

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

**VICTORY BIBLE CHURCH INTERNATIONAL: ITS ORIGIN,
DEVELOPMENT AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO PENTECOSTAL-
CHARISMATIC MINISTRY IN GHANA.**

By

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of the Faculty of Arts, University of Cape Coast in partial fulfilment
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in Religious Studies**

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: Date:

Name:

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the Thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University Of Cape Coast.

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Name:

ABSTRACT

The researcher was confronted with the question of the development of Victory Bible Church International. It became necessary therefore to find out how the church began and developed and its contributions to Pentecostal-Charismatic Ministry in Ghana. The history of Victory Bible Church International is crucial because it was among the first few charismatic churches that started the Neo-Pentecostal Movement in Ghana and introduced certain activities into the fraternity.

Documents and books were consulted with regard to the development of Victory Bible Church International. Various schools of thought were presented by people. Since the founder and a good number of the founding members are available, they were interviewed to present the authentic story of the origin of the church.

This studied ironed out all misconception that Victory Bible Church International broke away not on amicable terms. Victory Bible Church International started after the founder of the church left Christian Evangelical Ministry after he was willfully released by leadership. It is recommended that history is a crucial area of study and that the Ministry of Education must motivate students who have the interest to read history through advertisements and seminars and provide well-stocked history sections in libraries and in tertiary institutions and sponsor their members interested in reading historical studies. The history of the development of Charismatic Churches could be made known to the public within Ghana and beyond.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

In the early 1980s Neo-Pentecostalism took the centre stage of Ghanaian Christianity. This new movement became phenomenal because the first generation leaders were largely school drop-outs in their mid-twenties who introduced another aspect of Christianity. These young men rallied their peers from schools and the various mainline churches in their thousands to initiate an unprecedented happening. This is the root from which Nii Apiakai Tackie-Yarboi and Victory Bible Church International grew.

The history of Victory Bible Church International is crucial because it was among the first few charismatic churches that started the Neo-Pentecostal movement. Victory Bible Church International did not only belong to the first group of churches, but it also played key roles in so many ways by introducing certain activities in the Neo-Pentecostal fraternity. Since Victory Bible Church International belongs to the group of the first charismatic churches, its rich history needs to be explored.

The principal objective of this research is to establish a chronological arrangement of the history of Victory Bible Church International. An objective story of the origin and development of Victory Bible Church International will show its meaningful contribution to the neo-charismatic movement in Ghana.

There are various schools of thought as to how Victory Bible Church International was started. Since the founder and the various founding members are all alive, this study seeks to present the authentic story of the history of the origin of the church. There is also the impression that Victory Bible Church International broke away from the Christian Evangelical Ministry not on amicable terms. This research irons out all such misconceptions.

This thesis also makes available a material that can contribute to the study of ecclesiastical history of Neo-Pentecostalism in Ghana.

Statement of the Problem

This research investigated how much input Victory Bible Church International has made to the evolvement of Pentecostal – Charismatic Ministry in Ghana. As a first – generation Neo-Pentecostal movement, there was the need to set out some guidelines that could be used to find out the origins and contributions of the ministry to Pentecostalism in Ghana. The statement of the problem, put in a question therefore is: How did Victory Bible Church International come into being and what are its major contributions to the Church’s Ministry in Ghana?

Objective of the study

As a first-generation Charismatic Church, Victory Bible Church International plays a vital role in the history of the church in Ghana. It is therefore important that the history of Victory Bible Church International be researched into and appropriately narrated.

The second objective is that at the moment there is no well – researched history of Victory Bible Church International that can give dependable information. By this thesis, a chronological arrangement of the church’s history is made available.

Thirdly, as a contribution to academia, this thesis is a contribution to the history and study of Pentecostal – Charismatic development in Ghana.

This study is also meant to bring to the fore uniqueness of Victory Bible Church International as a member of the Pentecostal – Charismatic fraternity.

Furthermore, the work unfolds certain unique qualities that distinguish Victory Bible Church International from other Pentecostal –Charismatic churches.

Research Questions

In order to give this research a focus, the following are questions that guided the presentation of this research:

1. How did Victory Bible Church International begin?
2. Which personalities were involved in the development of Victory Bible Church International?
3. What have been the teachings of the Victory Bible Church International?
4. What could be identified as the main contributions made by Victory Bible Church International towards development of Christianity in Ghana?

5. Can it be said that Ghanaians have derived some benefits from Victory Bible Church International?

Significance of the Study

This work makes contributions to different aspects of society such as Academia, Bible schools, studies of Ghanaian history, and the knowledge of the members of Victory Bible Church International, Christians from Pentecostal-Charismatic denominations and the study of Church History in Ghana.

Scope

The areas covered in this research work are Christian Evangelical Ministry, Jesus' People Fellowship and Victory Bible Church International. These are all churches based in Accra. There are about 5000 people in these churches.

Literature Review

Neo-Pentecostalism and Prosperity

In his book, Anim (2003) discusses in detail the theology of Prosperity in Charismatic Churches in Ghana. He traces its roots to American Televangelists such as Oral Roberts, Morris Cerullo, Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland to mention a few, whose influence served as a catalyst and to a large extent shaped the theology of the Ghanaian charismatics in the early stages of the movement. He also asserts that the main influence from the African continent was Benson Idahosa, a Nigerian who himself was an American-trained preacher. He was

trained at Gordon Lindsay's Christ For The Nation Bible Institute, in Dallas, Texas. Idahosa was instrumental in the initiation of Television Ministry amongst Ghanaian charismatics on Ghana's television channel. Idahosa's Bible School, All Nations For Christ Bible Institute, Benin City, Nigeria, trained scores of Ghanaian Christian leaders who turned out to be the first – generation leaders of the charismatic movement in Ghana. People like Nicholas Duncan-Williams, George Ferguson-Laing, Charles Agyin Asare, Matthew Addae-Mensah, Christie Doe-Tetteh, James Saah and Cephas Amartey to mention a few were the products. The charismatic movement in Ghana metamorphosed from fellowships into churches.

This wave also affected Town Fellowships, the mainline and the older Pentecostal churches. Anim (2003) makes mention of other Christian fellowships which experienced splits as a result of this wave which in due course also metamorphosed into churches. As a result, with the off-shoot of these emerging churches, every charismatic church is known by the name of its leader. One such example cited is that of Nii Apiakai Tackie-Yarboi, leader of the Jesus' People Fellowship. Anim states that Tackie-Yarboi broke off with some members to form the Victory Bible Church having earlier joined the Christian Evangelical Ministry as a Pastor.

This is one of the assertions on which this thesis differs and attempts to straighten up the records. According to Anim (2003), there are three stands of the Charismatic Movement: The Word of Faith Movement, Deliverance Movement and The Prophetic or Super-Charismatic Movement; the Word of Faith Movement being the largest.

Tackie-Yarboi, one of the foremost leaders of the Word of faith Movement takes centre stage when prosperity is looked at in relation to dreams. He emphasizes that dreams are an essential part of human success and dreams that come from God have a positive impact or influence one's destiny. However, negative dreams from the devil have adverse effects on people's destiny.

On Prosperity and the Traditional Council, Anim recalls conflicts that erupted between the Ga Traditional Council and Victory Bible Church where Tackie-Yarboi was nearly beaten to death. Being a royal, when his comments concerning the ban on drumming and dancing dissatisfied his own tribes men they regarded him as arrogant.

The Origin of Pentecostal-Charismatic Ministry in Ghana:

Hanson's book (2002) is a material that seeks to chronicle the history of the Pentecostal movement in Ghana. So much has taken place from the early twentieth century when the Pentecostal wave started from 1906 with the Azusa Revival till the twenty-first century. Generations have come and gone and there has been the Pentecostal, Evangelical and Charismatic waves occurring in the landmarks of Ghanaian Christianity.

Hanson (2002) has attempted to record the major events during these various epochs of Ghanaian Christianity. This presents immeasurable information about what the Holy Spirit has been doing during these periods. This gives the readership much to pause and reflect upon. Hanson (2002) cites many a famous preacher who have observed that the book of Acts is the only book in the entire

New Testament that did not have an 'amen' to it. This writing therefore recounts the unending saga of the work of the Holy Spirit in Ghanaian Pentecostalism.

Hanson (2002) narrates how Tackie-Yarboi who through his conversion from Scripture Union days in secondary school served Christ zealously. Moving through the rungs of christian leadership, Tackie-Yarboi assumes the role of founder and Presiding Bishop of Victory Bible Church. This Word of Faith movement carries a mission statement that encourages the conversion of all people within its community using all available means to ensure converts are Nurtured To Be Fully-Functioning Followers Of Jesus Christ.

The Contributions of Pentecostal-Charismatic Ministry in Ghana:

Kodua (2004) traces the cradle of Ghanaian Christianity from when the first chapel was built in 1482 in the Elmina Castle until this day. He affirms that within a span of about 500 years, Ghana has grown to be the country with the highest number of Christians in West Africa. What initially began as a spark of fire has grown to affect every fibre of national life. He mentions that the greatest thing that ever occurred in Ghanaian Christianity is the Pentecostal movement whose seed has been watered by succeeding generations and has resulted in a massive harvest in contemporary times.

Kodua (2004) presents an analytic historical material which does not merely chronicle Ghanaian Church History but assesses the impact that was made and the effects those merits have on contemporary Christianity.

The author makes an exceptional input in the sense that besides narrating the history of Ghanaian Christianity; he also shows the effects of Christianity on

globalization and politico-socio-economic changes. Another development worth noting is the positive contribution of Pentecostal – charismatic churches in Ghanaian Christianity. Kodua also cites the origins of Victory Bible Church; the various metamorphoses it has gone through, its statistics, commission statement and its short and long term plans.

The Evolvement of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement in Ghana:

Larbi (2001) discusses how Pentecostalism evolved in Ghana. Larbi begins by investigating into the beginnings and growth of the Pentecostal movement in Ghana. The concept of salvation from the Akan perspective is analyzed. The primal concept of salvation of the Akans is interpreted as health, prosperity, safety, security and a state of being which promotes tranquility. It was this view that Pentecostalism came into contact with upon its advent in Ghana. Pentecostalism however appealed to this world-view, thus succeeding in permeating into the Ghanaian society with its message.

The Western mission-related Churches superficially addressed their need thus their impact was short-lived. Pentecostalism succeeded in meeting their felt needs. Economic recession resulted in social pressures that resulted in many turning to traditional sources for supernatural help. Pentecostalism provided ready answers to the complex problems.

Larbi (2001) thus presents a chronological arrangement of the various new religious movements: The African Independent Churches, Classical Pentecostalism, Pentecostalism in the mainline churches, Para-Church organizations through to the emergence of Neo-Pentecostalism.

Peter Newman Anim, the pioneer of Ghanaian Pentecostalism delved into deeper religious experience. His quest for taste of the supernatural brought about the “Holy Ghost Outpouring” of the *glossolalia*. As a result of his great efforts at spiritual revival, the ripple effect was the birth of the first-generation classical Pentecostal churches such as the Christ Apostolic Church, Apostolic Church and the Church Of Pentecost.

Another important personality mentioned is James McKeown. His life and ministry in Ghana was graphically narrated. McKeown’s partnership with Anim resulted in a thriving Christ Apostolic church. However there was a controversy between the two concerning the theology of divine healing. Anim remained with Christ Apostolic church whilst McKeown joined Apostolic Church and later seceded to form the Ghana Apostolic Church which was later changed to Church Of Pentecost.

Larbi (2001) discusses Neo-Pentecostalism as an off-shoot of classical Pentecostalism. The Pentecostal wave resulted in the formation of town fellowships. These fellowships produced personalities who later turned out to be leaders of the Neo-Pentecostal movement. This movement had two main emphases: the Abundant Life and Deliverance Movements. The former stressed more on the need for sound health one’s body coupled with financial well-being latter dealt more on generational curses which caused perennial problems. The deliverance movement believed that the remedy to these life’s vicissitudes was exorcism. The current first –generation Neo-Pentecostal movement like Nicholas Duncan-Williams, Mensa Otabil, Michael Essel, Tackie-Yarboi, Eric Kwamong, Isaac Quaye, Robert Ampiah-Kwofi, Charles Agyin Asare, George Ferguson-

Laing to name a few formed the Abundant Life group. Owusu-Tabiri, Normanyo, Addae-Mensah and Vaglas Kanco belonged to the Deliverance group. The reason for the emergence of Deliverance was that there was the belief that two thirds of Jesus' ministry was that of healing and deliverance. Though Tackie-Yarboi's is characterized mainly by the Abundant Life philosophy of ministry, his ministry reflects both the Abundant Life and Deliverance. Starting as a youthful charismatic leader in his twenties with no formal theological training, he diligently read the materials of Kenneth E. Hagin, E. W Kenyon and other notable North-American neo-Pentecostal preachers.

The Contemporary Developments of Neo-Pentecostalism

Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) examines the Pentecostal – Charismatic renewal in the African Context. As an indigenous form of Christianity, the book traces the roots of Neo-Pentecostalism, which was a product of the Pentecostal wave. The author mentions that the upsurge of Neo-Pentecostalism was to the disadvantage of the African Independent churches or what he termed as 'Sunsum sore'. The influence of North-American Neo-Pentecostal televangelistic movements had a great impact on Ghanaian charismatic churches. The author however makes a distinction between Pentecostals and Charismatics.

Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) defines Pentecostalism as Christian groups who emphasize salvation in Christ as a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit that includes speaking in tongues, prophecies, visions, healing and miracles as manifested in the early church. Charismatism is also explained as new independent churches in which every believer is considered a potential recipient

of a ministry gift of the Holy Spirit. This thus de-legitimizes the concentration of charismatic power in the hands of ministers and makes believers belong to the 'holy priesthood' and qualified to act as 'stewards of God's manifold grace'.

Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) goes further to present in graphical form certain personalities who played a key role in introducing Neo-Pentecostalism in Ghana: Oral Roberts, Benson Idahosa and Nicholas Duncan-Williams. He looks at the term salvation in the charismatic context. The charismatic looks at the concept of salvation as one that speaks of a transformed life. The individual may have come from a non-Christian background and have been delivered from ungodly lifestyles. However, repeated failure in life, poverty, indebtedness, terminal illness and other vicissitudes are considered as conditions that do not glorify God and must be exorcised.

Prosperity is acknowledged by charismatics as one of key benefits of salvation. This covers the spiritual, material as well as financial blessing.

With reference to the patriarch Abraham, the 'prosperity message', asserts that God has willed the 'blessing of Abraham' to believers as beneficiaries of the new covenant mediated by Christ. This blessing is tapped into through 'seed faith' and tithing. To the Charismatic, wealth is a sign of God's blessing. The author debunks the prosperity concept understood among charismatics with the reason that it is based on 'proof-texting'; a practice that one selects scriptures out of their context to support one's theological arguments.

However, Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) lends credence to the spirituality of charismatics saying it affirms God's existence and presence backed by intense

conviction. The reason is because charismatics believe that God is not a figment of one's imagination because He indeed exists and fulfils His promises.

Development of Neo-Pentecostalism in the Main Line Churches:

Omenyo's (2006) writing narrates how the Pentecostal wave penetrated into the orthodox churches. The mainline churches have not been able to successfully marry western Christianity with African Traditional culture. When the influence of the Western missionaries upon the indigenes did not materialize, some of the adherents seceded from the mainline churches to form the African Independent Churches. In these African Independent Churches, freedom of expression in worship was encouraged unlike the rigid and mundane style of worship of the western church that did not sit well with the indigenes.

In as much as the African Independent Churches contributed to the development of an African Christian identity, another level of Christianity was birthed out of the African Independent Churches; the Pentecostal – Charismatic renewal. This wave sprang up in the mainline churches and unlike the African Independent Churches it was characterized by a personal commitment to Christ, Bible Study, Prayer and fasting, evangelism and the exercise of Charismatic gifts. This wave promoted revival in the mainline churches but also seemed difficult to be controlled by leadership.

Omenyo (2006) studied charismatic renewal in the mainline churches and how the challenges and problems posed by this wave and how they are handled.

Evangelicalism; the Prelude to Neo-Pentecostalism:

Adubofour (2003) narrates the role of evangelicalism in Ghana. He defines the evangelical movement as those who form the tertiary wave after the Western missionaries and the African Independent Church movement. The evangelical association forms the Para-Church organizations because they worked in partnership with the churches to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ. These Para-Church organizations were Christian service agencies who towed inter-denominational lines in order to involve Christians from various church backgrounds. The non-denominational character of the evangelicals afforded them the opportunity to permeate into various ecclesiastical structures such as seminaries, voluntary church societies and the various churches. They had one goal in mind and that was to evangelize, study the Bible, pray and mature healthy Christian. Thus they supplemented the church's effort at impacting society.

The Para-Church Movement can be divided into two groupings: the primary and the secondary. The primary are those who were founded by the British expatriates and maintain a conservative evangelical position. These are the like of Scripture Union and the Evangelical Fellowships. The secondary are those who originated from the evangelical fellowship. They are also independent evangelistic organizations as specialized agencies for evangelism.

Adubofour (2003) talks about how the evangelicals arrived in Ghana in the latter part of the nineteenth century and formed Christian fellowship with the aim of fellowshipping through Bible study, prayer and evangelism. They went further to infiltrate into the educational institutions from the primary to the tertiary level. They also carried the requisite literature and encouraged a reading habit.

The wave spread leading to the organization of town fellowships and camps. The result was producing Christian leaders who carried the fire to start evangelistic organizations that carried the Great Commission to a further level.

Evangelism was thus carried into every facet of human existence. The evangelical movements were responsible for the birth of leaders who eventually spearheaded the Neo-Pentecostal renewal.

The Genesis of the Charismatic Movement in Ghanaian Mainline Churches

Abamfo Ofori Atiemo (1993) narrates the rise of the charismatic movement amidst the mainline churches. Prior to the upsurge of this new religious phenomenon, the recognized Christian denominations were the mainline churches namely the Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Evangelical Presbyterian, African Methodist Episcopal, Anglican to mention a few. These churches were the recognized protestant churches with the exception of the Catholic church. They possessed their own set of dogmas which were handed down from their mother churches that originated mainly from Europe. These mainline churches with the exception of the Catholic church were an offshoot of the Reformation of 1517 initiated by Martin Luther. Worship services were business as usual until the charismatic wave infiltrated into their fold and affected the orthodoxy of the mainline churches. Atiemo (1993) Starts by enumerating certain waves that occurred in Christendom similar to the charismatic movement. One such movement was monetarism that was started in the first century by Tertullian of Carthage, a respectable church father. They believed in visions, prophecies and the words of Jesus Christ. The Waldenses Movement emerged in the 10th century

that was liated by Peter Waldo. They were a lay movement who preached the gospel and rejected a ny form of liturgy that was not in harmony with the scriptures. The ‘Apostolic Brethren’ were next to appear in 1260. They great opposed to anything about the Roman Catholic Church. Martin Luther in his Reformation revolution in 1517 had the agenda of not only emphasizing the authority of the scriptures, but a life that manifests spiritual liberty. The Anabaptists who were called the ‘Inner Light’ embraced the prophetic gift. Then came the Methodist, the initiators of the Wesleyan revival in the 18th century. They believed that after conversion, one must experience the ‘second experience’ or sanctification. This was because, Christians ought to grow towards perfection. After the reformation, the Catholics tried to reconvert their converts, through the effort of the Jesuits. However within the Catholic fraternity there were those known as the Catholic Charismatics. These testified that they experienced supernatural visitations from the Holy Spirit. In 1900, at Bethel College, in Topeka, Kansas, United States of America, student gathered for a vigil and students experienced the gift of speaking in tongues for the first time in their Christian experience. Atiemo (1993) recounts that there were several other mainline churches that encounters with the Holy Spirit. In California at the St. Mark’s Episcopal church in 1960, Dennis Bennet the Pastor of the church was baptized in the Holy Spirit while at a prayer meeting. In 1966, a group of Roman Catholics students at Duquesne University in Pittsburg were baptized in the Holy Spirit whilst at a prayer meeting.

Before classical Pentecostalism started in Ghana, the exercise of gifts of the spirit had already began. Though the ministry of William Wade Harris, a

Liberia national, in South Western Ghana in 1914, there was mass conversion of people from idolatry. Furthermore Harris' preaching was accompanied by healing of sick people and exorcising of demons. Similarly, there were indigenous preachers like Samuel Oppong and Jehu Appiah who were acknowledged to have possessed a prophetic gift.

In 1937, classical Pentecostalism was birthed in Ghana when the Apostolic church in Bradford sent a missionary to Ghana, specifically Asamankese. James Mckeown was that missionary and though his ministry scores of people were baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of tongues speaking, healing and prophecy.

Atiemo (1993) narrates how the charismatic movement originated in the, mainline churches. The congregants of the mainline churches observed a form of liturgy that were western – oriented. As time wore on, these members of the various mainline churches were tired of a monotonous mode of worship and yearned for a deep spiritual experience. In the passage of time, in 1922, a Methodist Catechist, Joseph William Egyanka Appiah left the Methodist church to form the Musama Disco Christo Church. That same year, a member of the Presbyterian church, Peter Newman Anim, touted as the father of Pentecostalism broke away from the Presbyterian church to form the Faith Tabernacle which is now known as the Christ Apostolic Church. Testimonies began to pour in to validate these spiritual encounters. A “Pillar of Fire” was witnessed by people on the proopillan of Faith Tabernacle. Also Stephen Owiredu, a top member of the Faith Tabernacle Church was praying for his sick daughter in his cocoa farm when he was baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues and prophesied.

The mainline churches, had their fair share of the charismatic experiences. In 1930 a group of youngsters gathered to pray at the Ramseyer Presbyterian church in Kumasi. These prayer sessions yielded great spiritual dividends. They however faced stiff opposition from the church leadership. These youngsters were so unperturbed, that in 1966, the church incorporated this prayer into the church's fold and christened it Bible Study And Prayer Group. Furthermore, other groups have sprang out of the Bible Study And Prayer Group. Atiemo (1993) mentions groups such as the Resurrection Youth Club and Young People's Guild. It is speculated that these groups have raised people who manifest some gifts of the spirit.

Atiemo (1993) is quick to mention that unlike the Presbyterian church whose experience, of the charismata was a new phenomenon, the Methodist's was a reactivation or a revisitation of the effects of the Wesleyan revival. No particular group in the Methodist church is responsible for the expiration of the charismata. As a result, members are given enough room to operate whatever spiritual gift the individual possesses. The groups emphasize on Bible study and prayer that enables the individual to establish a relationship with God. Secondly these groups are permitted to pray for the sick, organize deliverance meetings and use anointing oil when prayer is being administered. The Methodist does not make a hard and fast rule that pastors must necessarily lead these groups. Any spiritually endowed person; pastor or lay person could lead the group.

The Anglican Communion is the latest of the mainline churches to have encountered the charismata. The operation of the charismata is spearheaded by the prayer and youth groups. Unlike the Methodist Church, Atiemo (1993)

asserts that it is only the priests who head these groups in order to maintain order and provide mature leadership.

In the Roman Catholic church setting, the Catholic charismatic Renewal and the Holy Spirit Prayer group are those responsible for the promotion of the charismatic movement. The charismatic movement was initiated by two Medical Mission sisters, Ellen Hummel and Jean Salgot. These sisters caught the charismatic fervour when they made contacts with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal group in the United States. They were later joined by one father, Ernest Sievers. Together they built the Centre For Spiritual Renewal in Kumasi. According to Atiemo (1993), the charismatic ministry in the Catholic Church has over the years produced the National Service Team and Diocesan Service Teams.

By way of appraisal, Atiemo (1993) affirms that the charismatic movement has brought a lot of benefit to the mainline churches. One remarkable feature the charismatic movement has brought is a vibrant church life. Prior to the advent of the charismatic fervor, church life was boring and monotonous. Order of service was predictable and because of its uninteresting nature, the youth left the Orthodox churches to join the charismatic churches. Also, the clergy and laity have both renewed their commitment to their roles in their respective churches. The church life in the Orthodox churches has been reinvigorated.

Furthermore, Atiemo (1993) has enumerated certain benefits the charismatic renewal has brought to bear on the mainline churches.

The charismatic renewal has whet the appetite for the multiplicity of growing congregations. Atiemo (1993) has stated that these churches have acknowledged that evangelism is the key to effective missions and the nurturing

of growing churches. Almost all mainline churches have set up evangelistic groups that have their own. This has improved the lot of Orthodox churches.

The understanding of ministry has been bettered. Ministry basically has to do with service. Since charismatism promotes dynamism, Atiemo (1993) has indicated that these mainline churches have taken a close view at ministry in a holistic sense. Individual members have been encouraged to exploit their gifts and talents in order to render service to God effectively.

Liturgy is no more the mundane stero-typed that was known before. Atiemo (1993) claims liturgy has been enthusiastic, ministering to the total congregant. It is hard to differentiate between a mainline and a charismatic churches when it comes to worship Fellowship has lived to its meaning with the advent of the charismatic renewal. Just as the charismata visited the early church with the sense of belonging for each other, these mainline churches have experienced their fair share of true fellowship. Fellow members fall on each other for mutual brotherliness.

Commitment to church work and the things of God have taken a different turn. According to Atiemo (1993), commitment have improved tremendously. Members recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit therefore a sense of awe is attached to every church activity.

Indigenization has been one gap the charismatic renewal has succeeded to bridge. Prior to the advent of the charismatic renewal, a lot of mainline churches have these tribal 'tags' attached to them. According to Atiemo (1993) the movement has broken the tribal barriers and has blended the adherents together as one body.

Having succeeded in breaking down the tribal barriers, the charismatic renewal creates the potential for effective ecumenism. Ecumenism paves the way for tolerance and accommodation of people from other denominations.

Finally, the charismatic renewals promotes the involvement of the laity in the work of the ministry. In the traditional mainline practice of ministry, there is the clergy – laity distinction. However when it comes to the charisma renewal, that gap does not arise. The most paramount subject of consideration is one's spiritual gift. Atiemo (1993) states that opportunities based on one's spiritual gifts and personal initiatives define ministry. It is an environment where premium is placed on lay participation.

The Chronicle of the History of Christianity

Cains (1996) chronicles the birth of the Christian church from the first century till the 20th century. The period in question was specifically from 5 B.C to the 20th century. Church History is defined as a record of how Christianity started, evolved and its influence on society. However, the genesis, development and the impact of Christianity upon society must be based on credible investigative sources such as archaeological findings and documents of records covering past occurrences. Church History thus narrates the supernatural activities of the Holy Spirit in the church over the centuries to carry out God's redemptive agenda among His creation.

The dividends of church history are clearly defined. Synthetically church history has the ability to connect the past records of the church to cotemporary times with the intent of encouraging further impact with regard to the propagation

of the gospel message. Church History has what it takes to present the gem of interpreting present day church dogmas. Church History serves as a guide in that it feeds the present generation not only the successes of the past but its failures. This makes the church of today to avoid repeating certain mistakes the church of yesterday committed. Church History has what it takes to motivate the individual to anticipate a successful Christian life as in the case of the icons in the history of the church. Studies about the history of the church presents to the church worker, minister of the gospel, theologian or the student of history a graphical view of systematic theology in the development of church history. Finally, church history makes us appreciate the past history and culture are not divorced. The student of history therefore – becomes tolerant towards people from other denominations and others who observe practices that differ from his but are not necessarily doctrinally unacceptable.

Church History can be classified into seven different groupings. The political dimension of church history unfolds the relationship between the Christian church and the secular state. A proper appreciation of the relationship between these two entities will enable one to appropriately interpret church history.

Secondly, propagation plays a vital role in the story of the Christian church. The success of the growth of the church can be attributed to effective propagation of the gospel. In the account of the growth of the church, we learn of men and women who exhibited unalloyed commitment to the cause of the gospel to the extent of being martyred.

Thirdly, in the course of the propagation, persecution was the result of the adherents. Ironically, instead of these accounts being viewed as a tragedy they served as stepping-stones to advance the cause of the church.

Fourthly, as the church grow numerically and geographically there was the need for the instituting the administration of the church. Polity thus deals with the kind of church government would adopt that rhymes with the forms of worship the church adopts.

Fifthly, polemics deals with the way and manner the church stood its grounds by opposing false teaching in order to advance its cause. This gave rise to the emergence of apologists, whose writings refuted the false claims of the heretics.

Praxis, is the sixth grouping. It is the practalizing of the doctrines of the Christian faith in every aspect of everyday life. Presentation is the last of the groupings. It is the study of the totality of church ministry. This includes the educational system of the church, hymnology, liturgy, architecture, art and preaching.

Cains (1993) places the various periods of church history in to three divisions: Ancient church History 5 B.C – A.D 590, Medieval church History 590 – 1517 and modern church History 1517 – present Day Ancient church History is the period when the Christian religion was birthed. The church was born when Christ was crucified, died and resurrected. Christ's successors were His disciples who were later acknowledged as Apostles.

Christianity initially operated within environs of Jerusalem and Judea. After a few decades of operating within the Judean region, the church spread its

tentacles beyond the borders of Israel into gentile settlements. All these occurred in the midst of stiff opposition from the Roman Empire. Even though the opposition was intense and resulted in persecution, many were the adherents who were martyred. When Christianity was recognized as part of Judaism, there was calm. When it distanced itself from Judaism it was seen as a secret society and was therefore considered as a threat to the Roman emperor, hence posing political danger to Caesar. Religiously, Christian worship was conducted in secrecy and there were rumours the Christians conducted immoral practices. It was also speculated that the observance of the Lord's supper which involved the eating and drinking, the Lord's body and blood was misinterpreted as cannibalism. Socially, the Graeco – Roman encouraged polytheism.

Christianity abhorred polytheism and discouraged its majority low-class adherents to refrain from the pagan worship. They were disliked and considered, as anti-social hence the persecution. Economically, the building of idols was a lucrative trade. Christianity not only preached against this practice but encouraged its majority low – class followers not to participate in the trade. The result was persecution. Apologists arose from within the church to withstand this external opposition through writing whilst polemical writers took care of the heresies that were creating internal impediments. The church was also confronted with the problem that came up as a result of their merger with the state. The state dominated the merger in order that the Graeco – Roman culture will not be extinct; the church had a problem in putting up with the merger with the state. Due to the intense persecution, the church did not have ample opportunity to refute the credal controversy. Even though some church fathers attempted to

resolve some theological disputes it was not enough to overcome the internal wrangling. Controversial institutional development consequently, the state exerted superior power, instituted bishops and the church eventually was known as the Roman Catholic church.

Medieval church history takes the concentration from Southern Europe to the Northern and the Western part of Europe. The Medieval church made frantic efforts to convert the Teutonic tribes to Christianity and to enforce Roman culture and Christianity into the Teutonic setting. By this action, the authority of the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church as an institution was entrenched.

The period of 590 – 800 did not favour the Roman Emperor. This was a period where the Eastern church encountered great opposition from Islam who took much of their territories. Even though the Pope succeeded in making alliance with the Teutons, he experienced great losses.

From 800 – 1054, church relations were strained. Due to theological disagreements there was a split between the Western and the Eastern church,. It was during this period that the Western church tried without success to build a relationship between the Roman church and the state that was acceptable to the Pope and the emperor.

1054 – 1305 was a period where the Roman Catholic church under Gregory VII and Innocent III, the church wielded a lot of power. Through the crusades they claimed power by overpowering the most powerful states in Europe. This made the Pope powerful.

In 1305 – 1517, personalities like John Wycliffe and John Hus made attempts to reform a papacy had been vested with too much power. This was a period when these were the emergence of the Renaissance, a host of existing nation – states and the middle – class. The refusal of the Papacy to reform made the advent of the Reformation a matter of course.

The period of 1517 till present day represents modern church history. Under this period were reformation and counter – reformation 1517 – 1648, Rationalism, Revivalism and Denominationalism 1648 – 1789, Revivalism, Mission and Modernism 1789 – 1914 and church and society in Tension since 1914.

The 1517 till present day was characterized by splits that resulted in – a split in the Roman Catholic Church. The ripple effect was Protestantism globally.

During the Reformation and Counter – Reformation period protestant churches emerged. To counter the upsurge of protestant churches, the Roman Catholic Church set up the Council of Trent, the Jesuits and the inquisition. These groups succeeded in stopping the spread of Protestantism in Europe and succeeded especially in Poland and Belgium and consolidated their dominance particularly in Central and South America, the Philippines and Vietnam.

From 1648 – 1789 during the period of Rationalism, Revivalism and Denominationalism, England introduced a kind of nationalism that was connected to deism. Even though it got on well with a good number of the protestant churches there were many others who preferred to be autonomous.

1789 – 1914 realized the revival of Catholicism. The protestant faction counteracted this revival by embarking on world missions. Later, the momentum

of nationalism began to wane and the theory of evolution replaced it thus introducing liberalism, a school of thought that was diametrically opposed to the Bible.

1914 till the present day witnessed the tension in the secular world between democracy and totalitarian system of governance. This system of governance has paved the way for neo-orthodoxy which has promoted an amalgamation of churches leading to ecumenism.

A Centenary Appraisal of Pentecostal – Charismatic Ministry

Vinson Synan (2001) appraises a century of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. At the turn of the century, the fire that emanated from the Reformation in the 16th century was waning. Neo – Orthodoxy had taken centre stage placing spirituality at the background. Neo – Orthodoxy was accompanied by secularism which was largely characterized by rationalism and intellectualism. This was a period in history where spirituality was at its lowest ebb.

After the historic watch – night service at the Bethel College, Topeka, Kansas on 31st December 1900, there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. From 1901, the fire from that service began to spread like bush fire. By the early part of the 20th century, denominationally Synan (2001) affirmed that pentecostals numbered more than 200 million; the largest protestant denomination.

The proprietor of the Bethel College, Topeka, Kansas, Charles, Parham produced the first batch of Spirit – filled believers with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Parham taught that tongues were the ‘Bible evidence’ of the baptism

in the Holy Spirit. He also added that “tongues were a supernatural impartation for the purposes of world evangelism”.

In 1906, William Seymour, a former student of Charles Parham. In a former African Methodist Episcopal church building at specifically 312 Azusa Street, Los Angeles, revival broke out with thousands being baptized with the evidence of speaking in tongues. There were several pilgrims from various parts of the United States of America. These people sent the fire they received to their various locations. One such example was Charles Harrison Mason. After visiting Azusa, he sent the fire to his church, Church Of God In Christ. Currently the Church Of God In Christ is the largest pentecostal denomination in America.

Synan (2001) says that the Pentecostal fire was carried beyond North America. J. Roswell Flower, the editor of ‘Pentecost’ a newsletter in the early 1900s recorded a phenomenal experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues in the various pentecostal denominations.

Thomas Barratt carried the revival to Western Europe. Through Barratt, Smith Wigglesworth received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and later become an international evangelist of legendary status. Under Barratt’s ministry many others who carried the revival to other parts of the world. Men like James Salter founded the Congo Evangelistic Mission. From Chicago, William Durham carried the Pentecostal fire across America to Canada, Italy, and South America in 1908. From South Bend, Indiana, two Swedish Baptist Immigrants, Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren after receiving the Pentecostal experience, responded to the call of God and relocated to Brazil and the result was the founding of the

Brazilian Assemblies of God. The Brazilian Assemblies of God developed into the largest Pentecostal ministry in the world.

In 1907, John G. Lake, having experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit migrated to South Africa with a large missionary team. John G. Lake is acknowledged as the father of African Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism reached Asia through Mary Rumsey, an American missionary who also was a beneficiary of the Azusa experience. Rumsey spread Pentecostalism in Japan and Korea. In Korea, she started a Bible College that trained a host of Korean nationals. One of her products was David Yonggi Cho who currently pastors the Yoido Full Gospel Church. Synan (2001) describes the Yoido Full Gospel Church as “the largest single Christian congregation in the world”. These accounts of the results of the Azusa experience the Pentecostal message was carried to all the continents, hence reaching the whole thus fulfilling in Acts 1:8 mandates.

Synan (2001) attests that the major Pentecostal denominations worldwide find their roots from the 1906 Azusa Revival. The congregants of the Pentecostal churches were formerly members of the mainline denominations. At the beginning of the 20th century when the Pentecostal revival of baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues occurred, these beneficiaries could not be accommodated in their respective mainline churches. Consequently, they were compelled to start their own churches.

The Pentecostal revival did not only remain within the Pentecostal fraternity. After the second world war, the charismatic renewal made its way into the mainline churches. Initially, priests and members from the mainline fraternity who exhibited tongues speaking traits were expelled from their various churches.

By the middle of the 20th century, the charismatic wave had engulfed most of the mainline churches.

Also, after the second world war, another phenomenon came up among the Pentecostals. These were the healing evangelists. Synan (2001) says that they founded large independent ministries. They were mainly involved in crusades, tent meetings, revivals, healing meetings and electronic media evangelism that was later dubbed 'televangelism'. They formed an association named the Voice Of Healing. The organization published a newsletter with Gordon Lindsay, a former Assemblies of God Pastor as its first editor. The name of the newsletter was also Voice Of Healing and it published the achievements and testimonies of the healing evangelists. Notable among the healing evangelists were William Branham, Oral Roberts, Jack Coe, A.A Allen, T.L Osborn and Kathryn Khulman to mention a few.

With the passage of time, Synan (2001) says that people began to hunger for something more than just miracles. The growing charismatic movement developed an appetite for God's word. The result was the rise of teaching ministries. The emphasis of the charismatic movement shifted from healing and miracles to exposition of the Word of God. These charismatic Bible Teachers rented public auditoriums and church buildings and organized teaching services. The leading proponents of the teaching revival were Kenneth E. Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Frederick K. C Price, Marilyn Hickey, John Osteen and Pat Robertson. Between the 1970s to the 1980s other personalities like Joyce Meyer, Benny Hinn, Creflo Dollar, Richard Roberts and Jerry Savelle joined the 'teaching movement'.

The charismatic movement later progressed to the building of media empires. Notable examples are the Trinity Broadcasting Network, owned by Paul and Jan Crouch, Christian Broadcasting Network, founded by Pat Robertson and Daystar Television Network founded by Marcus and Joni Lamb.

The teaching ministries not only exposed fellow Christians to appreciate the scriptures but to be educated theologically. This gave rise to the proliferation of Bible Colleges. A few others went further to set up universities. The popular ones that come to mind are the Oral Roberts University Tulsa, Oklahoma bearing the name of the founder and Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia founded by Pat Robertson.

Method of Study

The method of study used is the survey method in which interviews and consultation of books were used.

Organization of Chapters

The first chapter gives the background of the research work. It talks about what prompted the researcher to write on this topic. The objective of the study is outlined; basically chronologically arranging the church's history and distinguishing the church from other Pentecostal-Charismatic churches by reason of its uniqueness. Finally the chapter spells out its significance as a contribution to knowledge in various aspects of society.

The second chapter discusses the origin of Victory Bible Church International, how it started, how it got its membership, its purpose, mission, value statements, theology and its ethos.

The third chapter highlights the methodology of the research; how the research was carried out.

The fourth chapter talks about the uniqueness of Victory Bible Church International by way of its contribution to Pentecostal-Charismatic ministry in Ghana.

Finally, this research work assesses the prospects of Victory Bible Church International; what the church is doing and how it is going to benefit Ghanaians.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ORIGIN OF VICTORY BIBLE CHURCH INTERNATIONAL

Introduction

The origin of Victory Bible Church International can be traced to the Jesus People Fellowship days. Even though Victory Bible Church International did not emerge from Jesus People Fellowship the two ministries have several things in common. However we will commence by appraising the origin of charismatic ministry in Ghana.

The Origin of Charismatism in Ghana

This new phenomenon gathered momentum from the middle of the 1970s when American healing evangelist Oral Granville Roberts started airing his television broadcast on Ghana's sole broadcasting network, Ghana Television. This Pentecostal-charismatic broadcast exposed Ghanaian Christianity to another mode of the gospel that was foreign to them. On the programme, a picturesque view of the edifices of the Oral Evangelistic Association and University were shown. At the tail-end of the programme, the addresses of Oral Roberts' ministry and University were displayed and the viewers were encouraged to write to receive free books and monthly

newsletters authored by Roberts' outfit. Roberts' materials were spread in Ghanaian circles. This made Roberts' theologies and terminologies popular amongst Ghanaians.

This continued until in 1982 when his telecast was taken off and by that time, Roberts had become popular to his Ghanaian viewers and had great influence. His influence was further heightened when after six years of silence, Roberts' fame was revived with his visit to Ghana on 4th July 1988 to hold a one-day Miracle Crusade in Accra. Roberts, thus influenced Pentecostal – Charismatic Christians in Ghana. Another personality who fuelled the fire lit by Roberts was Neo–Pentecostal healing Evangelist, Benson Andrew Idahosa. Like Roberts, Idahosa's telecast dubbed 'Redemption Hour' was characteristically charismatic and was beamed at primetime. Idahosa also organized a mammoth crusade in the cities of Accra and Tema. At the end of the crusade, he offered scholarships to men and women who were willing to be trained for ministry work in his Bible School, All Nations For Christ Bible Institute in Benin City, Nigeria. The result was products like Christie Doe - Tetteh of Solid Rock Chapel, Godwin Normanyo of Fountain of Life Ministries, George Ferguson – Laing of Living Praise Chapel, Charles Agyin Asare of Word Miracle Church International and Matthew Addae – Mensah of Gospel Light International Church to name a few. These persons and many other Idahosa – trained ministers formed the first generation leaders of the Charismatic Movement in Ghana.

According to Larbi (2001), in the fullness of time, the evangelical fellowships turned out to be the source of membership for the neo-Pentecostal or charismatic churches. From the early 1970s to the early 1980s the town

fellowships developed three emphases within different periods. The period 1970 – 1978 was an era of evangelism. There was stress on all forms of evangelism that ensured that non-Christians would be proselytized. Being the preoccupation of the town fellowship Christians, they set targets in certain periods of time within which certain number of people were expected to be converted.

From 1978 – 1983, the emphasis was on prayer. Coincidentally, those were periods when the economic and political situation of the nation of Ghana was chequered. It was an epoch that saw a multitude of military juntas, of which three were successful. This period also presented Ghanaians with economic hardships which compelled people to leave the shores of the country to seek greener pastures in the neighbouring countries in the sub-region. There were in these periods unfavourable occurrences such as repatriation of Ghanaians from Nigeria and famine. These prevailing vicissitudes compelled Christians to do prevailing prayer. Simultaneously, the Christian leaders attached prophetic meaning to the unusual happenings to say that something unprecedented was in the offing. These prayer meetings benefited many a Christian because they were strengthened and encouraged.

The period of 1983 was the year that quickly followed with the emphasis of indoctrination. This era also came with the emphasis on the ‘local church concept’. This was because the charismatics were of the conviction that God intended the fellowships to metamorphose into New Testament Churches. Alongside the teachings, came Kenneth Hagin’s books, tapes and free monthly subscription of the ‘Word Of Faith’ magazine. Other magazines like, Fred Price’s ‘Messenger’, T.L. Osborn’s ‘Faith Digest’, Marilyn Hickey’s

'Outpouring' Steve Strang's 'Charisma' Kenneth Copeland's 'Voice of Victory' Charles Capps' 'Concept Of Faith' and Oral Roberts' 'Abundant Life' magazines had flooded Christian circles. Predominantly, E. W. Kenyon's materials, which were the sources of reference of the above-mentioned magazines also were in large circulation in the fellowships.

The Effects of Charismatism

The effect of the missionary enterprise of Benson Idahosa in the middle 1970s was an imprint that resulted in the genesis of charismatism in Ghanaian Christianity. His television ministry and crusades resulted in the formation of Redemption Hour Faith Ministry. He employed indigenes like Emmanuel Mettle, Isaac Agyare, George Ferguson Laing, Ransford Yeboah and Oduro Anokye to shepherd the congregation. Idahosa as already said, offered scholarships to people interested in ministerial training to enrol at his All Nations For Christ Bible Institute. The afore-mentioned persons and many others were beneficiaries of this opportunity were largely responsible for the initiation of charismatism in Ghana

The first products of Idahosa's ministerial training school surfaced in the late 1970s. The most prominent of them was Nicholas Duncan-Williams. He was noted for popularizing the messages similar to the North American charismatic televangelists. Through his ministry multitudes of other charismatic leaders have emerged. From the early to middle of the 1980s leaders like Reginald Ofori-Twumasi, Mensa Otabil, Michael Essel, Tackie-Yarboi, Isaac Quaye, Charles Agyin Asare, Dag Heward-Mills and Eastwood Anaba also sprang up.

Categorization of Charismatism

Larbi (2001) comments that due to theological emphasis, charismatics can be grouped into two categories: Abundant Life Ministries and Deliverance Ministries. Besides their belief in the Evangelical-Pentecostal message of the Triune God and the Deity of Christ, Abundant Life Ministries have a strong emphasis on the 'health and wealth' gospel. Within this very strand, there is another paradigm shift propounded single-handedly by Mensa Otabil that measures abundance by productivity, work and the exercise of one's talents. The Deliverance Ministries carry the philosophy that though one may, have experienced regeneration, holistic salvation is complete when undergoes deliverance.

The Jesus' People Fellowship

The fellowship was started by Clement Amankwaah Asihene, Alex Ato Acquah and Frank Adjei Danso in the early 1980s. Asihene was then a student at Presbyterian Training College at Akropong – Akwapim whilst Acquah and Danso attended Pope John and West Africa Secondary Schools respectively. They were all Scripture Union Presidents in their various schools. During holidays, they thought of initiating a gathering for fellow students for the purpose of fellowship. Frank Danso consulted the Senior House Master of West Africa Secondary School to permit them to use one of the classrooms for fellowship. When the fellowship began, the three co-founders went to schools to preach especially during the long vacation periods. During those periods, private lectures were organized at the various Secondary Schools during the long vacation (between July – September) for secondary

school students. These young men preached at the various lecture centres since a lot of students converged there. The fellowship grew very fast within a brief period of time. Alex Acquah met an old time friend, by name Elijah Saforo whom the former invited to attend the fellowship.

Saforo was also the Scripture Union President at the Ghana Secondary School, Koforidua. Saforo in the process of time brought Emmanuel Ackun. Asihene brought in Samuel Nunoo and Divine Danso. Nunoo was then a Scripture Union leader at the Presbyterian Boys' Secondary School, Legon. Nunoo succeeded in bringing in a colleague of his, Opoku, who later formed Transcontinental Evangelistic Association. Opoku in turn brought Isaac Quaye (currently the founder and General Overseer of Word of Life Christian Centre, headquartered in Accra).

Tackie-Yarboi – Asihene Affinity

On one of the missions to schools, Acquah and Asihene went to preach at the City Business College at the invitation Cornelius Adja Cofie (currently the General Secretary of Victory Bible Church International). Cofie was then the Senior Prefect and Scripture Union leader of the school. The preaching of Asihene and Acquah was described as 'judgmental'. At another opportune moment when the City Business College Scripture Union leadership invited Asihene and Acquah, Cofie invited a crony of his, Nii Tackie-Yarboi to come and listen to their 'judgmental preaching'. Tackie-Yarboi inquired about the roots of Asihene and Acquah and this caused him to pay a casual visit to their fellowship. Asihene brought a friend to his, George Asare to act as leader of the fellowship when schools re-opened and he and Acquah had left for school.

In the absence of the co-founders, Asare invited Tackie-Yarboi to preach at the fellowship. At another occasion when Asihene and Acquah were present Tackie-Yarboi was invited again to preach at the fellowship. Asihene appeared impressed with Tackie-Yarboi's maturity. As a result Asihene announced at a fellowship meeting that Tackie-Yarboi was the new leader of the fellowship. The leadership of the fellowship named the group as Jesus' People Fellowship. Under Tackie-Yarboi's leadership the fellowship enjoyed maturity and spiritual direction.

Christian Evangelical Ministry

Christian Evangelical Ministry was founded in 1975 by Kate Coffie at Abeka Lapaz in Accra. The original name was Shelter Revival Church. The church was later moved to Labadi. Kate was married to one John Alexander Coffie, a Pastor. The marriage between John Alexander and Kate was later dissolved, so Kate left the country for the United States. Besides the Jesus' People Fellowship that was held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the co-founders and their members adopted Christian Evangelical Ministry as their church base. John Alex Coffie took over moved the leadership and the church from Labadi to the Oxford Cinema at Accra New Town. Asihene then, had become instrumental in the Christian Evangelical Ministry leadership.

Asihene introduced Tackie-Yarboi to John Alexander Coffie. Tackie-Yarboi was by then a member of Agbozo's Ghana Evangelical Society. Tackie-Yarboi pulled out from Ghana Evangelical Society and within a short time rose to the position of John Alexander Coffie's deputy.

Release upon Agreement

In the process of time, a leadership misunderstanding erupted between John Alex Coffie and Tackie-Yarboi. Coffie as the leader was away from church for most of the time engaging himself in crusades. He had the flair for evangelistic service whilst Tackie-Yarboi's flair was that of pastoral and Bible teaching. Tackie-Yarboi's pastoral abilities were so pronounced that Coffie's presence was hardly felt. Tackie-Yarboi confronted Coffie for their roles to be re-defined; for the former to be in charge of the pastoral and for the latter to be responsible for the evangelism since he was hardly seen at church. Coffie was adamant, so Tackie-Yarboi made his intentions known that he wanted to be released to pursue his God - given mandate.

As a result, there were three separate leader's meetings on this disagreement. These were the minutes of the three meetings:

1st Interim Board Of Elders Meeting

Christian Evangelical Ministry

Date: 11th May 1985

Agenda:

1. The structures of the Ministry
2. The mobilization and Integration of the Ministry
3. Sunday School – children's department
4. Co-ordination of Board of elders, plans and visions of individuals, publications.
5. Akyem Akropong Crusade

The Structures of the Ministry

On this issue, Evangelist Clement Asihene mentioned that before a decision is taken on the structures of the ministry, he asked Pastor Tackie-Yarboi to disclose his future plans and visions to enable leadership form a basis on the issue. This is because Pastor Tackie-Yarboi perceived a difference in ministerial giftings which was very conflicting. Pastor Tackie-Yarboi affirmed strongly that he has plans of establishing his own association or ministry within the shortest possible time and he is also taking plans to fulfill the ministry that God has given him.

However, Clement went on to say that looking at the ministry – gifts outlined in scripture, it would be appropriate for every minister to locate his or her area of calling. He went further to declare that he recognized Tackie-Yarboi as Pastor and was ready to submit his allegiance to the latter's leadership.

Evangelist Alex Coffie stressed firmly that regarding this issue, he was not prepared to hand over pastoral duties to Pastor Tackie-Yarboi. By the declaration of Alex Coffie, Tackie-Yarboi gave his final decision to resign from Christian Evangelical Ministry. His resignation was purely on "principle and direction". The Board of Elders however accepted the decision of Pastor Tackie-Yarboi. Adja Cofie exhorted Tackie-Yarboi to exercise patience and walk in love.

Meanwhile the Board of Elders was dissolved and an Interim Board of Elders was set in operation. The Interim Board of Elders was scheduled to meet on the 18th May 1985 at 2:00pm at the same venue

2nd Extraordinary Meeting Of Board Of Elders Of The Interim Christian Evangelical Ministry

Date: 18th May 1985.

Agenda:

Setting The Ministry In Order

Clement Asihene told the house to be mindful in locating the appropriate ministry – gifts and offices that God had placed at their disposal.

In passing, Adja Cofie, took a swipe at the Interim Board Members as being responsible for the leakage of confidential reports of their meetings. On the issue of locating the right ministry offices, Adja stressed that the minister is accountable to God and must therefore maintain a sense of responsibility.

Martha Asante suggested that separation must be avoided and the various ministers must rather concentrate on operating in their ministries to enhance unity in the Body of Christ. Elijah Saforo, Samuel Quaye, and Ebenezer Sendey, all seconded Martha Asante's assertion.

Patricia Asante was unhappy about a statement Tackie-Yarboi made concerning the church leadership. Tackie-Yarboi was called upon to explain the statement he had made earlier on. He explained that he was not comfortable with the existing leadership structures in Christian Evangelical Ministry.

Senior Pastor Alex Coffie was called upon to express his reaction to the views of some of the members of the Interim Board of Elders. In response, Alex Coffie emphasized that God had not told him to handover his position to anybody. He went ahead and said that God had given him a different vision and therefore he is giving Tackie-Yarboi permission to go

ahead with whatever he wanted to do. Asked whether he would be organizing church services every Sunday, Tackie-Yarboi responded in the affirmative.

3rd Interim Board Of Elders Meeting Of The Christian Evangelical Ministry

Date: 21st May 1985

This was a meeting for Pastor Alex Coffie to deliver his final decision with regard to the leadership issue in Christian Evangelical Ministry. Pastor Coffie mentioned that what his stance from the first meeting remains untenable.

Evangelist Asihene advised Pastor Tackie-Yarboi to leave Christian Evangelical Ministry without expecting to receive any equipment and to start from the scratch.

Asihene was chosen by the Interim Board of Elders to mount the pulpit on Sunday 26th May 1985 and explain the issue and final decision to the entire congregation. The meeting ended at 8:15p.m in a relatively relaxed atmosphere.

On the 11th 18th and 21st of May 1985, the Board of Elders deliberated on the matter and this was the outcome: John Alex Coffie said he was not prepared to relinquish the pastoral leadership and Tackie-Yarboi stuck to his opinion by wanting to be released to start a new work.

On the final meeting day, 21st May 1985; John Alex Coffie said he was releasing Tackie-Yarboi to start his own church. Clement Asihene said he acknowledged Tackie-Yarboi as pastor and was willing to go with him.

On the 26th of May 1985, Clement Asihene announced to the church the decision of leadership. (Minutes of Board of Elders of the Christian

Evangelical Ministry, May 1985) Alex Acquah described it as amicable settlement.

On the 2nd June 1985, Victory Bible church International was born. The first name adopted was Jesus People Outreach Centre. Tackie-Yarboi describes that though there is similarity in the name; the church Jesus People Outreach Centre is a separate entity from the fellowship, Jesus People Fellowship.

Victory Bible Church International

Victory Bible Church International started on the 2nd June 1985. The first name of the church was Jesus' People Outreach Centre. The first service recorded an attendance of sixty-two; the name was changed to Victory Christian Centre. The name was changed again to Victory Bible Church and finally Victory Bible Church International. Based on the vision Tackie-Yarboi received from God, Victory Bible Church International therefore built on the commission statement "Raising the foundation of many generations". Currently Victory Bible Church International has branches in Ghana and certain parts of the world.

The Emergence of Church Leadership

Victory Bible Church International started with four founding pastors and eight founding Elders. According to Tackie-Yarboi, the four founding pastors were Tackie-Yarboi himself, Clement Asihene, Elijah Saforo and Emmanuel Ackun.

The Board of Elders comprised Clement Asihene, Elijah Saforo, Cornelius Adja Cofie, Albert Asante, Ebenezer Sendey, Samuel Ofoliquaye Quaye, Seth Aryitey, Martha Asante and Frank Adjei Danso. (Kodua, 2004) They formed the cream of church's leadership. Tackie-Yarboi assumed the title General Overseer of the church and Clement Asihene as his assistant. January 1st 2001, a new constitution was introduced. The founder and leader's position of General Overseer was changed to Presiding Bishop as prescribed by the new constitution.

Asihene's position was changed to the Deputy Presiding Bishop. The Board of Elders gave way to the General Council which is the highest policy making body of the church. The Executive and the Apostolic Councils follow after the General Council. The founding Pastors currently occupy positions in the top three councils of the church.

The Background of the Key Leaders

Nii Apiakai Tackie-Yarboi

Nii Apiakai Tackie-Yarboi was born on the 14th November 1958 at Kumasi to the late Amugi Tackie-Yarboi and Vivian Atswei Sowah. Tackie-Yarboi comes from the Amugi Royal Family. He attended Darley '2' Middle and Primary School Accra and the Ebenezer Secondary School for his secondary education. In 1974, at a scripture Union electing, a brother named Peter Dzandza preached and Tackie-Yarboi accepted Christ. During the 1978/79 academic year, he was elected as President of the Scripture Union at Ebenezer Secondary School. Later his secondary education, Tackie-Yarboi had short stint with Youth For Christ and the Ghana Evangelical Society.

During his fellowship with Agbozo's Ghana Evangelical Society, he was mentored by Nii John Gashong who is currently the Founder and Senior Pastor of World Bible Missionary Church in Accra. In about 1982 he met Clement Asihene. Tackie-Yarboi was made President of the Jesus People Fellowship. Asihene introduced Tackie-Yarboi to John Alex Coffie of Christian Evangelical Ministry. It was then that he entered into full-time Christian Ministry.

Tackie-Yarboi came into contact with Mensa Otabil, Obeng Darko, Michael Essel, Isaac Quaye, Ampiah Kwofie and Eric Kwapong when they had a prayer meeting Kwapong's mother's house known as the "Emmanuel Villa House of Prayer". They shared common experiences as they circulated amongst themselves books written by John G. Lake, Moody, Spurgeon, Finney, E.W Benyon and Kenneth E. Hagin. The attendants of the Emmanuel Villa House of Prayer turned out to be the cream of the Neo-Pentecostal movement (Larbi, 2001).

Tackie-Yarboi was ordained in 1986 by Reverend Jimmy Watson, a White missionary from the Faith Fellowship Bible Institute, United States of America. Tackie-Yarboi is currently the Presiding Bishop of Victory Bible Church International and the Chairman of the Executive and Apostolic Councils, governing bodies of the church. Tackie-Yarboi also oversees hundreds of churches within and without Ghana and is the senior pastor of the headquarters church of about 2,500 memberships at Awoshie, Accra. Tackie-Yarboi hosts a daily radio broadcast dubbed 'Voice of Victory' and he is the President of Victory Bible Training Institute, a Ministerial school. Tackie-

Yarboi has authored – books; “*The Believer’s Mind*”, “*Dreams of the Night*”, “*Overcoming Depression*”.

Tackie-Yarboi, also a member of the Minister’s Fellowship International headed by Dirck Iverson, Potter’s House International Pastoral Alliance headed by Thomas D. Jakes and the Faith Fellowship Assemblies headed by Jimmy Watson. He has undertaken the Special Chief Executive Programme for Church Managers and Chief Executive Programme for Church Managers all at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration. Tackie-Yarboi got married to Dora (Nee Sackey-Addo) on 20th December 1986 and they are blessed with three children; Nii Sorse, Nii Dromo and Naa Ashardey (N. Tackie Yarboi, personal communication, July 13, 2006).

Clement Amankwah Asihene

Clement Amankwah Asihene was born on the 5th of July 1959 to the late Edmund Asihene and Ernestina Addo at the Okomfo Anokye Hospital in Kumasi. Clement started his education at the University Primary in Kumasi. The family moved to Cape Coast briefly and then to Accra. In Accra, Clement continued his education University Primary School at Legon and the Ring Road East Middle School at Kanda. Clement sat for the Common Entrance Education and went to Swedru Secondary School. During his Secondary School days, he was a singer in the school band and kept a religious composure. During Secondary School days, Asihene responded to altar call and was converted but it was short lived. Presbyterian Training College at Akronpong-Akwapim was where Asihene had his Post Secondary Training.

Asihene underwent difficult moments when his parents divorced. In 1978, he was contemplating on committing suicide when Alex Acquah preached the gospel to him and he was converted. Asihene together with Acquah and Danso gathered students for fellowship and Jesus People Fellowship was initiated. Asihene also had series of All-night Fellowship with Ghana Evangelical Society when they were meeting at the Old Drama Studio. In the early 1980s Asihene says he was divinely connected to Tackie-Yarboi. Though Asihene was then the leader of the Jesus People Fellowship, the fellowship did not have any proper direction until Tackie-Yarboi assumed the reins of leadership.

He completed his teacher training education in 1983 and in July the following year, he was married to Cecilia Quashie. A month later he stopped teaching and launched into full-time ministry.

When Asihene joined Jesus People Outreach Centre, he founded Spring Life Ministries, an evangelistic outreach under the umbrella of the church with the intent to win souls into the church. However, in order to effectively utilize the church's resources, the operation of Spring Life Ministries was suspended.

In the early 1990s, Asihene was dispatched to London initiate a missionary work there. From there, the church's international missionary enterprise started and expanded. It was as a result of this church planting exercise that Victory Bible Church added International to its name to indicate the church has added an international dimension to its operation. He was the first Dean of Students of the Victory Bible Training Institute. Asihene currently has a triple responsibility as the Deputy Presiding Bishop of Victory

Bible Church International, the Pastor in charge of Victory Bible Churches in London and the Foreign Missions Director. He recently completed a Diploma in Business Management, from the Institute of Business Administration And Management in London.

Asihene has written two books; *Victory Praise Volume One*, a compilation of Praise and worship songs, *Ministers' Handbook for Wedding Ceremony*, the Official wedding ceremony Manual for Victory Bible Church International. Asihene has two musical recordings to his credit; *N'a humoboro* a Compact Disc he recorded in 2004 and "Rev. Eric Kwapong and Friends" a praise and worship recording he authored together with Rev. Eric Kwapong.

Asihene got married to Cecilia Asihene (nee Quashie) and they are blessed with four children; Kwabena, Kukwua, Baffour Junior and Nhyira (C. Asihene, personal communication, July 30, 2006).

Emmanuel Kwadwo Ackun

Emmanuel Kwadwo Ackun was born on the 21st of March 1960 to John Ackun and Mary Ackun (nee Gyasi) in Accra. Ackun had his Primary Education at Accra New town 11 Cluster of Schools and Kotobabi '8' Middle School respectively. Ackun had his Secondary Education at O'reilley Secondary School in Accra. After secondary education, Ackun worked at Kingsway Stores. In 1979, Ackun at born again at a programme at the Kpehe Methodist Church at Caprice, a suburb of Accra. Whilst attending the Methodist church, Ackun came to contact with Andrews Asare, the Founder and Leader of Faith Foundation International, a neo-charismatic ministry at

Kotobabi, a suburb of Accra. Ackun got associated with both Faith Foundation and Jesus People Fellowships.

Alongside, together with other concerned young Methodists, they formed a group with the aim of reviving the Methodist Church. The zeal welling up in Ackun compelled him to undertake ministerial training at Idahosa's All Nations For Christ Bible Institute in Benin City, Nigeria. Ackun had his theological training from January 1984 to December 1984 and earned a Diploma in Christian Ministries. Whilst in Benin City, Ackun tendered the office garden of the late Archbishop Benson Isahosa. Idahosa appreciated the good work of Ackun and once gave him money as a gift. Upon graduation, Ackun returned to Ghana in January 1985. Ackun kept fellowshipping with both Faith Foundation International and Jesus People Fellowship until 2nd June 1985 when he joined Jesus People Outreach Centre fully as an Associate Pastor. During the formative years of Victory Bible Church International, Ackun founded an evangelistic ministry under the church: Glorious Revivals Ministry. This ministry organized crusades, revival meetings and programmes like 'Experiencing His Glory' and 'Impact' an annual programme. Like the case of Spring Life Ministries, the Church Leadership wanted to make good use of its resources and to have a common vision; so Glorious Revivals Ministries was dissolved.

Ackun has productions to his credit; *'Irresistible Man; A Winning Secrets for Great Husbands, Well-Packaged Love and Glorious Harvester'* a monthly newsletter of Glorious Revival Ministry. Ackun got married to Georgina Yayra Ackun (nee Akinny) on 4th October 1986 and they are blessed

with three children; Veralyn, Debbye and Duke. (E. Ackun, personal communication, March, 2006).

Cornelius Adja Cofie

Cornelius Adja Cofie was born on the 20th June 1959 to the late Raymond Torgbor Cofie and Victoria Ayikaikor Thompson. Adja Cofie began his formal education at Bishop Boys' Primary School in Accra. His Secondary Education was at the City Business College and New Juaben College for his sixth form. Adja Cofie enrolled at the Institute of Professional Studies at Legon where he pursued the Institute of Chartered Accountant, a professional course. Adja now holds a Masters Degree in Governance and Leadership from the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration.

Adja Cofie became a christian as a result of the influence of Tackie-Yarboi. Cofie followed Tackie-Yarboi to whatever fellowship he joined such as Ghana Evangelical Society, Jesus People Fellowship, Christian Evangelical Ministry and currently Victory Bible Church International where he is now ordained minister and the church's General Secretary. Adja Cofie has written one book titled *Enjoying Sex in Marriage*.

Adja is married to Theresa (nee Okwabi) and they are blessed with three children; Dromo, Shidaa and Dzormor. (C. Cofie, personal communication, April 15, 2006)

Albert Kwasi Asante

Albert Kwasi Asante was born on 9th November 1958 to the late Charles Ansong and Grace Agyeiwaa Ansong at Akim – Breman. Asante had his primary education at Accra New Town 3 and 4 Primary School and Accra New Town 7 and 8 Middle School. From there, Asante attended Ghana High Technical School and Accra Technical Training Centre there he specialized in automobile engineering.

Albert got born again at a Idahosa Crusade that was organized in Accra. Albert's spiritual roots stem from Church of The Lord Brotherhood (Aladura). In his bid to quench his spirit thirst, Albert joined Christian Evangelical Ministry, Jesus People Fellowship, Juda Praise led by Eric Kwapong. Abba Adonai Ministries led by Elijah Saforo and currently Victory Bible Church International.

Albert Asante has special interest in music. He is gifted with the playing of the drums but more especially the saxophone. Albert started playing the Saxophone from 1972 but attached more seriousness to it in 1976. From there Albert's special skill has the accolade of the charismatic fraternity as the 'Man on the Sax'.

Albert has three albums to his credit: "*Wonsano adwuma*", "*Okonkroni*" (2005) and "*Lord Prepare Me*".

Albert has specialized in converting deviant young people to be transformed and live a meaningful life. Albert is the Music Director of Victory Bible Church International. Albert Asante is married to Martha (nee Seshie) and they are blessed with three children; Albert Jnr, Joshua and Alberta. (A. Asante, personal communication, August 6, 2006).

Richard Ampadu Duku

Richard Ampadu-Duku was born on the 17th of June 1958 to the late Kwadwo Duku Twum and the late Christiana Asante. He had his education at New Era Preparatory School at Tudu, a suburb of Accra and Mpraeso Secondary School.

Ampadu got born again whilst on admission at the Ankaful Hospital in 1973. Ampadu's sickness was diagnosed by the doctors to be 'high fever'. The sickness aggravated and Ampadu's Elder Sister, Beatrice Twum and her friends came to pray for him. Ampadu received his healing and accepted Christ as his Saviour. Ampadu joined Assemblies of God Church from 1973 – 1987. Ampadu was a Sunday School Superintendent for nine years and an Assistant to his Pastor.

Ampadu was elected chapel prefect at Mpraeso Secondary School. At the end of his term, he was presented with a book titled 'Christ Is Your Life' authored by Horner Duncan. After reading the book, the urge for ministry came so strong upon him. One Pastor Omane from the Assemblies of God came to preach at Mpraeso Secondary School and made an altar call for young men who wanted to enter into ministry. Ampadu respond to the invitation. He wanted to enrol at the Southern Ghana Bible Institute; an Assemblies of God Bible College, but he was disqualified because his age was below the requisite age of 18years. Ampadu however exhibited leadership qualities when he was elected the Senior Prefect and Scripture Union President at Mpraeso Secondary School. At the tender age of twenty, he was a member of the Board of Deacons and a School Teacher at the Cape Coast Assemblies of God Church. Ampadu had the opportunity to be admitted into the University of

Cape Coast but he pulled after one month because he did not like the courses that he was offered.

However, during his brief stay at the university campus, two people influenced his life and these enhanced his preparation for ministry. Emmanuel Otoo, Ampadu's room mate who was then a Sunday School Teacher at the North Kaneshie Assemblies of God in Accra, taught him how to do effective Bible Teaching. Asiedu Bondzie, a colleague, was a gifted musician. Bondzie taught Ampadu how to play the guitar. Bible teaching and the playing of the guitar became the foundation of Ampadu's ministry. When Ampadu left Cape Coast University campus, he formed two groups; 'Soul Seekers' and 'Sunshine Gospel Family' in Cape Coast. Prior to the formation of Sunshine Gospel Family, choral music was prevalent in Cape Coast. Ampadu initiated gospel music with instruments in Cape Coast and organized musical concerts that gave young people the opportunity to express their musical gifts. In May 1987, Ampadu had inkling to enter into full-time ministry. On 5th July 1988, Ampadu converted Sunshine Ministries, a Fellowship and singing group into Sunshine Family International Church. The church was later registered as Triumphant Bible Church in the course of time. Ampadu established contacts with Andrews Asare, Elijah Saforo and Emmanuel Ackun. Through Saforo, Triumphant Bible Church had close relationship with Victory Bible Church International. In 1989, when the government instructed that all churches register, Triumphant Bible Church came under Victory Bible Church International as a branch.

Ampadu-Duku is a member of the Executive and Apostolic Councils of Victory Bible Church International. He also serves as the Pastor in Charge

of Victory Bible Church International, Cape Coast and oversees the Central Sector; comprising of Victory Bible Church International churches in the Central and Western Regions. Ampadu has two publications to his credit: *Foot Prints; Thoughts on the essence of living and Be Wise As Serpents: The Daniel Generation Challenge*. He is married to Christiana (nee Ampah) and they live in Cape Coast. (R. Ampadu-Duku, personal communication, July 10, 2006).

Gershon Tamakloe

Gershon Tamakloe was born on the 25th of September 1957 to the late Joseph Atsu Tamakloe and the late Felicia Banini in Accra. Gershon had his Primary Education at Ecole Catholique de Kpalime in the Republic of Togo. Atsu Tamakloe, Gershon's father resettled his family at Sunyani where he was the Estate Manager at the Third Infantry Brigade; Liberation Barracks. Gershon continued his primary education at the Liberation Barracks Elementary School. The Tamakloe Family relocated again to Accra and Gershon completed his Primary education at Bethel Middle School at Accra New Town. Tamakloe later enrolled at the Accra Technical Training Centre for two years. Tamakloe continued at Ho Polytechnic and specialized in Block Work and Construction where he wrote the City And Guilds Examination.

Gershon got born again at a Scripture Union Meeting during his schooling at Accra Technical Training Institute on 15th September 1976. Gershon met Wilson Awasu who was then Traveling Secretary of Scripture Union. Awasu introduced Gershon to Fellowship Meetings that took place

every evening. Awasu eventually turned out to be Gershon's mentor. Benjamin Tamakloe, an elder brother of Gershon introduced the latter to Roman Ridge Fellowship founded by Selassie Sawyer – Williams and Calvary Baptist Church. At the Roman Ridge Fellowship, Gershon was taught by Selassie Sawyer-Williams how to study the Bible, pray, lead fellowship meetings and preached. At the Calvary Baptist Church, Gershon was a member of the Counsellors Evangelistic Ministry who embarked on outreach to schools, and prisons. Gershon held the position of Prayer Secretary both at Calvary Baptist Church Counsellors Evangelistic Ministry and Accra Technical Training Centre Scripture Union. At Calvary Baptist Church, Gershon joined the healing and deliverance team led by Wisdom Defeamakpor. In 1984, Gershon left Calvary Baptist Church and joined Alex Apenahia Ministries, a ministry whose cutting-edge was evangelism, healing and deliverance. Personally, Gershon was involved in schools evangelism. In 1986, after his wedding to Gifty in October, Gershon joined Victory Bible Church International the following month on full-time basis Gershon sensed the call of God upon his life but when he consulted the leadership but he was replied that the prerequisite for entering into ministry was for one to enrol at the Ghana Baptist Seminary at Abuakwa – Kumasi. Gershon felt the zeal upon him was too strong and that seminary education would quench the 'fire'. In 1986, Tamakloe joined Victory Bible Church International and formed Charisma Outreach Ministries, an evangelistic ministry that largely in involved in school evangelism. For the purpose of effective utilization of church resources and the formation of the Presbytery all evangelistic groups in Victory Bible Church were dissolved; hence Charisma Outreach Ministries

was dissolved as well. Gershon was ordained by Morris Cerullo and Alexander Ness at a Morris Cerullo School of Ministry held at Kumasi in 1985.

Gershon Tamakloe is a Senior Associate Minister of Victory Bible Church International. He is the Resident Pastor of the headquarters church, and heads the Intercessory, Home Cell and Deliverance Ministries in the church. Gershon is married to Gifty (nee Kumi) and they their union is blessed with three children; Delasi, Mawuena and Onam Tamakloe. (G. Tamakloe, personal communication, August 1, 2006)

Frank Adjei Danso

Frank Adjei Danso was born on the 25th of September 1962 to the late Richard Kofi Danso and Rose Ocran. Danso had his Primary education at Accra New Town 'Six' Primary and Kotobabi Boys' Middle School. He attended West Africa Secondary School and completed in 1982. Danso read a Diploma in Marketing at the Institute of Business Management at Madina, a suburb of Accra.

Frank got born again at a Scripture Union Meeting at West Africa Secondary School. He was nurtured spiritually at Scripture Union and Roman Ridge Fellowships. At West Africa Secondary School, Frank rose through the ranks to be the Prayer Secretary and eventually the Scripture Union President. At the Institute of Business Management, Frank was elected also as Scripture Union President.

Frank testifies that during the Jesus People Fellowship days there was a strong urge to enter into full-time ministry. Upon his completion of his

Diploma in Marketing programme, he turned down lucrative job offers to respond to the call to full-time ministry.

Frank Adjei Danso is a member of the Apostolic Council of Victory Bible Church International. He holds the position of Deputy Missions Director and Resident Pastor of the Tema Branch of Victory Bible Church International. Frank is married to Ellen (nee Koranteng). They are blessed with three children Frank Junior, Michael and Kate.

Samuel Ofoliquaye Quaye

Samuel Ofoliquaye Quaye was born on the 31st of August 1961 to Theodore Saban Quaye and Rebecca Sowah in Accra. Ofoli Quaye attended Gray Memorial Primary School for his primary education in the early 1970's. He attended Snaps College of Accountancy for his Commercial Education and the Institute of Business Management and Accra Polytechnic for his tertiary education.

Ofoliquaye Quaye accepted Christ on the 25th of March 1977 at the Faith Evangelical Church in Accra. A few years after his conversion, Ofoliquaye Quaye struck acquaintance with Tackie-Yarboi who introduced him to the Jesus People Fellowship during a long vacation holiday. Quaye was further introduced to the Christian Evangelical Ministry. When Tackie-Yarboi left Christian Evangelical Ministry to form Victory Bible Church International, Ofoliquaye followed the former. He rose through the ranks of the church leadership to the pastorate. By dint of Quaye's hard work, the church leadership appointed him as a pastor on bi-vocational basis.

Samuel Ofoliquaye Quaye is married to Irene (nee Martins). They were married on 22nd December 1990. Their Union is blessed with three children. Elliot Nii Sarah, Jelord Nii Aduquaye, Nii Amasa and Samuel Ofoliquaye Jnr. (S. Quaye, personal communication, November 15, 2006)

Ebenezer Sendey

Ebenezer Sendey was born on the 16th June 1960 to the late Akakpo Sendey and Adjoa Amika. He had his Primary education at the Accra New Town '10' Primary School and Kotobabi '9' Middle School. Sendey went further into Technical Education and read Wood Work at the Young Men's Christian Association Technical Training Institute at the intermediate level. He read an Advanced Certificate in Wood work at the Kpando Technical Institute and a Diploma in Quantity Surveying at the Accra Polytechnic.

Sendey also took private tuition and read the General Certificate of Education at the Kpando Secondary School. Sendey later took a Management and Accounting Course at the Management Development and Productivity Institute.

Concerning his regeneration experienced, he publicly accepted Christ at during his school days the Young Men Christian Association Technical Training Institute in 1978 but rededicated his confession in 1980. Sendey has a Catholic background and was skeptical about the neo-pentecostal experience. Benjamin Martey, a school at Young Men Christian Association Technical Training Institute invited Sendey to his Church, Calvary Baptist Church in the late in 1970s. Sendey also had a short stint at Selassie Sawyer's Roman Ridge Fellowship before joining Jesus' People Fellowship. Sendey also joined

Christian Evangelical Ministry and later followed Tackie-Yarboi to Victory Bible Church International.

About his call to ministry, Sendey initially wanted to be an architect and sponsor the preaching of the gospel. In the mid 1980's whilst teaching at his alma mater Young Men Christian Association Technical Training Institute he had a strong urge to enter into full-time ministry. Prior to this decision, the Principal of Young Men Christian Association Technical Training Institute, one Quarshie had told Sendey before hand that he would one day inform him of his intentions to enter into full-time ministry. Ebenezer Sendey is married to Sarah (Nee Ayitey-Adjin.) on the 2nd July 1988. Their union is blessed with four children; Peniel, Faustina, Sarah Jnr. and Ebenezer Jnr. (E. Sendey, personal communication, November 5, 2006)

Seth Aryitey

Seth Aryitey was born on the 6th of October 1959 to Theodore Aryeetey and the late Theodora Okoryoe Quarshie in Accra.

Aryitey had his primary education at Apenkwa Presbyterian Primary and Middle School and Accra High School for his secondary education. From Accra High School, Seth enrolled at the University of Ghana, Legon for his undergraduate studies where he graduated in 1994 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Sociology and Political Science. He later read a Master's Degree in Business Administration at the Ghana Institute of Management And Public administration. Seth also holds a Professional Post – Graduate Diploma in Marketing and a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, Ghana.

Aryitey was a staunch Presbyterian by his background. Tackie-Yarboi who was then a crony invited Aryitey to a Ghana Evangelical Society and that where the latter had his regeneration experience. Consequently, Seth received the Holy Spirit baptism with the evidence of speaking in tongues at a Ghana Evangelical Society crusade at St. Augustine's College, Cape Coast without anyone laying hands on him.

Seth claims his series of engagements with certain christian fellowships impacted his spiritual life immensely. After his stint at Ghana Evangelical Society, Seth also fellowshipped with Osu Christian Fellowship, Miracle Centre, founded by Seth Abbey (now Calvary Apostolic Ministry.), Lovers Of Christian Evangelistic Ministry headed by Michael Essel and Sam Korankye Ankrah; now founding pastor of Grace Outreach Church and Royalhouse Chapel respectively. From there Seth joined Jesus' People, then to Christian Evangelical Ministry and then Jesus People Outreach Centre (now Victory Bible Church International.)

Concerning his call into ministry, Seth claims that he sensed the calling during his secondary school days at Accra High School but the urge became stronger during his days at Victory Bible Church International.

Aryitey is married to Gifty (nee Ansah) and their union is blessed with two children Nii Jealo & Victoria. (S. Aryitey, personal communication, October 15, 2006)

Martha Asante

Martha Asante was born in Accra on the 25th of October 1957. She was born to Gabriel Seshie and Eleanor Fudzoe, all from Aflao in the Volta

Region. Martha attended New Nation Preparatory School at Nima, a suburb of Accra, Rangoon Camp Primary and Ridgeway Estates Girls Middle School. Martha sat for the Common Entrance Examination and attended Solomon Commercial College, Koforidua from 1971 to 1973. After Martha's secondary education, she worked with Wisdom Press at Accra New Town a suburb of Accra as the Private Secretary to the Managing Director. She also worked with the Barclarys Bank from 1976 – 1989.

Martha got born again when she was a student at Solomon Commercial College. She rose through the ranks to become the Scripture Union President and Assistant Girls' Prefect. In 1979, when Martha joined Shelter Revival Church, she committed her life fully to the Lord.

Martha (nee Seshie) is married to Albert Kwesi Asante. Their union is blessed with three children; Albert Jr., Joshua and Alberta. (M. Asante, personal communication, March 10, 2007)

Purpose Statement

The reason for the existence of Victory Bible Church International is based upon two main passages of scripture. These scriptures are Matthew 22:36-40 and Matthew 28:18-19. The first quotation talks about the greatest commandment; which is Love demonstrated first towards God then secondly towards our fellow human beings. The church's purpose statement says that: 'To bring people to conversion in Christ Jesus and membership in His family, maturing them to express God in human form and equip them for their ministry in the church and to fulfill their God given mission in the world in order to magnify God.

The purpose statement focuses on growing people by nurturing them into membership in the church. Thus, they are built up to mature in spiritual things. From this point, the people are given some considerable amount of training in order to be able to effectively perform their individual ministries. Having received training, they are sent out to fulfill the 'Great Commission' as stated in Matthew 28:18-19. Victory Bible Church International believes that by carrying out God's divine mandate for the average congregant; which is the 'Great Commission', and then God is magnified.

Against this background, Rick Warren has rightly noted that: A great commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will grow a great church. If any activity or program fulfils one of these commands, we do it. If it doesn't, we don't. We are driven by the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Together, they given us the primary tasks the church is to focus on until Christ returns. (Warren, 1995, p.103)

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of Victory Bible Church International says "Is to convert people within our community in all creative ways; developing them into fully functioning followers of Jesus Christ".

This assertion indicates the mandate and direction of the church. At Victory Bible Church International, every member is considered a minister. The average member is oriented to believe that the issue of mission or carrying out the Great Commission is mandatory. Members are taught therefore to view mission as the duty of every Christian. They are encouraged to be passionate about that and to win the lost at any cost.

The world is in dire need of the gospel. The absence of the gospel is the result of the discrepancies in individual lives, communities, institutions and the world as a whole. The need for the reception of Jesus Christ as Lord in people's lives is inevitable. Consequently, the gospel must be preached at any cost; it is mandatory (Bonnke, 2000)

Value Statement

These are activities or sets of belief system that matter most to Victory Bible Church International. These statements are eighteen in number.

Praying Regularly

From the inception of Victory Bible Church International, the leadership had the understanding the secret to the success of the Early Church was prayer. Victory Bible Church International conducted consistent lengthy moments of prayer. The rationale for this action was because it augmented the spiritual fervour of the church. (Agyin-Asare, 2001). Being charismatic by character, the church is of the conviction that spiritual gifts released in the lives of the congregants when frequent prayer sessions are organized. (Lea, 1988). Victory Bible Church International believes that one of the primary reasons for the fast growth of the church can be attributed to prayer. As a result prayer does not rest with the Intercessory Department alone but it is a church culture. (Wagner, 1997). Not only does the church practice prayer, but it blends prayer with fasting. The reason is because fasting has the tendency of intensifying the prayer and also provides clear direction for the leadership of the church and the church as a whole. (Cho, 1998).

Finally, Victory Bible Church International believes that prayer is the means by which the church the requisite power to effectively operate as a church. (Smith, 2003).

Philosophy of Grace

The concept of Grace is cherished by the leadership of Victory Bible Church International because it is the explanation for the church's achievement. Coming from a background where the founders are mostly secondary school leavers, the giant strides and successes chalked by Victory Bible Church International can be attributed to grace.

Grace is defined in Victory Bible Church International circles as God's divine provision that God gives to His creation to enable that creation to fulfill its intended purpose. The Grace of God is the working of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the Will of God amidst God's people. (Stone, 1990). Victory Bible Church International have always believed that whenever they are confronted with an obstacle as a church, they exercise their faith according to God's Word and God's power is activated through the vehicle of grace. Thus, they believe that when confronted by challenges in subsequent circumstances, they trust in the same God. (Spirit Filled Life Bible, 1991).

Victory Bible Church International as a church has embraced the philosophy of Grace because it believes as they trust in God; without necessarily doing anything to merit His favour, they are in good position of building a healthy relationship with God. (Smith, 1994)

Evangelism

Victory Bible Church International believes that Evangelism is mandatory for every Christian. Evangelism is the task of reaching the unregenerate with the gospel. Since these unregenerate people hardly attend church services let alone become members, Victory Bible Church International has it as a duty to encourage its members to move outside the walls of the sanctuary and preach out to them. (Osborn, 1974)

Evangelism is valued in Victory Bible Church International because there is the understanding that material passions and achievements are not as important as the value of a soul. Members are therefore encouraged to invest much time and energy in evangelism. (Hybels, 1994)

Victory Bible Church International as a church believes that people outside the church are alienated from God and need to be restored to God, hence the proclamation of the gospel. (Prince, 2006)

The Application of Scripture

The scripture is God's instruction for man. The scripture is also the foundation for the Christian Faith. The scripture is the medium through which God deals with man. (Treat, 1999). However, for one's Christian life to assume fruition, then the scripture must be practiced daily in the individual's life. (Braswell, 1994)

Victory Bible Church International seeks to nurture Christians who practice the Word of God in their daily life. That is why the Mission Statement states that "Converting people in our communities in all creative ways, developing them into fully functioning followers of Jesus Christ".

Service

Victory Bible Church International believes that every Christian has ability or a spiritual gift. Members are taught to discover their spiritual gifts. The ability to locate one's spiritual gift is when the individual engages in effective Christian service. (Yandian, 1991). As each member goes through discipleship training; leadership helps them to discover their ministry. (Barna, 1997). Victory Bible Church International's rationale for ministry is clearly spelt out in the purpose statement: "To bring people to conversion in Christ Jesus and membership in His family, maturity them to express God in human form and equip them for their ministry"

Appreciate Creativity and Innovation

After regeneration, the Christian is supposed to mature in every area of his or her life. This is the stand-point of Victory Bible Church International. In many cases, after people experience regeneration, it appears they develop only in their spiritual life but other aspect of their life is left to stagnate. There are many Christians who hold the opinion that Christ is soon coming, so they concentrate only on their spirit to the neglect of the other aspects of their life. This creates a lop-sided way of life that is not relevant to contemporary living. The Christian is supposed to discover his or gifts, talents and potentials and utilize them to the best of his ability. (Munroe, 1991). Additionally, the Christian is supposed to exhaust his potential by exercising his ingenuity. (Jakes, 1998).

Christian Self-Image

The ultimate intention of God towards the Christian is that the Christian should be conformed to the image of Jesus. This connotes that the Christian has to go through a metamorphosis. The results would be an outward change in appearance by way of behaviour in consonance with his or her thinking. (MacArthur, 2005).

In Victory Bible Church International's Purpose Statement, it mentions that: "To bring people to conversion in Christ Jesus and membership in His family, maturity them to express God in human form".

It is the church's conviction that instruction from the scripture and its application transforms the Christian to inherit Christ's nature and mature thereby. (Marr, 1993)

A Christian self-image results in godly character that makes the Christian honest, ethical and pure. This prepares the Christian to be prepared influence society with a godly attitude. (Johnson, 2003)

Commitment to Excellence

Victory Bible Church International believes that whatever is worth doing is worth doing well. Members are taught to cease every opportunity to offer their best efforts to any gainful undertaking. (Hagee, 2004).

This calls for setting high standards to enhance peak performance in every endeavour of life. Members are taught for example goal-setting to achieve the very best. (Tracy, 2003).

Victory Bible Church International also teaches its members that giving one's best involves taking risk and being adventurous to attain the best

of results (Carson, 1992). The achievement of excellence behoves members to do things skillfully (Duku, 2005).

Optimism

Victory Bible Church International is positive in their view of life. They believe that one's attitude determines what one must expect from life. An optimistic life has a greater tendency of resulting in success and a flourishing life, (Maxwell, 1993). Due to the uncertainties in life, Victory Bible Church International teaches its members to dedicate themselves to something bigger than themselves and live each day pressing ahead towards their dreams and the goals. Hence, members are trained to be enthusiastic in their attitudes regardless of the circumstances (Dei-Tumi, 2003).

However, the optimism encouraged by Victory Bible Church International is not a success-oriented message devoid of God. Victory Bible Church International teaches that God intends the Christian to blend a spiritual personality with a successful life. The church goes further to assert that when the concepts of success, motivation and the scriptures are assimilated into an individual's life, there will emerge a life filled with enthusiasm and excitement (Cook, 1974).

In addition to the study of the scriptures, there is the encouragement of the reading of motivational materials as a regular diet that encourages a positive attitude (Maxwell, 1999).

Growth

One stark evident of any thriving organism or organization is growth. Growth requires an increase in size. Living things grow by assimilation which requires taking of materials into themselves called food which is used in building body cells. As the cells increase in number, the living thing gains in size (New Standard Encyclopaedia, 1967).

Likewise, Victory Bible Church International emphasizes that any individual or organization that feed on useful knowledge will grow to the top of their endeavours (Tracy, 2002). Victory Bible Church International believes that growth is part of God's divine nature that He has imparted to us. Therefore the individual or organization is expected to be fruitful and multiply (Ocran, 2002)

Continuous Learning

In a world where new concepts, inventions, innovations and trends keep surfacing, there is the need for one to be level headed to fit into contemporary times.

Victory Bible Church International is of the conviction that individuals must give themselves one form of education or the other. This kind of education is not only confirmed to the formal classroom setting. It could be the school situation or on-the-job training or informal education. Any form of continuous learning will keep one abreast with the changing trends in the global village. The acquired knowledge will cause the individual to change from the old way of doing things to respond to innovations (Ocran, 2002).

Continuous learning provides knowledge that enables the individual to effectively apply in every aspect of his or her existence (Kreider, 1995)

Lay Ministry

Lay Ministry is basically the involvement of lay persons in ministerial service. Victory Bible Church International believes that unlike the traditional understanding that ministerial service is the preserve of a privileged few on full-time; lay people can be involved. Ministerial service is primarily geared towards evangelism and shepherding and more hands are needed in this regard. To enhance the work of the ministry lay people must be incorporated with the minority full-time workers to expedite soul-winning and experience church growth (Heward-Mills, 1999).

Authenticity of the Bible

Victory Bible Church International is a Bible-believing church. It stems all its doctrines and practices upon scripture. It recognizes the Bible as inerrant and God's inspired testimony that came through the prophets and through Jesus Christ (Goldworthy, 1991). As a church, Victory Bible Church International believes that the measuring rod for any christian teaching, doctrine, dogma and theology is the Bible (Bruce, 1988).

Victory Bible Church International asserts that the Bible is relevant and ever-compliant for any given epoch including the contemporary times for the purpose of its interpretation and practice (Dockery, 1992).

It is also of the view that the Bible is God's written Word and whatever the Bible says affirms what God says. The Bible is directly the Word of God

It is God in communicative action (Peterson, 2003). Victory Bible Church International stands for the idea that for an individual to maintain communion with God, one must listen to what God has to say through the study of the Bible (Machen, 1997). It believes that the Bible is God's Word that has eternal relevance and it speaks to all mankind in every culture; therefore it must be listened to and obeyed (Fee, 1982).

Finally, Victory Bible Church International believes that the Bible is a book that has the power of having a profound impact on people from every culture by transforming lives (Atkinson, 1996).

Women in Ministry

Women in Bible times were considered as second-class citizens. Unfortunately in contemporary times, many churches are repeating the same error (Smith, 1992). Victory Bible Church International however acknowledges the value of womanhood and believes that women have a stake in the work of God.

The church believes that women are instruments through whom God ministers to their gender and the entire body of Christ (Smith, 1992). The church acknowledges that women are not an accessory to ministry but they are endowed with certain unique giftings to undertake certain tasks that those of the opposite sex are not cut for (Lairdon, 1996). Women have the flair for patronizing the ministry and the church respects this ability (Arlandson, 1997).

Victory Bible Church International holds the view that, women qualify to preach unlike the school of thought that suggest that women are prohibited to preach (Kroegar, 1992).

Finally, the church believes that ministry is not entirely a preserve of men but women also have a significant role to play (Odeleke, 1999).

Marriage and Family

The Victory Bible Church International Minister's Handbook for wedding ceremony states that: "of the world's three great institutions – the Home, the Church and the State – the Home is the oldest and most sacred. In the consummation of the first marriage, the woman whom God made as a helpmeet for man was not taken from his head to rule over him, nor from his feet to be trampled by him, but from his side that she might be his equal, from under his arm that she might receive his protection, and from near his heart that she might own and command his love" (Victory Bible Church International Minister's Handbook For Wedding Ceremony, 1995, p.2)

The deduction that can be made from this manual suggests that Victory Bible Church International advocates for a secure marriage that can accrue security, encouragement and fulfillment (Ames, 1990)

Victory Bible Church International asserts the reciprocal principle of love and respect, in that a husband must do well to love his wife and the wife to respect her husband (Eggerichs, 2004). The Church recognizes the idea that the husband plays the headship role in the union. When the husband understands his leadership role, he is able to provide the appropriate direction the union requires. The end result is a fulfillment marriage (Scott, 2002). The wife's role is to submit to her husband as unto the Lord and to respect him as well (Munroe, 2002).

Victory Bible Church International however seeks to make its members realize their roles in the family so as to desist from over-dependence on public institutions like the churches, schools and other social institutions to do the work of parents. The church believes that since the family is the basic unit of society, it behoves the family to responsibly train the children in order to undergird the activities of the social institutions (Chaffin, 1978).

Praise and Worship

Praise and Worship is one of the cutting edges of Victory Bible Church International. Victory Bible Church International teaches its followership that they are regenerated to be houses of God's presence and places for worship. This prepares the individual to direct his or her attention and focus on God, making all the other pursuits in a church service a periphery. This mentality prepares the Christian for worship (Sasser & Cornwall, 1999). This state of the Christian enables him or her to enter into a relationship with God (Ness, 1979). The reason is because God wants to use that as a vehicle through which men will seek Him (Conner, 1976). This is because the prime purpose of God's creation of man is for man to worship him (Hildebrandt, 1989). Thus in Praise and Worship, the worshipper seeks God for God to grace the service with His presence. Once that is achieved, the service's purpose is fulfilled (Munroe, 2000).

An integral part of church service is Praise and Worship. Being the core of the service, Christian must appreciate the gravity of the moment and occasion, awe and reverence must be attached to it. Movement and conversation must be reduced to the barest minimum. The heart must be

involved in all sincerity and worship must be conducted truthfully, according to God's set pattern for worship (MacArthur, 1998)

Above all, the sum total of our worship must reflect kind of life that we live (Tenney, 1976)

Small Biblical Community Groups

Victory Bible Church International started as a church with the concept of the Small Biblical Community Groups which is commonly known within its circles as the "Priesthood Cell Group" or Home Cell. It is the hallmark of the church. It is the church that is broken down into smaller units. Because Victory Bible Church International is a church that has its membership numbering in the thousands the home cell provides an opportunity for members to fellowship within their neighbourhood in a small number (Cho, 1998)

Victory Bible Church International believes that the best place for the christian to be nurtured and grow in spiritual things is the home cell. Under normal circumstances, the highest number in a home fellowship is fifteen. Members are given the opportunity to express their spiritual gifts and abilities (Mahoney, 1993). This form of house fellowship is model practical in the early church for the purpose of interaction among christians, monitoring spiritual and physical welfare and to promote effective church growth (Adeyemo, 2006). The house fellowship thus becomes a breeding ground where dependable leaders are raised for church work (Fomum, 1996).

Continuous Evaluation

Victory Bible Church International is of the view that there must be a process of monitoring and adjusting organizational activities toward goal attainment. This guides the ministry in the direction it is intended to go. In continuous evaluation what is being accomplished is determined, performance is evaluated and corrective measures are applied so that performance corresponds with the predetermined plan (Orr, 1993). Appraisals develop the ministry by discussing past success and achievements so that they can be equaled or even surpassed. This is because any successful undertaking has to have a considerable amount of monitoring (Berkley, 1994)

The Theology of Victory Bible Church International

Victory Bible Church International started as a Neo-Pentecostal ministry that depended heavily on the scriptures for as the basis most of its beliefs and practices. This segment will assess the doctrinal beliefs of Victory Bible Church International.

Theology Proper

Victory Bible Church International attests to the fact that God is responsible for the creation of the universe. God created the material universe out of nothing and it is a reflection of God. God as a person is immaterial, uncreated and infinite. All of God's creation is contingent, meaning it is by God's infinite power that holds all creation together, without which all creation will cease to exist (Geisler, 2003).

God as a being existed prior to the existence of all things. God also is the cause of the existence of everything and everything exists for His sake. God is self-existent because He depends on no one else for His being (Geisler, 2003). God is holy in His nature, possesses an unlimited nature, transcendent above all His creation, immanent, eternal, immutable, impassable, immortal and omni-benevolent. In the midst of these non-moral attributes, God can be known and related to (Geisler, 2003).

Victory Bible Church International acknowledges the doctrine of the Trinity which comprises God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. There is only one God, but in the unity of the Godhead, there are three eternal and coequal persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence (Willmington, 1995).

God as a being has many facets. There are however two distinct aspects of God that come to the fore, which are His kindness and His sternness (Romans 11:22, NIV). Much of preaching leads towards God's kindness, grace, love and providence. Even though God is a God of love, He expresses great wrath towards every form of evil. God should not be viewed as one who is only good but also as one who executes punishment because His moral character is opposed to sin. (Grudem, 1994)

Too much of messages leaning towards God's kindness presents an imbalanced gospel which is "sugar-coated"; hence nurturing unhealthy Christians. Preaching on the sternness of God balances the equation, raises fruit-bearing Christians who can positively influence their generations

Christology

Victory Bible Church International believes that the origin of the world can be attributed to the agency of Christ. Christ is also a co-partner with God in creation (Tenney, 1976). The church acknowledges that Christ is God who became incarnate; the second person in the Trinity taking upon Himself a human form. Christ possessed a human spirit soul and body. He experienced human development and growth like any other human being. Christ also possessed both human and divine natures (Walvoord, 1969).

The church believes that Christ was sinless in all His existence on earth and became God's perfect sacrifice to atone for the sin of mankind (Lockyer, 1964). Christ not only led a sinless life but overcame every temptation that is susceptible to mankind (Conner, 1988)

Victory Bible Church International stands by the conviction that Christ died, rose from the dead on the third day, ascended into heaven and will return to the earth to judge the living and the dead (Lockyer, 1973).

Recent research conducted in churches within the Pentecostal-Charismatic bracket have proved that a month passes and the name of Jesus Christ is hardly mentioned in sermons preached. One can confidently conclude that when a message preached is devoid of the centrality of Christ, it ceases to be the gospel. The incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ is the very pivot upon which the Christian faith thrives (Walvoord, 1969, p96).

Since it is undisputable that the gospel is synonymous with the person of Christ that is what preaching must centre on. It is this kind of Christocentric message that result in the transformation of lives and the conversion of the unregenerate. (Romans 1:16, 17, NIV).

Pneumatology

Victory Bible Church International recognizes the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Godhead. The church started with a strong emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The church has the understanding that the secret to the success of Jesus' ministry was the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Additionally, the church admits that the era of the church is the period the Holy Spirit has permanently come to reside in Christians to enable them to accomplish what God had called them to do (Williams, 1996).

Victory Bible Church International is of the school of thought that says when one is regenerated; the Holy Spirit assists the fellow by indwelling, equipping, encouraging, and guiding the individual (Owusu, 2000).

One of the prerequisites of becoming a core member in Victory Bible Church International is the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues (Synan, 2001). They believe that not only does the Holy Spirit indwell the Christians for the purpose of empowering them to effectively do the work of God but they are simultaneously beneficiaries of praying in tongues (Guthrie, 1981). It is taught that the praying in tongues aids the Christian not only in prayer but in deep worship and also activates the quest of the believer for deeper experience of the Holy Spirit (Hayford, 1996).

Another cardinal teaching at Victory Bible Church International is that the Holy Spirit provides the 'charismata' or spiritual gifts that empowers the church to continue where Jesus Christ left off (Wagner, 2005).

The example of Christ's incarnation demonstrates the key to success in Christian service. Christ showed the way by teaching His source of power was the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 3:16, Luke 3:21, 22, NIV). Rather

than seeking power from other sources that cannot generate spiritual power, the Holy Spirit must be earnestly sought through the avenue of prayer. A.B. Simpson says: “It is the power for service. Finally this was the power for unwearied, earnest and effective work. It was a power that could enable Paul in a single lifetime, while supporting himself by his own manual labour, unsupported by any missionary society or church and without the facilities of our railroads, steamboats, telegraphs and means of communication, to girdle the globe and preach the gospel everywhere and say in words of superlative triumph “so from Jerusalem all the way round to Illyrium, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ (Romans 15:19)” (Simpson, 1994, p.385). The source of spiritual energy for effective christian service is the Holy Spirit. The third person of the Godhead is the power of the gospel. All the men and women in Bible times and our contemporary times who were effective in the work of the ministry traced their power base from the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit enables a man or a church or a christian ministry to fulfil the work of God by preaching the totality of the gospel around the entire globe in their life time. Without the Holy Spirit involvement in preaching, teaching and any form of christian service it is a mere academic exercise.

Anthropology

There is a strong assertion on the dignity of man in Victory Bible Church International circles. The leadership is of the view that there is too much over emphasis on the depravity of man even after one’s regeneration in church circles. Much stress is placed on the fact that after one is reconciled to

God, one is justified and adopted into God' family. Man is therefore redeemed from slavery to sin and enlightened to divine truth by the Holy Spirit. This exposes the regenerated man to a dignified life where the image of God is best expressed as he develops himself by exploiting his gifts, talents and abilities imbedded in him (Miline, 1982).

However, that is not to say that Victory Bible Church International discounts the reality of sin in man. The church does admit that man was made in the image and likeness of God. Due to man's disobedience to God, man's cordial relationship with God was marred and it subsequently resulted in separation from God (Mc Grath, 1994).

Any man who has accepted Christ is translated from death to life and has been elevated to a position, of being "seated with Christ in heavenly places" (Ephesians 2:6, NIV) meaning man now has the direct access to God's presence eternally (Hayford, 2001).

The proliferation of motivational literature, success-oriented books and self-help materials asserted that man is the architect of his own destiny. However, it is the other way round; man's existence and progression in his livelihood is solely dependent upon God's providence.

Messages that underscore strategies for success must not take God out of the picture. God governs all His creatures and all their actions to accomplish His purposes through them (Hodge, 2008).

Angelology

Victory Bible Church International believes in the existence of angels. Angels are spirit beings who are despatched from God to the service of believers (Ryrie, 1986).

The church acknowledges that in as much as the Holy Spirit is the believer's helper, some of the divine assistance can be attributed to the ministry of angels (Hunter, 1999)

There are various instances when humans and enjoy divine security or deliverance from accidents that can be credited to the intervention of angelic beings (Hunter, 1999).

The church believes that angels operate under circumstances that are sometimes natural and at other moments unusual (Wagner, 2000). There have testimonies of members who are of conviction that they have encountered certain personalities that have appeared in human form but are angels. (Dickason, 1975).

The church also believes that during the period of worship, angels are not only present but they do participate (Conner, 1976). On the other hand, the church acknowledges that not all angels are good. It believes that these angels fell with Satan during the rebellion. They identify them as demons (Dickason, 1975). Their duty is to promote rebellion, slander idolatry, promotes false religions and cults and to inflict ailments on mankind (Mumford, 1971)

However, Victory Bible Church International strikes a balance by teaching that the operation of angels must be tested with the word of God. If a whenever there is an utterance or an action that is contrary to scripture, it must be disregarded (Geisler, 2004).

The ministry of angels is a very important ingredient in christian service. Angels cannot be ignored when it comes supernatural occurrences among humans. However, care must be taken in order to avoid where these

supernatural happenings will be taken to the extreme. Also, there must be caution exercised to avoid undue emphasis to the extent of the exaltation or the worship of angels lest christian worship will be interpreted as a cult. (Capps, 1994)

Soteriology

Victory Bible Church International is convinced that every human being is born with the Adamic nature. The depravity of man is such that it will take the grace of God to redeem man from his state of spiritual separation with God. Therefore by God's act of grace; a favour mankind did not merit; He has chosen to bestow His grace on condition that man will respond by faith. As a result, when man responds, he is regenerated (Berkhof, 1958). By that singular act, God's nature is implanted in man and as a result man attains a right relationship with God. This reengineering of God's life is undertaken by the Holy Spirit. (Williams, 1958).

It then behoves the believer to conduct his life in a manner that will enable him continue living by God's nature that has been imparted into him. The ultimate aim of God is for the believer to mature into the nature of Jesus Christ. (Erickson, 1984).

Salvation as an area of study and as a doctrine is not a onetime experience after which the unregenerate grows overnight. It is a spiritual experience that must be nurtured on a regular basis. Kenneth Prior makes the following assertion to buttress this point: "The writers of the New Testament assume that Christians will make progress in their experience of God and in the holiness of their lives. They do not suggest that what Christians need is

one decisive act of consecration at some time subsequent to their conversion. Growth is one of the marks of health in a man's spiritual life, as it is in the physical lives of animals and plants. Indeed lack of growth or immaturity often causes defeats in the Christian's life" (Prior, 1994, p.86). Holiness affords the Christian to make considerable progress in his or her Christian life. However, the individual Christian ought to progressively and consistently exercise himself or herself in things that will enhance his spiritual health. Just as growth is one of the marks of a healthy man, the Christian must engage himself in productive spiritual exercises that will promote a victorious Christian life.

A lot effort must however be invested in spiritual growth since that is the ultimate rationale of regeneration.

Ecclesiology

Victory Bible Church International practices the Episcopal form of church government where the authority resides in the Presiding Bishop. The Bishop is the main person that sees to the functioning of the church policy. The bishop is assisted a second bishop who is in the capacity of the Deputy Presiding Bishop. The bishops are assisted in governance by an Executive Council comprising of nine people. These are the two bishops, two Senior Associate Ministers, the General Secretary of the church, the President of the Women's Fellowship the Chairman of the Youth Ministry, and two Elders of the church. This is the highest decision making body of Victory Bible Church International. As the highest decision making body of Victory Bible Church International they oversee the administration of the church.

There is the Apostolic Council as well. These are comprised of the Presiding Bishop and other Senior Ministers who are authorized with spiritual oversight they have the power to approve doctrine, examine and approve the church's relations with other churches and bodies, advise the Presiding Bishop on the appointment of ministers and is responsible for the calling and upgrading, appointment, revocations, dismissals, transfer and retirement of minister's of the church (MacArthur, 2005).

Victory Bible Church International believes in the priesthood of the believer. It understands the role of the Christian as one that are not only cleansed from sins but clothed, anointed and prepared for God's service (Wagner, 2000).

In this regard, it encourages lay ministry as a means of involving church members in pastoral work on bi-vocational basis. Thus, the church practices preaching of the word, baptism, celebration of the sacrament, prayer and judgment of doctrine (Lahaye & Jenkins, 1999).

The body of Christ globally practices various forms of church government. These all possess their merits and demerits. However, one major ingredient that will make a particular kind of church government relevant is godly leadership. John Mac Arthur says that: "you cannot bypass the need for godly leadership and still receive God's blessing. There must be holy men and women who are in position of responsibility in a church; there is no substitute for that. It's amazing how most churches choose their leadership. They select people who are the most successful in business, who have the most to say, and who have the most money. A man is not to be a leader in the church because he is a successful businessman; he has innate leadership ability or is a super

salesman. He is to be a leader because is a man of God. That is the beginning of effectiveness in the church” (MacArthur, 1991, p.103). Godly leadership is the only prerequisite for Christian leadership. In the selection of godly leadership, it is must not be determined necessarily by how one is successful in the corporate world or by one’s financial prowess or by one’s academic achievements. The choice of godly leadership must be on the fact that the individual demonstrates a heart of a servant-leader. That individual is a man of God. Godly leadership is a definite qualification to receive God’s approval

As the church emphasizes on teaching of the scriptures and sound Christian doctrines, the result is a growing and a spirit-filled church.

Eschatology

The commission statement of Victory Bible Church International “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them or the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age” gives an indication of carrying out the Great Commission with the end–time in view. Even though the preaching and teaching in Victory Bible Church International is not saturated with eschatology, the church’s entire purpose and mission statements are geared at preparing the church for the coming of Christ.

In view of this, the church is greatly involved in personal and mass evangelism, church planting exercises, various teaching classes for various categories of Christians, training of ministers and social services with the sole

purpose of arranging the programme of the church to make people ready for the return of Christ (Erickson, 1983).

Victory Bible Church International as a church supports the Premillennialism view. It believes that Christ will return personally and bodily to commence the millennium. This school of thought asserts that Christ's coming will be preceded by cataclysmic events (Lutzer, 1998).

Having a prior understanding that eternal judgment of the Christian is largely based on faithful Christian service; Victory Bible Church International prepares its members by first carrying its leadership duties conscientiously and educating the members to cultivate exemplary lives that will qualify them for the rapture (1 John 3:2,3 NIV).

A glance at Christendom universally paints a picture of a church that has adjusted very well with the global system. This is due to the contemporary success – oriented messages being propagated. The church appears to have lost sight of Jesus' promise that He will return to fetch the church. (Walvoord, 1990)

This is a wake-up call to all and sundry that we are in the end-time and the signs of the times is a pointer to the fact. The end of the world is near. The onus therefore lies on the Christian to see himself or herself as a pilgrim and start preparing for eternity. By so doing, the believer must be less earthly minded and be more focused on the world that he would be an inhabitant very soon. (Haldene, 1958)

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter explains how the researcher carried out this study. It explains the population, sample, instruments for data collection and analysis of data.

The researcher used the entire population of Victory Bible Church International who number four thousand (4000). These members can be found in the following locations: Awoshie, Osu, Kokomlemle, Adenta, Baatsona, Tema, Dansoman, Winneba, Cape Coast, London and New York. Since it was too difficult for the researcher to interview the entire four thousand (4000), he sampled four hundred (400) members and forty (40) leading pastors of Victory Bible Church International.

Sample

The method of sampling used in selecting the four hundred (400) members and forty (40) leading pastors was the systematic random sampling method. Numbers representing the members were written on pieces of paper which were

rolled into small balls and shuffled in a small bag. The balls were then picked and the numbers representing the members were listed. The numbers stood for the members and they were the people who responded to the instruments.

Instruments for Data Collection

The main instruments for data collection were interviews and literature.

The researcher asked open-ended questions. The questions were:

- How did the Jesus' People Fellowship start?
- When did the Fellowship start?
- Who were the founders of the Jesus' People Fellowship?
- Who was the first leader of the Fellowship?
- What roles did Asihene and Tackie-Yarboi play?
- How did Tackie-Yarboi become leader of the Jesus' People Fellowship?
- What was the relationship between Jesus' People Fellowship and Christian Evangelical Ministry?
- Which people constituted the membership of the Jesus' People Fellowship?
- Who was the founder and leader of Christian Evangelical Ministry?
- Who was the functioning leader of the Christian Evangelical Ministry?
- What was the cause of misunderstanding between John Alex Coffie and Tackie-Yarboi?
- What was the procedure of resolving the misunderstanding?

- Can Victory Bible Church International be considered a breakaway church?
- Who was the founder of Victory Bible Church International?
- What contributions has the Victory Bible Church International made to Ghanaian Christianity?

Analysis of Data

In analyzing the data from the interviews, eighty-one percent (81%) recalled that the Jesus' People Fellowship started as a result of vacation classes that were organized during the long vacation period.

Seventy percent (70%) remembered that Jesus' People Fellowship started in July 1981. Seventy-five percent (70%) said Clement Asihene, Frank Adjei Danso, Alex Acquah and Albert Asante were the founders of Jesus' People Fellowship.

Concerning how Asihene met Tackie-Yarboi, sixty percent (60%) remembered that the two met at City Business College Scripture Union Fellowship meeting.

Eighty percent (80) said, the first leader of the fellowship was quite an important question because of the story of breakaway.

Eighty-five percent (85%) remembered that Tackie-Yarboi was invited to preach once at the fellowship and during his visit Asihene announced he was the new leader.

Eighty-five percent (85%) said Jesus' People Fellowship was only a fellowship so some of the members used Christian Evangelical Ministry as their church base.

Ninety percent (90%) remembered that the membership of the fellowship was largely students from various denominational backgrounds.

Eighty percent (80%) said Asihene was an evangelist and Tackie-Yarboi was a Pastor.

Seventy-five percent (75%) remembered that Kate Coffie, wife of John Alex Coffie founded Christian Evangelical Ministry which was formerly named Shelter Revival Church. After John and Kate divorced, Kate travelled abroad and John took over the leadership of the ministry.

Concerning the functioning leader, Eighty percent (80%) recalled that John Alex Coffie was absent for most of the time and Tackie-Yarboi his associate acted most of time as the functioning leader.

About the misunderstanding between John Alex Coffie and Tackie-Yarboi, Seventy percent (70%) remembered that it was as a result of disagreement in their roles.

Eighty-five percent (85%) said after three leader's meetings the leadership of the church agreed to formally release Tackie-Yarboi to start his ministry.

Considering the impression that Victory Bible Church International is a breakaway church, eighty-five percent (85%) were convinced that it is not a breakaway church.

About the founding of the church one hundred percent (100%) acknowledged Tackie-Yarboi as the founder and leader of Victory Bible Church International.

Ninety-five percent (95%) were convinced that Victory Bible Church International had contributed spiritually, socially, politically and economically to Christianity in Ghana.

About fifteen percent which formed the minority were of the view that Victory Bible Church International broke away from the Christian Evangelical Ministry. Secondly, Victory Bible Church International is a metamorphosis of Jesus' People Fellowship. Finally, the minority claimed that the majority of the first congregation of Victory Bible Church International were largely members of Christian Evangelical Ministry. However, Alex Acquah was a co-founder of Jesus' People Fellowship and currently the Senior Pastor of Christian Evangelical Ministry asserted that Victory Bible Church International did not break away from Christian Evangelical Ministry but rather on amicable terms Tackie-Yarboi was officially released to start his own ministry which today is Victory Bible Church International.

Chapters Four and Five present the results of the data analysis, and the conclusions drawn.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTRIBUTION OF VICTORY BIBLE CHURCH INTERNATIONAL TO PENTECOSTAL – CHARISMATIC MINISTRY IN GHANA.

Introduction

Victory Bible Church International was among the first Neo-Pentecostal groups founded in Ghana. Having existed for two decades and more, this research work attempts to assess the impact it has made in neo-Pentecostalism in Ghana. The assessment of its impact is viewed from the social, spiritual, economic and political dimensions.

Spiritual Impact

Sanctity of Leadership

Among all the neo-Pentecostal churches that started between the early to the middle part of the 1980's Victory Bible Church International can be said to be one of the few churches that has its founding leaders together without any breakaway. Initially, when Victory Bible Church International started in 1985 it was then known as Jesus People Outreach Centre. Apart from the founder and

leader, N.A. Tackie-Yarboi, Clement Amankwaah Asihene and Emmanuel Ackun formed Spring Life Ministries and Glorious Revivals Ministry respectively within Victory Bible Church International with the aim of winning more souls into the church. Elijah Saforo on the other hand formed a singing group named Abba Adonai Ministries that also served evangelistic purposes.

At a pastor's meeting in the latter part of 1987, the pastors conceded that these evangelistic activities were impeding church work. They resolved that all the activities of the groups would have to be suspended and merged. As a result, the church invested all its outreach activities in the home cell system which is christened Priesthood Cell Group. The Priesthood Cell Group is basically the church decentralized at the home fellowship level. From the home front, the church is able to engage in effective fellowship among fellow members which will enhance personal evangelism.

These leaders have co-existed from the inception of the church with the principle of loyalty, selflessness and respect for each other; hence sanctifying leadership (Pan African Christian Leadership, 1978).

As opposed to the current spate of breakaways at the slightest provocation, ministers must exercise constraint when their relationship with their colleague ministers is strained. There are a lot of churches and ministers that have been birth out of misinterpretation of issues. Churches that have maturely managed their internal differences have overtime grown into strong ecclestical organizations. When those in the echelon of church leadership can learn to co-exist, there will be the multiplicity of tried and tested churches. Unlike the situation where there are

proliferation of numerous small churches littered in every nook and corner of urban areas, sanctity of leadership will promote healthy churches (Pringle, 2003).

Turning Out Leaders

Victory Bible Church International believes in its commission statement 'Raising the Foundation of Many Generations'. As a result, the leadership has the vision of turning out leaders who can be nurtured to hold various positions of responsibility. The church has organized a host of leadership training sessions over the years. The trained members have in turn performed various leadership capacities in the Priesthood Cell Group and the church departments.

The raising of leaders must develop to a point where trainers can delegate certain responsibilities to their trainees. The reason is because the leader cannot be everywhere at every time. Leadership must aspire to see their trainees equal the output of their leaders and even exceeding it. This should not in any way create a situation of insecurity leading to wrangling among leaders (Dornan, 1997).

Most of these leaders turned out have developed over the years into leaders in various ministerial positions. Almost all these leaders who are still in Victory Bible Church International are pastors and those who have left to join other churches are either pastors or are occupying leadership positions. There are many others who have also founded their churches.

The nature of ministry is such that the leaders must learn to raise other ministers as the work is growing. The senior minister ought to be a team builder. By this rationale, he takes the spotlight off himself and prepares other people to

take on responsibility in ministry activity. The leader must as well delegate authority as much as possible. This will curb the incessant breakaway by subordinate ministers and create ethical sanity in ecclesiastical circles (Barna, 1993)

General Council

Victory Bible Church International has adopted a system of church polity that leadership divorces itself from singular power. Even though Tackie-Yarboi is acknowledged as the Founder, absolute power does not lie in his hands. In the year 2000, a synod or which is named General Council was initiated to be organized biennially.

The General Council is the highest policy making body of Victory Bible Church International. The General Council is empowered to ensure the election of the Presiding Bishop. The Council is the final appellate body in all disciplinary matters affecting members of the General Council. The Council receives and approves reports submitted by the various organs of the church through the Executive Council. The decision of the National Council shall be subject to rectification of the General Council. The Presiding Bishop or his representative shall have power to convene Extraordinary Council Meetings. The Executive Council has the power to invite other persons to attend Extraordinary Meetings as and when the need arises.

During his attendance at the 2nd General Council Conference held from the 22nd to the 23rd October 2004 at Ghana Institute of Management and Public

Administration, Greenhill, Achimota, these were glowing tributes the former General Secretary of the Ghana Pentecostal Council, Ekow Badu Woode paid to the General Council: “This organization of the General Council is highly commendable. This characterizes a maturing church. I have attended meetings of many Pentecostal-charismatic churches but they have nothing like this. This is praise worthy and a feather in the cup of the leadership of Victory Bible Church International” (E. Woode, personal communication, October 23, 2004).

The ‘one-man’ phenomenon of a church does not guarantee success that can outlive the current generation. There is the need to build structures that will ensure a healthy and a growing church. The General Council on synod concept creates the platform for probity, accountability and great prospects for successive generations (Lairdon, 2008).

Denomination

Victory Bible Church International started as an independent neo-Pentecostal movement. As a church it believed in the ‘central church’ concept where a church does not have branches and it is large in size, preferably having thousands of congregants. As the church began to expand with the opening of branches coupled with the registration of churches in 1989; Victory Bible Church International was registered as a denomination. The Evangelical Dictionary of theology defines denominationalism as “broad movements within Protestantism that have developed over the years primarily because of geographical expansion” (Elwell, 2001, p.335).

As a denomination, Victory Bible Church International practices the Episcopal form of church government where the leader is a bishop. The bishop is the key to the functioning of church government (Erickson, 1985). At the 2nd General Council Conference held on the 22nd Of October 2004 at Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration, Greenhill, Achimota under the theme “Victory Bible Church International, 20 years In Perspective And Beyond”, Tackie-Yarboi, the Presiding Bishop said: “Victory Bible Church International started with the concept of an independent church with various ministers functioning at their base but the times call for a clearly defined stand as a thriving denomination since we cannot achieve much. I just want to start a lesson from history that will help us to align ourselves to fulfil our vision. This example is drawn from two men who lived in the eighteenth century. George Whitefield and John Wesley were the two most influential preachers of the eighteenth century.

Though they were contemporaries of each other and both were greatly used by God, their differences are how they organized their ministries which determined the impact they both had on humanity. Today, very few Christians would recognize George Whitefield’s name. In contrast, John Wesley’s name is still recognized by millions of Christians. The difference—organization. Victory Bible Church International seeks to create an organizational structure to fulfil our purpose that will outlive us. We seek not to build around a personality but to evolve around the cause of our existence. This is in contrast to the independent church concept” (N. Tackie-Yarboi, personal communication, October 22, 2004).

Larbi (2001) buttresses Victory Bible Church International's efforts at erecting an exemplary formidable denomination by noting that during the early 1990's Victory Bible Church International was the only neo-Pentecostal church to have developed a well thought-out constitution.

The idea of denominationalism can be beneficial to churches from the various church backgrounds. This is because denominationalism ensures that churches expand numerically and geographically. When a church is built around a personality, in the wake of that individual's death, the church in question begins to depreciate. Denominationalism in the long run will promote churches that will outlive their founders (Banister, 1999)

Bible School

With the advent of Neo-Pentecostalism, the proponents did not have confidence in the idea of theological training. This was because there was the impression that theological training will re-orient the Neo-Pentecostal into a liberal Christian and eventually the fellow will lose the anointing upon his life and ministry (Barister, 1999). With the passage of time, Neo-Pentecostal ministers came to realize that theological training complemented with a fervent spiritual life will not only enhance one's ministerial capabilities but can make the fellow a better a minister. As a result, Neo-Pentecostalism began to embrace the concept of theological training.

Victory Bible Church International was one of the first churches to establish a non-denominational Bible School by name Victory Bible Training

Institute. The aim of establishing the school is to equip ministers to provide quality service within the Neo-Pentecostal fraternity (Wagner, 2005). Victory Bible Church International believes that it can show the way by making a contribution to sound theological education that blend academics with charismatic – related practical ministry (Thompson, 2001).

When the charismatic move began there was little regard for theological education. Overtime, that school of thought has changed. Churches have started Bible School and people who desire to practice the ministry are enrolling in Bible School. Ministerial training prepares the minister for Christian service and specializes him in theology and ministry. This makes the minister committed to a lifelong process of study and growth that prepares him for continued service (Trull & Carter, 2004).

Church Planting Within Charismatics

Neo-Pentecostalism began in Ghana with the vision of planting mega churches. These churches occupied the cities and the major towns. They had the intent of setting up central churches; one big church without branch churches. Being characteristic of the Neo-Pentecostal movement, Victory Bible Church International initially leaned against the ‘church’ phenomenon. As the church began to expand, Victory Bible Church International later changed to church planting during the latter part of the 1980s. By this time, most of the charismatic churches were still obsessed with the central church phenomenon. The Victory Bible Church included ‘international’ to its name as a result of church planting

exercise beyond the shores of Ghana. Victory Bible Church International currently has about a hundred churches within and outside Ghana.

The Great Commission is not cut for a particular geographical location. It is a missionary enterprise that transcends building just one church in a particular locality after a long period of existence. Thus, church planting must be the preoccupation of any well-meaning church. Through effective church planting, the Great Commission will be successfully carried out.

Prayer and Fasting in January

Prayer and Fasting is normative within the charismatic fraternity. However, at the beginning of every year prayer and Fasting has become a popular exercise in most charismatic churches. During the month of January, Neo-Pentecostal churches set the month aside to seek God's face for direction and favour for the rest of the year (Angley, 1996). This practice was started by Victory Bible Church International in the middle 1980's to seek God's assistance for a successful year. Over the years, it has developed into a tradition among Neo-Pentecostals in Ghana.

It is prudent that at the beginning of year, precisely in the month of January, there is the need for any church that seeks to achieve a lot during the year to observe prayer and fasting. This spiritual exercise provides the requisite power to achieve God's purpose for the church (Prince, 1998).

Campmeetings

Campmeeting as a concept started during the summer of 1800 in Kentucky. “The most famous of campmeetings was at Cane Ridge in Bowdon County, Kentucky, in August 1801. Campmeeting is a distinctive feature of religious life organized in an open-air auditorium in a horseshoe or circular pattern. These meetings promoted vivid conversion experiences” (Douglas & Cairns, 1985, p.135).

Victory Bible Church International was one of the few charismatic churches that introduced campmeeting as a period where the church would set aside a time to wait on God for spiritual empowerment. Victory Bible Church International was founded in June 1985 and organized its first Campmeeting during Easter 1986. Today Campmeeting has become a popular activity among Ghanaian Neo-Pentecostals.

Campmeeting services are significant moments because the churches move away from its environs and secludes itself for the purpose of spiritual renewal. It pays that occasionally, churches must set sometime aside to encounter God and it will yield great dividends (Hyatt, 2006)

All-Nights

The All-Night concept was first introduced and popularized by Enoch Agbozo, the founder and leader of the Ghana Evangelical Society. Tackie-Yarboi had a brief stint with the Ghana Evangelical Society. When Tackie-Yarboi founded Victory Bible Church International, he introduced certain things he had

learned from Ghana Evangelical Society, especially all-night prayer meeting. All-Nights were set apart for prayer because that was the only moment that ample time could be made available. When Victory Bible Church International started in 1985, all-nights were organized fortnightly on Friday nights at the Baden Powell Hall in Accra. This prayer service attracted people from various denominations. Many testified that they were revived from these meetings whilst others acknowledge that it was at these all-nights that they received the call to preach the gospel. In the process of time, all-nights were incorporated into programmes of many charismatic churches. William Lamptey, Founder And Leader of Kingdom Impact Worship Centre, a Neo-Pentecostal church in Accra say that it was at these Victory Bible Church International all-nights that he was not only revived but received the direction to start his ministry in the early 1990. (W. Lamptey, personal communication, June 10, 2005).

Even though All-Night Service is another Prayer Service it carries a wider impact because more time is allotted to prayer. The singular reason is because prayer is the church's main source of experiencing the supernatural. Churches must however do well to regulate the noise levels at night by organizing these services away from residential areas (Lowery, 2007).

Home Cell System

The Home Cell System or the Priesthood Cell Group as known within the Victory Bible Church International fraternity is the bedrock of the church (Cho, 1998). Victory Bible Church International adopted the Home Cell system

because it does not only develop the believer's vertical relationship with God but also the horizontal relationship in Christian fellowship. As the home cell system promotes fellowship, it also ensures a vibrant church. The home cell or the decentralized church has a great impact as a means of an evangelistic tool of the church (Wagner, 2000). This is the secret to the phenomenal growth in Victory Bible Church International. Within the first few years of Victory Bible Church International, the church grew numerically in the thousands. Additionally, the first five years of the church realized more than two hundred thriving home cells. These home cells were used as a means of planting more churches. Victory Bible Church International became a pacesetter within Neo-Pentecostals when it came to home cell system.

The Home Cell System will forever remain asset to the church because it is a decentralized form of church. At the grassroots level, fellowship is more effective in the case where the church is large. Churches ought to practice the Home Cell System because it will guarantee the church of a dynamic congregation (Whitaker, 1988).

Praise and Worship

Praise and Worship is the cutting-edge of Victory Bible Church International. Victory Bible Church International's initiation into the Neo-Pentecostalism brought an input into the ministry of Praise and Worship (Conner, 1976). The church's emphasis was to encourage Christian to observe themselves as priests unto God and offer praise and worship in spirit and in singing, the

playing of instruments, thanksgiving, praise, clapping of hands, the choice of Psalms and spiritual songs, dancing lifting up of hands, worship and the right attitude to offerings (Conner, 1976).

Victory Bible Church International stresses that believers must fulfil their priesthood functions with great efficacy. They teach that on God's scale of priority, worship is first and service secondary (Sasser & Cornwall, 1990).

An integral part of church service is Praise and Worship. Being the core of the service, Christian must appreciate the gravity of the moment and occasion, awe and reverence must be attached to it. Movement and conversation must be reduced to the barest minimum. The heart must be involved in all sincerity and worship must be conducted truthfully, according to God's set pattern for worship (MacArthur, 1998)

Above all, the sum total of our worship must reflect kind of life that we live (Tenney, 1976)

Economic Impact

Victory Bible Church International is a Neo-Pentecostal church that belongs to the Abundant Life strand. The Abundant Life Ministries believe in the material and physical well-being of the believer (Larbi, 2001). The material and physical blessings are viewed as God showering His children with prosperity (Copeland, 1997). However, these blessings come by dint of industry as a result of one using his or her gifts and talents (Larbi, 2001).

Victory Bible Church International also teaches that financial prosperity is achieved through investment. The church encourages members to save their monies in the banks (Pilzer, 1995). Members are encouraged as well to save out of their earnings towards investment at the stock market (Amevor, 2005). These are ways and means by which members improve upon their economic fortunes (Adei, 2001).

Victory Bible Church International started a Co-operative Society and Mutual Fund in 2004 among its members. The leadership of the Church anticipates that the Mutual Fund will develop into a Bank and Insurance in the near future.

Even though the scriptures advise against the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10, NIV), the same scripture acknowledges God as the giver of wealth (Job 36:11; Deuteronomy 8:18, NIV). Financial independence through industry and prudent use of money ensure a life devoid of anxiety (Tracy, 2003). When one conceives a laudable goal or a dream in any sphere of endeavour and maintains his or her focus religiously, wealth is the obvious outcome. (Trump & Kiyosaki, 2006).

Political Impact

Acknowledgement of Government in Power

Victory Bible Church International acknowledges the government in power as a divinely ordained instrument to exercise rulership over the nation. To

exhibit good citizenship, members are taught to appreciate the services rendered by the incumbent (Barclay, 1975). The church educates its members to submit themselves to the rulership of the government whether it is to their favour or not. Members are taught not only to give respect to the representatives of the government who represent the law but they are to submit to their decrees and laws. This is because in the sight of God resistance to political authority is sin and the Christian's conscience must compel him or her to render the respect due to the rulers (Lyll, 1972).

As a result, Victory Bible Church International admonishes its followership to pray for those in authority. It is one of the requests that is frequently prayed about at the beginning of church service. The church is convinced that intercession for rulers ensures tranquil governance, secure rulership, a rulership of guaranteed longevity and a safe country (Barclay, 1975).

Christians everywhere must understand that whatever government that comes to power has been approved by God and must be respected (Romans 13:1-4, NIV). Therefore with this understanding the church must endeavour to encourage its members to be loyal to the government in power despite their political party affiliation. Messages preached from the podium must be devoid of anti-government sentiment. Prayer must be regularly made on the government's behalf to ensure a governable environment prevails.

Encouragement to Members to Fulfil Civic Responsibilities

Victory Bible Church International believes that state affairs constitute the responsibilities of every Christian. The church understands that fulfilment of

civic responsibilities enhances socio-economic condition of the nation. As a result the church encourages its flock to respond to their obligations to the nation by paying all forms of taxes, levies and utilities as required and provided by the state agencies (Barclay, 1975). In his writing 'Church and State', Karl Barth brings to our attention that: "Respect for the authority of the state is indeed an annexe to the priestly function of the church toward the state. Christians would be neglecting the distinctive service which they can and must render to the state, were they to adopt an attitude of unquestioning assent to the will and action of the state which is directly or indirectly aimed at the suppression of the freedom of the Word of God" (Barth, 1939, pp.68, 69). Hence, members do not become naïve but work towards the politico-economic emancipation of the nation (Robinson, 2002).

One of the characteristics that mark mature Christians out is their ability to volitionally carry out their civic responsibilities. The gospel must be packaged holistically.

Our Christian witness should not only be verbal but it must be balanced with acts that influence communities positively. Any form of taxes or levies from civil authorities must be complied. Church leaders can also educate their flock about government policies in their messages and through seminars.

Encourage Members to Participate in Politics

To many a Christian, politics is an arena that must be avoided. Yet, it is an area of concern to God and Christians must learn to appreciate God's desires

rather than their preferences (Bernier, 1994). Victory Bible Church International understands politics as an activity involved in getting and using power in public life and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or a society (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary). The church's stance is that God rules in the affairs of men (Daniel 4:17b). This infers that God is interested in politics and must have Christians representatives in government else as Edmund Burke puts it: "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing" (Robison, 2002, p.205). Hence the Christian has to prioritize socio-political matters above their private concerns. Victory Bible Church International therefore encourages its members to dare into politics and to help the poor and the oppressed as the salt and light of the earth (Haselbarth, 1976). Members are not only educated to pray for those in authority but are encouraged to be interested in public issues, belong to a political party, select and campaign for politically and morally qualified candidates, vie for political offices themselves, register and vote during parliamentary and presidential elections (Robison, 2002).

The church can boast of three current examples: Deacon Joseph Quaye, who was the Assembly Man for The Alajo Area, Deacon Kofi Ofori who also was the Assembly Man for the Ablekuma North Constituency and Deacon Kofi Amponsah Bediako, who was the Government Spokesperson for Social Services.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines politics as "the activities involved in getting and using power in public life and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or society". (Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary, 2000, p.899). Basically, it is an opportunity to be involved in public

service with the intent to better the lot of the citizenry. Due to the bizarre stories published about politics and politicians, many Christians have shied away from this noble task. As the salt of the earth, Christians must defy the odds and glorify God by serving humanity through politics.

Social Impact

Education

Education is very strong on the heart of Victory Bible Church International. The church acknowledges education as a means of not only providing information for the individual but that it guarantees a promising future (Silbiger, 2000). The church also advocates the pursuit of formal education because the individual's mind is cultivated and solutions to the world's problems are discovered (Munroe, 1996). However, in Victory Bible Church International parents are taught that the responsibility of education does not rest on the shoulders of the government alone. Parents are admonished to provide a non-formal sort of education that can groom their children to maturely make the right decisions in life. The Victory Bible Church International is of the conviction that education is most effective when there is church-state collaboration (Evans, 1999).

Currently, Victory Bible Church International has set up a Bible School; Victory Bible Training Institute. Founded in 1991, the school was founded with the aim of training ministers of the gospel. For the past decade and half, Victory

Bible Training Institute has produced hundreds of ministers for Victory Bible Church International, other Neo-Pentecostal churches and para-church organizations. Secular education-wise, Victory Bible Church International has set up Victory Academy, a primary school in the village of Avesive, near Aflao in the Volta Region. That is the only school in the entire village.

The church is not only a proclaimed of the gospel but an educational centre. The church must not focus on preaching but must extend it to influence the educational sector. The church needs to build schools in order to influence society and help reform the moral fibre of society.

Taking Care of Widows

The Apostle Paul admonishes that: “Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need (I Timothy 5:3). Victory Bible Church International recognizes the catering for its flock. Widows in the congregation are recognized as a group within the church and catered for. The church does not only seek their spiritual welfare but they are remitted on a monthly basis. The school fees of the widow’s children are paid for by the church as well. At the end of every year, the church gathers the widows and presents them with presents and fete them. Victory Bible Church International expresses respect and concern for widows (Schmidt, 2001).

People from various quarters have questioned how the offerings and the other sources of income of the church are used. To resolve the puzzle in the minds of people, the church must donate towards some relevant needs from within the

church such as widows. When the church takes care of the needy ones in its midst it will be a clear indication its funds are judiciously utilized (Acts 6:1-3, NIV)

Donation to Social Institutions

James expounds the place of religion in social services: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (James 1:27 NIV).

Victory Bible Church International practicalizes its spiritual activities by attending to the plight of the occupants in the prisons, borstal institutions, the physically and mentally handicapped, the hospitalized and the various social institutions. The church is as well guided by the exhortation of Jesus Christ: “Then the king will say to those on His right, ‘come you who are blessed by my father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him *‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go in to visit you?’*. “The king will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me? (Matthew 25:34-40)

Not only does Victory Bible Church International provide logistics in terms of food, clothing, pharmaceutical drugs and other essential items, but it provides prayer, pastoral care, counsel, and an attempt to solve the root of the problem (Waruta & Kinoti, 1994).

The funding of social institutions solely by the government has been unbearable. The church must show leadership in society by lending a helping hand to the government to enhance church-state collaboration.

Scholarship Scheme

The church has instituted a scholarship scheme for brilliant but needy students. The scheme is not only limited to members alone but all other people who merit the prerequisite of good academic results with an appreciable testimonial. The church acknowledges that for education to thrive in the nation, the church has to be collaborating with the government by helping to shoulder the financial responsibilities. The church lends its support by involving itself in the running of education with the scholarship package (Evans, 1999).

What is God's love when all we do is worship? That kind of love is one-sided. Love takes a holistic posture when it is exercised both horizontally and vertically. After the spiritual act of worship, we must look out for the needy, more especially the brilliant but needy students and provide scholarships for their education. By so doing we are rendering service to God and to man. God's purpose for man is relationship. He is concerned for our fallen state. His desire is to restore mankind. That is the essence of Calvary. Having that kind of

compassion from God our father, may we cultivate the intent of meeting people at the point of their need (Ferguson, 1998). Victory Bible Church International thus provides a holistic approach in meeting the needs of Christians.

University education does not just provide a change of status and financial reward but an opportunity into community leadership (Mandela, 1994)

Since education changes people's status and livelihood, the church must take it upon itself to fend for the brilliant but needy students.

CHAPTER FIVE

PROSPECTS OF VICTORY BIBLE CHURCH INTERNATIONAL

Introduction:

After two and a half decades of its existence, Victory Bible Church International has made considerable contribution to the evolvement of Pentecostal-Charismatic Ministry in Ghana.

Victory Bible Church International believes that the church can have influence in the nation if it renders some socio-economic services. As a result there are certain areas the church desires to engage in which will be of benefit to Ghanaians as a whole. There are many more initiatives that the church has projected for the future.

Education

The church in contemporary times is confronted with moral and ethical decline. Victory Bible Church International acknowledges the existence of relativism and so it intends to embark on establishing Christian schools from the pre-school to the tertiary level of education. The objective is to influence the

world-view of the individual. As Christian values are combined with the curriculum it is the conviction of the church that the nation will experience the raising of law-abiding citizens coupled with sound education. (Gangel & Benson, 1983).

The church is not only a proclaimer of the gospel but an educational centre. The church must not focus on preaching but must extend it to influence the educational sector. The church needs to build schools in order to influence society and reform to moral fibre of society.

Health

The quest for affordable medical service in the nation of Ghana is on the high side. The ratio of medical personnel to the Ghanaian is imbalanced and there is the need for reinforcement. The church intends to provide cost – effective medical services by building hospital facilities to serve people. This also opens employment opportunities for the requisite personnel on the job market. The rationale behind this prospect is that the church believes that both divine healing and medical science originate from God and blending of both are crucial. (Roberts, 1995).

Planting of More Churches

Victory Bible Church International has about one hundred and forty branches locally and internationally. In the years of its existence, the church has seen lives rebuilt, reformed and destinies shaped. The church intends to redouble

its efforts by planting churches more churches in as many communities, cities and nations as possible. The church believes that eagerly desires to see the redemption of the nations. (Adelaja, 2008)

Recommendations

- (1) History as a subject has been viewed by many as an obsolete area of study. The Ministry of Education must do well to disabuse the minds of students. This is because history links the past factual data of the truth with the future (Cairns, 1996). It is therefore recommended that students are helped to study the history of events and situations.
- (2) Pentecostal and Charismatic churches must set up Historical Departments in their various churches in order to meticulously record every major event that occurs in the various churches.
- (3) Due to the importance of history in every nation, the Ministry of Education must do well to kindle students' interest in certain issues and choose history as a specialized area of study.
- (4) Pentecostal – Charismatic churches as well as Christian bodies like the Christian Council of Ghana and Ghana Pentecostal Council must frequently organize seminars with regard to the history of the church so that the contributions of the church can be evaluated.
- (5) Since the necessity of church historians cannot be over-emphasized, the study of historical studies as well as Pentecostal – Charismatic studies

must be well-advertized at the various Universities, Bible Colleges and Seminaries to attract a sizeable number of students.

- (6) Visiting a good number of Bible Colleges, Theology Departments of Universities and Seminaries, the researcher observed that the materials at the history section were woefully under resourced. To add insults to injury, the scarce materials were mostly old ones. There is therefore the need to adequately resource the history section with current materials.
- (7) Pentecostal – Charismatic churches must invest into historical research by offering scholarship to their members who are interested in studying Historical Theology. This will help society to appreciate contributions of certain structures within the society.
- (8) Pentecostal – Charismatic churches must make their recorded histories available by handing them over to the various Universities and Theological Institutions as a contribution to academics.

Conclusion

The name ‘Victory Bible Church International can be explained in relation to its purpose of formation. The word ‘Victory’ was culled from the first epistle of John which states that: “For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the Victory that has overcome the world, even our faith”(1 John 5:4, NIV). By the name ‘Victory’, the church wants to affirm that by their faith in God’s word, they possess the trump card over the world’s system and the challenges it presents. The name ‘Bible’ speaks of the source of the church’s faith, the inerrant

Word of God. The church believes that the Bible is God's word and plan for the redemption of mankind. 'Church' basically connotes the congregating of the people of God for the purpose of worship, fellowship and evangelism. 'International' stands for the existence of Victory Bible Church International not only in Ghana but anywhere outside the borders of the nation.

By the church's ethos, it primarily exists for the purpose of converting people to the Christian faith with the view of establishing them as members of the church. This is to mature them to the point of locating their placement in the church and the corporate world in order to make their lives impactful. This thereby makes church members spiritually and socially relevant in their various communities. The members of the church are as a result nurtured with a set of value system that make them holistic.

As a first-generation Neo-Pentecostal movement, there is a lot of contribution Victory Bible Church International has made to Christendom. In retrospect, the advent of the gospel to the shores of Ghana by the western missionaries was at a great cost. In the face of vicissitudes, these missionaries dared to propagate the gospel at the peril of their lives. Their impact was further continued by the fire-brand classical Pentecostals. These Pentecostals gave Christianity another face by demonstrating the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit in an unusual way. The process was further developed by Victory Bible Church International and its contemporaries.

Spiritually, Victory Bible Church International has conscientized its followership to aspire for leadership. Consequently, this notion has created a

healthy competition amongst members and has therefore created the availability of leaders. Not only has Victory Bible Church International succeeded in planting more churches but it has also decentralized the church. As a result there is an effective form of fellowship where members are able to interact freely in small groups as against the thousands who congregate at celebration gatherings. Victory Bible Church International is among the first few Neo-Pentecostal groups who have encouraged theological education. Initially, Neo-Pentecostals held the opinion that theological education has the propensity of dissipating one's spiritual fervour. Victory Bible Church International has succeeded in disabusing that mind-set. Currently it runs a theological institution that trains both the clergy and lay people.

On ecclesiastical leadership, Victory Bible Church International has an enviable record of founders who have been together since the inception of the church. None of its contemporaries can boast of a leadership that has been together since they were founded. The church has not only instituted a hierarchy of leadership but attained denominational status and organizes a biennial synod to evaluate its activities. Economically, as an abundant life' ministry Victory Bible Church International teaches economic empowerment. In as much as it believes in the principle of tithing, Victory Bible Church International encourages industry and investment. The church is currently practicing a co-operative society and a mutual fund.

Politically, the church does not exercise partisan politics but respects whoever is in government as encouraged by the scriptures. Victory Bible Church

International encourages its members to fulfill their civic responsibilities, exercise their franchise during elections and involvement in politics.

The church has been actively involved in social work and services involved in social work and services in various forms because it believes in the improvement of society.

Victory Bible Church International can be said to be a church that has positively influenced Neo-Pentecostalism in Ghana. The church can be considered to be one of the major Neo-Pentecostal denominations in the nation. The church is considered as a symbol of good reputation among the charismatic churches in the nation. Due to these sterling qualities the church has demonstrated over the decades, Victory Bible Church International has been elected as a governing member of the Ghana Pentecostal Council.

With the emergence of the Neo-Pentecostal movement, there was the emphasis that God was mainly dealing with His people. The evangelistic ministry was seen as the means by which Town and Prayer Fellowships were organized. By the 1980s, the period for pastoring and teaching ministries had dawned and anything short of these ministries was not acknowledged as the 'current move of God'. The emphasis was more on 'church' rather than 'ministry' or 'fellowship'. That was rationale behind the Alex Coffie- Tackie-Yarboi misunderstanding.

However, this impasse was amicably settled by the existing Interim Board of Elders. There are various opinions held by people that Victory Bible Church International is a break-away faction from Christian Evangelical Ministry. Though Victory Bible Church International seceded from Christian Evangelical

Ministry, it was done under mutual agreement. John Alex Coffie, the leader of Christian Evangelical Ministry with the consent of the Interim Board of Elders released Tackie-Yarboi before the entire congregation on Sunday, 26th May 1985 to start his own church. The moral which Victory Bible Church International brings to the fore is that unlike the situation where many a young man breaks away unjustifiably, secession must be undertaken where necessary. There is the likelihood that differences in philosophy of ministry could arise, but in that unfortunate situation, decorum must be exercised as much as possible. In the wake of a possible secession, there must be a discussion between the minister in question and his or her superiors. A successive dialogue must possibly result in the willful release and blessing by the leadership of the church from which the minister is coming out. This will create a sense of sanity more especially in the Pentecostal- charismatic fraternity.

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