

Capacity Building

The Role of Missionary Societies and Development Agencies

A Methodist Perspective

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Background, in general

The advent of the development agencies, which from small beginnings in the 1940s grew dramatically in the scope of their activity, their geographical reach and their turnover, made a huge impact on the missionary Societies, especially since so many of the new agencies were founded and funded by Christians.

From the earliest days of the WMMS and its contemporary Societies, most of the activity which is now labelled development – and relief – formed part and parcel of the missionary enterprise. The British and Foreign Schools Society was established in 1814 to promote education (as the Bible Society promoted translation, publication and distribution). But it never adequately served the purpose. Missionaries who saw the need did their best to meet it themselves, often in partnership with wives who took on the hands-on responsibility, while appealing to their Societies for qualified teachers to develop the work.¹ As with education, so with health care. Many a mission station became a rudimentary dispensary, developed out of the basic first-aid with which the missionaries attempted to respond to illness and injury. The promotion of efficient agriculture was a concern long before MMS decided to employ, for a short-lived term, an agricultural advisor: Samuel Leigh began agricultural experiments in New Zealand in the 1820s and Thomas Birch Freeman in the 1860s introduced bullocks into West Africa to improve the local stock. The passion for social justice, an integral part of today's development agenda, was there in the campaigns to abolish slavery, cannibalism in the Pacific and, less successfully, caste in India. And David Hill's virtual secondment, in 1878, to the famine relief operation in Shanxi, is an instance of emergency disaster relief.

These 19th century examples were replicated in the 20th. Orphanages, hospitals and schools in particular multiplied. Douglas Thompson (later MMS General Secretary), returning to China in 1933, stopped off in India to learn all he could about rural development programmes. It was holistic mission (Thompson used the term 'life-inclusive'), and it was worldwide. But in Europe, still thought of as the heartland of Christendom, MMS and its counterparts had only a minimal presence. And it was in Europe, following the devastation of the second World War, that there appeared a pressing demand for relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation. The traditional mission Societies were not equipped to rise to that demand. So the newly-formed British Council of Churches established 'Christian Reconstruction in Europe', soon to become 'Inter-Church Aid and Refugee Service' and then Christian Aid. Around the same time the Methodist Relief Fund was set up.²

It was not long before two things happened. Firstly, the agencies swiftly recognised that

¹ In India there was tense debate over who should be the prime beneficiaries of education, whether the upper caste Brahmins or the socially excluded.

² The Methodist Conference repeatedly declared that Christian Aid was its primary agency, but MRF and later the World Development Fund attracted denominational support. Non-denominational agencies such as Tear Fund (197?) and World Vision (established in UK in 1982), which some Methodist individuals and congregations chose to support, were later on the scene.

prevention is better than cure. Relief in disaster situations was vital, but it was arguably even more important to set in place ‘development’ programmes to strengthen the poor³ in the expectation that many disasters could thus be averted and that, when they did occur, the people on the spot would have the capacity⁴ to tackle the consequences. Development was firmly on the agenda. Secondly, the agencies determined to extend their sphere of action beyond Europe to the undeveloped, or underdeveloped⁵ world. They had proved adept at raising funds for their cause and were in a position to adopt a broader remit once the most clamant European needs had been addressed by the Marshall Plan.

But the underdeveloped world was the territory where the missionary Societies were working. At the end of the second World War it was only in the dominions that Methodist Churches had become autonomous. The Church of South India was inaugurated in 1947, and China was closed to missionary personnel and funds by 1952. Autonomy elsewhere was longer coming – and in no case other than China did it entail cessation of MMS involvement. A commitment was made to go on supplying schools and hospitals, as well as theological colleges, with funding and staff, as well as supporting the newly-autonomous Churches with un-earmarked grants. In 1970 MMS added to its staff an education consultant and an agricultural consultant, alongside the existing medical officer post. Then in 1972 the Society joined with other members of the Conference of British Missionary Societies in establishing another new agency, Christians Abroad⁶. Its chief remit was to recruit personnel for overseas service, largely in education. And when it came to social development projects or disaster relief, the overseas Churches now had several organisations to which they could apply for funds: both MMS and one or more of the agencies.

Methodism, in particular

The Methodist Relief Fund was managed by an ad hoc committee led by Henry Carter until 1951. Edward Rogers (who declined to be nominated as MMS General Secretary in 1958⁷) had joined the Christian Citizenship Department in 1950 and was instrumental in bringing MRF under the Department’s wing. He confided to his private journal “HC very cagey, but in obvious difficulty to defend its continuing existence as now constituted”⁸ and later that “H Carter is still stubbornly holding out against closing down his ad hoc committee”⁹. But at the 1951 Conference “The Relief Fund Committee wound up without argument, so that relief work now comes under our department”¹⁰.

Rogers subsequently had a very wide brief as General Secretary of the Christian Citizenship Department and then the Division of Social Responsibility, but relief and development were foremost among his personal concerns and he retained that portfolio when DSR was set up in the 1973 restructuring.¹¹ In 1955 he wrote: ‘Aid for relief is a very practicable expression of

³ ‘To strengthen the poor’ was for many years Christian Aid’s strap-line.

⁴ ‘capacity-building’ entered the jargon in the 1980s

⁵ There was much debate about the terminology. Many argued for ‘developing’ world, but in the light of history that would have been a sad misnomer.

⁶ It brought together the Overseas Appointments Bureau, set up in 1947 by the Conference of British Missionary Societies, and two more recent bodies, Christian Preparation for Work Abroad and the Christian Overseas Information Service.

⁷ Had he been appointed, he would have been the first never to have had first-hand experience as a missionary.

⁸ 8.2.51

⁹ 23.5.51

¹⁰ 14.7.51

¹¹ On his retirement in 1975, part of the Conference tribute read: ‘In addition to his unrivalled competence in the

our Christian Citizenship – and is a pointer also to the co-operation which becomes essential when worthwhile Christian service is attempted. The Department finds itself working in the happiest collaboration with the Missionary Society’¹². He went on to mention Austria, Hong Kong, the Central African Federation, Malta and ‘the unhappy situation in South Africa’ before continuing ‘Our work is not exclusively concerned with the ends of the earth. There are problems and opportunities for Christian Citizenship in plenty at home’¹³. (Rogers’ humour was invariably dry, and that was of course written in the full knowledge that, half-a-century ago CCD was primarily concerned with British society and MMS with ‘the ends of the earth’, in terms both of official brief and public perception.)

The success of the Methodist Relief Fund was followed by the creation of the Fund for Human Need, the independent initiative of Donald McNeill, and eventually (1981) the World Development Fund which merged with MRF in 1985 as MRDF. Already by 1959 ordinary Methodists were becoming confused by the variety of channels through which overseas concerns could be addressed and the plethora of appeals to which they were invited to respond. A memorial to Conference, initiated in the Wimbledon Circuit (where McNeill was then stationed), regarding world hunger and the Fund for Human Need, was remitted to the Joint Overseas Christian Citizenship Committee (MMS/CCD). In Rogers’ private papers there is a typescript draft reply, and it is impossible now to be sure whether it is his own draft or one that had been submitted to him (perhaps by McNeill). Intriguingly it includes the sentence ‘Constitutionally, it is debatable whether the funds of the Missionary Society are available for the reduction of hunger and poverty’¹⁴. But the sentence did not appear in the reply that the Committee eventually presented to Conference. FHN remained a relatively small enterprise, supported by a limited group of enthusiasts and supporting a restricted number of projects.

From 1966 onwards there was a recurrent debate about the distinction between home and overseas mission, and the continued separate existence of MMS and HMD¹⁵. ‘Mission is one’ ran the theological argument, and there were clearly anomalies including MMS/MCOD’s work with overseas students in Britain and HMD’s links with the World Methodist Council’s initiatives in evangelism, including sponsorship of mission teams for short-term missions, mainly in the USA. But this confusion did not much trouble the Methodists in the pews. They were, rather, becoming less and less clear about the distinction between mission, aid and development. There were several underlying reasons.

- One was that the new agencies were promoting work of the type that had long been a concern of missionaries.
- Another was the arrival in Britain of migrants from south Asia and east Africa,

whole range of economic, social and political issues, his work has been characterised by a deep compassion. This has been most marked in his wise and imaginative administration of MRF for more than two decades. It is an indication of his spirit as well as of his ability that within two and a half years of retirement he put down most of the portfolios he had handled so expertly and took up the highly demanding work of world development.’

¹² Methodist Recorder, 10 November 1955

¹³ Meanwhile the distinctions between home and overseas became further blurred as MMS developed work among overseas students in Britain.

¹⁴ What would he have made of some of the uses to which those funds have been put since the 1997 restructuring?!

¹⁵ A memorial to the 1966 Conference, headed Joint Action for Mission, urged consideration of whether a single ‘Department for Mission’ combining MMS, HMD and the London Mission ‘would be in the interests of the World Mission of the Church’. The suggestion emanated from the London North-West District, where Norwyn Denny, who pressed the argument repeatedly in later years, was then stationed.

practising other faiths and raising the question of how Christians should relate to Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and others much more acutely than the historic presence of the Jewish community had hitherto raised them. Was evangelism – in Britain or in their lands of origin – to be the dominant approach? Were there not opportunities for collaboration and partnership in addressing the humanitarian concerns which were held in common?

- And thirdly there was the sheer scale of need, the ever-widening gulf between the incomes of the richest and the poorest, and a succession of disasters, ‘natural’ and ‘man-made’, given publicity as never before by the ability of television journalists to speed images into every British household. Increasingly it was recognised that ‘economic empowerment is a key mission priority’¹⁶.

It was in 1968 that the Conference first passed a ‘Special Resolution on World Poverty’. It urged ‘Circuits & Churches to participate fully in the World Poverty Campaign initiated by the BCC and being carried out by Christian Aid’; it appealed to Methodists ‘to make the facts relating to world poverty widely known’; it urged HMG ‘to increase the annual expenditure on overseas aid... if necessary by increasing taxation, and to continue to work for improved trading prospects for developing countries’¹⁷; and it commended ‘the agricultural projects of the Churches and overseas districts with which the Conference co-operates through the MMS’, and urged ‘continued and increased support for the work of the Society’. MMS was still seen as the obvious channel for effective engagement with the issue of poverty. The resolution went on to call ‘the Methodist people to join the members of the 1968 Conference in pledging themselves to give, over and above all other gifts to world mission and service, one day’s income on Good Friday 1969 for world poverty projects through Christian Aid’ and directed ‘the Joint Overseas Christian Citizenship Committee’¹⁸ to consider how the present contribution of the Methodist Church to the relief of world poverty can be increased by at least 5% before 1970’. The one day’s income appeal was soon changed to an appeal for ‘not less than 1% of personal net income every year’ and the 1971 Conference directed ‘that gifts sent to MMS, MRF or Christian Aid and earmarked One Per Cent Fund be used for development programmes *selected jointly* by these agencies.’ How the mechanism for joint selection worked, what was its degree of success and how long it lasted are questions which I have not been able to answer.

From 1958 the Methodist Conference annually passed a resolution, in identical form, authorising CCD and then DSR ‘through the agency of MRF, to receive and transmit moneys for the relief of special distress among Methodists or for works of relief under Methodist oversight.’ In 1977 came a change. Methodist oversight became Methodist ‘or ecumenical’ oversight. And a first sentence was added, reading: ‘The Division has within its purview the Christian responsibility for the relief of want and distress and for world development and shall accordingly administer MRF, FHN and the World Development Action Fund, reporting annually on each of these Funds to the Conference.’ WDAF was a newcomer on the scene: originally set up to receive and allocate the 1% Appeal, it now became a fund without charitable status, designed to promote global justice in ways that the Charity Commissioners deemed to be ‘political’ and therefore closed to charities. Both MMS (by now MCOF) and Christian Aid fell foul of the Charity Commissioners during the protracted struggle for Zimbabwean independence and because of their sympathy with the call to support the

¹⁶ Mvume Dandala, later to be Presiding Bishop of the South African Conference and General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches, in a private conversation in 1987.

¹⁷ The utter failure of this led, over 30 years later, to the Trade Justice Campaign.

¹⁸ The committee, comprising MMS and CCD representatives, had been set up in 1924 as the Overseas Joint Temperance Committee.

liberation movements in South Africa from the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism. Support for WDAF was never great, however; MCODE remained much the largest recipient of funds for work abroad.

In 1985, when the short-lived WDF and MRF merged, the second, original sentence of the Conference resolution now read: 'It shall be the responsibility of MRDF to receive and transmit moneys for the relief, rehabilitation and development under Methodist, ecumenical or other appropriate oversight primarily overseas but, in case of exceptional need, also in the UK.'

By this time one of the significant ways in which MMS/MCODE was funded had been brought to an end. A long-standing tradition by which the Society (along with Home Mission and Property) received one Sunday's collection per annum from every church in the connexion was replaced in 1978. The Divisions would be supported in part by the new Mission & Service Fund, financed by assessment on the circuits, and in part by moneys voted by Church Councils, as well as other traditional means such as boxes and garden parties. In theory therefore MCODE and MRDF had the same opportunities to raise funds, but the weight of history, together with evangelical zeal, ensured that MCODE disposed of much the greater income until the end of the century¹⁹. MCODE, however, put the expertise of its staff and its contacts with sister Churches at MRDF's disposal; Area Secretaries served as advisors to the MRDF committee, and on their overseas visits often acted for MRDF in making contacts and identifying or following up projects.

In 1996 MCODE was integrated into the Connexional Team whereas MRDF, unlike DSR with which it had been closely linked, retained its autonomy. The considerable changes which ensued in the 21st century are too recent for historical treatment, and fall outside the scope of the MMS History.

Uzuakoli, for example

In 1927 the Church of Scotland opened a leprosy settlement at Itu in Eastern Nigeria. Its success led the colonial government to open discussions with the PMMS about another settlement to serve a different part of the region, and the February 1931 Synod at Oron deputed Dr J A Kinnear Brown, newly arrived medical missionary, to identify and negotiate for a suitable site. "Looking for land with fertile soil, water, timber, building materials, and all the things one needs to establish a large, self-contained community, was as difficult as the pessimists feared and the objectors hoped."²⁰ After many a 'not in our backyard' response from local chiefs, a plot three miles from Uzuakoli was obtained. "By English standards the negotiations were protracted and tedious, but from the beginning we decided to proceed according to local custom, as an Ibo would if he wanted land. The difference was that we wanted 500 acres, and for an unpopular cause. That we got what we wanted was due I think to the lengths to which we went to check what should be done, and to do it, even though we had to negotiate areas of different size belonging to three different chiefs, none of whom would commit himself about where his land began and ended."²¹ Progress was in fact remarkably rapid, and work on a road began in October 1931; by the time Brown returned

¹⁹ Rachel Stephens, a former member of MCODE staff, after her appointment as International Affairs and Development Secretary of DSR in 1986, compared the relationship between MRDF and MCODE with 'David and Goliath'.

²⁰ JAK Brown, from Appendix 2 of A J Fox, *Uzuakoli, A Short History* (OUP 1964), p 104

²¹ *Ibid*, p 105

from furlough in July 1932, bringing major items of equipment, enough buildings had been erected, if far from completed, for him to take up residence on 10 August and treat the first patients the next day. “Gradually the settlement took shape – two villages, one either side of a pleasant valley, with all the main buildings on the crest of the ridge. One village was for the women, and one for the men... We started night school for all adults and they were only exempt when they had learned to read. They were then presented with a Bible... It was interesting to walk around in the evenings and see little groups of adults reading by hurricane lamps, and being taught by school children. Each Christmas we had sports which included wrestling, climbing a greasy pole, and an obstacle race... The first thing we did was to put a patient into a house and tell him to clean it and make it attractive. Often there was a refusal which went on for days or even weeks until the impact of others taking an interest in their house began to awaken interest. When a patient saw a man from a neighbouring village decorating his house or planting his garden, the competitive spirit was stimulated. If that man could do it, so could he...”²² Brown’s account goes on to mention “the first communion; the opening of the unaffected children’s ward; the installation of electric light; the building of the new church and its opening in 1936... the farm and plantations... the citrus orchard... the first paper published from Uzuakoli (on Leprosy and Diet), the result of many months of laborious investigations... issued in 1935... our first Discharge Service”. This was mission as holistic as it gets.

Brown was compelled by domestic problems and illness to withdraw in 1936 and was succeeded by Frank Davey, both minister and doctor, whose name and that of Uzuakoli soon became renowned in the world of leprology. There were in 1936 over 800 leprosy patients living in what they termed the ‘colony’ at Uzuakoli, but there were tens of thousands of sufferers in the region. Davey gained the co-operation of the administration and undertook “pilot surveys, trained leprosy control officers, and organised voluntary ‘segregated villages’ where leprosy patients trained at Uzuakoli gave medical and nursing care”.²³ In the 1940s, with the advent of dapsone treatment, he and his colleague John Lowe “inaugurated mass treatment with the new drugs in all their 111 district clinics in the segregated villages. Uzuakoli became the foremost leprosy research centre in Africa, and at that point probably in the world. By the early 1960s more than 21,000 patients had been discharged as ‘symptom free’... Four words echoed round the world: ‘Leprosy *can* be cured!’”²⁴

Then came the Biafran war. Five battles were fought across the settlement between 1966 and 1970. All expatriate staff were repatriated (and were not allowed back after the war); everyone else departed; the buildings were mostly left in ruins. But Uzuakoli rose from the ashes. The hospital – officially the ‘Leprosy Research and Referral Centre’ – came to be administered in lacklustre fashion by the Imo State Public Health Department, but the Welfare Department, the responsibility of Methodist Church Nigeria, took on a vibrant new lease of life under the visionary inspiration first of Margaret Snell and then of Ros Colwill. A 1988 report described three ‘Grainger villages’ (named after their original British sponsor, Lila Grainger), a variety of rehab workshops, the elementary school, farm, a printing press, a 2.5 hectare rubber plantation (begun 1962, unproductive 1967-83, but in 1988 being tapped daily), and an oil-mill processing home-grown oil palm. Most of the workshops had a supervisor and a varying number of trainees who lived in the rehab village and received a very small training allowance. After two years they were given a little equipment to go home and set up business. Workshops mentioned in the report were producing comfortable

²² Ibid, pp 108-9

²³ Cyril Davey, *Changing Places* (Marshall Pickering 1988) p 115

²⁴ Ibid, p 116

artificial limbs; sandals – mostly sold at a subsidised price to residents for whom proper footwear is so important; bricks, for the settlement’s own rebuilding programme; roof-tiles, simple to make and to lay, attractive in appearance and cool; cabinet-making; akwete-weaving (a local craft, from the village of Akwete) of cloths and presbyters’ stoles; and, for those too ill or deformed ever to return home a sheltered workshop doing canecrafts such as wickerwork chairs and trays. Some of the residents had formed their own co-operative which was running a little store on the spot and a small soap-making operation. Even the primary school had its own little candle-making project, underlining to the youngest the virtues of self-reliance – and doing good business because at that time there was no power or running water in the settlement. The largest building on the site was still the chapel, and 160 Methodist members were recorded.²⁵

Here follow some observations about the objectives, motivation and means of this leprosy work.

1. The objectives may be categorised as:

- To treat victims at the earliest possible stage, arrest the progress of the disease, and achieve a cure wherever possible
- To provide a home for victims who have been forced from their village homes
- To care for those who, because of the advanced stage of the disease or through advancing years, are unable to care for themselves, and who are cut off from family care because of their leprosy (these lived on a street in the settlement known as the ‘weak line’)
- To ‘strengthen the poor’ through education and training leading to a means of livelihood
- To confront the beliefs and attitudes that treat victims as outcasts, with education about the realities of contagion and demonstrable rehabilitation
- To restore broken relationships and reconcile families estranged because of leprosy

2. The motives are listed in no particular order, since the individuals and organisations at work in Uzuakoli would not all give equal weight to each:

- Compassion for people in weakness, isolation and distress – the humanitarian instinct but also for most, if not all who have at one time or another been part of the enterprise, echoing Jesus who was often said to be ‘moved with compassion’
- Building a strong and healthy nation – a pioneering contribution to ridding Nigeria of a widespread scourge
- A contribution too, especially through the work of Davey and Lowe, to the global campaign against leprosy
- For some, a particular impetus to leprosy work (as distinct from health care in general) arising from the numerous biblical references to leprosy – even if different bacilli are at the root of the modern and biblical diseases
- An opportunity to proclaim the Christian gospel of God’s saving grace in Jesus, to demonstrate it in practice and to lead people to Christ – in Davey’s words, rejoicing that “The Sunday before Dr Brown left, at least forty were baptised Christians”: “800 people are receiving impressions of true Christianity... If the roots of true religion are established during their time in the colony, what influence they may be able to exert among their peoples when they go away again!”²⁶

3. The means: throughout its history, Uzuakoli has been an exercise in partnership. At the

²⁵ John Pritchard, *Report of the Africa Secretary’s Visit to Nigeria, April 1988*

²⁶ Frank Davey, in *Kingdom Overseas*, February 1937, p 38

outset, it was a collaboration between church and government. “An engineer attached to the Native Administration was in charge of the buildings, the plans of which has been drawn and approved earlier. The buildings were duly erected and left to await our return” wrote Brown.²⁷ The *Kingdom Overseas* later reported, “Dr J A K Brown is in charge of the Government Leper Hospital at Uzuakoli, to which he is ‘lent’ by the Missionary Society”.²⁸ Government involvement in later years was spasmodic but generally there was grant support (less regular in practice than in principle) for some aspects of the work. With the autonomy of Methodist Church Nigeria began a partnership between MCN, now with full legal responsibility for the land and the activities, and MMS. But neither had the means to develop and maintain the work effectively. After the Biafran war the government assumed full responsibility for the hospital and accorded low priority to the reconstruction of the welfare department (as the colony or settlement was now styled). MMS, however, agreed to support MCN in re-establishing the department. MRF made regular grants to Uzuakoli during the period when Margaret Snell served as welfare officer, 1974-80²⁹. No further grant was made from that quarter (in the period to 1996) except for a £8000 grant in 1986. MMS/MCOD supplied the Welfare Officer and made a handful of small non-recurring grants: to replace the worn-out Peugeot 504 station wagon, and £2650 towards rebuilding, in 1985 – both from the Wightman Fund³⁰; up to £10,000 in 1988 for the chaplain (the Revd C R Opoko) to take a course at the London Tropical Child health Unit; and £1000 in 1993 to assist the tile-making division. At the time of the 1988 report, MCN was supporting the chaplain and MMS/MCOD the Welfare Officer. Some of the workshops were just about self-supporting, but voluntary donations and project funding were vital. The printing guillotine and stitcher, for example, were provided jointly by Umuahia Rotary, Warrington Rotary and Rotary International. The roof-tile process was developed by Intermediate Technology³¹ using sand (available on the spot), cement and oil-palm fibre, and pioneered at Uzuakoli.

Education, the launch-pad for development

From the outset, school-planting went hand in hand with church-planting. Among the reasons that prompted this investment of time, money and effort: giving the chief’s sons both a general and a biblical education would give the gospel a stronger toehold in the community; literacy would allow people to read the Bible for themselves; but equally because it was clearly the key to human development – or, in 19th century terminology, the ‘civilising mission’ which was not easily distinguished from the evangelising mission. Out of human compassion and concern, missionaries sought to conquer the darkness of ignorance with the lamp of learning, as earnestly as they sought to conquer the darkness of sin with the light of Christ. Constrained by Jesus’ love, they wanted the best for people: active minds and healthy bodies; capacity-building.

Nowhere is it more difficult to disentangle missionary motives than in the areas of educational and medical work. For some they were essentially a means to an end, a necessary and legitimate preparation for the gospel. Not only was it natural for Christians to

²⁷ J A K Brown, in *Kingdom Overseas*, June 1933 p 143. He continued: “When we got back to Uzuakoli in August [1932] we found the bush had grown without restriction, and the nice new road we had left the previous December was overgrown. In front of the house and all about the hospital the bush was six to eight feet high.”

²⁸ January 1936, p 13

²⁹ £4750 in 1974; £2270 in 1975; £4200 in 1976; £3000 in 1977; £2000 in 1979; £2050 in 1981

³⁰ The Wightman Fund was earmarked for medical work and health care

³¹ The Intermediate Technology Development Group now uses the name *Practical Action*

start the day in a classroom or clinic with prayer, it was obligatory for all. Not only did Christians commend their faith by their loving deeds and their selfless readiness to go the extra mile of kindness, their preaching was an indispensable component in the life of the institution. Students, patients, employees had to be there.³²

There is little doubt that this approach was often effective, although it is impossible to assess the relative impact of the gospel as missionaries preached it and the gospel as they lived it. It was reported from Ceylon in the 1860s that “75% of our converts have been gained, more or less, in connection with our educational work”.

Two influential voices of the 1930s, the American W E Hocking and the British J H Oldham, were fiercely critical of the misuse of educational and medical work as a tool for direct evangelism. They found it intolerable for two reasons. In the first place, such fundamental expressions of Christian love are themselves an authentic form of mission; but if carried on with ulterior motives they are corrupted. In the second place, those who are on the receiving end of teaching and healing ministries are in a temporary situation of dependence. To exploit dependence is a failure of respect for a brother or sister. The Christian way does not take advantage of another’s weakness.

But while it is true that much money and many lives were devoted to educational and medical facilities with the unequivocal objective of winning converts to Christianity, it is equally true that many lives and much money were given out of the conviction that active minds and healthy bodies are what God wills for all whatever their creed, and that the wellbeing of communities and nations depends upon the education, the ‘capacity building’ of each succeeding generation.

By the 1960s, however, educational practice was subject to another critique. Schools – mission schools and government schools alike – were, it was realised, geared to producing failures. Sooner or later – at the end of primary school or even earlier, or after middle school or O levels or A levels or their equivalents, you dropped out. The 1972 MMS report on Education in Africa said: “The last decade has seen a revolution in some of the educational thinking and practices that had held sway for generations. The old system, symbolised by the broad-based pyramid of educational opportunity, has come under heavy fire for producing a professional elite but giving little more than unfulfilled expectations for those who never achieved the summit... Political leaders can see that the road they have been following will lead only to a growing problem if the ‘educated unemployed’, unless schooling can be geared to new expectations leading to realistic self-employment in rural areas rather than to unrealistic hopes for wage-employment in the cities. But while advisers can see that education that once proved effective for a highly-selected few needs to be replaced by something different... it is quite another matter to change direction on the spot.” The report quoted a number of earlier innovations in Methodist schools, inspired by the Phelps-Stokes Commissions of 1921 and 1924 – such as the incorporation of agriculture in the curriculum and the creation of trade schools – but, it said, “All these brave approaches foundered. The theory that spurred on the church at that time was outweighed by the practical economic advantages that parents could see for those who excelled in the more academic subjects.”³³

Alas! A quarter of a century later, the same could again be said of the innovations in community-orientated education that seemed promising when David Temple wrote that

³² See my *World Parish*, Westminster Institute Oxford, p 80

³³ Chapter 5 *Community-Orientated Education*

report. The women's training centres, the village polytechnics of Kenya, the imaginative *Ecoles de Promotion Collective* in Benin (then Dahomey) had their brief day and ceased to be, though not without making a valuable impact on a handful of school generations. By the 1990s Methodist investment in education in Africa focused much more on the establishment of Methodist Universities in Zimbabwe and Kenya than directly on rural development, though both these universities have Faculties of Agriculture. This emphasis reflects the shift of primary funding sources to the USA; British Methodist resources for educational institutions in Africa or elsewhere dwindled markedly as the 20th century drew to a close. But over the two centuries surveyed by the MMS History Project, capacity-building was a prominent and integral element in Methodist mission.

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