

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

INDIGENOUS CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN THE BRONG  
AHAFO REGION: A CASE STUDY OF THE TEMPLE OF  
PRAISE CHURCH (1988-2013)

BY

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### DECLARATION

This is to certify that this thesis is the result of research undertaken by Benjamin Appiah, under the supervision of Rev. Prof. Cephas Narh Omenyo and Rev. Dr. George Ossom-Batsa towards the award of MPhil Religions at the Department for the study of Religions, University of Ghana.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God who gave me the energy, strength, and ideas to accomplish this work. It is also dedicated to my wife Charity and children; Cobby, Andy, Junior, and Krista for their love, care, prayers, and immense support that have seen me through thus far. It is also for my late mother, Mrs. Comfort Osei Appiah, who passed away during this period of study. To you, mum, I will forever be grateful.



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I am also very appreciative of the kindness and support I received from Mr. and Mrs. Antwi Boadu at Tantra Hill, Accra, Mrs. Helen Ohemeng Kyei, Mrs. Esther Ofori Bamfo, and my junior brother Collins Osei. To them, I will forever be grateful. My appreciation to my church members at Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Bethel Congregation, Bubiashie. Their contributions to this cause have been tremendous. To all those who contributed financially to my studies and to Rev. Bright Ofosu Asiedu and Richard Abrokwah who assisted me with the typing of the initial chapters as well as printing the thesis.

Finally, I wish to submit that all errors and omissions remain mine.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AICs	African Independent Churches
AICs	African Initiated Churches
COR	Corinthians
CPM	Church Planting Movement
CPMs	Church Planting Movements
EPH	Ephesians
FR	Father
MATT	Matthew
NKJV	New King James Version
NP	<i>Neo</i> Pentecostals
NPC	National Population Census
PCG	Presbyterian Church of Ghana
PNDC	Provisional National Defense Council
SU	Scripture Union
TL	Top Ladies
TOP	Temple of Praise
WM	Women's Ministry
WMMS	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society
YM	Youth Ministry

## ABSTRACT

The Temple of Praise Church is an indigenous *Neo*-Pentecostal church whose mode of operation slightly differs from both the Historic and Classical Pentecostal churches. It is one of the churches founded by indigenous Africans in 1988, and it is among the first Neo-Pentecostal churches to be established in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. The Temple of Praise church, Bethel Prayer Ministry, The Apostle Continuation Church and others which are not mentioned here are categorized as indigenous churches because they were founded by the indigenes. These churches are very widespread in the Brong Ahafo Region.

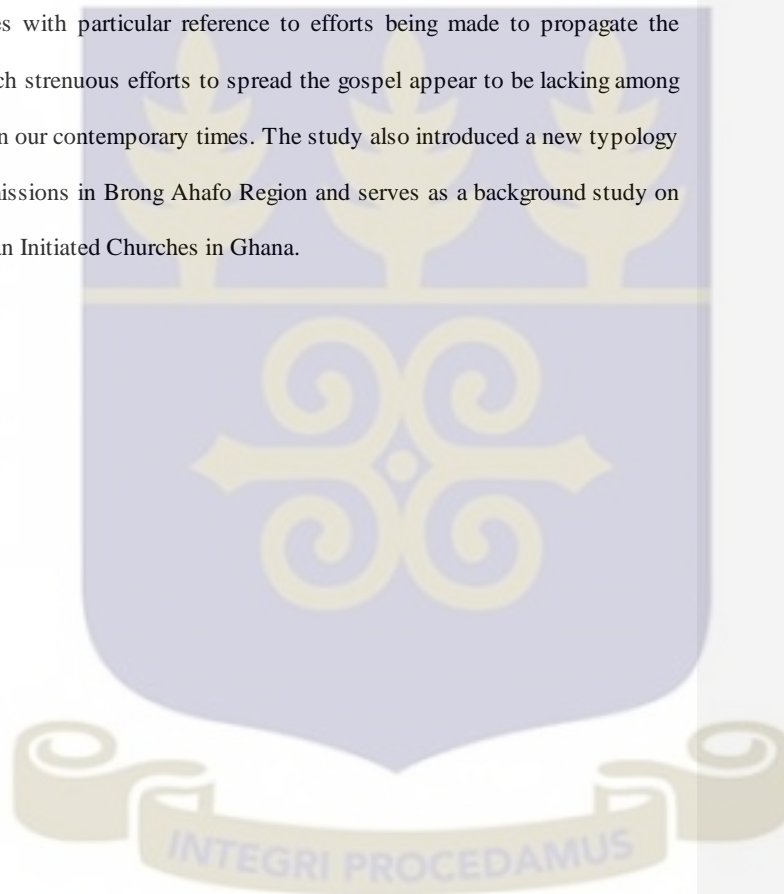
This study sought to investigate the factors that have contributed to the growth of Temple of Praise Church. It aimed at reconstructing a historical development of Christianity in the Brong Ahafo Region. The focus of the study was on Temple of Praise Church, which believes and maintains that sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with the unreached, which is the core mandate of the Church.

The researcher employed the phenomenological and historical methods focusing on the *nexus* between events, features, practical methods, movements and personalities. Furthermore, the study employed the qualitative method of gathering data. Questionnaire and structured questions were used in tandem with face to face interviews, focus group interviews, and participant observation.

The study revealed that the Temple of Praise Church has experienced significant growth due to the fact that, the principle of outreach programmes has been their priority. Virtually the entire church including the clergy and the laity have committed themselves to the sharing of the gospel message with the unreached. Furthermore, the bond of unity

and sense of belongingness especially among the founders have served as a platform for the growth.

The thesis has theological relevance since the operations of the Church are rooted in the Christian religion. The study in addition brought to light the new dimension of indigenous Churches with particular reference to efforts being made to propagate the gospel message. Such strenuous efforts to spread the gospel appear to be lacking among most the churches in our contemporary times. The study also introduced a new typology into the Christian missions in Brong Ahafo Region and serves as a background study on new trends in African Initiated Churches in Ghana.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In the light of the Christianization of Africa by European and American missionaries from the early 19th century, debates have raged on about responses to the gospel and the roles of the indigenous people to the spread of the gospel message in the Western part of Africa. The Christian faith was first brought to the shores of Africa by the Portuguese traders in the fifteenth century. However, the people of Dieppe in France claimed to have reached Ghana in the fourteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Even though this assertion has not been fully accepted by some scholars, W.H. Debrunner posits that the arguments for the French arrival on the Coast of Ghana, (formerly the Gold Coast) have been expanded in full by the French geographer Amandee Terdieu in 1847.<sup>2</sup> The researcher agrees to the widely acclaimed affirmation that the Christian faith was first brought to the Coast by the Portuguese explorers. This does not discard the claim by the Dieppe people. However, the researcher agrees with Debrunner's affirmation that 'even if the Dieppe people arrived first, they kept this discovery jealously to themselves, their objective being trading rather than Christian mission.'<sup>3</sup>

The Portuguese explorers, (whose expedition was sponsored by Prince Henry the Navigator), were the first to touch the shores of Africa. According to John S. Pobee, 'the big brain behind the voyages initiated into Africa was Prince Henry the Navigator of

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<sup>1</sup>Hans W. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), 13.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid*, 14.

Portugal' (1395-1460).<sup>4</sup> He had a five-fold aim: adventure, study, politics, trade, evangelism and crusades.

The fivefold aims were; to learn about West Africa beyond Bojador, to open relations, to ascertain the extent of the Muslim power which had been a serious threat to Christendom in Europe itself, to find Pester John, the mythical Christian Prince in Central Africa and to evangelize the people of Africa so as to undermine any Muslim and South of the Sahara influence.<sup>5</sup>

The historical development of Christianity in the Ghana has been divided into two segments by christian Scholars. The two segments were initiated by the Western Missionaries between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to Cephas Omenyo, 'mission history can be traced in Ghana to two main streams.'<sup>6</sup> The first stream began in the fifteenth century when the Portuguese tried to make converts in the vicinity of their castle on the Gold Coast. This did not have much impact on the indigenous people. He further states that "the second stream which was more significant in terms of the abiding fruits it bore started in the nineteenth century."<sup>7</sup> Within this period and subsequent years, missions in Ghana, (formerly the Gold Coast), were mainly done by the Basel, Bremen, Wesleyan, and Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and Roman Catholic missionaries. According to S.K. Odamtten, it was the Basel, Bremen and Wesleyan, among others, who in the nineteenth century, built on the foundation laid earlier in the fifteenth century for the Christian Church in Ghana<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>John S. Pobee, *Religion and Politics in Ghana*, (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1991) 51.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Cephas Nanh Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism: A study of the developments of charismatic renewal in the mainline churches in Ghana*, (Zoetermer: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2006), 42-43  
<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>8</sup>S.K., Odamtten, *The Missionary Factor in Ghana's Development* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1978), 11.

Beginning their conversions in the Coastal area and among the Akuapims, these missionaries established schools as ‘nurseries of the church in which an educated African class was trained.’ A succession of missionary societies from Western Europe subsequently lived and worked to benefit the people they shared the gospel message with. They christened the country Gold Coast because of the abundance of the precious mineral that was discovered.

It is worthy to note that the success of the pioneering missionary work of the Christian faith on the African continent have been credited mostly to the work of the Western missionaries. Notwithstanding this affirmation, the work of the Western missionary from the beginning had been complemented by their African counterparts. This position is affirmed by many scholars. One of such is Omenyo, who states that;

“There were numerous African “agents” ordained pastors, catechists, teachers, interpreters, and lay leaders,-who worked relentlessly alongside the Western missionaries to ensure that Christianity grew and spread in Africa. Indeed, due to linguistic problems coupled with unfriendly climatic conditions both militating against the work of the Western missionaries; the various successes of the mission they spearheaded would have been inconceivable without heavy reliance on indigenous Africans.”<sup>9</sup>

Richard Foli also argues that in spite of the difficulties and negative influences encountered in the attempt to plant Christianity in Ghana, the wise decision to use missionaries of African descent and indigenous converts, catechists and evangelists was to yield great dividend’.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Richard Foli, *Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Trust Publications, 2006), 56.

This study examines Indigenous Christian Missions in the Brong Ahafo Region with particular reference to the work of the Temple of Praise Church, (herein referred to as TOP). Since its establishment in 1988, TOP has experienced a significant growth in the Brong Ahafo region. TOP is categorized as an indigenous church because it was established by the natives without any direct ‘foreign assistance.’

The Temple of Praise Church has been able to make a significant impact in the missiological landscape of the Brong Ahafo Region. In spite of being a self-propagating, self-governing, self-supporting and self-financing church, the rate at which the church has been able to establish branches throughout the Brong Ahafo Region is remarkable and thus needs some scholarly attention. At the time of the research, the Temple of Praise has sixty-four (64) assemblies comprising a total membership of seven thousand, eight hundred and fifty (7,850) in the Brong Ahafo Region.

### **1.1 The Genesis of Christian Missions in the Brong Ahafo Region**

The genesis of Christian missionary enterprise in the Brong Ahafo Region is traceable to the pioneering work of the Basel, Wesley and Roman Catholic missionaries. It was the Basel missionaries who made the first attempt. However, this was not successful. Hans W. Debrunner posits that an attempt by the Rev. Ed. Perreguax to begin work at Nkoranza failed.<sup>10</sup> The reasons for the failure were that: firstly Perreguax suffered hunger and sickness, secondly, the people of Nkoranza were hostile. Nkoranza also had rebelled formally against the Ashanti and the British had failed to support the rebellion effectively.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Debrunner, *Christianity in Ghana*, 212.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*

The second attempt that resulted in the planting of the Presbyterian Church in the Region gained momentum only after the Yaa Asantewaa War of 1900. It is said that attempts by the Basel and Wesleyan missionaries to evangelize the Ashanti Kingdom faced stiff resistance from the Ashantis. This resulted in a number of wars between them and the British. Kwamena Poh recounts that 'Andreas Riis had visited Kumasi in December, 1839 to find if conditions there were better for missionary work to begin.'<sup>12</sup> Riis is reported to have said that 'an Asante mission had to wait until a clearer direction was received from God.'<sup>13</sup>

For the last thirty years (30) of the nineteenth century, the Basel Mission planning and strategies were dominated by the situation in Ashanti. Noel Smith posits that the 1874 Sagrenti war, the British *coup d'état* of 1896, the Yaa Asantewaa War of 1900 and the formal annexation of Ashanti in 1902, form the final episodes of a protracted period of mutual frustration and misunderstanding.<sup>14</sup>

The first congregation to be established was in 1889 in Techimantia.<sup>15</sup> It is said that an evangelist/catechist, the late Samuel Otu from Akuapem Larteh, was posted to Techimantia. However, his posting coincided with the Ashanti upheaval as elaborated before. Debrunner posits that 'some of the African Basel mission agents in Ashanti suffered much more than the missionaries.'<sup>16</sup> He continues that 'unfortunately one of the Catechists, Samuel Otu from Larteh stationed at Techimantia, was killed, although others

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<sup>12</sup> Kwamena M.A. Poh, *Vision and Achievement, 1828-1978, A Hundred and Fifty Years of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 2011), 138.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Noel S., *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835-1960* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1966) 108.

<sup>15</sup> Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Brong Ahafo Presbytery, 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Brochure*, 2006, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Debrunner, *Christianity in Ghana*, 212.

were in great danger, being considered potential spies and agents in the service of the English.<sup>17</sup>

Strictly speaking, Samuel Otu was not killed on account of his faith, but on account of the political upheaval. He was captured by the Ashantis and beheaded just after six months of his arrival in Techimantia on the 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1900. The unfortunate incident however did not discourage the Basel missionaries as fresh attempts were made, this time starting from Dormaa Koraso in 1904 and Berekum in 1905 respectively. The Dormaa congregation, now christened Schaeffer Congregation was first planted at Koraso, a village two (2) kilometers from Dormaa Ahenkro. We are told that a group of traders from Kumasi established the church at Dormaa Koraso during their trading activities in Dormaa Ahenkro. They started with eight converts. However in 1909, upon the suggestion and persistent advice of the then Dormaaahene, Nana Oppong Yaw I, the congregation was moved from Koraso to Dormaa Ahenkro.<sup>18</sup> Initially the church was headed by Catechist Timothy Boadi who held the fort until Rev. Schaeffer took over in 1926.

Evangelistic work in Berekum began in 1905 when Rev. N.T. Clerk was posted to Berekum. Before his appointment, Rev. Clerk had been working in Buem, Debrunner affirms that 'the great plans of the Basel mission to intensify the work in Buem, to establish missions at Akpafu and Adele, and to evangelize the interior of the German Togoland among the Kotokolis, came to nothing for political reasons.'<sup>19</sup> It is appropriate to note that this was a period within which the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 had

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<sup>17</sup> Debrunner, *Christianity in Ghana*, 212.

<sup>18</sup> Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Brong Ahafo Presbytery*, 10.

<sup>19</sup> Debrunner, *Christianity in Ghana*, 212.



authenticated the scramble and partition of the African Continent by the colonial powers. Subsequently, the German Colonial Government had taken over the lands of Buem, Nkonya and Kpanda. It is alleged that the German Government offered to Rev. Clerk in 1893, the position of Government interpreter with a salary five times what he received from the Basel Mission. This offer he declined and accepted the transfer to Berekum.

Clerk stayed and worked in Berekum for two years. Within this period, his ministry led to the conversion of twelve people who formed the nucleus of the church in Berekum. When he left in 1906, Catechist S. Dentu took over but unfortunately, within that same year, he died mysteriously. Catechist Christian W. Agadzi took over and strengthened the good foundation that had been laid by his two predecessors. His evangelistic work was extended to Seikwa, Jaman, and Ahafo.

In 1920, Berekum requested for a minister.<sup>20</sup> The Synod Committee did not only grant their request, but also elevated Berekum to a pastoral district, the first in the region. Subsequently Rev Henry E. Ofori (who hailed from Abetifi) was posted to Berekum. The Berekum District as at that time, covered Seikwa, Dormaa, Ahafo, Duayaw Nkwanta and Bechem.<sup>21</sup>

Later on, the Wesleyan missionaries also embarked on evangelizing the region in 1897.<sup>22</sup> It is said that the demand of the Christian fellowship of Methodists in Kumasi for leadership was met by the appointment of Rev. William F Somerville to Kumasi in

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<sup>20</sup>Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Brong Ahafo Presbytery, 8.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>The Methodist Church Ghana, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Diocesan Autonomy, 1979-2004 (Sunyani: Kuapaye Press, 2004), 19.

January 1897.<sup>23</sup> From that time the Ashanti mission of the British conference Methodist Church grew from strength to strength, making further penetration into the interior of the Techiman Traditional Area.

It is very fascinating that the first point of call for the 'Good News' by the Wesleyans was Techiman. The people of the Fante Confederation who form the cream of the Methodist Church are said to be descendants of Techiman and migrated from Techiman to their present place.

F.L. Bartels elucidates that 'according to tradition, the Fante people migrated from Takyiman, North of Ashanti and settled at Mankessim, under the leadership of three powerful chiefs, *Osun* (elephant), *Aburmankoma* (Whale) and *Odapagyan* (Eagle), whose names represented the Fante people's idea of such elemental powers as are demonstrated by the elephant, the whale and the eagle.'<sup>24</sup>

Missionary work at Techiman could not be said to have gained much grounds due to the most insuperable influence of pronounced Traditional religion which prevailed. The situation was worsened by a fire outbreak which destroyed the thatch-roofed house of the missionary, Rev. James Jonathan Roe.<sup>25</sup> Not only that but the upheaval which erupted between the Ashanti and the British also had a negative effect on mission work within that period. The Sagrenti War of 1874, the annexation of Ashanti under British rule by a military expedition and deportation of the Asantehene, Nana Prempeh I and Yaa Asantewaa in 1900-01, all made missionary work in Kumasi and its environs very

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<sup>23</sup> The Methodist Church Ghana, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Diocesan Autonomy, 1979-2004 (Sunyani: Kuapaye Press, 2004), 19.

<sup>24</sup> F.L. Bartels *Ghana Methodism* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), 114.

<sup>25</sup> The Methodist Church Ghana, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration 19.

challenging. It was alleged that the Ashantis were very hostile to the Europeans and were not ready to accept them or their gospel message. Bartels contends that the report made to the Synod on Ashanti at the turn of the century, was a gloomy one; it said:

The condition of our work in this important field is very sad. The war which broke out on the 1<sup>st</sup> April put a stop to all missionary operations and forced the people to flee for their lives. We are thankful that all our catechists and teachers were able to get away in time. The only stations that escaped destruction were those at Bekwai, Tekyiman and Old Juaben, where the native chiefs remained loyal to the Government. Our Agent in Tekyiman continued his work as well as he could during all these months of fighting, but it was impossible to correspond with him. It is a painful fact now we shall have to begin all over again as though there never had been a mission at all.<sup>26</sup>

The second attempt by the Wesleyans was in 1917. This time the destination was Wenchi which was then the District Headquarters of the British Colonial Administrative Area covering the Bono (Brong) chiefdoms of Techiman, Nkoranza, Mo, Nsawkaw, Seikwa, Banda, Suma and Drobo.<sup>27</sup> During this period, Rev. William Garfield Water-worth was Superintendent Minister of the Ashanti Mission. The field of work obviously was vast and communication poor, yet the Western Missionaries and their African counterparts were able to reach out to the remotest parts with the Gospel message, and opened stations at Sunyani, Kintampo, Berekum, Goaso, Nkaseim, Ahafo, Mim, Nsawkaw among others.

The history of the Catholic Church in the Brong Ahafo Region is unique. According to Oppong Baah, "it is observed that like almost all the histories of establishment of the churches in the Southern part of Ghana, the lay faithful planted the seed of faith before

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<sup>26</sup>Bartels, *Ghana Methodism*, 114.

<sup>27</sup> *The Methodist Church Ghana, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration* 19.

the priest was invited to administer the sacraments”<sup>28</sup> The inception of the Catholic Church in Berekum has history that proportionally weaves itself with circumstances, opportunity and divine providence.<sup>29</sup>

The search for work and the passion to survive led the pioneers of the church, Opayin Anthony Kwabena Nsiah, Opayin. Joseph Kwasi Krah and Opayin Kwabena Kumah to distant places. Their journey took them as far as Jukwaa in the Central Region of Ghana. They went as masons but somewhere along the way, Opayin Anthony Kwabena Nsiah fell sick. It is alleged that he was miraculously healed by the prayer of a Catholic Priest. This encounter became their “burning bush experience” and they longed to have more of such blessings. In order to accomplish this, they had to bring home the new faith that defeated their known beliefs and traditional practices. Upon their arrival at Berekum in the late 1923, they started to practise the new faith. That same year (1923), the pioneers invited Rev. Fr. Rudolf who lived in Kumasi. He responded to their invitation and travelled all the way from Kumasi to Berekum. In 1924, Mr. Taylor was appointed as the full time catechist and Rev. Fr. Joseph Fischer was later appointed as the first resident priest of Berekum in 1927. From this humble beginning, the Catholic faith spread through the region. However, each establishment was unique and could not be traced from any missionary work by the Berekum Congregation. Space will not allow for any elaboration of the evolution of other parishes as the main focus of the work is on the Temple of Praise Church.

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<sup>28</sup> John Oppong Baah, *History of Sunyani Diocese* (No publisher, No date) 11.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Later on, missionary work in the region was complemented by some classical Pentecostals like the Apostolic Church, Christ Apostolic Church and the Pentecost Church. The Classical Pentecostal churches, which had their origins in the United States in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, have since grown to be the largest family of the protestant Christians in the world. In Ghana, these Classical Pentecostals owed their beginnings to the pioneering work of Apostle Anim. Omenyo affirms that, the root of Pentecostalism in Ghana can be traced to the Faith Tabernacle Church (1917), later known as Christ Apostolic Church. Mr. Anim, the founder, who was later known as Apostle Peter Anim, is generally regarded as Father of Pentecostalism in Ghana.<sup>30</sup> Known at first, simply as Pentecostal churches; they were given the added designation, “Classical,” about 1970, to distinguish them from the neo-Pentecostals.<sup>31</sup> Since this is not the focus of the study, time and space would not permit further elaboration of their history in the region. However, the 2010 National Population Census indicates that, the Pentecost/Charismatic tradition which includes the classical Pentecostals, dominate the Christian population in the region.

In recent times, some indigenous churches have also embarked on and made significant impacts in missions. The term indigenous churches, refers to churches which are established by indigenes without any foreign initiative, support or control. Notable among this description of churches in the region are; the Apostolic Continuation Church, Bethel Prayer Ministry, Glorious Inheritance Ministry and the Temple of Praise Church. This work focuses on the Temple of Praise Church.

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<sup>30</sup> Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 94.

<sup>31</sup> Stanley M. Burgess & Gary B. McGee (ed), *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (NY: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 220.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The story of Christianity in Ghana cannot be completely told without reference to the contributions made by the indigenous people. The African Initiative is not a new phenomenon in the history of Christianity in Ghana. Some works have been done by scholars in that direction. Omenyo's article, *'Agenda for a Discussion of African Initiatives in Christianity'* is one of many scholarly works in that direction.

Notwithstanding this affirmation, it is an undeniable fact that most literature on mission history in the Brong Ahafo Region tends to focus mainly on the activities of the Western founded mainline churches.

Even with the mainline churches, most of the literature is imbedded in that of Ashanti Region. This is because at the time Christianity gained roots in the nineteenth century; the current Brong Ahafo Region was part of the Ashanti kingdom. Anane Agyei contends that the Bono kingdom was defeated by the Ashantis in 1723 and was subsequently annexed until the creation of the Brong Ahafo Region in 1959.<sup>32</sup>

Not much has been written about Indigenous churches like the Bethel Prayer Ministry, the Apostle Continuation church, the Glorious Inheritance Church and the Temple of Praise church in the Brong Ahafo Region. The absence of literature on these churches is a serious gap which needs to be bridged. Not only that, but these churches have contributed immensely to the missiological landscape of the Brong Ahafo Region and that should attract scholarship. It is said that whatever is good in its kind ought to be preserved in respect for antiquity, as well as our present advantage, for destruction can be profitable to none but such as live by it.

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<sup>32</sup>Nana Agyei-Kodie Anane Agyei, *Ghana's Brong Ahafo Region* (Accra: Type Company, 2013), 1.

This work seeks to trace the history, the phenomenal growth and impact of the Temple of Praise Church, an indigenous church in Brong Ahafo Region.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the research is to:

- Establish the historical beginnings, theology and mode of operations of the Temple of Praise in the Brong Ahafo Region from 1988-2013.
- Assess the growth and major elements responsible for the phenomenal growth of the Temple of Praise church.
- Identify and evaluate the mission strategies of the Temple of Praise Church.

### **1.4 Literature Review**

The first part of the literature review discusses at the works of scholars on Christian missions' strategies to missions and motives. The second part dwells on Africa Indigenous churches, factors that gave rise to the indigenous churches and their features. There are volumes of literature on Christian missions by scholars. However, a selected few have been reviewed for the purpose of this work.

David J. Bosch's work, *Transforming Mission* makes interesting reading. Bosch defines mission in the reign of God's conversion of the heathen and the founding of new churches. Bosch contends that still all these connotations attached to the 'mission' familiar as they may be, are of fairly recent origin. In his opinion until the sixteenth century the term was used exclusively with reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, that is of the sending of the Son by the Father and of the Holy Spirit by the Father. Thus the

term 'mission', as Bosch claims, presupposes a sender, a person sent by the sender, those to whom one is sent, and as an assignment.

John R.W. Stott in his work, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, opines that mission has been defined in two almost exclusive ways. On one hand are those who say the church's business is evangelism and discipleship only. On the other hand are those who advocate concentrating almost solely on Social Welfare. Stott, through a careful definition of five terms: mission, evangelism, dialogue, salvation and conversion, attempts to bring these two groups together and show that the mission of the church really includes both.

To Stott, the word mission is properly a comprehensive word, embracing everything which God sends his people into the world to do. It therefore includes evangelism and social responsibility, since both are authentic expressions of the love which longs to serve man in his need. Mission is, and should always be, holistic in nature.

Stott also touched on the Lausanne Congress of the World Evangelization in July 1974. It was the congress which birthed a movement that supports evangelical mission among non-Christian and nominal Christians. It regards mission as that which is designed 'to form a viable indigenous church-planting and world changing movement.' This definition is claimed to summarize the acts of Jesus' ministry, which is taken as a model motivation for all ministries. Christian mission is 'an organized effort for the propagation of the Christian faith.'<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>John R.W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press 1975), 22.



Christian mission has its genesis from the Bible and is typically depicted in the Gospel. In Matt. 28:19-20, Christ after His death and resurrection commanded His disciples to share the gospel, the message of redemption. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Bosch also contends that in the new image, mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God. It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.

The relevance of Bosch’s work and that of Stott, clearly define mission as, “that which is designed to form a viable indigenous church planting and world changing movement.” TOP, which is the focus of the study, is an indigenous church. The researcher is of the view that mission should not only aim at proselytization but should be holistic and that the needs of the poor and the under privileged should be attended to in our attempt to do missions.

S.K. Odamtten’s book, *The Missionary Factor in Ghana’s Development 1820 – 1880*, devotes part of the book to the mission strategies adopted by Basel and Wesleyan missionaries who arrived in the country in 1828 and 1835 respectively.

Odamtten’s work provides contextual and pragmatic discourses on strategies for missions using the vertical and horizontal approaches by the Wesleyan and Basel Missionaries. T. B. Freeman, the Wesleyan Missionary who arrived in Cape Coast in 1838 aimed at

occupying the coastal main settlement and moved further to the 'Capitals' of the powerful inland states. This helped the Wesleyans to spread the gospel message beyond the boundaries of the then Gold Coast.

Around the same time, the Basel missionaries adopted a strategy of 'never advance before your base is established firmly.' This could not produce many results when compared with that of the Wesleyans. Even though Odamtten wrote at a time that Christianity thrived on a seemingly 'virgin' soil, and a period which is over a century ago, the same strategies are used to assess the mission strategies of the Temple of Praise in chapter four of the work. Odamtten's work is relevant to this thesis in the sense that, a careful study of TOP's mission strategy equates with the vertical approach as explained by Odamtten. This position has been taken because, like the Wesleyan, TOP aimed at occupying the Brong Ahafo region first with the gospel message. They have now decided to move further to other parts of the country with much emphasis on establishing branches in Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi.

In writing on the motives for missions, Johannes Verkuyl, in his *Contemporary Missiology* outlines two major motives. These are the pure and impure motives. Under the pure motives, his attention is focused on the following issues; the motive of obedience, which he states has inspired countless thousands to dedicate their whole lives to the missionary task. On the motive of love, mercy and pity, he states that these should be the driving force behind missions, as God's love, mercy and pity on the human race can never be underestimated.

Secondly there is the motive of doxology where mission is done to glorify God. Preaching of the gospel should bring glory to God. Another pure motive is on eschatology. That mission is done to inform people of the second coming of Christ. Those who do not heed the message and repent potentially face the wrath of God. There is also the Motive of Haste where the focus is on urgency of the coming of the kingdom.

Verkuyl also discusses the personal motive where the attention is on the one who is involved in missions. He points to an established fact of human experience namely, that he who rouses others to believe, strengthens his own faith as well.

With impure motives, four issues are outlined by Verkuyl. Firstly, the imperialist motive, which is the attempt by one state to use another people or state as a means to achieve its own goals. Missions are used as a decoy by the missionary to achieve these intended objectives which often, are hidden. The next is the cultural motive; the goal of the missionary is not to present the gospel of salvation to the people, but they try to 'carry their fatherland' with its laws and customs along with them and to look upon the higher and better things of life whenever they go.

Another motive is commercial. Though it sometimes never dominates, it often becomes an accessory motive and a point in the propaganda for mission. The fourth one is the Ecclesiastical colonialism. This is the urge of missionaries to impose the model of the mother church on the native churches among whom they are working rather than give them freedom to shape their own churches in response to the gospel. The psychological feature that arouses an organism to action towards a desired goal is very important to any enterprise.

Bosch in his work, *Transforming Mission*, has built on Michael Green's assertions that three main missionary motives were operative in the early church, all of which are particularly clearly identifiable in Paul. These, Bosch elaborates as: a sense of gratitude, a sense of responsibility and a sense of concern.

In elaborating on these motives, Bosch elucidates that it was Paul's sense of gratitude that pushed him to the ends of the earth to preach the gospel of Christ. It was this gratitude that placed a greater sense of responsibility on Paul to preach the gospel message. In that sense, he perceived those who were 'outside' Christ's Kingdom as totally lost, and his concern for them placed a burden on him to try and win them all for Christ.

The missionary motives as exemplified by Bosch and Verkuyl, have been synchronized to assess the missionary motives of the Temple of Praise church in chapter five of the thesis.

The second part of the literature review of this work, focuses on the African Indigenous Churches. David Garrison's work *Church Planting Movements; How God is Redeeming a lost World*, is relevant to the study. In his work, the writer analyses a lot of fascinating features which when compared to TOP, bear similarities. Garrison begins by defining Church Planting Movements (which refers to CPMs or CPM when being used in a singular form) as 'a rapid and exponential increase of indigenous churches planting churches, within a given people group or population segment.'<sup>34</sup>

There are several key components to this definition which are very similar to TOP. TOP, an indigenous church, has experienced a rapid increase which is the focus of this study.

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<sup>34</sup> David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Middlethian VA: WIGTake Resource, 2004), 21.

The first characteristic is rapid. As a movement, CPM occurs with rapid increase when a new church starts. Garrison contends that the saturation of church planting over decades and even centuries is good, but does not qualify a CPM.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, there is the characteristic of exponential increase. This means that the increase in churches is not simply incremental growth, (adding a few churches every year or so) but rather it compounds exponentially: two churches become four; four churches become sixteen and so forth. Exponential growth is only possible when new churches are being started by the mother churches themselves, rather than by professional church planters or missionaries.

Finally, Garrison opines that CPMs are indigenously inclined. This means that they are generated from within rather than from without. This is not to say that the Gospel is able to spring up intuitively within a people group. The Gospel always enters a people group from the outside; this is the task of the missionary. However, in a CPM, the momentum quickly becomes indigenous, thus the initiative and drive of the movement comes from within the people rather than from the outsiders.

Omenyo's work, *'Agenda for discussion of African Initiatives in Christianity; the West African/Ghanaian Case from the Journal of the American Society of Missiology,'* is reviewed for this work. In his article, Omenyo discusses a range of African initiatives and their contributions to Christianity on the African Continent ranging from the 'Pre-Western Missionary era, the Western missionary era, the rise of the African Independent Churches (AICs), Pentecostalism and Pentecostalization of African Christianity to, other

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<sup>35</sup> David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Middlethian VA: WIGTake Resource, 2004), 21.

dimensions of contextualization of African Christianity such as African Initiatives, African migrant churches and Africa-led missions in the West.

In each of the typologies mentioned, Omenyo makes a case for the contributions of the African towards the birth, growth and sustainability of the Christian faith on the African continent. Under the pre-Western Missionary era, the writer opines that ‘there have been instances where Africans have demonstrated convincingly their predilection for the gospel and their commitment to live as Christians even before the dawn of activities of specific Western missionaries in their context.’<sup>36</sup> Two examples which the writer mentions are the cases of 1100 ex-slaves who were settled in Sierra Leone by the Clapham Sect philanthropists in 1792. This group comprised preachers and Christians who lived and worshipped as Christians for more than 14 years before the first Western missionaries arrived to work among them.

The other example is the circumstances that led to the advent of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (herein referred to as WMMS), in Ghana. Omenyo argues that prior to ‘the advent of the first WMMS missionary, Christianity began to spread from Sierra Leone towards the Gold Coast (present day Ghana) and Lagos through the efforts of Africans who were returning to their places of origin. This spread happened quite separately from European endeavours; it was solely through the efforts of African ministers and Christian believers.

These two groups, who were mainly natives of Africa, contributed their quota to the Christian faith before the arrival of the Western missionaries to the Continent. During the

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<sup>36</sup> Omenyo, *Agenda for a Discussion*, 374.

Western missionary era, Omenyo argues the fact that ‘there were numerous African ‘agents’ – ordained pastors, catechists, teachers, interpreters, and lay leaders, who worked relentlessly alongside the Western missionaries to ensure that Christianity grew and spread in Africa.’ Within this period, the African Christians played a major role which helped to consolidate the Christian faith on the African soil.

Apart from the African Christians there is yet another category of Christian pioneers which the writer describes as ‘African Prophets.’ Their “prophetic” periods were between 1914-1937 particularly in Ghana. The three key African prophets who had their respective independent calling to preach and minister alongside the Western missionaries as collaborators were; William Wade Harris (1860-1929), John Swatson (1855-1925), and Sampson Opong (1884-1965). Of the three, it is the calling and ministry of Harris that attracts the interest of Omenyo.

In this study however, the spotlight is on the work of Kwame Sampson Opong. As stated earlier, the selection of Sampson Opong stems from the fact that, he is a native of the Brong Ahafo region. Furthermore, it seems most of the ministerial work in the region is not given much prominence. This is as a result of the fact that the current Brong Ahafo Region was part of the present day Ashanti region. In this thesis, Opong’s work in the region gains much attention.

Another typology that attracts the interest of Omenyo is the Immediate Post-Western Missionary era (African Successors). Here, the writer makes a case for the taking over of the leadership mantle in the Western mission founded churches by the Indigenes. A case in point is the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, founded by the Basel and West Indian

missionaries. The Indigenes took over the leadership mantle when their 'colonial masters' (the German-speaking missionaries) were expelled from Ghana, which had become a British colony. Similarly in the case of the Northern German Missionary Society, Reverends Adreas Aku, Stephen Kwan and Robert Domingo Baeta led the Evangelical Presbyterian Church which the former society had founded.

Omenyo contends that the churches which were founded by Western missionaries survived after the departure of the missionaries from their respective mission fields, testifies to the determination of their African successors to champion the course of the gospel.

On African Independent Churches, Omenyo makes a distinctive assertion that the AICs are one of the many initiatives by Africans. Omenyo elucidates some of their features, and said that AICs are characterized by faith healing, taking the spirit-world seriously (including exorcisms), vibrant worship and lively African music accompanied largely by African musical instruments. Even though TOP is an Indigenous church, these features are not characteristics with their activities and worship.

Omenyo continues that the AICs are Christian churches built on the foundation of African culture providing authentic African worship. Omenyo traces the proliferation of the AICs in Africa around the 1920s which ushered in the genesis of a major explosion which has been sustained until the present day and has witnessed phenomenal growth.

Another typology given audience in Omenyo's article is Pentecostalism and Pentecostalization of African Christianity. This type, according to Omenyo, is distinct from the AICs. Its genesis is credited to a Ghanaian lay Presbyterian, Apostle Peter Anim



(1890-1984), who is popularly known as the 'father of Pentecostalism' because classical Pentecostal churches in Ghana trace their origins to his group, which according to Omenyo, was founded in 1922 at Asamankese in Ghana. This type laid much emphasis on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by gifts such as healing trances and *glossolalia*. Omenyo contends that Pentecostalism has much magnitude and significance in Africa today. He further revealed that Pentecostals constitute 24.1 per cent of Ghana's population. The writer affirms that Pentecostals are increasingly mainline in African Christianity not merely in numbers but also more importantly in spirituality, theology, and practice. TOP which is the focus of this study falls under this typology. It bears similar characteristics in terms of spirituality, emphasis on the Holy Spirit, spiritual baptism and its accompanying gifts. The dichotomy here is that, unlike the Classical Pentecostalism (whose activities were collaborated by foreign missionaries), TOP has remained an indigenous church since its establishment.

The other initiatives mentioned include the contextualization of African Christianity as African initiatives. On this, Omenyo argues that Africans have successfully and authentically encountered the message of the gospel through the medium of African vernacular, in their own mother tongue. Africans have easy access to Scripture in their mother tongues and have thus identified with the Christian faith and feel at home with it. This portion of the work is also relevant in that, TOP, unlike most of its contemporaries (Neo-Pentecostals/Charismatics) in the urban areas, which mostly use the English language as their mode of communication, has been making use of the language of the people (which is Twi) as a means of communication. Their liturgy, worship, prayers and praises are all done in the Akan language.

The last nomenclature described by Omenyo is the African migrant churches and African-led missions in the West as African Initiatives. Omenyo states that there is a phenomenal upsurge of African migrant churches everywhere in the world; particularly in the West. These are initiatives by Africans who exercise their mandate to share the Good News with their migrant brethren and their host.

Omenyo's article makes a strong case for African initiatives. Even though not all the nomenclature mentioned bear the same similarities of TOP's operations and worship. However, one fact remains constant. All the nomenclature bear African initiative.

Peter Barker's work, *'Must New Churches Go on Multiplying?'*, is also reviewed for the purpose of this study. Barker argues that 'nearly every year since 1950, the number of new churches started in Ghana has been greater than the year before.'<sup>37</sup> The multiplication of churches means two things; firstly, a desire for release from the traditions and discipline of the older churches; secondly, the unwillingness on the part of the older churches to let changes take place within their own framework.

Barker makes a very fascinating assertion that 'To start a new church is a kind of liberation from the limitations and frustrations imposed by the church one was in before. The new church provides what he term as 'freedoms' which were denied in the old one.' The old one here refers mainly to the Western missionary founded churches. Five of the freedoms which are expanded below are assessed in chapter five of the work to consider if such freedoms have contributed to the growth of TOP.

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<sup>37</sup>Peter Barker's, Asempa Publishers (ed.), "Must New Churches Go on Multiplying?" *The Rise of Independent Churches* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1990), 70.

The first, is the freedom to exercise spiritual gifts. Barker contends that not all the newer churches are Pentecostal in their practice. Most of them are, and even those which are not glad to be called 'Spiritual Churches' indicate their emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, not all stress on speaking in tongues, but nearly all stress the gift of healing. According to Barker, the old churches have regarded these gifts with suspicion and members who received them have usually been discouraged, or even sometimes driven out. This assertion described by Baker has experienced a dramatic change as some of the "old churches" now accept these spiritual gifts and also stress on the speaking of tongues in their corporate worship.

Baker cites the Presbyterian Church of Ghana as an example that, it now has a union of Bible Study and Prayer Group in which these gifts are emphasized, and other older churches too are coming to recognize these gifts as manifestations of the Spirit; but the earlier intolerance of these things is one of the main reasons for the rise of the newer churches.

Second, is freedom to worship with more movement and excitement. Barker argues that the liturgies of the Anglican and Methodist Churches were written for England and not for Africa, and most of the prayers are over three hundred years old. Ghanaians however enjoy a more demonstrative form of worship, with dancing, clapping and shouting.

Third, is the freedom to exercise the gifts of leadership. It is alleged that in the "older churches", the way to get into positions of leadership and responsibility are carefully controlled, and people with lower levels of education are not expected to go far. The "newer churches" on the other hand have recognized that, the less educated, and even

illiterate people, could potentially possess real gifts of leadership and where such people found themselves frustrated in the “older churches” they now had a remedy.

Fourthly, there is the freedom to create new forms and institutions. Barker opines that the newer churches can create institutions without ‘red tape.’ By ‘red tape’ Baker means decisions that are taken with much difficulty and bureaucratic procedures. For instance, one church has full-time “prayer warriors,” whose sole duty is to pray for the country and the church. Another has a fellowship meal each week before the main worship service. Innovations of this kind, argues Barker, would take months or years to pass through the process of consideration and ratification in the older churches.

Lastly, there is freedom to relax or reinforce moral requirements. The writer opines that some newer churches have legislated against smoking, drinking and eating pork and other kinds of meat; others also adopt a more flexible attitude to polygamy than the older churches do.

As stated earlier, these five freedoms will be critically assessed in the concluding chapter of the thesis to indicate whether they have contributed to the significant growth of TOP.

Another literature which is being reviewed for the purpose of this study is James Anquandah’s work, *The Ghana Independent/Pentecostal Movement*. The writer argues that the Independent Pentecostal Movement is a relatively recent development compared to the older historic churches. Anquandah argues that, ‘its foundation dates back only as far as to Prophet William Wade Harris’ evangelistic campaigns in Axim and Apollonia in

1914.<sup>38</sup> According to James, the movement today lacks the vast material resources, systematic organization, administration and the elaborate formal theological training of the early churches. Nevertheless, it might be said that the best part of the Independent Church Movement is probably the most colourful and most vibrant arm of the Ghanaian church as a whole. The writer assigns two reasons for his affirmation. These are because the movement's roots are Ghanaian and the ultimate aim is to develop a 'full gospel church.' The reasons are expanded below;

First, because its roots are Ghanaian, the Independent church movement has found itself at home in the use of indigenous music, musical instruments, and language in their worship. The Christian religion and its gospels are essentially a universal way of life that cuts across all racial barriers and national boundaries. But wherever the seed of the gospel has been introduced, it has grown and flourished by pushing its roots into and adapting itself to the local soil. Anquandah argues that because the liturgy of the older churches is still by and large foreign, Christianity hovers superficially on the fringes of the hearts of many illiterates and semi-literates.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, people find themselves very much 'at home' in the Independent churches with their African-flavoured music and liturgy.

Secondly, the ultimate aim of the Independent Church Movement is the development of a 'full gospel' church which is patterned on the first church in Jerusalem. Such churches manifest the full power of the Pentecostals, and yet subscribe to preaching, teaching, and practicing, the Christian tenet of faith, hope, charity, and salvation by grace through the

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<sup>38</sup> James Anquandah, Asempa Publishers (ed.), "The Ghana Independent/Pentecostal Movement" *The Rise of Independent Churches* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1990), 22.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

blood of Jesus Christ who was crucified. They also administer the sacraments of the “older churches”.

Anquandah’s work is very relevant to this thesis because, TOP as an independent church, fits perfectly into the description given by the writer, TOP’s roots are Ghanaian and it is typically indigenous in its music, language, and worship. It is also self-supporting, self-governing, and self-financing. The researcher agrees with Anquandah’s assertion that ‘whenever the seed of the gospel has been introduced, it has grown and flourished by pushing its roots into and adapting itself to the local soil.’<sup>40</sup> TOP has grown and flourished mainly because it was planted in the local soil of Brong Ahafo, where it started.

Again TOP seems to be a ‘full gospel’ church because of its emphasis on the full power of Pentecost and also its subscription to preaching, teaching, and practicing, the Christian tenets of faith, hope, charity and salvation by grace through the blood of Christ who was crucified. Since its establishment, this has been the primary aim of TOP.

Richard Foli’s work “*Christianity in Ghana*” is another literature which is very relevant to this study. Foli discusses among other things the Ghanaian Church in retrospect; towards a growing Ghanaian church among others but what is more imperative to this work is the typologies described. Under this sub-heading, Foli states that generally, “five broad distinctions may be made relating to the various types of the Ghanaian Church.”<sup>41</sup> This classification is based firstly on the roots and origins and in particular, the eras of

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<sup>40</sup> Anquandah, *The Rise of Independent Churches*, 21.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Foli, *Towards Church Growth in Ghana* (Accra: Trust Publishers, 1996), 65-67.

missionary activities resulting in the various churches; that is the era of the pioneer missions. Pentecostal missions, African Independent missions and other foreign missions.

Secondly, the classification takes into account the belief systems and modes of operation of the churches. The five main typologies comprise the following:

- The historic churches
- Other mission-related churches
- The Pentecostal churches
- The Independent “Charismatic” churches
- The Independent “Spiritual” churches

Foli also affirms that there have been earlier typologies of churches in Ghana. One such typology quoted by Foli is by Elom Dolvo which is concerned with the changing scenes of Christian Renewal in Ghana and has three distinctions. The distinctions which are based on three phases or renewal movements are;

- The Classical Pentecostal movements originating in and outside Ghana with established churches such as the Assemblies of God.
- The Neo-Pentecostal movement which began in America in the 1960s and found active expression in Ghana from the 1970.

Arising from the classification given by Foli and Dolvo, there are four acceptable terms which can be adopted for scholarly usage. These are; Historical churches, Independent/Spiritual churches, Pentecostals and the Charismatics. TOP is placed under

Independent Charismatic churches which can also be categorized as a Neo-Pentecostal movement.

Asamoah Gyadu's work, *African Charismatics*, is another literature which is very relevant to this work. He discusses among other things, Pentecostalism in context but what is more important to this work, is the waves of 'Renewal in Ghanaian Christianity'. Under this sub heading, the writer states that historically, it is possible to view the emergence of Pentecostal innovations and creativity in Ghana, in terms of at least three main waves. The first wave, he termed as the 'Sumsum Sore'. The second is the classical Pentecostalism, and the third is the Charismatic Movement. All these waves have elements of indigenous initiatives.

The Temple of Praise which is the focus of this thesis is placed under the third wave, even though its operations and activities differ slightly from the mainline charismatic movements as described by the writer.

*Pentecostalism; the Eddies of Ghana Christianity* by E. Kingsley Larbi is about tracing the history of Pentecostalism in Ghana. Larbi makes mention of the two major periods (1900-1970 and 1970-1990). According to him, the period produced Six major Christian renewal movements.

- The spiritual church movements
- Mainline or Evangelical Pentecostal Movements
- The Neo-Pentecostal Movements (or The Charismatic Movements in Ghana)
- The Prophet /Healer centered Pentecostalism
- Prayer Camps.



The six major Christian renewal movements being discussed, highlight on independent churches as well as Charismatic renewals in some of the mainline churches. Larbi's work is relevant to the study because it provides a historical sketch on some African prophets namely: Wade Harris, John Swatson and Sampson Opong. It also forms part of the historical background of the research. In this thesis, the highlight is on Sampson Opong who is considered to be the precursor of indigenous missions in the region.

The literature reviewed for this work was grouped into two parts. The first part centered on missions strategies for missions as well as motives for missions. The second part dealt with what Indigenous missions are, the various typologies, their features as well as factors responsible for church growth. Both are relevant to this study because they provide a historical sketch, background and also direct the focus of the study.

From the review, it can be said that the word mission is properly a comprehensive word, embracing everything which God sends his people into the world to do. It therefore includes evangelism and social responsibility. Again, mission is also defined as that which is designed to form a viable indigenous church planting and world changing movement. Furthermore, it has also provided a contextual and pragmatic discourse on strategies for missions using the vertical and horizontal approaches. TOP's missionary strategies equate with the vertical approach. Aside the strategies, it also came out that there are two clear motives for missions. The categorization is the pure and impure motives. The literature also highlighted on a range of nomenclature within the Ghanaian landscape and their contributions to Christianity.

Lastly, it also highlighted some features of church planting movements as well as factors responsible for church growth. The literature reviewed under this section will help guide the work which is aimed at investigating the significant growth of the Church under study (TOP).

### **1.5 Research Questions**

What are the major factors responsible for the phenomenal growth of the Temple of Praise Church in the Brong Ahafo region?

For the study to address this main question, the following sub-questions served as a guide in investigating the factors:

- How did Temple of Praise Church emerge in Brong Ahafo region?
- What are the mission strategies of Temple of Praise Church?
- What lessons can be learned from the mission strategies and growth patterns of the Temple of Praise Church?

### **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

Latourette's three tests of Christian expansion which is well expounded by Andrew F. Walls is used as the framework for this study. The theory which is in threefold is used as a means for measuring the influence of Christ, (that influence which is the source of Christian expansion). The first among the threefold is the spread of Christian profession in particular areas which he terms as the church test. The second is the number and strength of new movements owing their origin to Christ (which is the Kingdom Test), and the third is what Latourette calls 'the effect of Christianity on mankind as a whole' (which is the Gospel Test). Latourette's three criteria of Christian expansion is used to

assess the growth and impact of the Temple of Praise Church in the Brong Ahafo Region from 1998-2013 in chapter five of this study. The three are further expanded as follows:

**a. The Church Test**

Andrew Walls explains the Church Test as ‘the spread of the Christian profession in a particular area.’<sup>42</sup> The Church test implies the fruit of the Christian mission, which is, the bringing into being of the people of God or the community of worshipping Christians. The Church Test thus is that quantifiable element of Christ’s presence in the form of churches of worshipping believers. As Walls notes; ‘In considering the primacy of the church factor, it is worth remembering that the first effect of Christian expansion is not the production of saved or enlightened individuals but of congregations.’<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, Walls notes that the influence of Jesus Christ not only produces group responses, it works by means of groups and is expressed in groups. The influence of Jesus Christ operates in terms of social relations. By this assertion, Walls does not deny the worth of the individual *vis-à-vis* group conversion. Rather, he seeks to restore the communal nature of the Christian faith that unfortunately has been shelved for individual emphasis.

Walls also brings to the fore, Latourette’s fundamental theme concerning the expansion of the faith. He categorizes the process of spreading Christianity as one of advance and recession. The Christian story is unlike Islam. It is not one of triumphalism but rather one of vulnerability. It is sobering realization that Christianity is like a pilgrim without a permanent home on earth. This affirmation by Walls, is a reflection of the first stanza of

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<sup>42</sup> Andrews F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 10.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

the Presbyterian Church of Ghana Twi Hymn 791, which was composed by G. Werner (1589-1643) and translated by Theophilus Hermann Opoku (1842-1913). The stanza reads;

*“Ohoho ne mamfrani na meye wo fam ha. M’asase mmen ha baabi, menni fi pa wo ha. Ohaw, obre amane na yede tu ha kwan; n’osoro ho na Nyame bema mahome sann.”<sup>44</sup>*

This is literally translated as ‘I am a sojourner on this earth, for I do not have an abiding city as we journey through turbulent challenges in our daily struggles. We look up to God who will give us eternal rest in the next world.’ It is in this light that Walls explains that whereas ‘the Jerusalem of the Apostles has fallen, the Mecca of the prophet remains inviolable.’<sup>45</sup> When it comes to sustaining congregations of the faith, Christianity does not appear to possess the same resilience as Islam. It (Christianity) decays and withers in its very heartlands. In the area where it appears to have had the profoundest cultural effects crossing cultural boundaries it then takes root anew on the margin of those areas and beyond. To Walls, ‘Islamic expansion is progressive, Christian expansion is serial.’<sup>46</sup> Walls’ assertion stems from the fact that in the case of Islam, it can boast of a permanent centre, but that is lacking in Christianity. The latter has no bidding centre of gravity. Not only is the centre always shifting, it has no fixed culture. Walls expresses this succinctly thus: “Christianity has no culturally fixed element as provided by the *Qur’an* fixed in Heaven, closed traditions on earth, perfection of Law in the sharia, single shrine in Mecca and true word everywhere in Arabic.”<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Presbyterian Church of Ghana *Twi Hymn Book* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House).

<sup>45</sup> Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 13.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

The fact that Christianity has no fixed cultural element might account for the diversity Christianity has on earth. Even though this affirmation is true, the researcher is of the view that Christianity can never have fixed cultural elements, because at any given point, Christianity is used as a tool to address some challenges that confront the human race. For instance, during the apartheid regime in South Africa, Liberation theology was propounded to address the issue at stake. Others like Black theology, Feminist theology have come to address other thorny issues.

Walls argues that Islam is identical everywhere but that cannot be said of Christianity. For example, all Muslims everywhere in the world recite the same Arabic words which are considered sacred.<sup>48</sup> It is the nature of Christianity to embrace cultural adaptation otherwise known as inculturation. Failure to achieve inculturation is therefore an aberration in Christianity but not so in Islam.

#### **b. The Kingdom Test**

The Kingdom test has to do with movements or institutions generated within or outside the church but under Christ which brings vitality to the church as an institution. Vitality is used here to refer to liveliness; revivalism or dynamism that helps to meet people's needs while at the same time drawing them closer to God. Within the Ghanaian Christian setting, some of these movements are the Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship International, the Women's Aglow and Ghacoe Women's Ministry. These groups have helped in diverse ways to rekindle spiritual renewal in most of the churches especially the mainline churches. Without spiritual renewal, the church fails to grow, let alone exert influence in the community in which it operates. Most of the churches, at any point of their missionary activities, experience low spiritual tone and moral tonic.

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<sup>48</sup> Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 13

Omenyo contends that in the early 1920s, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (then Gold Coast) realized that the low spiritual and moral tone it experienced was due to lack of Spiritual renewal.<sup>49</sup>

The depth of Christian expansion is measured here by the number and strength of these movements. The movements display kingdom signs that are redemptive and as such can produce radical discipleship. This is how Walls puts it, “They bring Spirituality of Christ to bear more widely within their society, penetrating that society’s culture more deeply, translating Christ into that society more perfectly, and making the word within it.”<sup>50</sup>

Thus, all the movements and activities of the church bring Christ’s presence to bear upon society in the form of His act of mercy and power. Walls argues that ‘Kingdom movements call the church to repentance and to alertness to the presence of Christ within.’<sup>51</sup> According to him, some examples in the Christian history of Kingdom movements include the monasteries, hospitals, Renewal Movements among others.

However, movements which arise as kingdom signs are liable to lose their vitality and initial vision. Walls notes that when movements lose their vitality, their redemptive nature, or their initial vision, they become counter signs, or forces of negation, opposing the Kingdom of God. In his opinion, ‘the Monasteries which in their inceptions bore signs of the kingdom for example, became counter signs.’<sup>52</sup>

Initially as Walls posits, the Monasteries set out to be a sanctuary for the promotion of holiness but they degenerated into worldly and exploitative institutions.’<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 128.

<sup>50</sup> Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 13.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

### c. The Gospel Test

By the Gospel Test, Walls means ‘the effect of Christ on people and on culture.’<sup>54</sup> He argues that our application of the Good News is greater than anyone’s experience of it.

Walls here acknowledges God’s sovereignty in the world which transcends the church.

The Gospel or the Good News is about Christ’s ultimate victory over the evil forces that oppose God and destroy the world. Walls contends that:

The scope of the principalities and powers and their corrupting rules is immense. That rule poisons the environment and sends a virus through society. It soils every dimension of life and every dimension of life and every level of the personality. The scope of the good news that proclaims Christ’s victory over them is correspondingly immense. It extends through environment and society and reaches the depths of the individual personality.<sup>55</sup>

The underlying factor of this proposition is that whenever the Gospel is preached faithfully, there ought to be freedom from fear, promotion of truth, justice, love and goodwill in society. The gospel in effect ought to be redemptive in every sphere of human endeavour. The gospel proclaims that the resurrection makes a positive difference in present human life as well as in the life hereafter. This is done when people are transformed and work to combat injustice, crime and other forms of social vices.

Walls also argues that “similarly, the resurrection of Christ, which is the central theme of the Gospel, makes it possible for all things to be reconciled to God.”<sup>56</sup> The reconciliation is twofold, that is, it is not only limited to God, but it also extends to human beings and their environment. Furthermore, the Gospel breaks down ethnic barriers and changes perception of reality. It is for this reason that Paul said in 2

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<sup>54</sup> Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 19.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

Corinthians 5:16ff that we do not have to regard people from the human point of view because in Christ we became a new creation.

In Walls' view, Latourette's three criteria for Christian expansion can be summed up as; there is the sign of the church (the emergence of communities of people who worship God), acknowledge Christ, and confess His ultimacy.

Also, there is the sign of the kingdom: the impact within the church as the remnant principle operates afresh, and the movement of reformation, renewal and devotion spring up to challenge it and channel Christ's influence to the world. Not only that but there is the sign of the gospel, people respond directly or indirectly, to Christ's victory over evil through His cross and resurrection.

The three-test theory is used in chapter five of the work to assess the growth and impact of the Temple of Praise Church in their missionary activities. Can it be said that its impact has been impressive? Has it witnessed a rapid and phenomenal growth? Has there been a revival and dynamism in their activities? Have the lives of the people in the region especially their members been transformed? These questions among others will be discussed in the concluding part of the study.

### **1.7 Methodology**

The researcher employs the phenomenological and historical methods focusing on the *nexus* between events, features, practices, methods, movements and personalities. The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate a specific, to identify phenomena, through the way they are perceived by the actors in a situation. The study employs the qualitative method for gathering data. The researcher conducted oral interviews to augment the documentary sources. Questionnaire and structured questions



have also been used, as well as face to face interviews, focus group interviews, and participant observation. Four out of the five founding members of the church were interviewed in order to solicit their views for a balanced information regarding the church's beginnings, modus operandi and activities. Furthermore, the researcher had a fruitful interaction with two generational groups (the Women's Fellowship and the Youth) and elders of the six pastoral districts (Sunyani, Dormaa Ahenkro, Berekum, Wamfie, Bechem and Drobo) to solicit for additional information about the church. Relevant secondary sources useful to the thesis have been used. These include library based anniversary brochures of the church. The provisional results of the 2010 church survey in the Brong Ahafo Region conducted by the Ghana Evangelism Committee and 2010 National Population Census have also been used.

### **1.8 Scope of the Study**

The study is confined to the region due to the fact that, the church under study originated from the Brong Ahafo Region and its membership is more widespread in the region than any other region. It also has its headquarters in the region. The church is among the first of the neo-Pentecostal tradition which started in the region. It has also played key roles in so many ways by introducing certain activities in the Neo-Pentecostal fraternity.

Furthermore, the church's immense contribution to missionary activities within the region, its phenomenal growth within the period under study (1988-2013). Six Pastoral Districts of the church (Sunyani, Berekum, Dormaa Ahenkro, Wamfie and Drobo) are the focus of the study. The reasons for choosing these six Pastoral Districts stem from the fact that the church was first established in Sunyani, (24<sup>th</sup> January, 1988) with 34 members, followed by Berekum (7<sup>th</sup> February 1988), with 7 members, then Dormaa

Ahenkro (14<sup>th</sup> February 1988) with 12 members, Wamfie (28<sup>th</sup> February 1988) with 13 members and Bechem (1<sup>st</sup> January, 1989) with 4 members. The researcher has personal reason for including Drobo. He was the minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Drobo from 2003-2008 and had the opportunity to interact severally with the Temple of Praise, Drobo Assembly. Hence, it serves as a good platform to research into their activities. Aside that, Sunyani is the regional capital and also serves as national headquarters for the Temple of Praise Church. Berekum is very pivotal when it comes to Christian missions in the Brong Ahafo Region. Wamfie was where the founding members were residing. They were staunch members of the Scripture Union in Wamfie before they parted ways with the Scripture Union as will be discussed in chapter three of this work. Bechem is the gateway to the Brong Ahafo Region and one of the strongholds of the church where one of the early assemblies was planted.

### **1.9 Definition of Terms**

#### **Christian Missions**

Christian missions is an organized effort for the propagation of the Christian faith. It is mankind's committed participation as God's people at God's invitation and command in God's own mission, within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation.

#### **Indigenous**

The term 'indigenous' literally means that which is born from within, what is local, innate or native to a culture as contrasted to what is foreign, alien or exotic.

### **Indigenous Churches**

Indigenous churches are primarily churches which are founded by natives in a given context and functions, without reference or control by any Western missions or churches. Indigenous church comprise primarily people native to a region and are characterized as being self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting. In recent years, a new dimension such as self-theologizing has been added on.

### **Self-Supporting**

A church is self-supporting in the sense that it depends mainly on the local members to generate income and other related essential services to support her pastoral activities, and to expand such activities that the local church needs to develop.

### **Self-Propagating**

A self-propagating church does not rely on outside missionaries to attract new members but rely solely on its own members, institutions, initiatives, methods and means to expand its territories.

### **Self-Governing**

A self-governing church controls its internal affairs, or is ruled by its own members without any control by 'outsiders' or foreign denominations. Specifically, such churches are autonomous and self-governing from the day of their establishment.

### **Self-Theologizing**

A church is self-theologizing when it becomes indigenous in expression of faith. The community must form its life around Scripture engaging their culture within a *praxis*-reflection orientation. In other words, the community goes deep into their culture in engaging the gospel message.

### **1.10 Organization of the Work**

Chapter one of the work deals with the overview of the background, it consists of the following; statement of the problem, the genesis of Christian missions in the Brong Ahafo Region, objectives of the study, literature review, research questions, theoretical framework, methodology, scope of the study, definition of terms, and organization of the work.

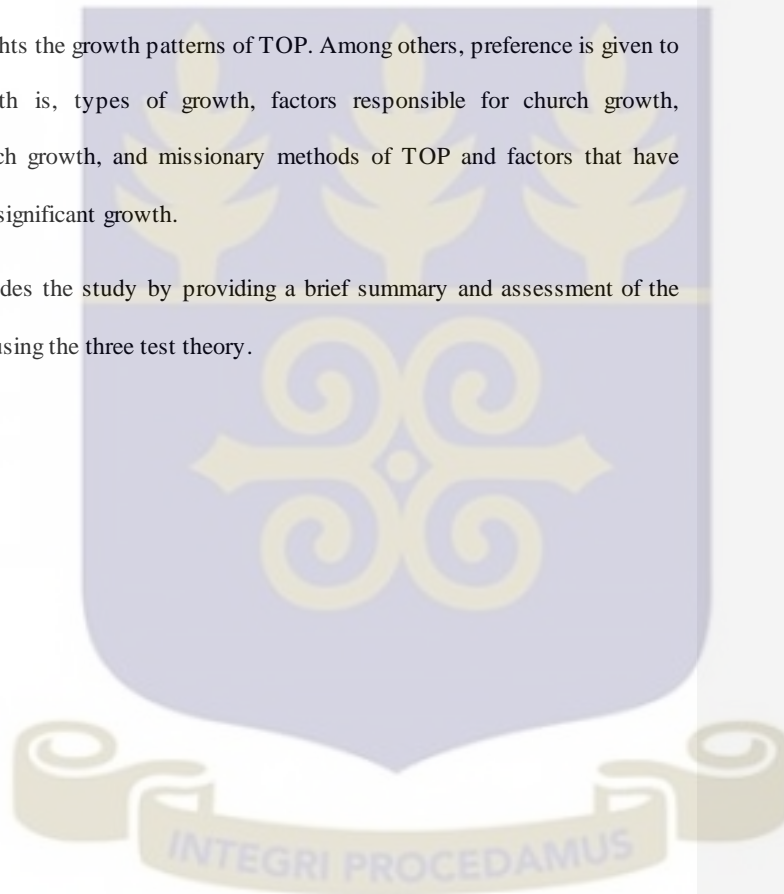
Chapter two discusses indigenous mission in the Brong Ahafo Region. The aim is to provide a framework for indigenous missions in the region. The chapter begins with a discussion on a brief overview of the region and its religious affiliations, what indigenous churches are, types and factors that gave rise to indigenous missions in Ghana. Attention will also be on Sampson Oppong, one of the earliest indigenous prophets. Oppong's prophetic ministry contributed significantly to the growth of Christianity especially in the Ashanti region and the Methodist Church in particular. Oppong is chosen among the lot because he is considered to the precursor of indigenous missions in the region and incidentally hailed from the same area where the founders of TOP were operating before they embarked on church planting. The last part of the chapter is on some contemporary indigenous churches in the region.

Chapter three comprises an in depth study of the history and development of the Temple of Praise Church. From the research, it emerged that two factors contributed to the establishment of TOP. These are the emergence of the neo Pentecostal wave on the Ghanaian religious landscape during the 1960s-70s. Subsequently, it was under the influence of one of the earliest charismatic Nigerian pastors, Benson Idahosa, whose tutelage and encouragement ushered into existence most of the current charismatic

churches. The other factors are the founders' separation from the Scripture Union. Other sub-themes are; initial challenges that confronted TOP, the naming the church, aims and objectives, beliefs and life of TOP, membership, discipline of members, liturgy, ordinances, organizational structure, finance, and conclusion.

Chapter four highlights the growth patterns of TOP. Among others, preference is given to what church growth is, types of growth, factors responsible for church growth, hindrances to church growth, and missionary methods of TOP and factors that have contributed to their significant growth.

Chapter five concludes the study by providing a brief summary and assessment of the growth of TOP by using the three test theory.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF INDIGENOUS MISSIONS IN THE BRONG AHAFO REGION

#### Introduction

This chapter traces the early beginnings and development of the phenomenon labeled Indigenous missions in the Brong Ahafo Region. Indigenous missions in this context refers to Ministries (Churches) which owe their origins and development to the initiatives of the local people without any foreign influence. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the region and its religious affiliations using the 2010 Population Census. Attention is also given to what Indigenous churches are, the types and factors that gave rise to indigenous churches. Attention is also the genesis of indigenous missions in the region. It begins with an overview of the missionary work of Sampson Opong who is considered to be the precursor of Indigenous missions in the region. Despite his efforts at promoting indigenous missions, Opong's missionary activities did not lead to the establishment of an indigenous church in the region. This was due to the fact that, he (Opong) entreated most of his converts to join the Methodist and the Presbyterian Churches. Omenyo argues that "Opong's ministry in Ashanti was short-lived. Yet, according to a Methodist missionary, he led One hundred and ten thousand people to Christianity, including a number of chiefs."<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, "It was Opong's ministry that made a breakthrough in the evangelistic task of the Church in Ashanti."<sup>58</sup> Although one cannot establish a direct link between Opong's ministry and the establishment of

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<sup>57</sup> Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 71.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

indigenous churches in the region, his work served as a clue to how indigenous missions could look like. His work also established the fact that indigenous mission was possible and those who sought to engage in it were guaranteed a successful mission. From Oppong's era, five Indigenous Churches are discussed. They are; the African Faith Tabernacle Church, The Greater Grace Temple of the Apostolic Faith, The Living Grace Ministries, The Apostolic Continuation and the Bethel Prayer Ministry.

The concluding part of the chapter assesses the growth and contributions of these Churches using the 2010 Population Census.

## **2.1 Religious Affiliations**

The Brong Ahafo Region is one of the ten political regions in Ghana. According to Anane Agyei, the region was created on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 1959<sup>59</sup> (by the Brong Ahafo Act No 18). Before its creation, the region was part of the present day Ashanti Region. The Act defines the area of Brong Ahafo region to consist of the Northern and Western part of Ashanti region and included Prang and Yeji areas that before the enactment of the Act formed part of the Northern region.

In the region, (Brong Ahafo, as indicated by the 2010 population census), Christianity forms 72.3% of the population, followed by Islam (17%) and African Traditional Religion (3.4%) 7.3% of the population has no affiliation with any religion.<sup>60</sup>

It is worthy of note that one in three Christians in the region is Pentecostal or Charismatic. Catholics are about one-fifth of the region's population. Pru and Sene are

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<sup>59</sup> Nana Agyei-Kodie Anane Agyei, *Ghana's Brong Ahafo Region* (Accra: Type Company, 2013), 1.

<sup>60</sup> Ghana Statistical Service, *2010 Population and Housing Census, Regional Analytical Report*; Brong Ahafo Region, June 2013, 38-39.

the only Districts where adherents of African Traditional religion are relatively high. The Islamic faith is predominant in Techiman and Atebubu-Amantin District Assemblies.<sup>61</sup> Table 1.0 below shows the distribution of the population by the various religious denominations.

From the table below, it is evident that the Pentecostal/Charismatic tradition, which includes TOP, has the highest number of Christians in the region. They command a staggering percentage of 24.5% of the total 72.4% of the population who profess to be Christians. This means that, out of about one million, six hundred and seventeen thousand, six hundred and eighty-eight (1,617,688) are Christians in the region, about five hundred and sixty-six thousand, one hundred and ninety-one (566,191) belong to the Pentecostal/Charismatic tradition. Even though this tradition was not the first to propagate the gospel in the region, they seem to be growing faster than their predecessors, which include the Protestants as well as the Catholics. No wonder TOP has experienced a growth since its establishment in 1988. According to available statistics given to the researcher by the church's administrator, Mr. George Apenkro, TOP has sixty-five assemblies with a total membership of Seven Thousand, Eight Hundred and Fifty (7,850) members as at December 2014.

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<sup>61</sup>Ghana Statistical Service; 2010 Population and Housing Census, 39.



**TABLE 1.0 (RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION IN THE BRONG AHAFO REGION)**

District	Population	No.Relig	Catholic	Protestant	Pent/Ch	Other	Islam	Traditionalist	Others
				Christians					
All Districts	2310983	7.3	20.1	17.7	24.5	9.9	17	2.7	0.7
Asunafo South	95580	6.7	15.7	18.8	26.6	12.3	17.7	0.6	1.7
Asunafo North	124685	5.9	15.2	17.1	30.9	14.6	14.9	0.7	0.7
Asutifi	105843	7	14.1	16.3	32.3	9.8	18.8	0.7	1
Dormaa Mun.	159789	5.5	18.6	23.6	30.1	8.5	12.3	0.8	0.6
Dormaa East	50871	6.6	18.8	22.3	32.7	11.6	7.1	0.5	0.4
Tano South	78129	8	18.1	16.1	26.9	11.1	16.9	2	0.9
Tano North	79973	6.2	21.8	20.3	27.2	9.3	13.8	0.8	0.6
Sunyani M.	123224	3.6	18.3	18.3	35.1	11.3	12.6	0.3	0.6
Sunyani W.	85272	5.8	18.2	19	32.6	14.2	9.2	0.3	0.6
Berekum	129628	4.1	17.3	23.5	38.8	8.8	6.5	0.4	0.7
Jaman South	92649	3.6	31.7	24.2	23.8	3	12.2	0.9	0.6

Jaman North	83059	2.2	35.9	26.5	18.4	2.7	13	1.2	0.2
Tain	108386	8.6	29.3	21.2	14.5	6.4	16.5	2.8	0.7
Wenchi M.	89739	8.2	29.9	14	16.7	4.9	21.9	3.7	0.7
Techiman M	206859	5.7	19.3	15.1	21.5	11.9	25	1	0.4
Nkoransa S	100929	10.1	23.8	16.6	19.4	16.4	10.3	2.9	0.5
Nkoransa N	65895	11.8	25.6	19.8	13.3	12.6	14	2.6	0.4
AtebubuAmantin	105938	7.8	14.3	9.5	19.2	9.6	33.5	5.6	0.4
Sene	118810	16.7	12.6	14.2	22.9	11.5	11	9.5	1.5
Pru	129248	11.2	13.5	14.4	19.7	6.6	21.7	12.6	0.3
Kintampo S.	81000	11.8	26.5	12.2	15.2	8.5	20.9	4	0.9
Kintampo M.	95480	6.4	17.9	9.4	14.4	11.4	36.1	4.1	0.2

Source: Ghana Statistical Service; 2010 Population and Housing Census, Regional Analytical Report: Brong Ahafo Region, June 2013, 38-39.



The next session of the thesis focuses on what Indigenous Churches are.

## 2.2 Indigenous Churches

An Indigenous Church is a locally established church. It occurs when local Christians in a given context plant and manage churches with no direct influence.

Melvin Hodges defines an indigenous church as ‘a native church which share the life of the country in which it is planted, ready to govern itself, support and reproduce itself.’<sup>62</sup>

Another theologian, William Smalley has this to say about indigenous churches; ‘a group of believers who live out their life including their socialized Christian activity in the patterns of their local society and for whom any transformation of that society comes out of their felt needs under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scripture, develop patterns of interaction to those who live within that culture.’<sup>63</sup>

Emmanuel K. Larbi builds on Henry Venn’s position by defining indigenous church as, ‘one which is self-governing, self-propagating, self-financing and self-theologizing.’<sup>64</sup> Larbi’s definition is adopted as a working definition for this thesis. This position has been chosen because the components in the definition fit perfectly into the Church under investigation.

Dean Gilliland sums up that ‘indigenous church is culturally authentic, having features unique to its particular locations. Thus while the gospel is indeed universal, each church

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<sup>62</sup> Melvin Hodge, *The Indigenous Church* (Spring Mo: Gospel Publication House, 1953), 5.

<sup>63</sup> Heibert Paul G, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 10

<sup>64</sup> Emmanuel Larbi K., *Pentecostalism; The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Blessed Publication, 2005), 307.

planted in a particular place and time, must take on to some extent, the shape of its surrounding milieu.<sup>65</sup>

From the above definitions, the researcher is of the view that indigenous churches are locally made ones. It can also be developed further as a situation where local Christians in a given context plant and manage churches with no direct foreign influence.

Since the inception of the ideological concept of indigenous churches, there have been two main protestant strategies proposed for the creation of indigenous churches; one is Indigenization and the other is Indigeneity. The former is when foreign missionaries create well organized churches and later hand them over to local converts. The foreign mission is generally seen as scaffolding which must be removed once the fellowship of believers is functioning properly. Missionaries provide teaching, pastoral care, sacraments, buildings, finance and authority and also train local converts to take over these responsibilities. From this point, the church becomes indigenous. The researcher wishes to state that the Presbyterian Church of Ghana is a typical example of an indigenized church. The church which was started in 1828 was initiated by some Western missionaries who controlled its affairs till 1926 when the baton was handed over to the indigenous people who continue to steer the affairs of the church.

The latter is when foreign missionaries do not create churches, but simply help local converts develop their own churches. Missionaries provide teaching and pastoral care alone. The church is thus indigenous from the start. It is always self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing. The researcher is of the view that even though the TOP

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<sup>65</sup>Gilliand Dean S., *Pauline Theology and Mission Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 9.

cannot be wholly categorized as one founded on Indigeneity, it is also not far from right to place the Church (TOP) under this category. This position has been taken due to the fact that the founders of TOP were indirectly nurtured by the Western missionary founded churches. The five founders were members of the Roman Catholic Church, Presbyterian Church of Ghana, and the Methodist Church before they left these churches to establish their ministry. In the next segment, factors responsible for the emergence of Indigenous Churches are discussed.

### **2.3 Factors Responsible for the Emergence of Indigenous Churches**

Under this section, the researcher discusses some of the factors which were responsible for the emergence of indigenous churches. However, before that is done, there is a brief consideration to the clarion call made for the establishment of indigenous churches, which to the researcher, serves as the prologue to other factors responsible for the emergence of Indigenous churches. The call for indigenous churches dates back to the nineteenth century. The call was made during the period that the Western missionaries dominated in the crusade of sending the Gospel message to almost every corner of the globe. Two men (Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson), among others envisaged that there was the need to 'hand' the baton to the indigenous people who were considered equally capable of performing the task of spreading the gospel.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson issued a call for the establishment of the truly indigenous churches. These men among others were distressed by the weak, dependent nature of mission churches were expected to produce dynamic indigenous churches. Stephen Neil recorded that 'as early as 1854, Henry Venn,

the present Secretary of the Church and Mission Society (CMS) in London, had spoken in terms of aim of the mission being calling into existence of self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches which will serve as the euthanasia of mission.<sup>66</sup>

Rufus Anderson, an American who also espoused this three self-formulation mused had not the apostolic idea of self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches dropped out of Christian mind soon after the age of the apostle, not to be fully regained until modern times.<sup>67</sup> It is very clear that these men (Venn and Rufus) were all ahead of their time because they made the call for indigenous missions at a time that the colonial era was still in its heyday and at a time when the Europeans were viewed superior in terms of the propagating of the gospel.

Others like Roland Allen, Hudson Taylor and John Livingstone Nevius had all added their voices to the call of Indigenous churches. However, since this is not the main focus of the thesis, the researcher will not make any further case for it.

In as much as the call was made for Indigenous churches, other factors have contributed to the emergence of Indigenous churches on the African Continent. The fact is that these religious movements did not emerge in a historical or social vacuum. They were conditioned by a number of factors ranging from spiritual, cultural, political, social and circumstantial. Some of the factors are discussed below;

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<sup>66</sup> Stephen Neil, *A History of Christian Missions* (New York: Perigun Books, 1864),14.

<sup>67</sup> Rufus Anderson, *History of Missions*, (New York: Perigun Books, 1874), 3.

The Role of Henry Venn:<sup>68</sup> In discussing the role of Ethiopianism<sup>69</sup> and the subsequent appearance of Indigenous churches, the contributions of Henry Venn cannot be underestimated. It is worthy to emphasize that long before his contemporary western missionaries could give any thought to native or indigenous leadership, he (Venn) had emphasized in his 7<sup>th</sup> mission principle that ‘native agency is basic to the development of the mission in Africa.’<sup>70</sup> Venn went on to deepen and broaden the concept of training indigenous leadership. He is quoted as saying ‘as early as possible, local leadership should replace the missionary.’<sup>71</sup>

In 1846, Venn wrote to the leaders of Sierra Leone that ‘it has been our constant aim and prayer that we might be enabled to train up a body of native teachers to whom we may turn over the pastoral charge of those of your countrymen who have embraced the Gospel of Christ. He further told the teachers that they were those upon whom the hopes of an African church are fixed.’<sup>72</sup> Venn’s contribution here is that he did not only succeed in describing the problem but he also accomplished the task of awakening others to its realization.

Again it was the translation of the Scriptures into vernacular which eventually triggered the kick-off of independent movements. Lamin Sanneh contends that ‘whenever the

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<sup>68</sup> Henry Venn; Henry Venn was an Anglican Clergyman who is recognized as one of the foremost Protestant missions strategists and a pioneer in indigenous missions of the nineteenth century. He was born on February 10, 1796, in Clapham, London and died on January 13, 1873 (An excerpt from Venn Henry from the Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions.

<sup>69</sup> Ethiopianism, a religious movement among Sub-Saharan Africa that embodied the earliest stirrings towards religious and political freedom in the modern colonial period. The movement was initiated in the 1880s when South African mission workers began forming independent African churches.

<sup>70</sup> Wilbert R. Shenk, & Gerald H. Anderson (ed.), *‘Venn Henry’ In Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, (New York: Macmillan Reference, 1998), 698.

<sup>71</sup> Max Warren, (ed.), *To Apply the Gospel Selections from the Writings of Henry Venn* (Grand Rapids: Erdmanns, 1971), 45.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 47

Gospel is translated into vernacular, the people of that language take ownership.<sup>73</sup> He also argues that whenever the Gospel is translated into vernacular, the Western missionary gave over the 'word' which they claim to have the final authority.<sup>74</sup> They (missionaries) lost that authority as the sole interpreter, because, the natives could now read the Bible without much difficulty. The translation of the bible also helped to bring out a lot of 'hidden' things hidden from to the worldview of the African. It is a fact that the scientific worldview of the missionary could not be reconciled with the biblical worldview and the African traditional worldview. It was the translation which bridged the gap. According to Robert Aboagye Mensah 'the indigenous translations helped not only in the proclamation of the gospel, but also in the preservation of the cultures, histories and traditions of the people.'<sup>75</sup>

It is said that there is no better way to liberate the individual than to provide that person with a tool that enables him/her to enter into critical and reflective examination of his/her own culture, history, politics, religion and tradition.

Another agency which stimulated the rise and growth of the indigenous churches was the massive conversion of people into Christianity within the early part of the twentieth century. People who led this massive explosion were said to be prophetic figures who organized evangelistic crusades across the length and breadth of Africa. They did not intend to establish churches of their own; rather they perceived themselves as prophets raised by God to make people turn to Jesus. These prophets included Garrick Braid from

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<sup>73</sup>Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 174.

<sup>74</sup>ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Aboagye Mensah, *Mission and Democracy in Africa: The Role of the Church* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1994), 46.



Niger Delta in Nigeria, William Wade Harris, a Kru from Liberia, Walter Matiffa, from Lesotho, Simon Kimben, from Belgian Congo and Samson Oppong of Ghana (formerly Gold Coast). As indicated earlier the focus of this research is on Samson Oppong. The latter and the others were all evangelists with special Spiritual gifts and charisma. A number of indigenous churches which claimed to have had some inspiration from them were established soon after their demise. Baeta argues that;

“the church of the Twelve Apostles as a religious body is very interesting...but also because they constitute a continuing result of a visit paid to the Apollonic and Axim districts of then Gold Coast by the well-known Grebo Prophet William Wade Harris as far back as the year 1914.”<sup>76</sup>

There were also some circumstantial factors. Some prevailing conditions soon after the first world war served as immediate factors that occasioned the rise of some African Indigenous Churches, especially in the Yoruba land of Nigeria. One of these factors was the occurrence of the worldwide influenza. Lamin Sanneh argues that when the influenza pandemic broke in Africa in 1918, many people thought that the end of the world was at hand. This led to the formation of prayer groups.<sup>77</sup> When the pandemic was over, some of the prayer groups metamorphosed into churches because they were rejected by the mainline churches. The Dicermond Society which metamorphosed into the *Christ Apostolic Church* in Nigeria, (one of the oldest indigenous churches in sub-Saharan Africa) could be attributed to the effects of the epidemic.

Aside the factors mentioned above, there was also the desire to indigenize Christianity. David Barrett argues that ‘independency reflects a rebellion against a Christianity that

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<sup>76</sup> Christian G. Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana* (Achimota: Ghana Christian Press, 1996), 8.

<sup>77</sup> Sanneh, *The Missionary Impact*, 176.

had become over-emphasized.<sup>78</sup> There was a longing in the hearts of several Africans to be psychologically and sociologically satisfied within the African context. There was the quest on the part of the African to contextualize the gospel message

At the same period, quite a number of the independent clergymen criticized the leadership of the mission churches who, they claimed, put so many obstacles in the way of the African converts by imposing on them European customs and traditions. Consequently, the new African movements took it upon themselves to correct the “foreigners” of the church. In so doing, they took into consideration the African culture and religious consciousness. They held that through their own initiatives, they could breed their own kind of African church, where African institutions would be recognized and respected. They felt that any religious institution, which did not meet the African’s daily life’s experiences, would create spiritual hunger. In African indigenous churches, therefore, the liturgy was made more African, by making use of songs, singing, drumming and dancing most of which were ingredients of African cultural manifestation.

Again there was the passion for purer forms of Christianity on the part of the African converts. Some African prophetic leaders seceded from the mainline churches because of what they perceived to be failures of Ministers in the established churches to live up to the call of the Bible and the alienation of the church hierarchy from the spiritual needs of the common people. In Ghana, for example, the members of the Methodist Society ‘Akonomsu’ (Water-Drinkers) broke away from the Methodist church at Anomabu in 1862. The principal reason why they seceded was that they felt that the Methodist church

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<sup>78</sup>David Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa* (London: OUP, 1968), 78.

had failed to enforce its rules against the buying, selling and drinking of alcoholic beverages.

It is also said that in Nigeria some of the breakaway churches criticized the Clergymen in the established churches for appointing people with questionable character to the hierarchy of the church, apparently because of their status in society. Some of the Clergy were alleged to have regularly consulted with 'native doctors' while some had charms and amulets under their cassocks. Like the Prophet Amos, these prophetic leaders opposed the corruption and desecration of the house of God. The factors mentioned above and others were responsible for the emergence of Indigenous Churches. In the next sub themes, attention will be on the genesis of Indigenous Churches/missions in the region starting with Sampson Oppong.

#### **2.4 Sampson Oppong**

Christianity in Africa has witnessed the ministry of some African prophets who contributed immensely to its growth. Omenyo argues that, a major Christian variant of the revival of the indigenous religions of Ghana however is the emergence of the African Independent Churches in Ghana.<sup>79</sup> There were some "African prophets" whose ministries resulted in the African Charismatic movements.<sup>80</sup> Larbi also affirms that, in the Ghanaian context this great stirrings or renewal movements have indeed coloured the face of Christianity and indeed ushered in a new Christian spirituality.<sup>81</sup> These renewal movements may be placed within two main periods, 1900-1970 and 1970-1990.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 67.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 68.

<sup>81</sup> Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 57

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*.

Omenyo also argues that, the earliest known charismatic movements in Ghana occurred between 1914 and 1937. These were the ministries of individual African prophets who traced the source of their ministries to divine revelations. Notable among them were; William Wade Harris, John Swatson and Sampson Oppong.<sup>83</sup>

This thesis, focuses is on the first period because it captures the activities of some African prophets whose activities precipitated the great harvest of souls in the historic churches. Oppong was chosen from the lot because, he hails from the Brong Ahafo Region and incidentally from the same area where the founders of Temple of Praise Church were living. Oppong hails from Akontanin which is about sixteen (16) kilometers away from Wamfie where the founders of TOP were living before they started their ministry. Politically, Wamfie is now the District Capital of the Dormaa West District Assembly, which covers Akontanin. Note also that most scholars who had written on Sampson Oppong have given prominence to his missionary activities outside the Brong Ahafo Region. This sometimes creates the impression that he did not work in his native region. Most scholars who have written on Oppong's work seem to focus on his activities in the Ashanti region and the Methodist church. This is one of many examples by G.N Haliburton on Oppong.

Oppong though unable to read and write, had a remarkable knowledge of the Bible. Something he attributed to the agency of the Holy Spirit, through the prophetic ministry of Oppong within the Methodist Church, the Church was able to harvest a record number of souls in Ashanti, an area where Christianity had been held considerably distrust. In 1923, the Methodist Church claimed 20,000 converts through the activities of Oppong.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 67.

<sup>84</sup> G.N Haliburton, "The Calling of a Prophet", *The Bulletin of the Society for African Church History*, 2:1 (1965): 92.

Documentary evidence as well as oral sources indicate that Sampson Oppong is a native of Akontanim. The royal family of Akontanim belongs to the Kwatwemafo Clan. They trace their ancestral home from the Akwamufie area of the Eastern region of modern day Ghana. As a result of wars and other strifes, they migrated westward and settled in Suntreso, near Kumasi. Led by their chief called Boahene Korkor, they migrated from Suntreso to the Gyaaman District in the present day Brong Ahafo Region and settled at Seketia. From Seketia, some of the members moved to Odomase near Sunyani, Susuanso and Bantama in Kumasi.

According to S.K. Oppong, a member of the royal family of Akontanim who the researcher interviewed, Boahene Korkor, who was then the chief of Seketia had a friendship bond with the then Dormaahene. To cement their friendship, Boahene Korkor gave his niece by name Adwoa Twumwaa to the Dormaahene to be his wife. After the death of Adwoa Twumwaa, her descendants migrated from Seketia and settled in-between Dormaa Ahenkro and present day Akontanim and called the place Kogyina which is now known as Amanfoso by the people of Akontanim.<sup>85</sup> There was lack of potable drinking water at Kogyina. Therefore the people moved and settled at their present location where there was plenty of water sheltered by the shade of the 'Akontan' plant. They called their new community Akontanim because water was found beneath the Akontan plants. Among the ancient rulers of the Akontanim community were; Kwasi Kwawie, Asare Korkor and Yaw Abonsra. Akontanim is about sixty-four (64) kilometers west of Sunyani.

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<sup>85</sup> The Interview was conducted at Akontanim on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2013.

As in many other communities, many people later migrated and joined the original inhabitants of Akontanin. This was due to the availability of fertile farmland and adequate water. Through their farming activities, many of the royal family members became rich and bought slaves into their households. Among the royal family was one Kofi Dom who brought the parents of Sampson Oppong as his slaves from then Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) and gave them Akan names.<sup>86</sup>

Sampson Oppong was the son of a Grushi slave captured by the slave trader, Samori.<sup>87</sup> He was sold to a man at Akontanin in Dormaa Ahenkro. According to Debrunner,

‘the father of Sampson Oppong was called Yaw Kyeremeh, a son of a Grushi chief from Upper Volta (modern day Burkina Faso who was captured by Samori). Samori was not only a slave raider but also a Moslem statesman and general who undertook his campaigns of conquest to spread Islam and increase his power.’<sup>88</sup>

Samori partly financed these campaigns by selling prisoners into slavery. It was through such captivity that Yaw Kyeremeh, the father of Sampson, came to ‘Bonoland’ in the village of Akontanin in the Dormaa state as a slave of a rich man in Akontanin by the name Kofi Dom.

According to oral sources as well as the work of Debrunner, the name of Oppong’s mother was Ama Dufa Debrunner affirms that like Oppong’s father, Akua Dufa was also a slave from the North in Kofi Dom’s household.<sup>89</sup> Besides Ama Dufa, Oppong’s father had two other wives; one was a slave from the North like Oppong’s mother and the other

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<sup>86</sup> The interview was conducted at Akontanin from 20<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup> December, 2013

<sup>87</sup> Hans W. Debrunner, *The Story of Sampson Oppong the Prophet, Pioneer Series* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1965), 9.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Interview with E.Y. Kyeremeh, the heir of Sampson Oppong’s family on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2013 at Akontanin.

was from the Akontanin village. These and many other slaves were all living in the courts of Kofi Dom.

Surprisingly, all except one of the people interviewed for this study knew much about Kofi Dom, who was the slave master of Sampson Oppong parents. It can however be concluded from the evidence on the ground that both free people and slaves of Kofi Dom's household are now mixed up. This position is supported by Debrunner's claim that

we must not imagine that Kofi Dom's slaves had a particular hard life. He seemed to have treated his slaves with some dignity to the extent that Yaw Kyeremeh, the father of Sampson Oppong, seemed to have been given an important position in the household of Kofi Dom.<sup>90</sup>

At present, since the Gyaase family of Akontanin claim a relationship to the Prophet, one can argue that the household of Kofi Dom is the occupant of the Gyaase stool of Akontanin with both the descendants of blood relations and the 'slaves' from the North, seeing themselves as one family and all claiming relationship to the Prophet Sampson Oppong.

The date of birth of Sampson Oppong cannot be traced. In fact, none of the people who claimed to have walked with him or knew him were able to indicate the day, month or year that the prophet was born. Notwithstanding this assertion, some scholars claim that Oppong was born in 1884. H.W. Debrunner who in 1957 visited the Prophet at Akontanin gave a clue about the year that Sampson Oppong was born. According to him, this is what Sampson Oppong said about his date of birth;

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<sup>90</sup> Debrunner, *Sampson Oppong*, 9.

“When Prempeh I, King of Ashanti was captured by the British government, I was twelve years old’. It is worthy to note that Prempeh I was captured by the British colonial masters, sent to exile in the Seychelles Islands in 1896. Based on the assertion by Oppong, that during that incident he was twelve years old. Debrunner drew the inference that Sampson Oppong was probably born in about 1884.”<sup>91</sup>

**a. His Early Life**

Sampson Oppong was not born a Christian but a heathen. It is believed that Akontanin at the time of his birth was engulfed in traditional religion. It is alleged that there were three prominent fetish shrines namely; ‘Adampa’, ‘Tam Kojo’ and ‘Dukuta’ as well as other personal ‘gods’ and ‘charms’. The use and practice of magic was also common during that period. Oppong therefore spent most of his youthful life learning and practicing magic and traditional religion.

Debrunner asserts that little Kwame Oppong became the favourite of his father’s Ashanti wife’s brother (his uncle). His uncle was a kind of a healer and magician who in all his life time, had a strong influence upon Sampson Oppong. He became his uncle’s pupil and when Oppong grew up he became a healer (Oduruyefo) and a magician (Osumanni). This position is also affirmed by Susan Hanson ‘It is believed that Oppong was a sorcerer and fetish practitioner before his conversion’.<sup>92</sup> Oppong, as indicated by Debrunner, was in possession of the following medicine or amulets (*aduro, suman*).

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<sup>91</sup> Debrunner, *Sampson Oppong*, 9.

<sup>92</sup> Susan Hanson, *A History of Pentecostalism in Ghana, (1900-2002)* (Accra: Heritage Graphix, 2002), 55.



*Amanfo*: An amulet that protects.<sup>93</sup> Whoever wears it is protected from bullets and knives. Anyone wanting to fire at the wearer of such an amulet, would find the gun exploding in his hand. The knife of an attacker would break in his hand.

*Nsuapem*: An amulet which protects a person from the enemy. Thus when the enemy sees anyone wearing such an amulet, he will stand as though rooted to the ground by the magic.<sup>94</sup>

*Wuramumu*: This amulet is shaped like a little pair of bellows. If you use it and call the name of your enemy, his stomach will distend and he will suffer a terrible pain.<sup>95</sup>

It seems these were not the only amulets acquired by Sampson Oppong, the magician/healer. He was also in possession of other amulets and charms which are not mentioned here. For instance, Debrunner quotes Sampson Oppong that 'I went on long journeys to obtain new and more powerful magic.'<sup>96</sup> This is an indication that Oppong, prior to his conversion, might have been powerful and also fearful among his contemporaries.

Apart from his magical powers, Oppong was involved in many activities in his native hometown of Akontanim in his early youthful days. This may be as a result of magical powers coupled with his stature because he was known to be a strongly built man. People interviewed for this study mentioned some of his recalcitrant and anti-social behavior before his conversion. Among these were the following; He engaged in excessive drinking and frequent fighting. It is alleged that he used his magic to expose the

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<sup>93</sup> Debrunner, *Sampson Oppong*, 9.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

nakedness of women who shunned his love advances. He also allegedly used magic to kill people's goats and sheep so that he could take the carcass for meat.

One of such activities is recorded by Haliburton.<sup>97</sup>This incident took place in Essiam, Akim Abuakwa where it is alleged that Oppong's magic killed a goat of his drinking partner. In the evening, he (Oppong) requested for the carcass during a drinking spree.

Another woman interviewed claimed that Oppong possessed another magic named 'agboragba'. This was a charm that was used by people who wanted to be strong and fearless during a fight. It is worthy of note that the use of this charm was not exclusive to Oppong. Even today, there are remnants of people who claim possession of this charm at Akontanin where Oppong was born and brought up. Aside the above mentioned, it is alleged that he also used his magical powers to either disgrace or cause discomfort of people.

According to Haliburton, Oppong recalled that "he was a glutton, womanizer and a drunkard. He described many of his wrongdoing in his Canaan days and in his preaching stressed the depth from which God had delivered him."<sup>98</sup>

#### **b. Religious Experience Of Sampson Oppong**

Sampson Oppong's conversion from traditional religion into Christianity was not an instantaneous event, but rather a gradual process, starting with his release from prison in Ivory Coast and his return to Ghana, until he finally committed himself to the service of

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<sup>97</sup> Haliburton, *Sampson Oppong*, 19.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

Jesus Christ. This section will therefore consider Oppong's religious experience starting from his activities in the Ivory Coast.

According to Debrunner "between 1896 and 1901, the British had occupied Ashanti and abolished domestic slavery."<sup>99</sup> This paved way for freedom of movement. Young and energetic men were everywhere looking for jobs. This ambition took Oppong to the then Ivory Coast where the French were looking for labourers to build railways. He was employed to that effect and subsequently became the foreman of a group whose duty it was to chop firewood for the locomotives.

Oppong was made the 'pay master' who received the wages to pay out to the whole group. One day, he made off with all the wages and he fled to a nearby village where he began spending the money. He started to flirt with a pretty woman who happened to be the wife of a police officer. When the woman got to know the source of Oppong's wealth, she reported him to the police and was arrested, and thrown into prison.

Debrunner states that in prison, 'Oppong encountered an old Fanti tribesman by name Moses, who Oppong claimed, was a Christian.'<sup>100</sup> The man, (Moses) prayed all the time and three days later, he was released. Before he left, Oppong asked for a few pennies to buy some food, Moses is said to have replied, 'I have no money but that which I have I shall give you.' I commend you into God's keeping.' This made Oppong furious because he was extremely hungry; and he did not see the use of being commended into God's keeping.

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<sup>99</sup> Debrunner, *Sampson Oppong*, 14.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

Oppong was left alone in his cell after Moses was released. By nightfall, he thought about what Moses had said. He prayed that the God of Moses should have pity on him. After the prayer he felt asleep and had a dream that night. In the dream he saw two Europeans who came into his cell and sawed through his chains, one of them said 'I am the God of Moses, burn your magic things and beat the gong for me.'<sup>101</sup> Oppong according to Debrunner was very happy but he woke up and realized that it was just a dream for he was still in chains.

A.E. Southon sums up Oppong's experience as; "weary in confinement, he made a double vow; that if he was released, he would serve the Lord Jesus (of whom he then knew scarcely more than His name), and he would never again touch the intoxicating drinks which had caused his downfall."<sup>102</sup>

In chains, Oppong and other prisoners were driven to work. They were to cut grass around the houses of the Europeans. It is reported that, one day the French District Commissioner came towards him and told Him:

"Oppong, you are still young. You have been foolish, and you will pay for it. But the railways authorities have your welfare at heart and are willing to give you another chance. Luckily, you did not steal from a private person. You will escape lightly. As a sign of the confidence I have in you. I shall set you free and let you stay in my house with my people until this time next week, when sentence will be passed in your case."<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Debrunner, *Sampson Oppong*, 14.

<sup>102</sup>A.E. Southon, *Gold Coast Methodism, the First Hundred Years, 1835-1935* (London: Gargate Press, 1935), 150.

<sup>103</sup>Debrunner, *Sampson Oppong*, 15.

The District Commissioner filed through Oppong's chains, exactly as Oppong had experienced in his dream. Three days later, Oppong was released and he secretly left Ivory Coast and crossed the border back to the Gold Coast (Ghana).

However, in Ghana, he forgot about the manner in which the Lord delivered him, the dream he had, the vow he made and returned to his old ways of practicing his magic. Debrunner states that 'he prepared new and more powerful magic, medicines and amulets'.<sup>104</sup>

### **c. The Turning Point**

Back in the Gold Coast (Ghana), Oppong, like many young men in the country at that time, was attracted by the booming cocoa industry. He went to Akim and the Ashanti Akim area of Ghana. He first went to Akim Tafo to work on a cocoa farm. In his spare time, he practiced his magic. From Tafo he went to Wankyi near Bompata and later to Nkronso near Apedwa. He finally settled at Osiem all in search of greener pasture. It was at Osiem that he finally surrendered unto the Lord. It is said that at Osiem, he was hired by a young man to kill his uncle. He had gone to the forest on a Thursday to work on the uncle's soul which could lead to the man's death.

It was in the forest that he heard a voice saying 'stand up'. In a trance, he allegedly saw two men who led him to a large square. He is said to have encountered 'a big and glorious looking man who told him that he had been charged to call him. The man reiterated that He was the God of Moses who freed him from prison in the Ivory Coast; 'why are you still living in sin'. The man quizzed! 'I am sending you.' He was said to

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<sup>104</sup> Debrunner, *Sampson Oppong*, 15.

have been shown a large lake of blood, the innocent blood shed by the other states. As a punishment these dead 'Kings' constantly had to drink the blood but the lake never grew empty.

This forest experience of Oppong marked a turning point in his life. He is said to have burnt all his magic things stressing that he had found one who was stronger than the 'magic'. Omenyo affirms that 'he was said to have had a vision in which he was instructed to carry a wooden cross to preach, and to burn all lesser deities.'<sup>105</sup>

He claimed that God gave him the name Sampson. He asked a carpenter to make him a cross and a tailor to make a long, white prophetic robe similar to what the people in the Bible times wore.

#### **d. The Ministry Of Sampson Oppong**

This section of the thesis focuses on the ministry of Sampson Oppong in the Brong Ahafo Region in particular. But before that Oppong's last prison experience is highlighted.

It is important to note that Sampson Oppong's first place of preaching after his 'forest experience' was Bompata. (Bompata is where Oppong had earlier attended catechumen class under Pastor Mante of the Presbyterian Church).

Sampson Oppong preached in many places, including, Kumawu where the people burned their traditional religious charms and amulets and became Christians. He allegedly earned £2.10.00 which he gave to one Pastor Opoku, a Basel missionary agent stationed at

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<sup>105</sup> Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 71.

Bompata.<sup>106</sup> Oppong's miraculous preaching made some people restless especially the headsmen whose non-Christian religions seemed to be in danger.

His preaching activities took him to the Obogu district. It was at the village of Banko that he accused a woman of witchcraft. It is alleged that the woman disputed the allegation and tried to prove her innocence, when she caught hold of Oppong's cross, then the witchcraft within her possessed her and she ran off into the forest.

A case was leveled against Oppong by the chief of Kumawu to the District Commissioner at Juaso on his encounter with the woman he accused of witchcraft. Subsequently, Oppong was found guilty and jailed for five months. It was during his second spell in prison that Oppong claimed to have been given the 'stone of revelation'. This is how Debrunner puts it 'The District Commissioner had broken my cross. To console me, God showed me a flat stone in the prison, by whose help the whole Bible was revealed to me from Genesis to Revelation'.<sup>107</sup> He could now read the Bible though he was illiterate. After his release, he preached in many places and many people were converted and burned their traditional religious paraphernalia.

The Prophet Sampson Oppong did not only preach in Ashanti but in other places in the Brong Ahafo region. He preached at Techiman. At Techiman, it is alleged that the King Yaw Krammo, did not want him to preach, so Oppong told him, he would perish by his own sword. The matter was reported to the Wenchi District Commissioner who banished

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<sup>106</sup> Debrunner, *Sampson Oppong*, 24.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

Oppong from the area. To the Commissioner, Oppong's attitude towards the chief was disrespectful and contemptuous and warranted banishment.<sup>108</sup>

Despite the fact that Oppong did not achieve much in Techiman, there is one significant achievement which is worth mentioning. At Techiman, in the year 1924, Oppong met one Papa Gyan (who later adopted the biblical name Abraham). He was a palm wine tapper. Oppong asked him to stop the palm wine business and preach the word of God. The said Gyan obeyed the admonishing of Oppong and later migrated to Wamfie in the Brong Ahafo region.

In an interview with E.Y. Kyeremeh, it was revealed that it was Papa Abraham Gyan who established the first Methodist Church in the Dormaa traditional area at Wamfie.<sup>109</sup> The Wamfie circuit of the Methodist Church is now vibrant, made up of seventeen societies and ten Preaching Posts.

Other places where the Prophet preached in the Brong Ahafo Region include Akontanim, Twumkrom (where majority of his converts joined the Presbyterian Church), Dormaa Ahenkro, Kyeremasu, Asikasu, Nsoatre and Kantanka, a village near Berekum.<sup>110</sup>

It is important to note that Oppong did not conduct baptism. He only preached the gospel and his converts were baptized by Rev. Ministers of the Methodist Church. It is also worthy to note that apart from Akontanim Methodist Church which was directly established by Sampson Oppong when he came home to settle in 1925, it was his converts who became the cradle of the Methodist Church in places where he preached.

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<sup>108</sup> Debrunner, *Sampson Oppong*, 24.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with E.Y. Kyeremeh on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2013.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with E.Y. Kyeremeh on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2013.



For instance, when Oppong settled at Akontanim, some of the young men who heard him preach, namely; Kweku Nsiah, Yaw Kyeremeh and John Peprah travelled to Kumawu. Whilst at Kumawu, they joined the Methodist Church, (where they realized that the mode of worship was exactly like what pertained at the Akontanim Methodist Church which Oppong had established later on). When they returned home, they settled at Amasu to farm. At Amasu, they established the Amasu Methodist Church.<sup>111</sup>

As mentioned earlier, when Oppong finally settled at Akontanim, (his hometown) he and his members started the Akontanim Methodist Church in 1925.

#### **e. Miracles**

The word miracle is used to refer to a broader range of wondrous events. However, the Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible states that, the biblical concept is limited to those not explainable solely by natural processes but which required the direct causal agency of a supernatural being, usually God. These occurred throughout all major eras of history but do appear in greater frequency at key periods of God's self-revelation.

The ministry of Sampson Oppong, like other biblical prophets, was also characterized by signs and wonders. Some of the miracles he performed are as follows;

The prophet performed some miraculous signs during his ministry. Mr. E.Y. Kyeremeh the current family head of the prophet narrated one of these miracles which took place at a village of Kantanka near Berekum in the Brong Ahafo Region. According to him, Oppong went to the village to preach. His first point of call was the chief's palace. The chief caused the gong-gong to be beaten for the people to come and listen to Oppong's

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<sup>111</sup> Debrunner, *Sampson Oppong*, 24.

message. However, the villagers declined except one woman. The reason being that, a hunter from the village had shot a bongo and they all went to the bush in search of the game instead of attending the prophet's preaching.

They searched through the forest throughout the day, but all in vain. The next day, when the woman who attended to the call went to her farm and she saw the dead bongo in her farm. The woman reported to the chief and the prophet responded that it was God who gave the animal to the woman.<sup>112</sup>

Another incident which is worth mentioning took place at Akontanin. According to a family member of Rebecca Amponsah, also known as Adwoa Nyamekye, whose father was the cook and a very close associate of Sampson Oppong, she was raised from death to life by Sampson Oppong. It is said that Rebecca fell sick when she was young, and died. At the time of the incident, her father was with the Prophet on their farm. It was revealed to the Prophet that something bad had happened at home. They quickly returned home only to realize that Rebecca was dead and had been laid in state. Sampson Oppong sent the corpse to the chapel and prayed till she came back to life. Rebecca Amponsah was a member of Sampson Oppong Memorial Methodist Church, Akontanin. She passed away on 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2010.

Again it is generally believed in Akontanin that the prophet could also pray for rain to fall, especially, wherever there was a drought. It even became a common saying at Akontanin after his death that whenever there was the need of rains, the people would say that if Sampson were to be alive; he could have asked God to give them rain. Not

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<sup>112</sup> Interview with E.Y. Kyeremehon 21<sup>st</sup> December. 2013

only that he could pray for rains, but he also could stop the rain from falling. Madam Efua Mansa an elderly woman of about Seventy-Three (73) years in Akontanin Methodist Church, stated that the Prophet could also pray to stop the rains from falling, during their camp meetings. She cited two instances at Nsoatre and Nsuhia camp meetings.

These signs and wonders and many others which time and space will not allow the researcher to highlight were believed to have accompanied the missionary enterprise of Sampson Oppong. Again, he was credited with the ability to cause many non-Christians to believe his message, repent and burn their amulets and magical charms and turn to Christ. It is evident that Oppong impacted positively on the history of Christianity in Ghana and for that matter, the Brong Ahafo Region. The following was said by Susan Hanson about Oppong's impact on Ghanaian Christian history:

Through Oppon's Prophetic Ministry, there was a turning point in the history of Christianity in Ashanti Territory. The Methodist church won many souls in the Ashanti. Prior to this time, the area has not held Christianity in any considerable district.... Thus when people saw the miracles, signs and wonders happening in Oppon's ministry, all they could do was to turn to Christ.<sup>113</sup>

There is no doubt that Oppong's ministry contributed tremendously to the history of Christianity in Ghana. Omenyo argues that it was Oppong's ministry that made the breakthrough in the evangelistic task of the church in Ashanti.<sup>114</sup> This assertion could be extended to the Brong Ahafo Region. His ministry coincided with the period when there appeared to be insurmountable difficulties in preaching the gospel in Ashanti.

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<sup>113</sup> Hanson, *A History of Pentecostalism*, 56.

<sup>114</sup> Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 71.

As said earlier, Opong's work did not lead to establishment of any Indigenous Church but it is also not wrong to argue that his work served as a prelude to indigenous missions in the region. From the era of Opong, attention is on the following Indigenous Churches; The African Faith Tabernacle Church, Greater Grace Temple of the Apostolic Faith Church, The Living Grace Ministries, Bethel Prayer Ministry. They are arranged chronologically, according to their year of establishment in the region.

### **2.5 The African Faith Tabernacle Church**

The first recognized Indigenous Church to be established in the region was the African Faith Tabernacle Church in 1960. It must be stated that the Church did not originate from the region. History recounts that it was a ministry which was started in Anyinam in the Eastern region by one prophet James Kwame Nkansah in 1919. It is alleged that the founder was born in 1862 to Opanin John Kwa Nkansah and Madam Sarah Akosua Ofosua. His parents were of the Aduana clan of Dampon in Asante Akim and Obo-Kwahu respectively but domiciled at Anyinam. It is alleged that the founder did not have any formal education as his father was opposed to sending his children to school. However, Kwame Nkansah through his own efforts learned how to read and write under the tutelage of a local letter writer in Anyinam. Later on, he could read and write and even became a recognized 'letter writer' in his hometown. He worked as a clerk in the colonial District Office at Kibi and Mpraeso and also served the District Commissioner in Kibi. He was introduced into the Christian faith by one Pastor S.K. Blakpe of Ada Foa, who was the pastor for the Faith Tabernacle Church. He was baptized into the Church in 1910. When he returned to his hometown, he established a branch with his family

members and others in 1919. From humble beginnings, his ministry spread to many parts of Ghana.

In the early parts of the 1960s, he established branches of his Church in the Brong Ahafo Region. Kukuom was his first point of call. Later on, branches were established in Berekum, Nkoranza, and Bechem. The Church grew steadily to other parts of the region. However, during the period of research, it was observed that the church had experienced a decline in membership, with some of the branches having collapsed. This was the result of the death of the founder in late 1987. It is claimed that after his death, there were a lot of misunderstandings among his family members as to who should succeed him, eventually leading to some factions breaking away. This has affected their membership in the region. Presently, some of the branches still owe allegiance to the mother church (African Faith Tabernacle Church), while others have defected to the United Faith Tabernacle Church and the New Faith Tabernacle Church.

Notwithstanding these divisions, the African Faith Tabernacle Church remains strong in the region with about twelve branches boasting a total membership of approximately eight hundred (800). The other faction is the New Faith Tabernacle which has three branches in Bechem, Techimantia and Berekum Mpasatia, with a total membership of about one hundred and twenty (120).

Even though there has been a decline of membership in recent times, the significant contributions made by the African Faith Tabernacle Church in the region cannot be underestimated. The Church is among the first in the region to introduce inculturation and contextualization into the Christian faith. They are noted for using traditional songs, musical instruments and clapping of hands in their worship. From the cultural

perspective, the Church is purely indigenous, their zeal and passion in the worship initiating a shift away from the formal and staid spirituality and theology that had come to characterize the lives of traditional Western mission churches.

### **2.6 Greater Grace Temple of the Apostolic Faith**

The Greater Grace Temple of the Apostolic Faith with its headquarters in Sunyani as part of the body of Christ traces its origin to the ministry which was started by Bishop Emmanuel Baffour Awuah in Sunyani in 1983. The founder and his wife lived in Techimantia between 1976 to 1980, where the latter was teaching. They later relocated to Sunyani upon the transfer of his wife in the later part of 1980. Before moving to Sunyani, the founder was a staunch member of the Scripture Union. However, after settling in Sunyani, he left the S.U and established his own fellowship.

Unfortunately, all those interviewed for the purpose of the work could not give the exact name of the fellowship. Between 1981-83, the fellowship flourished as they had more than two hundred members. It is alleged that upon the advice and encouragement received from Christian friends and persistent prayers, he was convinced to go into church planting. Thus in September, 1983, the ministry was born and was christened the Christ Alive Gospel Mission. He started with one hundred members at the premises of Twene Amanfo Senior High School, Sunyani. The following aims propelled him to go into church planting.

- To carry out the command of Jesus Christ as entrenched in the Great Commission (in the Bible) that is to preach the simple and entire gospel of salvation.
- To establish and maintain local assemblies where saved souls will be kept and taught the ideals of Jesus Christ.

- To preach Christian responsibilities at home and abroad in order to encourage and admonish every to aspire to attain Christ likeness.
- To contribute in the overall development of the Nation as a whole in the area of Health Education, Agriculture and other Social and Economic ventures.

The researcher wishes to state that when one assesses the missionary activities of the Church, not much has been achieved so far as the fourth objective is concerned. Since its establishment, they have not done anything in the areas of establishing schools, clinics or any other socio-economic venture for that matter.

#### Beliefs and Life of Greater Grace Church

The following are the beliefs of the Church;

- That Jesus is revealed in the Scripture as Christ, the son of the living God and that He is God in flesh and in Him dwell all the families of the Godhead bodily.
- That Jesus is the Messiah about whom the prophets of old prophesied as contained in the Holy Scripture.
- That his entrance (Birth) into the world was supernatural, likewise His life, death, and resurrection and ascension. That He shall return to earth the second time.
- That Jesus Christ sacrificed His life in death, providing for the salvation of man from sin, sickness and death.
- That unless there is an express repentance of sin, and confession of faith in Jesus Christ, for the natural man totally deprived of God's grace by sin is headed for eternal damnation.
- That healing is received in Jesus Christ through faith in prayer.

- They believe in two sacraments, these are Baptism and Holy Communion. The Church however does not baptize infants. The infants are however dedicated to God and given certificates of membership. One qualifies to be baptized at the age of fourteen.

These beliefs have guided the Church since its establishment and the church continues to be guided by these beliefs. The administration of the Church is governed by a five member Apostolic Council made up of the General Overseer, the Deputy General Overseer who doubles as the General Secretary, and three other executive members. During the period of the research, the council comprised the following: Bishop Emmanuel Baffour Awuah, the General Overseer, Rev. Alex Ofori Agyeman, General Secretary/Deputy General Overseer. Other executive members are; Revds. Forson Amankwaa, Sunyani, Edward Kwasi Afriyie, Bechem and Hayford Owusu Ansah, Techiman.

According to Rev. Edward Kwasi Afriyie, in 1997, the Church got affiliated to the Greater Grace Temple of the Apostolic Faith in Michigan, USA. This led to the Church changing its name from Christ Alive Church to Greater Grace Temple of the Apostolic Faith. When pressed for the reason behind this move, the researcher was told that, the founder was hopeful that the affiliation could lead to some financial benefits. However, this dream has not seen the light of the day as the Church has not received a penny from their affiliated group since the year 2000, and continues to rely solely on income generated from within.

In 1994, the Church established a Bible School christened 'The Christ Bible Institute' in Sunyani. The college was used to train their ministers and was also open to the public.



Sadly, the college collapsed in 2001 and has since not been resurrected. The researcher was informed that the College collapsed because the then General Secretary of the Church, Rev. Moses Sansa Konjon who doubled as the principal broke away from the Church and his actions affected the running of the college. He also went away with some of the members and this has affected the church's membership as well. The Church now has twelve branches in the region with a total membership of one thousand.

From all indications, the growth rate of Greater Grace Church is retarded. This position has been taken because from its establishment in 1983, it can boast only of twelve branches out of which only four of them have chapels of their own with the others worshipping in makeshift structures and classrooms. The breakaway they experienced in 2001 is another dimension that has contributed to the slow pace of growth. Another factor is the residence of the leadership of the church. Both the General Overseer and the General Secretary now reside in Accra, however the headquarters of the church remains in Sunyani. This makes administration of the church very difficult. Notwithstanding these challenges, the church has contributed to the success story of growth of Indigenous missions in the region. As one of the pioneers of Indigenous missions in the region, they helped set the pace for others to emulate. They have moved to other parts of Ghana and have established three branches in Accra, two in Kumasi and one in Kasoa.

### **2.7 Living Grace Ministries**

Bishop Richard Owusu, the founder of the Living Grace Ministries was born on 20<sup>th</sup> of April, 1964 to Dr. Kwaku Ahenkora and Madam Janet Asare Tawiah. He completed his secondary and sixth form education at Kumasi Anglican and Tema Secondary School respectively. It is alleged that he got 'born again' in the year 1987 and was subsequently

called into ministry in 1989. That same year, he was admitted into Ghana's prestigious Military Academy at Teshie, Accra. The researcher was told that, he declined the opportunity due to the intensity of God's calling upon his life (based on alleged vivid revelations and divine directions). He later joined the Fountain Gate Bible College at Kaneshie, Accra. Thereafter, he joined the Kingdom Army under the leadership of his senior pastor known as Rev. Joseph Amisah who was the founder of Grace Bible Church.

As a result of his selfless dedication to kingdom business and intense prayer, the Lord directed him to Sunyani to continue his ministry. He obeyed God's directive and relocated to Sunyani in January, 1990 where he joined Christ Alive Church (now known as Greater Grace Temple) for a short period. He used that short period to do feasibility studies in preparation for his own ministry. He left the Greater Grace and started his ministry at Sunyani Liberation Barracks with thirty (30) people. After he fellowshipped with them for one month, they were evicted from the barracks leading to the scattering of the members, leaving only two who joined him outside the Barracks. They were Mr. Richard Ampadu and Mrs. Sarah Frimpong of blessed memory.

From this humble beginning, it is said that somebody donated a sheep pen for them to put it into a habitable shape, and by April 1990, the Church known as the Grace Bible Church was started in full gear. As they grew in number, the need arose for them to move to a bigger place of worship. In August 1990, they relocated to the Social Welfare Campus, Sunyani. The Church from the initial stages faced a lot of challenges basically in the areas of finance and logistics, compelling them to petition the Grace Bible Church, Accra, (which they were affiliated to) for assistance. However, the Church in Accra

turned deaf ears to their request. This forced them to change their name to Grace Charismatic Church because they felt they had been disowned. As their members grew, they moved from the Social Welfare Centre to the Ridge Experimental School, where they worshipped until 2004 when they moved to their present place of worship.

Their road to church growth and expansion has not been easy. The researcher was told that two major crisis in the Church brought about a massive split. The General Secretary, however, declined to reveal to the researcher the details of the crisis and the circumstances that led to it. This resulted in another name change from Grace Charismatic Church to Living Grace Ministries. Despite all the initial challenges, the Church has established a Bible school in Sunyani, 'The Christian Leadership Institute.' Admission is open to the general public, however due to some circumstances; they were not able to enroll students for the 2014 /2015 academic year. The Church has seven branches in the Sunyani Municipality and nine branches scattered in the region with the total membership of One thousand, two hundred.

The Church has a passion for celebrating Jesus Christ through prayer, praise, worship and fellowship because of their mission of bringing purpose, direction and confidence to the present generation. They have progressed steadily; however, they are entreated to put more efforts in order to maintain the momentum in order to grow in numbers.

## **2.8 The Apostles' Continuation Church**

The Apostles' Continuation Church International, with its headquarters in Duayaw Nkwanta in the Brong Ahafo Region as part of the body of Christ, traces its origin to the ministry which was started by the Apostle Emmanuel Kwadwo Owusu and eight others.

Apostle General Emmanuel Kwadwo Owusu was born at Duayaw Nkwanta in 1919 to Opanin Kwasi Oduro and Madam Abena Henewaa, a descendant of the Anompi Royal Family of Duayaw Nkwanta. He had his primary education at Duayaw Nkwanta Presbyterian Primary School and completed his Middle School at Sunyani in 1946, where he obtained his Standard Seven School Leaving Certificate. After school, the Apostle worked with the following companies; G. B. Olivant, United Ghana (Farmers') council and Cooperative Consumers Association, as Depot Assistant, Depot Clerk and Cashier respectively. He was a married man and left behind twelve children before he passed on to eternity on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2003. He was baptized in the Presbyterian Church in 1938. He later joined the Apostolic Church as a result of the teachings of one Elder Adjei.

Following a rift in the Apostolic Church, he joined the Church of Pentecost. In the church of Pentecost; he was appointed as a Presiding Elder of the Duayaw Nkwanta Assembly between 1953 and 1978. He was very instrumental in the opening of the following assemblies of the Church of Pentecost; Bechem, Yamfo, Techimantia, Tapa and Goka. He was also among the two elders who represented the Brong Ahafo Region on the National Council of the church.<sup>115</sup>

The history of the Apostles Continuation Church has it that, Apostle Emmanuel Kwadwo Owusu, then a leading member of Church of Pentecost, dedicated himself to eleven (11) days dry fasting and prayer in July 1983. During this 'Spiritual exercise'; it is alleged that God revealed to him the Apostle' Continuation Church doctrine to him. That same year,

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<sup>115</sup>The Biography of the Late Apostle Emmanuel Kwadwo Owusu is an extract from the funeral brochure of the late Bishop's funeral held on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2003 at Duayaw Nkwanta.

he left the Pentecost Church and formed a prayer group to practice what God had revealed to him.

He was joined later on by the following people; Afua Boakyewaa, Salome Boateng, Yaa Pomaah, Rose Bemma, Afia Badu, Paul Manu (now Apostle of the Church) and Clement Brakatie (the present chairman of the Church). It is on record that Apostle Paul Manu, Clement Brakatie and Salome Boateng helped the prayer group with their tithes, due to the fact that they were gainfully employed. In 1984, the prayer group nearly collapsed. This forced the founder to move from Duayaw Nkwanta to Tuobodum in the Brong-Ahafo Region to undertake cash crop farming (cashew). He also reactivated the prayer group and preached the word of God alongside his farming activities in Tuobodum.

By the close of 1990, the prayer group had metamorphosed into a church and in 1991; the Apostles' Continuation Church was duly registered with its headquarters at Duayaw Nkwanta. From this humble beginning, the ministry has grown to other parts of the region and the country. Currently, the church has over one hundred and sixty five branches in Ghana.

In the Brong-Ahafo region, the church has a membership of about six thousand members. The Church's missionary activities have crossed the boundaries of the country as they now have sixteen branches spread across Europe, the United States and Canada.

#### **a. Mode of Training of Pastors**

Before the death of the founder, Apostle Owusu, anyone who felt called into the ordained ministry in the Apostle's Continuation Church, had to study under his tutelage for a one

year period after which, the person was ordained. There was no formal theological training for pastors. The theological interpretation given to this position was that, the disciples of Jesus never had any formal training. Notwithstanding this position, a recent visit to the church's headquarters by the researcher, revealed that the church has now established a Bible School, (barely six years after the death of the founder) where would-be pastors are trained formally for a one year period.

When asked about the *rationale* behind the establishment of the Bible School, the current General Secretary, Apostle Peter Sarfo Bofah replied that ministering in the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands adequate preparation; physically and spiritually hence the school. Another interesting revelation is that none of the church's Ministers were on the church's payroll. They are not paid but are given a token as allowance, a system which the General Secretary said they were restructuring. Ministers would be remunerated in the form of salaries starting from September 2014. Notwithstanding this fact, the church has ninety-nine Pastors in the Brong Ahafo Region alone, out of whom twenty five (25) are yet to be ordained.

#### **b. Governance**

According to the church's Constitution, 'the governance of the church rests on the trustees, General Council, Executive Council and the 'Regional Presbytery Council. The trustees consist of seven persons (supposed to be filled with the Holy Spirit and with designated professions and experiences). Three of them are ministers and other four, elders.

The General Council is made up of all Apostles, Prophets, Trustees, all active Ordained Ministers, Regional Executive members, National Heads, National Deacons, National Secretaries, Chairpersons of Boards and Committees. The church's constitution stipulates that: the council shall be the highest policy making body, having the mandate to elect the Chairman, General Secretary and the International Mission Director.

### **c. Social Services**

Like the mission Churches whose major evangelistic strategies were characterized by the provision of socio-economic and spiritual developments, the Apostles Continuation Church has established one Junior High School at Awowora, two Primary Schools at Asuae and Tuobodum, and a Clinic at Tuobodum. All these projects are in the Techiman Municipality of the Brong-Ahafo Region. The church has established a Bible College at Duayaw Nkwanta, to train pastors of the church.

The Apostle Continuation church seems to be charting a path of restructuring and formalizing their activities after the death of the founder. They seem to be more organized administratively than before. The current Chairman is to serve for a period of ten years, a situation not existing when the founder was alive. He was to be the chairman throughout the period he was alive. Now Reverend Ministers go for theological training for a one year period. Before, all ministers were to 'sit' at the feet of the founder for tutorials and nurturing for a one year period. The church has about six thousand members in the Brong Ahafo Region. As an indigenous church, it can be said that it continues to contribute its quota to the missionary activities in the region and Ghana as a whole.

## **2.9 Bethel Prayer Ministry**

Paul Kwaku Owusu Tabiri, the founder of the Bethel Prayer Ministry, was born on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October, 1935 at Taforo, a suburb of Dormaa Ahenkro in the Brong Ahafo Region to Nana Kwaku Owusu and Nana Afia Frimpomaa, all of blessed memory. He started his elementary education in 1945 at Dormaa Ahenkro and completed in 1955 at Chiraa.

After his elementary education, he continued at Berekum Commercial School, which he successfully completed in 1959. In the same year (1959), he enrolled at the Ghana Police Academy and passed out as a Police General Constable. As a Police Officer, he rose through the ranks to become an Inspector. He retired from the Ghana Police Service in 1977. While in the Police Service, he studied privately to pass his General Certificate of Education, Ordinary and Advanced Levels. He later enrolled at the Glasgow School of Law, United Kingdom and earned a Diploma in Criminal Law.

Owusu Tabiri later went into business and palm plantations in the late 1970s and 1980s. His hard work in this field, paved the way for him to become one time Regional Best Farmer. On his marital life, he got married to Georgina Owusu Tabiri, and the marriage was blessed with twelve children (seven boys and five girls).<sup>116</sup>

### **a. His Calling into Ministry**

The researcher was informed that Owusu Tabiri accepted Jesus as his Lord and personal Saviour when he was invited to chair the Annual Harvest of the Church of Pentecost,

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<sup>116</sup> The Biography of Paul Owusu Tabiri is an extract from the Funeral Brochure of the late Bishop's funeral held on 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2005 at Sunyani.



Dormaa Ahenkro branch in 1980. Due to his devotion and commitment to the work of God, he was made the Presiding Elder of the Estate Assembly, Sunyani, for 5 years and Regional Deacon, Brong Ahafo Region for twelve years. He was the first President and the Field Representative of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMGI)<sup>117</sup>, for the Brong Ahafo Region. The late Presiding Bishop narrates how he was called into full time ministry in his autobiography.

His experience dates back to July 1980 when the Sunyani District of the Church of Pentecost delegated him to contact and invite one Prophetess Sarah Donkor of Goka as the main speaker for a scheduled crusade. When he got to Prophetess Sarah, she declined the invitation and urged him that God could equally use him as He would use her. Again, as then Presiding Elder and Regional Deacon of the church of Pentecost, not only that, but also the Regional Field Representative of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, he had ministered in several Assemblies at Retreats and Conventions of the Church and in over 40 chapters of the Full Gospel. In one of such programmes, he encountered one Evangelist Dr. Friday Nwator of Port Harcourt University, Nigeria. That was in 1988. On his return, the Evangelist wrote to him that God had revealed to him (the Evangelist) how he was going to use Owusu Tabiri. But on the contrary, the late bishop had always considered himself as a businessman called to support God's work financially.<sup>118</sup>

From his autobiography, it can be said that his calling ministry was a gradual process. Even though he had some reservations about his calling, he later yielded to it and worked assiduously to the glory of God. On one of his business trips to the United States of America, he narrated how in a vision he was directed by God to pray and quench a fire. He obliged and after the prayer, water came out from heaven and quenched that fire. He also claimed that God told him that he had made him like Elijah. When he returned to

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<sup>117</sup>A trans denominational charismatic and evangelistic fellowship, English UK.

<sup>118</sup> Paul Owusu Tabiri, *This is Your Breakthrough* (London: Logos Publishing House, 2004), 11.

Ghana in 1988, he started the Bethel Prayer Camp in Sunyani with seven people. The number grew steadily. The camp was officially inaugurated on 9<sup>th</sup> July, 1992 by the Church of Pentecost. Before then he had been called into full time evangelistic and healing ministry by the church in 1991.

In 1995, he left the Church of Pentecost to lead the Bethel Prayer Camp as an Independent Ministry. This came about because it is alleged that Owusu Tabiri introduced the terms 'bombing,' 'binding,' and 'breaking' during prayer sessions. These terms were considered unacceptable and unscriptural in the Church of Pentecost. In spite of the tremendous work God was using him to accomplish in the lives of many people, he faced stiff opposition from his own people (the Church of Pentecost). After contemplating on his calling and ministerial gifts, he left the Church of Pentecost to start the Bethel Prayer Ministry.

In establishing the Bethel Prayer Ministry, he set out as his vision and goal, the fulfillment of what he saw as the five-fold ministry of Jesus Christ, namely: The Gospel of salvation and reconciliation.

- The Gospel of sanctification and righteousness.
- The Gospel of divine healing, deliverance and the manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit.
- The Gospel of prosperity, material and financial blessings.
- The Gospel of Divine Judgment and eternal heaven.

The late Bishop also believed that he had a sevenfold weapon at his disposal and that no devil could stand him and all obstacles could be broken. The Bethel prayer ministry was born on these seven weapons which include;

- The word of God
- The name of Jesus Christ
- The Blood of Jesus Christ
- The Holy Ghost Power
- Prayer and Fasting
- Praises and Worship
- Testimonies

The late Bishop was of the view that he was called by God 'to shake the kingdom of Satan and to crush its powers to liberate those under satanic bondage, to set the captives free and meet the needs of the people.

As said earlier, he popularized the terms 'bombing', 'binding', and 'breaking' as mighty weapons in spiritual warfare. His early ministry was characterized by outstanding healings and miracles. These were the main features that brought his ministry to the limelight. He had a divine call as a prophet, an apostle and an evangelist. Through his efforts and able leadership, the Bethel Prayer Ministry International, could boast of three hundred (300) branches in Ghana, two (2) branches in Togo, many branches in Europe and North America before his death. According to some statistics published in the *Bethel News Issue 1*, page 12, by 12 of February 1993, Eighteen thousand, nine hundred and ninety-seven (18,997) had accepted Christ at the Prayer Camp. Nine thousand seven

hundred and fifty (9,750) people were baptized in water through immersion. Eight thousand four hundred (8,400) people had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial sign of speaking in tongues.

Attendance at the Ministry prayer meeting has grown from seven (7) people to a total of forty-four thousand (44,000) people. He was called to eternity on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2005, after leading the Ministry for almost ten years. According to Larbi, 'he has successfully transformed the Prayer Camp to an Independent church.'<sup>119</sup> Between 1996-2001, the late Bishop was arguably, the foremost leader in the healing ministry in Ghanaian Christianity.<sup>120</sup> However, the same cannot be said of the Bethel Prayer Ministry today.

The researcher is of the view that when one critically examines the current situation of the Bethel Prayer Ministry, the Ministry is now experiencing recession. A recent visit to the Bethel Prayer Ministry in Sunyani, revealed that the monthly prayer meetings barely exist and do not attract attention and publicity as they used to in the in recent past. Aside that, there is decline in membership, some of the Assemblies have collapsed and only exist in name. Furthermore, the kind of charisma and operational gift that characterized the ministry of the Bishop, have apparently left the church. None of the Rev. Ministers of the church now seems to have the 'operational gift' which used to draw members to the church. It is a fact that the Bethel Prayer Ministry experienced exponential growth in the mid-1990s and the early stages of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, not only in Ghana but across the globe. A critical examination of the factors that contributed to the rapid growth can be

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<sup>119</sup> Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 389.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

attributed to the founder, Bishop Owusu Tabiri. His charismatic type of leadership and healing prowess were the spices that brought about the growth.

Andrew Walls posits that there are times and places when large numbers of people newly profess allegiance to Jesus Christ and form new Christian communities.<sup>121</sup> That is what he refers to as Church test. He went on to say that it is equally clear that at other times and in other places, this process stagnates or goes into reverse.

The Bethel Prayer Ministry is not as vibrant as it used to be. Reasons from the researcher's point of view stem from the fact that the death of the founder (Bishop Owusu Tabiri) in 2005, has led to that. It is alleged that there was leadership crisis after the death of the Bishop. Who to succeed him led to a contentious situation. There was struggle within the fraternity as to who to succeed him. It is said that the wife who was also an ordained minister in the Ministry wanted to succeed her husband, situation which led to the ban on ordaining female ministers in Bethel. As said earlier, the Bethel Prayer Ministry is not as strong and effective as it used to be. Notwithstanding this position, Bethel Prayer Ministry used to be one of the vibrant indigenous churches in the region.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter of the thesis has dealt with the history and development of indigenous missions in the Brong Ahafo Region. It began with the religious affiliations, what indigenous churches are, factors that gave rise to them, the genesis of Indigenous missions which began with the missionary work of Sampson Opong. Five Indigenous Churches were also discussed. From the research, one obvious challenge facing

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<sup>121</sup> Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 13.

Indigenous Churches is the increasing secession within their ranks. It appears new church groups emerge from them consequently retarding their progress and growth. The desire of individual members to have their own congregations has led to new churches being established.

There is also sometimes an over dependence on founders. This has led to 'some' of them arrogating to themselves powers and titles that do not contribute to Christian growth. Related to the above is that succession after the death of some leaders has often led to multiple secessions, hostilities and litigations. Notwithstanding the above mentioned challenges, it is obvious that the ministry of faith-healing forms a central part in almost all the churches discussed.

Furthermore, it is noticeable that these churches are committed to evangelism. They have travelling evangelists and prophets who organise local crusades, revivals, and house to house evangelism. Much emphasis is also placed on the role of the Holy Spirit in the various ministries of these churches. While much depends on the ingenuity of the leaders, they still refer to the Holy Spirit as the source of their gifts of vision, prophetic utterances and healing. Even though these churches have not grown as expected, they have in diverse ways contributed to the growth and progress of the Christian faith in the region.

One feature that runs through all these African initiatives that have been discussed is the fact that invariably they all manifest charismatic characteristics. It appears the established churches which have well defined theologies, practices and ethos could not contain them within their framework. As a result, with the exception of Sampson Opong who co-operated with the established churches such as the Methodist Church, the rest end

up setting up their own separate churches. This trend of high propensity for these missions to set up their own churches is going to characterise the ethos of future indigenous churches that are going to emerge in the Brong Ahafo Region, particularly TOP. In the next chapter, the history and development of TOP, the focus of the study is put into perspective.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEMPLE OF PRAISE CHURCH

#### 3.1 Introduction

We learn from mission history that it is more appropriate and prudent to support native missionaries who work within their own cultural settings than to send foreign missionaries who must labour in unfamiliar terrain. A native missionary is highly effective because he/she is normally familiar with the customs, culture and language of the people he/she is ministering to. However this assumption does not in any way underestimate the contributions and gains made by some foreign missionaries who continue to affect the missionary enterprise in diverse ways. The researcher supports the position that, it is more appropriate and prudent to support native missionaries who work within their own cultural settings. This is so because invariably when natives are involved in missions, they are able to communicate effectively in the language which the ordinary person on the street – the masons, carpenters, and illiterates understand.

It can also be argued that, the worship setting of the indigenous churches are more attractive and appealing to the local people because of their flexibility. Besides, the individual is an active heart and soul participant in the service. The songs they mostly sing are evocative and sometimes spontaneous compositions. Such missions have sought to make Christianity more relevant to the local context. The uniqueness of such indigenous churches are found in the prominent use of traditional beliefs, forms, symbols and practices and their liberal interpretation of the Bible to respond to issues such as



these posed by the spirit world in the African worldview. They are also noted for their emphasis on the Holy Spirit. In this chapter, the history and development of the Temple of Praise, a Church whose ethos fits the description above is the subject matter. The genesis of TOP, factors that led to its establishment, its administration, beliefs, initial challenges, as well as sources of income are discussed.

Just as everything has its small beginning, and usually with its accompanied challenges, TOP is no exception. The church started from an extremely low platform.

### **3.2 The Genesis of Temple of Praise**

The genesis of TOP can be traced to the pioneering and sacrificial work of five men, (now pastors) Osei Wusu Cobbinnah, P. Adu Kyeremeh, Peter Yaw Asamoah, Cosmos Tabiri and Alex Owusu Amankwaa. The five, who lived at Wamfie, a town in the Brong Ahafo Region in the 1970s and 1980s, were Christian ‘brothers’ who were also staunch members of the Scripture Union<sup>122</sup> of the Wamfie branch. Initially, the idea was not to establish a church, as they belonged to different denominations. Two of them were Presbyterians, with the remaining three belonging to Roman Catholic, Methodist and Christ Apostolic Church respectively. What therefore led to the establishment of TOP can be attributed to two factors. These factors were the emergence of Neo-Pentecostalism in the Ghanaian religious landscape in the 1970s and 1980s and the founders’ separation from the Scripture Union.

Aside the emergence of Neo-Pentecostalism, on the Ghanaian religious landscape, one person who has contributed immensely to the emergence of Neo-Pentecostal Churches in

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<sup>122</sup> Scripture Union is an International Christian Organization which aims and works with churches to make God’s Good News known to children, young people and families, and to encourage people.

Ghana, in recent years, was the late Archbishop Benson Idahosa from Nigeria. According to Larbi, Idahosa's evangelistic crusades in Accra in the early 1977, led to a series of events.<sup>123</sup> At first, he started his Redemption Hour TV Programme in the same year and also awarded scholarships to some people to attend his Church of God International Bible School in Nigeria. Some of the pioneers were Duncan Williams, Seth Abbey and Emmanuel Mettle, who were among that year's 1977 beneficiaries. Ransford Yeboah, Oduro Aboagye and others also benefited. It is interesting to note that between 1979 to 1983, the founders of TOP on separate occasions graduated from Idahosa's Bible School. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, most of his (Idahosa) students returned to Ghana. Larbi states that Duncan Williams, one of the first students of Idahosa returned in 1978.<sup>124</sup> One philosophy which Idahosa imparted to them was 'the charge' to start their ministries. To that effect almost all of them started their ministry mostly in Accra, apart from Charles Agyin Asare who started his Word Miracle Church, (now known as Perez Chapel) in Tamale in March, 1987 and later moved to Accra in October, 1994. The founders of TOP did not go their separate ways as most of their contemporaries did but joined forces together and started their ministry in Sunyani and other places in the Brong Ahafo Region.

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<sup>123</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 27.

<sup>124</sup> Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 289.

### 3.3 Separation from the Scripture Union

The other issue that triggered the birth of TOP was the misunderstanding and subsequent separation of the founders from the Scripture Union. The Christian Church has been characterized by schism<sup>125</sup> since the early stages. The history of Christianity itself shows that doctrinal and theological controversies have characterized the growth and experience of the church. Some of these controversies had emanated from misunderstanding, doctrinal and Theological factionalism, and ethnocentrism among others.

Francis Wermick observes that 'division and disunity have marked the history of the Christian church from at least the end of the first century.....while not immune from this danger of dissent, but the church has been relatively free from serious discord, having a remarkable unity on Bible truth. The misunderstanding which later led to the establishment of TOP was between the five Christian brothers and the hierarchy of the Scripture Union. As stated earlier, the founders of TOP were staunch members of the Scripture Union, Wamfie branch. In 1981, there was a misunderstanding between the hierarchy of the Scripture Union and the five. The bone of contention was on speaking in tongues. The five alleged that speaking in tongues was stringently prohibited in all public worships and meetings of the Scripture Union. Members of the fellowship could pray in tongues but it should strictly be a private affair.

This meant that praying in tongues, was only allowed outside the meetings of the Scripture Union. The five did not accept this doctrinal position even though they remained members of the Scripture Union. They believed they had received spiritual

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<sup>125</sup> Schism; *A schism is a division between people usually belonging to an organization, movement or religious denomination. The word is most frequently applied to a split in what had previously been a single religious body.*

baptism and to them, one of the clear manifestations was to speak in tongues. Like Montanus of Mysia, they claimed to have received a special revelation of the Holy Spirit. They thought that the 'paracletos' had now come on them and was to lead them to all truth and to expose sin, righteousness and judgment.

"We have not forgotten the day of Pentecost, one of them stated." After a period of time they pondered over the issue and sought for an alternative and formidable religious group that could complement their religious and spiritual beliefs, goals and practices. To them, speaking in tongues was not opposed to Christian tenets and moral standards that should be rejected by an evangelical group like the Scripture Union. Their quest for commendable 'Spiritual' growth, nurture and revival of their Christian lives led them to leave the Scripture Union in 1983.

They formed their own fellowship at Wamfie which they Christened 'Living Faith Fellowship.' Between 1983 and 1984, they were able to establish ten (10) branches of the fellowship in the Brong Ahafo Region. As a fellowship, they were able to acquire one diesel truck, a set of instruments and a film projector which facilitated their evangelistic activities. The researcher was informed that in the later part of 1983, one of the members, Pastor Cosmos Tabiri, now the head pastor for the Dormaa Ahenkro Pastoral District, left the shores of Ghana to Lagos, Nigeria to work and acquire a Yamaha Generator to help boost electricity supply for their evangelistic activities, as the Brong Ahafo Region by then had not been hooked to the National grid.

The purpose of their mission, then, was to lead people to salvation in Christ. As time went on, this anthropological perspective was however not the ultimate objective of their

ministry. They claimed that after 'waiting' upon the Lord on several occasions, the Lord directed them into church planting. Apart from this 'revelation' from God, one cardinal factor was that, they alleged that most of their 'converts' were not 'nurtured' well by the mother churches. Since, there was a fellowship by then, all converts won were entreated to worship with churches of their choice. However, they could realize that within a matter of time most of the new converts 'backslided' and went back to their former ways. They accused the churches of not doing well in discipleship. Furthermore, the sustainability of members in the Fellowship was a challenge. So in December, 1987, there was a general consensus among the five that they should establish their own church. There are times when it is more helpful that people should be called upon to take their responsibilities, struggles with and conquer their difficulties than to wait for a longer period.

Eventually, in 1988, the five left the fellowship they had founded to pursue their 'new' dream. It is said that most of the Christian fellowships which have surfaced in the Ghanaian religious landscape were later turned into churches. Omenyo contends that 'a major consequence of the evangelical/Charismatic renewal in the 1960s and 1970s was the institutionalization of some of the fellowships into churches.' In the case of TOP, it is alleged that they turned the fellowship into a church, a position the founders denied vehemently

Thus, on 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1988, the Temple of Praise Church was born in Sunyani with thirty four (34) members. It was Rev Osei Wusu Cobbinah who started the ministry. Within a period of two months, they were able to establish branches at Berekum, (7<sup>th</sup> February, 1988) with seven (7) members. Dormaa Ahenkro (14<sup>th</sup> February 1988) with twelve (12) members and Wamfie (28<sup>th</sup> February, 1988) with thirteen (13) members. On

4<sup>th</sup> January 1989, another branch was opened in Bechem with four (4) members. The five were strategically posted to the five branches as the pastors in charge.

### 3.4 The Name Temple of Praise

When the researcher interviewed the General Secretary of the Church about why the church was christened Temple of Praise 'TOP', the answer was that as Christians, our bodies are the Temple of God. He quoted from 1 Cor. 6:19-20.<sup>126</sup> Members are therefore encouraged to use their bodies, which are the temple of God, to praise their maker. This 'is further explained by defining the two key words, 'Temple' and 'Praise'. *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* defines Temple as 'a building, generally thought of as the dwelling-place of a deity, in which the corporate worship of that deity is centered. The temple elicited strong feelings in Jews including Jesus. He saw the temple as the place where God dwelled among His people (Israel), sanctifying all that was in it. Jesus' cleansing the temple court, was his attempt to restore them to their proper function.

The early church continued for a long time to worship at the temple on a regular basis (Acts 2:46; Luke 24:53). However in the Pauline epistles, the word temple refers no longer to a physical building (even though the temple in Jerusalem was still standing), but to a community of Christian believers (1 Cor. 3:16-17, Eph. 2:19-22). The Hebrew word '*halal*' is defined as praise meaning to ascribe worth to God.' Praise is regarded by the Bible as the response due God for all creation because of His majesty and saving grace. It is the dominant characteristic of true piety. With this understanding, members of the

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<sup>126</sup> "Or do you not know that your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you or whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's."

church (TOP) are entreated to use their bodies (which connote the temple) to praise God, because the purpose of God's people is to praise Him and to live the lives they have been given in such a way that God is praised. So whether in corporate worship or in their individual homes, church members are to glorify God in whatever they do with their bodies (Temples).

### **3.5 Initial Challenges**

Everyday we face challenges and it is what we do about these challenges that make us what we are in life. Challenges are very common features in the Christian faith especially in missions. Since the Great Commission and the journeys of Paul, till today, there have been a lot of stumbling blocks that have hindered missions. The story of TOP is no exception. When the researcher quizzed about some of the challenges that confronted the church in the initial stages, a lot of them were enumerated but only few of them are discussed in this thesis.

It is an undisputed fact that one of the primal challenges to any missiological initiative is finance, especially when it is embarked on by indigenous people without 'foreign support. However, in the case of TOP, the cardinal among the challenges was more political than financial. It is appropriate to remind ourselves that, between 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1981 to December 1992, Ghana was under military rule. The Provisional National Defense Council, herein referred to as PNDC, was the government of the day that introduced the PNDC law 221. The law was known as the Religious Bodies Registration Law. Essentially, PNDC Law 221 provides that 'every religious body in Ghana shall be registered under this law and no religious body in existence in Ghana, shall after three

months from the commencement of this law operate as such unless it is registered under this law. Section 20 of PNDC Law 221 defines religious bodies to mean ‘any association of persons or body or organization which professes adherence to or belief in any system of faith or worship; or which is established in pursuance of religious objective.

Before the coming into force of that law, the *People’s Daily Graphic* edition of Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> June, 1989 carried a banner headline, ‘Misuse of Religious Freedom can’t be allowed.’ The statement was attributed to the leader of the revolution, Jerry John Rawlings, who was said to have expressed concern over ‘the irresponsible use of freedom of religion which had led to the mushrooming of dubious churches which cash in on the ignorance of the people to dupe them.’

Officially, this law was implemented to protect Ghanaians from the exploitative tendencies of some churches. Also in the words of Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, “to preserve the purity of religious teachings”. Another aspect of the law which made the situation more alarming was the use of the title, ‘Pastor,’ without being connected to, and qualified under the constitution of the religious institution to which that person belongs, which must be registered and recognized by the Religious Affairs Committee.

To do so constitutes an offence punishable on conviction, to a fine not exceeding 100,000 Cedis (approximately \$363 as at 11<sup>th</sup> August, 1989) or imprisonment not exceeding three months.

This was the situation the founders found themselves in, just after one year of taking off. They were confronted with this, if they continued their operations, they were to attract the wrath of the ruling government. Unlike today, there was no platform for one to register



his protest or express oneself. What made their situation worse was that they did not have the requisite requirement for the registration exercise. The basic requirement was a constitution of that organization and a bank account.

Asked about how they were able to overcome such an insurmountable hurdle, the answer was that they were able to register with the help of one of their members who was 'close' to government. But it was the intervention of the Roman Catholic Church and the Christian Council of Ghana that put the matter to rest.

It is said that the two bodies felt that the law was not just; so they could not obey it. They wrote; 'the law is a serious violation of the fundamental human rights of freedom of worship.'<sup>127</sup> This is because it seeks to make registration with the State, a condition for being allowed to worship God. In our opinion, it also contradicts PNDC Law 42, Section 1 (b) which states; 'Respect for fundamental human rights and for dignity of human persons are to be activated among all sections of the society and established as part of the basis of Social Justice'.

Furthermore, the law to them was so vaguely written in some of its detail that it left plenty of room for dangerous and arbitrary interpretation. Worst of all, by the stroke of a pen, the chairman of the National Commission for Culture could order the seizure and disposal of any church.

Another challenge which confronted them at the early stages was the issue of finance. As stated earlier, as an indigenous church they did not depend on outside resources. The initial stages were very challenging such that the founders had to sacrifice their benefits

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<sup>127</sup> Ghana Bishops' speak: A collection of Communique, Memoranda and Pastoral letters of the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference Accra: National Secretariat, 20.

as well as invest their own resources to keep the "infant" church surviving. What made the situation more alarming was the rapid rate at which other assemblies were opened within a matter of two months. (From January – February 1988) The first four assemblies were planted. There were too many constraints on the limited resources.

Added to this situation was the fact that they did not start from cosmopolitan cities where one could say that the socio-economic status of members were higher so that the members could donate generously towards the activities of the church. The argument may be that they started from Sunyani, the regional capital, but Sunyani, twenty five years back, could not boast of many infrastructural developments which could attract many people to live there as compared to recent times.

The whole of the region had not been connected to the national grid. Not deterred by this constraint and with determination and perseverance, they managed with the little resources that were available. The researcher will come back to this issue when addressing financing in this chapter.

Aside the issue of financing, meeting places for the assemblies at the initial stages were very intriguing. They were meeting basically in the classrooms, homes of some members, and in the case of Bechem their second meeting was held on the magistrate court premises.

They faced ejection every passing week. What made the situation even worse was the order by the PNDC government on churches using classrooms to desist from doing that. It was very difficult for them to get a place to meet. On the other hand, those who were willing to rent out their places charged exorbitant fees in order to deter them from using

their places. With time, they managed to acquire lands and started chapel projects. This however, disrupted their agenda, as they moved from soul winning and temporarily became project oriented in order to get their own places of worship.

Aside the above, another challenge was the stigmatization of the church as '*abonsam asore*' (clapping of hands church). As one of the first neo-Pentecostal churches in the region, they were also tagged as insane people especially, their founders, because of their emphasis on speaking in tongues which characterized their worship. They were also considered to be men who had little theological knowledge. According to Rev. Peter Adu Kyeremeh, now the General Secretary of the church, the doubting 'Thomases' thought they were not in their right frame of mind, and soon the church would collapse. In view of this challenge, most of their members were initially the young people. The middle class in the society thought they "did not belong there." This also led to the loss of some of the well-to-do people who preferred being in the mainline churches as well as the classical Pentecostal churches.

### **3.6 Aims and Objectives of Temple of Praise**

As a church, the Temple of Praise exists first and foremost to worship God. That is every action of the Church must at the end bring God the glory. Anything the Church does contributes to her worship. The aims and objectives of the Church are as follows;

- To propagate the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, to all mankind (beginning from Ghana and to all the uttermost parts of the world).
- To establish or plant and maintain a Bible School for the training and nurturing of men and women who have the call of God upon their lives.

- To set-up and maintain Schools and other projects as this ministry may deem it necessary.
- To help and support Christian workers both at home and abroad.
- To assist in maintaining institutions like hospitals, prisons, orphanages and mentally retarded homes.
- To publish Christian literature for regions and for educational purposes.

These missional objectives as outlined by TOP, seem very holistic. They are analyzed in chapter five of the work to assess how far these objectives have been achieved.

### **3.7 Beliefs and Life of Temple of Praise Church**

This sub topic focuses on the beliefs and practices of the Temple of Praise Church as an Indigenous Church. In the church's doctrinal statement, it is stated that 'We believe in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as verbally inspired by God and inerrant in the original writings and that they are supreme and final authority in life and faith.'<sup>128</sup>

This is the preamble of the church's beliefs and practices. Aside the above doctrinal statement, the church also believes in the following;

- The Eternal Godhead: We believe in one God, eternally existing in Three Persons, The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit.
- Man's Depraved Nature: That man was created in the image of God, and that through sin; man incurred both spiritual and physical death. Consequently, man is

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<sup>128</sup> *The Constitution of the Temple of Praise* (Sunyani: TOP Press, 2005), 2.

totally depraved, and subject to eternal punishment, and needs repentance and regeneration through the new birth.

- The Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ; That Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God and begotten of the Holy Spirit and born by the Virgin Mary and that He is true God and true Man and that He led a sinless life.

Not only that but also, that the Lord Jesus Christ, as a substitutionary sacrifice died for our sins on the cross to fulfill scriptures and that everyone who believes in Him is justified on the ground of his shed blood.

The church also believes in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He ascended into Heaven, and that He is exalted at the right hand of God, and that at present, He is our High Priest and Advocate in Heaven, and that He shall personally return to this earth in power and glory.

- Salvation for sinners: That by the grace of God, all who in repentance and faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ, are born again by the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God.
- The Holy Spirit (Baptism and Gifts): The church believes in the personality of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of the Holy Spirit for believers subsequent to salvation, with the speaking in tongues as the initial evidence. To the researcher this position taken by the church presupposes that all those who cannot speak in tongues have not had the Holy Spirit baptism.
- They also believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and their manifestations.

- **Water Baptism:** The church believes in water baptism by immersion in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. All those who join the church from other churches but have not experienced baptism by immersion are entreated to be baptized. However, they do not believe in the baptism of infants, but rather dedicate them to God until they are of age.
- **Divine Healing:** They believe in divine healing which is the right of every born again believer, and that healing of sicknesses and diseases is provided for God's people in the atonement of Christ Jesus. Notwithstanding this affirmation, the church does not oppose to soliciting the help of qualified medical practitioners.
- **The Christian Church;** The Church believes in the universal church of Christ. They belong to Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Association.
- **Tithes and Offering:** They believe in tithing, giving of offerings and donations.
- **The Lord's Supper (Holy Communion);** The church believes in the Lord's supper as instituted by Jesus Christ.
- **The second coming of Christ;** They believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ, which includes the rapture of the saints, followed by the visible return of Christ with His saints to rule on earth for a thousand years.

They also believe in the bodily resurrection of the just to everlasting life and the unjust to everlasting damnation.

- **Marriage;** The church believes in the institution of marriage as ordained by God but not as a sacrament.

The church (TOP) as its theological position, places much emphasis on charismata. The word charismata in general denotes any good gift that flows from God's love to humans. The word can also mean any of the Spiritual graces and qualifications granted to every Christian to perform his or her task in the church. In TOP, members are encouraged to aspire for the spiritual gifts such as prophecy, healing, prayer and Bible studies as well as holiness. The theology of TOP can be best understood when consideration is given to her background. Her roots, coming from the 'Camp' of Idahosa and the subsequent break away from the Scripture Union on the issue of speaking in tongues, tells a lot why emphasis is placed on charismata.

Nothing has been stated in writing as the theology of TOP. However, hearing the founders and some of the pastors and lay leaders speak, one can easily know the theological position of the church.

### **3.8 Membership**

Membership in Temple of Praise Church is open to all true believers in Christ and who hold the Christian Doctrine. As stated in the Church's constitution, membership in Temple of Praise Church shall consist of those persons who meet the following qualifications;

- Personal Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and a desire to obey the requirements laid down in Acts 2:36-47.
- Agreement with the Doctrines of Faith as stated under Article vi of the Church's constitution.
- A lifestyle that is consistent with Christian conduct and doctrine.

- Regular attendance at the activities of the church.
- Financial support of the Church by tithes and freewill offerings.
- Voluntary submission to the spiritual oversight of the Church.
- All members are encouraged to complete the New Convert and Discipleship Classes.

Membership in the Temple of Praise shall be in three classes designated as;

- Active members.
- Associate members (those who are temporarily in other locations but desire to maintain membership.)
- Juniors who are under eighteen (18) years of age.

### **3.9 Discipline of Members**

The Leadership of the church has put down some measures to ensure that members put up an acceptable behaviour. Any conduct contrary to the Scripture is deemed unacceptable. The leadership shall on sufficient grounds disqualify members from the church when such members go contrary to Scripture.

However, the purpose of discipline is restorative and remedial. Notwithstanding this assertion, if a person is separated from the church, such a person may not be re-instated until there has been genuine repentance of the offence which led to the sanction.

The Leadership will also periodically update the active membership roles in accordance with its requirements for membership. Absence from attendance of regular church meetings for three months without reasonable excuse will constitute being removed from



membership. This clause however excludes those Associate members who are temporarily in other locations.

More so, members found to indulge in any social vice to the detriment of the nation such as smuggling, bickering, engagement in fraudulent conduct, prostitution, fornication and the like, risk dismissal from the church.

### **3.10 Order of Service**

The Temple of Praise Church has carefully structured a format through which their Church services are ordered on Sundays and other evening meetings. Without any hesitation, the researcher affirms that everything in this structure is in agreement with the word of God. The order of Service encourages orderliness when the church meets.

However, as a neo-Pentecostal Church, the Service is synonymous with the direction of the Holy Spirit. That is, the order is not a strict rule to follow but as directed by the Holy Spirit.

The Order of Service in the TOP is outlined below.

- Opening Prayers.
- Sunday School (Bible Studies)
- Praises and Worship
- Announcement
- Offering
- Choir Ministration
- The Word (Exposition)

- Closing Prayer
- Benediction

From the researcher's participation of TOP's church service on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2014 at Sunyani as well as his interaction with the Associate Pastor, Alex Amankwaa, he noted that the church does not recite the Apostles' Creed or any other creed during their Service as some of the Protestants like the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Roman Catholics do in their worship.

From a broader perspective, the worship setting of Temple of Praise is characterized by a good emphasis on the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Emphasis is put on charismata or spiritual gifts such as prophecy, healing, prayer, bible studies and holiness.

### **3.11 Ordinances of the Church**

The TOP church believes in two ordinances only; baptism and the Holy Communion. Members of the church according to article (4) of the church's constitution must be baptized in water (by or through immersion) before they are classified as true members of the church. The church does not believe in infant baptism. Baptismal candidates must be able to go through the new convert class and confess and acknowledge their sins and understand the purpose of the act.

The other ordinance of the church is the 'Lord's Supper' or the 'Holy Communion.' In the church, the Holy Communion is celebrated once every month, usually on the first Sunday of the month. Every 'active' member who is in good standing is permitted to partake in the Lord's Supper. Members are however cautioned not to rush to partake in

the Lord's Supper without self-examination, and meditation. Members must reflect the work of Christ on the cross to save mankind from sin. It must be noted that there is no 'speaking' and Preparatory Service preceding the Sunday meant for the Lord's Supper as done in some protestant churches like the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

However, it was discovered that any pastor who prepares the Lord's Supper in TOP should live a holy life. The pastor should pray during the period for strength and 'power' from the Holy Spirit.

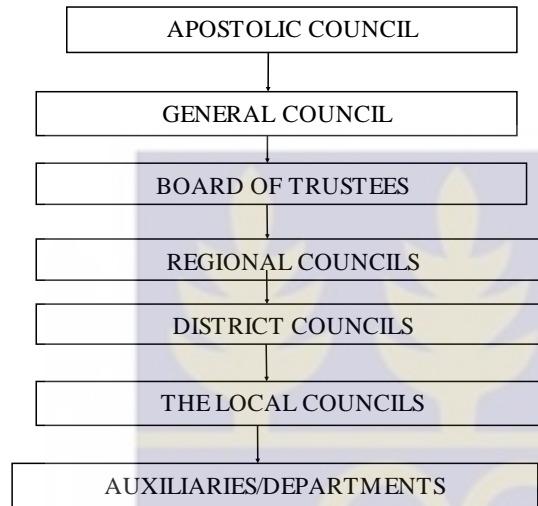
### **3.12 Organizational Structure of the Church**

The organization and administration of TOP is centered on the Apostolic Council, her officers and the various councils. Officers of the church comprise the Apostolic Council. By the constitution of the church, the Apostolic Council is made up of the following: The General Overseer, General Secretary, Treasurer, and two other high ranking Ministers. At the time of this research, the founding members constitute the Apostolic Council. The council exercises spiritual oversight and control over the whole Church. Other top officers of the church include the Board of Trustees, the Administrator who is appointed by the Apostolic Council to a five year term. He is eligible for re-appointment.

#### **a. Governing Bodies of the Church**

The church as an organization is governed by the structure below. For easy study of the governing bodies, the researcher has structured the organogram below based on the church's constitution.

Figure 2.0 THE ORGANOGRAM OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF TOP



According to the church's constitution, the highest authority of the Temple of Praise ministries shall be the Apostolic Council. It shall be the determining and final authority of the church in all matters, spiritual, moral and governmental of all the local assemblies of the Temple of Praise church.

Composition: The General Council consists of the following; The General Overseer, General Secretary, Treasurer and two (2) other high ranking ministers.

The founders of the Temple of Praise ministries shall be on the board until their death, if they remain of good standing in the faith. It is worthy to note that as at the time of the research, the Apostolic council consisted of only the five founding members.

**b. Functions**

- The said Council shall have general supervision of the state money / funds received and disbursed by the church.
- It shall appoint standing Boards and committees.
- It shall discipline all Ministers who flout their regulations.
- It shall meet as often as the chairman deems necessary.
- It shall decide the bounds of each Region/ District in the church and shall appoint all officers on National, Regional and District levels.
- It shall appoint new members to the existing council when the need arises; and must be chosen on the basis of the scriptural qualifications laid down in Timothy and Titus and must be official members of the church.

**c. General Council**

The general council shall comprise the Apostolic Council; Regional Pastors, District Pastors, Trustees, all Local Pastors, Presiding Elders and one representative each from every local church. However, it is only the Apostolic Council members, Regional Pastors, District Pastors, Ordained Pastors, Trustees and Presiding elders that shall constitute the permanent membership of the council.

- It shall offer suggestions and proposals to the Apostolic Council to enhance the smooth administration of the ministries.
- It shall carry information from the local churches to the Apostolic council and vice versa.
- It shall advise the Apostolic Council in the performance of its functions.

- It shall meet annually at its regular meeting in January each year .When it is necessary to have an emergency meeting, all members should be notified if possible.

Five persons shall be appointed by the Apostolic Council to serve on the Board of Trustee. This board shall control and manage all properties in which the churches or membership of the church hold or the general right of interest.

There shall be a Regional council which shall consist of not less than five (5) members. The Regional Pastor, shall preside at all meetings and in his absence, the next in rank shall preside. Other people qualified to be members of this council

Subject to the provisions of the constitution the regional council shall be vested with power to determine all matters affecting the ministries in the region.

It shall submit an annual report to the Headquarters on matters affecting the ministry in the region.

There shall be a District Council which shall consist of not less than three(3)members. The District Pastor shall preside at all meetings. In his absence the next in rank shall preside.

- Subject to the provision on Regional Councils, the District council shall have power in the District.
- The District Council shall submit an annual report to the Regional Council on matters affecting the ministries in the District.
- At least one member of the District council shall represent that District at the Regional council meeting.

There shall be a Local Council which shall consist of not less than five (5) members. The Pastor in charge of that Assembly shall preside over all meetings.

- The council shall assist the Pastors in the care of the local church.
- They shall encourage evangelism, stewardship, and prayer, tithing and giving.
- They shall see to the provision and maintenance of worship places and mission houses. Subject to the provision of the constitution, the pastor in charge, in consultation with the council shall have power to determine all matters affecting the congregation.
- They shall have power to form sub-committees subject to the constitution to enhance smooth running of the local congregation.
- The council shall submit Annual reports to the District council on matters affecting the local congregation.

**d. Auxiliaries / Department**

There shall be other auxiliaries / departments established within the ministries to cater for the needs of the people spiritually, physically and socially.

For the fulfillment of the above purposes, the following Departments shall be established in the ministries;

- The Women's Ministry - TOP ladies
- The Youth Ministry
- The Music (Choir) Ministry
- The Children's Ministry
- The Prayer Ministry

- The Counselling Ministry
- The Ushering Ministry

And such other departments as the Apostolic Council may from time to time establish.

- These groups shall promote lay evangelism, Christian stewardship and shall render other services to their communities within their regions and districts.
- These departments shall also foster fellowship and provide inspiration and guidance within their regions and districts.

**e. Finance**

The effective running of any organization, be it secular or religious depends largely on money. Without money, running the organization becomes extremely difficult. To this effect, churches have to put down pragmatic steps and programmes intended for developing both the spiritual and physical well-being of their members in order that members can contribute meaningfully to the cause of the church.

The Temple of Praise Church does not have any income generating venture; it solely relies on giving by members in the form of tithes, offering, voluntary thanks offering and remittances from their Assemblies in the diaspora as the church's only sources of income.

When the researcher interviewed the General Overseer of the church, (Rev. Osei-Wusu Cobbina), he stressed on measures which the church has instituted to help build the financial base of the church to help curtail the frequent slogan of 'no money syndrome'. Members are motivated to donate generously towards the cause of the church. He stressed that the church will never experience any form of 'donor fatigue' by the members irrespective of their frequent donations.



Aside the normal offerings and tithe payments, members are entreated to sow a seed every week in the form of money. This principle of ‘seed faith’, the General Overseer stressed, was learned from Oral Roberts. Oral Roberts was an American Methodist-Pentecostal televangelist and a Christian Charismatic. He founded the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and Oral Roberts University. As one of the most well-known American religious leaders in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Roberts preached a form of Christianity he called seed-faith. His ministries reached millions of followers worldwide spanning a period of over six decades. He was born on 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1918 and died on 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2009.

According to Emmanuel Larbi, ‘the influence of Oral Roberts cuts across the various church traditions in the country.’<sup>129</sup> Larbi went on that ‘until recently, Oral Roberts was in communication with several people in Ghana, through his regular letters to his partners. His visit to Ghana in July 1988 attracted a huge and euphoric crowd at the Accra Sports Stadium. It is believed that about 70,000 people mostly youth turned up for the meeting.

### **3.13 Sources of Income**

#### **a. Seed-Faith**

Rev. Cobbinah explained the concept of the Seed-Faith as taught in TOP as follows; everything in life starts with a seed-including things we receive by Faith. Expounding on Genesis 8:22, he went on to stress that God says, while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest... shall not cease. The eternal law of seedtime and harvest, planting and reaping,

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<sup>129</sup> Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 289

giving and receiving will not change as long as the earth remains. Again, Jesus compared faith to a seed being planted to get a result. (Matthew 17:20). When we put our faith in God's hands like a seed we plant, we are giving God something to work with, and He will send the miracle we need. No matter how small our faith seems to be, it will meet needs and solve problems that appear as impossible as moving mountains. This is because each act of faith is a seed planted and will be multiplied many times.

The General Overseer went on to say that the Seed-Faith principle that we find in the Bible contains three keys;

- Recognize that God is our Source; (Philippians 4:19) that God will supply all our needs according to His riches, His Love for us, His power to help us, and His wisdom to guide us. He may use many different instruments; a job, gifts, doctor, friends, family to meet our needs. But He alone is the Source and He alone cannot fail.
- Give first so that it may be given unto us. (Luke 6:38). We must first plant a seed of faith so that God can multiply it back to meet our needs. Jesus is talking about giving in the deepest sense of the word-the giving of ourselves to God. This includes anything we can give;- Love, time, patience, forgiveness, finance, prayer, whatever we have. Our giving reflects our trust in God and our thankfulness. It links us to God's inexhaustible resources for our every need. There is no way we can give to God without receiving something back from Him, multiplied.
- Expect a Miracle; (Mark 11:24) the moment we ask God for something, the moment we do our part and sow our seed of faith, we should believe God that the answer is on its way. It is important to expect our miracle so we can recognize it

and reach forth to take it when it comes. And it is also important to remember that God controls the time and method He will use to give back to us. We must keep trusting God and expecting our miracle, no matter how long it takes to reach us.

So, the principle of seed-faith is giving God something to work with. No matter how little you think you have, sow it in joy and faith, knowing in your heart that you are sowing a seed in order to experience miracles. The sower should start expecting all kinds of miracles, bearing in mind that God always sends the right answer at the right time, in the right way. His timing and methods are always exactly right for our lives.

Rev. Cobbina stated that this seed-faith teaching is so imbibed by the members that the church generates a lot of money from it. He reiterated that in some of the congregations, the church generates more money from the seed-faith than the normal offerings and tithes.

#### **b. Senders' Box**

Another method used to generate income for the church aside what has been discussed is the Senders' Box. Using Romans Chapter 10:15 as the Biblical base, the General Overseer said that there are members in the church who are available for all evangelistic activities but are not resourceful.

On the other hand, there are others who are resourceful but not available. The latter can give freely, sacrificially, generously, regularly, and joyfully with the motivation of love for God and His work. There is a Giver and Sender. However, it is not spelt specifically that the Giver can never be involved in any evangelistic activities except by giving and

the Sender cannot also give except involving himself or herself in evangelism. Each of them is entreated to involve in both sides except you work in an area where one is strong.

The researcher was told that monies raised through the Sender's Box are solely marked for evangelism and its related issues. As basic a thing as money often is, it can be transmuted into everlasting treasure. It can be converted into food for the hungry and clothing for the poor. It can keep a missionary actively winning lost men to the light of the gospel and thus transmute itself into heavenly values. Any temporal possession can be turned into everlasting wealth. Whatever is given to Christ is immediately infused with immortality.

The Sender's box approach, according to Rev. Cobbinah can best be described in the above words. It has helped alleviate a lot of pressure on the church's finances. Not only that but it has also contributed immensely to the church's evangelistic activities.

The researcher was told that recently part of the proceeds was used to roof a church building in Yeji and also rented a mission house for a resident pastor of the church at Atebubu.

The researcher did not have access to the church's financial statement. However, it is estimated that the church's income as at 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2013 stood at Seven Hundred and Thirty-Five Thousand, Four Hundred and Forty-Eight Ghana Cedis (GH ¢735,448).

### **c. The Investment Fund**

The church instituted an investment fund in the year 2008. All Assemblies of the church are therefore entreated to contribute to the fund. To that effect, the Assemblies are to pay

fifteen percent (15%) of all annual harvest proceeds into it. Since its inception, the fund has raised about fifty eight thousand, two hundred and twenty eight Ghana Cedis (GH ₵58,228). Rev. Cobbinah stressed that they have invested the amount, but the researcher was not informed about the kind of investment. He however reiterated that it was good investment that will go a long way to help the church. The 2013 report by the church's administrator on the Investment Fund however is not encouraging. Part of the reports reads "It is sad to put on record that the enthusiasm and vigour with which we embraced the idea of the Investment fund seems to be dying out". He therefore entreated members to rekindle the spirit which they started with. Members of the Church are humbly admonished to commit themselves to contribute generously to the investment. It is a laudable idea which should be embraced and sustained as the Church stands to benefit.

#### **d. Income from Foreign Branches**

The church's Assemblies outside the borders of Ghana, notably in Europe, also pay something to the church as a form of their tithes. Even though they are not levied directly by the church, their commitment to the church is not in doubt. As at the close of 2013, their total contributions made to the Head Office stood at thirteen Thousand, Four Hundred and Seventy Seven Ghana Cedis (GH ₵13,477) and Two Thousand Eight Hundred Euros (€ 2,800).

#### **e. Managing the Church's Funds**

When the researcher probed further about what was the mainstay of the church's finances, the General Overseer of the church, Rev. Cobbinah responded that to

accomplish one's mission and vision for ministry, one needed to effectively manage the church's finances. It is a fact that the management of church money is a complex task for any church finance manager, treasurer, business administrator, bookkeeper or pastor. He went on that in view of this, the church has instituted five key controls to help strategize, organize, measure, protect and audit the finances to champion a strong financial base. An effective stewardship mechanism has been put in place. The five key controls are:

- Planning and budgeting; how to use strategic planning and an operating budget to reach ministry goals. In view of this all locals and districts are entreated to present their annual budgets to the Headquarters of the church for proper and critical analysis.
- Minimizing the risk of embezzlement; sadly, embezzlement of funds is rife within the church. The church has instituted internal control measures for all the locals as well as the Headquarters to protect valuable ministry resources.
- Church Financial reports: An up to date financial assessment of the church's operations are effectively communicated to the members on regular basis. The church's income and expenditure is given to the leaders as well as the members to enable them know the financial position of the church. This helps cast out doubts and suspicion of members, because they are well informed on the financial information of the church.
- Another issue is the performance measurement. This Rev. Cobbinah evaluated how good you are at what you do. As leaders, they needed to explore various measurements and ratios to help them to assess the health of church and identify the areas that needed strengthening.

- Church Audits: To avoid the danger of embezzlement, the church has resorted to frequent auditing by professional bodies such as the Audit Service, the Ghana Revenue Authority to audit their books. Aside this, the church has her internal auditor who audits their books periodically.

### **3.14 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the history and development of TOP. It is evident from the research that the church is one of the earliest neo-Pentecostal Indigenous churches in the region. Its genesis was characterized by a series of challenges. However, it can also be concluded that the founders have been able to embrace the challenges, surmounted them and built on from their humble beginnings to their present state. As an Indigenous church, TOP depends solely on internally generated income. Notwithstanding this assertion, the church has managed to hold itself together since its establishment about twenty-three (23) years ago in terms of their finances. It is not ready to go into any income generating venture at present. Currently, everything relating to their finances seems to be working to perfection. How sustainable this approach (of relying solely on internal income generated) should inform TOP to establish some income generating projects. In the next chapter, missionary methods and growth patterns of TOP are discussed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE GROWTH PATTERNS OF TEMPLE OF PRAISE CHURCH

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter of the thesis assesses the growth patterns of Temple of Praise Church. In evaluating the patterns, the following sub-themes are discussed; what church growth is, types of church growth, factors that enhance church growth, hindrances to church growth and the methods and factors that have contributed to the growth of TOP.

#### 4.2 Church Growth

Growth is very essential to any establishment, be it secular or religious, if any organization fails to grow or meet its target, the general assumption is that, that organization has failed. Growth is often equated to progress and success. *The Webster Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary* defines growth as ‘the act or process or a manner of growing; development, gradual increase. Size or stage of development, development from a simpler to a more complex stage.’ Growth therefore refers to a positive change in size, often over a period of time. Growth can also denote a stage of maturation or a process toward fullness or fulfillment.

When we speak of church growth, the focus is not only on numerical increase of church membership, neither is it a mere sociological process. However, because the phrase church growth is so common, confusion abounds in its precise meaning. A secular humanist would see church growth as merely the outcome of the interplay of anthropological, historical, economical, and political forces.



The North American Society for Church Growth (now the American Society for Church Growth) defines church growth as ‘that discipline which investigates the nature, expansion, planting, multiplication, function and health of Christian churches as they relate to the effective implementation of God’s commission to make disciples of all people.’<sup>130</sup> The researcher adopts this definition for the work because of some components in the definition. These components of the definition describe the church under research. The work seeks to investigate the nature, expansion, planting and multiplication of Temple of Praise Church.

Donald A. McGravan has this to say about church growth ‘it means all that is involved in bringing men and women who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him and into responsible church membership.’<sup>131</sup> In other words, church growth is evangelism which one can be measured by the number of fruit-bearing disciples in local churches. It is evangelism that engenders accountability to the mandate of the Great Commission.

The researcher agrees with the assertion made by C. Peter Wagner (founding president of the American Society for Church Growth). Wagner captures five components worthy of recognition from the definition of Donald, when we talk about church growth.<sup>132</sup>

Firstly, church growth is a discipline. A discipline is a field of study or a system with distinct characteristics. Church growth is accepted around the world as a discipline worthy of recognition.

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<sup>130</sup> John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith Justice Anderson (ed.), *Missiology, An Introduction to the Foundation, History and Strategies of World Missions* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 484.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 485.

<sup>132</sup> Peter C. Wagner, *Church Growth Principles and Procedures* (Pasadena, California: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1980), 489.

Secondly, church growth focuses on disciple making. Evangelism cannot end with simply a decision. True evangelism, church growth evangelism, means that new Christians develop into fruit-bearing disciples of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, church growth centers on God's word. That is, no church-growth precepts, said the early leaders, can contradict the truths of God's word.

Fourthly, church growth integrates social and behavioural sciences to help determine growth.

Lastly, Wagner affirms that church growth as a modern day movement began with the missiological work of Donald McGrahan in India.

Rick Warren posits that 'church growth is the natural result of church health.'<sup>133</sup> He also argues that for effective and efficient approach to church growth, these five dimensions cannot be underestimated.

- Churches grow warmer through fellowship.
- Churches grow deeper through discipleship.
- Churches grow stronger through worship.
- Churches grow broader through ministry.
- Churches grow larger through evangelism.

The researcher is of the view that when we put church growth into perspective, the focus is not only on numerical increase. Church growth is no mere sociological process. The growth should be qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative in the sense that the people

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<sup>133</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Michigan, Grand Rapids: 1995), 49.

who are added to the existing number have been genuinely transformed into the likeness of Christ, they are grounded in the word of God, they are growing into maturity, and they share their faith regularly among others. Quantitative refers to the number of disciples a church is producing, people who are brought to Christ, developed to maturity and mobilized for ministry and missions. Growth is what every church needs. Most church leaders plan, aim toward, and set goals for the right kind of growth. Growth however comes in different forms. Missiologists have identified types of church growth. Four of such types are exemplified in the next section.

### 4.3 Types of Growth

Under this sub-theme, four types of church growth are highlighted. Donald McGravan in his work *'Understanding church growth'* distinguishes three kinds of church growth.<sup>134</sup> These types are expounded below; first is the biological growth. Biological growth derives from those born into Christian families. As families give birth to children, it suggests that such children will follow their parents to their place of worship as they grow. Thus following the birth of a child, another body is present and taking up space. Richard Foli contends that, biological growth is good, looking at it from the biblical point of view.<sup>135</sup> God's commandments say be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth (Genesis 35:11). However, Foli argues that biological growth is exceedingly slow.<sup>136</sup> Apart from the slow nature of this type of growth, the researcher is of the view that, this source of growth seems to lose its potency. Reasons assigned to this position stems from

<sup>134</sup> Donald McGravan, *Understanding Church Growth* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970), 98.

<sup>135</sup> Foli, *Towards Church Growth*, 52.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

the fact that dynamics and modernity of our current society makes it difficult for parents to exert pressure on their children to follow them to church.

Currently, much emphasis is being placed on human rights (freedom of worship and association among others). The researcher wants to reiterate that parents do not have much influence on their children when it comes to where to worship. It is also a fact that the current generation does not entertain the attitude of giving birth to too many children, unlike the recent past, where couples could give birth to as many as ten children. Within parts of the Akan socio-cultural setting, there is what we call 'badudwan' which is literally translated as giving of a sheep by the husband to the wife on the delivery of the tenth child. One hardly hears of this in our contemporary times. Owing to economic hardship, among other things, families are now in smaller units. Thus even in situations where children will follow their parents to their churches, the number is small, making growth quite insignificant.

Another type of growth is the transfer growth. Transfer growth occurs when believers from one congregation move and transfer their membership to another congregation due mainly to geographical relocation. Foli again is of the view that 'transfer growth is important.'<sup>137</sup> To him, every church should follow up its members and conserve as many of them as possible.<sup>138</sup> But it is obvious that the transfer growth will never extend the church, for unavoidably, many are lost along the way. Moreover, transfer growth means the increase in certain congregations at the expense of others (one man's gain is another man's loss). For instance in Ghana, the rural-urban migration is very high; churches in

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<sup>137</sup>Foli, *Towards Church Growth*, 53.

<sup>138</sup>*Ibid.*

urban areas grow at the expense of the rural congregations, because of the rural-urban drift. Congregations in the rural areas sometimes lack the services of the youth, most of who migrate to urban areas in search of jobs.

The researcher contends that there are some deficiencies in this type, because, in places where a particular church has no branch, its assembly members are forced to join other churches. For instance, until recently when the Presbyterian Church of Ghana began to establish congregations outside the boundaries of Ghana, precisely in the United States of America and parts of Europe, most of her members who travelled to these places joined other Ghanaian churches which were already established over there.

When the researcher interacted with Cobbinah, the General Overseer of TOP, he reiterated that his church has embarked on planting churches in Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi. He added that, apart from obeying the Great Commission, the other factor that has propelled them into it is that most of their members who are transferred to these places join other churches under the pretext that TOP has no assemblies there. This situation, he said was not good. He declared that TOP cannot 'work' and 'feed' others.

The third kind of growth is Conversion Growth. It occurs when someone moves from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. It occurs when those outside the church come to reset their faith intelligently on Jesus Christ are baptized, and are added to the Lord in His church. Foli stresses that, this is the only kind of growth by which the 'Good News' of salvation can spread to all segments of our society and to the earth's remotest

bounds.<sup>139</sup> This form of growth comes from sharing the gospel with the unsaved. Evangelism is primarily related to conversion growth.

Robin Gamble in his book, *The Irrelevant Church* adds a fourth dimension to the three sources outlined by McGravan which he terms as 'Restoration Growth.'<sup>140</sup> Gamble goes ahead to define Restoration Growth as 'a holistic approach laid down by the church to win back to the Christian fold those who had backslided.' It is the conscious effort to reclaim members who had fallen off the faith back into the kingdom. In the Reform tradition, a special service is usually conducted for those who are to be restored. In the Presbyterian church of Ghana for instance, a service is conducted for people who are restored or readmitted into the congregation. In the liturgy, it is stated that 'if someone has lapsed from church membership for a number of years, without having been disciplined, and now desires to return, this form may be used with suitable adaptation of the wording.'<sup>141</sup>

The process of restoration is complete when the minister addresses those who seek restoration with a series of questions to which those seeking it will respond. After that the officiating minister will say 'Go in peace, seek the grace of Christ that you do not sin again, that no evil may befall you. The very God of peace sanctify you wholly and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen'<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup>Foli, *Towards Church Growth*, 54.

<sup>140</sup>Robin Gamble, *The Irrelevant Church* (Kent, Great Britain: Monarch Publications Ltd., 1991), 150.

<sup>141</sup>Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Liturgy and Service Book Part One*, (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1987), 176.

<sup>142</sup>*Ibid.*

Finally, members of the session of that particular congregation shall also shake hands with the restored members as a sign that they have received them again into fellowship. The situation is quite different in TOP. In TOP, when a member is suspended, an elder is assigned to visit and encourage such a person to turn away from his/her sinful ways. When the elder is convinced that the person has shown remorse and has really turned away from what led to the suspension, he reports to the Council of Elders. When the Council is also satisfied, they would invite the person and admonish him/her to stand firm in the faith. The Council will then inform the Senior Pastor about developments. The Senior Pastor will then announce to the Assembly in which the person was suspended that the person has been restored to his/her former status.

Aside these four kinds of church growth, it is empirical to state that church growth has three facets. These are, spiritual, numerical, and activity. The Spiritual dimension is when there is growth in grace in the lives of the members. Spiritual growth is a life-long process that depends on the study and application of God's word and constant walking in the Spirit.

Numerical growth is when there is an increase in membership. Christ commanded his followers to 'make disciples.' This cannot be accomplished without adding people to the church. Obedience to the Great Commission is paramount to finding winning and folding lost people into the churches. Church attendance will continue to decline if we do not focus on numerical growth. The third (Activity) is that, living churches do not expand. They develop distinctive organs with special functions. Church growth inevitably results in gifted people who exercise their gifts to benefit members, society and the church universal.

Growth, being quantitative or qualitative, is very crucial in every organization. It is therefore very important for churches to adopt good and effective strategies to experience real growth. This leads to the next sub-theme; factors that enhance church growth.

#### **4.4 Factors for Church Growth**

Growth is very important in every organization. The achievement of every institution is normally measured by the growth of that institution. As discussed earlier, growth can be quantitative or qualitative. However, the bottom line is to achieve real growth. It is therefore imperative for churches to adopt good, effective and efficient strategies to experience real growth. Many theologians have underscored some of the factors as recipes for growth. Notwithstanding this assertion, the researcher builds on nine principles outlined by Gary L. McIntosh. These factors facilitate proper church growth. They include the following:

The first one is the Holy Spirit. According to McIntosh, 'Holy Spirit is the only one who can add new converts to the church and lead the church to grow healthily.'<sup>143</sup> Jesus Christ said that the Holy Spirit would come and fuel God's strategic plan, first in Jerusalem, then Judea and Samaria and the whole world (Acts 1:8). It was also the Holy Spirit who caused the church to explode in one day from an upper room prayer meeting of one hundred and twenty (Acts 1:5) to a throng of three thousand (Acts 2:41). Unless the Spirit of God moves, healthy church growth is impossible.

The second factor which McIntosh emphasizes is prayer. Prayer makes churches healthy. Related to the earlier assertion, the Holy Spirit empowers biblical church growth through

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<sup>143</sup>Gary McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 2003), 44.



effective prayer. The importance of prayer is emphasized strongly in the book of Acts of the Apostles, as it is mentioned thirty two times, a statistic which backs its significance. Jerry Fawel contends that nothing of eternal consequence happens apart from prayer.<sup>144</sup> Churches grow healthy when they pray effectively to get people saved, receive resources and remove barriers. This position is echoed by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. In the Twi Hymn No. 3. The third stanza reads '*wokura anyamesem, wo bo mpae dennen, nso saa nkrante ne akode yi a wode yi dom,*'<sup>145</sup> which is literally translated as, 'they hold on to the word of God and pray earnestly. It is these weapons that they use to deliver the captives from the evil one.'

Another factor is the Word of God. McIntosh argues that, biblical church growth begins with the 'Word of God'.<sup>146</sup> It is a fact that life-giving churches have a strong commitment to the authority of God's word. Therefore, churches that do not accept the Bible as authoritative, cannot experience growth. The Churches that grow are the ones which are committed to the authority of God's word. Martyn Lloyd Jones contends that 'his church's rapidly growing influence was not that of a church growth expert. It was the influence of a Scripture-driven man pastoring a Scripture-driven church.'<sup>147</sup>

The next factor is worship. The worship trend of churches makes them healthy or unhealthy. Authentic worship takes place when churches maintain proper attitudes and a conducive atmosphere throughout the worship experience. The second component is the expectation people bring to worship. In grounded congregations, the worshippers

<sup>144</sup>Billy Graham, *Life and Quotes and World Christian News* (California: Feed Bumer, 2014), 11.

<sup>145</sup>Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Twi Hymn*, 3.

<sup>146</sup>McIntosh, *Church Growth*, 45.

<sup>147</sup>Ian H. Murray D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The First Forty Years* (Ventura, CA: Banner of Truth, 1982), 166.

including visitors, believe something important will happen to them personally at the service. People come to worship seeking assistance in their lives. They do not come to be observers, nor do they merely expect a performance by the choir or by the worship leader.

It is worth noting that the critical factors in worship are the feelings of expectancy created by the atmosphere of the service, the mood of warmth, and friendliness carried into the church by the members. The members continue through the service by the worship leaders' efforts to convey to all attendees that when the diverse segments of the congregation has a corporate experience. Peter Wagner writing about Pentecostal denominations especially in Latin America, (which he claims are probably the fastest growing sections of the world church today), identifies their worship as a key factor for their rapid growth.<sup>148</sup>

Aside the factors mentioned, another one is discipleship. There is a call on the church to make disciples through a process of going, baptizing and teaching. While bringing glory to God is the ultimate goal of a local church, the immediate goal is to win people to faith in Christ. After winning them, it is essential to assimilate the new converts into the life of the local church and building them up in the faith by teaching them everything Christ commanded. Churches desiring growth should adopt effective methods of discipleship.

Related to the above is evangelism. Churches which intend to grow, should strategize for results oriented evangelism. The church is the gathering of believers who have been called by God and sent out into the world as witnesses of Christ. Spreading the gospel to

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<sup>148</sup> Peter C. Wagner, *Look out the Pentecostals are Coming* (Illinois: Creation House, 1973), 106.

the ends of the earth is the most important responsibility of the church. It is only through the proclamation of the Good News to the unsaved people that will bring the latter to the throne of Christ. John Wesley is quoted as saying:

you have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go not only to those that need you, but to those that need you most. It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society, but to save many souls as you can to bring as many sinners as you possibly, can to repentance.<sup>149</sup>

According to Rick Warren, 'evangelism is more than our responsibility; it is our great privilege. We are invited to be part of bringing people into God's eternal family.'<sup>150</sup> Evangelism is not a task entrusted to a few in the church, but rather given to all the believers who are called a royal priesthood.

Another factor bothers on Leadership. Under this, the leadership of the Ordained and the Lay are put into perspective. Leadership makes churches healthy and strong paving way for proper growth. John C. Maxwell argues that 'everything rises or falls on leadership.'<sup>151</sup> George Barna, who spent about fifteen years to research all phases of American Christian churches states that, 'American churches are dying due to lack of strong leadership'.<sup>152</sup> He went on to say that 'In this strong time of unprecedented opportunities and plentiful resources, the church is actually losing its influence on society. The primary source is the lack of leadership. It is said that nothing is more important than leadership.'<sup>153</sup> Maxwell in his assertion affirms that 'Great Pastors build

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<sup>149</sup>Graham, *Life and Quotes*, 11.

<sup>150</sup>Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1995), 104.

<sup>151</sup>John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leader Within You*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 2.

<sup>152</sup>George Barna (ed.), *Leaders on Leadership* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997), 18.

<sup>153</sup>*Ibid.* 19.

great churches, average pastors build average churches and weak pastors build weak churches.<sup>154</sup> This position should inform pastors to build themselves and become faithful and effective spiritual leaders to serve Jesus as the head of the church and all church members as the body of Christ. Pastors must become a model of biblical leadership to believers. Pastors must also consciously adopt pragmatic steps to develop faithful and effective spiritual leaders like themselves to ensure continuity and for a lasting and healthy church growth.

Aside the role the Clergy play in ensuring growth, growth also comes when the lay are highly motivated, well trained and strategically incorporated into the day to day administration of the church. It is an acknowledged fact that church growth depends largely on the laity and not just the clergy. All successful churches have dynamic leadership but more especially, they have involved the laity. It is therefore imperative for the clergy to consciously train the lay, so that they are equipped for the task. The clergy must help church members to discover their gifts and use them. Opportunities must also be given to the lay to exercise leadership.

Lastly, the church should consciously provide fellowship and create an affectionate atmosphere, so that members will feel a sense of belongingness. Any form of segregation among members must be discouraged. Special attention must be given to every member of the church, rather than just a perceived few. Foli contends that Christianity is meant to be lived in the context of loving and caring relationships, which was seen at the birth of the church at Pentecost.<sup>155</sup> Christianity had a religious communism of 'love' and shared

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<sup>154</sup> Maxwell, *Developing the Leader*, 3.

<sup>155</sup> Foli, *Towards Church Growth*, 70.

whatever they possessed with each other, so that no one lacked or had need. From these nine factors outlined by Gary, churches desiring biblical church growth should;

- Encourage corporate and individual prayer life in the congregation.
- Rely fully on the Holy Spirit, as biblical growth does not come through human effort but via the empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- Study the word of God and appropriate the Gospel message.
- Make worship attractive to suit all categories of members.
- Design a process for welcoming, following up and connecting newcomers to the life of the church.
- Acknowledge that being a growing church involves effectiveness in all three areas; going, baptizing and teaching.
- Develop leadership.
- Create a friendly atmosphere for members to fellowship.

Among other things, churches desiring biblical church growth should work towards the factors enumerated in this segment of the thesis. In the next sub-theme, hindrances to growth are discussed.

#### **4.5 Hindrances to Church Growth**

Notwithstanding the maxim that some factors serve as recipe for church growth, some others restrict growth. There are many of such factors, only five are considered under this section due to time and space constraints.

The first on the list is when churches set out methods, programmes and procedures which are ineffective for the present time and situation. Churches must consciously move with time and also address the growing needs of its members. However, some churches oppose change because they value tradition. Churches which wish to grow rapidly must vary their methods and programmes in order to move with contemporary times, otherwise they can never experience any meaningful growth.

Inadequate leadership retards growth. This occurs when leaders are not good role models to inspire others, when they are autocratic, have poor communication skills, do not delegate responsibilities, are preoccupied with matters that should be delegated to others, have poor vision and lack planning.

When the church is dull, worship is very boring and does not attract new members. When uninteresting sermons (which lack substance) are preached, such sermons do not challenge and motivate the church members, let alone draw outsiders to the church. In most cases, when such situations happen, it draws away the members especially the youth.

Related to the above is when the atmosphere is not captivating. This automatically discourages members and repels outsiders. When a church's atmosphere is cold unfriendly, indifferent and lacks joy and enthusiasm, it becomes herculean for new members to join.

Lastly, when the attitudes and lifestyles of the members, especially the leaders do not glorify God, they cause people to view the church negatively. As a church of God, much is expected from its members. Thus when members indulge in all forms of social vices, it

becomes very difficult for the church to attract new members. For churches to witness significant growth they must have a positive impact on the society in which they are located, else their growth will be stagnated.

Even though TOP, as a human institution, cannot be comprehensively be exempted from hindrances that may retard church growth, the researcher is of the view that none of the above mentioned hindrances can be associated with TOP. This position has been taken due to the fact that as a neo-Pentecostal Indigenous Church, their methods, programmes, and procedures seem to be devoid of bureaucracy. Their leadership seems to be very effective. Their effectiveness and efficiency have contributed to the significant growth of TOP. The researcher is convinced that if the opposite had happened, the church would not have experienced the significant growth they have had. Furthermore, as a neo-Pentecostal Church (with much emphasis on the Holy Spirit and its related charismata), the worship style seems to be very attractive, as it is not the classical type. In addition, the leadership, seem to comport themselves and live a life worthy of their calling. They have been able to eschew any human frailties that would bring disgrace to the entire church.

The next section of this chapter of the work focuses on the methodology used by TOP and some factors that have contributed to the significant growth of TOP.

#### **4.6 Missionary Methods of Temple of Praise**

Throughout mission history, Christians have used many different methodologies to spread their faith through the practice of evangelism. The *Business dictionary* defines methodology as 'a system of broad principles or rules from which specific methods or procedures may be derived to interpret or solve different problems within the scope of a

particular discipline. Unlike an algorithm, a methodology is not a formula but a set of practices.

It is the type of methodology which a church adopts that ensures growth or otherwise. TOP, as a Christian church has adopted some methods to ensure that they will continue to win 'souls' to the kingdom of Christ and for the church. These methods are not catalogued in the church's constitution, neither are they in the church's liturgy. However, when the researcher interviewed the General Overseer and the General Secretary<sup>156</sup> of the church on different occasions, the following methods were highlighted;

The first method discussed was the "Bring a Guest" to church approach. Members of the church are encouraged to bring a guest to church. Rev. Cobbinah reiterated that the emphasis on this approach is on those who do not go to church or do not belong to any denomination. This is to avoid what he termed as 'sheep stealing.' Emphasis is on those who do not belong to any church. The leadership of the church has made members aware that it takes the combination of the leadership of Jesus Christ and the responsibility of man to bring growth to the church. In view of this antecedent, all church members are expected to bring others especially the 'lost' ones into the kingdom. The task lies on the whole church, not just a few dedicated members. All are baptized to witness. The challenge to reach the unreached millions demands that all members should execute the task. Pastor Cobbina however, contended that this approach is only achievable when there is consistent and conscious discipleship of members. In view of this, the General

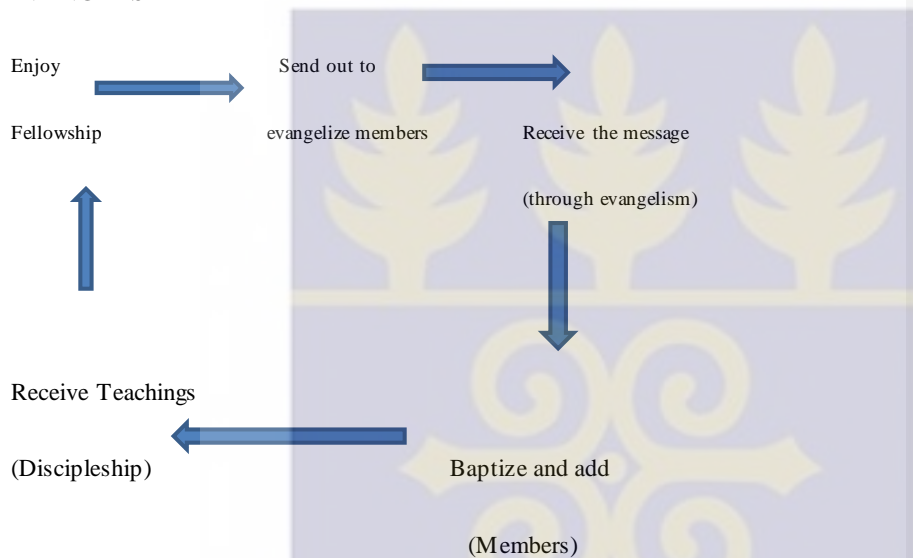
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<sup>156</sup> "The interview with the General Overseer and General Secretary were conducted on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21 March, 2014 respectively at Sunyani.



Overseer, enumerated steps taken to prepare and equip members for this task. The models are illustrated below in Figure 3.0;

Figure 3.0 STEPS USED BY TOP TO PREPARE MEMBERS FOR THE TASK OF EVANGELISM



From the above the researcher is of the view that there is a conscious effort to equip the members for the task ahead. New members are absorbed into the fraternity through evangelism, after which they pass through the new converts class. They are then baptized and made members of the church. After all these, they are disciplined through the normal Sunday School of the church. This activity ensures growth of members. They enjoy fellowship and are later sent out to bring others into the church. So the cycle continues.

They cited Acts 2:40-43:

“Those who gladly received his word were baptized and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and

fellowship in the breaking of bread and in prayer as the biblical basis for this approach.”  
(NKJV)

The researcher is of the view that members are prepared internally before they embark on this approach. Therefore, this approach is not a mere slogan ‘of bring a guest’ but the leadership of the church consciously equips the members in order to achieve results.

Another method which the church uses is the home cells approach. Home cells are small groups of people of the same faith, who consciously meet in homes of members on a regular basis to share the word of God, pray and deliberate on issues which relate to the corporate organization and individuals of the group. Joel Comiskey defines home cells as ‘open, evangelism-focused small groups that entwined into the life of the church. They meet weekly to build up each other as members of the body of Christ, and to spread the gospel to those who do not know Jesus. The ultimate goal of each cell is to multiply itself as the group grows through Evangelism and Conversion.’<sup>157</sup> The researcher was informed that as soon as the church (TOP) establishes another branch, the next thing to do is to organize the members into home cells. It is alleged that, the leadership demarcated the areas into zones to commence the home cells. Apart from the fact that some of these cells had metamorphosed into assemblies, the General Overseer enumerated about ten benefits of the Home Cell ministries. He supported his argument with some biblical quotations. These benefits are as follows;

- That home cells promote the most effective method of evangelism-relationship evangelism.

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<sup>157</sup> Joel Comiskey, *Home Cell Group Explosion* (Houston: Touch Publication, 1998), 17.

- That people are empowered in small groups to do more than they ever thought they could.
- That a vast number of people in the congregation are developed into leaders through the cell group ministry.
- That Individuals in the cells are identified and acknowledged (who they are, what they need, what they possess, what they can accomplish for Christ and among others).
- That people are affirmed and encouraged. They receive that little extra loving nudge that says 'you can make it.'
- That the group is identified through the word, fellowship and relationship. Each member is given an opportunity for leadership development.
- That mentoring occurs with a heart to heart transmission of information and values.
- That serving and ministry gifts are exercised.
- That cell groups provide a place for new believers to grow in Christ's likeness, learning to possess character and qualities such as humility, service and forgiveness.
- That cell groups provide accountability in the church.

Aside these benefits, the researcher was reliably informed that the Home Cells approach, had contributed immensely to the growth of the church, because, through it, some leaders (Lay and Ordained) had emerged, provided fellowship and helped solve physical and spiritual needs of some of the members.

Another method used by the church is personal witnessing. When the researcher interacted with the General Secretary of the church, the latter asserted that one of the most powerful tools the Christian possesses when it comes to evangelism and soul

winning is personal testimony that is, how God revealed Himself, and saved an individual. He argued that the Apostle Paul proved this by giving his personal testimony throughout Asia Minor. Holmes Rolston Jr. echoes this position by stating that ‘we have seen that twice in his writings, Paul makes the definite claim to have seen the risen Lord. The story of his conversion is told in Acts 9:1-9; 22:6-11. In listing the appearances of the risen Lord, in Corinthians he says: ‘and last of all, as to the child untimely born, He appeared to me also.’<sup>158</sup>

The General Secretary argued that people can challenge one’s exegesis or application of scripture, but people cannot argue with what the Lord has done in one’s life. The testimony can be that healing of a disease (physical or spiritual), a conversion experience, deliverance or simply the joy of living for God. J.B. Phillips adds to this stand by quoting Paul that:

For you have heard of my past career in the Jewish religion, how I persecuted the church of God with fanatical zeal and in fact I did my best to destroy it. I was ahead of most of my contemporaries in the Jewish religion and had a greater enthusiasm for the old traditions. But when the time came for God (who was responsible both for my physical birth and for my being called by His grace) to reveal His Son within me so that I might proclaim Him to the non-Jewish world.<sup>159</sup>

Members of the church have been encouraged to witness or share their faith to their neighbours as well as others they meet in their workplace in order to win them for Christ. The transforming nature of the gospel message will undoubtedly affect the lives of the people they engage.

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<sup>158</sup> Holmes Rolston Jr. *The Apostle Paul Speaks to Us Today* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1951), 87

<sup>159</sup> J.B. Phillips, *Letters to Young Churches* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1947), 90.

Related to the above is the lifestyle evangelism model. This type is a method of evangelism that focuses on living a godly life. It is suggested that God is made known through the beauty of holiness. The example of a life lived in communion with God then draws people to the beauty of holiness and allows for conversion. An example of good integrity and character is often more powerful than a thousand words. J.M. Stifler posits that 'it is wide of the mark to suppose that this worthy name, by which these believers were called, was given in derision by their heathen opponents. Its use shows who had preceded them.'<sup>160</sup> It is said that nothing preaches harder than self. Members of the church are therefore admonished to frequently live a life worthy of emulation; they are to shun all social vices and practice Christian virtues. No wonder members who flout the instructions of the church are suspended. The name TOP should constantly remind the members that their bodies are a temple of Christ, so they should glorify God with their bodies in whatever they do.

Apart from the methods mentioned earlier, the other one being used by the church is the Sunday school. During Sunday forenoon services, members break into groups and interact with each other. The Sunday school approach seeks to bring out a homogenous unity where people are bound together by some common bond and endeavour to understand their unique characteristics. Apart from interacting with one another, it also serves as a platform for effective and efficient nurturing of old and new members. During this period, doctrinal issues as well as the traditions and beliefs of the church are discussed and taught. The leadership of the church argued that, the Sunday school is one of the most effective methods of turning strangers (new members) into friends. It

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<sup>160</sup> J.M. Stifler, *An Introduction to the Study of the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1892), 102.

establishes long term contract with the individuals. The researcher was privileged to witness the Sunday school when he visited the Sunyani Assembly on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2014.

On the said day, the topic discussed was baptism. The time allotted for the Sunday school is forty five minutes. Another five minutes is allowed for members to interact with each other. The researcher is of the view that this method effectively plants the seed in the heart of members and also produces a common bond of friendship among members and with the church in general.

Another method used by the church is the institution of ‘analysis’ meetings in all the assemblies. This meeting is attended by Pastors, Elders, and Leaders of the various groups of the assemblies. It is organized every Sunday in all the assemblies. The time allotted for the meeting is one hour. The cardinal aim of the analysis meeting is to assess and evaluate the day’s (Sunday) forenoon service with respect to attendance. To that effect, the key agenda of such meetings is to find out why attendance to the day’s service increased, or decreased. In situations where attendance was on the ascendency, members were encouraged to continue their good ‘deeds’ to bring more people into the kingdom. On the contrary, members were entreated to wake up from their ‘slumber’ and win souls for Christ.

In relation to this approach, the church has instituted awards to individuals and assemblies who excel by winning more souls. Such awards come in the form of plaques and citations. Prospective winners are acknowledged and appreciated during the church’s annual conventions. The institution of the awards has motivated a lot of the people to do something ‘small’ for the Lord, Rev. Cobbinah added.

Even though there are other programmes, such as revivals, crusades and conventions which all aim to build and increase membership of the church, the last method being discussed under this section is constant visitation of members of the church by the leadership. The leadership of all the assemblies (pastors and elders) has made it their principal duty to visit all members on regular basis, especially those who do not attend services in any given period. They also visit most of their members in their workplaces, to share with them daily challenges confronting them, exhort and pray with them. This method, the General Secretary reiterated, has helped build and sustain most of their members. It has also established a cordial relationship between the leadership and the members as the constant visitations have helped bridge the gap. It has also served as an avenue of winning others into the kingdom of God as well as the church, as some people are attracted by the constant visitations.

To the researcher, the leadership of the church has developed effective strategies which have helped them to win more souls and more importantly, to sustain them in the. As at the time of the research, the Temple of Praise Church had Sixty-four (64) Assemblies, made up of a total membership of Seven thousand, eight hundred and fifty members (7,850). To the researcher, the growth is very significant because since its establishment to date, there is an average addition of three hundred and forty two (342) members per year. The growth rate is highly commendable. Among other things, it seems that these evangelistic methods adopted by TOP had led to the growth. However, these evangelistic methods are assessed in chapter five of the work.

#### 4.7 Factors that have Contributed to the Growth of TOP

Having established some of the methods adopted by TOP to promote growth in the church, the last aspect of this chapter analyses some other factors that have also contributed to their growth. In attempt to digest these factors, the researcher uses David Garrison's elements of church planting movements to assess the factors responsible for the growth. Garrison defines church planting movement (CPM) as a rapid and exponential increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people, group or population segment.<sup>161</sup> Garrison identifies these ten elements that are found in every CPM. To the researcher, TOP falls within this category. Again a comparison of the Garrison's elements and strategies of TOP reveals remarkable similarities hence the use. Garrison's common elements<sup>162</sup> are; extraordinary prayer, abundant evangelism, intentional planting of reproducing churches, the authority of God's word, leadership, lay leadership, houses churches, churches planting churches, rapid reproduction, and healthy churches.

To Garrison, the suggestion of these ten elements are indicators of the vitality of the movement which will enable the church to transcend the lifespan of the founders, hurdle generational and cultural barriers and have a broad and lasting impact. These ten elements as used by church planters, can also be used as leading indicators or benchmarks to assess their strength, movement, synergy, minimize movement deterrents and move toward healthy practices for their context. Within the context of this work,

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<sup>161</sup> Stifler, *An Introduction*, 102.

<sup>162</sup> David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements; How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: Wiatake Resource, 2004), 21.



these ten elements are not used as a criteria for assessing the growth of TOP but they are considered to have contributed significantly towards TOP's growth.

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Garrison's first element is prayer, and the researcher agrees that prayer is very essential to any evangelistic activity. All evangelicals' pursuits must be bathed with intense prayer. It is suggested that the soul winner who takes the power of prayer seriously will accomplish greater things to the glory of God. The gospels are replete with examples that substantiate the fact that Jesus prayed prior to performing miracles or before major events occurred. The researcher is of the view that after critically interacting with the leadership of the church and members and also worshipping with them on a few occasions, the ministry of TOP is solidly built on prayer with much emphasis on the Holy Spirit who empowers them to pray. Constant prayer meetings, (both corporate and personal) have been inculcated in the members to the extent that members make it their divine duty to pray always. The General Overseer remarked that 'a church that does not give prayer its proper place does not grow.' Prayer is essential to the life and growth of the church because it affects every dimension of its growth. To that effect, the church (TOP) has instituted prayer teams (Towers) in almost all the assemblies. The core duty of the teams is to pray for others and the church. The church also organizes a lot of prayer meetings and in some instances; they conduct prayer services to help build the prayer life of the members. The General Overseer reiterated that in the initial stages of their ministry, they collaborated with some of their colleagues in the neo-Pentecostal fraternity who they considered as pace setters in the ministry and organized prayer sessions with them. Garrison's second element is evangelism. *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* defines evangelism as 'The proclamation of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ with a view

to bring about the reconciliation of the sinner to God the father through the regeneration power of the Holy Spirit.’ The word evangelism emanates from the Greek noun *‘Euangelion’* meaning good news. The evangelical dictionary goes even further and gives a more extensive and comprehensive definition of evangelism as, “to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures and that of the reigning Lord, He now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe.”

The researcher is of the view that when one critically assesses the methods used by the church since its inception, there is no doubt that there is a systematic and a pragmatic approach by members to make new contacts and break new grounds in order to reach the unreached with the Good News. The church also has a well-trained evangelism team comprising almost all the members of the church. This team is taught about the basics of repentance and baptism, how to approach people with the gospel message and how to follow-up and build up new converts. There are also frequent seminars to equip members with modern trends of evangelism.

The third element is Intentional church planting. This element deals with the fact that Christian leaders realizing that church planting is the most effective means of discipleship. They devise a strategy from the outset where starting new churches is the single minded focus. Everything not contributing to this focus is discarded. The researcher wants to reiterate that this was one of the reasons which prompted the founders of TOP to start their ministry. When they left the Scripture Union and established their own fellowship as stated earlier, one of the reasons that ‘forced’ them to go into church planting was the nurturing of the converts (because they blamed their ‘mother’ churches

for failing to nurture them to grow in the Lord). From the onset, one could see that church planting was the sole motive of the founders. No wonder in just two months, they were able to establish four assemblies (Sunyani, Dormaa Ahenkro, Berekum and Wamfie). However, the pace at which the assemblies were being established has slowed down, since the focus of the founders has now shifted to the urban areas. Notwithstanding the change of focus, this element has helped contribute to the significant growth of TOP.

The next element is the authority of the Bible. Garrison contends that when the Bible is translated in the heart language of the people and believers, they unhesitatingly see it as the Bible, and not as any other book, aids, or teachers of authority in their daily lives. It promotes effective growth. Emil Bruner opines that 'the Bible is the soil from which all Christians' faith grows; it is the source of Christian doctrine and the manual of church practice. As stated earlier in chapter three of the work, 'TOP believes in the scripture of the Old and the New Testaments as verbally inspired by God and inerrant in the original writing, and that they are the supreme and final authority in life and faith'. Aside this belief, members of TOP have been built up to the gospel message in their daily lives to the extent that the Bible is their standard by which everything is measured.

There is also the element of local leadership. Garrison contends that local leaders and (not outside ministers or missionaries), give direction to the movement and take responsibility for it. This position is remarkably similar to the story of TOP, (as leadership of the church since its inception has emerged, grown and deployed indigenously). It can be said emphatically that the church has not been dependent on influence from outside. The leaders have been built from within and more importantly, from the Brong Ahafo Region.

Garrison's next element is the principle of Lay leadership. He opines that when a movement is spreading, there is neither time nor resources to educate, train and ordain professional leaders. The truth is wherever a movement starts to require educated leadership, it comes to a grinding halt. This assertion by Garrison is highly debatable but the researcher wishes to reserve any comment as this is not the focus of the work. When the researcher interacted with the General Overseer, he reiterated the affirmation of Lay leadership when he said 'whenever believers realize that if they are to reach their own culture for Christ then they personally need to take initiative and not wait for professional clergy to do it.' The leadership of TOP picked on the 'raw material' available and has been able to transform them into finished goods which they have used to achieve success.

Another element on the list is Cell or house churches. According to Garrison, it is universally true that whenever church planting movements occur, the church was found in homes rather than in expensive buildings. The church is found where people live. The genesis of TOP fits perfectly in this assertion as they formed cell groups which were very reproducible, meeting in homes of members or store fronts and other makeshift places of worship. These locations dominated the early stages of the church. However, this philosophy has changed as most of the assemblies have now moved on to a property owning mentality of using huge chapels as their meeting places.

Yet another element discussed by Garrison is churches planting churches. Garrison is of the view that the natural manner of reproducing is after one's own kind. Churches are meant to plant churches that plant churches. Garrison reminds us of God's command; be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Not only that but he also affirmed that a mission agency or a denominational board is not the means to start churches and was never meant

to be. The position of the leadership of TOP holds the view that reproduction is natural so they do not need outside resources to obey Christ's command to make disciples. In view of this assumption, ordinary church members, not only professional clergy, accept the responsibility for starting churches. This challenge has contributed to the rapid growth of the church, as ordinary members have embraced the challenge and also realized that they are worthy to be counted as partakers of the 'kingdom business.'

The ninth element is rapid reproduction. Garrison affirms that whenever there is a church planting movement, the reproduction rate is shortened so that the multiplication rate accelerates. The researcher holds the view that the founders of TOP have a sense of urgency to reach their 'lost' neighbours hence the brisk establishment of assemblies. To them, they avoided everything non-essential to planting of churches in the initial stages. No wonder they never attempted to provide social services in the communities they operated in, at the initial stages as church planting was their only focus.

Finally, Garrison compares churches to living things, when he states that healthy ones reproduce naturally, and sick ones on the other hand can cause infertility. Healthy churches are said to portray the following characteristics; worship, evangelism, discipleship, ministry to others and fellowship. The researcher is of the opinion that all these five characteristics feature prominently in the activities of TOP.

The researcher wishes to agree with Garrison's assertion 'that these ten elements are indicators of the validity of the movement which enables the church to transcend the life span of the founders, hurdle generational and cultural barriers and have a broad and

lasting impact.<sup>163</sup> It is also agreed that growth patterns usually reflect the methods used and factors which contributed to the growth or otherwise.

Even though these ten elements are not codified in the constitution of TOP, neither did the leadership categorically make mention of them during the researcher's interaction with them as strategies that they have consciously adopted to achieve growth. However, critical analyses of the factors that have engineered their growth will definitely point to these ten elements. To that effect, there is now clear understanding that the significant growth of TOP did not just emerge but the leadership and members worked towards it.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

From the earthly ministry of Christ and the day of Pentecost, to this present time, it has been God's divine plan that the church should grow. Every church, whatever its size, must regard numerical and spiritual growth as being of supreme importance. Church growth, however, does not just happen. It must be prayed for, planned for and worked for; and the example of TOP, attests to the fact that with conscious effort, proper planning and pragmatic steps, the church is capable of experiencing significant growth. The growth of TOP is a clear example that church growth is achievable in our contemporary times when churches desire to grow. Growth is also possible when given the needed attention and preparation. The next chapter of the thesis is the concluding part and it highlights some of the findings. It also assesses the growth of TOP in the context of the three-test theory.

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<sup>163</sup> Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 21.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters have examined Indigenous Missions in the Brong Ahafo Region with TOP as the main focus. The chapters also touched briefly on Christian Missions, the Brong Ahafo Region, the history of Christianity in Ghana and for that matter Brong Ahafo Region which is traced to the pioneering work of the early missionaries carrying the Gospel of Jesus Christ from Europe.

Attention has also been given to indigenous missions, factors that gave rise to Indigenous missions, Indigenous missions in the Brong Ahafo Region where the focus was on Sampon Oppong and five indigenous churches. The history and development of TOP, early challenges, financing and factors that have contributed to the phenomenal growth of TOP had also been highlighted. From the research, the following have contributed to the significant growth of the Church:

Firstly, it is an undisputable fact that Outreach has been the priority of TOP since its establishment. They have demonstrated a special zeal and enthusiasm for evangelistic ministry and outreach programs. Outreach is the work of groups and or individuals within the church which is directed towards people, groups and communities which are not currently associated with the Church, when such initiatives are taken, the sole aim is to win people, groups and communities to the church. In effect, when a church engages in outreach, it is reaching out to the community in order to meet needs or to let people know of its existence and possibly 'bring them on board.' A church that engages in outreach programmes, is interested in growth and sharing its faith, witness and

purpose with others. As a new Neo-Pentecostal Indigenous Church, the leadership realized that if they failed to reach out to others, they will lack membership and subsequently growth will be impossible. The leadership also turned the focus of their congregation away from themselves and to their original mission and Christ's mission (of reaching out to the unreached). This principle of Outreach programmes have contributed immensely to the growth of TOP. The leadership needs to be commended for the effective and efficient orientations to her members which have occurred through programmes, prayers, budgeting and honestly evaluating the Church's success at birthing new Christian disciples.

It is alleged that the longer a church exists, the more concerned members become with self-preservation and less concerned with the church's original reason for being established. After almost twenty-three years of existence, this mentality is likely to catch up with members. Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn affirm this position by stating that 'over time, churches become increasingly self-centered and self-serving. The result, not surprisingly is that such churches stop growing.'<sup>164</sup> While there are many good things a church can do and there are many good things a church should do, there is an essential thing a church must do, 'go out and share the good news' with everyone you meet, far and near in the way of life (Matt. 28:19). One is curious to follow the growth of TOP in the area of outreach with the passage of time.

Furthermore, it was also discovered that both the leadership, the ordained as well as the lay of TOP, have all committed themselves to reaching out to the 'unreached'. The researcher is of the view that the entire membership of TOP does not think that its

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<sup>164</sup> Gary L. McIntosh & Charles Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know – 101 Rules for Effective Leadership and Ministry in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 14.



evangelistic outreach, is the exclusive responsibility of its pastors, or of some other paid workers. All hands are on deck to spread the good news. William Richey Hogg contends that 'wherever the notion is perceived that evangelistic outreach of the church is an exclusive responsibility of minority few, a disastrous attitude often results. The congregation becomes a body to be served.<sup>165</sup> It no longer lives through corporate and personal evangelism as a body that serves.

Hogg terms this attitude as 'the virus of professional evangelism.'<sup>166</sup> That is when the charge to share the gospel message, is left to those who are perceived to have been trained for that. However, the opposite is true in the ministry of TOP. TOP's significant growth in Brong Ahafo has been possible because every member of the church has been nurtured to the extent that reaching out to others springs from propulsion and not attraction.

The members of TOP seem to have come together to champion the cause of Christ. Even the 'weakest' among them seems to have a gift, no matter how seemingly trivial which is peculiar to this genuine cause of spreading the gospel. For the past twenty three years, TOP seems to have been more concerned and committed to its mission of reaching out to the unreached.

The study has also brought out that both the leadership and the entire membership have not directed attention inward unto themselves, but are highly committed to the sharing of the gospel. The Church (TOP) seems to understand itself and have carefully analyzed the situation into which God has placed it. That is to share the Gospel. It is said that a growing church has a deliberate commitment to people beyond itself. Hogg argues that

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<sup>165</sup> William Richey Hogg, *One World One Mission*, (New York: Friendship Press, 1960), 149.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*, 148.

‘anytime a church does not live and act as though a great good news had been committed to it to be shared with all the world, it fails to grow’<sup>167</sup>. Hogg again opines that ‘when a church acts rather as if the gospel had been given to it for its own well-being and for the benefit of any nearby who may choose to join its ranks’,<sup>168</sup> it is very difficult for such a church to experience growth. However, the opposite is true when one compares with the ministry of TOP. The church has not kept the gospel message to itself but continues to share it with others.

The study also revealed that the lay have played a very vital role. The involvement of the laity, both as leaders and as participants in the evangelistic activities, should never be underestimated. The manner in which they have met the challenges to be in ministry; their submissiveness to the clarion call of the great commission, and their active participation holds lessons for posterity. Hogg posits that for the great majority of church members, the Christian world mission and anything associated with it, seems remote and of no direct personal importance. The concerns of daily living, hobbies and perhaps local church activities fill their thoughts. A few are hostile to the Christian mission. Many are indifferent to it. The same cannot be said of the lay membership of TOP. They have been active team players. The members are challenged in their judgment, that mission is not the responsibility solely of those who are interested and it does not also belong only to enthusiasts but to all who belong to the church. The members seem to understand that church membership, by definition, commits one to world-wide mission, to taking the whole gospel to the whole world.

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<sup>167</sup>Hogg, *One World*, 148.

<sup>168</sup>*Ibid.*

Lastly, one notes that the leadership, especially the ordained, are wholly prepared to help their members discover its vision and mission. Most of the church's programmes, training sessions; traditions and orientation are geared towards an evangelizing church that carries the gospel to those outside the church. Moreover, these activities enable the members to gain deeper understanding of the life of the whole church. Hogg affirms that 'many pastors, by their very preparation, are hindered in giving a church, the vision it needs to see its own mission.'<sup>169</sup>

The researcher observed that in some of the churches, the mission and missions have been the concern of a minority; and that among church members generally there exists an inadequate understanding of what the church itself is in its mission and missions which have been the concern of a minority. Among church members generally, there exists an inadequate understanding of what the church itself is, in its mission and unity. When such situations occur, church growth becomes a mirage. TOP's significant growth has been possible and successful because almost all the stakeholders see themselves as partakers of the task. An all-inclusive evangelistic strategy to win unreached souls for Christ has been adopted.

### **5.1 An Assessment of The Missionary Activities of TOP**

In assessing the missionary activities of TOP in the region, the researcher uses the three tests theory developed by Walls as discussed in chapter one namely, the church test, the kingdom test and the gospel test. As a missionary church, TOP is engaged in the spreading and expansion of Christianity. The tests when applied to TOP, will reveal the quality of Christianity being spread by her.

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<sup>169</sup> Hogg, *One World*, 148

## 5.2|The Church Test

Commented [u2]: ???

The church test is the spread of the Christian profession in a particular area. The church test implies the fruit of Christian mission, which is, the bringing into being of the people of God or the community of worshipping Christians.

In relating the church test to TOP, the researcher wishes to submit that TOP has passed the church test, with particular reference to their effective and efficient ways of evangelism and purposeful drive to establish more congregations in the Brong Ahafo Region. They have experienced advancement especially in the region. From very humble beginnings, they have now almost covered every part of the region. Even though they are not the first to attempt to share the Good news in the region, they now have congregations in all the Districts and Municipal capitals in the region, (refer to the map of Brong Ahafo in the appendix V). Their remarkable growth cannot be underestimated. The study revealed that, the Church has sixty-four (64) assemblies made up of a total membership of seven thousand, eight hundred and fifty (7,850) in the Brong Ahafo Region. This presupposes that, an average of three hundred and fourteen members is added to their membership annually. To add and maintain such number in church management is highly commendable.

When it comes to the cultural translation of the Gospel, the church has performed creditably well. Since its inception in the region, Twi has predominantly been used as the means of communicating the gospel message. The leaders of TOP who insisted on the Twi language thought it wise to go that way, because the church operates in areas where majority of the people are semi-literates and peasant farmers. Any attempt to have used

the English language as the mode of communication like most of their colleagues in the cities would have driven people away from the gospel message.

The use of vernacular in TOP's missionary activities have confirmed the fact that indigenous churches take root and grow best when the scriptures are translated into the language of the people and lay men can witness using vernacular scriptures. Furthermore, the use of the mother tongue by TOP, has laid emphasis on the fact that the mother tongue is a powerful medium to spread the gospel message. It is said that whenever the gospel is translated in to vernacular, the people of that language take ownership. Many others also bear testimony to the greater effectiveness of church planting efforts made through the preferred language of the local population. Even among non-literate groups, the bible has been well positioned when translated and this has stimulated growth. Walls affirmation in this church test theory is echoed by the Apostle Paul. The Apostle explained to the Corinthians that in church meetings, he would rather speak five words in a plain language than a thousand in an unknown tongue so that the other world will be edified. (Acts 14:10-13). This assertion by Paul can be compared to the Akan proverb which says "*asem aa ehia no, ye ka no yen kurom kasa mu*" which can literally be translated as, 'important messages are communicated in the local dialect'. The leadership of TOP from the beginning realized the importance of the gospel message and decided to communicate in the heart language of the people. It is true that when the heart language of the people emerges in their prayers, songs, sermons, illustrations and applications, worship becomes more accessible and within reach of all members of the community and allowing everyone to participate. Missionaries who identify and embrace the heart

language of the people they are trying to reach are well positioned to stimulate growth.

The researcher has no doubt that TOP has passed the church test.

The church test alone, according to Walls, is not a satisfactory measure of Christ's presence in a community. It is to be seen in relation to the other tests. This leads us to the Kingdom Test.

### 5.3 Kingdom Test

Commented [u3]: ???

The kingdom test has to do with movements or institutions generated within or outside the church but under Christ which brings vitality to the church as an institution.

In the ministry of TOP, it is hard to point to one of such movements in the Church's operational structures. However, it may not also be wrong to mirror the whole church as a kingdom test movement. The researcher has taken this position judging from the genesis of the church (TOP). It was a movement whose intention was to exert Christ's influence in the community in which it operated before the leaders turned into church planting and subsequently established TOP. It is alleged that some of these movements which emerged on the Ghanaian Christian scene, were later turned into churches. Omenyo argues that ' a major consequence of the evangelical/ charismatic renewal in the 1960s and 1970s was the institutionalization of some of the fellowships into churches, or the development of completely new and independent neo-Pentecostal churches known in Ghanaian parlance as charismatic churches or ministries.'<sup>170</sup> This dimension cannot be disputed as most of these movements which emerged turned out to be churches. TOP is not exclusive to this allegation.

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<sup>170</sup>Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 96.

TOP, as a missionary church, has done a lot within the Brong Ahafo Region, since its formative years to the present time. Everywhere it has operated in the region, its sole aim has been the radiant call of people into repentance and exerting the influence of Christ in the communities it has operated. The radical approach shows the sense of urgency to remind people of the love of Christ which calls people to repentance. Notwithstanding this assertion, the researcher wishes to reiterate that the leadership of the church must continue to remain focused in order not to sway off and become counter signs.

Walls has rightly observed that the spiritual churches, otherwise known as African Instituted churches, which served as kingdom signs, are now perceived by the charismatic churches as counter signs of the kingdom.<sup>171</sup> With the re-emergence of Healing and Deliverance now being showcased in the electronic media, with both local and foreign influence (as most of these movements/churches have their own television stations), the leadership ought to remain resolute and champion the cause of Christ and continue to rely solely on the Holy Spirit for divine direction. The leadership, especially the founders, should continue to seek the face of the Lord so that they lead the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century without becoming counter-signs. In Walls' "assertion one of the Kingdom signs is the provision of social services such as hospitals and schools, among others. From the research, it is clear that TOP has paid little attention to the provision of social services in the areas of operation". History recounts that the church in Brong Ahafo came into being as a result of the work of the Western Missionaries. They did not only preach but were also involved in providing social services such as healthcare, education, technical training and scientific farming. It is also said that no serious history of pre and post independent Africa can be written without reference to the church's contribution towards the shaping

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<sup>171</sup> Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 16.

and transforming of the life and the people of Africa. The social, economic, political and religious impacts due to the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the past and present history of Africa have been enormous. What is remarkable about the mission of the church in Africa is that the gospel was initially proclaimed as a message that concerned the whole person, body and soul. As said earlier, TOP has not paid much attention to this social transformation. The leadership is being reminded that missions are broad and as deep as the needs and exigencies of human life.

#### 5.4 Gospel Test

Commented [u4]: ???

The gospel text is the effect of Christ on people and culture. The gospel or the good news is about Christ's ultimate victory over the evil forces that opposed God and destroy the world.

In assessing TOP's impact through the Gospel Test, the researcher wishes to state that it is difficult to measure the level of influence the Gospel has had on the members or again to quantify the impact, the church has brought on its members. Walls affirms this position when he reiterates that 'and the capital difficulty of making this into any sort of principle of judgment is that the influence may be direct and acknowledged, or direct and unacknowledged or indirect and even unconscious.'<sup>172</sup>

Notwithstanding this assumption, the fact remains that the effects of Christ on people's lives is that members have been transformed. The current leadership of the church bears testimony to this transformation. It is a fact that TOP did not emerge in a vacuum. Planting of the church was through the work of local leaders who had faithfully reproduced themselves. The leadership of the church since its inception had emerged,

<sup>172</sup> Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 18-19



grown and deployed indigenously. It was the custom of the early church to develop strong local leadership wherever the gospel was preached. The success of the church in that era depended on the development of local leadership. It is evident that the local leadership of the church in apostolic times was placed on the shoulders of new converts as quickly as possible. Aside the leadership, some of the members seems to have also benefited from the gospel as their lives have been transformed. The General Overseer, Rev. Cobbina, reiterated that most of the youth who joined the church in its early stages have grown up to become responsible adults with some holding key managerial positions in both public and private institutions. He went on to say that, in this era of perceived corruption in almost every fabric of our society, we need men and women of highest repute, honesty and integrity to occupy responsible positions. This can be achieved when our lives have been transformed by the gospel message.

The effect of Christ on people and culture has been tremendously great especially where TOP operates, as it continues to advocate the liberation which the gospel brings to humanity.

When the three tests theory is synopsized to the missionary activities of TOP in the Brong Ahafo Region, it can be concluded that, the Church's impact has been impressive due to the fact that, since its establishment, it has witnessed a rapid and phenomenal growth. It has also brought about revival and dynamism in their activities.

Thirdly, the gospel which they present has been clothed and presented within the sociocultural setting of the people. The lives of the people, especially her members have been transformed. What is left to be done is to make a conscious effort to provide some social services.

There is no doubt that in the last twenty three years since the establishment of TOP, the Brong Ahafo region has witnessed aggressive evangelistic activities, innovation, mission initiatives and rapid growth. Though the gospel has not reached every part of the region, there has been a phenomenal growth in church planting. The door of the gospel has been opened to hitherto muslims dominated areas in the region like Atebubu and Techiman. Even though TOP is not the first church to share the good news in the area, their efforts must be commended.

TOP, among other denominations, are springing up on weekly basis especially in every part of the region. TOP, among others, are of various shapes and forms operating from one room apartment or shed. However, the Lord is equipping and anointing the church for a 'final' aggressive warfare and evangelism.

From the research, the following can be said of TOP:

- Christ is the center of their missionary work. They proclaim Christ and not self or church.
- Mission has been a responsibility of the Lay and the Ordained. Missions have not been exclusively left to the minority.
- The church centers its congregational life around a passionate worship of the Triune God, celebrating salvation by grace through faith in Christ and relying on the power of God's Spirit for fruitful ministry.
- The church is more prayerful. The church has remained under the authority of Christ.
- The church is led by the inspired and authoritative word of God and grounded in the teachings of historic Christian doctrines.

- The church nurtures individual members in a deepening spiritual life of worship, prayer, study and mutual discipleship.
- The church shares God's self-sacrificial love for the lost, lonely and broken people and cultivates a commitment toward outreach as well as expression of worship.
- The leadership, especially the founders have been able to discard any human factor including pride, internal struggling, infighting, and misunderstanding. On the other hand, they have remained resolute and committed to their vision and mission which brought TOP into existence.
- The church cultivates the habit of loving, accountable, reconciling relationships within its ranks.
- The church balances outreach with internal nurture, discipling and uniting members through participation in the church's mission
- The leadership has been held with faith, vision, courage, integrity and a passion for holistic mission.
- The church has placed every area of individuals and congregational life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, without much distinction between 'sacred' and secular.
- The women and the youth are all involved in the mission work at all levels.

Overall, it can be said that TOP has made great strides in spreading the gospel through planting of churches, evangelizing through literature and sending out missionaries to many parts of the region.

Aside the factors mentioned above, some causative factors that have precipitated this phenomenal growth is what Barker terms as freedom.<sup>173</sup> To Barker, to start a new church is a kind of liberation from the limitations and frustrations imposed by the church one was in before.<sup>174</sup> The 'Freedom' includes;

- Freedom to exercise spiritual gifts.
- Freedom to worship with more movement and excitement.
- Freedom to exercise gifts of leadership.
- Freedom to create new forms and institutions.
- Freedom to relax or reinforce moral requirements.

Critically, all these freedoms have contributed in a way to help TOP grow rapidly. The ethos of the church paves way for emphasis on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and its accompanied gifts. There is no rigidity in the worship style, (which is more flexible with members supposedly feeling the presence of the Spirit). Leadership positions have not been limited to the educated elites but also the less educated, even illiterates who possess real gifts of leadership have been given the opportunity to lead. New forms and institutions have been created with less difficulty to facilitate the church's activities.

Lastly, freedom to relax or reinforce moral requirements. On this the researcher maintains that, moral requirements have been enforced rather than relaxed. These freedoms even though not automatic to growth, have in a way, contributed to the rapid growth of TOP.

It is evident that TOP's significant growth has reinforced the notion that the African is capable of managing his own affairs. The researcher believes that TOP, as an indigenous

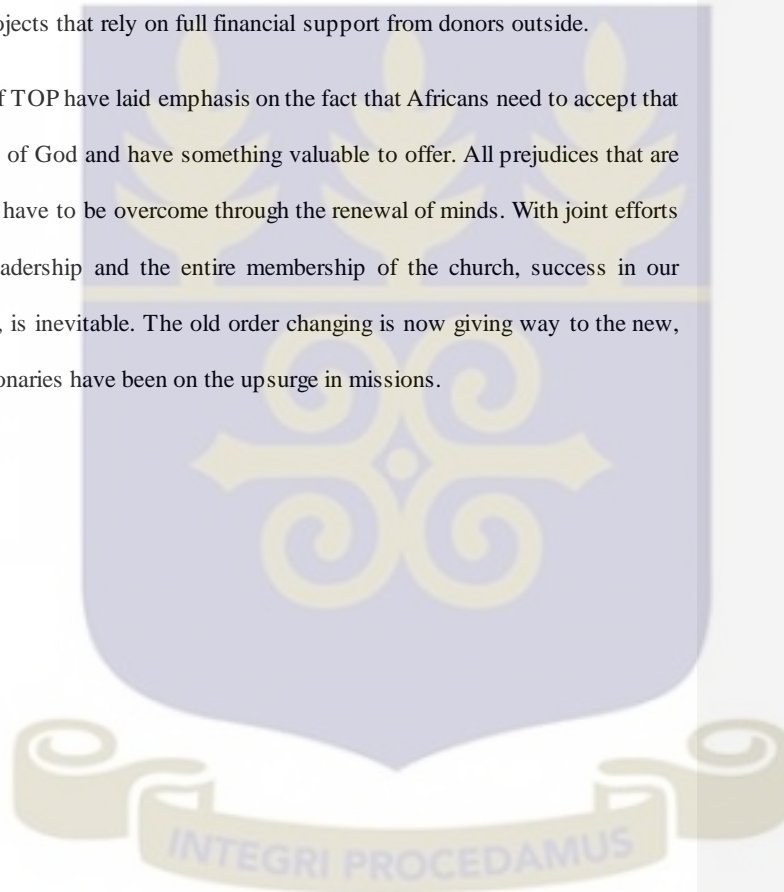
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<sup>173</sup> Barker, *The Rise of Independent Churches*, 70.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

church, has ensured a measure of sustainability and reduced dependency. They have done away with the dependency syndrome. They have carried out effective teachings that have informed their members about what to do to move missions forward. Much effort has been put in to explore local possibilities, which has helped TOP to avoid planning programmes and projects that rely on full financial support from donors outside.

The achievements of TOP have laid emphasis on the fact that Africans need to accept that we are also children of God and have something valuable to offer. All prejudices that are harmful to progress have to be overcome through the renewal of minds. With joint efforts coming from the leadership and the entire membership of the church, success in our mission endeavours, is inevitable. The old order changing is now giving way to the new, as indigenous missionaries have been on the upsurge in missions.



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**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX I**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE FOUNDERS OF TOP**

Personal Information

1. Name of parents.....

2. Date of birth..... Place of birth.....

Spiritual Encounter

3. When and where did you become a Christian?  
.....

4. Into which church or denomination were you worshipping?  
.....

5. Did you belong to any para-church group?  
.....

6. Why did you leave your church?  
.....

7. When and how did you start your church or ministry?  
.....

8. What motivated the founding members to start the ministry?  
.....

9. What are your church's tenets of faith, if any?

.....

10. In your opinion or view, what are the following: Holy Spirit, Speaking in Tongues, Healing and Deliverance?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**ORGANIZATION**

11. How is your church organized?

.....

.....

12. In which tradition do you place TOP?

Pentecostal [ ]

Neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic [ ]

Mainline [ ]

13. What system of church administration do you practice?

.....

14. Who are involved in leadership positions?

.....

15. What is the administrative structure of the church?

.....

**FUNDING**

16. Apart from offering and tithing, are there any other sources of funding of your church?

Yes [ ]

No [ ]

17. If yes, which areas do you receive support?

.....

18. Do you have any income generating venture which support you financially, or you rely only on normal tithes, offerings, harvests, and voluntary thanks offering?

.....

19. What is the average income per month?

.....

**GROWTH**

20. How many members did you start with?

.....

21. What is the yearly growth rate of membership?

.....

22. How many branches do you now have in Brong Ahafo?

.....

23. What is the numerical strength (total membership) in Brong Ahafo?

.....

24. Do you have branches outside Brong Ahafo? If yes, how many?

.....

25. Do you think your church has achieved a lot in terms of growth? If yes, what account for that?

.....

26. What are some of your strategies for evangelism?

.....

27. How do you nurture and motivate your members to remain in your church?

.....

28. In your opinion, is TOP doing anything that other churches are not doing?

.....

29. Have you experienced recession/decline in growth? If yes, what accounted for that?

.....

.....

.....

**TRAINING**

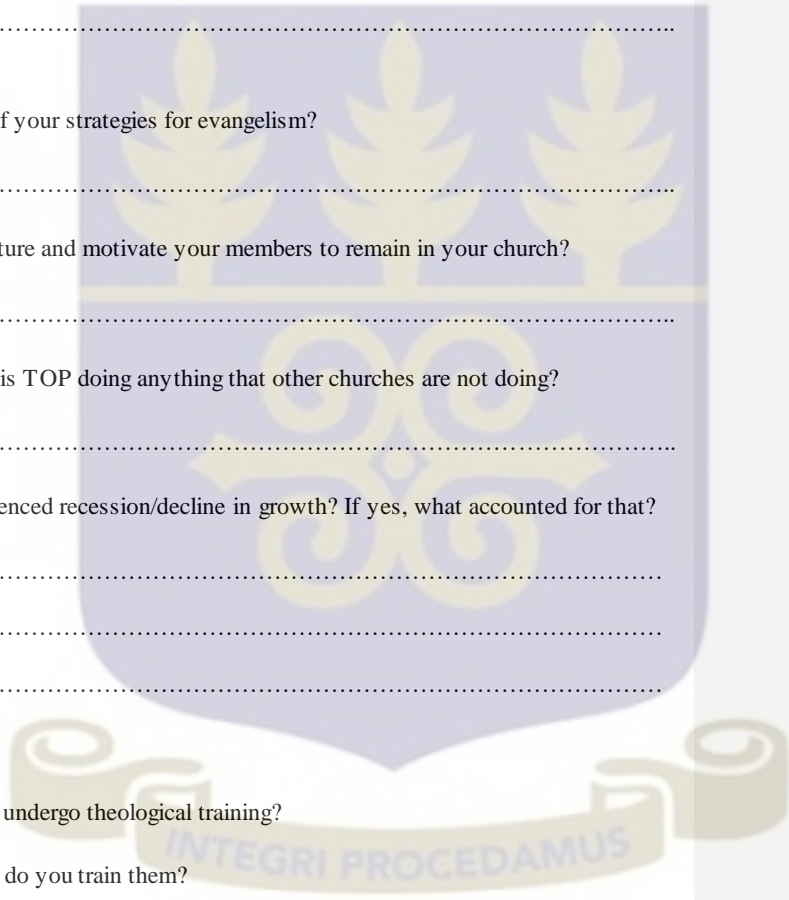
30. Do your pastors undergo theological training?

a. If yes, where do you train them?

.....

b. If no, why?

.....



31. What is the highest qualification among the pastors/lay leaders?

.....

32. Approximately, what is the salary structure level of your pastors and others on your pay roll?

.....

33. Do you have other incentives for the pastors apart from their normal monthly salary?

.....

**SOCIAL SERVICES**

34. Have you provided social services to the communities/areas you have branches?

a. If yes, what are they?

.....

b. If no, why?

.....

35. What does the future hold for TOP?

.....

.....

**OTHER**

36. In your opinion, are there any challenges confronting indigenous missions in Ghana?

.....

.....

.....

.....



37. How does TOP, a Neo-Pentecostal church relates or coordinates with other churches and ministries in the Brong Ahafo region?

.....

38. What were some of the initial challenges that confronted TOP?

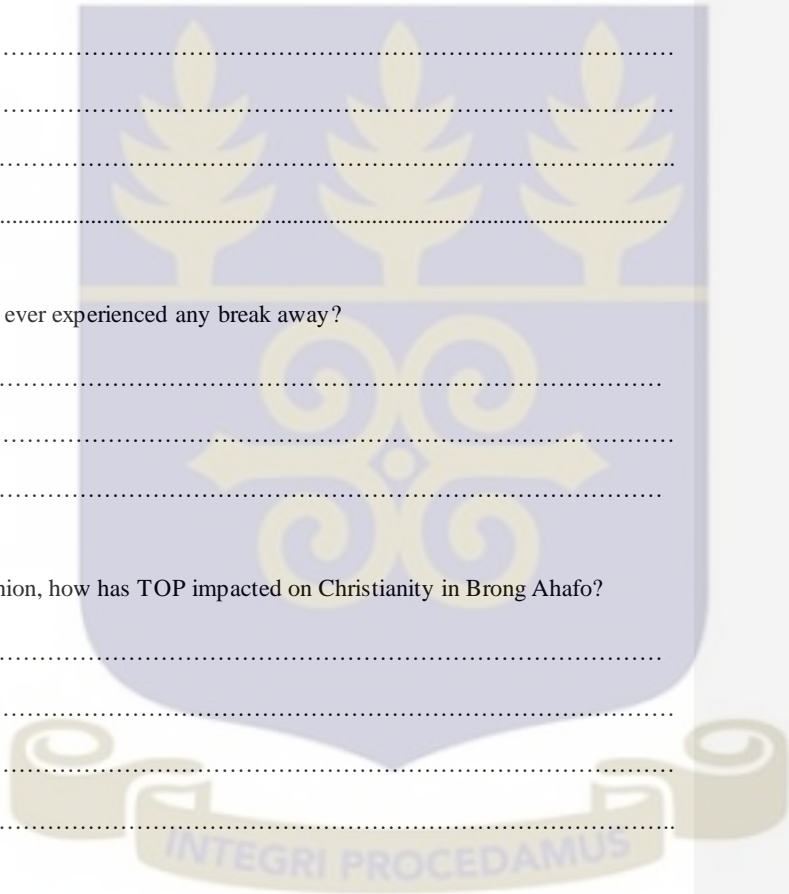
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.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

39. Has your church ever experienced any break away?

.....  
.....  
.....

40. In your own opinion, how has TOP impacted on Christianity in Brong Ahafo?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....



**APPENDIX II**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PASTORS OF TOP**

Personal Information

Name.....Educational Background.....

Date of birth..... Place of birth.....

1. How long have you been a pastor in this church?  
.....
2. Are you in Full time of Tent ministry?  
.....
3. What is your motivation to work with TOP?  
.....
4. Is there anything unique about the Founders of TOP which has influenced your thinking as a pastor of an Indigenous Church?  
.....
5. How do you increase your church membership?  
.....
6. What has accounted for the exponential growth of TOP in the Brong Ahafo Region?  
.....
7. What are some of the evangelistic strategies adopted by your church?  
.....

8. Is there anything about your church you wish to change or improve upon?

.....

9. What is view on the church's administrative structure?

.....

10. Appropriately, how much do you receive monthly in form of stipend?

.....



**APPENDIX III**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LAY LEADERS**

Personal Information

Name.....Educational Background.....

Date of birth..... Place of birth.....

1. When did you become TOP member?

.....

2. How did you become a member?

Through Crusade [ ]

Personal invitation [ ]

Radio [ ]

3. Do you hold any leadership position?

.....

4. What is your role to the day-to-day administration of your church?

.....

5. Do you take part in the church's evangelistic activities? If yes, what?

.....

6. Have you received any capacity building training?

.....

7. Is your church experiencing growth? If yes, what are some of the factors contributing to it?

.....

8. What makes TOP, an indigenous church, so unique and different from other churches?

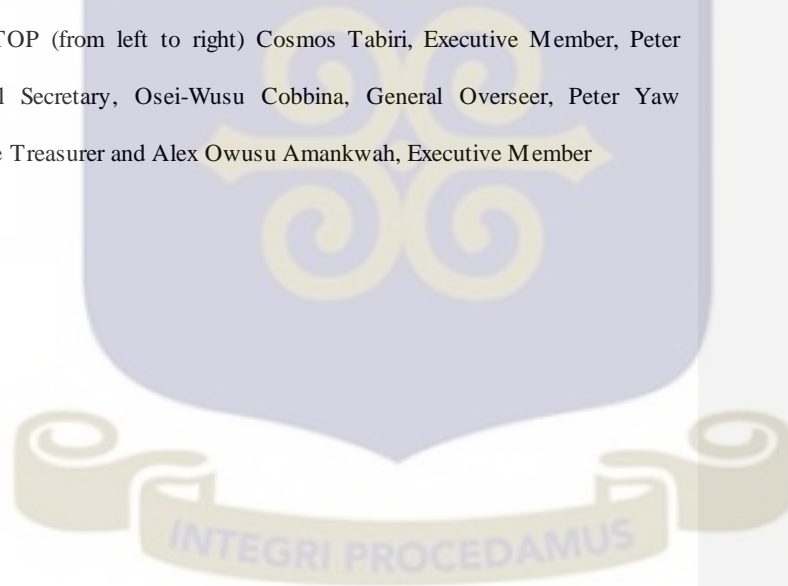
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*APENDIX IV*



The Founders of TOP (from left to right) Cosmos Tabiri, Executive Member, Peter Kyeremeh, General Secretary, Osei-Wusu Cobbina, General Overseer, Peter Yaw Asamoah, Executive Treasurer and Alex Owusu Amankwah, Executive Member

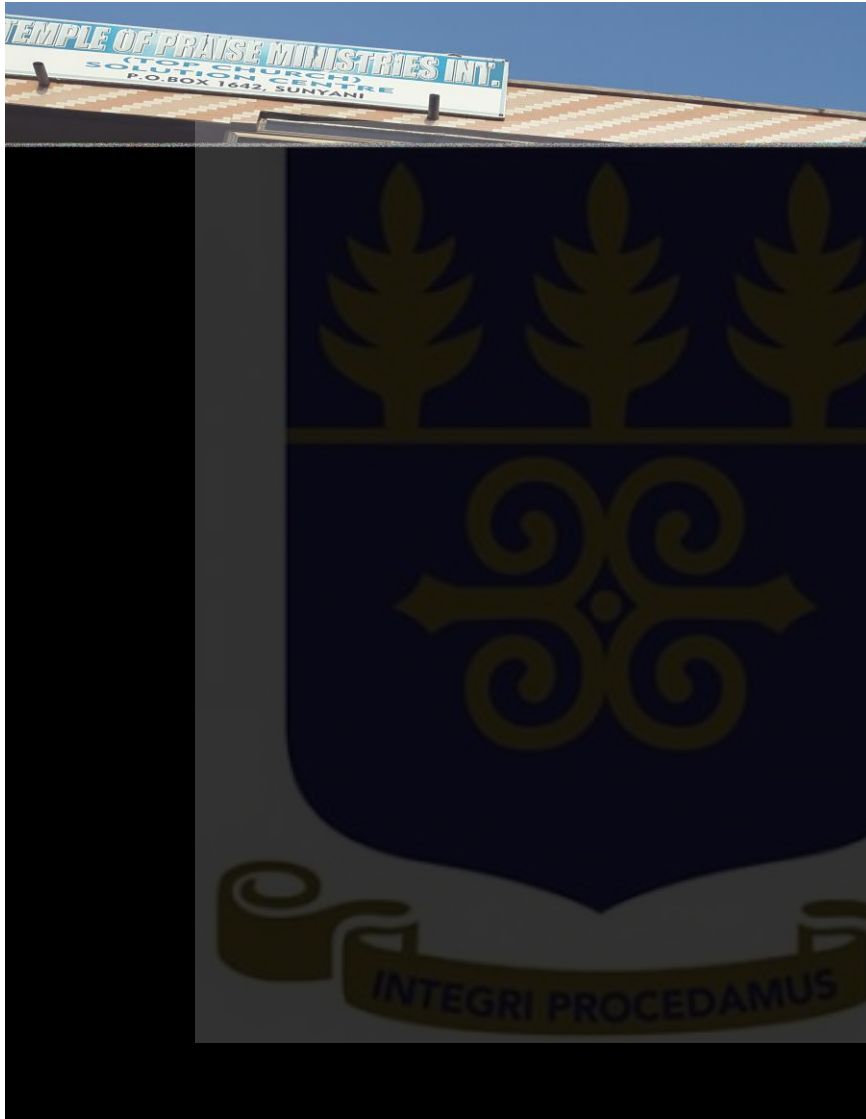


**APPENDIX V**



The Map of Brong Ahafo indicating all the Districts and Municipal capitals. TOP has congregations in all the capitals.

*APENDIX VI*



Front view of the Sunyani Central Church.