



**Pitfalls of Trained Incapacity: The Unintended
Effects of Integral Missionary Training in the
Basel Mission on Its Early Work in Ghana (1828-
1840) (American Society of Missiology
Monograph)**

Birgit Herppich

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The need to train Christian missionaries was an afterthought of the Protestant missionary movement in the early nineteenth century. The Basel Missionary Training Institute (BMTI) was the first school designed solely for the purpose of preparing European missionaries for ministry in non-European lands. *Pitfalls of Trained Incapacity* explores the various sociological and historical factors that influenced the BMTI "community of practice" and how the outcomes affected the work of the Basel Mission in Ghana in its initial phase. It shows that the integral training of the BMTI resulted in missionary practices that lacked flexibility to adjust attitudes and behavior to the vastly different circumstances in Africa, impeded the realization of mission objectives, and hindered the emergence of an African appropriation of Christianity. By exploring educational and sociological perspectives in a precolonial context, this study reaches beyond its historical significance to raise questions of unintended effects of integral ministry training in other times and places. The natural cultural bias of groups with shared theological assumptions and social ideals - like the Basel Mission - suggests a strong propensity for trained incapacity, that is, for training processes that establish inflexible mental frameworks that are potentially detrimental to intercultural engagement.

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