was clearly excluded from his confidence, as the Secretary decided to investigate thoroughly, as soon as he could, the conduct of the Niger Mission. Crowther gave him an opportunity. In order to guarantee access to his stations, the Bishop again proposed in 1875 that the C.M.S. purchase a steam launch or steamship. Hutchinson proved receptive to the idea. The Bishop began considering plans for the vessel, urging for example that complicated engines be avoided, so that the steamer, like the Mission's stations, could be wholly African-run. In the deliberations over the steamer project Hutchinson saw his chance to institute his desired enquiry into the state of the Mission. He suggested to Crowther that James H. Ashcroft, then in England, and the Rev. Henry Johnson, a Sierra Leonean recently returned from Palestine, accompany him on his next ascent. Subtly masking his true intentions, he offered that these two men could prepare an


2 C.M.S. CA2/01/494-95 Crowther to Hutchinson, 12 October 1875. Crowther also noted in his letter to Edgar, quoted above, that unless a permanent understanding could be reached with one of the trading firms for passage, etc., a C.M.S. steamer appeared the only alternative.

3 C.M.S. CA3/04/517 Crowther to Hutchinson, 17 January 1876.

4 See Register, p. 116, no. 576. Ashcroft had eighteen years' experience as a C.M.S. agent in Sierra Leone and Yorubaland. As stated in Chapter II, he was originally assigned for Onitsha in 1859, but circumstances of transport, etc., prohibited his going there. See Register, p. 315, no. 111. Johnson was an Islington graduate and subsequently a Tutor at Freetown Grammar School for eight years. He had been Pastor of St. Paul's, Breadfruit, Lagos, for two years when he was named Archdeacon.
objective statement on the need for a steamer, as well as "refute the slanders" of European agents such as Cliff. More accurately, Ashcroft could give a full personal report to the Lay Secretary and then the Parent Committee of the state of the Niger Mission.

Crowther invited Ashcroft to join him on the 1876 Visitation, not suspecting that the lay missionary was under special instructions from Hutchinson. After some delay, occasioned by an attack on their ship in the Delta, they proceeded upriver in August, accompanied by a Royal Navy gunboat. Ashcroft's particular inquisitiveness attracted the Bishop's attention: "Mr. Ashcroft has been very active in moving about in the Niger countries". Nonetheless, Crowther had only good words for him. He approved his suggestions for buildings at Osomari and Kippo Hill and appreciated Ashcroft's kind words on his plans for a station at Alenso. He did not seek to hide the problems at Onitsha from the eyes of the "visitor". After an investigation of charges of adultery and drunkenness against the Rev. William Romaine, the Senior Pastor there, Crowther found him guilty of the latter charge and suspended him from clerical duties for three months. Ashcroft was, however, clearly unimpressed with what he saw and the Bishop soon held a different opinion of the

1 C.M.S. L1/23H-90 Hutchinson to Crowther, 30 March 1876. Hutchinson's interest in bringing new methods to Salisbury Square is exemplified in this letter: it is one of the first in the C.M.S. archives to have been typewritten.

2 C.M.S. CA3/04/533 Crowther to Hutchinson, 10 May 1876.

3 C.M.S. CA3/04/533 Crowther to Hutchinson, 7 August 1876.

4 C.M.S. CA3/04/535 Crowther to Hutchinson, 9 October 1876.

5 C.M.S. CA3/04/537 Crowther to Hutchinson, 19 October 1876.

6 C.M.S. CA3/04/745 Crowther: "Onitsha" and a special appended note, dated 2 September 1876, in "Report of the Annual Visit for 1876".
missionary and his supposed purpose in accompanying him. Ashcroft's critical report prompted a Special Meeting of the C.M.S. General Committee on 23 November 1876. The Committee decided that it was desirable that an early opportunity should be taken of conferring with the Bishop for the requirements of the Mission and its future arrangements.

Although Crowther had expressed an intention to visit England in 1878 to attend the Second Lambeth Conference, the Committee resolved that he and Ashcroft should come immediately, "as it is of importance".

Upon receipt of the Committee's "invitation" Crowther wrote his acceptance and left within a fortnight from Lagos.

Crowther's 1877 visit to England, and his subsequent meetings with Salisbury Square Committees, signalled a significant change in C.M.S. attitudes towards the Niger Mission work and the Bishop's supervision of it. No longer would the Mission be conducted solely through African agency: Europeans would now work alongside their African colleagues. Nor would Crowther's authority ever again be what it had been previously. He would be relieved of "temporal affairs" and confined to spiritual matters, and even in the latter field his freedom to recruit and select his own missionary agents would be restricted. The decision had been reached to redefine the "noble experiment" which Venn and Crowther had begun. At the Bishop's first appearance before it in late February, the Committee of Correspondence resolved that a Special Sub-Committee be appointed "to confer more especially with Bishop Crowther on matters connected

1 C.M.S. G/31/1/179-80 Special General Committee, 28 November 1876.
2 Ibid. For Crowther's views on the Lambeth Conference, see C.M.S. G/37/G/35/2 Crowther to Wright, 23 May 1876.
with the Niger Mission". 1

A week later the Special Sub-Committee was selected, but in the meantime its scope had been broadened to reflect a growing bias against the existing situation in the Niger Mission "with the view of considering the steps to be taken to increase its efficiency". Of equal importance, the list of those to be interviewed was augmented to include Ashcroft, Henry Townsend and David Hinderer.2 The Special Sub-Committee Report was presented a fortnight later (although it had been written within a week). Its recommendations to the full Committee were approved as follows: 1) An Appeal should be established to obtain funds for a Mission steamer, which could run up the Niger "at all seasons of the year and be at the disposal of Bishop Crowther for the service of the Mission". The expenditure saved on annual passage and baggage fees to trading firms would more than cover maintenance costs. 2) "An earnest Christian European" should be appointed in charge of the steamer and the Bishop should be relieved of "all secularities" of the Mission by this individual. If necessary two Europeans should be employed, in the event that one became incapacitated. 3) All "native agents" from Sierra Leone or the Yoruba Mission must be recommended by the local Finance Committees of those Missions before they can be engaged by the Niger Mission (i.e. Bishop Crowther).3 The Committee chose Ashcroft for the new post "as he entertained a great respect for Bishop Crowther" and had

1 C.M.S. G/C1/v.43/305-12 Committee of Correspondence, 27 February 1877.
2 C.M.S. G/C1/v.43/321-30 Committee of Correspondence, 6 March 1877.
3 C.M.S. G/C1/v.43/359-69 Committee of Correspondence, 20 March 1877.
eighteen years' experience in West Africa.¹

Crowther acquiesced to the Committee resolutions, while at the same time stealing some of their thunder by presenting his own proposals for improving the "efficiency" of the Mission. After obtaining the approval of Henry Wright and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Campbell Tait, he urged the division of his Mission/Diocese into two archdeaconries: "The Lower Niger", which would include Onitsha, and "The Upper Niger", encompassing the stations north of that point. He nominated his youngest son Dandeson and the Rev. Henry Johnson for the two respective posts. Displaying a timely interest in the welfare of his staff,² he argued for additional scholarships for children of agents to the Grammar Schools at Lagos and Freetown and a salary rise, after five years' service, for all married agents. The Committee approved all of these recommendations.³

In the weeks before departing for West Africa on 21 July 1877, Crowther busied himself speaking in support of the steamer Appeal, while reporting to Governmental and secular groups the great importance and potential of the Niger countries. He presented a paper, "Notes on the River Niger", to the Royal Geographical Society, which was read in his presence by Edward Hutchinson.⁴ Mindful of

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¹ C.M.S. G/C1/v.4/5/379 Committee of Correspondence, 27 March 1877. Crowther had hoped that his Samuel would assume responsibility for any Niger Mission steamer. See C.M.S. CA3/O4/599 Crowther to Hutchinson, 26 December 1876.

² Many agents were threatening resignation over salaries and the general lack of benefits which European agents enjoyed.

³ C.M.S. G/C1/v.4/5/503-10 Committee of Correspondence, 19 June 1877; also C.M.S. G/A01/20/161-34 Wright to Tait, 18 June 1877.

⁴ Hutchinson was very active in geographical circles, writing several articles and short books on Africa. See, for example, E. Hutchinson: The Lost Continent: Its Rediscovery and Discovery, London, 1879.
his difficulties with some of the trading firms, Crowther cautiously urged that

Further attempts, carefully planned, and entrusted to men who would conciliate and not alarm the natives, would carry geographical discovery to the interior. 1

In discussing the steamer project, both the Bishop and the Lay Secretary spoke to the Geographical Society. Hutchinson indicated that the steamer would contribute significantly to exploration. He obviously had plans for the vessel which had not been mentioned to the Bishop, or publicly discussed at the Committee meetings which established the project. Crowther also commented briefly on Islam, crediting it with reducing "idol worship", but indicating that Christianity had a major role to play in the Western Sudan. He acknowledge that as a British subject he had easy access throughout the area. This prompted votes of approval for his work and raised again (no doubt to Hutchinson's chagrin) the singular importance of African agency and African supervision. The Dean of Lichfield expressed the hope that Crowther was representative of a new race of African bishops ... as Christianity would never really flourish until it was led by native blood. 2

Crowther's 1877 Episcopal Visitation was his last as unchallenged leader of the Niger Mission. Ashcroft remained in England, co-ordinating plans for the new steamer, and the Archdeaconery scheme was not to be implemented until 1 January 1878. In order to introduce the Archdeacon-elect of the Upper Niger, the Bishop took


2 Ibid. See also "Bishop Crowther 'On the Niger'", The African Times XVIII: 191, 2 July 1877.
Henry Johnson with him on the journey. The stations on the Niger, like those in the Delta, combined elements of success and potentiality, disappointment and drift. Alonso, approximately fifteen miles south of Caitsa, had become fully operational. It had only been taken up the previous year. A school had been established and a building purchased from the West Africa Company. At Akassa, twenty-five miles further north, a faithful congregation was growing. Lokoja, where Johnson's headquarters were to be located, provided the greatest encouragement. With the return of the Rev. and Mrs. T.C. John from Sierra Leone and the advent of Johnson, the Confluence area would be fully-staffed, enabling an increase in the already existing itinerancy programme. It would also raise the possibility of re-opening a station at Igbebe should the opportunity present itself. The fact that services were held in three languages (Hausa, Nupe and Bunu) greatly impressed the Arabist and linguist Henry Johnson. Crowther had constantly argued for a concerted plan of expansion in the North. Kippo Hill, the one station which could be accurately characterized as a "mission village", was attracting its own settlement of farmers. The Bishop still looked eagerly at Shonga, which he saw as the third point of a triangle which also included Lagos and the Delta. Speaking in strong Evangelical terms, he declared that by occupying the area contained therein, "We shall have fully besieged this portion of Satan's Kingdom". Although Crowther had recently been relieved of his quasi-Consular responsibilities by the Consul at Fernando Po, he

1 Johnson's journal of the trip was later published by the C.M.S. in pamphlet form. Henry Johnson: A Journey Up the Niger in the autumn of 1877, London, 1878.

continued to enjoy cordial relations with Umoru and made an overland trip to Bida to inform Etsu Hupo of the work at Kippo Hill and the plans for Shonga, as well as to introduce Henry Johnson.

Onitsha, the oldest station, continued to pose the greatest problems. While Crowther could maintain that European merchants had not given the best example to the population and had even been obstructionist, difficulties ran deeper than that. As has been noted earlier, there had existed from the start a certain amount of rivalry and friction within the Onitsha station and outstations. The Senior Pastor, William Romaine, who had been suspended for three months the year before, died while the Bishop was at Lokoja. Crowther's fulsome response to this loss was indicative of the personal loyalty which he had for his staff. It was an aspect of his personality which could easily be construed as a weakness. After twenty years' service as Scripture Reader, catechist, and finally Pastor, Romaine epitomized the type of agent which Crowther appreciated. Romaine's fall from grace did not in the Bishop's view negate his long service as "an old, patient, and diligent labourer". Despite the troubles at Onitsha, the Bishop confidently declared: "The Bible maintains its ground". The major hindrance to success was the lack of adequately qualified staff. Crowther anticipated that difficulties would

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1 See supra, Chapter III, pp. 151-62.

2 C.M.S. CA3/04/579a-b Crowther: "Report of Bishop Crowther's Visitation to the Niger Mission in 1877"; also C.M.S. CA3/04/577 Crowther to Hutchinson, 7 November 1877. Although the case of Romaine displays an unwillingness on the part of Crowther to handle effectively disciplinary cases, he could also act swiftly with those who disobeyed Society regulations. See, for example, his sacking of a Brass catechist in C.M.S. CA3/04/579 Crowther to Hutchinson, 10 December 1877.
The need for new agents was hardly keeping up with present demands, not to mention expansionary hopes. While the Mission had lost, for various reasons, twenty-three men since its inception, it still had only twenty-two in the field. New requests from Igbebe, Yimaha, Shonga, and other places could not be met. The untimely death of his son-in-law, T.B. Macaulay, moved Crowther to restate his position on African agency and the staffing of his Mission. He remained convinced that Africans must be primarily responsible for evangelizing their countries and the Niger. His trust in and dependence upon the experienced, older Christians from Sierra Leone and Lagos continued unshaken. He advised finally that "other" Africans should soon take positions of authority in the Niger Mission and thereby gain the knowledge and friendship of the various rulers. His proposal for the creation of the two Archdeaconeries had been in keeping with this view. He looked on with approval, therefore, when on 2 January 1878 Dandeson Crowther and Henry Johnson swore their oaths of loyalty.

1 C.H.S. CA3/04/736a Crowther: "Report on Bishop Crowther's Visitation to the Niger Mission in 1877".
2 Ibid.
3 C.H.S. CA3/04/583 Crowther to Wright, 21 January 1878.
4 C.H.S. CA3/04/582 Crowther to Hutchinson, 3 January 1878. See also "Bishop Crowther's Archdeacons", Intelligencer and Record N.S. III (1878), 107-88.
A Changed Mission: Ashcroft on the Niger

Hutchinson had his own plans for the Niger Mission and determined that where they were at variance with those of the Bishop his, as Lay Secretary, would prevail. Was not Crowther, despite his episcopal status, still an agent of the Church Missionary Society? The Mission steamer, christened the Henry Venn, sailed for Africa in late February 1878. In writing to the Bishop of its departure, Hutchinson issued one of several regulations which he would himself later contravene: the Henry Venn should not be employed as a means for exploratory expeditions. The Lay Secretary now also assumed a distinctly patronizing tone in his correspondence with the Bishop. He instructed him not to forget the financial strictures placed on all missionary work, especially at Nembé, and strongly questioned the purchase of the West African Company's factory at Alenson. Through the Parent Committee he appointed Crowther "Secretary" and Ashcroft "Accountant" of the Niger Mission. In order not to confuse his two responsibilities Ashcroft was instructed to keep the Mission and steamer accounts separate. As "financial administrator", he was also to conduct his work "as far as possible ... in consultation with Bishop Crowther". All bills of exchange, for example, had to bear the signatures of both men, although Ashcroft would act as paymaster and quartermaster for the Mission.

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2 C.M.S. CAY/1/1/291-93 Hutchinson to Crowther, 1 February 1878; also "The Henry Venn Steamer", Intelligencer and Accord N.S. III (1878), 188-89.

3 In May 1877 the West Africa Company was reformed as the West African Company. Under its new Articles it had the power to amalgamate with other companies. Mint: Goldie, p. 50.
Finally, in a move ostensibly designed to provide a better organization for an expanding Mission, Hutchinson instructed Crowther to establish Conferences within each of the Mission’s two divisions and to appoint Ashcroft a member of both. In a denouement which Crowther could only have found deprecating, the Secretary declared that all of the new regulations would "raise the spiritual tone of the Mission".  

Tension and controversy developed between Crowther and Ashcroft almost as soon as the latter arrived at Lagos. The immediate cause of friction lay in the "special" place the Crowther family held within the Mission. Dandeson was an ordained C.M.S. agent, but both of his older brothers, as well as his three sisters, had each on occasion accompanied their father on annual visitations of the Mission. Samuel and Josiah, West African Company employees, also "advised" the Bishop on many matters, especially building and construction. They received no salary for their counsel, but they, like their sisters, certainly profited from their relationship with the most famous African on the Niger. Ashcroft considered this situation one of unwarranted favouritism and a contravention of Mission regulations. The Bishop was, as we have seen, particularly sensitive where his family was concerned. A tactful man might have persuaded Crowther of the need to restrict what many perceived as blatant nepotism. Ashcroft, however, proceeded in a distinctly contentious manner and was not above arguing within a racial context. When he had not heard from

1 C.M.S. CA3/L1/293-301 Hutchinson to Crowther, 26 April 1878; C.M.S. CA3/L1/301-06 Hutchinson: "Memorandum on the financial arrangements for the Niger Mission"; also see N.A.I. C.M.S. "Y" 5/1/5 Hutchinson to Ashcroft, 3 May 1878, which encloses a copy of the "Memorandum" as well.
Salisbury Square after more than two months in West Africa, Ashcroft wrote to Hutchinson that the regulations for the Henry Venn needed "review". He noted the Bishop's insistence that his sons travel on board the steamer although one of the rules expressly prohibited the transportation of non-missionary persons. Ashcroft had reluctantly consented when the Bishop, pressing for a free passage for Samuel, asserted that his son "had been a great friend of the Society and ... had originated the idea of the steamer". Ashcroft again protested when Crowther informed him that for health reasons his widowed daughter Abigail Macaulay would also go up with him. The Mission Accountant contended that Mrs. Macaulay had trade in mind and not her health. Crowther retorted that as Bishop he would be responsible to the Parent Committee for his actions. When Ashcroft himself became ill, he warned the Committee that they would soon be told that White men were unnecessary for the maintenance of the steamer, especially because of their alleged susceptibility to disease. Ashcroft agreed on the negative effects of the West African climate on English "constitutions". But he showed his low regard for African agency when he added "You can depend upon their (i.e. Englishmen) doing their duty".

The "respect" which Ashcroft had supposedly entertained for Crowther evaporated or was demonstrated as never to have existed. This became quite evident after the first Niger Visitation on board

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1 C.M.S. CA3/05/10 Ashcroft to Hutchinson, 27 May 1878.
Rather hypocritically, Ashcroft was not against carrying "African" traders when they were willing to pay exhorbitant passage fees. See C.M.S. CA3/05/16 Ashcroft to Hutchinson, 24 June 1878.

2 C.M.S. CA3/05/11 Ashcroft to Hutchinson, 1 June 1878.
the Henry Venn in mid-1878, when Ashcroft severely criticized construction techniques and the conduct of the Industrial Institutes. In so doing he obliquely attacked the Crowther sons who had been so instrumental in both these areas. In his reports to Salisbury Square Ashcroft naturally had a sympathetic ear in Edward Hutchinson. Even before the 1878 ascent, Ashcroft had sought to limit his dealings with the Bishop to a minimum. He argued, for example, that the C.M.S. regulations which required his and Crowther's signatures on bills of exchange be abandoned, "as the Bishop was frequently away". He went so far as to impugn Crowther's motives. Referring to him as "the Old Man", he advised that the Bishop had no intention to abide by the new Niger Mission regulations and would continue to operate as he had done previously, feigning ignorance or misunderstanding. As he was hardly privy to Hutchinson's complete plans for the Niger, Crowther could not appreciate at this stage that the Lay Secretary intended to reduce significantly both his authority and the Mission's reliance on African agency. He also had clear evidence to doubt the sincerity of the new regulations. Ashcroft was beginning to act as a law unto himself. When the Accountant soon began to use the Henry Venn for trading and exploratory purposes, the Bishop could quite rightly believe that the much discussed regulations were not so much directives as recommendations. In the meantime Ashcroft pressed the Parent Committee for more support in his work (and in his battles with Crowther) and recommended the appointment of James Kirk, a mutual friend of his and Hutchinson's, as his assistant. After little more than a month on the Niger he had nothing but contempt for the

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1 Ibid.
2 C.M.S. CA5/05/15 Ashcroft to Hutchinson, 20 June 1878.
construction at the various stations, calling them a "farce" and pleading that Kirk be sent out.  
Hutchinson accepted Ashcroft's arguments. When he finally answered the Accountant's letters, he shared his reluctance in granting free passages to members of the Crowther family and encouraged Ashcroft in his reforming work. More importantly, he obtained the Parent Committee's approval to employ James Kirk.

Crowther's reports and correspondence in 1878 indicate that he was not totally unaware of Ashcroft's criticisms, as he adroitly anticipated and countered many of them. Although he did not refrain from pointing to Ashcroft's recurrent illnesses, he did not use them (as the Accountant expected) as a means with which to argue the superiority of African agency. When he received his copy of the Henry Venn regulations, he noted that they had been "wisely written", yet added that "exceptional cases" should be taken into account, stressing the long history of interdependence of peoples and groups on the Niger. On a personal note he claimed the assistance of Samuel as "medical advisor" aboard the steamer. Once on the river he appears to have taken great care in spending an adequate time at each station. The Henry Venn had as one of its stated purposes the provision of greater flexibility for the Bishop, who would no longer be tied to the schedule of trading vessels. Crowther made it clear,

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1 C.H.S. CA3/05/17 Ashcroft to Hutchinson, 3 August 1878.
2 C.H.S. CA3/01/321-22 Hutchinson to Ashcroft, 12 July 1878. Kirk was hired in a special "private" capacity and did not go out to the Niger as a lay missionary as did Ashcroft.
3 C.H.S. CA3/04/597 Crowther to Hutchinson, 24 June 1878; C.H.S. CA3/04/598 Crowther to Hutchinson, 4 July 1878.
4 C.H.S. CA3/04/599 Crowther to Hutchinson, 15 July 1878.
however, in a rather subtle manner, that Ashcroft did not afford him the use of the steamer as had been outlined. Crowther and his missionaries were left waiting on more than one occasion. Despite the express prohibition by the Parent Committee, the Henry Venn almost immediately began taking trade goods (allegedly to defray operating expenses) and going on exploratory journeys. Crowther did not condemn these voyages, one to Shonga (180 miles up the Niger from Lokoja) and another up the Bunu to Yimaha in Igbiraland. Privately, he was probably pleased at the potential for expansion. He noted the events in an almost disinterested manner, aware that any opposition which might be forthcoming from the Parent Committee would thus not fall on his shoulders.

In his 1870 Annual Report on the state of the Mission, Crowther gave one of his most detailed and well-written accounts. It was a review in many ways of not just one, but rather twenty years' work. He took pride in the programmes of self-support, notably at Brass, but also at Bunu and Lokoja. He cautiously noted the compromises which had been achieved with the local rulers and traders at Onitsha. Although he continued to be apprehensive of many of the new river merchants, who were less supportive and more critical of missionary work, he still believed that they and the Mission could derive mutual benefit through cordial relations with one another. At the newer stations of Alonso and Asaba the positive effect of the Mission presence, he opined, had already been felt in the reduction in human

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1 C.H.S. CA/04/602 Crowther to Hutchinson, 1 August 1878.
2 C.H.S. CA/04/605 Crowther to Hutchinson, 22 August 1878.
sacrifices and twin murder. With the contending chiefs at Igebe reconciled, he had received an invitation to re-establish a station there, but had decided to consider the proposal carefully before returning too quickly. In the station at Kippo Hill the Niger Mission had achieved its long-sought "foothing in the interior". As for the new areas which Ashcroft had explored, Crowther could not conceal a tacit approval for a Shonga station. He had wanted for some time a missionary establishment in the emirate as part of a connection to Ilorin and Yorubaland. After a meeting with Etsu Shonga Alihu in September he received a grant of land on behalf of the Mission.¹ At Yimaha Crowther and Ashcroft, accompanied by the Belgian explorer Adolphe Burdo, met with the Igbira ruler Kpanaki. Ashcroft took particular interest in Igbiraland which the Bishop had first visited in 1854. Kpanaki, however, at war with a neighbouring tribe, wished to use the Henry Venn as a means to threaten his foe. As Crowther would not countenance such a plan, Kpanaki declined to offer land to the Mission. The Bishop thought it best to wait; in a short time an invitation would be forthcoming without any strings attached.²

Crowther concluded his Report with statistics for the year:

African Clergy: 9; Lay Teachers: 19; Baptisms: 41 children, 92 adults; Communicants: 208; Christians: 655; All Mission Schools:


² C.M.S. GA5/01/605 Crowther to Hutchinson, 22 August 1878. Burdo painted a sympathetic portrait of Crowther, although lacking in accuracy. For example, he placed the Bishop's age at fifty years, when actually he was well over 70 at the time. See A.K. Burdo: The Niger and the Benue, London, 1830, pp. 214-36.
The increasing ill health of the Bishop's wife in 1879 gave Ashcroft, with Hutchinson's approval, an unexpected opportunity to increase his authority in the Mission. Since her husband had so frequently been absent from home during their nearly fifty years of married life, Susana Crowther had, in many ways, raised their six children single-handedly. Now, as Crowther movingly wrote, she wished her husband with her:

She imagined that she had no one else to care for her except myself, and when she would die, it must be in my arms, and I must close her eyes. She decided to remain with his wife and forego his annual visit of the upper stations. In the meantime Ashcroft had already assumed full control of the steamer and took it for periods of two months or more without giving reasons to the Bishop or keeping him informed of its whereabouts. In the early part of the year Ashcroft had been joined by James Kirk and the two, working in concert, proceeded to recast the Niger Mission to their own model. One of their first acts was to sack three agents at Lokoja: two carpenters and a Scripture Reader. When word of this reached Crowther in Lagos, he was incensed. He wrote Hutchinson and the Parent Committee to have them strongly instruct Mr. Ashcroft and Mr. Kirk never more to undertake a summary dismissal of any agents whom I have employed on the Niger Mission, without my

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1 C.H.S. 045/04/847b Crowther: "Report of the Niger Mission for 1879"; also "The Henry Venn on the Niger", Intellective and Record N.S. IV (1879), 96-104.
2 C.H.S. 045/04/539 Crowther to Hutchinson, 27 May 1879.
3 C.H.S. 045/04/625 Crowther to Hutchinson, 3 April 1879; also C.H.S. 045/04/539 Crowther to Hutchinson, 12 June 1879.
hearing both sides of the question and (giving) my consent. 1

Without waiting for a reply from the Committee, Crowther instructed Dandeson, then at Lokoja for a Mission conference, to restore the dismissed personnel. 2

Hutchinson had now resolved on some fundamental changes for the Niger Mission. In his letter of instructions to Kirk in December 1878 he told him that the Parent Committee had made a full review of the Niger work and had decided that the Mission was not in a satisfactory condition, and that the agents, both ordained and unordained, with a few noteworthy exceptions, were not maintaining "a high tone of Christian life". The Lay Secretary, while not actually blaming Crowther by name, pointed to the "insufficient care" in selecting missionaries and the "inadequacy of the present superintendence". He clearly indicated that Kirk would be only the first of many Europeans who would be sent out to the Mission. He instructed Ashcroft to visit the Cameroons on the Henry Venn in order to assess the area as a site for a sanitorium for European agents stationed on the Niger. 3 He also chose to ignore very favourable comments on Bishop Crowther and the work of the African agents on the Niger from the Henry Venn's Captain Francis Brown. While on the river in 1878 Brown clashed with Ashcroft who resented the Captain's easy friendship with and respect for the Bishop. He noted then in

1 C.M.S. CA3/04/644 Crowther to Hutchinson, 22 July 1879.
2 C.M.S. CA3/04/652 Crowther to Hutchinson, 13 August 1879.
3 C.M.S. CA3/11/329-35 Hutchinson to Kirk, 6 December 1879.
his diary:

Every day which I spent with Bishop Crowther on our long journey up the river I learned to admire his courage more... His wisdom and insight, coupled with a knowledge of the nature of his own people, brought us through many a tense experience.

He concluded: "African must be changed by African, if at all".¹

When Brown returned to England briefly at the end of 1878, he was relieved of his duties, a fact which he attributed to his pro-African opinions and his less than perfect relationship with Ashcroft.²

In addition to the sackings at Lokoja, Crowther continued to receive complaints from his agents, several of whom accused Ashcroft and Kirk of racial prejudice. One African missionary wrote from Alonso:

The wild notion prevalent among the natives that we Blacks are slaves of the Whiteman... is becoming more and more believed and acted upon.³

Other agents also alleged ill-treatment.⁴ Hutchinson was unmoved and continued to encourage and commend the two Europeans. At the same time he adopted an unsympathetic, chastising and patronizing manner with the Bishop. He lamented the "low moral tone" in the Mission, despite "the twelve years I have laboured for your race". As a result he informed Crowther that Parent Committee had resolved to send a third party, the Rev. Jonathan Buckley Wood, to conduct a full

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¹ Beattie: A Hope in the Hand, pp. 14-45.
² Ibid., pp. 51-54.
³ C.M.S. CA3/OV629 Rev. J. Buck to Crowther, 23 December 1879.
⁴ C.M.S. CA3/OV629 Rev. J. Williams to Crowther, 27 May 1879, Perry to Crowther, 5 June 1879, Thomas Moses to Crowther, 10 May 1879; also C.M.S. CA3/OV629 Paul to Crowther, 28 August 1879.
investigation of the Mission. The Bishop was requested to co-operate fully.¹ Two months later Hutchinson made his intentions known to Crowther. He noted the "peculiar position" which the Niger Mission enjoyed, as contrasted with other C.M.S. enterprises, with its entire control and administration in the Bishop's hands. Crowther's "advancing age require(d) a more permanent form of government".² Crowther agreed that reforms were needed as conditions had changed and the Mission had grown in the past twenty years. Yet he also realized, as a result of Ashcroft's and Kirk's conduct and Hutchinson's silent approval thereof, that the Lay Secretary had plans which would distinctly alter the character of the Mission he had worked so hard to build. Crowther silently resolved to marshal his forces and fight, if necessary, to maintain a Niger Mission in which African agency would have a dominant role.

Conclusion

The 1870s were an especially active period for Bishop Crowther and the Niger Mission. Conditions favoured expansion on the river and in the Delta. While financial problems plagued the Church Missionary Society during these years, Crowther resolutely took up new opportunities as they presented themselves. Brass provided the most important success for the Mission and the way looked open for a start in New Calabar (Kalabari) and for growth at Onitsha and beyond.

¹ C.M.S. CA3/L1/363-70 Hutchinson to Crowther, 5 September 1879. Wood was a close friend and confidante of Hutchinson. See C.M.S. CA3/L1/313 Hutchinson to Ashcroft, 11 October 1878; Register, pp. 103-04, no. 521.

² C.M.S. CA3/L1/371-74 Hutchinson to Crowther, 5 November 1879.
the Confluence. Even in Bonny, where the chiefs sought through persecution to stem the tide of conversion among their domestic slaves, the situation had markedly improved by 1880. The Bishop undertook these new responsibilities by circumventing Salisbury Square and by relying on the Bishopric Fund and private benefactors in England and elsewhere. At the same time that his episcopal duties increased, the Colonial Government in West Africa placed great trust in him. In Nupe he assumed quasi-Consular status for nearly seven years. He used his position there also to obtain greater security for his agents and for the disparate subject peoples who lived in the country, particularly at Lokoja. In Yorubaland the ifale and Administrator Glover's anti-Egba policies had severely strained relations between the Egba and the British. Crowther met with political leaders there and through Salisbury Square contributed to Whitehall's decision to alter its policy. The Bishop hoped that the Yoruba Mission, which had maintained operations without European supervision, might finally be transferred to his diocese. But the Bishops of Sierra Leone balked at any territorial loss. While some Europeans favoured the move, Henry Townsend remained firmly opposed to the person of Crowther. Similarly Crowther's interest in the Gambia did not bear fruit as the Society would not even be persuaded by the possibility of greater Methodist activity there. While the Rev. Henry Wright, the Honorary Clerical Secretary, urged Crowther to fill a supposed vacuum in Liberia, this too did not develop satisfactorily. When the American Episcopal Church moved to re-assert its position in Liberia, Crowther's reputation suffered unfairly in the criticism which followed.

The greatest challenge during the period lay in the re-organization necessitated by Henry Venn's death. For Crowther
and the Niger Mission this not only meant that they could no longer draw on the counsel and expertise of their former patron, but also that they would suffer several years of neglect during the turmoil of change at Salisbury Square. As Edward Hutchinson gradually emerged as a power within the Society, he sought to bring Crowther more strictly into line with Home policy. He determined to end the Bishop's financial independence and seeming disregard of C.M.S. directives, particularly on expansion. The increasing rift between missionaries and merchants on the Niger gave Hutchinson the opportunity he sought to restrict Crowther and remould the Mission. The Ashcroft investigation, which the Lay Secretary sponsored, prompted in 1877 a dramatic call for the Bishop to come to England. In the three months of meetings which followed, rules were laid down governing expenditure, the employment of new agents, and the maintenance of a new Mission steamer, the Henry Venn. More important still, the Society appointed Ashcroft as Mission Accountant and placed him in charge of the "secularities" of the Mission. Crowther did not sit by passively. He too showed his interest in reform, and in African agency, by successfully persuading the Parent Committee to divide the Mission into two Archdeaconries, with one headed by his son Dandson. These changes were not enough for Hutchinson and Ashcroft. Susanah Crowther's illness in 1879 prohibited her husband from visiting the Niger that year. Ashcroft and his assistant James Kirk went alone and blatantly assumed in Crowther's absence much of his authority. The African agents reacted angrily. As the Society determined on a second independent enquiry and a full-scale review of the Niger work, the stage appeared set for confrontation.
Chapter V

Attempts at Moderate Mission Reform in the Face of Challenge and Change on the Niger, 1880-86

With the illness of his mother and wife to concern him, Crowther might have hoped that as he had himself reached his mid-70s he could retire peacefully. He felt, however, his life's work threatened. The changing character of the C.M.S. leadership and the presence of Ashcroft and Kirk pressed him to work on. He desired to settle the persistent personnel problems and leave behind a growing African staff. He had urged the establishment of the two Archdeaconries not only because this helped to devolve the administrative apparatus, but also because this permitted room for others to display their talents.¹ Although Crowther had been for most of his adult life at the centre of discussion regarding "native agency", the real test for the programme which he represented was to come in his old age. He was to remain as Bishop for yet another twelve years. During that period he would be called upon to take decisive measures and cope with complex problems when perhaps least capable of doing so effectively and at a time when continual controversy and investigations were to be the hallmarks of his Mission. The Parent Committee was to have difficulty providing clear and consistent direction, in part due to internal problems, but also for lack of a single guiding hand at their centre. Despite their intentions, they could not expect to preserve the "special

¹ Crowther made it clear in late 1879 that he viewed both his son and Archdeacon Johnson as the prime candidates to succeed him as Bishop. C.M.S. CA3/04/65 Crowther to Hutchinson, 20 August 1879.
character" of African agency while appointing European Mission Secretaries who did not believe in or approve of the model. As a result Crowther, the Parent Committee, and the Mission were to stumble into a crisis at the end of the decade over which none of them would have much control.

J.B. Wood: The First Investigative Review

In October-November 1879 the Parent Committee appointed the Rev. Jonathan Buckley Wood to visit the Niger and prepare a report.  

In a further resolution, the Committee noted Bishop Crowther's long years of service, but declared nevertheless,

that the growth of the work and also the advancing age of the Bishop render it desirable that they (the Committee) should now arrange for the formation of a system of government which should assist him in the general control and management of the mission.  

To this purpose they urged the establishment of a Niger Finance Committee at Lagos which would meet monthly and report its proceedings to London. The members were to include the Bishop, the two Archdeacons, Ashcroft, the Revs. A. Maser, A. Mann, and C.H.V. Gollmer of the Yoruba Mission, with Wood serving as Secretary.  

When Hutchinson wrote to Crowther about the Wood investigation and the Parent Committee's resolutions, he was decidedly vague. He did not forward texts of the resolutions, nor any letter of introduction for Wood. He had little

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1 N.A.I. C.M.S. "Y" 4/1/5 Wright and Hutchinson to the Rev. J.B. Wood, 4 November 1879. Wood had been in the C.M.S. employ since 1857 when he had gone out to the Yoruba Mission as a catechist. He was ordained in 1865 and subsequently held various posts in Yorubaland. Register, pp. 103-04, no. 521.

2 C.M.S. CA3/L1/384-36 Committee of Correspondence, 21 October 1879.

3 Ibid.

4 C.M.S. CA3/L1/371-74 Hutchinson to Crowther, 5 November 1879. See also Ayandele: Missionary Impact, p. 209. Hutchinson later apologized for "his oversight" in these matters. C.M.S. CA3/L1/384 Hutchinson to Crowther, 16 January 1880.
concrete evidence besides Ashcroft's complaints, and these hardly sufficed as the basis for an investigation in and of themselves.

When Wood arrived in Lagos in late October, the Bishop greeted him warmly. The continuing grave illness of his wife was causing Crowther great concern and he decided not to accompany Wood up the Niger. He was, nonetheless, apprehensive and asked Archdeacon Henry Johnson to go in his place and to aid Wood in the latter's investigation of "evil" reports regarding certain agents. He particularly instructed Johnson to represent him in the case of J.S. Johnson, one of the three agents dismissed by Ashcroft and Kirk, whom he believed had been treated unjustly.¹

Wood was on the Niger from 1 January until 24 March 1880. During that period Crowther received many reports from his Mission agents. Ashcroft and Kirk had found a sympathetic ear in Wood and provided much of the information and informants for the investigation. The two European Mission agents sought Crowther's discredit. Their unilateral actions the year before had also frightened many of the African agents on the Niger. It was obvious that a damaging and less than objective report would be forthcoming.² Crowther decided that he could not again forego an annual visitation of the Niger and made arrangements for the care of his wife and mother during his absence.³

Although Hutchinson tried to reassure him that he would "still be the

¹ C.M.S. CA3/04/664 Crowther to H. Johnson, 23 October 1879.
² C.M.S. CA3/04/685 Crowther to Hutchinson, 26 February 1880; C.M.S. CA3/04/687 J.D. Garrick to D.C. Crowther, 3 February 1880; and C.M.S. CA3/04/692 A.B. Browne to Crowther, 29 January 1880.
³ C.M.S. CA3/04/689 Crowther to Hutchinson, 1 March 1880.
honoured instrument in God's hands to go before and possess the land", ¹
he found little comfort in such words. Even before he set out, he
received a foretaste of what was to come. On 3 April 1880, the
first meeting of the new Niger Finance Committee was held, with Wood
in attendance. In a discussion regarding building repairs which the
Bishop had requested for Kippo Hill, it became evident that Ashcroft
had not complied with his wishes. When asked if he would do so on
the forthcoming trip, Ashcroft refused. Crowther felt his work and
judgment challenged. He later wrote:

I am not a boy to be so peremptorily dealt with by
Mr. Ashcroft ... I have a high spirit as he, but
through divine grace it has been subdued to bear such
conduct patiently. ²

The Bishop left Lagos on 30 April 1880. During nearly six months
spent in the Delta and on the river, he continually heard complaints
about Ashcroft and Kirk. Several agents also sought to provide
explanation of past conduct which they believed would be interpreted
to their disadvantage. ³ When a total of four missionaries resigned,
citing harassment and disrespect, he feared that others might do
likewise. Replacements would be hard to find:

I am fully aware (that) many things need to be rectified
and corrected ... ; but I am as fully persuaded that if
a fair hearing and due consideration of individual cases
were regarded ... with a desire to modify (instead of
ignoring) present causes of difficulties, with words of
encouragement, these resignations would not have been
resorted to as the alternative.⁴

¹ C.M.S. CA3/L1/388-94 Hutchinson to Crowther, 5 April 1880.
² C.M.S. CA3/OV699 Crowther to Hutchinson, 5 May 1880; and
C.M.S. CA3/OV708 Crowther to Hutchinson, 16 August 1880.
³ For example, see C.M.S. CA3/OV709a-b C. Paul to Crowther,
9 August 1880.
⁴ C.M.S. CA3/OV713 Crowther to Hutchinson, 16 October 1880.
He returned to Lagos in time to be with his wife as she died.¹

The Wood Report, coming as it did at this juncture in Crowther's career, was a severe blow. Its findings and conclusions were worse than the Bishop had expected. Wood considered his investigation and subsequent Report as confidential. In his enquiries he did not inform particular Niger agents of the charges made against them, did not call for defence, nor show his Report to Crowther before sending it on to Salisbury Square.² Hutchinson accepted the Report in toto and was correspondingly appalled. He declared rather crassly, in the same letter in which he expressed his condolences to Crowther on the loss of Susanna, that after reading the Report "at first the disposition is to sit down in despair and pronounce the Mission an utter failure".³ The Report indicates that the investigation depended very largely on hearsay as opposed to substantiated evidence. Little examination was apparently made of written records of past work, notably relating to self-support projects undertaken in the Delta. Wood attempted to excuse these shortcomings:

As a body, the agents in the Niger Mission are not highly esteemed ... many stories are told of both the dead and the living which, true or untrue, are not calculated to inculcate respect for them.⁴

¹ Susanna Crowther, 80, died in her husband's arms. He closed her eyes "as the last parting duty of affection and love, of unflagged mutual feelings for each other's welfare during our pilgrimage close over one and fifty years". C.M.S. CA3/04/714 Crowther to Hutchinson, 20 November 1880. See also Page: Black Bishop, pp. 348-49, 353.

² J.F.A. Ajayi: Christian Missions, p. 245.

³ C.M.S. CA3/L1/405-08 Hutchinson to Crowther, 20 November 1880.

⁴ C.M.S. G/Y/A3/1/1J Rev. J.B. Wood's Report on the Niger Mission, (printed), Reserved Portion, p. 1. An incomplete, handwritten original, which was received in London on 15 October 1830, can be found at C.M.S. CA3/04/313.
More damaging to the Report's objectivity were the preconceptions which its author had of Africans and their ability to handle the difficult work on the Niger. In the 1850s and 1860s the aspersions cast against African colleagues by European missionaries like Henry Townsend had been either ignored or condemned. In that same period the widely-publicized views of the Anthropological Society, including the concept of a hierarchy of inferior and superior races, had been forcefully repudiated by Salisbury Square. By 1880, however, such ideas had won wide acceptance. As a result no one flinched when Wood declared that Blackmen were more concupiscent than Whites: "Africans have weaknesses to which they more readily give way than the average of White people do". He continued that they found it hard not to trade, which for them is "a passion". He concluded that "There is also a great tendency ... to lay themselves open to charges of illicit intercourse".

In reviewing the agents in the Mission, Wood said that ten had serious charges laid against them which required answer. The allegations included drunkenness, theft, abortion, rape, and homicide. The most serious case involved W.F. John and J. Williams, accused of the murder in 1877 of a "redeemed" fourteen year old girl. Ashcroft

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was also accused of having facilitated the escape of John while allegedly transporting the latter to the Consul downriver. Wood believed that Ashcroft was free of any blame, but took a different view of the two accused African agents. As far as he was concerned hardly any of the African agents on the Niger had been qualified to serve in the first instance since they lacked sufficient education and experience. He had good words for a very few of the twenty-five agents then employed. Casting aside the Venn/Crowther model of the good, sturdy, and well-respected Churchgoer from Sierra Leone, he argued that a more extensive background was required for success on the Niger. In Sierra Leone catechists and Christian Visitors could easily call on experienced missionaries for "guidance". A different situation prevailed when such men were placed in charge of mission stations in remote areas. As a result, according to Wood,

little by little there is a lowering of the spiritual life and a diminishing of power to withstand the temptations abounding on every side. 1

Men such as J.S. Johnson fell into this category, "wanting in self-denial and self-sacrifice, who would do but little credit to himself, and none to the Society ..." Wood opined that the Bishop might have provided the necessary supervision had circumstances been different. But since he could only make one "brief, almost a flying visit" to each station every year, the Mission had suffered "a most serious setback".

In his analysis of the evangelical and educational work, Wood took a distinctly patronizing tone. At nearly all stations, he

1 C.M.S. G/Y/A3/1/1J Wood Report, Reserved Portion, p. 4.
considered the results unsatisfactory. He did not visit the premier station at Onitsha which had been severely damaged by shelling in 1879.\(^1\) Wood sympathized with the action, which he regarded as having been necessary and just "punishment" and which had "had a most salutary effect on other towns". With the exception of Igbebe, he believed little or no itinerating had been conducted by the Mission agents at any of the stations on the river. He was hardly free with his praise in the Delta, where great strides had definitely been made, most notably at Brass and Bonny. He preferred to credit God, rather than African agents, for what had been achieved:

From nothing that came under my notice should I infer that, with the exception of Archdeacon Crowther, there is anything in the various agents ..., or in their neighbourhood, to account for the movements which have taken place. God has been pleased to use what we generally consider to be accidents ...\(^2\)

A Christian Revival was necessary in order "to stir up agents to greater exertions" in pastoral and evangelical work.\(^3\) As for educational programmes, he noted that schools were in operation at nearly all the stations, but opined that results were not commensurate with the number of personnel employed: the greatest number of the teachers had received little, if any, training for their work and the procedures which they employed were inadequate. Too little attention had been given to obtaining local teachers rather than depending on Sierra Leone and Lagos for new recruits.\(^4\)

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1 For background to the shelling see Ekechi: Missionary Enterprise, pp. 53-54; also F.E., 1880, LXIX, "Correspondence relating to the bombardment of Onitsha on the River Niger" (Slave Trade No. 2).
2 C.M.S. G/Y/A3/1/1J Wood Report, Main Text, p. 8.
4 C.M.S. G/Y/A3/1/1J Wood Report, Main Text, pp. 17-18.
In summary, Wood believed that supervision and stimulation were lacking. He urged that agents whose work had been less than satisfactory should be placed at other stations for a trial period. If at the end of that time marked improvement had not been made, they should be dismissed. More frequent and lengthier supervisory visits to each station were required. Wood hesitated as to whether such visitations should be conducted by the Bishop or the Archdeacons or both. He was inclined to consider the appointment of the Archdeacons as having been a mistake. In his view self-support programmes had barely begun and self-government had not even been raised as a goal. Congregations were not called upon to maintain their churches and, except for a few instances in the Delta, there were no regular collections or building funds. Wood held that nothing had ever been raised from local sources at Osomari, Alenso, Asaba, Igbebe or Kippo Hill. He noted ironically that a similar laissez-faire policy had for many years been pursued in the European-directed Yoruba Mission and that it had taken some time to overcome the error. In the Niger Mission he suggested inaccurately that agents had not been pressed to encourage local support. With another swipe at the Mission's present organization, he blamed its direction at the centre: "Bishop Crowther's own position and peculiar difficulties may account in a large degree for this subject having received less attention". The "Industrial Departments" at Lokoja, Onitsha and Asaba had not proved successful either for aiding the Mission or encouraging trades such as cotton-processing or carpentry. The Henry Venn was proving a financial burden and Wood recommended that Crowther's schedule be so arranged that the steamer could more easily carry freight and thereby earn its keep. A more stringent eye had to be kept on supplies and finances, and here the Niger Finance Committee should take control. As nothing
had been done to institute self-government, Wood concluded that plans should be devised for bringing forth lay readers and giving them positions of trust and responsibility.¹

Madeira Conference Prompts Reform

Prodded by Hutchinson and the Wood Report, the Parent Committee decided in November 1880 to hold a special conference to discuss the affairs and direction of the Niger Mission. A special C.M.S. Sub-Committee which had been established to review the Wood Report had already expressed general acceptance of the investigator's findings.² Rather than meet in England and perhaps draw unfavourable attention, it was arranged that the Conference should convene on the island of Madeira.³ The Deputation from the Parent Committee consisted of the Rev. J. Bradford Whiting and Hutchinson. Bishop Crowther attended with his son, Dandeson, and Mr. James Boyle, then Catechist and Schoolmaster at Bonny. While Ashcroft was present, Wood did not attend. The latter wrote that his duties as Secretary of the Yoruba Mission required him to accompany the Bishop of Sierra Leone on a tour of the Mission at that time. As Whiting was an old friend of his and Henry Venn, Crowther could expect a fair hearing. The Deputation had instructions to use the Wood and special Sub-Committee Reports as the bases for discussion. The Parent Committee had assumed that Wood would be present so that he might "enlarge" on his statements, but they noted in a pattern typical of C.M.S. investigations, that "legal proof"

¹ Ibid., Main Text, pp. 18-24.
² The Sub-Committee's Report is missing in the C.M.S. Archives.
³ C.M.S. CA3/L1/405-08 Hutchinson to Crowther, 20 November 1880.
of all alleged acts was not necessary. As for the future, Salisbury Square directed that the Bishop should serve as Chairman of the new Niger Finance Committee and that a "superintending missionary" should be placed in charge of each of the two divisions of the Mission. The Deputation was left to decide whether Archdeacon Crowther should hold this post for the Lower Niger. They were also left to enquire, apparently at Hutchinson's suggestion, whether Archdeacon Johnson should be transferred to educational work at Freetown or Lagos rather than direct the Upper Niger. It seems clear that the Lay Secretary preferred a European "superintendent" at the Confluence and had been offered some reasons for replacing Henry Johnson. Wood had expressed reservations regarding the Archdeacon's pastoral work and Ashcroft had accused him of being High Church. Even if a European were not available for the Northern post, Hutchinson arranged that the European Secretary of the Niger Finance Committee should also serve as Secretary of the Mission, "the function of the Bishop being, as in other missions, more purely episcopal".

The Madeira Conference met 10-18 February 1881. Crowther presented a strong defence of the work in the Niger Mission, while agreeing that new measures for future management and development were necessary. With Wood absent, the Bishop was able to challenge more effectively the sources of the allegations against certain agents.

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1 C.M.S. CA5/L1/409-18 Conference at Madeira: General Preliminary Instructions, February 1881.
2 Ibid.
3 C.M.S. G3/13/1881/21 H. Johnson to Hutchinson, 31 March 1881.
4 C.M.S. CA5/L1/409-18 Conference at Madeira: General Preliminary Instructions, February 1881.
At the same time he stressed the great difficulties within the Mission occasioned by the conduct of Ashcroft and Kirk and the growing anti-African antagonisms among many of the European traders on the river. Whiting and Hutchinson succeeded in restoring a working relationship between Ashcroft and the Bishop, although the arrangement could only be regarded as temporary in light of their past differences. Crowther emphasized again and again the prevalence of damaging rumours on the river. He was able to demonstrate conclusively that in the cases of two agents accused in the Wood Report, the information supplied was erroneous and in two other instances highly questionable. The Deputation found that

under all these circumstances, it was not unnatural that the Bishop should ask to have fuller opportunities for investigation of some of the cases before taking action episcopally ...

Crowther was left to conduct enquiries relating to two of his ordained agents, three others having been exonerated at the Conference. The Niger Finance Committee was directed to review ten unordained agents. The Deputation, however, clearly inclined towards restoration of accused agents rather than dismissal: of the five ordained and ten lay agents mentioned by Wood, they found only one and three respectively to have had serious charges laid against them. Wood's absence removed any possibility of acrimony at Madeira. Whiting had the upper hand, and his and Hutchinson's report is noteworthy in that it was not punitive, but constructive, seeking to reform for the future. Both men were impressed with Dandeson and believed he should act as

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1 C.M.S. GA/3/1/42/41 and C.M.S. G/Y/A3/1/7/3 Report of Deputation from Committee to confer with Bishop Crowther and others on the Niger Mission, (printed), March 1884, p. 3. An incomplete, handwritten copy of the Report can be found at G3/A3/1884/76.
"superintending missionary" for the Lower Niger. As for Archdeacon Henry Johnson, they reaffirmed Hutchinson's desire for "an Englishman of high standing" to serve as "general superintendent" in the Upper Niger, but as no such person was then available and Bishop Crowther asked for Johnson, they decided to leave the latter in charge.¹

Whiting and Hutchinson wrote separate letters to Crowther and to the Niger Finance Committee.² In addition to suggesting procedures for dealing with the investigation of agents named, both letters outlined the Parent Committee's plans for the Niger Mission. While Crowther had succeeded to a great degree in restoring confidence in the Mission and in himself, the Society had decided, nonetheless, that some of his authority would have to be devolved to bring the Niger Mission more into line with C.M.S. practise elsewhere. A Niger Conference was established for the purpose of deliberating on any proposals requiring Parent Committee sanction. Such an organ existed in most C.M.S. Missions most notably in nearby Yorubaland. The Niger Conference would have two divisions complementing the two Archdeaconries. The two superintending missionaries would be able to conduct more frequent visitations than the Bishop could alone. The Secretary of the Mission was also to serve as Secretary to the Niger Finance Committee and as representative of the Parent Committee within the Mission. The Commissioners believed that the Secretary, with residence at Lokoja, could be "better able to cope with the difficulties

¹ Ibid., pp. 5-7.
² Ibid., see Appendix: Whiting and Hutchinson to Crowther, 24 February 1881, pp. 1-10 and Memorandum for Guidance of Niger Finance Committee, undated, pp. 12-17.
caused by the European traders ... (and) see that the Native Agents are not misrepresented ..." They went on:

It will naturally follow that in many matters in which ... the agents have been accustomed to look to the Bishop for direction, they will now be advised or directed by the superintendent of the district, or the Secretary of the Mission.¹

Finally, the Commissioners specifically called for the following:

1) The continuous education of agents, especially in Scripture and vernacular language; 2) the formation of sub-committees for supervising translational work; 3) a complete end to trading by agents or their families, to be formalized by a written declaration of each agent; 4) a moderate increase in Mission salaries; 5) the establishment of institutions in each Mission division for "preparandi work" so that more local men might be trained as agents.²

The reorganization of the Niger Mission did not have a propitious beginning. The Parent Committee inappropriately appointed J.B. Wood Secretary of the Mission until such time as someone else could be chosen.³ It should have been clear to Salisbury Square that both Wood and Crowther would be on the defensive, with the Secretary wishing to vindicate his Report, the Bishop his Mission and staff. The new Niger Finance Committee met at Lagos 31 March - 7 April 1881. Not surprisingly Wood and Crowther disagreed and quarrelled from the start. The Secretary believed that the Madeira Conference, in not fully supporting his Report, had questioned his judgment. The Bishop

¹ Ibid., Memorandum, p. 13.
² Ibid., Whiting and Hutchinson to Crowther, 24 February 1881, pp. 3-4.
³ Wood held concurrently the Secretaryship of the Yoruba Mission.
claimed that Wood had conducted his investigation with pre-conceived attitudes and had purposely ignored suggestions that all charges of misconduct be supported by corroborative evidence. In a setback for Wood the Finance Committee decided in its first session to require the identity of all informants before investigating the ten cases before them. Wood had complained that to do so might draw him into the law courts.¹ When a report compiled by the two Archdeacons urging dismissal of charges against one of the ordained agents² was approved by the Committee, relations between the Bishop and the Secretary neared the breaking point. At the next session on 7 April, Crowther allegedly accused Wood of trying to "smash up" the Niger Mission. When according to Wood, the Bishop was asked by him to withdraw the remark, Crowther refused. The Secretary withdrew from the meeting and the Finance Committee was suspended without completing its work.³ Both men proceeded to visit the Delta stations, while appealing to the Parent Committee. The Bishop's stock at Salisbury Square was on the rise again. The Conference Report won back many wavering adherents of African agency. Hutchinson wrote Wood that the Bishop did not have to withdraw or apologize for his remarks. Wood was greatly


² C.M.S. G3/A3/1831/26 The Case of the Rev. J. Buck: Report of Inquiry by Archdeacons Johnson and Crowther, 5 April 1831. Buck had been accused of flogging a girl who allegedly later committed suicide. The Archdeacons found that the girl had not killed herself and they took evidence from her. They decided that Buck had not acted improperly and that the charge and the resulting difficulties were due to misunderstanding and a lack of communication.

disturbed by this as well as by J.B. Whiting's remark that "most of the charges against the Niger agents had fallen to the ground". ¹

In the meantime, Edward Hutchinson's own tenure as Lay Secretary came to a speedy end.

Hutchinson resigned his post on 20 May 1881.² While some of the C.M.S. archives remain sealed on this matter, it is clear that he had improperly used the Society's funds and had encouraged the use of the Henry Venn for trading purposes. The Parent Committee appointed J.B. Whiting to take charge of the Group III Committee, which supervised the African missions, until a permanent successor to Hutchinson could be found.³ They also selected General Edmund Davidson to investigate and report on the Niger Bishopric Fund and the Niger Industrial Institution. Davidson focussed his attention on 502 shares of West African Company stock which had been given by the heiress Baroness Burdett-Coutts in 1873 for the Niger work. The shares had been in Bishop Crowther's name but it was found that "all payments have been made and orders executed on instructions from the C.M.S. by Mr. Hutchinson".⁴

When the Company had gone into liquidation in October

¹ C.M.S. G3/A3/1881/95 Wood to Hutchinson, 27 July 1881. Whiting had made the remark in an address before the C.M.S.' ³ Anniversary Meeting at Exeter Hall in May. His speech was printed in Intelligencer N.S. VI (1881), 334-38, especially 335. See also The Lagos Times and Gold Coast Colony Advertiser I: 16, 22 November 1881, "The Church Missionary Conference at Madeira".

² The official C.M.S. historian provides little information regarding the resignation: "Scarcely had he (Hutchinson) returned to England in March 1881, when the circumstances arose which led to his retirement". Stock: History, III, p. 261.

³ In addition to serving as Lay Secretary, Hutchinson had also chaired the Group III Sub-Committee, which included supervision of the Society's African Missions. General George Hutchinson, no relation, succeeded as Lay Secretary and Whiting as Group III Chairman on a temporary basis.

1880, the liquidator sent a cheque for £354 17s Od to the Niger Bishopric Fund's bankers and one for £755 to Edward Hutchinson. The Lay Secretary paid the cheque into his private account and seven months later purchased, in his own name, Canadian stock valued at £598. Davidson questioned Hutchinson on 22 May 1881, four days after the Parent Committee had accepted the latter's resignation. The former Lay Secretary claimed he had placed the Canadian shares, as well as additional cash and securities worth £77 with Crowther's bankers. Although Hutchinson gave the bank no written instructions, the bank manager did recall that Hutchinson had told him that all were the property of the Bishop, despite their being in the Secretary's name. Davidson found that all of the proceeds from the sale of the shares could be accounted for.

Hutchinson argued that the shares, while legally the property of Bishop Crowther, were supposed to be used solely for industrial projects approved by him as Lay Secretary. He had obviously convinced the Bishop that such was the case. Crowther had been in England when Baroness Burdett-Coutts made her gift and the Lay Secretary had then explained to him the many benefits which would be derived in the industrial sector through the use of the shares' dividends for this purpose. When the Bishop received notice of the first dividends, he requested the West African Company to send these directly to Hutchinson in the future so as not to confuse them with the Bishopric Fund's resources. Thereafter Crowther received "sparse" information regarding the dividends. At about this time Hutchinson also ceased

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1 Ibid., At the time of the bequest the stock had been worth £3,000.
reporting to him on proceeds received from cotton which was shipped periodically to Manchester. On 31 December 1878 the Bishop turned over all Industrial accounts and balances to Ashcroft. When Crowther later learned from Hutchinson that the West African Company had gone into liquidation, he left the disposition of the shares to the Lay Secretary, but hoped that some refund would be forthcoming for use in the Mission.

Despite Hutchinson's argument and Crowther's misapprehensions, Davidson found that the evidence clearly indicated that the West African Company shares had been given to Bishop Crowther specifically for the Bishopric Fund and should not have been taken by Hutchinson for any separate account: A C.M.S. Committee of Correspondence Resolution of 24 June 1873 had so specifically stated. Davidson went on that "while entries occur of sundry payments made and monies received for an industrial institution" no separate accounts for such of a date later than 31 December 1878 could be found. Ashcroft had taken over on that date but "he had sent in no accounts of the institution" since that time. While the money left from the sale of the shares legally belonged to Crowther, the Parent Committee urged him to place it in the Bishopric Fund and appoint a European trustee. The Bishop promptly appointed Whiting his commissary in England and directed him to appoint two treasurers for the Fund.

1 C.M.S. F//L/TS/A3/1 Letters, Papers, etc. Crowther to General Hutchinson, 24 December 1871.
3 C.M.S. G/C1/v.47/138-41 Finance Committee, 24 September 1881.
4 C.M.S. F//L/TS/A3/1 Letters, Papers, etc. Crowther to General Hutchinson, 24 December 1881.
Davidson did not investigate the allegations regarding the use of the Henry Venn for trade. Information soon came to light, however, clearly implicating Hutchinson, Ashcroft and Kirk in trading activities. Whiting pressed Hutchinson closely and the former Lay Secretary pointed a finger at Ashcroft and Kirk. Whiting then asked Ashcroft, at the time in England:

Are the Committee right in concluding that produce was purchased by means of goods charged to the Niger Mission account generally? ... Was there a separate and distinct account for the Commercial Department? ... Was Hutchinson aware of this purchase of goods for the purpose of sale in Lagos? 1

A week later Whiting wrote Wood that the Parent Committee had learned "with deep regret" that trade had been carried on by the Henry Venn to a large extent and that a full accounting was required. At the same time, he sent words of encouragement to Bishop Crowther. 2 The most lucrative business on the Niger had been in the purchase of potash. The C.M.S. Secretaries pointedly instructed Kirk that all trade in African goods or minerals cease as "the Society is not a trading firm." They also directed that the "Commercial Department" be at once wound up. Finally, while directly accusing both Hutchinson and Ashcroft, they paradoxically hoped that Kirk would remain in charge of the Mission steamer: He was not to blame as he had "no doubt only followed instructions". 3 Ashcroft was severely reprimanded. 4

1 C.M.S. CA3/L1/457 Whiting to Ashcroft, 24 June 1881.
2 C.M.S. CA3/L1/459-50 Whiting and V. Gray to Wood, 30 June 1881; C.M.S. CA3/L1/458 Whiting and Gray to Ashcroft, 30 June 1881.
3 C.M.S. CA3/L1/460-63 Whiting and Gray to Kirk, 30 June 1881; C.M.S. G/C1/v.47/1-17 Committee of Correspondence, 26 July 1881. For West African reaction to the use of the Henry Venn for trading purposes see "Sugi" to Editor, The Lagos Times and Gold Coast Colony Advertiser II: 25, 23 November 1931 and "Correspondence (from our own Correspondent)", Lagos Times and Gold Coast Colony Advertiser II: 37, 10 May 1932.
4 C.M.S. CA3/L1/471-73 Whiting to Ashcroft, 16 August 1881; also C.M.S. G/C1/v.47/45-95 Committee of Correspondence, 26 July 1881.
he refused as instructed to supervise the sale of goods still held, the
Society sacked him: "The relations between you and the native agents
are not such as to lead the Committee to feel that your return to the
Niger is desirable". 1 Shortly thereafter, Kirk resigned. 2 With
his more severe critics either removed or discredited, Crowther
appeared to emerge unscathed from the Wood Report and the Madeira
Conference. Hutchinson had succeeded, nonetheless, in achieving one
of his aims. While African superintendence and indeed prominence in
the Niger work continued as official C.M.S. policy, a wholly African-
staffed enterprise would no longer be the rule as there would at the
least be a European Mission Secretary.

The Bishop proceeded as directed to investigate the cases of
misconduct assigned to him by the Madeira Conference. Between April
and June 1881, he heard evidence at Mission stations. Many agents,
not accused by Wood, threatened to resign, 3 and later several of them
presented a memorial to the Parent Committee asserting that Wood's
comments regarding themselves and their wives contained libels. 4

1 C.M.S. GA3/L1/483-84 Rev. Robert Lang to Ashcroft, 6 October 1881;
also C.M.S. G/G1/v.47/164-65 Committee of Correspondence, 4 October
1881. In late September the Parent Committee decided that the
Chairmanship of the Group III Sub-Committee should no longer rest
with the Lay Secretary. As a result they appointed an additional
Clerical Secretary, the Rev. Robert Lang, to assume this position.


3 C.M.S. G3/A3/1881/113 Crowther to Hutchinson, 17 May 1881; also

4 Six ordained and seven lay agents, including Archdeacon Crowther,
signed the protest: "A Memorial to the Committee respecting the
alleged statements of the Rev. J.B. Wood as to trading on the Niger
by missionaries' wives, which the writers regard as sweeping and
Crowther certainly noted the discontent within his Mission and gave the benefit of the doubt to the agents he investigated. While the vast majority of Wood's allegations could not be substantiated, the Bishop's report of his own inquiry tended, nonetheless, to be too apologetic and defensive as far as the African missionaries were concerned. Aside from noting one or two minor infractions, Crowther cleared all of the accused ordained agents. At the same time he charged Wood with prejudice and incompetence. He claimed, for example, that Wood's comments regarding missionaries' wives were made through ignorance of the peculiar positions of many of them, which he would have been informed of... had he intimated to me (i.e. Crowther) that he was about to remark about them. Several wives, the Bishop argued, were uneducated and could, therefore, hardly help in the schoolroom. Other women, wives of educated agents from Sierra Leone, believed that they were not required to teach as that was the custom at Freetown. The largest number, however, were and had been of great assistance. It was nearly universal West African custom for wives to engage in economic activities for such purposes. Crowther explained that most wives traded in order to pay for the further education of their children and to provide for emergencies lest their husbands die in service. He reminded the Society that it sponsored few scholarships and had no pension or widow's fund. As

1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1881/94 Crowther to Hutchinson and Whiting, 6 July 1881.


3 Ibid.

for Wood's and Kirk's statements that the female converts at Lokoja were immoral, Crowther believed otherwise. Under questioning by the Bishop, Kirk eventually admitted that his source for this information had been two former European traders and an African at Eggan who had said "Show me a Nupe woman, I show you a whore". On the question of self-support and self-government, Crowther rightly pointed in his report to the strides taken by himself and the Mission, noting that he had instituted the first church collection in the Yoruba Mission in 1851. Finally, he requested that another investigation be held on the Niger, with Wood, Ashcroft and Kirk present, so that all sources of information could be identified and rumour and innuendo put to rest.¹

Word of Hutchinson's resignation, along with a letter of encouragement from Whiting,² gave Crowther even greater confidence. He let the discredit of his critics reduce the sense of urgency for reform. With the crisis seemingly passed, his age probably inclined him towards the status quo and away from substantive change. The Madeira Conference had specifically recommended the transfer of certain of the examined agents, even if they were subsequently exonerated. The Rev. T.C. John of Lokoja and Mr. P.J. Williams of Igbebe, for example, had been directed to exchange assignments. The Bishop felt otherwise. At a sub-meeting of the Niger Finance Committee at Kippo Hill in August 1881, he persuaded the other members present, the two Archdeacons and the Rev. C. Paul, to leave these two


² C.M.S. CA3/L1/459-60 Whiting and Gray to Crowther, 30 June 1881.
missionaries where they had been. After he completed the various investigations, he wrote the Parent Committee requesting permission to ordain three missionaries. In so doing he circumvented the full Niger Finance Committee which had original jurisdiction in such matters. Surprisingly, sanction for the ordinations came swiftly. Crowther also prepared a lengthy report on Niger Mission buildings which openly criticized Ashcroft's supervision. The Parent Committee responded favourably to the Bishop's reports, although they expressed some reservations that "a more regular court" had not been held on the river in investigating the missionaries under review.

With the investigations completed, Crowther was invited to England to discuss several issues: the appointment of a permanent successor to Wood as Mission Secretary, the re-organization of the Niger Finance Committee to include laymen and more clergy, the possible purchase of a small vessel to replace the Henry Venn, and the settlement of diocesan boundaries with Sierra Leone, as the Bishop there was retiring.

The Niger Secretaryship of Thomas Phillips

Crowther's trip to England in 1882 would have been an excellent time for him to have retired. His work had been largely vindicated and he had renewed support in Salisbury Square. Prospects looked brighter in the Mission. At this juncture, however, resignation

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1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1881/103 Crowther to General Hutchinson, 7 September 1881.
2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1881/126 Crowther to Whiting, 28 October 1881.
4 C.M.S. CA3/L1/485-86 Lang to Crowther, 24 November 1881; C.M.S. CA3/L1/505-07 Lang to Crowther, 30 December 1881.
5 C.M.S. G/C1/v.47/305-07 Committee of Correspondence, 6 December 1881.
does not appear to have even occurred to him. The visit itself proved remarkably successful as he was received with friendship and gratitude. At his first meeting with the Committee, on 4 April, he gave a "cheering report" of the work at Bonny and Brass. A sub-committee was appointed to prepare plans. Before he arrived, Crowther had already moved to squash an attempt to sell the *Henry Venn* to the United African Company. George Taubman-Goldie, the Company director with whom Crowther would have several clashes in the 1880s, sought the steamer not so much as an addition to his growing fleet, but rather as a means of removing another competitor. He promised that Mission agents would have the opportunity for more frequent passage on the Niger, at lower rates, and that his ships could go up the Benue and Niger beyond that possible for the *Henry Venn*. Crowther asked rhetorically had the *Henry Venn* been a failure? He argued that if the ship were sold "the old slanders" would be revived, as the peoples along the river could not differentiate between traders and missionaries. He also complained that he and the Mission agents would be restricted to a prescribed schedule and that they would be hard-pressed to visit stations like Onitsha where no United African Company steamer called. Crowther had little to fear as the Group III Sub-Committee report, which was subsequently approved by the

1 See G/AC2/11/333-34 Rev. F.E. Wigram to Crowther, 28 March 1882 and C.M.S. G/AC2/12/346-47 Wigram to Crowther, 12 May 1882. Also: The Record N.S. I (5 May 1882), 182-83.

2 C.M.S. G/C1/v.47/523-46 Committee of Correspondence, 4 April 1882.

3 Goldie did not encourage further missionary penetration, however, noting the presence of "hostile natives" in those areas. C.M.S. GA3/L1/487-89 George Taubman Goldie to Secretaries, 28 October 1881. See also Ayandele: ""Duel!", p. 55.

4 C.M.S. G3/A3/1882/36 Crowther to Lang, 10 February 1882.
Committee of Correspondence, proved quite favourable to him and the Mission. In addition to providing for the maintenance of the Henry Venn, it urged generous funds for building and repair and the remission of an outstanding loan which the Bishop had earlier contracted for Mission work.\(^1\) The diocesan boundaries with Sierra Leone were finally established. Crowther's jurisdiction would include "all the countries bordering the Niger". The Yoruba Mission and Lagos would remain with Sierra Leone, and Otta, which Crowther had personally supervised from Lagos, would be placed under Freetown.\(^2\) To replace the retiring Bishop Cheetham, the Parent Committee at first recommended J. Bradford Whiting. When the Foreign Office medical officer found that Whiting was not sufficiently fit for the rigours of West Africa, however, the Archbishop of Canterbury decided not to proceed with the appointment.\(^3\) For Crowther, the fact that Whiting was not made Bishop of Sierra Leone was unfortunate. If his old friend and colleague had gone to Freetown, Crowther would have been able to call on him for advice and counsel at closer range.

Despite its support for Crowther and his work, the Parent Committee still believed that a European should continue as Secretary of the Mission. They soon settled on Thomas Phillips, 42, a recent graduate of Trinity College, Dublin\(^4\) and suggested that Bishop Crowther

\(^1\) C.M.S. G/C1/v.47/581-85 Committee of Correspondence, 25 April 1882.

\(^2\) C.M.S. G/C1/v.47/705-05 Special Committee, 20 June 1882.

\(^3\) C.M.S. G/Y/1/1/4 Rev. Randall Davidson to Wigram, 26 August 1882 and C.M.S. G/Y/1/1/4 R.H. Meade to Wigram, 17 August 1882.

\(^4\) Register, p. 200, no. 953.
ordain him to the priesthood. The move was a novel one and posed some legal and social problems. The Rev. Frederick Wigram, who had succeeded Henry Wright as Honorary Clerical Secretary in January 1881, asked the C.M.S. Counsel J.B. Lee whether Phillips' "status in the church at home would in any way be affected" if he were to be ordained by Crowther.¹ At the same time Wigram wrote several C.M.S. supporters who had questioned the propriety of a Black Bishop ordaining a white Englishman. In one such letter the Secretary declared forcefully:

> It has been suggested that such a step would have the effect of lowering him (Phillips) in the eyes of both Natives and Europeans. I should be ashamed to think this would.²

With the approval of their lawyers and the Bishop of London (within whose diocese the ceremony would take place), Wigram officially asked Crowther to hold the ordination. The Secretary argued that such an opportunity should not be missed especially with the ill-will then existing among many Niger agents:

> In the present state of feeling which I fear exists among some of our African brethren, it (the ordination) is calculated to do much good. That an African Bishop should ordain a European in England will proclaim to the world more than any statement would do, the reality of the Union in one Church of Africans and Europeans.³

Crowther agreed and the ordination took place on 29 June. Within two weeks Phillips left for the Niger. Once again, however, Salisbury Square's conflicting intentions presaged conflict. The Parent Committee did not just make Phillips Mission Secretary, but also gave him authority to act as their own special representative. Despite

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¹ C.M.S. G/AC2/12/477-78 Wigram to J.B. Lee, 16 May 1882.
² C.M.S. G/AC2/12/423 Wigram to Rev. H. Wilson, 11 May 1882.
³ C.M.S. G/AC2/12/301-02 Wigram to Crowther, 19 May 1882.
the fact that he was one of Crowther's clergy, he was instructed to be "an independent witness on the spot". 1

While men like Wigram and Whiting felt that affairs could be set right in the Niger without necessarily changing the leadership or character of the Mission, others felt the contrary. In some cases the critics were actuated by personal self-interest and were not above employing racial arguments. The Rev. J.B. Wood had learned with dismay that Crowther had been invited to England to discuss the Mission and that he had not. Wood complained that the C.M.S. had printed his investigative Report without consultation. At the same time he added that the Society's periodicals, in mentioning Crowther and the Niger Mission, did so only "approvingly". 2 Robert Lang, who had succeeded Hutchinson as Lay Secretary, replied that the Society wished to record the "bright" rather than the "dark" side of events. 3 When Wood insisted that he too should be permitted to come to England, the Secretaries reluctantly agreed - if a replacement could be found at Lagos to where he had returned after his Niger investigation. 4

In the meantime, he and other European agents complained that more was expected of them than of African agents. Wood stated that Kirk and Ashcroft had been "misrepresented" and that at the Niger Finance Committee Meeting of 13 April 1882, "the Bishop was heated beyond moderation". He went on that because "greater qualities" were

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demanded of white agents, a "spirit" existed in the Niger Mission which had to be "crushed" or else "Europeans will not be easily secured or maintained". Other European Yoruba missionaries also felt threatened. The Rev. C.H.V. Gollmer, who substituted for Wood when the latter finally got away to England, contended that Crowther continually "misled". He added that while "It is a common thing here for European missionaries to be misrepresented, few characters have been maligned like those of Mr. Ashcroft and Mr. Kirk". The strongest racial and personal attack on the Bishop came, however, from the Rev. A. Mann:

In Lagos, people see through the intrigues of the Bishop: no white super-cargo, no Mr. Ashcroft, etc., must any more pace the deck of the Henry Venn. The Bishop's sons can do this very well - and I add can make trade or run it as they do their own steamer!

Mann warned against Crowther's "schemes", while also accusing his sons and daughters of impropriety. He claimed that the Madeira Conference had "stirred the natives" and that the political situation might suffer. Finally, he asked: "Is the Bishop hardened by love of money or has he thrown down the gauntlet to the White Man?"

Thomas Phillips remained with the Niger Mission for less than a year. Although his tenure as Mission Secretary was brief, it witnessed a significant diminution in the authority of Bishop Crowther and respect for his African staff. Phillips made the Parent Committee pause and reflect. As they did so they gradually came to believe

that Crowther no longer had the ability nor the will to attempt significant reform. If the Bishop would or could not accomplish this task then the Mission Secretary’s power would have to be increased and the Parent Committee would itself have to keep a closer eye on affairs. Upon his arrival in August 1882, Phillips was impatient to see the Niger stations. Without waiting for Crowther’s return from Britain as had been arranged, he took off on the Henry Venn the following month. As he departed, he had some preconceptions of what he would find, noting especially that he believed "the antagonism of race has very little to do with Niger difficulties". He returned to Lagos five weeks later and, reflecting his own background in commercial matters, pointed with pride to the fact that the Henry Venn had paid for itself on the journey. More ominously, he took a strong line against the work of the Mission staff, concentrating very much on character and personality in his assessment. Robert Lang, who was strongly determined on reform, had to check Phillips’ language and advise him to "subordinate individual views and schemes to the general welfare of the whole Mission". In a letter marked "private", Lang went on a week later to stress that the Henry Venn had been "a personal gift" to Crowther and hence the Bishop’s views had to be respected, although the steamer’s "internal control" rested ultimately with the Mission Secretary. He concluded with the warning that Ashcroft had been sacked, among other things, for his "lack of Christian courtesy and respect". Phillips did not take the hint. Despite the hard line

which he had taken against the steamer's use for trade when he arrived, he soon had the vessel making commercial trips as a primary, rather than secondary function of its operation. His attitude was hypocritical, or at best inconsistent, when he chided the Bishop for taking "a deep and dangerous interest in trading matters". Phillips, also came down squarely on the side of the major European firms, arguing that it was a "dangerous thing to the Mission to thwart the interests of the National African Company". The Parent Committee seemed ambivalent. While they felt morally opposed in principle to using the vessel for this purpose, especially as it appeared to set a double standard as far as the Africans were concerned, this was for them a period of great financial constraint. When Phillips suggested that one firm be given a monopoly for the carriage of freight on the Henry Venn, Salisbury Square agreed.

In his zeal for change, Phillips resolved to discredit Crowther personally. Once again, there is a marked inconsistency in his actions. On his way out to the Mission, he hired a missionary agent in Sierra Leone without prior consultation with either the Bishop or the Parent Committee. He reacted angrily, however, when Crowther, quite inopportunistly, selected his son Josiah to superintend new

5 Phillips hired a man who had been sacked as incompetent at Freetown, and who two years later in 1885 would be dismissed by Bishop Crowther. See C.M.S. G3/A3/1885/5 Crowther to Lang, 10 December 1884.
building and repairs at Onitsha. With even less justification he
took advantage of a bookkeeping error on the part of his predecessor
J.B. Wood to accuse the Bishop of fraud. In reviewing the Mission
accounts, Phillips found that Wood had apparently debited the Bishop
twice for funds for a work project. When he showed this to Crowther,
the latter quite naturally asked for a refund for the second amount
which it appeared had not been used. Phillips wrote to the Parent
Committee that Crowther had taken "advantage" of the error,
characterizing the Bishop as "clever" and threatening resignation and
public disclosure if the "affair" were not investigated. To a
Parent Committee concerned with increasingly adverse publicity,
Phillips declared dramatically that in reporting Crowther's alleged
fraud so candidly he

was running a great personal risk ... (as) The means
frequently resorted to by educated natives to rid
themselves of those who stand in their way are only too
well known. 2

The Society chose their Assistant Lay Secretary, S.F. Purday, to review
the matter. His investigation found conclusively that "there is no
proof that fraud was attempted by the Bishop", citing that Crowther
had at once realized and acknowledged in asking for a refund, his
mistake when Wood's error was brought to his attention. Purday also
questioned Phillips' conduct, as the latter had not forwarded full
accounts for the period under scrutiny as he had been directed.
According to Purday the correspondence and accounts simply indicated
what should have been obvious to all: the Bishop was getting old and
his memory could not be expected to be infallible. 3 Phillips

1 C.M.S. G3/13/1883/37 Phillips to Lang, 11 January 1883.
2 C.M.S. G3/13/1883/36 Phillips to Lang, 10 January 1883.
3 C.M.S. G3/13/1883/36 (attachment) S.F. Purday: Memorandum,
  9 April 1883.
remained determined, nonetheless, to emphasize Crowther’s role in not pressing real reform and as being too protective of the African staff. He asserted that the Bishop was averse to the presence of Europeans on the Niger Finance Committee, and that since Africans were in the majority on that Committee, it was impossible to put forward constructive programmes.

Phillips finally succeeded in arousing the concern of the Society when he questioned the success of the work in Bonny and Brass. Since Lang had frequently chided him for arguing on too personal a level, he wrote instead to Eugene Stock, the Society’s Editorial Secretary. Stock replied with surprise, as neither Ashcroft nor Wood had ever lodged any important criticism of the work in those Delta stations. He also noted that Phillips did not make any specific allegations, but only raised doubts. Although the Mission Secretary’s manner in bringing this matter before the Parent Committee can be decried, the truth was that the C.M.S. was indeed in trouble in the Delta, especially at Bonny. As we have seen, Bishop Crowther had always pursued a policy of supporting the central authority in the countries in which the Niger Mission had stations. His and Archdeacon Crowther’s relationship with the Bonny Royal family was a close one. But neither William Dappa nor George Popple possessed great power or influence in their country. They were simply primus inter pares at best. Many

of their fellow chiefs were wealthier and, in concert, had greater authority.\(^1\) Several of these chiefs resolved in the early 1880's to make one last attempt to forestall the advance of Christianity. They found a convenient focal point in the Crowther family and the African staff of the Niger Mission.\(^2\) The chiefs conveyed their feelings to many European traders, some of whom wrote to Salisbury Square. The comments of one of them was typical: "From old Crowther down to the lowest subordinate, there is not an honest black man in the Society's pay".\(^3\)

The Crowthers provided the Bonny rulers with much ammunition. Beyond the support which they gave to the young George Pepple, as time went on they far less frequently consulted the other chiefs on matters which affected them. When Dandeson Crowther instituted an experimental self-support scheme in mid-1882, he only bothered to obtain the King's permission to collect funds in the country. Many of the chiefs were irate at what they considered a blatant disregard of their authority. They prepared to move decisively. Earlier in the year the Bishop had asked, out of courtesy, if the Niger Mission could move its headquarters from Lagos to Bonny. In June King George and six other chiefs wrote the elder Crowther giving their consent. By the end of the year Dandeson's actions and his closeness to the King caused many to have second thoughts. George Pepple blamed JaJa of Opobo for inciting discontent, but touched on a central problem when he indicated that his fellow chiefs were still more concerned with the effect which

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1 For the "development and decline of the Monarchy" in Bonny and Kalabari, see Jones: Trading States, pp. 177-87.  
2 Ayandele: Missionary Impact, pp. 93-95.  
3 C.H.S. G/Y/13/1/1B Seymour Danby to Lang, 11 May 1883.
Christianity had and was having on their slaves. In late February 1883, fourteen chiefs, including all six signatories of the June 1882 letter, wrote to Crowther declining the "honour" of having the Mission headquarters within their country. More contentiously, they requested that Dandeson be removed. Bishop Crowther reacted angrily and uncharacteristically exacerbated an already tense political situation. He challenged the authority of the fourteen chiefs, noting that the King had not signed their statement. In a favourite scriptural peroration, which in this case could not have been more impolitic, he admonished: "Fear God, Honour the King!"\(^1\)

Before writing the Bishop, the chiefs had also corresponded with a receptive Thomas Phillips. Their letter to him was even more condemnatory of the Crowthers, accusing them of meddling in political affairs and of reporting unfavourably on some of the chiefs to the Society, which had then printed the information in C.M.S. periodicals. As far as Dandeson was concerned, they considered him guilty of sedition.\(^2\) Phillips correctly estimated that the King had by this time become hardly more than a figurehead, but he rather naively accepted the chiefs' assertions that they were not opposed to Christianity but only to the interfering Crowthers and the African Mission staff. Phillips believed the chiefs when they told him that they would gladly receive European missionaries. He reported to the Parent Committee that earlier claims of persecution in Bonny had been exaggerated. The only way in which the Mission could be run

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\(^1\) C.M.S. G3/A3/1883/51 Correspondence related to the establishment of Niger Mission Headquarters at Bonny: five letters, dated 16 February and 5 July 1882, and 5 February, 21 February and 22 February 1883.

effectively, he confidently asserted, was by ending reliance upon African agency and superintendence. A workable self-support scheme could then be successfully implemented. If no Europeans could be found, then "provision should be made for his (the Bishop's) isolation from direct interference". Phillips continued to press this idea even to the point of repeating rumours circulated by the chiefs. Opening old wounds, he wrote that several of the Bonny rulers, on learning of the Madeira Conference and its results, had mocked the Society, allegedly saying: "Do English schoolboys grade their own examinations?" While the Bishop made a spirited defence of his son to the chiefs and refused to remove him without his being specifically charged, he realized on reflection that a cooling-off period was in order. He, therefore, wrote the Parent Committee that Dandeson should visit Britain to discuss the state of the Mission in the Delta. Without waiting for a response from Salisbury Square, Dandeson departed and was in Sierra Leone the following month.

1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1883/57 Phillips to Lang, 6 March 1883.
2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1883/60 Phillips to Lang, 6 March 1883.
3 C.M.S. G3/A3/1883/61 Crowther to Lang, 6 March 1883.
4 C.M.S. G3/A3/1883/78 D.C. Crowther to Lang, 17 April 1883.
   The younger Crowther, writing from Sierra Leone, urged the Society to discuss with the British Government the possibility of the latter establishing a protectorate over Bonny. Dandeson argued that the chiefs would find this preferable to a French protectorate, an idea which had also been mooted along the coast. See C.M.S. G3/A3/1883/30 D.C. Crowther to Lang, 10 May 1883.
Sierra Leone Murder Trial: Turning Point

As the controversy over the Crowther presence in Bonny reached its climax in 1882-83, critics of the Niger Mission had an even more sensational opportunity to question directly the wisdom of African superintendence and all African-staffed enterprise. The Government in Sierra Leone decided on a show trial of the two ex-Niger missionaries, W.F. John and J. Williams, and their wives. In early 1882 an investigating party questioned Niger Mission staff at Onitsha where the accused had served and where the alleged crime had taken place in 1877. Evidence was also taken at Lagos and subpoenas were served on several Niger missionaries. Those from whom a written deposition was deemed insufficient had to go to Freetown. The Mission Finance Committee granted leaves of absence. The Colonial Government paid the passage fees. Many of the European missionaries on the West Coast were convinced of the guilt of Williams and John and maintained that such "crimes" were the natural result of placing Africans in positions of authority. The attempt to work a mission solely through African agency had failed. As one of them concluded: "The time is not yet for Africa for the Africans". Archdeacon Crowther was concerned with the immediate practical effects which the trial had on the Niger work. He characterized the proceedings as "an upheaval"

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1 See C.M.S. G3/A3/1882/90 C.H.V. Gollmer to Secretaries, 26 May 1882. The head of the investigating party arrested Mr. and Mrs. Williams just south of Onitsha in June 1882. Mr. and Mrs. John had been arrested at Lagos in February 1881. E.P., 1882, XLVI, 1-52, "Correspondence Respecting the Trial of Certain Persons at Sierra Leone for the Murder of a Slave Girl at Onitsha on the River Niger", pp. 4-5.

2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1882/91 Minutes of the Niger Finance Committee, 24 May 1882. The Colonial Government spared no expense in the gathering of information on the Niger and in Lagos. For example, see: H.A.I. C30 1/1/9 Alfred Moloney to Sir Samuel Rowe, 11 January 1883. Rowe was Governor of the Gold Coast Colony, under which jurisdiction Lagos fell between the years 1874-86.

which particularly forestalled translation work. Bishop Crowther, in England at the time when the investigations began in earnest, was greatly disturbed by the complaints which naturally grew stronger against African stewardship. He was further embarrassed by the news that the steamer owned by his sons Samuel and Josiah had been seized for non-payment of debts. The Parent Committee became alarmed as the preparations for the trial soon provided sensational stories in the nation's press. Salisbury Square decided to reserve public comment, however, until after the trial had ended. They also wanted to wait for a report from Bishop Crowther on the situation in Freetown, where he was asked to stop on his way back to the Niger.

As a cause célèbre the trial lived up to expectations. Its effect on the Niger Mission was far-reaching and must be considered a turning point in the Mission's history. The Court, especially impanelled for the proceedings, consisted of the Chief Justice of Sierra Leone as President, the Chief Justice of the Gold Coast Colony, the Colonial Secretary of Sierra Leone, the Chief Magistrate of the Gambia, and a leading Freetown lawyer. Samuel Lewis, already the most famous African lawyer in the Colony, served as Crown Prosecutor.

3 The Times, 6 September 1882 (p. 8) and 7 September 1882 (p. 12); The Guardian XXXVII, 18 October 1882, 1435. One West African newspaper came as close as any account in attempting an apologia for the Niger Mission, despite the conviction of the two former missionaries. "Correspondence (from our own correspondent)" in Lagos Times and Gold Coast Colony Advertiser III: 52, 27 December 1882.
4 C.M.S. G/C1/v181/31 General Committee, 11 September 1882. Also Page: Black Bishop, pp. 354-56.
5 For a biography of Lewis see J.D. Hargreaves: A Life of Sir Samuel Lewis, London, 1958. Reference to the Sierra Leone trial of Williams and John is made on p. 16.
J.A. McCarthy, hardly his equal, appeared for Williams and John. The Grand Jury, the first held in the Colony since 1853, met on 11 August 1882. The Defence objected that the accused were without the jurisdiction of the Court. Lewis answered that the Government was exercising its rights under two laws, passed during the reign of George III. These stated that a British subject could be tried for murder or manslaughter, even if he committed the alleged crime outside the Royal Dominions or that of a European Power, if he travelled to the place on a British ship. After three hours of deliberation, the Grand Jury handed down a bill of indictment. The trial, which began ten days later, continued until 18 September.

In the proceedings it was established that Williams and John had arrived at Onitsha, each upon a British ship, in 1874 and 1876 respectively. The alleged victim, one Amp or Amelia John, had been "redeemed" from slavery by John who then continued to keep her as a "domestic slave" in his own household. When the girl attempted to run away with a domestic slave of Williams, both were recaptured. After paying ransoms for the two girls, Williams and John allegedly brought them before the Rev. William Romaine, then Superintendent of the Onitsha station. While advising punishment, Romaine had specifically warned against flogging according to the testimony of

1 57 George III c53 and 46 George III c54.

trial witnesses. The indictment alleged, however, that the two male defendants did flog the girls and encouraged their students to do likewise. It also asserted that Mrs. Williams had poked pepper up the vagina of Amelia while the two girls had been tied to a stake. According to the Crown the death of Amelia on the day following was the result of the flogging and subsequent exposure. This was further evidenced, it was alleged, by the fact that the defendants, in concert with the now-deceased Romaine, buried the girl secretly at night. A Court of Equity had met in Onitsha in October 1877, a few months after the death of the girl. It completely exonerated John (Williams had not been accused) and found that Amelia had committed suicide. To several who subsequently heard of the events, it appeared that a cover-up had taken place. Consul D. Hopkins held this view and through his and his successor's persistence the principals were finally arrested and brought to trial.

In his arguments and questioning of the witnesses, McCarthy performed weakly, raising peculiar defences. He attempted to show that the victim had killed herself in struggling and in eating "poisonous grass". He also maintained that the punishment inflicted on the girls was neither cruel nor extraordinary. His only significant move was in producing a reputable physician who questioned the Crown's contention that the victim's death had been caused beyond


doubt by the flogging and exposure to the sun. The other defence
witnesses called were hardly helpful to the accused. Most were
current or former C.M.S. employees. In their testimony they presented
a largely unsatisfactory picture of life in the Niger Mission and
provided the reporters covering the trial with much spectacular copy.
At a time when the Mission was already under increasing attack, the
added negative publicity was devastating and hardly welcomed. The
whole system of redeeming slaves and then keeping them in domestic
bondage appeared inconsistent with the expressed purposes of a
missionary society. The problem of domestic slavery bedevilled
the C.M.S. and other missionary organizations in the 1870s and 1880s.
Crowther had spoken out and preached against the institution since
his days in the Yoruba Mission. The fact that it continued in
Yorubaland and in the Niger Mission throughout his lifetime plagued
him and the Society. It was distressing that not only was it
practised by indigenous converts but also by the Saros and by Mission
agents such as John and Williams. The distinction between redeemed
servants and domestic slaves was indeed a fine one. A joint
Yoruba/Niger Mission Conference on the issue at Lagos in 1830, over
which Crowther presided, did not appreciably solve the problem.

As the trial dragged on, reports appeared in the press that the
proceedings were being used by the Colonial Government as a means with
which to embarrass missionary work. In his summation Lewis lamely
denied this charge in naively or cynically declaring that the defendants' "guilt will not affect other missionaries". The President of the Court felt otherwise. In a detailed and opinionated series of instructions to the jury, he branded the whole ransoming process an outrage. He directly criticized the C.M.S.' conduct of the Niger mission and its tacit acceptance of this practice:

The members of the C.M.S. may call it ransom, but the fact remains that they are slaves ... You (the jury) should remember, that these men (the defendants) were missionaries who went to instruct these benighted natives and to set thus an example of a Christian and civilized life. What an example they set!

The Chief Justice approved the notoriety which the case had produced and hoped that the trial and conviction of the accused would serve as a deterrent to others. He warned the jurors that "people in England" were following the trial carefully and "there can be but one conclusion".

After less than an hour's deliberation, the jury found all four guilty of manslaughter. The Williamses and W.F. John were sentenced to twenty years imprisonment at hard labour (later reduced to penal servitude), and Mrs. John to two years of penal servitude.

Reaction to the convictions came swiftly. The C.M.S. establishment was appalled. For many at Salisbury Square the trial symbolized "the last straw" as far as African agency on the Niger was concerned. For these sympathy and patience gave way towards insensitivity and intolerance. The Mission had to be "put right" by Europeans and done so with deliberate speed. Robert Lang and

1 Bell: Outrage, p. 85.
2 Ibid., pp. 117, 125.
3 Ibid., p. 116.
another C.M.S. Secretary, C.C. Fenn, wrote Phillips on the Niger that the trial sadly illustrated the necessity for the closest of supervision. As far as Williams and John were concerned, the Secretaries opined that "the sentence was not more severe than the cruelty of the action demanded". In addition to reporting the difficulties in Bonny, Phillips had also been using the adverse trial publicity to press for increased personal authority. While these combined events had inalterably reduced Bishop Crowther's stature in Lang's eyes, the Group III Secretary shied from reducing the Bishop to a figurehead, especially because of his episcopal office. There were ways, notwithstanding, to accomplish this without publicly denigrating the old man. When Phillips requested "that the control in essential matters should rest with the Mission Secretary", Lang replied that to do so as Phillips wanted "would involve the superceding of the Bishop in toto, which is scarcely consistent with his position". He continued, however, that "the desired control will be secured by giving you a veto in all cases", - a veto which could even be delegated when he was absent. As the trial remained very much before the reading public, Lang felt satisfied with his decision. In early 1883 the affair was raised in the House of Lords in an attack on the C.M.S. Several peers came to the Society's defence, but the only recently seated Archbishop of Canterbury, Edward Benson, was troubled. He subsequently questioned Wigram at length regarding the activities of the Niger Mission. The Honorary Clerical Secretary promised the


Archbishop in reply that stricter control and supervision would be implemented and so instructed Bishop Crowther. Coming so quickly upon Benson's complaint of "episcopal aggression" in Liberia, the Sierra Leone trial severely damaged Crowther's credibility with Wigram. He would henceforth be less willing to give the Bishop the benefit of the doubt. The unexpected illness of Thomas Phillips at this same time, and his subsequent removal to England, precipitated another frantic review of the Mission. On this occasion, however, the Bishop was hardly in a position to argue from strength or success.

Phillips prepared a highly critical report of his brief tenure with the Mission. While the Society's official historian indicates that the Parent Committee "sympathized" with Phillips' views, they were not prepared to accept his proposals completely. Although committed to strong corrective measures, they did not want to cause open revolt in the staff on the Niger or possibly create adverse publicity in the religious periodicals at home. Phillips resigned his Secretaryship in protest. The C.M.S.' response to the report was, nonetheless, far from dismissive. They had to demonstrate reform.

The Sierra Leone trial had had an effect beyond the confines of Salisbury Square. It had profoundly altered the attitudes in Church and missionary circles towards the character of African missionaries.

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1 C.M.S. G3/A3/L2/121-23 Wigram to Crowther, 2 March 1883. For the Debate in the House of Lords and its effect, see Hansard, 3rd series, CCLXXVIII, 31-40; Geary: Nigeria, pp. 172-74; Ekechi: Missionary Enterprise, pp. 52-55; and "Missionaries in West Africa", Lagos Observer II: 9, 28 May 1883.

2 The full Phillips Report is missing from the C.M.S. Archives. A short excerpted version can be found at: C.M.S. G3/A3/L2/177-79, undated.

in general. And Archbishop Benson's concern for events on the Niger added an even stronger sense of urgency. After examining the reports of the Niger missionaries and interviewing both Dandeson Crowther and Phillips, the Society's Group III Sub-Committee recommended that three African agents be immediately sacked and that a thorough examination be made of five other agents. The full Committee of Correspondence agreed and named the Bishop, Archdeacon Johnson, and the European Secretary to conduct the investigation. To replace Phillips, they appointed, on a temporary basis, the Rev. James Hamilton, 52, a C.M.S. Association Secretary in Buckinghamshire with fifteen years experience in Sierra Leone. Clearly showing their lack of faith in Crowther's ability to be forceful in the proposed inquiry, they gave Hamilton veto power to dismiss any or all three of the agents without either the Bishop's or the Archdeacon's consent and then to report his actions directly to Salisbury Square. They criticized also what they considered as hindrances to self-support programmes in the Mission and the interference in political affairs in Bonny. They concluded that the isolated nature of the Niger Mission stations, with their lack of frequent visitations, was leading to a decay of the spiritual life of all the agents. The Committee later decided that if the Niger Finance Committee agreed, Dandeson should not return to Bonny, but go instead to Brass. In a strong letter of rebuke they wrote the Bishop:

1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1883/100 Benson to Wigram, 26 July 1883.
2 Register, p. 106, no. 532.
4 C.M.S. G3/A3/L2/218 Committee of Correspondence, 31 July 1883.
We cannot help regretting that you did not see your way to take decisive steps in dealing with agents, who, for one cause or another, were clearly not fit for their high and holy calling. They went on to warn that he should not find employment in his own service for any of the disconnected agents, as he had done so unwisely in the case of W.F. John, or else they would be forced to make such an action public. He was instructed to "purge out the evil" within the Mission at all costs.

Hamilton proceeded almost immediately to West Africa, arriving at Bonny, without Archdeacon Crowther, on 20 August 1883. Despite Phillips' report he found that the spiritual condition of the station was satisfactory, with good church attendance, notwithstanding the difficulties posed by the local authorities. After a discussion with the chiefs, he wrote that the station should be maintained by the "more intelligent and educated African agents", like James Boyle (already present) and that the European Mission Secretary should be there headquartered. As for Dandeson Crowther, although he had good words for him personally, Hamilton noted that the chiefs were steadfast in not wanting the Archdeacon in the country.

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2 When John confessed to adultery with the daughter of a Brass chief in late 1875, Crowther dismissed him from C.M.S. employ. He kept John, however, in private service as a clerk, "because of his expectant wife and in hope of repentance", until early 1880. C.M.S. CA3/04/501 Crowther to Hutchinson, 10 October 1875 and C.M.S. CA3/04/501 Crowther to Hutchinson, 12 November 1875; Beyerhaus: Die Selbstandigkeit, p. 149. See also G.O.M. Tasiie: "The Story of Samuel Ajayi Crowther and the C.M.S. Niger Mission Crisis of the 1880's: A Re-assessment", Ghana Bulletin of Theology IV: 7 (1974), 55.
4 C.M.S. G3/A3/1883/121 Hamilton to Lang, 1 September 1883.
Mission's first medical missionary also recently arrived at Bonny, agreed with the Crowthers that the complaints made against them and the African agents by the chiefs were a smoke screen to hide the resolve to maintain domestic slavery no matter what. For this reason Brown urged no change regarding African agency there. On his first trip up the Niger, Hamilton reinforced Brown's view on the continuing appropriateness of an African staff, although he also advised that a great need existed for "European influence" in the Mission.

When the investigating tribunal, headed by Hamilton, convened at Lokoja, it interviewed the five accused agents. It dismissed the two ordained men, the Rev. E. Phillips for trading, and the Rev. J. During for being, in Hamilton's words, "too open-handed with the Society's money ... a disease on the Niger (which) will take some time to cure". The official reason given for During's dismissal was general incompetence. His service of more than a quarter of a century with the C.M.S. both at Freetown and on the Niger prompted the tribunal to recommend that he be given an annuity and/or possible re-employment in Sierra Leone. Two of the lay agents were "acquitted" and the third, again because of his age and service, was referred to the Niger Finance Committee for final judgment. Crowther concurred.

3 Ibid.
4 C.H.S. G3/A3/1883/137 Hamilton: Minutes of a Special Meeting, Lokoja, 23 September 1883. In announcing the dismissals, the C.H.S. said that the Bishop's enquiry following the Madeira Conference had been unnecessarily "quasi-judicial". They concluded that if such a legalistic approach were to be maintained, the Mission would suffer from retaining agents not suited to the work. Intelligencer N.S. VIII (1883), 506.
with the tribunal's decision but advised leniency. In a letter to the Parent Committee he especially noted Daring's and Phillips' lengthy service with the Mission. He added sadly that had he been acting alone he would not have removed either man. Two weeks later, he listed the criteria which he said he had always used in such cases: 1) lack of interest; 2) carelessness; and 3) guilt of immorality. Poignantly defending his men he added rather extraneously that although they may not have been able to "preach an eloquent sermon to an educated English congregation" they had been good servants of the Society. Archdeacon Johnson, in a letter to Salisbury Square which displayed considerable self-interest, "disagreed with his chief" as to the length of service mitigating the causes for dismissal. Yet he too felt that "we (the African agents) have not had fair play". The Parent Committee, as part of a broad recruitment programme for all its Missions, sounded a "call for more men". With regard to the Niger Mission, its printed appeal noted that the recently held Berlin West African Conference had "happily confirmed England's predominance on the Niger and Benue". In a significant departure from its consistently optimistic public remarks on the Niger work and its espousal of African agency, it declared: "Bishop Crowther has done what he could with weak instruments. Archdeacon Johnson feels almost forsaken at Lokoja. There is work for a dozen good (English) men on these rivers".

1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1883/151 Crother: "On the Disconnection of Mission Agents from Unfitness, or on a Charge of Unfaithfulness against any now connected with the Niger Mission", 1 October 1883.

2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1883/157 Crother to Lang, 16 October 1883.


The difficulties in Bonny, the Phillips Report, and the Hamilton investigation brought Ajayi Crowther to the breaking point. He reacted in an uncharacteristically acerbic manner. With Phillips clearly in mind, he wrote bitterly that after six years of "attack",

"...We flatter ourselves that we are sympathized with by Christian friends, instead of which, they are made tools of to fire deadly shots at us from secret enemies of the Mission." 1

The staff sackings had a devastating effect on mission morale. Four schoolmasters resigned and two others threatened to do likewise. The students at the new Preparandi Institute at Lokoja, recently established to train men for missionary work, were disheartened. As for himself, Crowther now believed that he had become a "mere nominal superintendent". 2 He argued that Phillips had had neither the qualities of a good missionary nor the ability to evaluate the work of others. His Report and that of Wood before him were filled with misrepresentations which had been noted respectively by the Lokoja tribunal and the Madeira Deputation. The Bishop considered the practice whereby the accusor did not face the accused a travesty, and added defensively that he had never shirked from dismissing incompetent agents, having sacked eleven in the years prior to 1831. He admitted, however, that the tremendous difficulties in obtaining a "higher class" of agents necessitated ordaining men of "inferior attainments". 3

The death of his centenarian mother at this juncture led him to offer his resignation to the Parent Committee. In a moving letter, he wrote

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1 C.M.S. G5/13/1884/20 Crowther to Lang, 15 December 1883.
2 Ibid.
I am already to yield place to others to act as leading manager of the Niger Mission ... and willing to labour as a pioneer in opening fresh grounds, while the already established stations can be worked by superior intellects and better managers.\

With the deposition of George Pepple and the shunning of both himself and his son by the Bonny and even Brass chiefs, Crowther had become emotionally exhausted.

**Political-Religious Confrontation in the Delta**

Within a few months the always resilient Crowther recovered from the doldrums, and the C.M.S. establishment, while still pressing for reform, took a much more apologetic and sympathetic tone. Although Lang reacted strongly in February 1834 to the Bishop's assertion that information detrimental to the Mission had come from "secret enemies," a balanced and hopeful report on the Niger stations from Hamilton served to calm some fears at Salisbury Square. Hamilton's request for more Europeans for the Mission and the establishment of a third archdeaconery to be headed by a European fell, however, on deaf ears. The supporters of the Venn/Crowther model were still in the majority and the C.M.S. maintained their resolve to keep the staff overwhelmingly African, despite their own published call earlier for a "dozen good men" for the Niger. They also decided to reply assertively to the Bonny chiefs. Lang wrote to them that although Dandeson Crowther had been transferred to Brass, the change had not been made because the chiefs demanded it. The Society expressed its

1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1884/46-47 Crowther to Lang, 6 February 1884.
confidence in the Archdeacon and claimed that his relationship with King George Pepple was a logical one as the latter had been the legitimate ruler. With regard to the question of convert-slaves, the Lay Secretary argued less satisfactorily that "the gospel nowhere discourages disobedience to masters". He concluded that the Society was determined on reform but emphasized that no European would be placed in "pastoral charge" of Bonny or any other established station in the Niger Mission.¹ On the same day that he wrote to the chiefs, Lang also sent a letter to Hamilton. He told him that the problems in Bonny were not entirely Archdeacon Crowther's fault and he reaffirmed, as he had with the chiefs, that "European influence in the Mission should be as far as possible outside the Mission itself".² Lang was even more apologetic a week later in a note to the Bishop. He lamented that

Communications from yourself to the House (Salisbury Square) have not received the attention which they should have received nor your warnings acted upon; ... We have been to blame, and accept our share of the responsibility.³

With the encouragement of greater self-support, "the peculiar character of the Mission should be maintained".⁴

Resolved to defend the work which had been accomplished, and determined to hold the C.M.S. to its stated policy of African agency, Crowther tackled the vexing problem of Bonny. In so doing he failed


³ C.M.S. G3/A3/L2/300-04 Lang to Crowther, 10 April 1834.

⁴ Ibid.
to realize, however, that even with an African staff the Society as he had known it was no more. Although churchgoing was prohibited under penalty of death, the converts, including the deposed George Pepple, continued to attend services. The chiefs, conscious of growing British authority, had not dared to exile the King nor execute any for disobeying the law, although many were imprisoned. When the Bishop arrived at Bonny in April 1884, he noted that the female converts suffered the most harassment. The congregations were buoyed by his presence and (according to the Bishop) welcomed heartily Dandeson Crowther when the latter paid a visit in May. The chiefs, nonetheless, took a different attitude towards the visits, ignoring both Crowthers and refusing to receive the Bishop. When the elder Crowther received, in early June, Lang's letter of 10 April enclosing the Society's letter to the chiefs, he was more angered than pacified by its contents. Now he understood why the chiefs had avoided him: they had informed Salisbury Square that they would deal only through a European Mission Secretary. With Phillips in mind particularly, but greatly disturbed with the institution of the European Secretaryship generally, he warned of

the most injurious effects which such absolute acts of a European Secretary may continue to have upon the Mission, if it is to be worked through Native Agency.

He also pointedly asked that if the Society was so determined to maintain the "peculiar character" of the Mission, where were the

2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1884/80 Crowther to Lang, 9 April 1884.
3 C.M.S. G3/A3/1884/117 Crowther to Lang, 10 May 1884.
4 C.M.S. G3/A3/1884/125 Crowther to Lang, 12 June 1884.
African agents to be obtained? Investigations like those of Wood and Phillips created distrust among the educated Christians. Prospective candidates were unwilling to dedicate themselves to Mission service when they might later be summarily dismissed without reasons being given.¹ In the meantime Dandeson expressed his willingness to do anything which the Parent Committee should recommend to pacify the Bonny chiefs.²

Events took a decided turn to the advantage of the Mission in August 1884 when the British Consul negotiated a Protectorate Treaty with Bonny, working in concert with Bishop Crowther. The Treaty was one of several negotiated with the Oil Rivers chiefs and peoples in 1834-35 and led to the establishment of the Oil Rivers or Niger Districts Protectorate in June 1885.³ Hamilton, who had returned to England in April, had no part in the negotiations. The British "restored" King George, who signed the Protectorate Article along with the other Bonny chiefs. Article 7 provided for Christian missionaries of all denominations freedom in the exercise of their religious duties and for all the inhabitants liberty of conscience.⁴ While Crowther grandiloquently stated that Christianity required "no

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¹ C.M.S. G3/A3/1884/136 Crowther to Lang, 11 July 1884.
² C.M.S. G3/A3/1884/129 D.C. Crowther to (Lang?), 30 June 1884.
⁴ C.M.S. G3/A3/1884/139 Crowther to Lang, 6 August 1884. Crowther enclosed a draft of the Treaty, of which three Articles had been signed. The full Treaty was approved by the Chiefs on 22 August. C.M.S. G3/A3/1884/140. During the negotiations, Crowther frequently conferred with the Consul, urging the inclusion of Article 7 and buttressing the Popple claim to authority.
compulsory measures to force its profession as a religion", plainly
the weighty problems would not have been so easily lightened without
the declaration of the Protectorate. ¹ The prohibition against
church attendance was soon a thing of the past. By mid-1886 the
chiefs were offering their sons for education and Dandeson had been
invited to return.²

While the situation in Bonny gradually became more stable,
Crowther's attention and that of the Parent Committee were dramatically
drawn to Nembe in Brass country where Christian converts had become
involved in acts of murder and cannibalism. Nembe was at this time
ruled by joint kings, one each from the Ogbolambiri and Bassambiri
clan.³ Traders from an interior Nembe village, subject to the
Bassambiri King Ebifa, were owed goods for their palm oil from a
Nembe-town chief allied to the Ogbolambiri. When payment was not
forthcoming, they resorted to the customary law which permitted the
seizure of the property of any individual of the same village or family
of the debtor. Accordingly they captured the trading canoe of
Alagogha, a Christian convert, who was then expected to obtain payment
for his loss from his fellow villager. Alagogha, however, went to
the village of the traders who had taken his canoe in hopes of regaining
it. A scuffle took place during which he was wounded. He

¹ C.M.S. G3/15/1885/33 Crowther to Lang, 9 March 1885.
² See C.M.S. G3/13/1886/118 Crowther to Lang, 31 July 1886 and
C.M.S. G3/15/1886/148 Addu Allison to D.C. Crowther, 25 August
1886. Allison was Chairman of the "Governing Board of Bonny"
and wrote on the behalf of a deputation of leading Bonny citizens,
requesting Dandeson's return. See also Alagoa and Fombe:
Chronicle, pp. 94-95 and Intelligencer N.S. XII (1887), 496-99.
³ For a study of the two divisions within Brass, see Alagoa:
The Small Brave City-State, pp. 5-53.
retreated to a nearby village where he convalesced for more than two months, returning triumphantly to Nembe-town in April 1885. It was now Alagogha, or more specifically the Ogbolambiri chiefs, who had recourse to traditional law. According to custom any person guilty of murder or attempted murder should be given up to the injured parties for execution and the ritual eating of his body. The chiefs of both divisions of Nembe met 27-29 May. The affair was complicated because Ebifa had promised the chiefs of Angiama, another Delta village to which the attacker had fled, that if they returned him, Nembe would not execute him. The Ogbolambiri chiefs demanded in his place nine prisoners. In order to prevent civil strife, Ebifa gave in and delivered up nine individuals. Apparently several converts attempted to stop the punishment and approached Alagogha, the man in whose name the acts were to be carried out. Alagogha allegedly sought the assistance of two fellow Christian Ogbolambiri chiefs, Kemma and Dogu, and told them that he sought the execution of only the actual offender and not the nine substitutes. In the end, the prisoners were divided among several of the chiefs. Kemma turned over the one sent to him to his men to be dealt with accordingly, although he himself did not participate. Dogu, who had been given two prisoners, sent them on to Alagogha, but they were carried off by members of the community before their safety could be assured. Alagogha gave up the one prisoner allotted to him to be executed, but not to be eaten. The remaining five prisoners, who had been divided among non-Christian chiefs, were all dispatched in the traditional manner.

Bishop Crowther had always upheld the right of the state to exercise capital punishment. With regard to ritual human sacrifice, he consistently argued for the substitution of animals and, failing that, a reduction in the number of those to be killed. He realized that such deeply-rooted customs would not end overnight and characteristically declared that the Gospel and education would gradually cause such practices to disappear. His gradualist approach, not surprisingly, received a severe blow when word of the Nembe "outrages" reached Salisbury Square. Dandeson Crowther conducted an investigation within weeks of the events taking place. His treatment of the "offenders" was hardly Draconian. He removed Alagogha from his post as Church Warden and suspended him from the Church for eighteen months. He also suspended fifteen other persons for lesser periods.

Hamilton, writing from Lagos, almost immediately questioned the Archdeacon's handling of the affair and demanded that the Bishop conduct a fuller inquiry and insure that the guilty were more severely punished. Lang wrote Dandeson that a stronger hand was needed and that in particular an example should be made of the Christian chiefs.

1 See, for example, C.M.S. G3/04/75 Crowther: "Report on Idda station, 1887", undated, received in London, 6 December 1887, p. 2.


In the meantime the elder Crowther visited Nembe in late July and remained there for nearly two months. He too took a decidedly temperate approach to the affair, perhaps not wanting to appear to question his son's actions. His first brief report to the Parent Committee included a remarkable statement on African traditional law and highlighted the special perspective which he and his African agents had in advising moderation in dealing with supposed abuses:

It requires a knowledge of the laws and customs of the Natives before one can pass correct judgment on the acts of an individual, right or wrong; whether he be a Christian or a heathen; because it is in the power of the authorities to punish the offenders ... however cruel or revolting such acts may be to the tender feelings of others.¹

In his full report he insisted on the separation of those involved but cautioned that "severe" punishment to maintain Christian discipline must be moderated with sympathy, and guided by due allowance for the measure of knowledge and Christian experience which the converts had. He reminded the Secretaries that the converts were a decided minority and had "scarcely emerged out of the rooted barbarous practises of their forefathers". He and Dandeson were able to secure the release of several other hostages who had been taken in addition to the original nine. He recorded that several converts had fled the town rather than participate in the events and noted the exemplary role played by the resident missionary, the Rev. G.D. Garrick, against tremendous obstacles.² The Parent Committee was not moved to sympathize and on 3 November condemned the whole affair. They concluded that respect for authority did not include complicity in

¹ C.M.S. G3/A3/1885/95 Crowther to Lang, 12 August 1885.
murder and urged the total separation from church privileges of all involved. While a month later Lang wrote that any participant who made public confession and promised to eschew such acts in the future might be re-instated, the "Nembe outrages" served to damage still further the reputation of the Crowthers and the Niger Mission in the C.M.S. establishment.  

Competition from Traders and other Missionary Societies

While affairs in the Delta drew much of his time in the period 1880-86, Bishop Crowther made four extensive tours of the upper Niger stations during these years. While the potential of this vast region remained great, the situation altered as mercantile interests expanded enormously and competition from other missionary societies became more significant. More so than in the Delta, the inability to raise an indigenous clergy and staff and the dependence on the less than satisfactory Sierra Leoneans proved a serious hindrance to the work. In 1880 the staff for the entire Niger Mission consisted of ten ordained and ten lay agents. Only six of the former had attended Fourah Bay College or Freetown Grammar School and only the same number of the latter had been to the Freetown or Lagos Grammar Schools. The remaining agents had had day school education or less. Also by that

1 C.H.S. G/G1/4.50/572 Committee of Correspondence, 3 November 1885. Crowther was warned to avoid leniency in dealing with those chiefs who had been implicated in the murders. C.H.S. G3/A3/L2/4/42-45 Lang to Crowther, 19 November 1885. For the Society's public comment on the Nembe affair, see Intelligence N.S. X (1885), 556.

2 C.H.S. G3/A3/L2/463-65 Lang to Crowther, 7 December 1885. It is noteworthy that when another trading dispute occurred in 1895, the Christian Nembe chiefs insisted that the captives should not be killed and eaten. Geary: Nigeria, p. 87.

date many of the early stalwarts were either dying or retiring. New recruits were not taking their places. \(^1\) Four years later, in one of the defensive "reviews" of his work which he was increasingly prone to write, Crowther noted the growing competition from other religious denominations with the arrival of the Wesleyans at Eggun and the Roman Catholics at Lokoja in that year. By 1886 Roman Catholic missionaries had begun work at Onitsha and Brass. \(^2\) The notoriety surrounding the Sierra Leone trial, the Nembe affair, and the sacking of agents by the Parent Committee hardly helped recruitment. The employment during these same years of hundreds of Sierra Leoneans by the European trading firms was a distinct embarrassment which did not go unnoticed at Salisbury Square.

The Society sharply questioned in 1884 the unsatisfactory record in obtaining what they characterized as "competent agents". Crowther retorted that he was "liberal, open, and favourable to improved and well-qualified agents ... if they could be obtained." \(^3\) He wrote the Sierra Leone Native Pastorate a plaintive letter seeking its assistance in obtaining additional missionaries. He acknowledged that several men had been sent out

\(^1\) Ibid. Two Scripture Readers died at Osamari in 1879-80.


\(^3\) C.M.S. G3/A3/1884/136 Crowther to Lang, 11 July 1884.
with erroneous confidence ... (and) they have shown out (sic.) their characters in their true colours by bringing discredit on the holy work for which they were appointed.¹

Yet, he added, the success stories had not received the same attention. He pointed to several cases including, rather inappropriately, that of the Rev. W. Romaine. Despite his rather limited success with such candidates Crowther felt forced to continue receiving applicants with only the barest of educational backgrounds.² The Society, accepting that it had not been particularly helpful in the past, also sent a letter to the Sierra Leone Native Pastorate stressing their continued faith in the Niger Mission and asking for the Pastorate's assistance in securing personnel for Crowther.³ While they were increasingly wary of hiring any Sierra Leoneans for the Niger work, no viable alternative existed.⁴ The Bishop also began to recognize his own weakness in failing to obtain new agents. In October 1885 he admitted that his attempts to train an indigenous clergy had not been successful.

Of fourteen candidates whom he had sent to Lagos or Sierra Leone since the Mission's inception, only four remained in service, none of whom were ordained. Persuasively demonstrating the pull of the Niger trading firms, he added that nine of the remaining ten were employed by the National African Company or other companies.⁵ The attraction

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¹ C.M.S. G3/A3/1885/10 Crowther: "Memorandum to the Sierra Leone Native Pastorate", 20 October 1885.

² Ibid.

³ See C.M.S. G3/A3/L2/463-65 Lang to Crowther, 7 December 1885.

⁴ P.E.H. Hair had noted the extent to which the C.M.S. relied on Sierra Leone for recruits for all its West African Missions and has commented favourably on the contribution made by agents from Freetown. P.E.H. Hair: "C.M.S. 'Native Clergy' in West Africa to 1900", S.L.B.R. IV: 2 (1962), 71-72 and Hair: "Freetown Christianity and Africa", pp. 15-16.

of "mercantile services" was so great at Lokoja that some of the student boarders there were leaving to join the National African Company.  

Crowther had presented his most ambitious proposal for training an indigenous clergy and teaching staff in mid-1881 when he sent the Society detailed plans and sketches for a Preparandi Institute for Lokoja.  

The Parent Committee delayed consideration as they were then still digesting the Madeira Conference reports and knew that Crowther would himself be coming to Britain the following year.  

During the Bishop's subsequent six month stay in the country, the Society tentatively agreed to the project. The crises and investigations, however, which occurred so soon after Crowther's return to West Africa, diverted his attention from the programme. Archdeacon Johnson quite naturally took an interest in the Institute as it was to be situated near his own headquarters. When the Bishop finally was able to visit the site, conflicts over design and related subjects arose between himself and his Archdeacon. Influenced by suggestions made by Hamilton, the C.M.S. appointed an English builder, John Burness, as Superintendent of Buildings for the Mission. In 1884 the construction of the Institute was placed under his supervision with the understanding that the Parent Committee's instructions were to be

3 C.M.S. G3/L1/511-12 Lang to H. Johnson, 16 February 1882.
4 C.M.S. G3/43/1884/55 Hamilton to Wigram, 25 February 1884.
delivered to him through the European Secretary. As a result most of
the direction of the scheme effectively passed from Crowther's hands.
Burness' first report of the state of all of the Mission property was
hardly encouraging. He counselled the Society to open no new
stations, until all repairs had been made and the new Institute was
well under way. Crowther had good words for what had been done when
he visited Lokoja in January 1836. He could not resist commenting
that five months of Burness' work equalled twelve months of Ashcroft's!
Burness did not meet this compliment in kind. He decried the moral
state of the Mission, accusing the Sierra Leoneans in particular of
"conceit, hypocrisy, and sensuality" and an unwillingness to learn
"mechanical" skills. When Crowther formally dedicated the new
Institute on 21 September 1836, he remarked with his usual optimism
that a "new era" was about to begin for the Niger Mission. The
Parent Committee extended restrained congratulations. Not unmindful
of the Bishop's partiality to Sierra Leoneans, they reminded him that
the Institute's primary purpose lay in the development of an indigenous
staff. The European Niger Secretaries' recurrent complaints of
educated Sierra Leoneans and Lagosians had made their mark at Salisbury
Square.

1 Register, p. 206, no. 989; C.M.S. G3/A3/L2/330-33 Lang, Wigram
and Penn to John Burness, 14 July 1884. Burness' duties also
included those of Mission Accountant. See also Intelligencer N.S.
IX (1884), 450.
2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1884/134 Burness to Lang, 4 October 1884.
4 C.M.S. G3/A3/1886/74 Burness to Lang, 12 May 1886. Burness
eventually withdrew from "secular" missionary work and confined his
service to "spiritual" concerns. His view on the Sierra Leonian
character were, however, by this time generally held of all
5 C.M.S. G3/A3/1886/139 Crowther: "Visit to Loko, Obotsi, Alenso,
Osamare and Abo", 15 October 1886, p. 5; also C.M.S. G3/A3/1886/137
Hamilton to Lang, 30 September 1886.
Crowther’s greatest lament in his reports of visits to Niger stations during the early 1880s concerns the growing friction between the Mission agents and the traders. He became especially condemnatory of the use of armed force by the merchant firms, although on one notable occasion he helped instigate the use of such force. The bombardment and sack of Onitsha in October 1879, carried out by a British naval gunboat under orders of the Acting Consul, created almost total desolation. Crowther and several of his agents had originally joined in asking the Government that Onitsha be "chastised" for what the missionaries had considered ill-treatment from the local authorities.\(^1\) The thoroughness of the naval attack and more especially the continued harassment of the town by European firms, notably the then United African Company, led the Bishop to execute a volte face. Less than three months after the Government’s action he pleaded with the Parent Committee that they must move the authorities at the Foreign Office ... to prohibit the mercantile agents of the Niger from firing into the shore and market at Onitsha, held at the water side by the natives themselves, unless in self-defence.\(^2\)

Edward Hutchinson, then Lay Secretary, was unsympathetic with the plight of the indigenes and quite approving of the actions of the trading companies.\(^3\) In July 1880, Crowther visited Onitsha and concluded negotiations for the re-establishment of the mission station and its

\(^1\) Ekechi: Missionary Enterprise, p. 53; also C.H.S. CA3/04/629 J. Buck to Crowther, 25 December 1878; Dike: Trade, p. 207; and Scott: International Rivalry, p. 264.


\(^3\) C.H.S. CA3/1/333/94 Hutchinson to Crowther, 5 April 1880. See also "The Destruction of Onitsha", Intelligencer N.S. V (1880), 124, 124–25.
buildings. He argued persuasively that while the merchants might be fickle and desert the town for other places on the river, the C.M.S. would remain as long as they were welcomed. Four months later, the representative of the United African Company instituted a blockade which he declared would not be removed unless a trading monopoly were granted his firm. As one writer has observed "traditional Igbo acceptance of competition as a way of life" prompted the Onitsha chiefs to refuse such terms. The Mission reacted vehemently to the blockade as well as to allegations that they had been responsible for stirring up strife between the people of Onitsha and the Europeans. The blockade was maintained for the rest of the year. The state of hostilities between Goldie's Company and Onitsha was in fact to continue throughout the 1880s.

The expanding mercantile presence on the Niger moved Goldie towards monopoly. He continued to buy out whenever possible his European competitors, but he also sought to eliminate the Saro and Delta traders and transform his firm into a chartered company. In June 1882 the United African Company reformed as the National African Company. The new entity was to Goldie's design and its goals were avowedly political. It sought authority to govern the lower Niger region and

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1 C.M.S. CA5/04/708 Crowther to Hutchinson, 16 August 1880.
2 Ekechi: Missionary Enterprise, p. 54.
3 C.M.S. G3/A3/1881/7 Correspondence related to the blockade of Onitsha, assorted dates in 1880, received in London, 29 January 1881.
4 Isichei: The Ibo People and the Europeans, p. 110; for example, see C.M.S. G3/A3/1885/56 Crowther to Lang, 11 May 1885. In this instance Crowther complained that the United African Company had threatened a blockade unless Onitsha agreed to new tariffs.
exclude all commercial competition (African and European) either through Royal Charter and/or by treaty with and concession from the Niger's indigenous rulers. The Saro traders, whom Crowther and his Niger missionaries had encouraged for a quarter of a century, were a thorn to be removed. Foreign competition, notably from the French, also needed checking. Crowther's Free Trade predilections were manifest not only in his support of the Saros but also in his friendly relations with various French and German traders who had begun to enter the river in the 1870s. These included the Count de Somelle and A.M. Mattei of the Compagnie Française de l' Afrique Equatoriale and the German Edouard Flegel. They found hospitality at the Niger Mission stations and travelled aboard the Henry Venn at Crowther's invitation. Such a spirit was not acceptable in the charged atmosphere of the 1880s as the Scramble for Africa began in earnest. Just as Hutchinson and Lang and the European Niger Secretaries had sought an increase in Europeans in the Mission and a corresponding reduction in the number of agents coming from Sierra Leone, the National African Company moved to eliminate Saro traders and remove Africans from positions of authority within the Company on the river. The two developments occurred


simultaneously and were at least indirectly related. Crowther's protests against the growing power and influence of the National African Company went unheeded. The C.M.S. came down squarely on the side of Goldie and his Company which they regarded as successors to Laird and the West Africa Company as purveyors of Christianity. The Bishop took the view that the Company had goals which were antithetical to Christian evangelism and were detrimental to the peoples of the Niger. The Society ignored him even when he detailed serious cases of alleged ill-treatment by European Company agents of African staff in their employ.¹

The expansion of trading firms on the Niger and potential competition from other religious denominations were an embarrassment. In 1883, Crowther made extensive tours up both the Niger and Benue. His trip to Bida in Nupe with Archdeacon Johnson in July-August illustrated again his continued good health and stamina. Permission for a mission residence in the town was renewed by Etsu Nupe Maliki. Crowther warned the Parent Committee that if they did not finally move on this invitation of so many years standing the Roman Catholics would certainly step in.² Taking the bit, Salisbury Square quickly approved the suggestion and urged that a catechist or schoolmaster be placed there as soon as possible.³ Immediately after the journey to Bida Crowther sailed past Lokoja for Yinaha, which he had last visited in 1878. The Bishop observed that while King Kpanaki considered the benefits of a mission station solely "from a temporal point of view,

² C.M.S. G3/A3/1883/128 Crowther to Lang, 31 August 1883.
³ C.M.S. G3/A3/L2/241-244 Lang to Hamilton, 7 December 1883.
yet we regard it as a providential footing for the introduction of Christianity."1 Crowther then went to Amara, fifteen miles further up the Benue, and also to Loko, more than sixty-five miles from Lokoja. At the latter place he noted that no less than four trading firms had already established warehouses,2 a sad commentary on the C.M.S.' inability to seize opportunities as Crowther had first travelled in those parts in 1854. The Bishop urged the "occupation" of all three places. Such openings, however, had to be deferred. When Crowther returned to Lokoja, word was waiting of the Parent Committee's sacking of three agents and the command to investigate charges against five other of his missionaries. With the resulting reductions in staff, expansion had to wait. Secretary Hamilton's report of the upper stations in October 1883 had also stressed the potential in new parts of the river and commented favourably on the location of already established stations above Onitsha.3 But Hamilton did not have African agents in mind for opening of additional stations in the North. Prior to returning to England in May 1884 he declared that ordained Europeans were necessary for Onitsha, Asaba, and Lokoja as well.4 Unable still to find a "permanent" Secretary for the Niger, the Parent Committee decided in

1 C.M.S. G3/3/1883/141 Crowther: "A Visit to the Benue in the Henry Venn from 19 to 24 September 1883", undated, received in London 30 November 1883, p. 1. Kpanaki had reason to be concerned with "temporal" affairs. Nupe sought to bring Yimaha within its sphere of influence during these years and thanks to its position as a power broker between Europe and Hausaland, it succeeded by 1886. Mason: Nupe, pp. 276-77.

2 C.M.S. G3/3/1883/141 Crowther: "A Visit to the Benue, etc.", p. 3.


4 C.M.S. G3/3/1884/55 Hamilton to Wigram, 28 February 1884.
December of that year to send Hamilton out again as Joint Secretary of
the Yoruba and Niger Missions. While stopping at Freetown, Hamilton
was made an Archdeacon by Bishop Nevill of Sierra Leone, in whose
diocese Lagos still remained.  

Hamilton's joint appointment naturally afforded him far less time
for Niger affairs as his residence was in Lagos. Events in the Delta,
notably at Bonny, also precluded an episcopal visitation of the upper
stations until late October 1884. On his way upriver, Crowther stopped
briefly at Idali, at almost the same time that the Parent Committee was
deciding, primarily on Archdeacon Johnson's recommendation, to
re-establish a station there. Crowther was alarmed at the challenge
posed by the Roman Catholics and Wesleyans. On reaching Lokoja, he
determined to remain a while as only one catechist was in residence.
While he was there he greeted the three S.M.A. priests who arrived
shortly after he had landed. Even though the staff situation was
quite desperate for the C.M.S., Crowther had to sack the tutor of the
Preparandi Institute (who had been hired by ex-Secretary Phillips) for
adultery. The action somewhat belied the by then accepted picture
of Crowther the weak administrator. He recorded enviously the
development of commercial enterprise from Lokoja and beyond, with the
division of the river by Goldie's Company into districts each supervised

1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1885/30 Hamilton to Lang, 26 February 1885.
2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1884/138 H. Johnson to Lang, 16 June 1884; also
   C.M.S. G3/A3/L2/545-44 Lang to H. Johnson, 24 October 1884.
3 C.M.S. G3/A3/1885/1 Crowther to Lang, 10 November 1884. The
   Society of African Missions (S.M.A.) planned a mission to the
   Muslim Emirates, but had to give up their Lokoja station for
   reasons of health. For a general history of the Society, see
by a European or an educated Sierra Leonean. Archdeacon Johnson, while in Britain in 1885, convinced an increasingly eager Parent Committee that "immediate steps" be taken for the establishment of at least one station on the Benue, and one on the Kwara as far as Shonga. The Bishop's visit later that year and his subsequent "Brief Review of the Niger Mission since 1857" forcefully underscored the importance of the manpower shortage. As a result, the plan for expansion remained largely unfulfilled. Following a successful Christmas sojourn at Onitsha where he confirmed twenty-three persons before a company of over one thousand, Crowther returned to the coast in January 1885.

The situation seemed even less promising when the Bishop again visited stations above Onitsha from August 1885 to April 1886. Reviewing the entire Mission, he observed that eight stations were in operation, six vacant for want of agents or civil war (New Calabar), one still abandoned (Idah), and twelve invitations waiting to be taken up. In contrast, he noted that there were no less than eighty-seven trading stations on the Niger and Benue, employing several hundred Sierra Leoneans and many indigenous persons. The European traders

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2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1885/57 H. Johnson to Lang, 22 June 1885. Salisbury Square approved on 7 July. C.M.S. G/C1/v.50/0/5-04 Committee of Correspondence, 7 July 1885.

3 C.M.S. G3/A3/1885/18 Crowther to Lang, 12 January 1885; see also C.M.S. G3/A3/1885/16 Minutes of Niger Finance Committee, Onitsha, 3 January 1885.

not only attracted potential recruits in Sierra Leone, but also solicited new staff from among the boarders in the Mission's schools and the Preparandi Institute, many of whom the Society hoped would enter C.M.S. service. According to Crowther, the traders' generally "immoral" ways also contributed to backsliding among the converts. The keeping of mistresses appeared to make a sham of the Christian prohibition regarding polygamy. Many former female boarders became concubines. As the people along the river came in contact with few other Europeans, the Bishop contended that the traders were "generally looked upon by both Mohammedans and the heathen population as indisputable example(s) of the requirements of the religion they possess".  

Crowther took an increasingly strict hand in his own dealings with these men. He denied baptism to the child of a European agent and a non-Christian Igbo woman at Onitsha and refused the plea of another European trader for permission to erect a memorial tablet to his deceased African mistress in one of the Mission churches. Such actions hardly won him many friends in the mercantile community. Finally, while there was less evidence of persecution from local authorities than in the Delta, the Mission on the river had to contend with unsettled political situations at Lokoja, where marauding officials of Etsu Hupu could still wreck havoc, and at Idah, where the absence of the Ata at war in the interior prevented a C.M.S. return there. The C.M.S.' continuing attempts to convince the Foreign


2 Ibid., pp. 3-4.

Office to re-open a consulate in Lokoja remained unpromising.¹

A new Mission steamship, Henry Venn II, made its maiden voyage up the Niger in June 1886. Archdeacon Hamilton, absent from the river for three years, joined the Bishop and Archdeacon Johnson on a visit to all the stations as well as on trips to Bida, Shonga, Yimaha, Amara, and Loko. The C.M.S. had determined on expansion even though the personnel was lacking. At Bida, Maliki promised them a decision shortly whether a station could be established at his capital.²

Steaming on to Shonga, they found the political climate considerably changed since Crowther had last been there in 1879. A new and weaker king was on the throne and a Nupe customs official exercised great influence over affairs. Many Yoruba had moved there, especially from Lagos. The original site offered them had since been occupied, but another was given them for when an agent could be sent.³

The journey up the Benue illustrated the competition posed by the S.M.A. As Yimaha had since been occupied by that Roman Catholic Society, the C.M.S. party accepted the fact that they could not also establish there. Crowther proposed that Amara serve as an outstation for Loko which, like Shonga, had considerably grown in population. Loko had expanded as a result of trade, and a tribal diversity was developing, with all its attendant difficulties, similar to that of Lokoja. With an agent ready to take up residence there, the Mission simply needed the approval of the Emir of Hazaratwa, who had authority over the town,

before work could commence. Hamilton, while encouraged by the potential, continued to feel that the task was too complex for African agents alone, as "native missionaries" had not met the great things expected of them. Even before he left for the coast, he wrote, "if the work is to be done, it will have to be done by the white man, and not the blacks". At the same time the Foreign Office, in response to entreaties from Salisbury Square that the Government help in halting twin murder, declared that the resident missionaries had not after many years' work "gained sufficient influence to be able to check such practices in the neighbourhood of the mission stations".

With critical observations coming from all quarters, the C.M.S. moved towards radical change in approach. Hamilton deemed it absolutely essential. He had gotten on well with Crowther, but believed that the old man was not typical of educated Africans. Assuming a rather superior and fatalistic tone, he observed of the Bishop that

He looks forward to a great future for his country, and I admire his patriotism, and also his faith, though I cannot share his expectation. And why? because there are so few willing to spend and be spent in their country's cause.

In October 1886 the Society appointed the Rev. John Alfred Robinson as European Secretary of the Niger Mission. With this appointment the rush towards crisis commenced.

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2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1886/78 Hamilton to Lang, 2 June 1886.
3 Sir T.F. Lister to R.N. Cust, 24 June 1886, attached to C.M.S. G3/A3/1886/78 Cust to Foreign Secretary, 1 June 1886.
4 C.M.S. G3/A3/1886/124 Hamilton to Lang, 3 September 1886.
5 C.M.S. G3/A3/L2/514 Lang to Crowther, 26 October 1886.
Conclusion

The first half of the 1880s witnessed a series of unsuccessful attempts at moderate reform in the Niger Mission. In contrast to the previous decade when Samuel Crowther had had almost unchallenged authority as Mission Director and quasi-Consul, conditions were changing on the Niger and in London which would soon dramatically affect his position. The continued complaints of Ashcroft and Kirk led the Parent Committee in 1880 to send out the Rev. J.B. Wood to investigate. Lay Secretary Hutchinson sought to bring Crowther and the Mission more closely into line with accepted C.M.S. policy as well as his own far-reaching plans for re-organization and European penetration of the Sudan region. He and Wood were predisposed to finding an unsatisfactory situation. Ashcroft and Kirk accompanied Wood on his Niger trip, and with Crowther absent they greatly influenced the course of the investigation. While conditions outside the Delta certainly needed correction, Wood received much information which was inaccurate or erroneous. Successful programmes were either ignored or regarded as "accidents". Wood's subsequent Report prompted the Madeira Conference. While Hutchinson served as one of the Conference's two Commissioners, the Rev. J.B. Whiting, a Crowther confidante and supporter of Venn's policies on Native Churches and African agency, sat as the other. The factual inaccuracies in the Wood Report were recognized and a series of generally constructive recommendations emerged. These included a devolution of authority through the establishment of a more effective Niger Finance Committee and a European Secretariat, the training of more indigenous Africans for Mission work, and the formation of a board of inquiry to review several cases which had not been settled at Madeira.

Before all of the Madeira recommendations could be implemented,
Hutchinson resigned in controversy, Honorary Clerical Secretary Wright drowned, and Ashcroft and Kirk were discredited and sacked. With the Society in such turmoil, Crowther was again left to his own devices, particularly with regard to the supposed follow-up investigations on the river. He proceeded too defensively in this task, not wishing to find error and concerned with mending staff morale. In his 1882 journey to England, he might have retired and thus insured an African successor. Instead he determined to remain and to press and defend his Mission and programme. During the brief Secretaryship of Thomas Phillips which followed, the Bishop succeeded in tying up many loose ends. Nonetheless, Phillips managed to convince many in the Parent Committee that Crowther could or would not achieve the kind of reform which they considered essential. At the same time events in West Africa moved toward a condemnation of the Venn/Crowther model. Crowther support for the Bonny Royal Family provided a pretext for canoe chiefs to demonstrate their opposition to the missionary presence and to the effect which Christianity was having on their domestic slaves. Finally, the trial in Sierra Leone of two former Niger Mission agents did more than any other single event to discredit African agency, and the Niger Mission and its Bishop.

Despite such developments, Salisbury Square was unwilling to make the break with the past which Phillips urged. While a growing group of C.M.S. Secretaries and Committeemen were disposed to significant change, they were not yet in a majority. When Phillips resigned, the Parent Committee moved to remedy the problems of its "isolated" Mission by giving the new Niger Mission Secretary Hamilton a power of review greater than his predecessors. Hamilton proceeded carefully at first
and found the "spiritual" condition of the Mission not nearly as black as Phillips had painted it. Crowther, however, was at the breaking point. In his view he had been reduced to being a nominal superintendent. While he proposed withdrawing in favour of another, his offer was not acted upon. Instead, the Parent Committee accepted partial responsibility for the Mission's difficulties, acknowledging that they had not given sufficient attention to it in the past.

Crowther had cause for encouragement in 1884 when the British Government, with his assistance, concluded a Protectorate Treaty with Bonny. The Treaty not only guaranteed freedom of conscience to the inhabitants, but also granted the various missionary societies the liberty to continue their efforts in the country. But such positive developments were few. The inability to engage new agents became critical. Goldie's National African Company drew away not only potential Sierra Leonean recruits, but also students from the Mission schools. Crowther further exacerbated his strained relations with the Company by his Free Trade attitudes, which were now perceived by many as being outdated as those of the "Bible and the Plough". The involvement of Christian converts at Nembe in acts of cannibalism renewed many of the complaints which had come to the surface with the Sierra Leone trial. The Society became increasingly suspect of the Sierra Leonean arrangement and the failure to train an indigenous clergy. Crowther's extensive trips up the Niger and Benue in 1885 and 1886 served not only to underscore the competition from the mercantile community, but also from other religious denominations. The lack of recruits, the growth of competition, the inability to fill vacancies and take up standing invitations, and the disenchantment with the Sierra Leonean connection moved the C.M.S. towards giving Europeans a more prominent role in the
field. The Society was poised to alter the existing structure and implement substantive change on the Niger.
Chapter VI

The Niger Mission in Crisis, 1887-1891

The final five years of Crowther's life were marked by conflict and misunderstanding. The C.M.S. establishment determined that wide reform was necessary but was divided on just how far it should proceed. The advent of the young European missionaries, starting with John Alfred Robinson, hastened crisis. The Sudan missionary group, led by Robinson and Graham Wilmot Brooke, and aided by their colleague in the Delta, R.N. Eden, aroused the ire of the African agents and shook the Parent Committee with their reports and finally their threats. They maintained and believed that they acted purely from spiritual motives. They were indeed among the progenitors of a new Evangelicalism developed in part by the Baptists and the Rev. Hudson Taylor, but which by the mid-1880s had affected Anglican missiology through the Keswick movement and the newly-founded Evangelical colleges at Cambridge and Oxford. Nonetheless, these new missionaries, despite their revivalist fervour, were imbued with Darwinian concepts of race. Their roughshod manner, so characteristic of "Young Turks", precipitated one of the earliest outpourings of nationalist feeling on the West Coast of Africa. In this context Samuel Crowther became the focal point of a movement which went beyond religious matters and stirred a pride in the hearts of the West African elite.

The C.M.S. realized that the Niger Mission stood at a crossroads when they sent Robinson out as Mission Secretary in January 1887. In their letter of instructions to him they referred to the time as "a moment of extreme interest and importance in the Niger Mission".

Because Dandeson Crowther had been re-invited to Bonny and "disorder" appeared at an end in the Delta, and prospects were brighter under Archdeacon Johnson in the Upper Niger, the Committee reaffirmed its determination to maintain the African nature of the enterprise as far as possible. While noting that "hindrances" remained to the success of the work, they told Robinson that "the Niger Mission is a native mission and the Committee desire in no way to alter its general character in this respect". Europeans were intended to occupy a position outside the formal structure of the Mission. Most importantly, Robinson was instructed to work closely with Bishop Crowther, giving him at all times the fullest respect.

On his way out to the Niger, the new Secretary studied the Reports of the Madeira Conference as well as those of his predecessors, Wood, Phillips and Hamilton. They fired him with a crusading spirit. After his arrival, initially events went well. At his first Niger Finance Committee he commented on the Bishop's "wonderful health and vigour" and complemented him personally. As might have been expected in a man of his scholarly disposition, he was critical of the degree to which the African agents had mastered the vernacular. He did not

2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1887/33 Robinson to Lang, 21 February 1887.
3 C.M.S. G3/A3/1887/46 Hamilton to Lang, 16 March 1887.
seem to appreciate the linguistic difficulties on the river nor understand the task facing the agents. He proposed that before ordination, the Society should administer a language examination. The Parent Committee later approved this suggestion. More ominously, he derided what he considered the negative aspects of the Sierra Leone character. In his opinion, they lacked Evangelical spirit and self-discipline. He soon argued that

It should be decided as a question of principle to what extent Native Agents should be encouraged to adopt the more expensive and fastidious style of living which is common at Sierra Leone, and affects all the agents who come from there.

Robinson's self-confidence impressed Crowther. The Bishop remained very much on the defensive as a result of the Hamilton Report and realized that his influence had decreased markedly at Salisbury Square. He believed that any proposals which he had for expansion within the Mission would have first to be approved by the Young Secretary if they were to have any chance of acceptance by the Parent Committee. He persuaded Robinson to visit Okrika which he urged him to put forward to the Committee as a permanent station as his own recommendation on this is stale and weak. The easy relationship which Crowther may have desired, nonetheless, did not develop. Within a few months Robinson was decrying the lack of economy on the

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1 Tasie: Christianity, p. 137.

2 C.M.S. G/C/1/v.52/102 Committee of Correspondence, 5 July 1887. The leading writer on the linguistic work done on the Niger has observed that perhaps the vocabularies and grammars produced in the Mission in the 1860's and 1870's were not employed effectively in the 1880's, particularly in the North. Hair: The Early Study of Nigerian Languages, pp. 94-95.

3 C.M.S. G3/A3/1887/36 Robinson to Lang, 26 March 1887.

4 C.M.S. G3/A3/1887/36 Crowther to Lang, 1 April 1887. A mission station had been established at Okrika in 1884. See Tasie: Christianity, pp. 133-43.
part of all the African agents, save Crowther père et fils. He asserted that the new graduates of the Preparandi Institute at Lokoja, about to assume posts within the Mission, should have the simplest dwellings or bamboo and mud. He also proposed a different and lower salary scale for those trained within the Mission. He argued that in this way the long overdue stations for Abo, Shonga and Idah could be taken up. Robinson's comments regarding what he considered the élitist conduct of the Sierra Leoneans soon added to the growing disenchantment with this group within the Parent Committee. In July 1887 the Group III Secretary, Robert Lang, strongly disapproved of Archdeacon Johnson "importing" students from Sierra Leone for the Preparandi Institute. Quite rightly, Lang expected the Institute to be training indigenous Africans.

Robinson's zeal for expansion, the apparent inability to train local Africans, and the disenchantment with Sierra Leoneans, naturally inclined the Parent Committee to seek some Europeans. When the European builder attached to the Mission, John Burness, asked to take up direct evangelistic work, Salisbury Square agreed and another European was sent to replace him in his former position. After a discussion with Graham Wilmot Brooke, an independent missionary, whom he met at Akassa in late 1887, Robinson became increasingly interested

1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1887/68 Robinson to Lang, 25 May 1887.
2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1887/69 Minutes of Niger Finance Committee, Lokoja, 3 May 1887. The Parent Committee approved a special salary scale of £24 and £30 per annum for schoolmaster/catechists and full catechists respectively who were trained in the Niger Mission. See C.M.S. G3/A3/L3/75-78 Lang to Robinson, 5 August 1887.
in the Sudan which Brooke was intent on reaching. He soon wrote
that he regarded the Muslim tribes there as "superior" to those in the
Delta. He also questioned Crowther's judgment in concentrating the
work among traditional religionists rather than among the Muslims, as
the latter, he opined, were preferable converts. Aware of the
Bishop's reticence in this matter and no doubt influenced by his
discussions with Brooke, he finally suggested that the entire area
should be a new centre for European work. Arguing that non-Africans
would be more effective in dealing with Muslim peoples, he added that
their presence also would "infuse new zeal" into the Mission as a
whole, both North and South. His own attitude towards all the
African peoples among whom he was working reflected a blend of
"scientific" racism and the new Evangelicalism soon to be prevalent
on the Niger. On the "Negro character", he observed:

They are, indeed, even the most advanced of them, very like
boys to deal with. They need above everything a firm
and a continuous policy (and) ... an outpouring of
Pentecostal blessing ... .

In the matter of self-support, however, Robinson stated in November
1887 that Bonny was ready to make this move, with the exception of
the salaries for pastor and schoolmaster. He regretted that the
Preparandi Institute had not been at Bonny or Onitsha.

By mid-December 1887, Bishop Crowther was back in Bonny,
making preparations for a February departure for Britain to attend

1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1887/80 Robinson to Lang, 30 May 1887.
2 C.M.S. G/Y/A3/V1B Robinson to Lang, 23 June 1887.
3 C.M.S. G3/A3/1887/131 Robinson to Lang, 5 November 1887. On
the Third Lambeth Conference. C.M.S. circles and the Church of England establishment were troubled by the apparent advance of Islam at the expense of Christianity. Crowther's earlier observations in 1885 that Islam had had a century's headstart on Christianity and that the latter faith enjoyed the reputation in Africa of being the religion of toleration had not assuaged the concerns of many. Robinson's related statements merely added grist to the mill. A spate of articles and conferences on the subject in the preceding years compelled Crowther to write a lengthy defence of his work in Muslim areas. In "Information on the Progress of Islam in Western Africa" he pointed to the significant doctrinal problems which faced Christian missionaries in proselytizing among Muslims, citing the beliefs in the Incarnation and the Trinity as significant stumbling blocks. He also attempted to explain Islam's success as due to activities which the Church either forbade or discountenanced: the use of "the sword", the approval of polygamy, the sale of charms, etc. Finally, he observed that Christianity required a long course of study before admission, Islam did not. Even when Robinson and others

1 Canon Isaac Taylor created a lively debate in October 1887 with publication of his paper on Christianity and Islam in Africa. See assorted issues The Record N.S. VI (1887), 999, 1032, 1057, 1081, etc. and The Guardian XLIII, 4 January 1888, p. 7. Also Stock: History, III, pp. 345-48.


3 C.M.S. G3/A3/1888/9 Crowther: "Information on the Progress of Islam in West Africa", 31 December 1887, printed in extenso in Intelligencer N.S. XIII (1888), 255 ff. It is fairly clear that while he was in Britain in 1888 for the Lambeth Conference, he composed a lengthier statement which was published posthumously by the C.M.S. S.A. Crowther: Experiences with Mohammedans in West Africa, London, 1892. One modern writer has argued that the "land born" Islam's religious and cultural spectrum was "broader and more variegated" than the "sea born" Christianity of the Saros and the Europeans. P.A. McKenzie: "The Expansion of Christianity in Nigeria - Some Recurring Factors", Orixa III: 1 (1969), 56.
would later urge new and more progressive methods for the Muslim peoples of the North, Crowther would reaffirm his belief in a cautious approach.\(^1\) He was not swayed by those who, typified by the Cambridge-educated Mission Secretary, were resolved to "convert the world in a generation" and who championed exposition of doctrine over apologetics.\(^2\) In his last statement on the subject, written only a few months before his death, he resolutely declared that the most effective manner by which men could be converted lay in suggestions to be found in the Acts of the Apostles. He concluded with an appropriate apologia: "We preach, the Holy Spirit moves!"\(^3\) The stage was set for a determined conflict based on methodology and personality.

The primary purpose for Crowther's 1888 visit to England was his invitation to the Lambeth Conference and more specifically at the request of the Conference's organizers, to participate in the scheduled discussions on polygamy. The Bishop's approach to this task illustrated his continued indebtedness to the ideas of Henry Venn. For many of his critics, it underscored a devotion to outdated precepts and a resistance to change. The question of Church membership for polygamists was debated widely in the 1880s. As has already been noted, Crowther appreciated the wide acceptance which polygamy enjoyed throughout West Africa and considered the institution as one of

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1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1889/115 Crowther to Lang, 20 July 1889.
3 C.M.S. G5/A3/1891/96 Crowther to (Secretaries?), 2 April 1891.
several significant barriers to Christian conversion. In reviewing his writings in this field it is difficult to separate them from those on Christian marriage as so frequently his thoughts on these subjects were intertwined. In 1884 he had prepared a brief minute for the Parent Committee on "Marriage" which set forth the major problems as he saw them. In it he maintained that persons married before their conversion usually possessed "insufficient knowledge of the principles of Christianity" respecting Christian marriage to be remarried in an Anglican ceremony. While stressing his faith in the course of instruction which converts underwent, he noted, nonetheless, that there were "backsliders". This was a serious problem in its own right, but the harm was compounded when the "backsliders" had taken Christian marriage vows. He had seen the "distressing" results on many occasions. In the common pattern, one of the contracting parties in the Anglican ceremony later "relapsed into heathenism" and took additional wives or a different husband. As a result, the partner faithful to Christianity, because of the Church's prohibition of divorce, became "an unfortunate forced widow or widower". Crowther reasoned, therefore, that it was advisable in dealing with such couples "not to interfere with their faith of union according to the law of the country which is also binding". If one of the parties left the Church and the marriage was dissolved by local law, the Christian spouse could remarry according to that same law or, if he or she wished, in an Anglican ceremony. The Anglican rite, as recorded in the Common Prayer book, by its very nature posed further problems. If, for example, the ceremony were performed in its entirety (something

1 C.M.S. CA\textsuperscript{2}/04/745b Crowther: "Report of Bishop Crowther of the Niger Mission to October 1874", p. 1.
on which he insisted), Crowther contended that it was virtually impossible for the husband to pledge "with all my worldly goods I thee endow" when his family continued to have complete power over his property. Similarly, he pointed to the fact that a widow had in most instances to remarry within her husband's family or else repay the bridewealth which the deceased husband had paid her family. The difficulties were so numerous that the Bishop was obliged to ignore the rite and to use it on only rare occasions within the Niger Mission.

The Rev. Frederick Wigram, Honorary Clerical Secretary of the C.M.S., reacted unfavourably to the 1884 Crowther memorandum. Later in that year a Special Sub-Committee on the Marriage of Native Converts made its recommendations. Wigram wrote the Archbishop of Canterbury, E.J. Benson, enclosing the Sub-Committee's Report and urging him to approve its contents. He also sent a copy of Crowther's minute. Of the latter Wigram declared that it indicated "a disposition to take a lax view of the sanctity of marriage and the indissolubility of the marriage tie". He asked Benson to so advise the Bishop of the Niger. The Archbishop would not, however, be so easily drawn into the Society's internal conflicts nor, more importantly, take a position on such a significant doctrinal matter without proper consultation. The Dean of Windsor, the Rev. Randall Davidson, Benson's former chaplain and a later Primate himself, prepared a lengthy minute.

1 C.H.S. 03/43/1894/155 Crowther: "Marriage". A C.M.S. Sub-Committee studying the problem accepted Crowther's suggestions. See also Daryll Ford: The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of South Western Nigeria, London, 1951, p. 29.

2 L.P.A. Benson Papers, v. 19/ff. 446-51 Wigram to Benson, 22 December 1884; also L.P.A. Benson Papers v. 19/ff. 51 C.H.S. Recommendations of a Sub-Committee on Marriage of Native Converts, 17 December 1884.
Davidson clearly stressed the importance of the issue while at the same time illustrating the attitude of several of the Anglican hierarchy towards the manner in which the C.M.S. conducted its affairs. The Dean argued that Wigram's letter and the Sub-Committee Report were practically a quasi-admission that the Committee of Colonels and those who meet in Salisbury Square are not really qualified to issue pastoral letters to the Diocese upon intricate questions of Church order and doctrine. He concluded that the proper court of administration on this issue should not be the Parent Committee but rather a Lambeth Conference. As such the Archbishop should avoid both private and public comments on the Report.1 Benson agreed and so informed Wigram, adding in less stringent tones than Davidson:

> To arbitrate on a matter so remote from business affairs and the administration of funds and touching the foundation of the Society does not seem to fall within the work of the strongest and most excellent committees.2

In preparation for the Lambeth Conference, Crowther wrote another memorandum in 1887 for the Parent Committee entitled "Notes on the life of Polygamy in West Africa". Recent arguments favouring Church admission, which he had read in various periodicals, greatly disturbed him. He did not see any need for the Church of England to compromise on this point. He contended that such a radical change in Church policy would be destructive of much of the C.M.S.'s work in West Africa during the last more than eighty years. To buttress his case, he presented a picture of polygamy which he claimed "the Fathers

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2 L.P.A. Benson Papers. v.19/f.f.454 Benson to Wigram, 29 December 1884.
in the Mother Church could not appreciate, far removed as they were from the situation". As he had so often done before, he emphasized the "subordinate" position of women within the system and declared that they disliked polygamy but were powerless to change it. Citing numerous accounts from his personal experience (several of which the modern reader finds quite humorous), he attempted to show that the polygamist himself also "suffered" and sometimes regretted his actions. Beyond the effects which the institution had on the people themselves, however, he underscored the potential damage to Christian advancement if the Church changed its long-established policy towards it. Such a move would show Christianity as a weak religion: the non-Christians, both traditional religionists and Muslims, would be scornful and the faith of the converts would be shaken. The various African and European traders, many of whom since the 1870’s had sought to undermine the Niger Mission’s rules regarding polygamy, would be triumphant. 1

While Crowther’s approach has been criticized for having been too conservative, 2 largely based on his formal 1887 Memorandum, this is perhaps an over-simplification of his views. As noted earlier, he had taken a very flexible and positive attitude towards African custom and tradition in his 1869 "Charge" to his Mission agents. 3 Nine years later he expressed similar understanding, specifically referring to polygamy. According to the Captain of the Henry Venn, the Bishop observed of the Niger peoples:

They have generations behind them of certain ways of living. They may accept our religion and still cling to native customs.

1 C.M.S. 05/31/1887/20 Crowther: "Notes on the Life of Polygamy in West Africa".
3 Supra, Chapter III, pp. 173-74.
He continued:

My Church sometimes accuses me of condoning behaviour which is un-Christian. I do not condone it, but I understand it. I refer especially to ... polygamy. Even some of my own native teachers have returned to it. They have their arguments and sometimes it is difficult to refute them.

Once the Synod convened, Crowther served on the Special Committee on Polygamy of Heathen Converts. When the Committee's Report was debated in plenary session, discussion centred on the teaching of the Gospel, the practices of the early Church, and the experiences of contemporary missionaries. The conferees agreed that apostolic teaching did not "sanction" polygamy even though the anomaly had existed in the early Church whereby presbyters and bishops were enjoined to have no more than one wife. In the post-apostolic period there was little doubt that monogamy was the norm, as Roman law upheld it. With regard to the present day, the European Bishop of Zululand, while noting that polygamy was rooted in "lust and avarice", nonetheless, argued that all wives, and not just the first as some had contended, should be eligible for baptism. His colleague from Sierra Leone agreed, and submitted a memorial from those in his own diocese which included an assertion by the Rev. Edward W. Blyden that "monogamy will not live in Africa". When Crowther rose to speak, he did not concentrate, as one might have expected, on his own observations over a period of more than sixty years. Rather, in true early Evangelical style, he emphasized the power of the Christian message to overcome all obstacles. With Blyden clearly in mind, he attempted to illustrate that the teaching of the Bible proscribed polygamy.² In ringing

1 Beattie: A Hope in the Hand, pp. 43-44.

2 He pointed to "the fact" that there had been only one Eve, that the Lord instructed Noe to select two of every species. He noted that the proponents of polygamy made too much of "the mistakes of the patriarchs" in this matter and he quoted extensively from the writing of St. Paul on monogamy.
terms he declared that "Christianity is the only medicine that can heal the Negro race of Africa from the leprosy of polygamy".

Concluding, he paraphrased a Yoruba proverb which his mother had frequently told him:

"No woman would ever undertake the expense of making a sacrifice to please her god in order that her husband may take a second wife, not one."

In the end the Synod approved resolutions which Crowther found acceptable. Polygamy was held inconsistent with Christian marriage. While affirming that polygamous males could not be baptized, it held that their wives could be under certain circumstances, which were left to the discretion of the local bishop. As for traditional religious marriages, a loophole existed whereby a Christian party could remarry where there had been no mutual pledge of life-long fidelity in his or her original marriage.

Bishop Crowther's 1888 English visit gave the appearance of success. In addition to his participation at Lambeth, he was quite active at Salisbury Square. He undertook an extensive speaking schedule for the Society throughout the country and delivered one of the major addresses at the Annual Meeting at Exeter Hall. During the more than eight months he was in England, he did not hesitate to press his own ideas regarding the conduct of the Niger Mission. The

1 For the debate on polygamy see: L.P.A. Lambeth Conference Minutes, LC/2/15-17/ff. 134-71.


3 He spoke forcefully in support of African agency at the International Conference on Foreign Missions in June 1888. The Record N.S. VII (15 June 1888), 584-90.
Parent Committee proved cautiously receptive. The Rev. W.A. Allan, a member of the Society's Group III Sub-Committee, had recently returned from an investigative tour of Sierra Leone and of the Yoruba and Niger Missions. His comments on the Niger, while not recommending significant changes, did urge increased vigilance. Crowther could, however, be especially persuasive. He convinced the Committee, for example, to retain the station at Kippo Hill and to exchange the Mission's site at Asaba with that held there by the Royal Niger Company.

Robert Lang observed of Crowther's performance that "It was exceedingly interesting to notice the shrewd and practical way in which the Bishop stated the several points." At two later meetings of the Committee Crowther obtained grants for three small outstations near Bonny and for a training institute similar to the Preparandi Institution for St. Clement's, Bonny. While acknowledging the lack of qualified African agents, Crowther took leave of the Committee in mid-October 1888 and "expressed (his) gratitude for the encouragement given to himself and his colleagues in the Niger Mission".

Robinson and Brooke Join Forces

While Crowther was absent in England, Robinson became increasingly more critical of the Bishop's general policies and ability to make what the young Mission Secretary considered as necessary changes.

1 Allan had good words for Crowther and self-support programmes which had been undertaken, and was critical of the influence of European traders on the Niger. C.M.S. G/C1/v.52/525 Committee of Correspondence, 4 April 1888 and C.M.S. G3/A3/1888/54 Rev. W.A. Allan to Lang, 27 April 1888. Also Stock: History, III, pp. 379, 382-83 and The Record N.S. VII 0 3  June 1883), 59-60.


4 C.M.S. G/C1/v.53/87f. Committee of Correspondence, 16 October 1888.
Although Robinson voiced pro forma "his great respect and affection" for the Bishop, he warned that thirty years on the Niger induces a conservatism which may prove ruinous to the real interests of our work. Nothing will bring him (Crowther) to change his mind on many points of policy.¹

He anticipated an open battle over reform and concluded quite accurately that as he held "ideas wholly incompatible" with those of Crowther, the latter would now certainly believe that "I was reversing all his life's work if my views were adopted".² Despite avowals of "respect", the Secretary began also to take personal swipes at Crowther. He criticized the £54 house rent which the Bishop received, arguing that the payment was unnecessary as he lived with his son Dandeson.³ In mid-October 1888, in another "private" letter to Lang, he laid out in some detail proposals for a sweeping transformation of the Upper Niger Archdeaconery. Evidently influenced by discussions and correspondence with Graham Wilmot Brooke, he urged the decentralization of Lokoja and the establishment of Onitsha as headquarters for the Upper stations, with Iboland receiving the major attention. He called for a reduction in the number of Sierra Leone agents, thereby indirectly rebuking Archdeacon Henry Johnson. At the same time he evinced a disdain for African missionaries in general. Once again combining Darwinian-like observation with Keswick belief, he declared that African agents manifested no spirit of self-denial and were not suited for "aggressive" missionary work. He added bitingly, "All our agents (with perhaps two exceptions) look on the C.M.S. as a

¹ C.M.S. 03/13/1888/91 Robinson to Lang, 17 October 1888.
² Ibid.
³ C.M.S. 03/13/1888/105 Robinson to Lang, 17 October 1888.
cow to be milked to the last available drop". As a result, he recommended that they should not be paid in currency but in kind for any spiritual work which they performed. In an attempt to reduce the African missionary presence beyond Lokoja, he called for the immediate closure of Kippo Hill, unaware that Crowther had already obtained approval for its continuance. Finally, in a move perhaps designed to obtain the necessary support for his recommendations from Bishop Crowther, he suggested that Dandeson be appointed Suffragan Bishop for the river with headquarters at Onitsha. He also indicated that he himself desired a new post and would go wherever the Society directed.¹

As Robinson wrote secretly to Lang, Graham Wilmot Brooke was requesting the Parent Committee to accept him as a missionary in an associated capacity. After a summer holiday in Algeria in 1834, during which he distributed copies of the Bible, and an unsuccessful attempt to penetrate the Western Sudan via the Senegal River in the following year, evangelism became less of an avocation and more of a vocation. In December 1836 he had what he came to regard as a profound conversion experience. He then determined to reach the Muslim tribes of the Sudan. Inspired like many others of his generation by the myth of Gordon the Martyr, he left seven months later for West Africa as an independent missionary.² This time he tried

² For a rudimentary sketch of Brooke's early life see A. Porter: "Evangelical Enthusiasm, Missionary Motivation and West Africa in the Late Nineteenth Century: the Career of G.W. Brooke", J.I.C.H. VI: 1 (1977), 24-25. As the title implies Dr. Porter's portrait of Brooke examines the theological influences on the man and questions the previously heavy emphasis on racialism as the prime consideration in his thought and actions. Contra, see J.B. Webster: African Churches, pp. 9-12 and Ayandele: Missionary Impact, pp. 270-12.
the Congo River as an avenue to the interior. After more than a year, growing increasingly ill, and stymied in his movements by the hostility of Congo tribes, he sailed for England. It was while stopping at Massa, as already noted, that he met Robinson. Under the Secretary's care he recovered sufficiently from his illness to resume his journey home. He also resolved that the Niger would now be the best means to get to the Sudan. While this should have been the most logical entrance in the first instance, it would appear that Brooke's independent nature had prevented him going where an established missionary society already operated. His talks with Robinson, on whom he had a most profound effect, convinced him that he might work out a special arrangement with the Society. Robinson undoubtedly pointed out what he considered as the unsatisfactory work accomplished in the Upper Niger Archdeaconry and also promised Brooke assistance. Certainly the Secretary had already laid the foundation for a concerted European effort in the North in his despatches. This coupled with the Society's and the Church's feeling that Islam was spreading at the expense of Christianity made the C.M.S. willing to enter into an agreement of which they might previously have been wary.

Brooke presented his unique proposals to Secretary Lang in November 1903. In his statement he requested that he be sent out as an agent associated with the Society, perhaps to Kippo Hill, where he might work among the Hausa. He suggested that he receive no salary and meet all his own expenses. In return, he sought the freedom to select the sphere and manner of his work, provided that this did not clash with operations already being carried on by the Society. Full and detailed reports would be forwarded to Salisbury Square. Finally, he advised the Parent Committee that they should
have no hesitation in breaking off the arrangement "if any evil results" appeared likely to follow. Reflecting the division over new Evangelical methods within the Society, as well as the uniqueness of the proposal, the Group III Sub-Committee asked Brooke to prepare a brief statement outlining his theological beliefs. The young man wrote two letters to Lang in response. The first, intended for the Sub-Committee, underscored his orthodox views. He stated that he considered himself an Anglican because "he accepted (the Church of England's) doctrine and preferred their form of government". In his second private letter intended for Lang alone, he wrote more candidly.
His note especially indicates his indebtedness to the Baptists and to the teaching of Hudson Taylor. He declared, for example, that ordained ministers were unnecessary for partaking the Lord's Supper and that infant baptism did not mean salvation for the baptized. He promised Lang, however, that he would keep such opinions to himself and not embarrass the Society.

The Group III Sub-Committee interviewed Brooke on 19 December.
He made a good impression on them. They passed a favourable recommendation to the Committee of Correspondence which likewise approved three weeks later stating that "the right hand of fellowship (was) extended, the Society laying down no rules save those suggested

1 C.M.S. G3/43/1833/111 G.W. Brooke to Lang, 30 November 1833.
2 C.M.S. G3/43/13/175 Brooke to Lang, 17 December 1833.
3 C.M.S. G3/43/1833/115 Brooke to Lang, 17 December 1833.
by Mr. Brooke. Brooke was pleased and displayed a magnanimity typical of him whenever he obtained what he wanted. He wrote the Committee that he now wished to "draw nearer" the Society. Confident that he had the C.M.S.'s full support, he quickly forgot his promise to avoid controversial topics. Even before he left for West Africa, he was creating uncertainty in the minds of several of the Parent Committee. The Rev. J. Bradford Whiting, who was one of the Group III Sub-Committee members who had pressed for a written statement from Brooke, attended two departure meetings held for the missionary in Liverpool. According to Lang, Whiting had been "much pained" by these meetings where a "very anti-Society feeling prevailed and anti-Society methods feeling ... found free utterance". Brooke's own addresses on both occasions, had not been either "very sober or discreet". All this caused "anxiety" within the Parent Committee with many members feeling that unless Brooke "is under control, he may run off in any direction". Lang instructed Robinson to insure that this did not occur. With the effect which Brooke had had on Robinson from their first meeting and the latter's desire to change the character of the Upper Niger stations, the Group III Secretary's advice seemed particularly naïve.

Robinson had meanwhile determined to use the Niger Finance Committee as a vehicle for pushing forward radical change and reform in the Mission. The Committee meetings soon became a battleground between the opposing personalities of the Bishop and himself and their

1 C.M.S. G/C1/v.53/289-71 Committee of Correspondence, 8 January 1889. For Brooke's favourable impression on the Parent Committee see Intelligencer N.S. XIV (1889), 123-24.
quite different methodologies. After brief stops at Sierra Leone and Lagos, Crowther had arrived at Bonny in late January 1889.

It was not long before Robinson's demands, usually couched in perjorative terms, caused the Bishop to feel that not only was his past work under attack but also that the ability of his fellow Africans to act as missionaries was being severely questioned. The growing division within the Mission came to the forefront in the Finance Committee meeting of 28-29 January. The Rev. W.E. Carew appeared before the Committee to answer charges of drunkenness, interference with trade, and the making of negative public statements regarding the Society.

Carew, ordained in 1874, had been in the C.M.S. employ for nearly twenty-five years, first at New Calabar (Kalabari) and then at Okrika. His home, with most of his possessions, had recently been destroyed in a fire. While Crowther was away in England, Robinson had accused Carew of intemperance. The African missionary had responded by seeking endorsements from several local traders to counter the rumours which the Secretary had used as evidence. In interviewing Carew the Finance Committee noted inconsistencies in his testimony. Crowther urged a strong reprimand, Robinson disconnection. The Bishop won the day, at least temporarily. Carew received a severe rebuke and was transferred to Okrika. In a covering letter to Lang, Robinson further personalized the incident when he suggested that Dandecson Crowther had given information to Carew for use in the latter's

1 At Freetown he delivered a sermon at St. George's Cathedral before a congregation of more than 1,000 persons. *Sierra Leone Weekly News* V: 17, 22 December 1889.

2 *Register*, p. 327, no. 195.
defence. Upon receipt of the Minutes, however, the Parent Committee reversed the Niger Finance Committee’s decision and wrote both Robinson and Crowther to make arrangements for Carew’s dismissal.

If Crowther had been irritated by Robinson at Bonny, he was incensed a month later at Lokoja. At a Niger Finance Committee meeting held there, the Secretary formally proposed that the Confluence station be abandoned. The Bishop, not unexpectedly, reacted angrily declaring that Lokoja would not be closed while he was alive to stop it! Once again, Robinson appeared to retreat, but not without characterizing Crowther’s attitude as having been racially-inspired and contrary to C.M.S. policy: "The opinions of all white men, however unanimous, count for nothing". That Crowther himself was by this time viewing developments partly in a racial context was probably true, although he believed he was on the defensive against what he considered were racial attacks. At such a critical juncture it was easy enough for motives to be impugned and the situation to grow polarized. The Bishop was receiving complaints from his Mission agents all along the river of Robinson’s high-handedness and insensitivity, especially during his own absence in England. From friends in Lagos and London, he was no doubt beginning to hear reports of Robinson’s proposals for a European-based enterprise above Onitsha. In such a light the abandonment of Lokoja could be interpreted as a temporary measure and one which could change as soon as the Mission’s

1 C.M.S. G3/13/1889/22 Niger Finance Committee Minutes, Bonny, 29-30 January 1889 (also to be found at G/Y/A3/1/13) and C.M.S. G3/13/1889/21 Robinson to Lang, 3 February 1889 (also at G/Y/A3/1/16).


3 C.M.S. G3/13/1889/44 Robinson to Lang, 22 March 1889.
administration did. That Robinson considered such a possibility is borne out by later developments. As for the unanimity of opinion on the Lokoja question which Robinson claimed existed, this was more illusion than fact. The Parent Committee hardly envisaged giving up a site which the Society had so long occupied, where it had only recently opened a seminary, and in an area where other mission societies and denominations were hard at work.

Ironically, as Brooke sailed towards West Africa, Robinson was not encouraged by his colleague's chances of success. His concern centred around the Society's relationship with the Royal Niger Company. A consistent supporter of the Company, he was apprehensive of Brooke's desire to push north of the Confluence, especially if the Company's officials openly disapproved. While the Company was the supposed legitimate government in the area, he wrote Salisbury Square that it had no power or authority above Lokoja. Relations between the Company and Nupe had deteriorated since the two had signed a treaty in 1885. By 1888 Etsu Nupe Haliki, while cautiously favourable to European traders, did not have the full support of his court, especially of several of the many children and grandchildren of his predecessors. Many of the latter suspected the British Government of planning a protectorate over their country and the Company's

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1 G.M.S. G3/I3/1889/50 Robinson to Lang, 13 April 1889 (also at G/1/3/7/4J). Professor Ayandele has argued that as far as the Northern Emirates were concerned, the Company was no more than a "tenant" north of the Confluence. E.A. Ayandele: "The Relations between the Church Missionary Society and the Royal Niger Company, 1886-1900", J.R.G.S. IV: 3 (1966), 413. In 1889 the Company still concentrated its activities in the palm oil region, but it had, nonetheless, scattered stations on the Kwarra and the Benue. Flint: Goldie, pp. 144-45.
officials realized the possible dangers.\textsuperscript{1} Despite such difficulties, Bishop Crowther continued to move freely in Nupè. Reflecting remarkable stamina for one in his mid-80s, he journeyed by horseback to Bida in March 1889. He reported that Maliki "considered us (he and his African agents) as fellow inhabitants, for whom no land could be refused".\textsuperscript{2} Notwithstanding his generally unfavourable attitude towards Goldie, Crowther had good words for the Company on this occasion for "facilitating the operation of the Mission as much as was in their power to do".\textsuperscript{3} With the political situation uncertain the last thing which the Company or Crowther would appreciate was the advent of a character the likes of Brooke. Robinson worried that Brooke in his zeal, might speak out against the Company and thus jeopardize all C.M.S. activities on the Niger. He was aware that Brooke's outspokenness had only recently led to involvement in a libel case in England. Further, the Company's officials still bristled from a letter published only a few months previously critical of their work on the Niger.\textsuperscript{4} With the political situation unsettled and Crowther and the African agents protective of their work and its potential in the North, Brooke could and did prove unsettling, disturbing a long-cultivated relationship between the C.M.S. and the Royal Niger Company, and raising racial conflict.

\textsuperscript{1} Ayandelo: "Relations", p. 413 and Pedler: The Lion and the Unicorn, p. 129. Mason has contended that Maliki was possibly the least able of the 19th century Nupè rulers. Mason, Nupè, pp. 337-40.

\textsuperscript{2} C.M.S. G3/A3/1889/54 Crowther to Lang, 5 April 1889. See also Nadel: Black Byzantium, pp. 188-89, 201.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{4} C.M.S. G3/A3/1889/50 Robinson to Lang, 13 April 1889 (also at G/Y/A3/1/14).
Brooke arrived at Brass in the Delta a few days before Robinson left for England.¹ He was accompanied by Ernest Shaw, a recent Cambridge graduate, who was going out to the Niger to see if he too should take up missionary work in an associated capacity with the C.M.S.² Brooke immediately had negative comments regarding the state of the work, but promised to withhold "final judgment" until he had visited several stations. He was enthusiastic to move north where he expected to be speaking Hausa within a month.³ After a quick trip up the Niger, he reported that he found the work "shallow and unreal". He added, as he would do so frequently in the coming three years, that he would not be restrained from publicizing whatever he saw. He wrote Lang that he was arranging for his monthly letters to be published and went so far as to warn the Society that "no erasures" be made in them.⁴ In the meantime, a rather uninformed Bishop Crowther regarded Brooke with uncertainty and treated him as he would an independent missionary or explorer, rather than as one attached to the Society. He appears to have felt very uneasy in the young man's company. Brooke offered to show him his written reports, but Crowther responded curtly that he had no interest in them unless they contained information concerning his African agents.

When Brooke questioned the lack of success in Muslim areas, Crowther defended his past performance. But the old man soon took the offensive. He criticized Brooke's adoption of African dress and his

¹ C.M.S. G3/13/1889/61 Brooke to Lang, 20 April 1889.
² C.M.S. G3/13/1889/10 Brooke to Lang, 22 February 1889.
³ C.M.S. G3/13/1889/51 Brooke to Lang, 20 April 1889.
⁴ C.M.S. G3/13/1889/62 Brooke to Lang, 25 May 1889. While awaiting further instructions, he agreed to replace Carew at Okrika.
C.M.S. G3/13/1889/102 Brooke to Lang, 25 June 1889.
moving into an African house. And he regarded as nonsense Brooke's belief that any missionary should be able to run a mission station singlehandedly.  

After a period of three months in which he did not communicate with the Parent Committee, Brooke resumed his correspondence in July 1839 in a more threatening tone. Writing from Lokoja where he was to attend a Niger Finance Committee meeting the next day, he declared that he was keeping records which "prove the necessity of drastic measures". He continued in a lengthy and inconsistent manner. He characterized all the African agents, with the exception of the Bishop and the Rev. James Boyle, as "deliberately untruthful". Assuming a responsibility hardly commensurate with his position, he demanded a purge. He warned that Shaw would soon return to England to speak at Cambridge in order to throw light on the true state of affairs and promote speedy action in removing those most widely known to be untruthful.

His attitude towards Bishop Crowther waxed and waned:

His beautiful simplicity, humility, and unselfishness have quite won over our affections, but his astounding faith in his native agents, and his unwillingness to

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1 G.H.S. G3/A3/1839/115 Crowther to Lang, 20 July 1839. Others were also concerned with the adoption of Muslim dress and culture. A.F. Mockler-Ferryman served as Private Secretary to Major MacDonald, sent out in 1889 to report on the Company's rule in the Niger. With Brooke clearly in mind, he criticized the growing conflict between "missionaries of different colour", praised the work of Crowther and the African missionaries, and urged that missionary activity be confined to traditional religionists. A.F. Mockler-Ferryman: Up the Niger. Narrative of Major Claude MacDonald's Mission to the Niger and Benue Rivers, West Africa, London, 1892, pp. 49, 56 and 200n.

2 Brooke believed with many others that reforms were necessary which would greatly simplify missionary work, both in the metropole and in the field. Porter: "G.V. Brooke", pp. 26-27.
notice even the most flagrant instances of deception
... have forbidden us to feel any high esteem for his
expressed opinions regarding the present state of the
mission.¹

Reflecting his fervent revivalism, impatient zeal, and "perfectionist"
thology² he quoted ominously that "If a ruler hearkeneth to false-
hood, all his servants are wicked". He condemned what he considered
the Bishop's wrongful methodology. He took particular exception to
Crowther's preaching the benefits which Christianity could bring in
this life to the apparent detriment of those which could be expected
in the next. He evinced no sympathy for the "Bible and the Plough".
He noted that in seven palavers with chiefs, the Bishop had emphasized
"non-spiritual benefits", only once alluding to the existence of God,
one to the Blood of Christ, and never to the after-life. On a
personal level, Brooke complained bitterly that Crowther dealt with
him as if he were a stranger. The Bishop had delivered the coup de
grâce when he told him that he treated him no differently than if he
were a Roman Catholic missionary! Attempting to portray himself
as the aggrieved party, Brooke was, nonetheless, not far from the mark
when he concluded that "Bishop Crowther heartily wishes us out of the
country".³ He gave ample reason to the Bishop at the Lokoja
Committee meeting.

Brooke moved audaciously. He informed the Finance Committee that
the Parent Committee had established the zone north of Eggan as the

¹ C.M.S. G3/A3/1889/118 Brooke to Lang, 16 July 1889.
² While the new Evangelicalism stressed distinct stages for Christians
from conversion to sanctification, Brooke took a more Calvinistic
view of saints and sinners, "those who were perfect and those who
were not". Porter: "C.L. Brooke", p. 36.
centre for his work. As a result they were not to send African agents to that area. Having only recently returned from Nupe and having received no instructions from the Parent Committee, Crowther could hardly have taken this information favourably. The Committee decided, therefore, that it would wait for confirmation from Salisbury Square before agreeing to Brooke's demands. These new proposals, coupled with the continuing criticism of the African agents and the sacking of their colleague Carew, led to two missionaries resigning at the meeting. One of these, P.J. Williams, withdrew his resignation when the Bishop plaintively argued that the criticism coming from all directions was not against Williams in particular, but the Mission in general. Two weeks later Crowther received a telegram from London asking if he could leave immediately for England. Within the month, complaining of "fever", Brooke telegraphed that he too would be returning. In England, Robinson had been painting a sorry picture of the Mission. He had written several letters to Lang and presented a detailed memorandum which, enforced by Brooke's disturbing and threatening notes from the Niger, tipped the scales within the Parent Committee definitely in favour of those who wished a new and radical departure in the work. In sending his report Robinson also wrote more

1 Register, p. 342, no. 335.
4 C.M.S. G3/A3/1889/17 Packer to Testimony (telegraphic address for the C.M.S.), 14 September 1889.
6 C.M.S. G3/A3/1889/125 Brooke to Testimony, 26 September 1889.
openly to Lang. He noted that he had omitted two suggestions which he obviously hoped the Group III Secretary would introduce: place the Niger Mission under a new Bishop of Yorubaland and retire Bishop Crowther. The latter he concluded was necessary as Crowther could hardly hold office "with any satisfaction to himself" under the "new régime" which Robinson believed would now be introduced. He added that while his memorandum was in part "crude in concept and execution" he hoped that this would be excused due to his physical and mental state.  

**European and African Missionary Spheres Created**

In his first appearance before the Parent Committee, Robinson had been temperate in his comments, even suggesting that African agency be maintained. He paid respectful lip-service to the work of "Christian education and civilization" which had been carried out on the Niger. Two days later, however, in his lengthy memorandum marked "strictly personal", he gave a more accurate expression of his feelings. Reformist zeal, Pentecostal fervour, and Social Darwinism were the hallmarks of his report. It represented a rejection of African agency as it had been practised on the Niger and a departure from the programme of Henry Venn which had dominated the Society's activities for nearly half a century. The methodological battle, which had been brewing on a personal and practical level on the Niger and on an abstract plane in England, was joined. After first presenting a list of alleged failures and shortcomings, he then

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1 C.M.S. G/3/3/1889/72 Robinson to Lang, 20 June 1889.  
2 C.M.S. G/31/v.53/628-44 Committee of Correspondence, 18 June 1889.
outlined (in a section which he considered especially confidential) his specific proposals for reform. While even the Parent Committee did not escape criticism, Robinson was careful to point out that he wrote candidly because that was what the Committee had requested. He castigated the "low standard of Christian life" in the Niger congregations which he saw exemplified in the continuance of domestic slavery, the acceptance of the liquor trade, and the inclination towards European fashion. In condemning the "low tone and work" of the African agents he acknowledged that "open scandals ... had disappeared" but that the evils which persisted were of a "negative character". In a harsh and personal observation, he impugned the motivation of the entire Niger staff: "They distinctly repudiate, from the Bishop downwards, that they should come as Natives to Natives, as Africans to Africans". His observations contained much which was perceptive and accurate. He was not far from the mark, for example, when he complained that Niger Mission reports depicted "the brighter side disproportionately". This problem was hardly peculiar to the Niger as the tendency always existed to emphasize successes rather than failures in missionary work. The special commitments and the experimental nature of the Niger enterprise, however, probably encouraged this fault to a greater degree. The Parent Committee further contributed to this by rarely discussing in its periodicals any aspects of the Mission which portrayed it in a negative light. As Robinson pointed out, perhaps too self-righteously, "most of the facts (in the reports) would be true, the general tone and colouring would be false".


2 Ibid.
Robinson's recommendations illustrated that his own thoughts had crystallized in the three years since his appointment as Mission Secretary. He was moving quickly towards the belief, encouraged by Brooke, that the whole structure of the Mission needed tearing down and rebuilding. The introduction of Europeans, he opined, had become essential to revival as there were "no suitable spiritually-minded" Africans available. But those new Europeans must come from the Keswick mould, "full of the Holy Ghost and power to teach our present agents the true lines on which missionary work should be conducted". He advocated more itineration and open-air preaching (which had characterized the early years of the Niger Mission), accepting the growing racial stereotype that "the great cause of spiritual declension (sic) among Africans is idleness". As African agents had in his view failed in the Muslim areas, they must now be excluded there in favour of Europeans. Personal ambition and, at the very least, an assumed "spiritual" superiority here intruded on altruism.¹

Robinson called for the closing of Kippo Hill, the decentralization of Lokoja, and the sale of the only recently completed Preparandi Institution. With a totally European group in control, more radical methods could be introduced and the role of the individual and independent missionary enhanced.² A mixed agency could continue from Onitsha downward to the Delta. In contrast to the expansion

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¹ One writer has argued that with their strict consciences, the Keswick-type Evangelicals had been "'born again' to dominate the consciences of others and to prove the continuing need of their supervision of the African Church by spying out the immorality of Africans". F.B. Melbourne: "Some Problems of African Christianity: Guilt and Shame" in Baeta: ed., Christianity in Tropical Africa, p. 137.

² The intended changes were consistent with the Hudson Taylor model.
which he contemplated for Europeans in the North, however, he there urged retrenchment and self-support: no new stations until Onitsha and Nembe were centralized and self-support (already begun by the Crowthers) was achieved at Bonny and Brass.

The greatest stumbling block to the changes which Robinson advocated lay in the person of the Bishop. Robinson knew this, but was reticent yet to call specifically for Crowther's removal. His observations in his Report left little doubt, however, that he hoped the Parent Committee would take this initiative. He equated the failure of the Mission with a weakness on the part of Crowther, whom he gratuitously referred to as the "Father of the Mission". This weakness he believed resulted primarily from Crowther's Blackness: "The Negro race shows almost no sign of ruling power. This is true in Sierra Leone, Liberia, West Indies and equally on the Niger".

Turning on the Parent Committee, he accused it of having fed the weakness by "granting to each Agent in Authority who has visited England (i.e. the Bishop and the two Archdeacons) almost all he asked for". While the Committee had periodically interfered "to purify" the Mission, most of what needed revision was of twenty-five years' standing. A European successor to Crowther was essential as there was "no suitable man in the West African Churches to succeed". Implementation of his proposals required a break with the past which could not be accomplished without acrimony. The Bishop was wholly identified with existing policy and the condition of affairs, and the new regulations would be like a "death-blow" to him. Reform would be met with strong and unanimous opposition from all agents. Robinson somewhat dramatically added that this made it impossible for him as Mission Secretary to institute the new programme as his report
would arouse "personal feelings of the bitterest nature" which would endanger his life. He concluded, in a tone hopeful of gaining wider support for his plans, that these could be instituted "firmly but gradually". He maintained, however, that they could only be effectively accomplished through a European Head of Mission "under whom reform would naturally arise ... (as) under the present Bishop bitter opposition would be created".\(^1\) As far as the Robinson Report was concerned Samuel Crowther, symbol of a race on trial, stood convicted in the dock.

On 30 July 1889, at the same meeting at which they invited Crowther to England, the Parent Committee resolved on substantial reform. In addition to pressure from Keswick, the Society was in the midst of yet another controversy sparked by the gadfly Canon Isaac Taylor, who had criticized the C.M.S.' finances and the general "failure" of missionary work.\(^2\) The forward group which included the Honorary Clerical Secretary, the Rev. Frederick Wigram, pushed through eight resolutions which had earlier been passed by the Group III Sub-Committee. These demonstrated the forward group's intention to follow Robinson's and Brooke's recommendations. While the Niger Mission's defenders were able two weeks later to postpone these resolutions until at least Crowther should arrive in England, there was little hope that the Bishop could now stem the advancing tide.

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The language of the new Evangelicalism, echoing as it did Brooke's own strong statements, emerged plainly in the "postponed" decisions:

(The work) has not, as a whole, been carried upon sufficiently spiritual lines, and ... does not show unmistakably spiritual results ... The Committee feel that they must not hesitate to invite English missionaries of spirituality and devotion to help in raising the Niger Mission to the spiritual level which is essential to real success.¹

After the Group III Sub-Committee had approved his suggestions, Robinson sought to discredit Crowther before the latter should arrive, mindful that the Bishop could be a convincing advocate. He warned that Crowther would be "obstinate" and that it would be "impracticable" to convince him of reform. With his plans seemingly approved, the removal of Crowther now became Robinson's main occupation. He wrote Lang boldly:

For at least ten years past, you (the Parent Committee) have admitted to yourselves that Bishop Crowther has not proved a success as an organiser and ruler, and now you are brought face to face with the question is this state of things to continue for very probably another ten years.

The only solution was that Crowther be strongly "induced to retire gracefully".²

Crowther arrived in England on 8 October, with Brooke following a fortnight later. After more than four months of meetings, discussions, and interviews, the General Committee on 9 December 1889 approved a detailed programme of reorganization for the Niger. The

¹ C.M.S. G/Y/A3/1/1J Committee of Correspondence, 30 July 1889 (shortened version at C.M.S. G/C1/v.53/721-24).
² C.M.S. G3/A3/1889/86 Robinson to Lang, 9 July 1889. Robinson's opinions on Crowther's administrative ability, while very far from the mark, have been generally accepted as a correct appraisal. See for example G.F.S. Gray: The Anglican Communion: A Brief Sketch, London, 1958, pp. 55-56.
new scheme, which incorporated most of Robinson’s proposals and received wide public attention, represented a victory for the forward Evangelical group within the Society. Bishop Crowther, his eyesight affected by cataracts, lacked the influence and possibly the will to fight, and his supporters were disunited. The Mission was divided in two. The Sudan and Upper Niger Mission was placed under the joint directorship of Robinson and Brooke, with the former acting as Mission Secretary. Lokoja, with African missionaries excluded, was to serve as headquarters for the Sudan group. A European medical missionary was to be introduced “to soften the prejudice of the Mohammedan community”. Crowther would retain only nominal episcopal superintendence. Despite strong protests from George Goldie, the Committee decided upon an “aggressive” approach to the Muslim tribes of the North. European missionaries were to conduct the work, aided by African “assistants”.

Goldie had become disturbed in July when he learned of Brooke’s expansionist plans. He told the Society then that he did not favour militant evangelization among Muslim peoples, that he had urged

1 C.M.S. G/C1/v.54/210f. General Committee, 9 December 1889. Thousands were present at the subsequent “farewell meeting” at Exeter Hall for the new “re-inforcements for Africa”. Stock: History, III, pp. 364-65 and The Record N.S. IX (24 January 1890).

2 While in London, Crowther had cataracts removed from both eyes. Although the operations appeared successful, six to eight months were necessary in order to determine whether the difficulties would recur. See C.M.S. G3/A3/L3/213-16 Wigram to D.C. Crowther, 10 December 1889.

3 It has been argued that the decision to restrict the work of African missionaries probably retarded the work in the North to the extent that in places it never recovered. E.F.T. Crampton: Christianity in Northern Nigeria, Zaria, Nigeria, 1975, p. 33. See also J.B. Grimley and G.E. Robinson: Church Growth in Central and Southern Nigeria, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1966, p. 289.
European governments to disassociate themselves from such efforts, and that he had promised the local rulers that this would constitute Company policy. He warned that he could supply the C.M.S. with no assistance either in obtaining provisions or in providing passages on his steamers. As for those determined to go, his Company could offer only limited protection to those missionaries who were located near his factories. The Parent Committee responded curtly that it accepted personal responsibility for its agents, but that it could not ask its missionaries to renounce their right to protection from the de facto government of the area, viz., the Royal Niger Company.

Prior to his departure for England Brooke had written from Lokoja aggravating the situation further and moving the Parent Committee towards reversing its long-established policy of co-operation with the Company. Mindful of his hero General Gordon, Brooke had prepared a written disavowal of his right to protection even if assassinated, imprisoned, or sold into slavery. He had admonished the Committee that if they interfered in political matters, he would resign his association with them. Goldie realized that he could not risk a total break with the Society nor could he stop missionaries from going into areas which they had nominally "occupied" before the Company was created. Thus before Brooke arrived in England, Goldie had softened considerably. He said that missionaries need not renounce

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2 C.M.S. G/C1/v.53/721-24 Committee of Correspondence, 30 July 1889.


4 Ayandele: "Relations", p. 414.
their claims as Brooke had done and told the Society that the Emirs and Sultan would be informed that the Company have only engaged not to be actively accessory to the conversion of Muslims. Finally, he tacitly promised protection to the missionaries (although not their converts), pledged no interference with their work, and expressed his "moral sympathy" with the enterprise.¹

The second part of the Parent Committee's plan for the Niger created a Delta and Lower Niger Mission, with regional centres at Bonny and Onitsha. While it was asserted that African control would be continued there and that Europeans would only be "associated with ... and work within the organization", this claim proved to be ill-founded and insincere. A Finance Committee was established which, although chaired by Bishop Crowther, had a membership appointed by the Parent Committee with an European/African ratio of 5 to 4. The Society accepted for this role three young Evangelicals remarkably similar to those going to the Upper Niger and Sudan. They selected the Rev. Frederick Nugent, 32, a close friend and colleague of Robinson, as Mission Secretary² and the Rev. Henry Hughes Dobinson, 26, an Oxford graduate, as Mission Accountant.³ Phillip Alfred Bennett, 30, a businessman who had earlier served with the Cape Mountain Rifles in South Africa, became a lay agent. Bennett's zeal even caused Wigram to remark that the young man had no concern for the


Mission's more practical work and that he displayed a "tendency to be censorious". African control could hardly remain effective when Salisbury Square proposed that men of Robinson's temperament and background should set the pattern for reform of the African agents. This was further illustrated in the groundwork which the Parent Committee laid for reform. The proposed changes were couched in tendentious and punitive language which could only exacerbate rather than soothe. In ending the differentiation between ordained and unordained missionaries, it observed that this would remove "all temptation to seek Holy Orders for mercenary motives". It proposed a draft code of regulations for "native" missionaries (compiled by Robinson), and established a six person committee (on which Bishop Crowther was the only African member) to approve it duly. Its decisions to sell the Henry Venn II and to establish small training centres at Bonny and Onitsha in place of the soon-to-be-closed Preparandi Institute at Lokoja, while probably motivated by good faith, could certainly be interpreted as negative measures. Finally, encouraged by Robinson and Brooke, it inaugurated a purge of African agents which continued for two years. It disconnected two men (one of whom the Bishop had only just recommended for Holy Orders) and placed a third on probation. Crowther accepted the European

1 C.M.S. G/AC2/32/387 Vigram to Eden, 4 February 1890. See also C.M.S. G3/13/L3/275-77 Instructions to Phillip Alfred Bennett, 30 January 1890 and Register, p. 230, no. 1136. Vigram's concern was later justified by Bennett's anti-African attitudes. Ekechi: Missionary Enterprise, p. 103.

2 C.M.S. G/C1/v.54/210f. General Committee, 9 December 1889. In Professor Hargreaves' view the Committee's actions represented "the first systematic attempt to replace West Africans by Europeans in the name of high principles". J.D. Hargreaves: West Africa Partitioned. I: The Loaded Pause, 1885-1889, London, 1974, pp. 201-02.
presence in the lower Niger with the proviso that they "go out and work for us, the Negro missionaries, as fellow labourers with Christian sympathy and brotherly love". Greatly shaken by the proposed changes he hoped, nonetheless, to salvage what he could. He argued persuasively, using Scriptural text and Yoruba proverb, that those who would be sent be motivated by a correcting influence rather than by a desire to tear down the entire fabric.¹

Crowther's plea for temperance and understanding did not find positive response from the European Niger missionaries. The methods which Robinson and Brooke employed in removing obstacles to their authority left no doubt that they contemplated a complete sweep. This can be closely observed in the part they played in the sacking of Archdeacon Henry Johnson. That the two were eventually successful in eliminating Johnson from the Niger resulted mostly from their concerted efforts. Bishop Crowther, however, was hardly supportive of his Archdeacon throughout. His silence did not so much denote a belief in the charges levelled against Johnson but rather a determination to concentrate his efforts in supporting his son Dandeson, who had also come under attack, and who had always been a rival of the other Archdeacon. At a juncture when the European missionaries were quite united, such attitudes could hardly help the cause of African agency on the river. Johnson's persistence in recruiting Sierra Leoneans as Mission agents and as students for the Preparandi Institute, especially outside normal C.M.S. channels,² provided Robinson with an


excuse for requesting the Archdeacon's removal from the Niger in the first months of 1888. Lang seemed to agree with the proposal.¹

Johnson would certainly have to go if Robinson's plans for a European centre at Lokoja were to materialize. In May, Robinson charged the Archdeacon with recruiting a Fourah Bay graduate for the Niger and indicated that as this had been done without the proper authority, there had also been a misappropriation of Mission funds.² By October, Robinson became more determined, asking Lang to promote the Archdeacon out of Lokoja as "his presence is a hindrance to the highest interests of the Mission".³ Despite the growing storm, Johnson again selected a Sierra Leonean in early 1889, without either Robinson's or Crowther's approval. When questioned on this by Lang, Johnson retorted, correctly but unwisely, that he could select whomever he wished for the Institute. As a result Robinson urged the Society to refuse on principle further C.M.S. employment for any such students.⁴ By now aware that he had a powerful adversary in Robinson, Johnson wrote to Lang that he hoped the Niger Mission Secretary's "picture of things had not affected the wisdom of the Parent Committee regarding affairs in the upper Archdeaconery".⁵ His hope was ill-founded.

² C.M.S. G3/A3/1888/56 Robinson to Lang, 7 May 1888 and C.M.S. G3/A3/1888/57 Correspondence between the Rev. J.A. Robinson and Archdeacon H. Johnson, July 1887 - February 1888. At this point Robinson was not particularly bitter and excused the Archdeacon's action in part because the latter "was not a practical man and more an academic".
⁴ C.M.S. G3/A3/1889/44 Robinson to Lang, 22 March 1889.
The campaign to displace Johnson became more bitter and severe with the arrival of Brooke. Even though the Archdeacon had only recently been awarded an honorary M.A. by Cambridge for his linguistic abilities, the young missionary condemned his translational work as either faulty or the work of others. During his stay in England in the autumn of 1889, Robinson convinced a sufficient number of C.M.S. Committee Members that Johnson should be removed to Lagos, there to await investigation. A special eight person committee was formed to inquire into the matter. The Salisbury Square Secretaries, however, moved slowly. They waited for six weeks before notifying Johnson of the General Committee's decisions and then attributed the move to Lagos as a result of the Upper Niger reorganization. They made no mention of a possible investigation. Several Committee Members were repelled by Brooke's methods of villification. Brooke himself admitted that his means of obtaining information were irregular, but

1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1889/12 Brooke to Lang, 26 July 1889. On Johnson's M.A. degree see Intelligencer N.S. X (1885), 865. Dr. Hair has good words for Johnson's linguistic work. He also points out, however, that the translational work of other agents, while constituting a contribution towards establishment of a literature in the various languages, was frequently uneven. Much of it had been published in the 1860s and 1870s, not only for teaching purposes but also to propagandize the fact of African authorship. Critics like Robinson, therefore, did not overly exaggerate when they noted the contrast between "published reports on linguistic publications and their real use in the field".


2 C.M.S. G/C1/v.54/159-69 Committee of Correspondence, 19 November 1889 and C.M.S. G/C1/v.54/210f. General Committee, 9 December 1889.


4 C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/24 Brooke to General J.G. Touch, 17 February 1890. Touch had served in the Army in India and was a leading Lay Member of the General Committee. Stock: History, III, pp. 44, 297.
the Committee's caution in dealing with Johnson roused him to greater
anger. His actions in the affair reflected his "perfectionist" beliefs
and represented his typical knee-jerk response to any questioning of
or interference with his vision for the Niger. In castigating the
Archdeacon's "successful career of flagrant hypocrisy", Brooke stated
that "He (Johnson) was of his father the Devil, and the hests of his
father it was his will to do". He concluded that such men made it
obvious that

There is no hope of success until we have first taken down
the whole of the past work so that not one stone remains
upon another.¹

The truth or falsehood of allegations against men like Johnson was
hard to discover. As in the case of many other African agents, rumour
built upon rumour. The end justified the means and guilt by
accumulation became the order of the day. In concluding his statement
to the Special Johnson Committee, Robinson lamely stated that the
materials (mostly hearsay) which he presented "would prove to be partly
or wholly untrue but their cumulative evidence is exceedingly great".²

As the European attitude towards the African suffered in general, so
did the merit of the Niger missionaries in particular, dependent as
they were on the whims of passing investigators like Wood, Phillips,
Hamilton, and others.

Several in the Parent Committee remained unconvinced of Johnson's
alleged wrongdoing and were appalled by his accuser's use of false
rumour and villification. R.N. Cust, a leading African "expert" and

1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/93 Brooke to Touch, 5 June 1890.
2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/92 Robinson to Touch, 3 June 1890. See also
C.M.S. Committee Member, saw the Johnson controversy in its wider setting. Drawing on his experience in India, Cust noted that frequently young English officers would arrive there, find fault with "native" officials, and listen to charges of immorality levelled against such officials "when it was desired that they should spring up". In such cases, he observed, unless the Superior authorities of the Province interfered, there was a clean sweep of every "native" and then "the European officer falls sick, or dies, or, if more than one, quarrel, and the District is ruined". Striking the lesson squarely, he concluded that "Nobody's character is safe, when men act like Burke (sic) and Robinson."¹ The difference between these "Young Turks" and others like Wood and Hamilton who had preceded them was that they were imbued with a religious fervour and ideology on which they based all their actions. Johnson continued to defend himself, but by 1891 the tide was running too strongly against him. In a lengthy defence written in late January of that year, he gave detailed replies to each of the accusations made against him. The picture which emerges in this document is of a man who erred in judgment occasionally, was perhaps not suited temperamentally for his office, but who was proud of his efforts and work over more than three decades and was hardly incompetent or guilty of the immorality with which he had been charged.²

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² C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/76 H. Johnson to Lang, 30 January 1891.
By the time the special committee had drawn up a memorandum entitled "The Case of Archdeacon Johnson" in April 1891, it was evident that they would advise disconnection. Two months later the Parent Committee acted, assuaging its feeling by giving the rather extraordinary severance pay of six months' salary.  

Finance Committee Meeting Sparks Niger Mission Crisis

Crowther returned to the Niger in April 1890, quite recovered from two successful eye operations. Robinson and Eden had arrived earlier and without waiting for the Bishop had immediately gone upriver on a tour of inspection. Eden quickly wrote condemning the low standard of morality at all stations and intimating that African agency was a pipe dream:

The idea of African agents for Africa sounds well at home, but when you come out here, you must confess that it is but an ideal.  

In the Sudan Mission some of the dissension among the Europeans which Cust had foretold did develop. In February 1890 the Society had sent

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1 C.M.S. G3/A3/13/460 Vigram to H. Johnson, 12 June 1891. Johnson went to England in October in the midst of the Niger Crisis, but did not embarrass the Society as Vigram had thought he might. C.M.S. G/A2/57/619 Vigram to Eden, 6 October 1891. In the years which followed, Johnson recovered his reputation and ended his years as Canon of the Cathedral in Freetown. In the late 1890's the only surviving European Niger missionary, H.H. Dobinson, lamented "the slanders and lying thoughts" which he and others had made against Johnson and other African agents. See Stock: History, III, p. 721 and Isichei: The Ibo and the European, pp. 95-96.

2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/58 D.C. Crowther to Vigram, 28 April 1890. Dandcson reported that his father's eye operations had been widely noted in the West African press. The elder Crowther was soon reading and writing without spectacles. See also Intelligencer N.S. XV (1890), 67, 467.

3 C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/54 Eden to Lang, 24 April 1890.
out a medical missionary, Dr. C.F. Harford-Battersby, to Lokoja.  

Brooke had consistently opposed the idea of a resident physician/agent. He convinced Robinson after two months' experiment, during which Harford-Battersby had begun a hospital at the Preparandi Institute, that the plan should be greatly modified. Without reference either to Crowther or the Parent Committee, the two sold the Institute to the Royal Niger Company. In return the Company agreed to construct a sixteen bed infirmary and other buildings worth £850 and give the Mission an £850 credit as well.  

Salisbury Square was appalled when they learned of the transaction. They rebuked the Europeans for having "unduly stretched" their authority and tried to stop the sale; but it was too late.  

Eden and Robinson also began transferring Mission agents as they saw fit. As the date for a meeting of the Delta and Lower Niger Finance Committee approached, the Europeans prepared for a showdown with the two Crowthers. Robinson wrote:

We all believe that the Exposure of the system and Archdeacon Crowther's duplicity and the Bishop's wilful ignorance will make this the last Finance Committee (meeting) under the present régime.

Not surprisingly Brooke went even further than this. Invoking the

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2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/78 Robinson to Lang, 21 May 1890.

3 C.M.S. G/C1/v.54/628 Committee of Correspondence, 15 July 1890.


5 C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/121 Robinson to Lang, 5 August 1890.
rhetoric of the new Evangelicalism, he criticized the Parent Committee for a lack of leadership and candour. He warned that if he and his colleagues should be abused and called "conceited men" for what they were about to do, it would be because Salisbury Square had consistently published what it knew to be as false reports of the Niger work. He concluded dramatically:

Don't throw us over to save the ship ... Let all men see that you are with us! Confession and Retribution must be our watchwords ... The score or so of fornicators who have been employed must be confessed.  

As the C.M.S. was already under pressure from the Keswick Convention to send out 1,000 men in the Sudan Mission pattern, such comments from Brooke could not be taken lightly.  

The Finance Committee held eight sessions between 18 and 29 August. Robinson and Brooke sat as the two appointed European members, along with Eden as Secretary and Dobinson as Accountant. For the first five days Crowther was the only African present. He was later joined by Dandeson and the Rev. James Boyle, the two African Committee members. Robinson, Brooke, and Dobinson each took minutes every day, co-ordinated their separate notes in the evening, and presented a single record which was naturally approved at the next session. In the course of the meetings charges were raised against eleven African agents ranging from the trivial like the misuse of an M.A. gown owned by Robinson to the more significant like adultery. The clash of


2 See "Forward!", Intelligencer N.S. XV (1890), 577-83; "A Thousand Missionaries", The Rock, 1 August 1890; and Stock: History, III, pp. 670-71.
different methods and approaches as well as cultures was evident throughout. Lengthy discussions occurred over whether a particular agent had been truly "converted and confessed" or if another had abused the baptismal rite in order to swell congregation numbers. The Europeans displayed a marked intolerance for African traditions, as in the case of one agent who stood accused of polygamy because he had refused to marry the woman selected for him by his father and had wed another instead. Misunderstanding and poor communication led to suspicion and acrimony. The Europeans viewed the proceedings as a trial. They abhorred any hint of dissembling and were not above bullying tactics. The Africans responded by taking the defensive and by not contributing information unless they were specifically questioned. While all of the agents accused may not have been exemplary in their conduct, several had laboured for many years not without hardship. The call by the Europeans for retrenchment in the Lower Niger when they proposed expansion for themselves in the Sudan seemed inconsistent. In this atmosphere, it was easy for the African agents to feel that the attacks directed against them were racially motivated.  

The Bishop remained on the defensive throughout the entire proceedings. The Europeans made no secret of their belief that the Niger work had been a failure and that Crowther was very much responsible. As the sessions progressed, they became more personal in their charges. They accused the Bishop of accepting funds for church repairs from

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1 Several writers have commented on the racial factor in the Niger Crisis. See especially: Ayandele: Missionary Impact, pp. 210-11; Webster: African Churches, pp. 8-9, 33, 59, 67; Tasie: Christianity, pp. 242-45; and Tasie: "A Re-assessment", pp. 47-60.
merchants who included gin in their trading. Crowther responded that one could not always trace the source of a firm's or an individual's donations and if such a stricture were imposed, few contributions could be expected from any of the firms doing business on the coast. The intensive questioning by the young men took its toll. The Bishop did not always answer as well as he might. His sense of loyalty to his men exceeded what was reasonable. The Rev. S. Peters, a Fourah Bay graduate with four years service with the Mission, was accused of having purchased a gun when firearms had been considered contraband and, according to Brooke of "having been ignorant of the Bible and a hypocrite". In hyperbolic response, Crowther defended his agent: "I consider him (Peters) the most energetic and real working man that I have ever had in the Mission". He concluded that if his report and knowledge of Peters were found to be invalid and unreliable, he would ask the Parent Committee to consider him unfit to continue as head of the Mission. When Boyle persuasively argued that the Europeans expected too much of single-handed missionaries like Peters, Crowther observed derisively:

You must wade, you must take off your things and go through the water, (as) these people don't care if you die or not. You are a Native, a black man.¹

The Europeans reacted strongly, stating that they were devoid of "national" feeling and wished only to be regarded as brothers. Their accusations, however became increasingly vituperative. Eden accused Crowther and Dandeson of "shuffling" and not speaking straightforwardly regarding the means in which funds had been obtained for a training

¹ C.M.S. G3/13/1890/165 Niger Finance Committee Minutes, 18-21, 25-29 August 1890, (later printed for Committee distribution).
institute in the Delta. The Europeans determined that this would provide the excuse for the dismemberment of the Mission. On 29 August Eden charged Archdeacon Crowther with having deceived him as to the use made of certain building funds. Both men called on God to judge them. The minutes of the meeting here clearly reflect the attitudes of the writers as there is a tendency to build a case on uncertain statements and comments taken out of context. After lengthy wrangling, Eden suspended the Archdeacon for having lied to the Committee. The Bishop replied, correctly, by rejecting Eden's authority to suspend one of his clergy. He then himself resigned from the Committee and the meeting hastily adjourned.¹

The response to the climacteric sessions of the Niger Finance Committee were relatively swift. The Parent Committee on receiving "serious statements" from the Niger Mission expanded the purview of the Special Archdeacon Johnson Sub-Committee to include an investigation of the events. For Bishop Crowther, the sessions had had a crushing effect. He wrote: "I was never so disappointed in all my missionary career to the present day".² Even before the Parent Committee so acted, he had urged that a special commission be established to examine the situation. In a significant reversal of his long-held beliefs in racial co-operation he had added that he considered that all hope was lost for the continuance of European and African agents working side by side on the Niger.³ The news of the suspensions and sackings caused

¹ Ibid.
² C.M.S. G3/43/1890/136 Crowther to Lang, 29 August 1890.
³ C.M.S. G3/43/1890/128 Crowther to Vigram, 9 September 1890. See also J.F.A. Ajayi: "Bishop Crowther: An Assessment", p. 15.
consternation in the Mission stations, especially in the Delta, but also in the recently established Lagos Native Pastorate. The African agents at Onitsha charged the Europeans with tearing down rather than building, and a letter from the congregation at Tuwon expressed similar feelings.  

More than one hundred African Christians at Bonny signed a petition supporting Archdeacon Crowther and calling into question the work done by the three European Secretaries Phillips, Robinson, and Eden. They characterized Eden as no more than "an enemy in disguise". The Rev. James Johnson understood well the implications. He maintained that the European missionaries contributed "towards fanning up the flame of race antipathies". He questioned the right of such men, some with only six months' experience on the Niger, to sit as judges when they did not understand "the habits of the people and cannot yet interpret correctly the drift of their minds." Johnson perceived a conflict of methodologies as well as of races and cultures, but he defended the established pattern of work which he contended was common throughout the Society's missions and which had been accepted and approved for many years. While declaring his interest in new approaches, he argued, nonetheless, that radical departures were unnecessary. Precipitative action had reduced the Bishop to a nonentity and a mere figurehead in the eyes of Africans on the West Coast. As a result, he concluded,

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1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/131 Members of the Onitsha Congregations to the European Missionaries, 30 August 1890; C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/149 Leaders, Churchwardens, and Members of St. Barnabas' Church, Tuwon, to Secretaries, 23 September 1890. (Both can also be found at C.M.S. G/Y/A3/1/4A.)

2 For the Bonny petition see C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/200-02 Boyle to Lang, 5 November 1890. Eden later intimated that several of these petitions were forgeries. C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/178 Eden to Wigram, 10 November 1890 and C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/214 Eden: Memorandum on letter of Native Christians from Lagos, (received in London, December 1890).
The present matter affects the credit not only of the Niger native agents ..., but also of the Negro race as a whole, and the capacity of converted Africans to live Christianity and spread it among their people through the power of the Holy Ghost.  

Having moved so decisively at the August Committee meeting, the European missionaries hardly remained idle in the weeks which immediately followed. They quickly determined that Eden should return to England and lay before the Parent Committee, "the complete collapse of the 'old system". Dr. Harford-Battersby would accompany him. Robinson asked that Crowther be pressured to resign as Bishop and be succeeded by Eden. Employing strong-armed tactics, he admonished that the loyalty of Sudan Party to the Society had become greatly strained. R.N. Cust's earlier observations on the fallibility of European physical constitutions in the tropics soon, however, proved most telling. Eden landed at Liverpool debilitated by fever and in need of three weeks' convalescence. He had hardly arrived when Brooke wired that he too was being invalided home. At the same time, however, Secretary Lang could hardly have encouraged Bishop Crowther when he wrote him that the Parent Committee "will seek the truth and wait for Eden". In a lengthy memorandum, Robinson put forward the Europeans' case. The document was designed, in conjunction with the personal appearance of Eden and Battersby to force

1 C.M.S. G/Y/A3/1/13 J. Johnson to Whiting, 24 September 1890.

Reflecting the desire to avoid public controversy, the C.M.S. made only passing reference to what it called the "important" Niger Finance Committee in its periodicals. Intelligencer N.S. XV (1890), 347.
the hand of Salisbury Square. Quoting extensively from the Society's Annual Reports, it showed that the Parent Committee had accepted responsibility for the system and procedures adopted, and were thus morally bound to acknowledge the bankruptcy of their policy. In a far less than balanced review of the Niger work, Robinson labelled each station at best as manifesting a low standard of Christian life and at worst as standing as a total failure. His more objective observations, such as those touching the administration of the Bishopric Fund, tended to be lost in the stinging rhetoric of condemnation. The Mission had simply been the workplace of the Devil. In reviewing the careers of the African agents, he characterized eight as "good", ten as "doubtful", and fifty as "bad". Persisting in a theme of premeditated wrongdoing, he declared that "Gross deception had been practised ... (and that) Fear of poisoning had rendered all former investigations as failures". As he and Brooke had demanded of the Lokoja congregation, so too must the Parent Committee now confess its crisis and deny the earlier reports of the Niger Mission.¹ Writing from Madeira in late October, Brooke echoed the Robinson memorandum and sought the end of any meaningful African control. He urged the reorganization of the Delta under European management, the disconnection of Archdeacon Johnson, the removal of Archdeacon Crowther and the withdrawal of all Sierra Leoneans from service in the Niger. He had nothing but contempt for the state of the Mission: "It is indeed a relief to be away (for a time) from so sickening a moral atmosphere".²

¹ C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/151 Robinson: Memorandum on the Condition of the Niger Mission, 10 September 1890. The original of this memorandum is missing, but there is a lengthy summary with direct quotations in the C.M.S. Precis Book for that date.

² C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/154 Brooke to Lang, 28 October 1890.
C.M.S. Abandons Venn/Crowther Model

The Niger Crisis found the Parent Committee divided. The Africans had their strongest supporters in the Committee Members J.B. Whiting and R.N. Cust. Whiting attempted to marshal sentiment against the European missionaries. He decried the rise of such tactics as "public confession" in obtaining information and he charged the Europeans with usurpation of authority. He continued that Robinson and Brooke had planned well in advance the events which transpired at the Niger Finance Committee sessions. He maintained that Robinson had told him before he left for the Niger in early 1890 that Archdeacon Crowther would be suspended and several agents sacked. ¹

In one of the most heated meetings of the Special Niger Sub-Committee, Whiting declared that the Society was moving towards the rejection of the tried and tested policies of Henry Venn. Two of the C.M.S.'s most prominent officers, however, Honorary Clerical Secretary Wigram and Group III Secretary Lang, took a contrary view. They had increasingly espoused new missionary methods pioneered by more Fundamentalist societies like the China Inland Mission. Both had welcomed Robinson and Brooke, and by this time felt that African agency had failed in the Niger Mission. While many Committee Members agreed that the evidence presented might in some instances be insufficient, Wigram definitely led the Special Sub-Committee to the conclusion that "new departures" were necessary, adding as an aside that Bishop Crowther could remain if he was willing. In order to provide an overview for the more than twenty members of the Special

¹ C.M.S. G/Y/A3/1/1J Whiting to Wigram, 23 October 1890. Brooke indirectly admitted this a month later. See C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/193 Brooke to Wigram, 24 November 1890.
Sub-Committee, Archdeacon James Hamilton and General J.G. Touch were directed to prepare a concise memorandum on the history of the Niger Mission to date. As was evidenced by his continual injection of the phrase "I told you so!" in the Special Sub-Committee sessions, Hamilton considered this the opportunity to vindicate his, Phillips's, and Wood's Niger Secretarships. While many of the Special Sub-Committee had argued that responsibility for what had occurred should be divided between the Parent Committee and the African directors of the work, the Hamilton-Touch memorandum later emerged primarily as an apologia for Salisbury Square. In its interviews with the European missionaries, the Special Sub-Committee did question the methods which the latter had employed, although they accepted their testimony for the most part. Under questioning, Eden was forced to admit that the suspension of Archdeacon Crowther had been contrary to ecclesiastical order and to defend lamely his public discrediting of African agency on the basis of poor translation work. Brooke was less contrite. He claimed, for example, that the harsh language which he had used was justified by the offenses committed. As he righteously called for the reduction of African agency, he sought greater independence for the

1 C.M.S. G/Y/A3/1/1 J Wigram: Memorandum of a Special Meeting of 21 November 1890; also C.M.S. G/#2/34/533 Wigram to Eden, 21 November 1890.

2 C.M.S. G/Y/A3/1/1 J Hamilton and Touch: Memorandum on the Past History and the Present Position of the Niger Mission (printed), December 1890; and C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/7 Hamilton: Memorandum on the Niger Mission, January 1891. See also: "The C.M.S. Niger Missions", African Times XXXI: 351, 1 December 1890. The suspension of Dandeson was contrary to ecclesiastical law and was so commented upon. Church Times XVIII, 7 November 1890, p. 1071, and 14 November 1890, p. 1101.

Sudan Party, maintaining that they should be treated as Generals in an army. 1

The Report of the Special Niger Sub-Committee was approved by the Parent Committee on 20 January 1891. 2 The Report outlined past policy and methods of work on the Niger, the actions and procedures of the European missionaries, the individual cases of several African agents, and specific proposals for the future conduct of the Mission. It deplored the inadequate provision made for superintendence and the "lamentable" moral and spiritual condition of the congregations. It accepted greater responsibility on behalf of Salisbury Square for what had occurred than the Hamilton-Touch memorandum suggested, also noting that Bishop Crowther had been plagued by serious difficulties from the outset. While not repudiating the work of the Sierra Leoneans as Brooke and Robinson would have desired, it did observe that the men from the Colony were "foreigners" on the Niger and that greater attention had to be paid toward raising an indigenous clergy. In remarks which must certainly have disturbed the European missionaries, it forthrightly declared that Eden had exceeded his authority in suspending two ordained agents, Archdeacon Crowther and the Rev. C. Paul. Further, in the instance of the Archdeacon, Eden had been "not justified ... on the merits of the case" in acting as he did. Eden and Robinson had misapprehended the


2 C.M.S. G/Y/A3/1/15 Report of the Special Niger Sub-Committee Appointed by the Minute of the Committee of Correspondence of September 30th and November 4th, 1890 (printed); C.M.S. G/A2/35/99 Telegram to W.J. Smith, 15 January 1891; C.M.S. G/C1/v.55/20 Special Committee, 20 January 1891; and C.M.S. G/A2/35/150-51 Telegram to Sir John Kennaway, 20 January 1891. Kennaway was the President of the Society.
extraordinary power granted to Archdeacon Hamilton in 1883 as having belonged permanently to the Niger Secretaryship. With regard to the European missionaries it concluded, in a paragraph designed to avoid further controversy, that it would be best to "abstain from discussing certain matters of detail which might otherwise be regarded as fairly open to criticism". The Report did specifically mention, however, that Eden, Robinson, and Brooke should feel, after reading their own minutes of the Niger Finance Committee, that the language they had used was unjustified, and that the tone adopted towards the two Crowthers was not such as was due their age and office. As for the six other ordained agents dealt with by the Niger Finance Committee, four were placed on probation "under European superintendence". The Revs. C. Paul and S. Smart, both with long and unexceptional careers, were disconnected. It let stand the Finance Committee's recommendations affecting the various lay agents which they had reviewed.

As for the future, the Report advised that the status quo be maintained in the Sudan and Upper Niger Missions, but directed that significant changes be made in the Delta. While Robinson and Brooke would no longer serve on the Lower Niger Finance Committee, other Europeans would be encouraged to enter the Delta work, despite the additional cost. These men would be located at each of the stations and act as superintendents. All training classes for African agents would be under European direction as well. Eden, whom it was hoped would continue as Mission Secretary, would have an Assistant Secretary concerned with administration. Archdeacon Crowther would remain in charge of St. Stephen's Church, Bonny, with a European to be appointed pastor of St. Clement's. Finally, while promising no interference with Bishop Crowther's ecclesiastical authority, the Secretary and Assistant Secretary would be responsible for the general
superintendence of the work. Despite the disclaimers, the Bishop had indeed become a figurehead.¹

In the weeks prior to the acceptance of the Niger Sub-Committee Report, Eden, Brooke, and Harford-Battersby had lobbied strenuously for their own proposals. Eden sought to avoid any personal blame for the suspensions of Crowther and Paul. Referring to his action as "an error in procedure", he argued defensively that it had occurred because the Parent Committee had not given him sufficient instructions.² When Brooke learned that Dandeson Crowther would probably be exonerated, he was particularly perturbed.³ He admitted the possibility that a mistake might have been made when "we suspended Archdeacon Crowther", but he demanded that a fuller inquiry be conducted before the Archdeacon should be permitted to resume his post.⁴ On the day that the Report was approved, Wigram noted that Eden had appeared "as if in a fog" after the meeting.⁵ It did not take long, however, for the fog to clear. Eden quickly wrote Wigram expressing his displeasure and threatening resignation. In reply, the Honorary Clerical Secretary gave a good view of his own fluid attitude towards the affair. Characterizing the Report as less than perfect, he added that if Eden resigned: "I think it would be looked on as a triumph of African over European".⁶ Somewhat re-assured, Eden decided to extend his stay in

¹ The Sub-Committee Report was published in part in Intelligencer N.S. XVI (1891), 141-44 and further excerpted in The Record N.S. X (23 January 1891), 77.
² C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/185 Eden to Lang, 17 November 1890.
³ C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/193 Brooke to Lang, 24 November 1890.
⁵ C.M.S. G/AC2/35/150-51 Wigram to Kennaway, 20 January 1891.
⁶ C.M.S. G/AC2/35/179 Wigram to Eden, 29 January 1891.
England and fight a rearguard action in C.M.S. and Church circles. Supported by several Committeemen in the Society he proposed the division of the Lower Niger, with one section centred at Onitsha under European control and the other, comprising the Delta, under African superintendence.\(^1\) Several persons also suggested that he be appointed General Secretary of the whole Mission and created an Archdeacon. In this manner the Society would display its confidence in him.\(^2\) Many did not agree with these new proposals and divisions grew at Salisbury Square.

As Brooke and Eden called for repudiation of past work and greater European control, others continued to champion African agency and decry the "excesses" of the Sudan missionaries. Cust took aim at the predilection for African dress.\(^3\) He had significant support in the Foreign Office where the Assistant Under Secretary, Sir T.F. Lister, questioned the advisability of sending inexperienced Europeans, several accompanied by their wives, into Muslim areas. Lister opined that the adoption of African dress would only serve to "stir up" the local rulers.\(^4\) Robinson, writing from Lokoja, accused Whiting of circulating letters from African agents which Robinson declared

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2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/33 "Memorandum drawn up by two or three friends of the Rev. F.N. Eden as a respectful suggestion to the C.M.S., for possible modification of the Niger Sub-Committee Report, dated 20 January", 11 February 1891.

3 C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/40 Cust to (Lang?), received February 1891; C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/42 Sir John Kirk to Cust, 2 February 1891. By adopting Muslim dress, the Sudan missionaries were even regarded as political spies by some emirs. Ayandele: "The Missionary Factor in Northern Nigeria", p. 507.

prejudiced him and the other European missionaries. When the Niger Report reached him he requested that he be permitted to return to England for an interview with the Secretaries. He complained that an independent tribunal, the public press or even an Archepiscopal commission would have reached different conclusions than those of the Special Niger Sub-Committee. As Eden and Brooke kept him informed of the developments, he soon telegraphed that he would return immediately unless instructed otherwise.

The C.M.S. Committee of Correspondence decided on 7 April 1891 to accept Eden's proposals for a division of the Lower Niger Mission. It was a short-lived victory. A week later, at a meeting at which 202 Committee members were present, the General Committee refused to confirm the lower Committee's decision. Robinson was also wired to remain on the Niger and to await further direction. The Europeans felt that they had been additionally repudiated. At the same time, illness struck nearly all of the Sudan missionaries and several were invalided home. Brooke, back on the Niger, openly threatened the Society and resigned as co-leader of the Sudan group in late May. In

1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/91 Robinson to Lang, 14 February 1891.
3 C.M.S. G/C1/v.55/337-38 Committee of Correspondence, 7 April 1891; C.M.S. G/C1/v.55/355 General Committee, 14 April 1891. Approximately fifty Committee Members usually attended General Committee meetings. For an informative picture of a "typical" meeting in the late 1880s, with an etching of the participants, see Gleaner XIII (1886), 73-75, 78-79.
4 C.M.S. G/C1/v.55/409 Special Committee, 30 April 1891. In the meantime The Record published a presumptuous appeal from Eden for more Europeans for the Niger. The Record N.S. X (17 April 1891), 357.
a lengthy, typed, diatribe, he charged the Group III Committee with deliberately withholding information from the General Committee, thus keeping the great body of C.M.S. subscribers in ignorance of the Niger Mission's "uninterrupted history of swindling". He charged Cust and others of having provided the Royal Niger Company with information which had led the Company to oppose the Sudan work. Finally, Brooke announced that he had given written testimony to five of his colleagues who would shortly present the whole case to the General Committee.¹

This formal protest was actually signed by nine of the European Sudan and Niger missionaries. It condemned the Report for exacerbating the crisis. It declared that the real state of the Mission was wholly at variance with the Report which had involved "a lack of honesty which you (the General Committee) and we alike would severely condemn". Placing the blame squarely on the C.M.S. Secretariat, it urged a re-organization of the home administration and the introduction of a system of foreign inspection. It concluded that if after due consideration of all the facts the General Committee was not prepared to take such steps, the nine signatories would resign and publicly explain their actions which they had so far refrained from doing.²

By the time that the protest statement was received in late July, Robinson had died of meningitis on 25 June.³ As the Sudan

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¹ C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/169 Brooke to Lang, 28 May 1891.
² C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/175 Eden, Robinson, Brooks, Dobinson, Lewis, Bennett, Harford-Battersby, W.H. Roberts and R. Callender to Secretaries, undated, received 29 July 1891. Eden, Lewis, and Harford-Battersby dissented from the resignation threat when informed that this would affect their arguments adversely.
³ C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/157 Brooke to Testimony, 6 July 1891; also C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/184-85 Brooke to Lang, 30 June 1891. In noting Robinson's death, the C.M.S. suggested that his illness had been aggravated by "mental anxiety" over the Sub-Committee Report. They added, however, that Robinson had misinterpreted and misunderstood the Parent Committee's motives and actions. Intelligencer N.S. XVI (1891), 699.
missionaries pressed forward, the African agents and their
congregations had not sat idly by. Events were taking place in the
Delta, in Lagos, and in Sierra Leone which by the middle of 1891 had
added a new dimension to the controversy over the Niger Mission.

Endgame: Crowther and West African Secessionism

The protests from the Niger congregations in the final months of
1890 eventually grew into demands for an independent Delta Native
Pastorate by mid-1891. Dandeson Crowther, who had gone on furlough
to Freetown after his "suspension", played a significant role in this
transformation. The Bishop most frequently took his cue from his son.
He remained in Bonny and Lagos and, prior to the publication of the
Niger Report, displayed far less vindictiveness than many of those who
regarded him as the focal point of their complaints. The racial
aspect, clearly aroused, spurred the African press and captured the
attention of the West African communities, especially their élites.
In the view of many a "National Crisis" now existed.¹ When Lang
wrote the Bishop, enclosing a copy of the Report, he trod carefully.
He emphasized that what was needed was a stricter discipline, but that
this demand in no way emanated from any racial ill-will on the part of
the Committee. As for the Bishop personally, the Group III Secretary
added that the elder Crowther continued to enjoy the "affectionate
regards" of the Parent Committee.²

¹ In 1889-90 there had been much discussion of race and racial
attitudes, particularly at Freetown. See, for example,
"Detractors of the Negro", Sierra Leone Weekly News VII: 2,
13 September 1890 and "The Niger Mission: A National Crisis",
Sierra Leone Weekly News VII: 10, 8 November 1890.
² C.M.S. G3/43/L3/382-86 Lang to Crowther, 29 January 1891.
Throughout the months of deliberations by the Special Sub-Committee, Crowther had employed Whiting as his correspondent and representative at Salisbury Square. When he made his own formal reply to the Report in April, his tone changed and was similar to that which Dandeson had earlier assumed. He correctly noted that the Sudan missionaries had kept him in ignorance of many of their accusations and hypothesized that they had probably said of him that "He is of no account, take no notice of him". With a determined air, he asked rhetorically, "Who are these Europeans, these so-called fellow labourers?" Answering, he cited their lack of experience and background. He defended the Rev. C. Paul, who had worked with him for fourteen years in Muslim areas, and called on anyone to prove that comparable work at Lagos or Freetown had been any more successful. To a Parent Committee only too well aware of Brooke's nearly belligerent relationship with Etsu Nupe, the Bishop pointed to his own cordial dealings with the Emir and other Muslim rulers. Under-scoring his use of more traditional evangelistic methods, he questioned Brooke's requirement that "marked signs" be present to show that a person had been converted. Exalting the necessity for Pentecostal demonstrations, he lauded the gradualist approach which Henry Venn had developed and which he and hundreds of other missionaries had implemented. In an accompanying memorandum on "Condition of the Heathen", he argued that while missionary work was guided by the Holy Ghost, the agency used to preach the gospel was human, visible, and

1 Etsu Nupe Maliki resented Paul's removal and went so far as to ask the Royal Niger Company to remove all European missionaries from Nupe land. Crampton: Christianity in Northern Nigeria, p. 32.

2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/96 Crowther to Lang, 2 April 1891.
external. The catechetical work of many of the Bonny converts best illustrated this. In erecting prayer sheds and in preaching in outlying districts these men and women demonstrated a practical evangelism, "pioneering the ground for a future and fuller successful operation hereafter". The Christians in the Oil Rivers had begun an important, self-supported, well-organized, and independent effort. In a separate letter to B. Baring-Gould, the Central Home Secretary, the Bishop informed the Society that if they were determined on introducing Europeans to the Delta, a Deputation should be sent out to present and explain these changes and to calm the "excited feelings" of the converts.

Before the Parent Committee could decide on such a Deputation events had already reached the point where radical actions were required. The Niger Report did little to assuage West African feeling. Its provisions simply affirmed the rumours which had followed the August 1890 sessions of the Lower Niger Finance Committee. The C.M.S. had decided on European control of its Niger Mission and had reduced Bishop Crowther to a figurehead. Protests and testimonials poured into Salisbury Square, several of which displayed great care and cogent argument. The suspended and disconnected agents requested reconsideration of their cases. As Dandeson spoke out in Sierra Leone against the European missionaries, the C.M.S.


2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/103 Crowther to B. Baring-Gould, 1 April 1891. The Society determined on a Deputation on 19 May 1891. C.M.S. G/C1/v.55/441 General Committee.

3 For example, see C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/95 M.G. Strayford to Secretaries, 23 February 1891.
Secretaries tried to restrain him. He was not to be cowed easily. When Wigram criticized him for accusing the Europeans of having considered his father a "slave" bishop, the Archdeacon retorted that Robinson had frequently employed the word "nigger" in his hearing, a term which meant "slave" along the coast.\(^1\) His speaking engagements throughout the Colony prompted nearly one hundred prominent citizens of different religious denominations to write the Society pressing that African agency be continued on the Niger.\(^2\) Both he and the Rev. James Boyle wrote lengthy letters to The Guardian, an English religious periodical. Although composed before either of the men had received the Niger Report, these letters created a great stir in missionary circles. Effectively positing the conflict of methodologies, Dandeson declared that

The good missionaries of old have also taught us the right interpretation of the Scriptures that we can detect a Unitarian from a Plymouth Brother, and from a new denominational sect a bit of all combined ... The way certain verses in the good old Book are twisted and misinterpreted by Mr. Brooks (sic) is to say the least most objectionable and un-Scriptural.

Reiterating his earlier statements on the disregard displayed towards his father's years of work, he complained that if this had been done by Europeans it would have been universally extolled, but because

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\(^1\) C.H.S. G3/13/13/334-35 Wigram to D.C. Crowther, 28 November 1890; C.H.S. G3/13/1891/13 D.C. Crowther to Wigram, 6 January 1891. Drawing on the "slave" bishop idea, the Sierra Leone Weekly News would later compare Samuel Crowther to the Haitian "slave" revolutionary Toussaint L'Ouverture! Sierra Leone Weekly News VIII: 2, 12 September 1891.

\(^2\) C.H.S. G3/13/1891/2 Letters from members of various Protestant denominations in Sierra Leone, dated November 1890. For the effect of Dandeson's work at Freetown, see Webster: African Churches, pp. 22-23.
"Bishop Crowther is a Negro ... that settles the case". The Secretaries' attempt to clear the Society in this public airing of its dirty linen proved clumsy. Resolutions were passed decrying the "disloyalty" of the younger Crowther and Boyle, and both men were reprimanded, but the controversy could be no longer contained.

The concept of an independent Native Pastorate, maintaining its link with the Anglican Communion, was not new. Pastorates had been inaugurated in Sierra Leone and in Lagos between 1875 and 1889. A truly African Church, embracing several denominations had not been attempted. Under happier circumstances the Parent Committee might have welcomed a Pastorate scheme for the Delta. In the present climate, exacerbated by months of heated controversial debate, both public and private, in England and in West Africa, such a proposal could not be accepted. As for any suggestion of an independent African Church, this was virtually anathema. The C.M.S. did not take seriously the soundings for these ideas which found their way into the West African press. Even Edward Wilmot Blyden's appearance and subsequent rousing reception at Lagos did not move them. In advocating an independent African Church, Blyden went beyond what

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1 The Guardian XLVI, 15 April 1891. Crowther's letter was dated 27 February and Boyle's 5 March 1891. Both were printed in this same issue. Clippings can be found at C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/9c.

2 C.M.S. G3/A3/13/127/43-54 Wigram to D.C. Crowther, 19 March 1891; C.M.S. G/31/v.55/409 Special Committee, 30 April 1891.

3 On the formation of the Lagos Pastorate, see Ayandele: Missionary Impact, pp. 190-91.

4 Sierra Leone Weekly News VII: 14, 5 December 1890 and VII: 25, 21 February 1891. See also C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/232 Brooke to Wigram, 30 December 1890.
C.M.S. agents would have proposed, but in so doing he was laying the ground work for broad West African support from many sectors and denominations for whatever type of plan should develop.¹ The Rev. James Johnson chaired several meetings there, at the first of which proposals for an independent African Church were discussed. A "Base of Union" seems to have been adopted at that meeting.² In the end, however, Johnson was not willing to go so far. At two public meetings at his Breadfruit Church in mid-April, plans were approved more closely akin to the Pastorate idea. In his letter to the Society's Secretaries, enclosing the minutes of these meetings, he emphasized that the new Pastorate would be self-supporting and free of C.M.S. financial dependence. The Lagos meetings undertook to raise £350 per annum towards projected costs of £700, and congregations in Sierra Leone also promised their assistance in getting the Pastorate started. As in the case of the earlier protests, these meetings took special umbrage at the insults and ill-treatment which Bishop Crowther had had to endure.³ It was obvious that Crowther's support for the plan would be critical.

The Parent Committee regarded Samuel Crowther as one of their most loyal agents. Even Brooke, when warning of the possibility of an

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² Webster: African Churches, p. 66.

³ C.M.S. GS/A3/1391/137 J. Johnson to Crowther, 21 April 1891. See also Tasie: Christianity, p. 204.
independent church, opined that the Bishop would never lend his support to such a scheme.¹ A Native Pastorate was a different story. When Crowther decided to accept the plan for a self-supporting Pastorate as suggested in the proposals outlined to him by James Johnson, he created a furore in England. It is difficult to determine to what extent Crowther was kept informed of the rather secret discussions which had been held in Lagos during the early months of 1891. It is fair to conclude, on the bases of his close family and social ties there and of later developments, that he was hardly ignorant of what was going on. At the least he turned a blind eye and perhaps may have tacitly encouraged the various Lagos meetings. In mid-May he informed the Parent Committee in a memorandum entitled "My Views of the Suggestion" that he accepted the Pastorate idea in principle. He pointed out that a Native Pastorate for the Delta had been envisaged from the very beginning of missionary work there. He added in a mild rebuke that "the crisis of the Niger Mission seems to hasten a step being taken at once to commence it". In tracing the development of self-support in the Delta, he noted the frequent contributions to building programmes which had been made by the chiefs and congregations. The coming of Europeans did not necessarily positively affect a growth in this community. On the contrary, Crowther reasoned that James Ashcroft for one had impeded a more rapid and natural movement towards true self-support.² His May memorandum, as well as an accompanying paper

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¹ C.M.S. G3/A3/1890/232 Brooke to Wigram, 30 December 1890.
² C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/132 Crowther: "My Views of the Suggestion" (for a Native Pastorate), May 1891. Ashcroft's and Hutchinson's improprieties regarding the Bishopric Fund were hardly secret and were used as ammunition by West African supporters of the Pastorate scheme. "The Proposal for a Niger Delta Pastorate", African Times XXXII: 351, 1 October 1891.
which detailed self-support projects undertaken in the Delta, does
display a reluctance to make a complete break with the C.M.S. at that
particular time. Crowther felt, however, that such alternatives
which existed for the Society included a rejection of his and his
African colleagues' past work. These were unacceptable. But he did
not burn all his bridges behind him. Possibly out of loyalty to the
Society or perhaps even in the belief that the Delta could not
immediately assume a financially independent posture, he hedged in
his memorandum to the Parent Committee. He concluded in a cautious
tone

As we have succeeded thus far in the Delta District towards
self-help, I propose and feel confident that the Delta
District be gradually made a Native Pastorate ... with
supplementary support for a time, and then be left to itself,
for sole support. 1

The Lagos plan and the Bishop's approval of it deepened the
Niger Crisis in the view of Salisbury Square and further aggravated
the already strained relations which existed among several of the
Parent Committee members. The Sudan missionaries and their
supporters sought the removal of J.B. Whiting and R.N. Cust. In early
May, before word reached London of the Native Pastorate proposals,
Whiting had been compelled to defend his position on the Group II
Sub-Committee following a heated request from Robinson that he should
resign. 2 When Whiting did not step down, Eden threatened that
"since the serious question regarding Mr. Whiting had not yet been
satisfactorily settled", he would not attend any further meetings at
Salisbury Square. 3 As soon as Frederick Wigram had the first news

1 C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/132 Crowther: "My Views of the Suggestion".
of the Pastorate plan, he wrote Whiting. Characterizing the move as coming "too early", he sympathized with the European missionaries for the "suffering" which they had endured and chastised Whiting for not apologizing to them as he had supposedly promised.¹

When Crowther's memorandum arrived the Secretaries and the Committee of Correspondence acted quickly. Viewing the scheme with "anxiety", they withdrew all monetary aid to the Delta stations, and requested that the opinions of the congregations and all the missionary agents be forwarded as soon as possible. Finally, they decided that until such information had been received, the proposed Deputation to the Niger would be deferred.² In response to a call from Eden for even more stringent action, Wigram wrote that if the congregations should approve of the plan as well as the Bishop, "We cannot force our money and control in such a case". With James Johnson's backing and the support garnered in Lagos and Freetown, the Honorary Clerical Secretary realized that there was no longer any chance that Crowther could be induced to resign as he and the Sudan missionaries had hoped. Nonetheless, he promised Eden that Crowther would be made to face the gravity of the proposed step and the Parent Committee's disapproval of it. If the Delta insisted on a break, it would not be along the lines suggested by Crowther. Rather, in Wigram's words, "It must be a complete severance".³

¹ C.M.S. G/AC2/36/562-6/ Wigram to Whiting, 11 June 1891.
² C.M.S. G/G1/v.55/50+ Committee of Correspondence, 16 June 1891.
³ C.M.S. G/AC2/36/628-29 Wigram to Eden, 16 June 1891; also C.M.S. G3/A3/L3/473c-e Wigram to Crowther, 19 June 1891. At this point the Society expected the Pastorate to be established and hoped to maintain as much control in the Niger as possible. Intelligencer N.S. XVI (1891), 618.
Despite the keen desire to keep their internal fracas within bounds, the Secretaries came under extreme pressure from several directions in July 1891. Salisbury Square traditionally operated under a skeleton staff during August and September, with July witnessing a winding down of business. In addition to the Niger difficulties, Wigram was very much involved with problems in Palestine, and his closest colleague, Robert Lang, was ill. He was greatly disturbed by Whiting's continued communication with Dandeson Crowther and with other African agents which angered the European missionaries. Whiting had also disputed the worthiness and capability of the European Niger missionaries to handle the situation of an emerging Church or Pastorate.¹ In a severe reproach to Whiting, Wigram drew on the parliamentary concept of ministerial responsibility. He questioned the propriety of a "member of the Governing Body" carrying on correspondence "with the governed of the character of your correspondence with your friends in West Africa". Whiting was told to "sink" his own policy in that adopted by the "Government" and to identify himself with it.² As rumours persisted that he was passing Committee discussions to West African agents, Whiting was finally compelled to resign on 23 July. At about the same time, Wigram wrote to Cust suggesting that he too resign from the Group III Sub-Committee because of his correspondence with Archdeacon Henry Johnson. Although the issue of his resignation was deferred, Cust's ability to comment on Niger events had been curtailed.³

¹ C.M.S. G/AC/1/1396 Whiting to Wigram, 13 July 1891.
² C.M.S. G/AC2/36/987-88 Wigram to Whiting, 10 July 1891.
³ C.M.S. G/AC2/37/21-22 Wigram to Cust, 11 July 1891; also C.M.S. G/AC2/36/989 Wigram to Kennaway and C.M.S. G/AC2/37/6-7 Wigram to Cust, 13 July 1891.
While Wigram had neutralized the two most important Crowther supporters, he was not going to get everything which he wanted. Two days after submitting his resignation, Whiting wrote to Wigram that Bishop Crowther would not accept a co-adjutor bishop for his diocese as proposed by Robinson, but that he might agree to a separate bishopric beyond the Delta. He added caustically that he saw "no way to keep the Delta in our hands". With these intense troubles, Wigram was brought to breaking point when he received Brooke's "painful" and threatening letter of 28 May and the joint statement of the nine Europeans a few days later. The Secretary felt deserted. These young missionaries were certainly not prepared to "sink" their policies in those of the "Governing Body"! Brooke's resignation and the group's threats of publication appalled Wigram. The suggestion by one of the Sudan missionaries that the Parent Committee should forego the summer recess to reconsider the Niger case insulted all the Home Secretaries. The Committee of Correspondence refused to be intimidated and postponed consideration of the matter until October.

In a joint "unofficial" letter, four of the Home Secretaries reprimanded the remaining seven missionaries for their threats of resignation and warned that if they persisted in such an attitude their

1 C.M.S. G/3/A3/1891/159 Eden: The Future Working of the Niger Mission, etc., 6 July 1891; C.M.S. G/A02/36/911-12 Wigram to Eden, 7 July 1891; and C.M.S. G/A02/37/235a-d Wigram: Memorandum on a Coadjutor Bishop for the Niger, 24 July 1891. The Parent Committee did not take up the suggestion until early November and then deferred judgment indefinitely. G/C1/v.55/704-06 Committee of Correspondence, 3 November 1891.

2 C.M.S. G/A04/7/1406 Whiting to Wigram, 23 July 1891 and C.M.S. G/A04/7/1410 Whiting to Wigram, 25 July 1891.

3 C.M.S. G/A02/37/200 Wigram to Eden, 23 July 1891; C.M.S. G/A02/37/255-54 Wigram to Lewis, 27 July 1891; and C.M.S. G/A02/37/272-73 Wigram to Eden, 28 July 1891.

4 C.M.S. G/C1/v.55/611 Committee of Correspondence, 28 July 1891.
withdrawal would naturally result. The Secretaries defended the truthfulness of the Niger Report and noted the many inconsistencies which had occurred in the Europeans' own reporting over the past two years. The general inexperience and lack of knowledge of the Parent Committee's work hardly qualified them to make the demands which they had. The right to challenge remained open to them, but it was hoped that they would use it, if at all, judiciously. Affairs, however, would not wait until October. During the summer recess, the situation further deteriorated.

In West Africa, as the public meetings and plans for the Native Pastorate proceeded apace, the strain soon had its effect on Bishop Crowther. While James Johnson had pushed the programme forward at Lagos, Dandeson Crowther too made a significant contribution there on his arrival from Sierra Leone and went on to play a dominant role in the Delta congregations. The younger Crowther definitely pulled the movement back from a more complete schism. In writing Wigram he stressed that the Society would be officially recognized as the Pastorate's "founding father". Although an interdenominational church was not now envisaged, he insisted that there must be African control and the absence of European Secretaries. After the Archdeacon had addressed congregations in Bonny, Brass, Okrika, and Opobo, each gave its approval to the plan. In reading the letters of endorsement which the various congregations sent on to Bishop Crowther, it is


2 C.M.S. G3/3/1891/160 D.C. Crowther to Whiting (extracts), undated, received by C.M.S. 17 July 1891. James Johnson, writing later, similarly assured Wigram of the Society's "moral influence" in the plan, adding the hope that the Parent Committee would not withhold pecuniary aid if needed. C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/250 J. Johnson to Wigram, 25 September 1891. See also Lagos Weekly Record II: 3, 29 May 1891.
important to note, however, that each mentioned the promised financial support from Sierra Leone and Lagos. There can be little doubt that this pledge of outside assistance was an argument used forcefully by the Archdeacon along with what one writer has called an appeal to the race consciousness of his listeners. The rather hasty drive for approval would later enable the C.M.S. to undo some of the work.

In the midst of the frenzied activity, Bishop Crowther became ill. Dandeson wrote in July that it was nothing more than a severe cold. But when the Bishop himself wrote Wigram the following month, he acknowledged that he had suffered a stroke which paralyzed his right foot and face, and slurred his speech. The letter, begun in an obviously shaky hand, was completed by his clerk. In it Crowther emerged as broken in spirit as well as in body. He made it clear that he would have never called for an independent Delta Pastorate so soon had it not been for the words and actions of the European missionaries. Although informing the Parent Committee that they could now deal with him personally as they wished, he added defiantly that the agents in the Delta remained determined to pursue the plan "at whatever sacrifice and abide by the desires of the congregations". Despite limited improvement in his condition, the Bishop's doctors suggested in September that he should leave Bonny to convalesce at Lagos.

1 Tasie: Christianity, pp. 225-31; see also C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/193-96 which includes letters from the congregations at Tuwon, Bonny, Chrikla, and Opobo, dated 25 May to 29 June 1891.


When the C.M.S. Secretaries returned from their holidays, the situation required immediate attention, but the Parent Committee was slow to move. They understood that whatever plan of action they approved would satisfy neither side in the crisis. Wigram decided to take a firmer hold on things. He used the growing uniformity of opinion within the Committee to press for his own solutions. His command of the organization was further buttressed by Lang's return and Cust's promise, prompted by Henry Johnson's embarrassing surprise visit to England, that he would have nothing further to say on the Niger question. With Whiting gone, Bishop Crowther was left without a correspondent or apologist in the Society's inner circles. The European missionaries were hardly better placed. The majority of them were cowed in part by pressure from the Parent Committee, but also by the deteriorating position in the Sudan. Brooke, of course, maintained the attack, characterizing the Bishop as the "mouthpiece" of Archdeacon Crowther and claiming that Dundeson sought a church which could be run like an English club. Bishop E.G. Ingham of Sierra Leone, irritated by the Archdeacon's recent sojourn in Freetown, echoed several of Brooke's views. Terming the "weak" elder Crowther the "creature" of the younger, he commented rather uncharitably: "I should utterly distrust any independent movement that was under his (the Bishop's) control". In ignorance of the revised boundaries of

1 C.M.S. G/AC2/37/514-15 Wigram to Cust, 10 September 1891; C.M.S. G/AC2/37/516 Wigram to Kennaway, 22 September 1891; and C.M.S. G/AC4/8/1499 Cust to Wigram, 28 September 1891.

2 C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/214 Brooke to Wigram, 1 August 1891.

Crowther's diocese he also suggested that he could forestall establishment of a Pastorate in the Delta as the area had now become a British Protectorate and arguably a part of his diocese.\footnote{Ibid. Under the original boundaries Crowther's jurisdiction extended only to those territories \textit{beyond the Queen's Dominions}.} Brooke had severe problems at Lokoja. He warned that the settlement was in danger of attack and that Harford-Battersby's services as a medical missionary "were no longer required". He suggested characteristically that he and his colleagues "should drop out of sight" and gradually reduce their association with the Society. In a personal riposte he declared his own intention to disassociate himself soon entirely from the C.M.S. as "no forward movement" could otherwise be made: "The Parent Committee do not know how to lead any of its Black missionaries, least of all the Sudan missionaries".\footnote{C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/242 Brooke to Lang, 26 August 1891.}

In this atmosphere the C.M.S. General Committee met on 13 October to consider the nine Europeans' letter of protest presented in July and since slightly amended by the four Europeans present in England. Eden, Lewis, and Harford-Battersby each addressed the Committee. Harford-Battersby's speech and the reaction to it reflected the changed attitude of the C.M.S. establishment. Posing the question "Shall Africans be chosen now for the higher positions in the West African Church?", he answered with a resounding "No!" His reasons combined the new Evangelicalism with the new "science" of race. Sierra Leone, which provided the men for the Niger, had been the "dumping ground" for ex-slaves. Employing language similar to that which had earlier so incensed Dandeson Crowther, he argued that these slaves had been
"chiefly derived not from the higher races of Africa, but from the lower races of the coast or the river regions". The "mixture" of races in Sierra Leone ("always a great disadvantage") resulted in the African Church being founded by "not a very highly elevated stock". The Venn programme had been a failure from the beginning as men were sent forth to the Niger without superintendence from home, and a Bishop, chosen later, who ... had shown no sign of ability to govern and lacked the qualifications for (being) Bishop.

That the Harford-Battersby arguments had by then won general acceptance can be deduced from the lack of objection to his statements in the Committee and from subsequent actions by Wigram and Lang regarding the Delta Pastorate. Scepticism over the competence of Africans for positions of leadership had given way to dogma. The General Committee appointed a three person committee to reinvestigate the Niger documents and report if further steps were necessary to make clear "the Committee's deep sense of the unsatisfactory character of the Niger work in the past".

The receipt of Bishop Crowther's August letter, indicating that the African agents and congregations were steadfast in their intention to establish the Delta Pastorate, finally caused the Parent Committee to act. Despite the obvious difficulties which would ensue, the Committee delay had enabled the acquisition of more information from the coast, the consideration of some of the weaknesses of the African plan, and the preparation of a counter-programme. The weak links in

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1 C.M.S. G/Y/A3/1/1J Harford-Battersby: "Shall Africans Govern?", 13 October 1891.
3 C.M.S. G/31/v.55/668-70 General Committee, 13 October 1891; also C.M.S. G/A2/37/683-39 Wigram to Allan, 12 October 1891.
the Pastorate scheme, as far as the Committee was concerned, included the dependence on outside financial assistance, the probable lack of understanding by the various congregations of the significance of the plan, and the ill-health of the Pastorate's titular leader, Samuel Crowther. On 3 November, the Committee of Correspondence reappointed a Deputation, consisting of Archdeacon James Hamilton and the Rev. W.A. Allan, to proceed immediately to West Africa and there confer with Bishop Crowther and the congregations. In their instructions to the two Deputies, the C.M.S. Secretaries observed that the Delta congregations apparently favoured the Pastorate scheme. The spontaneity which characterized the proposal, they continued, was due to the introduction of European missionaries and the unfortunate Lokoja meeting of the Niger Finance Committee. The situation differed markedly from that which had prevailed in Sierra Leone and Lagos where Pastorates were gradually introduced, congregation by congregation. The Parent Committee wished to ensure that safeguards were established and ascertain if certain areas, most notably Brass, might be maintained within the Society's control. They contemplated no division of the Diocese while Samuel Crowther was alive as they believed that this would perpetuate severance into European and African spheres. As a result, the Deputies were instructed to underscore strictly the effects which the withdrawal would have on financial support from London. They were to remind all concerned that the Society owned the land and buildings, but that if a "gradual transfer" were made to self-support then these could be rented at a nominal fee. Finally, Allan and

1 C.H.S. G/01/v.55/704-06 Committee of Correspondence, 3 November 1891; also C.H.S. G3/A3/L3/492-93 Lang to Crowther, 6 November 1891.
Hamilton were to obtain the views of the people and the Churches in Freetown and Lagos and use the information appropriately.¹

Two weeks following the appointment of the Deputation, the Special Committee appointed to review the Niger documents reaffirmed the Niger Report, suggesting merely in passing that Bishop Crowther might write a letter urging a higher moral tone in the future.² The European missionaries were wholly dissatisfied, but their position was so weakened that there was little that they could do. Disturbed by the Special Committee's findings and the deferment of a decision on a co-adjutor bishop, Eden again threatened to resign and a few days later finally did so. Wigram, weary of the conflicts, accepted the resignation with minimal comment.³ The complete public break with and condemnation of the past which the Europeans had sought did not enjoy the acceptance of the wide majority of C.M.S. Committee members. This attitude found some justification three months later when Brooke died of blackwater fever on the Niger.⁴ While Wigram and Lang would push forward further substantive changes in policy, neither of them would even remain in authority that much longer. In a short time the

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² C.M.S. G/C1/v.36/34-56 Special Committee, 17 November 1891; also C.M.S. G3/A3/L3/11-13 Minutes of Special General Committee, 17 November 1891.


⁴ C.M.S. G3/A3/1892/79 Dobinson to Testimony, 19 March 1892.
pendulum would again swing back and aspects of the Venn and Crowther policy would be more appreciated. ¹

Crowther awaited the arrival of the Deputation. In late October he had written that the move to Lagos had greatly benefitted him. The paralysis in his foot had subsided and except for a continued difficulty in making "lengthy speeches", he felt ready to resume a more normal schedule. When he received word of the Deputation’s departure in November, he noted that he had been significantly restored (although his handwriting had only slightly improved). ² In the meantime the proponents of the Delta Pastorate had agreed to the postponement of its inauguration, originally scheduled for 1 January 1892, until after Hamilton and Allan should complete their work. Bishop Crowther, nonetheless, insisted that the plans should go forward. Assuming a more strident tone, he reiterated that the Pastorate was being initiated so that the policy of "pulling down" would not be extended to the Delta. Should any difficulty arise in separating the Delta Church from his Diocese, he promised to apply personally to the Archbishop of Canterbury. He also let it be known that he would urge the appointment of an Assistant Suffragen Bishop to himself. ³ In Sierra Leone the Deputation

¹ J.F.A. Ajayi: Christian Missions, pp. 269-70. Both Lang (1892) and Wigram (1895) retired for "health" reasons, the former’s illness having been aggravated "under the severe strain" of the Niger Crisis. Stock: History, III, pp. 293, 679-80.


³ C.M.S. G3/3/1892/19 Crowther to Lang, 1 December 1891. See also "The C.M.S. and the Niger Mission", Lagos Weekly Record II: 16, 28 November 1891.
correctly reported, albeit over-simply, that the principal supporters of the scheme there were "non-conformists" who hoped for a non-denominational church. Greatly influenced by Bishop Ingham, they concluded that the Sierra Leone Church generally regarded the plan as premature.\(^1\) Hamilton and Allan arrived at Lagos on 21 December, buoyed by what they considered excellent possibilities for compromise. After meeting with Dandeson Crowther they came away thinking that he would accept a gradualist plan for the Delta similar to those which had been instituted in Sierra Leone and Lagos. The day following their arrival the Bishop visited the two Deputies. Although the elder Crowther steadfastly maintained his determination to see the Pastorate instated, Hamilton and Allan believed that they had somewhat shaken his resolve. In writing to Salisbury Square they noted that although the Bishop appeared "feeble", he was by no means helpless.\(^2\) A public meeting with the Lagos clergy on 28 December, however, had a very sobering effect on the two Englishmen. James Johnson pressed in the strongest terms for immediate severance and the appointment of an African Assistant Bishop. With the situation unsettled, it was decided to adjourn and re-assemble on 1 January.\(^3\) In the meantime Samuel Crowther died in the early hours of 31 December.\(^4\)

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3 C.M.S. G3/A3/1892/44 Hamilton to Lang, 29 December 1891.

4 C.M.S. G3/A3/1891/307 Hamilton to Testimony, 31 December 1891: "Bishop Crowther dead".
The Bishop's funeral took place at Christ Church Cathedral on New Year's Day 1892, attended by the Governmental, religious, and commercial leaders of Lagos. Crowther's Oxford hood and cap lay on a black velvet drape over the coffin. James Johnson delivered the eulogy. Memorial services were held within a few days all along the West African coast. Dandeson attended the one at St. Stephen's, Bonny, and Josiah and Juliana Crowther Nicol the one at St. George's Cathedral, Freetown.¹ The outpouring of affection seemed genuine.

In England many viewed the event as symbolizing the end of an era.² Others, despite their public displays of condolences, were privately relieved. The Niger Crisis might now be settled, they believed, in a manner more convenient to the C.M.S. establishment. Whiting declined to write a C.M.S. obituary, which he knew would be unacceptable to Wigram and Lang. He composed, nonetheless, a private tribute which he sent to Wigram. While certainly partial in his statements, he correctly outlined the important questions which had led to the Crisis: the conflict over divergent missionary ideologies and the success or failure of African agency. Whiting noted that Crowther had "lived very near to his Saviour ... and with the instinct of a true Christian hated all canting expressions." The Bishop had not adopted any of the Pentecostal practices of the new Evangelicalism and thus the "New" generation might not consider him a "spiritual man".


² For example, Illustrated London News C: 2751, 9 January 1892.
Drawing on several anecdotes Whiting showed that as a private person Crowther had been deeply spiritual and had possessed one practical attribute which some of the "new spiritual men" lacked - shrewd common sense. The Bishop had silently suffered the reduction in his authority in the last years of his life, but felt hurt and betrayed by the Parent Committee's response to his support of the Native Pastorate plan which Whiting called Crowther's "crowning work". Shortly before his death, Ajayi Crowther had mused aloud, "I have served them (the C.M.S.) faithfully". Wigram felt otherwise. He reproved Whiting for his praise of the Delta scheme and forbade him to publish the Bishop's correspondence as Whiting had proposed.

Despite the success of the Deputies in convincing Brass to remain with the Society, Dandeson Crowther pressed ahead, setting 29 April as the new inaugural date. The Hamilton-Allan Report, presented to the General Committee in that same month, hardly settled matters. While terming the Pastorate idea impractical, it acknowledged that the plan would be implemented. The Report suggested a European successor to Crowther with an African Suffragen, as there was "no native ... who can be trusted with independent episcopal powers". After much

1 C.M.S. G/AC4/3/1511 Whiting to Lang, 4 January 1892. The C.M.S. obituary was written by a Clerical Secretary, Rev. W. Furness-Smith. Intelligencer N.S. XVII (1892), 121-24.
2 C.M.S. G/AC2/38/755 Wigram to Whiting, 1 January 1892; C.M.S. G/AC2/38/870-73 Wigram to Whiting, 15 January 1892. Whiting made the same suggestion to Archbishop Benson. L.P.A. Benson Papers v. 165/ff.28-31 Whiting to Benson, 8 February 1892.
3 C.M.S. G3/A3/1892/93 D.C. Crowther to Lang, 12 February 1892.
pressure from Wigram and Lang, a European was selected and eventually two African "Assistant Bishops". Bishop J.S. Hill and his two "Assistant Bishops" arrived in December 1893 at Lagos, but were not particularly well received. 1 Within one month Hill and his wife were dead through illness. The Pastorate in the meantime progressed under Dandeson Crowther, while the work at Brass declined. 2 Hill's successor, Bishop Herbert Tugwell, brought a moderating influence. One of the few surviving European Niger missionaries, H.H. Dobinson, soon pressed for African control under an Assistant Bishop for the Delta, with European missionaries concentrating in the interior. 3 A gradual swing back towards the Venn/Crowther model occurred, particularly in the use of the Mission school. 4 After years of negotiation between the Society and the Pastorate, a Constitution was finally drawn up and agreed upon in 1897 which led to the renewal of links between the two. 5 Notwithstanding the discredit of his detractors and the re-acceptance of many of his methods, Crowther continued to symbolize, however, unjustly, the failure of African leadership. For more than half a century Africans were considered to be insufficiently "mature" to

1 Ayandelc: Missionary Impact, pp. 227-32.
3 Webster: African Churches, pp. 16-17.
exercise episcopal superintendence. Tugwell's successors were European and no African diocesan bishop was again appointed until 1953.¹

Conclusion

In the approximately fifteen years preceding the Niger Crisis, diverse factors had been at work in Britain and West Africa in Church, missionary, and trading circles. To single out one or two elements or individuals as possessing primary responsibility for the Crisis is to simplify grossly and to fail to notice the complexity of issues, personalities and events which brought the Niger "experiment" of which Crowther had been the linchpin to its conclusion. From the late 1870s the Church Missionary Society and other Evangelicals had sought to uphold a traditional theology in the face of forces making for change. Evangelical colleges were established at Cambridge and Oxford, and with the growth of the Keswick movement a greater stress came to be laid on the importance of personal revelation and religious experience. Developments in other religious denominations and missionary societies gradually affected the C.M.S. The spread of Islam became a much debated preoccupation. In the C.M.S. Parent Committee, Crowther's supporters were in decline and a "forward" group in ascendance. For the latter, E.W. Brooke seemed the wave of the future.

Brooke and J.A. Robinson, caught up in the fervour, excitement, and challenge "of converting the world in a generation", took control

of the Niger Mission from the outset. Crowther, in contrast, proved almost completely passive, very much the lonely figure being swept forward by events. When the C.M.S. divided the Mission into European and African spheres of influence, the Europeans quickly used the Niger Finance Committee as a means with which to reshape the Mission further. They decried the absence of an indigenous clergy and denounced the largely Sierra Leonean staff as incompetent and immoral. Here indeed lay Crowther's main weakness. He had continued to rely almost exclusively on Freetown for recruits. After more than thirty years few among the Niger peoples had entered the Society's service. He naively believed he could reason with his new adversaries, yet it was soon clear, as evidenced in their removal of Archdeacon Henry Johnson, that they contemplated a clean sweep. It was only a few months before their overreaching methods climaxed in the August 1890 Niger Finance Committee, with Robinson suspending Dandeson Crowther and others, and Samuel Crowther resigning from the Committee.

The resultant outpouring of nationalist feeling, the petitions from the Niger congregations, the movement first for an independent church and then a Native Pastorate, the aggressive actions of the European Missionaries, and the confusion and conflict within C.M.S. and Church circles, provided the dramatic and complicated finale to Crowther's career. The Parent Committee's continued inability to move quickly and decisively underscored one of the persistent factors in the Mission's checkered history. No-one was pleased with the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Niger Sub-Committee. The Europeans were reprimanded for exceeding their authority. The Venn/Crowther model was repudiated. The Niger Delta Pastorate plan evolved, articulated and pushed forward by Dandeson Crowther and James Johnson. Congregations in Lagos and Freetown rallied in support of the programme
and generally condemned the Europeans' actions, especially their treatment of the venerable Bishop. Extended debate occurred in the West African press and in British religious periodicals. Crowther, reluctant to make a complete break with the Society, nonetheless accepted the Pastorate plan, suggesting that it be implemented gradually. An incensed Parent Committee replied that the choice was either complete severance or maintenance of the status quo. They also rejected the European missionaries' demands that they forego their summer holidays, reconsider the Niger Sub-Committee findings, and accept blame for the condition of the Niger Mission.

As the Crisis reached a fever pitch, Bishop Crowther suffered a stroke. Brooke and Eden soon resigned. The Parent Committee appointed a Deputation to go to West Africa, to meet with the congregations, to save as many stations as possible for the Society, and to press a gradualist plan for those insistent on a Pastorate. On its arrival, the Deputation was at first encouraged, but then realized that several congregations were determined on implementing the Pastorate plan without delay. In the midst of these negotiations, Crowther died, signalling the end of an era. While a Pastorate was shortly thereafter established, the Crisis's wounds did not heal quickly. The Niger experiment, born in hope and promise, seemed to die in failure. Crowther's successors were Europeans, with Africans serving only as "assistant bishops". His achievements and those of his Mission, despite their influence and the extent of their contribution, were forgotten in the Crisis and its aftermath.
Appendix I: Church Missionary Society Committee Structure

GENERAL COMMITTEE
(1799 - to Present)

COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE
(1818-1916)
(From c. 1830 generally called the Parent Committee)

GROUP I
(1880-1916)
China
Japan
Canada

GROUP II
(1880-1916)
Ceylon
India
Mauritius
Madagascar
Turkish Arabia
Persia

GROUP III
(1880-1916)
Africa
Palestine
Egypt
New Zealand

Other C.M.S. Standing Committees included:

1 FINANCE (also known as ACCOUNTS) 1818 to Present
2 CLERICAL 1838 to 1881
3 PATRONAGE 1833 to 1878
4 HOME 1877 to Present

1 In addition to the various Secretaries, the GENERAL COMMITTEE contained from twenty to thirty lay members and "all such clergymen as (were) members of the Society". GENERAL COMMITTEE Meetings were attended by a hard core of perhaps fifty members, although at the Meeting at which the Special Niger Subcommittee made its Report in January 1891, 202 were present.

2 The GROUP COMMITTEES, which were originally Sub-Committees of the COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE, became full Committees in their own right in 1916.
Appendix II: C.M.S. Presidents and Secretaries (1799-1892)

I Presidents
Admiral Lord Gambier (1810-1834)
The Earl of Chichester (1834-1886)
Captain Honourable Francis Maude (1886-1887)
Sir John Kennaway (1887-1917)

II Honorary Clerical Secretaries (General Secretaries after 1922)
Thomas Scott (1799-1802)
Josiah Pratt (1802-1824)
Edward Bickersteth (1824-1830)
Dandeson Coates (layman) (1830-1841)
William Jowett (1833-1839)
Thomas Vores (1839-1842)
Henry Venn (1841-1872)
Henry Wright (1872-1880)
Frederick Wigram (1880-1895)

III Secretaries with Primary Responsibility for Africa
Dandeson Coates (1825-1841)
Henry Venn (1841-1872)
Edward Hutchinson (1875-1881)
Robert Lang (1881-1892)

IV Lay Secretaries (also Secretary to Finance Committee)
Dandeson Coates (1820-1846)
Major Hector Straith (1846-1863)
Colonel Michael Dawes (1859-1866)
Edward Hutchinson (1867-1881)
Major-General Edward Lake (1869-1875)
General George Hutchinson (1882-1887)
Major-General Clennell Collingwood (1888-1894)

V Other Secretaries Mentioned in the Text or Occasionally Concerned with African Affairs
Richard Davies (1842-1847)
William Knight (1851-1861)
John Chapman (1853-1861)
John Myrie Holl (1855-1867)
C.C. Fenn (1863-1892)
Eugene Stock (1877-1906)
Henry Sutton (1879-1885)
B. Baring-Gould (1885-1915)
I MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

A Public Record Office (P.R.O.), London

C.O. 147 1861-1892 (Lagos Series)
F.O. 84 1865-1891 (Slave Trade Series)
F.O. 2 1891-1892 (Oil Rivers and Niger Coast Protectorate)

B Church Missionary Society Archives (C.M.S.), London

1) General Secretary (Honorary Clerical Secretary)

G/AC1/1-23 Administration/Correspondence (within U.K.)
Letter Books (Outgoing) (1824-1890)

G/AC2/1-41 Administration/Correspondence
Letter Books (Outgoing) (1874-1892)

G/AC3 Original Papers (Incoming) (1826-1892)

G/AC4/1-8 Original Papers (Incoming) (1872-1892)

G/Y/A3/1/1-8 Overseas Correspondence (Specific Topics)
Early Material, Niger Mission (1880-1899)
(Includes G/Y/A3/1/1A-J Enquiry into the Niger Mission: Correspondence, Notes, Drafts and Working Papers of Special Niger Sub-Committee, 1890; and G/Y/A3/1/4 Papers Relative to the Henry Venn steamer, 1877-1878, 1881).

2) Committees

G/C1/v.1-56 Minutes (1799-1892)
The minutes of all the various Committees are entered in the same volumes, in chronological order. They provide a summary of the reports, letters, and other items coming before the Committees, and record the discussions upon them and the actions taken. Each volume is paginated.

3) West African Mission (Sierra Leone)

CA1/E1-E8 Early Correspondence (1803-1820)
Incoming and Outgoing Correspondence
CA1/I Individual Letter Books (1852-1873)
A series of volumes for private and confidential letters from Secretaries at headquarters to individual missionaries; but not used by all Secretaries.

CA1/L1-L9 Letter Books (1820-1883)
Letter books containing copies of outgoing correspondence from Secretaries at headquarters (acting as Parent Committee representatives) to missionaries and others concerned with the Mission's affairs.

CA1/M1-M22 Mission Books (1820-1880)
Original papers (including letters from missionaries and others) were copied into the Mission Books so that a legible copy was available for the use of the Committee. From 1868 onwards, individual letters were numbered, e.g. CA2/M11/3.

CA1/01-0235 Original Papers (Prior to 1880)
Incoming letters, journals, petitions, reports and minutes of Local Conferences, copies of correspondence with local authorities, Consuls, Governors, etc. Samuel Ajayi Crowther's correspondence and papers, 1828-1844, can be found at CA1/079/1-32.

With the formation of the Group Committee system in 1880 (Africa was in Group III) a new nomenclature was adopted (A1 signifies the West African Mission).

G3/A1/1880-1892 Original Papers
After 1880, incoming letters were serialized by year (on the basis of receipt date) rather than by individual missionary.

G3/A1/P1-P2 Précis Books (1880-1898)
Précis Books contain summaries of the Original Papers and frequently indicate how issues raised were dealt with by Committee.
4) **Yoruba Mission**

- CA2/I: Individual Letter Books (1852-1880)
- CA2/L1-L4: Letter Books (1844-1880)
- CA2/M1-M11: Mission Books (1845-1880)
- CA2/O1-O99: Original Papers (1844-1880)
  - Samuel Ajayi Crowther's correspondence and papers can be found at CA2/085/1-276.
- G3/A2/L5-L6: Letter Books (1880-1892)
- G3/A2/1880-1892: Original Papers
- G3/A2/P1-P3: Précis Books (1880-1895)

5) **Niger Mission**

- CA3/L1: Letter Book (1858-1882)
- CA3/M1-M4: Mission Books (1857-1880)
- CA3/01/1-17: Original Papers
  - Minutes of Niger Finance Committee Meetings and Conferences (1860-1863; 1880).
- CA3/02/1-14: Original Papers
  - Miscellaneous missionary papers, requisitions, accounts, etc. (1857-1879)
- CA3/03/1-9: Original Papers
  - Miscellaneous letters to Secretaries at headquarters
- CA3/04/1-762: Original Papers
  - Original Papers of Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1857-1880)
- CA3/05-043: Original Papers
  - Original Papers of Niger Mission agents (1857-1880)
- G3/A3/P1-P3: Précis Books (1880-1897)
6) Miscellaneous Papers Cited

Venn MSS. Series of deposited family papers (1679-1955)

F/FL/TS/A3/1 Finance
Letters, Papers, Accounts, and Printed Matter relating to West African and Nigerian Bishopric Funds

C Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan (N.A.I.)

1) Nigerian Secretariat, Lagos

CSO 1/1 Lagos Despatches to the Colonial Office (1861-1892)

CSO 1/2 Lagos Despatches from the Colonial Office (1869-1892)

CSO 1/3 Lagos Despatches (Confidential) to the Colonial Office (1881-1892)

CSO 1/4 Lagos Despatches (Confidential) from the Colonial Office (1886-1892)

CSO 1/8 Lagos Despatches to the Governor-in-Chief of Sierra Leone (1866-1874)

CSO 1/10 Lagos Despatches to the Governor of the Gold Coast (1874-1886)

CSO 1/12 Lagos Confidential Despatches to the Governor of the Gold Coast

CSO 5/1 Treaties (1852-1914)

CSO 8/1 British Consul Lagos: Letter Books of Miscellaneous Correspondence (1854-1860)

CSO 8/4 Governor of Lagos and Southern Nigeria: Letterbooks of incoming correspondence from Firms, Chiefs, etc. (1878-1892)

CSO 8/5 Governor of Lagos and Southern Nigeria: Letterbooks of outgoing correspondence to Firms, Chiefs, etc. (1862-1892)

2) Church Missionary Society Papers: Yoruba Mission

CMS "Y" 1/1/1 Letters of Instruction from C.M.S. London to Gollmer, Townsend and Crowther (1844-1852)

CMS "Y" 1/1/5 Letter Book of Mission Secretary (1885)
| CMS "Y" 1/7/2 | Rev. J.B. Wood, Correspondence to C.M.S. London (1877-1892) |
| CMS "Y" 2/2/1 | Treaty in Yoruba between Egba Chiefs and H.M. Government about Abolition of Slave Trade in Abeokuta, 1852 |
| CMS "Y" 2/3/2 | C.M.S. Meetings in Lagos, 1878 |
| CMS "Y" 2/3/4 | Minutes of Niger Finance Committee Meetings and Correspondence Relating, 1879-1882 |
| CMS "Y" 2/5/2 | Papers of Bishop Tugwell (1891-1893) |
| CMS "Y" 3/1/1 | C.M.S. Yoruba Mission Minutes (1844-1859) |
| CMS "Y" 4/1/1 | The Beginning of Work in Ibadan (1852) |
| CMS "Y" 4/1/3 | Native Church Regulations (1853-1883) |
| CMS "Y" 4/3/10 | Om ode Eru-kunrin ti o di Bishopu Tabi Itan Samuel Ajayi Crowther (Lagos, 1925) |

### D  Lambeth Palace Library Archives (L.P.A.)

1) Fulham Papers, Blomfield  
   C.J. Blomfield, Bishop of London (1828-1856)

2) Longley Papers  
   C.T. Longley, Archbishop of Canterbury (1862-1868)

3) Tait Papers  
   A.C. Tait, Bishop of London (1856-1868), Archbishop of Canterbury (1868-1882)

4) Benson Papers  
   E.W. Benson, Archbishop of Canterbury (1883-1896)

5) Lambeth Conference Papers (1888)  
   Preliminary Correspondence, Conference Minutes and Reports

### II OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS

#### A Parliamentary Papers

1) P.P., 1840, XXIII (57), "Correspondence Relating to the Niger Expedition"

2) P.P., 1842, XI-XII (551), "Report of Select Committee on British Possessions on the West Coast of Africa"

3) P.P., 1843, XLVIII (472), "Papers Relative to the Expedition to the River Niger"
4) **P.P.,** 1852, XLIX (284), "Correspondence Relative to the Conveyance of H.M.'s Mails to the West Coast of Africa"

5) **P.P.,** 1852, LIV (221), "Papers Relating to the Reduction of Lagos by H.M.'s Forces"

6) **P.P.,** 1857, XXXVIII (255), "Papers Relating to the Cultivation of Cotton in Africa"

7) **P.P.,** 1862, LXI (339, 365), "Papers Relating to the Occupation of Lagos"

8) **P.P.,** 1865, V (1), "Report of Select Committee on State of British Settlements on the West Coast of Africa"

9) **P.P.,** 1880, LXIX, "Correspondence Relating to the Bombardment of Onitsha on the River Niger"

10) **P.P.,** 1882, XXXVII, "Correspondence Respecting the Trial of Certain Persons at Sierra Leone for the Murder of a Slave Girl at Onitsha on the River Niger"

### III. CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

**A. Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society**

Published annually, this contained minutes of the Society's annual Anniversary Meeting, the General Secretary's Report, Annual Estimates of Expenditure, etc. The C.M.S. year began in May and volumes are identified by two-year dates, e.g. 1871-1872.

1801-1892

**B. Missionary Register**

This contained "the principal transactions of the various institutions for propagating the Gospel, including the proceedings at large of the Church Missionary Society". It was edited by Josiah Pratt until 1838 when the decision was made that the C.M.S. should concentrate solely on reporting their own activities.

Vols. I-XLIV 1813-1855

**C. Church Missionary Paper**

This was published for the use "of weekly and monthly contributors" to the Society.

Nos. 1-308 1816-1892
D Church Missionary Record, Church Missionary Intelligencer

The Church Missionary Record appeared monthly and was directed at the average reader interested in missionary affairs. It contained extracts from letters and journals of C.M.S. agents. In 1876 it merged with the Church Missionary Intelligencer, considered the most intellectually advanced C.M.S. publication.

1) Church Missionary Record

Vols. I-XXVIII
III-XV (2nd Series) 1858-1870
I-V (3rd Series) 1871-1875

2) Church Missionary Intelligencer

From 1876 to 1890, it was called the Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record.

Vols. I-XV 1849-1864
I-XI (New Series) 1865-1875
I-XVII (New Series) 1876-1892

E Church Missionary Gleaner

This was probably the most popular journal, which could be used in Sunday Schools and other instruction classes. The engravings and woodcuts are especially fine.

Vols. I-IX 1841-1849
I-XIX (New Series) 1850-1869
I-XIX 1874-1892

F Church Missionary Juvenile Instructor

This was published exclusively for use in schools.

Vols. I-XLVIII 1842-1890

IV NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

Of the large number consulted, those which follow were significantly useful.

A Published in London:

- African Times (1862-1892)
- The Church Times (1863-1892)
- The Guardian (1846-1892)
- Illustrated London News (1842-1892)
- The Rock (1868-1892)
- The Times (1864, 1888, 1892)
- The Sierra Leone Journal and Monthly Record of Colonial Affairs (1865-1866)
B Published in Lagos:

Anglo-African (1863-1865)
The Eagle and Lagos Critic (1883-1888)
Lagos Observer (1882-1888)
Lagos Times and Gold Coast Colony Advertiser (1880-1883)
Lagos Weekly Record (1891-1892)
The Mirror (1887-1888)

C Published in Freetown:

The Sierra Leone Church Times (1884-1886)
The Sierra Leone Weekly News (1884-1892)

V WORKS BY SAMUEL AJAYI CROWTHER

Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language. Part I - English and Yoruba. Part II - Yoruba and English. To which are prefixed, the grammatical elements of the Yoruba language. London, 1843.


The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans. Translated into Yoruba for the Use of the Native Christians of that Nation. London, 1850.

Iwe adua Yoruba. A Selection from the Book of Common Prayer, according to the Use of the United Church of England and Ireland. Translated into Yoruba, for the Use of the Native Christians of that Nation. London, 1850, 1853, 1862.


The First Book of Moses, Commonly Called Genesis, Translated into Yoruba for the Use of the Native Christians of that Nation. London, 1853.


Iwe owu, ati iwe oniwasu. London, 1856.
A translation into Yoruba of the Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

Ihin rere ti St. Luku; ati ise awon apostoli; ati episteli to St. Paulu apostoli si awon ara Romu; pelu awon episteli St. Yakobu on St. Peteru. London, 1856.


A translation into Yoruba of the Book of Common Prayer, the Psalms, and the Thirty-Nine Articles.


Experiences with Heathens and Mohammedans in West Africa. London, 1892.


VI CONTEMPORARY BOOKS AND ARTICLES


Bishop Crowther: His Life and Work. London, 1892.


_________ Observations and Reflections on Matters Connected with Missionary Societies of All Denominations and All Countries. London, 1885.

_________ Africa Rediviva, or the Occupation of Africa by Christian Missionaries of Europe and North America. London, 1891.


Impressions of Western Africa, with remarks on the diseases of the climate and a Report on the peculiarities of Trade up the rivers in the Bight of Biafra. London, 1858.


"Are our Foreign Missions a Success?", Fortnightly Review XLV N.S. (1889), 481-89.


May, D. J. "Journey in the Yoruba and Nupe Countries in 1858" Journal of the Royal Geographical Society XXX (1860), 212-33.


Walker, S.A.  Missions in Western Africa Among the Soosoos, Bullons, etc.  Being the first Undertaken by the Church Mission for Africa and the East.  Dublin, 1845.


VII  LATER BOOKS AND ARTICLES


Aderibigbe, A.B.  "Rivalry Among the Yoruba States in the Nineteenth Century", The Historia 2: 1 (1965), 103-112.


"How Yoruba Was Reduced to Writing", Odu, No. 8 (1960), 49-58.


"The Political Significance of Missionary Activity in Nineteenth Century West African History", The Historia', II: 1 (1965), 16-34.


___________  *Register of Missionaries (Clerical, Lay, and Female) and Native Clergy from 1804 to 1904.*  London, 1905.


Dike, K.O. "John Beecroft, 1790-1854: Her Britannic Majesty's

Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885.


Eminent Nigerians of the Nineteenth Century.


The Church in Opobo. Aba, 1958.


Prelude to the Partition of West Africa.


Nadel, S.F. A Black Byzantium, the Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria. London, 1942.


1966.


Thompson, T.J. *The Jubilee and Centenary Volume of Fourah Bay College, Freetown.* Freetown, 1930.


VIII UNPUBLISHED THESIS AND DISSERTATIONS


Phillips, E.H. The C.M.S., the Imperial Factor, and Yoruba Politics, 1842-73. Ph.D., University of Southern California, 1966.

