

Primitive Methodist financing of World Mission

John Young

Primitive Methodism began in the early nineteenth century in the Potteries of Staffordshire and was a mission movement from the beginning. Circuits ran their own missions and the movement spread spectacularly across the UK especially in rural and industrial areas. As far as the wider world was concerned the PMs started churches among British settlers in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. These were often staffed by ministers from Britain but the colonial churches quickly became self-supporting and eventually joined with other churches.

The other part of PM overseas mission consisted of work in Africa and this became known as foreign missions and was supported by the Africa Fund of the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society. Prior to that PMMS funds were mainly directed towards mission in Britain. This paper will concentrate on the Africa Fund and give a preliminary report on various aspects of it.

After its early expansion the PM Connexion had a strong District orientation and the Norwich District is credited with initiating the African mission. Joseph Diboll, a shoemaker from Yarmouth, mooted the idea of such a mission at the Sheffield Conference of 1837 but nothing came of it and Diboll entered African missionary work with the Baptists. The Norwich District maintained its Africa mission interest and Thomas Lowe and James Fuller of Swaffham held the first missionary meeting for African missions there in May 1852. Lowe was an enthusiast for Africa and £40. 5s [equivalent to about £3500 today] was raised for Africa and three men volunteered for the work. Nevertheless, these funds, substantial in those days, were insufficient for embarking on mission in Africa and Conference was unwilling to commit the PMs to this venture though some suspected that this was because the initiative came from the Norwich District. Interest grew, however, and in 1860 'The Connexion as a whole became committed to the African mission'¹ which could begin when enough funds became available. In 1870 missions were opened in West and South Africa and in 1893 the PMs opened their first mission in Central Africa in what is now the Southern province of Zambia. Apart from the South African Missions which joined the Methodist Church of South Africa in 1931 these missions remained under the control of the Primitive Methodist church until Methodist Union in 1932 when they became part of MMS.

Sources

For this project I sampled PM Minutes of Conference from the 1870s. These provide summaries of PMMS annual accounts including the Africa Fund and give good pictures of the changing financial and general positions in PM missionary work. Separate more detailed reports were published and I have seen some of these including the five Popular reports, modelled on the

¹ Kendall, 1906, ii, 487

Bible Society Annual reports, issued for 1928-32. The detailed reports are available at SOAS in the MMS Archives along with PM Missionary magazines such as the *Records* and *Advance*. There is a selection of the *Records* at Engelsea Brook Primitive Methodist Museum. Information about Mission finance turns up from time to time in the PM magazines (*Christian Messenger*, *Aldersgate*), Kendall's histories, other historical studies as well as biographical studies (e.g. Lives of A.T. Guttery, Sir William Hartley...). I was also able to draw on notes I made while working on archives in Zambia and my previous visits to SOAS to study the Smith papers. This provided sufficient information for a paper of this length but suggests that further research could be done.

Primitive Methodist missiology did not distinguish home and overseas missions. Mission was one whether at Whitechapel or West Africa.² This is an important consideration in analysing PMMS finances for it is not always clear which kind of missionary work or fund is meant. The PM approach throws doubt on a methodology which neatly divides home and overseas but it also created problems because missionary leaders in the UK frequently failed to understand the problems of working in vastly different cultures. The slow communications of the period also hindered the efficient working of this style. Although handled from the same office the African missions became a separate section of PM missionary work and the Africa Fund was accounted for accordingly.

An interesting question also arises and should be addressed somewhere in this mission history project and that is how we define missionary. The PMs gave that name to evangelistic workers around Britain. In Central Africa there were missionaries from Britain but there were also Africans who should be described as missionaries. They came from Lesotho and at least two of them served in Central Africa for around 20 years. In that they travelled far from their homeland to work in a different cultural and physical environment they should be counted as missionaries and certainly they were included in the mission funding scheme.

I discuss the topic in two parts; an early period of 1870-1900 and a later period of 1900-1932.

The Early Period: 1870–1900

Enough interest and funds had been raised by 1870 to begin the work and for regular efforts to be made around the Connexion. For example at Wingate in Co Durham a Juvenile Missionary Anniversary was held and £2 9s 6d was raised 'for the African Mission Fund by collections, Sabbath-school box, and scholars' cards, &c'.³

PM literature shows that various methods were used for raising money and awareness during the 1870s. There were collecting books for Sunday School scholars to collect ½d weekly subscriptions. In September 1878 different ideas were described and suggested – Local Preacher missionary meetings, farthing missionary meeting etc. In January 1878 'Every home station shall be desired to hold at least two special meetings annually in aid of Africa.' In May 1879 a bazaar

² *Life of A.T. Guttery*, 111f; PMMS Popular Report, 1928.

³ *The Christian Messenger*, 1871, 62.

was to be held in connection with the May anniversary in London. Despite these efforts in July 1879 a debt of ~£10000 was reported and over £1100 was collected (£200 from Mr W. Beckwith of Leeds) to help pay this off. Other sources of income at this early stage included a legacy of £495 from a lady in Tasmania and contributions from the young men's movement and the students of Elmfield College (figures taken from the *Records* of that period).

Personal interest played a part and when one of the early missionaries, the Revd John Smith, left for South Africa in 1874 he was presented with £200, a substantial gift (~£13000 today), from the Yarmouth Circuit to meet the cost of sending him and his family to Aliwal North in S Africa.⁴

In 1892 the Jubilee of the PMMS was celebrated by setting up a fund to raise £50,000.⁵ It turned out that most of the objects of this fund could be considered Home Mission work (e.g. work on Hartley College) and the Africa Fund awaited its Jubilee in 1920.

In Africa the work was largely financed by support from Britain but there were local accounts. The early transactions in Northern Rhodesia make interesting reading in that a barter account was set up and payments were made in yards feet and inches of cloth and pounds and ounces of beads. This went on until about 1900. 30 bundles of thatching grass cost 2¼ yards of calico. It cost 40 yards to build a house for an evangelist and plastering the outside of a new house cost 5lb 8oz of beads.⁶

In 1897 there were 795 Primitive Methodist circuits, 640 in Britain, 147 in Australia and New Zealand and 8 in Africa⁷ Contributions to the Africa Fund from all sources totalled £4291 in that year,⁸ about 5d per member (~£1.50 in 2004).

The Later Period 1900-1932

By 1900 the PM Africa Missions were fairly well established and part of PM consciousness. PMMS magazines, missionary deputations and other PM literature kept the church informed about the work overseas and at the local level all sorts of activities were going on. The Coxhoe Circuit in Co Durham could be taken as about typical in that missionary giving in 1914 was just about equally divided between the General and African Funds. Most of the AF income came from missionary boxes, collecting cards and donations but about 10% came from Christian Endeavours and 20% from Sunday Schools. In some years the circuit had missionary deputations from Africa including several visits from the Revd R Cawthorne who served in Nigeria and had relatives in Coxhoe. As well as missionary services the Women's Missionary Auxiliary held monthly meetings.⁹

⁴ Kendall, H.B., *The Origin and History of Primitive Methodism*, 2 Vols, London: 1906, ii, 497.

⁵ Kendall, H.B., *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, London: Primitive Methodist Publishing House, 1919, 129; Barber, B.A., *A Methodist Pageant*, London: The Holborn Publishing House, 1932, 196.

⁶ Account books in UCZ archives, Kitwe, Zambia.

⁷ *PM Magazine*, 1897, 620-29.

⁸ *PM, Magazine*, 1897, 633

⁹ Coxhoe PM Circuit Plans and Minute Books, Durham County Records Office.

The Revd A. T. Guttery was Connexional Missionary Secretary from 1908 to 1913. During that time giving to the African Fund increased by 50% to £12,000 and one new station was opened each year.¹⁰ The work in Africa was developing and the statistics from this period show that an increasing proportion of PM mission giving was directed to Africa. In 1914 £11,448 was collected for the General Fund and £9,215 for the African Fund a ratio of 1:0.8. By 1923 £19,463 was collected for the General Fund and £29,334 for the African Fund – a ratio of 1:1.5. In 1928 the figures were £21,667 and £37,817 (1:1.75). On this basis the Church Gresley Circuit in the Nottingham District was remarkable in its high rate of giving to the Africa Fund 1914, 1: 2.6 and 1928 1: 5.1.

Table 1 Ratio of Africa Fund (AF) and General Fund (GF) giving from All Circuits and Church.Gresley Circuit

Year	AF/GF	AF/GF
	All Circuits	Church Gresley
1914	.8	2.6
1928	1.75	5.1

This high ratio is accounted for by there being a many missionary boxes, collectors and subscribers devoted to African Missions. Since coming across that example I have noticed others. In 1914 the Leeds Second Circuit with an AF/GF ratio of 4.0 had a long list of box holders, collections at events, donations and contributions from organisations such as the Christian Endeavour and schools. Also, the Prince Consort Road Church in Gateshead supported the AF at the same ratio (4.0) and their list is dominated by three collectors who together raised more than half the £21 raised by collecting on average 6d a month from each subscriber. These examples suggest the hand of an enthusiastic organiser.

In other places, however, a more personal interest in Africa may have been responsible. For example, the Oldham II circuit in 1914 collected £12 for the General Fund and over £33 for Africa (AF/GF= 2.8) of which £23 came from Lees Road Church (AF/GF= 4.6). This may be accounted for by the minister, Rev J. Venables, being an Africa Mission enthusiast. He had a daughter, Mrs Muriel Stamp, who served later in Central Africa for many years. Another church, the Scott Memorial Church in the Norwich Circuit, contributed at an AF/GF ratio of 8.7 and this interest with many boxes, collectors, special efforts and donations may well be connected with Revd John Smith's involvement there a few years earlier. As we know John Smith was an early missionary in Africa and his son was active in Africa. Furthermore, John Smith's brother in law, H.J. Walters, was a member at Scott and was very interested in African Missions and donated £5. Further research in local PM histories would show more clearly what factors were involved in

¹⁰ *Life of A.T. Guttery*, 122f.

the extraordinary support for African Missions in certain places and apparent lack of interest in others or whether active discouragement of African missions may have played a part.

The Jubilee of PM African Missions was celebrated by setting up an African Jubilee Thanksgiving Fund after World War One. The aim was to raise £50, 000 but by 1923 ‘our people contributed over £66, 000’¹¹ and this was used to subsidise the work for the rest of the decade since expenditure regularly exceeded income by several thousand pounds.

Local income

Local income on the field is not so easy to ascertain from Connexional statistics. It is clear, however, that grants were received from the colonial government towards the educational, medical and industrial work. During 1923 the local income in Africa came to about £9, 600 compared to the £29335 raised from the UK circuits.¹² The 1914 Report has no comparable figures other than £118 from San Carlos and Banni.¹³ However, the station reports show that missionary anniversaries were held on many African stations and funds were raised in other ways – e.g. £494/2/6 from the cocoa harvest at San Carlos. At Oron £539 was raised locally which was only £30 short of paying local expenses for African ministers and teachers.¹⁴ This had grown from £14 in 1893.¹⁵ By 1932 it was reported that £20134 was raised in Africa, including Education grants which was about 70% of the amount raised for the African missions in the UK. Some areas had less local income than others. For example, in Central Africa by 1931 £621 was received in Government grants towards the support of 56 teachers.¹⁶ Indeed, local accounts show that there were sums of money not mentioned in the central accounts. For example, Northern Rhodesia showed a total expenditure of £7174 in 1929 with a block grant from Britain of £5928. This suggests that the £621 educational grant was matched by other local income to make about £1250 raised locally.

Several significant projects were started after 1900:

A new training centre in Oron, Nigeria, was built in 1905 at a cost of £1000 which was raised by the Christian Endeavour Societies.¹⁷ The Christian Endeavour (CE) movement was very popular among the Primitive Methodists. Its role in Primitive Methodism was similar to that of the Wesley Guild and through its classes many people grew in knowledge and confidence. Apart from special efforts to raise funds for particular projects such as Oron, CE income was usually included in the contributions from local churches so would take a lot of research to establish how much was raised by this means. However, CE contributions from churches in 1914 were designated for Oron, Kasenga and Medical Missions as well as for the AF in general. A small sample suggests that around 5% of income came from CEs. The Cleethorpes circuit had 30% of its substantial AF giving from CE efforts but another high giving circuit, Church Gresley,

¹¹ *PMMS Eightieth Annual report, 1923*, p. 7.

¹² *PMMS 1923 Report*, 54f.

¹³ *PMMS 1914 Report*, 206-7.

¹⁴ *1914 Report*, lxvii.

¹⁵ *1914 Report*, lxvii.

¹⁶ Kafue School Archives.

¹⁷ *PM Minutes, 1905*, 179; Ritson, J., *The Romance of Primitive Methodism*, London, 1909, 296; *PMMS 1928 Report*, 54f; Barber, B.A., *A Methodist Pageant* (London: The Holborn Publishing House, 1932), 190, etc.

received less than 1% from CEs.

A new mission at Kasenga, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), was started in 1909. The start up cost of over £3000 (~£200, 000 by 2004) was formidable but money was raised by the PM people in response to a challenge from Sir William Hartley who agreed to pay half of any expenditure between £3000 and £4000. The Arthington Trust also contributed a start up donation and annual donations. As well as that Mr Calow, a pharmacist from Redcar, provided medicines for the work.

In 1916 another project, Kafue Training Institute (KTI) in Zambia, needed funding and this was provided by Mr and Mrs Clixby of Trinity Street PM Church in Gainsborough. They were already generous donors to African work having given £3/10/- (~£200 today) in 1914.¹⁸ On 14 June 1916 they offered £900 in addition to £100 they had previously given to complete the purchase price of the farm at the Kafue Mission Station conditional on their names being permanently associated with it.¹⁹ The choirs of Primitive Methodism were involved in fund raising for Kafue and these are still commemorated on a plaque at KTI:

‘To the glory of God, this Institute for the education of African boys, was erected by the choirs of British Primitive Methodism in the year 1918’²⁰

The Layman’s League also raised £1000.²¹

Sir William Hartley has been mentioned. He was an outstanding PM industrialist who practised enlightened employment policies and philanthropy on a large scale. Many PM causes and initiatives were supported by Hartley and Missions were high on the list. ‘In the early eighties the Missionary Society had contracted a debt of about £5000, which appeared extremely formidable. In 1884 Mr Hartley ... offered to give £1,000 towards the liquidation of the debt on condition that £4,000 was raised.’²² The target was reached and Hartley continued his generous support of missions. As well as the start up cost for Kasenga he ‘paid for the training of Dr Gerrard, the first medical missionary sent to Africa by the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society’.²³ When the Jubilee Fund for PM African Missions was announced Sir William gave £5000, one-tenth of the amount to be raised.

Another philanthropist, Robert Arthington (1823-1900), generously supported world mission and although the London Missionary Society and the Baptist Missionary Society benefited most from his generosity the PMMS was helped by grants towards Kasenga from the Arthington Trust which administered his estate. ‘With intense pleasure we report that we have received for this mission a gift of £1,000 in addition to a grant of £100 a year for the next five years from the Arthington trustees.’²⁴

¹⁸ PMMS 1914 Report, 146

¹⁹ Kafue School Archives.

²⁰ Pearson, Philip C., *Those Awakening Days, The Kafue Story*, Alsager, Fairway Folio, 2002, 17.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Arthur S. Peake, *The Life of Sir William Hartley*, (Hodder and Stoughton Limited, London, 1926), 111.

²³ Peake, *Hartley*, 115

²⁴ PM Minutes, 1909, 149.

Many other sources of income could be lumped together as miscellaneous.

[i] The May Meetings held in London raised awareness and funds and were the big PM missionary event of the year. In 1928 the £534 raised which was divided between the General and African Funds. Two thirds of the money came from two donors, Sir T. Robinson, £150 and W. Lacey Esq, £200.²⁵

[ii] The British and Foreign Bible Society which bore the cost of publishing Bible translations.

[iii] Mr Calow, a pharmacist from Redcar, supplied medicines and the value of these was included as income – e.g. £69/19/4 in 1910 and £74/5/3 in 1916 (more than £4000 today).

[iv] Sunday schools played a part in fundraising– my small sample for 1914 suggests that they raised about 7% of AF funds. Some circuits had no entry under this heading but I noticed the Reading circuit (20%) and the Wingate Circuit (27%) collected a high proportion of income from this source.

[v] Hartley theological students would make special efforts and contributed £205 in 1914, £200 in 1924 and £180 in 1928.

[vi] The Ladies' Missionary Federation, later known as the Women's Missionary Federation, raised substantial amounts, growing from £334 in 1906 to £1079 in 1914²⁶ and £3109 in 1929 (10% of income from circuits).

[vii] The American PMs sent regular donations of £11 per month for many years up to the mid nineteen twenties.

Some of these aspects are tabulated below. Overall it shows a support rate of 2½d (1p) per member in the 1870s, 5d (2p) by 1900, 11d (4.4p) in 1914 and 2/6 (13p) in 1932.

Table 2 Partial table of Mission Income through PM Africa Fund period

Year	GF excl Balance in hand	GF from stations	Total AF excl BiH	AF from stations – and adjusted for inflation to 1932 [in brackets]	PM members	Inflation [1932= 1.00]
1874				2523 [4080]		1.62
1875				1833 [3024]	165410	1.65
1876				1634 [3000]		1.65
1877				1516 [2530]	183048	1.67

²⁵ PMMS 1928 Report

²⁶ 1914 Report, 207.

1880			2110	1538 [2660]		1.73
1883			1565	1396 [2410]		1.73
1895			3944	3000 [5670]		1.89
1896			4420	3515 [6640]		1.89
1897			4291	?3400 [6320]	197847	1.86
1905			5977	4986 [8630]		1.73
1906			9614	7796 [13490]		1.75
1907			7267	5665 [9740]	210114	1.72.
1908			8237	6567 [11300]		1.72
1909				6260 [10640]		1.70
1910			10026	6688 [11240]		1.68
1914	15434	11448	12796	9215 [15200]		1.65
1916			17045	10372 [12860]		1.24*
1923	21000		34335	29334 [25230]		0.86
1924				24186 [21040]		0.87
1927				28613 [25470]		0.89
1928	25000	21667	48805	37817 [34040]		0.90
1929				30794 [27710]		0.90
1930			47393	31102 [29240]		0.94
1931			41586	29861 [28970]	222978	0.97
1932			41843	28583 [28583]	222021	1.00

*There was rapid inflation in World War 1 – the money reported in 1916 may well reflect 1915 value and so be equivalent to £15000 in 1932. To compare 1932 with 2001 multiply by 40.²⁷

There was a question in the preparatory notes on the main areas of missionary expenditure (both

²⁷ This figure and the figures relative to 1932 are derived from: House of Commons *Research Paper 02/44*, 11 July 2002, *Inflation: the value of the pound 1750 -2001*, Patsy Richards, Economic Policy & Statistics Section, House of Commons Library.

geographical and thematic e.g. missionaries' stipends, home administration) and how did these change over time? This is a paper in itself. Geographically the PMs were in West Africa and Central and South Africa. Here is a table of approximate figures over the period (% in brackets).

Table 3 Geographical distribution of expenditure - % in square brackets.

Year	W Africa [%]	Missys	S Africa [%]	Missys	C Africa [%]	Missys	Passages and outfits	Furlough	General admin etc	Total spent
1883	520 [36]		404 [28]				318 [22]		~14%	1450
1895	1450 [37]	8 ^a	506 [13]	2 ^a	1014 [26]	4 ^a	591 [15]		~8%	~3900
1914	3355 [29]	20	704 [6]	6	3542 [31]	8	1237 [11]	790 [7]	1740 [15]	11400
1924	13750 [44]		2330 [7]		5590 [18]		3350 [11]	2860 [9]	~3500 [11]	~31400
1930 ^b	13540 [36]	40 ^c	1448 [4]	5 ^c	5300 [14]	10 ^c	4770 [13]	3880 [10]	~8740 [23]	37700
1931 ^b	14300 [36]		876 [2]		6610 [17]		4020 [10]	5340 [13]	~8450 [21]	39600

^a 1897, ^b from quarter to 30 June x4 rather than as whole year and ^c 1929

It is clear that it was much more expensive to mission in Central Africa than elsewhere and this was the cause of heated correspondence between the missionaries and the Missionary Secretary in the early years of the twentieth century.²⁸ Taken as funding per missionary in 1914 then ~£170

²⁸ This is discussed in my book on Edwin Smith, *The Quiet Wise Spirit*, Peterborough, Epworth Press, 2002, 78f.

in W and S Africa seemed much less than the £440 needed for C Africa (1:2.6). The disparity can be explained by the remote and undeveloped area in which the pioneer missions in Central Africa were situated. By 1930 the relative figures are £330 and £530 (1:1.6) showing that the gap had narrowed somewhat.

I asked a learned colleague about where the PMs got their funding for world mission and received the answer 'from the efforts of the people' which is about the measure of it. Although Sir William Hartley and other wealthy people did their bit, this means the efforts of the industrial and rural poor.

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