

**'HEADLIGHT' THEOLOGY:
THE RISE AND FALL OF LEGITIMATE COMMERCE
IN YORUBALAND 1839-1893**

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of
Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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To my wife, Adedoyin Olabisi Abimbola for her immeasurable support and
for sharing my moments at all seasons

ABSTRACT

The study examines the history, operation and growth of Legitimate ('lawful') Commerce in Yorubaland, and its utilization as a missionary strategy for abrogating the Slave Trade and empowering indigenous Christians in Yorubaland. It examines also the decline of Legitimate Commerce after some three decades (during which other secular interests eventually disrupted the missionary agenda). This study hence explores the theory and practice of 'Legitimate Commerce' from the neglected angle of theology and argues that the absence of such consideration has given too negative an image to modern mission in Africa. This thesis thus stimulates more accurate interpretations of the identity, motives and methods of nineteenth-century missionaries in Yorubaland in particular and potentially by extension Africa in general.

The traditional idea of portraying the missionaries' commercial experiment as a continuity of British enterprise in Africa, or as a prelude to imperialism, is here rejected on the basis of the documentary evidence. Rather, it is argued in this thesis that although Legitimate Commerce lost its vitality as an economic alternative for Africa, its operation shows that it stood out as a missionary strategy for abrogating the unlawful Slave Trade. This study hence provides avenues for giving new definitions to the identity, motives and methods of missionaries in Yorubaland. This is one point at which, so it is argued, this thesis makes a new contribution to learning, for it critically examines the experiment from the period of the influence of Legitimate Commerce in the 1840s to the time of its decline from the 1870s; this rather than taking the position of those who base their arguments on the waning years of the experiment only. Such an evaluation of the vital missionary economic emancipation strategy in Yorubaland is long overdue; it is the main concern of this thesis.

This research applies historical data to advance theological arguments. It uses primary materials in a number of missionary archives to investigate three key issues that distinguish missionaries' economic initiative from the indiscriminate enterprises of nineteenth-century traders in Yorubaland. This 'coal face' archival work is also, it is proposed, a significant contribution to learning, for, as will become apparent, if accepted this thesis fills some of the missing links in missionary sources with information from resolutions and minutes of selected English Chambers of Commerce, the *Liverpool Journal of Commerce*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Liverpool Daily Courier*, the John Holt Papers, and some official papers of the Foreign and the Colonial Offices. Issues raised by critics of modern mission in Africa are used here to pose questions for which answers were sought in the archival resources and published works.

Contrary to the previous popular view that missionaries were agents for the advancement of imperial nations' social, economic and political interests, it is here argued that in fact Legitimate Commerce was genuinely beneficial to those to whom it was directed. It also shows how the economic motives of missionaries in Africa in general gained wider acceptance in Yorubaland with the *Saro* in the forefront of restoring 'lawful commerce' to their country. Hence, their return with 'the light of the Gospel' and 'lawful commerce'

changed many of the 'enslaved and degraded' Africans into 'men of enterprise and intelligence'.

This thesis also argues that although imperialists subsequently usurped the economic experiment, it was 'Headlight' for Yoruba economic emancipation throughout the three decades of 1840s to early 1870s. The value of Legitimate Commerce was apparent in the way that many eminent Yoruba leaders such as Ogunbona of Ikija and Henry Robbin expanded their agricultural ventures and became powerful entrepreneurs in the nineteenth century. Consequently, this study concludes that although Legitimate Commerce lost its vitality from the 1870s it became a reference point as the foundation of modern economic history of West Africa and functioned as a stimulus for social, political, anthropological and particularly economic transformations of Yorubaland between 1839 and 1893.

Based upon research in a number of archival deposits that have to this point remained largely unexplored in the very specific context that is explored in this thesis, it is hence argued here that Legitimate Commerce was genuinely important for missionary activity during the period here under discussion. It was not a foil for economic domination, but a means by which real missionary activity could be advanced.

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Author's Declaration

This thesis conforms to the prescribed word length for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy for which it has been submitted for examination.

No part of this work has been presented before for a degree offered by the University of Liverpool or by any other establishment.

Johnson Olajide Abimbola
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CHAPTER ONE

THE BEGINNING OF THE ERA OF LEGITIMATE COMMERCE IN YORUBALAND

[T]he Slave Trade might be suppressed by means of the squadron for a century, but it would break forth again in a year after the removal of the squadron unless means shall have been adopted to introduce lawful commerce and Christian civilization in Africa.¹

Henry Venn, the secretary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) from 1841 to 1872,² never stepped on the soil of Yorubaland, but the extract above shows how concerned both Yoruba and European missionaries were to help Africa out of its vulnerable state more than half a century after the Slave Trade had been at least nominally abolished.³ Venn's observation summarizes the main thrust of this thesis, showing how missionaries in the nineteenth century introduced 'lawful commerce' as an evangelistic strategy to eradicate the Slave Trade. Although the relevance of Legitimate Commerce as an economic option eventually declined, it had served by then the dual evangelistic strategy it was designed to accomplish. First, it had enabled the various categories of missionaries to engage the Yoruba meaningfully with Christianity as a religion with a human face. Secondly, and more importantly, it portrayed the Gospel as having a liberating effect on any community that embraced Christianity as a way of life: the Gospel has the potency of liberating people from 'the slavery of sin and Satan.'⁴

¹ CMS/CA2/L2 Letter Book, p. 168. Letter with the Theme: 'Lawful Commerce and Christian Civilization', Henry Venn to Captain Yardley Wilmot, 12 Sept 1862.

² Henry Venn (1796-1873) was the longest-serving secretary (1842-1871) of the Church Missionary Society. His role will be discussed more fully later in this and the next chapter.

³ The Slave Trade was abolished by Act of Parliament in Britain in 1807, followed in quick succession by the United States (1808), Holland (1814), and France (1815). See J. Forbes Munro, *Africa and the International Economy 1800-1960* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1976), pp. 42 – 3.

⁴ CMS/CA2/049/95 D. Hinderer, 'Missionary at Abeokuta, June 12 – Sept 25 1849' Journal, Wednesday 20 June 1849. The work of David Hinderer, a German missionary from the CMS, will be discussed further below.

Legitimate Commerce is rather described than defined. It is the commercial activities promoted in Yorubaland, first by the Yoruba missionaries and traders who returned home from Sierra Leone, and secondly by European missionaries who were invited by their Yoruba counterparts to join in the crusade for liberating their country economically.⁵ The economic experiment refers to commercial production and sale of agricultural produce by the Yoruba people, using the Yoruba labour on the Yoruba soil, to produce the agricultural crops that Western nations had exploited African human power to produce in the plantations in America.

Legitimate Commerce has been described in various ways by many of its proponents, five of which are itemised here and developed further at different stages in the thesis. David Livingstone (1813 – 1873), the missionary to the Central and Southern Africa and the proponent of the term ‘Commerce and Christianity’ describes the concept as ‘upright commerce’.⁶ While Queen Victoria depicted it as ‘commerce between nations’,⁷ Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton (1786-1846), the proponent of 1841 Niger Expedition called it ‘Legitimate Commerce’.⁸ Henry Venn (1796-1873), the secretary of the Church Missionary Society between 1842 and 1871 termed the economic experiment ‘lawful commerce’, as above, portraying the Slave Trade as illegal trade.

By whatever name it has been described, Legitimate Commerce is better seen from the function it performed, rather than as a mere cliché. The lawful commerce was set up as a means of stemming the tide of the Slave Trade, and of making the converts

⁵ CO 265/154, Enclosure dated 15 Nov. 1839, in Doherty to Russell, 30 Nov. 1839. (Petition written by Thomas Will and twenty-two other Yoruba traders in Sierra Leone)

⁶ David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa: Including a Sketch* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1858), p. 39.

⁷ Sarah Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1854), p. 160.

⁸ Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy*, p. 306.

become Christians with purpose and collectively as a wealth-making community. The findings in this study show that the commercial experiment raised moral and ethical question against the slave dealers in Yorubaland. It is in these lights that Legitimate Commerce will be viewed as 'Headlight', the light that shines through the darkness created by the Slave Trade in Yorubaland, throughout this thesis. Similarly, the missionaries who engaged in the task of re-legitimizing Yorubaland are referred to collectively as 'missionaries', or 'missionary', but distinguished as Yoruba, European, American, British and German wherever it is expedient to clarify issues.

'Headlight' has been derived firstly from the proposition of missionaries and their facilitators in the nineteenth century who depicted missionary's activities as light in the midst of darkness. These include William Carey (1761-1834), the father of modern mission;⁹ Thomas Will, a successful Yoruba trader in Sierra Leone;¹⁰ Samuel Crowther, a foremost Yoruba missionary;¹¹ Henry Venn, the secretary of the Church Missionary Society;¹² and Earl of Carnarvon, a secretary of the colonies under Prime Minister Disraeli.¹³ Headlight as a metaphor by which Legitimate Commerce has been described in this thesis arises from an idea borrowed from Frederick Haynes' summary of Martin Luther King Junior's (1929 – 1968) *Letter from Birmingham Jail* in which Luther said:

There was a time when the church was very powerful... the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas

⁹ William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester: Ann Ireland & Others, 1761), p. 81.

¹⁰ CO 265/154, Enclosure dated 15 Nov. 1839, in Doherty to Russell, 30 Nov. 1839.

¹¹ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission*, p. 208.

¹² Cited in O. U. Kalu, ed., *The History of Christianity in West Africa*, vol. i (Harlow: Longman, 1980), p. 2.

¹³ C.C. Eldridge, 'Sinews of Empire: Changing Perspectives', in C.C. Eldridge, ed., *British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (London, Macmillan, 1984), pp. 184 – 5.

and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society.¹⁴

Haynes interprets the quotation above as a call that church would be a 'Headlight' to a society that had fallen from the standard of God.¹⁵ His perception of the function and mission of the Church has been employed metaphorically in this thesis to propose that Legitimate Commerce was a 'Headlight' for Yoruba economic emancipation. It is argued here that although imperialism subsequently usurped the missions' economic initiative, Legitimate Commerce in the three decades from the 1840s to the early 1870s brought trade and religion together successfully. Furthermore, Legitimate Commerce aided the abrogation of the Slave Trade and successfully restored 'lawful commerce' to Yorubaland.

As will be examined further below, the established view of many scholars is that all Western nations' commercial dealings with Africa had a single 'imperial' or 'expansionist' agenda. This study takes an approach that is different from those, and examines Legitimate Commerce from 1839 to 1893 as a separate venture. This introductory chapter sets out the motivation and value of doing so. First, this chapter examines the necessity for embarking on this research in spite of the existence of diverse existing studies on the historical, political and educational development of Legitimate Commerce in Africa. Secondly, it focuses on the relevance of using the Yoruba, a nineteenth-century ethnic group in West Africa, as the case study for evaluating Legitimate Commerce in Africa. Thirdly, it evaluates the processes, approaches and methodology employed for examining the 'Rise and Fall' of

¹⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter From Birmingham Jail*, April 16, 1963, taken from Martin Luther King Jr. speeches website – <http://www.mlkonline.net/jail.html>.

¹⁵ Cf. Frederick D. Haynes III, 'From Vision to Action: Principles of Organising a Theologically Grounded and Vision-Driven Church to Effectively Implement Ministries at the Local, National and Global Levels', in Iva E. Carruthers, Frederick D. Haynes III and Jeremiah A. Wright Jr., eds, *Blow the Trumpet in Zion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), p. 24.

Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland, exploring more fully the value and relevance of archival materials for laying out the arguments in this thesis. Finally, it summarises the issues raised in every chapter of this thesis to advance the argument that Legitimate Commerce was a 'Headlight' meant to beam 'the light of the Gospel' into the Yoruba country and to restore the Yoruba economy to its pre-slavery state.

The main argument in this study is that although 'Legitimate Commerce' had lost its influence by the late nineteenth century, by then it had aided the effective abrogation of the Slave Trade and had established a Christian means of making legitimate wealth and the integration of Christianity as a religion of the Yoruba. It will be argued that it is inaccurate to portray the commercial experiments of nineteenth-century missionaries in Yorubaland as a continuation of the British enterprise in Africa, as for example Arthur Norton Cook tends to portray,¹⁶ or as a prelude to imperialism, as Toyin Falola asserts.¹⁷

This thesis will suggest that 'Legitimate Commerce' may be viewed as a necessary complement to the Gospel proclamation in nineteenth-century Yorubaland. While it is true that colonialism left an economic system that impoverishes Africa perpetually, basing all considerations of the African economy on the effects of colonialism gives the impression that Legitimate Commerce was merely part of an oppressive system designed to subjugate Africa. The voluminous journals and correspondence of nineteenth-century missionaries and colonialists in various archives in Europe provide new ways of perceiving the missionaries' theological responses to the Slave Trade –

¹⁶ Arthur Norton Cook, *British Enterprise in Nigeria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1943).

¹⁷ Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1999), pp. 33 – 44.

outlawed but still booming – and show also their repugnance towards the practices of imperialist trade.¹⁸

The Significance and Boundaries of this Study

Three scholars in particular, J. F. Ade Ajayi, E. A. Ayandele, and J. D. Y. Peel, stand out as motivators for this investigation of the missionaries' adoption of commerce as a means of promoting religion in nineteenth-century Yorubaland. Ajayi traces the historical perspectives of the development of African élites through their contact with European mission;¹⁹ Ayandele examines the social and political impacts of missionaries on the geographical entity that was to become Nigeria¹⁹; Peel examines the emergence of Christian mission in the interplay between religious groups in nineteenth-century Yorubaland.²⁰ All three scholars touch on significant aspects of the missionaries' involvement in the development of the Nigerian economy; Ajayi and Peel make more allusions to Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland.

Ajayi's monumental work on the emergence of educated élites adequately covers two aspects of missionary endeavour in Nigeria, which this thesis does not venture into in detail. It draws connections between five major missionary strands and their influence in using linguistic, educational and economic policies to create 'the class of Western-educated élite'.²¹ This thesis differs from Ajayi fundamentally in his perception and description of missionaries as 'European', by identifying the promoters of Commerce

¹⁸ See Eric Stokes, 'Late Nineteenth-Century Colonial Expansion and the Attack on the Theory of Economic Imperialism: A Case of Mistaken Identity?' *The Historical Journal* XII, 2 (1969), pp. 285 – 301. He suggest that the concept of imperialism belongs to the school of thought of Hobson, Lenin and a group of socialists 'forged into an idée fixe of the twentieth century' (p. 285).

¹⁹ Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite*. See also E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914* (London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, 1966).

²⁰ Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, pp. 123 – 151.

²¹ Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite*, pp. xiv – xv.

and Christianity in Yorubaland first and foremost as Yoruba from the Sierra Leone Diaspora. Peel more accurately states that the Yoruba agents of the CMS were equally responsible for the social, political, religious and economic changes in nineteenth-century Yorubaland.²²

My focus is a deeper investigation into the missionaries' motives for taking an interest in an unusual field of missionary endeavour, and an examination of the methods they adopted in pursuing their religious and economic agenda in Yorubaland. Whereas two renowned historians, Ajayi and Ayandele cover the heterogeneous kingdoms of Nigeria, a nation in the making, this study emphasizes the development of Legitimate Commerce specifically among the Yoruba ethnic group in the West Africa of 1839 – 1893, about the same period as Peel covers in his work.

Furthermore, this investigation delineates the distinctions between the missionaries' economic development projects in Yorubaland as opposed to commerce tied to the colonial invasion of Africa and the occupation of territories therein. Toyin Falola and Demola Babalola who allude to Legitimate Commerce in a generic manner state categorically that their contribution 'does not pretend to be comprehensive ... [on]... the elements in the relationship between religion and the economy'.²³ Thus, narrations of the foundations of Legitimate Commerce in most theses are curtailed, because the emphases of the authors are elsewhere.

²² J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 11.

²³ Toyin Falola and Demola Babalola, 'Religion and Economy in Pre-Colonial Nigeria', in Jacob K. Olupona and Toyin Falola, eds, *Religion and Society in Nigeria: Historical and Sociological Perspectives* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1991), p. 152.

This thesis emphasises further that a parallel can be drawn between the *Saro*²⁴ returnees and the biblical lepers at the gate of Samaria in the time of famine who perceived themselves as carriers of 'Good News' to the very people who had alienated them from their own country.²⁵ The skills acquired by the liberated Yoruba in the economic transformation of Sierra Leone²⁶ had changed the *Saro* from mere slaves to men of enterprise. The CMS in particular, and some of the other missionary bodies examined in Chapter Five, employed the religious, intellectual and commercial competence of the Yoruba from the Diaspora to develop a model of Christian community for Africa.²⁷

Whereas Kenneth Onwuka Dike, on the one hand, concentrates particularly on the politics and trade in the Niger Delta in his investigation of the involvement of missionaries in the political economy of a community that was to become part of the Nigerian nation,²⁸ this study draws inferences from the missionaries' economic activities in the Niger Delta. It however concentrates on Yoruba core mission centres such as Abeokuta, Ibadan, Ijaye and Ogbomoso for an evaluation of the 'Rise and Fall' of Legitimate Commerce in Africa, which is outside the concerns of Dike.

Peel, on the other hand, examines some fundamental and practical issues on the emergence and the development of the Aladura movement in Yorubaland.²⁹ He does

²⁴ *Saro* is the colloquial form for Sierra Leone, which the Yoruba people adopted to distinguish the liberated Africans who were resettled in the British colony after they had been recaptured from the slave ships. Those of Yoruba origin began to arrive at the colony from about 1822.

²⁵ This parallel has been drawn literally by this investigator from a biblical account in 2 Kings 7: 9.

²⁶ Jean H. Kopytoff, *A Preface in Modern Nigeria: the Sierra Leonians in Yoruba 1830 – 1890* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p. 7.

²⁷ Kopytoff, *A Preface in Modern Nigeria: the Sierra Leonians in Yoruba 1830 – 1890*, p. 7.

²⁸ K. Onwuka Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956).

²⁹ J. D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

not pay particular attention to the theological rationale that motivated the missionaries to develop Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. Although the focus here differs from Peel's concerns, numerous insights are derived from his effective use of the missionary archives and his method of extracting from them an understanding of the events in nineteenth-century Yorubaland. In addition however, this study, unlike Peel's evaluation of Christianity as an agent of change in the Yoruba religious spheres, portrays the Yoruba as pathfinders for the European missionaries' propagation of the gospel and the promotion of Legitimate Commerce in their own country. It also argues that the Yoruba were not mere beneficiaries of Legitimate Commerce, but participants in adopting it as a strategy for Gospel proclamation.

Legitimate Commerce, the evangelical tool for propagating the Gospel in the West Indies, India and China,³⁰ Sierra Leone and Gold Coast,³¹ was thus incorporated into Yoruba evangelization as a theological expression of humanitarian activities. It also had anthropological dimensions, contributing immensely to the physical, psychological and economic transformation of the Yoruba. Hence, while historians, sociologists and anthropologists discuss Legitimate Commerce in a generic form covering the whole geographical mass that was to become Nigeria,³² this study concentrates on an examination of the missionaries' commercial activities in Yorubaland.

³⁰ Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), pp. 85 – 90, 98 – 101.

³¹ Thomas Birch Freeman, *Journal of Various Visits to the Kingdoms of Ashanti, Aku, and Dahomi in Western Africa*, 3rd ed., Harrison M. Wright, int. (London: Frank Cass, 1968).

³² Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite*. See also Robin Law, ed, *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-century West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Legitimate Commerce also features in scholarship as illustration and example of issues on social, political and religious change in Yorubaland.³³ Whereas it is examined as a phenomenon in this study, the popular conception is to refer to it as part of the era of European trading activities in Africa,³⁴ or just an aspect of British trade in Africa, as Norton Cook suggests.³⁵ The theological angle to the economic initiative in its earlier phase has been neglected and Yorubaland has not been given its due prominence as a major example of entry point for the experiment in the 1840s.

The continued grouping of Legitimate Commerce with other European economic activities in nineteenth-century Africa makes it imperative to re-assess theories such as Magnus Bassey's that 'soldiers, traders, merchants, and *missionaries alike* were sent afield and used by the various imperial governments.'³⁶ Such depiction of missionaries as agents of imperialism portrays Legitimate Commerce as an encroachment on the African economy; it puts discussions about 'Christianity and Commerce' in Africa on wrong premises which therefore lead to many wrong conclusions.

This study gives a new identity to the Yoruba and the European missionaries' economic experiment in Yorubaland by portraying Legitimate Commerce as having its period of influence from the 1840s, and its time of decline from the 1870s, as the

³³ Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914*. See also Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*.

³⁴ Law, ed, *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce*.

³⁵ Cook, *British Enterprise in Nigeria*.

³⁶ Magnus O. Bassey, 'Missionary Rivalry and Educational Expansion in Southern Nigeria, 1885-1932', in *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 60, no. 1, (Winter, 1991). Italics mine.

traders and colonial administration began to invade Africa. Although some imperial traders seized on the advantages of colonialism to impoverish Africa economically, as many authors state,³⁷ it is here argued that Legitimate Commerce succeeded as a distinct theological response to the protracted Slave Trade in Yorubaland and as a means of creating wealth for the Yoruba. This thesis contends therefore with the suggestion that Legitimate Commerce was 'Expansionist' or that it was a conception of missionaries acting as agents of the imperial traders.³⁸ It questions why scholars often omit the events of the 1840s to 1870s or group missionaries along with imperial agencies. It also calls for a redefinition of the vital role missionaries played in using commerce to moderate the activities of local slave dealers by enlisting their interests in agricultural trade.³⁹

Falola appears to be right in arguing that missionaries and Legitimate Commerce positively influenced Africa. Although there is a tendency among scholars to downplay the role of missionaries in African economic emancipation, their efforts at eradicating the Slave Trade in the 1840s and 1850s, and the Liquor Trade from the 1870s, could not be omitted in historical monument of Africa. Falola however describes the missionaries as 'pathfinders for the colonialists.'⁴⁰ This is inaccurate, especially in view of the theological arguments put forward by missionaries for using commerce as a vehicle for taking Christianity to Africa, a continent that was being exploited by the slave dealers. Aylward Shorter is therefore right in suggesting that

³⁷ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* is a good example of scholarly conjectures that touch on the economic development of Africa and the role of the imperialists.

³⁸ See Falola and Babalola, 'Religion and Economy in Pre-Colonial Nigeria'. See also A. G. Hopkins, 'Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880-92', in *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 21, 3 (1968), p. 580 of 580 - 606.

³⁹ The correspondence of King Kosoko on his exploits of the Slave Trade in Lagos in the 1840s is published verbatim by the British. See British Parliamentary Papers, House of Lords, 1852-53, vol. XXII, pp. 327 - 66.

⁴⁰ Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, pp. 33 - 44.

accusing missionaries of paving the way for the imperial traders, or saying that the cross predated the trade and the flag in Africa, is 'putting the cart before the horse'.⁴¹ Looking back at European rule in tropical Africa, Robinson and others perceive correctly that 'the theory of economic imperialism puts the trade before the flag, the capital before the conquest, the cart before the horse.'⁴² A further affirmation to this thesis is indeed the fact that historiographers argue that the infiltration of Africa by the European traders, explorers and scientists predates the arrival of the Christian missions in Yorubaland.⁴³

Furthermore, although these dimensions have been examined by a number of authors, the political aspect of the economic experiment has always been emphasized at the expense of the humanitarian theology behind it. A case in point is the anthology edited by Robin Law, which examines some critical dimensions of the 'crises of adaptation' as well as local and international economic hegemony as it affects the weak Africans, especially peasant farmers and women.⁴⁴ Rather than examining the theology behind legitimizing commerce in Africa, attention is usually focussed on how Legitimate Commerce resulted in a 'crisis of adaptation'.⁴⁵ This study on the contrary perceives that the imperial traders' invasion of Africa from about the 1870s

⁴¹ Aylward Shorter, *Cross and Flag in Africa: The 'White Fathers' During the Colonial Scramble 1892 – 1914* (New York: Orbis Books, 2006), p. 24.

⁴² Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: the Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 409.

⁴³ While the explorers navigated the Niger in the 1500s, the scientists moved into the periphery of Yorubaland in 1700s. Intercontinental trading was visible in all ages, while 'modern mission' only entered into the economic terrain of Yorubaland from the mid 1800s.

⁴⁴ Law, ed, *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-century West Africa*. This anthology is a rich resource for understanding the 'crisis of adaptation', the 'compatibility' of slavery abrogation and agricultural commerce, and the gender-related issues in 'Legitimate' trade.

⁴⁵ See Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, 'The initial "crisis of adaptation": the impact of British abolition on the Atlantic slave trade in West Africa, 1808 – 1820', in Law, ed, *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-century West Africa*, pp. 32 – 56.

destroyed the intention of the missionaries who invented Commerce as a means for promoting Christianity in Yorubaland as a civilizing and liberating religion.

This study is an investigation of changes in economic structure, rather than 'changes in economic performance'⁴⁶ it nevertheless agrees with Anthony Hopkins that Legitimate Commerce inducted Africa's small-scale farmers and traders into international economic exchange for the first time.⁴⁷ However, as missionaries' influence began to decline, the imperial traders took advantage of colonialism to engage in non-progressive trades, such as the Liquor Trade examined in Chapter Six.

Legitimate Commerce empowered many Yoruba farmers. For instance, the adoption of legitimate agriculture by Ogunbona of Ikija, 'mission's most committed patron' in Egbaland, earned him the title '*Agboketoyinbo*', ('he who lives upstairs like a white man').⁴⁸ Hence, rather than being perceived as a prelude to imperialism, 'legitimate commerce marked an important break with the past and signified a new phase in the growth of the market, a phase which can be seen as the start of the modern economic history of West Africa.'⁴⁹

Whereas the missionaries had humanitarian motives, the invasion of the colonialists maximized 'the strength and compulsiveness of the expansionist forces in Europe in

⁴⁶ A. G. Hopkins, 'The 'New International Economic Order' in the nineteenth century: Britain's first Development Plan for Africa', in Law, ed, *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-century West Africa*, p. 241.

⁴⁷ A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1973), pp. 125 - 6.

⁴⁸ CMS/CA2/032 S. Crowther Jr, Report for the period to 25 December 1856, cited in Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, p. 129.

⁴⁹ Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, p. 124.

the later nineteenth century⁵⁰ to the detriment of Legitimate Commerce. This negative development tends to encourage scholars to focus more on European trade in Africa from about 1889,⁵¹ overlooking the in-between period of Yoruba empowerment from the 1840s to 1870s.

Rather than thinking that the memoirs of abolitionists⁵² and missionaries⁵³ are meant to apologise for their involvement in African commerce, findings in this study show that Legitimate Commerce was not only a successful theological response to slavery, it also facilitated Christianization and accelerated the commercialization of Yorubaland. Despite voluminous works on the economy and missionary movements in Africa, and selected parts of Yorubaland in particular,⁵⁴ there remains a need for the study of the trajectories of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland, on which this study focuses.

The year 1839 is the beginning point for Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland,⁵⁵ because that was the year when some Yoruba ex-slaves who had become successful

⁵⁰ Stokes, 'Late Nineteenth-Century Colonial Expansion and the Attack on the Theory of Economic Imperialism: A Case of Mistaken Identity?' p. 285.

⁵¹ See Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, ed., *From Slave Trade to Empire: European Colonisation of Black Africa, 1780s-1880s* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁵² E.G. Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* (London: Printed by R. Taylor for Longman, 1808).

⁵³ E. G. Freeman, *Journal of Various Visits to the Kingdoms of Ashanti, Aku, and Dahomi in Western Africa*. See also Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission*; Thomas Jefferson Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa from 1849 – 1856* (London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1968 [1857])

⁵⁴ See Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. See also Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914*. While Rodney catalogues the European imperialism Ayandele puts the missionary labours into specific contexts in a nation that was in the making in the nineteenth century. See also A. G. Hopkins, 'Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880-92', in *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 21, 3 (1968). See also S. O. Biobaku, *The Egba and Their Neighbours, 1842-1872* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).

⁵⁵ Christopher Fyfe, 'Freed Slave Colonies in West Africa', in John E. Flint, ed., *The Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 188.

traders in Sierra Leone desired through commercialized farming⁵⁶ to liberate their country people who were 'living in darkness.'⁵⁷ This thesis suggests that it was those Yoruba ex-slaves who formed the foundation of evangelicalism in Yorubaland, carrying with them the concept of Commerce and Christianity, although as we shall see later, Andrew Walls argues that the Nova Scotians carried Methodism with them to Sierra Leone.⁵⁸

The *Saro* exhibited a new conception of society,⁵⁹ through Legitimate Commerce, with which they illuminated Yorubaland.⁶⁰ This movement became the foundation of the modern economic history of West Africa.⁶¹ Missionaries therefore not only proclaimed the Gospel, they also reactivated legitimate trading in Yorubaland and wiped out the Slave Trade, which was prohibited⁶² but was nevertheless flourishing.⁶³

Yorubaland as a Case Study for Legitimizing Commerce in Africa

There are seven reasons why Yorubaland is an appropriate focus for the study of missionary endeavour, and especially for evaluating the Rise and Fall of Legitimate Commerce in West Africa. First is the activity of the Yoruba liberated slaves⁶⁴, the *Saro*. They were a formidable group in Sierra Leone, successful traders in their own

⁵⁶ Fyfe, 'Freed Slave Colonies in West Africa', p. 188. See also Kopytoff, *A Preface in Modern Nigeria: the Sierra Leonians in Yoruba 1830 - 1890*, p. 44.

⁵⁷ See CO 265/154, Enclosure dated 15 Nov. 1839, in Doherty to Russell, 30 Nov. 1839.

⁵⁸ A. F. Walls, 'The Nova Scotian Settlers and Their Religion', in *Sierra Leone Bulletin of Religion*, June 1959. See also Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*.

⁵⁹ E. A. Ayandele, *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1974), p. 9.

⁶⁰ See CO 265/154, Enclosure dated 15 Nov. 1839, in Doherty to Russell, 30 Nov. 1839.

⁶¹ Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, p. 124.

⁶² J. Forbes Munro, *Africa and the International Economy 1800-1960* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1976), pp. 42 - 3.

⁶³ See McGregor Laird and R. A. K. Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa by the River Niger* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1971 [1837]). The Slave Trade was abolished by the English Parliament in 1807 and given a stamp of authority, as Sierra Leone became a Crown colony from January 1, 1808.

⁶⁴ *Saro Akus*, otherwise referred to in various works as Oyo, Ijebu, Egba, Ekiti or Ijesha.

right⁶⁵ who relocated, carrying along with them their new religion. They arrived in Yorubaland as people whose spiritual experience had developed into a universalising faith, and were therefore expressing their faith on earth as relational and tangible.⁶⁶

Secondly, but of great importance is the way that Yoruba theology is enmeshed in religious, social and economic milieus as if they were an indivisible experience. The Yoruba economy was tied to religion, explained by religion and resolved by religion.⁶⁷ Thus, the missionaries' introduction of Commerce and Christianity was not an innovation but a resuscitation of the traditional life of the Yoruba for whom religion and commerce were complementary and harmonious.

Thirdly, Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland was neither the idea of abolitionists as in the case of Granville Town agricultural settlement,⁶⁸ nor was it initiated by a European parliament as in the case of the 1841 Niger Expedition. Indeed, the British Parliament neither endorsed the appeal for a colony in Yorubaland⁶⁹ nor discouraged the liberated Yoruba from relocating into their own country, as long as Britain would not incur expenses of migration and protection.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891*, pp. 25, 28.

⁶⁶ This terminology is borrowed from James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: the Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers Inc., 1981).

⁶⁷ S.O. Biobaku, *The Origin of the Yoruba* (Lagos: University of Lagos, 1971). E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longmans, 1962).

⁶⁸ The agricultural settlement in Sierra Leone was given the name Granville Town initially and changed to Freetown during the second agricultural initiative championed by a London banker, Henry Thornton, a member of the Clapham Sect.

⁶⁹ See CO 265/154, Enclosure dated 15 Nov. 1839, in Doherty to Russell, 30 Nov. 1839.

⁷⁰ Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite*, p. 28.

Fourthly, the words of the twenty-three Yoruba traders who represented the *Saro* in making a petition to the Queen of England in 1839⁷¹ mark out the Yoruba as a West African group that had emerged as a model of African merchants and evangelicals.

Fifthly, while Europeans took inter-continental commercial exchange to many African kingdoms, such as Southern Africa where David Livingstone pioneered the concept of Commerce and Christianity⁷², it was the Yoruba *Saro* and *Creoles*⁷³ who were the harbingers of the Good News of legitimizing commerce in Yorubaland. Not a single missionary, Yoruba, European or American was reported as trading for personal profits or deflected from the primary task of African evangelization.⁷⁴

In the sixth place, the Yoruba in Sierra Leone developed so quickly, especially from the time European missionaries began to arrive in the colony⁷⁵ thus providing clear case study for scholars. They acquired a Western education in Sierra Leone and became property owners as a result of being involved in the economic development of the colony. Many of them were enlisted by the Governor of the Sierra Leone colony to administer the villages where the liberated slaves scattered, as alternatives to Western missionaries who became incapacitated by death or illness.⁷⁶ So, the Yoruba in Sierra Leone were a strong and capable force to be reckoned with for the social and economic development of the colony.

⁷¹ CO265/154, Doherty to Russell, 30 Nov. 1839.

⁷² See Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, p. 70.

⁷³ Creole (or Kiriyo), the Yoruba adaptation for the word 'Christian' simply refers to the children born by the *Saro* while in the Diaspora. A good number of the children of the *Saro*, such as the Crowthers embraced Christianity.

⁷⁴ CMS/CA3/04/497/05, J. Edgar, Managing Director of West Africa Company to CMS Secretaries, 3 September 1875.

⁷⁵ The CMS was the first to arrive in Sierra Leone in 1804, followed by the Wesleyan Missionary Society (WMS) in 1811. That trend was reversed as the missionaries respond to the call for the establishment of Yoruba mission. WMS and CMS arrived Yorubaland in 1842 and 1845 respectively.

⁷⁶ Fyfe, 'Freed Slave Colonies in West Africa', p. 188.

Lastly, Ajayi's entire thesis on the development of the modern elites⁷⁷, and Peel's remarkable statistics on the size of the journals composed by African missionaries⁷⁸ show that the Yoruba were already a formidable group that had gained sufficient skills needed for proclaiming the gospel and promoting commerce in Yorubaland. This thesis follows these authors by making use of materials that relate to the activities of Yoruba missionaries. These represent more than half of the missionary data used in this study, because of their extensive reports on 'lawful commerce' in Yorubaland.

In addition to the factors above, the role of the Yoruba missionaries in the development of commerce in their country makes Yorubaland a suitable centre for the study of Legitimate Commerce. Missionaries in nineteenth-century Yorubaland were CMS, Baptists, Wesleyan Methodists and Scottish Presbyterians; they were not just European but Yoruba, Americans and mixed race. Even the European missionaries were not just British, but mission agents from Britain such as the German David Hinderer and even the Methodist missionary, Thomas Birch Freeman, son of a liberated slave and an English mother. Missionaries also represented different economic persuasions even within the same missionary body, as no missionary group actually made any mission policy statement on Legitimate Commerce.

The distinction between the Yoruba and European missionaries is clearer within the CMS than it is in the other principal missionary bodies in nineteenth-century Yorubaland. While the Yoruba missionaries also emerged with strong positions on

⁷⁷ Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite*.

⁷⁸ Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, p. 11.

Legitimate Commerce within the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and the Southern Baptist Mission, their effectiveness in the commercialization of Yorubaland is seen more in the period after 1893, which is outside the scope of this thesis.⁷⁹

The most striking distinction of Yorubaland as a suitable centre for studying the 'Rise and Fall' of Legitimate Commerce in Africa is that the community served as the base from where missionaries reached many other satellite kingdoms in the nineteenth century. Samuel Johnson gives a clear description of how central Yorubaland was placed among the missionary centres in the nineteenth century. He observes that the Yoruba country

lies to the immediate West of the River Niger (below the confluence) and South of the Quorra (i.e., the Western branch of the same River above the confluence), having Dahomey on the West, and the Bight of Benin to the South. ... This part of the country, of which Lagos in the Bight of Benin is the seaport, is generally known as the Yoruba country, extending from the Bight to within two or three days journey to the banks of the Niger.⁸⁰

The Yoruba not only benefited from Legitimate Commerce, they also participated in its development and spread to other areas of West Africa. The vantage geographical and historical positioning of Yorubaland and its *Saro* liberated citizens who had gained the advantage of European education, civilization, skills and commerce in Europe as well as at Sierra Leone, make Yorubaland a suitable centre for examining the Rise and Fall of Legitimate Commerce in Africa.

⁷⁹ For example, Majola Agbebi is a formidable name in the twentieth century for the growth of agricultural produce in Ijebu area.

⁸⁰ Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, O. Johnson, ed. (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul Ltd, 1921), pp. xix – xxii. Johnson's vivid description of the Yoruba has been one of the most-widely consulted sources in identifying the people, because he witnessed the events in Yorubaland in the period under consideration.

The Scope, Approach and Methodology for this Study

The particular focus of this study is the period from 1839, when Yoruba traders petitioned the British Queen for a colony in Yorubaland, to 1893, the year most authors agree that colonialism really took hold of Africa. Missionaries' letters, journals and official correspondence in the archives are the sources consulted for establishing in this thesis that Legitimate Commerce was meant to be 'Headlight' and a means to a religious end in Yorubaland. Secondly, whereas the approach of scholars is to focus at the last two decades of the nineteenth century when the influence of Legitimate Commerce had waned, archival resources provide fresh insights into the adoption of Legitimate Commerce as a theological response to the concerns on slavery in Africa in the earlier period. The responses are viewed as a 'headlight' in this thesis, because the missionary materials link Legitimate Commerce to the abolitionists, the eighteenth-century British evangelicals and the Yoruba and European missionaries, rather than to colonialism and the imperialism of free trade.

This study uses archival material as a major source to examine the theological concerns of the nineteenth-century evangelicals in Yorubaland who saw virtue in using Legitimate Commerce to proclaim the Gospel and to counteract the trade in slaves. It links theological concerns with historical evidence relating to nineteenth-century Yorubaland. Secondly, this study examines ethical issues such as the Liquor Trade that could hinder the proclamation of the Gospel. Thirdly, the use of archival material gives a deeper and more flexible understanding of how missionaries applied the idea of commercialisations in Yorubaland than the popular idea which brands all European enterprises in Africa as encroaching on African trade.

Materials are drawn from eight sources, the most essential of which are the archival records of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Societies (WMMS).⁸¹ Although the archival materials contribute to the processes of reconstructing the history and theology of Legitimate Commerce as well as investigating the economic philosophy of the nineteenth-century evangelical missions in Yorubaland, missionary sources have significant limitations, which are examined later in this chapter.

This study adopts a mixture of theological and historical approaches because the Yoruba missionaries perceived Legitimate Commerce as their benevolent response for redeeming Yorubaland, by way of mixing ideological and religious aspects. Although mission has ‘no direct competence in the realm of worldly structures’,⁸² nevertheless, the missionaries’ tasks is not only to feed the soul, but also the body. The adoption of commerce as a means⁸³ of proclaiming the gospel into the world with an image of the human, shows that a function of the Great Commission in the perception of the missionaries in Yorubaland was to organise the community’s structures as responsibly as they could.⁸⁴

Historically, the Yoruba missionaries moved into their country as torchbearers and beamed the light of the Gospel into the dark alleys that slavery created. The practical way Henry Venn, the secretary of the CMS, approached Legitimate Commerce, for instance, shows how committed he was to Yoruba empowerment. He moved into the

⁸¹ The Church Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society are referred to from this point forward and throughout this work as CMS and WMMS.

⁸² H. Urs von Balthasar, ‘Liberation Theology in the Light of Salvation History’ in J. V. Schall (ed.), *Liberation Theology in Latin America* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), p. 144.

⁸³ William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester: Ann Ireland & Others, 1792), p. 81.

⁸⁴ Urs von Balthasar, ‘Liberation Theology in the Light of Salvation History’, p. 144.

cotton trade that brought himself and Mr Thomas Clegg, a Manchester cotton merchant and financier of the trade in Yorubaland into serious disagreement. Venn won the battle by the establishment of a cotton training institute in Abeokuta in 1859.⁸⁵ Thus, the CMS under Venn made significant progress in gaining converts through Gospel proclamation, discipleship programmes and church planting,⁸⁶ as missionaries invested quality time in establishing 'lawful commerce' in Yorubaland.

The propositions of the abolitionists who were the forebears of missionary enterprise in Yorubaland had laid a foundation for the argument of this thesis that the eighteenth-century evangelical spirit of proclaiming the Gospel of Commerce and Christianity in other cultures motivated their successors in Sierra Leone. This influence can be seen, for example in a letter Thomas King, a Yoruba missionary and the first catechist of the Anglican Church at Lokoja in 1841 wrote to Venn, the secretary of the CMS. In the letter, King expressed the hope that the empowerment of the Yoruba would produce the needed skills to embark on the task of Gospel proclamation in the entire African continent.⁸⁷

Although this is an investigation of the commercial activities of missionaries in nineteenth-century Yorubaland, some important actions of the evangelicals in Victorian and Edwardian Britain are evaluated in various parts of this work to place Legitimate Commerce within its proper evangelical context. Similarly, some ethnographic reports such as the memoirs of McGregor Laird and Richard Oldfield are also examined. It was these two merchants who pioneered a new movement of Western merchants into West Africa after the course of the Niger River was

⁸⁵ CMS/ CA2/L1 Letter from Henry Venn to Henry Townsend of 29 November 1850.

⁸⁶ Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa*, p. 329.

⁸⁷ CMS/CA2/061/1 Thomas King to H. Venn, Letter, Abeokuta, 27 Oct. 1851.

discovered. Their observation that the Slave Trade did not abate in spite of its abolition and the activities of the enforcement squadrons along West African coast⁸⁸ was helpful to the missionaries.

This study connects Legitimate Commerce with the successes of the Slave Trade abolition. The labours of the abolitionists in the Victorian Parliament belong to a period before this thesis, but failure to link this period with the study would result in a void being created. The year 1807 is symbolic, because of the victory scored by the abolitionists.⁸⁹ They were the brain behind Britain's bold thrust of leading other European nations out of the Slave Trade.⁹⁰ Britain, 'the world's foremost commercial nation, the shipping of which carried one-half of all the slaves crossing the Atlantic',⁹¹ set a precedent by abolishing the trade in 1807. Although the slaving activities did not abate, the abolition movements won a victory in which good overcame evil,⁹² at least in principle if not in practice.

The eye-witness accounts of the European missionaries and traders show the futility of the efforts and expenditure of the British Government in maintaining the enforcement squadrons on the West African coasts. The CMS mission under the leadership of Venn carried the work of the abolitionists forward by seeking to promote an alternative to the unlawful trade in slaves and make 'lawful commerce' a permanent feature of African Christianity.

⁸⁸ Laird and Oldfield, *Narration of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa*.

⁸⁹ For more details on the activities of, and sacrifice made, by the Slave Trade abolitionists, see Thomas Clarkson, *An essay on the Impolicy of the African slave trade*.

⁹⁰ There are arguments against the sole claim of victory by the abolitionists by scholars who argue that the British public deserve a share in the commendation we give to the abolitionists. See Seymour Drescher, 'Whose Abolition? Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave Trade', in *Past and Present*, No 143 (May, 1994), pp. 136-166.

⁹¹ Munro, *Africa and the International Economy 1800-1960*, pp. 42 - 3.

⁹² James Walvin, *Britain's Slave Empire* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing Ltd, 2000), pp. 67 - 72.

The reasons adduced by the proponents of 'Legitimate Commerce' for embarking on it were stated clearly as they defended their vision before the British populace. Thomas Fowell Buxton, the successor of William Wilberforce as the Parliamentary leader of the Slave Trade abolitionists, stated that commerce would bequeath an empowering legacy on Africa. He saw in it great potential for developing relationships between Britain and Africa. He suggested that British industries would obtain cheaper sugar and cotton from Africa than was obtainable from Brazil and the Americas, thus shifting dependence away from the New World:

Africa and Great Britain stand in this relation toward each other. Each possesses what the other requires, and each requires what the other possesses. Great Britain wants raw material, and markets for her manufactured goods. Africa wants manufactured goods, and a market for her raw materials.⁹³

The Primary Sources of Information

Another feature of this thesis is the attempt made to understand the motives and methods of the missionaries in Yorubaland from their reports, journals and correspondence. One of the major advantages of using missionary sources is that they are in writing and the researcher is able to link one report to another in the process of making an argument. The CMS required its missionaries to write journals of their daily experiences on the mission field; they did not state that the purpose of this was to facilitate the process of reconstructing history, but the documents have indeed become veritable references for various investigations.

⁹³ Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, 1840, p. 240.

The written memoirs of the Yoruba, British and German missionaries contradict many scholarly assumptions and historical interpretations about the motives of missionaries for including commerce in their agenda for Yoruba evangelization. They give a clear picture of the events of the nineteenth century in Yorubaland. The extensive use of these materials in this study thus removes much of the confusion in scholarly works about the motives of missionaries for introducing lawful commerce alongside the proclamation of the Gospel in Yorubaland, and their methods of achieving the goal.

Ajayi and Ayandele summarise the current state of missionary materials in the archives of Europe, America and West Africa:

The historian cannot but feel tantalized by the opportunities that are yet to be explored particularly given the richness of the only slightly tapped archival materials in the mission headquarters in Europe and the New World, personal and family papers in West Africa, the diaries, reports, and minute books which lie fallow in various churches and parsonages.⁹⁴

Considering how fragmented most of the materials were until very recently, the eminent scholars who have made significant contributions to the study of Legitimate Commerce and have seen the critical state of sources in Africa, have every reason to heave a sigh of relief at the progress that is being made in new organisation of the ancient documents across Europe and indeed the New World. This organisation gives hope that some archival centres in West Africa, such as that of the University of Ibadan, will continue to recover and re-assemble the surviving original papers of the evangelical missions. This theological exploration of Legitimate Commerce owes a debt of gratitude to the organisation of the archives. The materials have provided fresh historical insights for evaluating Christian mission history.

⁹⁴ J. F. Ade Ajayi and E. A. Ayandele, 'Emerging Themes in Africa and West African Religious History', in *Journal of African Studies*, vol. 2, (1974).

In twentieth-century studies, theologians and historians had great difficulties extracting information from missionary correspondence, especially when the basic concerns were theological or polemic, because of the general lack of information concerning these holdings and their availability to scholars in Africa before the 1960s.⁹⁵

It should be emphasised here that it was through great difficulty that researchers such as Ajayi and Ayandele extracted data from the materials in the CMS archive for their works on missionaries' activities in Nigeria. From the last decade of the twentieth century however that the CMS archive had been reorganised, the materials became better accessible, so that researchers such as Peel explored the documents extensively in examining the missionary presence in Yorubaland from various angles.⁹⁶ Those materials are also used extensively in this study.

Limitations on the Use of Missionary Archives

There are limitations however in the new arrangement. A researcher searching for materials on Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland for the period 1845-1893 has to go through the entire materials for the Yoruba mission. It entails extracting the materials from a pool of resources containing much other material as well as economic matters. An instance is a report by Samuel Crowther Jr., the native lay agent in charge of cotton warehouses, whose reports covered issues related to cotton gin and the farmers, and medical reports of his clinic in Abeokuta mission centre.⁹⁷ The separation of the

⁹⁵ Donald D. Leopard, 'African-Related Materials in European Missionary Archives', *African Studies Bulletin*, vol. X, no. 2, September 1967, p. 1.

⁹⁶ Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* is a good example of an innovative use of the CMS archives. Hard copies of the missionary papers are currently housed in the archives of the University of Birmingham.

⁹⁷ CMS/CA2/032

Letter Books from the Mission Books or Original Papers however facilitates easier identification of the documents that relate to the way missionaries promoted commerce, the responses of the people, their rulers and the slave dealers in Yorubaland.⁹⁸ The Yoruba Mission documents are not arranged in chronological order, but the relevant papers such as incoming letters from the mission fields and individual missionary's daily journal entries are clearly delineated for ease of identification and use.

The value of the archives will continue to be mentioned in the various chapters of this thesis as a means of stressing the uniqueness of the missionaries' writings to this research. It is important however to mention at this introductory stage that the usefulness of the CMS archives in the University of Birmingham is incalculable. First, the fact that the bulk of the journals in the archives were composed by African agents of the mission strengthens the argument in this study that Legitimate Commerce was a 'Headlight' for Yoruba economic emancipation. Peel argues further that the archival materials credited to Yoruba missionaries represent the first works of the modern Yoruba intelligentsia.⁹⁹ The register of the activities of the missionaries in Yorubaland therefore provides quick information on the contents of most materials held for that community of West Africa. The documents contain policy statements on issues such as the duties imposed on imports from UK and those charged by Lagos on imports from Abeokuta, a major inland centre of commerce in the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ CMS/CA2/07/1 Lagos ex-king Akitoye to J. Beecroft, consul at Badagry, 1851 – Akitoye's petition to Beecroft is an example of the political struggles that ensued as a result of the king's introduction of Legitimate Commerce in Lagos.

⁹⁹ Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁰ CMS/CA2/07/47 Letters to & from Glover, Egba Board of Management and Bashorun of Egbaland.

Researching into Legitimate Commerce through the Methodist Missionary archive largely housed at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London provides a different experience to that at the CMS archives. Although the arrangement of the Methodist materials has improved from what it was in the last fifty years, little has been done at the source in Africa to rescue them from wasting away.. The fragmented nature of the documents remains as it was in the last decade and confirms G. B. Alegbeleye's observation twenty years ago that 'even today only a small proportion of the records of the Methodist church are organised in any archival institution; the rest are in a decaying state in private hands and vestries of churches.'¹⁰¹ The Methodist documents were subjected to complex problems of poor preservation of the materials in Nigeria. Apart from the fact that the society did not have the kind of policy guide adopted by the CMS, the methodology for collating the Primitive Methodist church records was very poor. Methodist sources also suffered from the problems associated with piecemeal storage of documents, some of which were destroyed during the Nigerian civil war.¹⁰²

Lastly, missionary sources have been interpreted with caution in this study, because the materials emanate from evangelists whose primary objective was to Christianize the Yoruba through Legitimate Commerce. However, the authenticity of missionary sources has been carefully checked against government sources such as the papers of the Foreign and Colonial Offices. Similarly, the surviving materials in Europe recovered from the former base in Marylebone Road and moved into the special collections section of the SOAS since 1945 provide an opportunity for evaluating the early Methodist work in Yorubaland in 1845. Noel Matthews and M. D. Wainwright's

¹⁰¹ G. B. Alegbeleye, 'Archival Odyssey: A Study of the Problems of the Researcher in Using the Methodist Church Records of Nigeria' in *History in Africa*, vol.14, 1987, p. 376 of 375 – 380.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p. 376.

written guide¹⁰³ also provides a means of examining the minutes of the Methodist meetings after 1842.

Taking cognisance of the fact that nineteenth-century missionaries were Yoruba as well as Europeans and Americans, makes it more credible to embark on this research into the motives for introducing Legitimate Commerce. Careful examination of the voluminous letters, journals and correspondence in the CMS archive also invalidates the tendency to present European missionaries in Africa as imperial agents. Even the few resources at SOAS on the early beginning of the missionary work under the leadership of Birch Freeman in Badagry indicate that the goal of the missionaries was to beam the 'light of the gospel' into the darkness created by the slave dealers.

The major limitations in the archival materials of the Methodist missionaries are the gaps in the correspondence, letter books and district minute books from about 1882 and the fact that the bulk of the Methodist collections relates to early work in Europe. Where materials are available on Africa, they have been dispersed. Some Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society records from 1843 to the first decade of the twentieth century are kept in the National Archives in Ibadan Nigeria, while some papers emanating from the work of Thomas Birch Freeman are housed in Ghana Methodist Church archives.¹⁰⁴

Apart from the correspondence exchanged with the headquarters in London by the chairmen of overseas district committees, and individual missionaries, the Nigerian

¹⁰³ Noel Matthews and M. D. Wainwright, *A Guide to Manuscripts and Documents in the British Isles Relating to Africa* (London: 1971), pp. 81–5. See also Noel Matthews, *Guide to West African History in the Archives of the United Kingdom* (London: 1973), pp. 71–107.

¹⁰⁴ Alegbeleye, 'Archival Odyssey...', p. 378.

Synod minutes of 1878 – 1891 are contained in boxes 174 – 278 at SOAS. The box devoted to the maps and plans of buildings in Nigeria is of tremendous advantage for exploring some of the economic and educational development of the Methodist mission in Yorubaland.

The memoirs of Birch Freeman, the pioneer Methodist missionary in Yorubaland¹⁰⁵ are valuable sources for researching into Legitimate Commerce at the onset in Yorubaland. This is because Methodist missionaries pioneered the task of setting up European missions upon their arrival in Badagry in 1842. They took the first initiative, and extended missionary works to Yorubaland through the returnees who had imbibed European Christianity, Commerce and Civilization. They even attracted some of the European industrialists in Gold Coast, such as Thomas Hutton who set up some manufacturing concerns in Lagos, and also explored the interior of Yorubaland.¹⁰⁶

The Wesleyan Methodists, under the leadership of Birch Freeman played host to both the CMS and the American Baptist missionaries who followed their example by setting up mission centres at Badagry and Abeokuta in 1843 and 1845, and Ijaye in 1850. Preservation of the primary documents of the Methodist group in Nigeria has faced many setbacks, which creates difficulty for the twenty-first-century researcher in reconstructing some of the critical steps taken by the group in actualising Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. Efforts are being made to harmonise the important documents still housed in various parsonages and private family libraries, but the materials at SOAS are still the most reliable source for reconstructing the

¹⁰⁵ Freeman, *Journal of Various Visits to the Kingdoms of Ashanti, Aku, and Dahomi in Western Africa*,

¹⁰⁶ CMS/CA2/043 Letter from Gollmer to C. M. S. Secretaries, 14 Jan. 1851.

Methodist side of the story. The Methodist Church Overseas Division, consisting of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, the United Methodist Missionary Society, and the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society,¹⁰⁷ merged together in 1933 to form the Methodist Missionary Society (MMS). The archives containing the documents of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, dating from 1842, when Birch Freeman arrived in Badagry are among the collections of 1,570 boxes deposited in SOAS, between 1978 and 1993.¹⁰⁸

Official Correspondence

The 'Headlight' theology proposed in this thesis is validated by using some of the official correspondence held at the Public Record Office in London, including the Foreign and Colonial Office correspondence as supplements to the archives. The materials on antecedent issues on Legitimate Commerce in West Africa housed in the Foreign Office under the heading Great Britain and General, and marked as 'Africa', especially the 'Correspondence Relating to West Africa' are invaluable for investigating the missionary attitude to the Liquor Trade.

The journals of the various Chambers of Commerce portray Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland as 'Headlight', in view of the spirited effort of Henry Venn on the establishment of the cotton training institute in Abeokuta, which is explored further in Chapter Six of this work. The Manchester Chamber of Commerce has a rich archive of commercial papers, especially those relating to the cotton mercantile group, which

¹⁰⁷ David M. Anderson and Rosemary Seton, 'Archives and Manuscripts Collections Relating to Africa Held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London', *History in Africa*, 1995.

¹⁰⁸ See Elizabeth Bennett, *Guide to the Archives of the Methodist Missionary Society* (London, 1979).

experienced periods of boom and recession.¹⁰⁹ The activities of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce in mediating in the Yoruba country's internal hostilities, and the abolition of tolls levied on the passage of goods, greatly facilitated the acceleration of the cotton trade.¹¹⁰

The Annual Reports of the London Chamber of Commerce are also useful for evaluating how Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland began to suffer setbacks from the emerging imperialism of free trade, which will be examined extensively. This study therefore makes extensive use of the official resources for reconstructing missionary motives and methods for Legitimate Commerce, rather than relying on secondary ideas and theoretical assumptions. All these documents on Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland give credence to the suggestion that the missionaries were fashioning out a Christian model that would serve as an example of holistic salvation for other African kingdoms to copy. Although Legitimate Commerce experienced a setback from the 1870s, the purpose, means and intention for which it was originally designed in the 1840s were not invalidated.

Some Valuable Secondary Sources

This study does not discount the importance of the contributions made so far on the development of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. It consults a good number of scholarly works as a basis for information, but in doing so seeks also to identify the missing links in their views of the motives, methods and identity of the missionaries,

¹⁰⁹ For more details on the growth of cotton trade in Yorubaland, see CMS//CA2/L1 Letter from Henry Venn to Henry Townsend of 29 November 1850. See also CMS//CA2/L2 Letter from Venn to Robin, 22 Jan, 1857.

¹¹⁰ See CMS//CA2/045/28 Lagos Government prohibition of trade between Lagos and Abeokuta 14 Jan 1863. See also Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Proceedings 25 March 1891; ref. CO/147/83, Manchester Chamber of Commerce to Colonial Office, 31 March 1891.

and to highlight particularly the relative neglect of the significance of the period from 1839 to 1893. Chapter Two evaluates the main arguments of the supporters and critics of missionary involvement in commercial activities in Yorubaland.

Chapter Summary

This chapter lays the foundation for the central argument that although Legitimate Commerce contributed to the development of Yoruba economic, social, historical and cultural transformations, scholars have continued to emphasize its end result and pay little attention to its prime movers, primary purpose and function in Yorubaland. It examines the nature and background of Legitimate Commerce, the need for this research in spite of the extensive works already undertaken by eminent scholars on missionary activities in Yorubaland, and the invaluable writings of missionaries for making theological propositions on this important economic history.

Chapter Two contains a structured critique of scholarship as it relates to Legitimate Commerce. It engages with previous scholarship as regards both the opinions put forward and the extent to which archival resources underpin these views. It argues for placing the 'Benevolence' theory of eighteenth-century evangelicals ahead of the restraining generic theories of 'Capitalism, Slavery and Anti-slavery',¹¹¹ 'Hegemony',¹¹² 'Mercantilism' and the 'Imperialism of Free Trade',¹¹³

¹¹¹ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964).

¹¹² David D. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

¹¹³ Brian Stanley, 'Commerce and Christianity': Providence Theory, the Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842-1860', *The Historical Journal*, 26, 1, (1983). See also J Gallagher and R. Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', in *Economic History Review*, 2nd Ser., VI (1953); Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: the Official Mind of Imperialism*; J Gallagher and R. Robinson, 'The Partition of Africa', in *New Cambridge Modern History, XI Material Progress and World-wide Problems, 1870-1898*, Hinsley, F.H., ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962); R. Robinson, 'The Official Mind of Imperialism', in *Historians in Tropical Africa*, University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Salisbury, 1962).

Chapter Three provides an overview of several aspects of Legitimate Commerce which are further examined in subsequent chapters. The chapter evaluates some critical antecedent issues, especially how the evangelical strategy developed in Sierra Leone before Yorubaland. It argues that although Western missionaries participated in legitimizing commerce in Yorubaland, the most critical group that laid the foundation for the economic experiment was the liberated Yoruba who returned to their own country with 'lawful commerce' and Christianity.

Chapter Four specifically examines some of the theological and religious bases for experimenting with Christianity and Commerce in Yorubaland. It links the theological framework of the Victorian evangelicals who introduced commerce as a means of propagating the Gospels in other cultures with those of their nineteenth-century successors in Sierra Leone and Yorubaland. It argues that there were sufficient reasons for thinking that commerce could be integrated to religion in the process of evangelizing the Yoruba.

The contribution of Chapter Five to the thesis is that pedagogical activities were a critically important part of Legitimate Commerce and a means of bringing the Yoruba closer to the making legitimate wealth. The chapter argues that formal education, workshops and practical pedagogy that had changed many of the enslaved and degraded returnees into men of enterprise and intelligence were critical for perceiving Legitimate Commerce as an empowerment project for Yorubaland.

The contribution of Chapter Six to the main argument that Legitimate Commerce opened up new and sustainable avenues of wealth for the Yoruba consists in

examining the activities of European missionaries in importing capital and 'know-how' for introducing the Yoruba to international trade. The chapter argues that the missionaries who were behind the cotton trade facilitated the process of legitimizing trade in Yorubaland and had a different identity from the traders who promoted the liquor trade;¹¹⁴ arms trade¹¹⁵, wars, and colonialism from the 1870s.

The final chapter, Chapter Seven brings together all the strands of missionary labours in their bid to teach the Yoruba sustainable economic activities. It considers the effects of the intervention of the imperial traders who took advantage of colonialism to push back the influence of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. The chapter observes in conclusion that whereas the Yoruba returnees from Sierra Leone expressly stated their desire to beam 'the light of the Gospel' into their country through Legitimate Commerce, scholars have paid little attention to their theological ideology, missionary identity and economic thrust for their motherland.

Summary

The argument that Europe needed raw materials for the expanding factories and market for the finished products is not only established by recent contributions,¹¹⁶ missionaries and abolitionists such as Buxton had made such propositions.¹¹⁷ The prime movers of Legitimate Commerce in Africa, such as David Livingstone, Fowell Buxton, Samuel Crowther and Henry Venn did not anticipate that European nations would begin to formulate policies for annexing Africa or taking over her economy. Although the European missionaries collaborated with the imperial governments,

¹¹⁴ CO96/266, Enclosures in Aborigines Protection Society to Colonial Office, 22 May 1895.

¹¹⁵ CO 2/22, Stephen's minute of 21 September 1839. James Stephen's forecast that the unending intra- and inter-tribal wars of the Yoruba were likely to implicate any agent of the British Government.

¹¹⁶ Munro, *Africa and the International Economy 1800-1960*, p. 42.

¹¹⁷ Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, 1840, p. 240.

because one had to have a power base to be relevant in Africa at that time,¹¹⁸ they did not lose their focus on establishing a humanitarian enterprise in Africa.

The greatest challenge that confronted Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland was not hegemony and rivalries among missionaries, but how to continue to interpret the economic ideology without ending up with what are now understood as 'crises of adaptation.'¹¹⁹ Ironically, those who made their fortune from the Slave Trade regained the frontline position again as beneficiaries of Legitimate Commerce. For instance, when Prince (later king) Kosoko, the leading slave dealer in Yorubaland, was finally overpowered and persuaded by the British administrators to forgo the Slave Trade, he swung to the other side and became the champion in Legitimate Commerce.¹²⁰

This thesis in dealing in depth with Legitimate Commerce engages in Mission History and especially that of the Christian missions in Africa. It explores the Rise, Development and Decline of using Legitimate Commerce as a means for advancing mission's primary goal of Christianizing Africa. Legitimate Commerce belonged to two discernible dispensations. During the era of the *Saro* returnees from the 1840s, missionaries adopted the idea of Commerce and Christianity¹²¹ as a strategy for propagating the Gospel and counteracting the trade in slaves. The resurgence of the imperial traders from the 1870s disrupted Legitimate Commerce and set Africa back economically.

¹¹⁸ Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, p. 123.

¹¹⁹ Hopkins, 'Economic Imperialism in West Africa, Lagos 1880 – 92', pp. 580 – 606.

¹²⁰ Kristin Mann, 'Owners, Slaves and the Struggle for Labour in the Commercial Transition at Lagos', in Law, ed, *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-century West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 147.

¹²¹ 'Commerce and Christianity' was the symbol of civilization initiated by the eighteenth-century British evangelicals for propagating the Gospel. See Stanley, 'Commerce and Christianity': Providence Theory, the Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842-1860'.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON 'LEGITIMATE COMMERCE'

Preamble

Two polar positions compared in this chapter dominate theological and historical discussions on the way the evangelicals used 'Legitimate Commerce' as a strategy for propagating the Gospel in West Africa and in the world at large. This study belongs to the first school of thought, which portrays missionaries as humanitarians, whose motives, methods and identity are discernible and separable from those of traders and colonialists in nineteenth-century Yorubaland. It also shows that the purpose of Christianizing commerce in Yorubaland from 1839 to 1893 was to create a Christian community that was economically self-reliant.

The antithesis to the above theory portrays the inclusion of commerce in the missionary portfolio as a strategy of pre-empting the imperialism of free trade and preparing for it. It also depicts missionaries as forerunners of colonialism in Africa and 'Legitimate Commerce' as an Expansionist scheme. Indeed some scholars have portrayed missionaries as agents for preparing the ground for the imperial plans of expanding British commercial and political interest in Africa.¹ Such perceptions of missionaries and their involvement in commerce reinforce the arguments of historians who argue that Britain diversified investments from the New World to capitalize on trade in weaker Africa.²

¹ Magnus O. Bassey, 'Missionary Rivalry and Educational Expansion in Southern Nigeria, 1885-1932', in *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 60, no. 1, (Winter, 1991).

² Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964), p. 39. See also Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slaver in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977).

Most studies on the motives of modern mission³ for integrating Legitimate Commerce into evangelization in Yorubaland tend to concentrate on the outcome and implications of the commercial activities on the economies of Europe and America. However, many African scholars such as J. F. Ade Ajayi, and a few Europeans such as J. D. Y. Peel, though investigating different aspects of the socio-economic activities of the missionaries, engage with issues that are germane for underscoring missionary identity and motives for integrating commerce into Christianity in Yorubaland.⁴ None of the literature explored in this chapter invalidates the main argument of this thesis, that although imperial opportunists gave Legitimate Commerce a bad image, missionaries introduced it to counteract the illegitimate trade in slaves and to aid the propagation of the Gospel in Yorubaland.

This chapter evaluates ongoing discussions on Legitimate Commerce. It examines three major theories. First, it explores how the ideology of the eighteenth-century British evangelicals impacted upon European missionaries who experimented with using commerce as a means of evangelizing the Yoruba. Secondly, it connects the arguments on Capitalism, Slavery and Anti-Slavery with the identity of modern mission in Yorubaland. Thirdly, it moves forward to the later phases of Legitimate Commerce to examine scholarship surrounding the 'Imperialism of Free Trade', which impugns – wrongly, in my view - the missionary motives for using Legitimate Commerce as a means of propagating the Gospel.

³ 'Modern mission' in Yorubaland is differentiated from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Portuguese and Dutch missions, whose interest was primarily trade. It refers to the Wesleyan Methodists and the Church Missionary Society who teamed up with the Yoruba ex-slaves in enforcing the abolition of the Slave Trade through religion, culture and, in the context of this thesis, economy from the early 1840s to 1890s. See Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891, The Making of a New Elite* (London: Longman, 1965), pp. 31 – 38.

⁴ Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite*, J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

Evangelical Ideology and Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland

The background of Legitimate Commerce is traceable to the eighteenth-century evangelical ideology which proposed Commerce and Christianity, as a practical means of propagating the Gospel in weaker economies. It was upon this principle that their nineteenth-century successors based the introduction of Legitimate Commerce into the Christianization process in Africa. Newton's teachings, as Brian Stanley observes, prompted the nineteenth-century evangelicals to move the ideology beyond the theoretical level where their predecessors left off.⁵ The same evangelical spirit of Christianizing commerce, Stanley notes further in another work, was the motivation for European missionaries who adopted commerce as a strategy for evangelizing West Indies, India and China in the nineteenth century.⁶ The commercial ideology was not limited to the evangelicals, as John Wolfe observes. Non-partisan groups such as the Christian parliamentarians of the Victorian era also joined in nurturing 'the idea that Britain had received the Empire as a providential gift of God'⁷ and needed to extend the same to the weaker economies of the world.

This study follows Peel's method of re-evaluating the activities of missionaries in Africa through extracting information from the various archives and historical sources.⁸ The missionary ideology of integrating commerce with Christianity becomes clearer by examining the documents and relating them with the arguments of critics of Legitimate Commerce and missionary movement in Africa. Such an exercise reveals

⁵ Brian Stanley, "'Commerce and Christianity'": Providence Theory, the Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842-1860', *The Historical Journal*, 26, 1, (1983), p. 72.

⁶ B. Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester, Apollos, 1990), pp. 85-90, 98-101.

⁷ John Wolfe, *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland, 1843-1945* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 222.

⁸ Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, pp. 9 - 17.

Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland to be the outcome of a deep theological concern for Yoruba existential problems. A brief evaluation of William Carey's 1792 treatise that set out from biblical perspectives the strategy of carrying out missions in non-Western lands,⁹ opens up new ways of separating the commercial activities of the European missionaries from the opportunistic and expansionist tendencies of the imperial traders. Among those who portray missionaries as part of the imperial system is Norton Cook. His work on British commercial interest in Nigeria does not establish a dividing line between profit making ventures and Legitimate Commerce, nor point specifically to missionaries' commercial development of Yorubaland. Rather, Cook treats various periods and agencies together before making his complex proposition about the possible motives for British commercial interest in Nigeria.¹⁰

Cook's assumption that the 'development of the trade of the Empire'¹¹ was a major motivation for the British Government's support of its citizens in Africa is plausible, considering the amount of human and financial resources invested in the exploration of the Niger. However, because his agenda was to examine British commercial interest in Nigeria, he did not pay any special attention to missionaries or the development of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. This study however focuses more on the writings of the Yoruba missionaries themselves, whose journals and correspondence provide a source for reconstructing their identity as 'Headlight' to the Yoruba community of West Africa.

⁹ William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester: Ann Ireland & Others, 1792).

¹⁰ For more on this, see Cook, *British Enterprise in Nigeria* p. 46. See also See Toyin Falola and Demola Babalola, 'Religion and Economy in Pre-Colonial Nigeria', in Jacob K. Olupona and Toyin Falola, eds, *Religion and Society in Nigeria: Historical and Sociological Perspectives* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1991); and A. G. Hopkins, 'Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880-92', in *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 21, 3 (1968), p. 580.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p.46

Yoruba missionaries became well grounded in the doctrine of Providence, which is discussed more extensively in Chapter Three of this thesis. They not only learnt the workings of Providence intellectually, traders such as Thomas Weeks and Yoruba missionaries such as Samuel Crowther and other *Saros* and *Creoles* internalised the means of grace, leading them to offer commerce as a panacea for eradicating slavery in their motherland. It is therefore more than a mere coincidence that Yoruba missionaries and their European mentors embraced the same ideology, focused upon in Chapter Three, of propagating the Gospel through legitimizing commerce.

Thomas King, a Yoruba missionary and ex-slave, explained why it was mandatory for the returnees to propagate the holistic Gospel to their own people. He recalled how his own sorrowful state of enslavement became a story of a 'happy day'.¹² Such claims as King's are explored further in Chapter Three of this thesis; they inform the theology upon which Yoruba and European missionaries based their argument for promoting commerce as a means of eradicating slavery in Yorubaland. The idea was widespread among the early returnees who were showing forth their praises 'to the God of all mercy' who took them out of the misery of the Slave Trade.¹³ The concerns of the European missionaries in Sierra Leone greatly influenced the *Saro* Yoruba who received the Gospel from about 1825 till 1839, and decided to take the Good News of Commerce and Christianity to Yorubaland. The *Saro* thus took that light of Christianity, Commerce and Civilization along as they returned to liberate their own country in particular and Africa in general.

¹² CMS/ CA2/061/1 Thomas King to Henry Venn, *Letter*, 27 Oct 1851.

¹³ CO 265/154, Enclosure dated 15 Nov. 1839, in Doherty to Russell, 30 Nov. 1839. See the content of the petition enclosed in the memo from Governor Doherty of Sierra Leone to Lord John Russell, British Secretary of State.

The argument made here on the foundation of the evangelicals' ideology of Legitimate Commerce does not invalidate the fact that European missionaries were interested in empire building. Any contrary opinion would imply that they were unpatriotic, which they were not; for example, they always expressed Queen Victoria's good wishes everywhere they visited in Yorubaland.¹⁴ Rather than try to conceal the interests of the evangelicals in the development of the British Empire, J. Ellison and G.H.S. Walpole propose that Christian involvement in nation building is a positive development. Although the expression, 'imperialism' appears to be pejorative and many scholars continue to perceive it that way, Ellison and Walpole advocated a new and functional meaning for the term.¹⁵

The proposition of 'Headlight' theology in this thesis opens up a new way of differentiating between the flag, the trade and the cross in Africa, taking Yorubaland as a testing ground.¹⁶ The representatives of the British government in Yorubaland were there to enforce the Act of Parliament that abolished the Slave Trade; the missionaries came to offer lawful commerce; and the traders who went to Yorubaland to exchange European goods with African produce and slaves had the sole purpose of trading for profit.

It was for the purposes of linking Africa with European civilization that William Wilberforce, the leader of the Parliamentary wing of the abolitionists, spearheaded the

¹⁴ See Sarah Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1854), pp. 160 – 161. 'The Queen and people of England are very glad to know that Sagbua and the chiefs think as they do upon this subject of commerce'

¹⁵ J. Ellison and G.H.S. Walpole, eds, *Church and Empire: A Series of Essays on the Responsibilities of Empire* (London, 1907), pp. v - vi, xiii, 21 - 41.

¹⁶ 'The flag' refers to the British Government, 'the trade' describes European traders and 'the cross' symbolizes the presence of missionaries.

formation of the Society for Missions to Africa and the East in 1799. Through that organisation, renamed the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East in 1812, the Yoruba returnees learnt the evangelicals' ideology of Commerce and Christianity. This study provides a clearer picture that the move of the *Saro* to legitimize commerce in Yorubaland was the crown of the task of the abolitionists who sought liberation for the slaves. As Wilberforce stated in 1823: 'the emancipation of the slaves was the ultimate object of all those who took the lead as advocates for the abolition of the Slave Trade.'¹⁷

Peter Clarke suggests that abolitionists had begun to emerge in Sierra Leone from 1787 with the ideology of Commerce and Christianity as their proffered solution for African liberation.¹⁸ The arrival of European missionaries in Sierra Leone introduced teachers and facilitators, who taught the Yoruba literary studies as well as technical skills. Samuel Crowther's tutelage under the Weeks is an example of the British missionaries' efforts at empowering the Yoruba in Sierra Leone. Christopher Fyfe, Jean Kopytoff and J. D. Y. Peel all give insightful accounts of the return of the former slaves from Sierra Leone to Lagos.¹⁹ Clarke gives a longer term historical perspective on Christianity's involvement in slavery, starting from the Portuguese traders who used a missionary guise in the sixteenth century²⁰ to obtain the Pope's approval as the

¹⁷ Reginald Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1933, 1964), p. 112.

¹⁸ Peter Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd, 1986), pp. 32 -7.

¹⁹ Jean H Kopytoff, *A Preface in Modern Nigeria: the Sierra Leonians in Yoruba 1830 - 1890* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p. 7, Christopher Fyfe, 'Freed Slave Colonies in West Africa', in John E. Flint, ed., *The Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 188, Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, p. 8.

²⁰ Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, p. 7.

sole traders with Africa before that monopoly was broken by British traders.²¹ This aspect will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

The Sierra Leone experience of the *Saro* Yoruba began with the philanthropic work of Granville Sharp, the father of the abolition movement. He arranged several forms of relief plan, into which he placed his personal pension funds before setting up a committee 'for relieving the black poor' in 1786.²² A new era of African economic emancipation began when some 351 emancipated slaves who had roamed the streets of London, Bristol and Birmingham volunteered to pioneer the 'back to Africa' plan of Sharp in 1787.²³ They landed in Sierra Leone, where their original settlement, Granville Town, was razed by a local chief, King Tom. It was re-founded by Henry Thornton and renamed Freetown shortly afterwards.²⁴

The second batch of Africans to settle in Sierra Leone were also ex-slaves, but from Nova Scotia. They had fought on the side of Britain in the American War of Independence of 1775-83, and the British Government had settled a number of them in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. However, owing to local opposition, the promise to them of social, political and economic freedom had become unrealisable.²⁵ A delegation seeking redress went to London in 1793, and was offered the opportunity to join Henry Thornton's project of reactivating the town of Granville

²¹ See John W. Blake, *European Beginnings in West Africa, 1454-1578: A Survey of the First Century of White Enterprise in West Africa, with Special Emphasis upon the Rivalry of the Great Powers* (Westport (Conn.): Greenwood, 1969 [1937]).

²² Betty Fladeland, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Antislavery Cooperation* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972), p. 83.

²³ Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, p. 32.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 33.

²⁵ Lamin Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of the Modern West Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 24 – 31.

Town (to become Freetown). Their acceptance of this option renewed the hope of the ex-slaves²⁶ and was to lead to widespread commercial activities in West Africa.

Two groups of ex-slaves thus converged in the Sierra Leone settlement. These were those on the one hand who had been emancipated from the plantations and the Nova Scotians, and on the other hand the recaptives – those who had been captured for the plantations, but were rescued ('recaptured') by the British squadrons, and resettled in Sierra Leone. Although the Yoruba was a major group carried into the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, they were not the main concern of Clarke or Walls. While Walls is concerned with the Nova Scotians²⁷, Clarke gives a general overview of how the emancipators arrived in various locations in West Africa. My study looks at how the Yoruba ex-slaves embraced the idea of Commerce and Christianity in Sierra Leone before they took the evangelicals' ideology to their homeland in 1839.²⁸

Walls and Clarke give accounts of how the emancipated slaves got to Sierra Leone; Christopher Fyfe provides information on the Yoruba people's interests in and commitment to religion, culture and commerce.²⁹ Saburi Biobaku addresses the emergence of the recaptives in Sierra Leone in his historical account of the wars in which many Yoruba such as Samuel Crowther were rescued and resettled at the colony after the Egba war of 1825.³⁰

²⁶ Brian Stanley, 'Profile: Andrew Walls' in *Epworth Review*, 28, No 4, October 2001, p. 17.

²⁷ Andrew Walls, 'The Nova Scotian Settlers and Their Religion', in *Sierra Leone Bulletin of Religion*, June 1959

²⁸ Kopytoff, *A Preface in Modern Nigeria: the Sierra Leonians in Yoruba 1830 – 1890*, p. 7. See also Fyfe, 'Freed Slave Colonies in West Africa', p. 188.

²⁹ Fyfe, 'Freed Slave Colonies in West Africa', p. 188.

³⁰ See S. O. Biobaku, *The Egba and Their Neighbours, 1842-1872* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).

Although the recaptives were from various different backgrounds, none of the scholars who examine the process of their emancipation distinguished between the various Africans resettled in the Sierra Leone colony. In Ayandele's study he examines the effects of the return of the *Saro* and their children on Yoruba society, and thus goes some way towards the analysis lacking in the others. He portrays the *Creoles* from the Diaspora as the offspring of former outcasts sold into the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade³¹ However, he then goes on to describe them as 'deluded hybrids' incapable of leadership.³² The situation of Crowther and some other recaptives who were captured during the wars that ravaged their towns puts some question marks on Ayandele's remarks. Many *Saro* Christians portrayed themselves as new vessels and arrived in Yorubaland with a new conception of humanity. Their conversion to Christianity had given them the advantage of European skills and commerce, and they tried to transplant into their country from 1839. They were far from incapable of leadership.

The returnees discussed above petitioned Queen Victoria in 1839 for a British colony in Yorubaland, primarily with a three-tier agenda of propagating the Gospel, legitimizing commerce and eradicating the Slave Trade from their own country.³³ Although the petition was declined, some of the liberated Yoruba were later incorporated into the British team on the 1841 Niger Expedition.³⁴ The conversion of

³¹ E. A. Ayandele, *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1974), p. 9.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ See the petition in Christopher Fyfe, *Sierra Leone Inheritance* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964) pp. 147 - 9.

³⁴ C. C. Ifemesia, 'The "Civilising" Mission of 1841: Aspects of an Episode in Anglo-Nigerian Relations', in O. U. Kalu ed., *The History of Christianity in West Africa* (London and New York: Longman Group Limited, 1980), p. 88.

some of these returnees therefore aided the importation of European Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation into Yorubaland.

Controversy continues on whether it was the missionaries' commerce that inducted Yorubaland into large-scale cash-crop farming. My work will throughout compare the original statements from the Yoruba and European missionaries taken from archives with the views of secondary scholars. Missionary sources demonstrate that the motif for incorporating evangelicals' economic ideology into the Christianisation process was to change Africa to a 'wealth producing' continent.

The Entry of Legitimate Commerce into Yorubaland

Thomas Fowell Buxton (1785 – 1846) provides the most penetrating of all missionary explanations for Christianizing commerce in Africa in the reasons he gave for initiating Legitimate Commerce in the Niger, through the Niger Expedition of 1841.³⁵

Buxton was the conscience of the abolitionists, a practical humanitarian and promoter of African emancipation, who succeeded Wilberforce as the leader of the abolitionists in Parliament. He contended with sceptics of the economic experiment that Africa needed an alternative - a civilizing trade that would counteract the Slave Trade, arguing not for imperial trade, but a commercial enterprise that would be fairly organised to favour both the countries of Europe and Africa.³⁶ He did not limit his campaign to the 'Clapham brotherhood' who had fought for the abolition of the Slave Trade; his strategy of seeking the support of all categories of people in Britain, the

³⁵ T. F. Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, G. E. Metcalfe, Int. (London: Dawson of Pall Mall, 1968 [1839, 1840]).

³⁶ Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, p. 195.

Whigs and the Tories, Parliament and the populace, slaves and free persons, hastened the implementation of his proposition.³⁷

Archival sources show that there are both significant similarities and differences between Buxton's proposition for the Niger Expedition and that of the Yoruba liberated slaves, who requested that Parliament establish a colony in Yorubaland. The Niger Expedition, initiated in Britain by Buxton, a former parliamentarian and leader of the abolitionists, was supported by the British Parliament. Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland was originated by the Yoruba liberated slaves and failed to convince the parliamentarians.³⁸ Nevertheless, the two experiments were both meant to achieve the same goal of economic liberation for Africans.

Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland is separable from all other facets of Commerce and Christianity in Africa, including Sharp's and Thornton's agricultural initiatives of 1787 and 1793 respectively, and Buxton's 1841 Niger Expedition. Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland was meant to liberate the individual traders and farmers from darkness through the light of the Gospel.³⁹ A. G. Hopkins is right therefore, in suggesting that Legitimate Commerce incorporated many African small-scale farmers into integrated and international farming for the first time.⁴⁰ Regardless of this distinction in practice between the British-implemented projects and the commercial initiative of the Yoruba returnees, both experiments introduced a new angle to African economic emancipation.

³⁷ *Report of the Committee of the African Civilisation Society to the Public Meeting of the Society held in Exeter Hall on Tuesday, the 21st June 1842* (London: n.p, 1842), p. 27.

³⁸ CO 265/154, Enclosure dated 15 Nov. 1839, in Doherty to Russell, 30 Nov. 1839.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1973), pp. 125 - 6.

Jean Decorvet and Emmanuel Oladipo's investigations analyse how Samuel Crowther, the frontline Africa missionary, Thomas King, the catechist at Lokoja and about 150 other Africans were incorporated into the Niger Expedition. These pioneers eventually took the message of Commerce and Christianity back to their motherland after undergoing tutelage in Sierra Leone from 1825, and an induction in the Niger in 1841.⁴¹ They returned to effect practical changes in the commercial life of Yorubaland, which was still under the control of the cartel of local slave dealers.⁴²

Buxton's own writings show that in spite of the challenges to his proposition, he did not waver in his goal of economic emancipation. Rather than giving up, he appealed to the conscience of all parties concerned in the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, especially Britain, a Christian nation:

It cannot be too deeply engraven [sic] upon the minds of British statesmen, that it is beyond our power to rescue Africa, if the burthen is to fall wholly and permanently on ourselves. It is not the partial aid, lent by a distant nation, but the natural and healthy exercise of her own energies, which will ensure success.⁴³

He made a case for 'calling forth her [Africa's] powers, and enabling her to stand alone, relying upon the strength of her own native sinews',⁴⁴ claiming that the advantages accruable to Africa and Great Britain were mutual.

Buxton's projection of mutuality between the Gospel and global peace also suggests that Christianity could only thrive in an atmosphere of equality and human dignity:

⁴¹ Jean Decorvet and Emmanuel Oladipo, *Samuel Ajayi Crowther: The Miracle of Grace* (Lagos: CSS Bookshops Ltd, 2006), p. 30.

⁴² See the disillusionment of the slave dealers in CMS/CA2/032/57, Journal of S. Crowther Jnr, Abeokuta, 18 June 1852.

⁴³ Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, p. 301.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 301 – 2.

Legitimate commerce... demonstrating the superior value of man as a labourer on the soil, to man as an object of merchandise; and if conducted on wise and equitable principles, might be the precursor, or rather the attendant, of civilization, peace, and Christianity, to the unenlightened, warlike, and heathen tribes.⁴⁵

These ideas were fulfilled in three ways. Firstly, African labour was being used productively to produce cash crops for inter-continental trade. Secondly, missionaries succeeded in using Legitimate Commerce to help Africa abrogate the Slave Trade. Thirdly, Africa began to exchange its produce with goods in international trade relations, rather than exporting her human labour. Legitimate Commerce demonstrated the evangelicals' benevolence in Africa. The value of the resources expended on Legitimate Commerce, the strength of the campaigns in Britain and among the emancipators abroad,⁴⁶ and the energy expended by the evangelical missions on the introduction of commerce in Yorubaland all point towards a productive mission – not, as Bosch argues, a romantic one.⁴⁷

The Yoruba from Sierra Leone such as Thomas Will and the home grown farmers and traders such as Henry Robbin⁴⁸ were among the earliest West Africans to embrace Legitimate Commerce and Christianity. Many Yoruba who imbibed the culture of legitimate farming left behind themselves stories of economic success. This study pays close attention in Chapter Six to the successes recorded in cotton production and the returns obtained through the assistance of the CMS mission secretary, Henry Venn. Peel examines the reception and rivalry among the chiefs of Egbaland as they

⁴⁵ Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy*, p. 306.

⁴⁶ *Report of the Committee of the African Civilisation Society to the public meeting of the Society held in Exeter Hall on Tuesday, the 21st June 1842*, p. 27. See also F. C. Stuart, 'A Critical Edition of the letters of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, Bart' unpublished MA thesis, London University, 1957, II, p. 418.

⁴⁷ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 5.

⁴⁸ CMS/CA2/080, H. Robbin to H. Venn, Ake, 5 February 1859.

competed for the attention of the missionaries. He observes that Ogunbona of Ikija excelled in the missionary experiment and obtained much wealth through it.⁴⁹

Christopher Fyfe observes that the abolitionists capitalized on Henry Smeathman's presentation to Granville Sharp's 1786 'Committee for Relieving the Black Poor' of a glowing picture of Africa's agricultural potentials. He extolled West Africa as:

a land of immense fertility, where the soil need only be scratched with a hoe to yield grain in abundance, where livestock propagated themselves with a rapidity unknown in a cold climate, where a hut provided adequate shelter at all seasons.⁵⁰

While the amateur botanist's conjecture on the viability of African soil for commercial agriculture may not be universally correct, it is to some extent true of Yorubaland where individuals and groups experimented successfully with cotton, cocoa and pepper.⁵¹

While many African kingdoms did not want Europeans in their cities, the case of Yorubaland was a major exception. For instance, Yorubaland hosted Thomas Birch Freeman, a Wesleyan Methodist Mission representative in Gold Coast (and himself of mixed race), the first to arrive in Badagry in 1842. He was closely followed by Henry Townsend of the CMS on a mission of research to Yorubaland in 1843; Charles Gollmer and Samuel Crowther later joined him. While European missionaries were widely accepted in Yorubaland, especially in major mission centres such as Abeokuta⁵² their experience was not the same in the northern kingdoms. Thus, it was

⁴⁹ Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, p. 129.

⁵⁰ C. Fyfe, *A Short History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 15.

⁵¹ CMS/CA2/049, D. Hinderer, Journal Entry, November 1850. David Hinderer reported great success in the cotton production in Ibadan.

⁵² Sarah Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1854).

the influence of the Yoruba that was responsible for the success of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland.

It is clear from reading CMS resources that the European missionaries' arrival in Sierra Leone did not go unchallenged, in spite of the fact that abolitionists had made several efforts to enter into commercial relationship with the natives. Fowell Buxton recalled the arguments of a school of thought to which the Duke of Wellington belonged: 'The efforts of Great Britain to put an end to it (the Slave Trade)' he said, 'are not attributed to good motives, but to commercial jealousy, and a desire to keep the monopoly of colonial produce in the hands of the British traders.'⁵³ The Duke's argument that slavery was not abolished 'on the score of its inhumanity...' but as 'a commercial speculation'⁵⁴ gives some support to the theory that Legitimate Commerce was for the expansion of European trade in Africa.

The Duke of Wellington had made his observations about four decades earlier; his fears and those of others were fulfilled when traders invaded Africa from the early 1870s and began to reverse some of the ideas that the missionaries had established in Yorubaland. It is arguable that Christianity was attempting to make reparation by legitimizing commerce - Buxton attests to the fact that Christians played significant parts in the development of the trade in slaves in the earlier centuries.⁵⁵ The accusations levelled against abolitionists and missionaries, that the abrogation of the Slave Trade was only a guise for trading, tended to portray Legitimate Commerce as an opportunistic experiment, but archival sources show this is not the case.

⁵³ Duke of Wellington to the Right Honourable J. C. Villiers, *Letter*, Paris, 31st August 1814. See Buxton, 1968, p. 442.

⁵⁴ Duke of Wellington to Wilberforce, *Letter*, Paris, 15th Sept 1814. See Buxton, *Ibid*.

⁵⁵ Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy*, p. 288.

Although the influx of missionaries and traders into Africa from the 1840s did not pose a uniform problem, there were apprehensions in virtually all the kingdoms. The Yoruba too were initially apprehensive because of their experience with the traders who had exploited them in the past; their fears were not as strong as those of the people of the Niger Delta who asked a British administrator pointedly: 'what are you come for?'⁵⁶ Many of the rulers of the divided Yoruba kingdoms too were keen not on the development of Christianity in their domains, but in trading with the Europeans.

Peel's analyses of the responsiveness of Africans to the European missionaries show that they were keen on trading with them.⁵⁷ The first sign of such interest was the invitation extended to European missionaries by Thomas Will and others. Many of the rulers soon began to request missionaries. For example, the CMS responded quickly to the strong request of Kurumi of Ijaye for European missionaries in his domain by sending Adolphus Mann, who opened a mission station there in 1853.⁵⁸

Elsewhere in Southern Africa, a Tswana who would rather trade with the European missionaries than listen to the Gospel confronted Livingstone: 'to be plain with you, we should like you much better if you traded with us and then went away, without forever boring us with preaching that Word of God of yours.'⁵⁹ This was the same way in which the high chiefs of Abeokuta, the country of the Egbas, competed for the

⁵⁶ CO 2/22, 153, Niger Expedition, Jamieson to Russell, 21 January 1841; later published as *A Further Appeal to the Government and People of Great Britain against the proposed Niger Expedition* (London, 1841).

⁵⁷ Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, p. 129.

⁵⁸ CMS/CA2/085 H. Townsend, Journal, 25 March and 21 Aug – 7 Sept 1852.

⁵⁹ J. D. Y. Peel, 'Religious Change in Yorubaland', in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 37, no. 3 (Jul., 1967), p. 303. See also Isaac Schapera and John L. Comaroff, *The Tswana* (London; New York: Kegan Paul International in association with the International African Institute; New York: Wiley, 1991, 1958), p. 5.

attention of Henry Townsend and Samuel Crowther when the two missionaries arrived at Abeokuta to found a CMS mission centre in 1845.⁶⁰

The description of the complex goal of modern mission in this thesis as 'Headlight' theology is dependent not only on what the Yoruba or European missionaries said or did but also on the responsiveness of the Yoruba to the missionaries. This was because the missionaries not only proclaimed the Gospel, they also made propositions that would help the Yoruba emerge as productive Christians and prepare them to become 'cells of civilisation from which the light would radiate to the regions around.'⁶¹ The motive of modern mission therefore, was to lead the way forward and empower the Yoruba, who would in turn beam the light of Commerce and Christianity into the rest of Africa.

The correspondence, letters and journals in the archives of the CMS and those of Freeman, the pioneer Wesleyan Methodist missionary in Yorubaland, are evidence for the assertion here that the motive of modern mission was 'Headlight' theology. So are the pronouncements of abolitionists such as Buxton and Venn, the memoirs of eyewitnesses such as Laird and Oldfield, and the accounts of captains of colonialism such as Frederick Lord Lugard.⁶²

⁶⁰ CMS/CA2/031 Samuel Crowther, Journal, 25 Sept 1846. See also Biobaku, *The Egba and Their Neighbours 1842-1872*, pp. 31 – 33.

⁶¹ Henry Venn's declaration of missionary empowerment program for Yorubaland, cited in O. U. Kalu, ed., *The History of Christianity in West Africa*, vol. i (Harlow: Longman, 1980), p. 2.

⁶² See Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy*, op. cit., McGregor Laird and R. A. K. Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa by the River Niger* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1971 [1837]), Frederick Lord Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1923).

Authors such as Norton Cook are correct in pointing out that Britain had a long history of commercial and political interest in Nigeria before, during and after the period when missionaries introduced Legitimate Commerce into Yorubaland. However, grouping European missionaries with the traders portrays them as part of a single imperialist agenda in Africa. Imperialism unarguably explains the presence of the traders in Nigeria, but not that of the missionaries, whose intervention was to legitimize commerce as a means of curtailing the excesses of the slave dealers. It is a misconception to project the British missionaries as if they were the forerunners of British imperialism in Nigeria.

The missionaries were certainly not the first traders in Africa. The Slave Trade will be considered later, but Alan Burns and John Spears note that trade in agricultural products marked the first presence of English vessels in Benin Rivers⁶³ in the sixteenth century. After initial unfavourable experiences English traders avoided penetrating inland in the Bight of Benin and the whole of Yorubaland. However, by 1588 Captain James Welsh broached another adventure. Burns notes that Welsh's 1591 trip recorded the first historical 'reference to the oil which later was exported in such quantities as to give its name ... to the rivers from which it was obtained.'⁶⁴ Welsh was also reported to have returned to England with '589 sacks of pepper, 150 tusks, and 32 Barrels of Oil of Palm trees'.⁶⁵

This brief glance at early British enterprise in Nigeria shows that the missionary ventures of the nineteenth century were neither an innovation nor a continuation of

⁶³ Alan Burns, *History of Nigeria* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1929), p. 67; John R. Spears, *The American Slave-Trade: An Account of its Origin, Growth and Suppression* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat, 1967), p. 40.

⁶⁴ Burns, *History of Nigeria*, p. 69.

⁶⁵ Nigeria Handbook, 1933, pp. 4 – 5. Hakluyt, vol. ii, p. 132.

the hegemonic trading tradition that escalated into the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. While trade in commodities was not a novelty, mixing commerce with Christianity was a new phenomenon in the economic activities of the Yoruba kingdoms.

Peel's detailed account of changes in the religious patterns of the Yoruba shows how important the presence and influence of the missionaries were to the social, political, religious and economic tensions in nineteenth-century Yorubaland. Whereas Kurumi, the ruler of Ijaye, did not approve of the Christianization agenda of the missionaries, as Henry Townsend observed, he developed a friendship with any allies for the purposes of fighting his wars. During Townsend's first visit to the warlike king he assured him that the missionaries' presence would be beneficial to his kingdom.⁶⁶

Economic and Cultural Theories on Legitimate Commerce

Economists from different backgrounds have commented elaborately on Adam Smith's theory of non-interference⁶⁷ and Max Weber's view that Protestants were the promoters of the Spirit of Capitalism;⁶⁸ categorization of the European missionaries as the forerunners of European domination of trade remains unchallenged. Condemning Legitimate Commerce on the grounds of these theories appears unjustifiable because the critical situation of the Yoruba in the nineteenth century demanded the critical solution which the missionaries adopted. However, hypotheses such as Eric Williams' expressed in *Capitalism and Slavery*,⁶⁹ various views of Marxists on 'the Imperialism

⁶⁶ CMS/CA2/O85 H. Townsend, Journal 3 Sept 1852.

⁶⁷ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, C. J. Bullock, ed., (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1909).

⁶⁸ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Harper Collins Academy, 1991).

⁶⁹ Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*.

of Free Trade',⁷⁰ and David Laitin's 'Cultural and Commercial Hegemony',⁷¹ cannot be overlooked because of their direct relationship with Legitimate Commerce.

Capitalism and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Yorubaland

One major approach to the issue of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland comes from the consideration of the link between Capitalism and Slavery. Eric Williams for instance suggests that

The capitalists had first encouraged West Indian slavery and then helped to destroy it. When British capitalism depended on the West Indies, they ignored slavery or defended it. When British capitalism found the West Indian monopoly a nuisance, they destroyed West Indian slavery as a first step in the destruction of West Indian monopoly.⁷²

Williams' arguments have been very influential, and if they stand then much of my thesis relating to the motivation of the missionaries would be invalidated. It is therefore necessary to spend some time examining his propositions.

Williams' perception of British economic philosophy as unstable indicts the nineteenth-century evangelicals who introduced Legitimate Commerce to Yorubaland. It gives the impression that Africa was the next target of the capitalists and that the motives of the missionaries in Yorubaland were to expand British trade in Africa. In doing this Williams does not take into account the development that took place in the African continent as European missionaries began to arrive in Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Yorubaland after Britain abolished the Slave Trade in 1807.

⁷⁰ The term 'the Imperialism of Free Trade' is much used by Marxists such as Lenin, Nikolai Bukharin and Rudolf Hilferding, proponents of imperialist motives for European trades in other continents. Their theories are examined more closely later in this chapter.

⁷¹ David Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

⁷² Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, p. 169.

The theory of the Williams' school of thought should not be limited to Europe and America because the missionaries who went from Britain to set up Legitimate Commerce experiments in Sierra Leone and Gold Coast were the mentors of the nineteenth-century evangelicals in Yorubaland. It is therefore imperative to place modern mission's humanitarian agenda side by side with Eric Williams' perception of British attitudes towards Capitalism and Slavery.

One of Williams' main contentions is that the Slave Trade was abolished on economic grounds when it had lost its usefulness. However, many years after abolition, the Yoruba slave dealers continued to justify their capitalistic stance at the expense of the Yoruba populace. A slave dealer, who bemoaned the expulsion of the exiled king Kosoko from the Lagos commercial scene, claimed that 'our fathers traded in slaves....'⁷³ This was a reference to the domestic slave trade, which had always been a part of Yoruba trading pattern. The domestic slave trade had been in existence before the trans-Atlantic dimension took off in the sixteenth century, making it difficult to distinguish between the two. The gain from slavery was huge and the business had gone on for almost three centuries before European missionaries embarked on Legitimate Commerce in West Africa. It was the battle for its eradication that was the beginning of Legitimate Commerce. Contrary to Williams' arguments, it was a real battle. Thomas Clarkson related how he and the rest of the 'Saints' such as Granville Sharp, William Wilberforce, Henry Martyn, Hannan Moore, John Venn, and Zachary Macaulay and others fought and won the battle of morality.⁷⁴

⁷³ CMS/CA2/032/57 Samuel Crowther Jnr, Journal at Abeokuta, 18 June 1852.

⁷⁴ Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, vol. ii (London: Printed by R. Taylor for Longman, 1808), pp. 352, 502 - 3.

Williams does not see any justification for referring to any group as being responsible for the victory of the enactment of the Abolition Act, which in his view came at a time when slavery had lost its relevance in capitalist economies.⁷⁵ He contends that capitalists in Cuba, Brazil and the United States saw nothing wrong with the Slave Trade as long as it was meeting the needs of the plantations in the West Indies, but condemned it as soon as the West Indian monopoly became 'a nuisance'.⁷⁶

The arguments of Robinson and others that economic development was more of a consequence than a motive, call Williams' thesis to question. As already noted, they insist: 'the theory of economic imperialism puts the trade before the flag, the capital before the conquest, the cart before the horse.'⁷⁷ Adam Smith had expressed similar sentiments in 1776 as he examined an important dimension of the relationship between economics and morality. He commented that the Quakers' intensive opposition to slavery could be indulged because they had not invested so much in the trade, pointing to the adverse cost/benefit analysis of slaves for the plantations owners who had invested much in the Slave Trade.

The late resolution of the Quakers in Pennsylvania to set at liberty all their negro slaves, may satisfy us that their number cannot be very great. Had they made any considerable part of their property, such a resolution could never have been agreed to.⁷⁸

Seymour Drescher raises an idea similar to those of Smith, Williams, Robinson and others on the economic aspects of the British anti-slavery campaign. He infers that the abolition was a less expensive alternative for the politically and economically

⁷⁵ Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964), p. 39.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 169.

⁷⁷ R. E. Robinson, J. Gallagher with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 409.

⁷⁸ Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, p. 366.

powerful nations of Europe and America which were already looking in the direction of colonialism and imperialism. He argues that 'the hair-splitting utilitarian calculus of demographic and economic stress might presage colonial stagnation but not cataclysmic ruin. That was enough to seal the fate of the slave trade.'⁷⁹

Williams does not actually reject the motives of the 'Saints'. Rather he upholds the earlier Marxian-Weberian view of slavery as a backward economic system.⁸⁰ Roger Anstey appears right in questioning the diversity of economic, political and humanitarian motives of the abolitionists.

Archival documents shed light through an 1823 letter by James Cropper, which reflects the thinking of investors in slaves on the way God intervenes in human affairs, cautioning the Liverpool Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery:

He who has made it the interest of man to do right, has fixed a period to the gains of those who dare presume to debase his creatures, (therefore) is it not reasonable to suppose that these are the means appointed by the Supreme Governor of the universe, for the extinction of slavery....⁸¹

Cropper's caveat shows that while some evangelicals were deeply dissatisfied with the inhuman acts of the slave owners, the latter lacked simple understanding of certain basic doctrines of Christianity.

⁷⁹ Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition*, p. 140.

⁸⁰ The theories of Marxists Vladimir Lenin, Nikolai Bukharin and Rudolf Hilferding are examined more closely below, as we evaluate the imperialism of free trade.

⁸¹ James Cropper, *A Letter Addressed to the Liverpool Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery* (1823), pp. 6, 23. See David Brion Davis, "James Cropper and the British anti-slavery movement, 1821-3".

Whatever interpretation is given to the campaign for the abolition of the Slave Trade, abolitionists and missionaries did not engage in a 'romantic' mission⁸² in Africa and especially in Yorubaland. Their twin objectives of evangelizing and commercializing Yorubaland were achieved because they made converts among the natives from about 1848⁸³ and gained disciples such as Ogunbona of Ikija who experimented with cotton and other products.⁸⁴ Thus, the missionaries were not only philanthropists, their strategy of using commerce as a means for evangelizing was successful.

Williams' theory and those of his allies who view abolition as a necessity rather than an outcome of the struggles of abolitionists and missionaries did not go unchallenged. Edward Reynolds for instance, does not see a basis for suggesting that the British Caribbean trade had declined, arguing on the contrary that it was more buoyant in the 1820s than in the 1770s.⁸⁵ Steven Webb is cited by Ibrahim Sundiata as claiming that Williams' free trade argument is invalid because the British abolition scheme 'came more than a decade before the triumph of free trade in 1846'.⁸⁶ Time-frame, a key element in the economic analysis therefore draws attention to a major factor that calls Williams' thesis into question.

Williams' theories also face the test of an accurate estimation of the trade in the British plantations in the early 1800s. In this context David Eltis comments on the

⁸² Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, p. 5.

⁸³ Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd, 1986), p. 63.

⁸⁴ CMS/CA2/082 Isaac Smith, Journal Entry, 6 June 1850.

⁸⁵ Edward Reynolds, *Stand the Storm, A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Allison and Busby, 1985), p. 75.

⁸⁶ Steven Webb, "A Review of the Literature Pertaining to the Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade in the British Empire," (colloquium paper, Northwestern University, 17 December, 1974), p. 4., cited in Ibrahim Sundiata, "Capitalism and Slavery: 'The Commercial Part of the Nation'", in S. H. H. Carrington, Heather Cateau, eds, *Capitalism and Slavery Fifty Years Later: Eric Eustace Williams - A Reassessment of the Man and His Work* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), p. 122.

insecure 'quantitative underpinnings of Williams' view'⁸⁷. Eltis argues that 'economic data testify to the continuing vitality of the British West Indies well into the nineteenth century.'⁸⁸ Forbes Munro's observation that slavery persisted in Brazil until 1850, with the importation of African slaves after 1807 standing in excess of one million,⁸⁹ shows the enormity of the task that the missionaries confronted as they carried the campaign of Legitimate Commerce to Yorubaland. Although Williams did not initiate the discussion, the publication of *Capitalism and Slavery* in 1964 puts him in the leadership of the school of thought that rates the labours of the abolitionist and missionaries as insignificant. Such theories portray the missionaries' activities as hypocritical, meddling and unwarranted.⁹⁰

Williams saw the overproduction of sugar as a factor that contributed to the success of the anti-slavery movements, especially within the first half of the nineteenth century. This idea has greatly influenced more recent theories on the British anti-slavery movement. If that were so, why did the missionaries promote sugar production in the Niger to replace that of the Caribbean? William's theory blocks an accurate perception of Legitimate Commerce as a strategy for recapitalizing the economy of the weaker African kingdoms of the nineteenth century. It challenges the interpretation of missionaries' re-capitalization of the Yoruba economy, in this thesis, as proactive and positive change from slavery economics to Legitimate Commerce.

⁸⁷ David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 5.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ J. Forbes Munro, *Africa and the International Economy 1800-1960* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1976), pp. 42 – 3.

⁹⁰ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, 'Conscience and Career: Young Abolitionists and Missionaries', in Roger Anstey, *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, Christine Bolt, Seymour Drescher, eds (Folkestone, England: W. Dawson, 1980), p. 183.

It is not necessary to eulogize the missionaries in Yorubaland by presenting the anti-slavery movements as great moral forces; the abolitionists have already presented their own story effectively.⁹¹ Rather, this thesis proposes that the motive for legitimising commerce was to liberate Yorubaland, in the same way as David Livingstone proposed for Southern and Central Africa.⁹² The extent of this liberation is however outside the scope of this study. The need to examine how far economic considerations rather than ethical repugnance or an exercise of moral rectitude over the forces of evil motivated Legitimate Commerce makes it imperative to examine information that could have underpinned Williams' work.

Williams' thesis could have been greatly moderated if it had been informed by the 1789 report of the Committee of the House of Lords on 'the state of trade to Africa', which one of his biographers, William Darity revisited in his review of Williams' views on the Industrial Revolution and the ending of slavery in the British Isles.⁹³ Further examination of the 1789 document in this work suggests Williams did not focus much on the state of slavery in Africa. This report strongly supported the fears of the abolitionists on the state of slavery in Africa. It included important statistics such as the costs/benefits analysis of acquiring the slaves, manifest on slave chattels, productivity of the slaves and compensations for loss of revenue due to slave

⁹¹ See Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*.

⁹² David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa: Including a Sketch* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1858), pp. 34, 39.

⁹³ William Darity, 'Economic Aspects of the British Trade in Slaves: A Fresh Look at the Evidence from the 1789 Report of the Lords of Trade (Committee of Council)' and Ibrahim Sundiata "Capitalism and Slavery: 'The Commercial Part of the Nation'", (both) in S. H. H. Carrington, Heather Cateau, eds, *Capitalism and Slavery Fifty Years Later: Eric Eustace Williams - A Reassessment of the Man and His Work* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).

detentions and incarcerations.⁹⁴ These show clearly that, contrary to Williams' views, there was a major economic benefit to continuing with slavery, and much to lose by its abolition.

Beyond any other consideration, the report revealed the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade as an irredeemable instrument of European economic development. It was made up of

extensive testimony from captains of slave ships, travellers to the African coast, merchants and manufacturers whose businesses bore direct and indirect links to the Atlantic trading system, agents for the West Indies colonies, sailors on slave ships, Evangelical abolitionists, and British civil service officials engaged in supervision of foreign commercial activities.⁹⁵

If Williams' arguments are weighed against the strong request to rescue Africa made by the 1789 report, then Legitimate Commerce would be adjudged as highly relevant, for nineteenth-century Yorubaland.

Further evidence comes from John Shoolbred of the African Company, an English trader in West Africa in the late eighteenth century, who submitted a detailed representation on behalf of the merchants trading in Africa. This is valuable for an evaluation of the state of slavery that confronted missionaries upon their arrival in Yorubaland. Shoolbred was against abolition, an advocate of the merchants, but he nevertheless portrayed Africa as the loser in the slavery activities:

Africa has not derived Advantages from this Trade in any degree equal to ours; nor was it possible in her Situation to obtain such Advantages, having no Manufactures to sell, no Foreign Commerce to extend, or Navigation to improve.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Sheila Lambert, ed., *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century, Vol. 69: George III, Report of the Lords of Trade on the Slave Trade 1789 Part 1, Vol. 70: Part 2* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1975).

⁹⁵ Darity 'Economic Aspects of the British Trade in Slaves', p. 138.

⁹⁶ Lambert, ed., *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century, Volume 69*, p. 8.

Shoobred's conclusion that Africa had nothing to pay in return for her wants but to surrender her human labour reflects the feeling of the slave dealers and slave owners who would rather acquire more slaves from Africa in exchange for European goods.

He asserted that:

Her (Africa) Benefits, however, are equal to her State, for her Wants are fully supplied at a very trifling Expense, the greatest Part being paid for with what has been a Burthen to other Countries, the Refuse and Off-scourings of her Population, without which she would have no Existence in Trade, her natural Produce being very trifling compared to her Wants, and notwithstanding the greatest Encouragements, have been hitherto incapable of Improvement.⁹⁷

Further re-evaluation of Williams' arguments that slavery had outlived its usefulness before it was abolished is required in view of Samuel Taylor's statistics of Manchester's trade with Africa. Taylor shows that of goods worth £200,000 that Manchester, the first prominent centre of British manufacture in the eighteenth century sold to Africa in a year, only ten percent was exchanged with produce. The remaining ninety percent was exchanged for slaves. At that small beginning the manufacture geared towards Africa produced 18,000 jobs and capital utilization of about £300,000 for Manchester alone, apart from those generated through indirect supplies to the plantations in the British West Indies.⁹⁸

This picture is further clarified from the evidences of Thomas Clarkson; a member of the abolitionist movement who carried out an investigation into the unbearable conditions of the slaves in the Middle Passage and led one of the representations to the Committee of the Lords. Clarkson, along with David Henderson, Williams James, Isham Baggs, and James Arnold, presented a picture of the untold hardship through

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Samuel Taylor's account of Manchester's trade with Africa contained in Lambert, ed. *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century, Volume 70*, p. 195.

which the slaves were transported to the plantations in the West Indies.⁹⁹ Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vassa), an emancipator, indigene of Iboland who was captured and sold into slavery in 1755 also spoke on behalf of the abolitionists. He suggested that Britain would reap a better advantage from developing 'a commercial intercourse with Africa....' In his own conception, commercial interaction would open up 'an inexhaustible Source of Wealth to the manufacturing interest of Great Britain; and to all for whom the Slave Trade is a physical obstruction.'¹⁰⁰

Abolitionists did not show an uncaring attitude either to British empire-building or commercial advancement. It is unarguable that the abolition of the Slave Trade would be costly to the British economy that had just moved out of agriculture into industrial revolution. A capital outlay of about £70 million pounds would also be in jeopardy if the trade were abrogated, as Sheridan notes.¹⁰¹

All this should be seen against the background of estimates that Britain's 450,000 slaves in the West Indies were worth more than £23 million. Landed property associated with slavery was worth twice that figure and housing and vessels were valued at another £2.5 million.¹⁰² Considering the scale and pace of the trans-Atlantic slavery in the British West Indies, the figure could not be less than double by the end of the eighteenth century.

Thus, the argument of Williams' school of thought that Britain abolished the Slave Trade because it was no longer beneficial does not appear to be accurate.

⁹⁹ Lambert, ed., *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 69, pp. 125 - 56.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹⁰¹ R.B. Sheridan, 'The Wealth of Jamaica in the Eighteenth Century,' *The Economic History Review* 28, 2 (August, 1965), pp. 305— 6.

¹⁰² Lambert, ed. *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, Volume 70, p. 291.

The archives and missionary memoirs provide further evidence to show the extent of the damage that the Slave Trade abolition did to the British economy. For instance, delegates from Bristol argued that if the trade were abolished, 'at least Two hundred Ships' and 'valuable Cargos' of British origin, the 'grand Supports of the Revenue, Navigation and Commerce' would fall, while the French and Spaniards would ruin the British chances of African commerce.¹⁰³ Thus, Britain stood to lose to other nations that were looking for opportunities to trade with British territories in Africa.¹⁰⁴ In spite of that possibility, not all traders in Britain were entirely pro-Slave Trade. The Chamber of Commerce and the Guild of Merchants of Dublin, for instance, thought that the abolition of the trade was injurious to the British economy,¹⁰⁵ but nevertheless, proposed that legitimate commerce would help Africa to trade in goods in return for their requirements from Europe.¹⁰⁶ That type of thinking conformed to the projections of the evangelicals who moved into Yorubaland with the message of 'Commerce and Christianity'.

Missionaries anticipated a commercial intercourse that was beneficial for industrial development. Their goal, extensively enunciated in Buxton's *Slave Trade and its Remedy*, was that Africa and Britain would be mutual beneficiaries and that Christianity would be successfully advanced.¹⁰⁷ John Harris, a British commentator

¹⁰³ Lambert, ed., *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, Volume 69, p. 91.

¹⁰⁴ See also Samuel Estwicke, the representative of the Committee of Council in Barbados, Lambert, ed., *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 69, p. 315.

¹⁰⁵ Lambert, ed., *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 69, p. 91 - 2.

¹⁰⁶ A 1788 anonymous correspondent to Lord Hawkesbury of Liverpool (See Lambert, ed., *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, Volume 69, p. 97).

¹⁰⁷ Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, 1840, pp. 240, 272 - 3.

on the events in Africa in the nineteenth century, observes that the evangelicals adopted John Newton's concept of divine intervention in human affairs.¹⁰⁸

From the Shoolbred material cited above, and more:

But the Effects of this Trade to Great Britain are beneficial to an infinite Extent. In its immediate Effect it employs about 150 Sail of Shipping, which carry annually from this Country upwards of a Million of Property, the greatest Part of our own Manufactures; and in its more remote Effects, there is hardly any Branch of Commerce in which the Nation is concerned that does not derive some Advantage from it... In conclusion, this Committee makes no Scruple to effect, that the African Trade is so blended with our Commerce, and so interwoven with our general Interests, that if at any Time, through Neglect, Mismanagement, or Misfortune, this Nation should be deprived of its Benefits, it will then suffer a very great and irreparable Loss, a Maim in its Commerce, Dignity, and Power, of which it is impossible it can ever recover.¹⁰⁹

it is obvious that there were voices that sounded caution to the British public and Parliament on the abolition of slavery. Shoolbred's arguments represented the voice of the traders and other anti-abolitionists, and such arguments won the day for almost two decades before Britain began to call for abrogation of the Slave Trade. However, by 1807 the war with the French made it imperative to look for means of blocking the nations hostile to Britain from the easy acquisition of slave labour, and this finally led to the abolition.

Williams argues that 'all classes in English society presented a united front with regard to the slave trade. The monarchy, the government, the Church, public opinion in general supported the slave trade.'¹¹⁰ Seymour Drescher shows convincingly that

¹⁰⁸ John Harris, *The Great Commission: or, the Christian Church Constituted and Charged to Convey the Gospel to the World* (London, n.p., 1842), pp. 3 - 11.

¹⁰⁹ Lambert, ed., *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century, Volume 69*, p. 8.

¹¹⁰ Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, p. 39 (Williams argues extensively on the acquiescence of the British public on pp. 76 - 92 also).

this is over-simple, and that in fact the British public played an important role in the abolition of the Slave Trade.¹¹¹ The fact that apart from the abolitionists, a large number of Britons were also clamouring against the trade shows that Williams' contention that the abolitionists were fighting a battle that was already won, like his economic arguments, does not appear accurate.

Williams' statement about the Church is also over-simple. Although the Church did not have a uniform position on the Slave Trade, individuals spoke against it. Moderates such as Richard Baxter felt that it could be regulated and given a human face, while Morgan Godwin, an Anglican clergyman from Oxford, recalling what he saw during his visit to Barbados, described slavery as 'a cruelty capable of no palliation'.¹¹² There were however also voices on the other side. Some of the evangelicals do not seem to have achieved the right balance between earthly empire building and the heavenly vision of obtaining holistic freedom for all of humanity. Reginald Coupland notes that Lord Dartmouth, the president of the Board of Trade in 1774 who was renowned for his evangelical piety and life of prayer, nevertheless declared unequivocally that Britain 'cannot allow the colonies to check or discourage in any degree a traffic so beneficial to the nation'.¹¹³ Thus, while some Christians resolved that the Slave Trade should be terminated others remained insensitive to the clamour for its abrogation. It was the former who founded the Society for Missions to Africa and the East in 1799, which was to become the Church Missionary Society.

¹¹¹ Seymour Drescher, 'Whose Abolition? Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave Trade', in *Past and Present*, 143 (May 1994), pp. 136-166.

¹¹² Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*, pp. 40 – 41.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

William's thesis portrays the abolitionists as taking advantage of the waning state of slavery, but modern mission most certainly did not meet a haven of legitimate trade in Yorubaland, as would surely have been the case if Williams were right. The Yoruba dealers were worshipping the god of gain, and Africans were still vulnerable by the 1840s when missionaries arrived in Yorubaland. The local slave dealers continued to cooperate with the Cubans and Brazilians long after the trade had been abolished by the Western nations that were dealing in slaves.¹¹⁴ The voices of dissent in Yorubaland were few. The slave dealers in Lagos did everything possible to malign the missionaries and to perpetuate the trade in Yorubaland.¹¹⁵ Legitimate Commerce should not be evaluated on the basis of the experiences of the capitalist economies alone, but also on the mercantilist attitude the Yoruba slave dealers who were also making illicit profits.

Legitimate Commerce and the Theory of the 'Imperialism of Free Trade'

Free trade had begun in Yorubaland much earlier than 1890-1900, the period during which Lenin observes that 'the imperialist epoch of world capitalism' began to move the world from competitive economy to monopolistic capitalism.¹¹⁶ Basil Davidson's observation expatiated upon in chapter three of this thesis shows that the chiefs and notables in Iron Age Africa had always traded with Europe and Asia in agricultural goods and natural resources before domestic slavery escalated into an international trading activity.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Forbes Munro, *Africa and the International Economy 1800-1960*, pp. 42 – 3.

¹¹⁵ CMS/CA2/032/57 Samuel Crowther Jnr, Journal at Abeokuta, 18 June 1852.

¹¹⁶ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism', in *Collected Works*, No 23, October 1916 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House; London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1964), p. 111.

¹¹⁷ Basil Davidson, *The African Slave Trade: Precolonial History, 1450-1850* (Boston: Little Brown, 1961), p. 40.

Yoruba traders made as much profit from the Slave Trade as their European counterparts. Hence, although the 'imperialism of free trade' theory of Marxists Vladimir Lenin, Nikolai Bukharin and Rudolf Hilferding¹¹⁸ challenges British economic activities in other cultures, it consolidates the arguments of the evangelicals who proposed the introduction of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. European missionaries who moved into Yorubaland to redress the injustice of the local slave dealers could therefore not be categorized among the nineteenth century world powers that the Marxists accused of political manoeuvres and economic imperialism.

Scholarship has been divided on the view that capitalism and colonialism worked hand in hand, or that commerce/trade (capital) is a phase of imperialism and global economy. Volumes have been written on the imperialism of free trade after the Marxist theories of linking imperialism with colonialism first emerged. Norman Etherington's description of imperialism as the reserve of 'men who cared for nothing but interests and dividends'¹¹⁹ challenges the views of apologists such as Eric Stokes who reject basing the theories of economic imperialism on the colonial expansion of the late nineteenth century.¹²⁰ Karl Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg and John Hobson

¹¹⁸ Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *British labour and British imperialism: A Compilation of Writings by Lenin on Britain* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1969); Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline*, Norman Lewis and James Malone, int. (London: Junius: Pluto, 1996); Nikolai Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy*, V.I. Lenin, int. (London: Merlin Press, 1972); Rudolf Hilferding, *Finance Capital: A Study of the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development*, Tom Bottomore, ed., Morris Watnick and Sam Gordon, trans (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

¹¹⁹ Norman Etherington, 'Reconsidering Theories of Imperialism', in *History and Theology*, 21, 1 (1982), p. 3.

¹²⁰ Eric Stokes, 'Late Nineteenth Century Colonial Expansion and the Attack on the Theory of Economic Imperialism', in *Historical Journal*, 12, 2 (1969), p.p. 285 - 301.

belong to another school of thought that treats imperialism and colonialism as semantically interchangeable.¹²¹

The task of this study is not to endorse or reject the Marxist position, the extreme polemics of Kautsky, Luxemburg, Hobson and others, or Stokes' rejection of locating imperialism inside colonialism. It does however rebut the idea of categorizing the missionary motives for Legitimate Commerce as part of the imperial capitalization in Africa. Benevolence was at the base of Legitimate Commerce, traceable to the toil of the abolitionists in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

It was these benevolent acts of the abolitionists that resulted in the 'back to Africa' project of 1787, which took 351 Africans back to Sierra Leone.¹²² It would have been self-contradictory if the missionary body that was founded on moral, ethical and compassionate grounds should become an agent for the expansion of illicit trade in Africa. When the Society for Missions to Africa and the East was established, the founders William Wilberforce, John Venn, Henry Thornton and others set on a providential mission of equating Africa with Europe economically. Francis Warre Cornish cites the first Chairman of the CMS, John Venn (1759-1813) as imploring the society to 'Put money in the second place' and avoid external intervention.¹²³ John's son Henry was one of the key disciples of his father's principle of benevolence.

¹²¹ Karl Kautsky, *The Economic Doctrines of Karl Marx*, H.J. Stenning, trans. (London: Black, 1925), Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, Agnes Schwarzschild, trans. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), John A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988).

¹²² Fyfe, *A Short History of Sierra Leone*, p. 17.

¹²³ Francis Warre Cornish, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 1 (London: Macmillan 1910), p. 51.

The period that Marxist writers refer to as the starting point of the imperialism of free trade¹²⁴ is much later than the period of opportunistic trade when Germans and others exported liquor in large quantities to Africa, which is treated extensively in Chapter Seven. The imperialism of free trade can however be linked at two points with missionary economics in Yorubaland. First, Marxist perspectives assert that there were many similarities in the workings of economic imperialism and colonialism in the 1870s to 1890s. Secondly, Sir George Goldie arrived in the Niger in the 1870s, wielding economic power, stripping every enterprise of its assets and taking over the full control of Legitimate Commerce in Nigeria.¹²⁵

Archival evidence shows that the zeal of the CMS missionaries who had been in the forefront of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland began to decline from the 1870s, with the death of Henry Venn and later, Samuel Crowther, creating setbacks for Yoruba missionaries.¹²⁶ They began to wonder why viable ventures were being surrendered to traders,¹²⁷ who did not portray Christian characters, but whose goals were purely economic.¹²⁸ The traders' vessels were heavily overloaded with a high turnover of British manufactured goods, making no space for conveying missionaries as in the past.¹²⁹

The fall of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland became imminent, and this also shows complexity from the time of the exit of Venn, the pragmatic promoter of

¹²⁴ Lenin, *British labour and British imperialism: A Compilation of Writings by Lenin on Britain*.

¹²⁵ John E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, Gerald S. Graham, ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 9.

¹²⁶ See CMS CA3/04(a), Bishop Crowther to J. Edgar, 03/09/1875. Samuel Crowther wondered why 'blackmen' were 'not capable of managing the business' anymore, 'but Europeans'.

¹²⁷ E. g. Sir George Goldie in the Niger.

¹²⁸ Rev. Samuel Crowther and the Rev. John Christopher Taylor, *Journal and Notices of the Native Missionaries accompanying the Niger Expedition of 1857 – 1859* (London: Unwin Brothers Limited, 1859), p. ix.

¹²⁹ CMS/CA3/04(a), J. Edgar to S. Crowther, 5 May 1875.

African freedom and economic independence. Crowther expressed dissatisfaction with the growing rivalry between European and African missionaries. The disenchantment ultimately discouraged the African missionaries who advised the CMS to be aware of

the selection of those only as their agents and representatives in Africa who will exhibit there the deportment, and practice the self-control of Christian gentlemen.¹³⁰

Cultural hegemony notwithstanding, missionaries came together as examined in detail in Chapter Seven whenever the imperial traders began any new device.

The background of European missionaries who laboured to establish Legitimate Commerce in Africa does not justify classifying them as agents of imperial traders. Apart from Henry Thornton, a London banker and M.P. for Southwark for thirty-two years who inherited his grandfather's trading estate in Russia,¹³¹ the majority of the abolitionists were not from the bourgeois class. Granville Sharp, the leader of the abolitionists was a clerical worker from a humble background. The Venn family were mainly clergymen. Henry Venn Sr. (1725-1797) was the rector of Yelling, Hunts, while his son, John inherited Anglicanism to become the rector of the Clapham brotherhood.¹³² John's son, Henry Venn (1796-1873) was the CMS secretary for 1842-1871. While it is arguable that the background of the missionaries did not preclude them from being underground agents to the traders, evidences from the archives and even government sources do not point to them in that light.

¹³⁰ Crowther and Taylor, *Journal and Notices of the Native Missionaries accompanying the Niger Expedition of 1857 - 1859*, p. ix.

¹³¹ Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*, p. 74.

¹³² *Ibid*, pp. 46 - 7.

William Wilberforce, the leader of the 'Saints' was a parliamentarian of repute born at Hull in 1759 to 'an old Yorkshire family which had prospered in business'.¹³³ He was very influential but without a personal record of commercial estate. Zachary Macaulay, the youngest member of the 'Clapham sect', as they were called within Anglicanism became the governor of Sierra Leone in the times when the abolitionists were still searching for an economic identity for the ex-slaves. Therefore, their movement to the hinterland of the Yoruba country was not 'romantic'.¹³⁴ Their goal was to invest Europe's superior commercial knowledge to make Africans generate lawful wealth and convert from African traditional religions to Christianity.

Ironically, only a few scholars portray missionaries as agents of moral rectitude, and their voices were hardly as loud as those of the critics. Stanley, observes for instance that 'Missionary enthusiasm is an elusive quantity not easily subjected to an objective measurement',¹³⁵ He catalogues the missionary labours in other lands, 'fuelled' by the campaign of the abolitionists: Buxton's 1841 Niger Expedition,¹³⁶ the 1842 treaty of the Nanking, the working of providence behind the deplorable 'opium war' in China¹³⁷ and Livingstone's researches in southern kingdoms of Africa.¹³⁸

An insightful diagnosis of commerce as missionary medium for mediating the Gospel in other cultures is made clearer in the words of Samuel Wilberforce:

¹³³ Ibid, p. 70.

¹³⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, p. 5.

¹³⁵ Stanley, 'Commerce and Christianity': Providence Theory, the Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842-1860', p. 77.

¹³⁶ Buxton, *Slave Trade and its Remedy*, op. cit.

¹³⁷ See John Angell James, *God's Voice from China to the British and Irish Churches, both Established and Unestablished, in the Works of John Angell James*, vol. 16 (London: np., 1862), p. 14.

¹³⁸ David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London: 1857), pp. 673 - 4.

Commerce is a mighty machinery laid down in the wants of man by the Almighty Creator of all things, to promote the intercourse and communion of one race with another....¹³⁹

For commerce to retain its providential status however, it has to respond to the moral theology of perceiving and preserving its 'usefulness' as a Christian duty.¹⁴⁰ While it is appropriate to highlight the hardship that the slave dealers and imperial traders subjected Africa to, it is equally important to present the image of missionaries who laboured to rescue Africa from its woes.

The 'imperialism of free trade' that the Marxists bemoaned belongs to the traders and the political class that were seeking new frontiers of commercial and political expansion. European missionaries were quick to criticise any act of licentiousness by other Europeans in foreign lands. David Livingstone strongly proposed that Britain should adhere to the principle of civilizing other cultures through 'commerce and Christianity' to avoid the 'opium war' in China.¹⁴¹

Although the labours of missionaries and abolitionists may be written off elsewhere, the fact that 'both groups stood for many of the same things, especially the end of bondage'¹⁴² remains indelible in Yorubaland. A careful study of materials in the missionary archives disproves the theory that 'the anti-slavery crusaders were... breaking chains while the foreign missionaries were forging them'.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Samuel Wilberforce, *Speeches on Missions*, Henry Rowley, ed. (London, n.p., 1874), pp. 176 - 7.

¹⁴⁰ Niel Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas, 1797-1860* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 33 - 4, 181 - 2, See also Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720* (Brighton: Harvester, 1976), p. 68, Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: the Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London: Cape, 1976), pp. 24 - 5.

¹⁴¹ See W. Monk, ed., *Dr Livingstone's Cambridge Lectures* (London: n.p., 1858), p. 21, See also, Letter from Livingstone to Tidman, 12 Oct 1855, cited in I. Schapera, ed., *Livingstone's Missionary Correspondence 1841 - 1856* (London: Chatto & Windus 1961), pp. 301 - 2.

¹⁴² Bertram Wyatt-Brown, 'Conscience and Career: Young Abolitionists and Missionaries', p. 183.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

Conclusion

This task of this thesis is not to present missionaries in Yorubaland as absolutely good and the traders and colonialists as evil. For instance, the consuls collaborated with the missionaries to overpower Kosoko and his slave trading cohorts,¹⁴⁴ and British industrialists supported missionary endeavours in Yorubaland.¹⁴⁵ Missionaries did not condone any trader who engaged in obnoxious activities. When Mr Hutton, a British industrialist, was about to jeopardise Legitimate Commerce in Badagry as he expanded his industry in 1842, the Randolph Brothers were brought in from Bristol to break his monopoly.¹⁴⁶ Missionaries deserve to be separated from the profit-oriented merchants who invaded Yorubaland for trade and political expansion. It is imperative to evaluate the theology of salvation that the *Saro* successors of the evangelical movement reflected through Commerce and Christianity to create an orderly society in Yorubaland, which is the subject of examination in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁴ Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, *Eminent Nigerians of the Nineteenth Century: A Series of Studies Originally Broadcast by the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation* (Cambridge, 1960), p. 29.

¹⁴⁵ See for example, CMS/CA2/ O43. The invitation of Mr Hutton to Abeokuta for trade and industry.

¹⁴⁶ See CMS/CA2/O43 Letter from Charles Gollmer to the C. M. S. Secretaries, 14 Jan. 1851.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM SLAVE TRADE TO LEGITIMATE COMMERCE: SOME OVERARCHING PERSPECTIVES

What a picture for us to contemplate with feelings of adoring gratitude! A vessel, whose only cargo had hitherto been human beings led forth to perpetual misery, now laden with articles of *lawful commerce*, and manned by some of those very people whose souls and bodies had once been its only freight! Praised be God who put it into the hearts of his servants to establish the colony of Sierra Leone!¹

The above remarks by Miss Sarah Tucker, a European missionary observer in the 1850s can be described as a sigh of relief at the introduction of 'lawful commerce'.

The main argument in this thesis is that the return of the Yoruba ex-slaves to their own country with 'the light of the Gospel'² and the ideology of carrying the plough along with the Bible³ ignited Yorubaland with a religion that was set to transform the Yoruba from the despondency of slavery to deliverance through commerce. This is the basis for suggesting here that Legitimate Commerce was a 'Headlight', a Christian benevolence, which Tucker described as Sunrise within the Tropics.⁴ For thirty years, Yorubaland enjoyed the immense benefits of missionary labours, which not only 'prospered the converts remarkably in worldly affairs'⁵ but also successfully and systematically rooted out the Slave Trade from Yorubaland and gave the people a new sense of human dignity.

¹ Sarah Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1854), p. 45.

² CO 265/154, Enclosure dated 15 November 1839, in Doherty to Russell, 30 November 1839.

³ Thomas Fowell Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy* (London: Dawson of Pall Mall, 1968 [1839, 1840]), p. 483.

⁴ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission*

⁵ CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal, S. Crowther Jr., June to 25 September 1852.

This positive mixture of culture and religion is obscured by the fact that recent studies place greater emphasis on the widely perceived cataclysmic effect of colonialism on the African economy. The practice now indeed is to give the impression that, by legitimizing commerce in Africa, the missionaries answered a question that nobody asked them,⁶ whereas in fact 'lawful commerce'⁷ was used in the 1840s and 1850s in Yorubaland to overcome the conspiracy and menace of the slave dealers.

This chapter gives an overview of a number of vital aspects of the rise, development and decline of Legitimate Commerce in nineteenth-century Yorubaland, with a view to presenting an overarching understanding of the whole nature of the missionaries' economic initiative as both a commercial and theological endeavour. One of the strands examined in this chapter is the Slave Trade and how slavery should be evaluated. An attempt is made in the second place to recapture the pre-contact process of using religion as a means of regulating commerce in Yorubaland. This chapter also explores European contacts with Africa, the growth of the transatlantic Slave Trade, the factors of the imperial traders and politicians and the tensions with the missionaries' introduction of Legitimate Commerce. This chapter then examines the *Saro* and *Creoles*' adoption of the plans of English abolitionists to replace the illegitimate trade in slaves with Legitimate Commerce, and how eventually the activities of the imperial traders and slave dealers brought a decline to Yoruba missionaries' commercial initiative.

⁶ See Bertram Wyatt-Brown, 'Conscience and Career: Young Abolitionists and Missionaries', in Roger Anstey, *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, Christine Bolt, Seymour Drescher, eds (Folkestone, England: W. Dawson, 1980), p. 183.

⁷ CMS/CA2/L2 Letter Book, p. 168. Letter with the Theme: 'Lawful Commerce and Christian Civilization', Henry Venn to Captain Yardley Wilmot, 12 Sept 1862. See also Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, pp. 306, 511 and Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 45.

Reconstructing the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade from the Beginning

One of the difficulties of writing the history in Africa is that events were not documented. This is certainly true in Yorubaland until the nineteenth century when the Yoruba began to develop its own indigenous literature with the influence and pedagogical support of missionaries. The question arises then on how to relate the antecedent events in Yorubaland with the 'Rise and Fall' of Legitimate Commerce in the nineteenth century. J. D. Y. Peel suggests that missionary encounters with the Yoruba in the nineteenth century provided an opportunity for reconstructing the primal period through the observations of Yoruba and European missionaries.⁸

This study adopts Peel's suggestion and therefore evaluates the accounts of nineteenth-century missionaries in order to synthesise some of the oral traditions. This has facilitated the process of observing from missionary records that Yoruba trade, from the most menial to the most sophisticated, including the Slave Trade were under the control of the gods. Hence, the Yoruba's reception of missionaries' Commerce and Christianity was with the hope that Legitimate Commerce, as the trade approved by the god of the missionaries would usher prosperity into Yorubaland and save them from the menace of the slave dealers.

From Domestic Slavery to the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Yoruba Economy

The transatlantic Slave Trade was not the beginning of slavery in Yorubaland. Domestic slavery had existed among the Yoruba even before the Portuguese began to demand slaves for sale in the trans-Atlantic trade. The international magnitude and patterns of the trade however expanded what the Yoruba had regarded as legitimate

⁸ Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, p. 22.

(or domestic) trade in slaves. Slaves that used to be an item among others in Yoruba markets soon became the most important commodity, increasing human traffic on the West African coasts for about three centuries. Thus, although missionaries detested trading in slaves they soon realised that it was not a new experience in Yorubaland, which continued in practice up unto the late 1870s.⁹ However, the development of the transatlantic trade was a new phenomenon in Yoruba experience.

Similarly, slavery either at the domestic or international level was neither peculiar to Yorubaland nor was it new in most human societies. It was a world system that transcended African experience. Reginald Coupland observes that slavery in the social and economic structures of society was universal in almost all ancient civilizations, including China, India, Persia, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome.¹⁰ He argues that the practice waned in Europe with the growth of civilisation, the cessation of Roman conquest and the spread of Christianity.¹¹ Slavery reached an alarming level in Yorubaland from the late sixteenth century and became almost irredeemable with the premium placed on it by the Europeans and the local slave dealers.¹²

Coupland argues interestingly that Africa was opened up to slave trading by Western merchants because the state of her environment did not promote the growth of civilizations such as those of Eastern and Western worlds. Although his description of the state of Africa before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was not applicable to

⁹ CMS/CA2/L4 Letter Books, pp. 455-6 Minutes on domestic slavery in the Yoruba mission, 1879

¹⁰ Reginald Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1933, 1964), pp. 8 – 9.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² CMS/CA2/031/80 Letter, Commodore B. Campbell of West African Squadron to ex-king of Lagos, Kosoko in 1856.

the picturesque landscape of Yorubaland, it aptly explains why the African continent became generally vulnerable and was exploited by the Western nations that were dealing in slaves. Coupland's argument however does not take into consideration the African rivers and vast resources: as Alan Burns says, 'the wealth of Hausaland and Bornu were freely rumoured, but the course of the Niger remained a fascinating mystery'.¹³

Coupland's assumptions may be generically accurate on the situation of Africa, but Yorubaland had its own individual profile in the nineteenth century. Miss Tucker a European observer of the events in the nineteenth century described the social condition of Yorubaland in a glowing manner. She observed that the 'Yoruba enjoyed a comparative peace and prosperity unknown to most of the neighbouring states'.¹⁴ Coupland's thinking reflects the assumptions of many Europeans on the pre-transatlantic Slave Trade Africa, but this does not fully portray Yorubaland and its relationship with European traders. The economy of Yorubaland before the Fulani raided them and polarized their country into an enclave of slave dealers depended basically on farming as well as trading in produce and domestic slaves.

The domestic Slave Trade in Yoruba perspective was destined by *Eleda* or *Ori*.¹⁵ The irony was that it was the same *Ori* who brought blessings to the captors and misery to the captives. Thus, in the same way the trader thought s/he was blessed by her/his *Ori* who gave her/him slaves displayed on the market stalls along with agricultural commodities, the slave also would blame his *Ori* for allowing the slave hunters to

¹³ Burns, *History of Nigeria*, p. 78.

¹⁴ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 13.

¹⁵ 'Forehead' – which here symbolizes the Creator, who has made the head to regulate human 'destiny' in Yoruba traditional worldview.

capture him/her. Domestic slavery was not more lucrative than trade in agricultural and natural goods until the emergence of the transatlantic Slave Trade. 'Iron Age Africa, whether east or west', argues Basil Davidson 'had much to offer Europe and Asia' apart from slaves:

– gold, wrought iron, ivory, tortoise shell, even textiles – while there was much that the states of Africa (or at any rate their chiefs and notables) desired to buy in exchange. Slaving was merely a part of the trade from Africa, just as it was merely a part of the trade from Europe.¹⁶

Thus, slavery albeit at the domestic level with insignificant international exchange existed before the transatlantic Slave Trade. However, exploring the process by which domestic slavery became the most lucrative trade among the Yoruba helps to understand the motive of modern mission for introducing Legitimate Commerce.

Although the Yoruba as in many other tribes of West Africa traded in slaves, their treatment of their captives was peculiar to the societal orientation in which a slave could become 'a child' to its owner. The structures, patterns and purposes of the traditional Yoruba system of slavery distinguished *iwòfà*, literally 'pawns' or human collateral for debts from *?rú* (war captives).¹⁷ *Iwòfà* was a child voluntarily pledged by a debtor until the full payment of a debt. Such a child was treated as one of the children in the household of the moneylender and shared the same privileges the children enjoyed, slept in the same rooms as the children, served the lender in the same way his/her children would. The labour of *iwòfà* was not deductible from the

¹⁶ Basil Davidson, *The African Slave Trade: Precolonial History, 1450-1850* Boston: Little Brown, 1961), p. 40.

¹⁷ Olu Daramola ati Adebayo Jeje, *Awon Asa ati Orisa Ile Yoruba* (Onibon-Oje Press & Book Industries Nig. Ltd, 1967), pp. 148 – 50.

debt, because s/he was only a pawn who served the debtor for six days (*?j? m?fā*),¹⁸ and was free to work in her/his own farm for one day in the week.

?rú (slaves), on the other hand were war captives whose case had no palliation of any sort, but who automatically became 'properties' of their captors until they died or were sold to the slave dealers. Occasionally they might be set free through the magnanimity of their captors, but they had no rights. They could be exploited as labourers, pledged as *iwòfā* or even sold as an item of trade. Occasional feuds and jealousies among the Yoruba led to inter-tribal hostilities during which captives were taken and condemned to domestic slavery, which was of 'the mildest kind...The slave was then, and still is, considered as part of the family, is often called 'my son,' and a stranger would scarcely discern the difference between the freeman and the bond-slave.'¹⁹ These were the domestic slaves traditionally known to the Yoruba people before the transatlantic slave interchange introduced its own dimension to the trade.

The Development and the Dimension of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

The transatlantic Slave Trade swept aside what the people knew as trading and brought in a much easier trade in human beings: as a slave dealer said 'could sort [ivory, palm oil and cotton] walk down of themselves to Lagos to be sold as slaves could... it would require cowries to get them down'.²⁰ In essence, the bitter experience of the victims of the transatlantic slavery was the later basis for the returnees' resolution to lead their own people into a new era of Legitimate Commerce.

¹⁸ The description, *iwofa*, was derived from the six days (*?j? m?fā*) of service. See Daramola ati Jeje, *Awon Asa ati Orisa Ile Yoruba*, p. 150.

¹⁹ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 14.

²⁰ CMS/CA2/032/57 Samuel Crowther Jr., Journal at Abeokuta, 18 June 1852.

The emergence of the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade brought a major shift to the Yoruba economy that had depended heavily on agriculture. The Slave Trade escalated as some European nations began to develop the plantations in the New World:

In 1604 ... a period of business development began. Companies of investors received charters to settle "plantations" or colonies in North America in regions where they would not run afoul of Spanish interests.²¹

Fowell Buxton was right in claiming that Christianity could not be absolved from the cruelty that devastated the African continent. The cruelty began from the Portuguese traders who entered West Africa under the pretext that they were missionaries to the sub-Saharan region and it was consolidated by Christians, such as Bartolomé de las Casas, the bishop of Chiapas at the time, who perceived that the weaker Native Indians should be substituted with the stronger Africans:

Las Casas, the first bishop of Mexico [sic] began to denounce the cruelties inflicted on the Indians and to plead – how unwisely he realized too late – that Indian slaves should be replaced by Africans. So Africans were shipped across the Atlantic in fast-increasing numbers.²²

The Portuguese traders became ready suppliers of slaves because of their trade links with West Africa from the fifteenth century. For instance, 'in 1444 six caravels set out from Lagos on a "joint-stock" enterprise, and came back laden with 235 slaves.'²³

Antonio Gonsalvez led the initial trade in slaves by the Portuguese at the coast of Guinea where twelve Africans from around Rio d'Ouro were impounded in 1441. Henry the Navigator thereafter obtained monopoly of the African slave trade by charter, and succeeded in obtaining the approval of the Pope in 1454, on the ground

²¹ Company of the Friends of the Huntington Library, *News from the New World: Wherin May Be Seen the Excellent Qualities of the Beasts of the Field, the Fish, and Fowl, as Well as the Singular and Rare Virtues of the Earth and Air of that Goodly Land* (Los Angeles, CA: Anderson & Ritchie, 1946), p. 2.

²² Reginald Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1933, 1964), p. 18.

²³ *Ibid*, pp. 15 – 16.

that he was working 'for the destruction and confusion of the Moors and the enemies of Christ and for the exaltation of the Catholic faith'.²⁴ Soon, the domestic Slave Trade gained the status of an international trade. Although the Portuguese put forward a missionary agenda, their mission was different from that of the British evangelicals or Roman Catholics from France in nineteenth-century Yorubaland.

Agricultural produce could not yield as much dividend as the profits Kosoko, Madam Tinubu, Efunsetan, Teso of Dahomey and several other top Yoruba traders were making from the Slave Trade. The liberated Yoruba missionaries and their European counterparts were confronted with the need to step up the production of cotton. Samuel Crowther Jr. soon began to distribute cotton gins to farmers who also kept requesting more than was obtainable from Europe.²⁵ Even then, the efforts of the liberated slaves were not sufficient to overcome the widespread trade in slaves in Yorubaland, because about twenty thousand men had become slave hunters under the influences of king Kosoko and Madam Tinubu by 1854.²⁶

Kosoko's influence spread beyond the territory of Lagos to include Epe and Palma, his trading depots that the consuls had to annex when Lagos became a colony. Similarly, Madam Tinubu was a key trader who turned around the commercial lives of Lagos and Abeokuta in the early days of the arrival of the missionaries in Yorubaland.²⁷ Tinubu Square in Lagos and Ita Iyalode (Iyalode Square) at Abeokuta

²⁴ C. P. Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*, vol. I (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), p. 119. See also John W. Blake, *European beginnings in West Africa, 1454-1578: a survey of the first century of white enterprise in West Africa, with special emphasis upon the rivalry of the great powers* (Westport (Conn.): Greenwood, 1969 [1937]).

²⁵ CMS/CA2/032/18 Samuel Crowther Jr. gave account of the number of saw gins purchased and the quantity of cotton paid for the gins.

²⁶ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 15.

²⁷ Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, *Eminent Nigerians of the Nineteenth Century: A Series of Studies Originally Broadcast by the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation* (Cambridge, 1960), p. 37.

testify to her success in commerce in Yorubaland.²⁸ Madam Tinubu's economic prowess was second only to that of Kosoko. With her exit from Lagos, the island was then surrounded by potential dangers from Kosoko in Epe and Madam Tinubu in Abeokuta. Tinubu neither embraced Legitimate Commerce nor was averse to it, she would engage in any trade that was yielding money. Thus, though she traded in palm oil, gunpowder and bullets, slaves remained her main business interest:

With her unfailing business acumen and enterprise, she quickly established a flourishing trade in gunpowder, bullets and other weapons of war. She built up her house into a salon where disgruntled Lagosians congregated and planned to avenge themselves on the interfering Consul....²⁹

Madam Tinubu remained independent of missionaries and especially the consuls who eventually masterminded her expulsion by her cousin, king Akitoye from Lagos. What further compounded the distortion of the Yoruba economy was the huge support the local slave dealers got from their European counterparts.

The role of European traders cannot be justified in spite of arguments such as J. F. C. Harrison's that the trade contributed to the total wealth of Yorubaland.³⁰ Rather, both the foreign and native dealers were answerable for not being sensitive in making wealth. The local dealers are more to blame for buying and selling fellow Africans as chattels. For instance, an assistant of Samuel Crowther Jr. challenged some slave dealers in Abeokuta for colluding with European traders to place their own relatives on the market as 'commodities' of trade. He asked 'whether or not they think it right

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ For more details, see J. F. C. Harrison, *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism 1780 – 1850* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1979).

and peaceful to sell a fellow?'³¹ He wondered how much European traders offered to enlist their interest in such acts.

Commerce and Religion' in Pre-Missionary Era Yorubaland

Although the Yoruba had traded in slaves as well as extensively in agricultural produce before the transatlantic Slave Trade disrupted the economy, the dynamic for a re-introduction of lawful commerce was set in motion by the *Saro* returnees under the leadership of Thomas Will.³² Hence Legitimate Commerce was not an innovation among the Yoruba, but it had a special role, because it was being propagated by a combination of Yoruba and *Oyibo* (white) missionaries whose primary task was the evangelization of Yorubaland.

The most important factor that facilitated the plan of restoring the traditional trading pattern was because trade was tied to religion in Yorubaland. Hence, commerce was inconclusive for the Yoruba until it was sanctioned by the gods, because a major function of the pantheon of gods of the land was to supervise the trades. As diverse as commerce was in Yorubaland, so were the gods even before the era of transatlantic Slave Trade. Commerce and Christianity was not inconceivable therefore in the Yoruba worldview, when missionaries introduced the concept in 1842.

The experience of commerce being tied to religion made it easy for the liberated Yoruba slaves to become easily attracted to the religion of missionaries and thus to begin to learn European skills, language and commerce in Sierra Leone. Samuel Ajayi Crowther, for instance quickly gained carpentry skills:

³¹ CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal, S. Crowther Jr., June to September 25, 1852.

³² See CO 265/154, Enclosure dated 15 November 1839, in Doherty to Russell, 30 November 1839.

He had a great appetite for learning. Soon, he was able to read and speak this new language that was so very different from his mother tongue. He plunged into his books with zest. Within six months he was able to read the New Testament. The school also required that pupils learn a trade. He chose carpentry, which he learnt from Mr Weeks who was later to become Bishop of Sierra Leone.³³

In this model, Christian religious instructions and trade skill went hand in hand and the liberated slaves benefited immensely thereby.

Eyewitnesses in nineteenth-century Yorubaland such as Sarah Tucker and scholars such as William Russell Bascom³⁴ observe that the Yoruba were ‘industrious, honest, and affectionate, and in their own simple way they lived in external ease and comfort... particularly noticed by Capt. Clapperton.’³⁵ Although the Southern Baptist Mission had no interest in legitimizing commerce, Thomas Jefferson Bowen the pioneer Baptist missionary in Yorubaland was keenly interested in helping to identify areas of strength, when he observed that the Yoruba was industrious and creative, with a lot of potential for commercial intercourse with Christian nations.³⁶

Even though Yoruba economy before the arrival of missionaries in 1842 depended primarily on ‘sedentary hoe farming’, the Yoruba also engaged in ‘craft, hunting, fishing, animal husbandry, and the gathering of wild foods’.³⁷ The religious passion of the Yoruba was also reflected in commerce and industry, because virtually all trades had peculiar descriptions that linked them with the gods that controlled them.

³³ Jean Decorvet and Emmanuel Oladipo, *Samuel Ajayi Crowther: The Miracle of Grace* (Lagos: CSS Bookshops Ltd, 2006), p. 13.

³⁴ William Russell Bascom, *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria* (New York; London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 18.

³⁵ E.g. Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, pp. 13 – 14.

³⁶ T. J. Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1968 (1857)), p. 329.

³⁷ Bascom, *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria*, op. cit.

The farmers were adherents of 'Orisà oko' ('the god of the farm'), while the hunters, blacksmiths and ironmongers worshiped 'Ogun' ('the god of iron'). The tradesmen and women who worship 'Osun' ('goddesses of the river'), claim that it was in a time of dearth that she showed them the site where the town, Oshogbo was located.³⁸ 'Yemoja', ('the deity mother of all rivers and fishes') was said to emerge from the sea and 'comes into the temple... during the festival'.³⁹ Thus, for the Yoruba combining commerce with religion was not an innovation.

The Yoruba informal division of labour basically but not exclusively apportioned the role of farming to men while the women traded in farm produce. The women also engaged in palm oil production in their local oil mills – *ebu*, weaving of cloths, plaiting of hair and soap making while men also engaged in 'weaving, iron working, brass-casting, wood and calabash carving, bead and leather working, drum making, drumming, circumcising, cicatrising, divination, and the practice of herbal medicine.'⁴⁰

The tradition was for every member of a trade group to cluster together in the worship of their own benefactor gods. The gods in turn 'blessed' the worshippers and pronounced prosperity on their trades. For example, the *olòrìsà-oko* worshipped the earth or the land, because to them it was a spirit that guaranteed the farmers abundant harvest.⁴¹

³⁸ G. J. Afolabi Ojo, *Yoruba Culture: A Geographical Analysis* (London: University of London Press, 1966), pp. 163 – 4.

³⁹ E. G. S. Parrinder, 'Yoruba-Speaking Peoples in Dahomey', *Africa*, vol. XVII, 1947, p. 29.

⁴⁰ Maureen Warner-Lewis, *From Mother Tongue to Memory* (Tuscaloosa, AL.: University of Alabama Press, 1996), p. 19.

⁴¹ P. Morton-Williams, 'Yoruba Ogboni Cult in Oyo', *Africa*, vol. XXX, 1960, p. 364.

Walter Rodney argues, as stated earlier, that Africa had an industry that was growing before Europeans intervened in her economy. Giving a catalogue of 'Made in Africa' products such as leather, yarn and cotton, Rodney contends that 'African manufacture ...had advanced appreciably'.⁴² Missionary and official records substantiate this claim to be true of Yorubaland. For instance, the chiefs of Abeokuta sent a gift of locally manufactured cloth to Queen Victoria in 1848. In response, the Queen requested the Earl of Chichester, the President of the CMS, to send her appreciation to the chiefs and people of Yorubaland:

I have had the honour of presenting to the Queen the letter of Sagbua and other chiefs of Abbeokuta, and also their present of a piece of cloth.

The Queen has commanded me to convey her thanks to Sagbua and the chiefs, and her best wishes for their true and lasting happiness, and for the peace and prosperity of the Yoruba nation.

The Queen hopes that arrangements may be made for affording to the Yoruba natives the free use of the river Ossa, so as to give them opportunities for commerce with this and other countries.

The commerce between nations, in exchanging the fruits of the earth, and of each other's industry, is blessed by God. Not so the commerce in slaves, which makes poor and miserable the nation that sells them, and brings neither wealth nor the blessing of God to the nation that buys them, but the contrary.

The Queen and people of England are very glad to know that Sagbua and the chiefs think as they do upon this subject of commerce. But commerce alone will not make a nation great and happy like England. England has become great and happy by the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ.⁴³

Crowther took some raw cotton from Yorubaland as samples when he visited England in the early 1850s.⁴⁴ The joy of meeting Captain Henry Leeke, the commander of the

⁴² Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Abuja, Lagos, Pretoria: Panaf Publishing, Inc., 1972), pp. 47 – 8.

⁴³ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, pp. 160 – 161.

⁴⁴ Parliamentary Papers PP LIV, 1852, Papers relative to the reduction of Lagos, pp. 133 – 34, Straith to Palmerston, 20 Aug 1851.

vessel, *Myrmidon* who rescued him from the slave ship almost thirty years earlier in 1822 overwhelmed Crowther; nevertheless, he was more eager to know the fate of the cotton he took to England. He took back to Yorubaland the good news that Manchester cotton traders declared that the raw cotton was of merchantable quality.⁴⁵

Market expansion naturally created the incentive for extensive farming and marketing of palm oil, kola, locust beans, cotton and indigo. Weaving of cloths and the work of art for which some strata of the Yoruba society was known were traditionally a family affair, engaged in by both male and female. Ogbomoso, the town that eventually played host to Jefferson Bowen the pioneer missionary of the Southern Baptist Mission, was a typically strong commercial depot in Yorubaland with clusters of family occupations, such as wood carving, weaving, dying of cloths and subsistent farming. However, all these ventures became unattractive when the Slave Trade became expansive in Yorubaland.

Although missionaries became the restorers of the traditional commercial heritage of the Yoruba, Legitimate Commerce was neither mandatory to all groups, nor did all of them participate in its re-introduction into Yoruba commerce. Thus, there was a polarity within the missionary movement on the philosophy of helping the people to regain their lost commercial glory. Virtually all missionaries preached the same eschatological message in spite of their divergent views on the restoration of the commercial heritage of Yorubaland. For example, in spite of Bowen's observation that 'commerce and civilization' were 'powerful auxiliaries of the Gospel',

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Legitimate Commerce was outside the mandate of his benefactors, the Southern Baptist Mission, which were gospel proclamation and soul winning.⁴⁶

The apologetic expressed by the pioneer Southern Baptist missionary for his inability to join the CMS in legitimizing commerce in Yorubaland showed that his personal views on Legitimate Commerce were different from those of his benefactors. However, he expressed a great hope that missionary work would soon transcend denominational emphasis in Africa:

We may differ at present, on some points of importance, but the fundamental doctrines of brotherhood are common to us all, and the day is not very distant when a mutual renunciation of all human errors will bind us into one body somewhat different from any of our present organizations. Now is the time to fight with sin, and not with one another.⁴⁷

Bowen identified the commercial potentials that could be generated between Africa and the Western world. In his personal observation of the trading patterns of Ilorin and other big towns of the Yoruba country, he saw that the huge populations had insatiable demands for foreign goods:

There is not a town without its market and not a market without some European goods, and a desire for more; and yet all this vast, populous and productive region, is cut off from all direct and convenient intercourse with the civilized world.⁴⁸

Basically, the missionaries' gospel of eschatology and existentialism was not at variance with the Yoruba concept of commerce and religion as a way of taking care of life on the earth as a prelude to life after death. Thus, although promoting commerce as 'Good News' was in tune with the Yoruba worldview, which recognises commerce and religion as progressively co-terminal, missionaries had a difficult time persuading

⁴⁶ Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in several countries in the interior of Africa*, p. 357.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 358.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 332.

the people to do away with country fashions, such as the pantheon of gods and embrace Christianity. Thus, although missionaries' penetration of Yorubaland in the nineteenth century with the message of Commerce and Christianity, offering the people Abundant Life and Eternal Hope conformed to the Yoruba concept of holistic salvation, it was difficult to reconcile Christianity with the Yoruba concept of religion.

The traditional eschatological worldview of the Yoruba was both earthly and ethereal. Although Robin Horton portrays the people as having a more expanded view of the world of 'microcosm' that emphasised the gods of the land,⁴⁹ the Yoruba had a notion of God, whom they called *Olodumare*. They worshiped the *orisa* who alone could talk directly with God (*Olodumare*) on their behalf.⁵⁰ 'Egúngún' (masquerades), which even missionaries of Yoruba descent called the 'Aku devil' (the devil worshipped by the Yorubas) was believed to have come from heaven with answers to their prayers.⁵¹ The Yoruba even believed that *Ifa*, which missionaries observed was 'nothing and consequently has no power in the world to come', was the interpreter of God's message to humankind.⁵² Thus, although the Yoruba believed that commerce was being supervised by religion, they could not perceive how a single religion would perform the functions of their multiplex traditional religions and pantheon of gods.

A conversation between David Hinderer and a convert he invited to the Sunday school in the Ibadan CMS mission centre gives a vivid example of the Yoruba concept of religion, which permits an individual to be a member of many cults, as

⁴⁹ Robin Horton, 'African Conversion', in *Africa*, 41:1971, p. 103 of pp. 85 – 108.

⁵⁰ For extensive study of Yoruba understanding of God and the divinities, see Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longmans, 1962).

⁵¹ CMS/CA2/018/16, Journal of William Allen, Abeokuta, 8 May 1865.

⁵² *Ibid.*

long as there were no taboos or barriers between them. 'What have you so much to do to-morrow?' Mr Hinderer asked his convert. Thinking that he was making a genuine excuse, the new convert explained how important that Sunday was for him. That was the day when 'I must worship my forehead,' he exclaimed.⁵³ Hinderer asked in amazement, 'How do you mean?' and he replied 'Do you white men think us so foolish as to suppose our forehead itself can save us? No, but God made my forehead, and he saved me through my forehead, and so I worship it.'⁵⁴

The Yoruba concept of eschatology is that '*Aye ni ao k?k? se ki a to se ? run, ? runminla, ?run nikan lo m? ?ni ti yo la ohun*' – life in the earth is a prelude to the one in heaven, because, in the Yoruba worldview only the heavens know those who will be saved.⁵⁵ Thus, although commerce was inseparable from religion, the pantheon of gods had to be appeased, because the Yoruba regarded them as messengers of the Supreme God.

Missionaries met this complex religio-commercial worldview when they began to arrive in Yorubaland from the 1840s. One of their earliest experiences with the Yoruba traditional religions was coming in contact with Akere, a traditional priestess in Abeokuta around 1856 as she led the adherents in the worship of *Yemoja* and made propitiation for healing, fertility and prosperity. While the European missionaries perceived Akere's sacrifices to *Yemoja* as idolatry and deception, their Yoruba counterparts, though sympathetic towards her because of their knowledge of Yoruba

⁵³ 'Head' symbolizes the 'Creator' in Yoruba traditional religious worldview.

⁵⁴ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 37.

⁵⁵ J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London, 1969), pp. 171-177, Jacob K. Olupona, *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1991), pp. 61 – 2, and Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, Op. cit., give extensive explanation of the Yoruba beliefs, especially as it relates to their existential approach to religion.

traditional religions, also condemned her as a 'cheat' and an 'impostor'.⁵⁶ While Crowther and King condemned Akere because of the way the liberated slaves had become intolerant of any form of religious or commercial extortion or slavery, Smith a European missionary did not have any understanding of what Akere was doing.

European Contacts with West Africa

Although the Europeans did not gain much knowledge of the Yoruba people until the eighteenth century,⁵⁷ the trade partnership with Europe had been opened up from 1553 when Thomas Wyndham and one hundred and forty Europeans traded in agricultural and natural resources at the Bight of Benin. The Wyndham party's adventure though perilous succeeded in registering the British presence in the West African trade and marking the first presence of English vessels in the Benin Rivers.⁵⁸

The success of the voyage was credited to a Portuguese defector by name Pinteado, who accompanied Wyndham on the voyage and provided the lead for gaining access to the gold and ivory of the region. Despite serious casualties on the voyage that did not spare Wyndham, Pinteado and about one hundred members of the party, the forty survivors who reached Plymouth with the 80 tons of pepper bought at Benin took with them a story of commercial success. Apart from the large quantity of commodities procured, the group entered into a credit arrangement with the king of Benin.⁵⁹ Thus, essentially, apart from the trans-Saharan trade which had introduced the Arabs and

⁵⁶ Cited in J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 20 –21.

⁵⁷ S. O. Biobaku, *The Egba and Their Neighbours 1842-72* (Oxford, 1957).

⁵⁸ Alan Burns, *History of Nigeria* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1929), p. 67. John R. Spears, *The American Slave trade: an Account of its Origin, Growth and Suppression* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat, 1967), p. 40.

⁵⁹ James A. Williamson, *A Short History of British Expansion* (London: Macmillan, 1922), pp. 83 – 84. (See also Burns, *History of Nigeria*, pp. 67 – 8 for more details).

Islam into Yorubaland, the people had traded with Europeans and Britain in particular, dealing in agricultural exchange as far back as the sixteenth century.

John Lock's commercial voyage of 1554 to West Africa, based on the information of the former group, was a greater success story, because, apart from the reduction in European casualties the voyage resulted in a 1000 percent profit. Nevertheless, the unfavourable experience of the Wyndham-led adventurers and that of Lock halted the movement of the English traders into the hinterland in all of the Bight of Benin and the entire Yoruba country until 1588 when Captain James Welsh undertook another adventure. Welsh's 1591 trip recorded the first historical reference to the 'Oil Rivers', during which he was reported to have returned to England with '589 sacks of pepper, 150 tusks, and 32 Barrels of Oil of Palm trees'.⁶⁰ 'These are the first references to the oil which later was exported in such quantities as to give its name (Oil Rivers) to the rivers of the area from which it was obtained.'⁶¹ Historically therefore, although the Yoruba did not have direct dealings with Europe, exchange of goods had taken place through the earlier traders and explorers.

Similarly, the Edo⁶² people's earliest contact with the major Yoruba centres of Ekiti, Ijesa and Akoko was for commercial exchange. It brought European goods into Yorubaland in exchange for agricultural produce of the Yoruba country. Though indirect, trade with the Edos nevertheless marked the real beginning of exchange of cultural products between the Yoruba and the Western world. The Edo traders

⁶⁰ *The Nigeria handbook* (containing statistical and general information respecting the colony and protectorate), 10th ed. (London: n.p., 1933). POV L602. 3.5 Remote Store A. Nigeria Handbook, 1933, pp. 4 – 5. Hakluyt, vol. ii, p. 132.

⁶¹ Burns, *History of Nigeria*, p. 69.

⁶² The Edo is the major tribe found in the Southern parts of the Bight of Benin, bothering the Yoruba country. Their ruler and many of the subjects were also believed to be descendants of the Yoruba progenitor, Oduduwa.

exchanged corals, European cloth and iron implements, cowry shells and later guns and gunpowder for locally woven cloth, camwood, beads and potash. 'Akure was the entrepot of this trade and a considerable number of Edo people soon settled permanently there.'⁶³ When some Europeans finally penetrated the hinterland of the Yoruba country in the eighteenth century, the rapid commercial activities led to the development of 'king's market' – *Oja Oba* in many parts of the urban centres. Thus, trading in lawful goods or even dealing with Europeans lawfully was not entirely new to the Yoruba.

Adoption of Legitimate Commerce for Yoruba Economic Transformation

While Fowell Buxton, Henry Venn and their Yoruba allies, Samuel Crowther, Thomas King, and Samuel Crowther Jr. were labouring to regain economic freedom, the imperial traders and the politicians were exploring the continent for trade expansion. Even key members of the political class who did not necessarily approve impoverishing Africa did not deny that Europe had the political advantage over the weaker economies. For instance the British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli underscored the pre-eminence of the powerful nations in sustaining wealth when he said in 1862 that 'there may be grave questions as to the best mode of obtaining wealth... but there can be no question... that the best mode of preserving wealth is power.'⁶⁴ Thus, while missionaries were removing the landmarks of slavery from the African continent, the imperial traders kept on devising new ways of perpetuating exploitation of Africa, as explored further in chapter six.

⁶³ S.A. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840-1893: Ibadan Expansion and the Rise of Ekitiparapo* (Harlow: Longmans, 1971) 25—6.

⁶⁴ W. F. Money Penny and G. E. Buckle, *Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield* 6 vols (London: n.p., 1910-20), vol. IV, p. 335.

It is imperative therefore to separate missionaries from traders. Although missionaries had some internal problems of cultural supremacy, not a single Yoruba missionary traded in his/her own name. The returnees' invitation to Europeans was to join in the task of empowering the Yoruba so that Africans could experience God's kingdom on earth through commerce and have eschatological hope through the gospel.

While it may appear difficult to allow Legitimate Commerce its own place within the context of the 'Imperialism of Free Trade' or Europe's 'Expansionist' programmes, the labours of the liberated Yoruba cannot be discredited or treated with levity. While missionaries were not immune from errors, condemning Legitimate Commerce would amount to dishonouring the initiators of ideological commerce that was meant to eradicate the Slave Trade. Although some leading European missionaries covered their lapses with lavish reception for Yoruba leaders, the concept of empowering the Yoruba was uppermost in the Yoruba missionary agenda. Thus, Henry Townsend's rejection of Samuel Crowther's nomination for Bishop was a betrayal of the confidence the Yoruba reposed in him.

The Yoruba returnees arranged a rosy reception for him when he 'visited Abbeokuta very soon after Mr. Freeman's return to Badagry, and his welcome was as hearty and as warm... "How do you do, white man? how do you do, you that are coming?"'⁶⁵ His Yoruba friends were disappointed when he teamed up with some other European missionaries to oppose the consecration of Crowther, the foremost Yoruba

⁶⁵ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 88.

missionary, as bishop,⁶⁶ arguing that the 'influence of white missionaries is very desirable and necessary' to sustain the respect that Africans had for them.⁶⁷

Although the problems of this sense of superiority escalated among the missionaries in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, some Europeans rejecting the leadership of Africans or even their mere elevation, even if they were better qualified for a position, the primary goal of liberating Africa was not vitiated. Venn fought relentlessly for ecclesiological advancement and economic restoration. He vetoed many decisions which might have hindered Yoruba empowerment. He recommended the consecration of Samuel Crowther as bishop of the Niger against all opposition, and at a time when prices were rising in Europe he expanded the cotton trade of Abeokuta and Ibadan to ensure that the Yoruba reaped good dividends from their labours. His goal was to empower the Yoruba so that they could become models of Christian community in Africa and compete favourably in the international market.

When the missionaries of the CMS arrived at Badagry from Sierra Leone in 1842 their goal of moving to Abeokuta immediately was frustrated by the death of Sód?k? the paramount ruler of the Egbas. Their hopes had been built on the report of Henry Townsend after his exploratory trip to Yorubaland.⁶⁸ But because 'the soil here is anything but rich'⁶⁹ missionaries could not help the people (Popos) to set up agricultural projects in Badagry where they were held up for another three years before their planned mission for Abeokuta materialised. Regardless of this

⁶⁶ CMS/CA2/016/2 Isaac Smith, Henry Townsend, David Hinderer, C. A. Gollmer protesting against proposed appointment of an African Bishop in 1851.

⁶⁷ CMS/CA2/049 D. Hinderer to H. Venn, 15 November 1864.

⁶⁸ CMS/CA1/0215, H. Townsend, Journal on 'a Mission of Research', 5 Jan. 1843.

⁶⁹ CMS/CA2/043, C. Gollmer, Journal entry, June 1847.

disappointment they set up the first mission station in Badagry and commenced the work when it became obvious that they could not move immediately into Abeokuta.

Henry Smeathman's projection that agricultural production would be very viable in Africa because it is 'a land of immense fertility'⁷⁰ turned out not to be the case in every part of West Africa. Badagry's sandy soil was too loose to support agricultural production. Nevertheless, the Popos embraced the missionaries' proposition to legitimize commerce. They insisted that 'Trade we shall, trade our fathers taught us',⁷¹ though it was obvious that their soil could not support extensive integrated farming.

Thus, Legitimate Commerce was better received than is usually presented by scholars. The identification of the missionaries as 'European',⁷² distorts the fact that the Yoruba were not just beneficiaries, but also benefactors of Legitimate Commerce in Africa. The inappropriate identification of missionaries with the imperialists tends to aggravate their misclassification in current debates as 'precursors of colonialism'.⁷³ The current trend is to build theories on the assumptions that empire building and imperialism were at the top of missionaries' agenda for Africa. This kind of negative connotation of missionary labours agrees with the position of the slave dealers who maligned missionaries for attempting to rid Yorubaland of the trade. They portrayed the missionaries and Legitimate Commerce as part of an imperial design for Africa in general and Yorubaland in particular. In an open discussion, a Yoruba slave dealer

⁷⁰ C. Fyfe, *A Short History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 15.

⁷¹ CMS/CA2/043, C. Gollmer, Journal entry, 18 December 1850.

⁷² See J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite* (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1965), p. xiv.

⁷³ See Magnus O. Bassey, 'Missionary Rivalry and Educational Expansion in Southern Nigeria, 1885-1932', in *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 60, no. 1, (Winter, 1991), p. 39. See also Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1999), pp. 33 - 44.

thought himself quite justified to infer, that it was no other but the company of slave dealers who published some false reports of the perfidious intention of the public towards the missionaries at Abeokuta, Ibadan, Ijaye, together with the converts connected with them.⁷⁴

The goal of the slave dealers in clamouring that Akitoye, the king of Lagos who had become a supporter of Legitimate Commerce 'is nobody... he is all white man, and he has no honour' was 'because he grants the English to stop the slave trade'.⁷⁵ They were inciting the public against the missionaries and portraying them falsely as agents of the imperial nations.

The African slave dealers soon began to panic when the wealth of the converts appeared to be increasing. They envied the converts because in spite of their not partaking in the illegal trade, missionary economic experiment had begun to generate wealth for them. Many of the slave dealers apparently rejected being converted into Christianity because of its demand for abstaining from 'worldly affairs'. One of them laid a charge that was not capable of being treated against the converts:

...on their return from Lagos, they have always had the privilege of bringing up the luggage of the missionaries, which bring in something for them. That although they (the converts) do not buy or sell slaves, yet they prosper remarkably in worldly affairs. This he added should not have been thus.⁷⁶

Even mission detractors, the native slave dealers in Yorubaland, saw that Legitimate Commerce ushered in the happy days the returnees hoped for to their converts. When it appeared no longer to be possible to stop converts from participating in Legitimate Commerce the slave dealers resorted to blackmailing them and the missionaries as stated below.

⁷⁴ CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal, S. Crowther Jr., June to September 25, 1852.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Although the slave dealers rejected the gospel and remained adamant on continuing the trade, the missionaries' message had begun to permeate their rank and file. They were aware that a Christian ought not to 'entangle himself with the affairs of this life'.⁷⁷ One of the slave dealers reported further how they began to blackmail missionaries:

That we of the slave dealers lied that none but the Book people (meaning the converts) got on as the time show, in trade; that they have more chance of getting rich than they (the slave dealers), that the converts have been very active in purchasing & carrying goods down to Lagos for trade.⁷⁸

Although the passion with which missionaries pursued Legitimate Commerce was remarkable, it is obvious that the expansion of God's Kingdom on earth which is the professed goal of Christian mission was their primary goal. Crowther clarified this as he translated the 1849 letter from the Queen to the chiefs of Abeokuta.⁷⁹

Regardless of the positive influences of Legitimate Commerce on Yoruba economy, the changes in missionary policies from about the middle of the 1870s puzzled the Yoruba missionaries. Reviewing the return of the liberated Africans to Yorubaland in 1851, Samuel Crowther Jr. said with satisfaction that

whatever branch of this great work it may be our lot to occupy, if our motives be good, and if our object be the same, and in accordance with God's word, we may rest satisfied that we are on the right course, and are performing God's service.⁸⁰

However, the influence of Legitimate Commerce reduced considerably after the demise of Venn. The vacuum that Venn's death left on Legitimate Commerce made

⁷⁷ Cf. 2 Timothy 2: 3 - 4 KJV Bible.

⁷⁸ CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal, S. Crowther Jr., 1852.

⁷⁹ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 162.

⁸⁰ CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal S. Crowther Jr. at Abeokuta, June to 25 September 1852.

the weaknesses of the economic experiment more obvious, as discussed in the concluding chapter.

Evaluating Legitimate Commerce as both a Secular and Religious Phenomenon

Although the focus is on motives rather than consequences of Legitimate Commerce, nevertheless, the evangelicals are commendable for not wavering from their object:

Although doubts grew as the century wore on, most Victorians clung to the gospels of restricted government and free trade. That moral improvement and intellectual enlightenment attended the growth of prosperity, that all three depended upon political and economic freedom, remained their characteristic and passionate beliefs.⁸¹

Hence, the rupture in missionaries' commercial emancipation goal and the lapses of the abolitionists and many friends of Africa should not be orchestrated to overturn their motives and thus portray them as villains instead of victors in nineteenth-century Yorubaland.

Unless Legitimate Commerce is viewed as a part of Christian evangelization, it would appear on the surface to be oppressive since it contradicts the principle of *laissez faire* which discourages external intervention and proposed that all nations of the world be allowed to grow at their own pace and in line with their natural and economic endowment. This was the whole essence of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland for which the Crowthers, King, Buxton, Venn and several other Yoruba and European missionaries toiled in the hope that illegal trades would give way to lawful commerce in Africa.

⁸¹ Denny, Gallagher and Robinson, *Africa and the Victorians: The Climax of Imperialism*, p. 2.

The interest of the European missionaries in the development of European empires is undeniable, because every process through which they entered Yorubaland portrays them as ambassadors with evidences of national allegiance. For instance, when Townsend was returning from England after reporting the appreciable success of the missionaries in Abeokuta in 1849, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert sent gifts of two Bibles, 'handsomely bound in red morocco' leather and corn mills to the people.⁸² In the Yoruba worldview, these two items coming from the Crown vividly represented *àrokò*,⁸³ symbols typically used to state the mission of a messenger.

In Yorubaland *àrokò* (symbol) was meant to simplify the task of a messenger. It was easily interpreted and understood by the recipient because it portrayed the nature of the mission which could mean peace or war. The gifts from the Crown presented missionary purpose as both eschatological and existential, and portrayed them as propagators of the Gospel and promoters of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland.

Although the gift was appropriate for explaining the mission of the visitors to the Yoruba country, the status of the sender had other implications for the identity of the missionaries. It held them up ostensibly as agents of the Crown and connoted their mission as incorporating British political influence and presence in Yorubaland. This was soon proved right by the annexation of Lagos into a colony in 1862. The Egba Management Board soon began to remove missionary immunity, portraying European missionaries as if they were part of an indivisible European entity⁸⁴ not because they

⁸² Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 161.

⁸³ Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, p. 359 cites C. A. Gollmer, 'African Symbolic Messages', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 14 (1885), pp. 169 – 82.

⁸⁴ CMS/CA2/017 G. E. O. Johnson, Letter from Bashorun of Egbaland to Governor Glover.

were not distinct from the traders, but because the Egbas wanted the European missionaries to pressurize the Governor of Lagos to accede to their requests.⁸⁵

Regardless of the foregoing, Legitimate Commerce remained a cornerstone in the social, educational and above all commercial development for which Yorubaland became renowned in Africa. It not only motivated the people and accelerated education and the cultivation of cash crops such as cocoa and palm tree oil, it symbolizes missionary presence in Yorubaland. Thus, Yorubaland owes a lot to the ex-slaves and missionaries who demonstrated unwavering concerns for the pathetic condition of the polarized kingdoms in the formative years of modern Nigeria, through social and religious reforms, and particularly economic and pedagogical programmes.

Although there were crises of hegemony within missionary circles in the last quarter of nineteenth century as variously discussed, Legitimate Commerce was an effective means to an end in Yorubaland. The Empire that was uppermost in the agenda of European missionaries was the Heavenly kingdom. They proclaimed the gospel intensively and variously, preaching from place to place, in markets, on the streets and corner places, in palaces and at their patrons' homes.

David Hinderer's speech after his induction at the Abeokuta mission in 1849 showed clearly that the empire in his heart was God's Kingdom. He gave 'there a description of a happy country to be conquered – heaven – as well as (he) could from the Word of

⁸⁵ Ibid.

God.’⁸⁶ He also drew some comparisons between heaven and hell as he exchanged some ideas with Sagbua, the paramount chief of Abeokuta, after he had watched the chief and his traditional priest make some traditional rituals. ‘...I preached to him about heaven and hell, but ... his objection is always, if he did away with his country fashions, he could no longer be chief.’⁸⁷

Many of the mission admirers such as Sagbua could not fully abandon their indigenous religions, because that would mean abandoning their leadership responsibility and this would lead to a loss of their relevance in traditional society in which religion was a key component of commerce.

Misclassification of the missionaries as part and parcel of imperial agency is not the most problematic issue in current debates, but the portrayal of the Yoruba returnees in negative terms, which is a clear misrepresentation of what the forgotten but liberated humanitarians stood for. But for their being portrayed as social outcasts, Ayandele’s collage of the premier educated and enlightened Nigerians would have been a good reminder of the emergence of the class of Western-educated élite and a supplement for, Ajayi’s insightful work.⁸⁸ Although Ayandele acknowledges the Yoruba educated elites, the offspring of the early Christian converts as a critical part of the missionary enterprise of the nineteenth century,⁸⁹ describing them as ‘deluded hybrids’⁹⁰ has serious implications on their labours to restore the lost economic glory of the Yoruba

⁸⁶ CMS/CA2/049/95 D. Hinderer, ‘Missionary at Abeokuta, June 12 – Sept 25 1849’ Journal, Tuesday 19 June 1849.

⁸⁷ CMS/CA2/049/95 D. Hinderer, Journal, Friday 22 June 1849.

⁸⁸ Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite*, pp. xiv – xv.

⁸⁹ See E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914* (London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, 1966).

⁹⁰ E. A. Ayandele, *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1974), p. 9.

country. Rather than casting aspersions on the returnees, memorials should be written in their remembrance. They were 'the stone that the builders rejected', which eventually became 'the cornerstone', bringing a new hope to commerce in Yorubaland in the midst of the hopelessness of transatlantic slavery.

Very many eminent Yoruba returnees such as Samuel Crowther, Thomas King and Yariba George who served as agents of modern mission in the perilous 1841 Niger Expedition returned to their country with a message of Commerce and Christianity, and the projects that were meant 'for the benefit and happiness of the African race'.⁹¹ They organized workshops and distributed cotton gins as discussed extensively in Chapters Five and Six. Thus, it is more plausible to suggest that Oshogun's annihilation in the 1820s wars of the Egbas posed a great difficulty for Samuel Crowther to go back to his hometown upon returning to Yorubaland, rather than suggesting, as Ayandele said: that Crowther lost his bearings. Besides, he had a more urgent economic assignment to accomplish that would restore the lost glory of Africa, which transcended tribal or clannish considerations that was beyond Oshogun or even Yorubaland. The application of social stigma to Crowther's work would not fairly represent the situation of his enlistment among the recaptives nor characterize his unparalleled distinction as a benevolent contributor to the economic emancipation of the Yoruba people. He was roused by the doctrine of providence and remained committed to social, religious, and above all economic restoration of Yorubaland until the last syllable of his earthly existence.

⁹¹ CO 2/23, Russell to the Commissioners, 30 January 1841.

Where Ayandele may be right in suggesting that many *Saros* had become deluded as a result of the new religious and social values acquired in their lands of sojourn, it was from among this class that the core Yoruba group arose with a sense of providence to promote a new ideology for Yoruba economic restoration. They started to plan how the global commercial and cultural exchange that gave supremacy to the Western world would be established among their own kith and kin in Yorubaland.

Legitimate Commerce did not stand any chance if the *Saro* and *Creoles* remained in Sierra Leone or sought a place in the indentured labour in Trinidad instead or returning to Yorubaland in 1839. Although they did not move at once as did the children of Israel when they were leaving Egypt on their return journey to Canaan,⁹² virtually those who migrated had the state of their country's economy at the uppermost on their agenda. For instance, the returnees were not deterred in their determination to evangelize their country through legitimizing commerce, though out of the two hundred people who applied to return to Yorubaland in 1839, Governor Doherty of Sierra Leone 'issued passports to only forty-four men and seventeen women'.⁹³

While some of the remnants continued to establish trade and agriculture in the Sierra Leone Crown colony, others searching for better life migrated to other parts of the world. It is worthy of note that:

in 1844, only three years after the traffic of indentured labourers out of Sierra Leone commenced, the proportions on one shipment of 154 labourers show one-fifth being *Creoles*

⁹² Cf. Exodus 13: 3.

⁹³ Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite*, p. 29.

of Sierra Leone, another fifth Yoruba, and a similar amount being Moko.⁹⁴

Many of the *Saro* and *Creoles* who started to migrate back to Yorubaland from 1839 shared the views of Queen Victoria that slavery was not a natural part of commerce.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, their adoption of an evangelical ideology of legitimizing commerce in order to restructure Yoruba commerce allows them to be viewed as 'Headlight' to their motherland that was still in transition from slavery to freedom.

Enlisting the assistance of the European missionaries however turned sour as imperial traders, top of whom was Sir George Goldie, began to arrive at the Niger to strip the CMS of its enterprises. The first move by Goldie in May 1876 was the formation of 'the Central African Trading Company Ltd., of which he and Grove-Ross were the sole directors'.⁹⁶ Although the commercial investment of the CMS had collapsed by 1879,⁹⁷ the Yoruba agents who had spearheaded its restoration from the verge of bankruptcy⁹⁸ were unwilling to endorse, let alone subscribe to Goldie's proposal for a merger. Nevertheless the arrival of the *Saro* brought great social awareness and injected commercial competition into Yorubaland.

Ironically, although the nineteenth-century missionaries entered Yorubaland with deep humanitarian concerns, the presence of a former Christian group that traded in Africa under the guise of mission continues to create confusion in mission studies in

⁹⁴ See Liberated African Register Nos. 75375-84420, vol. 15, 18451848; copy of a *Report from R. G. Butts, Esq. to the Governor of British Guiana, 23 July to 7 August 1844* entitled "Analysis of new immigrants brought by the *Senator* from Sierra Leone to Trinidad, October 1844," in Report from R. Guppy, Esq. addressed to the Governor of Trinidad, October 18, 1844, Acts and Papers Vol. XLIV. Royal Commonwealth Society Library, London.

⁹⁵ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 106.

⁹⁶ John E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 29.

⁹⁷ CMS/CA3/04(a), Samuel Crowther to Hutchinson, 16 October 1879.

⁹⁸ CMS/CA3/04(a), Samuel Crowther to Hutchinson, 18 June 1879.

West Africa. Scholars such as Peter Clarke have done serious studies that distinguish the Portuguese emissaries of Henry the navigator as belonging to a different tradition from nineteenth-century missionaries, but that confusion continues unabated.⁹⁹ It should be reiterated as often as investigations are undertaken of missionary enterprise in West Africa that the Portuguese traders started the transatlantic Slave Trade in the sixteenth century, and modern missionaries brought it to an end in the nineteenth century. Although the Portuguese presented themselves as missionaries, they paid little attention to Christian work¹⁰⁰

Fowell Buxton's criticism of Christianity's complicity in the transatlantic Slave Trade was a reference to the Portuguese who entered West Africa in 1544 and of various misinterpretations of Biblical text across the centuries, until the abolitionists rose up from among the Anglicans, Methodists, Quakers and Presbyterians. For instance, the Protestant mission at its meeting in France in 1637 agreed that the Bible is not against slavery, and thus left it to the prerogative of the nations dealing in slaves. One of many such responses is captured in an American Christian perception of slavery in a Bill of Lading showing the manifest of a vessel, *Sierra Leone*, meant for carrying slaves across the Atlantic. An endorsement on the Bill of Lading read:

Shipped by the Grace of God in good order... by William Johnson & Co., owners of the said schooner, whereof is master under God for this present voyage, David Lindsay, & now riding at Anchor in the harbour of Newport, & by God's grace bound for the coast of Africa¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ See Peter Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd, 1986), p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*, vol. I, p. 119.

¹⁰¹ For more details, see Spears, *The American Slave-Trade: An Account of its Origin, Growth and Suppression*, p. 40.

The statement ended with a prayer, 'And so God send the good Schooner to her desired port in safety. Amen.'¹⁰² The proposition of Buxton and others that Christians had a responsibility to participate in legitimizing commerce therefore is not only essential but also appropriate.

Conclusion

Missionary records have been invaluable to this study, making available fresh insights into the identity of nineteenth-century mission, to show first and foremost that the word 'missionary' is not synonymous for 'European' and secondly that the motive of missionaries was to legitimize commerce as a strategy for evangelizing Yorubaland. The returnees were not perfect agents of change, but their efforts at introducing sanity into the economy of an economically stressed community of the Yoruba call for new interpretations of their persons and motives and methods. While the imperial traders who impoverished Africa may be condemned, missionaries who tried to rebuild the ruined economic state of Africa deserve commendations, rather than condemnation.

Rather than categorizing all European and American missionaries as enemies of Africa, the record should be re-read and history re-written to accurately capture the words and deeds of each missionary that was involved in legitimizing commerce in Africa in general and Yorubaland in particular. The European missionaries did not initiate Legitimate Commerce, nor was it envisioned as an imperial strategy by its precursors, the liberated Yoruba. Rather, the first generation of Yoruba evangelical Christians that returned to their motherland initiated the economic experiment as a 'means' to a dual end of gospel proclamation and commercial restoration.

¹⁰² Ibid.

The return of the liberated Yoruba to their motherland with the message of Commerce and Christianity ought not to have faced any difficulty considering that in Yoruba worldview religion and commerce are complementary, and commercial prosperity was the prerogative of the gods. The initial experience of the *Saro* who carried merchandise into Yorubaland and took products of Yorubaland to Sierra Leone in the slave ships they had purchased convinced the traders that there was great advantage in returning home. Tucker observed:

in the year 1839 we find a few of them actually embarking their small capital in the establishment of a trade with those very shores from which they had been sold as slaves. They purchased from the Government a small captured slave vessel; freighted her with European and Sierra Leone productions.¹⁰³

Two ships were used effectively for trade between Sierra Leone and Yorubaland.

These spirited adventurers succeeded admirably; they were well received at Badagry, easily disposed of their goods, and returned with palm-oil and other native produce. Others were encouraged to follow their example; two more condemned slave-ships were purchased, manned, and freighted like the first; and it was not long before a small but brisk trade commenced between Sierra Leone and Badagry.¹⁰⁴

Thus, the formation and development of Legitimate Commerce among the Yoruba weakens any suggestion that the motive of modern mission was to advance European trade and politics in Yorubaland.

Legitimate Commerce however did confront some significant problems. The difficult processes and phases of introducing the economic experiment in Yorubaland portray the missionary enterprise in diverse ways to different people, because of the sacrifice and dedication on the part of the returnees. Although they had an agenda of

¹⁰³ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, pp. 44 – 45.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 45.

legitimizing commerce they did not think that they were returning to an economically unproductive country. Indeed their action shows that they knew that Yorubaland was an agrarian community with rich soils for production of merchantable produce.

Thomas King's reference to the corn he had gone to harvest in his father's farm on the morning of his capture by the slave dealers¹⁰⁵ shows that he did not forget the agricultural potential of Yorubaland. Yorubaland was however destabilized by the inter-tribal war, Moslem invasion and especially the slave dealers. It was during that period that modern mission entered the Yoruba country with a message of holistic salvation, offering the people 'Eternal Hope' and 'Abundant Life', through the propagation of the message of Christianity and Commerce.¹⁰⁶

Although Legitimate Commerce successfully counteracted the trade in slaves from the 1850s, that mediating role in commerce could not be sustained, especially since missionaries began to lose their powers to the imperial traders who invaded Africa from the 1870s. What further led to the decline of the influence of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland was the way the *Saro* and *Creoles*, African missionaries who arose from among the rank and file of the liberated slaves to promote Commerce and Christianity were easily replaced with the imperial traders from 1875. Although the returnees were the initiators of the idea of legitimizing Commerce in Yorubaland, their role faded out gradually and they finally lost their relevance by the 1890s.

¹⁰⁵ CMS/CA2/061/1 Thomas King to H. Venn, Letter, Abeokuta, 27 October 1851.

¹⁰⁶ For more on 'Christianity and Commerce' as an eighteenth century slogan of the British evangelicals across the Christian denominations, see Brian Stanley, 'Commerce and Christianity': Providence Theory, the Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842-1860', *The Historical Journal*, 26, 1, (1983).

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE IDEOLOGY OF LEGITIMATE COMMERCE AND ITS DISSEMINATION IN YORUBALAND

Introduction

When we look back on our own personal history, or on that of the church of Christ, how continually do we find that our heavenly Father, in his providential dealings with us, has brought about some important result by indirect, and, perhaps, unlikely means. It has been so in the case of Yoruba; the circumstances that have worked together for her good appeared at the time to have no connection with each other, though now we see they were all linked together by the golden chain of God's sovereign will and determinate counsel.

—Sarah Tucker, 1854¹

Sarah Tucker (ca. 1859),² a female observer of events in Yorubaland in the late 1840s and early 1850s, thus summarizes the theological underpinnings of the nineteenth-century missionary movement in Yorubaland. It illustrates the main concern of this thesis that Legitimate Commerce fulfilled the purpose of fulfilling the Gospel. The liberated Yoruba who became missionaries perceived that it was the workings of Providence that turned them into harbingers of the Good News to their motherland.³

The perceived negative effects of colonialism in Africa tend to overshadow the efforts of missionaries at developing lawful commerce for the Yorubas in the period before the 1870s. Three reasons make it imperative to re-evaluate the missionary motives, methods and identity in nineteenth-century Yorubaland. First, many of the

¹ Sarah Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1854), p. 38.

² Although not much has been written in any work on the biography of Sarah Tucker, but she was known to be a single English lady who wrote other books on CMS missionary activities, such as *The Rainbow in the North and South Indian Sketches*, published in London by James Nisbet and Co in 1851. There are indications in *Sunrise within the Tropics* to show that she was an observer of many of the missionary activities in the early 1840s and the 1850s, especially at Abeokuta.

³ CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal S. Crowther Jr. at Abeokuta, June to 25 September 1852.

missionaries to Yorubaland in the nineteenth century were of Yoruba origin. Secondly the Yoruba missionaries requested 'her Royal Majesty to send a missionary' with them to suppress the Slave Trade, supplementing their efforts at rebuilding lawful commerce in their motherland.⁴ Thirdly, the missionaries' commercial activities from the late 1870s differ substantially from those of the 1840s to early 1870s. It was in those three decades that the missionaries, Yoruba and European, carried the message of Commerce and Christianity around.

Tucker's allusion to the concept of Providence examined more fully in Chapter Three connects Yorubaland with the theology of the Victorian evangelical missionaries whose humanitarian actions arising from their Christian duties distinguishes from those trading for profit and colonialists in Yorubaland of the nineteenth century. Tucker's memoir shows further that missionaries were a distinct group motivated by a theological impetus for the deliverance of Yorubaland from the throes of slavery.

Three theological strands examined in this chapter distinguish missionaries from all other visitors to Yorubaland in the nineteenth century. The first strand was that of the eighteenth-century British evangelicals who adopted the doctrine of Providence to propagate the Gospel in other cultures.⁵ The second traces the theology of the nineteenth-century successors of the evangelicals who promoted Commerce and Christianity in the West Indies, India, China, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast.⁶ The

⁴ See details of CO 265/154, Enclosure dated 15 Nov. 1839, in Doherty to Russell, 30 Nov. 1839 in the concluding chapter.

⁵ Brian Stanley, 'Commerce and Christianity': Providence Theory, the Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842-1860', *The Historical Journal*, 26, 1, (1983), p. 72.

⁶ B. Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), pp. 85-90, 98-101. Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002), pp. 95 - 6, 140, 156; Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd, 1986), pp. 32 -3, 41 - 2;

third strand was that of the emerging Yoruba elites and traders, a major missionary group in Sierra Leone who returned to Yorubaland with the evangelical theory of God's working of Providence. Samuel Ajayi Crowther's claim that his liberation was not only from human slavery, but also from 'another worst state of slavery, namely, that of sin and Satan'⁷ was deeply rooted in the doctrine of Providence.

Thus, 'Legitimate Commerce' was not just an economic slogan, but a theological means, through which the Yoruba recaptives and emancipators carried the Gospel to their homeland from 1839. The economic experiment was not the beginning of European commercial connection with the Yoruba as discussed extensively in the last two chapters, nor was it just a continuation of the trading activities between the Yoruba traders and European merchants. Rather, it was a means through which Mr Freeman of the Wesleyan Methodist, and Townsend and Crowther of the CMS promoted Legitimate Commerce as they propagated the Gospel.

This chapter evaluates the three events that give form to Legitimate Commerce as a theological expression. First, it traces the way Victorian evangelicals' ideology influenced the humanitarians who promoted Legitimate Commerce in West Africa. Secondly, it evaluates the issues that prompted European missionaries to accept a call by *Saro* ex-slaves, similar to Paul's vision of 'the man of Macedonia' (Acts 16: 9 -

Jean Kopytoff, *A Preface in Modern Nigeria: the "Sierra Leonians" in Yoruba 1830 - 1890* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), pp. 89 - 103.

⁷ This allusion is common in missionary circles of the nineteenth-century Yorubaland. While David Hinderer made his maiden trip to Iloko chapel, he spoke 'a few words about the slavery of sin and Satan.' CMS/CA2/049/95 D. Hinderer, 'Missionary at Abeokuta, June 12 - Sept 25 1849' Journal, Wednesday 20 June 1849. See also CMS/CA3/04, S. Crowther to H. Venn. See also A. F. Walls, 'A Second Narrative of Samuel Ajayi Crowther's Early Life', in *Bulletin of the Society for African History* 2 (1965), p. 14.

10), to come over to Yorubaland and help them.⁸ Thirdly, it traces the theological underpinnings for introducing commercialization into the Gospel proclamation in Yorubaland, drawing connections between Legitimate Commerce and the eighteenth/nineteenth-centuries evangelicals.

The doctrine of Providence became widespread among the evangelicals within the rank and file of Anglicanism, Methodism, Quakerism and other denominations across Britain in the eighteenth century.⁹ Upon its arrival in Yorubaland it operated as a 'Headlight' pointing towards the future economic liberation for Africa. The returnees in their request that Yorubaland be made a British colony envisioned themselves as radiating the light to their own country, having been illuminated in their lands of refuge by the way of salvation. They had a deep sorrow for their relatives who were still 'living in darkness, without the light of the Gospel'.¹⁰ Thus, the three approaches that developed progressively among the rank and file of the successive evangelicals may be described as 'Providential', 'Benevolence' and 'Headlight' theology.

The three concepts did not develop in a linear form. Rather, they developed progressively and cumulatively as the successive missionaries built on the existing theory of their forbears. Thus, 'Providence' theory, the hallmark of the mid-Victorian Newtonian evangelicals, was the torch of mission lit by the eighteenth-century evangelicals, passed on to their nineteenth-century successors and inherited by the Yoruba liberated men and women who projected the light of Western civilization, commerce and religion to their own native land and people.

⁸ Ibid. See also petition by Thomas Weeks and 23 other *Saro* merchants from Sierra Leone referred to earlier.

⁹ Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*, op. cit., pp. 70 - 77.

¹⁰ CO 265/154, Enclosure of 15 Nov. 1839 to Governor Doherty, in Doherty to Russell, 30 Nov. 1839. Petition to the Queen by twenty-three traders led by Thomas Weeks.

Legitimate Commerce as a Theological Concept

The notion that expanding the British Empire was an implicit consideration in the minds of European missionaries as it was with traders and consuls in Yorubaland of the nineteenth century is indisputable.¹¹ Even those who perceive missionaries as positive agents of change in other societies nevertheless admit that there is a connection between the theories of providence and civilizing mission on the one hand, and the theory of empire building on the other. John Wolffe asserts,

The idea that Britain had received the Empire as a providential gift of God for the diffusion of Christianity and civilization had a long pedigree in nineteenth-century thought, but during the last decades of Victoria's reign it was a view particularly widely held by both politicians and churchmen.¹²

The humanitarian ideology which the evangelicals acquired from the eighteenth-century advocates of using commerce as a strategy for evangelizing other cultures portrays them, especially those from the Anglican tradition as being consumed with the passion for propagating the gospel through commerce. This is the premise by which it is argued here that theology was significant in the thought of missionaries, despite the fact that of course they were also concerned with national issues.

Thus, Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland did not create a problem of divided loyalty for European missionaries. Rather, mission's goal of generating wealth for the expansive kingdom of the Yoruba people was held as a divine duty by a missionary body whose theological thrust of abrogating slavery had become irrevocable:

...we hold our empire as the gift of God... conferred upon us, not through any merit of our own, but because it pleased Him

¹¹ See Prime Minister Disraeli's argument on 'power' in W. F. Monypenny and G. E. Buckle, *Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield* 6 vols (London: n.p., 1910-20), vol. IV, p. 335.

¹² John Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland, 1843-1945* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 222.

to choose us as the instrument for spreading His glory among the nations. It was for this that, during the ages, His Providence moulded our composite race, and endowed it with the characteristics of enterprise, love of commerce, national persistency, capacity for rule and religious earnestness... when the time was come He gave us the priceless boon of 'the everlasting Gospel' Can any destiny be higher than to be a messenger of God's goodwill to the world, and to have the privilege...of lifting the heavy curse from the sons of Ham?¹³

The complexity of combining patriotism with empire-building notwithstanding, missionaries in the Yoruba kingdom of the nineteenth century were stimulated by a theological imperative and the evangelical spirit of being one's brother's keeper. Hence, for the evangelicals, propagating the gospel through Legitimate Commerce was inevitable.

The British abolitionists and missionaries never hid their national identity. Their presentations as they arrived in Abeokuta in 1845 held them out ostensibly as agents of Queen Victoria and the chiefs of the Egba people therefore sent gifts of locally woven cloth to the Queen through them.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the empire that was more paramount in their agenda was heaven,¹⁵ which was why 'the Bible' could not be left behind as they carried 'the plough' to Africa.¹⁶

Some British evangelicals however would not agree with the negative connotation of the word imperialism. They thought that there was a need 'to give a Christian meaning to the misused and tortured word "Imperialism" and to make that meaning

¹³ Reflections on the golden jubilee of 1887, culled from the Anglican Evangelical journal *The Churchman* by Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain*, op. cit., p. 222.

¹⁴ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, pp. 160 – 161. The Earl of Chichester who was the President of the CMS in 1848 was mandated to write the Queen's response to the chiefs and people of Abeokuta.

¹⁵ CMS/CA2/049/95 D. Hinderer, 'Missionary at Abeokuta, June 12 – Sept 25 1849' Journal, Tuesday 19 June 1849. Hinderer spoke extensively to the Sagbua of his loyalty to the 'heavenly kingdom'

¹⁶ Thomas Fowell Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy* (London: Dawson of Pall Mall, 1968 [1839, 1840]), p. 483.

grow and glow throughout all the dominions of the King'.¹⁷ This was not the concern of the missionaries, because Legitimate Commerce is a rejection of superiority and the imposition of the culture of missionaries on other cultures.¹⁸ Whereas the plain meaning of 'imperialism' is political, economic and cultural domination of another sovereign state by a more powerful one, Legitimate Commerce was not an instrument of oppression in Yorubaland, but the evangelicals' empowerment ideology.

The theological expediency of 'Commerce in the House of God' has long historical roots in the Victorian era of evangelicalism. It is pertinent to reason that the Yoruba returnees, the disciples of the British evangelicals were not turning the house of God to 'a den of robbers'. Rather, evidence of how they approached their task shows that they were upholding the saying, 'my house will be called a house of prayer'.¹⁹

Given that the problem of slavery in Yorubaland was real and that the motives of the returnees who claimed to have seen 'the light' were without imperial motives, the foundation of Legitimate Commerce was built on William Carey's suggestion that

We must not be contented however with praying, without exerting ourselves in the use of means for the obtaining of those things we pray for. Were the children of light, but as wise in their generation as the children of this world, they would stretch every nerve to gain so glorious a prize, nor ever imagine that it was to be obtained in any other way.²⁰

The twenty-three merchants who signed the petition referred to earlier on behalf of the other *Saro* returnees held themselves out primarily as Christians and converted people. They showed the deportment of what Carey referred to above as 'children of

¹⁷ J. Ellison and G.H.S. Walpole, eds, *Church and Empire: A Series of Essays on the Responsibilities of Empire* (London, n.p, 1907), pp. v-vi, xiii, 21-41.

¹⁸ J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978a), p. 170.

¹⁹ Cf. Matthew 21: 13 NIV Bible.

²⁰ William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester: Ann Ireland & Others, 1761), p. 81.

light', by confronting the slave dealers and by lighting up the darkness of Yorubaland and progressively that of Africa through Legitimate Commerce.

A critical question is whether the nineteenth-century evangelicals were working at cross-purpose with the role of Christianity? The basic nature of mission is global Gospel proclamation. It is pertinent therefore to examine why the missionaries implanted Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland, particularly with regard to the unity between religion and commerce. It is possible to draw a parallel with the first century experience of the biblical Jewish merchants whom Jesus, the founder of Christian missions²¹ drove out of the Temple ground.²² Was Jesus therefore anti-commerce by driving out moneychangers and turtledove traders from the precincts of the Temple?

Mark 11: 15 can be read to underpin a theory of Legitimate Commerce as a theological proposition. This includes the view that Jesus did not rebuke the traders for applying their commercial skills but for trading inside the courts of a ground set aside for worship. Their trade was legitimate, because pilgrims needed animals that met the ritual requirements for sacrifice and local currency to pay Temple tax..²³ In another Bible text, Matthew 25: 27, the parable of the unprofitable servant who hid his master's money instead of investing it, is a passage that shows a more positive approach to commerce or legitimate profit.

The critical issue in these examples is the motive for trading. These scriptural reflections offer scope for the view that religion and trade can be validly combined. In

²¹ Cf. Matthew 28: 19 (KJV) 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations....'

²² Cf. Matthew 21: 12 - 13 quoted by Jesus from Jeremiah 7: 11.

²³ See notes on Mark 11:15, in *The NIV Study Bible*, Kenneth Baker, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), p. 1517.

the Yoruba setting of Legitimate Commerce, both Yoruba and European missionaries kept the primary objective of seeking converts. They 'went out to preach about in the town',²⁴ 'preached in the market place'²⁵ and in chapel speaking 'a few words about the slavery of sin and Satan.'²⁶ They did not desecrate places set up as altars for worship, or lower standards in ecclesiological matters on the account of Legitimate Commerce. Although Samuel Crowther learnt carpentry at Sierra Leone in 1825 under the tutelage Bishop Thomas Weeks, the Industrial Agent of the mission,²⁷ when the latter became the Bishop of Sierra Leone in 1856 and visited Yorubaland, it was not for commerce but to mediate in matters of ecclesiological concerns.²⁸

As well as encouraging the policy of Legitimate Commerce, missionaries preached 'from market to market, in villages and small towns, under the trees and along the highway'.²⁹ For instance, David Hinderer preached extensively in Abeokuta and Ibadan, giving many illustrations from the 'Word of God.' His 'First trial preaching' in Abeokuta in June 1849 took place 'in open places... I went to Kesi market....'³⁰ 'Preached this morning from Matt. 7: 24ff. The Church crowded so that we could scarcely seat the people.'³¹ Allen, meanwhile, proclaimed the Gospel in the palace of Baale Orowusi of Ibadan in 1870.³²

²⁴ CMS/CA2/018/16, Journal of William Allen, Abeokuta, 8 May, 1865.

²⁵ CMS/CA2/049/95 D. Hinderer, 'Missionary at Abeokuta, June 12 – Sept 25 1849' Journal, 3 July 1849.

²⁶ CMS/CA2/049/95 D. Hinderer, 'Missionary at Abeokuta, June 12 – Sept 25 1849' Journal, Wednesday 20 June 1849.

²⁷ E. Stocks, *A History of the C. M. S.*, vol. 1 (London: n.p, 1899), pp. 450 – 1.

²⁸ CMS/CA2/031, S. Crowther to H. Venn, 3 Jan. 1857.

²⁹ J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 155 – 6.

³⁰ CMS/CA2/049/95 D. Hinderer, Journal, 'Missionary at Abeokuta, June 12 – Sept 25 1849'. See also Journal, Tuesday 19 June 1849.

³¹ CMS/CA2/049/95 D. Hinderer, Journal, Sunday 17 June 1849.

³² CMS/CA2/019, W. S. Allen, Journal 11 Nov. 1870. See also CMS/CA2/058, S. Johnson, Journals, 1870 – 73.

But religion was to be supported by lifestyle. For example, Samuel Wilberforce argues that the whole purpose of integrating commerce into Christianity was to train the converts to become 'a wealth-producing people, an exporting people, and so a commercial people, giving value to life, dignity to labour, and security to possession'.³³ Missionaries knew the implications of offering Eternal Hope to the economically disadvantaged Yorubaland while the slave dealers continued to deny them Abundant Life. They therefore visualized the gospel proclamation as consisting not only of eschatological but also existential matters.³⁴ In this way the returnees, the descendants of the eighteenth-century evangelicals, reflected Calvinism and the doctrine of Providence,³⁵ which they inherited from their mentors in Sierra Leone, Britain and other parts of the Western world.

In one of his speeches in May 1860, Bishop Samuel Wilberforce posed a question: 'What is the connection between the Gospel and Commerce?'³⁶ The evangelical prelate who inherited the pro-'Commerce & Christianity' ideology from his father William, the frontline abolitionist, proposes:

There is a great connection between them... there is little hope of promoting commerce in Africa unless Christianity is planted in it, and... there is very little ground for hoping that Christianity will be able to make its proper way unless we can establish a lawful commerce in the country.³⁷

³³ Samuel Wilberforce, *Speeches on Missions*, Henry Rowley, ed. (London, n.p., 1874), p. 212, speech at Leeds, 25 May 1860.

³⁴ Cf. James 2: 15 - 17 New International Version of the Bible. 'Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.'

³⁵ Stanley, 'Commerce and Christianity', op. cit., p. 72.

³⁶ Wilberforce, *Speeches on Missions*, p. 213.

³⁷ Ibid.

The idea expressed by Wilberforce above, did not belong to him alone, but to the entire Newtonian evangelicals who held the view that commerce was complementary for proclaiming the gospel as a service to humanity in other cultures.³⁸

Thus, carrying the plough along with the Bible into nineteenth-century Yorubaland was to induct the people into 'new methods of earning wealth by honest industry'.³⁹ Although Legitimate Commerce was introduced to counteract the trade in slaves, empowerment of the Yoruba in preparation for the full-scale Gospel propagation of Abundant Life and Eternal Hope in Africa was the ultimate goal of the disciples of the eighteenth-century evangelicals. Henry Venn hoped that missionary toil in Yorubaland would result in the establishment of 'cells of civilisation from which the light would radiate to the regions around.'⁴⁰ In the perception of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century evangelicals 'Commerce and Christianity' were naturally 'harmonious'. Their economic theology budded out of the 'intellectual structure of evangelicalism', Newton's teachings and the 'doctrine of providence'.⁴¹ Thus, Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland was an appropriate measure for the abrogation of the Slave Trade.

The Victorian age was a period when Britain demonstrated great interest in spreading her commercial endowment to other nations where the gospel was preached. Development of the economy of Africa was paramount in the perception of the British parliamentarians as well as missionaries.⁴² Thornton's hope that 'some good may

³⁸ Stanley, 'Commerce and Christianity', p. 72.

³⁹ Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, p. 483.

⁴⁰ Cited in O. U. Kalu, ed., *The History of Christianity in West Africa*, vol. i (Harlow: Longman, 1980), p. 2.

⁴¹ Stanley, 'Commerce and Christianity', p. 72.

⁴² Wolfe, *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland*, p. 222.

come out of' the 'Clapham system', and his eulogy that 'Wilberforce is a candle that should not be hid under a bushel',⁴³ was meant to endorse the 'Headlight' theology of the British abolitionists and missionaries.

The Slave Trade Abolition Act was so crucial to the abolitionists that after getting their vote through, they expressed a sense of accomplishment. Fox's valedictory speech of 10 June 1806 is reminiscent of Wilberforce's oratorical motion of 1792:

If during the almost forty years that I have now had the honour of a seat in Parliament, I had been so fortunate as to accomplish that and that only (slavery abolition), I should think I had done enough and could retire from public life with comfort and the conscious satisfaction that I had done my duty.⁴⁴

Another aspect of Legitimate Commerce was the movement for the abolition of slavery. Most evangelicals led by Granville Sharp saw the emancipation of the slaves as a providential duty that transcended procuring freedom for its sake only. They viewed economic emancipation as the ultimate benefit for the African continent, separated from Europe only by the Atlantic Ocean.

The anxiety expressed by the anti-abolitionists shows that Legitimate Commerce can be described in the words of James Walvin below as a theology of good versus evil. While abolitionists and missionaries were embarking on Legitimate Commerce in Africa, they were clamouring that African misery and hopelessness should be redeemed. Meanwhile it can be shown that even by the close of the nineteenth century when the imperial traders had already taken over African commerce, evangelicals

⁴³ Letter from Henry Thornton to Charles Grant, 1793, cited in Reginald Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1933, 1964), p. 81. Grant was an older member of the Chatham Group, a decade younger than Granville Sharp, who was living next door to Thornton in Clapham.

⁴⁴ Coupland, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

continued to explore means of ensuring that Britain inducted every member of the British Empire into the privileged position of commercial wealth. For example, Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary for the Colonies suggested in 1897 that the work of civilisation was the national mission of Britain. The need for legitimizing commerce is unquantifiable in view of the plea in 1878 by the Earl of Carnarvon, one of Chamberlain's predecessors under Prime Minister Disraeli that

our native fellow-subjects... the humblest may enjoy freedom from oppression and wrong equally with the greatest; where the light of religion and morality can penetrate into the darkest dwelling places.⁴⁵

It can be argued then that the commercial enterprise of modern mission was set up as a 'Headlight', to light the path of the Yoruba with the hope that they would in turn lead Africa out of the illegitimate trade in slaves to legitimate commerce in agricultural ventures.

Legitimate Commerce and the Doctrine of Providence

Thus, taking the message of commerce to Yorubaland was a way of carrying through the ideology of the mid-Victorian evangelicals who initiated the humanitarian culture of Commerce and Christianity. The nineteenth-century successors of the British evangelicals, especially Henry Venn, trained Yoruba men and women who carried the idea of Commerce and Christianity into their own country and people, basing the theology of Legitimate Commerce upon the workings of 'Providence'.

However, providence as a term is fleshed out by particular groups at different times. In general, reliance on a theory of divine providence can be found in Christian traditions more widely. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), a thirteenth century Dominican

⁴⁵ C.C. Eldridge, 'Sinews of Empire: Changing Perspectives', in C.C. Eldridge, ed., *British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (London, Macmillan, 1984), pp. 184-5.

Friar, for example, sees mercy and justice, the attributes of God⁴⁶ with which he regulates human conduct⁴⁷ as divine providence, the most vital means through which all creatures great and small respond to their Creator. No event therefore, whether good or evil takes place outside of God who made his creatures *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) and upon whom they depend for existence, sustenance, power and their entire being.

Protestantism developed its own version of providence, relying on traditions from the sixteenth-century reformer, John Calvin (1509 – 1564). The evangelicals uphold the doctrine of the sixteenth-century Church leader who came to the limelight as a result of the religious and political crises that engulfed the Church during the difficult period of reformation and transition.⁴⁸ Although John Calvin, the French reformer was not an academic theologian his means of Grace and other theories influenced the rank and file of the evangelicals so much so that his theological viewpoints were still highly respected among radical Christian denominations in the nineteenth-century Europe.⁴⁹

One of the areas that Calvin touched upon was the doctrine of Providence which he perceives as an aspect of the creating act in which God is ‘the first cause’ and the very essence in the life of every creature, not as God’s ‘foreknowledge’ but as the totality of existence.⁵⁰ Saint Paul’s citation of the poem of the fourth-century Stoic philosopher Aratus, as he said to the Athenians: ‘As “offspring” of God in him we

⁴⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, Fathers of the English Dominican Province, trans, 2nd ed. (London, n.p., 1920) 1, q. 22.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, q. 21.

⁴⁸ Emmanuel Martey, ‘The Church’s Doctrine of the State: Theological Investigations of Augustine of Hippo, John Calvin and Allan Boesak’, in *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*, 6 (July 1996), No. 2, p. 26.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ John Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion*, Thomas Norton, trans. (London: H. Middleton for W. Norton, 1587) Institutio Christiana (1559), part I, chap. 16.

live and move and have our being'⁵¹ gives a background to the watchword of the moderate Calvinists.⁵² They subscribed to the Calvinistic doctrine of Providence and their faith concerned both exterior and internal aspects of human condition. They embraced the theory that the omnipotence of God places all human experience, spiritual and material, at the mercy of his Transcendence, because 'All prosperity', according to Calvin 'is God's benediction, adversity God's malediction....'⁵³

Nevertheless, although Providence can be shown to be a strong Christian theme, it did not engage all Yoruba missionaries equally. The Southern Baptist missionaries whose agenda is examined extensively in Chapter Five had their emphasis elsewhere than in legitimizing commerce. Whereas CMS missionaries expressed deep joy in the workings of Providence, the Southern Baptists, though within the same Protestant tradition did not participate in the process of empowering the Yoruba for economic emancipation. Thus, the 'Headlight' theology was not universal among all missionary groups. It was the CMS who particularly desired to create providential benefits for the Yoruba community. Looking back in retrospect in 1852 Samuel Crowther Jr. claimed with joy and hope that God's providence that motivated many returnees in their missionary endeavours in Yorubaland would one day reward their labours:

I feel convinced that whatever branch of this great work it may be our lot to occupy, if our motives be good, and if our object be the same, and in accordance with God's word, we may rest satisfied that we are on the right course, and are performing God's service, and so much the more should we be convinced of this truth when we see the blessing of God upon our labour.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Cf. Acts 17: 28 New International Version of the Bible.

⁵² Francis Warre Cornish, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 1 (London: Macmillan 1910), p. 9.

⁵³ Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion, Institutio Christiana* (1559), part I, chap. 16, n. 8.

⁵⁴ CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal S. Crowther Jr. at Abeokuta, June to 25 September 1852.

Abolition, Legitimate Commerce and the Ideology of Benevolence

The Yoruba country of 1839-1893 was a theatre of social, religious, political and above all economic changes for which the abolitionists and the missionaries could not be classified or categorized simply with the imperial traders in Africa. While abolitionists exemplified the evangelical spirit of Providence, missionaries, their successors carried on with the same initiative of taking the ex-slaves back to Africa by replacing the Slave Trade with Legitimate Commerce. Although the abolitionists' resettlement plan for the liberated and emancipated slaves in Britain, Nova Scotia,⁵⁵ modern day Canada and Sierra Leone was the foundation of commerce in Freetown, the initiative of the ex-slaves was the beginning of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. They continued to reactivate the African economy where the abolitionists left it off, while also engaging in active evangelization.

James Walvin's argument that 'For more than a century, the story of abolition was typically portrayed as the triumph of good over evil'⁵⁶ can be applied not only to abolition, but also to Legitimate Commerce. The same ideology that governed the movement of the abolitionists into Sierra Leone continued to be the guiding principle of missionaries in Yorubaland. Suzanne Schwarz, researching into Melvill Horne's missionary activities in West Africa, observes that the first official report of the Sierra

⁵⁵ Lamin Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of the Modern West Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 24 – 31. See also A. F. Walls, 'A Christian Experiment: The Early Sierra Leone Colony', in C. J. Coming, *The Mission of the Church and the Propagation of the Faith, Studies in Church History 6* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 107ff. of 107-129.

⁵⁶ Cf. James Walvin, *Britain's Slave Empire* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing Ltd, 2000), pp. 67 – 72.

Leone Company published in 1791 appeared to be a major influence on the missionary's compassion for African liberation.⁵⁷ The report, according to Schwarz

explained that the Company, through its settlement at Freetown, intended to undermine the 'savage and disgraceful traffic' in slaves by substituting an 'honourable' or legitimate trade in which European goods were exchanged for African produce. It was envisaged that 'spirited cultivation' exhibited by the colony would encourage Africans to cultivate their land, the produce of which could form a viable alternative to the slave trade.⁵⁸

Schwarz observes further that Horne whose interest had been in the 'humanitarian and benevolent aims' of Henry Thornton's Sierra Leone Company 'considered the possibility of going 'farther into the country among the natives' to experiment with what living with Africans entailed.⁵⁹ In these ways the evidence suggests, humanitarianism combined with commercial interests.

The beginning of the abolitionists' economic endeavour in West Africa can be dated as 1787 when Granville Sharp's initiative resulted in the first movement of the freed slaves, usually referred to as 'the Black Poor'⁶⁰ from England to Granville Town in Sierra Leone.⁶¹ Henry Thornton, a London banker and prominent member of the 'Clapham Sect'⁶² carried Granville Sharp's vision forward by resuscitating the

⁵⁷ Suzanne Schwarz, "'Apostolick Warfare': the Reverend Melvill Horne and the Development of Missions in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries", in *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 85, 1 (Spring 2003), p. 72.

⁵⁸ Ibid, citing from *Substance of the Report of the Court of Directors the Sierra Leone Company to the General Court held at London on Wednesday the 19th of October, 1791* (London: James Phillips, 1791), pp. 44, 49 – 50, 54.

⁵⁹ Suzanne Schwarz, 'The Legacy of Melvill Horne', in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 31, 2 (April 2007), p. 88, citing from Melvill Horne, *Letters from the Rev. Melvill Horne, Late Curate of Madeley, Salop; Now Missionary at Sierra Leone, Africa, to His Friends at Madeley, Previous to His Departure from England* (Madeley: J. Edmunds, 1792), p. 28.

⁶⁰ Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, p. 32.

⁶¹ J. Peterson, *Province of Freedom* (London: Faber, 1969).

⁶² This term does not appear to have given a true description of this group, because, rather than a 'sect', they were members of the evangelical wing of the Church of England, most of who never lived in Clapham, an area in South London only famous as the spiritual centre of this anti-slavery movement (E. M. Howse, *Saints in Politics: The 'Clapham Sect' and the Growth of Freedom* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1971[1953]), pp. 17ff.

annihilated Granville Town, renaming it Freetown.⁶³ Missionary humanitarian gestures such as Horne's may have prompted disciples of abolitionists such as Buxton to propose the 1841 Niger Expedition.⁶⁴ It was Buxton's expedition that inducted Samuel Ajayi Crowther, Thomas King and many other Yoruba agents of mission into commercial farming. They in return adopted Legitimate Commerce for Yorubaland and began to persuade their people that it was meant 'for the benefit and happiness of the African race'.⁶⁵ Thus, missionaries and merchants from Sierra Leone continued the unfinished business of the abolitionist in Yorubaland. The underlined principle of these endeavours is that of benevolence or, good intention towards the economic and human benefits of the inhabitants of Yorubaland.

Benevolence had become a part of the agenda as missionary moved, first to Sierra Leone and Gold Coast and then to Yorubaland. This is evidenced by the fact that the ex-slaves enjoyed the same privilege of learning the skills and commerce of Europe as did Samuel Crowther in the home of the Weeks when the liberated Yoruba joined the Sierra Leone settlement. Missionary means of legitimizing commerce in Yorubaland however differed substantially from those of Sierra Leone or the Niger. Missionaries' method of implementing Legitimate Commerce as they moved into Yorubaland was without any governmental interference, because, rather than getting involved in production as in Thornton's Freetown or Buxton's Niger they stimulated the Yoruba to take direct control of agricultural production. In doing this, the lessons of these two earlier centres of Legitimate Commerce became useful to the missionaries in Yorubaland. Yoruba farmers and traders also avoided the capital outlay of Sierra Leone. While capital and machinery were major factors of production in Sierra Leone

⁶³ Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, pp. 32 – 34.

⁶⁴ Buxton, *The Slave Trade and its Remedy*, p. 240.

⁶⁵ CO 2/23, Russell to the Commissioners, 30 January 1841.

and the Niger, Henry Venn's 'self-propagating' scheme of 1842-1871 made it mandatory for farmers and traders to plant their own cotton, acquire their own gins for processing the cotton,⁶⁶ and sell their cotton directly to merchants⁶⁷ and so advanced commercially.

Meanwhile, at Sierra Leone, the liberated slaves who were culturally attuned to European civilization and had robust religion were employed to fill the vacuum brought about by the mortality of European missionaries.⁶⁸ Thus, those who took the message of 'Commerce in the house of God' to Yorubaland were more proactive Calvinists than their mentors in Sierra Leone, because legitimizing commerce was meant to reverse the slave dealers depraved attitude towards profit. The Yoruba missionaries thus surpassed the evangelicals of the eighteenth-century Britain also as they empowered the people economically and beamed 'the light of the Gospel' into Yorubaland through Legitimate Commerce.

The Yoruba elites returned to their roots thus combined commercial and religious skills, having been converted and enjoyed the benefits of Western forms of education, Christianity and commerce in Sierra Leone. Although the new religious doctrine of the returnees was at variance with that of their brothers and sisters at home in Yorubaland⁶⁹ their main goal was in a mission of civilizing their motherland.⁷⁰ Many among these people who had embraced the new orientation of the evangelicals and

⁶⁶ See CMS/G3/A2/p. 5, Minutes of Meeting of Church Executive Council, 2 December 1918. Venn's 'three-selves' did not materialize as such until much later after his death.

⁶⁷ CMS/CA3/04/497 J. Edgar to S. Crowther, Letter, 1875.

⁶⁸ Christopher Fyfe, 'Freed Slave Colonies in West Africa', John E. Flint, ed., *The Cambridge history of Africa*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 183.

⁶⁹ E. A. Ayandele, *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1974), p. 9.

⁷⁰ See CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal S. Crowther Jr. at Abeokuta, June to 25 September 1852.

had become converted into Anglicanism and Methodism⁷¹ began legitimate trade in agricultural produce as soon as they arrived in Sierra Leone.

The Yoruba elites⁷² some of whom had been trained by missionaries in Sierra Leone and England returned to their roots not only as trainers too, they landed at Badagry with some European merchandise in 1839.⁷³ They saw themselves as torchbearers motivated by the evangelical vision and a sense of Providence. They moved into Yorubaland with the theme of Commerce (Abundant Life) and Christianity (Eternal Hope) to their own people who were still in darkness socially and economically.⁷⁴

The theological inclination of the European missionaries who mentored the Yoruba returnees in Sierra Leone differentiated them from the traders and the consuls. Their worldview conforms to Wilberforce's perception that it was providential to promote commerce in weaker economies as a way of showing gratitude to God who endowed Britain with commerce and military prowess, with the intention

to make it the interest of this, the most active, the most ingenious, and the freest people on the face of the earth, to be up and doing, and to be in earnest in the far more important work of spreading His Gospel throughout the world. Was it written in vain by the prophet, 'and the ship of Tarshish first'? Was it not meant that God has given us our commerce and our naval supremacy, that industry, that patience which had enabled us to subdue the earth wherever we had settled... that we might as the crowning work of all these blessings, be the instrument of spreading the truths of the Gospel from one end of the earth to the other'.⁷⁵

⁷¹ A. F. Walls, 'The Nova Scotian Settlers and Their Religion', in *Sierra Leone Bulletin of Religion*, June 1959.

⁷² J. F. Ade Ajayi, , *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite* (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1965)

⁷³ See CMS/CA2/031, S. Crowther Journal for the period ending June 1841 containing Crowther's comments on the returnees. See also Fyfe, 'Freed Slave Colonies in West Africa', p. 188.

⁷⁴ CO/265/154, Governor Doherty to John Russell, 30 Nov. 1839.

⁷⁵ Wilberforce, *Speeches on Mission*, p. 212, speech at Leeds, 25 May 1860.

Despite these high ideals, the returnees did not have an easy task evangelizing the Yoruba and legitimizing commerce to abrogate the Slave Trade.

Although Seymour Drescher argues that the British populace was actively involved in the abolition process and John Wolffe suggests that politicians were also part of the move⁷⁶ neither parliamentarians nor everyone in the Church agreed to the concept of spreading a commercial message to other nations of the world. Thus, the missionaries who promoted commerce and Christianity in Yorubaland were few in number and unpopular, just like the 'Clapham sect' from which they emanated.

One of the greatest achievements of the European missionaries in Sierra Leone was that they successfully indoctrinated the Yoruba with the same theology that was passed down the evangelical line right from the mid-Victorian period. As pre-millennialists who viewed the current age as a prelude to Christ's kingdom, the Yoruba returnees exemplified the character of the eighteenth-century evangelicals by following the teachings of Isaac Newton and John Wesley and expecting their reward from the 'Director of providence'.⁷⁷ Hence, Legitimate Commerce draws together both the spiritual and material aspects of Christian's 'Kingdom', in which Christianity can be created within everyday framework.

The European missionaries' motives appeared to be transparently humanitarian and their economic emancipation plan was not the same as that of the traders who were pursuing profit and business expansion. While the missionaries were derided by the

⁷⁶ Drescher, 'Whose Abolition? Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave Trade', in *Past and Present*, No 143 (May, 1994); Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland*, p. 222.

⁷⁷ CMS/CA2/061/48 Journal of Thomas King, 8 Jan 1853.

slave dealers, they enjoyed the patronage of the Yoruba leaders such as Sagbua, who spotted significant differences between missionaries and traders in the 1860s:

Missionaries are good men who 'teach book' and who dissuade people from slavery and sacrifice... As for merchants, they come to get what they can; they care for nothing but cowries; they trade with a man and his enemy – in fact they are liars and rascals.⁷⁸

No sooner had the missionaries arrived in Yorubaland than they began to receive much encouragement from mission-minded Christians in Britain on the need to evangelize Africa through commerce. For instance, a pro-commerce Methodist lay person, Thomas Thompson, wrote to the secretaries of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1842 urging them to attract the young, able-bodied, working class strata of the British society into God's kingdom task.⁷⁹ Although his suggestion that 'Commerce, Christianity and Civilization' are synonyms exaggerates the concept⁸⁰ Thompson's call for radical social and economic responsiveness in mission was taken seriously. His motive was to remind European missionaries of the goal and implications of the Great Commission. He perceived that commerce was Britain's strongest political point, which could be promoted as a strategy for harmonising the economy of the world and for providing employment for 'hundreds of thousands, than all the Anti Corn leaguers can ever accomplish....'⁸¹

However, while the evangelicals were looking for means of rehabilitating the former slaves and indeed the entire African continent, bureaucrats and merchants such as Robert Jamieson opposed organised commercial relations with West Africa on

⁷⁸ Cited in Richard Francis Burton, *Abeokuta and the Camaroons Mountains: an Exploration* (London: Tinsley brothers, 1863), p. 286.

⁷⁹ *Methodist Missionary Society (MMS) Archives*, Thompson to Wesleyan Missionary Secretaries, Home Letters, 11 February 1842.

⁸⁰ Stanley, 'Commerce and Christianity', p. 71.

⁸¹ *MMS archives*, Thompson to Wesleyan Missionary Secretaries, Home Letters, 11 February 1842.

humanitarian grounds. Despite the opposition from various groups, European missionaries kept a focus on restoring the economy of Africa, basing their argument for carrying Commerce and Christianity to West Africa on the traditional evangelicals' act of benevolence.

The Origins of Legitimate Commerce and 'Headlight' Theology

The zeal with which many of the Yoruba returnees such as Crowther and King converted to Christianity,⁸² participated in the 1841 Niger Expedition and connected Yorubaland with Legitimate Commerce is evidence that Yoruba missionaries were an empowering and theologically-motivated group that was seeking the transformation of society. Thus, while the colonialists may be held suspect of expansionist motives, missionaries may not be seen in that light. They originated from the background of the evangelicals' doctrine of Providence to promote Commerce and Christianity, which prevailed in their Christian communities.

However, the tendency among scholars was to group them with traders and colonialists as an imperial entity, especially anytime their roles overlapped or they cooperated with either or both to achieve a common goal.⁸³ The overlap between the missionaries' ideology and the task of the British administrators is apparent. The British consul, Campbell for instance favoured the missionaries' concept of Legitimate Commerce because it was in conformity with his own assignment. He gave his support to the liberated Yoruba from Sierra Leone and their peers from Cuba

⁸² See Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, pp. 216, 240, 242 'By 1890 not less than 10,000 Yoruba were claimed by the CMS as members of their churches'.

⁸³ CMS/CA2/043 C. Gollmer to C.M.S. Secretaries, 14 Jan. 1851. Thomas Hutton's visit to Yorubaland and donation of '120 heads of cowries' is typical of missionary cooperation with the traders.

and Brazil against their rival, Madam Tinubu, an accomplished Yoruba trader but one who was an agent of the Brazilian slave dealers.⁸⁴

The missionaries also followed their own independent strategy. Ironically however, Tinubu used her wealth and position to raise support for the reinstatement of her cousin, Akitoye the undaunted supporter of Legitimate Commerce to the kingship of Lagos in 1851. Tinubu was absolutely 'independent of mission influences'⁸⁵ even though she enjoyed some benefits from Legitimate Commerce, obtaining a loan of over £5,000 for her palm oil trade from various merchants.⁸⁶

When they were leaving Sierra Leone for Yorubaland in 1839 the *Saro* did not migrate for economic exploitation of their motherland. Looking at the turn of events between 1839 and 1854, Tucker asserts:

But in the year 1839 the faint streaks of a brighter morning appeared; and, since that time, thanks to the unconquerable spirit of a few British and Christian philanthropists; - thanks to the far-sighted benevolence of our rulers in entering into treaties with the more friendly tribes... above all, thanks to Him who not only thus guided the minds of his servants, but ordered the events of his Providence to the same end - the slave-trade has gradually diminished.⁸⁷

Rather, they wanted Christianity to bring material benefits to Yorubaland. The first major step Samuel Crowther took towards the promotion of Legitimate Commerce was to take to a sample of African cotton from Abeokuta to England in 1851. The approval of the sample by some of the great Manchester manufacturers brought a ray of commercial hope to Yorubaland. The expectation was that with an improved

⁸⁴ See FO 2/20 Consul Campbell to Lord Clarendon, Lagos, 6 Nov. 1857, No 2.

⁸⁵ Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891*, p. 164.

⁸⁶ S. O. Biobaku, *Eminent Nigerians of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 33 - 41.

⁸⁷ Tucker, *Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 5.

cultivation, trade was about to begin between Abeokuta and England.⁸⁸ The benevolent nature of the evangelicals was thus manifested in the returnees, who graduated from becoming mere religious converts into proclaimers of the Gospel of Commerce and Christianity among their own people.

A letter from Thomas King, a Yoruba missionary and catechist of the CMS church at Lokoja during the 1841 Niger Expedition to Venn expresses views at the heart of Legitimate Commerce:

We offer our sincere thanks in congratulating us for our safe voyage and journey from Sierra Leone to Abeokuta, and our happy union with our surviving relatives. The leading of Providence are indeed... very wonderful. There was a striking proof of this connected with my capture, the recollection of which always produces in my heart the warmest gratitude to the Wise Disposal and Director of all things.⁸⁹

King's memoir is a clear demonstration of the theology the returnees inherited from their mentors in Sierra Leone who encouraged them to take the Good News back to their country. Their sojourn in their lands of refuge had changed their spiritual orientation and worldview and made them agents of a Legitimate Commerce which brought a renewal of hope that Yorubaland could become a model of the benevolence of God expressed in socio-economic improvement.

These beneficiaries of the humanitarian act of the abolitionists wished to take commerce as a tool for evangelizing their country. In this way they hoped to shine the light of Divine Providence on a country that was regarded at the time as 'a land of darkness'.⁹⁰ The goal of the Yoruba who had imbibed the European skills, commerce

⁸⁸ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission*, p. 159.

⁸⁹ CMS/CA2/061/1 Thomas King to H. Venn, Letter, Abeokuta, 27 Oct. 1851.

⁹⁰ CMS/CA1/0215, 'Journal of H Townsend while on Mission of Research', 5 June 1843.

and Christianity was to 'carry back among their countrymen the arts and improvements of Europe which they had acquired ... and the fortunes which had been amassed by them'.⁹¹ They believed that the training and preparation conferred upon them by divine providence demanded that they return to their native land for the social and economic improvement of their own people.

This response must be situated in the underlying reality of the Slave Trade and its impact on the lives of the ex-slaves. The abduction of Thomas King and that of Samuel Ajayi Crowther by the slave dealers for instance tells the story of the uncompassionate manner the innocent Africans were treated during the Slave Trade. King was wandering about between his father's house, the family farm and a friend's house plucking corn and helping a friend sharpen his cutlass when he was taken out of his ordinary life, 'never to return to his father's house again'.⁹² The same was true of 'a boy of twelve years old, of the name of Adjai, who, with his mother and sisters, was bound in chains and sold into slavery... sold and resold, dragged from place to place', and finally 'shipped on board a Portuguese slaver at Lagos'.⁹³ Such experience sharpened an interest in preventing such sufferings for fellow Yoruba.

The severity of suffering can be deduced from the writings of Tucker had this to say of Crowther family's experience:

But what human tongue shall tell of the cries, the groans, the wailings of suffering and despair that throughout that weary night entered into the ears of the "Lord of Sabaoth" from the

⁹¹ CO 267/160, Governor Doherty to Secretary of State Russell, 3 Oct 1840. Doherty would rather that his colonial influence spread to Yorubaland than merely releasing the people to migrate without any advantage to the colonial expansion.

⁹² CMS/CA2/061/1 Thomas King to H. Venn, Letter, Abeokuta, 27 Oct. 1851.

⁹³ Tucker, *Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 17.

multitude of widows and orphans that were led like sheep
from Oshogun!⁹⁴

But Crowther and his colleagues came to believe that they had been led out of their country by Providence to share the spirituality and skills of European centres of civilisation. In this belief, they returned to Yorubaland with the determination of proclaiming to their people that Christianity was a civilizing religion that 'declares the way of salvation and illuminates understanding.'⁹⁵ Such was their conviction that although the slave dealers opposed them at first, they succeeded in convincing the people through their sermons and the workshops that they organized.

The achievement of the returnees came out of their own efforts rather than that of their 'colonial' compatriots. Ironically, neither Governor Doherty, the British representative in the Sierra Leonean colony nor the European missionaries were disposed to seeing the liberated, rehabilitated and converted Africans leave for their homeland. While Doherty did not want the successful Yoruba 'to carry back among their countrymen the arts and improvements of Europe which they had acquired here, with the fortunes which had been amassed by them',⁹⁶ the European missionaries feared that their converts were moving out of the 'light' into 'a land of darkness' 'where God was not known'.⁹⁷ That they went despite such difficulties can be seen as the work of Providence, allowing Legitimate Commerce to develop in Yorubaland.

Some of the experiences that the ex-slaves had before they were providentially removed into their land of refuge in Sierra Leone became useful upon their return to

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ CO/265/154 Governor Doherty to Russell, Secretary of State, 30 Nov. 1839, containing the petition dated 15 Nov. 1839.

⁹⁶ CO 267/160, Governor Doherty to Russell, Secretary of State 3 Oct. 1840.

⁹⁷ CMS/CA1/0215, 'Journal of H. Townsend while on a Mission of Research', 5 Jan. 1843.

Yorubaland. Also, the ideology of the mid-Victorian evangelicals kept on circulating among the Yoruba disciples of the abolitionists and humanitarians despite the fact that the idea of Commerce and Christianity had begun to wane among the British evangelicals.⁹⁸ Their disciples in Sierra Leone had imbibed that commercial heritage as a 'tool' for evangelizing the Yoruba and were to put it in practice.

The liberated Yoruba were uniquely the pioneer missionaries to their own country. Having gained missionary exposure and status in Sierra Leone and caught the vision of the 'Great Commission', the ex-slaves entered into Yorubaland as missionaries and promoters of Legitimate Commerce. They returned to Yorubaland to implant their newly acquired economic ideology as an accompaniment to their eschatological hope. Samuel Crowther Jr. for example was not only a physician; he was also a missionary and promoter of commerce. In support of this news he entered the unprecedented success of Legitimate Commerce in his journal, and reported that three hundred gins had been demanded in 1862 by farmers in Abeokuta.⁹⁹

Although Lord John Russell, the Secretary of State, acting on the report of Vernon Smith that the returnees were yet to be 'well-instructed in the arts of civilized life'¹⁰⁰ recommended that they relocate to the West Indies for indentured labour rather than returning to their own country to develop trade. Yet the journals and letters of many of the returnees show that Africa was their target and Yorubaland was only a starting point.¹⁰¹ Smith's report was not unfounded, considering that the liberated Africans

⁹⁸ Andrew Porter, "'Commerce and Christianity': The Rise and Fall of a Nineteenth-Century Missionary Slogan", in *The Historical Journal* 28, 3: 1985, pp. 597 - 621.

⁹⁹ CMS/CA2/032/18. See also CMS/CA3/037 J. C. Taylor to H. Venn, Letter 27 September 1862.

¹⁰⁰ CO/265/154, Minute of V. Smith, Colonial Under-Secretary on Doherty to Russell, 30 Nov. 1839.

¹⁰¹ CMS/CA2/061/1 Thomas King to H. Venn, Letter, Abeokuta, 27 Oct. 1851.

from Nova Scotians, the maroons and the slaves that emancipated from Europe did not have the same opportunities that the recaptives had in Sierra Leone.

Although the returnees did not set out to invite their European counterparts to help in the task of rebuilding the economy of Yorubaland they did need the backing of the British government to persuade their home-based relatives. Lagosians for instance disowned them in the 1850s, as Campbell states 'There has existed a deep feeling of jealousy on the part of the Native inhabitants' on the grounds that the *Saros* had 'superior intelligence and a higher social position attained by them over the Natives'.¹⁰² Since Britain was unwilling to annex Yorubaland as a colony, the emigrants invited their European peers and mentors in Sierra Leone and Gold Coast. Even Samuel Crowther, 'the most widely known African Christian of the nineteenth century'¹⁰³ was 'reluctantly led to adopt the opinion that Africa can chiefly be benefited by her own children' with extensive training.¹⁰⁴ The home-based Yoruba did not oppose the idea of Legitimate Commerce, but were suspicious of the new doctrine being introduced by their Diaspora relations and the new European skills, which give them commercial advantage.¹⁰⁵ Hence, the evangelization of the Yoruba exiles could not have worked out without political support from an 'imperialist' framework because religion and politics go hand in hand.

¹⁰² FO 84/1031 Consul Campbell to Clarendon, Lagos, 7 April 1857, No 10.

¹⁰³ Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002), p. 155.

¹⁰⁴ Rev. James Frederick Schön and Mr. Samuel Crowther, *Journals of the Expedition up the Niger in 1841* (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1970 [1842]), pp. 62 - 3.

¹⁰⁵ *Parliamentary Papers*, PP 1862 LXI, W. McCoskry to Lord John Russell, Papers relating to the Occupation of Lagos, 7 June 1861. The pace of 'civilization is much too fast to please the native chiefs' of Lagos, who could not match the 'mercantile or agricultural' skills of the emigrants.

While in Sierra Leone, many of the returnees had become inheritors of a new religion that adopted commerce as a tool for evangelism, experiencing new hope and expressing new faith in God whom they have come to regard as the 'Director of all things'. This shows a major difference between their worldview and that of the homegrown Yoruba. It also validates Horton's theory that the traditional religious system even in its micro view of the divine has a means of responding to the problems of the people. Moving from 'Microcosm' and 'Macrocosm', however, portrays the Yoruba as gaining new orientation as they came into contact with the monotheistic religions.¹⁰⁶ While the process of administering Legitimate Commerce may be faulty, the principle of legitimizing commerce was expedient for dealing with the eschatological hope and the existential problem of the Slave Trade.

The returnees moved on however, in spite of the apprehensions of the colonial administrators, the European missionaries and even the Yoruba leaders that many of the Yoruba converts, educated elites, and agents of modern mission might backslide from their newly acquired commercial and Christian orientations.¹⁰⁷ The *Saro* Yoruba returned to their country with a renewed vigour to influence their own people with their newly acquired knowledge, skills, education, commerce and Christianity.

Despite all difficulties the returnees pressed on. The doctrine of Providence was at the root of their theology and they perceived their suffering as an avenue to Yoruba greatness. Despite Britain's unwillingness to dissipate its energy from the challenges

¹⁰⁶ Robin Horton, 'African Conversion', in *Africa*, 41:1971, p. 103 of pp. 85 – 108.

¹⁰⁷ CO/265/154, Vernon Smith's Notes on Doherty to Russell, 30 Nov. 1839, suggests that the liberated Africans did not appear to be 'well-instructed in the arts of civilized life'. CMS/CA1/0215 'Journal of H. Townsend while on a Mission of Research', 5 Jan 1843, expressed reluctance about emigrating from 'the country where God was known' into 'a land of darkness'. Frederick Schön and Crowther, *Journals of the Expedition up the Niger in 1841*, p. 63, desire that the liberated Africans be adequately trained to take full benefit of the European civilization.

of the industrial revolution in which she was playing the leading role in Europe the Yoruba returnees were unrelenting in their search for other avenues for introducing Legitimate Commerce to Yorubaland in particular and Africa in general. Ironically, the home-based Yoruba derided the returnees as 'deluded hybrids',¹⁰⁸ descendants of social outcasts, who were sold into slavery because they had become a nuisance in the society. This perception of the returnees does not appear to be accurate, considering that many of them such as Samuel Crowther and Thomas King were providentially conscripted into slavery, not as criminals but as innocent souls. It is important to note therefore that the part played by Yoruba missionaries set straight their benevolent interests of setting up Legitimate Commerce to educate their people on the integration of Christianity and Trade as one possible form of realigning religion with society.

They returned to their roots as Joseph re-established relationship with his brothers who sold him into slavery. He saw the divine fulfilment of his suffering in Egypt as a providential process of preparing the way for rescuing his father and his household from famine. 'But God sent me', Joseph said 'ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God.'¹⁰⁹ The Yoruba returnees in like manner came out of their despondent situation with a civilizing message to their relations. The home grown Yoruba felt intimidated by the new image of the *Saros* that they

Do not hesitate openly to express their aversion to men [ex-slaves], who they state were sold from this place only a few years since, and who have now returned so much their superiors, occupying a considerable portion of the best part of the town and enjoying so large a portion of its trade.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Ayandele, *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Genesis 45: 7 - 8.

¹¹⁰ FO 84/1031, op. cit, Consul Campbell to Clarendon, Lagos, 7 April 1857, No 10.

Ayandele, one of the key contributors to the historical analysis of the 'missionary labours'¹¹¹ points out, and rightly too that the worldview of the *Saros* had been transformed radically by their Diaspora conversion experience in their lands of refuge.

To this extent Legitimate Commerce as a Christianity-based theory challenged indigenous religions and society. Ayandele notes that the new spirituality of the *Saro* conflicted with Yoruba people's socio-cultural existence:

when they returned to Nigeria the *Saro*...returned with a different conception of man, his worldview, his religion, his life-style, his value system, the attributes a leader should have and the course of history society should chart (which) made them regard the indigenous milieu as something that should be wiped off completely.¹¹²

A further problem relating to the influx of the liberated men and women into the Yoruba country touches on the hostility of local traders. Whereas homegrown merchants like Madam Tinubu were not as skilled in dealing with the Europeans as 'the emigrants from Sierra Leone, Brazil and Cuba either in mercantile or agricultural pursuits',¹¹³ they nevertheless, as earlier observed opposed the returnees on the ground of their superior commercial skills.

Despite its foreignness, Legitimate Commerce was more humane when compared with the evil of slave dealing which was part of the home grown trade. The question posed to the slave dealers by an assistant of Samuel Crowther Jr. shows that the slave dealers were totally depraved. The illegitimate trade typifies the unimaginable level of immorality that the Slave dealers had attained. A slave dealer in Abeokuta once

¹¹¹ E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914* (London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, 1966).

¹¹² Ayandele, *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society*, p. 9.

¹¹³ *Parliamentary Papers*, McCoskry to J. Russell, op. cit.

demonstrated in a statement the selfishness and utter disregard for human dignity exhibited by the slave dealers:

it is all nonsense to talk about Ivory, Palm Oil & Cotton... [as if they] could walk down of themselves to Lagos to be sold as slaves could... It would require cowries to get them down... our fathers never sold Cotton or Ivory, & why should we?.¹¹⁴

The local slave dealers who longed to see the return of the exiled king Kosoko into the throne of Lagos lamented that the missionaries' extermination of the intrepid captain of the slave dealers from the economic scene of Lagos had greatly disrupted their trade and the expansion of their own illicit wealth.

One of the slave dealers extolled the economic prowess of Kosoko, the deposed king of Lagos and the resolute slave chieftain who had been banished to exile in Badagry:

If we could but get our friend K?s?k? back to the throne at Lagos, we shall be able to accomplish this. Akitoye is nobody, said he, he is all white man, & he has no honour.' K?s?k? is the man of power and honour.'¹¹⁵

The state of decadence of the Slave Trade in Yorubaland portrayed Legitimate Commerce in the perception of the slave dealers as a 'Restrictive' measure rather than an 'Expansionist' vision. They would rather continue to exploit and export human labours than employ the dignity of labour to explore the vast agricultural land. For the missionaries however, Legitimate Commerce was the height of global commercial relationship, the most appropriate measure for arresting the trade in slaves and for proclaiming the gospel of Commerce and Christianity.

In this context, Legitimate Commerce was introduced to the Yoruba as a means of developing their country to become a major centre from where the light of the Gospel

¹¹⁴ See CMS/CA2/032/57 Crowther's assistant questioned the rationale for selling 'fellow humans'.

¹¹⁵ CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal, S. Crowther Jr., June to September 25, 1852.

would be radiated into the rest of the African continent. In 1855, Hector Straith, the CMS secretary wrote to Charles Macaulay, a *Saro* working in a Yoruba mission 'we think here that the time is come for Africa – we mean your part of it and the Yoruba Christians – to... engage more fully in Missionary work.'¹¹⁶

Coincidentally, although commerce was never separated from religion in Yorubaland, nevertheless, slavery cast it in the imagery of darkness. Thomas Will and the twenty-two other petitioners who perceived that the Yoruba was 'living in darkness without the light of the Gospel' however, portrayed Christianity in the metaphor of 'light'.¹¹⁷

The metaphors and their antonyms by which the missionaries depicted their role at that time were light and darkness, life and death, good and evil. James White, an African missionary for instance recalled with amazement, an event where a woman accused of witchcraft at Otta was killed. He perceived that the nineteenth-century Yorubaland was in darkness as he quoted from John 3: 19: 'and men loved darkness, rather than light because their deeds were evil'.¹¹⁸ This shows how the missionaries perceived their presence and their ideologies as 'light' in the midst of war, slavery, illicit trade in liquor and many other vices. Although the Slave Trade abated before the close of missionary influence in Yorubaland darkness persisted. One evil kept replacing the other. J. Edgar defended missionaries as people of impeccable character, never found to be in 'drunken excess ...[nor] lazy loafers'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ CMS/CA1/I Straith to Charles Macaulay, 10 March 1855.

¹¹⁷ CO/265/154 Governor Doherty to Russell, Secretary of State, 30 Nov. 1839, containing the petition dated 15 Nov. 1839.

¹¹⁸ CMS/CA2/087, J. White, Journal, 6 March 1870.

¹¹⁹ CMS/CA3/04 J. Edgar to S. Crowther, 30 April 1875.

As agents of light the missionaries perceived themselves as part of the divine benevolence for Yorubaland. The evangelical theory of Providence re-echoed for instance in the memoirs of Thomas King, a Yoruba missionary, and one of the earliest arrivals from the Crown colony in Sierra Leone. In the 1851 letter to Henry Venn the secretary of the CMS, King showed his 'warmest gratitude to the wise Disposer and Director' of Providence, as he recapitulated how the course of his life was divinely redirected.¹²⁰ In the poetic epistle the son of a blacksmith and ostensibly an 'ògún' (the god of iron) adherent relayed the story of how God moved in a mysterious way to take him out of his father's house and out of his country into slavery in a foreign land.

While sojourning in the land of his captivity, however, he experienced spiritual renewal that resulted in his conversion to Christianity. Thus, his tale of woes and sorrows was turned to a story of joy and accomplishment. The memory of his day of agony ushered in 'a happy day' experience. King not only recapitulated the ordeal of the day of his agony as 'a happy day', he was also certain of the blissful experience that awaited him in eternity.¹²¹ The providential 'happy day' experience was not limited to Thomas King; so was it also for Samuel Crowther who would not surrender to the condition of his arrest and shipment as a slave meant for the plantations in the New World. He rose to become the first African Anglican Bishop.¹²² Crowther's son also, Samuel Crowther Jr. and several other *Saro* and *Creoles* returned to Yorubaland with a sense of accomplishment.¹²³

¹²⁰ CMS/CA2/061/1 Thomas King to H. Venn, Letter, Abeokuta, 27 Oct. 1851.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² CMS/CA2/031 Journal of Samuel Crowther. See Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books and Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd, 2002), p. 158. Crowther was not the first African to be ordained by the Anglican Church. Walls cites Crowther's discovery of an epithet on the memorial tablet of Philip Quaque who was appointed chaplain to the British trading settlement in Cape Coast (modern Ghana) as far back as 1765 [Cf. Jesse Page, *The Black Bishop* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), p. 53.]

¹²³ CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal of S Crowther Jr. at Abeokuta from June to September 25th 1852.

These proclaimers of the Good News of Christianity and Commerce not only became converts to Christianity, but were also inducted with skills in Legitimate Commerce. However, their conversion experience was incomplete until they carried the Good News to their own country and people. 'The vision of home had a great power of attraction for the liberated Africans in Sierra Leone'.¹²⁴ Thus, Legitimate Commerce was a proof of the victory they had obtained in their land of freedom as it completed their conversion experience and new identity.

Thomas King's new name suggests a claim to Providence that changed him from slavery to freedom, from rejected personhood to 'royal priesthood' and 'a peculiar' person. The liberated Africans had passed through untold hardships before returning through Providence to the same place from where they had been captured. 'Some found their children, others their brothers and sisters'.¹²⁵ A *Saro* companion of Henry Townsend took a woman to him and introduced her: 'I done find my wife!' 'Andrew Wilhelm discovered several members of his own family after twenty years of slavery, John M'Cormack accosted a lady in the market who 'proved to be indeed the beloved one from whom he had been torn'.¹²⁶ Although the returnees suffered in their hours of weakness, when they became strong, it dawned upon their hearts that they should make a difference to those who sold them, because

The love of gain tempted the more powerful chiefs to make war upon their weaker neighbours, *for the express purpose* of procuring slaves... eagerly purchased by Spanish and Portuguese dealers, who, in return, supplied the native chiefs with rum, gunpowder, fire-arms.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite*, p. 25.

¹²⁵ CMS/CA1/M9/ p. 438, Samuel Crowther Journal for the term ending June 1841.

¹²⁶ Tucker, *Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 90.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 9.

Samuel Crowther, Thomas King, William Allen and a host of other Yoruba returnees had a duty to 'declare the praises' of the 'Director of Providence',¹²⁸ who called them 'out of darkness into his wonderful light'.

Christianity and Yoruba Religion

Regardless of the zeal and magnanimity of the returnees, the Yoruba at home had sufficient grounds to be suspicious of their moves, because not only were they agents of missionary bodies in Yorubaland, their success in trade was very great. Native missionaries challenged the activities of the slave dealers in Yorubaland fiercely. The Diaspora Yoruba also trivialized the fact that Yorubaland was no longer the same one that they left when they were captured barely twenty years earlier.

The theology of the returnees had changed fundamentally, because they too had imbibed the ideology of the evangelicals and could no longer tolerate any religion that did not forcefully condemn slavery. Though promoting religion and commerce, missionaries neglected to embed cultural factors in traditional Yoruba thought. Rather than adapting the fundamental aspects of the Yoruba traditional religions that made 'Religion and Commerce' complementary as it was in the mindset of British evangelicals, European missionaries rejected every aspect of tradition.¹²⁹

Although the benevolent imperatives of mission were primarily to set the converts free from the bondage of ignorance and wickedness, European missionaries failed to learn how commerce developed within the traditional religions of the Yoruba. For

¹²⁸ Thomas King's appellation for God in his letter to Henry Venn. See CMS/CA2/061/1 Thomas King to H. Venn, Letter, Abeokuta, 27 Oct. 1851.

¹²⁹ CMS/CA2/085 H. Townsend to H. Venn, 5 Nov. 1859. Townsend argues that 'The white man must be in advance in ability, in religion'.

instance, 'Òrìsà oko' (the god of the farm) was in charge of agricultural success. Similarly, there was a fundamental correlation and an irreconcilable difference in the providential doctrine of the Calvinists for whom God was in the centre of human activities, and Providence in the worldview of the Yoruba, which was supervised by 'Ori' the god of destiny. The correlation was that 'Ori', in the Yoruba traditional religions stimulates successes and failures, just as the God of Providence has the prerogative over life and death, success and failure, good and evil.

The Yoruba did not take commercial success as a matter of chance. Traditionally, they consulted with 'Ifa' divinity who alone knew what the future held in stock for every individual. Whatever trade *Ifa* prophesied for the future of a child as the one approved by his/her destiny ('Ori') was the trade the child would enter into upon attaining adulthood. Thus, for the Yoruba there was no commercial prowess or ingenuity, which the god of the trade did not approve, and there was no commercial failure that was not ritually sanctioned.

When the farm harvest or the gain from a trade is large the gods take the credit for the prosperity, and whenever there was adverse commercial result because the trader did not consult with the gods, then the gods are not to blame. Religion was, and still is the basic point of reference where the gods were commended in times of commercial prosperity and appeased (never blamed) in case of commercial losses, because the Yoruba think religion, breathe religion, talk and walk religion.

The difference between the evangelical doctrine of Providence and Yoruba religio-commerce ideology was the total condemnation of slavery by the former and the

partial acceptance of it by the latter. Apart from the social outcasts and prisoners of war who were sold traditionally into slavery, the god of destiny had the prerogative of determining who would be captured and sent into slavery and who would not. There was virtually no trade that was outside the foci of the gods. Even the Slave Trade which modern mission sought to repudiate was under the supervision of *Ori*, the god of destiny who determined the fate of those who would be taken into slavery.

Furthermore, the difference between the two traditions of Providence is that the Calvinists see God as unfolding his plans in human lives, not as predestination, but as Providence, while the Yoruba perceived that fate or destiny could only be ameliorated but not changed or transformed. In the Yoruba traditional worldview fate or destiny has no cure. Thus, the returnee who had imbibed the providential and benevolent spirituality of the British evangelicals had moved out of a tradition of 'microcosm' into that of 'macrocosm', which necessarily altered their thought patterns and transformed their spirituality.¹³⁰ The converted and informed returnees had the onerous task of convincing their own people that fate or destiny did not mean that a nation should be impoverished or that anyone should be enslaved.

The missionaries' link with the consuls to implant trading in agricultural and natural resources in Yorubaland created a gulf of trust between them and the home-based Yoruba. For the latter, domestic slavery, which is explored further in the next chapter, was also a legitimate and functional part of the society. Introducing Legitimate Commerce into Yorubaland was imperative both to the missionaries and the British

¹³⁰ This thesis does not affirm or reject Horton's theory that the Yoruba notion of the divine was at the 'micro' level, and progressed into the 'macro' stage as the people become acquainted with the monotheistic religions of the nineteenth century. See Robin Horton, 'On the Rationality of Conversion', in *Journal of the International African Institute*, 45, No 3 (1975), p. 1.

administrators. While the missionaries had the task of stemming the tide of slavery through agriculture, British administrators had to cope with the inter-tribal wars.

Nevertheless, the returnees had a sense of mission, though they faced rejection by their own folks who saw an imminent ending to their gains in human exploitation. There are lots of similarities between the British and Yoruba evangelicals. The two faced all kind of persecutions and marginalization. The returnees were as influential as their mentors, the 'saints' had been in the British Parliament. Thus, the clamour of the Diaspora Yoruba for economic emancipation of Yorubaland was a continuation of the struggles of the British abolitionists in the Parliament.

Conclusion

Three groups of interests, the missionaries, the consuls and the traders were involved in the 'battle' for the economic survival of Yorubaland in the nineteenth century. The consuls were accused of expansionist motives and betrayal of the confidence the Yoruba had reposed in the English administrators. They sent Henry Townsend to Britain with a serious caution and requested for the withdrawal of Governor Glover of the Lagos colony.¹³¹ The traders had profit to maximize,¹³² while the missionaries continued to propagate the Gospel of Commerce and Christianity. The missionaries' alliance with these two groups was discernible, distinct and purposeful.

The missionaries stimulated the merchants into Legitimate Commerce, and made use of the consuls to gain political power, in order to respond to the imperatives of showing the Yoruba 'the way of salvation'. The benevolent theory manifested as

¹³¹ CMS/CA2/017 G. E. O. Johnson to Glover, Letter from Egba Board of Management.

¹³² Burton, *Abeokuta and the Camaroons Mountains: an Exploration*, p. 286.

'Headlight' in Yorubaland, because the returnees who were the promoters of Legitimate Commerce perceived their role as that of 'light' in the darkness. While the British consuls' goal of colonizing the Yoruba soon manifested with the annexation of Lagos in 1862, missionaries' vision of empowering the people as producers of wealth became full-blown under Henry Venn between 1842 and 1871. Venn's proposition became widely acclaimed in ecclesiological circles as a successful means of empowering the people, developing African economy and stimulating a Self-Governing, Self-Financing and Self-Propagating church.

Three positions became apparent on the interactions between the missionaries, the traders and the consuls. First, the general norm of referring to missionaries in Yorubaland as a European agency is not only faulty but also irregular, because, while a good number of the missionaries were Europeans, a lot more were of Yoruba origin. The adoption of an English name by many of the *Saro* and *Creoles* may also be responsible for this confusion. Secondly, the European missionaries, Methodists and Anglicans who arrived in Yorubaland entered for the propagation of the Gospel of Commerce and Christianity. Although Legitimate Commerce encountered difficulties, they did not waver in their goal of revolutionizing the Yoruba economy. Rev. Thomas Dove, the Superintendent of the Methodist Mission in Sierra Leone made a case on the Yoruba emigration from the colony. He relied heavily on the letters from James Fergusson and an unknown source to conclude that the motives of the Yoruba emigrants were gospel proclamation, pedagogy and civilization.¹³³

¹³³ *Methodist Missionary Notices*, Series No 1, pp. 801 – 2, Dove to the Home Committee, 1 June 1841.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the Yoruba missionaries were moved by the providential and benevolent imperatives that drove their predecessors to Sierra Leone. Although Legitimate Commerce infringed upon the Yoruba worldview of commerce and religion, nevertheless, the missionaries' ideology and philosophy were consistent with those of the eighteenth-century evangelicals in Britain and the Yoruba worldview of religion and commerce.

Despite the problems of the imperialism of free trade, the Yoruba returnees lauded the ingenuity of the originators of Legitimate Commerce. Rev. Samuel Crowther and Rev. John Christopher Taylor eulogize Sir T. Fowell Buxton, Sir Edward N. Buxton, Rear-Admiral H. D. Trotter, and many other European missionaries in an elegy written on their effervescent example of love for their fellow humans.¹³⁴ Regardless of the perceived effects of colonialism on Legitimate Commerce from the 1870s, it was a 'Headlight' that the returnees and their European friends used to reverse the trade in slaves. Their goal was to turn the country into a rallying point for African evangelization and to transform the people from the 'darkness' of slavery into the 'light of the gospel'.

¹³⁴ Rev. Samuel Crowther and Rev. John Christopher Taylor, *Journal and Notices of the Native Missionaries accompanying the Niger Expedition of 1857 – 1859* (London: Unwin Brothers Limited, 1859), pp. ix – x.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEGITIMATE COMMERCE IN YORUBALAND AS A PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS

Education and civilisation had changed numbers of the enslaved and degraded negroes into men of enterprise and intelligence; the preaching of the Gospel had turned them from idols to serve the living God, and, by His grace, the missionaries could thankfully rejoice over many of these as fellow-heirs with themselves of the kingdom of their Lord.¹

The above reflection of a nineteenth-century missionary observer in Yorubaland, though derogatory by modern standards, shows the role of education in inducting Africans into European Christianity, Civilization and Commerce.

Although some European missionaries did not treat the returnees as equals with themselves, the *Saro* were desirous of enlisting their relatives as 'fellow-heirs' of God's Kingdom. They were conscious of how Western education had transformed them from the 'slavery of sin' to freedom in Christ and how it had liberated them from the misery of the human system of slavery.² Thus, even in the face of the rivalry among missionaries and the problems of cultural hegemony within missionary circles,³ the returnees continued to educate their home grown relatives, transferring to them the European skills that they had acquired in their land of refuge.

¹ Sarah Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1854), p. 44.

² This allusion is common in missionary circles of the nineteenth-century Yorubaland. David Hinderer made his maiden trip to Iloko chapel, he spoke 'a few words about the slavery of sin and Satan.' CMS/CA2/049/95 D. Hinderer, 'Missionary at Abeokuta, June 12 – Sept 25 1849' Journal, Wednesday 20 June 1849. See also CMS/CA3/04, S. Crowther to H. Venn. See also A. F. Walls, 'A Second Narrative of Samuel Ajayi Crowther's Early Life', in *Bulletin of the Society for African History* 2 (1965), p. 14.

³ David D. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 43. See also David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 5. Bosch's argument is commonly referred to in current debates on mission. He draws parallels between many models of mission, arguing that cultural supremacy was averse to the foundations of Christian mission.

This chapter emphasises three significant factors in the instructional processes for restoring Legitimate Commerce to Yorubaland before showing some of the positive outcomes of pedagogy to legitimizing commerce in Yorubaland. First, it examines how returnees were inducted into Legitimate Commerce in Sierra Leone. Secondly, it examines the part played by the various missionary bodies in the process of restoring lawful commerce to Yoruba trade that had been distorted by the transatlantic Slave Trade. Thirdly, it examines some of the theoretical processes adopted by missionaries for introducing Legitimate Commerce to the traders and farmers in Yorubaland.

The Origin of Economic Pedagogy among the Liberated Africans

The most enduring legacies bequeathed to the ex-slaves in Sierra Leone were eschatological hope, education and enterprise which transformed them from slavery to economic freedom. Many of the *Saro* returnees, especially those who had become missionaries in Sierra Leone such as Crowther had the privilege of undertaking formal education, both in the colony and in Britain.⁴ The European missionaries in Sierra Leone who were the mentors of the liberated Africans realised thereafter that it was one thing to deliver their converts from slavery, but it was another to liberate them from the economic despondency. Legitimate Commerce was therefore introduced to them theoretically through education and practically as many of them such as Thomas Will became property owners. From the time of the arrival of the first 351 Africans of various origins in the Granville Sharp initiated 'back to Africa' scheme,⁵ the understanding was that model agricultural settlements would be set up

⁴ Jeanne Decovert and Emmanuel Oladipo, *Samuel Ajayi Crowther: The Miracle of Grace* (Lagos: CSS Bookshops, 2006), pp. 16, 19 – 22.

⁵ Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd, 1986), p. 32. See also J. Peterson, *Province of Freedom* (London: Faber, 1969); C. Fyfe, *A Short History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 17.

for the emancipated slaves. Practical teaching methods were therefore strengthened through the setting up of the Sierra Leone Company in 1789.

Missionaries' motives were rooted not only in their theological views, but also in the cognitive process through which they disseminated Legitimate Commerce to the farmers and traders in Yorubaland and implanted the ideas in them. Education was a major means through which European missionaries introduced the Yoruba in Sierra Leone to Legitimate Commerce. Virtually all the initiators of Legitimate Commerce in West Africa felt that education and training were imperative for success. Fowell Buxton, in his treatise *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy* advocated that the regeneration of Africa requires calling 'forth the capabilities of her [African] soil.'⁶ Henry Venn declared in 1857 that the economy of Africa had to be restructured in favour of legitimate trade. He hoped that through education a new generation of enlightened, educated, African middle-class elites who had acquired European skills would begin to surface in the church as well as in the commercial, industrial and political spheres of the emerging African nations. He anticipated that the beneficiaries would 'form an intelligent and influential class of society and become the founders of a Kingdom which shall render incalculable benefits to Africa and hold a position among the states of Europe.'⁷

Thomas Jefferson Bowen, the pioneer missionary of the Southern Baptist Convention of America in Yorubaland argues also that impartation of knowledge was essential for human development. He observed that

⁶ Thomas Fowell Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy* (London: Dawson of Pall Mall, 1968), p. 282.

⁷ Cited in James Bertin Webster, 'The Bible and the Plough', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 2, no. 4 (1963), p. 420.

The wise instructor of Africa is content to begin with the elements of knowledge, both religious and secular, and he continues his course by attempting a diffusion of such principles of Christianity, science, art and social improvement as the people can appreciate and reduce to practice.⁸

Although the Southern Baptist mission did not show so much interest in legitimizing commerce in Yorubaland, there was consensus among all missionaries that education was needed to awaken the spirit of the people.

The Yoruba was not just chosen as a matter of chance as a target for setting up a legitimate commercial plan, which missionaries considered to be consistent with the Christian ideals and suitable for restoring the dignity of trade in Africa. Apart from the liberated Yoruba who had been instructed in European skill, commerce and civilization in Sierra Leone and other parts of the world, the Yoruba was generally adjudged to be quick in learning the skill of Western commercial orientation and civilization. For instance, Bowen observes that 'the most rapid' educational process in Africa was found 'among the natives of Yoruba'⁹ who were 'industrious, honest, and affectionate'.¹⁰ This was why many of the recaptives quickly gained proficiency in English language at Sierra Leone and began to experience a revival that motivated them to carry the message of economic emancipation to their own people.

Part of the overall plan included a very remarkable strategy in the CMS effort in Sierra Leone, which was to develop the recaptives such as Crowther who 'became first a student, and then a teacher in the Fourah Bay Institution for the education of

⁸ Thomas Jefferson Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in several Countries in the Interior of Africa from 1849 – 1856* (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1968), p. 328.

⁹ Tucker, *Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 44.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 13.

young men as teachers and catechists'¹¹, through the opening of a training institution in 1814. The series of crises the institution went through before it was finally re-established in 1827,¹² the goal of the founders of the school was to educate the emancipated slaves, and this implies empowerment.

The school not only grew in influence into what was known as Fourah Bay College by 1876, it soon gained an affiliation with the University of Durham, a British University from where degrees were awarded to qualifying students¹³ including many of the *Creoles* and the Yoruba at home. The CMS effort at educating the ex-slaves and their children also resulted in the establishment of a grammar school in Freetown in 1845, the very year Henry Townsend and Samuel Crowther established a Yoruba mission station at Abeokuta.¹⁴ A secondary school for girls was subsequently founded in Freetown in 1849.¹⁵ Thus, Western missionaries had developed the ex-slaves into people of exceptional enterprise by developing their theological knowledge and understanding long before they began to establish mission stations in Yorubaland.

Historically, the returnees had not only been converted they had also been opened up to the skills and knowledge of British education, industrial skills, and Legitimate Commerce. Several pedagogical trajectories contributed to the induction of the ex-slaves, especially those who sojourned in the plantations in the New World in the art of legitimizing commerce. First many of the maroons and Nova Scotians had learnt the Western system of farming and trading in agricultural goods before joining the

¹¹ Ibid, p. 19.

¹² Christopher Fyfe, 'Freed Slave Colony in West Africa', in John E. Flint, ed., *The Cambridge History of West Africa*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 187.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ CMS/CA2/031 Samuel Crowther, Journal, 25 Sept 1846. See also Biobaku, *The Egba and Their Neighbours 1842-1872*, pp. 31 – 33.

¹⁵ Fyfe, 'Freed Slave Colony in West Africa', p. 187.

Sierra Leone agricultural settlement. Secondly, many of the liberated Africans in the Crown colony excelled quickly in the European educational system. Many of them even became sufficiently trained to fill the vacuum in Governor Charles MacCarthy's administration that the sickness or death of European missionaries created.¹⁶

Economic Education and the Liberated Africans in Yorubaland

The Yoruba were distinguished traders, farmers, workers of the art, and professional entertainers.¹⁷ The people also had their own peculiar pedagogical process, through which the individual was launched or initiated into a trade. The peculiarities of a trade dictated the mode of learning the trade. However, whatever an individual chose as his/her vocation, the society had its own established means of training the children to gain membership of a trade. It is therefore important to evaluate the traditional processes of learning a trade in Yorubaland before missionaries introduced a new system of training the people in Western forms of farming.

Much has been written on the African educational system before they came into contact with European missionaries in the nineteenth century.¹⁸ The aim of education in the traditional Yoruba society was to 'produce an individual who is honest, respectable, skilled, cooperative and conforms to the social order of the day.'¹⁹ However, although the Yoruba had a pedagogical system by which they passed down the needed skills for a trade or vocation, Legitimate Commerce posed another set of challenges. Yoruba and European missionaries had their own processes of educating the people, especially with the newly invented industrial revolution. Their technology

¹⁶ Fyfe, 'Freed Slave Colony in West Africa', p. 183.

¹⁷ W. R. Bascom, *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria* (New York: 1969), p. 18.

¹⁸ See A. Babs Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974).

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 20.

had not only advanced, it was different from those of the local blacksmiths, ironmongers, fishermen, farmers, petty and slave traders in Yorubaland. Pedagogy therefore did not only introduce new skills, it sharpened the old means of training the child in crafts and trade.

The missionary bodies that subscribed to the theological ideology of carrying the plough along with the Bible²⁰ in Yorubaland offered an economic experiment which engaged with the educational principles and practices of Europe. Although specialization was at a preliminary stage in Yorubaland, the people were already attaining significant success in hand made goods such as cloth-making²¹ and subsistent farming in yams, cassava, and the various other grains to take care of their domestic needs. Their country was also 'abounding with cotton',²² which was 'grown in considerable quantities', because 'the soil was productive, the climate healthy, the people industrious, honest, and affectionate, and in their own simple way they lived in external ease and comfort'.²³

The scale and pace of production in the envisaged missionary plan necessary to counteract the Slave Trade in Yorubaland, made instruction in European agricultural and industrial techniques inevitable. The pre-nineteenth-century training which was adequate for the domestic need of the people before the transatlantic Slave Trade had become inadequate for the accelerated production of cotton, palm-oil, cocoa and cola-

²⁰ Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, p. 483. Here, Buxton adapted the words of Mr Read, a missionary to the frontier of Cape colony, 'but let it be remembered, that in Africa the Bible and the plough go together'.

²¹ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Abuja, Lagos, Pretoria: Panaf Publishing, Inc., 2005), p. 48. See also Basil Davidson, *Africa in Modern History: The Search for a New Society* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1978), pp.32 – 3.

²² Parliamentary Papers, PP LIV, 1852, Papers Relative to the Reduction of Lagos, pp. 133 – 4, Straith to Palmerston, 20 Aug 1851.

²³ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, pp. 13 – 14.

nuts for export. Crowther was further encouraged that the Yoruba had to move out of subsistence to commercial farming when in an interview with Queen Victoria and Prince Albert,²⁴ the Queen explained that 'commerce between nations' meant 'exchanging the fruits of the earth, and of each other's industry'.²⁵

Meantime, the Efiks elsewhere in Old Calabar were clamouring for missionary education, their problem was no longer the Slave Trade, but instructional processes that would enable their children take stock of their palm oil trade.²⁶ Their motive therefore for attracting missionaries into their enclave was not for conversion to Christianity as in the case of the liberated slaves, but to 'ensure their ability of gauging the oil casks, square up their accounts, read and write their letters.'²⁷

While the missionaries were planning a formal system of educating the people in European commerce and civilization, the Yoruba systems of industrial education were designed for informal family, peer and societal levels of individual interaction. Although the Yoruba instructional process was adequate for their micro-economic trade, Legitimate Commerce moved the people to an international level of exchange. Traditionally, the individual began life in the trade of the parents. However, an individual graduated into the trade which *Ifá*, the diviner who knows 'the secret of man's lot'²⁸ adjudges to be the best for his/her success, because among the Yoruba, commerce was regulated by religion. *Ifa* could pronounce the family trade subsequently, but in rare cases ? *rúnmilà* (the *Ifa* god) might dictate another sphere of

²⁴ E. Stock, *History of the CMS*, vol. 2 (London: 1899), pp. 111 – 113.

²⁵ Tucker, p. 160.

²⁶ CMS/CA2/031 Crowther's journals of 1874 containing 'Brief Statements exhibiting the characters, habits and ideas of the Natives of the Bight'.

²⁷ CMS/ G3A3/1884/166, Pratt to Crowther, 9 September 1884.

²⁸ J. Omosade Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites* (London: Longman, 1979), p. 23.

industrial or commercial life for an individual, and that was the trade group s/he would join and learn.

Whatever an individual's trade however, subsistence farming was a supplement that had become part and parcel of the Yoruba economy. As Magnus Bassey observes

Farming, fishing, trading, hunting and weaving were introduced to children quite early. But most of the occupations, however, were run on an apprenticeship basis. This was a system in which children were trained, not by their parents, but by master craftsmen and master craftsmen, relatives or friends in their chosen professions in order to maintain discipline and concentration.²⁹

Traditionally, the general nature of the trade by which the people had identified themselves and sustained their economy before the Slave Trade and missionaries' intervention involved an element of farming. For instance, Thomas King, a *Saro* Yoruba missionary, recalled how firmly he was entrenched into his father's farm as well as his vocation as a blacksmith before he was providentially captured and sold into slavery.³⁰ Since missionaries linked education with trade, although parents were not interested in pure literary education, they readily released their children to learn European system of farming from the missionaries.

Although missionary economic pedagogy involved some classroom learning, in the traditional society, responsibility for educating and instructing the youth was that of the entire community. Kofi Opoku observes that the cardinal principle of 'traditional

²⁹ Magnus O. Bassey, *Western Education and Political Domination in Africa: A Study in Critical and Dialogical Pedagogy* (Westport, CT.: Bergin & Garvey, 1999), p. 20.

³⁰ CMS/CA2/061/1 Thomas King to H. Venn, Letter, Abeokuta, 27 Oct. 1851. See also CMS/CA2/061/48 Journal of Thomas King, 8 Jan 1853.

education was its emphasis on social sensitivity, that is, the individual was inseparable from the group'.³¹ Similarly Kofi Busia observes:

Though traditional Africa had many cultures, they all appear to have emphasized as a *summum bonum*, a social sensitivity which made one lose one's self in the group; the kinsfolk were, and lived as, members of one another. It was the goal of education to inculcate this sense of belonging, which was the highest value of the cultural system. The young were educated in and for the community's way of life.³²

Indeed, in Africa, educational success was measured by the value of output an individual obtained from his/her trade, which was an indication of how hard-working an individual was and whether the gods were satisfied with his/her sacrifices.

The educational systems of the African communities were not uniform, but they were similar as regards the importance of the social lessons they teach the individual, the family and the community at large. The value of this social education as a setting for work in Yorubaland was so high that the entire community placed a high premium on the dignity of labour as a social benefit. Such virtue was similar in many respects to that of the major tribes of West Africa. Abdou Moumouni observes that

In the social sphere, even in the feudal societies of pre-colonial Black Africa, education was considered far more valuable than even high birth or fortune, to the point where the title of 'man' was inseparable from a certain number of traits linked to education.³³

Thus, missionaries had no problem enlisting converts who had become convinced of participating in the benevolent process of legitimizing commerce for training since it too emphasized training for labour and the common good of the community.

³¹ Kofi A. Opoku, "Education and Moral Values in Contemporary Africa: The Role of the Family in Education (The Akan of Ghana)", in Charles E. Nnolim, ed., *The Role of Education in Contemporary Africa* (New York: Professors World Peace Academy, 1988).

³² K. A. Busia, *Purposeful Education for Africa* (The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1964), pp. 16-17.

³³ Abdou Moumouni, *Education in Africa* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1968), p. 16.

The value placed upon economic education in Yorubaland was so high, because 'African society regarded education as a means to an end and not as an end in itself ... generally for an immediate induction into society and a preparation for adulthood.'³⁴ Thus, a comprehensive instructional system which could accommodate the development of a new concept of legitimizing commerce was not alien to the Yoruba whose educational system covered social, spiritual, political and above all economic considerations and almost every sphere of human endeavour.

Babs Fafunwa summarily states the pedagogical emphases, orientations, processes, and values in African society, in which commercial skill development was prominent:

African education emphasized social responsibility, job orientation, political participation and spiritual and moral values. Children learned by doing, that is to say, children and adolescents were engaged in participatory education through ceremonies, rituals, imitation, recitation and demonstration. They were involved in practical farming, fishing, weaving, cooking, carving, knitting, and so on. Recreational subjects included wrestling, dancing, drumming, acrobatic display, racing, etc., while intellectual training included the study of... history, poetry, reasoning, riddles, proverbs, storytelling, story-relays. Education in Africa... combined physical training with character-building and manual activity with intellectual training.³⁵

For the Yoruba almost every trading and cultural activity was didactic. The people therefore engaged the children mentally, physically and emotionally in the art of learning the traditions and trades of the community.

One of the theoretical trajectories of Yoruba traditional pedagogy was oral education, in which poetry, singing and dancing played significant roles. For instance, the

³⁴ Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, p. 15.

³⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 15-16.

primary purpose of farming as the prime trade of the Yoruba was encapsulated in a popular slogan, preserved in a lyric across the ages and even to the present time:

*Is? àgb? n'is? il?? wa
? ni kò s'is? á mà ja 'lè
Iwé kí k? lai si ?k? ààti àdá
Kò ipéé o, kò ipéé o*

Farming is the vocation of our land
Whoever avoids working (i.e. tilling the land)
Will end up stealing
Education without hoes and cutlasses
Is incomplete learning³⁶

One big advantage for nineteenth-century missionary economics was the existence of such a slogan, since Legitimate Commerce too emphasized farming, the principal trade of the Yoruba. It was also a reminder that although reading was essential for gaining entrance into Western civilisation, the original and natural trade of the land should be preserved.

This slogan was meant to resuscitate the economic strength of the African kingdoms in the comity of nations, even long before the missionaries arrived in Yorubaland.³⁷ Modern mission's introduction of integrated farming was a way of accelerating production of exportable produce, especially cotton, palm oil and palm kernel of merchantable quality and quantity, in view of the growing demand by the textile industry and soap makers in the industrialised nations of Europe. And as such it built upon earlier traditional initiatives. Advanced organisation of farming then included keeping of accounts and ability to understand profit and loss.

³⁶ The song explains in literal form the importance of agriculture to the Yoruba economy, and states that an educational philosophy that does not emphasise agriculture (represented with the metaphors of farming implements, 'hoes and cutlasses') will result in partial learning.

³⁷ Agriculture had been the mainstay of the traditional Yoruba society, Bascom, *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria*, p. 18.

Although the missionaries' economic pedagogy revolutionized arithmetic, most ethnic groups in Africa had developed their own ways of counting and numbering in the traditional society. Arithmetic was an integral part of trading and an 'intellectual training' for inducting children into functional and accountable enterprises. Counting was simple, graphical and visual, using 'objects, counting rhymes, folklores, plays and games either at home or in the farms'.³⁸ Similarly, 'special attention was given to vocational education in traditional society'.³⁹ The Yoruba was not only versatile in farming; they had developed a system of quantifying their harvests of different produce, pricing their goods, valuing produce for trade, accounting for the turnover of their produce in monetary terms, and engaging in several other mathematical deductions.

Use of Educational Development for Wider Purposes

Empowerment of the Yoruba was an important item on the agenda of the returnees who had known Yorubaland as a place of astuteness in commerce. Upon hearing the news of the ordination of Samuel Crowther in 1843, Thomas King, a Yoruba agent of the CMS expressed the hope that the development of the Yoruba would result into a total transformation of the African continent, in line with European culture and civilisation.⁴⁰ The process through which Legitimate Commerce was introduced to the Yoruba showed that the intention of modern mission was to prepare converts who would become models for African communities where the gospel was to be propagated. The plan therefore was for the Yoruba to become a showpiece of the

³⁸ Basse, *Western Education and Political Domination in Africa: A Study in Critical and Dialogical Pedagogy*, p. 20.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ CMS/CA2/061/48 Journal of Thomas King, 8 January 1843.

supremacy of trade, wealth and power that Christianity is able to give to any nation that embraced the gospel and Legitimate Commerce.

The purpose for which the returnees introduced Legitimate Commerce to the people of Yorubaland has not received so much emphasis in current scholarship. Rather than stating the benefits of missionaries' economic pedagogy some scholars group all instructional projects in Africa together as a competitive scheme designed by each missionary group to justify their occupation of African kingdoms.⁴¹ Legitimate Commerce was in fact geared towards recovering the lost economic glory of Yorubaland, which was mainly agriculture.

As soon as it became clear to the returnees that their people had not fully imbibed the new economic orientation, both they and their European colleagues who had come to assist the Yoruba started to introduce enlightened educational programmes. Two major workshops were organized in 1859 by the returnees to educate their people on the value of abandoning slavery and returning Yorubaland to the path of legitimate economy. The workshops were held at Ake School Room in Abeokuta Lyceum. Mr R Campbell a Yoruba missionary of Egba origin addressed the first workshop entitled 'The Dignity of Labour' on Wednesday 11 January 1859.⁴² The main speaker for the second public workshop was Mr Samuel Crowther who spoke on the subject: 'How can the African improve his country'? That workshop was held precisely four weeks after the first one on Wednesday 8 February 1859.⁴³

⁴¹ Magnus O. Bassey, 'Missionary Rivalry and Educational Expansion in Southern Nigeria, 1885-1932', in *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 60, no. 1, (Winter, 1991).

⁴² CMS/CA2/032/35, Samuel Crowther Jr., Notices enclosed in his journal of 11 January 1859.

⁴³ CMS/CA2/032/36, Samuel Crowther Jr., Notices enclosed in his journal of 8 February 1859.

Two pieces of evidence show that the missionaries' economic motive was to reverse the plight of Yorubaland from that of being the haven of the slave dealers to make it a community of lawful traders. First, the CMS bore the expenses of the workshops, which always put prominently in the public notices: 'Admittance Free'. The zealous Yoruba missionaries knew that it would be difficult to attract farmers and traders who were their targeted audience if any form of levy was introduced. The second strategy was to arrange the pedagogical programmes at 7 PM in the night, a time when virtually every farmer and trader had returned from their farms and market stalls. The workshops were meant to provide alternative recreation for the adults who would otherwise had been engaged in indoor games while the children settled for the traditional moonlight tales.

Education showed the liberated Yoruba the way to improve the art of living, as legitimate enterprises began to turn many of them into property owners, such as the commercial wealth of Thomas Will, which Christopher Fyfe portrays in glowing tribute as an exemplary enterprise.⁴⁴ Thus, for the Yoruba missionaries, education became a means of creating awareness among their people that African economic emancipation was in the hands of the Africans. Education and training therefore became strategies for enlisting the interest of the people into the process of legitimizing commerce of their country.

However, there was no consensus between the Yoruba and European missionaries as to the kind of education that would accelerate growth and encourage the growth of lawful commerce among the Yoruba. While some of the European missionaries felt

⁴⁴ C. H. Fyfe, 'View of the New Burial Ground', in *Sierra Leone Studies*, no 2, June 1954, p. 89.

that replicating the pure grammar school education of Sierra Leone was inappropriate for introducing Legitimate Commerce to the Yoruba, their African counterparts had preference for the learning of the English language. The *Saro* and *Creoles* perceived that the learning of English language was the first aspect of education that inducted them into Western civilization and facilitated their acquiring European skills.⁴⁵

The Economic Pedagogy of the Foremost Missionary Movements in Yorubaland

Four missionary bodies, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, the Church Missionary Society, the Roman Catholics from France and the Southern Baptist Mission were prominent in nineteenth-century Yorubaland. Although the primary objective of all of these missionary bodies was gospel proclamation, while the formation and operation and mission of some of them were geared towards purely eschatological considerations, others had existential concerns of how to abrogate the Slave Trade. Thus two missionary ideologies existed with regard to the issue of legitimizing commerce in Yorubaland, and these involved separate pedagogical *modus operandi* in each of the four groups listed above.

The traditional principles of each missionary group was responsible for the ideological differences of the two groups of missionary movements and the kind of educational curricula each group implemented in Yorubaland. Those that were founded by the Slave Trade abolitionists, such as the CMS formulated programmes that were radically different from that of the missionary movements founded by the slaveholders such as the Southern Baptist Convention. A careful evaluation of the instructional process of each group is very useful for understanding their economic

⁴⁵ See FO 2/23, Memo, McGregor Laird to Lord Clarendon, 5 March 1855.

philosophies. While the CMS education shows that its activity was in line with that of the abolitionists, the fact that the Southern Baptists did not engage with abolition and trade generally demonstrates their parent body's attitude towards the transatlantic Slave Trade.

Whereas missionaries focussed on heavenly matters, Africans are sensitive to any eschatological paradigm that does not address the transatlantic Slavery Trade, in the same way the Jews always expect history to emphasize the holocaust in which millions of their relations were exterminated.⁴⁶ Empathizing Africans and seeking ways out of the 'evil' trade in slaves therefore, were essential for re-legitimizing the economy of the continent. Thus, instructing the Yoruba meant empowering the people to actualize the philosophy for establishing Legitimate Commerce in their country. Education portrayed the missionary message as holistic salvation, which not only catered for Eternal hope but also for Abundant Life. A close examination of the 'policy' of some missionary movements in Yorubaland is imperative therefore, for clarifying the distinction between the two strands of missionary movements and the ideologies upon which each was founded and commissioned to penetrate Africa.

The four principal missionary groups compared here are the Roman Catholics, first from Portugal and later from France, the Southern Baptist Mission from United States, the Wesleyan Methodists and the CMS from Britain. Although the United Presbyterian Mission of Scotland was operating elsewhere in the divided kingdoms of

⁴⁶ Michael Berenbaum, *After Tragedy and Triumph: Modern Jewish Thought and the American Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 1, 'The holocaust has become a symbol central to the identity of American Jewry' and Jews all over the world. Although the Shoal was a more recent experience of Jewish holocaust, it is offensive to the Jewish people to refer to their history without a mention of the events of Auschwitz.

Nigeria, a preview of their philosophy too is useful for comparing missionary economic programmes in Old Calabar and Yorubaland. The purpose is to distinguish between the pedagogical initiatives of missionary groups that had no agenda for dealing with the existential problem of abrogating the Slave Trade, and others who saw their economic mission as an offer of holistic salvation which included an alternative economy.

The Roman Catholic mission operated in West Africa at two different times. Whereas the Portuguese era paved the way for the Slave Trade, the French Roman Catholic mission of the nineteenth century participated in the process of legitimizing commerce in Africa. Thus, while the Roman Catholic mission of the sixteenth century was searching for means of diverting the exploration of the Portuguese traders from Muslim traditional trade route of the states of North Africa, that of the eighteenth century was out to 'save the souls' of the people of Africa.⁴⁷

Although the Roman Catholic missionaries that arrived in the heart of Yorubaland in the nineteenth century did not commence any economic policy early in their missionary endeavour, they entered with the intention of proclaiming the gospel. However, upon their observation and conviction that Legitimate Commerce was an effective strategy for proclaiming the Gospel, they too started to promote it. So while their economic philosophy for Africa which became official in Yorubaland was not originally motivated by providential/benevolent theology as is characteristic of the evangelicals in the Protestant movements, they did eventually engaged in

⁴⁷ Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, p. 7.

humanitarian activities. But this was a programme embarked upon shortly before colonialism took over the political arena in Africa.

Magnus Bassey is justified here in claiming that the Roman Catholics joined the Protestants to justify their presence and to be relevant within the evolving missionaries' economic ideology in Africa.⁴⁸ The Roman Catholics' pedagogical process which began in 1875, barely ten years before the Berlin Conference began to regulate the 'scramble for Africa' was abruptly terminated as soon as colonialism commenced in full from the 1880s. However, in spite the short duration within which the Roman Catholic missionaries undertook some instructional process for legitimizing commerce, their contribution was effective in giving form to the new economic experiment in Yorubaland. For instance, St. Joseph's Institution established near Badagry was mainly for the promotion of agricultural development. They thus complemented the efforts of the missionaries already promoting commerce by creating 'a model Christian village whence the virtues of hard work and decent living would be spread to the surrounding areas by envoys of the Gospel.'⁴⁹

Economic pedagogy was not limited to the Yoruba kingdom in the nineteenth century. For instance, the United Presbyterian Mission based in Old Calabar was also instructing the Efiks in subjects that were complementary to legitimate trade. The task and purpose of the Presbyterians' economic pedagogy was different from that of the Roman Catholics, or indeed any missionary body in Yorubaland. They too, in the same way as did the Roman Catholics, did not propose or initiate any cogent

⁴⁸ Bassey, 'Missionary Rivalry and Educational Expansion in Southern Nigeria, 1885-1932', op. cit.

⁴⁹ Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, p. 153.

economic plan during the first half of the nineteenth century. However, the Scottish group became active in empowering the people to trade more effectively.

Whereas Yorubaland was still under the control of Kosoko and his ally slave dealers, slavery had died down significantly in Old Calabar and the Effiks had settled down significantly to the trade in palm oil with the Europeans by the middle of the nineteenth century. They however had an acute need of the means of calculating their profit and taking the stock of their produce. Thus, Legitimate Commerce was one of the key reasons for learning arithmetic and other complementary subjects to enhance their ability to trade more profitably and effectively. The industrialisation scheme through which the Presbyterians began to engage the people in the instructional processes did not materialise until about 1846. The establishment of a sugar factory, which later became moribund, was the beginning of the Presbyterians' interest in Legitimate Commerce. It was to be established through the efforts of two volunteers from Jamaica.⁵⁰ Although the initial sugar project failed, the Scottish missionary movement kept on working on the idea of industrialisation for almost five decades, during which individual missionaries and groups from Jamaica, Kew and Glasgow Botanical Gardens tried to encourage the Efiks to embark on commercial agriculture.

The interest of the Presbyterian missionaries was in mixed agricultural projects. They emphasized cash crops such as cocoa, breadfruit, avocado pear, Jamaican cocoa, Liberian coffee, arrowroot, papaw, ginger, cinnamon, tomato, lemon, the custard

⁵⁰ E. A. Ayandele, *African Historical Studies* (London: Frank Cass, 1979), p. 96. The pedagogical philosophy of the United Presbyterian Mission could be seen in the various reports of the group, reported in the work of Ayandele.

apple, jackfruit, and the Batanga curry.⁵¹ Colonisation had already caught up with Africa, by the time appreciable responses began to be felt among the Efiks towards the close of the nineteenth century when the imperial governments took over the reins of African's political and economic administration. What brought reward to the educational philosophy of the Presbyterian missionaries was the rise of an educated class in Old Calabar, just as the 'educated élite' class was becoming prominent in Yorubaland. Thus, as the CMS was encouraging the growing of cotton, cocoa and palm oil in Yorubaland, so were the Presbyterians promoting agricultural and industrial ventures such as furniture-making and especially brick-making, for which their soil was notably rich.

The involvement of the educated class in Old Calabar encouraged the Foreign Mission Board of the Scottish mission to expand its vision beyond training of artisans such as cobblers and technicians. They also began to propagate the gospel through Legitimate Commerce, inducing and enlisting the interest of the neighbouring peoples of the Cross River basin. The reports of 'the famous Dr Robert Laws of Livingstonia and the Rev W. Risk Thomson of Jamaica' greatly fostered the huge, but courageous resolve of the Presbyterian mission to impart industrial education into the Efiks.⁵²

Although colonialism had begun to gain momentum by 1895, nevertheless, the Scottish mission went on to establish the Hope Waddell Training Institution at Calabar, delineating between pure grammar school and vocational training such as

⁵¹ The United Presbyterian Church of Scotland Minute Book, The Presbytery of Biafra, Entry for 22 December 1892, 'Report of the Sub-Committee appointed to reply to Industrial Memorandum of Mission Board'.

⁵² Ayandele, *African Historical Studies*, p. 97.

‘printing, masonry, tailoring, carpentry and bakery’.⁵³ Even though the institution was only able to attract eighteen apprentices; seven for carpentry, five engineering, five (including two girls) for printing, and one for cookery at the commencement, it had eight Scottish instructors; one printer, two engineers, three carpenters, one brick-layer, and one manual trainer. However, because the first set of trainees needed to undergo six years of apprenticeship, they were remunerated for their labour before being commissioned to their various locations in the Cross River Basin. In the same way that the CMS expected its trainees to become models for the society, the successful apprentices of the training institute in Calabar were required to pass on the skills they had acquired while proclaim the gospel message to their people. It was Good News to the people who began to see great transformation in their own social and economic spheres.

Thus, the idea of ‘carrying the Bible along with the plough’ originated by the Slave Trade abolition movement as a strategy for proclaiming the gospel to the Africans became a popular mode of evangelism among many missionaries of the Scottish society in the nineteenth century. Although it took such a long time for the Presbyterians to come up with an economic philosophy, their efforts at legitimizing commerce distinguishes them as a missionary body that was sensitive, not only to eschatological concerns but also to the issue of the restoration of African economic glory. They taught the people not only to carry ‘the Bible’ but also ‘the plough’.

The Presbyterian missionaries continued to emphasise commercial training in spite of the huge investment of over £2,000 required annually to maintain the training institute

⁵³ Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, p. 153.

alone. Although the Efiks showed an initial lethargy, the economic instruction prospered very significantly, especially with the influx of the neighbouring people to whom the missionaries had started to preach the Good News also.⁵⁴ Although this colossal sum needed to sustain the project was a great drain on the group's budget, the enterprise soon began to flourish. Indeed, the carpentry and brick-making had been very profitable from the inception, because of the wide market of the missionaries, the European merchants and the growing educated elite who were already developing a good taste for European furniture and lifestyle.⁵⁵

The carpentry department could not produce chairs, tables and other furniture in quantities large enough to satisfy their growing demand.⁵⁶ Similarly, the bricks being manufactured at Okorofiong were not enough to meet the government's orders of bricks for building offices and staff quarters for European officials. The missionaries also started to generate orders for the churches and mission houses. Although production increased, the demand could not be met. More people had been influenced by European lifestyle. Not less than 88,000 bricks had been produced at Okorofiong by 1897 to generate a revenue of £224 2s 6d.⁵⁷ No sooner had the market begun to respond positively than the shift in emphasis occurred, partly because of the missionaries' financial constraint and also to give way to colonialism.

The educational ideology of the Southern Baptist Mission reflected the emphasis of its sending body's philosophies of mission and the principle upon which it was founded in 1848 after the dissolution of the Triennial Convention. Although the Southern

⁵⁴ Ayandele, *African Historical Studies*, p. 97.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 98.

⁵⁶ Ayandele, *African Historical Studies*, p. 98.

⁵⁷ The United Presbyterian Church of Scotland Minute Book, The Presbytery of Biafra, Entry for 25 January 1898, 'Report on brickwork at Okorofiong'.

Baptist Convention, which was part of the Triennial Convention of America until the schism of 1848, started to send out missionaries soon after it parted ways with the North American Baptists, Legitimate Commerce was not in its agenda. One of the critical issues at the centre of the schism had to do with the views held by the Baptists from the northern states that although slavery was endorsed by first century Christians, it was an immoral human system.⁵⁸ Ironically, soon after the schism, the Southerners who held the opposing views that the Pauline epistles endorse the ownership of slaves began to dispatch missionaries to West Africa to preach the gospel and seek repose for the souls of 'the heathen' in the African continent. Thus, the Southern Baptists perceived the Slave Trade differently from most of the other missionary groups that entered Yorubaland in the nineteenth century for the propagation of the Gospel, especially the CMS and WMMS.

Economic education was therefore not top on the agenda of the Southern Baptists. Although T. J. Bowen, the pioneer Baptist missionary saw the economic potentials of the Yoruba country and portrayed a glowing picture of the abundance of resources that Africa could exchange with the Western world soon after his arrival in Yorubaland, not much could be done to support the project of legitimizing commerce. While his sending body did not appear to have any economic agenda at that time, however, Bowen's feasibility survey was appropriate. He was very observant and critical of the untapped but extensive economic potentials of Africa as he journeyed from Monrovia to Badagry, some parts of the Yoruba country and eventually the interior of the Sudan between 1850 and 1851. The need for pedagogy and training in Western forms of agriculture were inevitable in view of Bowen's great amazement at

⁵⁸ Travis Collins, *The Baptist Mission of Nigeria 1850 – 1993* (Nigerian Baptist Bookstore Ltd, 1993), p. 1.

the abundance and variety of food and cash crops grown through traditional processes, as well as the vast but unexplored mineral resources.⁵⁹

There are two fundamental differences between the Southern Baptist mission and the missionary bodies founded in Britain. The zest with which the evangelical movement of the eighteenth century opposed the Slave Trade and clamoured for its abrogation continued into the humanitarian activities of the abolitionists at Sierra Leone, and ultimately in Yorubaland where pedagogy was considered to be unavoidable if Africa would awake economically. The Southern Baptists, on the contrary began to feel the passion of evangelizing the people of Africa soon after they separated from the Northern Baptists in 1848. While the examples of Commerce and Christianity were well grounded among the British evangelicals, the American missionaries did not appear to have a similar or parallel economic precept to follow. Although the Baptists saw the state of decadence into which slavery had thrown Africa, commerce was not in their terms of reference, as Bowen implied in his statement below.

Bowen, on a personal level desired that missionaries should set up model farms, from where the people would develop their own native technology. Two reasons, however, precluded the Baptist mission from pursuing an economic agenda or even establishing an economic instructional centre. First, the sending body was still grappling with the issue of the slavery, having initially based its theological argument on the ground that there is 'no explicit prohibition against slavery' in 'the New Testament'⁶⁰ The Northern Baptists however got a 'Scriptural support for their stand, for they saw that the Bible "taught the integrity and worth of every individual in the sight of God and

⁵⁹ Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa from 1849 to 1856*, pp. 44 – 55.

⁶⁰ Collins, *The Baptist Mission of Nigeria 1850 – 1993*, p. 1.

the moral wrong of the enslavement of men by their fellows.”⁶¹ It was this theological disparity that caused separation between the Northern and the Southern Baptists in 1848. The former insisted that slavery was ungodly, inhuman and barbaric. However, in 1849, barely a year after the schism the Southern Baptists began to send missionaries to West Africa.

Although Bowen became the guest of Freeman, the leader of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission who was equally engaged in economic education, the Baptist missionary had no preparation or backing for embarking upon economic pedagogy. He however teamed up with his Egba hosts in fighting their wars, even carrying the guns as the ‘strategist for the Egba troops’.⁶² The state of the Yoruba country notwithstanding, the evangelicals who had commerce as part of their agenda, started to organize workshops for training and empowering the people in the art of legitimizing commerce. The Baptist interest in education was not to become prominent until about 1883 when the Baptist Academy was founded in Lagos. The Baptists however gave maximum attention to the Gospel proclamation as Bowen asserts:

The missionary work, and the only duty of missionaries, as such, is the preaching of the Gospel, and the planting and training of churches. The duties of this single calling are sufficient to fill the hands of any laborer.⁶³

The missionary groups that were promoting commerce did not lag behind either in striving to entrench Christian ideals in the people of Yorubaland, preaching ‘in the market places’⁶⁴ and to various chiefs and people of Yorubaland.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Robert George Torbet, *A History of the Baptists* (London: Carey Kingsgate Publishers, 1950, 1966), p. 309.

⁶² Collins, *The Baptist Mission of Nigeria 1850 – 1993*, p. 7. See also Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa*, pp. 118 – 20.

⁶³ Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa*, p. 329.

⁶⁴ See CMS/CA2/049/95 D. Hinderer, ‘Missionary at Abeokuta, June 12 – Sept 25 1849’ Journal, 3 July 1849.

⁶⁵ See CMS/CA2/049/95 D. Hinderer, ‘June 12 – Sept 25 1849’ Journal, Friday 22 June 1849.

However, since Bowen could not work at cross-purpose with the mandate of his benefactors, he challenged the people to harness their abundant resources for economic growth rather than pursuing the Western forms of education. Although he perceived the need for the communities to have 'farmers and mechanics at every station', insisting that the art of reading is not more important than the art of working, his commercial perception was at the level of subsistence farming, and not in the dimension of international trade that the CMS was pursuing. Bowen contended that 'a little farm at each station in which we should exhibit such improvements in tools and especially in the mode of cultivation as the people can understand and imitate.'⁶⁶

He extolled the industrious character of 'Ogbomoshaw', where 'He was so cordially received by chiefs and people that he resolved to make this his field of labor'⁶⁷ and stop wandering about for a new settlement after Ijaye had collapsed. Bowen thought that African civilization could not just 'leap into full grown existence, as if by miracle', but 'by the natural and slow development of civilizing forces', arguing:

Too many persons seem to regard the English language as a sort of second gospel to mankind, and in some parts of Africa they have absolutely cursed the people by means of English schools.⁶⁸

This may have been his own view, but also Bowen was bound to speak the minds of his benefactors who had no plan for training the people towards the development of 'lawful' commerce in Yorubaland.

⁶⁶ Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa*, p. 329.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

In contrast, the pedagogical imperatives of the CMS, the Methodist and the Presbyterians in Old Calabar enhanced Legitimate Commerce, provided an alternative to the Slave Trade, and generated fervour for the development and empowerment of the educated elites as implied by Ajayi.⁶⁹ The great resources developing out of these educated elites show that the people's greater propensity for learning would have been suppressed, if all the missionary bodies concentrated only on eschatology at the expense of Christianity's greatest task, which is not just an appendage to the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 19 – 20), but the essence of it:

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.⁷⁰

Even with the best of intentions, the Southern Baptists could not perceive commerce as a part of their duty to the humanity to which the Gospel was being preached.

Bowen had a desire, however little that pilot farms be set up that would serve as model for the development of native economy in a way that was natural and consistent with the level of growth. His utterances showed clearly that he knew that aversion to economic development was inimical to holistic conversion:

No one denies that schools and the industrial arts would be useful to Africa, and helpful to the establishment of the Gospel, but the greatest of all these secondary means for the extension of the Gospel, is commerce with Christian countries... Already 'lawful commerce', as it is usually and significantly called, has taken fast hold on most of the old stations of the slave trade, as at the mouth of the Gambia, at

⁶⁹ J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite* (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1965).

⁷⁰ Cf. Matthew 25: 35 NIV Bible.

Sierra Leone, in Liberia, on the Gold Coast, and lastly, at Lagos.⁷¹

Thus, although Bowen saw the problem, he could not tackle it because the Southern Baptist missionaries neither had any mandate to engage in commercial enterprise nor could they embark on a pedagogical program or establish a centre for learning a trade. Thus, although Bowen made serious representations for commercial interactions between the Western world and Africa, for the first thirty-two years of existence as a missionary movement in Yorubaland, the Baptists did not engage in any pedagogical project geared towards Legitimate Commerce. The missionary's love for Africa did not diminish even though his arguments incorporated the feelings of his benefactors:

The missionary... must not be a schoolmaster... can not instruct them (Africans) in the arts of the blacksmith, the carpenter, the mason, & c., but he will desire them to have that degree of instruction in every art which is necessary to their present improvement. He may not turn merchants among them, but he will rejoice at the extension of commerce, as one of the great means of civilization.⁷²

This clearly negates the principles of the British evangelical theology of mission, which had become the guiding code of ethics for the abolitionists and their missionaries who were seeking 'means' of giving life to all of African humanity. Thus, evangelicals such as Thomas Fowell Buxton were clamouring for 'missionaries and schoolmasters' to cooperate for African economic development,⁷³

Bowen, speaking the mind of his benefactors criticised missionary bodies that encouraged or engaged in Legitimate Commerce:

In like manner, missionary societies can not become the patrons and supporters of anything which is not directly a part of the missionaries' work; but if need be, they may render any

⁷¹ Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa*, pp. 329 – 330.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 329.

⁷³ Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, p. 511.

kind of assistance to school teachers, mechanics and traders, which may be consistent with the design for which missionary societies were created.⁷⁴

Thus, Ogbomoso, 'a large town fifty miles northeast of Ijaye,'⁷⁵ did not experience the influence of Legitimate Commerce, though it began to host missionaries with the arrival of Mr W. H. Clarke in February 1855,⁷⁶ only after about ten years of arrival of the CMS in Abeokuta.

It is a real question that Ogbomoso a town renowned for itinerant trade and industry before the arrival of missionaries did not enjoy the missionary influence of integrated cash crop production as Abeokuta and Ibadan until after the emergence of some educated elite such as Majola Agbebi, in spite of the town's great support for mission. Ogbomoso ultimately became a major Baptist centre from where missionaries moved out to other stations. The founding of a 'preacher-training class' in 1898 by Charles Edwin Smith indicates the emphasis of the Southern Baptists.⁷⁷ The first educational institute in Ogbomoso for the development of skills in commerce and industry was not to come into existence until 1938 when Eta Eyo in cooperation with N. D. Oyerinde, an educated indigene established Ogbomoso People's Institute.

Although the Baptist missionaries, from Bowen in 1851 to Charles Edwin Smith in 1898 saw and attested to the agricultural and industrial potential of Yorubaland, no move was made in the direction of commercial development of those prospects. Any such move would challenge the rationale for using slaves in the plantations and industries of the Southern states in America. Bowen saw the Yoruba people as an

⁷⁴ Bowen, *adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa*, p. 329

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 185.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 185.

⁷⁷ Charles E. Maddry, *Day Dawn in Yorubaland* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1939).

industrious community with a high level of honesty. He observed their potential for large-scale production of agricultural produce, but predicted a market glut, should there be a bumper harvest.⁷⁸ Thus, while the CMS was resolute in training and developing the agricultural and industrial labour of the people, during the critical slavery transition period of 1839 – 1865 in Yorubaland, the Baptist Mission had no parallel agenda for commercial development, and/or empowerment of the people.

Missionaries were sent by the Southern Baptists to propagate the gospel, caring for the souls, but leaving the people to develop at their own pace, as they acquired more knowledge of the gospel. The aggressive missionary education of the last decade of the nineteenth century, as Magnus Bassey argues, was a direct result of the Berlin Conference's requesting all Westerners to justify their occupation of land in Africa.

Although the Methodist mission was the earliest missionary movement that arrived in Nigeria from the Gold Coast (modern day Ghana) on 24 September 1842, it did not have as much zeal for commerce as the CMS. The group, led by the Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, the superintendent at the Cape Coast⁷⁹ was also one of the earliest to declare an educational agenda for the region under its control, including Badagry and Abeokuta. The movement's educational philosophy differed substantially from the economically oriented ideology of the later missionary groups. It was geared towards

teaching children to read, write and count, and do this under the best possible conditions. How society chose to reward those with this type of education was in the end beyond the control of the teacher and the school.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa*, pp. 285 – 6.

⁷⁹ Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of New Elite*, p. 31.

⁸⁰ Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, p. 152.

Pedagogy was a major part of missionary educational policy at the Methodist District Meeting at Cape Coast (Ghana) in 1848. The district, which included Badagry and Abeokuta Methodist mission centres, encouraged the teaching of various subjects relevant to Legitimate Commerce. Although the Methodist mission made provision for the incorporation of the societal needs into the educational system,⁸¹ it was decided to train the people and let the society reward productivity as appropriate.

No pedagogical approach by any missionary group in Yorubaland was comparable to that of the Church Missionary Society. The missionary organisation epitomised the whole essence of the abolitionists, because it was founded as part of their struggle to provide a more radical solution to human and commercial development in Yorubaland. The CMS economic pedagogy was a reflection of its foundation. Apart from the formation of the CMS in England in 1799,⁸² the invitation by the returnees and the zeal to pursue the agenda of its founders made the missionaries in Yorubaland treat Legitimate Commerce as a priority.

What necessitated the formation of the CMS was the lack of interest by the Church of England in the evangelisation and civilisation of Africa on the same terms as it was done in India. Charles Simeon's keen interest in the establishment of missions in his India 'diocese' made him propose to the Eclectic Society on 8 February 1796 to constitute a Church of England Society for the conversion of the heathen, especially for 'Africa and the East'. Similarly, the two elder societies, the Baptist Missionary Society, founded as a result of William Carey's sermon of 1792 and the London

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Francis Warre Cornish, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1910), pp. 45 – 6.

Missionary Society, founded in 1795 concentrated all efforts on India, as well as the British plantations in America and the West Indies.

The founders of the CMS therefore targeted Africa. They had anticipated that education would be a major mechanism for every aspect of their missionary enterprise in Africa, be it Commercialisation, Christianisation or Civilization. They were conscious of the fact that Commerce and Christianity would be an innovation in the missionary task, because there were no precedents to follow. At its formation, the first Chairman of the Church Missionary Society and the rector of the Clapham group, John Venn laid down four principles of mediating salvation, which he wanted the society to adopt:

(1) 'Follow God's leading,' (2) 'Begin on a small scale,' (3) 'Put money in the second place,' (4) 'Depend upon the Spirit of God' – have worldly wisdom in them; for nothing is more important to a new institution depending on personal effort, not on rule and precedent, than that it should avoid regulations and regulators, take an original and independent line, and be guided by circumstances.⁸³

The missionaries to West Africa followed these principles and continued with them until the son of the bishop of the Clapham brotherhood, Henry Venn, became the secretary of the CMS in 1841. For example, no sooner had the CMS arrived in Yorubaland than it established industrial training schools such as the one in Abeokuta in 1851.⁸⁴ This did not go down well with the Yoruba elites from Sierra Leone.

Although the Yoruba educated elites who were to play a major role in deciding the future of educational philosophy for Yorubaland also trained and acquired skills in Legitimate Commerce under the Sierra Leonean civilising mission, they perceived

⁸³ Cornish, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 51.

⁸⁴ Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, op. cit., p. 152.

that the approach to education in Yorubaland should be different. The Yoruba in Sierra Leone had no input in the type of education that was designed for them in their land of refuge. Not too long after the formation of Sierra Leone Company in 1789, especially as soon as the ex-slaves had settled in to their new life in the settlement, the CMS engaged in Grammar School education.

While some of the emerging elites such as Samuel Crowther belonged to the recaptive group, others emancipated from Trinidad, Brazil, and Nova Scotia and had their own distinctive form of Christianity and learning in European education and commerce.⁸⁵ The variety of experiences of the returnees culminated in their proposing a new economic order for Yorubaland. There was no specific philosophy for 'Legitimate Commerce' or the process of inducting the people into the new economic orientation. However, educational curricula, instructional emphases and modality for teaching the people to develop consciousness of legitimizing commerce were apparent in different degrees in the pedagogical agenda of each missionary group as indicated above.

Despite the variables in the overall missionary goal in nineteenth-century Yorubaland, the instructional process of missionaries who had Legitimate Commerce in their plan was clear. Education stood out as a distinction between the commercial initiative of missionaries and the commercial interests of the traders and colonialists. The missionary function as a 'Headlight' was obvious in the training schemes set up to actualize Legitimate Commerce in the midst of the problems of slavery in nineteenth-century Yorubaland. Responding to the critics of Yoruba empowerment in 1875,

⁸⁵ The Nova Scotians were the emancipators who fought on the side of Great Britain in the American War of Independence. For more on the Nova Scotians see A. F. Walls, 'The Nova Scotian Settlers and Their Religion', in *Sierra Leone Bulletin of Religion*, June 1959.

Edgar a European missionary and key agent of the CMS expressed great joy that 'large production of seeded cotton at a lucrative price...' has been accomplished

at Abbeokuta [missionaries had] succeeded, and have left the native farmers and mercantile community, both Europeans and natives, to reap and enjoy the abundant harvest of our persevering efforts to induce agricultural labours as the source of prosperity to Africa⁸⁶

Thus, missionaries continued to proclaim that their interest in commerce was to empower the Yoruba in preparation for mass proclamation of the gospel in Africa.

Theoretical Educational Schemes for Legitimate Commerce

Missionary education in Yorubaland was not entirely for legitimizing commerce, nor was it designed to achieve that purpose alone. Missionary emphasis was also on how 'Bible teaching' would become 'the backbone of all our school efforts' so that Legitimate Commerce would not remove the most important item from the missionaries' agenda.⁸⁷ Southern Baptist missionaries who had no economic agenda also argued:

What then shall Christians of this favoured age attempt to do for Africa? The same as we are now attempting. Give the people missionaries, give them Bibles, give them the power to perpetuate the Gospel amongst them, or, in one word-civilization.⁸⁸

Thus, there was goal congruence within the missionary circles that the proclamation of the gospel was the principal task of modern mission.

Africans too had their own expectations. The impression the missionaries created everywhere they went in Africa was similar to the mission statement of Henry

⁸⁶ CMS/CA3/04/497, Letter, J. Edgar to S. Crowther, 3 September 1875.

⁸⁷ D. Campbell, *Blazing Trail in Bantuland* (London: Pickering and Ingles, 1932), p. 113. (JSTOR Edward H. Berman, 'African Responses to Christian Mission Education', in *African Studies Review* vol. 17, No 3 (Dec. 1974), p. 528 of pp. 527 – 540.

⁸⁸ Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in several countries in the interior of Africa*, p. 327.

Townsend to Kurumi on his arrival at Ijaye. They were always quick to state that their mission was to 'make country good'.⁸⁹ Although they assured the people that they wanted to inculcate an all-round education that would help the Africans gain full knowledge of the European civilization, the people were more interested in functional education that would enable them 'gauge palm-oil and other mercantile business as soon as possible'.⁹⁰

Although Henry Venn, the longest serving secretary of the CMS (1841 – 1872) promoted commerce, religion was however top in his agenda. His conviction that pedagogy was critical for imparting an all-round consciousness on the leaders and the people of Yorubaland is however clear in his letter pointing out the importance of education to a Yoruba catechist, William Marsh:

Remember that it is to affect the heart that you must chiefly aim. It will be easy to inform the understanding when the heart is inclined to listen.⁹¹

Thus, although there were specific curricula for the industrial education of the people, religion, in the perception of the missionaries played a significant role in transferring commercial skills because unless the heart is attuned, learning would be difficult.

Henry Venn as a Case Study in Relating Pedagogy to Legitimate Commerce

An outstanding proponent of an economic programme for African emancipation, who shared the Calvinist theology of the abolitionists and the eighteenth-century evangelicals⁹² that all human beings should be free, was Henry Venn (1796-1873).

Although he never stepped a foot in Yorubaland, his concept of missions there was

⁸⁹ CMS/CA2/O85 H. Townsend, Journal 3 Sept 1852.

⁹⁰ CMS/CA3/04 Crowther on the 'characters, habits and ideas of the Natives' to missionary education, 1874 .

⁹¹ CMS/CA2/L1 Letter from Henry Venn to William Marsh, 17 April 1847.

⁹² See Cornish, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 9.

geared towards self-actualisation and integrated economic emancipation. Venn was conscious of the need to develop a theology of holistic redemption for which Anglicanism was renowned in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁹³ Although his principle of self-propagating, self-financing and self-governing ideology did not materialise until the 1850s and 1860s, bishop Tugwell adopted it much later in 1918:

the whole of the Ijebu... Lagos, Abeokuta and Ibadan districts, are practically self-supporting and self-governing as regards their pastoral, evangelistic and educational work. They have no European missionaries to superintend them or help them. Large districts also in the P.C.C. areas are under native superintendent.⁹⁴

Even though the church could no longer pursue Legitimate Commerce as in the past, the primary agenda of missionaries - 'pastoral, evangelistic and educational' had become rooted in Yorubaland. Thus, when the light of the gospel would have been extinguished with the ending of the era of modern mission, through Venn's 'three-selves' ideology, missionaries' labours were still bearing fruits.

Similarly, although there was no single economic philosophy proposed by the CMS, a series of pronouncements by the various missionaries tend to portray the group as one with a penetrating policy on economic ideology for Africa. Fowell Buxton proposed that if the schoolmaster and the missionaries cooperate, avenues would open for economic exploitation of Africa by Africans and for Africa.⁹⁵ As a descendant of the British evangelicals for whom Christianity and Commerce were complementary, Buxton did not see how Christianity alone could be propagated successfully in Africa.

⁹³ Brian Stanley, 'Commerce and Christianity': Providence Theory, the Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842-1860', *The Historical Journal*, 26, 1, (1983).

⁹⁴ CMS/G3/A2/p. 5, Bishop Tugwell in minutes of E. C. meeting, 2 December 1918.

⁹⁵ Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, p. 511 'Let missionaries and schoolmasters, the plough and the spade, go together and agriculture will flourish; the avenues to legitimate commerce will be opened; confidence between man and man will be inspired; whilst civilization will advance as the natural effect, and Christianity operate as the proximate cause, of this happy change'

Venn's pedagogical initiative was reminiscent of the theological standpoint of his predecessors, the Slave Trade abolitionists for which his father, John was the rector. His instructional proposition was meant to be implemented at the national, economic and ecclesiology spheres. Speaking in line with his predecessors' aspirations, he argued in favour of raising people who would form a nucleus of an 'intelligent and influential class of society and become the founders of a Kingdom which shall render incalculable benefits to Africa and hold a position among the states of Europe.'⁹⁶

This underpins Venn's philosophy for legitimate commerce, which was to begin with industrial curricula in schools, aim for economic independence as well as social and political emancipation comparable to those of the imperial nations. This was to be radically different from the result obtained by missionaries from a similar economic experiment earlier on in Sierra Leone. Although the result of that experiment was equally appreciable, it did not justify the human and material investment in the educational system of the Grammar Schools. Venn therefore argued that if industrial education had been emphasised over and above Grammar School education the failure of the agricultural ventures could have been minimised, if not totally avoided.

Henry Venn was thus an advocate for schools in Yorubaland where 'the pupils would be taught agricultural and trade skills, combining fruitful labour on the field ('self-supporting') with mental discipline in the classroom. Students were to be educated in brick-making, carpentry and masonry, among other things.'⁹⁷ This unyielding spirit of making Commerce and Christianity become African led to the CMS' establishment of

⁹⁶ Cited in Webster, "The Bible and the Plough", p. 420.

⁹⁷ Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, p. 152.

an Industrial Training School in Abeokuta in 1851, where pupils were engaged in the art of pre-export cotton picking and cleaning. Others were taught brick-making, carpentry and printing, an aspect of legitimate commerce highly favoured by Henry Townsend.

The strategy of Africanising commerce reached other parts of Nigeria and a similar school was established at Onitsha ten years later by the CMS. Venn's philosophy of functional pedagogy did not receive the approval of other missionary groups or even the CMS missionaries some of whom like Jefferson Bowen could not reconcile using commerce as a means for evangelizing Africa. However, Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland yielded positive fruit, leading to intensified and profitable cotton growing at Abeokuta and justifying Venn's clamour for productive education.⁹⁸

Although African's tropical weather did not favour the growing of Persian cotton, Abeokuta experienced a boom in its production, cleaning and export, having more than 200 gins and five presses in 1859.⁹⁹ Even when the climatic problem made it unavoidable to seek for technological aid from Europe to boost cotton production, Venn was in the forefront. Venn's intervention attracted the needed assistance from the African Aid Society whose philosophy was based on Buxton's concept of 'carrying the Bible along with the plough'. The society that was formed in England in 1860 had as its cardinal principle to function as 'light' and 'heralds' for the spreading of the Good News of eternal and abundant lives to the entire African continent. The society's insistence that 'civilisation and Christianity must go together in Africa, if

⁹⁸ CMS/CA3/04/497, Letter, J. Edgar to S. Crowther, 3 September 1875.

⁹⁹ CMS/CA2/016 Journals of Isaiah L Dewring, Otta, John G. Hughes, Ake, Abeokuta and Thomas Lewn, Abeokuta. See also Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, p. 159.

either is to go forward at all',¹⁰⁰ clearly demonstrates that the purpose of embarking on Legitimate Commerce was expansion of Christianity among economically free people of Yorubaland.

Ironically, the influx of the *Saro* (Sierra Leonean) returnees, the Yoruba educated elites who had gone through the Grammar School training in Sierra Leone limited the development of Venn's vision of economic pedagogy for Yorubaland. They had been instructed in English language to facilitate uniformity in instructional pattern and effective communication of the new religious and economic change. Despite their intense desire for the proper implantation of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland the returnees did not favour an educational system that emphasised practical learning at the expense of Grammar school education through which they had been launched into European Culture, Christianity and Civilization.

The Positive Outcome of Pedagogy on Legitimate Commerce

Pedagogy turned out to be a positive means of restoring Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland, and to resuscitate its agricultural trading pattern distorted by the Slave Trade. The strategy paid off in the 1860s and 1870s and stepped up the production, processing and exportation of cotton from Abeokuta, Ibadan and the neighbouring towns. On his own part, Henry Venn, the secretary of the CMS based in England, took advantage of the rising price of cotton on the international market to canvass extensively on behalf of Yorubaland. He pointed to the advantages of procuring cotton 'from the Countries watered by the River Niger and its tributaries',¹⁰¹ pleading

¹⁰⁰ Webster, "The Bible and the Plough", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, p. 423.

¹⁰¹ CMS/CA2/016/12 Report H. Venn to CMS secretaries.

successfully with the cotton merchants to support of the establishment of a cotton training institute in Abeokuta.¹⁰²

Within very short time, cotton production had received a boost and trade had assumed an unprecedented level in Yorubaland. Reports started to pour in from local farmers and traders such as Joseph Boller¹⁰³ and J. Coker,¹⁰⁴ native agents at Abeokuta, as well as foreign agents of cotton merchants such as Thomas Lewn's report on Mr Dewring, agent for Mr Southam¹⁰⁵ and W. Mallalieu & Co London Merchants.¹⁰⁶ Samuel Crowther Jr. also gave an encouraging report to Thomas Clegg, the chief financier of cotton production in Abeokuta, concerning 'an account of the state of the cotton trade between Thomas Clegg and the chiefs and people of Abeokuta'¹⁰⁷

The wars between Ibadan and their various neighbours, in which the Alake of the Egba people and the chiefs of Abeokuta resisted any attempt by Commander Norman B. Bedingfield to mediate,¹⁰⁸ however, gave serious setbacks to the development of the cotton trade. Similarly, persecution of missionaries for the misdeeds of Europeans traders made matters worse, because, though the attacks were aimed at 'Europeans rather than Christians',¹⁰⁹ persecution of European missionaries was enormous and widespread.¹¹⁰ They were 'tolerated but not protected'.¹¹¹

¹⁰² CMS/L2/p. 302 Letter signed by H. Venn and Michael Dawes Re: Cheque for Industrial Work, Dec. 1859.

¹⁰³ CMS/CA2/032/43 Joseph Boller, native agent at Abeokuta to Crowther, Nov. 1861

¹⁰⁴ CMS/CA2/032/44 J. Coker, native agent at Abeokuta to Crowther, Nov. 1861

¹⁰⁵ CMS/CA2/016/15, Isaiah L Dewring, Otta Re: Cotton Trade, 1858. See also CMS/CA2/016/19

Thomas Lewn, Abeokuta Re Mr Dewring, agent for Mr Southam and Cotton Trade, 1860.

¹⁰⁶ CMS/CA2/032/30 W. Mallalieu & Co London Merchants to S. Crowther Jr., 1858

¹⁰⁷ CMS/CA2/032/17 S. Crowther Jr. to Thomas Clegg Manchester Cotton Merchant, 1862.

¹⁰⁸ CMS/CA2/08/13 Letter, Alake & Chiefs to Commander Norman B. Bedingfield, Sept. 1861.

¹⁰⁹ Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, p. 136.

¹¹⁰ CMS/CA2/085 H. Townsend to H. Venn, 25 Jan 1867, CMS/CA2/037 V. Faulkner to H. Venn, 18 April 1868.

¹¹¹ See CMS/CA2/068 J. A. Maser, Journal, 24 June 1866.

However, when the Alake of Abeokuta and his chiefs realised that they were the losers for persecuting the European missionaries, they re-enacted the resolutions made in the 1850s against slavery activities in Abeokuta, principal among which was that:

Europeans or other persons now engaged in the Slave Trade are to be expelled [from] this country; the houses, thus, or buildings hitherto employed as slave factories, if not converted to lawful properties within three months of this engagement, are to be destroyed.¹¹²

The CMS even succeeded in convincing the people that England was only interested in lawful commerce and could monitor the activities of others who might want to engage in obnoxious trades. The Abeokuta chiefs thereafter declared:

The subjects of the Queen of England may always trade freely with the people of the Egba nation in every article they may wish to buy or sell in all the places, and ports and rivers within the territories of the chiefs of the Egba nation and throughout the whole of their dominions, and the Chiefs of the Egba nation pledge themselves to show no favour, and to give no privilege to the ships and traders of other countries which they do not show to those of England.¹¹³

Missionaries thereby gained greater prestige, silencing the voices of the slave dealers and thus had an opportunity to advance the Gospel, as the Egbas declared that: 'complete protection shall be afforded to missionaries or ministers of Gospels, of whatever nation or country, following their creation of sponsoring trade.'¹¹⁴

The most significant success for Legitimate Commerce was that the *Saros* who had earlier been the subject of ridicule by the native slave dealers gained protection from the king and chiefs of the Egba people who promulgated laws that: 'Sierra Leone African's natives (*Saros*) of whatsoever country are [not] to be permitted to be

¹¹² CMS/CA2/08/2A Article 5 of January 1852.

¹¹³ CMS/CA2/08/2A Article 6 of January 1852.

¹¹⁴ CMS/CA2/08/2A Article 8 of January 1852.

kidnapped.’¹¹⁵ The work of mission therefore moved beyond the main city into all the suburbs as the chiefs resolved ‘we will not attempt to hinder the advance of missionaries, ministers, and others into the interior.’¹¹⁶ The Egbas not only abrogated the Slave Trade, they also condemned other social vices such as human sacrifice which missionaries had been preaching against for the two earlier decades:

The Chiefs of the Egba Nation declare that no human beings shall.... be sacrificed within the territories on account of religion or other ceremonies, and that they will prevent the barbarous practice of murdering prisoners captured in war.¹¹⁷

Consequently, missionaries won the battle of morality, moving freely into the interior. They successfully legitimized commerce as a strategy for Gospel propagation. While some African chieftains rejected the Gospel, they could not resist having European missionaries’ presence in their domain for commercial and military motives. As Venn predicted, Legitimate Commerce gradually began to turn the Yoruba to ‘cells of civilisation from which the light’ soon began to ‘radiate to the regions around.’¹¹⁸

Conclusion:

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Henry Venn became a disciple of Buxton’s school of thought. He promoted ‘Legitimate Commerce’ at the formative stages of Christianity in Yorubaland. His proposition of the three-selves – Self-propagation, Self-Governing and Self-Financing is examined further as the discourse moves on to examine the issues that led to the decline of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. The missionaries who initiated and upheld Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland were criticized for delivering Africa from economic woes and the unpatriotic act of the

¹¹⁵ CMS/CA2/08/2b, Supplementary treaty to Article 1 of January 1852.

¹¹⁶ CMS/CA2/08/2b Article 1 of January 1852.

¹¹⁷ CMS/CA2/08/2A Article 7 of January 1852.

¹¹⁸ Henry Venn’s declaration of missionary empowerment program for Yorubaland, cited in O. U. Kalu, ed., *The History of Christianity in West Africa*, vol. i (Harlow: Longman, 1980), p. 2.

local and international slave dealers. They were reproved by fellow missionaries who argued that what Africa needed was the transforming power of the gospel.¹¹⁹

Even as late as 1810 the lists of subscribers to the Church Missionary Society contain no names of peers or bishops, no support from the cathedrals, nor from the universities.... The clergy refused to let its missionaries preach in their churches, the older religious societies frowned upon them, the magistrates were slow to enforce the law in their favour.¹²⁰

Nevertheless, the agricultural and commercial successes recorded by individuals such as H. Robbin, a native lay agent in Ake, Abeokuta and favourite of Venn who traded successfully in cotton, go a long way to justify Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland.¹²¹ It vindicates Venn's stance for productive education and portrays the native missionaries' pedagogical philosophy as a right step in the right direction.

Samuel Crowther who was instructed in literary studies and carpentry under the tutelage of Mr (later bishop) and Mrs Weeks in Sierra Leone was full of gratitude to God who returned him by the workings of providence to his country and people again, to teach them the same thing that he was taught in his land of refuge:

When I was a boy at Sierra Leone, the history of Joseph was my favourite reading. I had no thoughts of ever returning to my native land, nor of seeing my relations, but it led me to lie passive in God's hands, and to follow the leadings of Providence as my safest guide."¹²²

It was this unpleasant remembrance of captivity and joyous memoirs of deliverance that turned Thomas King's day of agony to a 'happy day'¹²³ and melted the minds of the returnees who became promoters of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. There

¹¹⁹ Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in several countries in the interior of Africa*, p. 329.

¹²⁰ Warre Cornish, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 8.

¹²¹ CMS/CA2/080/25 Letter, H. Robbin to H. Venn, Ake, 8 February 1860. 'every one has got his own trade nearby so that it is fully hoped goods will be sent out soon'.

¹²² Tucker, *Abbeokuta or Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 116

¹²³ CMS/ CA2/061/1 Thomas King to Henry Venn, *Letter*, 27 Oct 1851.

was no resting for them until cotton began to yield dividends to the native traders and farmers as Edgar argued:

The sooner a large production of seeded cotton at a lucrative price can induce farmers to grow large quantities, and the merchants invited thereby to consider it worth their while to take up the trade, than we are ready to give up this at present unprofitable inducement which requires much patience and determined perseverance to accomplish.¹²⁴

A critical question however is: 'Why and how did Legitimate Commerce lose its relevance as an economic salvation process for Yorubaland?' This is the subject of investigation in Chapter Six of this thesis.

¹²⁴ CMS/CA3/04/497, Letter, J. Edgar to S. Crowther, 3 September 1875.

CHAPTER SIX

THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR LEGITIMATE COMMERCE IN YORUBALAND

In history there is always a struggle going on between the forces which try to drive toward fulfilment in the kingdom of God and its unity and the forces which try to disrupt this unity and prevent history from moving toward the kingdom of God; or in a religious mythological language, there are always conflicts going on in history between divine and demonic forces.¹

Legitimate Commerce in nineteenth-century Yorubaland can be perceived in the light of Tillich's theological reflection on the human aspects of bringing God's plan into fulfilment. The two opposing forces discernible in the economic scene of Yorubaland in the nineteenth century were the missionaries on the one hand and the imperial traders on the other. While the missionaries were doing everything to restore the dignity of trade in Yorubaland through the evangelical ideology of harmonizing trade with religion, their goal of moving the Yoruba towards that unity was constantly challenged by continuing slave traders led by Kosoko in the 1840s and 1850s, and then by the liquor traders from Germany in the 1870s and 1880s.

Thus, I argue that the missionaries represented the forces that were working to attain the fulfilment of God's kingdom and its unity in Yorubaland, while the slave dealers of the 1840s and the imperial traders of the 1870s were the negative forces that continued to exploit Africa and its citizenry. Sometimes they admitted as much – cf. the confessions of some of the slave dealers in the 1850s: 'we of the slave dealers lied that none but the Book people [meaning the converts]... have more chance of getting rich than [the slave dealers]'.²

¹ Paul Tillich, 'Missions and World History', in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, Gerald H. Anderson ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 282.

² See CMS/CA2/032 CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal, S. Crowther Jr., June to September 25, 1852.

The period from the 1870s to about 1893 posed a different problem. As missionaries sought every means of counteracting the menace of illicit traders from many parts of Europe, the latter also began to malign them, pointing to them as 'illicit traders hanging about violating the orders against private trading'.³ Missionary intervention in the commercial life of Yorubaland encountered much confrontation from economic opportunists. These insensitive traders whose interest was purely profit greatly disrupted the Yoruba agents of the CMS and other returnees who set out with great zeal that as 'fellow-heirs (with their European peers) of the kingdom of their Lord'⁴ they would purify their country's economy that had been polluted by the transatlantic Slave Trade.

The Yoruba returnees perceived that the Slave Trade would vanish if their people should embrace lawful trade. Their story was full of promises as 'three native young men' bought a slave ship, and made 'their first trading voyage', consecrating 'the first fruits of their labour to the good of their country'.⁵ However, missionaries' successes of the first three decades of the 1840s to early 1870s when Venn, the secretary of the CMS was in the forefront of propagating the Gospel of self-reliance through 'lawful commerce' were unprecedented, in spite of the challenges from the slave dealers. Thus, missionaries as the 'forces of the 'divine' fulfilment of God's plan laboured on until colonialism swept them aside by the 1890s, giving the forces of the

³ CMS/CA3/04/497 J. Edgar to CMS Secretaries, 3 September 1875.

⁴ Sarah Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1854), p. 44.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 86.

indiscriminate traders more latitude to reintroduce what is perceived in this thesis as illicit trades and therefore, 'slavery of sin and Satan.'⁶

Commerce in Yorubaland thereby rose from the level of mere buying and selling to a productive economy. Things however turned sour for the Yoruba agents of mission towards the close of the century, when Venn retired in 1871 and died and soon after died in 1873. Although the vision of Venn to create 'a cell of civilization' succeeded, especially in the 1860s, his departure changed the face of history for the economy of Yorubaland. His empowerment programme for Samuel Crowther and his countrymen and women waned in the course of time. The forces of Legitimate Commerce and those of the illegitimate traders confronted each other. Both forces started to whip up sentiments that would portray the other as demonic forces within Yorubaland in particular and Africa in general.

It is in the light of the unsustainable enthusiasm of the Yoruba missionaries from about the 1870s that this chapter examines some of the critical issues that undermined Legitimate Commerce and led to its downfall in nineteenth-century Yorubaland. First, it appraises the role of the missionaries in the development of cotton production in Abeokuta and Ibadan, the two foremost missionary centres in Yorubaland. Secondly, it examines three factors that made the 'light' of Legitimate Commerce begin to dim from the beginning of the 1870s. These are the effects of the 'Liquor Trade', the factor of 'Colonialism', and 'Cultural Hegemony'. While the imperial traders flooded the market with intoxicating drinks, the colonialists competed for the possession of territories in Africa and missionary rivalries escalated.

⁶ CMS/CA2/049/95 D. Hinderer, 'Missionary at Abeokuta, June 12 – Sept 25 1849' Journal, Wednesday 20 June 1849.

The Rise of Legitimate Commerce as a Missiological Ideology in Yorubaland

The names of Samuel Crowther and Henry Venn will remain indelible in the annals of history whenever recourse is made to the emergence of Legitimate Commerce as a panacea for redressing the economic and social delinquency in Yorubaland. Both men were the symbols of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. While Crowther held the sceptre of missionary development in Yorubaland, Venn was the ambassador at large and plenipotentiary for the Church Missionary Society. He never stepped on the soil of Yorubaland, but fought for her economic restoration for thirty critical years of missionary formation in West Africa. Thus, the two men stood on the African and European shores of the Atlantic as builders of the Kingdom of God in the African continent.

The voluminous production and sale of cotton in the nineteenth century also remain a vital aspect of Legitimate Commerce for which Crowther and Venn will continue to be reference points. The international trade effectively eradicated the trade in slaves as production and sale of cotton rose steadily and more farmers requested the assistance of the missionaries to step up production. Thus, the vessels that were formerly dedicated to the shipping of African's forced labourers became very active in commuting between Africa and Europe with African cotton exports.

Although the missionaries introduced a new impetus for the large scale production of oil palm trees, cocoa and other food crops in Yorubaland, cotton took the lead among the products missionaries were interested in promoting in the 1850s. The story of the cotton trade began from Samuel Ajayi Crowther, who took samples of cotton grown

in Yorubaland with him as he travelled to England in 1851 and returned with good news from the Lancashire cotton merchants.⁷ The Yoruba returnees believed passionately that their country would soon become a force to be reckoned with in the comity of nations.

Crowther's solo effort paid off quickly, as Manchester cotton merchants observed that the Yoruba cotton was of merchantable quality. It was with great enthusiasm that he returned to his people with the news that the indigenous cotton of Yorubaland was marketable in Britain. So what was the whole purpose of missionaries' commercial initiative if the cotton from the Yoruba country was qualitative and merchantable, one may ask? The sample was good, but how would the final product reflect the sample holistically? The quality was good, but how would an economic quantity of cotton be obtainable from Yorubaland?

Although many authors argue correctly that Africa had its indigenous technology of hand made goods before the arrival of missionaries, nevertheless, production was on a small scale, grossly inadequate to satisfy the economic quantities suitable for the export of lawful produce. Venn argued that

The commerce of Africa being confined to its crafts and being limited for many years principally to the export of its inhabitants for labour as slaves in other countries, the cultivation of cotton then was confined to supply the wants of its population.⁸

⁷ *Parliamentary Papers*, PP LIV, 1852, Papers Relative to the Reduction of Lagos, pp. 133 – 4, Straith to Palmerston, 20 Aug 1851.

⁸ CMS/CA2/016/12, Report H. Venn on cotton 'from the Countries watered by the River Niger and its tributaries' to CMS secretaries, 8 May 1858.

Thus, Africa was involved mainly in micro economics as far as its manufactured goods were concerned. Without external support, training facilities and funding the large scale production which modern mission anticipated would not materialise.

Even though Crowther saw the viability of Yoruba cotton, there was none to export, because the work was done manually and the production was barely sufficient for the local looms. The way and manner by which the growing and processing of cotton was accelerated in Abeokuta and Ibadan showed that Legitimate Commerce was a project for Yoruba empowerment. First, immediately a new market in far away Manchester had been opened up for the marketing of Yoruba cotton, production was increased. Samuel Crowther had a difficult time meeting the needs of the farmers in Abeokuta who were demanding gins.⁹ Missionaries' hopes were however rewarded as a good number of farmers soon began to export their cotton directly to England.¹⁰

The trade in Yoruba cotton moved on smoothly once some permanent infrastructures were put in place through the efforts of Venn in the 1850s. Venn did not oppose the use of squadrons to check the menace of slave dealers in Yorubaland as an interim measure, but he expressed reservations on its adequacy for sustaining the abrogation of the trade permanently. Venn argued that even if the squadrons were able to contain the Slave Trade for a century, it would break forth again unless a viable religious and economic option were put in place. Venn's conviction that Legitimate Commerce was needed to suppress the Slave Trade is reflected in the way he fought intensively until cotton became a major exportable commodity from Abeokuta, Ibadan and their environs. Acceleration of cotton production in Yorubaland was inevitable to check the

⁹ CMS/CA2/032/18 S. Crowther, Report on the number of saw gins purchased, and quantity of cotton paid for the gins.

¹⁰ CMS/CA2/032 S. Crowther, Report containing a list of farmers who already began to export cotton from Abeokuta by 1856.

menace of Kosoko, the intrepid Prince and King of Lagos who rose from exile to reign again in Lagos, the major slave port in West Africa.

Despite his reservation on the effectiveness of the squadron as a lasting solution, Venn solicited the support of the government, requesting every means of reinforcing the efforts of the missionaries in Africa.

The fourth point upon which I will touch, is the very valuable help you may give to the missionaries; manifesting your interest in their work - such as occasional visits to their stations - attending their worships, examining their schools & co¹¹

Every effort was made by the plantation owners to sidetrack the slave trade, including asking for an intensification of the indentured labour, exporting the African human-power to the West Indies, especially Jamaica. Venn, an ardent disciple of Fowell Buxton's school of thought, insisted in his address to the secretaries of the Church Missionary Society that African labour be retained and utilized in Africa to produce the needed agricultural produce for export into Europe. Although the West Indian plantations were producing cotton, especially at Jamaica and Demarara, Venn identified two major reasons why Europe should begin to look in the direction of Africa, not only for cotton but also sugar cane:

doubtless the cotton plant will grow in these countries (i.e. Jamaica and Demarara) as well as others within the tropics but these two countries ask for an advance of capital and for what is utterly unattainable - fresh importations of African labour.¹²

While Britain and many other European nations had outlawed the exploitation of the African labours, the plantation owners in the West Indies kept on attracting Africans indirectly. They succeeded because some Africans in Sierra Leone who wanted to

¹¹ CMS/CA2/L2, p. 168. Letter with the Theme: 'Lawful Commerce and Christian Civilization', Henry Venn to Captain Yardley Wilmot, 12 Sept 1862.

¹² CMS/CA2/016/12. Report H. Venn on cotton 'from the Countries watered by the River Niger and its tributaries' to CMS secretaries, 8 May 1858

relocate to places where they could find greener pastures ended up in the indentured labour scheme.

Venn projected that within time, the supply of cotton from the British West India positions would become unattractive because of the 'equally good or better remuneration for the available human labour' in the cultivation of cotton and the sugar cane in Africa. He made extensive analyses of the advantages of procuring cotton 'from the Countries watered by the River Niger and its tributaries'.¹³

Venn's promotion of the cotton of Yorubaland invalidates any categorization of European missionaries as agents of imperialism, because farmers and traders became fully integrated into the idea of legitimizing trade. At the peak of cotton production in Yorubaland, Venn reported in London that

There are now two hundred to three hundred gins at work in Abeokuta, and five or six presses, chiefly in the hands of natives. Cotton is flowing to England in a stream widening every day, and Abeokuta is rising rapidly in every branch of commerce.¹⁴

While imperialism, the chief crime that provided the latitude for other misdemeanours by Europe against Africa is indefensible, care is needed to separate good from evil, the chaff from the good seeds, and to commend the agents of Yoruba empowerment and condemn the merchants who contributed to economic dereliction and made themselves catalysts of Yoruba subjugation.

It can be argued that the traders who identified with the religious responses of the missionaries and abolitionists were not as recklessly careless as the imperial traders.

¹³ CMS/CA2/016/12. Report H. Venn to CMS secretaries, 1861.

¹⁴ E. Stocks, *A History of the C. M. S.*, vol. 2 (London: n.p, 1899), pp. 105, 111.

For instance, the Liverpool merchant, McGregor Laird and his colleague Richard Oldfield not only traded in African produce, their memoirs gave the critical information needed to execute the economic plans of Buxton and the Yoruba merchants in Sierra Leone.¹⁵ The era of thinking that Africans were not capable of fully internalizing European civilization had gone with Samuel Crowther,¹⁶ Thomas King and many other Yoruba elites, all brilliant alumni of Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone.

While the attitude of some European missionaries, such as David Hinderer, Henry Townsend and Charles Gollmer was to retain their African counterparts as second class agents in missionary affairs, Venn worked tirelessly at promoting cotton from Yorubaland and empowering the people with accelerated production and sale of cotton. Yoruba cotton rose in importance at the height of escalating prices in Britain. This was due to the effort of Venn who started to lobby the Manchester cotton merchants and to stimulate the Yoruba to grow more cotton. Venn was not merely trying to enlarge the British market for the promotion of Yoruba cotton; he was also interested in helping the people develop a new trade link that would enhance production and marketing. In this way the profile of 'headlight' theology as a providential or beneficial theology becomes clearer in this study.

The Collapse of Legitimate Commerce as a Theological Ideology in Yorubaland

No sooner had Henry Venn, their friend and champion of African empowerment died in 1873 than the story of Yoruba empowerment through legitimizing commerce took a

¹⁵ McGregor Laird and R. A. K. Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa by the River Niger* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1971 [1837]).

¹⁶ Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (New York, Edinburgh: Orbis Books, T & T Clark, 2004), p. 93.

different turn. The events that unfolded after the retirement of Venn as the secretary of the CMS and his subsequent death, therefore, left many questions in the hearts of the Yoruba people, missionaries or lay people. These events marred the laudable works of three eventful decades of Venn's advocacy for the empowerment of the Yoruba.

The issue that critics of missionary motives continue to ponder on is why European missionaries entered Africa with a new conception of religion and society at all, when for example traditional religions, even at their primal levels of 'microcosm', appeared to be taking care of the problems of Yorubaland.¹⁷ The traditional argument of missionaries for exposing themselves to the hazards of malaria, wars and attack from illegitimate traders was that they were vanguards of eschatological hope. T. J. Bowen, the pioneer missionary of the Southern Baptist Mission in Yorubaland argued that the primary function of mission was 'the preaching of the Gospel, and the planting and training of churches'¹⁸ Some people however suspect that there was an intrinsic motive for embarking on 'missions at all'. Miller poses a question that appears to incorporate the ancient interrogation on the purpose of mission:

Why do these nice but naive people waste their lives in discomfort and loneliness, vainly toiling at futility? Why should efforts be made to change men's religion? After all, are not all religions essentially alike, all headed in the same direction? And are not religions culture-conditioned, each having developed in its own milieu as befitting the needs of its own adherents? Isn't there enough, too, for each church to do in its own land without setting forth to evangelize other lands?¹⁹

¹⁷ Robin Horton, 'African Conversion', in *Africa*, 41:1971, p. 103 of pp. 85 – 108.

¹⁸ T. J. Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1968 (1857)), p. 329.

¹⁹ Donald G. Miller, 'Pauline Motives for the Christian Mission', in Gerald H. Anderson, *The Theology of the Christian Mission* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 72.

Questions such as this may have influenced Horton's argument that Yoruba traditional religions, at the level of 'microcosm', appeared to be providing solutions that world religions offer at the level of 'macrocosm'.²⁰

Critics of modern mission and Legitimate Commerce ought to begin to examine mission in nineteenth-century Yorubaland, not only in terms of its eschatological impetus but also its existential value to the growth of lawful commerce. While some European missionaries lost the plot by beginning to edge out their hosts, the Yoruba agents of modern mission, the two groups always united quickly to ensure that the people and the continent were not suppressed perpetually. The critical test for establishing the purpose of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland is to re-examine the efforts of missionaries under the leadership of Venn who legitimized commerce in spite of the 'forces' of slave dealers and obnoxious merchants. Despite the arguments of the critics, the principle in Tillich's proposition is right that the Church cannot be separated from its mission:

Every activity of the Church must be derived from the foundation of the Church itself. It must be an activity which follows *necessarily* from the very nature of the Church. It is not the accidental but the necessary functions of the Church which are the subject of theological consideration.²¹

The argument here is that missionaries could not proclaim the gospel in nineteenth-century Yorubaland without paying attention to the problem of commercial dysfunction, as that would portray them as an insensitive organ of the Church.

Christianity, it can be argued, includes a humanitarian dimension, and it is only by the use of 'means' could this be achieved as William Carrey suggested in the quotation

²⁰ For more on the parallel between the functions of 'microcosm' and 'macrocosm', see Horton, 'African Conversion', pp. 85 – 108.

²¹ Tillich, 'Missions and World History', p. 281. *Italic mine.*

below. Missionaries had a compelling responsibility to interfere in every aspect of human endeavour such as stimulating agricultural production in Yorubaland. The actions of the missionaries were appropriate and timely, because 'the soil was productive, the climate healthy',²² as Sarah Tucker observed in the 1850s. Much earlier in the eighteenth century, Henry Smeathman described the continent generally as 'a land of immense fertility'.²³ The missionaries' response became unavoidable as Africa was fast becoming a wasted land.²⁴

Considering Tillich's argument and the observations of Tucker and Smeathman above, it can be argued that Legitimate Commerce derived from the foundation of the Church, especially in the way it manifested in nineteenth-century Yorubaland. Legitimate Commerce was not only relevant, it was also a timely 'means' for the development of a theology capable of drawing the Yoruba to the centre of meaning and life in the Transcendent. It also passes William Carey's test of necessity:

We must not be contented however with praying, without *exerting ourselves in the use of means* for the obtaining of those things we pray for. Were *the children of light*, but *as wise in their generation as the children of this world*, they would stretch every nerve to gain so glorious a prize, nor ever imagine that it was to be obtained in any other way.... Their souls enter into the spirit of the project, and their happiness in a manner depends on its success?²⁵

The eighteenth-century ideology of the British evangelicals that commerce and Christianity were harmonious has however been challenged by those who argue that the Protestant tradition was a global promoter of the Spirit of Capitalism. The

²² Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, p. 13.

²³ C. Fyfe, *A Short History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 15.

²⁴ For details of how the slave raiders invaded Yorubaland from the 1820s, see Sarah Tucker, *Sunrise within the Tropics*. See also S. O. Biobaku, *The Egba and Their Neighbours, 1842-1872* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957)

²⁵ William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester: Ann Ireland & Others, 1761), pp. 81 – 2. Italics Carey's

frontline nineteenth-century sociologist, using several examples of how the Protestant tradition has continued to promote acquisitive tendencies among its members, criticizes the Church for giving the impression that wealth was a way of measuring Godliness or otherwise.²⁶

However, Legitimate Commerce was not only to extend the means of making wealth to Christian converts, but to reverse the trend whereby human beings were being sold as chattels on the international market. King Akitoye of Lagos, who introduced Legitimate Commerce into his kingdom in 1845, did so at the cost of his throne. The hatred that slave dealers had for the introduction of Legitimate Commerce led to his being dethroned as the king of Lagos and being sent into exile in 1850. In 1851 he reminded the British consul of his anti-slavery stance and the fact of his being the legitimate ruler who should be reinstated onto the throne of Lagos and not be left to waste away in exile at Abeokuta.²⁷ There were also fears of critics who did not take a deep look into the motives for the commercial activities of European missionaries before concluding that they were precursors of colonialism, and thus labelling Legitimate Commerce as an imperial design.²⁸

Some events in Yorubaland in the nineteenth century give credence to such thinking. Missionaries had an arduous task subduing the local slave dealers led principally by the Prince and King Kosoko and Madam Tinubu whose influences were widespread

²⁶ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Harper Collins Academy, 1991).

²⁷ See CMS/CA2/07/1 Lagos ex-king Akitoye to J. Beecroft, consul at Badagry, 1851.

²⁸ See Toyin Falola and Demola Babalola, 'Religion and Economy in Pre-Colonial Nigeria', in Jacob K. Olupona and Toyin Falola, eds, *Religion and Society in Nigeria: Historical and Sociological Perspectives* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1991). See also A. G. Hopkins, 'Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880-92', in *The Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, 21, 3 (1968), p. 580.

among the people. A slave dealer in 1852 lamented how missionaries had succeeded in getting rid of their king and chief slaver, Kosoko from the economic scene of Lagos²⁹ Making a distinction between the colonialists and European missionaries was sometimes complex, because both had a goal of abrogating slavery in the 1840s and 1850s. While the former were using force, the latter were employing persuasion by providing an alternative trade in goods to counteract the Slave Trade.

The argument of critics could have been calmed if Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland had followed the participatory method of Henry Thornton in his Sierra Leone agricultural settlement experiment. Economic imperialism could not have been imputed as Thornton's motive for setting up a fund for the enterprise into which numerous philanthropists donated. Henry Thornton, Wilberforce's cousin, an elected member of the London Abolition Committee, became the chairman of the Company, while Thomas' brother, John Clarkson was appointed as the governor of the colony.³⁰

The conduct of Christian traders endeared them to the heart of the Yoruba and compensated for any suspicion that they were pursuing some 'Expansionist' goals. The love and trust that the Yoruba initially had for Western missionaries and the liberated Africans who came to them with the ideology of Commerce and Christianity was based on stories of 'strange adventures' the Yoruba emigrants told their relations:

the history of their sufferings at the barracoon, and in the slave ship; of their rescue by the English; of their settlement at Sierra Leone as free men... their astonishment and admiration of the English nation were unbounded. And when their Christian brethren told them, not only of the love of English

²⁹ CMS/CA2/032/57 Samuel Crowther Jr., Journal at Abeokuta, 18 June 1852.

³⁰ London, British Library of Society of Friends, Dept of MSS, Elihu Robinson, Diaries and Memoranda, Vol. VI, 13 November 1792, MSS 21, 256, 10 May 1791, MSS 21, 256, 31 January 1792 [cf. Judith Jennings, *The Business of Abolishing the British Slave Trade 1783-1807* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1997), p. 70.]

Christians, but of the source from which it flowed, the conviction forced itself on some of their hearts that the English religion must be the right one.³¹

Missionaries and indeed the English nation enjoyed the unlimited support of the Yoruba until unfolding events began to show that 'wolves' were hiding among the 'sheep'. In the midst of the commercial exploitation by many Europeans were friends of Africa such as Laird who stimulated the interest of Fowell Buxton and sensitized Africans in many places to begin the crusade for legitimizing commerce in Africa.³²

Laird, the pioneer Liverpool entrepreneur who ventured into trade at the Niger immediately after the discovery of the River that had been obscure to many explorers, anticipated religious and cultural interaction. Although Laird, like many other English traders shared the evangelical stance on civilizing Africa, profit motive and expansionist vision was still paramount on his agenda. He envisioned that

By the Niger, the whole of Western Africa would be... opened with all the nations inhabiting the unknown countries between the Niger and the Nile. British influence and enterprise would thereby penetrate into the remotest recesses of the country... new and boundless markets would be opened... hundred of nations would be awakened... and every British station would become a centre from whence religion and commerce would radiate their influence over the surrounding country.³³

It is clear from the above comment that not only was Laird aware of the missionary thrust of harmonising religion and commerce; he had a progressive vision for Africa as well. However, as a trader profit was the main motivation.

³¹ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, pp. 52 – 53.

³² For more on the influence of McGregor Laird's writings on Buxton and others, see C. C. Ifemesia, 'The "civilising mission of 1841: aspects of an episode in Anglo-Nigerian Relations', in O. U. Kalu, ed., *The History of Christianity in West Africa* (London and New York: Longman Group Limited, 1980).

³³ Laird and Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa*, pp. 388 – 389.

Laird's perception of the evangelical theory of carrying the Bible along with the plough did not interfere with his expansionist vision, profit maximization and Empire-building. He is an example of how modern mission was being driven by a spiritual and social agenda, while the traders had profit and empire expansion as their uncompromising goal. The alliance of modern mission and the British consuls did not allow such European traders easy access to Yorubaland. Commentators who classify European missionaries of the 1850s and 1860s as if they were part of the Western exploitation of Africa do a serious disservice to the zest with which they implanted Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. While others were unconcerned on the state of the slaves, missionaries toiled to legitimize the commercial orientation of their converts with the sole aim of transforming Africa into an economic Paradise.

The general atmosphere that pervaded late nineteenth-century Yorubaland blurred the real intentions of the returnees, Yoruba missionaries and their European guests. However, their correspondence, journals and memoranda portray them as economic liberators and torch-bearers for Yoruba economic emancipation. Their collections in the archives across Europe were not missionary apologetics in defence of their actions, but reports of their stewardship, which was a requirement of the CMS, their sending body. Although Legitimate Commerce eventually lost its impact in African economic development, posterity shows that tribute should be paid to the nineteenth-century missionaries who laboured to restore the economic dignity of Yorubaland, rather than grouping them along with traders and economic speculators. Even though Fowell Buxton and Venn never visited Yorubaland, their motives were apparent in the propositions examined earlier and provided the compass for making objective evaluation of the economic situation of Yorubaland between 1839 and 1871.

When some of the rationales that were evident in the original plan started to give way to spurious ideologies among the successors of Buxton and Venn, some returnees themselves began to wonder if history would misjudge their motives for introducing Legitimate Commerce. Crowther lamented at the turn of events towards the end of the nineteenth century, seeing that what they had perceived as a process of emancipation had turned out to be for the advantage of imperial governance and the expansion of trade in Africa. All these negative effects of Legitimate Commerce and the way modern mission proactively challenged the evil in slavery by cooperating with the British consuls to gain political influence portrayed the economic experiment as an imperial design.

The usual reaction of the slave dealers is encapsulated in the reaction of a local slave dealer to a question from an assistant of Samuel Crowther Jr.:

If we could but get our friend K?s?k? back to the throne at Lagos, we shall be able to accomplish this [Slave Trade]. Akitoye is nobody, said he, he is all white man, & he has no honour. (That is because he grants the English to stop the slave trade).³⁴

This kind of confrontation between legitimate and illegitimate trade was responsible for the chasm between the missionaries and the local traders who felt that the Christian returnees had greatly disrupted the flow of business and curtailed their profit significantly. Ironically, despite the impact of the traditional religions in commerce in Yorubaland the people did not see Christianity as a threat to their prosperity but the fact that missionaries were bent on Legitimate Commerce.

Under the instruction and influence of these Missionaries, the natives have in large numbers embraced Christianity, and have

³⁴ CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal, S. Crowther Jr., June to September 25, 1852.

advanced in civilisation and lawful commerce, and especially have entered upon the cultivation of cotton, and its preparation for the European markets, to an extent unparalleled by any other tribes in West Africa.³⁵

Legitimate Commerce therefore promoted Christianity as a viable religion to the converts who began instantly to reap the fruit of obedience to the new doctrine of commerce with a human face. At that point the Christian converts were the envious of their folks who remained in the traditional religions.

The events of the last three decades of the nineteenth century however weakened the advantages of Legitimate Commerce and cast shadows on the 'light' of the returnees and their friends from Europe. It was a period of indiscriminate trade in the expanding African market, political exploitation by the colonialists and cultural hegemony within the new missionary circles. These three prevailing conditions were not circumstantial or even accidental. They were carefully calculated by the traders and colonialists who were looking for ways of expanding trade and politics in Africa. It is imperative therefore to carefully analyse the events that led to the Rise and Fall of Legitimate Commerce, rather than casting aspersions on the missionaries who laboured for the social, political and economic redemption of Yorubaland.

The Effects of the Liquor Trade on Legitimate Commerce

The liquor trade which became an issue for the first time in 1886 through the protests of the Colonial Congress of the Temperance League and 'a pamphlet by Rev. H. Waller, gave much bad publicity to Legitimate Commerce, because of the

³⁵ H. Venn to the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 March 1863, in *British Parliamentary Papers concerning the Niger Expedition, Lagos and Surrounding Territories 1840 - 87*, Colonies Africa (Nigeria), vol. 63, P. Ford and G. Ford, eds (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1971), p. 203.

demoralising effects of liquor on 'the native races'.³⁶ Those who had acquired legitimate wealth soon became slaves to liquor. Nathaniel Ogbonaiye, a native missionary recalled that 'the wealthy ... were more or less addicted to drunkenness'.³⁷

He recalled a particular day in 1879:

This date in the grand market Adij?r?; Agun one of the candidates for baptism attended the market, and about the close of it she finished a bottle of gin rum. On their way home a young girl was pulling with her, a few yards that they might land, Agun being much intoxicated dropped at once into the water and died....³⁸

Thus, introducing liquor brought colossal losses to Yorubaland, not only because of the economic waste, but also because it resulted in the loss of human lives, reduced productivity and hindered the spiritual development of the converts.

The liquor trade, which boomed as the century drew to a close, was a major distraction to the theological experiment of using good (Legitimate Commerce) to overcome evil (the Slave Trade). The arrival of such detrimental trade portrayed Legitimate Commerce as an all comers' business game. It corrupted the civilizing mission, which the progenitors of Legitimate Commerce wanted to use as an avenue for fostering new and progressive international relations and restoring the hope of a degraded continent. It turned out to be another means of subjugating the people and impoverishing Africa.

A. Olorunfemi observes that the two groups of major protesters against the influx of liquor into West Africa were the cotton textile merchants of the Manchester Chamber

³⁶ F. D. Lugard, *Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1923), p. 597.

³⁷ CMS/CA2/11/112, N. Ogbonaiye, Journal Extract for the quarter ending December 1879, 9 Dec. 1879.

³⁸ Ibid, CMS/CA2/11/112, Ogbonaiye, Journal Extract for December 1879.

of Commerce and the trustees of the civilizing mission led by Bishop Tugwell of Equatorial West Africa and Sir John Kennaway, a member of the British Parliament.³⁹

The contention of the anti-liquor trade crusaders was multifarious. They observed the evil effects of wasteful expenditure on liquor. Apart from the danger that alcohol was injurious to health, the intoxicants introduced innumerable social vices, such as drunkenness, laziness, and 'wholesale degradation of tribes and communities'.⁴⁰ The decadence and laxity was so great that some key Yoruba leaders, rather than arresting such obnoxious trade, began to reap great benefits from it as they had done of the Slave Trade and promoted it to the detriment and further degradation of society.⁴¹

It was not only the Christians who disapproved of the liquor trade on the grounds of morality; the Manchester merchants shared the vision of the missionaries who had constituted themselves into a force for the suppression of evil against African humans. The missionaries and their allies insisted that the liquor trade was one of the causes of evaporation of Legitimate Commerce, 'since the natives who were easily led astray would rather drink than buy.'⁴²

The Manchester merchants had cause to team up with the missionaries to fight the export of liquor into Africa, not necessarily because of the evil effects of the intoxicants to the people, but because of the effects of a trade that emanated from competing European ports. Germany's export of 'about 3,400,000 gallons of trade

³⁹ CO 96/266, Encl in Aborigines Protection Society to Colonial Office, 22 May 1895. See also A. Olorunfemi, 'The Liquor Traffic Dilemma in British West Africa: The Southern Nigerian Example, 1895-1918', in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 17, No 2, 1984, p.229 of pp. 229 -241.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Lugard, *Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, p. 598.

⁴² Statement of Deputation From Native Races and Liquor Traffic United Committee to Mr Chamberlain. *The Times*, 18 April 1889 cited in Olorunfemi, 'The Liquor Traffic Dilemma in British West Africa...', p. 229.

spirits'⁴³ to Africa in 1889 alone reduced the importation of textiles in exchange for cotton. The net effect is that while the Yoruba exported cotton to Manchester's textile industry they contributed nothing to the production of gin that was becoming more popular than textiles as a commodity of trade. Thus, apart from the obnoxious nature of liquor, imperialists from Germany exploited Africa, widening the continent's balance of trade that had just begun to recover since the 1850s. Such trade practices cast great aspersions on the moral sense of promoters of liquor as traffickers of evil in Africa, taking place only a decade and a half after the death of Venn, the great champion of the cotton trade in Yorubaland.

Although the cooperation of the Manchester textile group and the colonialists with the missionaries was with some ulterior motives, it was still a step in the right direction. While the Manchester merchants' protest was absolutely protectionist, the influx of liquor into a young economy such as Yorubaland was dangerous for the growth of commerce and injurious to the people's future. Lord Lugard observes:

The importation of liquor enormously decreases the importation of Manchester and Birmingham goods. The cry for 'new markets' and the daily papers teem with unpleasant statistics which go to prove that our trade supremacy is being wrested from us by Germany; yet here in our own Crown Colonies and protectorates, we forgo the market that might be ours and substitute foreign-made goods for our own from which we derive no profits except such as accrue from a small portion of the carrying trade.⁴⁴

The potential danger of losing trade superiority to the Germans explains why the British Parliament disapproved of the exchange of spirits with African produce, at the expense of drastic reduction in the sales of domestic articles such as cloths,

⁴³ Lugard, *Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, p. 597.

⁴⁴ F. D. Lugard, 'Liquor Trade in Africa', in *Nineteenth Century*, 42, November 1897, p. 776.

agricultural tools and other useful factors of local production.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the missionaries whose goal was to legitimize commerce in Yorubaland always cooperated with others as long as it advanced their own course.

Neither the traders nor the colonial administrators could be carried along for too long. They cooperated with the missionaries only insofar as they were useful for combating competition from other European nations that jointly and severally exploited Africa. They easily abandoned the national clamour for trade superiority in Britain and joined their German peers in the liquor trade that was bringing in cheap profit. Virtually all the imperial traders became liquor merchants, because the spirits were 'cheap, easy to barter and had a reasonable steady price which made it one of the most consistently profitable economic links with West Africa.'⁴⁶

Although the 1889 Brussels Conference imposed a heavy tariff on liquor to further discourage the trade in Africa, the colonial administration in Lagos took advantage of the legislation as a cheap source of raising fund to finance their mandate. The argument of Governor Carter of Lagos colony aptly summarizes the stance of the colonial office on the liquor trade.

[Concerning] the main financial support of the imperial structures in West Africa. I shall be sorry to see the spirit traffic abolished in West Africa, because I happen to be charged with the duty of finding necessary funds to carry on the machinery of government in one of the West African Colonies, and I know of no more satisfactory means of obtaining money than by a duty on spirits.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *The Times*, 23 August 1895. See also J. Flint, 'Mary Kingsley: A Reassessment', in *Journal of African History*, IV, 1, 1963, pp. 98 – 9. See also Olorunfemi, 'The Liquor Traffic Dilemma in British West Africa', p. 230.

⁴⁶ M. Kingsley, 'Liquor Traffic with West Africa', in *The Fortnightly Review*, April 1898, pp. 537 – 560.

⁴⁷ Governor G. Carter in *The Times*, 6 June 1895.

Missionaries on the other hand were out to offer both the message of salvation and economic empowerment to the people who would become the future carriers of the 'Good News' to other parts of Africa. This is one of the ways of distinguishing them from either the merchants or the colonial administrators whose interest in Yorubaland were purely commerce and trade integrated into politics.

Even though colonialism had become firmly rooted in Yorubaland by 1893, the CMS missionaries especially derived power from the system without losing their focus.⁴⁸ Although their theological framework depended upon colonial policies, nevertheless, they continued to search for legitimate 'means' of achieving their goals. Bishop Tugwell, decrying the use of irrational funds to execute rational projects proposed direct tax for laying on the infrastructure. He asked:

How is the railway being built? By gin. How is the town lighted? By gin. And now if it be asked how is the town to be drained, or how are we to secure a good supply and good pure water? The answer is, with gin! Such a situation is absolutely dishonest.⁴⁹

Thus, although missionaries needed the colonialists to continue to be relevant, they kept their mandate of defending Africa whenever possible.

Merchants such as the John Holt and company, the Miller Brothers, and F. & A. Swanzy whose main and sustaining merchandise were spirits, argued in favour of the liquor trade. Their contention was that it was part of Legitimate Commerce. They argued that it cast no serious aspersion on the 'civilizing mission' and other agencies of the Slave Trade abolition and eradication.⁵⁰ Mary Kingsley, an advocate of the pro-

⁴⁸ See how missionaries derived powers from colonial system in J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 149 - 151.

⁴⁹ Bishop Tugwell in *The Times*, 14 November 1908.

⁵⁰ The Liverpool Journal of Commerce (Supplement), 2 August 1895.

liquor trade group, downplayed the clamour for restraint to the trade in spirits as an exaggeration of the problem. She claimed that 'sensational journalists had painted an unfairly lurid picture of the effects of the liquor trade in West Africa.'⁵¹

Kingsley's argument agrees with that of Augustus Mockler-Ferryman who argues that liquor was one of the vestiges of the Slave Trade, because, apart from gun and gunpowder it was another mode of payments for the slaves.⁵² At the height of Legitimate Commerce, the bulk of the payment for agricultural produce, up to half of the turnover was made in exchange with liquor. It was more acceptable to the key merchants on both sides of the trade, and the African chiefs. The labourers too were also anxious to be paid with gin, arms and gunpowder, rather than cowries.⁵³ Thus, while the traders were culpable of selling the intoxicants, their customers, the Yoruba were not less guilty.

The pattern of the Slave Trade in which the Portuguese were the leader and Britain a later addition to the list of buying nations, repeated itself again on the issue of liquor sale. In the 1880s German merchants such as G. L. Gaiser and Witt & Busch took advantage of the British agencies' indignation over the liquor trade to gain an edge over others in African trade. They began to export poor grade spirits to Lagos.⁵⁴ The German Chancellor supported the traders for the fear that the share of his country in the African market would dwindle if the liquor trade were abrogated.⁵⁵ It was from

⁵¹ M. Kingsley to Joseph Chamberlain, 30 April 1898. J. Chamberlain, paper 9/5, cited in Olorunfemi, 'The Liquor Traffic Dilemma in British West Africa', p. 230.

⁵² Augustus Ferryman Mockler-Ferryman, *British West Africa* (London: n.p, 1898), pp. 480 – 4.

⁵³ Lugard, *Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, p. 598.

⁵⁴ C. Gertzel, *John Holt: A British Merchant in West Africa in the Era of Imperialism* (D. Phil Thesis, Oxford, 1969), pp. 543 – 546.

⁵⁵ FO84/1817, Conference Memo by H. P. Anderson, 10 December 1884.

Lagos that the 'export quality liquor'⁵⁶ that were not marketable in Germany was therefore dispersed to the hinterland of Yorubaland. Thus, the vulnerable markets of Yorubaland and indeed the whole of West Africa were subjected to consuming spirits which in European standards were of un-merchantable quality.

By and large, when it became obvious that the competing Germans were having a larger share of the African market, British merchants finally joined the trade.⁵⁷ Lord Lugard, the one time Governor-General of Nigeria observed that Britain was made to join in legislating against merchandise that was not of British origin, arguing:

The spirit trade was a disastrous policy.... Not only was it a foreign manufacture carried in foreign vessels... but since it supplied German vessels with outward cargoes, it enabled Germany to secure the practical monopoly of the homeward palm kernel trade.⁵⁸

The press outcry and public opinion in Britain was that the larger market outside Europe had begun to prefer the popularly acclaimed, 'Made in Germany' products.⁵⁹ Thus, in no time British traders backed their German counterparts up in putting up a resistance against anti-liquor trade crusaders⁶⁰ hoping that 'the liquor traffic will reach its own level and die a natural death, as soon as the traders can get freely among the natives and create new wants for their products.'⁶¹

⁵⁶ This writer calls it 'export quality liquor' pejoratively, because such quality was unfit for human consumption in Hamburg or Rotterdam, not to talk of London.

⁵⁷ See C/O 96/346, Quarterly Report for Ada, encl. in Governor Hodgson to Mr Chamberlain, 18 December 1899. See also Liverpool Journal of Commerce, 26 March 1894.

⁵⁸ Lugard, *The Dual Mandate*, p. 60

⁵⁹ R. J. S. Hoffman, *Great Britain and the German Trade Rivalry 1875 - 1914* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1933), pp. 224 -272; G. Durham, 'The Foreign Trade of Great Britain and Germany', in *Contemporary Review*, 98, October 1910, pp. 396 - 402.

⁶⁰ See T. N. Tamuno, *The Evolution of the Nigerian State: The Southern Phase, 1898 - 1914* (London, 1972), pp. 289 - 303.

⁶¹ C/O 96/268 J. Hartford and Coy of Bristol to Mr J. C. Chamberlain, 3 Sept 1895.

The authors of *News Review* spoke the minds of the British public that 'a gigantic Commercial state' was rising 'to menace our prosperity and to contend with us for the trade of the world'.⁶² Others too, within and outside the colonial administrative system observe the potency of the liquor trade to the survival of European trade relations in Africa. Allan McPhee perceives the trade as the key for unlocking many other commercial doors,⁶³ while a colonial official, Edward Fairfield pointed to it as 'a great way to account for the growth of the West African trade in comparison with the commercial stagnation and insolvency of the prohibition parts of Africa.'⁶⁴

The journey to the eradication of the liquor trade was tortuous. For example, Lord Salisbury's proposal of ten shillings per gallon duty on liquor in 1888–89 met with intense resistance by traders within and outside the British colonial administration. They forecast that the measure, if applied would lead to loss of trade to the less-stringent French and Germans.⁶⁵ The success and resilience of gin as a mode of payment for African produce is evidenced in the report of Walter Egerton to the colonial office as late as 1908.⁶⁶

The Brussels' conference of 1889–1890, which barred the export of liquor beyond Latitude 7° North, on the basis of Islamic religious expediency, and proposed tariffs in some other areas of West Africa,⁶⁷ was the nearest to a multi-lateral decision on the

⁶² Ernest Edwin Williams, *Made in Germany*, Austen Albu, ed. (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1973).

⁶³ A. McPhee, *The Economic Revolution of British West Africa*, 2nd Ed., Anthony G. Hopkins, int. (London: Frank Cass, 1971), p. 9.

⁶⁴ CO96/263 Minutes by E. Fairfield, 23 August 1895 on Parliamentary Questions by Charles Dilke, 17 August 1895. See also *Manchester Monthly Record*, 26 May 1896.

⁶⁵ FO84/2005 Memo by H. P. Anderson, 26 October 1888; Memo by the Marquis of Salisbury, 30 October 1889.

⁶⁶ CO520/66, Walter Egerton to Colonial Office, 6 July 1908. See also, R. Olufemi Ekundare, *An Economic History of Nigeria, 1860 – 1960* (London: Methuen 1973), p. 187.

⁶⁷ Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis; with Alison Smith, eds, *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 83 – 118.

liquor trade. Although the Brussels General Act of 1892 did not result in outright abrogation of the liquor trade, it exposed its dangers on African socio-economic development and motivated British-German joint and several restrictions of the trade in their adjoining protectorates in West Africa.⁶⁸

Even while no consensus could be reached among the British merchants as regards the exportation of liquor to West Africa, missionaries of the CMS were strenuous in ensuring that it was banned. While the Manchester cotton merchants and missionary precursors were vehement about its danger and negative projection of Legitimate Commerce, the Liverpool merchants saw foolhardiness in blocking the exportation of liquor, which was a major trading 'bait' for promoting other British made goods.⁶⁹ John Holt in the same vein insisted that increased duties would only be workable if it was for the entire West African sub-region.⁷⁰

However, by the time European Governments could agree on imposing a higher rate of tariffs, colonialism had begun to take full advantage of the income from trade duties. The merchants too had perfected the process of passing the buck to the susceptible West Africans.⁷¹ Although J. T. Hutchinson, the successor of Venn, was no substitute for the advocate of Legitimate Commerce, the missionaries' strength had begun to dwindle and more attention were therefore directed towards getting more converts.

⁶⁸ FO881/6894, encl. in no. 9 Baron von Rotenham to Martin Gosselin, 4 July 1896; FO881/8611 Memo. to Berlin and Brussels Act, and provision for their revision, December 1905.

⁶⁹ *Liverpool Journal of Commerce* (editorial), 26 March 1896.

⁷⁰ John Holt Papers, 9/1. John Holt to J. Chamberlain, 13 May 1899.

⁷¹ A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of Lagos, 1860 – 1894* (Ph.D. Thesis, London: 1964), pp. 149 – 155.

The crusade against the liquor trade was not one-sided. The African vanguards of modern mission, disgusted about the fraudulent nature of carting away legitimate and valuable products from Africa in exchange for destructive merchandise, were persistent in seeking the end of the export spirit. The argument was that the spirit was neither suitable for human health nor contributing to societal well-being. Rather, it was destroying societal moral, promoting drunkenness, laxity and laziness, all of which alienated the individual from personal and spiritual development.⁷²

Some of the initial agitators against the liquor trade, especially the Parliamentary left-wingers, certain members of the Manchester textile sub-sector and radical officers of the colonial office remained resolute bringing the trade to an end. For instance, Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, once suggested that the liquor trade was beginning to cast a bad light on the humane stance of the British Government for African restoration. He lamented that the trade was 'discreditable to British name and disastrous to British trade.'⁷³ Hence, while traders continued trading in illicit gin, European missionaries and Christian parliamentarians and colonialists continued to fight for economic freedom for Africa.

The Shadows of Colonialism on Legitimate Commerce

The impact of colonialism on the development of African produce is unquantifiable. Although it accelerated the development of infrastructures, it also cast shadows on Legitimate Commerce from the time Lagos was annexed as a colony in 1861. The annexation of Lagos, the transatlantic gateway to Yorubaland had gone on for almost a year before Venn made representations to Commodore Wilmot in 1862 on how

⁷² CO520/110, 'Native Races and Liquor Traffic United Committee to the Colonial Office', 29 February 1896. See also *The African Times*, 5 June 1895.

⁷³ CO147/103 Minutes by Joseph Chamberlain, 27 August 1895

'lawful commerce', rather than the use of force could be employed to suppress the Slave Trade.

Colonialism was systematically destructive to Legitimate Commerce, because although it promised to 'facilitate the operation of trade and to see that the benefit is reciprocal'⁷⁴ in reality such promises were hardly realisable. Even though Lagos had been annexed since 1861 it did not experience the full effects of imperialism until the 1880s when the rest of the Yorubaland became ripe for the European scramble for the possession of Africa. The Colonial Secretary stated in 1885 that

Lagos, in common with all the other West African Colonies, exists only as a trading station for the native producers and depends, unfortunately upon the produce of the palm trees of the surrounding tribes.⁷⁵

Legitimate Commerce had brought Lagos its commercial prowess and international recognition. The balance of trade was in favour of the colony for many decades during which palm oil export gained prominence in Yorubaland. Although the volume of palm oil trade in Yorubaland was comparable to that of the Niger delta, the kingdom also experienced an appreciable export of £590,000, £460,000 and £595,000 spanning the three decades of 1871, 1881 and 1891 respectively.⁷⁶

Mercantilism and the imperialism of trade however did not allow the balance of trade to grow in favour of Yorubaland. While the colonial administrators were executing their dual mandate of empire and economic expansion, merchants were expanding

⁷⁴ F. D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh, London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1923), p. 477.

⁷⁵ *Parliamentary Papers* (C. 6857), P.P. LIX, p. 698, 1893-4. See also Alice Denny, John Gallagher, Ronald Robinson, *Africa and the Victorians: The Climax of Imperialism in the Dark Continent* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), p. 387.

⁷⁶ *Parliamentary Papers* P.P. (1884-5) LXXXIII, 6 - 7, 22 - 23, 28 - 29, P.P. (1890-1) XC, 660 - 661, 682 - 683, 688 - 689, 668 - 669; P.P. (1901) LXXXVI, 660 - 661, 668 - 669, 682 - 683, 688 - 689).

their own stock of illicit trade. It was nothing short of an international conspiracy against the divided Yoruba kingdom, because the favourable balance of trade, which was fifty percent in 1871, declined to thirty-eight percent in 1881 and only nineteen percent in 1890.⁷⁷ The volume and value of the economy of Yorubaland gradually declined and commerce moved away from the missionary era of humanistic enterprise to the traders' age of imperialism of free trade.

The philosophical ideology of Fowell Buxton, Venn, Samuel Crowther and others that was relating economy to a religious benevolence had collapsed and power had shifted from the missionaries to the economic speculators. It was an all-comers game, English, Germans, French and others. The Royal Niger Company had collapsed and Sir George Goldie had stripped all existing companies of their trading assets. The export of produce from Lagos declined so much, leaving only a balance of trade of a mere six percent.⁷⁸ Cotton exports, which Venn had thought would be the foundation of the self-financing Church in Africa, also faced decline.

The colonialists were not interested in the development of Africa for the sake of Africa and Africans. While the missionaries were propagating the Gospel, the colonialists and imperialists were interested only in opportunistic enterprise. The African colonies were being used to fill the gaps left by the British economic interests by the loss of the American colonies. Although the annexation of the African kingdoms was costly for Britain which had the Industrial Revolution to fund in the

⁷⁷ The above figures are computed from the data in the *Parliamentary Papers*, P.P. (1884-5) LXXXIII, 6 - 7, 2 - 23, 28 - 29; P.P. (1890-1) XC, P.P. (1901) LXXXVI, 660 - 601, 668 - 669, 682 - 683, 688 - 689).

⁷⁸ *Parliamentary Papers*, P.P. (1901) LXXXVI, pp. 660 - 601, 668 - 669, 682 - 683, 688 - 689.

late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, channels of subjugating Africa had been devised before the close of the nineteenth century.

When the British merchants referred to the development of Tropical Africa, they meant it as a futuristic plan and a palliative measure for the period of depression. Africa was simply ignored in the period of boom in the colonies of the Americas and India. However, whenever the economy depressed and the fall in demand and supply forced the prices to rise, Africa with its cheap human labour would suddenly become important to Europe. As soon as the depression was over America and India resumed their full commercial strengths such that palm oil supply was in abundance and the Lancashire cotton merchants got cotton in such abundance that they need not look in the direction of Tropical Africa.⁷⁹

By contrast, Venn, the secretary of the CMS for the three eventful decades of 1841 to 1872 had taken great advantage of the depression and the rise in the price of cotton in Europe to stimulate cotton production in Yorubaland. He mounted a campaign to secure philanthropic financiers for cotton cultivation in Abeokuta, Ibadan and their environs. In his plea with the economic committee of the CMS, he observes:

The cotton plant appears to be indigenous within the tropical latitude of the three continents of Asia, Africa and America. It was found in use and manufactured into clothing in Mexico when the Spaniards first visited and conquered that country. The natives of the tropical Africa and tropical Asia have from the earliest times cultivated the cotton plant and manufactured its fibre into clothing for their populations... These two continents are therefore prominently deserving the attention of the committee from the fact that both the cotton

⁷⁹ A. Redford, *Manchester Merchants and Foreign Trade* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1934 - 1956), p. 19 - 20.

plant and the labour required to cultivate it are indigenous and that the latter is abundant and cheap.⁸⁰

European and Yoruba missionaries deserve commendation for linking Africa with other countries of the world, not only through religion but also in terms of economic development. Nonetheless, their efforts were not consolidated in the last stages of Legitimate Commerce.

The initial exhibition before the Lancashire cotton merchants by Samuel Crowther had shown that cotton cultivation was indigenous to Africa. Venn had used the same point to reinforce his argument that Africa and Asia were better suppliers of raw cotton. He observed that 'Africa like India has rivers penetrating to the very heart of the continent and watering those countries in which cotton is known to be already extensively cultivated.'⁸¹ Venn's appeal was not based only on humanitarian or benevolence theology, but also on sound economic principles. Comparing America and Brazil with Africa and India, he observed further:

In those countries where cotton is now extensively cultivated the United States and Brazil neither the plant nor the labour employed in its cultivation are indigenous. The latter requires an immense amount of capital for its purchase or its use. Capital for labour is needed in Africa at least but is found to be the case in India. British capital is needed to bring the cotton grown in the interior countries to the sea bar and for shipment.⁸²

Venn's analytical support for African cotton had religious, humanitarian and economic implications, because the Africans whom the missionaries were pursuing for eschatological message of the Gospel were also being offered alternative plans by the Brazilians after the Slave Trade had become unpopular. Many Yoruba were

⁸⁰ CMS/CA2/016/12, Report H. Venn on cotton 'from the Countries watered by the River Niger and its tributaries' to CMS secretaries, 8 May 1858.

⁸¹ Ibid, Report of H. Venn on cotton, to CMS secretaries.

⁸² CMS/CA2/016/12, Report H. Venn on cotton 'from the Countries watered by the River Niger and its tributaries' to CMS secretaries, 8 May 1858.

among those who relocated to Brazil for indentured labour as the Brazilians continued to explore all means of attracting human power from Africa.

But what Venn anticipated in those three decades of empowering the Yoruba and developing the self-financing Church into a model for the evolving African Christianity, did not materialise until later in the twentieth century when one of his disciples, Bishop Tugwell carried on in the spirit of Venn. Once Lancashire recovered from the depression, cotton from Yorubaland was no longer required. Thomas Clegg who took over the cotton Training Institution at Abeokuta with the intention of making large profits also resigned his proprietorship of the institution.

The action of Clegg was to be expected because he was a business speculator rather than the 'friend of Africa' that the European missionaries were looking for to help in the development of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. The action of missionaries who thought of setting Yorubaland free through the formation of an independent board that would oversee the cotton business deserves commendation rather than condemnation. When Legitimate Commerce is treated as a separate activity in its own right, the full benefits of its combination of trade with religion emerged. However, this positive endeavour was not ultimately sustainable in changed CMS.

While the missionaries were labouring and confronting the ills in the economic system of Yorubaland, the colonialists also began to assemble a collage of explanation for subjugating Africa and sidelining the supply of palm oil and cotton from Yorubaland. They pointed at the Yoruba intra-tribal wars as a major blockade

for the development of Legitimate Commerce. The acting-Governor of Lagos colony declared in 1889,

Were a permanent peace established, the imports and exports of Lagos would soon be nearly doubled, but this can never be effected until what is known as the Ibadan-Ilorin war is brought to a termination.⁸³

The alliance of the people of Oyo and Ibadan against Ijebus and Egbas⁸⁴ definitely crippled agricultural export of Yorubaland through the Lagos sea bay, in the same way as the insurgence of the Ashanti hindered trade expansion of the Gold Coast.

Colonialism had its own challenges for the countries of Europe, especially Britain that saw it as a process of expanding the empire. Without the fierce competition by the French and the German, Britain would have traded in Africa on the principles of *laissez-faire* advocated by Adam Smith.⁸⁵ She would have entered into a trading relationship with Africa without commitment, since her raw material needs were being met by America and Brazil, and Africa was a mere buffer for periods of scarcity. The Americas were preferred whenever the economy was doing well, while Africa remained an economic 'underdog'. The sort of enduring commerce which Venn and his associates anticipated and which made them 'Headlight' for Yoruba economic emancipation was not sustainable. In addition to this 'colonial' pattern, the competition from German traders made Britain also participate heavily in the Liquor Trade, and this increased the negative impact of colonialism on trade in Yorubaland.

⁸³ *Parliamentary Papers*, P.P C. 5897, p. 9. Denton to Knutsford, 26 Nov. 1889.

⁸⁴ For details of the inter-tribal wars of the Yoruba in the nineteenth century, see S. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas: from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, O. Johnson, ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1921), XXIII - XXXIV.

⁸⁵ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, C. J. Bullock, ed., (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1909).

Britain too did not have a smooth trade with Africa as the administrators thought it would be. Other Europeans had begun to challenge their monopoly of Yorubaland and other kingdoms spanning Lagos to the Niger, up to Sokoto on the upper belt of the River Niger. The need for beginning to chart these vital kingdoms of the West Africa more accurately and intensively for the purposes of expansion escalated. On the one hand Britain had secured a reasonable control of the core commercial centres of Yorubaland, having silenced the slave dealers in Lagos by 1852 through anti-slave treaty with Kosoko and his cohorts. She had set up the payment of royalty to the Prince and King for acceding to the request of Britain to embrace Legitimate Commerce.⁸⁶

France and Germany on the other hand had begun to challenge Britain's authority over those territories. Sir Gilbert Carter, the governor of the Lagos colony, lacked both authority and financial strength to withstand the other European traders entering Yorubaland. An opportunity however came finally for the colonialists to sweep aside the missionaries and expand British trade in Yorubaland. By 1893, when colonialism was already on the wing, the Colonial Office granted the Lagos administration the authority to broker peace among the warring kingdoms of Ibadan, Ilorin, Oyo, Egba and Ijebu, so that legitimate trade could resume in Abeokuta.⁸⁷ With an 1889 agreement between Britain and France, French traders stopped trading with Lagos until the scramble for Africa ceded Yorubaland properly to Britain.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ F. O. 84/816 *Minute by Palmerston, 2 Feb. 1851*; F.O. 84/858 *Palmerston to Beecroft*, no. 4, 21 Feb. 1851.

⁸⁷ Parliamentary Papers P.P. LXII, 600, 632, 597-654, *Carter to Ripon*, 11 Oct. 1893, C. 7227.

⁸⁸ Sir Edward Hertslet, *The map of Europe by Treaty; Showing the Various Political and Territorial Changes which have Taken Place Since 1814* (London: n.p., 1875 - 1891), pp. 732, 736.

Although Viscount Palmerston's advancement on the West African coast appeared to be an ordinary expedition, it resulted in the annexation of Lagos as a colony in 1861, and eventually the entire Yorubaland, to the detriment of Legitimate Commerce. Thus, the British full occupation of the prime centre of Yoruba economy was only a matter of time, because 'the consul has in fact for some years been the de facto ruler of the place'.⁸⁹ Long before its annexation the Colonial Office had reached the conclusion that 'Lagos is a deadly gift from the Foreign Office',⁹⁰ through which colonialism was to spread to other parts of Yorubaland. Although Palmerston, presented himself as an advocate of the Yoruba, delivering Lagos, the key Yoruba seacoast into the coffers of Britain affected the growth of missionary commerce significantly. He, much unlike J. Beecroft, his predecessor, had taken Lagos decisively from Kosoko and his allies, giving fresh hopes to the missionaries that Legitimate Commerce would grow further. Although colonialism promised to assist Africa obtain greater 'freedom', 'impartial justice' and 'sympathetic treatment', the influences of Legitimate Commerce waned under it.

'Adaptation crises' identifiable with the rulers and traders in the Delta⁹¹ also occurred in Yorubaland.⁹² Rulers such as Kosoko and Madam Tinubu of Lagos who had profited from slavery had to enter into fierce competition and rivalry with legitimate traders and farmers. The British took advantage of the infiltration of Lagos by the local slave dealers to annex the city in 1862. The final colonization of other

⁸⁹ F.O. 84/1141, *Minute by Wylde, 11 Jul. 1861, on Acting Consul at Lagos to Russell, no. 2, 7 Jun. 1861.*

⁹⁰ C.O. 147/6, *Minute by Barrow, 22 Apr. 1864, on Governor of Lagos to Newcastle, no. 13, 9 Mar. 1864.*

⁹¹ Kenneth Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 47.

⁹² Hopkins, 'Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880-1892'. See also A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (Harlow: Longmans, 1973).

parts of Yorubaland and indeed the entire geographical area later to be known as Nigeria by outwitting the French in the 1890s⁹³ raised doubts about Legitimate Commerce. With the arrival of Sir George Goldie in the Niger and his formation of the United African Company in 1879, British mercantilism became well set and the French interest could only linger on to 1885.⁹⁴

With key politicians such as Lord Aberdare, Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, Charles Mills of the leading merchant bank Glyn, Mills & Currie on the Board of the National African Company in 1882,⁹⁵ annexation of Nigeria was only a matter of time. As one of the most well connected British mercantile house in the Niger the National African Company metamorphosed into the Royal Niger Company in 1886. It also obtained extended commercial rights to further obstruct the French incursions into the territories of Nigeria.⁹⁶

Samuel Crowther had become so wary of the new entrants into the commercial scene that he made a request for the mission's own vessel, because the merchants who had cooperated with the missionaries in conveying them and their belongings in the past had begun to overload their vessels. T. J. Hutchinson, the successor of Venn as secretary of the CMS, simply appointed a European lay agent in Sierra Leone, J. A. Ashcroft, over Crowther the bishop as the business manager in charge of *Henry Venn*, the new steamer assigned to the missionaries.⁹⁷ Thus, Crowther was deprived of the

⁹³ John D. Hargreaves, *West Africa Partitioned: The Elephants and the Grass* (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 201 - 35.

⁹⁴ C. W. Newbury, 'The Development of French Policy on the Lower and Upper Niger, 1880-98', *Journal of Modern History*, 31 (1959), pp. 16-26.

⁹⁵ J. E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 45-6.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, chapter 4.

⁹⁷ CMS/CA3/L1, enclosures, 'Memorandum on the financial arrangements for the Niger', Hutchinson to Ashcroft, 3 May 1878. See also CMS/CA3/L2, Letter, Lang to Phillips, 26 Jan. 1883.

advantages of the steamer that was intended as recompense for the performance of his duties as bishop.

While Venn marked the beginning of missionary influence among the Yoruba, Hutchinson represented the beginning of the end in the missionary project of Yoruba empowerment. Colonialism virtually stripped the missionaries of their immunities with the merchants. The group most hit by the ripples of colonialism were the Yoruba missionaries. By the turn of the century, Africa had become a pawn in the hands of European imperialists:

The area of Africa is about 11,500,000 square miles, and its population about 170 millions. In 1880 less than 1,000,000 square miles with a population of under ten millions were in the hands of European States. By 1890, 6,000,000 square miles had been annexed by Britain, Germany, France, Belgium, and Portugal.⁹⁸

The complexity of colonialism shows 'that the passage from slave trade to "legitimate" commerce was much more a process than a simple transition'.⁹⁹

The Effects of Cultural Hegemony on Legitimate Commerce

The most serious problem that gave a negative image to Legitimate Commerce and cast aspersions on the image of the missionaries was the superiority complex of some CMS missionaries who had become great rivals of the advancing *Saro* elites. Some European missionaries had never accepted the proposition that they were 'fellow heirs' with the Yoruba agents of modern mission or supported any programme for the removal of the native agency from the subordinate position to the European

⁹⁸ Leonard Woolf, *Economic Imperialism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Howe, 1920), p. 37.

⁹⁹ Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, *From Slave Trade to Empire: European Colonisation of Black Africa, 1780s-1880s* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 4.

missionaries.¹⁰⁰ In the heyday of Venn, Townsend wrote a damaging letter to him insinuating that the African agents of mission could never amount to anything but surrogates. In the letter he insisted that as soon as the 'white man' could no longer be placed ahead of the natives, their relevance has come to an end in Africa and they must leave.¹⁰¹ Townsend was not alone in this thinking. David Hinderer in Ibadan in the 1860s could not foresee how an African would begin to lead the mission. While reluctantly conceding to the proposed elevation of Crowther as bishop, Hinderer, a German pietist who was zealous for Gospel propagation, nevertheless perceived that it was because the people were still bonded in 'heathenism' that God gave Europeans 'influence' among them.¹⁰²

Samuel Crowther and some other African agents of mission were unhappy with what mission was becoming and how some of the merchants arriving in Nigeria started to deviate from the Christian norms on which Legitimate Commerce was based. The CMS had always ensured 'the selection of those only as their agents and representatives in Africa who will exhibit there the deportment, and practice the self-control of Christian gentlemen.'¹⁰³ But this duty of care gradually waned as colonialism drew near.

The new breed of CMS representatives that began to arrive were neither missionaries nor merchants. They were of a different disposition compared to those who set the pace for missionary foundation in Yorubaland. Some of the new arrivals disregarded Sunday for worship and threatened their employees with dismissal if they left their

¹⁰⁰ CMS/CA2/016/2 I. Smith, H. Townsend, D. Hinderer, C. A. Gollmer to Venn, 1851.

¹⁰¹ CMS/CA2/085 H. Townsend to H. Venn, 5 November 1859.

¹⁰² CMS/CA2/049 D. Hinderer to H. Venn, 15 November 1864.

¹⁰³ Samuel Crowther and John Christopher Taylor, *Journal and Notices of the Native Missionaries accompanying the Niger Expedition of 1857 - 1859* (London: Unwin Brothers Limited, 1859), p. ix.

tasks to attend worship services. In apparent frustration Bishop Crowther lamented that the religious persuasion of these new entrants was so strange that it was difficult to know whether it was 'atheism, infidelity, free-thinking or Mormonism'¹⁰⁴. The practices of these merchants led to tension between the African agents and their European counterparts. The Yoruba agents of mission began to suspect that the era of empowering the people through 'Legitimate Commerce' was coming to an end.

The testimony of the pioneers of Legitimate Commerce could have been sufficient to draw the conclusion that modern mission was motivated purely by 'Headlight' theology. Their argument that 'the deliverance of Africa' depended heavily upon 'calling forth her resources,'¹⁰⁵ appears to be a way of empowering the people to gear their human power resources into productive activities rather than the destructive Slave Trade. The claim of the proponents of this economic initiative was that they were out to restore the continent's hope and the general thinking was that such action would re-establish the dignity of a people already abused beyond human bounds.¹⁰⁶

Yoruba missionaries became discouraged as a result of the suspicions of the clandestine moves of the traders, who were determined to edge them out of the mainstream of the mission leadership of the commercial enterprises. No concrete action appears to have been taken by the CMS to rectify the anomaly until asset stripping and takeover bids commenced on the Niger. The first move by George Goldie in May 1876 was the formation of 'the Central African Trading Company

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, *The African Slave Trade* (London: 1839), pp. 192 – 4.

¹⁰⁶ The slave trade, which had always been a part of the continent's life even before the arrival of the Portuguese traders became institutionalised through their exploits, expansion of influence and monopoly in Africa from around 1444 – 5. See Peter Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd, 1986), p. 7.

Ltd., of which he and Grove-Ross were the sole directors'.¹⁰⁷ Although the investment of the CMS had collapsed by 1879,¹⁰⁸ the Yoruba agents who had spearheaded the restoration of the economic project that was on the verge of bankruptcy¹⁰⁹ were unwilling to endorse, let alone subscribe to Goldie's new economic proposition.

The chasm went on without any attempt to fill the gap until colonialism swept across Africa and mission as a major power bloc started to derive its relevance in the new scheme of European administration. These shifts in the traditional mission process of commercialisation lend credence to the desirability of investigating why modern mission's passion began to wane as regards the enthusiastically motivated scheme. While it is plausible simply to underwrite mission's economic experiment as a complement to the goal of evangelisation in Africa: certain features, characteristics, reservations, controversies, objections, criticisms and outright rejection of the hypothesis make historical reconstruction alongside earlier and later events inevitable. Modern missionary movements thrived as economic pacesetters of what was tagged 'Legitimate Commerce',¹¹⁰ propagating Christianity, and spearheading the spreading of the message of freedom from slavery economics to trading in goods and services.

The Effects of Change in Theological Attitudes in Europe

The change of direction from the early 1870s was not only rapid; it created loss of confidence in a system that was once endorsed and embraced by the Yoruba, either at home or in Diaspora. It was also indicative of systematic withdrawal of missionary movements from a theology of humanitarian economics to that of economic

¹⁰⁷ Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, Op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁰⁸ CMS CA3/04(a), Bishop Crowther to Hutchinson, 16/10/1879.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, 1839, p. 195.

expansion, which is why some people suggest that modern mission, paved the way for European exploitation of Africa.

The changes in theological emphasis of the CMS from the 1870s in Yorubaland has to be extended to the missionary base in Great Britain where evangelicalism was already having changing attitudes to the Church's role in evangelizing in other cultures. Evangelicalism, as David Bebbington argues, has been consistently marked by four distinctive characteristics – conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism, which 'have been transmitted down the generations'.¹¹¹ Although this thesis is concerned mainly with 'activism' of the evangelical missionaries in Yorubaland, the other three features were vividly present in one form or the other, because the Cross was at the centre of evangelicalism, the Bible was their constitution and conversion was their focus. All the four features, as Bebbington argues further, 'have formed a permanent deposit of faith', each manifesting in its own way, but especially 'activism, was a novelty that set Evangelicals apart from earlier Protestantism.'¹¹²

In spite of the evangelical commitment to a theology of humanitarianism based on the principle of 'crucicentrism' that puts Christ's Crucifixion in the centre of evangelical faith, evangelical Christians' continue to experience changing theological attitudes that have great impact on their missionary movements all over the world. Right from the 1830s, especially with the exit of the members of the 'Clapham Sect' as the abolitionists were called within Anglicanism.¹¹³

¹¹¹ David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: History from the 1730s to 1980s* (Florence, KY: Routledge, 1988), p. 269

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ See E. M. Howse, *Saints in Politics: The 'Clapham Sect' and the Growth of Freedom* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1971[1953]), pp. 17ff.

But fresh attitudes became characteristic of the movement towards the church and the world, towards public issues and even towards the purposes of God. A different mood was abroad. It was partly because a new generation was coming to the fore. The old leaders were going to their reward: Robert Hall, Adam Clarke, William Wilberforce, Hannah More, Rowland Hill and Charles Simeon all died between 1831 and 1836.¹¹⁴

Thus, it is here argued that the structural change in activism of the CMS was a change of theological attitude, which was a feature of evangelicalism that begun from the 1830s rather than a change of theology. However, Henry Venn was a 'bridge' between the old (i.e. the abolitionists, of which his father, John was a member and the rector of the Clapham parish) and the new. However, his retirement in 1871 and subsequent death in 1873 made those changes in theological attitude that had begun from the 1830s to become apparent.

Three authors in the 1960s and the 1970s proposed valuable reasons for the change in disposition. While Ford Brown proposes that the change in emphasis was due to generation gap,¹¹⁵ Ian Bradley adduces it to 'a new obscurantism and fanaticism'.¹¹⁶ Yet another proposition by Alec Vidler points to the change in theological mood as a reaction to the Oxford ('Tractarian') Movement of 1833-1845 that sought to maintain the continuity of the intimate and unbroken connection between the Roman Church and the Church of England.¹¹⁷ While Vidler's proposition does not appear to relate to the missionary movement in West Africa in the 1830s and especially by the 1870s, it

¹¹⁴ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: History from the 1730s to 1980s*, p. 269.

¹¹⁵ F. K. Brown, *Fathers of the Victorians: The Age of Wilberforce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1961), pp. 518 ff.

¹¹⁶ I. Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London: Cape, 1976), pp. 194 ff

¹¹⁷ A. R. Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution* (Harmondsworth (Middx): Penguin Books, 1961), p. 49.

is argued here that colonialism heightened fanaticism and widened the new generational emphases within the missionary movement in Yorubaland.

The effects of those changes on missions outside Great Britain, such as the economic activity of the evangelical missionaries in Yorubaland were superiority and hegemony, which Venn tried to eradicate in his time as the CMS secretary. Of course, the effects of Social Darwinism theory of the 'survival of the fittest' followed the new missionaries who arrived in Yorubaland and the Niger in the 1870s. Thus, monopolists such as Sir George Goldie, who stripped all other enterprises developed by the missionaries and individuals, had the unique opportunity to consolidate their trading monopoly in West Africa. A biographer of Goldie, John Flint gives a graphical detail of how the British merchant successfully liquidated other trading outfits to consolidate his trading estate in the kingdoms that were to amalgamate later to become the Nigerian nation.¹¹⁸ With the full introduction of colonialism in 1899, Europeans started to arrive in quantum to displace indigenous missionaries, especially with the success of quinine as prophylactic for subduing the deadly fever that had consumed the lives of many Europeans.¹¹⁹

Summary of the Rise and Fall of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland

The traditional imagery of missionaries as the 'Pathfinders' for colonialists greatly diminishes the vital role of modern mission in combating and curtailing the activities of the slave dealers. Although the process of implanting Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland paved the way for greater understanding of the huge economic advantage

¹¹⁸ John E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, Gerald S. Graham, ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 9.

¹¹⁹ E. A. Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies* (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1979), p. 90.

that was wasting away in the country, colonialism almost marred the good intention of the missionaries. Whether or not European missionaries entered into Yorubaland, the imperialists were already gunning for the annexation of the fertile land of the Akus. The multiplication of cotton cultivation undoubtedly opened up Ibadan, Abeokuta and some other missionaries' enclave in Yorubaland. Nevertheless, the missionaries did not play the forerunner role of to the imperialists as scholarship tends to portray them.

The missionaries took the light of the Gospel into a country that was confronted not only by eschatological imperative, but especially by existential peculiarities. This led them to the use of means for the deliverance of the people from economic strangulation. Other groups of visitors also entered Yorubaland with expansionist agenda making it difficult to sieve out 'the chaff from the good seed'. The self-seeking traders ultimately won the battle of turning Africa to economic pawns, and 'riding' on her state of helplessness. Nevertheless, the theological standpoint of the missionaries was discernible even in the midst of the chaos.

The break in the missionary ranks was the most pathetic of all the factors that cast shadows on Legitimate Commerce. It shows that not every missionary or agency subscribed to the idea of Legitimate Commerce in Africa. Regardless of the good intention of the missionaries, certain objections to their mode of operation cannot be taken lightly. It is imperative that

where they (objections) inadvertently are criticisms of missionary method rather than of the mission itself, the Church should penitently stand under their judgment and seek to mend her ways. But in so far as they strike at the heart and

seek to deal a deathblow to the Church's mission, they
summon to a re-examination of missionary motives.¹²⁰

The events of the three decades of 1842 -1871 show that despite lapses in missionary circles Legitimate Commerce rose as a panacea for existential imperative and declined through the conspiracy of the colonialists and imperialists.

¹²⁰ Miller, 'Pauline Motives for the Christian Mission', p. 72.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LEGITIMATE COMMERCE IN YORUBALAND: A NEW DEBATE

Thanks be to the God of all mercy who has set his servants to declare unto us poor creatures the way of salvation, which illuminates our understanding so we are brought to know we have a soul to save, and when your humble petitioners look back upon their country people who are now living in darkness, without the light of the Gospel, so we take upon ourselves to direct this our humble petition to your Excellency,

That the Queen will graciously sympathize with her humble petitioners to establish a colony at Badagri that the same may be under the Queen's Jurisdiction and beg of her Royal Majesty to send missionary with us and by so doing the slave trade can be abolished... so that the Gospel of Christ can be preached throughout our land. Thomas Will & Others¹

The petition above, made in November 1839 by twenty-three leading *Saro* merchants under the leadership of Thomas Will to Governor Doherty of the Sierra Leone colony seeking to migrate to Badagri summarizes the main argument in this thesis. Although Legitimate Commerce waned at the close of nineteenth century, the missionaries' primary goal 'to save the souls' of the Yoruba did operate between 1840s and 1870s before the 'imperialism of free trade'² started to pull down missionary structures in Africa by putting profit before human concerns.

This same petition opens up in this concluding chapter issues that serve as reminders of the *Saro* Yoruba merchants and missionaries' purposeful agenda of adopting evangelical philosophy to re-legitimize commerce in the country from where they had been taken as captives. It points to four important propositions in this thesis. First, the petition establishes the proposal that missionary involvement in the economic history

¹ CO 265/154, Enclosure dated 15 Nov. 1839, in Doherty to Russell, 30 Nov. 1839.

² The maxim 'Imperialism of Free Trade' belongs to Marxists such as Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Nikolai Bukharin and Rudolf Hilferding, proponents of imperial motives for European trades in other continents.

of Yorubaland began in 1839 when the Yoruba returnees mooted a plan to reactivate lawful commerce in their country. Secondly, it establishes that Legitimate Commerce distinguishes Yoruba missionaries and their European counterparts from commercial opportunists in nineteenth-century Yorubaland. Thirdly, although it has become widely accepted that colonialism disrupted the traditional pattern of commercial activities in Africa from about 1893, the *Saro* in their time perceived that Legitimate Commerce, which was their colonial heritage from Sierra Leone was beneficial for the development of lawful commerce in Yorubaland. Finally, this chapter evaluates the impact and implications of the factors that contributed to the decline of using Legitimate Commerce as a strategy for propagating the Gospel in Yorubaland.

Legitimate Commerce and the Coming of Missionaries to Yorubaland

The period of 1839 – 1893 when Christianity was introduced into Yorubaland is also reminiscent of the time Legitimate Commerce entered the country of the *Akus*.³ The petition sent to the Queen of England by Thomas Will and others on behalf of the returnees also points to the *Saro* Yoruba merchants as the pioneers of the new economic order in Yorubaland. Although their persuasive request was meant to be an expression of gratitude to God and European missionaries for ‘illuminating’ their understanding, it also depicts the derelict state of the Yoruba economy and society.

The *Saro* merchants rightly portrayed their country as one groping in soteriological and economic ‘darkness’ for which they thought that ‘the light of the Gospel’ was the answer. Looking back at Africa in retrospect in 1851, Samuel Crowther, the foremost African missionary portrayed the return of the ex-slaves, eradication of unlawful trade

³ Aaku or ??ku, a standard mode of greetings in Yorubaland is explained further below.

in slaves and restoration of new eschatological hope for the Yorubas as a 'Headlight' platform of Christian mission:

This is the only place where the light of the Gospel shines. Surely God will not let it be quenched, nor will He permit the labours of England for the destruction of the slave-trade and the conversion of Africa to be thwarted by a bloodthirsty tyrant!"⁴

Yorubaland of the nineteenth century was a battleground for 'good' and 'evil' where the gospel of legitimizing commerce confronted the Slave Trade.

Although Christianizing Yorubaland was the primary concern of the *Saro* merchants, they did not ignore the state of the Yoruba economy, which the Slave Trade had distorted significantly. While the Slave Trade symbolized 'darkness' to the returnees, the evangelical ideology of legitimizing commerce was adopted as a means of projecting the same 'light' of the Gospel that illuminated their own 'understanding' to their own people and country. Yorubaland at that time was still under the siege of the slave traders who in cooperation with the Cubans and Brazilians greatly oppressed the Yoruba.⁵ Kosoko was also raiding for slaves at the time of arrival of missionaries and Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland.⁶

If it had not been for their determination to legitimize commerce in Yorubaland, a combination of the Governor of Sierra Leone, leaders of the CMS and colonial administrators would have stopped the plan of the Yoruba merchants from returning

⁴ Sarah Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1854), p. 208.

⁵ J. Forbes Munro, *Africa and the International Economy 1800-1960* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1976), pp. 42 - 3.

⁶ See CMS/CA2/031/80 Letter, B. Campbell, Commodore of West African Squadron to ex-king Kosoko, 1856.

to their country. Governor MacCarthy had a plan as to how he intended to develop the colony. He

planned to settle recaptives in tidy villages, laid out in English style round a nucleus of parish church, parsonage and schoolhouse. There they would learn from missionaries a new religion and new way of life. Missionaries were already available for the task. The Church Missionary Society, from 1804, and the Wesleyan Missionary Society, from 1811, had agents in Sierra Leone.⁷

MacCarthy also made adequate plans for funding his plan in spite of the post-Napoleonic Wars policy of conserving funds to cater for retrenchments: 'But MacCarthy, a persuasive enthusiast, won over the authorities in London, who authorized the outlay of large sums of British tax-payers' money to carry out his grandiose, expensive schemes.'⁸ For their own part, colonial under-secretaries felt that the recaptives had not developed their skills enough to venture into the task of liberating others.⁹

Meanwhile, the missionary mentors of the ex-slaves, especially Henry Townsend, while visiting Abeokuta in 1843 felt that it would be retrogressive for the *Saros* to 'leave the country where God was known for this where God was not known; thus turning their backs upon them'.¹⁰ Despite the reservations by the three arms of authority in the Sierra Leone colony and the British preference for the Niger, the returnees were undeterred in their determination to rid their nation of the conspiracy of the Brazilians, Cubans and native slave dealers. They were resolute on winning the battle of morality by proclaiming the Gospel through Legitimate Commerce, in spite

⁷ Christopher Fyfe, 'Freed Slave Colonies in West Africa', in John E. Flint, ed., *The Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 182.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ CO 265/ 154, Vernon Smith's Memo on Governor Doherty's Comment on the Petition signed by the twenty-three Yoruba merchants on 15 Nov. 1839, dated 30 Nov. 1839.

¹⁰ CMS/CA1/0215, 'Journal of H. Townsend while on a Mission of Research', 5 Jan. 1843.

of the campaign of calumny by the slave dealers whose deportment showed utter disregard for human dignity.¹¹

The Christian-merchant petitioners from Sierra Leone are identifiable as the foundation of the Yoruba Christian mission¹² who proclaimed the holistic gospel of Commerce and Christianity before the arrival of any Western missionary.¹³ An initial congregation had been formed in Abeokuta before the arrival of Thomas Birch Freeman, the very first Methodist missionary to penetrate the hinterland of Yorubaland. It was that same group that met him and later the trio of CMS' Gollmer-Crowther-Townsend with 'pomp and pageantry' as they entered Abeokuta, the first Yoruba major missionary centre referred to by Sarah Tucker, a female missionary observer in the 1850s as *Sunrise within the Tropics*.¹⁴

Reflecting back on the returnees' manner of salutation, Birch Freeman said:

I shall never forget the joy that beamed in their countenances as they seized me by the hand and bade me welcome. 'Ah!' said they, 'we told our king that the English people loved us, and that missionaries would be sure to follow us to Abbeokuta; but he would hardly believe that any one would come so very far to do us good. Now what we told our king is really come to pass!' O Massa, you are welcome, welcome, welcome!¹⁵

Thus, the *Saro* Christians had penetrated Yorubaland, made positive moves to invite European missionaries with the hope that they – 'massa' (master) would attract the experience of Sierra Leonean-European commercial exchange to their country also.

¹¹ CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal, S. Crowther Jr., June to September 25, 1852.

¹² Missionary in this sense transcends the Gospel proclamation, and includes the movements of Christians who expressed their burden for social, political, religious and economic despondency in the nineteenth-century Yorubaland.

¹³ The missionary movement that entered Nigeria, through Yorubaland, beginning from 1842, made up mainly of the Protestant tradition, beginning with the Methodist in 1842, the Church Missionary Society in 1845 up to the Southern American Baptists in 1850.

¹⁴ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 88.

Thus, although there had been some efforts on the part of the European missionaries at researching into how to spread the Gospel to Yorubaland, such as Henry Townsend's research visit of 1843 referred to above, the coming of white missionaries to Yorubaland was masterminded by the Yoruba returnees. Similarly, the 1839 attempt of *Saro* Christian merchants to attract colonialists and missionaries to Yorubaland is analogous to the kind of patriotism that made the lepers at the gate of Samaria in biblical Israel risk their lives and move into the camp of the Arameans.¹⁶ Thus, although European missionaries moved in swiftly to counteract the Slave Trade through commerce, the foundations of liberation are to be found from among the Yoruba returnees and mission agents.

Legitimate Commerce, Yoruba and European Missionaries

A critical aspect of the returnees' intervention in the commercial activities of Yorubaland was the incorporation of the European missionaries into the economic experiment of nineteenth-century Yorubaland. There has often been a misconception, stated or assumed, when reference is made to European intervention in African economy, that all Europeans were an indivisible entity governed by a single economic ideology. J. F. Ade Ajayi states in his detailed and informative account of the development of Nigeria's educated élites that:

the different missionaries, whether British, German, American, or French, Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian or Anglican will be considered as much as possible together as 'European' missionaries forming one single factor in the history of Nigeria.¹⁷

¹⁶ Cf. 2 Kings 7: 3 - 4.

¹⁷ J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite* (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1965), p. xiv.

Despite this categorization of the term missionaries along national or denominational lines as 'Europeans', the main argument in this thesis is that modern mission in Yorubaland was made up of Yoruba as well as European and American citizens. In a preface to Ajayi's work, K. Onwuka Dike wonders why 'historians continued to write as if Africans were not active participants in the great events that shaped their continent'.¹⁸

Nineteenth-century missionary activity in Yorubaland is different from what obtained in many other parts of Africa, including Sierra Leone from where it emanated. A careful study of the correspondence and journals in the CMS archives shows that the Yoruba missionaries were incontestably a fundamental group within the missionary enterprise. J. D. Y. Peel observes:

The journals are the pride of the archive... the bulk of them were composed by African agents of the mission. Of the 86 authors of documents in the CMS archive before 1880, 47 (55 percent) were Africans. ... I reckon that over 60 percent of journals come from the pens of Africans. After 1880 ...some 80 percent of the most valuable material is provided by Yoruba authors.¹⁹

Thus, materials used to reconstruct the missionaries' theology of legitimizing commerce in nineteenth century Yorubaland are extracted from the reports of the Yoruba missionaries who were not less active, functional or competent than their European counterparts. They were well grounded in legitimate enterprise and organized many workshops on Legitimate Commerce in Abeokuta.²⁰

¹⁸ Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite*, p. x.

¹⁹ J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 11.

²⁰ Encl in CMS/CA2/032/35 Wednesday, 11 January 1859. See also Encl in CMS/CA2/032/36, Wednesday 8 February 1859.

Why, one may ask, and how, did the European missionaries become so involved in the re-commercialization process of Yorubaland? Were they patrons or partners to the Yoruba agents of modern mission? The first clue is that European missionaries responded to the petition from the twenty-three Yoruba merchants referred to above. The request and the response point to three historical and theological implications of Europeans presence in re-legitimizing the economy of Yorubaland.

First, the Yoruba who had imbibed European culture, commerce and Christianity in Sierra Leone perceived that the illumination of their understanding was providential and transferable to Yorubaland. The responses to the return of the *Saro* and *Creoles* of three key native missionaries examined below show the hope of evangelizing Yorubaland through commerce. The frontline Yoruba missionaries individually saw their former enslavement as the working of Providence that opened the way for them to propagate the Gospel through Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland.

In 1851 Crowther recalled:

When I was a boy at Sierra Leone, the history of Joseph was my favourite reading. I had no thoughts of ever returning to my native land, nor of seeing my relations, but it led me to lie passive in God's hands, and to follow the leadings of Providence as my safest guide."²¹

It was this same remembrance of the miserable experience of captivity and joyous experience of deliverance that made Crowther's colleague and friend, Thomas King express similar sentiments in an 1851 letter to Venn: 'the leadings of Providence are indeed... very wonderful ... the recollection of which always produces in my heart the warmest gratitude to the Wise Disposer and Director of all things.'²² In the same

²¹ Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, pp. 116 & 159.

²² CMS/CA2/061/1 Thomas King to H. Venn, Letter, Abeokuta, 27 Oct. 1851.

vein, Samuel Crowther Jr. was certain that his labours for the propagation of the Gospel of holistic salvation were not in vain:

I feel convinced that whatever branch of this great work it may be our lot to occupy, if our motives be good, and... in accordance with God's word, we may rest satisfied that we are on the right course, and are performing God's service, and so much the more should we be convinced of this truth when we see the blessing of God upon our labour.²³

Thus, the Yoruba ex-slaves did not want to keep the providential dividends of their enslavement to themselves. Their thought is analogous to that of the lepers who said to one another: 'This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves'.²⁴ They looked outwards to their country people who were still living in darkness, without the light of the Gospel. The humanitarians thus held themselves out as 'Headlight' to the Yoruba country, because of their desire to share the providential effects of their Christian profile.

Secondly, while the *Saro* merchants thought that Britain would approve a colony in Yorubaland under the Queen's Jurisdiction, the British parliament had its plan well underway for the 1841 Niger Expedition and was not prepared to divert tax-payer's money into the setting up of another colony. Thus, although there was congruence of the goal of legitimizing commerce in Nigeria, whereas the Niger Expedition for the establishment of an agricultural venture was an entirely European project, Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland was a commercial initiative of the Yoruba formulated by Yoruba ex-slaves for Yorubaland.

There were two ways of looking at the two economic experiments, which as earlier observed were pursuing the same goal of abrogating the abolished but thriving trade

²³ CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal S. Crowther Jr. at Abeokuta, June to 25 September 1852.

²⁴ Cf. 2 Kings 7: 9 (New International Version Bible).

in slaves. The Niger Expedition was different from traditional European ventures in Africa. It turned out to be practical pedagogy, not only for the Yoruba but also for returnees from many other parts of Nigeria. Jean Decorvet and Emmanuel Oladipo observe:

Schön and Crowther had made a careful selection of twelve interpreters from among the freed slaves who belonged to various tribes bordering the great river; Ibo, Yoruba, Egarrá, (Igalla), Kakanda, Hausa, Bornu, Laruba and Fulani. Crowther was Yoruba, and Schön spoke Hausa and Ibo... Many freed slaves wanted to take part in the Expedition, as seamen or farm hands, and quite a good number were accepted. In the end, there were 154 Africans and 145 Europeans in the Expedition.²⁵

Thomas Buxton (British) and Thomas Will (Yoruba) were both important figures in the development of the Yoruba economy in the nineteenth century. While the influence of Will, the leader of the petitioners to the Queen was direct, that of Buxton, the initiator of the Niger Expedition was indirect.

Two things were common to the two philanthropists. First, both were motivators of Legitimate Commerce albeit at different locations in Nigeria. Secondly, although both left indelible marks on the economic scene of the populous African kingdom, neither of them ever set a foot on Yoruba soil. They both had a goal that 'the slave trade can be abolished',²⁶ through establishing legitimate ventures in Africa. The plan was to engage Africans in productive labour, 'calling forth her [Africa] powers, and enabling her to stand alone, relying upon the strength of her own native sinews'.²⁷ While the Western control of the African economy across the centuries is discernible, the

²⁵ Jean Decorvet and Emmanuel Oladipo, *Samuel Ajayi Crowther: The Miracle of Grace* (Lagos: CSS Bookshops Ltd, 2006), p. 30.

²⁶ CO 265/154, Enclosure dated 15 Nov. 1839, in Doherty to Russell, 30 Nov. 1839.

²⁷ Thomas Fowell Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, G. E. Metcalfe, int. (London: Dawson of Pall Mall, 1968 [1839, 1840]), pp. 301 – 2.

missionary initiative of legitimizing commerce to eradicate the Slave Trade in Yorubaland was also obvious.

It is argued here that the *Saro's* were justifiable in inviting their European counterparts into the evangelization and commercialization of Yorubaland. It is important to note also that the returnees did not move out of Sierra Leone at once to Yorubaland as did the Hebrews when the entire race left Egypt for their 'Promised Land' under Moses. Rather, it was only those willing among the Yoruba who migrated. While some liberated Yoruba moved back to their country, others were still searching for greener pastures in the indentured labour camps of the Caribbean.²⁸ There is no evidence indeed that any of the key merchants and property class who wrote the petition ever migrated to Yorubaland. Rather, the first emigrants were small-scale traders who were thought by Vernon Smith, a colonial Undersecretary to Lord John Russell, not to be 'well-instructed in the arts of civilized life'.²⁹

The traditional concept of grouping missionaries with traders and imperialists in nineteenth-century Africa is an overgeneralization of foreign infiltration of the African economy. Magnus Basse's theory that 'soldiers, traders, merchants, and missionaries *alike* were sent afield and used by the various imperial governments'³⁰ is not applicable to the Yoruba situation, considering that many of the nineteenth-century missionaries in Yorubaland were Yoruba. Christian missions and Legitimate Commerce began at a time when the consuls and the squadrons were still finding it

²⁸ Maureen Warner-Lewis, *Trinidad Yoruba: From Mother Tongue to Memory* (University of Alabama Press, 1996), p. 26.

²⁹ CO 265/ 154, Vernon Smith's Memo on Governor Doherty's Comment on the Petition signed by the twenty-three Yoruba merchants on 15 Nov. 1839, dated 30 Nov. 1839.

³⁰ Magnus O. Basse, 'Missionary Rivalry and Educational Expansion in Southern Nigeria, 1885-1932', in *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 60, no. 1, (Winter, 1991). My italic.

difficult to stop the activities of king Kosoko of Lagos, the patron of the slave dealers in Yorubaland.³¹ Bassey argues that a clause in the Berlin Conference of 1884 - 5 that required all Europeans to justify their hold on a territory in Africa, created rivalry among the missionary groups. However, grouping European missionaries with the traders and the British law enforcement squadron gives the erroneous impression that all of them were an indivisible entity with a single imperial agenda.³²

It is noteworthy that even the Roman Catholic mission that had not been part of the process of legitimizing commerce in Africa eventually participated in the evangelical ideology, moving swiftly into equatorial Africa in 1878 to pre-empt the exploitative moves of King Leopold II in 1876.³³ Shortly before colonialism took off officially the group emulated the example of the CMS, setting up an agricultural institution, St. Joseph near Badagry, to create a model Christian village and spread the Gospel of 'hard work and decent living.'³⁴ Thus, Bassey's arguments based on the denominational competition of the 1880s are not sufficient grounds for writing off the European missionaries' commercial innovation of the 1840s - 1870s, nor for invalidating the *Saro's* perception of themselves and their Gospel as 'Headlight' for Yoruba economic restoration.

Although European missionaries had allegiance to their home governments and were interested in empire building, nevertheless, they had a higher motive for proclaiming the Gospel and addressing the trade in slaves with Christianized commerce.³⁵ The

³¹ See CMS/CA2/031/80 Letter, B. Campbell, 1856, op. cit.

³² See Bassey, 'Missionary Rivalry and Educational Expansion in Southern Nigeria, 1885-1932'.

³³ Shorter, *Cross and Flag: The 'White Fathers' During the Colonial Scramble (1892 - 1914)*, p. 26.

³⁴ Peter Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1986), p. 153.

³⁵ John Wolfe, *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland, 1843-1945* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 222.

European missionaries' passion for legitimizing commerce as an incentive for offering salvation on earth to the Yoruba and empowering them for the task of African evangelization is therefore discernible. David Hinderer declared in his preliminary sermons in Abeokuta in 1849 that the Kingdom he was promoting was 'a happy country to be conquered – heaven'.³⁶ Thus, the missionaries were torchbearers for Yoruba emancipation, empowering the people with Legitimate Commerce as a means of grace to take care of both eschatological hope and existential concerns.

Proposing Legitimate Commerce in this thesis as 'Headlight' overturns any claim that European missionaries who were invited by the *Saro* to support the task and who enlisted the Yoruba as part of the missionary enterprise³⁷ entered Yorubaland with a hidden agenda. Legitimate Commerce did not have the same image as in Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast from where it moved into Yorubaland. It was uniquely the initiative of the *Saro* and their children, the *Creoles*. The European missionaries were very much unlike the merchants, of whom Sagbua, the paramount ruler of the Egba people, said 'as for merchants, they come to get what they can; they care for nothing but cowries... in fact they are liars and rascals'.³⁸

Perceptions of ideologies are never static, especially in interpreting the motives of others. Missionary identity, which is one of the ways in which this theological reflection contributes to the twenty-first century debate on African missiological history, underscores the way scholars continue to portray the European missionaries'

³⁶ CMS/CA2/049/95 D. Hinderer, 'Missionary at Abeokuta, June 12 – Sept 25 1849' Journal, Tuesday 19 June 1849.

³⁷ Jean H Kopytoff, *A Preface in Modern Nigeria: the Sierra Leonians in Yoruba 1830 – 1890* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p. 7.

³⁸ Cited in Richard Francis Burton, *Abeokuta and the Camaroons Mountains: an Exploration*, (London, Tinsley brothers, 1863), p. 286.

humanitarian acts as mere political gestures. It is ironic that historians and theologians continue to portray those who fought for African economic freedom as opportunists, simply because 'historians are political creatures, and not always clear-thinking.'³⁹

The current trend of presenting the abolitionists and by implication the missionaries as imperial agents is a regression, considering the way scholars portrayed them from about the middle of the twentieth century. The trend from the last two decades of the twentieth century has been to group them together with European 'Expansionists'. Whereas in the 1930s they were seen as reactionaries and extremists, the 1960s and 1970s hailed them as vanguards of justice and fair-play:

In racially conservative times, the 1930s and 1940s, we lambasted the abolitionists as insecure fanatics who started a war nobody wanted. In recent, more liberal days, the 1960s and 1970s, we have called them champions of racial justice and egalitarian fulfilment.⁴⁰

The primary question being examined here is what went wrong with the perceptions of missionaries as vanguards for legitimizing Yoruba economy in the 1960s? How did the missionaries and abolitionists whom Brian Stanley described as moderate Calvinists⁴¹ suddenly become socio-political villains? Wyatt-Brown observes:

Missionaries, the abolitionists' contemporaries, are usually overlooked.... When mentioned at all, they appear as narrow busybodies who imposed a shabby culture on helpless aborigines and opened the doors for imperialists. The contrast is startling. The anti-slavery crusaders were allegedly breaking chains while the foreign missionaries were forging them. Yet both groups stood for many of the same things, especially the end of bondage....⁴²

³⁹ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, 'Conscience and Career: Young Abolitionists and Missionaries', in Roger Anstey, *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, Christine Bolt, Seymour Drescher, eds (Folkestone, England: W. Dawson, 1980), p. 183.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Brian Stanley, 'Commerce and Christianity': Providence Theory, the Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842-1860', *The Historical Journal*, 26, 1, (1983), p. 81.

⁴² Wyatt-Brown, 'Conscience and Career: Young Abolitionists and Missionaries', p. 183

The assumptions by scholars such as Norton Cook that Legitimate Commerce was a continuity of British commercial activities in Nigeria are untenable for Yorubaland.

Cook gives a detailed account of British trade in Nigeria, paying particular attention to the development of trade in agricultural produce in the country, north and south. This masterpiece on pre- and post-colonial British economic activities in Nigeria however treats the theologically motivated part played by the European missionaries as if it was just an era of British trade and Empire development:

The reasons for this continuous and vital support are not clearly revealed, but it is justifiable to assume that the hope of developing the trade of the Empire was an important motive. Moreover, individuals interested in the advancement of science, the suppression of the overseas slave trade, the establishment of Christian missions, and the spread of civilization in Africa influenced the Government to make a real effort to advance these worthy objectives.⁴³

Cook's allusions to 'humanitarian impulses' and 'other crusaders of similar faith'⁴⁴ are a start, but are insufficient to fully describe the European missionaries' motive of Christianizing Yorubaland through commerce.

The Development and Decline of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland

Legitimate Commerce as the missionaries' strategy for proclaiming a holistic Gospel in nineteenth-century Yorubaland passed through at least four distinct phases between its inception in 1839 and its decline in the 1870s. The years from the 1840s to the early 1850s were a period of hostilities and rejection by the Yoruba slave dealers who maligned the missionaries as much as they could. However, the missionaries had devised a method of giving intensive training to the Yoruba by the 1850s. The

⁴³ Cook, *British Enterprise in Nigeria* p. 46. (The italics are mine to emphasize the space given to modern mission in Cook's exploration).

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 46 and 49.

pedagogical strategy of that decade not only yielded good results, it ushered in an era of realisation, understanding and acceptance by the 1860s. However, Legitimate Commerce began to experience decline from the early 1870s when European and America traders began to flood the market with destructive goods such as liquor in exchange for the agricultural produce of Yorubaland. Let us focus briefly on each of these times.

Period of Hostilities 1840s – 1850s

The slave dealers in Yorubaland campaigned against legitimizing commerce at its inception so much that one of them based in Abeokuta thought himself quite justified to state that it was no other but the company of slave dealers who published some false reports of the perfidious intention of the public towards the missionaries at Abeokuta, Ibadan and Ijaye.⁴⁵

The question the Yoruba slave dealers were asking was why the missionaries should concern themselves with what was exclusively the traders' business. They could not see the value of disrupting a trade that had flourished for three centuries. They lamented 'Our fathers never sold cotton or ivory, & why should we?'⁴⁶ The slave dealers began at first to discredit Legitimate Commerce insisting 'it is all nonsense to talk about Ivory, Palm Oil & Cotton'.⁴⁷ By 1852, when the effects of Legitimate Commerce had brought a decline to the Slave Trade, the slave dealers kept extolling the prowess of their leader, the exiled king Kosoko, who had been banished from the

⁴⁵ CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal, S. Crowther Jr., June to September 25, 1852. A slave dealer in Abeokuta in a conversation with an associate of Samuel Crowther Jr.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ CMS/CA2/032/55 Journal, S. Crowther Jr., June to September 25, 1852, op.cit.

throne of Lagos and exiled to Badagry: 'K?s?k? is the man of power and honour.'⁴⁸

While missionaries resolved to counteract the Slave Trade with Legitimate Commerce, the native slave dealers did everything within their means to discredit the missionaries and their commercial initiative.

Although many contributors to the debate on Legitimate Commerce create the impression that, European missionaries were part of the Western expansionists in Africa has its roots in the way Africans had always perceived the influx of missionaries into their kingdoms. Although Gospel propagation was uppermost in the programme of the European missionaries, Africans could hardly differentiate between the European missionaries who told them that trading in slaves was immoral, and other Europeans who wanted to buy slaves from them.

The misrepresentation of the missionaries' motives was one of the major causes of the perceived failure of many of the missionary projects of the nineteenth century, such as the Niger Expedition. Historians portray the 1841 Niger Expedition as a failure and irrelevant for the development of the African economy because the British Parliament, press and public had declared Fowell Buxton's articulate but unrealised hope as a failed exercise.⁴⁹ On the contrary, subsequent events, especially the advancement of the Gospel, Legitimate Commerce and local mobilization of skilled manpower for Yorubaland attest to the value if not the success of the 1841 quasi-mission initiative.⁵⁰ The Yoruba indigenes who participated in the expedition took back to their own

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See *The Times* (London), 25 April 1842, 6, col. 1; 27 June 1842, 6, col. 4.

⁵⁰ See C. C. Ifemesia, 'The "civilising" mission of 1841: aspects of an episode in Anglo-Nigerian Relations', in O. U. Kalu ed., *The History of Christianity in West Africa* (London and New York: Longman Group Limited, 1980), pp. 81 - 2.

country the gains of the practical pedagogy they obtained from the largely European exercise.

The perception of all Europeans as belonging to the same hegemonic group was widespread in virtually all parts of West Africa. Robert Jamieson, a nineteenth-century Liverpool merchant, commenting on the general suspicions that pervaded the heterogeneous kingdoms of West Africa in the nineteenth century, recalled an earlier experience of one of his colleagues, Hugh Clapperton:

Wherever he went the obvious and favourite interrogatory was, 'What are you come for?' ...A general belief prevailed that the English intended taking possession of Africa, as they had done of India, first coming in ones and twos, until they got strong enough to seize on the whole country.⁵¹

This sort of suspicion was not limited to Clapperton and the European traders and explorers on the bank of the Niger River. The Yoruba at home became suspicious of the moves of their brothers and sisters from Sierra Leone who had migrated back to Yorubaland from 1839.

Samuel Wilberforce's question in his May 1860 lecture summarizes the overarching concern in this thesis: 'What is the connection between the Gospel and Commerce'?⁵²

The bishop, who inherited the ideology of Commerce & Christianity from his father William, the British Parliamentary leader of the abolitionists, argued:

There is a great connection between them... There is little hope of promoting commerce in Africa unless Christianity is planted in it, and... there is very little ground for hoping that

⁵¹ CO2/22/153, Niger Expedition, Jamieson to Russell, 21 January 1841; later published as *A Further Appeal to the Government and People of Great Britain against the proposed Niger Expedition* (London: 1841).

⁵² Samuel Wilberforce, *Speeches on Missions*, Henry Rowley, ed. (London, n.p, 1874), p. 213.

Christianity will be able to make its proper way unless we can establish a lawful commerce in the country.⁵³

Wilberforce's answer to his own question carries the assumption that propagation of the Gospel is a compelling task of the church that has to be done within the context of the need of the recipient.

Similarly and much earlier, William Carey, the acclaimed father of modern mission, had expressed concern as to how the mission of the church would be accomplished taking into consideration the condition of the recipients. Referring to the example of Sierra Leone, he envisaged that 'commerce shall subserve the spread of the gospel', noting that opening 'a way for honourable commerce' would usher in a happy mean of propagating the gospel in Africa.⁵⁴ He suggests further:

We must not be contented however with praying, without exerting ourselves in the use of means for the obtaining of those things we pray for. Were the children of light, but as wise in their generation as the children of this world, they would stretch every nerve to gain so glorious a prize, nor ever imagine that it was to be obtained in any other way.⁵⁵

In his valedictory speech of December 1857 David Livingstone, the foremost missionary to Southern and Central Africa, proposed to the Senate House of Cambridge that the Gospel and commerce had to go together in Africa:

I beg to direct your attention to Africa; I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country, which is now open; do not let it be shut again! I go back to try to make an open path for commerce and Christianity... carry out the work which I have begun. I LEAVE IT WITH YOU!⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester: Ann Ireland & Others, 1761), pp. 66 – 82.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 81.

⁵⁶ David Livingstone, *Dr. Livingstone's Cambridge Lectures Together with a Prefatory Letter by the Rev. Professor Sedgwick*, 2nd ed., Monk, W., ed. (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, 1860), p. 24 (Capitalization is that of Livingstone).

Livingstone's view belonged to the eighteenth-century evangelicals who nevertheless did not develop the ideology as did their nineteenth-century successors. Legitimate Commerce was not just another commercial era in Yorubaland, but a new process of abrogating the unlawful commerce in slaves that had defied parliamentary solutions.

The Period of Training and Education in 1850s

Although some chiefs in Abeokuta such as the CMS' strongest loyalist, Ogunbona of Ikija had started to experiment with the commercial production of agricultural produce, the hostile slave dealers hindered the progress of Legitimate Commerce significantly. Missionaries therefore knew that there was a need to educate the people on the subject. Earlier in Sierra Leone and shortly before the 1841 Niger Expedition when the returnees had begun to move back to Yorubaland, Samuel Crowther co-signed a petition with Attara, seeking for education that was relevant to the need of Africa:

Our chief motive in writing to you on this important step is, should it please God, after they (African children studying abroad) are qualified they may be usefully employed as the servants of the Church Missionary Society in this benighted continent.⁵⁷

Crowther believed that 'Africa can chiefly be benefited by her own children if they are given all round and relevant instruction.'⁵⁸ In the 1850s, Yoruba missionaries turned Ake School Room to a lecture theatre where they trained the Yoruba people in the purpose, value and meaning of Legitimate Commerce to the economic

⁵⁷ CMS/CA1/M9, Petition, Crowther and Attara to Special Meeting of Local Committee, 17 August 1840.

⁵⁸ J. F. Schön, *Journals of the Rev. James Fredrick Schön and Mr. Samuel Crowther who Accompanied the Expedition up the Niger in 1841 on Behalf of the Church Missionary Society* (London: Franc Cass., 1970), p. 63.

emancipation of Yorubaland. They treated subjects such as 'The Dignity of Labour' and 'How can the African improve his country'?⁵⁹

The 1841 Niger Expedition served as practical pedagogy for some frontline Yoruba such as Samuel Crowther, Thomas King, the catechist for the church at Lokoja and Yariba George. The 1850s was a period of theoretical training and education in the art of developing a sustainable economy in Yorubaland. Pedagogy yielded much fruit as Isaac Smith observed when he visited Ogunbona's farm in 1850.⁶⁰

The Beginning of the End for Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland

Why and how did Legitimate Commerce lose its relevance as a means to holistic salvation for the Yoruba? Three factors that contributed to the decline of Legitimate Commerce were the widely held views on the perceived evil effects of the European colonisation of Africa; the factors known as the 'Imperialism of Free Trade' and 'Cultural Hegemony'; and unhealthy rivalry within missionary circles.

Colonizing Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland

The perceived evil effects of 'Colonialism' have occupied the attention of historians and theologians to such an extent that most people talk of the African economy in terms of *From Slave Trade to Empire*⁶¹ instead of *From Slave Trade to Legitimate Commerce*.⁶² The subsequent Western control of the commercial and a cultural life of Africa tends to blur the contribution of the *Saro* Yoruba to African economic

⁵⁹ See Encl in CMS/CA2/032/35 11 January 1859 & Encl in CMS/CA2/032/36, 8 February 1859.

⁶⁰ See CMS/CA2/062 Isaac Smith, Journal, 6 June 1850.

⁶¹ Cf. Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, ed., *From Slave Trade to Empire: European Colonisation of Black Africa, 1780s-1880s* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁶² Cf. Law, ed, *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-century West Africa*

development. Although both 'Colonialism' and Legitimate Commerce deserve equal attention, the former has attracted due attention because of its incalculable damage to the economy commonly acclaimed by scholars,⁶³ while the latter is regularly glossed over as a non-event.

Whereas missionary commerce was both eschatological and humanitarian, colonialism maximized 'the strength and compulsiveness of the expansionist forces in Europe in the later nineteenth century'⁶⁴ to the detriment of Legitimate Commerce. The tradition in scholarship has been to move straight from the era of the Slave Trade to the period of colonialism from about 1893.⁶⁵ Scholars often overlook the in-between period of Yoruba empowerment, 1840s to 1870s. The internal problems among missionaries notwithstanding Crowther and Taylor wrote an epitaph on the death of three great lovers of Africa.⁶⁶ While it is unarguable that some European missionaries were on a hegemonic mission, feeling a sense of superiority, which is inconsistent with the Christian mission in Yorubaland. The initiative of the *Saro* merchants needed as a complement to the big picture on African economy has been the focus of this study.

In the background of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland is colonialism, whose implications are fundamental to studies in African economic development. One may

⁶³ See L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan, eds, *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969 - 1975); L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan, *Burden of Empire: an Appraisal of Western Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara* (Stanford (California): Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1977); Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes to Colonialism in Africa, 1895-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1968).

⁶⁴ Eric Stokes, 'Late Nineteenth-Century Colonial Expansion and the Attack on the Theory of Economic Imperialism: A Case of Mistaken Identity?' in *The Historical Journal* XII, 2 (1969), p. 285.

⁶⁵ See Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, ed., *From Slave Trade to Empire: European Colonisation of Black Africa, 1780s-1880s* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁶⁶ Rev. Samuel Crowther and the Rev. John Christopher Taylor, *Journal and Notices of the Native Missionaries accompanying the Niger Expedition of 1857 - 1859* (London: Unwin Brothers Limited, 1859), pp. ix - x.

argue on the one hand that the extensive work already carried out on the negative effects of colonialism tends to suppress the valuable contributions of missionaries to the economy of Yorubaland. On the other hand, avoiding discussions of colonialism altogether makes a debate on African economy inconclusive. There has been much discussion since the 1960s on various aspects of the commercial relationship between Africa and Europe from the fifteenth century. The tendency has been for researchers to concentrate on colonialism and on how several Western nations impoverished Africa and continue to exploit her economy.⁶⁷ Although the latter period of the 1870s - 1890s best describes the era when African exploitation reached a peak,⁶⁸ the former three decades of the 1840s to the early 1870s witnessed expansion in the Yoruba religious spheres, bringing about economic emancipation, upon which this study focuses.⁶⁹ In that era, the Yoruba elite and economically informed indigenes, especially those from the Diaspora in Sierra Leone played key roles in Yoruba economic restoration.

Although imperialism and hegemony are not the focus of this study, nevertheless, it is germane to point out that the intervention of Western nations in the political life of Africa appears to be an infringement of the natural laws of sovereignty. The theory of *laissez faire*⁷⁰ portrays Western nations' interference in the commercial development of Africa as detrimental for the continent's commercial growth. Penetration of Africa

⁶⁷ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Abuja: Panaf Publishing Inc., 1972). Rodney's panoramic and extensive historical analysis of how Europe disrupted African economy summarizes the views of most authors on European economic hegemony in Africa.

⁶⁸ Colonialism had begun to creep in with the arrival of some European merchants, such as Sir George Goldie who stripped the interests of all the companies he met in the Niger of their shares in the economy through a 'take-over' bid strategy employed by the Royal Niger Company.

⁶⁹ Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* and Peel, 'Religious Change in Yorubaland', op. cit examine the religious metamorphosis of Yorubaland in detail, while Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Élite* explores the development of Yoruba intelligentsia.

⁷⁰ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, C. J. Bullock, ed. (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1909).

and India was only a matter of time after the breakthrough of machinery in Europe. The market, both for raw materials and finished goods had to be expanded to feed Europe's developing large-scale industrial potentials. The big picture of the Yoruba economy is incomplete until the motives of the Yoruba returnees and their European co-labourers have been appropriately evaluated.

Falola's argument summarizes the position of those scholars who portray missionaries first as 'Europeans' and secondly as an indivisible part of the imperialism in Africa:

European activities revolved around four major issues: exploration, Christianity, trade, and imperialism. All are ultimately related – explorers provided useful knowledge for others to use and encouraged the traders to move to the hinterland; missionaries served as the pathfinders for the colonialists; traders indicated the profits to be made from imperialism, and, together with the missionaries, pressured the British government to take over Nigeria.⁷¹

This argument is not unmindful that European missionaries too were caught up in the middle of what David Laitin describes as European domination of African culture.⁷²

The beginning of the Nigerian version of colonialism is traceable to the exploration of the course and confluence of the Niger River. While such exploration of other people's territory without invitation may be seen as an invasion of rights and the establishment of primacy over that other, as seen earlier, European missionaries were invited by their Yoruba peers to join in the task of liberating their country from the slave dealers.

Although the term 'Colonialism' has become a past issue in Euro-African relationship, neo-colonial activities have continued to serve as reminders of how

⁷¹ Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, p. 39.

⁷² See Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba*.

Africa became a pawn in the hands of Western nations. The European hegemonic ideology, by whatever slogan it is described, continues to distort the African economy.⁷³

Although a few scholars catalogue some of the advantages of Colonialism; in the way the academy has settled down with it, the ideology is the crux of the European domination of Africa when Europe 'scrambled' for territories without the consent of the natives. The ideology can only be perceived in a present continuous tense, because of the havoc it wreaks on Africa. This study has avoided dating colonialism to circumvent succumbing to the pressures it presents to many African historiographers and theologians. However, such avoidance presents some difficulties in placing Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland in its own proper context and time frame.

Deji Ayegboyin dates colonialism in modern Africa as 1815 – 1914, observing that it became patterned and full blown in the period 1880 – 1914.⁷⁴ This is sufficient for the purpose of this investigation, especially as it is not at variance with the widely held views of the Marxists Lenin, Nikolai Bukharin and Rudolf Hilferding⁷⁵ who date 'the imperialist epoch of world capitalism as 1890 – 1900'⁷⁶ when Europe scrambled to impoverish Africa. This exercise is not to compartmentalize colonialism into a

⁷³ See the works of Samir Amin, *Neo-colonialism in West Africa*, Francis McDonagh, trans. (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973); Neil Larsen, 'Imperialism, Colonialism, Postcolonialism', in Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray, eds, *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Malden, MA ; Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2005);

⁷⁴ Deji Ayegboyin, 'European Colonization: Its Local and Global Effects on the Church in Nigeria', in *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 17 (December 2003), p. 47.

⁷⁵ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *British labour and British imperialism: A Compilation of Writings by Lenin on Britain* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1969) Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism : A Popular Outline*, Norman Lewis and James Malone, int. (London: Junius: Pluto, 1996), Nikolai Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy*, V.I. Lenin, int. (London: Merlin Press, 1972), Rudolf Hilferding, *Finance Capital: A Study of the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development*, Tom Bottomore, ed., Morris Watnick and Sam Gordon, trans (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

⁷⁶ Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism', in *Collected Works*, No 23, October 1916 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House; London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1964), p. 111.

particular era, especially considering its many phases and faces in Africa. It started as a process of Christianization with the Portuguese emissaries of Prince Henry the Navigator in the fifteenth century. It moved on from there to the explorers, the traders and later the slave dealers whom the missionaries interrupted in the second quarter of the nineteenth century in Yorubaland before they too were destabilized in the last decade of the century.

European colonization of Africa is systematic and continuous, dating as far back as the fifteenth century when several parties of European and Mediterranean explorers invaded various parts of Nigeria in search of trade and political expansion for their countries. The Portuguese traders had had dealings with the kings of Benin from about 1485,⁷⁷ while the European slave dealers had visited the West African coasts for about 300 years before the nineteenth century. The longest of all the external incursions in Nigeria had been that of the explorers who laboured to discover the course of the then elusive Niger River and its tributaries from about the twelfth century.⁷⁸ The British zeal in discovering the course of the Niger was greater than that of any of the earlier explorers. It was nothing short of preparation for economic expansion. It was carried out the expense of the lives of many dedicated Britons and foreign agents - Mungo Park, Major Peddie, Captain Turkey, Captain Campbell, Captain Gray, Major Denham and Lieutenant Clapperton are just a few of the key leaders of the various parties who disappeared into the African abyss without a dirge at their funeral.

⁷⁷ Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, p. 18.

⁷⁸ Alan Burns, *History of Nigeria* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1929), pp. 78 - 9.

Free Trade and its Relationship with Colonialism

Missionaries again were at the forefront of challenging the influx of traders who imported obnoxious goods from the early 1870s. The Liquor Trade was an invention of the imperialists, especially the Germans. Since about the 1880s, the colonial administration in Lagos too had seen the liquor trade as a cheap source of financing their mandate.⁷⁹ While merchants such as the John Holt and Co, Miller Brothers, and F. & A. Swanzy also argue in favour of the liquor trade, Bishop Tugwell, speaking the minds of the missionaries, proposed a direct tax for creating the infrastructure rather than using what they considered immoral funds to execute beneficial projects.⁸⁰

Considering the damage caused by the influx of imperialists, directly and indirectly from the time of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, one could view colonialism as being systematically destructive to Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. Although colonizing Lagos in 1861 was to stem the activities of the local slave dealers that were hindering free trade, events of the 1880s portray the colonialists as expansionists. Lagos, for instance, did not experience the full effects of imperialism until the 1880s when the rest of Yorubaland was annexed. The then Colonial Secretary observed in 1885 that 'Lagos, in common with all the other West African Colonies, exists only as a trading station for the native producers and depends, unfortunately upon the produce of the palm trees of the surrounding tribes.'⁸¹ Thus, it was only a matter of time before the rest of Yorubaland became colonized. There is a marked difference between European trade and Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland.

⁷⁹ Governor G. Carter to *The Times*, 6 June 1895.

⁸⁰ *The Times*, 14 November 1908.

⁸¹ Parliamentary Papers P.P. (C. 6857), (1893-4) LIX, p. 698.

From 1841 when the British initiated Niger Expedition failed to yield results, emphasis shifted to Yorubaland where missionaries had successfully begun to legitimize commerce. The Earl of Chichester, the president of the CMS was mandated by Queen Victoria to respond to the gesture of the chiefs and people of Abeokuta who sent her gifts of locally manufactured cloth in 1848. The letter reads in part:

The commerce between nations, in exchanging the fruits of the earth, and of each other's industry, is blessed by God. Not so the commerce in slaves, which makes poor and miserable the nation that sells them, and brings neither wealth nor the blessing of God to the nation that buys them, but the contrary. The Queen and people of England are very glad to know that Sagbua and the chiefs think as they do upon this subject of commerce. But commerce alone will not make a nation great and happy like England. England has become great and happy by the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ.⁸²

Economic opportunists did not share Queen Victoria's sentiments, and they spared no effort from 1841 to 1893 until Yorubaland became a full colony of Great Britain. It is against this background that the missionaries' introduction of Legitimate Commerce into Yorubaland in 1839 is singled out as an intervention in and discontinuity of economic exploitation of Africa. *Saro* native traders and missionaries who introduced Legitimate Commerce had an unquestionable interest in the development of Yoruba economy. Even though Ayandele points to their transformed religious worldview as a disruption to Yoruba's existential, social, political and religious milieu,⁸³ the goal of *Saro* élites was to legitimize commerce in their motherland.

Although the original motive of the precursors of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland is one thing, it can be asked what became of the experiment gradually from the mid-1870s to 1893 when the colonialists took over? What the liberated

⁸² Tucker, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics*, pp. 160 – 161.

⁸³ E. A. Ayandele, *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1974), p. 9.

Africans of Yoruba descent in Sierra Leone begun in 1839 as a process of liberating their own people from slavery through Legitimate Commerce became an instrument of oppression in the hands of the imperial traders who entered into African commerce with the sole aim of making profit. Marxist historians have argued along these lines to develop their own theories of the Imperialism of Free Trade.⁸⁴

Very early in the experiment in 1840, Fowell Buxton perceived Legitimate Commerce as a means of redressing the inequality of trade between Africa and Europe. He saw a great potential in British industries obtaining cheaper sugar and cotton from Africa than was obtainable from Brazil and Americas, thus shifting dependence away from the New World.⁸⁵ Buxton's idea was ultimately implemented as Venn championed the cause of the Yoruba people all over Britain, seeking all possible assistance to liberate the Yoruba economy through Legitimate Commerce. Shortly before Venn succeeded in promoting the establishment of a cotton training institute in Abeokuta, British consul Campbell had proposed that a 'supply of cotton may be drawn from those countries watered by River Niger and its tributaries'.⁸⁶ Campbell's proposition shows that British interest and exploration of the countries bounding the Niger River, especially Yorubaland where the missionaries were already successful did not abate, even after the failure of the 1841 Niger Expedition.

Cultural Hegemony in Missionary Circles

The break in the missionary ranks was the most painful of all the factors that contributed to the decline of Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. Not every missionary or agency subscribed to the idea of Legitimate Commerce, but there had

⁸⁴ Lenin, 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism', p. 111.

⁸⁵ Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, 1840, p. 240.

⁸⁶ CMS/CA2/016/12, Paper by B. Campbell, 1857.

been no voice of dissent on civilizing Africa. Cultural hegemony and a sense of superiority within missionary circles had been a feature of modern mission right from its inception in Yorubaland. When Venn was the secretary of the CMS, Henry Townsend wrote him a damaging letter insinuating that the African agents of mission could never amount to anything but surrogates for the British: 'The white man must be in advance in ability, in religion, in position, to the native teachers of all kinds, or if he ceases to be so, he must leave the work.'⁸⁷ Similarly, while reluctantly conceding to the proposed elevation of Samuel Crowther as bishop, David Hinderer, a German pietist nevertheless observed that Africans were still bonded in 'heathenism', and therefore could not lead while Europeans followed:

because God gives us influence as Europeans among them. This influence is very desirable and necessary to us, but if they hear that a black man is our master, they (Africans) will question our respectability.⁸⁸

Thus, the tradition of cultural supremacy had become apparent since the 1850s.

No sooner had Henry Venn retired from championing Yoruba economic emancipation than the Yoruba missionaries began to feel that the situation was no longer the same even within missionary circles. Commenting on the new generation of European missionaries that emerged by the 1870s, Bishop Crowther, apparently in frustration lamented:

The path has been well beaten by black agents, who had roughed it for years till good houses are being put up in the factories which prove healthy for European agents, now black men are not capable of managing the business but Europeans!⁸⁹

⁸⁷ CMS/CA2/085 H. Townsend to H. Venn, 5 Nov. 1859.

⁸⁸ CMS/CA2/049 D. Hinderer to H. Venn, 15 Nov. 1864.

⁸⁹ CMS/CA3/04(a), Bishop Crowther to J. Edgar, 3 September 1875.

Bishop Crowther, sensing the beginning of the end began to ponder on what legacy he and his colleagues would leave behind for successive generations of Africans.

Illicit traders who constituted themselves into informants on missionary activities in Africa quickly took advantage of the problem of hegemony to break the ranks of missionaries in the Yoruba missions, by peddling damaging reports. J. Edgar, a missionary and the managing director of West Africa Company Ltd, was particularly disappointed to hear that unfounded rumours were being circulated against missionaries. He argued that if the informants were only being humorous or they had been favourably disposed towards missionaries 'such sweeping, disparaging and indiscriminating charges' would not have been written against them.⁹⁰

In an 1875 letter to mission secretaries in Dickinson Street in Manchester, Edgar gave his opinion after cataloguing the accusations levelled against missionaries:

1. That they were hungry missionary rabbles, devouring everything, lazy loafers.
2. That there were dissolute black women found squatting or lying above and below among the men, and much else besides.
3. That they were illicit traders hanging about violating the orders against private trading.⁹¹

Edgar defended missionaries elaborately. He gave an account of those with whom he had undertaken voyages by sea:

Mr. & Mrs. Williams, Mr & Mrs Spencer and four sawyers...
Mr & Mrs Dandeson and a servant girl, Mr. & Mrs. Carew
and two children, and a girl nurse, Mr Riffle a young
schoolmaster.⁹²

⁹⁰ CMS/CA3/04/497 J. Edgar to S. Crowther, Letter, 1875

⁹¹ CMS/CA3/04/497 J. Edgar, (while in a steamer travelling to Upper Niger in the company of Josiah Crowther) to CMS Secretaries, 3 September 1875.

⁹² Ibid.

He put up a spirited defence of the integrity of missionaries: 'The General agent kindly gave up his cabin in favour of Mrs Dandeson Crowther, his sister in law, Mr & Mrs Carew with the children occupied a portion of the saloon, thus the female members of the mission were accommodated.'⁹³ Edgar also reminded the secretaries that he was the managing director of the West African Company Limited and could vouchsafe that the missionaries did not engage in any private dealings or illicit trading:

Now for the illicit trading... they being missionary passengers and not the company's servants, they could not be bound by their orders. If the missionaries were intended to be accused as traders contrary to the regulations of their society, it should be so distinctly stated... but be it known that they strictly never made any regulations forbidding their agents from buying or battering altogether for their own use: without this distinctions, all such dealings will be termed trading as for gain or profit. Since 1857, now 18 years ago....⁹⁴

Thus, although hegemony could not be denied, missionaries of all nationalities still held their relationships with one another intact and kept toiling together for result.

Conclusion

Although this study does not portray missionaries as good in absolute terms and other people as absolutely evil, the distinction between the European missionaries, the traders and the consuls is discernible. 'In history there is a continuous mixture of good and evil in every group, in every agency which carries the historical process, in every period, in every historical actualization'.⁹⁵ This research does not trivialise the tragic ambiguity of history and its inability to harmonise all the theological issues related to Legitimizing Commerce in Yorubaland. It however perceives from available data that

⁹³ CMS/CA3/04/497 J. Edgar, Managing Director of West Africa Company

⁹⁴ CMS/CA3/04/497/p. 5 J. Edgar to CMS Secretaries, 3 September 1875.

⁹⁵ Paul Tillich, 'Missions and World History', in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, Gerald H. Anderson ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 282.

missionaries Christianized commerce in Yorubaland by adopting the providential doctrine of their forebears who used Commerce and Christianity to proclaim the Gospel to the West Indies, India and China in the nineteenth century.⁹⁶ Their pursuit was for earthly fulfilment which would help the converts to become candidates of the kingdom of heaven.

Tillich's description of the kingdom of God as 'the symbol for an unambiguous situation, a purification of history, something in which the demonic is conquered, the fulfilment is reached, and the ambiguous is thrown out',⁹⁷ is vital for understanding the motives of the Yoruba missionaries for embarking on Legitimate Commerce in Yorubaland. Carrey also provides a basis for perceiving that modern mission envisioned commerce as an evangelistic strategy to conquer the demonic forces of the Slave Trade in God's earthly Kingdom. This goal was achieved through legitimizing the business relationship between Africa and the West, bringing the farmers rewards for their labour that was capable of taking them out of the trade in slaves. Yoruba and European missionaries thus adopted the evangelical strategy of benevolence to introduce God's Kingdom to the people of Yorubaland.

While it is impossible to overlook the issues of cultural hegemony and discrimination, nevertheless, an objective assessment of missionaries' labours in bringing back the lost economic glory of Yorubaland is imperative. This study does not examine the lapses of some British abolitionists and missionaries in detail; this was a major concern dealt with by Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, and some other

⁹⁶ B. Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), pp. 85-90, 98-101.

⁹⁷ Tillich, 'Missions and World History', in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, p. 282.

scholars in the 1930s.⁹⁸ Rather, it evaluates the evangelical missionaries whose contributions to the African economy in spite of criticisms are still evident in the commercial, educational, social and cultural life of the Yoruba.

Some commercial landmarks were left in remembrance of missionary motives of legitimizing commerce in Africa and wiping out slave dealing. One such memorial was the establishment of a weekly produce market on 27 August 1861 at Lokoja for the sole purpose of legitimizing trade, which became the marketing pattern of Yorubaland. The agenda to develop the produce market to a weekly affair also materialised. Articles 1, 3 and 4 in the instrument establishing the market reads thus:

Regulations for the market about to be established:

1. The market shall be open everyday, except Sunday, from sunrise to sunset
2. In it may be exposed any article of sale, either European or native, with the sole exception of slaves, as soft goods, native cloths, hardware, weapon, palm and other oils, articles of goods, live stock, &c
4. A large market shall be held every Monday and every Thursday....⁹⁹

Two implications of the missionaries' influence in the 1860s are apparent from the document referred to above. First, the missionaries kept on influencing the colonialists towards advancing Legitimate Commerce. Secondly, the missionaries did not allow their desire to legitimize commerce to jeopardise their primary objective of proclaiming the Gospel. Whereas other traditional religions had different days when their adherents gathered for worship, especially Moslems who met on Fridays, the missionaries' persuasion of the British Colonial administrator, Balfour Baikie, to set

⁹⁸ D. H. Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered* (New York, 1956), pp. 19-36; M. B. Duberman, (ed.), *The Antislavery Vanguard* (Princeton, 1965), G. Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists* (Westport, Conn., 1971), are among the later works that pay glowing tributes to the triumph of the abolitionist over the forces of the evil trade in slaves.

⁹⁹ CMS/CA2/07/1, Regulation signed by Colonial Administrator, W. B. Baikie, Lokoja, 27 August 1861.

Sunday aside so their converts would not miss worship has since remained a Yoruba heritage.

Samuel Crowther's oratorical memorial in remembrance of his commercial mentors, the brave pioneers of Legitimate Commerce, has a positive connotation. It implies that Africa's renaissance of hope lies not only in the condemnation of the opportunists, but also in the commendation of friends of Africa and preservation of their memoirs:

Sir T. Fowell Buxton, who planned the first Niger expedition, and his son, Sir Edward N. Buxton, who never wavered in his interest in the cause of Africa, have both passed away to their rest. Still, more recently, the leader of that expedition, Rear-Admiral H. D. Trotter... has been taken away like so many others, just at the moment when the enterprise which he initiated seemed about to be crowned with success.... Africa does, indeed, owe to these tried friends such a posthumous Memorial.... 'They rest from their labours, and their works follow them' [Revelation 14: 3].¹⁰⁰

Philosophical keys cannot unlock the mystery behind the missionary motives of using commerce as a means for the proclamation of the Gospel and the abrogation of slavery. However, a theological interpretation of Legitimate Commerce, based on historical proofs, awakens fresh lines of thinking about how itinerant preachers defied criticisms to become 'Headlight' in the world, shining through commerce into Yorubaland for about four decades.

¹⁰⁰ Crowther and Taylor, *Journal and Notices of the Native Missionaries Accompanying the Niger Expedition of 1857-1859*, pp. ix - x.

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Appendix

Glossary of Non-English Terms

Aladura movement – The praying group/ the praying Church

Agboketoyinbo – ‘he who lives upstairs like a white man’

Akus (Akoos) – An identification word for the Yorubas, (beginning every Yoruba greeting (‘a-ku’ or ‘e-ku’ or ‘o-ku’))

Àrokò – Symbols typically used to state the mission of a messenger

Aye (Aiye) – The earth or the world

Creole (or Kiriyó): Descendants of various groups of freed slaves resettled in Freetown, Sierra Leone between 1787 and 1855. It refers in this context to the children of *Saro* (Yoruba) ex-slaves

ebu – Local palm oil mill

Egúngún - masquerades, believed by the Yoruba to descend annually from heaven

Eleda – The Creator

?rú – War captives and slaves are interchangeably referred to as *?rú*

Ifá – The diviner who knows ‘the secret of man’s lot’

Is? àgb? - Farming as a profession

Iwé – Book

Ìwòfà – literally ‘pawns’ or human collateral for debts

Lagosians – natives of Lagos

Oba – King

Ogun’ – The god of iron

Oja – Market

Oja-Oba – The king’s market

?j? m?fà – Literally meaning six days. *Ìwòfà*, a ‘pawn’ was expected to serve the debtor for six days and was free to work in her/his own farm for one day in the week

Olodumare – The all-knowing God

olòrìsà-oko worshippers of the god of the earth or the land

? *l?run* – Yoruba plain word for God

Ori – Literally means ‘head’, but symbolically refers to the god of destiny

orisa – Yoruba word for god or goddess

Orisà oko – The god of the farm

Òrìsà oko – The god of the farm or land

? *run* – Heaven

? *rúnmilà* – The *Ifa* god

Osun – goddess of the river

Oyibo – White person or White European

Oyo, Ijebu, Egba, Ekiti or *Ijesha* – The various tribes of the Yoruba

Saro – Colloquia form of describing the ex-slaves from Sierra Leone

Yemoja – The deity mother of all rivers and fishes

