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## Missionary Work

### *Politics, Culture, and Ethical Globalization*

Globalization is “a set of social processes of increasing interdependence,” with no easily identifiable agency and structured pattern (Steger, 2009, p. 17). Most often, the term connotes a heavy Western-influenced system of economic, political, and cultural interdependence.

Protestant Christian missionaries, who propagate religion in a foreign culture, are inevitably part of the process of culture change within globalization. Missionaries are often portrayed, as Ryan Dunch (2002) writes, “in both literature and scholarship as narrow-minded chauvinists whose presence and preaching destroyed indigenous cultures and opened the way for extension of colonial rule” (p.307). Many times missionaries are then charged with being either political or cultural imperialists--those who both spread foreign political influence and destroy indigenous culture for the sake of Western Christianity. Such an understanding of missionary work ---as inherently imperialistic--- is a surprisingly insufficient perspective for the complex social interplay of missionary work. In the same way religion does not influence just morals, but also politics and economics, missionary work should not be interpreted only through political or ethnocentric lenses. An understanding of missionary work needs to account for the equally frequent instances when missionaries enrich and empower the indigenous groups with whom they work, preventing a culture group from disappearing altogether because of globalization. The work of missionaries, like Robert Moffat and John Phillip, of the London Missionary Society in nineteenth-century Southern Africa, and translators with the present-day Wycliffe Bible

Translators demonstrates that missionaries also can advocate on behalf of indigenous groups by preserving mother tongues through Bible translation. First, though, it is necessary to establish the deficiencies of political and cultural imperialism as primary interpretations of missionary work.

### I. *Understanding Mission Work*

It is undeniable in the historical record that missionaries have acted as agents of foreign empires who help to spread foreign political influence over the indigenous peoples with whom they work. There have been many instances of missionaries working on behalf of the United States government in foreign states. Information about these claims come from reputable news sources, like the BBC, who reported the expulsion of the New Tribes Mission from Venezuela for their involvement with the CIA (*BBC*, 2005), or independent investigations, like David Stoll's analysis of the complex interactions between the CIA and Wycliffe Bible Translators throughout South America (Stoll, 1982). These charges notwithstanding, it is necessary to explain why they paint an incomplete picture of modern missionary work.

Historically, missionaries have been part of the process of political imperialism. Today, missionaries are still a logical front through which U.S. foreign policy makers can encourage their interests. By working closely with indigenous populations, missionaries establish relationships, understand the culture, and most importantly, propagate a certain worldview. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, missionaries have played a major role in developing both the social infrastructure and the economies of the region. Due to missionaries, the number of Christians in Africa grew from 15 million to more than 200 million during the last century. In East Africa alone, 64% of the population claims to be Christian, while in southern Africa, 82% of the population identifies itself with Christianity (ARDA, 2010). These statistics demonstrate the growing importance of Christianity, and its importance as a worldview, in these regions.

Understandably, in order to develop its foreign policy, the U.S. government needs to consider the religious nature of a region. Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, Scott Thomas (2010) notes that by understanding the growth of “the worldwide religious resurgence,” U.S. foreign policy makers can use this revival “to improve international security and better the lives of millions” (p.96). Furthermore, Thomas notes that “Christianity is the world’s most pro-American faith,” due to the similarity with “American beliefs and ideas” in its teachings that “inculcate values conducive to democracy and economic development” (pp.93-101). Thomas effectively draws a connection between the importance of religion in shaping American foreign policy and the link to Christianity serving as the possible ambassador of these American or Western ideologies. Part of this relationship is because Christians are enormously influential in American domestic politics, which in turn shapes U.S. foreign policy, particularly regarding humanitarian aid, human rights, and support of Israel (Mead, 2006, p.24). Consequently, the same Christian attitudes that influence the U.S. government are the ones that many missionaries may hold as well.

For these reasons, it is not unreasonable that there would be instances of missionaries working on behalf of the U.S. in areas of political importance such as Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, where many missionaries have been accused of working for the CIA. Understanding missionary work simply as politically imperialistic, however, can result in a fruitless and narrow definition. All missionaries have political connections, at a minimum as expatriates of a foreign state. While evidence of direct U.S. involvement in missionary work is varied and at times unreliable, in many situations, missionary work was stopped and undermined even due to rumors of U.S. government involvement. Ryan Dunch (2002) notes regarding missionary work both past and present, that “neither missions societies nor missionaries as

individuals were directly influential with their home governments or their colonial representatives, nor were they directly linked to the traders and economic interests of their home countries” (p. 308). Throughout history, numerous accounts trace the connection between missionaries and imperial powers. While not the case for all missionaries, in southern Africa, missionaries have often gone in to begin a project and thereby opened up the way for colonialists to follow; both the missionaries and state powers have had various successes with missionary projects. As John Burton (2007) notes, although missionaries are deemed imperialists, we are living in very post-colonial times, and missionaries are still working in foreign cultures (p.1). While undeniably associated with foreign political governments, a political understanding of missionary work is only part of its function within globalization.

In addition to understanding the political role of missionaries, it is necessary to understand the charge of cultural imperialism. Using a definition from Paul W. Harris (1991), cultural imperialism is “the active expression abroad of a culture that has been shaped by the experience of aggressive expansion and dominance” (p.311). The term is often used to describe the oppression of people by a more dominant culture group, particularly American, and the origin of the term “lies in the outrage of Third World nationalists over various forms of dominance that seemed to perpetuate their exploitation and impoverishment in the post-colonial era” (p. 309). Furthermore, the charge also extends from anthropologists, who, despite the many connections between missionary work and the development of anthropology as a discipline, sometimes regard missionaries as “official enemies of anthropologists,” who intend to subvert and destroy the cultures they study for the sake of Western Christianity (Burton 2007, p.1). The pervasiveness of the charge has even led to the notion that mission work is synonymous with cultural imperialism (Harris, 1991, p.309). Even so, Dunch (2002) argues that as a term

“originating in opposition to Western cultural hegemony,” cultural Imperialism “can ironically lead to a conclusion which is profoundly Eurocentric in its denial of agency or autonomy to non-Western populations” (p.307). Culture change is a bilateral exchange and acceptance of ideas and one cannot assume that a minority culture prefers Western culture. Cultural imperialism overlooks the reality that culture change is not passive acceptance, but active engagement between cultures. Granted, missionaries have historically destroyed cultures in an effort to civilize them, but at other times missionaries have worked to preserve cultures in the face of dominant cultures and worldviews. Or, as Harris (1991) remarks, to merely identify missionaries as cultural Imperialists simply betrays that as a culture “we no longer share the view that non-Christian religions are false, deluded, and corrupt systems destined to be superseded by Christianity” (p.310). Simply put, the cultural imperialism perspective neglects to explain the many ways in which missionaries benefit cultural preservation, especially in the face of such a complex social phenomena as globalization.

Such is the case with the role of missionaries within globalization: Missionaries have a unique and beneficial impact upon the culture groups with which they work. The impact of missions work is not just political and culturally hegemonic. Missionaries do promote imperialism, promoting both political and cultural change, but oftentimes they enrich, empower, and preserve the indigenous groups with whom they work.

One of the main ways missionaries empower indigenous groups is through Bible translation into minority mother tongues, which preserves these languages in a script and allowing their culture to be recorded. Furthermore, missionaries, who live among these groups, often work on behalf of these people groups, representing their interests to the national government and international community. Using critical discourse analysis, this study will

examine how such a perspective enriches the work of the London Missionary Society's Robert Moffat and John Philip in British South Africa helped enrich such groups during the early nineteenth century.

## *II. Historical Applications: The London Missionary Society*

The London Missionary Society (LMS) is arguably the most reputable missions organization that operated out of Great Britain. The LMS was founded independently of the English Anglican church for the purpose of taking "the Glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the heathen" (Gruchy, 2000, p.1). The LMS had a far-reaching impact in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and worked not only in the Pacific, but also in the Cape Colony in southern Africa, often on the coat tails or as the heralds of the expanding British Empire. In the mid-nineteenth century, missionaries like Robert Moffat and John Phillip worked with this organization in southern Africa. Due to the nature of their work and the philosophy of the LMS, the work of these missionaries included not only elements of political and culture change, but also involved an effort to protect and preserve the indigenous groups during the dynamic process of British Imperial growth.

First and foremost, it is necessary to understand the motivation of the LMS, who were a group of evangelical missionaries focused on the salvation of indigenous peoples. The gospel was considered the enlightened truth, a means of going to heaven and being in right relationship with God, responsible for saving men from their degraded condition. As Christians, their duty was to "employ every means in their power to spread the knowledge of the gospel both at home and abroad" simply because one could not "justify not sharing the beauties of God's grace and the possibility of (knowing) this salvation to be available to all mankind" (Price, 2008, p.22). Missionaries often believed they were superior because they held the true knowledge of God and

felt a responsibility to enlighten and spread the knowledge of Christianity due to the prompting of the “Great Commission,” a divine call to spread Christianity to non-Christians (Gruchy, 2000, p.40). Additionally, in the missionary perspective, non-Christians were not just indigenous people abroad, but were other Englishman as well; there were many organizations devoted to spreading Christianity domestically in England. Regardless, zeal throughout England for converting others on behalf of Christianity was demonstrated in the creation of missionary societies, like the LMS.

As Lovett (1899) reports, in 1795, at the founding of the LMS, a prominent minister named George Burder delivered a sermon that presents the philosophy of the society. Here, he calls for missionaries to observe Jesus’ last command to go into the nations by uniting with each other in order to act on behalf of the unsaved. Furthermore, Burder challenges the audience to establish the spiritual kingdom of God, so God’s name might be well known among all men. He then implores that they unite, regardless of political views, “abhorring all attempts to disturb order and government in this or in any other country,” through their love of Christ, establishing a missionary society “for sending ministers of Christ to preach the gospel among the heathen.” Through this sermon, it is evident that for the LMS, the missionaries were not motivated by a political association with the British, but rather to evangelize and spread Christianity. In Burder’s mind, proselytizing was an act of obedience to God, demonstrating that they “love His name and prize His salvation.” Additionally, Burder sets a standard for missionaries to work together despite political differences and to work abroad in a manner that does not upset domestic or foreign governance. Burder suggests the LMS establish a Christian community in foreign lands by sending out well-financed missionaries together to “cultivate a friendly discourse with the natives,” befriending them by living among them and then “leading them into a gradual

acquaintance with the most glorious truths of Revelation” (pp.21-23). This idea set a standard for the missionaries to live among the indigenous populations and then to introduce Christianity over time. In practical application, the missionary mindset was coined into ‘Christianity, Civilization and Commerce’ by John Philip, who demonstrated that mission stations provided not only an opportunity to spread Christianity, but also civilization which led to commerce. Missionary stations gave missionaries a chance to learn the language, customs, and culture of the indigenous people while also establishing relationships with them and their chiefs. Missionaries then became part of the indigenous culture while also, because they were British, introducing elements of the British culture.

Missionaries appealed to colonial powers because they were British citizens who had established relationships with indigenous people, spoke local languages, and engaged in local commerce. As the British Empire expanded, the British inevitably clashed with the indigenous people groups. For the British, an effective relationship with the indigenous people required favor from the chiefs. Missionaries, on the fringes of the colony, already had established friendly relations. Some laws even indirectly gave the chiefs the responsibility to protect the missionaries, who agreed not to interfere with the chiefs’ rule. In this manner, missionaries were not a threat to the indigenous people and were able to focus on their mission work. Such a relationship, along with the introduction of commerce at the mission posts, attracted the attention of the colonial state, who began to regulate commerce (Price, 2008, pp. 60-62).

Some British colonial governors considered missionaries to be responsible to the British Empire. As British colonial influence increased, the colonial government exerted control through relationships with the indigenous chiefs. Missionaries had better relationships with chiefs than traders and government officials, and proved able to maintain order on the frontier.



Understandably, missionaries were instrumental in forming frontier policy, especially in the realm of commerce. Colonial officials tried to control frontier trade, but on the fringes of colonial authority, missionaries frequently bartered European goods in order to obtain other basic necessities (Price, 2008, p. 233). Some scholars, like Robert Beck (2002), even argue that the biggest influence of European culture came through trade, rather than missionary efforts at preaching and teaching (p.76). In this way, the influence of commerce at the missionary bases provided a legitimate entrance for colonial authority to intervene through missionary work.

The opportunity provided to colonial officials to exert colonial policy over the indigenous people through missionary relationships, when coupled with the philosophy of the LMS, created an interesting perspective of historical missions work. Although Christianity motivated LMS missionaries, their definition of Christianity included elements of the British Empire culture. Nonetheless, within the process emerged another facet of missionary work: empowering cultures through the storm of Empire expansion. The whole process can be seen through the work of John Philip and Robert Moffat. John Philip, seeing the inevitable expansion of British colonial authority, as a superintendant for the LMS worked on behalf of the indigenous people's rights in order to protect them, while also promoting colonial influence. Robert Moffat, working at a mission base in colonial Southern Africa, minimized colonial influence through his work with linguistics.

### *John Philip and Empire*

John Philip worked in ministry in Scotland until he was sent by the LMS in 1819 to serve as a director of the unorganized and disarrayed missions posts in Southern Africa. Philip was sent in order to review the work of LMS missionaries, and then to recommend and implement reforms. This role as superintendant for the LMS gave him both an active role in missionary

work, but also required him to be actively involved in colonial politics (Ross, 1994, p.28).

Although Philip has often been remembered for his influence in the spread of British colonialism, Philip worked for the sake of the missionaries under his control and on behalf of the indigenous people that he served.

First, it is necessary to understand that Philip worked on behalf of the LMS for the missionaries in the Cape. Through his work in support of missionaries, Philip promoted both civilization and commerce. Missionaries were necessary for the propagation of Christianity, and understandably, these missionaries often brought to their mission posts a certain level of civilization. As reported by Hastings (1994), Philip once wrote about the importance of civilization to Christianity, commenting, “civilization is to the Christian religion what the body is to the soul,” then noting that the goal of Christianity “never can be secured and rendered permanent among them without their civilization” (p.285) It is important here to note what Philip may have meant by civilization, which was not what many understand as industrialization and ‘commercial employability,’ but for the missionaries, was making the missions posts more like home. As Hastings (1994) argues, civilization was “the vegetable gardens and fruit trees, clean houses and water, ploughs and forges, reading and writing, hats and shoes,” the items that were familiar to them back in England (p. 285). Such a kind of civilization was important to benefit the missionaries through the physical improvement of the mission posts. Missionaries had certain expectations for a quality of civilization, at a minimum for themselves, which led to the introduction of manufactured European goods at the mission posts for the British. Over time, trade developed at mission posts, granting indigenous peoples access to European goods.

Commerce became one of the facets of Christian missionary work. Philip first suggested the idea of a store at a mission post in 1822. Eventually Philip created mission stores at two of

the LMS mission posts. These mission stores would trade certain European goods for Indigenous crafts and products. For Philip, the mission store was a risk. According to Beck (2002), Philip believed “missionaries should labor solely for the ‘improvement’ of those under their charge and not in any secular activities,” like “commercial enterprises,” which threatened mission work with “abuse and evil reports.” Furthermore, as demonstrated, such commerce and trading connections eventually became a viable source of expansion for the British Empire (p. 77).

Secondly, Philip worked to represent and protect the indigenous people from various threats. Philip wrote a book, entitled *Researches in South Africa*, in order to influence frontier policy in Britain, encourage a humanitarian approach to politics, which, while based out of a felt burden for the indigenous, concurrently promoted their well being (Price, 2000, p.31). As Philip (1828) writes, relative to other forms of government, “missionary stations are the most efficient agents which can be employed to promote the internal strength of our colonies, and the cheapest and best military posts that a wise government can employ to defend its frontier.” He then recalls how one chief, “a noted murderer and plunderer,” after his encounter with missionaries, began to promote peace in place of hostilities (pp. 227-229), which, for Philip, demonstrated the positive effect of missionaries among cultures. Furthermore, Philip had suggested that missionaries, as part of Christianizing, should function as the principle means of moral reform and civilization in lieu of the colonial state (Stuart, 2002, p.72). According to Hastings (1994), the primary requirement for civilization was political justice for the indigenous people (p. 286), since Hastings identified Philip’s “intention was to protect them as independent states, building up their resources through a missionary presence,” which concurrently introduced British commerce and culture. For Philip, “sometimes the only way to protect the indigenous people...seemed incorporation into some form within the Empire” (p. 409). When the motivations of missionary

work combined with the expansion of British Empire, missionaries conceded to encourage incorporation within the empire, effectively allowing direct political Imperialism while attempting to protect the indigenous. Thus, Philip as a missionary, although attempting to protect the indigenous people and promote Christianity, also managed to introduce Western culture and commerce.

### *Robert Moffat and Bible Translation*

Robert Moffat was a missionary with the LMS in the Cape colony from 1817 until 1870 at one of the bases managed by John Philip. He rigorously involved himself in his missionary work, effectively developing the mission station on the fringes of the British colony, and undertaking numerous treks across the Kalahari to present-day Zimbabwe. He successfully learned Setswana and translated the entire Bible into Setswana, a decades-long endeavor, which was printed on his mission post's printing press (Gruchy, 2000, p. 29). As a dedicated missionary, through his letters and book, *Missionary Labours in South Africa*, Moffat demonstrates another aspect of LMS missionary work during the period while Philip was superintendent.

Moffat, as a missionary, dedicated his life to working with the Batswana people in the Kalahari Desert and his primary focus was to translate the Bible into Setswana. Such an endeavor was religiously motivated and concurrently strengthened the Batswana people. The Setswana language translation took him nearly thirty years, and he had to learn Setswana adequately, transcribe the language, and teach it to the Batswana. Translating the Bible into Setswana, rather than using an English version, greatly empowered the Batswana. Moffat could have taught English, as some missionaries have done, with the expectation that his congregation would learn to speak and read English, the colonial language. However, by translating into

Setswana, Moffat essentially empowered the Batswana. Mother tongue translations introduce Christianity into a particular social context, which is infinitely more personal to the native speaker, and literacy enables cultural progress (Gruchy, 2000, p.27). In retrospect, Moffat (1876) recalls the positive response of the Batswana people to having the Bible in their language: they were enthusiastic and appreciative at being able to read the Bible in their mother tongue (p.176). By translating the Bible into Setswana and then teaching the Batswana how to read it, Moffat was in a sense empowering the Batswana not to rely solely on what was told to them about Christianity and the British, but rather was enabling them to think for themselves (Gruchy, 2000, p.27). Furthermore, the Bible embraces specific views against oppression and promotes freedom and liberty; by introducing these values in Setswana to the people, Moffat not only undermined British political influence over the Batswana, but he also affirmed his friendship with the Batswana by offering the scriptures to them in their mother tongue.

While Moffat distanced himself from British culture through the adoption of Setswana, he furthermore did not refuse to interpret and translate between natives and the British. Moffat (1837) writes, “No missionary can refuse his pacific council and advice [to the indigenous people]...nor decline to be interpreter or translator to any foreign power.” In addition to offering interpreting and translation services, Moffat believed that it was appropriate to “hush the din of war,” and to serve as “a mediator or intercessor where life is at stake.” These remarks clearly demonstrate his ability to appeal to pacifism and to be a representative of the Batswana to the British. Moffat commented that to act as an agent for the benefit of the British government and “entering into diplomatic engagements places himself [the missionary], as well as the great object of his life, into jeopardy” (pp. 207-208). Moffat was an Englishman working as a representative of God among the Batswana, all the while establishing relationships and serving

as an ambassador of the Batswana. In his view, agency of both government and religion was incompatible and impractical. By working on behalf of the state, Moffat would have had less control in his desire to complete his missionary activities, which ultimately laid a foundation for the protection of the Batswana culture (Gruchy, 2000, p.21). Moffat's work demonstrates another side of missionary work in the colonial Cape, a side that actually encouraged cultural growth.

In nineteenth century South Africa, John Philip and Robert Moffat demonstrate a more complete picture of missionary work beyond Imperialism. John Philip's work became quipped as "Christianity, civilization and commerce," and to many at home in Victorian England, Christianity was seen to be the means by which global social and economic development would ensue. As noted by the Rev. W. Ellis, "To bring the heathen the gospel of the cross of Christ was to open before them not only the prospect of eternal life but also the road to unlimited social and economic development" (Stanley, 1983, p.71). Thus, with such a discourse in the minds of Christian Englishmen in Britain, the advantages of missionary work among indigenous people groups was bound to come to the mind of British foreign-policy makers. Policy makers, in turn, began to turn to missionaries to exert political influence and as the British Empire spread, at times, missionaries took action to protect and preserve indigenous cultures. A complete and more accurate understanding of missionary work, beyond Imperialism and including empowering minority groups, can be demonstrated through the actions of John Philip and Robert Moffat of the LMS. Interestingly, a number of similarities can be found in interpreting the work of modern day mission organizations, like the Wycliffe Bible Translators.

### *III. Modern Interpretations: Wycliffe Bible Translators*

Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT) is an organization was founded in 1942 by missionary William Cameron Townsend,. When Townsend began to work with the Cakchiquel Indians in Guatemala, there was no translation of the Bible in their language. From there, Townsend resolved to begin an organization to translate the Bible into every language so that all people may have access to the Bible in their mother tongue. Now, WBT, motivated by the belief “that God’s Word is accessible to all people in a language that speaks to their heart,” has projects in over 90 countries and works primarily with minority people groups and aims to begin a translation project for every language by 2025. Furthermore, WBT believes that “the most effective means of communication is the mother tongue,” and “that for a church to be fully indigenous, it must have the Bible in its mother tongue” (WBT, 2011). Lastly, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), WBT’s sister organization, is a global authority on ethnic languages. Also founded by Townsend, Wycliffe missionaries are also members of SIL, but while WBT is a missionary organization, SIL “presents itself as a secular linguistics institute, thus enabling it to enter countries otherwise restricted to missionary activities,” which has led to controversy and numerous criticisms (Metzer, 1993). Many WBT projects are now focused on Africa, where, according to one 1997 study, only 25% of African languages had a translated copy of either the Old or New Testament (Yorke, 2004, p.156). Though seemingly mundane, Bible translation has a number of factors that both promote politics and economics, while also empowering people groups.

According to WBT, benefits of translating include “better health as a result of access to medical information, economic growth due to the acquisition of marketable skills, and the

preservation of culture thanks to a written history” (WBT, 2011). SIL cites a number of benefits of translation in relation to the UN Millennium Development Goals, which include better access to health care and educational opportunities (SIL, 2008). Furthermore, translation efforts in Africa mold the culture and identity of African churches, given the role of minority vernacular languages and the flourishing culture of African indigenous churches (Yorke, 2004, p. 154). Preserving mother tongue languages encourages ethnic diversity and effectively preserves a culture while the work of translators also improves economic development and can lead to political connections.

Political connections of WBT and SIL have prompted much criticism and trouble for their missionaries. Part of the controversy starts with SIL presenting itself as a secular organization instead of Christian, which fuels rumor, especially when there have been occasions of the CIA being involved with SIL work. Many of the instances occurred in Latin America in the Cold War era, when leftist governments were taking power. At the time, although discouraged, many missionaries were more open to involvement with the CIA since missionaries and governments had similar concerns (Lernoux, 1980, pp.494-495). Even so, despite training missionaries against colluding with foreign governments, in the 1970s, SIL investigated 16 instances of collusion between its missionaries and the CIA (Alford, 2006, p.58). After protesting to the United States government, legislation was passed in 1976 to prevent the CIA from using missionaries and clergymen as a front for them in foreign states. The CIA later admitted in 1980 that there was “a controversial loophole,” that allowed the CIA to use missionaries as informants (Jones, 1980). Such events led to further accusations of SIL. In Latin America, due to rumors of CIA involvement, in 1980, Colombian rebels accused SIL of mining and exporting emeralds to the United States. SIL missionary Chet Bitterman was even taken



hostage and later murdered (Alford, 2006, p.58). Another similar incident occurred in 1994, when Colombian rebels again took an SIL worker hostage, releasing him two years later (CT, 1996). It is difficult to determine the involvement of the United States in missionary work, mainly because no direct evidence has been found, nor are missionaries willing to share their experiences. Regardless, these instances demonstrate the reaction to the political influence missionaries can even be rumored to have, but WBT attempts to focus not on political activity, but on translating the Bible.

WBT is a post-colonial missions organization and much of their work is not evangelizing, but translating the scriptures, most often in communities that have already a Christian population. In addition, the communities WBT works with are often minority language speaking, and for these people groups, mother tongues are not only an important part of preserving their culture, but contribute to economic development. There are many instances citing the value of mother tongues, which aid in language communication and, as Hill (2006) notes, research among Ghana's Dega has shown, speaking mother tongues "increased their appallingly low level of self-respect, freed them from beliefs that hindered their development, and opened the door to literacy and to numeracy" (p. 86). One WBT missionary, James Pohlig, pointed out that literacy in one's mother tongue increases their chances of fluency in regional languages and ultimately can lead to greater fluency in national languages, which are imperative for economic development. Additionally, Pohlig believes the value of literacy goes beyond merely being able to read the Bible. Literacy raises one's self-respect, aids in communication, shows cultural progress, and enables one to write down their cultural history (Personal communication, November 25, 2011). With Bible translation, the basic foundations for literacy are laid. WBT both translates the Bible and then teaches literacy. As an effort to preserve African identity, though, many scholars are

beginning to call for an effective way of preserving African culture in translation, by avoiding Western biases and by putting African identity back into the Bible as it is translated into vernacular languages. Translations specifically highlighting biblical references to places in Africa along with topics relevant to Africans, would show Africans that they do have a place within the Bible (Togerassi, 2009, p.62). Bible translation, as done by WBT, effectively preserves a culture and allows it to grow and maintain an identity in the face of an expanding Modernity while concurrently promoting economic development.

The idea of translation benefitting the culture, avoiding cultural Imperialism, and progressing the people group is demonstrated in the work of WBT missionary James Pohlig. Although he now works as an advisor on translation projects, he has a doctorate in Biblical languages and translated with the Lutheran church in Nigeria for six years before joining WBT in 1988. WBT sent Pohlig to Cameroon's Far North Province to translate for the Mofu people between 1990 and 1996. Pohlig is motivated by his religious conviction and truly believes that "every people group needs God's word." He has no corporate interests, but is financed by individual donations and contributions from churches. Pohlig elaborated on how the presence of missionaries can further advocate on behalf of the local minority population.

While in Mofuland, Pohlig worked in literacy and translation. He believes that everyone needs God's word, the Bible, and sought to give the Mofu Christian population a translation in their mother tongue. The Mofu are a minority group in Cameroon and out of a population of 40,000, between six and seven thousand were Christians. The majority religion in the area was Islam and many of the local leaders were Muslim. As such, the Christian minority was often subject to discrimination. Relative to the Muslims, the Christians often experienced land grabbing by Muslim leaders, who would then give it to friends and family, withholding the

government stipend for cotton harvests, and denying tax receipts on a head tax, which means Christians would often pay the tax two or three times. Many Christian groups would then attempt to combat this prejudice by organizing emigration movements for the Christians out of areas of oppression. Furthermore, one missionary even appealed to the governor on behalf of the prison population, where many of the prisoners were dying due to disease and poor living conditions. Although these are examples of missionaries working on behalf of the minority people groups, Pohlig did not recall the discrimination stopping entirely due to a missionary presence, and while Pohlig worked with the Mofu, there was neither a change in local nor regional politics due to influence from the missionaries. While missionaries would involve themselves in politics on behalf of the oppressed, missionary involvement led to both strengthening the culture through translation and political activism (personal communication, November 25, 2011).

WBT and SIL demonstrate a more complete understanding of missions work. Sometimes being subject to charges of CIA collusion, WBT and SIL often promote both economic development and cultural revival among the groups they work with simply by the nature of their work. Translation provides an opportunity for locals to become literate, which increases their chances of promotion in the economic ladder. As globalization continues, WBT and SIL have a unique seat that allows them the opportunity to not only promote political ends, but to participate in economic and cultural development. Furthermore, these missionaries work among all types of people groups and often in places with very little economic or political interest, which decreases the likelihood of marginalized people groups falling through the cracks of globalization.

#### *IV. Conclusions*

Globalization is a social process that is increasingly involving more and more people in a variety of culture groups. Culture, being man made, is an active exchange of both external and

internal factors that can change political systems and worldviews. As a part of globalization, imperialism, however strong, both cultural and political, is a process that affects both traditional and foreign cultures. Missionaries have a unique function within the process of globalization. Although some missionaries do act as imperialists, both politically and culturally, many missionaries may not promote just capitalism and democracy, but also function to empower the indigenous people through Bible translation and by advocating on behalf of the marginalized. Despite the imperialist charge, the question of missionary work should not rest on whether cultures should change, but rather what elements of our culture should be promoted as a part of globalization? As Manfred Steger (2009) notes, “there is nothing wrong with greater manifestations of social interdependence that emerge as a result of globalization as long as these transformative social problems address our global problems,” where he refers to these global problems as “terrorism, nuclear weapons, climate change, poverty, and inequality.” Lastly, Steger promotes world powers to emphasize “a form of globalization that is not defined by economic self-interest alone but, rather, is deeply infused with ethical concerns for humanity (pp.165-166). Missionaries in foreign lands, who are not motivated by politics or economics, but religion, may promote the minority group, which does not subjugate indigenous peoples as a victim of globalization, but rather allows them to benefit from globalization. Religion encapsulates a worldview that includes both politics and economics while also promoting ethics. Being so, a critique of missionary work should not simply be a charge of either political or cultural Imperialism, but should also examine the moral presentation of political and cultural ideas to a culture, which often times may benefit the people group relative to the ideals presented by corporate interests and diplomats. By promoting the use of mother-tongue languages, missionaries preserve ethnic cultures and increase the likelihood of both economic and human

development among people groups. Furthermore, missionaries, working with the people group often empower and work on their behalf to larger government bodies. A study of the LMS and WBT demonstrates that missionary work should not be interpreted merely as political or ethnocentric, but should also regard the value of those who will empower minorities, which is critical if globalization is to bring even more cultures into closer contact.

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## Addendum

For my project in IGS 400, I evaluated and created a scholarly lens for understanding missionary work. I then demonstrated how to use this lens by applying it first to a historical study of Robert Moffat and John Philip's work with the London Missionary Society in Southern Africa, and secondly to present day missionary group Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Through the process of writing this project, I deepened my research skills by not only learning to find a variety of sources, but also by learning to synthesize a variety of information.

First, I had to start with a hunch. While I had an idea, I had to research, describe and utilize scholar's opinions and perspectives regarding missionary work. Here, I found it most helpful to use the International and Global Studies Resource page to begin wading through the many scholarly interpretations of missionary work. While using EBSCO Academic Search Complete, I learned which search terms yielded beneficial results and how to apply practical advice I had been taught by Sarah Dorsey about truncating and expanding search terms. I also developed a plan to save relevant articles and keep my folders organized. This enabled me to research effectively by learning about my topic, recording data, making qualified distinctions, and expanding upon my search terms in order to come to precise conclusions. All in all, this process of learning to use EBSCO enabled me to construct a theory to apply to my research.

I also learned to augment what I found in EBSCO by accessing relevant data and articles elsewhere on the Internet. For example, I found two article abstracts in *Foreign Affairs* online. These articles were not publically available, but I realized that I could find them by using the library's "Journal Finder" tab. I was then able to access and use these articles, which became

critical to my argument. Furthermore, I also learned that I could access religious demographic information through “The Association of Religion Data Archives.” This resource allowed me to draw useful conclusions about the growth and change of Christianity in different regions in Africa.

After creating my theoretical lens, I first applied it to study the work of historical missionaries Robert Moffat and John Philip. I was using critical discourse analysis on their writings, but I was only able to find their writings in Google Books, but I then used the “Historical Abstracts” and “EBSCO Search Complete” tab under the IGS subject guide to find secondary sources. Through these services, I was able to find a variety of opinions that deepened my understanding of their missionary work. I also found that I needed more context than what the articles included, so I turned to the library catalogue. Here, I applied the lessons I learned from Sarah Dorsey in an honors class and was able to find books that established the historical context of British South Africa, where these two worked. There were also books with collected essays that were relevant to my topic that I found helpful. It was also helpful to search through the catalogue subject headings, which helped me find all the books that were specifically related to my topic. Coupling articles with the books I found gave depth that the primary sources were lacking.

Thirdly, EBSCO provided the resources that I used for my modern interpretation. Through EBSCO, I learned to find newspaper and magazine articles that became a wealth of information. These articles, from as far as 30 years ago, became my primary source documents that other scholars had not used, and provided valuable insight into social factors of the modern missionary movement. In this way, when coupled with an interview I conducted, I felt I had

completed my original research by applying my theory to understanding these primary documents that had not been yet been commented on by other scholars.

Researching my topic taught me how to be specific with my search terms, how to utilize resources, determine what resources to use, and how to find what was most useful to my research. I am currently expanding my project and have utilized online film and ebooks through UNCG. All in all, my project was the elaboration of current academic lenses to create a better scholarly lens, which was then applied to study both history and the present, which required research, learning to use, and applying a variety of the library's resources. Finally, the APA style guide helped me to make it into a properly cited scholarly paper.