At the Edge of Two Worlds: Mary Slessor and Gender Roles in Scottish African Missions

Sarah Marcia Lennon, Liberty University

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Douglas F. Mann

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Abstract
Mary Mitchell Slessor, a missionary to Calabar, West Africa in modern-day Nigeria from 1876 until 1915, was a transitional character, combining traditional feminine roles with more masculine roles during her time as a missionary. Though many biographers focus on Slessor's eccentricities and use her life as an example of the exceptional Victorian woman, this study disagrees with that assessment and instead views her caught between two worlds, part of the previous generational thinking regarding women's work, but also progressing toward what would be considered normal in the early decades of the twentieth century. Comparing Slessor to other women working in her field, she emerges as one who not only extended the roles and duties of the founders' wives but also broadened the definition of what a woman could do on the mission field.