

# CHAPTER 3 CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES IN WEST AFRICA

## Objectives

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

- trace the origin of slave trade in West Africa;
- point out the effects slave trade had on West Africa and the world;
- outline the factors that promoted slave trade in West Africa;
- explain activities of anti-slave trade movements and how slave trade was abolished;
- enumerate reasons why slave trade thrived after its abolition and the effects of the abolition of the trade;
- account for the importance of Sierra Leone in the evangelical history of West Africa;
- identify major activities of the missionaries in West Africa;
- weigh their positive and negative impacts on West Africa.

Colonial intervention in Africa brought about the coming of Missionaries. Having been conquered by the European political and economic class, the Christian missionaries afforded themselves of the evangelical opportunities in West Africa and Africa at large. They struggled to abolish the slave trade so as to restore the dignity of Africans as God's creation. The abolition gave them the opportunity to reach out to West Africa for a serious missionary work. The freed Negro slaves were of significant importance in this direction.

## 3.1 The Role of Evangelical Movements in the Suppression of Slave Trade

### Slave Trade in West Africa

Although slave trade started in West Africa as far back as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was the industrial revolution in Germany intensified the trans-Atlantic trade. Europe at this time became heavily industrialized. More food was produced; there was over-population and over-production which called for markets outside the shores of Europe. This meant that Europe had to build empires outside, where their surplus could be consumed. Agriculture in Europe became mechanized demanding the cheap labour to work in the established plantations in Europe. The availability of the cheap labour was found in West Africa where slave trade existed between the autocratic local rulers and the Portuguese as the basis of the import – export economy within the coast of West African states. The trade was conducted on trust. Africans were in need of manufactured goods, while the European slave merchants were in need of slaves. The slave trade and the plantation economy it fed in Europe, provided profits and employment on a large scale in Europe and America, down to the shipping and manufacturing industries. Through the slave trade, the West African market supported and extended

the industry of Europe, leaving the West African economy wholly tied to the European capitalist economy and its trans-Atlantic extension.

The trans-Atlantic slave trade affected the social structure of the West African coastal states. It enabled the existing distinction between the privileged rulers and the common masses to become more heightened. The 'chiefs' benefited from the trade through exchange of foreign goods with the slaves. In this way, slaves employed by the rich, chiefs and kings for farm and domestic works, existed as a recognized institution in Africa and other parts of the world. Historically, around 500BC, Negro slaves were sold to the Carthaginians and the Romans. From the 7<sup>th</sup> century, when Muslims conquered North Africa, the trans-Saharan slave trade was established through which the Muslims captured those who refused to embrace the Islamic faith and sold them as slaves to the Arabians. The slave markets in West Africa existed in Cairo, Alexandria, Tunis, Tripoli and Negroes from South of Sahara were mainly the stock-in-trade. The Islamic Sudanese states made slaves of pagans from the forest belt of West Africa, who they raided and sold to Arab slave dealers.

When the Portuguese bought their first ten Negro slaves from Rio de Oro in 1441 to Portugal, the chapter to Atlantic slave trade was opened. At first, it was a dealing between Portugal and West Africa. Portuguese exported the slaves to other European countries who were in need of them as household servants. With the Spanish discovery of West Indies and America in 1492, the volume and destination of slaves and slave trade increased. The Spaniards and other Europeans who infiltrated America then (the New World) opened up gold and silver mines, sugar, tobacco and cotton plantations which needed more workers than could be supplied by the Red Indians (Original inhabitants of America). The Portuguese were made to supply slaves from West Africa to the New World. They monopolized this trade between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century. By 1510, the first batch of African slaves were exported to America from Lisbon in Portugal and by 1537 when the slave trade became rife, over 10,000 Negro slaves were transported to America from Portugal annually.

By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, other European states like France, Holland, England, Denmark, Brandenburg and Sweden joined Portugal in the trade. To sustain this trade, these European powers first colonized Africa from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century in order to operate unhindered. The opening up of the New World demanded more slave workers which became the main commodity in the Great Triangle Trade that spanned across four centuries with powerful European nations competing for supremacy.

The Great Triangle trade which was dominated by Brintons was so named because of its major three courses of voyage. The first stage being the voyage from Europe to Guinea Coast with ships carrying European goods exchanged for slaves.

The second stage, called the middle passage, was a voyage from West Africa to West Indies and America carrying Negro slaves exchanged for American produce of sugar and tobacco. The last stage was the voyage from the New World (America) to Europe, carrying raw sugar and tobacco from

America to be sold to manufacturers in Europe. By the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Atlantic slave trade reached its peak where an average of 70,000 slaves were yearly exported to the New World. By the end of the trade, over six million Negroes were sold into slavery. European slave merchants made as much as \$10,000 profit per trip while the West African agents exchanged European goods worth \$25 per slave. Goods exchanged were cups, guns, gun-powder, gin, metalware, brass and iron bars, cotton, linen, wollen, silk materials, copper, beads, mirrors, etc.

Due to the increase in demand for slaves, powerful chiefs entered into war with their weak neighbours or even raiding neighbouring tribes and those captured in such expedition were sold to the middlemen who in turn sold them to the white slave merchant. Those who survived the torture en route to the harbour were kept like cattle in a special compound called the 'baracoons' where they awaited their shipment to the New World. They were all tied by the waist to the next line, given different marks or numbers. The journey took them to America where they were used as plantation workers by their European masters. Some died in droves on their way to the harbor; in the ship and thrown overboard; in the plantation out of exhaustion and in the revolt at the hands of their masters.

### **The Effects of the Slave Trade on West Africa and the World**

Slave trade had a negative impact on the lives of the West African peoples and also a positive impact on the economic development of European and American states. The effects of the slave trade are long lasting especially on the psyche of West Africans and the Negro (blacks) in Europe and America. The effects can be viewed in the following ways:

#### **Social Effects**

Undoubtedly, the slave trade in West Africa caused a great loss of the youthful population of the area. More than six million people were said to have been sold out towards the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. On a general note, from the 15<sup>th</sup> century when slave trade began, till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was officially abolished, the peoples of West Africa lost a population of between twenty to thirty million people. This had negative effect on the socio-political development of the region.

The loss of young, virile and productive men and women rendered the area volatile and insecure. It definitely affected the lives, health and conditions of the aged and children who largely depended on the youth for survival and support. As a result of the slave trade, some lineages were wiped off, some wives and husbands were perpetually separated, some children were rendered fatherless and motherless while some aged parents died as a result of the traumatic experience of having their children sold out.

The Atlantic slave trade introduced moral decadence in West Africa. Local slave merchants promoted inter-tribal warfare, slave-raids, rape and anarchy. The lust for wealth, material goods and power became manifest. African norms, peaceful coexistence, love for neighbours and respect for the

sacred were eroded. The traders rendered both the Africans and European counterparts morally depraved.

### **Political Effects**

Politically, the Atlantic slave trade introduced marked changes in the administration and organization of the coastal cities or slave coasts. These cities adopted new political system called the 'House Rule' in which adopted slaves acquired the privileges of a native and could even ascend to the throne of a 'House'. Social discrimination was abolished due to the presence of slaves and foreigners. Most slaves settled in these areas and were absorbed in their 'Houses' which replaced the family unit. This was how King Jaja of Opobo, a slave from the Southeast town of Amaigbo rose to the kingship of Opobo kingdom. Some of these slave coasts in Nigeria include Bonny, Nembe (Brass), Duke town (Calabar), Kalabari (New Calabar) and even Whydah in Dahomey.

The collapse of most empires and kingdoms in the forest states of Dahomey, Asante, Oyo and Benin was as a result of the slave trade. The desire of some of the chiefs and kings to participate in the lucrative slave trade business led to senseless aggression, raids and intertribal wars. This quest for expansion in order to directly deal with the European slave merchants led to the decline and fall of some of the kingdoms. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Civil wars of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries destroyed Oyo empire, while the Dahomey and Asante kingdoms were sacked by the Europeans owing to their greed to expand their kingdoms and dominate in the slave trade.

It was the slave trade business that led to the Aro expansion and influence in South East Nigeria. Being armed with guns and supported by their control of the Long Juju (Ibinukpabi) oracle, which was highly dreaded by the people for its judgement, the Arochukwu people organized raids and sponsored litigants to Ibinukpabi from where most of them were exported to Calabar as slaves. The Aro strong holds at Okigwe and Arondizuogu were used as slave spots for commercial benefits.

### **Economic and Cultural Effects**

In the first instance, the trans-Atlantic slave trade destroyed the trans-Saharan trade that was coordinated by the North Africans across the Sahara desert. The Sudanese states that blossomed as a result of their middlemanship in the trans-Saharan slave trade lost out to the emerging slave coasts in the coastal region. This was a sort of business and wealth relocation. With the drying up of the trans-Saharan trade, Western Sudanese cities, like Jenne, Timbuktu and Gai declined.

Economically, the slave trade whether through trans-Saharan route or by Atlantic coast retarded the socio-economic development of West Africa. Able bodied men who could have made meaningful economic contributions were sold off. As a result of the lucrative nature of the trade, farming, legitimate trade, traditional vocations and skills were abandoned. The devastating raids brought untold hardship, general insecurity and discouraged investment in the area.

The slave trade destroyed the commitment to African art which flourished in the 15<sup>th</sup> century especially in Igbo, Yoruba, Edo (Benin) Nupe and Jukun Lands.

The wars motivated by slave trade destroyed the cultural values of the people. It promoted greed, love for material gains, dishonesty and hostility. It de-emphasized the respect for truth and honesty, family and fear of the divine. People looked up to the European standard, needs and dictates. This accounted for the disdain meted on us by the rest of the world and the derision that Africa had no culture. The slave trade middlemen prevented the white merchants from entering the hinterland and perhaps discovering other sources of making wealth. The Sudanese states that lost out remained totally cut off from the rest of the world until the abolition of slave trade and commencement of colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Outside the coast of West Africa, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was significant in several ways:

1. It was observed that apart from the Jewish dispersion which occurred about 70AD, the West African slave trade remains the greatest racial dispersal in the history of mankind. There were some few thousand Negroes in Asia through the Arabian supervised trans-Saharan slave trade; few thousands upwards Europe through the Carthaginian middlemanship and the early Portuguese merchants, and millions of Negroes to West Indies and America through the Atlantic slave trade masterminded by Portugal, England, Holland, Spain, Denmark, Sweden and their surrogate local merchants. By 1890, Negroes in United States of America alone were 7.5 million and by 1960 they came close to about 19 million. This accounted for the rich cultural diversity and resourceful manpower in America, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti Brazil and the West Indies. These surviving Negroes have kept some of the African cultural heritage alive.
2. The slave trade brought about cultural miscegenation which means cross-breeding of differing cultures. It helped to bridge the racial and cultural gaps existing between West Africa and the rest of the world. It also created sense of oneness and close tie between Negroes in the diaspora and those in Africa, bringing about peace and understanding.
3. Trans-Atlantic slave trade showcased the importance of Africa in the development of Europe and America. The raw materials and the human resources used for the development of Europe and America were from West Africa. The growth of America as a rich and powerful nation was based on the efforts of the Negro slaves. In sports, American Negroes have proved their meetle and shown unbeaten dexterity. In the First World War (1914-1919), Negro soldiers amounted up to 450,000, while the number significantly improved in the Second World War (1939-1945) to well over 701,678 armed personnel. Negroes in America have also contributed to the greatness of America in arts, literature and poetry. The likes of Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass, George Washington Williams, W.E.B Du Bois, Laurence Dunbar, among others. Micheal Jackson, the greatest American pop startr was a Negro. In political sphere,

names like Martin Luther King (jnr) and Barak Obama the first American Negro President remain unforgettable. American Negroes are in every field of endeavour in medicine, computer, engineering, science and technology.

4. Like America, the industrial advancement of Britain was propelled through the slave trade. The Negro slaves who worked in West Indies and America produced the raw materials that sustained the British industrial needs.
5. American Negroes have contributed immensely to world development. They accompanied and aided the Spanish expeditions to America, New Mexico and Arizona in 1513 and 1527. American Negroes have made their marks in science, social sciences, music, athletics, boxing among others. Despite the abolition of slave trade in America in 1833, the Negroes have worked hard to break world records not minding the racial repression and discrimination that follow the abolition.

### **Factors that Promoted Slave Trade in West Africa**

Trans-Atlantic slave trade lasted for close to 400 years. In these four centuries, West African slaves remained the principal commodity. The trade went on despite its inherent problems and dangers especially on the side of West African people. Certain factors listed below accounted for protracted Europeans – West Africans involvement in the trade.

- i. The period was basically a feudal phase in world history. Most states of the world depended on slaves and serfs for domestic, farm and manual works. In Africa, slavery and slave trade were in practice within the notable empires. The trans-Saharan slave trade flourished with the Muslims in North Africa in-charge. The times and circumstance favoured and tolerated the trade globally.
- ii. The quest and greed of West African chiefs to become powerful and wealthy gave boost to the trade. Their taste for European finished goods and the pride in using foreign materials pushed them into cooperating with European slave merchants.
- iii. The desire for reprisal attack, vengeance and vendetta among chiefdoms, powerful Africans and individual families whose family members or loyalists had been sold into slavery by rival persons or groups kept the trade flourishing.
- iv. Slave trade became accepted by the local people especially among the non-centralized states of West Africa as a profitable means of excommunicating and disposing of recalcitrant, evil-minded and unrepentant law breaker. Rather than shed blood, commit murder or endure a long lasting irrepressible criminal, the slave trade option was chosen and preferred. As most of these sedentary states had no prison or reformatory, the notorious law breaker was sold away to appease the land and maintain tranquility.
- v. The increase in the demand for slaves to work in the plantations, and the European merchants efforts to maintain the demand schedule and by so doing making huge profits, accounted for the long period of the trade. The wide and steady patronage which the slave trade commanded

was unprecedented as those who made fantastic gains from it wanted it to continue. It was through slave trade that many European cities thrived. Britain for instance supplied on yearly basis over 4,800 slaves to Spanish colonies in the New World, and sold over £1,000,000 worth of goods yearly to Africa in exchange for slaves.

- vi. Engagement in slave market was seen as a sign of national strength. Slaves were conscripted into the naval force and recruited as seamen, ship workers and ship-chandlers as sea transport was crucial to national economy and industrial growth. Britain used the support of the slave workers to keep her lead at the sea above her French and Dutch rivals. Slaves were used to maintain her farms and mines in the New World where she maintained her colonies. Owing to her small size and population and the nature of the work, slaves in West Africa became inevitable up till the 18th century.
- vii. Not until the close of the 18th century, the majority of Christians in Europe and the peoples of West Africa never regarded human trafficking as evil. Morality at the dawn of industrial revolution was low in Europe as means to wealth was all that mattered. Human lives were not valued and never treated as sacred. The trade was seen as a necessity towards material acquisition and power.
- viii. The deep rooted ignorance about African people and the heinous trade by Godly Europeans gave the inhuman trade a lasting opportunity. It was obvious that most religious, educated and human rights activists were unaware of the trauma and gorrisome pains experienced by these Negro slaves in the American plantations at the hands of the cruel slave owners or even at the Guinea Coast of West Africa down to their shipment and voyages in the sea. With time, through contacts with the Negroes from the plantation or via missionary visits to West Africa, some Christians witnessed the horrifying experiences of the slaves and rose for its abolition.

### **Anti-Slave Trade Movements**

At the onset, some Africans opposed the slave trade. The victims of this trade reacted against it. Some protested, others in Haiti and Santo Domingo plantations revolted, some engaged in high sea mutiny while others committed suicide to frustrate their captors or owners. King Agaja of Dahomey, tried to suppress the trade in his domain. In Benin, the Obas outlawed the export of male slaves in the 18th century.

Outside Africa, voices were raised sporadically in condemnation of slave trade. Bartolome de Las Casas who muted the idea of slave labour for the Spanish-American colonies was hired to condemn this proposal. In Britain, some humanitarian conscious individuals like Richard Baxter in 1673, condemned the inhuman trade. Rev. Morgan Godwyn of the Anglican Church, spoke against it. John Locke in 1689 wrote against the practice. Indeed, the Catholics, Quakers, Wesleyans and the Anglicans denounced the trade. Pope Pius II (15th century), Paul III (16th century), Urban VIII (17th century) and Benedict XIV (18th century) progressively prohibited and detested the practice. By 1774, the Quakers liberated some slaves in England. They were supported by John Wesley.

Rousseau's ideas of liberty and equality of all men propelled the French Revolution of 1798 and together with the liberal ideas of Thomas Paine, the slave trade began to receive wider condemnation.

In 1787, the humanitarian groups in England formed the Anti-slave committee led by Granville Sharp with William Wilberforce (a parliamentarian), Thomas Clarkson, Fowell Buxton and Zachary Macaulay as members. These were supported by renowned liberated African slaves namely Olaudah Equiano, an Igbo from Nigeria and Ottobah Cugoana, a Fanti from Ghana. They wrote books and made public speeches and appeals. William Wilberforce spoke for this committee known as the Clapham Sect in the House of Commons. By 1792 when John Venn assumed the leadership of the Clapham Sect, he added more vibrancy to their pursuits. He insisted on abolition of slave trade, expansion of Christianity and reforms. They were comprehensive in the use of methods to achieve their aims. The methods included parliamentary campaigns, education or public opinion via the press, dissemination of evangelical literature and scripture, the encouragement and support of evangelical pulpits. The 'abolitionists', as the sect was called insisted on spreading the message to West Africa where the slaves were brought.

By the end of 18th century, Europeans adopted the idea of 'Superior race' in which they insisted that their culture and Christian religion were superior to non-whites and that they were on a mission to teach the rest of the world the European way of life. In order to teach Africans and inculcate in them European civilization, they had to first destroy the practice of slave trade. Only then could they lay claim to be morally superior and advance into Africa as liberators. Putting an end to the slave trade became an essential stage in the European conquest of Africa.

In 1772, the British Chief Judge, Lord Mansfield, gave a landmark judgment abolishing slavery in England. The case which was sponsored by Granville Sharp in support of a run-away slave James Somerset, signaled the downturn in slavery and slave trade. In 1772, about 15,000 slaves in England were liberated. In 1807, the abolitionists persuaded the parliament in England to enact an Act forbidding and making slave trade illegal in Britain. Denmark had outlawed the trade in 1804. Britain pressurized other states to outlaw slave trade. The United States of America outlawed it in 1808, Sweden in 1813, Holland in 1814, France in 1815, Spain in 1816 and then Portugal in 1817. To enforce the law, Britain navy patrolled the sea and equally established navy bases in Fernando Po, Sierra Leone and Freetown West Africa.

Britain initiated Reciprocal Search Treaties involving her with Portugal and Spain, who were suspected to have carried on with the trade despite the abolition. Through these treaties, a joint or 'Mixed Commission Court' was established in Sierra Leone to try slave merchants who violate the abolition laws. Ships belonging to member countries could be searched if they were suspected of carrying slaves on board. Due to the defects in the first treaty, a second treaty called 'Equipment Treaties' was signed among Britain, the initiator of the treaties, Spain in 1835, Portugal in 1842 and U.S.A. in 1863. These treaties reduced drastically the slave trade business. To put a final stop to it, Britain paid £20,000,000 to slave owners and abolished slavery in British West Indies in 1833. Other European stakeholders emulated the British example and abolished slavery in their oversea territories.



France followed suit in 1848, Spain in Ecuador Dominion in 1847, in Paraguay dominion in 1867 and in Brazil dominion in 1888, USA having abolished the trade and slavery in 1863 in the North, entered into civil war with the South on its refusal to liberate over 4million slaves. In 1865, when the war ended in favour of the North, slavery and slave trade were abolished in the South which completely ended slaves demand and slave trade.

With the establishment of legitimate trade, commerce and evangelism were exported to West Africa. The Moravian Brethren in Germany were eager to serve as missionaries in the 'Dark continent of Africa'. Initially, they were attached to Danish chaplains but by the 19th century, they came on their own. They came to Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Gambia where most freed Negro slaves were sent for re-settlement. To help those desirous to return to Africa, was the 'Back to Africa Movement' championed by Wilmot Blyden, Marcus Garvey and Casely Hayford, who supported the ideals of pan-Africanism and African identity. They used their ship 'African Black Star' to send back freed African slaves. On arrival to Gambia and Sierra Leone, they found life very difficult. Samuel Ajayi Crowther was among those slaves intercepted by the British war ship and sent back to Sierra Leone where he later traced his way back to Yoruba land as a missionary under the aegis of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) referred to as the Anglicans. The slaves who were able to trace their roots left Lagos, Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone slave cluster zones.

Apart from the activities of the evangelical movement which diminished slave trade in Europe and West Africa, other factors contributed to the demise of slavery and slave trade. These included:

- i. ***The Emergence of Industrial Age in Europe:*** The capacity of the machines and the industries to mass produce and do arduous agro-allied works faster, cheaper and better made slavery, slave trade and forced-labour obsolete and an unprofitable venture. This turned the British economy away from mercantilist stage and an economy driven through slave labour expended in the farm lands of West Indies, to an economy perfectly dependent on manufactured goods. To avoid an impending doom, Britain had to suspend slave trade and open up commodity markets in West Africa. Agricultural produce needed to run her industries came from Africa. Britain realized that the only way she could encourage palm produce commodities for her oil and soap industries and other seedlings needed to assist her manufacturing of finished goods was to stop the business of slave trade in order to allow the West Africans go back to farm business since the machines were more efficient than slaves.
- ii. By the middle of 18th century, most British colonies in America forcefully broke away from British colonial domination and asserted their independence. This undermined the British control of the slaves and slave trade. Most British investors shunned the slave business and invested rather in industrial ventures.
- iii. As legitimate trade i.e. trade in produce and commodities expanded and became more lucrative, slave trade waned off. The palm oil produce in West Africa and cotton produce in America took the centre stage. As Britain recorded much profit in legitimate trade, other

European powers followed suit and the emphasis shifted to industrial capacity rather than slave raids or slave labour.

### **Reasons Why Slave Trade Thrived After the Abolition**

In spite of the concerted efforts of Britain to stamp out slave trade after the Slave Trade Abolition Act of 1807 through the 'Reciprocal Search Treaties' and the 'Equipment Treaties' with major stake players in the business, slave trade though made illegitimate thrived for nearly a century after the abolition. By 1810, about 85,000 slaves were still exported to the New World. In 1830, it increased to about 125,000 slaves and in 1846 it recorded more than 80,000 slaves movement. The reason for this was not farfetched.

- i. Other rival nations like France and United States were jealous of British powers and growing strength on the sea. They intended sabotaging the efforts of Great Britain, who they knew made their huge wealth through slave trade. Spain and Portugal signed the Reciprocal Search Treaties in 1817. It was only in 1862 that United States signed the Equipment Treaties. This uncooperative attitude of these nations made the slave trade to linger.
- ii. Since the treaties were mainly signed by Britain, Portugal, Spain and lately United States of America, the slave merchants boarded slave ships that flew the flags of other nations who were not originally part of the treaties as the British warships and navy could not search and prevent such nations from engaging in slave trade since they were not signatories to the treaties.
- iii. Despite the Abolition Act of 1807, demands for slaves were still high in America and West Indies and the business remained attractive in spite of the fact that it had become risky and illegitimate.
- iv. The size and the length of the West African coast which extends more than 1,500 miles with estuaries and creeks, made it quite difficult for the small squadron of British navy to patrol. The estuaries and creeks became hideouts for slave ships on sighting British war ships.
- v. The local slave merchants were made rich by the trade, aided and abetted by the European traders. They helped them adopt strategies that defied the British anti-slave raids and interception on the high sea. They helped to promote the slave trade despite its illegality.
- vi. The inclement weather and unfriendly nature of the coastal and tropical climate, hampered the British efficiency in patrolling the West African coasts. The unfriendly climate claimed the lives of most of the officers. It was said that one out of every 20 naval officers on the coast died weekly between the years 1825 and 1845. This greatly deterred British efforts.

Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther

### **Effects of the Abolition of Slave Trade**

The end to the business of human trafficking in West Africa had some effects in West Africa and beyond. As an economic gateway, its abolition had tremendous impact on the white patronizers and the local beneficiaries in many ways:

- i. It led to the founding of Sierra Leone and Liberia as colonies to settle freed Negro slaves from America and Great Britain. Following the landmark judgment of Lord Mansfield in 1772, Sierra Leone was founded in 1787 for the settlement of the emancipated slaves in Britain, while Liberia was founded in 1821 for Negro slaves liberated in the United States of America.
- ii. The abolition of the slave trade pushed the European merchants into exploring the West African hinterland. There was the urgent need to penetrate the interior land to source for raw materials especially the palm oil and to expand their market for their manufactured goods. By 1788, African Association was formed in England to help explore the hinterlands through the River Niger, a feat which was achieved by Mungo Park in 1795.
- iii. The legitimate trade which started with the palm oil from West Africa and manufactured goods from Europe took over the slave trade. The new business waxed stronger and became lucrative as it gradually diversified into other commodities. The new trade was transacted on the platform of peace and hardwork. Wars and inter-tribal conflicts disappeared as no one needed to fight wars or raid communities to obtain slaves, rather local merchants concentrated on the farm produce that could exchange for British manufactured goods.

- iv. Based on the explorers reports of the evil trade in West Africa, missionaries and scientists developed interest in the cause of the Negroes. This interest were both humanitarian i.e. evangelical, commercial and political. It was their desire to eradicate slave through evangelism and prepare people for both the European commercial and colonial activities. The end of the slave trade led to the influx of European missionaries and traders, who assisted Britain to consolidate their colonization policy in West Africa.
- v. With the abolition of slave trade, Europeans developed imperialist interest in West Africa. In order to annihilate slave trade, the European powers, mainly Britain and France, gave protection and support to the activities of the European traders and missionaries and later intervened in the political affairs of West African societies, so as to forge a peaceful and favourable atmosphere for the promotion of the legitimate trade. With this, the colonization of West Africa commenced. In 1851, Lagos was captured by John Beecroft to promote British legitimate trade and to arrest further slave merchandizing. The realization that only imperialism and colonialism could stampede illegitimate trade and stabilize legitimate trade which granted European advancement and economic expansion, led to the Berlin Conference of 1885 which partitioned Africa amongst the colonial powers of Europe.

### **3.2 Foundation of Sierra Leone and Liberia and Missionary Activities**

William Wilberforce and Clarkson were mostly credited for the success of the British anti-slave trade campaign. However, they built on the labours of their collaborator, Granville Sharp who had more than 20 African friends before the Clapham Sect took off. It was Granville Sharp, who brought before the law court James Somerset, a former slave from West Indies, who was being claimed by his old master. He succeeded in winning the case presided over by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Mansfield, in 1772 which automatically set more than 15,000 Negro slaves in England free. The British government was burdened with how to resettle these poor illiterate and unemployed Negro slaves.

At the end of the American independence war, a big influx of people of African descent came into London from across the Atlantic among them were discharged soldiers, sailors who served with the British forces, and slaves who escaped from their American slave owners. They were all destitute, poor and unemployed. Sharp made friends with them, formed a committee of the humanitarians to raise money to support them and in conjunction with the British government proposed that they be relocated to a new home of their own in Africa. The British government being too anxious to get rid of them chose Sierra Leone for their resettlement. Sierra Leone was a former British slave trade centre with good harbor and fresh water supply.

On May 14, 1787, the first 450 Negroes arrived the coast of Sierra Leone under the charge of Captain Thompson. The British government acquired a land of about 20 square miles from a Temne sub-chief, King Tom, with the sum of £59.1.5d. The settlers named it Granville Town. Sharp did not regard the settlement as a mere dumping ground for unwanted black vagrants as the British government had thought; rather, his desire was that these freed slaves should form an egalitarian

African community of freed, loving and Christian people. He conceived it as province of freedom and drew up a constitution to enable the citizens govern themselves. As soon as the Negroes landed and were settled, they elected one of them, James Weaver, as the governor following the Sharp's constitution, after which the naval ship sailed off and left them on their own. This venture was organized and executed on behalf of the British government by St. George's Bay company, on the humanitarian ground that the poor liberated Negroes needed to be resettled in Africa and on social ground that Britain needed to get rid of the social urchins on the streets of London.

From the start of the settlement, the occupants faced difficulties and disaster. They were beaten by the heavy rains before they had opportunity to erect houses. Many fell sick and died and those who survived found out that the land was not good enough for their farmed crops. They also had border and culture conflicts with the original owners of the land, who, led by King Jimmy of Temne, attacked and burnt the Granville Town. This led to the dispersal of the surviving settlers.

Again, Granville Sharp with his friends organized the colony in 1791 under the administration of Sierra Leone Company (SLC) founded by Sharp, John Clarkson (brother of Thomas Clarkson) and William Wilberforce. The company made the settlers to farm the land to enable them become economically self-supporting and to showcase the European civilization on the benighted African continent. New settlers from Nova Scotia, a British colony who fought on the British side against the American war of independence (1776-1783) were sent to Sierra Leone as a reward for their service in 1792. Together with a batch of European settlers, made up of the governor, members of his council, traders and artisans who settled in Granville Town, in 1791, a new Sierra Leonian colony was formed. The new colony had a new governor Lt. John Clarkson. He was ably supported by the freed Negro from Nova Scotians who appeared to be better Christians, artisans, craftsmen, good farmers and abreast with English law and culture. They renamed the Granville Town, Freetown.

However, the transformed colony faced new problems. The European officials of the (SLC) died in droves and the 'Nova Scotians' refused to pay rents on the lands allocated to them by the company and instead demanded a say in the administration of the colony. Under this doldrums, the French naval officers executing the Napoleonic wars in Europe attacked Sierra Leone in 1794 and burnt down the colony. Zachary Macaulay who became the Governor in 1794 to 1799 made peace between the 'Nova Scotians' and the Sierra Leone Company. He promoted legitimate trade with the Temne people, expanded the colony and also attracted the European missionaries in the colony. By 1800, over 500 freed Negro-slaves from Jamaica known as the Maroons, joined the Freetown colony, and in 1801 the Temne invasion on Freetown over its territorial expansion was contained and successfully foiled. As the cost of running the colony became unbearable to the (SLC), the British government took over the colony and made it a Crown colony in 1808. Governors were henceforth appointed to represent the king, signaling the formal colonization of Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone and its citizens supported the fight against slave trade in the West African coast. They supported the British and American onslaught against the trade. They embraced Christianity early enough, particularly from among the Nova Scotians who were mainly Methodists, Baptists,

Anglicans and Catholics and had among them indigenous pastors and congregations. They rebuffed European missionaries and preachers who shared the same belief of European superiority with their former slave masters.

Sierra Leone was the initial base of all freed slaves who had imbibed Christian tenets and beliefs. It was thickly populated and had good relationship with the British colonialists. In 1801 and 1804 missionaries from the C.M.S and Wesleyan Missionary Society (W.M.S) respectively arrived Sierra Leone as a base for the evangelization of other West African states. Sir Charles Macarthy the Governor of Sierra Leone (1814-1824) saw them as a chance to introduce European civilization to Africa. He accepted the cooperation of government with the missions to transform the colony into a Christian state and have them spread the gospel to the rest of West Africa. Then people or recaptives were to be settled in villages of English pattern where there would be a parish church, personage and school house, where they could learn from the missionaries new religion, skills and behaviour pattern.

The 'Nova Scotians' and 'Maroons' became a reference group for the recaptives to emulate - a black community, yet Christians and living an European style. Due to scarcity of missionaries, lay preachers were appointed mainly from the Afro-Americans and Afro-West Indies. However, in spite of the efforts of the missionaries and pastors to enforce a European type of Christianity, many recaptives particularly Yorubas, practiced syncretism, mixing occultic practices with Christianity as a result of their background. These recaptives retained much of their homeland traditions and refused to turn into 'Black-Englishmen'. They evolved a language called the 'Krio language' from the 19th century which is a mixture of European and West African languages particularly from Mende and Temne which was later referred to as the 'pidgin'. Their descendants became known as the Creoles or simply Krio.

The Krio took to trade due to the unfertile nature of Sierra Leone land. They, being European agents, went far into the interior and opened it up for business. By 1840, these recaptives had entered into import and export trade and became wealthy. They embraced Western and Christian education owned by the missionaries. By 1814, the C.M.S had 21 elementary schools in Sierra Leone and by 1845, there was a C.M.S Grammar School in Freetown for boys and in 1849 at Annia, a secondary school for girls was opened. By 1847, a missionary college for teachers and missionaries was established in Fourah Bay, East of Freetown and by 1876, it became the Fourah Bay College affiliated to Durham University England, which enabled West African students to obtain external degrees. Until 1940, Fourah Bay College was the only institution for university education in the whole of West Africa. It became the university college of Sierra Leone in 1960.

Other missions followed suit. The Methodist founded the Methodist Boys High School in 1874 and in 1880 established a girls secondary school. The Roman Catholic Mission arrived in 1864 and had their own schools opened to natives. Sierra Leone, through the assistance of the Creoles remained the centre of British administration in West Africa where British governors resided. It was the educational centre for the region, as well as serving both the clergy and laymen. Many Creoles served as missionaries in most parts of West Africa. They also trained as doctors, lawyers, judges and

civil servants. By the middle of 19th century, Creoles officiated as pastors and teachers. In 1859, two Creoles qualified as lawyers and by the end of the 19th century some attained the positions of senior civil servants. This was why Sierra Leone was described as ‘the mother of West Africa’.

While the Creoles embraced the Christian religion and the superior ideals of the whites, they still held tenaciously to their African origin and identity. They practiced and preached the Christian doctrines but preferred to marry fellow Africans.

Sierra Leone played a major role in the Christianization of Africa. The Baptist missionaries were there as early as 1795 and the Glasgow Missionary Society in 1796. As early as 1830, a Christian school was established in Freetown by the Methodists. On the arrival of the C.M.S, the missionary activities were shifted to non-Christians. This Christian mission received the support of Zachary Macaulay and later Charles McCarthy governors of Sierra Leone.

The first C.M.S missionaries in Sierra Leone came from Germany in 1804 as no English clergy volunteered to work in Sierra Leone. For some reasons, the missionaries never ventured into the interior. First, they were employed in Freetown as colonial chaplains. Second, after the murder of Peter Greig of the Edinburgh Missionary Society, the colonial authorities thought it unsafe to allow missionaries enter the interior. The C.M.S were favourably disposed to assist the liberated slaves of pure African ancestry or of mixed blood i.e. the Creoles, by teaching their children Western education and the grown ups farming. Government built churches in new villages in Freetown under the aegis of Anglican missionaries. This made Anglican an official and predominant religion in Sierra Leone.

Between 1804 and 1824, 70 Anglican missionaries were sent to Sierra Leone but only 27 of them survived due to the unfriendly climate. At this period, the practice of European officials having their own churches different from the natives was adopted due to language and cultural barriers. One of the ‘colonial churches’ in Freetown opened in 1817 was St. Georges’. The first African to be ordained a priest of the Anglican ministry in Sierra Leone was Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther in 1843. He hailed from Yoruba (in Nigeria), released as a young boy from a slave ship and brought to Sierra Leone. He was to later become the first bishop of the Niger Diocese of the Anglican Church.

With his ordination, Africanization of the Anglican mission began. By 1859, three Sierra Leonian were ordained into the ministry and by 1856, eight became ordained and as the years rolled by, the number increased. Because of the delay in confirmation and ordination of candidates due to absence of a local bishop, the Anglican Diocese of Sierra Leone was created in 1852 by the church of England. This became the first Anglican Diocese in West Africa. The Catholic and Methodists also tried missionary work in Sierra Leone. The pioneering missionary for the Catholics was Mother Anne and her team who went to the villages, nursing people suffering from illnesses. The Methodists sent a minister and three teachers. Their activities however proved abortive in a short while.

Consequently, the Christian mission in Sierra Leone became indigenized. Henry Venn, the senior secretary of the C.M.S in England, burdened with the maintenance of evangelical work in Sierra Leone, maintained that the church must be developed to become a “Native Church with Native Pastors”. At this point, the English church supported the scheme with their funds in order to make the

Sierra Leonian church self-sufficing, self-governing and self-propagating, by 1876, it withdrew the financial support in order to concentrate on the missionary works in other lands.

In 1860, the Native Church Council was established in Sierra Leone. The Creoles who dominated, led the church council. Only few Europeans were left behind and the evangelization of the interior was left in the hands of the Creoles. By 1896, the Sierra Leone Church Mission was founded to assume responsibility for the church in the colony and beyond.

### **Foundation of Liberia**

Liberia began like Sierra Leone and shared similar experiences. It was established in the year 1821 as a settlement for freed Negro slaves mainly from the United States of America (USA). Around 1790, over 60,000 Negro slaves gained freedom from their American slave owners and in 1800, the number rose to about 108,435. This created great concern for the USA government, as they felt that the uncoordinated freed slaves could constitute an economic and social problem. In order to tackle this problem, the American Colonization Society (A.C.S), sponsored a scheme of finding a settlement for the freed Negroes around West Africa.

In 1821, the first batch of the freed Negro-Americans was settled at the vast area of Cape Mesurado, bought for this purpose by the American Colonization Society. The initial population was 86 and in addition with three White officials of the A.C.S, the Liberia colony was founded and later named 'Liberia' meaning 'the land of freedom'. The first site occupied by the settlers was named 'Monrovia' named after President Monroe the then incumbent President of America.

The settlers experienced hard times as they had arrived in April, close to the rainy season which hampered their construction and farming works. They also had to contend with the aborigines who attacked them twice in 1822 unsuccessfully, as they detested having the strangers settling permanently on their land. As they progressed, more American Negroes joined. Lott Cary a vibrant negro who did the works of a doctor, soldier, builder, agriculturist and clergyman preached to the immigrants, and coked to have the colony turned into a Christian settlement. He however, died suddenly in 1828.

With the expansion of works by Governor Jehudi Ashmun, two new settlements by St Paul River called Caldwell and New Georgia were established in 1825 to accommodate the influx of returnee Negroes from America. Monrovia eventually retained its position as the capital of Liberian Republic. Because the soil was richer than those of Sierra Leone, the Negroes from Southern states of the USA, who were farmers in America cultivated the new settlement. The American government and philanthropic agencies still supported Liberia with equipment and funds.

Missionaries from America established schools for the education of the Liberian people. All the principal missionary actors namely the Methodists, Baptists, the Catholic and the Protestant Episcopal Church all had their primary and secondary schools.

### **3.3 The Spread of Missionary Activities in West Africa**



Christian missionary activities in West Africa were made possible through the evangelization of Sierra Leone. Having consolidated their grip and indigenized the Anglican Church in Sierra Leone, the church by the help of indigenous or African clergy expanded the mission outside the shores of Sierra Leone and Liberia. The ambition to evangelise Niger territories started with the British expedition of the Niger in 1841. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) who had hoped to establish its mission at Lokoja, build schools and agricultural farms, could not materialize them as 48 out of the 145 white missionaries died in Lokoja within two months of arrival.

However, some Nigerian indigenes that were among the slaves and recaptives in Sierra Leone got prepared to return home. Coupled with the realization that no African missionary died in the fatal 1841 expedition, the CMS resolved to train African missionaries in Freetown to help evangelise Nigeria. Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther a teacher, preacher and missionary in Freetown, being one of the ill-fated team that stormed Lokoja in 1841, became ordained in 1844 as a result of his performances. Between 1839 and 1845, Negro slaves of Nigerian extraction, who had become wealthy and at the same time Christians, started returning to Nigeria passing through Badagry and finally settling at Abeokuta where they had a church opened for them by the CMA in 1844.

Crowther and his colleague Townsend fought against slave – trade business and the fetish beliefs in the Yorubaland. From Abeokuta, the CMS mission spread to Lagos in 1852, Ibadan in 1853 and to Oyo in 1856. By 1854, Crowther and Taylor an Ibo ordained a priest in Sierra Leone, joined the Niger expedition to establish a station at Onitsha in Igboland. The Europeans sent in 1859 to coordinate the mission at the Niger, died of malaria attacks. This prompted the resolve of England to ordain Samuel Crowther a bishop in 1864 to enable him head the African mission. Crowther made Lagos his headquarters having established the church in the Oil River Area.

In 1885, Roman Catholics arrived Onitsha led by the Holy Ghost Missionaries. They started by resolving the conflict between Onitsha people and the Royal Niger Company which had bombarded the people in 1879. The Rev. Father Lutz led Holy Ghost Missionaries were welcomed by the people of Onitsha and the good relationship that existed between them gradually extended to the colonial officials as they could not distinguish between the clergy and the colonialists. From Onitsha, both the Catholics and Anglicans penetrated Owerri before 1905 while Bishop Joseph Shanahan remained at Onitsha to coordinate the Catholic Mission in Igboland with a major station at Emekku in Owerri district, Bishop Tugwell of the Anglican Mission residing at Egbu coordinated missionary activities in Owerri district.

It was obvious that the spread of Christianity in West Africa originated from the coastal areas of West Africa. When the first Portuguese missionaries made their first contact with Benin Kingdom in Nigeria, the coastal states had long been regarded as promising area for missionary activities. In 1845, a small vessel brought Henry Townsend an English Anglican Missioner to Badagry. The Catholic priests in Senegal first settled at Borthurst on the coast and around 1555, the Catholics were reported to have made appearance in Warri. Soa Tome was also touched. These coastal areas became the bases for the spreading of missionary activities to West African hinterlands.

The sea as at then was the best means of transportation bordering Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Senegal and Ivory Coast. Through the coasts, the missionaries followed the rivers inland. The primitive Methodists on arrival to Nigeria through Fernando Po, passed through Calabar and settled at Oron. The Qua Iboe Methodist followed the Qua Iboe river and settled at the banks. The largest expedition in West Africa was sent in 1841 to open up the Niger, though 48 of them died as a result of malaria and yellow fever attacks but the CMS followed up the River Niger and established its mission at Asaba and Usumari. The missionaries also settled along water side in Aba because water was the principal means of reaching out to those in the interior.

In Gambia, the missionaries only settled at Bathurst due to lack of navigable waters. In Sierra Leone, the muddy and infertile nature of the interior scaled down missionary activities in the interior. In Guinea, missions were established around the small area of Guinea Rivers. The case was different in Ghana where the Basel mission penetrated Kwahu, Akim and Ashanti across the Volta river. This was the case of Nigeria where the missionaries settled along the coastal and Niger areas like Lokoja, Abeokuta, Onitsha, Calabar, etc. Beside providing easy access to transport, these rivers and ports assisted in promoting trade and commerce which connected the hinterlands.

Under the umbrella of the United Presbyterian Church, Rev. Hope Waddell and his team were sent to evangelise Calabar in 1846. He depended on the Cross River to access the interior since there were no access roads to the Ibibio heartland. Through the river, a mission was opened at Ikotana in 1884. By 1888, he established a mission at Unwana, a town by the Western Bank of the Cross River. When he opened up Umuahia, he built a hospital there. However, through the encouragement of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the Anglicans, coasting through the River Niger, occupied and opened mission at Onitsha in 1857, Brass (Nembe) in 1888, Opobo and Bonny in 1892.

### Major Activities of the Missionaries in West Africa

The spread of missionaries in West Africa through the establishment of Liberia and mainly Sierra Leone engaged the missionaries both foreign and aborigines to numerous activities aimed at converting the people, bringing European culture and civilization closer to them and stopping the obnoxious slave trade. In the course of these, they opened up missionary centres first on the coastal areas and lastly in the interiors. The missionary activities can be streamlined as follows:

- i. **Iconoclasm Against African Beliefs:** The European missionaries looked at African traditional beliefs as paganistic, antiquated and demonic. For instance, the missionaries supported heavily the British evasion of the Aro and the long Juju of Arokwu (Ibini-ukpabi) in Igboland. The British colonial officer who led the military campaign against the Aro dynasty and idol was Sir Ralph Moor, the British representative in Bights of Benin and Biafra. This was which came to be known as the Aro expedition of 1901-1902 led to the desecration and dismantling of the Ibini-Ukpabi oracle, which the British colonizers and missionaries saw as the very citadel of Aro power and influence over the entire Igboland and which obstructed both colonial and missionary activities. The expedition which began on November 24, 1901

lasted till March 24, 1902 when the long juju was destroyed. Its destruction facilitated missionary optimism in Igboland and beyond. The Arochukwu example was a case study of how religious shrines and symbols were destroyed across West Africa by means of brute force to pave way for colonialism and its corollary Christianity.

- ii. **Fight Against Slave Trade:** The missionary personnel condemned in strong terms the inhuman trade business. Major Christians denominations and the Clapham Sect in London spent their resources in order to end the slave trade both in Europe and Africa. One of the reasons for the West African mission was to put an end to the trade. They supported the treaties to end the trade and moved into West Africa to educate the local populace on the dangers and unacceptability of slave trade in an industrialized age. This accounted for the reasons they first settled by the coastal areas of West Africa, where they impacted on the slaves and slave dealers before turning their attention into the hinterlands. The Sierra Leonian and Liberian missionaries, who were themselves, freed Negro slaves from Europe and America came up strong in the fight against continued slave trade after its abolition in Europe and America.
- iii. In order to provide the people with alternative means of livelihood, the missionaries taught the local people modern ways of farming. They introduced modern implements for agriculture. They also trained some as cooks, church teachers, artisans and employed some as househelps and 'errand boys' in order to shift their attention from slave merchandise. This alternative means of livelihood devoid of warfare, shedding of blood and hostility gradually came to be accepted and appreciated.
- iv. **Helping to Perpetuate Legitimate Trade:** Since the slave trade abolition affected the economy of the slave merchants, legitimate trade was introduced. This has to do with exchanging of manufactured goods with farm produce. The missionaries on their own taught most local merchants the new trade. By helping in the fight against slave trade and encouraging the legitimate trade, the missionaries helped to develop commerce and industry in West Africa.
- v. **Indoctrination of Africans:** The missionaries by their activities preached the superiority of the European religion, civilization and ideals. They often provided support to colonial military expansion. One of the reasons for establishing the colony of Sierra Leone by the white was to use the Negroes who they regarded as street urchins in Europe and America, to civilize the benighted Africa continent. The Creole Missionaries who though preserved their African identity preached the European supremacy and racial superiority. Using the Christians tenets and literature, the missionaries worked hard to establish the doctrine of superiority of the whites. They projected European religion, culture and socio-economic systems as worthy of emulation. The missionaries brainwashed the Africans through their doctrine.
- vi. **Assisting in Urbanization:** The activities of the missionaries were spectacular. They built churches, schools, hospitals, and erected parsonages in the areas of their operation. Often,

these structures were located near colonial settlements and by so doing, helped in the urbanization of such areas.

- vii. **Offer of Western Education and Scholarship:** The most conspicuous efforts of the missionaries were in the areas of education. Knowing that modern life could not be lived in ignorance and illiteracy and seeing that their effort to teach the people European culture, Christian way of life and modern economic skills would amount to nothing if they were not first educated, they built schools and made education of the West Africans a priority. For instance, in the Gold Coast, the Basel missionaries been very keen on education opened schools in all their stations starting from a boys' school at Akropong in 1843. In Nigeria, Mr and Mrs De Graft, Ghanians by origin, opened a school in Badagry called "Nursery of the Infant Church" in 1843 under the auspices of the Methodist church. This was followed by the Togo industrial school for delinquent children opened in Badagry by the Roman Catholic mission in 1876. Before the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, many schools and colleges sprang up. Some were schools where missionaries were trained, others were teacher training colleges, grammar schools for boys and girls, vocational colleges where practical skills were taught and specialized schools. The Roman Catholic mission took the lead in this direction in Nigeria. Missions offered scholarship to some indigent students abroad to enable them develop their potentials. Western education championed by the missionaries revolutionized the area and helped in consolidating Christians and the emergence of the African elite who led the nationalist movement for eventual political independence.
- viii. **Indigenisation of Christianity:** Through the activities of the missionaries, native converts were trained and ordained as priests. In Sierra Leone, African Negroes emerged not only as teachers, lawyers, doctors and public servants but also as priests and missionaries in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the growth of local converts and indigenous clergy, coupled with the growing inability of the European missionaries to survive the hostile terrain of West Africa, Africans were empowered and allowed to manage the new Christian missions. With the creation of the Diocese of Sierra Leone in 1852 as the first diocese in West Africa and the ordination of Samuel Crowther as the first bishop of African origin in 1864, Christianity became indigenized and Africanised.
- ix. **The Stoppage of Obnoxious Culture:** Missionaries to West Africa contended with many obnoxious practices, rituals and culture. In the Igboland, they fought against the Osu caste system although without success. They waged war against slave raids and slave trade; widowhood malpractices and customs promoting idolatry. In the Yorubaland, they contended against ritual killings and occultism. Killing of twins was a general custom of the Southern people of Nigeria. Mary Slessor, a Presbyterian missionary who arrived Arochuku in 1903 carried her campaigns against the killing of twins down to Calabar which at first, between 1846–1902, appeared to be quite a difficult area for evangelism. The missionaries put up a

fight against all anti-Christians rites and ceremonies until the people accepted the Christian virtues and faith.

- x. **Language Promotion:** Since language is the only sure way to communicate, teach and understand, the missionaries made frantic efforts to understand the language of the people for a good relationship. They also, through education and catechism made the people to speak and understand either the English or the French language as the case may be. Since there were multiple dialects in West Africa due to the presence of multiple tribes, the missionaries made concerted efforts towards consolidating the colonial language as the Lingua Franca. They also developed interest in developing some widely spoken indigenous languages like the Igbo, Yoruba and Tiv languages. Bishop Ajayi developed Yoruba orthography and a possible translation of the Bible into Yoruba language, Archdeacon Dennis of the famous Egbu mission in Igboland developed Igbo orthography and translated the Bible into Igbo language. In the Gold Coast, the Basel missionaries did the same with the Tiv language. By their efforts, they advanced the development usage and study of African languages.
- xi. **Charitable Activities:** On arrival, the missionaries saw highly depraved, poor and pitiable natives. This condition was as a result of inter-tribal conflicts occasioned by the slave trade. The indigenes were mostly poor, ignorant, crude and almost naked. They lacked adequate medicare, social welfare and basic education. In order to arrest this situation, they engaged in charitable works offering free clothing, housing, education and medicare. They built hospitals and maternity homes, dispensaries, sick bays, schools, charitable homes and orphanages where their missionary experts were posted to work. In Nigeria, the Uzioakoli leprosy settlement stood out clearly as a symbol of missionary humanitarian services. They built schools for the deaf, dumb and blind and equally rehabilitated recovered thrown-away twins. These made Christianity very attractive to the people.
- xii. **Opening up of the Roads:** To evangelise the interland, road network was needed. The missionaries in conjunction with the colonial offices opened up roads for transactions and missionary work. Roads were opened up or constructed where schools, hospitals, personages or churches were sited. This made communication and transportation much easier.

### 3.4 Impact of Missionary Activities in West Africa

Missionary activities of a truth had some positive and negative impacts on West Africa.

- i. Missionaries through their religious and humanitarian activities provided the people with a good platform to learn and understand advanced colonial languages. It also sparked off the desire of many elite to develop the orthography of their local languages for the use of workshop.
- ii. The use of a Lingua Franca and practice of common religious belief made it possible for a fast integration of the diverse Sierra Leonean and Liberian Negroes. Common religious practice gave some sense of unity and the tendency of nation-building.

- iii. Missionaries in West Africa taught the people team work, team spirit and tolerance. The local people and convert appreciated and emulated the cooperation and L'esprit de corps which existed among missionaries of different denominations and among the colonial officials and their missionary counterparts. Missionaries eliminated all forms of rivalry and conflicts amongst them since it was what they condemned among Africans.
- iv. The colonial and missionary objectives were not very much differentiated. While the missionaries engaged in what could be termed 'Religious colonialism', the colonial officials carried out 'Political Colonialism'. However, the synergy and cooperation that existed among them inspite of some apparent differences proved the inseparability between government and the church. The colonial government offered the missionaries security and at times lent some financial support. In return, the missionaries softened the ground by making the people more vulnerable to economic and political domination.
- v. The activities of the missionaries improved the socio-economic lots of the people. Through the provisions of social amenities, building of schools, hospitals, construction of roads and personages and through humanitarian charitable acts, the missionaries changed the people's life and ushered them into a more civilized world.
- vi. Missionary activities in West Africa changed the peoples' perspective, improved their moral standing, and questioned the relevance of certain cultural practices and religious beliefs, rooted in the Christian and European culture. It also led to the emergence of African elite who by their educational attainment questioned the rationale for the colonialistic imperialism practiced in West Africa. The Christian idea of equality of all men as creatures of God informed their nationalist movements for political emancipation.
- vii. On the contrary, the missionaries created 'inferiority complex' amongst Africans. They branded as fetish and barnal, all aspects of African culture and customs. They segregated against Africans who they saw as primitive. In all places of West Africa, they had separate churches with their 'black' counterparts. By so doing, they planted a seed of discord and dichotomy. The doctrinal differences noticed among the different denominations, planted the seed of 'religious politics' and divide amongst their African converts.
- viii. Missionary activities in West Africa provided a rider for the smooth take-off and sailing of colonialism. It was said that the missionaries in Africa 'came with the bible on one hand and the plough on the other hand'. It was they who supported the replacement of the slave trade with legitimate trade and the subsequent military and political domination of West Africa, to curtail the incessant inter-ethnic wars engendered by slave merchandize.
- ix. The conversion of some Africans by the missionaries led to social and family rifts. Most families were torn apart as a result and some of the converts were excommunicated and discriminated against. The impasse between the traditionalists and Christian converts lasted a long time and impeded social development.

## Summary

- Slave trade in West Africa had a long historical standing before its peak between 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which saw millions of West Africans sold to European powers for onward transmission to the New World where they were used as slave labourers.
- The Trans-atlantic slave trade being promoted by many factors was significant in many respects as it impacted on the economic, social and political systems of West African people.
- At the peak of the trade, anti-slave movements moved by passion and humanitarian drive, gathered forces against the inhuman trade which eventually saw to the abolition of the trade.
- Abolition of the slave trade gave room for the liberation of the Negro slaves in Europe and America and in a way to solve their settlement problems, Sierra Leone and Liberia were founded as new states for the liberated Negroes.
- It was through Sierra Leone that missionary activities spread to other West African states and the final stoppage of slave trade still going on after the abolition.

## Revision Questions

1. The European initiators of slave trade were the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. Spaniards
  - B. French
  - C. Portuguese
  - D. British
2. \_\_\_\_\_ was one of the routes to trans-Saharan slave trade.
  - A. Fez
  - B. Carthage
  - C. Sudan
  - D. Timbuktu
3. The “New World” was notable for its \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. spirits
  - B. gold
  - C. palm plantation
  - D. cotton plantation
4. The colonization of America by Britain and Spain promoted \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. missionary expedition
  - B. legitimate trade
  - C. industrialisation in the West Indies
  - D. slave merchandise
5. In the “Great Triangle Trade” is referred to as the “Middle Passage”.
  - A. The West African Coasts

- B. The Sierra-Leonian Nova Scotians
  - C. America
  - D. Clpham House
6. The activities of Mary Slessor, the Presbyterian missionary were centred on \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. Health care and the preservation of Twins
  - B. Education and leprosy management
  - C. Agriculture and legitimate trade
  - D. Slave trade and education
7. The first indigenous Anglican diocese in West Africa was the \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. Diocese of the Niger
  - B. Diocese of Sierra Leone
  - C. Egbu Diocese
  - D. The Diocese of the Cape Coast
8. Granville Town was later changed to \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. El Mina
  - B. Temne
  - C. Fernando Po
  - D. Freetown
9. Due to its significance in the history of West Africa, Sierra Leone was regarded as
- A. 'Mother of West Africa'
  - B. 'Whiteman's grace yard'
  - C. 'Middle passage'
  - D. Black – English men
10. \_\_\_\_\_ translated the Bible into Igbo language.
- A. Bishop Tugwell
  - B. Archdeacon Dennis
  - C. Rev. Townsend
  - D. Rev. Henry Venn

### Essay Questions

- 1a. How was the trans-Atlantic slave trade conducted in West Africa?
- b. What were the effects of slave trade?
- 2a. What factors were responsible for the promotion of slave trade in West Africa?
- b. What four reasons accounted for the survival of slave trade in West Africa long after it was abolished?
3. Assess the contributions of the church humanitarian groups, Quakers and Britain in the anti-slavery trade fight.



- 4a. Sierra Leone was central to the evangelization of West Africa. Discuss.
- b. Account for the spread of missionary activities in West Africa.
- 5a. What constituted the major efforts of missionaries in West Africa?
- b. What impact did the missionaries make in West Africans?