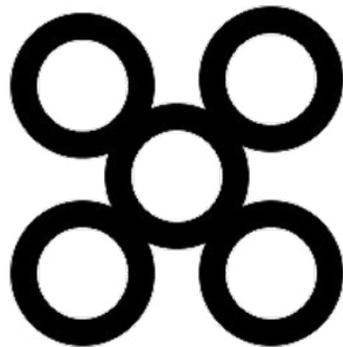


## **PART 2**

# **HISTORY OF MISSIONS IN GHANA**



*The meaning of this symbol is characterize The Adinkra symbol  
“DUAFE” means “WOODEN COMB” and emphasises the qualities  
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# REACHING THE GOLD COAST – A HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF MISSIONS IN GHANA

Godwin Kofi Ahlijah

## Introduction

Missionary activities in Ghana formerly known as the Gold Coast have come a long way. They have been the channels of Western influence, origin of good education and health-care, and a base for raising leaders not only for the church but also for economic development. The introduction of Christianity in the mid-fifteenth century also marked the birth of other problems that have been affecting modern mission activities in the West African sub-region, both explicitly and implicitly.

There is no doubt at all that the work and sacrifices of these early missionaries contributed to the development of Ghana. The early missionaries were instrumental in helping to build Ghana through the establishment of mission schools that have trained many renowned citizens. The products of these schools have served and still serve in various positions of influence both in Ghana and beyond. Notable amongst them is the former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan who had his second cycle education in Mfantsipim School, founded in 1876 by the Wesleyan Missionaries in Cape-Coast. The holistic training from these missionary schools indirectly promoted the feeling of self-governance, which culminated in the struggle for, and eventual independence of Ghana from colonial rule.

A brief overview of Missionary work in Ghana reveals that, the earliest missionaries to the Gold Coast were the Roman Catholic Franciscan Friars who accompanied the Portuguese traders in 1482. The primary aim of these missionaries was not to evangelize as such. They came as chaplains to the Portuguese

traders.

This Article looks at how Christianity eventually was established in the Gold Coast and the succession of the various missionary groups and individuals.

## Earliest Contact Between Western Europe and the Gold Coast

From the first half of the fifteenth century, Portuguese explorers began to visit the Guinea Coast, and by 1471 they had reached the coast of modern Ghana. For about two centuries they stayed on the coast mainly for trading purposes and made a permanent impact on the places where they had settlements. In time, other European traders followed the steps of the Portuguese to share in the rich trade with the people of the Guinea Coast.

A Permanent mission station was not established until 18<sup>th</sup> December 1828 when missionaries from the Basel Society (Karl Salbach, Gottlieb Holzwarth, Johannes Gottlob Schmidt) came to the Gold Coast. They initially settled at Christiansburg, Accra and later moved to Akwapim ridge for climatic reasons. The Wesleyans followed the Basel missionaries in 1835. They established their station at Cape Coast, the Central Province.<sup>1</sup>

The German Bremen Society arrived on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1847. They first stayed in Cape-Coast and then later settled in the Trans-Volta area.<sup>2</sup>

The Roman Catholic Missionaries followed in 1880 and settled in Elmina.<sup>3</sup> In 1898, the African Methodist-Episcopal (AME) Zion Mission, an Afri-

<sup>1</sup> Larbi, Kingsley E., 2001. Pentecostalism, The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity. Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, Accra-Ghana. p.16

<sup>2</sup> Agbeti, J.K., West Africa Church History, Christian Missions and Church Foundations: 1482-1919, Lieden E.J. Brill, 1986. 81

<sup>3</sup> The pioneer missionaries FRS. Augusta Moreau and Eugene Murat arrived on Pentecost Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> May, and 1880. Helena Pfann, a Roman Catholic Historian stated that, the Catholics found it difficult sending missionaries to the Gold Coast because of the ravages malaria was causing among the Europeans on the Coast. ; Agbeti, J.K. 81

can-American group followed.<sup>4</sup> The Anglicans came in 1906 and started their missionary activities again.<sup>5</sup>

The world wars disturbed missionary activities in Ghana (the Gold Coast) for some time. The Bremen Missionaries in Ghana were deported in 1916 from the Trans-Volta area. The British Colonial authority also expelled the German Basel Missionaries in 1917 during the First World War over fear of perceived German missionary influences and potential German military spying from Nsaba, then a very strong German Missionary post in the dense tropical forest of Ghana.

For a short while the institutions were left without management until 1919 when the Scottish mission arrived to take over their institutions. Although the deportation of the Germans was regarded necessary for the conduct of the war, Governor Guggisberg of the Gold Coast later described it as “The greatest blow which education in this country has ever suffered”.

When the Basel missionaries returned to the Gold Coast in 1926, various efforts were made by the representative of the Scots and Germans to foster closer cooperation and understanding between the missionaries of the two missions.

The incarceration of the German Nationals of both Basel and Bremen missions in 1939 during World War II saw the Scottish missions assuming full responsibility of the Ewe (Evangelical) Presbyterian Church.

Denominational competition became a subtle problem for the churches. The Wesleyans began their work at Cape-Coast, and although they were active in the rural areas, their main strategy was to settle first in the large urban centers before moving to the interior. Smith notes that when the Wesleyans began the spread from Accra into what was considered the traditional mission field in Akwapim and Akim, this for some time caused much concern

in the Basel circles. Discipline was made more difficult as, “Presbyterian members under censure often made their way to rival missions”. Another point of conflict was the use of English language in the Wesleyan Schools as opposed to the use of vernacular by the Basel mission. The use of English was said to have attracted young people to the Wesleyans.

The 1880’s saw the Roman Catholic missions competing for members in the original territories of the Wesleyan and Basel missionaries. Within twenty-five years, the Roman Catholics established missions in Elmina, Cape-Coast, Accra, Keta and Navrongo. “Thus, from the east and west sides of the country, the Roman Catholics entered the traditional Basel and Wesleyan spheres of activities”.

### Reasons for the European Journey

Several reasons caused the Portuguese explorers to sail round the continent of Africa. In addition to their desire to bypass the Muslim sphere of influence in what is today the Middle East and find a new sea route to the Far East, there were several other reasons.<sup>8</sup> The most important reason was economic; they wanted to have a share in the rich trade with western Sudan without having to use the trans-Saharan routes, which for centuries were controlled by the North Africa Berbers and other Muslims.

<sup>9</sup>According to Buah, Portugal being a strong Christian country also aspired to reduce the Muslim influence, which was spreading fast in western Sudan. If successful in this enterprise, the Portuguese would not only have been in the position to gain a hold on western Sudanese trade but could also convert the people to Christianity.<sup>10</sup> Thirdly, the exploration was prompted by the spirit of enquiry and enthusiasm for knowledge that was sweeping across Europe at this time of renaissance.<sup>11</sup>

The Portuguese arrived in 1471, and for 11 years

<sup>4</sup> Agbeti, J.K.147

<sup>5</sup> Larbi, Kingsley E, 2001: Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity. Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, Accra-Gh

<sup>6</sup> Larbi, (ibid) p.17

<sup>7</sup> Larbi, Kingsley E, 2001: Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity. Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, Accra-Ghana. 17

<sup>8</sup> Buah, F.K.1998: A History of Ghana (Revised and updated). Malaysia: Macmillan. 65

<sup>9</sup> Buah, 65 see also Hildebrandt, Jonathan. 1987: History of the Church in Africa. African Christian Press. Achimota. 59

<sup>10</sup> Buah, 65

were engaged in trade with the people of Edina, which they named El- Mina (the gold mines) because of the abundant gold they found there and its surrounding areas. Becoming convinced that the prospects of trade were very good; they obtained a piece of land from the King of Elmina, built a magnificent castle in 1482 near the mouth of the River Benya, and named it Sao Jaogo (or St. George). To this day the castle (with later modification by the Dutch) has remained the greatest memorial of Portuguese activities on the Western Coast of Africa.

For well over a century, the Portuguese enjoyed a near monopoly in the prosperous trade on the coast of Guinea, but in the course of the sixteenth century, other Europeans entered into the trading scene. The formidable challenge posed by these other European merchants; especially the Dutch and the English compelled the Portuguese to leave the Gold Coast (Ghana) and many of their other trading posts along the Guinea Coast. The early attacks on the Portuguese monopoly were sporadic, as the other European competitors lacked the backing of their home governments. In due course, however, their home governments welcomed the advantage of giving their adventure-merchants patronage. They began to enjoy the results of their operations on the west coast.

Anticipating failure in their repeated attempts to find alternatives to routes to the Far East, which would help them avoid the sphere of influence established for Portugal and Spain by the treaty of Tordesillas (1494), the English entered into a competition in an attempt to obtain a share of the Guinea Coast trade. In 1553, the year the English adventurers Willoughby and Chancellor were fruitlessly searching for a Northeast passage to the east, an English expedition led by Captain Thomas Wyndham reached the coast of Ghana. Continuing their exploration as far as the Niger delta and Benin, Wyndham and his men returned to England with a quantity of gold, silver and other valuable Guinea commodities such as pepper.

Other English men such as John Hawkins followed Wyndham in 1562, 1564 and 1567, and took home slaves. Another English explorer was Francis Drake,

who became famous for his successful circumnavigation of the world from 1577 to 1580.

These early successful visits created an interest in England in the 'golden' trade that the Gold Coast offered. Merchants then began to go out to the Gold Coast. They first made a settlement in Cape-Coast, where they built their first fort in 1664. From here they spread their influence to several coastal towns, including British Komenda and Anomabu. The firm establishment of the British in these places resulted in strong rivalry between the Dutch and later, other European merchants.

The greatest challenge to the Portuguese monopoly in Ghana came from the Netherlands whose traders began going out to the Guinea coast in 1593. Within half a century they had forced the Portuguese to capitulate and withdraw from Ghana. The Netherlands merchants intensified their trading activities along the Guinean Coast, including the 16 supply of slaves to the Portuguese in the New World. Other Europeans were also attracted to the wealth of the Gold Coast, now Ghana, from the mid seventeenth century onwards: the Danes (1642), the Swedes (1647), and the Bradenbergers (1682).<sup>12</sup>

## SUCCESSION OF MISSIONARIES TO THE GOLD COAST

The Roman Catholic faith was the first to be introduced. This was followed by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), later renamed the Anglican Church. The next important Christian sect was the Presbyterian Church, introduced by the Basel Missionaries Society and then the Bremen Mission. They were followed by the Wesleyan (now Methodist) Church. The last of the mission churches established in the nineteenth century was the American Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church.<sup>13</sup> It is worth acknowledging the efforts of the Moravian missionaries who also came to the Gold Coast in 1732 from the Danish Island of St. Thomas even though their work ended fruitlessly after sowing eleven (11) precious human seeds in the soil of Ghana.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Buah, 65

<sup>12</sup> Buah, F.K. 1998: A History of Ghana (Revised and updated). Malaysia: Macmillan. 68-69

<sup>13</sup> Buah, F.K. 1998: A History of Ghana (Revised and updated). Malaysia: Macmillan. 132

## The Catholic Missionaries

Apart from the economic gains, one of the important goals that urged Portugal, a fervent Catholic Nation, to embark upon the sea voyage to the African coast and beyond was the promotion of the Catholic faith in these new lands. In the company of the merchants on the Coast were priests, who initially served as chaplains to the merchants. On 20<sup>th</sup> January, 1482, the first public mass was said at Elmina. The priests soon started making converts among the people of Elmina and other immediate districts and in 1503, the Chief of Efutu and about 1,300 of his subjects received baptism. In 1534, the country was made part of the diocese, with headquarters on the Island of Sao Tome. In succession, three different orders of Monks were assigned to the country to open mission stations but, in the eighteenth century, the Catholic Church in the Gold Coast went into oblivion; it was revived in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The decision to re-establish the Catholic Church had some support from Sir Garnet Wolseley, the Governor and the military leader of the Sagrenti War of 1874. It was also influenced by another colonial official, a Catholic who worked in both Ghana and Nigeria, who enthusiastically promoted the idea of inviting Catholic missionaries to Ghana. He was James Marshall in whose honour the Knights of Marshall in Ghana and other parts of West Africa was founded.

For some time, Kumasi was considered for the headquarters of the Church in Ghana, however, Elmina was chosen. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 1880 the first two priests of the Society of the African Mission (S.M.A) founded in France in 1856 arrived at Elmina. Like the earlier missionaries of the other churches, the priest did not survive long. One of them, Father Eugene Murat, died barely three months after his arrival and the other Father Augusta Moreau, six years afterwards. Undaunted by this setback, the S.M.A sent out other missionaries. In 1897, the church moved its headquarters from Elmina to nearby Cape Coast, probably because Cape Coast although no longer the capital of the country had become the provincial headquarters of the colony's political administration.

From 1900, the Catholic Church spread rapidly not only to the south of the country, but also the

Asante/Bono-Ahafo and Ewe lands. This success was attributed to the hard work of the fathers of the SMA. In 1939 another group of missionaries, the Society of the Divine word (S.V.D) arrived to work at the present-day Greater Accra and Eastern Regions.

Missionaries commonly known as the White fathers, who entered the evangelical scene from present day Republic of Burkina Faso, pioneered the establishment of the Catholic Church in the Northern and Upper Regions. After initial problems arising from the refusal of permission by the British Colonial authorities, largely because the New Missionaries were French nationals, the White Fathers were finally allowed to open their first mission station at Navrongo in 1906.

For some time, the British colony again placed obstacles on the development and expansion of the church in the North, particularly in the Upper West Region. After a period of struggle, the White Fathers were given permission to operate throughout the north and they created an ecclesiastical province in 1950. By 1980 the Catholic Church had become so well established that, in addition to two archbishops at Cape-Coast and Tamale, it had bishops in Accra, Sekondi-Takoradi, Keta-Ho, Kumasi, Sunyani, Wa and Navrongo - Bolgatanga, all nine leaders being Ghanaians.<sup>15</sup> Recently, the Archbishop of the Cape-Coast diocese, Arch Bishop Appiah Turkson was elevated to the sacred position of a Cardinal.

## Anglican Missionaries

In response to requests made by the Royal African Company trading on the coast of Ghana, the society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G) of the Church of England (Anglican) sent out the first chaplain, the Rev. Thomas Thompson, who arrived at the Cape-Coast castle in 1752. Except for the few visits he made to the other English settlements like the Anomabo Castle, Rev. Thomas Thompson confined himself to working in Cape Coast where he made some conversions among the Mulattoes. In less than 5 years, he was compelled by poor health, to return to England. Being convinced that the success of the Church in the country would depend on the native clergy, Thomas Thompson had, in 1754, sent three boys to England from Cape

<sup>14</sup> Addae, Kwame Divine. 2003: The Influence of Episcopalianism on Charismatic/ Independent Churches in Ghana. An unpublished dissertation for Masters in Divinity (ITS). 26- 28

Coast for training. Two of them died. The third Philip Kweku (anglicized as Quaue), was ordained priest of the Anglican Church and returned home in 1765. Like his patron Thomas Thompson, Rev. Quaue's activities did not extend beyond the Cape-Coast Castle. His converts were mostly mulattoes. However, by his death in 1816 Philip Quaue had laid a firm foundation. As headmaster, for Cape-Coast castle school, a number of the nineteenth century Cape Coast castle intelligentsia received their first cycle education.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the SPG church on the Coast was dormant, and in 1905 when new missionaries arrived, there were only four coastal congregations: a colonial chaplaincy at Cape-Coast and Accra, a station at Axim started in the late 1890s and a small congregation at Sekondi comprising Yoruba members.

Unlike the other Christian churches, the Anglican Church does not have many centers in rural communities. The relatively few mission stations in the rural districts owed their foundation to certain groups of laymen. Among such people was the "Prophet" John Swatson of Beyin in Nzema, a disciple of Prophet William Wade Harris, a Liberian national who led a religious movement across the Ivory Coast into Western Ghana. With a band of Catechists, Swatson established congregations in different places in the South western part of the country, including the Sehwi district.

In due course, these congregations were absorbed into the Anglican faith. Another group of Anglicans derived their origin from Yoruba workers and traders in the mining centers. These communities established their own congregations of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) brought over from their native Nigeria. As the C.M.S was an offshoot of the Anglican Church, the S.P.G missionaries in the country extended their missionary work to the Yoruba foundations. Some Anglican congregations also owed their foundation to leaders under censure imposed by their mother churches, particularly the Presbyterian Mission, which in the early days unlike the Anglican Church was unduly inflexible to their members' participation in some harmless traditional rites, festivals and social activities like dancing.

It is worth noting that perhaps the greatest source

of strength that helped the establishment of the Anglican Church, especially in urban communities, was the official patronage given to the Church. The elite gained some prestige from their membership of what, in the British colonial days, was virtually the 'established church'. Also, people who attended the 'Government Schools' were often trained with the Anglican bias for the Anglican Church.

Despite the advantages it enjoyed over the other missions, the Anglican Church, for lack of adequate missionaries and local clergy, did not spread as widely as the other denominations. By 1990, the Church's two bishoprics in Accra and Kumasi were still part of the West African Province, although headed by the Archbishop resident in Koforidua in Ghana.<sup>16</sup>

### Basel and Bremen Missionaries

There are two groups of Presbyterian Churches in the country: The Presbyterian Church of Ghana with headquarters in Accra and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church with its own headquarters in Ho in the Volta Region. Early attempt to establish the churches in the country from continental Europe, including the United Brethren of the Moravian Church, did not yield permanent fruits. It was not until the second decade that a fresh start was made by the Swiss Missionaries.

Taking advantage of a request made in 1826 by Major de Richelieu, the Danish governor of the Christiansburg Castle in Accra, the Basel Missionary Society in Switzerland offered four missionaries for service in Accra. After training and ordination in Denmark the four missionaries arrived at Osu, Accra on 18th December 1828. As was to happen to all the early missionaries of the other churches, the tropical climate had a heavy toll on their lives; within the first seven months of their arrival, 3 of them had died, and the fourth died not long after. In March 1832, three other missionaries arrived on the coast.

The group included Rev. Andreas Riis, the only one who survived. Owing largely to health reasons, Riis left the Christiansburg and opened a station at Akwapim Akropong. While returning to the Christiansburg for a brief period, Andreas was recalled home. Meanwhile two other missionaries

<sup>15</sup> Buah, F.K. 1998: A History of Ghana (Revised and updated). Malaysia: Macmillan Publishing Limited. 6 132-3

<sup>16</sup> Buah, F.K. 1998: A History of Ghana (Revised and updated). Malaysia: Macmillan.134

had arrived on the coast in 1837; they like their predecessors did not survive the climate.

The Rev. Andreas Riis returned to the country with two other pastors, George Thompson, a West African trained in Basel, and the Rev. Widmann. Also in company with Riis was a group of twenty-four West Indians, who were not only to help in spreading the gospel but also to become an example of Christian living in Akropong. Some of their descendants, the Halls at Akropong and the Clerks at Osu, Accra, became the leading ministers and Christians in the Presbyterian Church.

Having been reported to the Basel Missions in Switzerland by newly arrived missionaries for dealing in gun and gun powder, and for running a mission plantation worked by slaves who were guaranteed their freedom when they accepted baptism, Andreas Riis was called home for good in 1845. The remaining missionaries carried on, and opened stations in rapid succession in both present-day Greater Accra and the Eastern Regions. Thanks to the Rev. Frederick Ramseyer, whom the Asantes captured at Anum in 1869 and eventually sent to Kumasi as a prisoner, other stations inland were established. These included Begoro (1875), Abetifi (1877) and Kumasi itself.

During World War I the Basel missionaries were expelled from the country. In 1918, missionaries from Scotland arrived, and the Church, which had hitherto been known as the Basel Mission, became known as the Scottish Mission. In the 1920s some of the German missionaries returned. In 1926 the church became autonomous with its own national synod.

As mentioned above, the other branch of the Presbyterian faith was introduced by the North German Missionary Society, and was for many years, known as the Bremen Mission. The pioneer missionary, the Rev. Lorenz Wolf, started the first mission station at Peki in 1847. His two companions died soon after arrival, and he himself died in 1851, having made very few converts. The infant church had a fresh lease of life when the new missionaries opened a mission at Keta in 1853. By 1859, two other stations had been opened, Anyako in the south and Wegbe, near Ho. With funds raised from a trading enterprise in palm oil and cotton, the missionary

built a catechist school in 1864. To assist the Bremen missionaries, some churchmen in the Basel missions were sent to work in parts of the Volta Region. These included the West Indian, Rev. Peter Hall and the Ghanaian mulatto, Rev. Christian Quist. Two others who had a great impact on the area were the Rev. Nicholas Clerk and Daniel Awere.

The Bremen missionaries spread their work to Lome where a mission was opened in 1896. By 1905, one synod with headquarters at Keta served all Ewe communities on both sides of the present day boundary.<sup>17</sup>

### **Wesleyan Missionaries (The Methodist Church)**

After the Catholic, the Wesleyan, at first known as the Wesley Mission became the strongest of the Christian churches in the country both in terms of membership and geographical spread. The arrival in the country of the early Wesleyan missionaries owed much to the ground prepared in Dixcove in the western region by some products of the Rev. Philip Quaque School in Cape Coast, led by William deGraft, who in 1831 formed the Society for Promoting Scripture Knowledge. Welcoming their request for Bibles and their enthusiasm for promoting the word of God, the Methodist Missionary Society in England sent out to Ghana the Rev. Joseph Dunwell, who arrived at Cape-Coast on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1834. Both Dunwell and his successor did not survive for long in the inclement climate, as happened to the pioneer missionaries of the earlier churches.

In 1838, the Wesley Missionary Society sent out a missionary who survived the harsh climatic conditions of the country for 52 years. He was the Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, the son of an English mother and a West Indian Father. Encouraged by Captain George MacLean, 'President' of the English possessions on the coast, Birch Freeman laid the roots of the Methodist Church in the country.

After a successful start, including a trek to Kumasi, Freeman returned to England and came back to the country with other missionaries. One of these was the Rev. Shipman, posted to Accra, to train catechists

<sup>17</sup> Buah, F.K. 1998: A History of Ghana (Revised and updated). Malaysia: Macmillan.135

and other evangelists. The rest worked at Dixcove, Dominase near Saltpond and Kumasi. Perhaps over-ambitious Freeman spread his efforts more widely (including Lagos and Abeokuta in Nigeria) than the mission resources could bear at the time. He was relieved of his position as the superintendent of the church and was succeeded by the Rev. William West in 1860. By the 1870's, the church had taken such firm roots that a chairman was appointed. He was Rev. T.R Picot.

Having served the outside church for some time, Rev. Birch Freeman returned to evangelical work, and it is recorded that in the first six months of 1873 he converted and baptized about 1060 souls in Anomabo. In spite of this and similar successes elsewhere, the Methodist Church faced the common problem which beset most European missionaries at the time - ill health and death of ministers. To overcome this problem, the Mission commenced a policy of training local converts in 1877, men and women, fit to carry on the work in the remotest places.

Early in the twentieth century, the Methodist church made efforts to open stations at Tamale and Wa, but faced the opposition of the colonial authorities in the north. The governor ruled against the stand of the Chief Commissioner, Cecil Hamilton Armitage, and in 1913 permission was granted to the Wesley Mission to open a station at Tamale. Barely two years after, the Mission was closed down, due largely to the obstacles that the Chief Commissioner continued to place in the way of the church's success in the north. A second attempt was made in 1920 but it also failed. It was from the 1930s that Methodism began to have some hold in the north. In 1951, the church became independent of the parent church in England, and had its own conference headed by an elected president.<sup>18</sup>

### **A.M.E Zion Church**

There were many other Christian denominations with many followers in the Gold Coast. These included the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Zion Church, the Seventh Day Adventist church, the Salvation Army and the Lutheran Church. Of these, A.M.E. is not just the oldest but the largest in terms

of membership and geographical spread. The Zion Church has more in common with the Methodist Church than any other denomination. Unlike all the other churches the A.M.E Zion church has its roots in the United States of America, from where the first missionary, Bishop J. Bryan Small, came to the country and opened the first mission station at Keta in 1896. Today this Church comprises two Zonal units, the Western and the Eastern, each are with a deputy Bishop.<sup>19</sup>

### **Assemblies of God**

The Assemblies of God (AG) was the first foreign Pentecostal body to work in Ghana. The Rev. Lloyd and Margaret Shirer, Assemblies of God missionaries in Mosiland (Ouagadougou) crossed over to Northern region of the then Gold Coast in 1931. They found the land ready for missionary activities so they returned to the USA to recruit missionaries. They returned to the Gold Coast in September, 1931 with the first recruits, Miss Beulah Buchwalter and Guy Hickok. Miss Buchwalter while in the States enrolled at Central Bible College. She returned to the Gold Coast with another worker, Miss Florence Blossom who later on became Mrs. Ed Beck. They initially settled at Kumbungu near Tamale. During the War, it became difficult to recruit couples for the field, so at one time, Miss Beulah Buchwalter and Miss Florence Blossom were the only missionaries on the field. Miss Buchwalter died on the 15th November, 1942 and was buried at Yendi near Guy Hickock.

Health was a problem for most of them. Guy Hickock died within two years of his arrival. Miss Buchwalter had to leave for the Canary Islands in March, 1934 with the hope of regaining her health. Finally, she had to leave for the same reason back to the USA in January, 1935. The Shirers and their team first settled at Yendi on the invitation of the Ya-Naa, King of Dagbon.

The most outstanding of the AG missionaries were Lloyd and Margaret Shirer. The Shirers closely associated themselves with the Northern people "more than missionaries ordinarily do". They served AG until the Second World War when they left the direct service of the AG in order to place their

<sup>18</sup> Buah, F.K. 1998: A History of Ghana (Revised and updated). Malaysia: Macmillan.136

<sup>19</sup> Buah, (ibid) p.138.

services at the disposal of the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development. The Shirers were so popular in the North that the Northern people made Rev. Lloyd Shirer a Chief.

The construction of the necessary facilities for the mission stations and language study were the two main activities of the early missionaries. Stations were built in Tamale, Walewale and Bawku.

Henry B. Garlock joined the AG in 1932, followed by Eric Johnson in 1934. Thelma Godwin came in 1937. The initial mandate was to set up and run the Bawku mission station. When the Godwins arrived in Bawku, a chief was said to have come to them with what appeared like a heart-warming message about the prediction of the coming of missionaries: “This is the Man of God, I saw in my dream. This is the one whom that one with bright light about him said would come and lead us into the truth”

The AG established its first clinic among the Kokomba tribe, about 40 miles Northeast of Yendi in 1948. The Clinic was erected by the McNutts who had gone to the Gold Coast as builders. When they saw the need for medical as well as Gospel work, they went from village to village dressing sores and preaching the gospel. In the first part of 1949, Ozella Reid and Ruby Johnson went to Saboba to work as missionaries. Another clinic was built at Nakpanduri. It functioned under Hilda Eichen and Betty June Shackleton. A third clinic (maternity clinic) was set up at Walewale under Vivian Smiths to augment the medical efforts of the church.

The Kumasi station was opened in 1944; and the Takoradi station was opened in 1945. The Southern Ghana District council was inaugurated in 1950, a year after the inauguration of the Northern Ghana District Council. In spite of AG’s early activities in the southern parts of Ghana, the numerical growth up to the 1970s was very slow. One of the reasons could be because, “the Pentecostal element” was less pronounced in this church than the Apostolic Church. The Assemblies of God is a somewhat Puritan Church, leaving individual missionaries much personal freedom to adopt the mission policy they think most suitable.”<sup>20</sup>

Unlike other Pentecostal denominations, the work of

the Assemblies of God was heavily dependent upon a western financial and personnel support system. Between 1931 and 1970, about 99 missionaries worked with the missions in various capacities: Typists, clerks, cooks, and building contractors were all included in the list alongside medical personnel, teachers and church planters. It appears the sacrificial lifestyle of the early missionaries like the Shirers, was not followed by later ones. Until recently it was the smallest church among the mainline Pentecostal denominations. As at 1978 it had only 151 churches as compared to 1,209 for the Church of Pentecost, 370 for the Apostolic Church and 255 for Christ Apostolic Church. The actual numerical growth of the Church took place when the organization became less dependent upon American Missionaries. Perhaps the limited numerical strength of this church seems to have influenced the apologetic tone of the following statement:

“Every Assemblies of God Mission and Bible Institute in Ghana is strategically located. Not one fails to serve a specific need. As a result, the actual influence of the Assemblies of God is many times greater than its numerical strength...”<sup>21</sup>

The organization’s achievements are more profound in the areas of health needs of the people and literature development than the area of church planting. It was able to create a vernacular literature and managed to produce a tentative Dagomba version of the New Testament. Assemblies of God in Ghana gained autonomy in 1970 and the first Ghanaian General Superintendent, Elijah L. Namyela Panka was appointed to office the same year. He served until 1986 when S.B. Asore succeeded him.

In 1969, the mainline Pentecostal bodies came together to form an association called the Ghana Pentecostal Council.<sup>22</sup>

### **Apostolic and Pentecost Missionaries**

The genesis of Apostolic Church and Church of Pentecost in the Gold Coast could be traced to Peter Anim and his Faith Tabernacle Church in 1917.

<sup>20</sup> Larbi, Kingsley E, 2001. Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity. Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, Accra-Ghana.p.70-74

<sup>21</sup> AG 1981. The Ghana Story (1931-1981), p.3

Susana Hanson stated in her book

“...in May 1923 at Asamankese, an unusual, spectacular phenomenon took place that had great repercussions on the Pentecostal Movement in the Gold Coast. It is said that while some devout members of Anim’s movement were praying in a building in the town, a “pillar of fire” was seen resting on the roof. The people in the town who saw the fire raised an alarm and tried to put it off but they couldn’t succeed. Therefore, they called the Fire Brigade to come and quench the Fire of the Holy Spirit but they also failed.”<sup>23</sup>

Due to Anim’s enthusiasm and evangelistic activities, by 1924, many branches of his church had been opened at the Akwapim district, Coaltar, Asuokyene, Pampanso, Kwahu; others were Teshie, Nungua, Keta, Anlo and the Togoland. A remarkable event that saw the rapid spread of Anim’s organization was what was referred to as “Holy Ghost Outpouring”. From August 31 to September 12, 1932, Peter Anim launched one of the greatest revivals at Asamankese. Anim recalled that:

“At these meetings a great number of our sisters received mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost, speaking in tongues, prophesying together with the manifestation of all other signs of the Apostolic promises, Acts 1-4; 10:44-46... Prayer was continued and the sisters filled with the Holy Ghost were moved to lay hands on the brothers and some were baptized by the Holy Ghost. Brother Owiredu (junior) and I, received sanctification during the process of the Revival Prayer Meetings.... People who were hungry for the deeper spiritual experience and desirous of receiving the power from on high... arriving from far and near in search of the Holy Ghost Baptism. As a result of practical demonstrations of the work of the Holy Spirit as in the days of the

Apostles and testified by public, many were converted and received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and left [for] their various towns and villages – propagating the good news.”<sup>24</sup>

Peter Anim’s organization entered into an affiliation with the UK Apostolic Church in 1935. By this time the American Assemblies of God missionaries Lloyd and Margaret Shirer had entered the country across the northern border and had established churches in Yendi, Tamale and Walewale. In 1937, James McKeown and his wife Sophia<sup>25</sup> were sent to the Gold Coast as missionaries of the UK Apostolic Church, to work with Anim’s group but they parted company due to some misunderstanding regarding divine healing and the use of preventive and curative medicine. As a result of this contention, Peter Anim disassociated himself from the UK Apostolic Church and founded the Christ Apostolic Church while James McKeown continued to work with the UK Apostolic Church until 1953, when he also parted and formed his church, The Church of Pentecost, then known as the Gold Coast Apostolic Church.

Consequently, there were four main Classic Pentecostal Churches in the Gold Coast. These were Peter Anim’s Christ Apostolic Church, James McKeown’s Church of Pentecost, the Apostolic Church of Gold Coast, affiliate of the UK Apostolic Church, and of course, the Assemblies of God.<sup>26</sup>

McKeown, when he retired in 1982 had been a resident minister for 45 years. He had also been in the forefront of the apostolic or charismatic ministry (normally called “Pentecostalism”) throughout that period. It is pertinent to mention that a great number of the Holy spirit-led spiritual churches in Ghana today are the result of McKeown’s organizational acumen and distinguished endeavours.<sup>27</sup>

## Conclusion

Christianity in the earlier days was known for sound

<sup>22</sup> Larbi, Kingsley E, 2001. Pentecostalism, The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity. Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, Accra-Ghana.70-74

<sup>23</sup> Hanson, Susana. 2002: A History of Pentecostalism in Ghana (1900-2002). Accra. Heritage Graphix, 60

<sup>24</sup> Larbi, (ibid)p.104-105

<sup>25</sup> Leonard, Christine. 1989: A Giant in Ghana. New Wine Press.Chichester, England. 23

<sup>26</sup> Larbi, (ibid) p.70

<sup>27</sup> Duah, O.K.Alex.2001: Parting Words of Rev. James McKeown. Blessed Publications. Accra. P.11

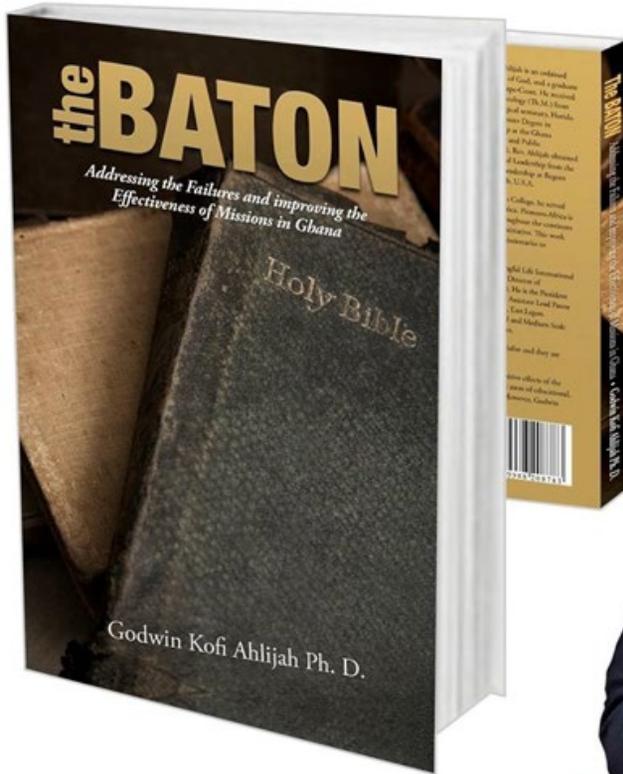
doctrine and moral teachings with the purposes of bringing up responsible future leaders in the nation. Currently there are many denominational and non-denominational churches. Some of these churches that have no traces of their foundation from the work of the earlier missionaries have betrayed the sound doctrine and moral teachings. This is largely

due to internal crises and the lack of any formal or spiritual training.

However, the presence of Christianity in Ghana has brought major developments into the land, notable among which is education or literacy and made Ghana a predominantly Christian nation.

# OF THE BATON

by Godwin Kofi Ahlijah Ph.D.



A MUST read for Missions

# CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS OF MISSIONS IN GHANA

Godwin Kofi Ahlijah

## Introduction

Even though the early missionaries and the work of missions, in general, have contributed so much to the socio-economic and political lives of Ghanaians, there were some challenges and setbacks that the missionaries had to grapple with.

Prof. Omenyo succinctly captures these challenges in this statement:

*“Western missionaries thus encountered the African world view from a background of Christianity embedded in enlightenment, which is perceived as superior to that of the African. This attitude made the effectiveness of their mission a nonstarter”.*

This concern was also expressed in Christian Baeta’s statement that:

*“The fact that the evangelists and their hearers belonged to such glaringly different racial types; the fact that their cultural backgrounds were so different, the unfortunate association of the colour black in the European superstition; the slave trade, with Europeans being always owners and Africans always the outstanding; the assumptions by the missionaries of a position of superiority vis-à-vis African, which assumption Africans weakly and unprotestingly accepted; the fact that the majority of missionaries to our parts were connected with the movement known as pietism; these and such-like factors determined the policy, which was adopted by all missions practically without exception, of non-amalgamation with, and aloofness from Africa culture”.*

These challenges included; the lack of understanding of the existing traditional religion and culture, lack of relevant training of some missionaries who came, especially in cross-cultural issues, syncretism on the part of the natives due to their religious predispositions, and the challenge of keeping missionaries healthy and protected from tropical diseases. The health factor is perhaps the most debilitating challenge the early missionaries ever faced.

## The Health Factor

Various factors were militating against Christian success in eighteenth-century Ghana. The rate of mortality among Europeans on the coast was the most challenging of them all.<sup>[1]</sup>

From 1828-1838, the first decade of Basel mission involvement on the Gold-Coast for instance, many of their new missionaries were faced with extreme health hazards. Eight out of ten missionaries dispatched died within months or very few years after arrival.<sup>[2]</sup> If one considers the first 20 years about half the missionaries arriving died.<sup>[3]</sup> Jacobus Captein had a similar frustration when the headmasters Abraham Suurdeeg and Jan Boying of the school he started in Elmina died shortly after taking over the school. This finally brought the school to a premature halt.<sup>[4]</sup>

The disastrous loss of the entire first batch of four missionaries in 1832 caused the committee in Basel to appoint Dr. C. F. Heinz to evaluate the situation. Unfortunately, he also succumbed to fever after just six weeks of arrival. For the next forty years, the leadership never gave a thought to sending a medical doctor to the field.<sup>[5]</sup> The causes were invariable: hepatitis, yellow fever, and malaria. At that time, however, these tropical diseases had not yet been clearly

<sup>[1]</sup> Debrunner, W. Hans: 1967. A History of Christianity in Ghana. Waterville Publishing House. 349

<sup>[2]</sup> Schweizer A. Peter. 2000: Survivors on the Gold Coast. Smartline Publishing House. Accra. 90

<sup>[3]</sup> Schweizer A. Peter. 2000: 90

<sup>[4]</sup> Kpobi, N.A. David. 1953: Missions in Chains. Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer. 151

identified. They were generally lumped together as “tropical fevers”.<sup>[6]</sup>

### Lack of Understanding of African Religion and Culture

By 1980, about half of Ghana’s population was on record as belonging to one or another of the Christian churches, and although the nation could not be regarded as a Christian country, the churches were exercising a remarkable influence on society. But while Christianity brought the country’s people undoubted benefits, it also eroded the Ghanaian people’s ancestral customary practices, values, and way of life.<sup>[7]</sup>

As an institution, alien to the people and their religions, introduced into the country by missionaries with very different traditions and culture, the Christian religion made radical inroads into Ghana’s culture, beliefs, and other aspects of her social heritage. Much of these, however, after sounder reviews, have been found by leaders of the Christian churches themselves not to be, after all, at variance with the Christian faith and morals.<sup>[8]</sup>

Instead of adapting the teachings and practices of the Christian religion to suit harmless Ghanaian indigenous values and practices, the early Christian missionaries totally condemned them as ‘pagan’ and to be shunned by their converts, whatever they considered strange. This contrasts with the “Christianization” of the Roman, Greek, and Anglo-Saxon cultural practices. This situation arose largely from the missionaries’ ignorance of the true meaning and significance of certain local institutions and practices. Some of their converts, particularly the over-zealous catechists and other evangelists, who misled them to misinterpret the people’s ancestral heritage, were also at fault.<sup>[9]</sup>

African Traditional Religion was labelled with negative and depreciative words like “superstitious” and “magic”.<sup>[10]</sup> Consequently, the Christian missionar-

ies, notably the Presbyterians, separated the Christians from the rest of the townfolk due to many groundless fears of contamination with ‘pagan’ influences. Hence, they lived in secluded part of the townships known as Salem.

Another innovation, which the Christian churches, introduced concerned marriage. The new institution refused to accept marriage performed according to the people’s own customary law and practices, and unless a couple married ‘in the church’, as it was popularly described, that is, according to the churches own ritual, they were denied important benefits such as Holy Communion and Christian burial rites.<sup>[11]</sup>

According to Larbi, the western mission agencies coming from the post-enlightenment, rationalistic background, approached the missionary task from this ideological frame of mind. For many in the receptor culture, Christianity was not accepted for its religious value; rather, it was a religion that offered material blessings. To learn to read, to learn something of the ability of the European to control his environment and to evolve a superior material culture, factors which to the African were bound with the white man’s worship of Christ, operated as strong motives for announcing oneself as a baptismal candidate.<sup>[12]</sup>

Larbi further observes that the other extreme, which is the denial of the existence of the spirit-force (witches, sorcerers, fetishes, magic, charms, and the local deities) in the missionary enterprise also radically, undermined the work of the missions. In the process, they ended up producing “two-world” Christians with double allegiance.<sup>[13]</sup> Tite Tienou confirms this in his book “The Theological Task of the Church in Africa” that in practice and privately, all African Christians feel the tremendous burden of carrying at least two cultural loads: the modern or so-called Western culture and the traditional.<sup>[14]</sup>

<sup>[5]</sup> Schweizer A. Peter.2000: 90

<sup>[6]</sup> Schweizer A. Peter. 90

<sup>[7]</sup> Buah, F.K. 1998: A History of Ghana (Revised and updated). Malaysia: Macmillan Publishing.139

<sup>[8]</sup> Buah, F.K. 1998. 139

<sup>[9]</sup> Buah, F.K.139

<sup>[10]</sup> Pobe, S. John.1991: AD 2000 and after; The Future of God’s Mission in Africa. Asempa Publishers. Accra. 72

<sup>[11]</sup> Buah, F.K. 1998: A History of Ghana (Revised and updated). Malaysia: Macmillan.139

<sup>[12]</sup> Larbi, Kingsley E. 2001: Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity. Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, Accra-Ghana. 29

## Paternalism

Increasing financial paternalism and accompanying Westernization of the gospel are the two most critical issues facing world missions today.<sup>[15]</sup> Paternalism is the interference of a state or an individual with another person, against their will, and justified by a claim that the person interfered with will be better off or protected from harm.<sup>[16]</sup> The analysis of paternalism involves a limitation on the freedom or autonomy of some agent.

Many mission agencies in Ghana have had to depend on foreign support to operate and to maintain their missionaries. Subsequently, this has sometimes led to donors prescribing what their donations should be used for against the real and most important need on the ground. Increasing financial paternalism creates dependency. It denies the wholeness of the individual and ultimately leads to his or her bondage and suppression. There can be no genuine reciprocity between individuals or groups when one of them treats the other like a child. Unfortunately, due to various constraints, notably the economic hardship, missionaries and mission agencies have been trapped in this web of control by the donor agencies. This to a large extent has stifled the progress of missions in Ghana.<sup>[17]</sup>

## Lack of Relevant Training

Indigenous mission societies that sprang up as offshoots of western missionary efforts in Africa, either saw little need for relevant missionary training, did not have the relevant missionary training or did not have the know-how to prepare the staff adequately before sending them out to the mission field.<sup>[18]</sup> The practice was to send anybody who had the call for ministry regardless of the nature of the ministry, to a Bible school for training, where available. In most cases, the students of the Bible Schools and Seminaries were equipped for pastoral work

in organized church denominations rather than in rugged missionary work which the African mission field demands. The effect was that Christian workers who were trained in the Bible schools plunged into missions and were ill-equipped for the challenges they faced on the field.<sup>[19]</sup>

The new sending agencies in Africa, mostly from a Pentecostal background as a result of charismatic revival in the institutions of higher learning, were modelled after faith missions of the early European missions. These African missions, like the Pentecostals, did not grasp the need for training or patient, careful selection of missionary candidates. Furthermore, many of these new sending agencies were being led by directors who themselves did not go through any form of training to prepare and equip them for their work, especially in cross-cultural settings.

Most agencies did not require any form of training, but rather saw the training period as a waste of time, while souls were perishing in heathen lands. They felt that all that missionaries needed was knowledge of the Bible, to be able to tell sinners that Jesus loved them and that He came to save them from their sins. Armed with Bible knowledge, Christian workers moved out in faith and zeal to send many hundreds of workers to mission fields in and around Africa. Some agencies recruited indiscriminately, without references to individual qualifications or the home church, and without missionary training.

Many missionaries have gone out not only without the necessary skills, but also without adequate field supervision, mentoring, and appropriate care. In fact, in some cases, missionaries went out by themselves to unreached and very difficult areas. This approach has done more harm than good. Some of these untrained missionaries crashed woefully and returned home broken. Others who managed to weather the storms and who stayed on “ruined” the work and shut the door to subsequent missions.

[13] Larbi, Kingsley E. 2001: 29.

[14] Tienou, Tite. 1990: *The Theological Task of the Church in Africa*. African Christian Press, Achimota, Ghana. 22

[15] Kornfield, William J. 1997: What has our Western Money and our Gospel wrought. Editorial of *Mission Frontiers* (January-February). Frontiers. Pasadena. 1

[16] Dworkin, Gerald. 2002: Paternalism: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://mb-soft.com/believe/indexa.htm>

[17] Dokunor, Sampson: President GEMA (Interview). 12-7-04.

[18] Famonure, Naomi. 2002: *Doing Member Care Well; Member Care for African Mission Personnel*. William Carey Library. Pasadena. 95

[19] Famonure, Naomi. 95

## Syncretism

Paul G. Hiebert, who had served as a professor of Anthropology and South Asia studies at the Fuller Theological Seminary defined syncretism as the mixture of old meanings with the new so that the essential nature of each is lost.<sup>[20]</sup> Syncretism is also the process by which elements of one religion are assimilated into another religion resulting in a change in the fundamental tenets or nature of those religions. It is also the union of two or more opposite beliefs so that the synthesized form is a new thing. It is not always a total fusion but maybe a combination of separate segments that remain identifiable compartments. Originally a political term, “syncretism” was used to describe the joining together of rival Greek forces on the Isle of Crete in opposition to a common enemy.<sup>[21]</sup>

Heibert explained that the major cause of syncretism is when the Christian message is translated into the native forms without the thought of preserving the original meaning. He drew the line between Syncretism and Indigenization, which is careful preservation of the meaning of the Gospel even as it is expressed in native forms.<sup>[22]</sup>

This was one of the major challenges that the early missionaries had to contend with; the syncretistic nature of African Christianity. Debrunner described such as living in a partly disillusioned world as semi-sophisticated bands of people, searching for new ideals and new forms of religions. These people remained Christians at heart, whilst at the same time vigorously pursuing material advantage and succumbing to crude superstition -cruder than that of old pagans.<sup>[23]</sup> He quotes some Basel missionaries as saying, “We suffer from the evil influence of lapsed Christians in Akwapim and of elements attracted by the possibilities of making money. Among the congregation, lack of discipline and conformity with the world is spreading...”<sup>[24]</sup>

According to Larbi, anybody who knows African Christians intimately would know that no amount of denial on the part of the church will expel the belief in supernatural powers from their minds, and he becomes a hypocrite who in official church circles pretends to give the impression that he does not believe in these things, while in his private life he resorts to practices which are the results of such beliefs.<sup>[25]</sup>

The 21st-century edition of Operation World reveals that over 64% of Ghanaians call themselves Christians, but only 40% have links with a church and only 12% are regular church attendees. African traditional world views and practices, the researcher noted, have gone hand-in-hand with the claim of being Christian.<sup>[26]</sup>

African traditional religion practitioners, like the Hindus, believe that all religions lead to God, implying thereby that there is no need to change from one religion to another.<sup>[27]</sup> It is therefore not surprising that much of the practical evangelical Christianity in Africa is described as being terribly syncretistic.<sup>[28]</sup> It was perhaps this frustration that led the Rev. Hendrik Velse to say that, “it was often a futile exercise attempting to convert an adult whose links with the traditional society were almost inseparable.”<sup>[29]</sup> The syncretic lifestyle of the Efutu people could be the reason why ten years after the massive conversion at Efutu in 1503, nothing seemed to have remained.<sup>[30]</sup>

The challenge of split allegiance or double allegiance to two or more religious sects amongst the people of Ghana was further confirmed in Kwame Nkrumah’s autobiography published in 1959 when he wrote: “Today I am a non-denominational Christian and a Marxist socialist and I have not found any contradiction between the two.”<sup>[31]</sup> This, Pobee finds very misleading and a misunderstanding of what the two sects stand for.

<sup>[20]</sup> Heibert, G. Paul. 1981: Perspectives on the World Christian Movement. William Carey Library. Pasadena. 378

<sup>[21]</sup> Imbach, S.R. Syncretism: <http://mb-soft.com/believe/indexa.html>. Elwell Evangelical Dictionary.

<sup>[22]</sup> Heibert, G. Paul. 378

<sup>[23]</sup> Debrunner, W. Hans: 1967. 256

<sup>[24]</sup> Debrunner, W. Hans: 1967.258

<sup>[25]</sup> Larbi, Kingsley E. 2001: Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity. Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, Accra-Ghana. 29

<sup>[26]</sup> Johnstone, Patrick. 2001: Operation World. Paternoster Lifestyle. Cumbria. 274

<sup>[27]</sup> Christian witness to Hindus [The Lausanne Committee for world Evangelism.] Perspective on the world Christian movement.- edited by Ralph .D. Winter and Steven .C. Hamthorne). 645

## Challenges Today

Commenting on the modern-day missionary challenges, Todd M. Johnson in his publication, “Christianity at 2000: Changes Today, Challenges Tomorrow”, notes that; the challenges faced by new missions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are legion. The world of AD 2000 is radically different from that of 1900. The overconfidence exhibited early by secular leaders of the Enlightenment Project has been completely deflated by the collapse of communism and general loss of faith in science and the idea of inevitable progress.<sup>[32]</sup>

Johnson asserted that Christian theologians and mission leaders who borrowed heavily from this paradigm find themselves at a crossroads. Although some advocate an even stronger “modern” approach, many see the changing times as corrective to the overconfidence of 20<sup>th</sup>-century strategies.<sup>[33]</sup>

Some see the ethos of 20th-century mission creeping into 21st-century initiatives. First is the tendency to convene big conferences with impressive slogans, in which the implications of the slogans are not always seriously addressed.<sup>[34]</sup>

Second, the hoped-for century of church union has become one of schism and lack of co-operation. If anything, hundreds of new organizations have emerged, each with its own independently stated plans.<sup>[35]</sup>

Third, the number of missionaries available for frontier missions may be impacted by an increasing uneasiness over the efficiency of Christianity in “already disciplined” peoples.<sup>[36]</sup>

Fourth, short-term mission efforts are now a driving force in missions. Although this means that more Christians are exposed to mission fields, it seems to be having the effect of injecting a short-term emphasis into long term church planting strategies.

Fifth, although much has been learned about contextualization of the gospel, emerging short term mentalities foreshadow a de-emphasis on language and culture learning, which are still the backbone of the foreign missionary enterprise.

## Conclusion

David Nii Anum Kpobi gave some reasons for the failure of some of the early missionaries and chaplains. This was the fact that they worked under various constraints. Also, many of them simply had no interest in evangelizing the local people.<sup>[37]</sup> However, there is no doubt that some of them were filled with genuine Christian zeal for the propagation of the Gospel.<sup>[38]</sup> These zealous ones, however, happened to come at a time when trade offered more attractive benefits than preaching of the Gospel.<sup>[39]</sup> The Europeans on the coast did not only become involved in the gold trade; they also sought to control it. This was no doubt, resented by the local people. It was almost impossible for the Africans to distinguish between the European trader and the missionary.<sup>[40]</sup>

Closely related to this set-back was the method of beginning evangelism from the Royal Court, with the hope that when the King gets converted, the masses would also follow. This strategy turned out to be very intrusive to the Africans. It was perceived as an attempt to dominate the political life of the people. It was clear that they underestimated the strength of traditional religions. The missionaries resented to some extent the very culture of the people and considered drumming and dancing, for example, as serious offenses.<sup>[41]</sup> They held the view prevalent at that time, that the Africans had no idea about God, and would therefore gladly accept the Gospel without questioning.<sup>[42]</sup>

Agbeti’s appraisal in his book; “West African Church History” confirmed that most of the early

[28] Tienou, Tite.1990: The Theological Task of the Church in Africa. African Christian Press, Achimota, Ghana.22

[29] Kpobi, N.A. David.1953: Missions in Chains. UitgeverijBoekencentrum, Zoetermeer. 146

[30] Debrunner, W. Hans: 1967.A History of Christianity in Ghana. Waterville Publishing House.19

[31] Pobe, S. John.1980 Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana (1949-1966). Asempa Publishers. Accra. 39

[32] Todd, Johnson M. 2002: Doing Member Care Well. William Carey Library,Pasadena.35-36

[33] Todd, Johnson M. 2002: Doing Member Care Well. William Carey Library,Pasadena.35-36

[34] Todd, Johnson M. 2002:35-36

[35] Todd, Johnson M. 2002:35-36

[36] Todd, Johnson M. 2002:35-36

[37] Kpobi, N.A. David.1953: Missions in Chains. Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer. 48

[38] Kpobi, N.A. David. 1953: 48

missionaries thought and believed that the African had no religion of his own. Consequently, they (the missionaries) felt divinely called to take their Western Religion and civilization to Africa.

This Western derogatory attitude has been clearly articulated in this German hymn, translated into Ewe, specially composed, for mission fields in India, Africa, and non-Western countries.

*Nu nyuigeowo so gbo  
Le nutomawo me.  
Anyigbaya nyonuto  
Gake ameawo gble.  
Mawufedomenyonyo  
Gba go de wodzidzro  
Ati kple kpe wosubo,  
Womenya Mawu O.<sup>[43]</sup>*

This verse may be paraphrased in English as: “In those regions (Africa and India) the land is fertile, but the inhabitants are corrupt; may they have a share in God’s grace; they worship wood and stone, they do not know God (they have no religion).” From this so-called depraved nature, the Western missionaries, regarding themselves as superior people, felt called to deliver the Africans. Therefore, they composed and sang:

*Can we, whose souls are lighted  
With wisdom from on high.  
Can we, to men benighted  
The lamp of life deny.  
Salvation! O salvation!  
The joyful sound proclaim,  
Till each remotest nation  
Has learned Messiah’s name.<sup>[44]</sup>*

Thus from the foregoing, it may be concluded that the Western missionaries risked their lives to come to Africa because of the derogatory and poor image they had about Africans.<sup>[45]</sup>

They paid little attention to the socio-cultural factors that play a very important role in missionary communication. Not much was done to present Christianity in a way that would appeal to the Africans. According to Kpobi, the uncompromising attitude of Christian theology at the time was the reason for their attitude towards traditional religion. He was, however, of the opinion that they would have achieved more positive results if they had regarded the African religion as a preparation for the coming of the gospel.<sup>[46]</sup>

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[39] Kpobi, N.A. David. 1953: 48

[40] Kpobi, N.A. David. 48

[41] Schweizer A. Peter.2000: Survivors on the Gold Coast. Smartline Publishing House. Accra.79

[42] Kpobi, N.A. David. 48

[43] Agbeti, Kofi J.1986: West African Church History. Leiden E.J. Brill. Netherlands. 161

[44] Agbeti, Kofi J.1986: West African Church History. Leiden E.J. Brill. Netherlands.161; see also Methodist Hymn Book Number 801.

[45] Agbeti, Kofi J.1986: West African Church History. Leiden E.J. Brill. Netherlands.161; see also E.P Church Hymn book Number 166 in Ewe.

[46] Kpobi, N.A. David.1953: Missions in Chains. UitgeverijBoekencentrum, Zoetermeer. 48

## SUCCESS 24 – THE FIRST “BLACK” MISSIONARIES TO GHANA AND THE MOVE THAT TURNED THE BASEL MISSION AROUND

Mawunyo Kuuku Win-Tamaklo

Life on the Gold Coast, which is modern-day Ghana, was very threatening for foreign missionaries. Four young men who were trained by the Basel missionary society were sent to the danish protectorate of Gold Coast.<sup>[1]</sup> These men were supposed to be the future of mission work in Africa. In 1828 on December 17, these four young hopeful missionaries arrived at the Gold Coast. Unfortunately, they caught the climate fever and all died.

Despite this unfortunate situation, three other men signed up to serve their Lord overseas. Of the three, Andreas Riis was the lone surviving missionary in Gold Coast. His friends died due to the wild kill of malaria fever. He was determined to make it as a missionary on the gold coast. His determination was soon attacked by the fever, which he submitted to local treatment and got well.<sup>[2]</sup> It is interesting to note that all these missionaries served in the coastal areas, but after a short while, they passed away. Andreas Riis seemed to be able to relate better with the locals. He criticized his mates for not taking the time to understand their new location.<sup>[3]</sup> In this article, we will take a look at how the Basel missionaries succeeded in their mission despite the previous failures they had encountered.

Before this work by the Basel missionary society in the Gold Coast, the Moravians attempted to bring the gospel to the Gold Coast. In an article by Daws Mark (2003), Dr. Antwi commented,<sup>[4]</sup> that as early as 1735, the Moravians of Herrnhut in Saxony, Germany, brought in an inhabitant of Gold Coast and trained him at the University of Copenhagen but on his return, he could hardly speak his mother tongue. Andreas Riis however was revolutionary; according

to Dr. Amtwi, “He became an African to Africans.”

Andreas Riis decided to move the mission from the coastal area where he only served the Danes to a much healthier region of the country, Akropong. His move was successful even though it was fought for many reasons. Andreas was the people’s man. Like any missionary who thirsts for souls to be won, He did all he could to reach the local people of Akropong. His life and methods have come under heavy criticism, but he was hungry for what he wanted to see, that locals were Christianized. He tried his best to expand the mission but it was not successful. He couldn’t account for even a soul for eight good years on the gold coast. The Basel mission society decided, it was time to close the missionary endeavor. They called Riis to return to Switzerland.<sup>[5]</sup>

Upon returning, he made a case for a group of people he felt were better fitted for such a mission field. He requested that the freed slaves in the West Indies be recruited and sent to the Gold Coast, and that, it may work. The mission was convinced that somehow in bringing freed Africans from the West Indies to do the work of evangelizing Gold Coast, they will turn from their ways and accept the gospel.<sup>[6]</sup> The Basel Mission was convinced and sent Riis to Jamaica in 1842 to recruit freed slaves who were evangelicals for his Gold Coast mission.

Is it possible that some mission fields are currently not responding because of the kind of people there? Andreas Riis became a local. He ate their food and learned the language. It still didn’t work. But How did the people see him? It is worthy to note that Ri-

<sup>[1]</sup> Nana Opare Kwakye, A. (2018). Returning African Christians in Mission to the Gold Coast. *Studies in World Christianity*, 24(1), 25-45.

<sup>[2]</sup> Quartey, S. (2007). *Missionary practices on the Gold Coast, 1832-1895*. Cambria Press.

<sup>[3]</sup> Quartey, S. (2007). *Missionary practices on the Gold Coast, 1832-1895*. Cambria Press. Page 61

<sup>[4]</sup> Daws Mark (2003) contributed by Daniel J. Antwi. A Ghanaian church built by Jamaicans. published: Tuesday | October 7, 2003

<sup>[5]</sup> Quartey, S. (2007). *Missionary practices on the Gold Coast, 1832-1895*. Cambria Press.

<sup>[6]</sup> Quartey, S. (2007). *Missionary practices on the Gold Coast, 1832-1895*. Cambria Press.

is's idea to include the freed slaves from West Indies was because of a comment made by the then Paramount Chief of Akropong, Nana Addo Dankwa. In his words, he said this: "When God created the world, He made a book for the white man and juju for the black man. But if you could show me some Black man who could read the white man's book, then we would surely follow you"<sup>[7]</sup> This became his mission, to bring black men who could not only read what the Chief called 'the white man's book', but black men who also knew God.

When Riis arrived on the island of Jamaica, he met with a Moravian superintendent minister, Rev. Jacob Zorn who had founded a school to train Christian missionaries for Africa.<sup>[8]</sup> This is when preparation meets appointment. Riis traveled all through the island to convince people to get on board this mission endeavor. Riis was a man with a zeal for the work of missions. If he couldn't succeed, then he was ready to succeed in another way. What a way to approach the noble work of missions! Success at all costs!

He got 25 people for the mission. 24 of them were Jamaicans, and one was from Antigua. However before they left for the Gold Coast, Rev. Zorn insisted on an agreement to be established between them and the Basel missionary society. It included:

1. The way the Moravians worshipped and disciplined should be accepted and kept.
2. The West Indians were to work willingly and in return, the Basel Mission was to provide for them for the first two years.
3. The Basel Mission was to give them a house and land to work once a week.
4. If any of the West Indians after five years wanted to go back, the Basel Mission was to pay for their passage back home, except for immoral living.<sup>[9]</sup>

For the success of every missionary endeavor, the parties involved must take time to consider the nit-

ty-gritty. This helps parties involved in the mission to have an understanding that supports the success of mission work. The Basel mission turned around.

The effect of this move turned the tables for the Basel Mission. To start with, they realized, the Jamaicans could handle the tough climate, unlike the European missionaries. The mission didn't have to worry about how fatal the mission was. Some lives were lost, but it was not as frequent as it had been with the European missionaries.<sup>[10]</sup>

Also, the simple presence of Africans who were living as Christians was a witness to the people of Akropong that they could also serve God and live for Him. This bridge was a necessity. The chasm was too great to communicate, but thanks be to God, they saw Africans who were Christians.<sup>[11]</sup>

Another effect was in the area of education, which was the main tool the mission used to reach the Gold Coast. Catherine Mulgrave and Alexander Worthy Clerk were the two of the West Indies missionaries who worked specifically in the area of education. The focus of the school was not only to educate in disciplines but also in biblical studies. Catherine Mulgrave was the pioneer of the education of girls. She started three girl's schools. One in Abokobi, Osu, and Odumase.<sup>[12]</sup> Education was a great tool in the hand of the Basel Caribbean mission. Many Indigenous people were trained through the schools, who became even better bridges to the indigenes of the Gold Coast.

Another teacher worthy of note is Rose Ann Miller. Daughter of Mary and Joseph Miller, both missionaries who were part of the 24 who turned the mission around. She was only twelve when she began to assist the leader of a girl's school in Akropong. Later on, she moved to Aburi, where she started a girls' boarding school in 1859.<sup>[13]</sup>

Imagine the souls that were brought in through

<sup>[7]</sup> Daws Mark (2003) contributed by Daniel J. Antwi. A Ghanaian church built by Jamaicans. published: Tuesday | October 7, 2003

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<sup>[9]</sup> Nana Opere Kwakye, A. (2018). Returning African Christians in Mission to the Gold Coast. Studies in World Christianity, 24(1), 25-45.

<sup>[10]</sup> Nana Opere Kwakye, A. (2018). Returning African Christians in Mission to the Gold Coast. Studies in World Christianity, 24(1), 25-45.

<sup>[11]</sup> Nana Opere Kwakye, A. (2018). Returning African Christians in Mission to the Gold Coast. Studies in World Christianity, 24(1), 25-45

<sup>[12]</sup> Nana Opere Kwakye, A. (2018). Returning African Christians in Mission to the Gold Coast. Studies in World Christianity, 24(1), 25-45.

these missionary moves. Let us think through the work God used these Jamaican missionaries to do, and consider bridging the chasm by raising cross-cultural missionaries. Africans might be best suited for African fields. Much more, the indigenes of lands are best suited to reach their people.

### Conclusion

Today, we have what we call the Presbyterian church, but its roots are deeply buried in the work of these 24 missionaries who sacrificed their lives to

come back home to serve God. It was not an easy task. Some of them died, others also left. But in all, by God's grace, they turned a failed mission around. The Basel Mission still influences Ghana today. These 24, though unknown, have left an indelible mark on our nation. Isn't there a cause for any such drastic action to be taken by those who desire the conversion of the nations? A decision to bridge the gap of culture, to bring the gospel to people in a language they understand. May God help give us the wisdom to bridge gaps and smooth rough edges as we embark on God's Holy Mission.



Having been saved by God's grace through faith in the atoning work of Christ, Mawunyo Kuuku Win-Tamakloe sees clearly how much God loves all people, which is the reason behind his singular passion and drive together with the Holy Spirit to reach the lost and to make disciples of all nations. He is married to his sweetheart Jessie, and together they serve the Lord as missionaries in Sunyani under Oneway ministries. He also serves 'The Heart Church' (a young local disciple making church in Sunyani) as a pastor. He hosts a weekly evangelistic radio broadcast, "the Hour of Decision", which brings the glorious gospel of Christ Jesus with power and clarity to the people of Bono region. He loves music, writes Christian songs and is a worshipper. His dream is to lead at least three million people to Christ Jesus; also, his joy is to see young believers grow to love and obey Jesus.

<sup>[13]</sup> Nana Opere Kwakye, A. (2018). Returning African Christians in Mission to the Gold Coast. *Studies in World Christianity*, 24(1), 25-45.



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