

Basel Mission Archives

"Report for the Station Abetifi in the Year 1886 (Written by G. Schmid)"

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Description: Attempts to buy land in Nkwatia end Bepong have failed. They have to fight against misapprehension among the Christians as well as the heathen that money from Europe can easily be come by the missionaries and secondly that they need land in all localities as they needed it in order to set up the Abetifi station. In Abetifi the station land is partly planted by the Christians - a few of them had a good crop of coffee. There is no question of renting here as there is in Akwapim, however, since there is no shortage of agricultural land in Kwahu. The local people at the end of the year do give the mission 50 cents to 1 Frank 50 out of their proceeds, but that is really because this is their custom among themselves. But he makes in extended form exactly the same point as Ramseyer that because the coast is so far away it is difficult to find a suitable economic activity - idleness is one of their greatest enemies. 'Often we are completely at a loss in the face of the question by what means can we accustom our people to hard work, to proper and useful use of time.' Useful business would be a saving means to point the way to our young people in the face of many events which run counter to the intention and spirit of the Christian community order. Summarising the changing of mission personal on the station Schmid reports Dilger's leaving for Europe with his family in January, Sitzler's being transferred to Begoro, and the Ramseyer's being detained in Akwapim by an illness of Mrs Ramseyer, and the Akim troubles. Only Brother Tschopp stayed in the station the whole year. Their Christmas was saddened by the latter's severe illness, and in the distressing cases of sin in the community which led to the exclusion of several members of the community. Nathaniel Beko, the assistant catechist, whose name stood first in the baptismal register of Kwahu, died in November, peacefully in faith - though his wife deserted him 14 days before his death, only to return to the station 14 days after it. Writing about their local assistants, mainly Kwabi and Boateng, Schmid remarks that they travelled a lot, the former for a quarter of the year, the latter in the last half-year spending much of his time with the three Christians of Nkwatia. Schmid is, however, rather critical of them and their results. Kwabi is lively and fresh in his sermons, and they portray the certainty of his own convictions. But he lacks that inner warmth, which alone can wake movements of the spirit in his hearers. This kind of warmth greys only out of a man's inner experience in fellowship with God and if these members of the mission know to mercy or sharing of sorrows then the missionaries must come to the front more, and make their influence felt more. The catechists have never in his presence on their own initiative followed up their preaching by going and speaking privately with people in their houses. They go on their preaching journeys more because that is their job than because they have an inner urge to extend a helping hand to people who need it. A sign of this is that they can never give a definite

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answer to the question of what the results are of their preaching in a particular place. Schmid stressed to them that when preaching they must always keep their eyes open for people who are not just showing an outward interest, but also are really accepting the message inwardly, and to come nearer to them by private conversation. If a Christian family can be brought into existence then it will be a light to the rest of the people in the village. This kind of point he has made the subject of their discussions every time he has met them, also as directed by the Basel Committee they have held two conferences for catechists at which this sort of point is discussed. As for the community - the numbers have decreased rather than increased, and compared with the older stations this station appears in no favourable light — indeed it has problems all its own. There were no baptisms although Schmid inherited a number of catechumens, whose instruction he took over from Catechist Boateng, none of whom he felt could be baptised. Two of them indeed 'fell' one was already married to an excluded Christian, and then committed adultery with a young man who had already been excluded for that sin. Another was married to a Christian wife who at this time committed adultery with a young Christian, and the candidate himself took up several sittings of the presbyters over his claim for 35 Franks satisfaction. Others were irregular in their attendance at morning and evening prayers, and the instruction itself, and gave derisory excuses like being involved in cutting wood or cooking for their absences. Schmid remarks that with most of them there was no inner living longing for salvation, no single minded search for peace, truth, and a quickening of the soul, nor did they have a real acknowledgement of sin, a striving after a reform of their character, a preparedness to change their outward habits in accordance with the word of God, nor a lust for the 'pure milk of the gospel'. In the community the attendance at Sunday services is satisfactory -- people will only be absent if they have a very important matter to attend to. But many believe that Sunday attendance is all that is required of them. The weekday liturgies are not at all well observed. And people feel no need of them and the inner peace they might bring, judging by the excuses they offer for not attending a flippancy of their attitudes when they are coming away from a service which they have attended. The missionaries on their side must fall to earnest self-examination on account of this kind of failure of their work - perhaps one of his colleagues is right when he writes 'we labour in a time of small things because we are small people'. In their behaviour as marriage partners and members of the community the people need loving instruction, teaching, enheartening, and correction. 3 more families have moved onto the station in the course of the year, and so have several youths. The majority of the latter live in the town, however, and the missionaries have no means to force them onto the station, while they pay no heed whatever to arguments about morals. Schmid remarks that the greater number of the Kwahu Christians (he specifically points out that he is not talking about Akwapim Christians in Kwahu), have graduated from the boarding school, and many have been servants of the missionaries, too. Unfortunately when they become adult they return to their families because of the difficulty of marriage and the lack of work - none of the Kwahu students who have gone to the middle schools in Begoro or Akropong have completed the course, and

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the Kwahu people often ask what the point of school is, since boys who have attended school have got nowhere. There is only one Christian Kwahu pair - all the other married Kwahu Christians are in mixed heathen-Christian marriages. It is extremely difficult for the women to achieve equality in marriages. However the married catechists provide a living picture of Christian families.

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