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# Nigerian-Vatican Diplomatic Relations

Evangelisation and  
Catholic Missionary Enterprise  
1884-1950



PETER LANG  
EDITION

# Introduction

There are multi-faceted ingredients which form the bedrock for the writing and reconstruction of the history of missionary enterprise and the development of the Nigerian Church. The coordinates that make up this whole, comprise of the missionary and religious groups, the Vatican, the colonial powers and traditional leadership, slave trade and its emancipation, Protestantism, the First and Second World Wars, African traditional religion (s), Inculturation, the Nigerian People, catechists and very importantly, African culture amongst others.<sup>3</sup>

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- 3 ACHEBE, Things v-x, 62-87, 148-158; ACHEBE, Arrow 54-59; ACHEBE, Trouble 10-20; EHUSANI, Afro-Christian 121-187; RODNEY, How 161-176; SOYINKA, Play v-x; MAKOZI/ OJO (eds.), History 1-14, 15-37, 55-70; DADA, James/ OSHAGBEMI, Titus (eds.), Egbe History 23-88; Horst GRÜNDER, Art. Kolonialismus und Mission, in: LK 2 (2001) 868-869; FREI, Pädagogik 14-20, 38-54, 66-75; FILIYA/ DONG et. al., History 18-20, 21-26, 86-97; MANDIROLA, Diary 17-26, 27-30, 324-325; HICKEY, Augustinians 7-10, 16-19, 48-52; HICKEY, Growth 13-15, 52-63; O'CONNOR, SMA Missionaries, vii-viii, 1-3; ROZARIO, 9-12, 14-16, 17-20, 71; HICKEY, Holy Father 4-13; RATH, Zur Geschichte 42-52; RATH, Geschichte (IV), 276-306; HOGAN, Berengario 1-30, 98-144; OKPE, Social 23-26; OKURE, Final 15-26; IWE, 48-74, 168-170; MCGARVEY/ FALOLA, OLA Mission, iii-iv, 1-6; MCCAWILLE, We Will, 106, 128; MCNAMARA, Nora/ MORSE, Stephen, Developing 67-77; ONWUBIKO, African Thought 1-13, 35-43, 115-130, 149-158; ONWUBIKO, Osu 24-34; IHENACHO, African Christianity 1-18, 157-162; Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, Chose 3-4, 28-29; OKWOLI, Outline 3-23; Joachim WANKE, Art. Kultur im Kontext eines Neues Missionsbegriffs, in: Kirche und Kultur 212 (2007), 59-61; Sekretariat des Deutschen Bischofskonferenz (ed.), Art. Mission, in: Der Glaube der Kirche. Ein theologisches Lesebuch aus Texten Joseph Ratzingers 248 (2011), 99; Sekretariat des Deutschen Bischofskonferenz (ed.), Art. Die Diskussion über die Heilsrelevanz der Religionen 136 (1996), 10-11; IKENGAMETUH (ed.), African Inculturation 77-88, 107-127; Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Church 17, 22, 26; Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Family 11-18, 73-78; OJO, Catholic Laity 74-114; Oluwasegun EHNMIRO, Art. Revelation and the Rise of Sects Today, in: NACATHS JAT 8 (1998), 82-87; EDIMEH, Legacies 46-72; Ugwu IKENNA, Art. Inculturating the Sacrament of Reconciliation within the Nigerian Church, in: NACATHS JAT 6 (1996), 67-75; Victor IFEANYI, Art. Inculturation and Liberation Theology. Similarities and Differences, in: NACATHS JAT 10 (2000), 23-34; Modestus ANYAEGBU/ Nze Ignatius NWACHINEMERE, Art. Vocation Boom in Nigeria. Use and Abuse, in: NACATHS JAT 10 (2000), 47-52; Maurice IZUNWA/ Adolphus ANUKA, Art. Ecclesiological Questions in Africa. A Historic-Theological Appraisal, in: NACATHS JAT 11 (2001), 14-38; Alfred Adewale MARTINS, Art. The Rational Status of Magical Beliefs and Practices. in: BJ 6 (1994), 25-44; John ONAIYEKAN, Art. Evangelisation and Human Rights Issues in Africa Today. Some Pastoral Reflections, in: WAJES 3 (1991), 1-8; Joseph OSEI-BONSU, Art. Christianity and Culture, in:

Historical memory is the firm perception of order in what has been done and said. Such a memory creates awareness and consciousness, both individually and socially; together it generates discernment and wisdom for the future, for the “*res gerendae*”<sup>4</sup>. In other words, history could be said to be the study of the past in the present in view of the future such that among the numerous advantages of the study of history, one advantage is the discovery of the antecedents behind any foundation or event. In as much as a purely objective presentation of history is controversial among historians as a result of a heterogeneous line of influences or biases, personal make up and a host of other arguments, it is the onerous task of the scientific historian to present history as objectively as possible. An attempt at the documentation of the beginnings of the Church in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular tries to bring the two coordinates of the Church’s presence in Africa: the past and the future. The former seems to point to, and almost map out, the latter.

Much has already been said and done in the evangelisation of Africa, nonetheless, much remains to be done and said, a continued and deeper effort to ensure the permeation of the Christian faith and inculturation which is the new form of evangelisation. The teaching organ of the Church has made significant contributions in the form of documents which throw heavy weight on the missionary role of the Church and the challenges of evangelisation. This is true of many papal personages, this is also true of the popes of past centuries, from the 15<sup>th</sup> through to the 19<sup>th</sup>, from Martin V (1417-1431)<sup>5</sup> to Alexander VI (1492-1503)<sup>6</sup>, who drew the ‘raya’ between the East Indies and the West Indies, not to

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WAJES 3 (1991), 56-66; Anthony EKWUNIFE, Art. The Christian Celebration of Death and Burial and the Position of Widows in the Contest of Inculturation. A Case Study of the Igbo South-East of Nigeria, in: WAJES 3 (1995) 34-56; ROBIN, Lest 59-61.

4 PALERMO, Africa Pontificia 9.

5 Martin V (1417-1431), formerly known as Oddo Colonna, born in Genazzano near Rome, 1405 elevated to Cardinal, 1417 elected Pope after 40 years of vacancy due to the Western Schism. During the Western Schism where the Church had three Popes namely, Gregory XII (+117) John XXIII (1419) and Benedict (XIII), Martin V (+1431) was elected Pope. Before his election, the Council 1415 brought out the decree “*Haec Sancta*”, that declared the superiority of the Council over the Pope which is still discussed until today. The Council of Constance condemned John Wycliffe (+1384) who, amongst others, denied the teaching of transubstantiation. The council also condemned Wycliffe’s companion John Hus who was greatly influenced by Wycliff and burnt as a wizard, Hieronymus of Prague was also condemned and burnt at the stake. The Council also condemned communion under both species and other reforms among which is the decree “*Frequens*” with the recommendation to hold regular synods. Cf. Ansgar FRENKEN, Art. Martin V, in: BBKL 4 (1993) 912; Rudolf FISCHER-WOLLPERT, Art. Martin V, in: LP 101, 234-236; Arnold ESCH, Art. Martin V, in: HLP 1 (2001) 131-132.

6 Alexander VI (1492-1503), formerly known as Rodrigo de Borja, born in Játiva bei Valencia, 1455 appointed Cardinal Deacon and Bishop of Valencia by his uncle Calixtus III, 1456 ele-

divide the world between Spain and Portugal but rather to assign more precise tasks in its evangelisation to the sovereigns of those nations; from Julius II (1503-1513)<sup>7</sup> to Pius V (1566-1572)<sup>8</sup> who wanted to create a type of ‘flying nun-cio’ for all mission lands; from Gregory XV (1621-1623)<sup>9</sup>, founder of the Propaganda Fide to Urban VIII (1623-1644)<sup>10</sup>, founder of the Collegio Propaganda Fide, to receive and train future missionaries and native seminarians<sup>11</sup>. While Gregory XVI (1831-1846)<sup>12</sup> reorganized and gave new impetus to the Missionary

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vated to Cardinal and 1457 Assistant Chancellor, 1492 elected Pope. Cf. Friedrich Wilhelm BAUTZ, Art. Alexander VI, in: BBKL 1 (1990) 104; Rudolf FISCHER-WOLLPERT, Art. Alexander VI, in: LP 107-108.

- 7 Julius II (1503-1513), formerly known as Giuliano della Rovere, born in Albissola near Savona, 1471 elevated to Cardinal by his uncle Sixtus IV, 1503 elected Pope, 1506 laid the foundation for the new St. Peter’s Church. Cf. Herbert IMMENKÖTTER, Art. Julius II, in: BBKL 3 (1992) 811; Klaus GANZER, Art. Julius II, in: HLP 1 (2001) 114; Rudolf FISCHER-WOLLPERT, Art. Julius II, in LP 108-109. For further information about him see: Ivan CLOULAS, Jules II, Paris 1990; Christine SHAW, Julius II. The Warrior Pope, Oxford 1993.
- 8 Pius V (1566-1572), formerly known as Michele Ghislieri, born in Bosco bei Alessandria, studied in Genua, 1528 Priestly ordination, Teacher of Philosophy and Theology in Pavia, 1556 elected Bishop of Sutri and Nepi, 1557 elevated to Cardinal, 1560 named Bishop of Mondovi. The Council of Trent left the Pope with a lot of assignments: 1566 publication of the Roman Catechism, 1568 the Roman Breviary, 1570 the Roman Missal. After the victory of Armada in 1571 in the Gulf of Lepanto, the Pope pronounced the Feast of Our Lady of Victory today known as Our Lady of the Rosary. Cf. Klaus GANZER, Art. Pius V, in: HLP 158-159; Rudolf FISCHER-WOLLPERT, Art. Pius, in LP 114; Georg DENZLER, Art. Pius V, in: BBKL 7 (1994) 665.
- 9 Gregory XV (1621-1623), formerly known as Alessandro Ludovisi, born in Bologna, Studies in Rome with the Jesuits and Bologna, 1612 Archbishop of Bologna, 1616 elevated to Cardinal, 1621 elected Pope. As Pope, he undertook reforms within the Church and was active against the Reformation. He made the world mission central with the founding of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide. He issued two bulls on papal election and canonized Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier, Phillip Neri and Theresa of Avila. Cf. Georg SCHWAIGER, Art. Gregory XV, in: HLP 77; Rudolf FISCHER-WOLLPERT, Art. Gregor XV, in: LP 117; Friedrich Wilhelm BAUTZ, Art. Gregor XV, in: BBKL 2 (1990) 325; BEDOUELLE, History 174.
- 10 Urban VIII (1623-1644), formerly known as Maffeo Barberini, born in Florence, studied in Collegium Romanum, Studies of Law in Pisa, 1589 Referent of both Signature, 1601 sent to Paris, 1604 Titular Archbishop of Nazareth and Nuncio in France (until 1607), 1606 elevated to Cardinal, 1608-1617 Bishop of Spoleto, 1611-1614 Legate of Bologna, 1623 elected Pope. Cf. Klaus JAITNER, Art. Urban VIII, in: HLP 191-192; Rudolf FISCHER-WOLLPERT, Art. Urban VIII, in: LP 117-118; Ernst PULSFORT, Art. Urban VIII, in: BBKL 12 (1997) 929-933.
- 11 PALERMO, Africa Pontificia 10.
- 12 Gregory XVI (1831-1846), formerly known as Bartolomeo Alberto Cappellari, born in Belluno, 1787 ordained priest, 1805 Abbot of San Gregorio al Celio, 1823 Superior of his Order, 1825 elevated to Cardinal, 1826 appointed Prefect of Propaganda Fide, 1831 ordained Bishop, 1831 elected Pope. Cf. Georg SCHWAIGER, Art. Gregor XVI, in HLP 78-79; Rudolf FISCHER-

Church, Leo XIII (1878-1903)<sup>13</sup> insisted on the abolition of slavery and Benedict XV (1914-1922)<sup>14</sup> wrote his first encyclical on the missions with highlights on indigenous clergy. Paul VI (1963-1978)<sup>15</sup> became the first apostolic pilgrim to Africa and John Paul II (1978-2005)<sup>16</sup> in his several visits throughout the world has made ten visits to the Church in Africa.

Slavery was commonplace in this era and was accepted by “almost everyone” with few arguing against it<sup>17</sup>. During the 15<sup>th</sup> century, sentiment in Europe increasingly turned against the enslavement of Christians and the Church denounced such practices, but this did not extend to unbelievers. According to Burton (2007) Martin V authorized a crusade against Africa in 1418 and this coupled with a later bull (1441) sanctioned the Portuguese trade in African

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WOLLPERT, Art. Gregor XVI, in: LP 130-131; Friedrich Wilhelm BAUTZ, Art. Gregor XVI, in: BBKL 2 (1990) 327.

- 13 Leo XIII (1878-1903), formerly known as Vincenzo Gioacchino Pecci, born near Anagni, 1837 ordained Priest, 1843 Nuncio in Brussels, 1846 appointed Bishop of Perugia, 1853 elevated to Cardinal, 1878 elected Pope, 1902 founded the Papal Biblical Commission for the care, guidance and control of Biblical studies. Cf. Oskar KÖHLER, Art. Leo XIII, in: HLP 124-125; Rudolf FISCHER-WOLLPART, Art. Leo XIII, in: LP 133-134; Ekkart SAUSER, Art. Leo XIII, in: BBKL 4 (1992) 1451.
- 14 Benedict XV (1914-1922), formerly known as Giacomo Marchese della Chiesa, born in Genua, 1882 ordained priest, 1882 Papal diplomatic service, 1907 appointed Archbishop of Bologna, 1914 elevated to Cardinal, 1914 elected Pope. Cf. Georg SCHWAIGER, Art. Benedikt XV, in: HLP 37; Rudolf FISCHER-WOLLPART, Art. Benedikt XV, in: LP 136-137; Friedrich Wilhelm BAUTZ, Art. Benedikt XV, in: BBKL 1 (1990) 491. For further information about him see: Walter PETERS, *The Life of Benedict XV*, Milwaukee 1959; John POLLARD, *The unknown Pope. Benedict XV and the pursuit of peace*, London 1999.
- 15 Paul VI (1963-1978), formerly known as Giovanni Battista Montini, born in Concesio in the Province of Brescia, 1920 ordained priest, thereafter studies in the diplomatic service of the Holy See in Rome, 1923 Secretary to Nunciature in Warsaw, 1924 Secretary of State, 1937 Undersecretary of State, 1954 elected Bishop of Milan, 1963 elected Pope. Cf. Victor CONZEMIUS, Art. Paul VI, in: HLP 143-145; Rudolf FISCHER-WOLLPART, Art. Paul VI, in: LP 143-145; Franz Norbert OTTERBECK, Art. Paul VI, in: BBKL 28 (2007) 1207. For further information see: Jean GUITTON, *Dialog mit Paul VI*, Frankfurt (Main) 1969; David Andreas SEEGER, *Paul VI, Papst im Widerstreit*, Freiburg 1971; Peter HEBBLETHWAITE, *Paul VI, the first modern pope*, London 1993; Antonio ACERBI, *Paolo VI*, Milan 1997.
- 16 John Paul II (1978-2005), formerly known as Karol Josef Wojtyła, born in Wadowice, 1946 ordained priest, 1953 habilitation at the University of Crakow, 1958 appointed Bishop, 1964 appointed Archbishop of Krakau, 1967 elevated to Cardinal, 1978 elected Pope. Cf. Gatz ERWIN, Art. Johannes Paul II, in: HLP 111-113; Rudolf FISCHER-WOLLPART, Art. Johannes Paul II, in: LP 1145-148. For further information see: Mieczysław MALIŃSKI, *Johannes Paul II, Sein Leben, von einem Freund erzählt*, Freiburg 1979; Stanisław DZIWIŚ, *Mein Leben mit dem Papst. Johannes Paul II wie er wirklich war*, Leipzig 2007; Stefan SAMERSKI, *Johannes Paul II, München* 2008.
- 17 SETTON, *Papacy* 46.

slaves<sup>18</sup>. In March 1425 a bull was issued that threatened excommunication for any Christian slave dealers and ordered Jews to wear a “badge of infamy” to deter, in part, the buying of Christians<sup>19</sup>. In June 1425 Martin V anathematized those who sold Christian slaves to Muslims<sup>20</sup>. Traffic in Christian slaves was not banned, purely the sale to non-Christian owners<sup>21</sup>. The papal Bull of Excommunication issued to the Genoese merchants of Caffa related to the buying and selling of Christians but has been considered ineffectual as prior injunctions against the Viennese, including the Laws of Gazaria, made allowances for the sale of both Christian and Muslim slaves<sup>22</sup>. Ten black African slaves were presented to Martin V in 1441 by Prince Henry of Portugal (1394-1460)<sup>23</sup>. Martin V supported colonial expansion. Davidson (1961) argues that Martin’s injunction against slavery was not a condemnation of slavery itself but rather it was driven through fear of “infidel power.”<sup>24</sup>

The documents of 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century bring out how different Pontiffs discussed evangelisation with sovereigns and princes. This is echoed in the following, for instance: “the Pope allows the King of Portugal to make commerce of spices, of metals, copper, etc. with the infidels, (the Moors, the black men of Guinea and the Indians) in the hopes of their conversion to the Catholic Faith.”<sup>25</sup> Nicholas V (1447-1455)<sup>26</sup> in *Dum Diversas* writes: “To Alphonsus the King of Portugal and to his successors, the Pope gives the faculty of conquering, submit-

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18 BURTON, Blessings 197.

19 DAVIS, Slavery 100.

20 SETTON, Papacy 46.

21 MAXWELL, Slavery 49.

22 DAVIDSON, Slave Trade 41.

23 Prince Henry of Portugal (1394-1460), born in Portugal. Henry of Portugal known to History as Henry the Navigator was the third surviving son of King John I and his Queen, Philippa, daughter of John of Gaunt. Henry of Portugal was regarded as the “Navigator” because of his novel interest and desire to find out more about the Atlantic Ocean. The Atlantic Ocean was frightening to the Europeans, they were more acquainted with the Mediterranean Sea and because of this fear of the unknown, and Europeans did not try to sail to Africa or India before the fifteenth century. European expansion had its true start at the beginning of the fifteenth century owing to the enthusiasm of Henry the Navigator. Portugal systematically explored the western shores of the African continent from the capture of Ceuta in 1415 to the sailing around the Cape of Storm, which later became the Cape of Good Hope, in 1487. Cf. GROVES, Christianity 118; BEDOUELLE, History, 87-88.

24 DAVIDSON, African Slave Trade 100.

25 PALERMO, Africa Pontificia 52.

26 Nicholas V (1447-1455), formerly known as Tomasso Parentucelli, born in Sarzana, 1443 appointed Bishop of Bologna, 1446 Papal Legate in Germany, 1446 elevated Cardinal, 1447 elected Pope. Cf. Ludwig VONES, Art. Nikolaus V, in: HLP 136-137; Rudolf FISCHER-WOLLPART, Art. Nikolaus V, in: LP 103-104; Johannes GROHE, Art. Nikolaus V, in: BBKL 16 (1999) 1142.

ting, possessing and governing the kingdoms of Saracens, of pagans, of infidels for the defense, the integrity and increase of Religion.”<sup>27</sup>

Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447)<sup>28</sup> proclaimed his intention not to cause harm thus “The King of Portugal and the King of Spain claim the right of conquest over certain lands of Africa and certain isles (The Canaries). The Pope declares that he had not nor has any intention whatsoever to do any harm to the persons’ rights and exhorts not to raise scandal. Alexander VI in *Eximiae Devotionis* writes “the Pope grants the Sovereign of Spain the same privileges already granted to the Kings of Portugal over the lands and the Isles discovered to be discovered towards the West for Spain towards the East and Africa for Portugal to enlarge the Christian Kingdom and to exalt the Catholic Faith.”<sup>29</sup> Furthermore in *Inter Cetera* he adds with caution “As to the Kings of Portugal, for the conquered lands, discovered or to be discovered in Africa, the Pope grants the same privileges to the King and the Queen of Castille, but ‘in virtute sanctae obedienciae’ they must choose, for those lands, wise missionaries, cultured, fearing God, and who know how to educated people in the Faith.”<sup>30</sup> Pope Leo XIII gave a certain sum of money to Cardinal Charles Lavigerie (1825-1892)<sup>31</sup>, Bishop of Carthage and of Algiers, for the liberation committee of African slaves.<sup>32</sup>

In later times, the approach changed drastically as the former is easily prone to misunderstanding. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the documents of the Popes and of Propaganda Fide set in motion the great work of reorganization and constitution of the ‘sui iuris’ missions, apostolic prefectures and vicariates.<sup>33</sup>

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27 PALERMO, *Africa Pontificia* 52.

28 Eugene IV (1431-1447), formerly known as Gabriele Condulmer, born in Venedig, 1407 appointed Bishop of Siena, 1408 appointed Cardinal Priest, 1431 elected Pope. Cf. Ludwig VONES, Art. Eugen IV, in: HLP 60-61; Rudolf FISCHER-WOLLPART, Art. Eugene IV, in: LP 102-103; Friedrich Wilhelm BAUTZ, Art. Eugen IV, in: BBKL 1 (1990) 1553. For further information see: Georgio FEDALTO (ed.), *Acta Eugenii Papae IV*, Rom 1990; Joseph GILL, *Eugenius IV, Pope of Christian Union*, London 1961; Johannes HELMRATH, *Das Baseler Konzil 1431-1449*, Köln-Wien 1987.

29 PALERMO, *Africa Pontificia* 62

30 PALERMO, *Africa Pontificia* 60.

31 Charles-Martial-Alemard Lavigerie (1825-1892), born in Saint-Esprit, France, 1849 ordained priest, 1863 appointed Bishop of Nancy et Toul, 1868 founded the Society of Missionaries of Africa (also known as White Fathers or Pères Blancs), 1869 founded the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Notre Dame d’Afrique (or White Sisters), 1882 appointed Cardinal Priest. Cf. Karl MUEHLEK, Art. Lavigerie, Charles-Martial-Allemard, in: BBKL 4 (1992) 1269.

32 PALERMO, *Africa Pontificia* 166.

33 PALERMO, *Africa Pontificia* 11.

In his encyclical letter *Summi Pontificatus* although Pius XII (1939-1958)<sup>34</sup> discussed other matters like the errors of the present time, the laicisation of society, the autonomist and absolutist concept of the state etc, he concerned himself also with Mission and inculturation. With a document titled *Non Semel*, the Propaganda Fide cautioned that greater prudence and respect should be used when speaking or writing about the mission countries.<sup>35</sup>

The missionary contact with Nigeria could be said to have taken place in two phases namely; in the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and secondly in the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The several attempts to bring the Catholic faith to Nigeria were greeted with varying degrees of success. The earliest attempt was at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century by Prince Henry. This was the age of exploration in order to make trade more feasible, however, beside finding out more about the oceans and finding out new trade routes, the Prince also wanted to see if there were any Christian Kings in Africa.<sup>36</sup> In addition, Prince Henry wanted the Catholic missionaries to take the message of Christianity to the people along the African coast, where the Portuguese set up trading centers. As a result, Catholic missionaries accompanied the early trading ships of the Portuguese. In 1546 Rome named a Missionary Prefect for all of West Africa. Numerous missionaries worked here until the end of the century but recorded dwarf success. Hildebrandt hinges the little success recorded in the conversion history on two reasons: He argues that the Africans seemed more interested in Portuguese guns and power than they were in Portuguese religion and secondly that the Portuguese spent more time and money developing trade than in furthering the work of the Church.

Imokhai, writing on the origin of the Portuguese expedition to Africa says that the Portuguese priests of the diocese of Lisbon made the first attempt during the age of exploration. The King of Portugal was interested in the conversion of West Africa. Even though the conversion of his territory to the Catholic faith was not the primary aim of the Portuguese expedition in the fifteenth century, it

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34 Pius XII (1939-1958), formerly known as Eugenio Pacelli, born in Rome, 1899 ordained priest, 1901 worked with the Papal Secretary of State, 1902 Doctoral studies in Canon Law, 1904 worked closely with Pietro Gasparri, 1909-1914 Professor of Church Diplomacy, 1911 Under-secretary, 1912 Pro secretary, 1914 Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Extra Ordinary Church Affairs, 1917 Titular Archbishop of Sardes and Apostolic Nuncio in Munich, 1920 Nuncio in Berlin, 1929 elevated Cardinal, 1930 Secretary of the Vatican State, 1939 elected Pope. Cf. Josef GELMI, Art. Pius XII, in: HLP 168-170; Rudolf FISCHER-WOLLPART, Art. Pius XII, in: LP 138-140; Hugo ALTMANN, Art. Pius XII, in: BBKL 7 (1994) 682-699. For further information see: Josef GELMI, *Die Päpste in Lebensbildern*, Graz 1988.

35 This document was signed by Petrus Card. Fumasoni Biondi, Cf. PALERMO, *Africa Pontificia* 334.

36 HILDEBRANDT, *History* 61.



formed a very special mission dear to the heart of the King.<sup>37</sup> Lisbon launched a pioneering missionary enterprise in the Kingdoms of Benin and Warri in Nigeria. By the Papal Bull of Demarcation of the Holy See, Portugal was given the monopoly of commercial and spiritual influence over the continent of Africa.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, in 1472, Portuguese priests from the diocese of Lisbon, who technically speaking, were not missionaries, were sent by the King of Portugal along with the Portuguese merchants to evangelize and trade with the Benin Kingdom.<sup>39</sup> The inconsiderate European territorial expansion and domination seem to justify the assertion that an appetite for wealth and evangelisation are by no means incompatible.<sup>40</sup>

Tasie, writing on the early European contacts with the Niger-Delta of Nigeria points out that in 1472, following the return of the explorers, lucrative trade developed between Portugal and Benin. The trade was chiefly in pepper, ivory and gold.<sup>41</sup> The commercial tie which opened between Portugal and Benin included diplomatic relations and later Christian missionaries were sent out with traders and diplomats.<sup>42</sup>

The missionary strategy used in the conversion of Europe to Christianity was adopted by the King of Portugal and his missionary priests, namely, the primary focus was on the ruler of the state in the hope that with his influence over his subjects, his conversion would automatically mean the conversion of his entire state to Christianity. This however was not successful because it does not follow that what works in Europe necessarily works in Africa or elsewhere in the world.

The priests who came to Benin achieved little success because, they did not come with the intention of living with the people and learning their language and other aspects of the Edo culture, thus there was a wide communication gap. The Christianisation in Benin at the time could be said to be more superficial as it did not penetrate deeply into the people, people were being baptised without really

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37 Charles IMOKHAI, Art. The Evolution of the Catholic Church in Nigeria, in: Aloysius MAKOZI/Afolabi OJO (eds.), History 1.

38 Ibid. 3

39 Ibid.

40 The main intention of these missionaries was to attract the peoples of these regions and to obtain their conversion to Christianity. Already the "Alexandrine Gift" of 1493, through several bulls of Alexander VI Borgia, affirmed the duty of evangelisation. It was for this purpose that the Pope divided up those parts of the new world already discovered and those to be discovered in the future between Spain and Portugal. Bernal Diaz, second in command to Hernan Cortès in Mexico and his chronicler, put it crudely: "We came here both to serve God and to grow rich!" Cf. BEDOUELLE, History 167.

41 TASIE, Missionary Enterprise 7

42 Cf. TASIE, Missionary enterprise 7. See also BURNS, History 65-66 and EGHAREVBHA, History 18-27.

knowing deeply and being convinced of what it meant to be baptised and other such practices. Being landlocked, Benin was also difficult to assess directly even by the expensive vessels of the Portuguese. Asking the Benin King to convert to Christianity was almost like a joke, since the traditional religion meant so much to him, the King being treated as a deity at that time.

A group of Augustinian monks;<sup>43</sup> introduced Christianity not only to the Kingdom of Benin but also to the Itsekiri Kingdom, called “Warri” in modern sources. Although a serious enough Christian had great difficulty in getting priests to settle in Warri; the poverty of the state and the deadly malaria fever prevented a strong Christian mission from being established. The Augustinians were withdrawn in 1584 and in 1593 a party of Franciscans visited Warri from São Tome. Following the pattern of Church-State relations, missionaries called at King’s courts, sought to convert the Kings, and from there attempted to make the populace Christian.

On the whole, the Oba of Benin and Olu of Warri had many contacts with Christian missionaries and their reaction to Christian mission were different at different times, sometimes, their response was that of encouragement but at other times they hampered any move to preach the faith. Many Warri rulers, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century were confessing Christians. A son of such a ruler was even sent to train as a priest in Portugal as the Portuguese felt that Africans might be the best missionaries to themselves.

Furthermore, it must be pointed out that the enthusiasm which inspired the Holy See<sup>44</sup> to legalise the Portuguese monopoly in Africa was gradually waning with time until the relationship between Lisbon and Rome who were principally interested in the conversion of Benin deteriorated until Rome eventually refused to recognise or have any dealings with the newly independent Portuguese government in 1640.<sup>45</sup> In 1622, Pope Gregory XV established the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith as an arm of the Vatican Curia to direct all missionary activities within the Catholic Church throughout the world. The Sacred Congregation recruited missionaries from existing religious orders and founded

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43 While the kings of Benin City remained strongly attached to their indigenous religion and rejected any missionary attempt, the young dynasty of Warri tried to assert its independence through contacts with the Portuguese. In 1570 the Olu (King) of Warri invited the Augustinian missionaries from Sao Tome and had his crown prince baptised Sebastiao. The Catholic tradition of the rulers of Warri was established and continued with some interruptions until 1807. Cf. BAUR, 2000 Years 76.

44 The Holy See or Apostolic See refers to the office of the Pope as the highest leadership office in the Catholic Church. The name also refers to the Pope as the one who occupies this office and those who work in the dicasteries of the Roman Curia. Cf. Jürgen ERBACHER, Art. Heiliger Stuhl, in: VL 176-177.

45 IMOKHAI, Art. Evolution 7.

new congregations of missionaries to facilitate and bring the gospel to non-Christian lands. It also kept detailed reports of the statistical reports sent in by missionaries in foreign lands. The fascinating reports of the missionaries drew the attention of Propaganda Fide to the Benin Mission.

The second wave of mission in the 19<sup>th</sup> century West African sub-region started with the Protestants. Missionary enterprise in Nigeria took the form of a three-pronged attack: the Church of Scotland's mission itself with Calabar; the Church Missionary Society established missions in the Niger Delta and up the Niger; the Methodists, the Church Missionary Society, and the Baptists advanced into Yorubaland.<sup>46</sup> This missionary work began with the liberated slaves from Sierra Leon and Brazil, who were primarily lay men and women.<sup>47</sup> According to Crowther, "early missionaries in West Africa had a dual purpose: to promote legitimate trade between Africans and Europeans, and to convert Africans to their own religion. This came out clearly in the expedition up the River Niger in 1841."<sup>48</sup> The more definite beginnings of what is today known as the Catholic Church in Nigeria was the pioneering work of the Society of African Missions.<sup>49</sup> On 29<sup>th</sup> February 1856, Rome gave permission to Melchior de Marion Brésillac (1813-1859)<sup>50</sup> to found a society of missionaries interested in working in the interior of the West Coast of Africa. On August 28<sup>th</sup> 1860, the SMA opened the new Vicariate Apostolic of Dahomey and Fr. Francesco Borghero (1830-1892)<sup>51</sup>

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46 CROWDER, Story 126. See also HATCH, Nigeria 108-109.

47 CROWDER, Story 127.

48 Ibid. 125.

49 The Society of African missions is an international community of Catholic missionaries who serve the people of Africa and people of African descent around the world. SMA stands for the society's official name: Society of African Missions. People often ask, then why SMA and not SAM? The initials refer to the name in Latin: Societas Missionum ad Afros. Its French equivalent is Société de Mission Africaines. Cf. ROZARIO, You Filled, 8-16; MANDIROLA, Diary 19.

50 Melchior de Marion Brésillac (1813-1859), born in Castelnaudary, France, 1838 ordained priest, after three years of parish ministry, he decided to dedicate himself completely to the mission, 1855 he left India and decided to devote his life to the Mission in Africa, 1856 founded the Society of African Missions in Lyon, 1858 given a new Apostolic Vicariate of Sierra Leone by Rome, 1859 accompanied the first missionaries on mission in Sierra Leone. The Society of African Missions is an international community of Catholic missionaries who serve the people of Africa and people of African descent around the world. SMA stands for the society's official name: Society of African Missions. People often ask, then why SMA and not SAM? The initials refer to the name in Latin: Societas Missionum ad Afros. Its French equivalent is Société de Mission Africaines. Cf. MANDIROLA, Diary 19.

51 Francesco Borghero (1830-1892), born in Ronco Scrivia in the Province and Diocese of Genoa. Borghero was son of Antonio, a native of Novi Ligure and Maria Bisio. He was the eldest of twelve children, six boys and six girls, 1849 Philosophical and Theological studies, 1854 or-

was the first SMA priest to reach Lagos and founded the mission there.<sup>52</sup> Fr. Carlo Zappa SMA (1861-1917)<sup>53</sup> is reputed to have founded the Western Prefecture in 1886. On reaching Lokoja, he built a house for the nuns and purchased thirty children at a cost of three hundred and ten pounds sterling (310).<sup>54</sup>

Another congregation that came into Nigeria which laid the foundation in Eastern Nigeria was the Congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers (Spiritans). In December 1885, Fr. Joseph Lutz (1853-1895)<sup>55</sup> arrived at Onitsha to begin the Holy Ghost mission in Eastern Nigeria.<sup>56</sup> This spread widely in Eastern Nigeria and in 1889, the Prefecture of the Lower Niger was founded. Bishop Joseph Shanahan (1871-1943)<sup>57</sup>, the Prefect of the Lower Niger Prefecture concentrated his efforts in the founding of schools. He considered the building of schools for the indigenes was the most important to the mission as it would eventually con-

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ained priest, 1858 Teacher of Theology in Lyons, 1861 pastoral work in Dahomey until 1865. Cf. MANDIROLA, *Diary*, 17-26.

52 Borghero was the first Italian to join the society on July 5, 1858. Cf. IMOKHAI, *Art. Evolution* 10; MANDIROLA, *Diary* 11-12.

53 Carlo Zappa (1861-1917), born in Milan, 1880 joined the Society of African Missions, 1884 ordained priest. He was an astronomer, a topographer, a surveyor and a cartographer. He was another Italian pioneer of the SMA like Fr. Borghero who founded the Vicariates of Dahomey and Bight of Benin, 1894-1917 Apostolic Prefect of Upper Niger Mission (Later Prefecture of Western Nigeria). Cf. DOUAU, *Biographies* 40-41; IMOKHAI, *Art. Evolution* 11; OMENKA, *School* 195, 201, HOGAN, *Berengario* ix, 4- 5, 10, 32.

54 The purchase of these children held as slaves was a controversial issue in the mission field. Fr. Zappa admitted that they bought them but trained them and liberated them afterwards. Some view this action of his as contributing to the promotion of slave trade while others saw it as a way of liberation from the evil fangs of slavery. The author thinks that was a delicate step which could attract misunderstandings from all corners. Cf. IMOKHAI, *Art. Evolution* 11.

55 Joseph Lutz (1853-1895), born in Dauendorf, France, 1876 ordained priest at the age of 24, 1885 arrived at the Port of Akassa, Nigeria, 1885 sailed on a boat and arrived at Onitsha, his destination ten days later, 1889 appointed Prefect Apostolic of Lower Niger in Nigeria, 1893 returned to Europe in 1893. Cf. KOREN, *Spiritan*, 19-21. See also RATH, *Geschichte* 197-198.

56 IMOKHAI, *Art. Evolution* 11.

57 Joseph Shanahan (1871-1943), born in Glankeen, Ireland, Shanahan was a missionary who spent most of his life in Nigeria, 1900 ordained priest at Blackrock, 1902 assigned to Nigeria and sailed on October 10, 1902 for his destination, 1902 Priest in charge of Onitsha and also Director of Handwork and Catechetical School, 1904-1905 brief stay at Dekina, which ended in the closing of that station, he was assigned to Nsugbe, 1905 appointed Prefect Apostolic of Eastern Nigeria. The Apostolic Prefecture of South-Eastern Nigeria was raised to the level of an Apostolic Vicariate on April 12, 1920, 1920 ordained Bishop at Maynooth, Ireland, 1924 opened the first senior Seminary in Nigeria with nine students; among them the future first Nigerian Bishop John Anyogu, 1924 founded the Congregation of the Holy Rosary at Killesandra, County Cavan, 1956 His remains were removed to the Onitsha Cathedral in Nigeria where he was given a second burial. Cf. JORDAN, *Bishop Shanahan* 1. See also UZOH, *Missionary* 10; RATH, *Geschichte* 203-206; RATH, *Zur Geschichte*, 123; KOREN, *Spiritan* 42-44.

tribute to the establishment of the Church. The two pioneering missionaries in Nigeria could be said to be Zappa (SMA) and Shanahan (C.S.Sp), while Zappa bought slaves who would become Catholics, Shanahan was interested in building schools. Zappa's priority was the establishment of an African local church. He argues that the school system would tend to make Europeans out of Africans.

## 1. Research and Literature Review

Several works have been written on the missionary history of the Church in Nigeria. Put differently, attempts have been made to write the history of the Nigerian Church. As the author admits of imperfections in his work since no work is a perfect piece, he, however, wishes to point out some loopholes in researches that have been carried out on historical works regarding the Nigerian Church. These works either laid primary emphasis on Protestant mission in Nigeria or focused only on a particular geographical area or jurisdiction.

It is worthwhile to name some: The beginning was made by Jordan (1948)<sup>58</sup>, but he only wrote his personal experiences with Shanahan of South-East-Nigeria, without documents from the archives. He only dwelt on oral history.

Ajayi (1965)<sup>59</sup> concentrated more on Protestant missions especially the CMS in Nigeria. His sources on Catholic missions were only drawn from the SMA archives in Rome. He discussed slave trade, colonialism among others but little was given to the pool of Catholic sources from important Vatican archives like the APF and the archives of the Spiritan Fathers.

Also Ayandele (1966)<sup>60</sup> laid weight on slavery, colonialism and Protestantism in Nigeria, with emphasis on the Church Missionary Society CMS and enormously used documents from the Archives of the Methodists, Wesleyan Missionary Society.

Iwe (1985)<sup>61</sup> concentrated mainly on the African culture in relation to the European culture and of course on colonialism, without reference to any archives of the Church.

Nnabuike (1983)<sup>62</sup> focused on the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria. In his work, he made use of documents from the Spiritan archives in Chevilly Larue,

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58 Jordan primarily recounted his personal experiences with Shanahan and committed them to writing. Jordan was Educational Adviser to the Catholic Missions of Nigeria and the British Cameroons. Cf. JORDAN, Bishop Shanahan 1-10, 42-50.

59 Cf. AJAYI, Christian 31-52.

60 Cf. AYANDELE, Missionary 118-150, 242-252.

61 Cf. IWE, Christianity 21-47.

62 Cf. NNABUIFE, History 164-208.