

INTRODUCTION

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The nineteenth century saw the establishment of multitudes of missionary organisations, with many connected to evangelical Protestantism in Britain, continental Europe, North America and the British colonial world. To facilitate the dissemination of information about their work, missionary societies drew upon a variety of media available to them including the rousing immediacy of lectures from missionaries on furlough, the anonymity of missionary monographs and pamphlets, or the exotic nature of photographs and magic lantern shows from far flung places. All of these forms of missionary propaganda attempted to reach a broad range of people in order to engage them in the support of the missionary endeavour. Of these forms, one of the most enduring and multifaceted is that of the missionary periodical. Periodicals had a synthesise function as they were able to incorporate other media, such as reprints of missionary lectures, copies of sketches or photographs, serialised monographs, letters or reports. They differed from newspapers in so far as they appeared at greater intervals, and were more specialised. They were seen at the beginnings of the nineteenth century as closer in form to books, and by the end as part of mass consumption culture.¹ As missionary intelligence was often needed to be drawn together from disparate places, their regularity was more important than their actuality, with many societies relying upon old narratives, or those from other societies to fill the pages. Moreover, their preparation and dissemination was dependent upon vast geographical networks that often went beyond the confines of one missionary society, and thus were a product of, as well as contributing to, the web of missionary connections. Their function was multifaceted being utilised to influence the readership, to conjure support for missions, to construct images of the foreign ‘other’, and to help legitimise the missionary endeavour. They were in and of themselves a political media that both hoped to shape the beliefs of those who read them, as well as themselves being affected by church and state politics.

Within this edited collection, the term politics is broadly understood to encompass activities pertaining to the acquisition or exercising of authority or status of one group or individual over another group or individual though either formal or informal means. This definition includes both the effects of the state on the

1 Jürgen Wilke, *Grundzüge der Medien- und Kommunikationsgeschichte* (Köln, Weimar, and Wien: Böhlau, 2008), 94; Brian Maidment, “Periodicals and Serial Publications, 1780–1830,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 5, ed. Michael Suarez and Michael Turner (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 498–512.

content and function of missionary periodicals as well as how the content itself was used as propaganda to secure missionary interests. In particular, we have targeted five different categories that missionary actors could move through from individual to national levels: as individuals; as congregations or local nodes of supra-regional religious groups; as missionary organisations; as denominations; and as nations. The collecting, reporting, manipulation and reception of politics – whether international, transnational, national, religious, or body politics – in missionary periodicals opens up questions as to how missionaries utilised the particular form and function of missionary periodicals to attain their desired ends.

Missionary periodicals, like all sources, are problematic.² They can inform us of historical events, actors, and places, but must all be read cautiously, and with an awareness of missionary biases. One of these biases is found in the editing process itself, which was often a political act. What was left in, what was taken out, and who determined this, all contributed to the shaping and controlling of missionary intelligence. As chapters in this collection reveal, often political structures beyond the missionary society themselves influenced the editing process. Even when we know the intentions of the editors, missionary periodicals are not a straightforward source that historians interested in non-European societies can turn to. Andrew Porter has argued that much of the text within missionary periodicals was so sanitised and censored before reaching the home readership that it “was often bland and comfortable, often remote from reality because of the conflicting interests it attempted to reconcile,” with it quickly illuminating “an inbuilt tendency to cater for metropolitan prejudice.”³ To be sure, the content of missionary periodicals was often solicited in order to cater for home audiences and thus reflected both home audience expectations as well as missionary ability to pander to these expectations. As cultural historians and literary scholars have further noted, missionary periodicals helped define the norms and values of the home audience, especially when juxtaposed to the ‘heathen other.’⁴ Amidst the “bland and comfortable” images were, however, ones that were decidedly more sensational and exotic; for sensationalism indeed sells, and missionary periodicals, like non-devotional religious tracts, were intended to reach large audiences as well as be commercial viable.⁵

2 As to the problematic nature of missionary sources see: David Arnold and Robert A. Bickers, “Introduction,” in *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues*, eds. Robert A. Bickers and Rosmary Seton (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996): 1–10.

3 Andrew Porter, “Scottish Missions and Education in Nineteenth-Century India: The Changing Face of ‘Trusteeship,’” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 16, no. 3 (1988): 35–57, 45.

4 For example, see: Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830–1867* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002); Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

5 For an example of sensational religious tracts, see: Rowan Strong, “A Vision of an Anglican Imperialism: The Annual Sermons of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts 1701–1714,” *Journal of Religious History* 30 (2006): 175–198.

Religious leaders, and especially evangelical leaders, were aware of the power of the printed word and strove to establish missionary periodicals for their “friends and patrons,” which were to be edifying as well as informative.⁶ Terry Barringer has noted that missionary periodicals were “used blatantly as a public relations tool.”⁷ Indeed, many missionary societies were forthright about the aims that they held for their periodicals, including that of raising material and spiritual support for the missionary cause. As a subsection of the religious press, missionary periodicals were also seen as being “rarely inventive in format or protocol,”⁸ however, by often being modelled on other products in the market,⁹ and following mass media trends such as the use of new technologies, they made very efficient use of the opportunities and functions that these media offered. One example is the technology needed to easily print photographs on paper. Introduced in 1882, missionary periodicals, such as Moravian *The Little Missionary* in the United States of America, were already using this technology by the mid-1880s.¹⁰ Another trend was the diversification into audience specific periodicals, for example those for children or women. Larger missionary societies, such as the Church Missionary Society, catered to many specific interest groups with dedicated periodicals such as: the illustrated *Church Missionary Gleaner* (London, 1850–1870, 1874–1921) for the middle class; the *Church Missionary Intelligencer* (London, 1849–1906) for an “intelligent and thinking mind”¹¹; the *Church Missionary Juvenile Instructor* (1844–1890) for the upcoming generation; and the *Chinese Bible Woman’s Mission* (1893) for those women particularly interested in missions in China. The number and breadth of people that read missionary periodicals was significant, with smaller missionary periodicals having a circulation of a couple of hundreds to a number of thousands, and the larger ones with figures in the hundreds of thousands.¹² Just as secular periodicals had become “one of the chief

- 6 Thomas Baldwin, Daniel Sharp and James M. Winchell, “Editors’ Address,” *The American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer* 1, no. 1 (1817): 4–6, 4.
- 7 Terry Barringer, “Why Are Missionary Periodicals [Not] So Boring? The Missionary Periodicals Database Project,” *African Research and Documentation*, no. 84 (2000): 33–46, 33.
- 8 Josef L. Altholz, “Anonymity and Editorial Responsibility in Religious Journalism,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 24, no. 4 (1991): 180–186, 180.
- 9 Joseph Stubenrauch, “Silent Preachers in the Age of Ingenuity: Faith, Commerce, and Religious Tracts in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *Church History* 80, no. 03 (2011): 547–574, 548.
- 10 For a general overview of missionary photography, see: Kathryn T. Long, “‘Cameras ‘Never Lie’: The Role of Photography in Telling the Story of American Evangelical Missions,” *Church History* 72, no. 4 (2003): 820–851.
- 11 “Character and Objects of the ‘Church Missionary Intelligencer,’” *Church Missionary Intelligencer* (London) 1, no. 1 (1849): 1–3, 2.
- 12 For example, the Church Missionary Society had a combined total monthly periodical circulation in 1898 of about 216,000. See: Steven Maughan, “‘Mighty England Do Good’: The Major English Denominations and Organisation for the Support of Foreign Missions in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues*, eds. Robert A. Bickers and Rosemary Seton (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996): 11–37, 21.

entertainments of the people,”¹³ missionary periodicals were produced on a scale and manner that encompassed a diverse readership, with content that was designed to entertain, edify, and inform supporters and friends of the missionary endeavour. And, like the secular press, missionary periodicals were not homogeneous in their opinions, political positioning, or social commentary. Yet, despite the rich content and mass of missionary periodicals, they have not been the focus of much academic attention, especially not as sources in their own right.¹⁴

Part of the dearth of attention is due to the impression that missionary periodicals are formulaic and overtly full of propaganda; but just as other forms of media they had the double function of informing and influencing.¹⁵ Sometimes it was governmental opinion that missionaries groups wished to influence, but more often it was aimed at influencing the views of the home community with the intention of raising funds, legitimising the missionary endeavour, or even their nation’s imperial efforts. In a century where European mapping of the world was not yet complete, missionary periodicals provided some of the richest information about foreign people and lands. Such information about non-Europeans was not only influenced by metropolitan stereotypes. It was just as often used as the basis of various stereotypes, many of which were very resilient, as chapters in this volume demonstrate. Amongst these was the trope of the needy ‘heathen’, which, along with reports of successful missionary work, functioned to legitimise missionary requests for funds. Within the pages of missionary periodicals the entangled nature of the ‘Bible and the flag’ in the nineteenth century is evident.¹⁶ Editors and contributors were able to shape their readership’s opinion as to colonial, imperial, or nationalist aspirations through obviously political texts, or through more subtle

13 John S. North, “The Rationale – Why Read Victorian Periodicals?,” in *Victorian Periodicals: A Guide to Research*, eds. J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. Van Arsdell (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1978): 3–20, 5.

14 Exceptions include: Terry Barringer, “What Mrs Jellyby Might Have Read: Missionary Periodicals: A Neglected Source,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 37, no. 4 (2004): 46–74; Felicity Jensz, “Origins of Missionary Periodicals,” *Journal of Religious History* 36, no. 2 (2012): 234–255; Felicity Jensz and Hanna Acke “Forum: The Form and Function of Nineteenth-Century Missionary Periodicals,” *Church History* 82, no. 2 (2013): 368–404; Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800–1860*. A number of groups have documented the titles of missionary periodicals. For example, see: Roswitha Bodenstein, *Die Schriftenreihen der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft* (Berlin: Berliner Missionswerk, 1996); Dietrich Meyer, “Deutschsprachige Zeitschriften der Brüderunität,” *Unitas Fratrum* 9 (1979): 53–64; “Missionary Periodicals Datatbase,” accessed December 2, 2010, <http://divdl.library.yale.edu/missionperiodicals/Default.aspx>.

15 Our understanding of propaganda is informed by John MacKenzie. See: John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire. The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880–1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 3.

16 For more about the connection between the nineteenth-century missionary enterprise and imperialism, see: Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University, 2004); Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollon, 1992).

ways, such as reproducing texts and advancing national narratives. Missionary periodicals were on many levels political tools used to influence their audience.

As Terry Barringer has noted, missionary periodicals “are valuable sources for the evolution of missionary self-understanding and self-representation.”¹⁷ Within this edited volume we also provide evidence that missionary periodicals are valuable sources for the evolution of political thought as well as political placement. Their content reveals the networks between various societies, as well as the boundaries between. One such boundary that was fiercely guarded within the pages of missionary periodicals was that between Protestants and Catholics. Politics on all these various levels affected the content of missionary periodicals, the rationale behind creating images of the ‘other’, the role of censorship, and how missionary organisations promoted and disseminated their periodicals. The broad geographical outlook within the volume over the long nineteenth century provides an opportunity to explore similarities and differences between varieties of missionary periodicals, both of single organisations, or societal publications, as well as those that combined material from various sources, or supra-denominational sources. In doing so it broadens the geographical focus of research on missions beyond the Anglo-Saxon realm that has dominated research up until now. The volume has coalesced around four key themes. The first three chapters, bound under the heading ‘Modes of Nationalism’ examine how missionary periodicals contributed to the creation of national or imperial identities. Missionary periodicals for children, argues Hugh Morrison in his chapter, helped construct loyal imperial subjects in various colonies such as Canada and New Zealand, with religions and politics an entangled aspect of the genre of missionary periodicals. In a comparative analysis between two Moravian publications, the *Periodical Accounts* and the *Missions-Blatt*, Felicity Jenz argues that the differences between the expressed support for imperialism within these periodicals was based upon the combination of perceived audience, national setting, political standing of the editor, as well as the form of the periodical. Jeremy Best demonstrates in his chapter on the *Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift*, a German missionary periodical which synthesised material from various other missionary periodicals, that selective reprinting of articles encouraged a German imperialist tone. Together these three chapters demonstrate that imperial politics was reflected in how the missionary periodicals were compiled and constructed.

The second section, ‘Creating nationhood and modernity’, engages with the theme of how missionary periodicals contributed to a process of the construction of notions of nationhood and modernity. Albert Wu examines missionary periodicals in China, and demonstrates how the Catholic and Protestant mission to China created different visions of a Chinese modernity through conversion narratives. Wu’s chapter highlights confessional differences in the means used to construct an image of the Chinese ‘other’. The identity construction of the missionaries

17 Terry Barringer, “From Beyond Alpine Snows to Homes of the East – A Journey through Missionary Periodicals: The Missionary Periodicals Database Project,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 26, no. 4 (2002): 169–173, 169.

themselves is a theme that Helge Wendt takes up in his chapter on the republication of eighteenth-century Catholic missionary periodicals in the nineteenth century, which Wendt argues both validated and legitimated the Catholic historical claim to missionary work, as well as contributed to the nationalist aspirations of French Jesuits in India. The construction of identity through print media was not, however, as Gabriele Richter in her chapter argues, purely used by Europeans, rather, indigenous people in the Australian controlled territory of Papua New Guinea also used missionary periodicals as a genre to construct their own cultural identity distinct from that of the German Lutheran missionaries working amongst them, with these Indigenous interests expressed in the backdrop of the turmoil of changing imperial and colonial rule from German to Australian hands. Thus, as these three chapters emphasise, missionary periodicals encouraged a form of identity building that could encompass and underscore nationhood and articulate diverse forms of modernity that were envisaged both by missionaries as well as their protégées.

The third section entitled ‘Constructing Missionary Politics’ analyses how an image of the ‘other’ was created within missionary periodicals that was not only complicated by the broader political sphere in which the missionaries found themselves, but also contributed to the changing image of the ‘other’ amongst the readership. As Armin Owzar posits in his chapter, missionary periodicals not only served their Christian European readers with information on the increasingly marginalised Islamic world, they also contributed at the end of the nineteenth century to a dynamic of interdenominational cooperation based on a common Islamophobia, and thus the public transformations of the image of the ‘other’. Agnieszka Jagodzińska argues that missionary politics were affected both by self-censorship and political censorship, which ultimately compromised the content of missionary periodicals, and thus, missionary periodicals often need to be read in conjunction with other material in order to create a representative image of the political situation. In her specific case – the periodicals of the *The London Society for Promoting Christianity among Jews* – the precariousness of the Protestant missionary endeavour under the strict controls of the Russian administration in Poland meant that much was omitted from the periodicals themselves, leaving historians turning to archival material to gain a full picture of the situation. Together these two chapters indicate that the politics within missionary periodicals were a reflection of both the external politics surrounding these periodicals as well as the political aims of the groups.

Despite the threat of censorship, the availability, periodicity, and contemporary nature of missionary periodicals made them, as the chapters under the section ‘Missionary Discourse’ demonstrate, a vibrant and accessible medium in which missionary discourses could be expressed. In non-European spaces, as Amelia Bonea in her chapter argues, missionary periodicals were used to help create a discursive difference. Bonea’s chapter on the ‘Coolie’ Mission in Fiji reveals that missionary periodicals were an important form in the construction of the politics of race and class of the Indians amongst whom Methodist missionaries worked. In Thoralf Klein’s contribution, in which he examines five missionary periodicals

published during the Boxer War, he demonstrates that various groups utilised their periodicals differently as forms of propaganda dependent upon the geopolitical situation of the organisation. In such ways missionary periodicals reflected broader media trends on the late nineteenth century in creating media moments. In reporting on the work of Swedish missionaries and especially their medical mission, Malin Gregersen postulates that wider political debates of the means and ends of the Christian mission are visible in the everyday observations from missionary work that make up a large part of the missionary periodicals. Gregersen examines the discourses presented in a Swedish missionary publication originating from medical missionary work in Southern India to demonstrate how the missionary project was legitimised to its readers through descriptions of social change. In drawing together threads from the chapters, Hanna Acke concludes the collection with a chapter that uses the previous contributions as well as an analysis of one missionary periodical, the Swedish *Missionsförbundet*, within a theoretical framework to argue that missionary periodicals can be seen as a genre in their own right.

Missionary periodicals, as this collection demonstrates, were a necessary and important mode of communication for nineteenth-century missionary organisations, which, like their secular counterparts, provide multiple avenues of research for contemporary historians. Their content was often highly political, and through examining how different actors expressed their voices in missionary periodicals, how editors changed these voices and how missionary organisations promoted and disseminated their periodicals, these chapters offer a nuanced understanding of the often contradictory modes of political expression within missionary periodicals as well as the politics of missionary periodicals themselves.