

# The Position of the Church and the European Intellectuals of the Slave Trade in West Africa

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**Abstract:** The difference of opinion between the European thinkers and the Christian clergy on slavery differed from their view of the issue of slavery as dictated by the teachings of Christianity. Although some intellectuals refused to admit that slavery was normal, they sought to justify it in some cases, The system of slavery and the process of obtaining slaves through the sale was practiced in many societies before the Atlantic trade, according to some spatial and temporal variables, the growing slavery in Africa during the fifteenth and sixteenth century AD, the result of the disintegration of the major African powers. This has led local African leaders to practice the slave trade as an important means of strengthening their governance and wealth, as the forces that determined the success of this Atlantic trade between Africa and Europe grew. Our topic is about the position of the Church and European intellectuals, including thinkers, philosophers and clerics, in their view of slavery and how to deal with African slaves, and knowing the different opinions about that and what are the most important data on which they based their dealings. Among the results, that we can present through the problem is that the different positions on the part of the Church or intellectuals and philosophers were included within a single project confirmed by the material interest that canceled everything related to the human conscience and the principle of freedoms advocated by intellectuals and philosophers in Europe.

**Keywords:** Slavery, Teachings of Christianity, African Powers, Europe, Atlantic Trade

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## 1. An Introduction

The practice of slavery in the world has known many different forms and patterns in many nations and civilizations, and through different historical periods in human history. The concept of slavery has developed and its methods and objectives have varied in all ages. Slaves were used in productive work as a result of the economic expansion and the development of its activities. With the crystallization of colonial thought in how African slaves were used in extensive commercial practices in terms of style, means and use magazines, the Church supported the enslavement of Negroes and their transfer to the New World, because they were getting a return from The slave trade has forced the slave traders to lure the churchmen and made them a free for every slave who deliberately believes that the slave is baptized by baptism. This has made European societies generally witness heated debates between writers and thinkers, and men of law and politics. Africa.

## 2. The Position of the Church on the Slave Trade in West Africa

Christianity advocated the equality of all people, but gave up its idealism. Some of its preachers said that equality is to be in the spirit only, and that the body has been created for the world and on this body to submit to every authority, and it must bear the pain and torment [1], it has. Important developments have prompted the Christian Church to recognize the legitimacy of slavery [2].

The popes followed this principle and followed his approach and permitted slavery because slavery was an expiation for the sins of men. These slaves performed the wrath of the Great Master, and St. Augustine, when he saw slavery A fair reward for the sins committed by these slaves. After these calls by the popes, the position of the Church began to be clear from the phenomenon of slaves, where they called these slaves to obey their masters, and that the

condition of the slave remained intact so that the Christian religion did not bring anything new improves the status of these slaves. On the contrary, Survival of slavery.

### **2.1. The Church During the Middle Ages in Europe**

In Europe, the church forbade the sale of Christian prisoners to Muslims, but allowed the enslavement of Muslims as well as Europeans who did not convert to the Christian religion. Thousands of prisoners of war and Muslims distributed slaves to monasteries in Europe. The eleventh century [3].

The church in Europe considered that Christians should not be enslaved while others of other peoples could be enslaved to serve the Church and to retain control over Europe during that time. The canonical law estimated the wealth of the Church lands sometimes not as much as the equality of money but in the number of slaves. St. Thomas Aquinas interpreted slavery as the result of Adam's sin, and that it was an economic means in a world in which some people should be tempted to be able to defend others. Therefore, these opinions, which were unique to that of his contemporaries, were consistent with the words of Aristotle And adapted to the spirit of his time. The Church made slaves and slaves sometimes more difficult in the property of the Church than in other possessions.

The Church benefited from the system of slavery that was applied in Europe to serve its economic interests and to maintain its religious domination over European society and thus to maintain the system of slavery in Europe. However, the Church has taken increasing steps in restricting the slave trade by prohibiting the enslavement of Christians only at a time when Christianity was rapidly spreading. The decay of the slavery system was not the result of moral ascendancy in Europe in the Middle Ages but was the result of economic developments.

Which leads to direct physical coercion less profitable and more difficult than production, which is motivated by the desire to own.

In the fourteenth century AD, in Europe, a system of correspondence between slaves and slaves began to develop in the end, after the completion of certain works or the payment of a certain amount [4]. The slavery system in Europe changed at the end of the Middle Ages due to the changing economic data. Slavery served the productive interest only through economic competition, so that pattern changed in slavery to make slavery more useful than in the past.

### **2.2. The Position of the Catholic Church on the Slave Trade**

The evolution of the slave trade coincided with the development of European thought about slavery. Given the different physiological composition of Africans and their unknown cultural characteristics, the Europeans concluded that it was related to foreigners of inferior race who deserved ill-treatment and because they were not Europeans. It was

thought that black Africans could be legally enslaved, Europeans who believed that by doing this trade in Africa they would discover new landmarks and new people, and they would look for them everywhere.

This thinking, espoused by ancient European religious scholars, philosophers and scientists, was supported by the Catholic Church, which blessed and agreed to the ill-treatment suffered by the African population through the practice of colonial wars and the transatlantic slave trade [5].

With regard to the position of the Church, some Christian clergy supported the phenomenon of slavery in the 19th century, that the Christian religion did not deny the slavery of the text and did not cancel the work, through the reports of the saints and ecclesiastical texts, worked European Catholic countries, according to their belief on the Black Africans and the transfer of civilization To them. In 1701, the French king of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques received the Spanish King of Spain to monopolize the slave trade for ten years.

The two kings formed the two parties to the agreement, each taking a profit of one quarter and in the reign of Louis 16 a grant for the slave trade was granted with the approval of the Council [6].

Louis XIII and Father Labat also saw that the hunting of African slaves was a project because they were barbarians to be prepared and stressed that all black colonies were by law slaves [7].

In Europe, the Church allowed slavery to be practiced in Africa, as it saved those pagans from their harsh lives full of diseases and epidemics and, most importantly, taught them the principles of Christianity and extracted them from the state of inferiority and underdevelopment to civilization and progress [8].

The Church considered the slave trade to be a prize trade, and that it was indebted to these African slaves and brought them out of their backwardness and inferiority to another, more civilized world. Piled up like the goods half of them die at sea and become a fish bait. This is the civilization that Europe and the Christian Church wanted to bring to backward Africa. The slavery trade contradicted the principle of human justice. It also contradicted the principles of religion. History shows that at the time of the advent of Christianity, the early Christians demonstrated their opposition to this type of slavery, which was called subordination. They believed that slavery, whatever its degree, was contrary to the doctrine of their sacred religion. The early ones during the first centuries of the church were of their customs and at the time of their death their slaves were freed and wrote in their commandments and covenants [9].

The merchants of this trade are aware of their crimes and the consequences of this trade, but they are always looking for justifications for their actions, and the use of the spread of the Christian religion as a means among the peoples of Africa, and bringing these people to the colonies and calling them to Christianity. Not only by bringing Africans into Christianity, but also by blocking their conversion to Christianity [10].

The Christian clergy tried to justify the slave trade in Africa by calling them proselytizing and proselytizing in

order to spread the Christian religion on the African continent, but their goal was to profit financially and to encourage those European companies to enter Africa and take the largest possible share of Africans into the colonies in the Americas.

Is due to the Church as a result of the sale of these Africans as slaves and workers of those colonies and European settlements in the Americas. In 1610, a Catholic priest, Father Sandoval, sent a letter to a staff member of the Church in Rome asking whether the families of the Africans were enslaved according to the principles of the Church. In a letter dated March 12, 1610, the reply came from Brother L. Brandon: "You say in your letter that you would like to know whether the families of Negroes who are being sent to you from Africa are legitimate. On this issue, I think that you should have no doubt about this, because this matter has already been discussed by the Council of Conscience and all members. This council of scholars and salvation does not see any error in this, and we have been working here for 40 years and therefore we Other parents in Brazil Nguetna these slaves to our service without hesitation or confusion [11].

In fact, the main reason why the Church turned a blind eye to the slave trade, despite its knowledge of the suffering they were receiving, was that it was reaping huge sums of money from that trade.

The hatred that the slaves had for their masters was naturally offensive to the religion they practiced. They saw nothing but oppression and torment in this religion.

"The crimes, wars and tragedies caused by the slave trade in Africa and even the woes they experienced during the ship's transfer to the colonies Between four thousand and five thousand slaves were transferred annually.

The principles of the Christian Church have contrasted with the practices caused by the slave trade to Africans, whether in Africa or in the European colonies of the Americas.

The oppression experienced by Africans in those European agencies in Africa or during their transfer to the New World or during their service in all these settlements does not reflect the spirit of the Christian religion Even the human spirit in dealing with these slaves has lost the Church and the Christian religion that respect and appreciation that these Africans can belong to this religion and embrace it because they saw all kinds of torture and oppression and abuse. Christianity does not justify trade because it contradicts the principles of religion. Religious legislation condemns and denounces the slave trade without exception. It is not only the monks who approved this legislation, but even those who came after them from the popes and the church [12].

### **3. The Protestant Church's Position on the Slave Trade in West Africa**

The Protestant Church allowed the slave trade and slavery in Africa to be lawful provided that slavery was not done through violence or injustice. Both Martin Luther and Calvin

saw that some men were born free and others destined to be enslaved. Protestants, on the other hand, held more than Catholics that in a world dominated by sin constitutes slavery.

The Church in Europe was engaged in the slave trade in Africa and saw no impediment to both Catholicism and Protestantism. Both of the two sects wanted their own interest in keeping that trade to the Church and to maintain its position and control over Europe and the world.

Position Philosophers European Intellectuals of the Phenomenon of Slavery in Africa.

The medieval European thinkers differed on slavery, which opposed what Aristotle said. Their view of the question of slavery was dictated by the teachings of Christianity that all men were equal before God and that the spirit of the slave was as important as that of the free master. Europe refused to recognize that slavery was normal but that they had traditionally sought it in some cases and insisted on the principle that the Lord always had a good attitude towards his slave.

European thinkers have always tried to give a distinctive character to the person in the immaculate but always sought to use it and exploit it for their own benefit and in line with their ideological proposal. In medieval European society, thinkers thought that the question of slavery was usually necessary to dispose of society, while recognizing that it was not safe [13].

In medieval Europe, society consisted of the free, the slaves of the land and slaves. The number of slaves decreased as the number of slaves grew [14].

When there is no slavery in northern France, we find it increasing in Germany in the tenth century AD, when the Germans did not hesitate to arrest the pagan scribes to do manual labor in the German loss, or to sell them to the Islamic or Byzantine countries at a time when the merchants were Of kidnap Muslims or Greece from extended land on the Black Sea coast and the coast of West Asia and North Africa to sell them to work in agriculture or home or eunuchs or concubines of service, but in England, it has been most of the slaves confined to the private domestic service in the twelfth century.

The writers and thinkers also had a position on this issue of slavery in Africa, such as Montesquieu and John Jacques Rousseau, and others defend this issue with mockery about slavery, where he disclosed that the black slave is a slave from his foot to his head and even his nose must be crushed and can not be placed in a good position nor He can have a spirit and have no wisdom. The thought of the thinkers and philosophers of Europe in the modern era of slaves, especially the African slave, was inferior and regarded as their servant because he was created for their service and must be exploited because he can not be like them.

He can not think and he has lost his spirit and considered him a body without spirit. Sensation can not evolve and advance with thought or civilization. The European European countries and even the European Catholic countries believed that black Africans were civilized and the civilization was transferred to them.

As for the abolition of slavery in the colonies, many questions were raised by writers and thinkers.

For example, Montesquieu, in his book *The Spirit of Laws*, This case is a joke about slavery [15], where it is revealed that the slave slave is a slave from his foot to his head and even his nose must be crushed and can not be placed in a good position and can not have a spirit and no wisdom [16].

Even the pioneers of the human movement who criticized domination, hegemony, exploitation and tyranny did not defend the African slave.

They considered it a body without spirit and it was created to serve them and to consecrate their development and civilization. Their writings and their defense of man and the human spirit and freedom from restrictions, On the status of the slave as it is and exploitation of all exploitation for the service of European civilization and its development.

According to John Jaques Rousseau, "Every man created in slavery lived in slavery [17]. The Vatican was in favor of black Africans under the name of the Holy War because these peoples were infidel and it was necessary to convert to Christianity, albeit by force if necessary. The pope's policy was in favor of the commercial activities of the European ships [18].

This papal encouragement came in the decision of January 8, 1454, to the King of Portugal by Pope Nicolas V, allowing him to trade slavery and convert to Christianity. The need for labor led the European Christian Church to support the European adventurers and exploiters [19].

The European philosophers emphasize the ecclesiastical proposition that slavery in Africa is a necessary necessity for development, because these African peoples are infidel and must embrace the Christian religion by force, but European countries have not sought to convert Africans to Christianity, but to exploit Africans As slaves in their settlements in the Americas as a worker who earns huge sums of money for European companies and the Christian Church, which benefited from their share of these trips to the New World, which was accompanied by a group of priests and monks as a holy war in the service of the Christian Church.

However, kidnapping as a means of getting slaves was a tedious and expensive process. European traders preferred to buy slaves wherever they had the opportunity, but this was also complicated because political negotiations had to be conducted with the local population.

Local leaders are convinced of the advantages that trade can offer them after they initially resisted the Portuguese [20], because they could get rid of prisoners of war, criminals and people who lost their families and unwanted ones and replaced them with European products. The leaders or kings Africans when they need European goods they send their soldiers to catch their fellow citizens and take away everything [21].

European traders have used commercial agencies to transfer African slaves to the New World. These local leaders, by seducing them and exploiting their circumstances by providing some of the goods that were brought from Europe such as toiletries, wine and some fabrics in exchange for the

sale of their countrymen. "M. Smith", who lived for a long time in Africa as a member of the English Trade Office in 1722, "The Africans who have a degree of awareness and thought of Europeans coming to their countries is the biggest abuse and the biggest crisis they can get.

They say that Christian Europeans, by bringing them to Christianity and calling them, carry all the evils and tragedies to a country where peace and security have previously existed." According to what Smith says, he would be Christian if Christianity followed crime, pillage, and murder. This is what Africans said.

This is part of the fact that Africa, the African slaves and their suffering have suffered throughout this period of injustice, tyranny, oppression and exploitation. Africans do not have to embrace this religion and they see before their eyes the ugliness of these Europeans, who lacked the spirit of humanity for their greed and greed in the exploitation of African human to achieve the development and progress witnessed by Europe during the nineteenth century.

The British traveler Mungo Park said: "The first idea that informs Africans about the advantages of European prescriptions is a bad picture of them in their relationship to religion.

Traders never succeeded in changing or removing this idea from their minds. If Europeans do their religious duties, it is often secret and far from the eyes of blacks, Kind and fraternal with them".

African slaves took a bad picture of the Europeans as a result of the dealings of these traders and their greed, and that religion had no role in the way of dealing as a result of the contradiction of religion with those transactions harmful to religion and human, so the European dealings with Africans of a special nature without the spirit of humanity, Their religious duties escape the truth and reality in their dealings with African slaves.

The European merchant encouraged the African merchant to raid the houses and assault the wife and the servant or the animal, but attacked the person himself, not only pleasing him, but was using all means to deprive all people, so this trade is condemned by the laws of our master Moses, but also condemned the religion of Jesus For many reasons, slavery is not only a violation of the principle of human justice but also contrary to the principles of heavenly religion.

The slavery trade in Africa contradicted the principles of religion, the principles of humanity, justice and the human right, as called for in European legal legislation, to respect human rights and protect them through these raids and the exploitation of African conditions and African leaders who have been attracted to the wishes of European merchants to serve their economics.

## 4. Conclusion

The European philosophers, whose writings were concerned with freedom, choice, social justice and the concept of public ownership, agreed to and participated in slavery in Africa. For example, the English philosopher John

Locke, his counterpart Thomas Hobbes and French philosophers of the Enlightenment, including Voltaire, Montesquieu, Didero and Rousseau, And the functions of the state, considering that Africans prisoners of war were defeated in the power struggle by a ruling state, giving a legal and moral character to enslave them, and considered that slavery corrupts civilization and the low morals of all who exercise it, in fact there was an agreement between the Church and The states and colonizers of the Americans who saw the African slave trade as an opportunity to compensate for labor shortages by liberating Indian slaves, Catholics and Protestants, agreed to this system for the reconstruction of the New World.

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