

**On the 'Lobbying' of the Christian Missionaries in  
the British Colonial Project  
Rethinking the Civilising Mission in the Gold Coast:  
The Colonial Curriculum at the Crossroads**



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**Summary:**

Intended to ensure progress through Western education, the civilizing mission had ended up in the massive exploitation of the natives, drifting them as productive force into capitalism and colonization. Seemingly, missionaries' education had played a significant role in the thinking of imperial curriculum. However, their lobbying in the British colonial project triggers the curiosity of many scholars. The question that raises itself by now is whether the Christian missionaries were part of the lobbying which was backed up by the social Darwinists' racial views that facilitated the feasibility of the civilising mission. This article teases the concurrent paradox that had not only amplified the philanthropic actions of the nineteenth century missions, setting the ground ripe for colonisation, but had also exacerbated the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' imperialism. It seeks to demonstrate how the missionaries' activism, mainly in education, was a curse in disguise in the Gold Coast. This study revealed how through a suitably designed curriculum that served the greedy interests of the British in this territory, the Christian missionaries had proved that they were part of the lobbying which had backed up the nineteenth century social Darwinism that had justified imperial and powerful countries' sovereignty over less fortunate peoples for human advantage.

**Keywords:** Colonialism, Christian missionaries, lobbying, native education, race, Social Darwinism

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The nineteenth “Century civilising” mission is often glorified and the Christian missions’ work epitomised as the saviour of the damned, principally through Western education. Conversely, evidence shows that Christian missions were behind weaker populations’ subjugation and colonisation in Africa and in other continents like Asia and America. As a matter of fact, the propagation of Western education, which was the key component in this enterprise along with the introduction of cash-crop<sup>1</sup> economy constituted the means through which the nineteenth century civilising mission had dragged populations towards colonisation and imperial exploitation.

In a cruel twist of irony, these humanitarians’ educational endeavours had brought more harm than good to the natives causing their subjugation and their drifting as productive forces into capitalism and colonisation. What is being pointed at is the curriculum, academic and vocational training, which is said to have drastically impacted the natives in the sense that it rendered them weaker and weaker while it empowered the British administration and its institutions on the spot.

While the philanthropists and missionaries were claimed to have been inspired by their “fervent attachment to the principle of evangelical religion” (Holland et al. 642), to many experts, they had played an overriding role in the effective establishment of British colonial rule in Africa, as put by many scholars and researchers as it will be illustrated below. It is worth reminding that it was by no means a coincidence that by then, new racist ideas and thoughts had started to break through putting to the fore the notion of White race superiority, which was fuelled by the theory of the “The survival of the Fittest” advocated by the Social Darwinists<sup>2</sup>, as it was corroborated by Thanapat Pekan (2016), who sustains the significance of race in the “civilising mission”, which is itself important to the understanding of British imperialism (n.d.). This presumed missionaries’ manifest betrayal was decried by many scholars, like the Nigerian pastor and philosopher, Olufeni Olunyi, in his “Darwin Comes to Africa” (Cited in West 2023), who argued that British officials who, like Governors Guggisberg (1924-27) in the Gold Coast, now Known as Ghana, and Lugard (1914-1919) in Nigeria were both prone to social Darwinists’ views which had by then gained ground in colonial spheres.

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1. Cash-crop economy encompasses the commercial activities based on agricultural products that are grown for commercial purposes.

2. Social Darwinism is a movement of intellectuals which rose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that connected Darwin’s biological theory of evolution with theories about economies and societies (Sadeghi and Royanian 139)

That there were parallels between Christian Missions' educational enterprise as a humanitarian action and the British imperial goals of the late nineteenth century is reason for concern, regarding the agendas set forth to work out their humanitarianism. This article aims to tackle the concurrent paradox that had not only amplified the philanthropic action of the nineteenth century missions, setting the ground ripe for colonisation, but had also exacerbated the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century imperialism. In point of fact, this is but evidence of the exploitative and racist features of British civilising mission undertaken under the auspices of humanitarians. This paper focuses on the missionaries' education in the shaping of imperial education policy. Focus will be on the racism depicted in the civilising mission's racist discourse as denounced by many scholars, as it will be illustrated. It will also be question of demonstrating how this mission had justified extensive and intense exploitation of the Africans and their soils through the introduction of Western education, namely the three Rs ---Writing, Reading and Arithmetic (counting) causing them to be engaged in the most exploitative system, namely capitalism. Attention will also be paid to the role of missionaries' schooling in the thinking of the imperial curriculum. On the whole, this paper teases the role of the missions' educational endeavours in working out a well thought of curriculum that is said to have rendered favour to Britain's commercial enterprise in the Gold Coast.

## **2. Background to British Humanitarianism and Civilising Mission**

Theoretically, the civilising mission meant exporting Western values including languages, religion, and culture to the benighted populations. It is widely agreed upon that this enterprise was part of the broad scheme of humanitarian activism, which Didier Fassin labels the "moral landscape" (Cited in Lester and Dussart 6). For the latter, the Christian faith which had nourished a particular compassion toward the suffering of populations had stemmed from the "Passion for Christ" (9). The origin of humanitarianism has been widely documented and was situated to the anti-transatlantic-slavery movement of the late eighteenth century which achieved the end of slavery in 1807. By then, the immorality of the slave system had started to become widely denounced, and paralleled by a nascent resentment, which had started to develop and which grew fierce among the community of Englishmen. The first voices against slavery commenced to rise by the Quakers, a religious body of the period. Later, the movement started to gain more ground when it was joined by members of other religious communities like the evangelicals, in addition to intellectual elite, such as writers, poets, scholars as well as political reformers, who felt concerned with human welfare, and commenced to chastise the practice of slavery system. The nascent antipathy against the slave system was not only exacerbated by the sufferings of "its victims", but also by the feeling that blacks were "fellow human beings to whom the Gospel had been denied" (Holland et al., 642). Two eminent

leading figures of the abolitionists among the members of Parliament were Wilberforce and Gladstone.

The abolition of slave trade had concurred with the turning up of humanitarian ideology that not only promoted justice to the victims of the slavery system, but also sought to ameliorate their life and to lift up their social and economic status as human beings. On the whole, humanitarianism denotes the idea of compassion and philanthropy, interest and concern with human well-being, and implies bringing assistance to those supposedly in need of assistance in other countries. Hence, humanitarians were philanthropists whose alleged altruism motivated them to engage in various sceneries, such as wars and natural catastrophes triggered by their "Passion of compassion", H. Arendt's terms (Qtd in Lester and Dussart 7) They were said to be driven by philanthropic and religious principles. Their humane actions ranged from anti-slavery mobilisation abolishing slavery and slave trade to Christian missionary enterprise. Similarly, Prill (2019) corroborates this notion of compassion embedded in the religious movement(89).

In fact, as it is vowed by Lester and Dussart, the culmination of the abolition of the traffic of slaves also meant that the British nation acknowledged its past sins and showed its readiness to provide assistance to those populations it once hurt. The idea was, after putting an end to slave system, the British came to realise that it was their duty to take care of the peoples that they had been in contact with for centuries, and whom they considered as backward and savage and had an utter contempt for their cultural fabric (5). Relatedly, David Smith (2003) states that, "Within the evangelical movement in Britain in the nineteenth century there was a deep and persistent awareness that a great wrong had been done to Africa and its peoples through a terrible trade in slaves that had blighted the continent" (Qtd. in Prill 89). Actually, in its essence, the antislavery movement laid 'developmental' bases for its actions, which were designed for the betterment and amelioration of the formerly enslaved populations (Lester and Dussart 5). Thus, at the beginning of the nineteenth century mainly during the Victorian era (1837-1901), Britain witnessed a revival where religion was to play a significant role. Rudyard Kipling's notorious reminder of "The White Man Burden" implied that the Whites (Westerners) were entrusted with the duty to undertake the mission to civilise the uncivilised. As a matter of fact, this duty was allotted to humanitarians, namely religious men and women, doomed to be as "men with a relative abundance of moral" (Halsey 4). Their mission was to convert the native peoples in the colonies and relief their distress.

However, Lester and Dussart (2014) argue that "organized lobbying" was part of humanitarian organisations (3). As it happens, the Christian Missions that constituted an integral part of the humanitarian movement and assigned themselves the duty to right the wrongs of centuries of slave system were not an exception. Their civilising mission, which they had assigned themselves the duty

to achieve in Africa, had become questioned and their lobbying in the imperial project decried. As their mission was largely instructive, it was the type of education they disseminated among the Africans which is being pointed at and indicted by many scholars and researchers. It is widely assumed that Christian missionaries had benefited the African in more than one respect, however, it is also evidenced that they had played a tremendous and significant role in strengthening colonial governments in general and the British in the Gold Coast in particular.

In what follows insights about the role of missionaries' educational activities in the rise of British imperialism, often dismissed and deliberately downplayed will be highlighted. It will be demonstrated that literacy together with vocational education diffused by the missionaries had not only brought the colony to the British administration eyes, but it had also spotlighted its economic potential in term of labour force as well as raw materials.

### **3. Native Education in the Perspective of the Civilising Mission in the Gold Coast**

Education contributes a great part into economic growth, in such a way as it is the vehicle through which the needs for trained and skilled labour force are satisfied and means and ways of production revolutionised. These altogether make education become a vital ground to deserve interest and concern, as put by Mc Ewan Peter and Stutcliffe Robert (1965), reminding the necessity of involvement and investment in this field as one of the key ingredients to economic growth, "there is no doubt (...) of the wisdom of stressing the crucial importance to the economy of more investment in these three sectors, education, agriculture and transportation" (225). Indubitably, the development of both agriculture and transport relies substantially on the amount and the quality of instruction and training for these vital services. That is why education has always been adapted to the socio-economic requirements of society. But this doesn't imply that populations are consulted in the formulation of educational policies. These are left to policy-makers to draw the main lines to work out particular agendas and interests.

Given the fact that education is closely connected to economic growth, multiple questions may be pictured in one's mind by now: Would education attain its objectives under a colonial regime? Would it work for the transformation and the modernisation of traditional economic features of the indigenous society? Or just seek to preserve the old modes of production? Taking into account the general framework through which Western education was spread under the auspices of the civilising mission, the question which raises itself as far as the objectives of this paper are concerned is what caused missionary education to be suspected of having served the British colonial project.

It is commonly agreed that the initiation of the Africans to Western schooling was accomplished by European emissaries – mainly, merchants and Christian missionaries and later colonial governments. In the Gold Coast it took

place long before the official establishment of European colonisation. Initially, it was the merchant companies<sup>1</sup>, which took the education of the natives in charge with the view to satisfy their urgent needs for African interpreters as well as clerical subordinates for their activities in the trading posts they had established in Fante land<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, the lucrative Euro-African dealings during the nineteenth century were mostly of economic focus. However, it was this trade which was behind the dreadful relationships that had characterised the coastal populations and their hinterland neighbours<sup>3</sup>. The fact was that the former used to act as 'middlemen' between the Europeans and their neighbours who preferred to trade directly with the European merchants (Lauman 125). As a matter of fact, trade and commercial interests were behind European presence in the Gold Coast as stated by E. D. Morel, a British historian, who bluntly reckons that it was not their desire to mend nor to alter the Africans' ways of life, rather, he avows, it was their persuasion that West Africa was a vast outlet for the free trade and unfettered development of English trade, as well as an equally vast field for the cultivation of products of economic necessity to these Europeans. He admits that "it was commerce alone that sent the British and other European countries to the West Coast of Africa" (Qtd. in Graham 2). Actually, according to records, the Whites had exploited West Africa for its minerals and agricultural produce for centuries<sup>4</sup>.

Nevertheless, compared to the time and energy absorbed by the trade in gold and in the most inhuman of all trades, notably, the aforementioned slave trading, the merchants' concern about instructing the natives was only a subsidiary function. As a result, a very little success attended their efforts and by the early eighteenth century, one could hardly find any trace of Christianity in the

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1. Up to the nineteenth century, the trading activities were prominently carried out by statchartered companies, which were granted monopolies to trade between the forts that they had established themselves. Among those merchant companies, there was the Company of Royal Adventurers into Africa which started its activities on the spot as early as 1662, in addition to the Royal African Company (1672), which was controlling the British forts and settlements on the Gold Coast; and the Company of Merchants (1750).

2. These trading posts were set mainly on the shores of the coastal towns. They served as suppliers of African commodities, mostly gold and ivory to the Europeans.

3. Several wars broke out between the hinterland kingdom of Asante and the coastal Fantipeople over trade with the Europeans (More details are provided in Holland et al., 649-653)

4. As it happens, the Gold Coast was one of the earliest and busiest coastal bases according to many historians like A. G. Hopkins (87), R. Howard (35) and M. Crowder (23). The latter asserts that there were about forty- three fortified stations on the West African coast that belonged to Europeans, among which thirty-one were set up along the 200-mile-long coast that was known as the Gold Coast (23).

Gold Coast (Boahen 79; Graham 15-16). On the contrary, the missionaries' interest was, a priori, the betterment and amelioration of the Gold Coasters' living standards by converting them to Christianity, and by teaching them notions about hygiene and good health. Still, their most distinguished achievement was the foundation of modern schooling in the Gold Coast ----as they did in many other parts in the African continent, as well as the liberation of the African mind and spirit. Thus, their presence in Africa was to be "the panacea for Africans' wretchedness and woe" as naively put by Nwadiakor and O. Obi (4).

### **3.1. Character Building and Cultural Imperialism**

According to records, throughout the nineteenth century, the educational activities in the Gold Coast were mostly vested in the hands of two major religious bodies, namely, the Wesleyan Methodist Society and the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society. There were two other Missions that had also carried out educational activities on the Gold Coast, namely, the Bremen Mission (1847) and the Roman Catholic (1880). The British administration, which was running the forts and settlements on the West African coast, had also some sporadic attempts at the education of natives, as it is developed presently.

The Wesleyan Missionary Society, was named after its initiator, John Wesley, who laid the foundations of London Methodism in 1739; but it was not until 1841 during the Methodist Conference that the Society was endowed with the General Plan of Wesleyan Education (David Mc Dowall 123-12). By then, their missionaries, who were sent to the Gold Coast by the late 1830s, were already operating under the leadership of Revd. Thomas Birch Freeman (1838-90).

The Basel Mission was a German Protestant Christian society settled at Basel in Switzerland. The Basel, who were affluent families, were said to be behind the Basel Mission according to Dr Lea Haller (2022). This historian specialised in "transit trade", while taking part in the activities of a Webinar on Mission 21<sup>1</sup> on May 2023, maintained in her talk "Trade and Colonialism: Mission and the Missionary Trade Society", that the Basel were the founders of the Mission Trading Company, one of the outstanding commodity-trading companies in the country, which was itself engaged in transatlantic slave trade before its abolition. To this author, not only did the Basel orient their activities towards commodity-trading for their own profit, but also for compensation to the natives for the sufferings inflicted by slave trade. As it will be detailed subsequently, they had succeeded in developing a zealous work force among the natives, on the

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1. The Mission 21 is an international group of Christian churches and organisations established in Switzerland and operating in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. It is a humanitarian body that pursues philanthropic actions all over the world for the promotion of peace, justice, education, healthcare. Mission 21 Synod gathers delegates annually from different parts of the world and is conducted online or in person to discuss and exchange ideas on various themes and decide on the policies of the Mission 21's activities.

grounds that work was “a duty towards God and society”. As sustained by Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong (2023), their ideology entails that the Christian faith and social action are complementary. Not only does the message conveyed by Christianity suggest enhancing the spiritual assistance of people, but it also promotes the elevation of their social, health, education, environmental and economic advancement (146).

The Basel first missionaries were sent out to work in areas that were under Danish sphere conducted by Revd. Andreas Riis, (1838-57). It is reported that, it was the Danish Governor, Johanus Von Richelieu, who showed a great interest in teaching the African children and helped those humanitarians to settle on the coast, where he wanted them to undertake the Danish school at Christianborg. They first landed there in 1828, then moved to Akropong in 1835 (Mc William and Kwamena 29).

These religious bodies intended to teach the natives the bases of Christianity by diffusing western education among them. They shared the same paramount goal to assist the natives and get them acquire high standards of personal conduct and a new sense of responsibility towards their community. They also shared the same view that only the church could attain their stated goals, to quote Offiong’s terms, “to all intents and purposes the school was the church” (Qtd. in Ngugy Wa Thiong’O 16).

Conversely, they conceived different settings for their fulfilment. While the Wesleyans did consider the family as an essential background for a sound growth of the child and insisted on involving the family in the completion of their work, the Basel missionaries had shown preference for boarding schools. For them, boarding schools would not only move the children away from their communities’ indigenous customs and practices, but they would also resolve the problem of absence which was mostly caused by the kids’ ill-health and malnutrition. Besides, these schools were intended to feed, clothe and educate these children and thus, would attract more parents and children.

On their arrival, they started their enterprise by dispensing the rudiments of elementary education on the same bases (objectives, syllabus and ways) with those prevailing in Charity schools in England at that time<sup>1</sup>. As aforementioned, the objective of missionary education was to propagate Christianity in view to convert the heather peoples. For this, all the Christian denominations functioning in the area were compelled to supply religious subjects. Therefore, no other book than the Bible was to be used, as it was recommended by Joseph Lancaster, an

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1. Charity schools were schools established by humanitarians in England where a kind of popular education was dispensed among the poor population with the view to help eradicate vice and unsocial practices. The poor people were to be instructed in order to live upright and industrious lives (Lester Smith 46-47).



early educationist in England, “the Bible without not or comment should be read in the schools” (Qtd. in Graham 29). Hence, all the subjects taught, specifically, Reading Writing and Arithmetic had to be connected to religion. Church catechism was dispensed and its different parts explained to pupils. Reading and Writing passages, which were drawn from the Bible, would inculcate moral training with godly principles and habits of good behaviour. Arithmetic was introduced in order to instruct children in household economy and help them economise on their means.

In the initial stages of the enterprise instruction was to be supplied in the English language, which was viewed as the only medium through which the accomplishment of social and educational advance of Africa could be possible. Nevertheless, the religious men engaged in the education of the natives, had soon realised that training local clergy, catechists and teachers through local languages could be more advantageous.

They became aware that the African teachers were the main channels through which literacy passed to the local chiefs and people. The knowledge of the native tongue, written or spoken, became then essential to any eventual progress in evangelisation, as it was stated as early as 1836 by one of the reverends, Revd. Wriggley, when he wrote “the knowledge of the native tongue is quite necessary to any progress of divine truth among the people (...)” (Qtd. in Graham 125). In this way, the learner, either a child or an adult, would learn better, absorb more and appreciate better in his mother tongue; though according to some records, the parents’ motivation for sending their children to school was to have them become skilled at the English language which they saw as the “language of commerce, civilisation and Christianity” (Qtd. in Burns 77)

Here, the Basel mission men had at earnest championed the resort to local languages in their dealings. Mc William and Kwamena-Poh report that the English language was deliberately discouraged in their schools, while the vernaculars were overwhelmingly encouraged (33). More importantly, the Basel men had interested themselves in the writing of native dialects and languages. In their endeavours, one of the eminent ministers of their church in the Gold Coast, Johan Gottlieb Christaller had translated the *Four Gospels* in 1859, *the New Testament* in 1864, *Psalms and Proverbs* in 1866 and the whole Bible in 1871. He also issued a dictionary which had been reckoned as one of the most highly ranked dictionaries of African languages (Graham 125; Mc William and Kwamena-Poh 32; Opuni-Frimpong 155). Additionally, Johannes Zimmermann, an eminent missionary also devoted his works to the development of local languages. As early as 1858, he released a grammatical book entitled *A Grammatical Sketch of Akra or Ga languages*, which Boahen refers to as one of the most outstanding grammatical books (85). In this way, their output was acknowledged by people as pastors and teachers of a superior quality. For instance, by 1873, children in many towns where the Basel had their schools, could boast of being capable of reading the

scripture, studying their history, learning geography, ciphering, writing and singing all in their respective tongues.

On the contrary, the Wesleyans, who had from the start, favoured the utilisation of the English language, on the grounds that heartily intended to teach the Gospel to the largest possible number in the quickest time using the available means and measures, hardly paid attention to local tongues. Therefore, only a few literate Gold Coasters were able to translate for them. As a matter of course, in 1873, a Wesleyan minister addressing a letter to the secretaries of their Church, wrote expressing his good impressions about the Basel schools in the interior, "Whilst we in the past we have devoted too little time to the teaching of the native tongue in our schools, the Basel Brethren have to the extreme" (Qtd. in Graham 125-26). But, the necessity of the vernaculars commenced to be felt in the 1850s when the paucity in lesson books in the Fanti language began to be palpable, and the Wesleyans found themselves compelled to resort to Twi school books from the Basel Mission to be translated into Fanti so that they could utilise them in their schools (Mc William and Kwamena-Poh 32). As a result, they became aware that for their schools to attain their goals, they needed to turn towards the teaching of the natives in their own languages like their Basel colleagues.

Thus, time had come for them to embark on the writing and the production of Fanti books on a great scale, and by 1870 the first primer in the Fanti language was issued by Rev. T. Laing, a mulatto<sup>1</sup> minister. This textbook enabled school children grasp the meaning of the English books they had been using so far. Starting from then, the Wesleyans had continued their endeavours in the development of local languages. By 1885, Revd. W. M. Cannell, a European minister, who was also the headmaster of a Wesleyan secondary school published several productions, including a compilation of Fanti Grammar; *Fanti Reading Book for Beginners* (1884); the *Fanti English Dictionary* (1886) a work he shared with Rev. Isaac Aaman, an Africa Churchman; the Fanti Translation of John Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress* (1886), a joint work with Reverends R. Hayfron and S. R. Attoh-Ahumah who were both African ministers. Not the least, the Wesleyans did also interest themselves to the translation of the New Testament into Fanti, which was achieved by Rvrd. A. Parker, A European Churchmen (Graham 126-27).

Thus, by spreading literacy, the Christian missionaries produced African teachers and preachers and provided cheap subordinate personnel for various services as well. Irrefutably, the Christian missionaries' role in supplying the future elite was so significant in the Gold Coast that the latter rose as "an excellent instance" in Kilson's terms (351). The result was that former mission schools' pupils had risen as the intelligentsia that led challenging movements against British rule starting from the 1960s onwards, like the Fanti Confederation (1868-

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1. Mulattos were sons of the European merchants who married local women.

1872)<sup>1</sup> and other uprisings<sup>2</sup> that marked the close of the nineteenth century and caused the British on the spot to intervene in the enterprise of native education.

Nonetheless, beside this spiritual assistance, which was in reality meant to brainwash the young Africans, the Christian missionaries had also contributed in turning the Gold Coasters from the century-long practised slave trade ---which was largely practised by the coastal people ---to cash crop-economy by enhancing agricultural and industrial training. The member of Parliament T. F. Buxton (1786-1845), who was a social reformer and one of the first paramount members of the anti-slavery movement in London, incited the missionaries and teachers to take the plough and the hoe in view to promote farming amongst their disciples (Holland et al.; Burn 77).

### 3.2. Vocational Training and Exploitative Imperialism

As part of the pursuit of combating slave trade and slavery that were decried by the eighteenth century humanitarian movement, as it will be dealt with in a subsequent section, the missionaries' civilising mission was to play a primordial role. Mission men strove to acquaint the Africans with cash-crop economy through the teaching of skills, such as agriculture, manual work and trade which were prerequisite for better living standards and for civilisation. Farms were purposefully started on British settlements where schools were already set up as they would allow the rising of revenues that help finance these establishments.

These plantations were also intended to employ the young African school-leavers, whose opportunities to attain posts other than teachers or clerks in the British administration were scarce and dearth. Additionally, this was intended to help grow the production of raw materials which were to help improve home economy. In 1846, Governor Winnett complained to the Colonial Office<sup>3</sup> about this deficiency. He suggested the introduction of practical training in the school curriculum that would open additional and new work spaces (Mc William and Kwamena-Poh 36) ---it is self-evident that this claim concerned the castle schools, which the British officials on the spot had opened for their children and which were run by Europeans<sup>4</sup> as it will be demonstrated in a later section. Moreover,

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1. The Fanti Confederation was set up by an educated bourgeois elite right before the formal annexation of the coastal states of the Gold Coast by the British administration on the spot.

2. The Aborigines' Rights Protection Society (ARPS) was a movement organised in the 1890s by educated natives with the view to defend and protect the chiefs and people's rights to preserve traditional land tenure relationships.

3. The Colonial Office was the department/ ministry in charge of colonial affairs in Westminster

4. By then, the British administration had some headquarters on the African coast to run the forts where they were controlling their trading activities.

the missionaries were inclined to insert trades of shoemakers, tailors, carpenters and masons in their curriculum as equipoise to the bookish nature of instruction.

With these concerns and towards these ends both the Wesleyans and the Basels had pursued the establishment of farms and plantations as well as industrial schools. The Wesleyans set up model farms adjoining their schools in many areas where they were active as they wanted their pupils to cultivate interest in agronomy. It is recounted that in 1842, Reverend Freeman conducted several experiments in the Beulah school, where he enhanced the pupils to participate in light chores on the plantation, like hoeing, cleaning, watering young plants, amassing cotton as well as other crops on the farms he had beforehand started where he experimented with coffee, olive trees, cotton, cinnamon, black pepper, mango and ginger. The Beulah was described as the most effective and successful. Additionally, Adults were also incited to not only try out seedlings of these plants, but instructions and methods of cultivation as well as (Graham 63). Similarly, Men from the Wesleyan Church had endeavoured to spread manual work among the natives. They opened industrial schools to instruct pupils in handicrafts like carpentry, blacksmithing, joinery and printing.

Notwithstanding, it was the Basels' endeavours in the field of both agricultural and industrial training which sound to be the most outstanding, "they pioneered education, health services and other infrastructure in various communities both for their members and non-members" as accordingly acknowledged by Opuni-Frimpong (147). Armed with the principle that "to use the spade and other working tools side by side with the bible" (Qtd. In Graham 122), the Basel missionaries contributed their best to boost manual work. This might explain their concentration in rural areas. Many of them shared the view that if African boys and girls were not acquainted with habits of industry, their education would not be complete; and thereby they took it upon themselves to further progress in technical and industrial training. Manual work was significant for the Basel as they assumed themselves being "agents of social change and therefore, sought to improve the lives of the people they served by providing education, healthcare and other social services" in Opuni-Frimpong's words (146).

On these grounds, to instruct their pupils to try their hands, the Basel missionaries started industrial schools and workshops to produce qualified craftsmen in different skills. The schools supplied the young apprentices with intensive instructions alongside with normal class-work. The output was a new generation of craftsmen, who brought a general improvement of their living standards (Boahen 86, 102; Graham 122). In the domain of farming, the Basel has as good a record as their Wesleyan colleagues. They set up botanical gardens where they grew different fruits, local vegetables in addition to coffee, tobacco, sugar cane and breed fruit trees (Boahen 82). Like the Wesleyans, they also distributed seedlings of the newly introduced crops to local farmers. In addition to

that, they not only provided them with instructions about the new techniques of irrigation and ploughing but assisted them to familiarise with them as well.

Still, what the Basels can be reminded for in the Gold Coast is their eagerness to initiate the natives to the cultivation of cash-crops. They incited the natives to grow crops like palm oil, palm kernels and groundnuts, whose fostering did not require sophisticated and advanced means and ways. In fact, the collection of the fruits and the extraction of oil were traditional household which necessitated traditional tools and simple techniques, little capital and the use of family labour. Not only that, but they also made the first attempts at the marketing of palm products. It should be reminded here that those oils and products had turned out to be the major agricultural products since 1850 in Western Europe owing to the use of new machines that operated with these crops' oils ---palm oil was necessary for lubrication and for the production of palm-based soap and candle, while palm kernels oil was used in the fabrication of margarine (Boahen 82; Howard 69-70).

In the same vein, the missionaries had also prompted and reinforced the propagation of the culture of timber and rubber; and as early as the late 1850s, made the first attempts at the fostering of cocoa. This was in the Eastern Province of the Colony<sup>1</sup>, then, they extended the setting up of cocoa plantations over the Western and Central Provinces of the Colony. Subsequently, they started other cocoa plantations in Asante and all over the Gold Coast, as reported by Howard (61), excluding the Northern Territories<sup>2</sup> (Plange 5). Opuni-Frimpong sustains that the Basels' spirituality was greatly based on spiritual development and assistance as well as on social change and amelioration, as he says "The implementation of novel techniques in agriculture by missionaries as well as their successful experiments with new cash crops as cocoa was considered as a service to God and humanity" (148). Thus, cocoa, as a crop intended for export, had played an overriding role in the Gold Coast economy in the twentieth century, in such a way as it helped to subsidise a good number of developments that took place in the Colony since then.

This upheaval in the agricultural field, culminated in the rise of employment prospects for the youth in agriculture. In addition to that, legitimate commerce based on the export of cash crops had offered openings to a new generation of traders and producers. Besides, it provided jobs to a great number of intermediaries, who were demanded to collect the commodities that were destined for export and distribute the European manufactured goods. That is how, by introducing cash crops, the missionaries offered the natives employment chances that released their energies that were shackled by the Atlantic slave

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1. By then, the southern states had already been proclaimed British Colony.

2. The states to the north of the Gold Coast were referred to as the Northern Territories in the period between 1902-1957

trade. Undeniably, slave system had for long centuries hampered the Africans to lead ordinary lives and to take up other activities other than farming, as Walter Rodney, a Guyanese historian (1942-1980) lamented, "... as long as the Atlantic slave trade continued people found it extremely difficult to carry on worthwhile activities" (Qtd. in Kilson 365). This account shows that vocational training rose as one of the major endeavours the Christian missionaries had accomplished to turn the Gold Coasters in the perspective of their civilising mission.

#### **4. The Colonial Administration Educational Concerns: The Curriculum at Stake**

Concomitantly, the British administration established on the coast on what became to be called the Gold Coast Colony since 1821, had been making sporadic attempts at the education of the natives. During this whole period, the instruction of the natives was not of a great concern for them. The main reasons for Britain's indifference were twofold: first, the doctrine of *Laissez-faire* adopted at home considering education as the entire concern of voluntary or private enterprise, --- actually, education in England was not only run by the Church, but it was also paid for by the contribution of wealthier churchmen; second, Britain's reluctance to fully commit herself on the natives' affairs owing to financial constraints.

It was not until 1847 that the Education Committee appointed by the Privy Council in 1839 had emanated its memorandum on "Industrial Schools for Coloured Races" exhorting the schools to reconsider the content of their curriculum and include practical subjects like agriculture and rural industries. According to the memorandum these recommendations were directed at the betterment of the living conditions of the Africans as well as their development as peasants. Among other things, the memorandum insisted that the pupils should be made aware of "the mutual interests of the country, and her dependencies, and the domestic and social duties of the coloured races" (Graham 60). Similarly, it reiterated the significance of religious teaching in terms of the character building of the African individual, on the grounds that this would provide him with principles, habits of self-control and moral discipline.

##### **4.1. The Imperial Curriculum: Prompting Industrial and Technical Education**

With the annexation of the kingdom of Asante of the hinterland in 1874, and the enhancement of the economic situation thanks to the rise of revenues from the import-export enterprise, the Legislative Council under the chairmanship of Governor Rowe passed the first Education Ordinance *for the promotion and Assistance of Education in the Gold Coast Colony* (Seid'ou 2014 010) in 1882. Yet, the ordinance, which had marked the Colonial Government's first recognition of Mission churches as claimed by Seid'ou 2014 (010) ---though in the Gold Coast, this relationship was believed to be warm, unlike in Nigeria, for example, where

they were always in conflict<sup>1</sup>, was described as “unworkable” due to many deficiencies and shortcomings (As cited in Mc William and Kwamena-Poh 39).

In 1887, another Education Ordinance was promulgated. With the issue of this new ordinance, the Government intended to give a definite nudge to the educational system with the amendments it introduced. The major ones concerned the missionaries’ role in the management of the administration of all non-Government schools, and the financial assistance in the form of grants-aids that was one of the most important provisions made by the previous ordinance. Thus, mission men had to replace the local school boards, set up by the previous Ordinance and became the managers of these schools. On the same grounds, more details were supplied to the financial assistance, which was to be drawn from public funds and principally based on the requirements put up by the Government, as it was ratified by the previous ordinance.

The new ordinance decreed special encouragements to manual training which became to be referred to as *Hand and Eye Training*. Subjects like cartography, illustration, calligraphy and penmanship, handiwork, housecraft, nature study, some clerical and civil duties, blackboard work by teachers, etc., (Seid’ou 010). Additionally, the Ordinance provided for Industrial Schools which were to schedule ten hours a week of manual work that consisted of handicrafts, manufacturing process agricultural work, or household work for girls. More interestingly, the grants offered for industrial subjects were higher than those given for the other subjects. In 1888 for example, the missions were granted an amount of £687 3s. 6d. distributed between the missions. The Basel schools got the *lion’s share* of £351 18s. 0d., while the Wesleyans had only £229 13s. 0d., and the Catholic schools £77 5s. 0d. and the Bremen schools received £28 7s. 6d. More considerable grants were afforded by the Ordinance in the following years (Graham 114-115). Interestingly, this code remained in vigour until the promulgation of the memorandum on “Education Policy in British Tropical Africa” in 1925 by the CO, when the policy of adapting colonial education to the local context of the colonies became the order of the day.

That was how the colonial administration, which, on the onset of colonial rule, was reluctant to intervene in the internal affairs of its colony, was dragged to the field of native education and that was to be intensified starting from the dawn of the next century. Yet, in retrospect, and considering the international context of the period, this change in attitude in the British officials cannot be a negligible fact. Evidence shows that the era was marked by the rise of imperialism for which the Mission societies had set the stage ripe by intensifying their efforts in providing the appropriate type of education to the locals, in view to enhance the

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1 . In Nigeria the Christian missionaries were suspicious towards the Government’s contempt of the irreligious Teaching (Ayandele 299-301)

growth of the colony as the major supplier of cash crops and labour as the following section seeks to illustrate.

#### 4. 2. Native Education in the Era of Imperialism

The turn of the nineteenth century was marked by the pacification of the area after the European powers operating in Africa had almost fallen on arms<sup>1</sup>. It was in this way that the free competition, which had already commenced by the seventies, reached its climax and culminated into the birth of capitalist cartels which commenced to have a hold of sales, prices, profits and other economic issues<sup>2</sup>. That was how capitalism has been converted into imperialism (Lenin 2016). Britain was no exception, as Lenin (2016) puts it, "It was then that Britain completed the construction of her old-style capitalist organisation" (n.d.). These imperialists' race towards their interests and profits generated an atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety. Like her European counterparts, Britain had a fetish for her self-interest, which was based on the belief in the intimate relationship between the maintenance of the colonies on the one hand and social security along with reforms at home on the hand (Hetlerington 45). This brings up the question whether Britain's motives to step forward in the enterprise of native education and the fact of privileging vocational teaching were not dictated by the imperatives of the era.

These altogether had increased the British interest in their colonies. In the Gold Coast, the colonial administration became aware that this dependency was an important economic potential mainly as it had started to contribute heavily in the world economy with huge supplies of raw materials since 1890. Owing to its strategic significance, the British hastened its *mise en valeur*, which according to evidence supplied previously, it can be safely stated that it had commenced with the end of slave system when the natives, who were engaged in this activity, were oriented to cash crop economy thanks to missionary zealous endeavours as aforementioned. Conversely, researchers, like Boahen and Szereszewski, had situated it between 1890 and 1911, still much earlier than other neighbouring colonies (Boahen 110; Samir 65). For instance, in Nigeria, which was also

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1. The acquisition of the interior territories of Asante had allowed the instauration of peace and order which were prerequisite for economic activities. This period though fraught with violence to acquire more territories, was also a period where colonial governments had consolidated their rule.

2. As defined by Llyich Lenin, the system of cartels was created to regulate business conditions. These cartels generally, have tacit agreements on different economic issues, such as prices of goods, dates, the amount of goods to be produced, and divide the profits among themselves.



potentially rich, the development was in Fage's terms, "slower and less spectacular than that of the Gold Coast" (194)<sup>1</sup>.

The point is that, farming and mercantile policies, together with the government's and missionaries' efforts had succeeded to equip this colony with modern infrastructure, namely railways, roads and harbours that facilitated the transportation of minerals and agricultural crops, as well as the necessary equipment for the mining enterprise, -the natural resources were brought from the interior to the sea in order to be shipped to England, while mining equipment was transported from the sea to the mining area. Here again, the missionaries explained these upheaval as included in their theology as said by Opuni-Frimpong "The missionaries also helped to expand trading networks and brought innovations in architecture and infrastructure as part of their response to their Christian calling in Ghana" (148).

This upheaval in transport, mostly in railways is but evidence of the involvement of the European competitive powers in capitalism whose traits are massive exploitation of the rich soil of the colonies and the tremendous rush towards their gold mining areas as Lenin puts it "The building of railways seems to be a simple, natural, democratic, cultural and civilising enterprise; (...)But (...) the capitalist threads, (...) have converted this railway construction into an instrument for oppressing a thousand million people (in the colonies and semi colonies, ...) as well as the wage-slaves of capital in the "civilised" countries" (n.d.). This state of affairs had propelled the financial situation and facilitated the rise in local incomes via the taxation of the natives. What might be striking is the fact that the imports consisted largely of indigenous foodstuffs, which could be produced locally by the natives themselves, such as rice, sugar and salt, in addition to very few investment goods, like construction goods and transport supplies. Not only did the colonial state dampen the production of such items, but it also inhibited it (Howard 84; Wallerstein 401). As it was corroborated by A. Boahen (1966) "West Africa was allowed and indeed assisted to produce these very cash crops but again forbidden, as it were to produce manufactured goods which she was to continue to receive from Europe" (Qtd. in Wallerstein 401).

Moruwawon Bahatunde Samuel sees that by importing basic cheap commodities from the mother country for local markets in Africa, the colonial government did not serve the vocational-mission-schools products. On the contrary, unemployment was one of the major pleas that youth in the Gold Coast had always complained about. Thus, the abolition of slave system together with the civilising mission and all the so-called benefits that it had allegedly generated to ease

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1 Fage contends that this was due to the fact that the greatest part of the Nigerian population lived in the northern part of the country, which lacked efficient transport to join the sea ---the first railways were built in 1924, as well as to the shortage of labour hands in the agricultural fields (194).

the Black populations' life accounted for "white innocence", as Wekker labels (Pallister-Wilkins 701).

### **5. The Curriculum in the Era of Imperialism**

While the pacification of West Africa had set up the stage ripe for more and more exploitation, it had also brought to the British eyes the necessity of substantial low-priced and skilled labour force to be injected in the different exploitative fields of agriculture and mining. The British officials started acknowledging the economic necessity of native education. Since then, the successive Governors of the Gold Coast took it upon themselves to take the necessary measures to enhance the imperial project and embarked on the development of social services including health and education. At this stage the altruistic motives of the civilising mission become dubious and obsolete.

In retrospect, by introducing agriculture and industrial training in the school curriculum, the missionaries and the administrators considered that the Europeans' ultimate mission in Africa to spread civilisation, could never be achieved unless Christian education taught manual work. For them, civilisation implied "visible results, rather than the ideas that would produce them" (Graham 60). It became evident to them that exploiting the soil through organised labour, and bringing its production into the market, was part of the spread of education which was the only means of civilising the natives.

However, the missionaries' zealous work achieved in the Gold Coast has been viciously criticised. Borrowing from Prill, it "came under severe criticism", although it might seem considerable and advantageous for the natives. Prill asserts that many European researchers along with African mission men are critical about the curriculum designed for the educational enterprise, together with the negative role those missionaries' educational achievements had on the destruction of the African traditional fabric. More seriously, he continues, the missionaries were guilty for having "supported" political as well as economic colonisation of the Africans. He reports that those humanitarians "were driven by an attitude of spiritual and ethno-cultural superiority" (81). Those criticisms were put on the account of the Mission Societies' being colonial governments' accomplices. Missions' schooling had helped in providing explanation and justification of racial inequalities that had permitted formal education policies. Scholars like G. Mangan (2012) contend that imperial curricular as fashioned by Christian Missionaries had guaranteed cultural subjugation that served imperial economic social and political needs.

### **6. Questioning the "Civilising Mission" Integrity: Lobbying? Or Philanthropy?**

Western humanitarians' interventions have always been suspiciously pointed at and questioned, regarding their geostrategic enterprise. What might be bewildering and confusing regarding the Christian missionaries is their decried

lobbying, which was denounced by many historians, and researchers, like Holland et. al, (1961), Prill (2019), Bancel (2005) Anna Johnston (2009), Lea Haller (2022), Ulrich van der Heyden (2023). While some of them hold the view that humanitarians in general and Christian missions in particular had influenced British policy-making in Africa particularly, in the Gold Coast, others claim that missionaries were actually instrumentalised by colonial governments. For example, as early as the 1960s, Holland et al., contended that the abolitionists and the religious men, who sought the civilisation of the Africans were said to belong to the same group and had worked under the auspices of Westminster “the early nineteenth-century British colonization of southern lands was accompanied by humanitarian lobbying, notably from missionaries ‘on the spot’, and from the British metropolitan- based Aborigines’ Protection Society” (642)<sup>1</sup>.

A Johnston (2009), who confirms the fact that colonialism resulted from the “betrayal” of missionaries, confesses that the latter had backed up colonialism with a sense of justice and authority, as she puts it “Christian missionaries’ activity was central to the work of the European colonialism, providing a sense of justice and authority” (13). She also regretfully admits that Christian missionaries, with their achievements made imperial projects take the shape of “moral allegories”, in the sense that they had managed to drift the natives into the world modernity and civilisation by reshaping the African communities and adjusting them to Western culture and ideologies(13 She also corroborates the argument that “throughout the history of imperial expansion, missionary proselytising offered the British public a model of ‘civilised’ expansionism and colonial community management” (13). She affirms that European colonial enterprise was triggered by Christian missionary work which had at the same time reinforced British missions and their sympathisers (15-16).

Another statement about the contribution of the Christian missionaries in the colonisation in Africa was made during Mission 21 Webinars in the series *Mission-Colonialism Revisited* held in 2022, by participants like Dr Lea Haller and Ulrich van der Heyden who shared the view about the role played by the missionaries in expansion of colonialism. In her talk, Haller explained how the Basel and the allegedly great work they are said to have done in the Gold Coast had set the ground ripe for the development of colonial trade in the nineteenth century and brought the country to become one of the prominent commodity-trading powers in the twentieth century.

Heyden, comforted this idea stating that those missionaries, who began to be sent out in the eighteenth century, “became important actors in globalization because not only were they active on the ground, but through their important

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1. The Aborigines Protection Society (APS) was set up in 1835-37 by anti-slave system campaigners who advocated the rights of the indigenous populations in British colonies from Fiji and New Zealand to South Africa

knowledge about the nature of the non-European world and its culture". He claimed that the Basel Mission was one of the missions which had sought protection from colonial powers. On the Gold Coast where they were very active, as it was displayed in this study, they had managed to enter the hinterland and reach the Asante (known for their vehement attacks, as it was mentioned earlier). Heyden's statement was corroborated by Claudia Buess, Director of Studies at Mission 21, who claimed "At the same time, the Basel mission lobbied the British House of Commons for a colonial subjugation of the Asante and supported the military campaigns of the British against Asante kings with its own companies". Although Heyden was dubious about the fact all the missionaries were agents of colonialism, as he put it, "There can be sweeping judgment on this subject", he maintains that collaboration between colonial powers and Christian Missions could not be denied.

During a meeting for a debate at the Centre de reflexion sur l'action et les savoirs humanitaires (CRASH) held on 17 March 2005, Nicolas Bancel, a French historian, raises a rhetoric question his address entitled "Le Colonialisme, un Projet humanitaire?", where he wondered whether the universal ideal of human rights has been betrayed by colonisation, or, on the contrary, it is constitutive of it. He, additionally, raised a couple of intriguing other questions which foster the complementarity of humanitarianism and the colonial civilising mission (3). According to him, the colonial project as it was conceived, inferred first of all, a project of equality, but a deferred equality in the long term. He explains that the meant delay was due to the view and beliefs that were prevailing at that time about the lowness of the conquered populations' civilisations. This was again a stark reminder of the idea of hierarchy between races. To him, progress is also seen as essential to the civilising mission in the sense that scientific progress and technology, which Europe could boast of at that time, were seen to be prerequisite in the transformation of the natives in order to facilitate their integration into the imperial world. However, to him, the projected equality can only be achieved with framework of an annihilation of local culture and societies and the production of a society on the French model. That would be the culmination of the civilising mission through education.

To him, colonialism produced a singular alliance between lay people and religious missions, which is not without interest for a reflection on the genesis of humanitarianism. He furthers that this alliance could not be possible without the common ultimate objective that of military and spiritual subjugation of the colonised populations, shared by most of the European protagonists on the spot including religious missions, and the colonial administration and the secular schools. These altogether constitute the basis on which the civilising mission had to be founded (4-6). Bancel, however, refutes the idea that economic motives were behind the outbreak of colonisation. He maintains that colonial projects in

general had integrated economic developments as part of their mission to help societies and communities elevate their living conditions. Rather, he claims that what had motivated the great powers was the race to acquire more and more territories, downplaying their greedy interests. He suggests that it was just a geopolitical competition between them (9-11).

Furthermore, Prill (2019), in the “Ambassadors of Christ or Agents of Colonialism?” claims that Christian Missions are fiercely condemned for their conduct in Africa. Relying on many scholars’ and theologians’ criticism along with African Church men’ accounts, he reports that missionaries are criticised for the deleterious role they had in the destruction of the African traditional fabric. According to those criticisms those Mission men “were driven by an attitude of spiritual and ethno-cultural superiority” (82), in addition of being imbued with a strong belief in their cultural and spiritual superiority, along with the superiority of their values, which according to them stems from the Enlightenment, which had saved them from obscurity of the Middle Ages. Rufus Ositelu, one of the critics Prill cites, overtly laments about what he refers to as “cultural imperialism”. “In consequence of cultural imperialism, African men were not considered to be true Christians if they did not take the name of Jack, Robinson, Jones, ... In short conversion to Christianity meant rejecting traditional forms of dressing, authority, customs, culture, marriage (...)” (Qtd. in Prill 82).

Frances Adeney wanted to say it all. she joins most of the scholars and scholars cited in this article. For her, the notion of Western superiority went along way with economic imperialism in the mid-nineteenth century, and this had spilling-over effects on other Protestant movements. She writes, “the lethal cocktail of Western economic imperialism, the notion of a calling to spread Western Civilization, and the idea of racial competition and the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon peoples had devastating consequences for Protestant missions” (Qtd. in Prill 83). She explains that there were some missionaries who naively believed in their duty to bring the Christian faith to those remote peoples, who needed inserted Westernisation construct in their tasks.

Furthermore, addressing those who accused the missionaries for being “willing agents” of colonisers in Africa, Prill sustains that “missions’ views about colonialism were something rather ambivalent”. He argues that, in fact, certain Missions had “wholeheartedly” backed up colonial administrations, while others had coped with their presence and decided to serve them, and some of them also were critical of colonial systems and attitudes and denounced European settlers with the natives (99). More seriously, those critics accuse the European Churchmen of having sustained political and economic colonisation of the Africans. Similarly, Prill corroborates the argument that the Christian missionaries were involved in the growing of economic imperialism of the second half of the nineteenth century (81).

As to the curriculum designed in Missions' schools, Stephen Ball in his "Imperialism, Social Control and the Colonial Curriculum in Africa" (1983), refutes the assumption that Western education was imposed on the natives by the Europeans as many African scholars even Europeans tend to believe. He argues that education turned to be the vehicle through which the civilising mission was to be accomplished. Thus, schools were expected to help in the conversion of Africans into "Good Christians" (238). For him the dissemination of knowledge accounted for the missionaries' efforts to persuade and 'seduce' the reluctant African parents to send their sons to school, by putting to the fore the economic advantages that once sufficiently literate the young Africans could find jobs in the newly introduced commerce in cash crops (238-39). In other words, as Foster (1963) assumes education and its pledged transformations it would generate had drawn the Africans towards schools. Writing about schooling in the Gold Coast, Foster notes, "if ... there had been an attempt to offer Western education *in vacuo* and if it had not been associated with significant change in the economy or the system of political control, it is likely that educational demand would have remained" (Qtd. in Ball 239). This is but a stark reminder of the Basel's ingenious initiatives in setting up of boarding schools, promoting the vernaculars and establishing schools 'farms.

Colonial education in Africa was largely literary and the 3Rs constituted its major components in Addition to optional subjects like History, Geography, Literature and Health Science. These non-compulsory courses where they were dispensed benefited the aided-schools with supplementary Government financial backing (Mc William and Kwamena 40).

What was bewildering was the content of these subjects which was deliberately emptied from African context. In fact, colonial education consisted of themes that reflected the situation in the home country, while it was intentionally emptied from the African content, which the Europeans considered as pagan and evil. In this respect, beside Jesus life and the religious notion, the African children were taught the British Constitution, the Geography of Britain, and English literature. For instance literary works were presented by the teachers as the greatest literary achievements in the world, and were taught in such a way that they caused the Africans' admiration for English values and their alienation from their own oral tradition (Kwabena 415-16). Lilly denounces the impact of geography in the school curriculum in terms of racial imagery as "widespread and lasting", and assumes that the role of geography manuscript as "formulator and reflector of racial prejudices" was "substantial" (Cited in Mangan Intro. 2). The African children were also taught the history of the British Empire on the basis of the European belief that Africa was a primitive and a barbarous continent without history (414). Professor Hugh Trevor Roger advanced in 1962, that there was no African history to teach, and that there was only the history of the Europeans in

Africa. He claimed that the rest was darkness and that the latter was not the subject of history (Crowder 10). This view was also shared by Margery Perham, a British historian of African affairs, when she wrote in 1951, "Until very recent penetration of Europe the greater part of the continent was without the wheel, the plough or the transport animal; without some stone houses or clothes except skins; without writing and so without history" (Akubor 2016 138).

Likewise, the curriculum did not include any technical subjects that would acquaint the African children with notions of "modern manufacturing industries", in Seid'ou's formulation (11). In this connexion, M. Crowder (45) asserts that even the trading companies did almost nothing to provide their African employees with mechanical and managerial training. It could be understood that the expatriate businessmen did not want the Africans to widen their knowledge in these skills, and to learn more than what they were expected to learn. This shows how Britain wanted to keep the Africans in an inferior position vis-avis their masters.

For his part, J. A. Mangan (2012), in the collection of essays he entitled "The Imperial Curriculum Racial Images and Education in the British Colonial Experience" addressing the issue of racism, education and imperialism, denounces the contribution of the imperial curriculum in sustaining "racial stereotypes, the creation of ethnocentric attitudes and the 'labelling of colonial peoples'" (Intro. 1). His focal point lies on how education, curriculum and primers contributed in drafting "imperial images of dominance and deference" (Intro. 2). In his essay, he sees the stereotyping accordingly explains and justifies racial inequalities. He further regards education policies as formulated on the basis of "a range of stereotypes arising out of altruism and ulterior attitudes associated with political imperatives, cultural myopia, spiritual idealism and racial prejudices" (Intro. 2).

Besides, the wide range of literature produced by the essayists cited in this volume, including Mangan, Katheryn Castle, T. Lilly, Mc George, Robert Theodore and Anthula, and many others commonly agree that colonial education was designed to serve the requirements of "interlopers", in Theodore and Anthula' terms, meaning the British officials on the spot, the missionaries and eventually settlers (4). They contend that those needs required "an education for the Africans", which according to them, would serve as a means to prepare the natives for subjugation.

In the light of these scholars and historians' views, it becomes evident that the civilising mission had legitimised colonisation and imperialism as Harry Johnston, an eminent explorer and colonial official acknowledges, "Missions strengthen our hold over the country, spread the use of the English language, they induct the natives into the best kind of civilisation and in fact each mission is an essay in colonisation" (Qtd. in Fitzmaurice 12). How the philanthropic civilising mission had set the ground for imperialism is, actually an intriguing issue that could only be understood within the mid-eighteenth century and mainly the early

decades of the nineteenth century rising of an intellectual movement holding racial thoughts and ideologies.

### **7. The Scientific Discourse and the 'Racialisation' of the Civilising Mission**

In parallel with the imperialistic economic conjuncture discussed above, between 1850 and 1950, the world had evolved under the influence of racial thoughts and ideologies advocated by Malthus, Darwin, Spencer and many philosophers and thinkers, setting differences between races. Scholars, researchers like Pallister-Wilkins (2022), Fitzmaurice (2017), Sadeghi and Royanian (2016), Popović (2015), Brooke (2008), Bolt (2007), contend that it was the Christian Missions' racist discourse that had generated subjugation and subordination which facilitated the economic exploitation of the Gold Coast territory and its colonisation. In his "Scientific Racism and the British Theory of Empire" (1960), D. Curtin illustrated how "xenophobia" had haunted the spirit of the Europeans since the early contact of other populations, and how European racial thoughts had moulded the West's theories of empire (40).

Fitzmaurice (2017) corroborates what many researchers and scholars have maintained, starting from the nineteenth century race had turned up to be a necessary precondition and a clue for the better understanding of other peoples' ways of life. This notion of race came at the right time to bring "additional legitimisation to the 'civilising' mission of Europe in Africa which was championed by imperialists and missionaries" as seen by Fitzmaurice (12). For John West (2023) that Darwin's "poisonous ideas" were adopted by "aggressive Social Darwinists" whose vicious and dreadful effects are still palpable in Africa (n.d.). One of the keen followers of Darwin's principles, Herbert Spencer advocated the social theory of "the survival of the fittest" which brought new ideas and beliefs on the grounds of which policies that served richer and more powerful nations were justified and legitimised. This theory refuted any attempt to promote the weakest on the grounds that this would delay the advancement of civilisation.

Regrettably, as it was put by Weikart, the non-Whites deemed unfit did not deserve any kind of interest and thus, any religious or secular humanitarians' educational endeavours "were in vain" (273). As a substitute, thinkers, who started to be imbued with social Darwinism, suggested other alternatives. For example, Rudolf Cronau, one of the advocators of scientific or biological racism rejected any eventual relief that could be brought to the indigenous populations; he labelled "lower races". He argues that "The current inequality of the races is an indubitable fact (...)Therein lies once again the great doctrine, that the evolution of humanity and of the individual nations progresses, not through moral principles, but rather by dint of the right of the stronger" (Qtd. in Weikart 273).

Thus, Cronau and many other social thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ruthlessly condemned those "lower races" for



hampering the advancement of civilisation and promoted their “annihilation” (as cited in Weikart 273).

Sadeghi and Royanian, addressing the relationship between Social Darwinism, colonialism, imperialism and racism, and relying on a great body of theorists and philosophers, confirm that after the issue of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, his followers, who became known as Social Darwinists, misappropriated his scientific ideas and commenced to diffuse racial ideologies justifying the superiority and inferiority of human races, (139).

Hence, racism and colonialism are interconnected as Sadeghi and Royanian have construed stating that “We cannot separate racism from colonialism because colonialism is a complete manifestation of racism that draws a line between the superior colonizer and the inferior indigenous colonized, separating white from black” (141). Marvin Perry (2012), as cited in Sadeghi and Royanian, contends that Social Darwinists adopted Darwin’s theory to work out and expand “the growth of the British Empire, the expansion of the United States to the Pacific, and the extension of the German power”. Perry laments that what was considered as the “superior race” had no consideration for other nations like American Indians, Africans, Asians, and decreed that it was their “natural right” to subjugate them (141).

In his examination of the “historical role” the notion of race had played in justifying white domination, Nişancioğlu (2020) contends that acknowledging sovereignty not only “delimits the analytical scope of race to discursive and/or legal struggles over recognition of colonized peoples within the confines of the already existing state-system”, but it also censors potential anti-colonial visions (Pallister-Wilkins 701). This is but another evidence of the ‘colonialistic’ visions embedded in the notion of race as it had emerged at that particular crucial time; and endorsed by humanitarians and the religious men under the flag of the civilising mission, thus providing the needed justification for colonisation and exploitation and plundering the colonised raw materials.

## 8. CONCLUSION

British imperial expansion in the Gold Coast cannot be invoked with any mention of the collaboration of humanitarians’ activism in Africa mainly, where many populations had found themselves under the hegemony of aliens under the flag of enlightenment. As so far discussed, concurrent paradoxical synergies had patterned the relationship between the nineteenth century civilising mission and colonial governments. The diffusion of Western education was the vehicle through which Western civilisation was to be exported to the Gold Coasters. Yet, as it was demonstrated the educational endeavours and the particular curriculum were designed to amplify the racial ideologies of the mid-nineteenth century and also to work out the lobbying of those philanthropists and missionaries in the British colonial and the imperial project particularly in the Gold Coast which was leading the van of exploitation. This paper, in the reflection of what it attempted

to figure out as far as the lobbying of the Christian missionaries in the British colonial and imperial project in the Gold Coast, demonstrated how through a well thought of and a suitably designed curriculum that taught the natives obedience; and via farming education, the missionaries had contributed in the exploitation of the natives and the plundering of their rich soil. The underpinnings of the present thought revealed how the Christian missionaries, humanitarians, were part of the lobbying which had backed up the nineteenth century social Darwinist view that had justified on the grounds that imperial and powerful countries had the right of sovereignty over less fortunate nations for humankind advantage.

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