

CHRISTIANITY IN NORTHERN GHANA: MISSIONARY IMPACT PAUL KANG-EWALA DIBORO¹

ABSTRACT

The impact of Christianity in Northern Ghana regarding the subject of development and the promotion of human lives have not been duly recognized. This article brings to light the contributions of some missionary groups in Northern Ghana who for some years pioneered the developmental cause in the Northern corridors of Ghana. Assessing some of the developmental projects and initiatives undertaken by these Churches as an aspect of their mission, this article demonstrates how the missionary activities in Ghana, especially in the North, have laid the foundations for the developmental agenda of the Christian faith in Ghana. The article contends that, if not for the Church (Christianity) in the North, the area would have lagged in terms of education, health and other important socioeconomic developments that promotes the holistic development of a people. Methodologically, the historical approach is employed, and the data used for this article is gleaned from relevant literature on indigenous Northern Christian missions.

Key Words: Mission, Missionary Impact, Protestants, Pentecostal-Charismatic and Northern Ghana

INTRODUCTION

It has been observed that the “Christian presence in Africa dates back to the first century” and within the first three centuries of its spread, the Christian faith had been rooted on the African soils of Egypt, Nubia, Ethiopia, and Roman North Africa. Records show that Africa have had Christian experience before Western Europe.² Similarly, the Christian presence and missionary activities in Southern Ghana was long before it was introduced into Northern Ghana. This notwithstanding, the impact of missionary activities on the lives of people in the north of Ghana cannot be underestimated. The introduction of Christianity to West Africa particularly Ghana has been recognized by a lot of Africans as well as European scholars. However, in recent times, the attention of many Christian scholars in Ghana is towards Christianity in the South. For a long time, little was known or written about northern missions, Churches and Christians, except that which is available about the early missions among the Northerners of Ghana by few scholars about the early days of missionary activities. Regarding the history of northern Christian encounters and missionary activities, the Roman Catholic, Protestants, Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals, Charismatic and Independent Churches have different historical records and features. While some missionaries of these Churches are of European origin, others are distinctively African or natives of Ghanaian land.

In this article, an effort is made for readers to appreciate particularly how the Northerners in Ghana encountered the Christian faith and the impact of these religious missions in the development of the Northern part of Ghana. This article however not a comprehensive work of Christianity in the north of Ghana. It therefore does not seek to discuss every issue in relation to Christianity in the North. It only concentrates on some Christian denominations because of their pioneering work, widespread and large adherents in Northern Ghana.

Against this backdrop, this article examines the different historical records and features of some of these Churches and their impact in the development of Northern Ghana. Besides the Roman Catholic Church, other denominations are discussed under Protestant, Pentecostals and Charismatics. The article contends that since the advent of these missionaries from various Church denominations in Northern

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² John David Kwamena Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)* (UK: St. Jerome Publishing, 2011), 1.

Ghana, they have impacted the educational, social, cultural, spiritual, economic, moral and political transformation of the people in the North. Though impact is a broad subject, the article focuses on educational, health and economic (language and agriculture) developments.

Ghana's first Contact with Christianity

It is almost impossible to write about the advent of Christianity in Northern Ghana without referring to the early days of Christianity in Ghana, formerly Gold Coast. In this light, Debrunner states that "the beginning of Christianity in Ghana is generally associated with the Portuguese".³ Upon their arrival, there followed the celebration of the first *mass* in Ghana. He writes that:

On a small hill stood a big tree and on this the royal Portuguese banner was hoisted. At the foot, an altar was set up, at which the first mass in those parts of Ethiopia was said. This mass was heard by our men with many tears of devotion... He would give them wisdom and grace to draw those idolatrous to the Faith so that the church which they would found there might endure until the end of the world.⁴

Debrunner's report above shows the initial intention of these Portuguese in propagating the Christian faith on the African soil even though they might have other intentions for coming to Africa.⁵ Therefore, the history of Christianity in Ghana is traced generally to these Portuguese before the 16th century reformation which among other factors led to the evangelization of Africa by various missionary groups as a mission field. Ekem indicates that, "The day this holy sacrifice of the *mass* took place, the first to be offered in what we call the Gold Coast (Ghana), was on 20th January 1482; it was a Sunday, the feast of SS Fabian and Sabastian. The place was Elmina."⁶

In Jones Darkwa Amanor's view, this "earliest contact between Ghana and Christian Missionaries was the late 15th century when Roman Catholic missionaries accompanied the earliest Portuguese traders to the Gold Coast. A succession of missionary societies from Western Europe subsequently lived and worked to impact life in the nation they christened the Gold Coast because of the abundance of the precious mineral that was discovered".⁷ While we may acknowledge the efforts of the Portuguese in bringing Christianity to the Ghanaian Coasts, it is also important to state that their aim during this period was perhaps not to do Christian mission but rather carry out trade in gold and subsequently slaves. Amanor further observes that:

Western European interest in the land they christened the "Gold Coast," due to the abundance of the precious mineral, was primarily trade. Trade in gold and later in human beings became foremost in their minds and consumed their energies. The propagation of the Gospel, which was one of the reasons for their journey to Africa, was for a long time neglected and showed little success.⁸

It suggests to me that without the discovery of gold and other minerals in the Gold Coast by these Portuguese, the first Christian contact with Gold Coast (Ghana) perhaps would not have been possible. Following this, Cephas N. Omenyo argues that, the history of Christianity in Ghana is traced to two main streams. "The first stream began in the fifteenth century when Augustinian, Capuchin, and Dominican friars attempted to make converts in the vicinity of Portuguese castles on the Gold Coast. This earliest effort did not make much impact on the indigenous people. The second stream, more significant in terms of the abiding fruits it bore, started in the nineteenth century".⁹ From the time these first Europeans arrived in Ghana leading to the establishment of the Elmina castle in 1482 and the 19th century several efforts were made by various mission groups to spread the gospel in Ghana.¹⁰ Meaning that Ghanaians have had some contact with Christianity but it was not until the 19th century, when Churches were formally opened. At the beginning of the 19th century, official opening of Churches started in Ghana. Basel Mission (the present

³ Hans W. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), 13.

⁴ Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 13, 17.

⁵ Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 13, 17.

⁶ Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)*, 5.

⁷ Jones Darkwa Amanor, *Pentecostalism in Ghana: An African Reformation*, pctii.org/cyberj13/amanor.pdf. Accessed on 4th November, 2019, 1.

⁸ Amanor, *Pentecostalism in Ghana: An African Reformation*, 1.

⁹ Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches* (Netherlands: Zoetermeer, 2002), 42.

¹⁰ G. K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2003), 120.

Presbyterian Church of Ghana) begun at the Christiansburg castle in 1828, that of the Methodist Church in 1835 at Cape Coast and for the Bremen Mission in 1847 at Peki, and the Roman Catholics followed later in 1880.¹¹ The motivation for Northern missions was also in the early 19th century.

The Motivation for Christian Mission in Northern Ghana

Following the history of Ghana's Christian encounter in the early stages, it can be deduced that Ghana's first Christian encounter has been linked to the trade in gold and other minerals. In other words, the trade in gold was a catalyst or a source of motivation for these early European missionaries to keep on with missions in the Gold Coast (Ghana). Unlike the South, the delay in missions in Northern Ghana probably could not have been without a cause. But what motivated missionaries to attempt missions in the Northern territories? According to Franz Kroger:

After the Ashanti Hinterland had become the British protectorate "Northern Territories of the Gold Coast" in 1901, the way was clear for intensive Christian missionary activities. In the Gold Coast colony, that is, the coastal area of modern Ghana, several churches, most of them Protestant, had done successful mission work, e.g. the Methodist, Presbyterians and Anglicans. It was expected that these churches would send missionary to the north to divide the Northern Territories into spheres of influence for the respective churches.¹²

He continued to say that:

It was, however, French-speaking missionaries who founded the first mission station in the north. Why was this? Some explanations can be found in the interior politics of France. Anti-clerical tendencies in the political field were growing at the end of the 19th century and French missionaries working in today's Burkina Faso feared that they might be called back to their mother country. So they tried to prepare another mission field for missionary work in a British colony.¹³

In line with this, Remigius McCoy states that it was a time when dioceses in the Sub-Saharan Africa did not actually exist. But for the purposes of Church administration, the mission headquarters in Rome separated various parts of the continent into prefectures or vicariates. It was one of the vicariates, the Sudan, which covers the French colony, which was known as the French Sudan that began to extend over to the Northern Gold Coast, an English protectorate. For him, there was a special reason for this extension of mission besides a natural concern to extend the boundaries of the Roman Catholic. In McCoy's view, "the French government had embarked upon a policy of violent anticlericalism in the home country, and Bishop Bazin, then vicar apostolic of the Sudan, feared that one day this policy might be extended to colonies. In such a case, the missionaries in French Sudan would be faced with expulsion."¹⁴ Also, other Christian institutions that followed the Catholic Church might have peculiar reasons that motivated their agenda for northern missions. However, these accounts indicate that, the motivation for the first stream (fifteenth century) of Ghana's encounter with Christianity through the Portuguese and the northern Christian mission initiative by the White Fathers were born out of trade and politics except that of the second stream (nineteen century) which was genuinely missionary driven.

The Advent of Christian Missionaries in Northern Ghana

Missionary presence and activities in Southern Ghana dates back to the early days when Christianity was introduced into Ghana. Unfortunately, missionaries' interest to christen the Northern part of Ghana was for a long time neglected and showed little attention at that period. In an attempt to propagate the gospel in Northern Ghana, several Christian denominations were involved in Christian mission activities around the early 90's. Among the various Christian denominations are the Catholic Church, Assemblies of God, Anglican Church, Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Ghana Baptist Convention, Baptist

¹¹ Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana*, 121.

¹² Franz Kroger, *The Beginning of Christian Missions among the Balsa and the History of the Catholic Parish*, <https://www.buluk.de/Buluk4/Cath-Miss Txt.htm>. Accessed 26th April 2019.

¹³ Kroger, *The Beginning Christian Missions among the Balsa and the History of the Catholic Parish* <https://www.buluk.de/Buluk4/Cath-Miss Txt.htm>. Accessed 26th April 2019.

¹⁴ Remigius F. McCoy, *Great Things Happen* (Montreal: Society of Missionaries of Africa, 1988), 1.

Mid-Missions, Churches of Christ, Evangelical Church of Ghana, and Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Some include Evangelical Church of Ghana, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Good News Churches, Church of Pentecost, and Seventh-Day Adventist Churches.¹⁵

Francis Benyah argues that there has been an upward growth of Pentecostal movements in Ghana and the world at large. For him, “this brand of Pentecostalism, which is mostly referred to as the third strand of the Pentecostal movement in Ghana proliferated between the 1970s and 1980s and saw an exponential growth in the early 1990s”.¹⁶ Recently, from the 1970s to 1980s until now, there is a wide spread of Neo-Pentecostals and Charismatic Churches across the Northern landscape. For example, Fountain Gate Chapel, Perez Chapel, Lighthouse Chapel, Winners Chapel International among others. All these Churches began missions in Northern Ghana at different locations and times. While some have changed the names of their denominations, others had little success in missions. Meanwhile, some have made a massive adherent and impacted on the lives of many Northerners. The author would consider first the Roman Catholic Church before the Protestant missions, Pentecostals and Charismatics while discussing their developmental impact (educational, health, political, spiritual, and socioeconomic) in Northern Ghana.

Roman Catholic Missionaries in Northern Ghana

The story and impact of the Catholic mission in the north has made it almost impossible to discuss northern Christian missions in Ghana without any reference to it. According to Peter Barker, the Catholic Church in Northern Ghana owes its origin to the White Fathers, a missionary order founded by Cardinal Lavigerie in 1868. It had a mission in French West Africa, and in 1906 a team of two White Fathers, a Catholic brother and two African boys with their belongings on donkeys moved from Wagadugu and arrived in Navrongo. They were led by Fr. Morin, who in 1933 was expected to be the first Bishop of Navrongo when it was not a full diocese till 1956.¹⁷

Paul K. Diboro has also observed in a recent study of the Dagaaba encounter with the Christian faith that:

The Roman Catholic Mission was the pioneer in extending the Christian faith to the northern territories in Ghana, formerly Gold Coast. Debrunner has observed that following an appeal in 1904 by Cromier, a British official to Dakar in a visit to Wagadugu, the White Fathers were asked to start mission work in northern Ghana. By 1906, they secured entry permit from the Governor of the Gold Coast and opened a station and a school at Navrongo. They were, however, refused the permission to work in Wa and Tamale by Colonel Waterston, the then commissioner for the Northern Territories, who defined them as “deceitful and very untrustworthy.” The situation changed in favour of the White Fathers with the emergence of Waterston’s successor, Armitage. From 1913, he gave preference to the Catholic missionaries’ respect to the Protestant.¹⁸

In reference to Abadamloora and Gelleece he further states that:

Between 1926-1934 the Missionaries of Africa became resolute in their commitment to evangelization and development, because they were now recognized and loved by the people. They proceed to break new grounds by expanding their borders beyond Navrongo. New stations were, therefore, established to the East and West of Navrongo. Later, stations were opened in Bolgatanga 1927, Wiaga 1927, Jirapa 1929, Binduri 1932, and Tamale 1946.¹⁹

From this background, Navrongo in the North-West was the first town where the first Christian mission station was established. Abadamloora and Gelleece record that “the station of Navrongo was materially and even spiritually opened, because over and above the few huts that were the beginning of the future

¹⁵ Peter Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1986), 24.

¹⁶ Francis Benyah, Commodification of the gospel and the socio-economics of Neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Ghana, *Legon Journal of the Humanities* 29.2 (2018): 117.

¹⁷ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 41.

¹⁸ Paul Kang-Ewala Diboro, “The Dagaaba Encounter with the Christian Faith: Missiological Implications for the Church in the Dagaaba Land,” *Ghana Journal of Religion and Theology* vol 8.1 (2018):113-114.

¹⁹ Diboro, “The Dagaaba Encounter with the Christian Faith: Missiological Implications for the Church in the Dagaaba Land,” 113-114.

buildings”.²⁰ This implies that the first mission station in Navrongo was strategic. It was meant to be the springboard for Northern Christian mission as far as the Catholic Fathers were concerned. Apparently, from Navrongo other mission stations were opened in Northern Ghana among different northern tribes as observed above. It is said that the first Catholic Mass in this station was celebrated on 2nd May, 1906 which falls precisely on the day of the feast of Saints Philip and James.²¹ For the missionaries, this form of Catholic prayer was meant to strengthen them with hope on this new mission field of Navrongo.

Early Protestant Missionaries in Northern Ghana

The word Protestant used in this study is in reference to churches of missionary origin (old-established missionary societies). Apart from the Roman Catholic Church, other Protestant missionaries started work in northern Ghana as shown above: Basel mission/Presbyterian Church, the Anglican Church, the Methodist mission, Ghana Baptist Convention, Baptist Mid-Missions, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, and so on. Unlike the Catholic Church, it may be difficult to account for the reasons why it took Protestant missionaries a long time to extend their missions to the north of Ghana after so many years of their mission work in the southern Ghana. While other Protestant missionaries were resisted entry by colonial policy into the northern territories,²² the Anglican Church was given a reserved field for mission.²³

According to McCoy,

When Monsignor Morin wrote to the British colonial governor at Accra, Sir Gordon Guggisberg, to request authorization, the latter replied that he had no objection to the White Fathers opening missions anywhere in the Northern Territories except in the Northwest. He has promised the Anglican Church officials, he explained, that the Northwest would be reserved for their missionary endeavours at least until 1932 and that no other religious denomination would be allowed to establish a mission there in the meantime. If the Anglicans failed to take advantage of this before the stated deadline, the field would then be open to anyone including the Catholics.²⁴

However, the White Fathers persisted and this restriction and objections from the governor were withdrawn from opening Catholic mission in the Northwest (among the Dagaaba). This granted them the permission to start work among the Dagaaba also.

Obviously, Protestant missionaries' interest in the northern mission was several years attained after the Catholic Fathers had taken the lead to propagate the Catholic faith in northern Ghana. Even though the Anglican Church, for instance, had the opportunity from the governor to reach out to the Northerners first especially in Wa, they could not speed up their missionary agenda, so that opportunity was given to the Catholics after their first mission station in Navrongo.²⁵

Besides the Catholic Church, the Basel missionary societies were present in Northern Ghana in Tamale around the 1900s. Several of the government clerks in Tamale were former Basel mission agents. They had their daily prayer devotions and Sunday church services regularly with a former catechist and this new congregation was linked to the home church in the South. In 1910, “Dr. Fisch recommended the opening of a mission station in Yendi then belonging to German Togoland”.²⁶ Following this, in 1912, the Basel mission officially opened a station at Yendi which was later closed down because the British government had deported the missionaries after four years of opening the station. Stations were later opened in Tamale (1949), Salaga (1950), Bolgatanga (1955), Sandema (1957), Garu (1958), Damango, Bawku and Gambaga (1960s)²⁷. Apparently, the work of Basel mission in the north seems to have opened the door for Protestant missionary activities as well as other evangelical churches.

The Methodist mission was not left out in this northern mission initiative. Methodist missionary, H. G. Martin, also arrived at Tamale in 1912. But the Methodist had no success at this time because

²⁰ Abadamloora L. and Joe G., *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*(Takoradi: St Francis Press Ltd, 2006), 17.

²¹ Abadamloora L. and Joe G., *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*(Takoradi: St Francis Press Ltd, 2006), 17.

²² Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 216.

²³ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 33.

²⁴ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 33.

²⁵ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 33.

²⁶ Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*. 214-216.

²⁷ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 36.

Armitage did not allow them to acquire a land for missionary purposes.²⁸ Mission centers were later established in Tamale, Wa, Yendi area, Bolgatanga around the 1950s and 1960s. The introduction of Methodism into Wa for instance, was pioneered by Rev. Paul Adu within this period following significant outreach into other northern areas including Yikine, near Bolga, and at Nanongi and Mawini-Ngrabado near Yendi.²⁹

From 1942, the Evangelical Church of Ghana began its missionary activities in Tuna under the leadership of Pastor John Kipo Mahama. The mission extended its service to Kpandai (1994); Damongo (1953); and Buipe in 1971. Unfortunately, the response to mission was initially slow but the church was committed to its leprosy work, maternity clinics and agricultural work all in Tuna and Kpandai. The Oti River Leprosarium was opened by the church in 1949 and handed over to the Ghana Government in 1973.³⁰ The Ghana Baptist Convention and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana both started missions in 1949 in the north. Ghana Baptist Convention began in Tamale when an American missionary couple were stationed in Tamale who started a leadership school which later became the Tamale Training Centre. Mission centres were then expanded to Lingbisi (1955) and Nalerigu (1956). Around 1957, Tamale became the main centre for mobile clinic, leading to the establishment of the Baptist Medical Centre at Nalerigu in 1958.³¹ Currently, it is a full-fledged hospital.

The Anglican missionaries (the Church of England) arrived in Gold Coast in 1754.³² Their mission in northern Ghana was pioneered by Fr. John Rye who was stationed in Bolgatanga. Three parishes (Tamale, Bolgatanga and Binaba) were immediately established with three parish priests. There were outstations in Yendi, Salaga, Kusanaba-Zebilla and Wa. However, churches in the leading towns tend to be congregations of southerners but the stations within Bolgatanga and Tamale represent some significant outreach into the local adherents.³³

Meanwhile, beside the mission churches mentioned above, there were other missionary societies that evangelized northern Ghana in the early days. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EP) which has its base in Ho, Volta Region began work in northern Ghana in the 1950s and 1960s. Its main centres were located in Yendi (1952), Bimbila (1955) and Saboba (1961). The EP Church made serious inroads among northern peoples especially in north-east through the use of northern languages. As a result of this mission, separate EP Churches were founded in Chereponi (1968), Wa (1978), Tamale (1973) and Navrongo (1978).³⁴

To add to the list of churches is the Baptist Mid-Missions (Kaleo, Wa and Tumu), Churches of Christ (Tamale, Taha, Walewale, Salaga, Yendi, Chereponi, Wenchiki, Saboba, Lawra, Bolgatanga, Sandema and Navrongo), Good News Churches (Sandema, Chiana, Tumu (1978), Mirigu (1980), Mamprusi and Koma areas (1980). The Seventh - day Adventists which was brought to Ghana in 1888 also had mission centres in Tamale (1956), Bolgatanga (1968), Kpandai (1969), Wa (1974), Bawku (1976).³⁵

Early Pentecostal Missionaries in Northern Ghana

Attention is drawn to the Assemblies of God and the Church of Pentecost in this discussion because of their widespread and large following among the northerners. This however, does not mean that the work of other Pentecostal Churches in the north is not appreciated.

According to Peter Barker, most Ghanaian churches started on the coast and then spread northwards. However, this is unlike the Assemblies of God Church which arrived in Ghana from the north through a missionary couple, the Shirers, who crossed over the border of the Upper Volta – currently Burkina Faso and began missions in Yendi. From 1931 to 1949 (period the church was planted), the Shirers served and later joined the Social Welfare Department for literacy and community development. In

²⁸ Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 216.

²⁹ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 35.

³⁰ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 29-30.

³¹ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 27-30.

³² Amanor, *Pentecostalism in Ghana: An African Reformation*, 5.

³³ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 26.

³⁴ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 31.

³⁵ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 28, 32, 42.

recognition for his commitment and services to the people, Lloyd Shirer was enskinned as a chief by the Dagombas.³⁶

After his hard work for 18 years in Yendi, mission stations were established by other missionaries in Tamale, Yendi (1931), Walewale (1933), Bawku (1937) and Saboba (1947). By 1949, clinics were opened at Saboba, Nakpanduri and Walewale and in the 1950 the church started the Northern Ghana Bible Institute in Kumbunga together with a printing press in Tamale.³⁷ The Bible Institute still remains vibrant today, training ministers in the northern sector and beyond in training ministers for the Assemblies of God church. Expansion and evangelism were made the responsibility of every assembly to evangelize villages next to the mission stations and to disciple new converts for membership and baptism.³⁸ Even though the Assemblies of God is now strong in the southern Ghana, its humble beginnings has its roots in northern Ghana.

The next Pentecostal church to follow the Assemblies of God was the Church of Pentecost. It was after 22 years of Assemblies of God's missions among Northerners in Ghana that the church was established. The Church of Pentecost started in 1937 when Rev. James McKeown was invited as a missionary to Ghana³⁹ by Anim's movement for two years before planting the Church of Pentecost.⁴⁰ According to E. Kingsly Larbi, "The Transvolta Togoland and the Northern territories were the last place to be reached by McKeown's movement, mainly because of communication".⁴¹ The evangelistic work of the Church of Pentecost in northern Ghana began in the 1950s. With the presence of some few southern members of the church as workers in the north, assemblies were started. Progress among the natives was because the church gave attention to function in northern languages including Chumburung, Birifor, Konkomba, Bimoba, Frafra and Wali. The church has its early main centres in Tamale (1953), Sawla, Wa, Bolgatanga and Kapandai.⁴²

Charismatic Missionaries in Northern Ghana

The Orthodox and Pentecostal Christian churches led the evangelization crusade in Ghana in the 19th century onwards. These religious denominations were led by the Europeans and the impact of these Christian institutions cannot be ignored or overlooked. The late 1970s witnessed a second wave of religious crusade led by Ghanaians, Africans and natives of the Northern land. These Charismatic churches for the past two decades have been making serious inroads into the Northern land with their emphasis on faith, healing, miracles and deliverance services. "The term Charismatic churches in reference to indigenous independent charismatic and neo-prophetic churches that emerged on the Ghanaian Christian scene between the late 1970s and early 1990s, often referred to as the third wave or neo-Pentecostal movement".⁴³ Leaders of these churches and ministries are Ghanaians and their Africa-based missionaries such as Enoch A. Adeboye of the Christian Redeemed Church (Nigeria), David O. Oyedepo of Winners Chapel International (Nigeria), Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy Outreach (Nigeria/South Africa), Nicholas Ducan-Williams of Action Chapel (Ghana), Mensa Otabil of International Central Gospel Church (Ghana), Charles Agyinasare of Prez Chapel (Ghana), Eastwood Anaba of Fountain Gate Chapel (Ghana), Dag Heward-Mills of Light House Chapel (Ghana)⁴⁴ together with many other charismatic churches have brought transformation and a shift from the traditional religious perspective of Christianity among some Northerners. Among the churches mentioned above for example, Charles Agyin Asare of Prez Chapel (Ghana) and Eastwood Anaba of Fountain Gate Chapel started their ministries in the North. Just as in Southern Ghana, these churches continue to spread across the landscape of Northern Ghana even though the Catholic Church have taken territories and its influence remain strong in terms of spread.

³⁶ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 25.

³⁷ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 25.

³⁸ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 25.

³⁹ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 35.

⁴⁰ E. Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001), 176.

⁴¹ Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, 179.

⁴² Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 35.

⁴³ Benyah, *Commodification of the gospel and the socio-economics of Neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Ghana*, 117.

⁴⁴ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Signs and Signs of the Spirit: Ghanaian Perspectives on Pentecostalism and Renewal in Africa* (UK: Regnum Books International, 2015), 16.

However, the presence of Charismaticism in the North is seen as a challenge to the old paradigms of Catholic, Protestants and even Pentecostal Christianity.

Missionary Impact on Life in Northern Ghana

“Though the propagation of the Gospel and the promotion of Christianity through the introduction of western education were the foremost reason for the arrival of European Missionaries to the shores of the Gold Coast, their activities brought improvement on general life of the natives in the country”.⁴⁵ The presence of Christian Mission Societies in northern Ghana from the 1930s to date has also resulted in massive improvement in the general life of the people in the North. The advent and emergence of these missionary groups was not only aimed at converting people to their prospective churches but was also to bring enlightenment in order to improve upon the living conditions of their adherents and all alike. Many of these churches that established mission fields in the north and evangelized the people sought to promote Christianity through improving life conditions not only by education but also healthcare, agriculture, trade, linguistic studies, architecture coupled with Christian faith practices such as divine healing.

Educational Impact

Apparently, Christian missionaries owned the credit for education in northern Ghana in the early days of the Church in Ghana. It appears mission churches and western education go hand in hand. Education was seen by missionaries as the next important thing to the propagation of the Christian Gospel. Amanor has observed that wherever missionaries went, they “always built a mission station with a chapel and a school. Bright youngsters were also taken as boy-servants to enable them become thoroughly acquainted with European manners. The most talented among were sent for higher education”⁴⁶. This approach to education by missionaries in the North was strategic and was meant to bridge the communication gap between the Europeans and the natives within the shortest possible time. While the natives benefited from spiritual and secular education, the Europeans on the other hand took advantage in learning the indigenous languages for their mission work.

It must not be forgotten that the development of educational infrastructures and programmes were given attention by many of the mission churches across the Country in the pursuit of Christian Mission. For instance, in 1867, Elias Schrenk of the Basel Mission wrote;

If we had a nation formal education, able to read and write, my plans for mission work would be different but now I am convinced that the opening of schools is our main task. I have a low opinion of Christians who are not able to read their Bible. The smallest school is a missionary and establishes a relationship with the grown-ups which would not exist without a school.⁴⁷ From this background, Debrunner further contends that in the eyes of the missionaries, the aim of the mission schools was therefore to enable the congregations to read the Bible and to use the hymnbook. A further aim of the mission schools was the training of African collaborators, teachers, catechists and ministers.⁴⁸

Similarly, the Church in Northern Ghana especially the pioneering church (Catholic Church) gave attention to the human promotion in the situation in which missionaries encountered the people.⁴⁹ As a result of the generally poor conditions of the natives, the missionaries felt the need to build schools, vocation centers and other facilities.⁵⁰ Recently, the Bishop of the Diocese of Damongo and Chairman of the Ghana Prisons Council, Most Rev. Peter Paul Angkyier has stated that the whole of Northern Ghana would have been 50 years behind, in terms of education if not for the Catholic Church. In a speech to inaugurate a six-unit classroom block for St. Theresa of the Child Jesus school complex at Canteen in the West Gonja District of Northern Region, he noted that:

Since the time of the early missionaries, education has been a central part of the mission of the Catholic Church....Why? Because, it is the basis for and the key to the development of the human capital of every society....The Catholic Church has embarked on this, and for those who may not know, I often say: if not for the Catholic Church, the whole of the

⁴⁵ Amanor, Pentecostalism in Ghana: An African Reformation, 8.

⁴⁶ Amanor, Pentecostalism in Ghana: An African Reformation, 8.

⁴⁷ Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 76.

⁴⁸ Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 76.

⁴⁹ Abadanloora and Gilleece, *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*, 171.

⁵⁰ Abadanloora and Gilleece, *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*, 171

Northern part of Ghana would have been, perhaps, 50 years behind. The church had to fight with the colonial powers to introduce formal education in Northern Ghana, beginning from Navrongo.⁵¹

For him, education and human promotion are a central dimension of the mission of the Catholic Church. Catholic education therefore aims at promoting the holistic and integral development of the society. Unfortunately, the Church in Ghana still fight successive governments for the implementation of educational policies. For instance, the introduction of the Comprehensive Sexual Education Programme has attracted a lot of debate in the Church setting.

In pursuit of this educational vision in promoting the lives of the people, soon after the arrival of the Catholic mission in Navrongo in 1906, the first mission school, St. Paul's Primary was started in the Northern soil in 1907. It is on records that the Catholic mission alone after hundred years in Northern Ghana has established over six hundred and fifty two (652) basic, secondary and other educational institutions spread over Northern Ghana.⁵² Notable ones among the lot are the minor seminary/secondary schools, St. Charles (Tamale), St. Francis Xavier (Wa) and Notre Dame (Navrongo),⁵³ Queen of Peace (Nadowli), McCoy Teacher Training College (Nadowli). These institutions are among the best in the country in terms of Senior High School Certificate.

Apart from the formal education, the churches' educational system was geared towards three areas: Girl's Education and Vocational Training, Technical Education and Informal Education. Girl child education was given attention by the Catholic Church from the beginning of the missions in Northern Ghana. In an attempt to accomplish the church's vision regarding education and training the girl child, the first school for girls, St. Mary's Girl's School was opened in 1929 in Navrongo. St. Agnes Girl's Primary School in Jirapa also followed in 1940. Other vocational institutions such as St. Bernadette's Vocational Institute (Navrongo), St. Anne's (Nandom), St. Clare (Tumu), St. Theresa's (Daffiama) together with St. Mary's (Tamale) were all opened to help to develop the girl child and for that matter women in the North. Latter in 1959 the first girl's secondary school St. Francis of Assisi in Jirapa and St. Anne's Girl's Senior Secondary were also opened in Damongo.⁵⁴

Practically, it is evident that from the beginning of the church in the North, missionaries have demonstrated a great concern in advancing the course of Northern women through education and vocational training. These schools and institutions have for the years produced many excelling and responsible women in education, health and weaving industries in the North and the Ghanaian society at large. This approach in education was strategic and was meant to empower the Northern Ghanaian women to be able to compete in a society that is predominantly and culturally patriarchal.

For Technical education, the Christian Mission through the Catholic Church in the North "also gave priority to the technical education which is linked to offering opportunities to the young to acquire practical skills in masonry, carpentry and others in order to place them in gainful employment".⁵⁵ Paul Diboro Kang-Ewala is of the view that the provision of social amenities such as technical schools by missionaries in Northern Ghana showed that the Church was "translating the Gospel message into practice, by considering the total development of the people".⁵⁶ To achieve this purpose, the religious Brothers opened Technical Institutions in Bawku, Nandom, Saboba, Kaleo and Bole to train the people in various skills and human capacity building.⁵⁷ It is important to mention that many of these Technical Institutes have been handed over by the church to the government. Currently, the technical programmes of these institutes are integrated with the formal educational system in Ghana where students are not only taught technical skills but subjects such as English, Mathematics and Integrated Science. This is aimed at enabling students from these institutions to further their education in various Universities.

The missionaries' informal educational developmental programmes were also seen in the area of functional literacy classes commonly known as 'night' schools were started by the church around 1960s

⁵¹ Most Rev. Peter Paul Angkyier, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Northern-Ghana-would-ve-been-50-years-behind-without-Catholic-Church-Rev-Angkyier-691899>, accessed on Thursday, 11 October 2018.

⁵² Abadanloora and Gilleece, *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*, 171.

⁵³ Abadanloora and Gilleece, *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*, 171.

⁵⁴ Abadanloora and Gilleece, *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006* 172.

⁵⁵ Abadanloora and Gilleece, *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*, 172.

⁵⁶ Diboro, "The Dagaaba Encounter with the Christian Faith: Missiological Implications for the Church in the Dagaaba Land, 119.

⁵⁷ Abadanloora and Gilleece, *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*, 172.

and 70s. Interestingly, a lot of missionary groups (Catholic, Assemblies of God, Ghana Baptist Convention, Good News Churches and others) were involved in this kind of informal education for their church members. The aim was to assist natives to read and write particularly in the local languages. Men and women groups were taught numeracy and Basic English language to improve their ability in trade and communication.⁵⁸ As a result of ‘night school’, many turned out as church workers and missionary agents who assisted the missionaries as messengers and catechists. Apparently, one shepherd boy, Atayaba entered the teacher training college through the ‘night school’ and later served as a coordinator to the government non-formal education programme.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, by 1961, the Methodist Church Ghana had also opened schools in Kpongu, Chansa, Darimo, Passey and Mangu and other areas. Not until these schools, parents who wanted education for their wards sent them to Busa in Wa for schooling.⁶⁰ Barker affirms that Rev. Paul Adu, the pioneer missionary of the Methodist Church, Ghana in the 1950s and 1960s built up a network of schools and villages churches in that area.⁶¹ The Anglican Church established a Vocational School at Zuarungu and a Women’s Training Centre at Yelwoko in the Binaba traditional area.⁶² The Tamale Leadership School began in 1959 by the Ghana Baptist Convention which is now called the Tamale Training Centre. This place has served as a theological resource centre for the training of pastors from various church denominations in Northern Ghana and beyond.⁶³ The Adventist Church also had six primary schools by 1956 to 1976 in the North.⁶⁴ In 1950 the Northern Ghana Bible Institute was started in Kumbungu near Tamale. This was followed by a small printing press the same year by the Assemblies of God’s Church.⁶⁵ Today, some Charismatic Churches have also established private schools in the North.

Considering the outstanding investment in education by the church in Ghana, it appears almost impossible for any government to implement educational policies in the country without any consultation with the church as a stakeholder.

Healthcare Delivery

Apart from the fact that early missionaries in Ghana were consistently attacked by tropical diseases which resulted in the deaths of many European missionaries, medical work among missions was seen as an important compliment of a holistic Christian mission. Not only that, but establishing medical centres was also considered strategic in local missions as well.

Paul K. Diboro has observed that:

Though their first aim was evangelization, they also paid attention to medical work which created immediate interest among the people. Strategically, the treatment of diseases was meant to win the hearts of the people. It had been clear from the start that eventually health care would have to be a priority of our ministry among the Dagaaba. This implies that the mission work among the Dagaaba could not have been successful but for the medical work: The mass movement among the Dagaaba had been preceded by the healing work of the Jirapa dispensary and would have been unthinkable without it.⁶⁶

The Catholic Church have played a key role aside the government of Ghana in the area of health in the North. Soon after arrival in 1906, the missionaries established dispensaries and clinics in some deprived areas within Northern Ghana. There are, twenty-four (24) clinics, three hospitals: Jirapa, Damongo and Binde with a Nursing Training College in Jirapa all to the credit of the Catholic Church. Through the effort of the Catholic Relief Service (N.G.O), some interventions and support is being given to people with HIV/AIDS around the three dioceses, that is Tamale, Wa and Navrongo-Bolgatanga.⁶⁷

⁵⁸ Abadanloora and Gilleece, *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*, 173.

⁵⁹ Abadanloora and Gilleece, *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*, 173.

⁶⁰ methodistchurch.org.gh/northern-ghana, accessed on the 7th of October, 2018.

⁶¹ Baker, Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 35.

⁶² Baker, Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 27.

⁶³ Baker Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 25.

⁶⁴ Baker, Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 42.

⁶⁵ Baker Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 25.

⁶⁶ , “The Dagaaba Encounter with the Christian Faith: Missiological Implications for the Church in the Dagaaba Land, 114-115, See also Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 344 and 329 and Baker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 54.

⁶⁷ Abadanloora and Gilleece, *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*, 171.

Similarly, Hilda Afi Aleh has shown that another strategy used by the American missionaries (Assemblies of God) in Northern mission was medical mission. In her view, from the inception of mission, the Shirers and the Garlocks recognized the necessity for a medical mission among the local people. That is, missionaries were convinced that the introduction of healthcare will help propagate the Good News to the indigenes, who never heard the name Jesus. This act, for them was also to create awareness for the mission. The Shirers and the Garlocks realized that a medical mission among the Konkomba will be of tremendous effect to the entire mission because of their constant engagement in wars. She indicated that after every war, the American missionaries went from village to village to dress the sores of the casualties.⁶⁸

Hilda Afi Aleh further contends that:

They used that as an opportunity to present the gospel to the people. Subsequently, the first clinic was built among the Konkombas in 1948 at Saboba north east of Yendi. The efforts of the missionaries yielded results as a man named Akonsi in Saboba converted to Christianity which served as a testimony to his ethnic group. His son, Gyilema worked at the Saboba clinic for many years. Presently, the clinic at Saboba is a district health centre. It is known as the Saboba Medical Centre. A second clinic was built at Nakpanduri in 1950. Later, another clinic (maternity clinic) was built at Walewale. It functioned under Vivian Smith, an American AG missionary.⁶⁹

Furthermore, the Anglican Church also established clinics at Pwalugu and Binaba to serve the people within that area. In Nalerigu, the Ghana Baptist Convention in 1958 established the Tamale Medical Training Centre. Recently, the centre is operating as a full-fledged hospital.⁷⁰ Also, the Evangelical Church of Ghana within Tuna and Kpandai had begun leprosy work, general health service and maternity clinics. Following this, the Oti River leprosarium was opened in 1949 and was later handed over to Ghana Government in 1973. As a result of this medical work undertaken by the church, a lot of churches were planted around Tuna and Kpandai areas.⁷¹ However, the Presbyterian Church has partnered the government in medical work in the North since 1956 in providing health services to the people in the Bawku government Hospital. As part of this, the church run clinics from the hospital in many centres including Balgatanga by expatriate nurses.⁷²

Impact on Northern Languages

The development of Northern local languages into written materials is attributed to the presence of Christian missionaries in the area. Arguably, to some extent, the development of many Ghanaian languages in the context of 'language development' is traceable to the effort of missionary work in Ghana. For example, Peter White has argued that "the Basel Mission Society had a language policy which was an effective tool for missionary work. Its aim was to train the indigenous people to read the word of God in their own mother tongue. Their policy was that at all cost the African must hear the Gospel, read the Bible, worship and be taught in his or her own language."⁷³ This policy was crucial to almost all missionaries in Africa because they needed the local languages to enable them evangelize and interact with the indigenous people. To achieve this goal, it became necessary that missionaries be trained in the local languages.⁷⁴ It has been observed that even though the language barrier was one of the setbacks impeding the mission work, (in the North), it was soon overcome in few months by the willingness of missionaries to learn the

⁶⁸ Hilda Afi Aleh, *A Comparative Study of the Mission Histories of the Assemblies of God Church and the Church of Pentecost in Ghana*, Unpublished Master's Thesis (University of Ghana, Department of Religions, 2013), 46-47.

⁶⁹ Aleh, Hilda Afi Aleh, *A Comparative Study of the Mission Histories of the Assemblies of God Church and the Church of Pentecost in Ghana*, Unpublished Master's Thesis (University of Ghana, Department of Religions, 2013), 46-47.

⁷⁰ Barker, Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 26-27.

⁷¹ Barker, Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 30.

⁷² Barker, Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 38.

⁷³ P. White, "Religion, Mission and National Development: A Contextual Interpretation of Jeremiah 29:4-7 in the Light of the Activities of Basel Mission Society in Ghana (1828-1918) and its Missiological Implications," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36, no. 1 (2015): 5; <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/VE.V36I1.1419>.

⁷⁴ P. White, "Religion, Mission and National Development: A Contextual Interpretation of Jeremiah 29:4-7 in the Light of the Activities of Basel Mission Society in Ghana (1828-1918) and its Missiological Implications," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36, no. 1 (2015): 5; <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/VE.V36I1.1419>.

local language which later helped them to interact with the people.⁷⁵ Many of the educational facilities or initiatives by these missionaries served as platforms where they could apply and comprehend the northern local languages better. A survey of almost all the early churches in the North indicates that, they have used the Northern languages to evangelize.⁷⁶ The “application and perspiration” of local languages for missions therefore moved missionaries to explore and began to develop these languages into written materials. One of the ways the churches helped to develop these languages was to encourage missionaries to learn and use them. They also allowed the churches to use them in service or liturgical songs. This was the task of the Catechists. “The Catechists contribute in various ways to the inculturation of the faith through their knowledge and experience. Some of them are composing songs, telling stories and explaining proverbs”⁷⁷. All these were done in the local languages and this laid the theological foundations for the inculturation of the Christian faith among the Northerners.

Over the course of time, missionaries have acted in such ways to translate the scriptures into the Northern local languages. This further made it crucial for a critical study of these languages in schools. Before Ghana Bible Society took over the translations of the Bible into Northern languages, some churches had started translation work among the various Northern people. For example, between 1949 and 1956 the weekly lessons for Ghana Baptist Convention were printed in local languages and church members could read them.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, at this time the Baptist Mid Mission has completed the translation of the New Testament into Wali. While engaging in translations and church planting, the Evangelical Church of Ghana adopted a strategy for missionary couples and national pastors to work in specific areas using the local language rather instead of a trade language.⁷⁹ There are for example thirty-four (34) different languages in Northern Ghana, the Catholic Church was the first to express these in written form.⁸⁰ Furthermore, Diboro has argued that:

The Roman Catholic missionaries excelled, and are still doing well among the Dagaaba, because they have considered the local language as a major tool in propagating the gospel. From the beginning, they have translated into Dagaare the texts required for a three-year lectionary of mass readings from the Bible including the Apocrypha; they have also translated the four gospels. These translations aimed at making understanding of the gospel easier to the people. Recently, these early translations have been revised by the Catholic Church.⁸¹

With reference to David Barrett, Lamin Sanneh posits that the vernacular scriptures have the power to communicate and create religious dynamic than versions in *linguae francae* such as in Arabic, English and French. The vernacular translation in his view “enables the ethnic group concerned to grasp the inner meanings of ... profound and intricate biblical doctrines”.⁸² Arguably, the Church’s involvement in the study and reduction of the local languages into writing was strategic and evangelistic. Because it was meant to facilitate the spread, growth, sustainability and local involvement of the indigenes in Northern missions.

Economic Impact: Agriculture

The inconsistencies of the rainfall pattern and some Northern farmer’s inability to adopt improved methods of cultivation attracted the attention of missionaries to agriculture from the beginning of their missions in the North. Between the 1960s and 70s, the Catholic Church opened agricultural stations in Navrongo-Bolgatanga and Wa dioceses in the North. Abadamlora and Gilleece write that:

Agricultural stations were opened in Wiaga, Bongo, and Walewale in the diocese of ... for training and agricultural extension service to farmers aimed at increasing food production. The Waiga agricultural station has been absorbed by the ministry of

⁷⁵ Diboro, “The Dagaaba Encounter with the Christian Faith: Missiological Implications for the Church in the Dagaaba Land, 118.

⁷⁶ Baker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 25-42.

⁷⁷ Abadanloora and Gilleece, *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*, 161-162.

⁷⁸ Barker, Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 28.

⁷⁹ Barker, Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, 29-30.

⁸⁰ Abadamlora and Gilleece, *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*, 173.

⁸¹ Diboro, “The Dagaaba Encounter with the Christian Faith: Missiological Implications for the Church in the Dagaaba Land, 119.

⁸² Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 188.

agriculture, while that of Bongo grew into Bongo Agroforestry which promotes tree growing for soil improvement and for fodder, erosion control and farmer organization. The Walewale station grew into the family reproductive Health Project which promotes nutrition, women reproductive rights and credit. A farmers training centre for demonstrations farms and research has now been sited at Pusu-Namongo in same diocese.⁸³

Furthermore, agricultural stations were also opened in Nandom, Tumu, Walembelle and Fumsi in Wa diocese to assist farmers to access farm inputs and extension services. Missionaries established a Bullock Ploughing Training Centre and promoted farmer groups for inputs and marketing of farm produce.⁸⁴ The Evangelical Church of Ghana started agricultural work while the Church of Pentecost also “renders social service through the provision of food and clothing and by literacy work and vocation training for women”⁸⁵ Also, the Presbyterian Church in the 1970s had established agricultural stations in Garu and Lanbinsi in addition to an agricultural rehabilitation centre for the blind in Garu.⁸⁶

The Church has played no small role in assisting farmers in deprived villages to improve their farming technology which helped them to increase productivity and to reduce the food shortages which used to be a challenge in Northern Ghana because of unfavorable climatic conditions. These agricultural stations helped at a time government had not reached out to these villages and communities, to reduce the incidence of food shortages. It is important that these initiatives in agriculture are improved and more added to by the government in the North.

CONCLUSION

The Church in Ghana particularly in the North occupies a very important place in the history of development and human promotion in Northern Ghana. It is clear from the study that the mission of the Church was holistic, that is, it included all aspects of human life. The good works in education, health, languages and agriculture are impressive and still remain impactful on the lives of the people. The effort of the missionaries and their prospective missions or churches should be taken up more seriously by the government and the communities to ensure continuity and sustainability. One must also applaud the missionaries for having been one great source of bringing impact in a way no other religious and government organization has been capable of over the years in the North. It is the author’s humble appeal that the spirit of ecumenism provided by these early missionaries will continue to flourish among Churches in the North. It is therefore possible that missionaries can collaborate to advance the development and transformation of the Northern sector in Ghana.

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⁸³ Abadanloora and Gilleece, *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*, 173.

⁸⁴ Abadanloora and Gilleece, *One Hundred Years of the Church in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province 1906-2006*, 173.

⁸⁵ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana* 36.

⁸⁶ Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana* 37.

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