

LESSON NOTE FOR WEEK EIGHT (FAMVAR INTERNATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL)

SUBJECT: HISTORY

CLASS: JSS1

TOPIC: EARLY EUROPEANS THAT CAME TO NIGERIA: MISSIONARIES

Nigeria experienced an influx of missionaries from the 15th century until the early 20th century. The early Portuguese and British missionaries both undertook efforts to convert the country. The most influential Christian missionaries who came to Nigeria include:

The Roman Catholic Mission: The Roman Catholic Mission was the first Christian mission to come to Nigeria and was made up of the Portuguese priests who accompanied traders and other officials to the West African coast in the 15th century. Prominent among the missionaries were Joa Affonso Aveiro, who visited Benin in 1485 in order to evangelize the people of Benin and Reverend Father Francesco Borghero, an Italian priest, who was the first missionary to arrive in Whydah(Benin Republic) and came to Lagos in 1861.

Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther: Samuel Crowther was a member of the first British-sponsored Niger Expedition, which took place in 1841. He was essential in the foundation of Christian missions in Nigeria, having been a liberated African slave from Freetown, Sierra Leone, of Yoruba descent. As a Christian Missionary Society missionary, he composed hymns and translated the Bible into Yoruba.

In 1845, he was ordained, and in 1864, he was consecrated as a bishop becoming the first African Anglican bishop. He published the “Iwelohein” which was the first Yoruba vernacular newspaper together with Reverend Henry Townsend in 1859, and they also co-founded the C.M.S. mission.

Mary Mitchel Slessor: Mary Slessor was a United Presbyterian Church missionary of Scottish descent. When she landed in Nigeria in 1876 , she was the first single female missionary. Her missionary work was concentrated in Calabar and the surrounding communities. She advocated for women’s rights and the protection of children. She later worked in Okoyong in Calabar where she played a key role in stopping the killing of twins in the region. She died in Calabar in 1915 at the age of 67.

Reverend Henry Townsend: Townsend was a missionary of the Christian Missionary Society who first arrived in Nigeria in 1843. He returned to Abeokuta in 1845 from Sierra Leone with a team of missionaries including his wife Sarah Townsend, Rev and Mrs Golmer, and Rev and Mrs Crowther.

He established the first printing press in Abeokuta in 1852 and published the Yoruba vernacular newspaper known as “Iwelohein” together with Bishop Ajayi Crowther in 1859. He also jointly established the C.M.S. mission with Bishop Crowther. In 1873, he founded the Ake Orphanage.

Thomas Birch Freeman: Thomas Freeman was a Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society missionary who arrived in Badagry, Nigeria on September 24, 1842. He arrived in response to a request for a minister from liberated slaves from Freetown of Yoruba and Aku descent living in Abeokuta.

He was the first Christian missionary of the Wesley Methodist Mission which was the the first Christian mission to successfully operate in Nigeria. He built a mission house and a bamboo chapel with the help of other missionaries such as William De Graft, which was finished in November 1842. He went on missionary trips to Egba, Abeokuta, and Dahomey.

Some other early European missionaries who came to Nigeria were Reverend Hope Masterson Waddell, Reverend Williams Anderson, Elizabeth Booth and Sarah Townsend.

HOMEWORK

1. Name four notable early missionaries who came to Nigeria.
2. Write short notes on the contributions of Mary Slessor and Bishop Ajayi Crowther as missionaries in Nigeria.