



An Exploration into the Public Theology of the Basel Missionary Society in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

The article seeks to explore the Public Theology of the Basel Mission that gave birth to the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG). The article argues that the theology of the Basel Mission emphasised the integration of the Christian faith and social action for social transformation. It held a position that the gospel message of Jesus Christ should not only address the spiritual needs of individuals but also their social, health, educational, environmental and economic needs. The church should therefore be actively involved in promoting justice, equality and human rights, particularly for the marginalised and vulnerable members of society. The study paid attention to the works of Hans Debrunner, Noel Smith and Kwamena-Poh who pursued various studies on the Basel Mission and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana for the actualization of the Public Theology of the Basel Mission on the operations of the Basel Mission. The study concludes that the Basel Mission has made a significant contribution to the development of Public Theology in Ghana as it has equally done so in the social transformation of Ghana. The study further makes recommendations for the churches in Ghana to consider the Public Theology of the Basel Mission, including Theology of Vocation, Prayer and Work (*ora et labora*) and the Bible and the Plough to serve as a drive in their pursuit of Public Theology and public witness.

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Publication History

Received 31st March, 2023

Accepted 17th April, 2023

Published online 28th April,
2023

Keywords: *Public Theology, African Christianity, Christian Public Witness, Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Basel Missionary Society*

INTRODUCTION

The Basel Mission was a Protestant Christian missionary society that operated in Ghana (then known as the Gold Coast). The mission was founded by the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society in Switzerland in 1815 and sent its first missionaries to the Gold Coast in 1828. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana is an outcome of the missionary efforts of the Evangelical Missionary Society, Basel Switzerland commonly known as the Basel Mission; the Moravian Church Jamaica in the West Indies and the United Free Church of Scotland. Even though the missionary bodies that joined later made significant contributions to the missionary enterprise, the fact remains that the Basel Mission provided the foundation for the mission and ministry of the PCG. The Public Theology of the Basel Mission or the way it understood and communicated its Christian beliefs to the wider public, was shaped by its mission to spread the Christian faith, while also promoting social and economic development in Ghana.

The Basel Mission emphasised the integration of the Christian faith and social action for social transformation. They held a theological position that the gospel message of Jesus Christ should not only address the spiritual needs of individuals but also their social, health, educational, environmental and economic needs must be addressed. The church should therefore be actively involved in promoting justice, equality and human rights, particularly for the marginalised and vulnerable members of society. The Basel Mission in Ghana was focused on evangelism and the establishment of Christian churches. The missionaries sought to convert the people to Christianity by preaching the Gospel to them. They, however, participated actively in the provision of education and medical care needs of their converts and their communities.

Hans Debrunner, Noel Smith and Kwamena-Poh who have done very extensive work on the impact of the Basel Mission and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana have established the significant contribution of the Basel Mission on the social transformation of Ghana. There are churches in Ghana that do not consider the socio-economic development of the nation as part of their mission and ministry. Paul Gifford has opined that these churches considered the provision of social services like education, health facilities, sanitation and good governance as the sole responsibility of governments. Churches' participation in such social activities is therefore considered as a deviation from Christian mission and ministry.¹

The drive of the Basel Mission to their public Christian witness was its Public Theology. Peter Schweizer has pointed out that the theology and ethics of the reformers like Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and John Knox informed the Theology of Vocation, Prayer and Work (*ora et labora*) and the Bible and the Plough that serves as a driver of public witness of the Basel Mission. The study has observed that the legacy of the Basel Mission includes its influence on the development of Public Theology of other churches as they have come to appreciate the role of the Basel Mission and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana on the social transformation of Ghana. The study, therefore, makes a recommendation for the churches in Ghana to consider the Public Theology of the Basel Mission, including Theology of Vocation, Prayer and Work (*ora et labora*) and the Bible and the Plough to serve as the key drives in their pursuit of Public Theology in Ghana.

METHODOLOGY

The study is mainly qualitative in nature. It picks its thoughts from available insights on the Basel Mission from library research. It explores both primary and secondary materials on the subject. Much attention is paid to the works of Hans Debrunner whose work on the history of Christianity in Ghana did a major survey on the impact of the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast. Debrunner's work has served as the bedrock for all major studies on the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Other later works on the Presbyterian Church of Ghana by Noel Smith, Peter A. Schweizer and Michael Kwamena-Poh have equally been considered.

Theology and Mission

The Basel Mission's Public Theology in Ghana was characterised by its commitment to evangelism, social justice and cultural engagement. The mission saw its work as not only promoting the spread of the Gospel but also promoting the well-being of the people of Ghana. Its Public Theology was subsequently based on the belief that the Christian faith should have a positive impact on society. The Basel Missionaries saw themselves as agents of social change and therefore sought to improve the lives of the people they served by providing education, healthcare and other social services. Public Theology was based on a commitment to social justice, the promotion of the common good and the transformation of society. The mission sought to bring the message of Christ to the people of Ghana in a way that would address the pressing social, political, cultural and economic issues. The Christian faith, it was believed should be integrated into all aspects of society.

¹ Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity* (USA: Indiana University Press, 2004).

The Mission further saw itself as a partner in the development of Ghanaian society working together with the people, governments and traditional leaders to build a better future. Olav has considered the role of the church as a partner in development which plays a major role in Christian missions.² The missionaries believed that the Christian faith should not only transform individuals but also transform society as a whole. They saw their mission as a call to work for the well-being of all people, regardless of their race, ethnicity and social status. The missionaries sought to integrate Christian principles into the daily lives of Ghanaians. They believed that their work would not only promote the Christian faith but also lead to the overall development of society.

The Public Theology of the Basel Mission was characterised by a strong commitment to social justice and a belief in the power of the Christian faith to effect positive change in society. The Missionaries worked tirelessly to improve the lives of the people they served and their legacy can still be seen in the many schools, hospitals, and other social institutions that they established in Ghana. The Mission established a strong presence in Ghana and was instrumental in the development of Public Theology in the country. The impact of the Basel Mission on Ghana is still felt today, with many of the schools and hospitals they established still operating and contributing to the country's development.

Theology and Missionary Impact

Theology must speak to the church and its mission in context but also to the wider good of society. Reflections on the public witness of early missionary bodies in Ghana point out to holistic approach and understanding of Christian ministry. The holistic approach of missionaries in Christian ministry pays attention to both spiritual formation and social transformation.³ The impact of the Basel Mission, for instance, is amply demonstrated in the social, economic and cultural dimensions of the communities within which they served. Moreover, the Mission did not provide Christian services to their church members only, they also affected society in general. They pioneered education, health services and other infrastructure in various communities both for their members and non-members.

Western missionaries who worked in different parts of Ghana came primarily to spread the gospel. The Christian understanding of the missionaries, however, indicated that the gospel demands participation in the process toward the well-being of the recipients of the gospel. In the various mission stations, issues of education, health, agriculture, industry and quality of life remained on the agenda of missionaries. While they pursued some of such developmental projects on their own, Debrunner⁴ and Kwamena-Poh⁵ have indicated that they also partnered with the governments, traditional leaders and their parent missionary bodies to meet the human needs of the people that they have come to share the gospel with. Through the Basel Trading Company, (later United Trading Company) the Basel Mission engaged in the development of the palm oil trade which preceded the development of cocoa as a cash crop and a major foreign exchange earner. It introduced cocoa into the country on the Gold Coast on an experimental basis.⁶

A major focus for missionaries was to create employment opportunities for the people of the areas where each mission was located. To this end, they pursued vocational and technical education that provided skills in printing, tile manufacturing, weaving etc. The missions employed some of their products from vocational and technical institutions. Many of them, however, ended up in various public and private industries. Basel Mission educational policies, experimental farming schemes, and the advancement of commercial networks, infrastructure and transportation were pursued since they had a theology that did not impede public participation in socio-economic development projects.

² Olav Fykse Tveit, "The Role of Religion in Sustainable Development and Peace," *Partners for Change: Religions and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2016, 1.

³ John R W Stott and John Wyatt, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Zondervan, 2006).

⁴ Hans Werner Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Waterville Publishing House, 1967).

⁵ Michael Albert Kwamena-Poh, "Vision and Achievement: A Hundred and Fifty Years of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (1828–1978)," *Accra-Ghana: Waterville Publishing House*, 2011.

⁶ Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), *Constitution* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 2016), 162.

The Mission played a significant role in the development of Ghanaian society and its legacy continues to influence the country to this day. Public Theology refers to the application of Christian teachings to social and political issues.⁷ The Basel Mission emphasised the importance of Public Theology in their work in Ghana, seeking to address social and economic challenges facing the Ghanaian people. The Mission's approach to Public Theology in Ghana was heavily influenced by the Reformed theology. The public theology of the Basel Mission was informed by the theological underpinnings of Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, John Knox and others which were not different from the Moravian Church Jamaica in West Indies and the United Free Church of Scotland.

The rationale behind the public witness of the Basel Mission as an integral part of Christian ministry and mission needs exploration to ascertain its insights for the contemporary Christian public witness and public theology. Attention is therefore paid to the Theology of Vocation, Theology of Prayer and Work (*ora et labora*), and the concept of the Bible and the Plough. Moreover, some specific social dimensions that the various public theologies demonstrated in practical terms will need examination for the contemporary reader of the works of the PCG and its parent organisation the Basel Missionary Society.

Theology of Vocation

The Public Theology of the Basel Mission that gave birth to the PCG was deeply rooted in the theologies initiated by reformers such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, John Knox and others as mentioned earlier on. Martin Luther's Theology of Vocation for example argues that God's calling is for all Christians both lay and ordained. Theology of Vocation rejected the Catholic theology that indicated that the Christian calling was limited to the priests who lived in the monasteries and who committed themselves to celibacy and pursued full-time ministry in the church. The services of others outside the church were therefore considered secular and could not be viewed as a sacred Christian calling. Christian ministry however according to Luther is not limited to services in the church.

Christian calling moreover is directed toward the family, the church and the state. As the priesthood of all believers, Christians are expected to serve faithfully in their various callings by offering up their lives as living sacrifices to God. Whatever task that God assigns a Christian at any time must be done as sacred service to God. To the Colossians, Paul instructed that Christians must pursue any assignment as unto God. 'And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men' (Col 3:23).

The Public Theology of the Basel Mission is amply demonstrated in their commitment to both spiritual development and social change in consonant with the Theology of Vocation. The social transformation involves missionaries' participation in education, agriculture, health, economics, culture and gender equality. The implementation of novel techniques in agriculture by missionaries as well as their successful experiments with new cash crops such as cocoa was considered a service to God and humanity. The missionaries also helped to expand trading networks and brought innovations in architecture and infrastructure as part of their responses to their Christian calling in Ghana.

Theology of Prayer and Work (*Ora Et Labora*)

The theological foundations of the Basel Mission according to Peter Schweizer were on their interpretation of Christian compassion of Zwinglian ethics of *ora et labora* (prayer and work). According to Schweizer⁸ and Smith,⁹ the Zwinglian understanding of prayer and work served as the

⁷ Sebastian Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere: Public Theology as a Catalyst for Open Debate* (London: SCM Press, 2013); Karel Thomas August, *The Quest for Being Public Church: The South African Challenge to the Moravian Church in Context (1737-2004)* (Moravian Printing Works, 2005); Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, "Doing Public Theology in African Christianity: A Reflection on Communiqués by Churches in Ghana," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 7, no. 11 (November 15, 2021): 190–200, <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.20217111>.

⁸ Peter A Schweizer, *Survivors on the Gold Coast: The Basel Missionaries in Colonial Ghana* (Smartline Pub., 2000), 93.

⁹ Noel Smith and Brian Watson, "The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835-1960: A Younger Church in a Changing Society," 1966.

theological and ethical basis for the missionary work of the Basel Mission.¹⁰ The theological tradition guided the missionaries from the very outset to create prospects for the economic betterment of the indigenous population. The ambitious missionary programmes which included the construction of churches, schools, hospitals, and agriculture required sound logistics, entrepreneurial skills, and financing.¹¹

The Theology of Prayer and work was shaped by the biblical understanding that faith without action (works) is dead. According to James, ‘What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.... for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also’ (James 2:14-18, 26).

Faith must be demonstrated in deeds and works. God intervenes in the affairs of humanity through prayer and human action. Prayer is therefore the invitation for divine intervention. Action/work is the demonstration of faith with the awareness of divine presence and provision. Prayer is a call to a deeper relationship with God. It is a relationship that demands strong spirituality and devotion to God. Prayer eventually is service and love to God. Jesus instructed, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ (Lk 10:27 NIV). Love for God however must also lead to love for humanity. ‘Love your neighbour as yourselves.’

Work in the Zwinglian theology was a call for a closer relationship with the environment and people. It is a call for a stronger and healthy relationship with people and whatever makes life meaningful to society. Human action and work are therefore considered as service to God and for his glory.

Theology of the Bible and the Plough

The Basel Mission also worked to address issues of social justice in Ghana. The Mission opposed the practice of slavery and actively worked to promote the abolition of the slave trade. The Christian advocacy for the abolition of the slave trade further argued for alternative economic activities. It was conceived that ‘the only complete cure of all the evils of slavery and the slave trade is the introduction of Christianity into Africa’. It wanted, as it were, to back missionary activity by putting the natives in the way of cultivating the soil and drawing forth its varied and immense resources. The true way to abolish the slave trade would be to support it by lawful commerce’ as stated by Buxton.¹² The ‘Bible and the Plough’ Christian understanding influenced some Christian missionary bodies in Ghana including the Basel Mission.

Buxton instructed that ‘let missionaries and schoolmasters, the plough and the space, go together. It is the Bible and the Plough that must regenerate Africa.’¹³ The ‘Bible and the Plough’ Christian understanding influenced some Christian missionary bodies in Ghana including the Basel Mission. The Basel Mission articulated ‘the Bible and the Plough’ concept as the conceptual base for the churches’ involvement in socio-economic and political development. As expected by men like Buxton, the Christian mission was meant to create an African middle class, thoroughly Christianised and made financially self-reliant by the production and export of cash crops. The middle class could then ‘civilize’ Africa from within and do so far more efficiently than European missionaries, though the latter were of course needed initially to preach the Christian faith and to foster the spirit of entrepreneurship.

¹⁰ Schweizer, *Survivors on the Gold Coast*, 93

¹¹ Schweizer, *Survivors on the Gold Coast*. 93.

¹² Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 103.

¹³ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 104.

The concept of 'the Bible and the Plough' is consistent with the mission's policy of self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing churches in Africa. Its twin axes were evangelism (the Bible) and agriculture (the Plough). Hence every mission station was also associated with a farm on which were grown both cash crops and food crops. Such farms were also used for demonstration and instruction in model agriculture for Ghanaian converts. Some of the farms did so well that they became centres of development. The concept of 'the Bible and the Plough' became the motivation for the church's involvement in social development. The concept formed a good basis for development and had the potential to make the Church self-reliant.

The Mission and Agriculture

The Basel Mission's Public Theology in Ghana was characterised by its commitment to environmental stewardship. The mission recognized the importance of preserving Ghana's natural resources and worked to promote sustainable agricultural practices and conservation efforts. The endeavours of the Basel Mission were by no means restricted to evangelisation, schools, trade, and crafts. Agriculture, however as the cornerstone of the Ghanaian economy, also played an important part.¹⁴ Together with the West Indians, especially David Rochester, Joseph Mohr planted orange and mango trees, local vegetables and bananas, yams, beans and groundnuts, as well as coffee, tobacco, cotton, sugar cane and breadfruit trees. The mango had been introduced to Ghana by the West Indians.¹⁵ Mrs. Rochester was the first to make groundnut oil in Akuapem. David Rochester introduced non-poisonous cocoyam to Ghana, and after initial jeering, the crop became immensely popular and was hailed as a saviour from famine.¹⁶

At Akropong more buildings for the missionaries and the West Indians were done with much farm work as well. Zimmermann speaks of blacksmiths, shoemakers, carpenters and tailors at Akropong. He also identified the rearing of domestic animals like goats, sheep, hens, ducks and guinea fowls. Coffee and arrowroot were also planted at Aburi, and a garden was kept at Christiansborg.¹⁷ The coffee and arrowroot plantations at Akropong did so well that Mohr was able to send samples of coffee and arrowroot to Basel in 1851 in the hope of stimulating direct export to Switzerland.¹⁸ It was found out in 1851 that the agricultural side of the mission work has grown to the point that there was a need for a full-time specialist.¹⁹

The Co-Operative Venture at Abokobi

A much better scheme for the furtherance of agriculture and independent African farmer was introduced in Abokobi in 1871. The mission land was divided into plots and was leased to members of the congregation. If a man neglected to cultivate his plot, it was taken from him. The rents were used for congregational and community development, including school and water supply. According to Debrunner, 'the endeavour of the Basel Mission to create an independent, active middle class of farmers, as the backbone of the congregations succeeded and it is one of the most precious achievements of Christianity in Ghana.'²⁰

The Comprehensive Development Agenda

The 'Bible and the Plough' concept led to a very comprehensive and farsighted developmental agenda. Debrunner has observed that the Basel Mission pursued, 'the introduction of the printing press and the local manufacture of paper; an investigation of the climate in various localities and the introduction of medical science; the engineering of roads and canal for transport and a suitable system of drainage for

¹⁴ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 138.

¹⁵ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 129.

¹⁶ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 129.

¹⁷ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 130.

¹⁸ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 130.

¹⁹ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 132.

²⁰ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 140.

health reasons; the sharing with Africans of the best knowledge available in agriculture, and the provision of approved implements and tested seeds, together with advice as to the best economic crops to produce for world markets'.²¹ It was noted that 'much of this programme was adopted and realised by the Christians at work in Ghana between 1840 and 1873.'²²

The Beginning of the Basel Mission Trading Company

Trade developed quickly and the home board of the mission realised that funds for mission work and capital for trading should be clearly separated. Mission accountant Elias Schrenk was sent out in 1859 and trading put into the charge of Rottmann. Capital was no longer provided directly by the mission, but by some traders in Basel who formed a Mission Trading Commission, later to be converted into the Basel Mission Trading Company, a shareholder company, part of whose profits were used to be a subsidy for mission work. The mission traders, however, remained strictly under the discipline of the Mission's home board.²³ The Basel Mission Trading Company held the principle to sell no guns, gunpowder and spirits. The main export commodity was palm oil.²⁴

Profit-Making and Missions

Soon, the Basel Mission Trading Company made handsome profits and the question of expansion became urgent. The home board of the Basel Mission decided that financial gain was not to be the main aim of the Mission Trading Company, but the example of Christian methods in trade and training of African Christians for business.²⁵

Education for the Ordinary Ghanaian

The Basel Mission placed a strong emphasis on education. It believed that education was a key tool for social and economic development and established schools throughout Ghana to provide education to both boys and girls. In addition to academic subjects, the Basel Mission schools also taught practical skills such as agriculture, carpentry and sewing to help students become self-sufficient. The mission believed that education was essential for the development of Ghana and that it was a key way to combat poverty and inequality. The Basel Mission also believed in the importance of literacy and the translation of the Bible into local languages which helped to spread the Christian message throughout the regions.

It is common knowledge that the Church has the credit for the promotion of formal education in Ghana. Colonial authorities introduced education in the various castles that served as residences for their officials and their families. The castle schools, however, were restricted to the children of the colonial officials. Ordinary Ghanaian children were not offered open access to the Castle schools. The Basel Mission on the contrary, considered education for the ordinary Ghanaian child as a major national priority. Special education centres for girls, women, the blind and the deaf were established. Vocational and technical institutions were moreover established for students with special needs. The success of Christian missions was deeply connected to the education of both members and non-members of the church.

Christian formation of converts was a major concern of the Mission. The need to gather Christian information from the Bible, catechism, liturgy books, bible commentaries, dictionaries and hymn books demanded that church members must be educated in reading and writing skills. The Bible was translated into English and local languages which were read regularly in church. There was a need for church members to understand the message of the gospel when preached and written. The church encouraged the singing of hymns from hymn books. The task of using hymn books at church worship services demanded literate church members. Preparation of church members for baptism and

²¹ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 104.

²² Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 104.

²³ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 132.

²⁴ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 132.

²⁵ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 132.

confirmation demanded the ability to read, memorise and rehearse portions of Scriptures by church members who were educationally oriented.

The growth of the missionary enterprise in numbers and geographical spaces brought to bear the call of Jesus that the harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. There was a need for the missionaries to train indigenous people to support them and eventually take over the leadership of the future church. The Basel Mission established ministerial formation facilities to train lay and ordained ministers to support the ministry. Ministerial formation for ordinary Ghanaians prepared both lay and ordained agents for the various ministries in the church. The effort further reduced the over-dependence of the church on its foreign missionary bodies and laid the foundation for the self-governance of the church.

Christian Faith Perspectives on Public Issues

The agents of the various missions served as key opinion leaders in community development and matters of governance. The influence of the Basel Mission was experienced in almost every dimension of the Gold Coast. The key agents of the Mission that influenced public opinion were the pastors, catechists and teachers. They were able to influence society because they possessed the ability to bring faith perspectives to the public sphere on matters of public interest. The Mission prepared its key agents in other disciplines as well as theology. The Teacher Training College at Akropong for example offered the tertiary and highest education and provided education in other disciplines as well as theology. In 1857, the curriculum of Presbyterian Training College was extended from four (4) to five (5) years. A fifth-year (5th) course was added specifically for studies in theology for the students.

The pastors, catechists and teachers were not given different education from the other students who studied in the mission schools that were prepared to become agents of the Church. Since the Mission went on insisting that preaching and teaching should be guided by the same religious approach to life, it did not deem it appropriate to create separate educational facilities on that same level for other professions. The Basel Mission for example even resisted attempts to separate the careers of religious and secular teachers.²⁶ The orientation of the key agents who brought their faith perspectives to the public space made them capable to play that role.

The church leaders and agents played key community leadership roles due to their preparation in matters of theology and social engagements. Some church agents served as secretaries to traditional leaders and at community meetings. They were able to bring their faith perspectives to the public space since they were well equipped for such public witness and commanded public respect. The Mission saw its influence spread over wider areas of the country. Church agents became key facilitators in shaping public opinion in matters of faith and public interest.

Human Resources Development

The first generation of Ghanaian leadership in modern times was trained in mission schools. Missionary education was in consonant with the Prayer and Work theology and ethics as it prepares workers for civil and public services. Church educational institutions prepared the workforce for the various public sectors including education, health, industry, transportation, security, civil and public service. The pride attached to the products of the church educational institutions was the issue of high standards of work ethics including time consciousness, discipline, sincerity, hard work and a sense of productivity. It became known that education from the mission offered employment opportunities and a workforce with sound work ethics.

The vocational and technical institutions of the Mission had a specific focus on preparing the needed artisans for industry and entrepreneurship. Carpenters, masons, painters, and mechanics were produced for the efforts toward the industrialization of the new economy. The Mission set up craft centres as part of their educational programmes. The Basel Mission strongly believed in developing practical skills along with theoretical knowledge. Their aim was to make the population self-sufficient

²⁶ Schweizer. *Survivors on the Gold Coast*. 84

and economically more resilient.²⁷ Without denying that prior to the introduction of Christianity in Ghana, the people had developed their own crafts, one must admit that Christian missionaries also introduced some form of crafts in carpentry and masonry. The church subsequently became an integral part of national conversations on human resource development and industry.

Good Health and Health Services

Another important aspect of the Basel Mission's Public Theology was its focus on healthcare. The missionaries recognised the high rates of disease and mortality in Ghana and established hospitals and clinics to provide medical care to the local population. They also emphasised preventative health measures such as hygiene and sanitation and worked to combat diseases such as malaria and yellow fever. The mission saw healthcare as an important aspect of its work, believing that it was a way to alleviate suffering and promote human dignity. The Mission believed that healing and caring for the sick was an important aspect of Christian ministry and considered medical work as an opportunity to demonstrate the love of God to the Ghanaian people.

From the outset, the Basel Mission laid down a very important foundation for socioeconomic development in Ghana. The ecumenical relationships established by the PCG and other missionary-initiated churches like the Methodist Church facilitated Christian unity and corporation in several sectors. The formation of the Christian Health Association of Ghana (CHAG) by the missionary churches made significant contributions to the church's role in health delivery. The standard of health in society increased significantly because of mission hospitals. In many places, the only hospital or health centre available was the one owned by the Church.

The greatest problem faced by the early missionaries was the tropical climate and its related health hazards. Many missionaries died because of the climate and tropical diseases. This problem made missionary work very difficult. However, the discovery of quinine and other curative medicines in the late 19th century made the history of missionary work in Ghana a different story altogether. The Mission established medical centres, at first at their mission posts, and later far and wide, to attend to the sick. The missionaries also greatly improved health services. Before the advent of the missionaries and indeed well into the pre-independence period, most sick people depended for cures upon concoctions, herbs, roots and barks of trees. Although modern scientific research has confirmed the medicinal properties of these concoctions, traditional medical practice had several shortcomings.

Preventive medicine was hardly known; the result was that epidemics of different kinds were frequent. Also, traditional doctors often could not diagnose illness accurately. They often attributed natural ailments to supernatural causes and resorted to mystic cults to appease the 'unknown' spirits, before applying medicine to the sick person. They also prescribed many taboos which in the light of modern medical science, had no relation whatever with the illness being treated. In due course, leprosariums and orphanages were built to supplement their medical services. Many mission-sponsored hospitals were founded in the course of the twentieth century. The PCG opened health facilities in some parts of the country, including the Agogo Presbyterian Hospital in Asante-Akyem. Among other missionary hospitals of long-standing reputation are those run by the Methodist Church at Wenchi in the Brong-Ahafo Region and the Seventh Day Adventists Church at Kwahu Atibie in the Eastern Region.

While pioneering their works of development in the spiritual, educational, medical and economic sectors, the missionaries revealed an astonishing disregard for all sorts of discomforts. Among those, the deadly menace of malaria, yellow fever and similar killer diseases were most prominent. They felt the needs of the people. The challenges also affected them as the challenges of their church members became their challenges as well.

Towards Independence

²⁷ Schweizer. *Survivors on the Gold Coast*. 84

The participation of the church in the efforts of Ghana toward independence was very phenomenal. The Christian Council of Ghana, for example, participated in the discussions towards independence and provided spiritual and Christian perspectives on the independence efforts. The statement of the Christian Council of Ghana in August 1940 made a significant contribution to the road map toward Ghana's independence. Anquandah has noted that 'the Coussey Committee had just submitted its proposals for preparing the country for self-government. It was in that month that the Christian Council caused quite a stir on the Ghanaian scene by a publication, in several newspapers, of a public statement entitled Christianity and Political Development. The statement was signed by fifteen members of the Christian Council Executive Committee including General Secretary Rev J. Bardsley, Rev Christian Baeta, Rev M.B. Taylor and Dr. Eugene Grau, Principal of Trinity College.'²⁸

Human Rights and Good Governance

The churches have played very significant roles in post-independence Ghana. The churches engaged the government of the Nkrumah regime on several public policy matters. The Christian Council of Ghana is on record to have sent a series of letters to the Government on several governance and human rights issues. A typical case in point is the introduction of the Preventive Detention Act. The Act allowed the government to hold some citizens in detention for long periods without trial. The Christian Council in a series of letters challenged the Act.²⁹ Even though President Nkrumah did not agree with the churches, the law was eventually repealed from the laws of Ghana.

The unique role of the church during the military era in the governance of Ghana was its call to the military to go back to the barracks and return the nation to democratic governance. The Christian Council of Ghana and the Ghana Catholic Bishops Conference issued a joint communiqué to the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council on June 28, 1979, calling for the discontinuation of the execution of former military Generals during the military takeover of the nation. The communiqué was jointly signed by Rev C. Awortwi-Pratt, Chairman of the Christian Council of Ghana and Rt. Rev. Dominic Andoh, President of the Catholic Bishops Conference. Similar joint communiqués were sent to the PNDC to return the country to constitutional and democratic governance on November 28, 1982.

When the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) finally decided to return the country to democratic governance, the ecumenical bodies played a very vital role. It was at this time that the PNDC Government initiated the process to return the country to democratic rule. It, therefore, set up a Constituent Assembly to draft the constitution for the 4th Republic. The Christian Council, the Catholic Bishops Conference and the Ghana Pentecostal Council were the key ecumenical bodies invited to serve on the Constituent Assembly. The draft constitution received approval from the people of Ghana through a referendum and this was followed by the formation of political parties and the subsequent presidential and parliamentary elections.³⁰

Language Development

Bible translations into mother-tongue languages preserve indigenous languages. The Reformation among others demanded that the Bible must be made available to those who wanted to read it. Moreover, translation of the Bible into the mother-tongue languages and vernacular literature must be encouraged. The call for the availability of the Bible and its translation into the mother-tongue languages influenced missionary activities. Printing houses were established for the purpose of publication of Christian and other educational literature in English and other local languages. The Presbyterian Printing Press and the Presby Book Depot became very key institutions in the publication and distribution of Christian literature. The various languages in the communities of the missionaries were developed into writing. Education in the local languages subsequently facilitated the reading of

²⁸ James Anquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire: 80 Years of the Christian Council of Ghana, 1929-2009* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2009), 113.

²⁹ Anquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire: 80 years of the Christian Council of Ghana 1929-2009*, 115.

³⁰ Anquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire: 80 years of the Christian Council of Ghana 1929-2009*, 122.

the Bible in various languages. The local languages were also used in teaching various subjects in schools including mathematics.

The Basel Mission was one of the pioneers which put the Ga and Twi languages into writing. In 1858 the Rev. Johannes Zimmermann wrote a grammar of the Ga language and in 1874 the Rev. J. G. Christaller produced a Twi Grammar and Dictionary. In Fanteland, the Methodists and Roman Catholics pioneered similar works. While the Evangelical Presbyterian missionaries were the first to develop literature in Ewe, the Roman Catholics made similar contributions to Nzima literature.

Christian Newspapers and Public Conversation

Media remained a major public space for public Christian witness by the various missionaries in Ghana. The establishment of Printing Press Houses facilitated the publication of books and other materials for educational purposes. Bible stories for adults and children were translated and printed. Catechisms for use in confirmation classes were produced for use in schools and churches. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* for example was translated into Twi and Ga.

The Press Houses also created opportunities for the publishing of Newspapers for public conversations. In 1883, the Basel Mission produced its first issue of the *Christian Messenger*. The *Christian Messenger* promoted the use of both foreign and local languages. It created columns for English, Twi and Ga stories. The publication contained stories of news of both religious and secular nature including international stories. The major events of the First World War, for example, were regularly reported by the *Christian Messenger*.

The other missionary bodies equally have their newspapers that facilitated public education and conversation. The *Methodists Times of the Methodist Church*, the *Golden Shore* by the Anglicans, and the *Catholic Standard of the Roman Catholic*, served as the media in bringing faith perspectives on national issues in their regular editions. Christian Newspapers have served as entry points for Public Theology on various national issues. The missionaries further enjoyed other existing media platforms as their activities, sermons and faith perspectives were reported in such newspapers. The views and opinions of the missionaries on the governance of the colonial administration were known and discussed as both the Christian Newspapers and other media platforms offered such opportunities for public conversations.

Post-Missionary and Development Efforts

Today, it is common to see the Church at the forefront of development in Ghana. The churches continue to be involved in traditional aspects such as medicine and education, even though in many places, these have been taken over by the government. However, there is fresh input that the Church has brought into the arena of development. There is an attempt to articulate a theology of development which argues that development that is based on exploitation and oppression of the people cannot be genuine. Churches have argued that people are the subjects and not the objects of development. The dignity inherent in human beings actively demands involvement in creative and productive work. Hence the church's central concern over unemployment and under-employment.

There is the dimension of justice and development. This is a very important area that the churches should feel called to articulate more clearly. There cannot be development without social justice. Moreover, there must be a concern for the measurement of development. The development will occur when people's experience of life changes positively. If only 1% of the population experiences positive change, that cannot be regarded as development. Theologians' and churches' involvement in development must be informed by the biblical and theological basis that responds to genuine development and social justice.

The church in Africa has a unique place in society. It is the only institution that brings together millions of people together every week. That means the Church has great potential as the promoter of development. To have such audiences, every Sunday is an opportunity that the church must consider in its effort to make contributions toward genuine development and social change. The challenge that the Church faces, therefore, is for it to redefine its role in development. This is a fundamental task if

the church is to be truly African in its development work and if it is to serve the poor masses in the communities. This task calls on the Church to be courageous and prophetic in demanding development with justice. It is only when this is achieved that people will enjoy a foretaste of life in its fullness, thereby coming closer to fulfilling the wish of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

The public witness of the PCG is characterised by its major contribution to the socioeconomic development of Ghana. The Basel Mission originated the missionary work that gave birth to the PCG and laid the foundation for Public Theology of the PCG that directed its public witness. Theology of Vocation, Theology of Prayer and Work and the Bible and the Plough Theology were informed by the Reformed theology and have been sustained over the years in missionary work in the PCG. The exploration into the Public Theology of the Basel Mission points to the fact that the Basel Mission has made significant contributions to the development of Public Theology in Ghana and African Christianity in general. An effort that must be considered for the contemporary Christian public witness in African Christianity.

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