

NTARE SCHOOL
HISTORY FOR WEST AFRICA
S4 A, C and D

THE MISSIONARY FACTOR IN WEST AFRICA DURING THE 19TH CENTURY

In West Africa during the 19th C, there appeared various religious groups following the wake of scramble and partition of W. Africa.

These religious groups had come from Europe between 18th to 20th centuries.

They include

- (a) The Wesleyan
- (b) The Quakers
- (c) The Catholics
- (d) The Plesedylians

But the interests of missionaries in W. Africa was pronounced between 18th, 19th and 20th C when their roles became paramount being Catholics and Protestants.

The reasons for the coming of missionaries

Their coming followed the number of factors that were many, a lot, numerous wide ranging.

- Their motives were quite diverse, of the economic, political, social but largely religious
- The primary objective was religious factor i.e the need to spread Christianity in W. Africa. In here the Europeans saw Africa as a universal den of desolation, Misery and crime (Africa was seen as a ground for evils).
- Missionaries came to West Africa because they had special attractions for missionaries who wished to "save African souls through conversions".
- Missionaries wanted to eradicate the barbaric acts a case of spread of slave trade in the continent.
- There was a strong desire to halt the rapid spread of Islam which had made it a head way southwards especially during 20th.
- There was a need to completely outcompete/eradicate Islam which had taken roots in Africa/ West and plant in Christianity.
- The coming of missionaries in W. Africa was seen as a way of atoning for European crimes against Africa notably slave trade.
- There were humanitarian factor as well e.g need to eradicate slave trade, the undesirable practices of Africans, the human sacrifices, the throwing away of

twins/murdering twins, the ancestral worships etc. all these were to be eradicated accordingly.

- It was a way of wanting to introduce the western values/civilization especially education/formal learning/literacy.

The economic factors

The missionaries were a byproduct of an industrial society in Europe and so were influenced by the demands of industrial revolution.

- The need to create conducive climate for the development of legitimate trade i.e acceptable trade.
- The need to promote agriculture
- The desire to encourage trade in forest products particularly cash crops like palm oil, rubber, sugar, lamb oil etc hence substituting slave trade.
- Wanted to produce market for industrial goods
- Missionaries wanted to find areas of investment thus a saying from Fowell Buxton maxim of "the bible and plough".

Political moves

- Missionaries came under indirect motives e.g the extension of European colonial rule.
- The colonial slogan of "the flag followed the cross" meaning political factors were embedded into.
- European presence would ensure protection of missionaries themselves by getting the government to apply force where possible as a way of imposing law and order and suppressing slave trade as well.
- J.F.A Ajayi sums up this "in the Bight of Benin British interests began with the establishment of Christian missions at the Badagry and Abeokuta".The trade followed the missionaries and they led traders in calling for British intervention in Lagos.
- Moreover Christian motives were a reflection of rivalries in Europe. E.g Britain Vs France, Germany.
- The theme of scramble and partition of W. Africa stood highest wishing to do good than harm e.g Mungo Park was motivated by the reports of past explores who wrote about the good of Africans, climate etc.

Note: the above were religious, political, social, economic and humanitarian factors governing the missionary factor in W. Africa in 19th C.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MISSIONARIES IN WEST AFRICA

The missionaries had many, diverse, numerous contributions in W. Africa.

- They were political, religious, economic and social etc
- Contributions were both positive and negative but largely religious in nature
- Many people were converted/evangelized to Christianity through accepting baptism and confirmation.
- Educational institutions of learning were built eg colleges, schools, and universities to offer formal learning. For example Foural Bay College gave exemplary learning skills, carpentry and art work.
- There was general promotion of literacy
- Creation of an African elite, clergy class of teachers, doctors, clerks, lawyers etc.
- There was enlightenment in learning leading to the pioneering of nationalistic struggles eg J.E Casely Hayford, Herbert Macernly, J.B Danquah, TA Wallace Johnston etc.
- Missionaries influenced the birth of African nationalism, leading inspiration of independence leaders for example Azikiwe, Nkrumah, Sengor, Houphout.
- Missionaries contributed to linguistic issues eg they studied and reduced African languages, wrote grammar books and dictionaries.
- Missionaries further promoted the spread of faith in foreign languages e.g English, French, and Latin.
- There was introduction of printing press machine notably by Rev. Townsend (1852) in Sierra Leone.
- There was publication of Newspapers eg the first Yoruba Newspaper, the Iwe Irohim that published in 1859.
- There was emancipation of women from the series of talk and teachings.
- African barbaric/pagan activities were reduced eg murder of twins, throwing away of twins, pregnant girls, human sacrifices etc.
- Rev. Hope Waddens' work was recommended in the Calabar and cross river regions especially condemning African pagan practices.
- Total dislike of African things like music, art, dance, marriage, inheritance etc

- Missionaries divided converts on religious lines of Protestants Vs Catholics affecting unity.
- Helped in checking on the spread of Islam.
- Contributed to the emergence of religious people eg Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1864)
- Missionaries helped in the eradication of diseases eg malaria, measles, dysentery, polio (which had characterized Africa as a Whiteman's grave) etc.
- Offered money to build missionary hospitals and health centres where diseases were cured.
- Reduced on mortality rate of Africans and prolonging lifespan through polio vaccines.
- Missionaries spread western civilization through changing on standards of living like attire, table manners, dress codes, mannerism.
- Added to the architectural fashions/ ways of building.
- Generally changed the world in W. Africa for better.

Economic developments

- Promotion of agriculture
- New crops both cash crops and food crops introduced eg rubber, coffee, tea, cotton, palm oil, Ground nuts etc
- New farming methods introduced eg crop rotation, plantation farming, fertilizer application etc
- Missionaries created trading missions/ companies eg the Basel trading company (1859) created by the mission society.
- Missionaries improved on transport and communication through constructing roads, railway lines etc

The political contributions

- Missionaries reduced intertribal/state wars by intervening in social conflicts bringing lasting solutions eg arranged the exchange of prisoners of war in the Egba, Dahomey war (1851).
- They preached the gospel of unity, love and fraternity.
- Ensured restoration of social order/stability but were very instrumental in bringing W. Africa under colonial rule/colonization thus "flag followed the cross"

- Appealed their home governments for protection eg Britain, Germany, France, Italy etc.
- Establishment of law and order using even force eg King Premphay (I) was subjected to force.
- Missionaries pressurized for the final deportation of stubborn Kings eg King Kosoko of Lagos (1852) and subsequent desolation of Lagos.
- Helped to undermine the traditional authority of Kings/leadership.
- Undermine traditional authority/sovereignty
- Helped in emancipation of women as education for girls was put in high gears e.g built girls' schools in Kumasi, Ghana and Trinity college Ghana, St. Gregory (Niger) were formed.
- Establishment centre for freed slaves eg in Sierra Leone (1807), Liberia (1821).
- Helped in promotion of legitimate trade against the scourge of slave trade.
- Opened the interiors of W. Africa to the outside world through explorations, adventures etc
- Western values were acquired accordingly
- Helped to stop slave trade
- Improved standards of living
- Offered employment opportunities through institutions set up
- Wrote religious hymns, songs and literature still used today in form of bibles, journals etc

PROBLEMS MISSIONARIES ENCOUNTERED IN WEST AFRICA

In view of the above theme, candidates can identify problems of missionaries in E.A except the use of examples of E.A do not apply in W.A

Eg

- Missionaries faced poor means of transport in W.A
- Missionaries faced poor communication
- Language barrier
- Geographical barriers
- Lack of clear directions/campuses
- Lack of enough money/funds
- Lack of medical care
- W.A a bed of diseases
- Whiteman's grave

- Existence of wild/hostile animals
- Existence of hostile Kings
- Presence of slave trade
- Lack of reference books
- High levels of illiteracy
- African practices of death of twins
- Eradicating primitive African practices
- Poor/no accommodation
- Mistaken to slave trade
- No communication to their home
- Eradication of Islam was very hard. etc

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE FOLLOWING MISSIONARIES IN WEST AFRICA

(a) BISHOP AJAY CROWTHWER

(b) BISHOP JOSEPH SHANAHAN

BISHOP AJAY CROWTHWER (1806 – 1891)

- Bishop Ajay Crowther was born in about 1806 in the Osbogun village near Iseyin in Yoruba land
- The name Ajay was the family.
- He had adventurous background.
- His village was ransacked during the 19th century Yoruba civil wars/ Owu war of 1821 – 1839.
- As a young boy Ajay was taken as a captive and sold as a slave to the long distance trekkers.
- He was later resold to the Portuguese slaves and put on board for transportation as a slave
- Across the Atlantic ocean to the new world (America)
- But the slave ship was intercepted by the warships of the British preventive squadron.
- He was later taken to Sierra Leone (1823).
- The British anti-slave trade base in W. Africa
- Together along with others Ajay Crowther was liberated and joined captives thus marking the turning point in his life.

- He showed remarkable intelligence in early school attracting the attention of the C.M.S officials.
- He was subsequently sent to school
- within a record time he was able to easily read the bible due to the inborn intelligence in him.
- In Dec. 11th 1825 he was Christianized / baptized and names Samuel Crowther after a prominent committee of members of C.M.S. This thereafter added to the progress in his work.
- In 1826 he was taken to the parish school of Islington in England for further learning.
- He returned to Sierra Leone (1827) and this time he was enrolled in school as a pioneer (pupil/student) at Faural bay college.
- There at the college he exhibited rare intellectual qualities rising to greater status.
- He became a tutor at Faural bay college.
- But missionary connections with native Nigeria began in 1841. Commonly with the Rev. C.J.F Schon representing the missionary arm of Nigeria branch.
- He gave a brilliant account of the expedition and these qualities he displayed impressed C.M.S.
- To the extent that on his second visit to England (1843) he was ordained as a priest and was earmarked for the project C.M.S youth work.
- With Rev. Townsend, he opened the C.M.S mission at Abeokuta (1846).
- During the 1854, Nigeria expedition, Crowther made exemplary contacts for founding of mission stations in the Niger.
- With the Rev. C.J Taylor accompanied the day spring expeditious to the Niger (1857) and consequently opened up mission schools like Onatisha and Glegbe that were placed under Taylor.
- He promoted literacy (reading and writing).
- In 1864 he was consecrated the 1st Anglican bishop in W. Africa and set his base at Bonny 1867.
- Was appointed to head the C.M.S Niger mission.
- He held this post till death in 1891- 31st Dec.
- He transformed the church into African feelings.
- He preached the gospel/Christianity in W.A.
- He Africanized the gospel from European beliefs.

- Due to his great influence he compiled the grammar bible into his likes and for the people.
- He translated the bible into many native languages.
- He contributed to the abolition of slave trade.
- Built many churches
- Created Yoruba dictionary
- He resigned bishopric post in 1890 and died in 1891 – 31st Dec.

BISHOP JOSEPH SHANAHAN

- He was born on 6th June 1871 in Glanzen.
- At an early age of 12 he began to like religion.
- He joined a society of the Holy Ghost fathers.
- He was ordained in 1900 as a priest in southern Nigeria.
- In 1902 he arrived at Onitsha to join Fr. Lejue.
- In 1905 he was appointed a prefect of lower Nigeria mission and later he became the 1st Vicar general of the apostolic at the new created mission of Nigeria.
- In 1917 he was appointed to Rome to be administrable of the mission in British occupied territory of the Cameroons.
- Bishop Shanahan helped to establish and expand Christianity in southern Nigeria.
- Shanahan executed unique revolutionary methods in order to be someone.
- He had a rare quality of the white missionaries and thus facilitated the success of missionary factor/career.
- He did not suffer from racial superiority and arrogance of the most Europeans.
- He did much to understand Africans and also respected them and their culture.
- He saw Africans as a great potential of Christianity and its spreading.
- He advocated for the need to understand Africans.
- He was a great admirer of the Ibo and their culture.
- He stated his name as Ibo as I stands for Industry, b stands for boldness and o stands for obedience.
- He never liked African culture, beliefs, attitudes and religious culture of the institutions

- He called for the transformation of indigenous religions in the way that it was to market Christianity.
- He opened up a teacher training college at Iglarrim in 1913 and at Onatasha at St. Charles training college
- He travelled widely and lived with Africans, became nearer to them, ate African foods, shelter etc
- Bishop Shanahan spoke the native language of people hence showing closeness.
- He laid a foundation of a native clergy in southern Nigeria.
- He founded the first major seminary in eastern Nigeria to train the clergy.
- He produced and ordained the 1st Ibo man a father/priest "Fr. John Cross Anyegu" who later became the bishop of Enugu dioceses.
- He released the tension between missionary groups by accepting unity and togetherness.
- He realized the importance of educating the woman to facilitate the work of evangelism.
- In 1923 he founded the congregation of the holy rosary sisters.
- He died in Dec. 25th 1931 of ill-health having evangelized the gospel in Nigeria.

Note: his contributions were many, a lot, diverse,

- were political, religious, economic but largely religious and
- were largely positive.

End