

THE HISTORY OF
THE CHURCH OF THE LORD
(GHANA)

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JE,RE & MYN
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THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF THE LORD (GHANA) 1965 - 1996

INTRODUCTION

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have actually investigated every thing from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught (Luke 1:1-4).

Some past students, John Teinor, James Andoh, Manasseh Peki and Simon Atiso-Doe of the Good News Training Institute, GNTI, have already written briefly on the history of the Church of The Lord (Ghana). However, we, Raymond Essandoh Bruce, Joseph Kofi Eshun and Mercy Yaa Nsiah are here to review, and up date, where necessary, what has been written. It is our hope that the Lord will help the Church to know where we come from and where we are going to help meet the problems and challenges of our rapidly changing Ghanaian Christian world.

Paul planted the seed, Apollo watered it, but God made it grow (1 Corinthians 3.6).

The purpose of history is not merely to tell the story of the past, or to explain and record it, but rather to show and examine the connection between the past and present help us live today in the light of the lessons and mistakes of the past. It is this relationship between the past and present that gives us the ability to know where we have been, before we can be clear about where we are going. (Spruth 1995. p.1).

History is very important. The Holy Scripture, or the Bible we have now, is historical and that is why we are able to trace its origins and how God lived among His people Israel.

Our main aim of reviewing and up dating the history of our Church, is to show how "the destructive struggles for leadership and the cults of personality which led to splits in many church bodies can be avoided when the people of the Church remember what happened in the past". (ibid p.2)

It is also true to note that "knowing the historic development of certain teachings which may today appear to be a departure from the thrust of Scripture, will help leaders as they work to bring about corrections in the life of the Church. Being aware of how a tradition began, gives one a better idea of whether it should be maintained and the truth about it be taught again, or whether it should be abandoned". (ibid.)

The Church of the Lord (Ghana) is currently one of the well organised African Instituted Churches (AICs) in the country. The Spiritual Head and leader, titled the Patriarch, is Bishop Benjamin Peace Epton. The headquarters building in Accra is under construction, the temporary office is in a premises at Osu Ako-Adjei donated by an elder of the Church.

There are (about) forty four Pastors in charge of the branches which are scattered in the Greater-Accra Region, Eastern, Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo Regions, and Central and Western Regions. The leading branch is at Labone, where a temple, Bishop Yamoah Memorial Temple, has been dedicated to the founder, the late Bishop Albert Kwesi Yamoah.

The cradle of the Church is traced to a house at Osu where the founder established a one-man Church with encouragement from a trusted friend, a politician and a Minister of State, Hon. Kojo Botsio. He later donated one of his houses at Osu-Re, No. 200, where Rev. Yamoah built a wooden structure for his Church, which remained the headquarters of the Church of The Lord (Ghana). Yamoah was installed the first Patriarch.

Power struggles among the four top Ministers, and Bishops resulted in a split before the end of the eighth year of the life of the new Church. An off-spring, The Church of The Lord (Mission), came into being. The young energetic leader of the Mission Church, Bishop Maurice Sackey, carried away a larger proportion of the over seventy young Ministers and branches.

Bishop Yamoah, undaunted, carried on successfully, and trained new men and women to help him in his ministry. His death about twelve years later was a blow to the faithful admirers of his prowess as a leader of a Church movement. The successor, Bishop Oku-Ampah was dismissed in his third year in office on a charge of syncretism, he being a secret member of the Hare Krishna sect.

An Interim Management Committee (IMC) under the chairmanship of Elder E.K. Osafo, took over the administration of the Church. The IMC appointed a Constitutional Committee for the preparation of a Church Constitution under which terms the current Patriarch took office. (see copy in the appendix).

The Church has experienced improvement in her administration and teaching. Progressive discussions started two years ago for the Church to take a bold step to break away from the inherited traditions, practices and rituals of the mother Church.

One can never fully comprehend the teachings of a Church without knowing her historical background (ibid). We hope that this work will achieve its aim.

CHAPTER 1

THE CHURCH OF THE LORD (ALADURA)

a) Brief History

The Church of the Lord (Aladura) was founded in Nigeria, in July, 1930, by the late Dr. Joseph Olunowo Oshitelu. He joined a group of ALADURA Churches ("Aladura", a Yoruba word, meaning "Prayer People") which had started in Nigeria under prominent pastors including Joseph B. Shadare of the Precious Stone Society, Moses Orimolade Tunolashe and Christian Akwenisown a Prophetess both of the Cherubim and Seraphim, and Isaac B. Akinyele, leader of the Faith Tabernacle Church who was ably supported by a dynamic Prophet Joseph Babalola. These leaders were all former faithful members of the Anglican Church in Lagos, Nigeria.

There was a revival movement in the Faith Tabernacle Churches to correct some unwanted practices of some congregation using medicines and baptizing polygamists. Many of the various leaders of the Aladura Churches met and tried to work together. During the period, the other leaders found out that Oshitelu was moving on a different direction from the intended practices of the group. For instance, Oshitelu had included lists of fasts, "Holy words", special services and prohibitions in his church which he had established in his home town, Ogere. He accepted polygamy, and had seven wives himself. When the other leaders prevailed upon him to stop these practices, he refused and separated from them to name his church, THE CHURCH OF THE LORD (ALADURA). (Spruth 1995:16,17).

b) Growth of Aladura: (Sierra Leone and Liberia)

Oshitelu had able missionaries, including Apostle Adeleke Adejobi, who became the second Primate of the church. He had a vision of opening a church in Sierra Leone, and in 1946, he was in Freetown to open a branch of the Church there. Almost at the same time, a Liberian lawyer, Mr. Justice Barclay and his wife invited the church to go to Liberia. Prophet Oluwole was sent to Monrovia early in 1947 to begin the Aladura in Liberia.

c) Growth of Aladura: (Gold Coast)

Oshitelu's command to the two Apostles was clear. Adejobi was to work in Sierra Leone and extend the development of the mission to the United Kingdom; while Oduwole was to work in Liberia and work up his mission to the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and to the United States of America. A dramatic change of this arrangement came about when in 1952, Oshitelu visited Adejobi in Freetown and met "an important woman from Kumasi" who invited the Church to go to Kumasi, Gold Coast. Without consulting Oduwole, who had the original mandate to open the mission in the Gold Coast, Oshitelu asked Adejobi to undertake the assignment in Kumasi. In the company of a young Yoruba, called Sonekan and a woman assistant named Edna Parsons, Adejobi left Freetown in March, 1953 for Kumasi.

Oduwole considered this action by both Oshitelu and Adejobi as an interference with his territory. In June, 1953, he travelled to Accra on his own and soon established a Church there, and then planted a church in Komenda in the Central Region. (Spruth, 1995:18,19)

CHAPTER 2

BIRTH OF THE CHURCH OF THE LORD (GHANA)

The Church of the Lord (Ghana) came about as a result of the conflicts that existed in the "mother" Church of the Lord (Aladura).

a) Aladura in Ghana

As already outlined, the mission of the Aladura Church started in the Gold Coast in the same year, 1953, by the two able Apostles: Adejobi and Oduwole (ibid).

Adejobi established first in Kumasi where the mission received a tremendous support from people of all walks of life. His missionary vision was remarkable, and he moved down to the coast, precisely Sekondi to establish a branch which Sonekan took charge of. In less than three years, Adejobi had established 16 branches in, Mampong, Wenchi, Swedru, Winneba, Koforidua, Nkawaw, Nsawam, Konongo, Bekwai, Dunkwa, Obuasi, Tarkwa, Sunyani, Goaso, Techiman and Nkoranza. His mission in the Gold Coast had over-grown the church in Sierra Leone which was the head-quarters. He therefore described himself as "The Pioneering Minister in charge of Sierra Leone - Gold Coast See". By 1961, Adejobi had confirmed 55 branches scattered all over the country, Ghana. He trained a larger proportion of the Ghanaian Ministers in Freetown (including Bishop Yamoah).

Oduwole on the other hand also extended his Liberian mission to the Gold Coast. He added Cape Coast, Asamankese, Nyakrom and many smaller branches to his main Accra and Komenda churches. He also called himself "The Apostle of the Liberian - Gold Coast See". By 1961, Oduwole had only 12 churches in the country, Ghana (ibid).

b) Revolt in the Aladura Church in Ghana

The two sections of the Aladura movement in Ghana kept good relations with each other for some time. Trouble, however, started when in 1958, Adejobi's faction entered Asamankese to plant a church when in fact Oduwole had just revived his branch which was established there in 1953.

Oshitelu was called upon to settle the matter. He instituted the following measures:

- i) He created a whole new unit known as THE CHURCH OF THE LORD OVERSEAS.
- ii) Adejobi was appointed Administrator General over the unit.
- iii) Oduwole was the Administrator with further power to control the work in Liberia.
- iv) Asamankese should form part of the Southern Mission, ie. for Oduwole.
- v) The Kumasi group was not to open new branches in the South.
- vi) The missions in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ghana were to be considered one church with a rotation of annual conferences in each country.

These arrangements did not work to solve the mal-administrative structure of the mission in Ghana. The first conference to be held in Freetown in 1961 did not even work well. The Liberian group protested and sent some charges against the Sierra Leone Church.

Meanwhile, the Ghana Church was struggling for unity. It had been divided into Kumasi and Accra groups, each with their own political and membership support. A group in Accra after laying a charge on Oshitelu as the originator of the confusion in Ghana, suggested an

independent appointment of a spiritual head for Ghana, ie. separate from either of the two Apostles, Adejobi and Oduwole. (SPRUTH, 1995. 20).

c) Struggle for Church independence by the Ghanaian Members

Political Background

The political atmosphere in the country at the time, is worth noting. The Gold Coast had been a British colony over the past ninety to hundred years, and the spirit of nationalism had started to move people like the late Dr. J.B. Danquah, Paa Grant, Dr. K.A. Busia, Ako Adjei, and Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. In 1948, the country saw the first revolt against the colonial government when there was a boycott and looting in Accra. On 28th February, 1948, ex-service men who had joined the British forces to fight during the second world war, were marching to the Castle, Osu (Christianborg) to present a petition for better conditions for their resettlement. The Colonial police opened fire on the peaceful demonstrators, and killed three of them. This incident sparked off riots, and six of the Gold Coast personalities advocating for an independent state, were arrested and imprisoned. The struggle continued until finally the Gold cost was granted independence on March 6, 1957. Two main political parties existed, the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) and the United Party (UP). The CPP was led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah who won the general elections to declare the country "FREE".

The common-people-based CPP included able young politicians including Ako Adjei, Kofi Gbedemah and Kojo Botsio. The UP on the other hand composed of intellectuals, like Ofori Atta, and others. This party had a tone of tribalism, as it gathered its main support from the Ashante Nation, based in Kumasi. The two parties had bitter struggles, and lives were lost. The CPP government introduced a "Detention" Act under which most of the opposition members were arrested and detained.

This was the political scene when Oshitelu and his Apostles, Adejobi and Oduwole were playing about with the political intelligence of the Ghanaian membership of Aladura. The underground nature of the situation was that the Kumasi Mission seemed to enjoy the support of Ashanti, (therefore the UP), while the Accra based Mission enjoyed that of the CPP giants.

Independence for Aladura In Ghana

The Ghanaian churches were contemplating why they should continue to allow the aladura Apostles to take money away to Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia, without any development in Ghana. Except a few of the Churches notably in Kumasi, Agona Asafo and Accra, many of the chapels were wooden and iron sheet structures. In November 1960, a committee of the two factions was formed:

- i) To unify the two (Adejobi and Oduwole) groups;
- ii) To centralize Church funds for the exclusive progress of the mission in Ghana; and
- iii) To seek the recognition of the government.

The Ghana Union sought for a separate Spiritual Head to administer the affairs of the United Ghana Church of the Lord (Aladura).

Oshitelu's reaction was not compromising. He sent in two Apostles earlier to handle the Ghana issue. Bishop Sonoiki of Ibadan was not successful to settle the issue. He was involved in an accident which killed Prophet Gabriel who was driving.

Oshitelu, in his written response to the Church in Ghana, charged that there was no Ghanaian ripe to man the office of a Spiritual Head. He made quick changes and transfers to frustrate the Ghanaian group.

The Primate's latest reaction to the Ghanaian issue was seen as an affront against the integrity of the Church in Ghana. The Primate was not prepared to end the exploitation that was going on in the country. An emergency meeting was held in Accra on 19th December, 1964 at which a decision was taken for the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Ghana to be independent of the missions in Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The Primate acted too late in 1965 to save the situation in promoting and appointing E.A. Ofori as an Apostle and Spiritual Head of the church in Ghana, for the decision of the December, 1964 Emergency Meeting had been acted upon in early 1965 for the split of an independent church in Ghana, which was named THE CHURCH OF THE LORD (GHANA). (SPRUTH. 1995: P.20,21 and ATISO-DOE, 1990: P.3).

CHAPTER 3

THE AUTONOMOUS CHURCH OF THE LORD (GHANA)

a) Early Organisation Structure

At the time of the declaration of autonomy, Bishop Albert Kwesi Yamoah, then a Prophet, had seceded from the mother church and was operating under the same name at House Number 200, Osu, R.E), Accra. The church was not registered, and had a total number of seven hundred members, seven ministers, seven branches and ten ministers under training, but soon after the declaration of autonomy by the late Bishop Yamoah's Church, the new Church of the Lord Ghana merged with his church and was registered under the Trustees (Incorporation) Act 1962, Act 106 in November, 1966.

b) Split in the New Church

At a general Conference of the autonomous church held at Mamprobi - Accra in January, 1965, three Senior Ministers namely, Olu Sonekan, Albert Kwesi Yamoah and James Aburabura were appointed Bishops to lead the Church in a three-year-term rotation. Albert Kwesi Yamoah, was appointed the first Bishop and Patriarch of the Church. All of the three were anointed Bishops on Sunday, 5th May, 1965. Then within the period of two years the second Bishop, Olu Sonekan resigned. As a result of this the third Bishop James Aburabura was appointed Deputy Patriarch pending. Meantime, Bishop Olu's position had become vacant.

Prior to the election of a new Patriarch in February, 1968, a misunderstanding broke out between the two Bishops, Yamoah and Aburabura, over leadership and through the influence and manoeuvres of Bishop Yamoah, he was made life Patriarch by the Conference. Bishop Aburabura, then deputy Patriarch, was made first Bishop and Bishop Maurice Sackey, who was then a Senior Prophet, was elected the second Bishop in succession to Bishop Olu Sonekan. During this process at the conference, the position of Deputy Patriarch was abolished. For the smooth running of the administration, the conference created two Dioceses, namely, Greater Accra/Central/Western Dioceses with its headquarters at Takoradi; and Eastern/Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo Diocese with its headquarters at Kumasi.

Bishop Aburabura resigned over his transfer to become head of the second Diocese. Accordingly, after his resignation, the late Senior Prophet E.B. Mensah was promoted to the rank of Bishop in place of Bishop Aburabura, and was placed in charge of the second Diocese. Bishop Sackey was stationed at Takoradi to man the first Diocese.

c) Break Away Church of the Lord (Mission)

Bishop Maurice Sackey assumed his duty in 1968 with only seven members in the Church at Takoradi. Between 1968 and 1972, an additional four hundred and ninety-eight (498) members were evangelized and won for Christ, as the great commission demands. Within this period, a misunderstanding arose between the newly appointed Diocesan Head, Bishop Maurice Sackey, and the elders of the Church. The Patriarch, Bishop Albert Kwesi Yamoah, was then on the side of the Church elders.

The arbitration held by the late Head of state, Colonel Ignatius Kutu Acheampong, appointed Colonel Acquaye Nortey, the Greater Accra Regional Commissioner of the erstwhile National Redemption Council, to settle the matter. A series of arbitration meetings were held at the Regional Commissioner's office out of which the following terms of settlement were accepted by both rival leaders:

CHURCH OF THE LORD (GHANA)

1. The Church of the Lord Ghana should split up.
2. Each Bishop should keep the branch church loyal to him.
3. Bishop Maurice Sackey should find a name for his church, while Bishop Yamoah retains the name, the Church of the Lord (Ghana).

On the 5th day of February, 1973, Reverend Bishop Maurice Sackey submitted the name of his church as "THE CHURCH OF THE LORD (MISSION)" which was accepted by the Regional Commissioner, Colonel Acquaye Nortey. The Reverend Albert Kwesi Yamoah successfully held his position as a Patriarch and founder of the Church until his death, which occurred on Tuesday, 30th of April, 1985, exactly three months after his wife had been laid to rest.

Bishop Yamoah's own quiet and unassuming way of life is remembered by all those who came in contact with him. He was the National Advisor to the Pentecostal Association of Ghana. Bishop Yamoah trained many ministers, most of whom are now leading various individual Churches in Ghana and else-where.

CHAPTER 4**THE CHURCH UNDER BISHOP A.K. YAMOAH****a) Birth, Education and Early Life**

The late Reverend Bishop Kwesi Yamoah was born in the year 1911 at Agona Abodom in the Central Region of Ghana. Some of his relations called him Kwesi Mainu whilst other colleagues preferred to call him John Payne. His father, was Nana George Kwaw Yamoah, an ex-chief of Agona Abodom. His mother was called Madam Kate Yamoah popularly known as Madam Akosua Apoh.

He was the first born of nine children of the above named parents. Bishop A.K. Yamoah took up a teaching appointment shortly after his Elementary Education. He was a musician and well remembered for his pioneering work in the formation of the famous "KONKOMA" music groups of the Gold Coast era. He enlisted in the Royal West Africa Frontier Force and served with it up to the end of the Second World War. He later joined the Native Authority Police Force of the Gold Coast, and was stationed at Agona Swedru after several transfers. Judging from his diligence, he could have risen to the post of a Police Inspector, but excessive drinking robbed him of that rank.

b) Conversion and Early Missionary Work

In the period of 1952-54, the late Reverend Suku Davies, who had then established the Church of the Lord (Aladura) at Swedru, miraculously brought Yamoah into his fold, and equally remarkably, he stopped drinking, to the amazement of his family and friends. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and started preaching, teaching the word of God, casting out demons (evil spirit) healing people and so on, sometimes in his office at the Police Station, Swedru. While he was engaged in these spiritual duties, one Mrs. Magarret Effrim Essandoh, wife of the late John Smith Effrim Essandoh, Deputy Commissioner of Police, introduced Albert Kwesi Yamoah to Mr. Kojo Botsio and his wife Ruth, alias Ewura Ama.

Mr. Kojo Botsio is an Oxford University graduate who was then one of the leading members of the Cabinet Ministers of the First Republic of Ghana under President Kwame Nkrumah. The Botsios were so effected by the religious activities of Bishop Yamoah that they soon found him indispensable in all they planned doing. On their advice, he resigned from the Native Authority Police Service to stay with them in their Accra residence at Kokomlemle in 1956.

After she was healed in 1959, Mrs. Ruth Botsio became an adherent of the Church, and more particularly, a patroness of late Bishop Yamoah who effected the cure, by his prayer, holy water, and fastings for her. Both Mr. Botsio and his wife Ruth had encouraged Yamoah to set up his own semi-independent church on similar lines in the Accra suburb of Osu in 1957. To facilitate his pastoral duties, the Botsios initially found him a motor-bike and later got him a Peugeot car. Through their efforts, Bishop Yamoah became acquainted with a good number of dignitaries, especially the ruling Convention Peoples Party (C.P.P.) members. Some of them contributed in no small measure towards the upliftment of the late Bishop Yamoah's pastoral task. By way of crowning their benevolent deed, Mr. and Mrs. Kojo Botsio gave their estate House Number 200 at Osu to the Church. This building was used as the Headquarters of the Church of the Lord (Ghana) for many years.

c) Pastoral Training

Rev. Bishop Albert Kwesi Yamoah held the view that 'whatever is worth doing is worth doing well'. Consequently, although he could preach effectively, heal the sick, see visions, etc., he felt he needed an institutional training. So he joined forces with the Aladura Organization and was sent to their Pastors Training College at Freetown, Sierra Leone, in November, 1958. He received his training under the direct tutorship of Doctor E.O.A. Adejobi (Ph.D, Glasgow) later Primate of Aladura International. Originally the training programme was spread over a three year period. Nonetheless, given his experience, ability and intelligence, coupled with the fact that he was needed in Ghana, Rev. Bishop Yamoah was ordained as a substantive minister on 25th January, 1959, after having gone through the course for barely three months.

d) Marriage and Family Life

Back in Ghana from his successful training, Rev. Bishop Yamoah continued with the propagation of the Word of God under the Aladura banner. It was about this time that he met Georgina Iffy Mensah, a graduate of Wesley College, Kumasi, who became his wife and partner. They had their wedding ceremony at Ogere, Nigeria, which was officiated by Doctor J.O. Oshitelu, the founder and first Primate of Aladura International. The Spirit-filled Georgina accepted the challenge of the call of her husband, and gave him moral and spiritual assistance. She later gave herself up for the ministry and rose through the ranks to the position of Senior Prophetess. She died in February, 1985 after a short illness. Bishop and Senior Prophetess Yamoah left behind six children.

e) A Bishop With a Mission for his Nation

Reverend Bishop Albert Kwesi Yamoah, as the first Patriarch of this church, was one of the leaders in Ghana who had been fighting to have the Nigerian Church appoint a leader for Ghana. As a leader and founder, he confirmed himself to the relationship between man and God. He did not interfere in inter-church conflicts and refrained from all political activities. He acknowledged and worshiped God, the Almighty Creator, and lived according to God's commandments, opposing all forms of discrimination based on race or colour. In addition to the Ten Commandments, he demanded that all of his ministers and congregations became obedient to the authority of the state and love one another. He did not practise Krishna. He forbade pork meat, snails and crabs, teaching his congregation to keep away from what was evil and loving what was good, just and morally pure, keeping every religious practice which would help to bring people and nation together in harmony. In addition, he tried to maintain discipline in the Church.

As the first Patriarch, he trained many ministers, most of whom are now heading various individual Churches in Ghana and else-where. Within the Church of the Lord (Ghana) itself, most of the ministers were trained and ordained by him. He also became the National advisor of the Pentecostal Association of Ghana. He took part in training ministers in Good News Training Institute. He tried to abolish the so called HOLY NAMES (Power Words) in the Church's Hymn Book. He also laid the foundation of the Church at Labone, which has now been named after him, Bishop Yamoah Memorial Temple.

Rev. Bishop Albert Kwesi Yamoah maintained his title and remained faithful to his LORD in the said church until his death on the fateful Tuesday, April 30, 1985, exactly three months after his dear wife, Rev. Mother Georgina Iffy Mensah was laid to rest.

In 1970 and 1971, Bishop Yamoah preached that the nation should fast and pray in order to obtain "Divine Intervention" in solving the country's multi-million cedis debt:

Although Ghana is deeply indebted, I can assure those who trust in God that if they fast, our debts shall be written off. (Flamingo Magazine p.30, 1970)

He pronounced a week-long fast for the entire nation for the Lord to intervene in handling the 500m New Cedis of the international debt, and waited in vain for government's green light to go ahead.

In his speech to the 1971 Taborra Festival, Bishop Yamoah, among other things, said:

You are all aware that our motherland, Ghana, is in the throes of an economic convulsion. She needs all the help of her sons and daughters spiritually, morally and materially. This can be achieved if Ghanaians, irrespective of their political affiliations, give of their best to support the government efforts to resuscitate the economy of the country. (Address by the Patriarch on 21st August, 1971).

Mission Abroad

Bishop Yamoah made two trips overseas. In 1978, he visited the UK on a holiday, but used the period to investigate the possibility of establishing a Church in London for the members of his supporters resident there.

In October, 1980, he was the only Ghanaian Bishop among twenty other Africans who attended a two-day Conference of the World Council of Churches in Edinburgh. He re-examined the chances of opening a Church, and inspected some premises for the purpose. The idea had not been abandoned when he died.

Supervisory Position

All these years, Bishop Yamoah was the Pastor for the Osu Branch. In 1980, on his return from the conference, he was appointed to a position of Supervisory duties for the entire organization. Osu Branch was then taken over by his wife Georgina, who had been promoted to Senior Prophetess. Bishop Yamoah then had enough time to work on his missionary vision. He toured the stations and gave authoritative preaching of the Word of God at each station.

CHAPTER 5

I THE CHURCH UNDER BISHOP OKU-AMPAH

Bishop Oku-Ampah succeeded the late Bishop A.K. Yamoah as the Patriarch, in June, 1985.

Brief Life History

Bishop Oku-Ampah hails from a fishing village near Apam in the Central Region. Little is known about his early life, but he received technical training in electrical works, and worked as a general electrician for building construction and repaired small electrical equipments.

Christian Life

He joined the Church of the Lord (Ghana) in 1965, and soon offered himself for the Ministry. He was one of the first four pastors Bishop Yamoah trained soon after the Church gained her independence from the Aladura organisation. He pastored Branch Churches in Wenchi in Brong-Ahafo and in Adabraka, Accra. He increased the membership of the Adabraka Church and served there for many years. During the crisis in the Church which resulted in the split of a group to form the "Mission" Church, Pastor Oku-Ampah remained loyal to Bishop Yamoah, thus added the Adabraka branch to Yamoah's Church of the Lord (Ghana). He was promoted a Senior Prophet, and at the time of the sudden death of Bishop Yamoah, Oku-Ampah was then the most senior minister and so able to take over the administration of the Church.

The Second Patriarch

The Most Rev. Apostle Sagoe of the Church of Christ, Mamprobi, Accra, performed the anointing ceremony for Oku-Ampah as Bishop, and as the second Patriarch of the Church of the Lord (Ghana). He performed well, and managed to bring together the small number of ministers who remained loyal after Yamoah's death.

A Syncretist

Soon, Bishop Oku-Ampah's double religious practices came to light. He was a secret member of the Hare Krishna sect. The National Planning Committee of the Church preferred charges against him, accusing him of syncretism, before a National Delegates Conference in 1987.

A Reconciliation Committee of three was appointed to look into the allegation and settle the impasse. Bishop Oku-Ampah continued with his secret practices of Hare Krishna consciousness, but kept on denying he was so involved before the National Planning Committee. This generated indiscipline and mistrust for the leader, who in an attempt to sanction some of the leaders, convened an emergency National Delegate Conference in January, 1988. The Pentecostal Association of Ghana (PAG) and Good News Training Institute (GNTI) attended the meeting and formed a Mediation Team to study the issue. After a thorough investigation, the Mediation Team found Bishop Oku-Ampah guilty of the offence of syncretism, and recommended his retirement from the Church of the Lord (Ghana).

He was retired accordingly on Saturday 6th February, 1988. An interim Management Committee was recommended to run the Church until a new Bishop and Primate could be elected.

II THE INTERIM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The nine-member Interim Management Committee (IMC), under the Chairmanship of Elder E.K. Osafo (see Appendix 1.2), was charged with the responsibility of ensuring the continuity of the organisation, maintaining peace and order, and preparing for the appointment and anointment of a new Head of the Church. One of the major tasks of the IMC was the preparation of the Church Constitution, under which terms the present Head was appointed and the affairs of the Church are being managed.

During the period of the administration of the IMC, co-operation among pastors and members was intensified. The learning and teaching of the Bible was placed high on the agenda of all meetings held. There was peace, and there was a year of successful administration of the Church. The Taborrar Festival (the annual convention) of 1988 was well organised and attended by many members. There were 27 Branch Churches.

THE CONSTITUTION

The 47 page Draft Constitution was adopted by the Church in January, 1989. Although a review Committee has been examining and amending clauses where necessary, the Constitution has been respected and defended by both the Clergy and the Laity.

Some clauses of Interest:

Independence

The Church organisation has "her independent and exclusive jurisdiction and legislation in all matters of church doctrine, worship, discipline and government".

The introduction of any other system of religion, teachings, beliefs or practices alien to the Christian religion, teachings, beliefs and practices, is not permitted. The syncretist should be removed or dismissed.

Government

The highest body of authority is the National Delegates Conference (NDC), and power is exercised through the National Executive Committee (NEC), which is responsible for the general administration and implementation of policies as directed by the NDC. Other committees are formed to report to the NEC on matters that the committees have been directed to deal with. These include: The National Finance Committee, The National Educational Committee, and National Welfare Committee. Other bodies working under the NDC are the Ecclesiastical Court (EC), which handles problems with the Clergy, the Minor Conference (MC), which is composed of all Ministers of the Church, and the Bishop Council (BC), an advisory body composed of Bishops and Diocesan Heads.

NDC

EC

BOT

NEC

BC

MC

COMMITTEES

The Constitution provides for a Board of Trustees (BOT) which is a standing Committee of the NDC, and which, among other issues, has the right to conduct the affairs of the Church during an anarchy caused by a dispute.

The Patriarch

The Constitution has clear terms for the qualification, nomination and election of the Head of the Church, ie. The Patriarch. On election of a new head, notice should reach the Churches at least fourteen days before the scheduled meeting for the election, which would be conducted by secret ballot. A quorum of half the number of delegates is needed. The powers of the Patriarch have been detailed in the Constitution. The Head can be removed during a term of office if he is found "guilty to have acted in wilful violation of any provision of the Constitution, which action is likely to bring about doctrinal confusion and the disruption of peace in the organization; or to have acted or conducted himself in a manner which brings or is likely to bring the high office of Patriarch as the Spiritual Head into disrepute, contempt, ridicule, mockery or hatred or to have behaved in any manner which is or is likely to be prejudicial or inimical to the well being of the Church of the Lord (Ghana), the Ministers and the entire membership".

Review Committee

The Review Committee has so far reviewed Clauses 1 - 22 of the Draft Constitution, a copy of which is attached.

CHAPTER 6

THE CHURCH PRESENTLY UNDER BISHOP BENJAMIN PEACE EPTON

a) Birth, Education and Early Life

Reverend Bishop Benjamin Peace Epton, was originally called Hector Benjamin Triumphant Epton. He was born on the 11th day of February, 1931 at Essikado via Sekondi in the Western Region of the Gold Coast, now Ghana. His father was Mr. Joseph Oti Epton. He was a general merchant importer and exporter. His mother was known as Sarah Esi Nyinba French. Both parents came from the Western Region of Ghana, and were deceased when Epton was two years old. He was the last child of his parents' ten children. His parents were Christians and staunch members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church at Sekondi. He obtained the elementary education certificate in 1948 at Sekondi Methodist Mission School.

He also gained admission to Ashanti-Mampong Government Trade School and, unfortunately for him, he stopped due to the lack of adequate finance. Fortunately for him, he acquired a Diploma Certificate in Accountancy, Salesmanship, Marketing, and a Fellowship in Book-keeping and Accountancy through a Correspondence Course. Bishop Epton first took up a teaching appointment in an Infant School shortly after his education was completed, and later worked as a junior Law Clerk in his cousins's Chambers. In 1949, Bishop Epton was employed by the United African Company (U.A.C.) as Counter Clerk, and was later promoted to the post of a Wholesale Store Keeper in Sekondi.

In the year 1964, Bishop Epton was transferred from Sekondi to Tema, where he held the post of Assistant Accounts Manager in the Central Distribution Depot. He held this position till his retirement in 1980.

His previous two marriages had not been successful, however, he had two children (a boy and a girl) from them: Rev. Benjamin Epton, Junior, is a Senior Pastor in the Baptist Church (Ghana), stationed at Takoradi, and Esther, now Mrs Esther Anane, is a Deaconess in the Assemblies of God Church, Accra. In the year 1985 God blessed his present marriage to a holy matrimonial status, he and his wife having been together in a customary marriage since 1972.

b) Christian Life

Reverend Bishop Benjamin Peace Epton was born in a Christian home and baptized in the Wesleyan Methodist Church at Essikado. He was a member of the Church Choir. Later Epton joined the Anglican Church and became a mass-server. In 1965, Bishop Epton was influenced by his female cousin to join the Church of the Lord (Ghana), and was re-baptized by immersion in the same year by the late Patriarch Albert Kwesi Yamoah. After the baptism, he was given a prophecy by Patriarch Yamoah that he would take up his (Yamoah's) mantle. This prophecy came into reality twenty five years later when Bishop Epton was installed the Head and leader of the Church of the Lord (Ghana).

In 1966, Bishop Benjamin Peace Epton joined the Branch Church at Tema Community 2, and became the Captain of the Army of Jesus group. Later he moved from this branch with some of the members to form a new branch at Community 1. In the same year he was appointed Secretary for Special Duties at the Church National Secretariat, Accra.

He held this post until his employers transferred him to Northern Ghana on relieving duties. In 1970, he returned to Tema and took up the post of Assistant Secretary General of the Church. He took up an appointment as an agent in the Community One Branch in Tema two years later in 1972. He began his pastoral work while he was still working with the UAC, Tema.

In the year 1980 Bishop Epton had his call and in the same year he was anointed a Disciple. He was promoted to the rank of a Junior Prophet when the late Bishop Yamoah returned from his tour in Britain and Europe. In 1985, he was promoted to the rank of Senior Prophet. Finally on the 28th day of January, 1989, he was elected as the Patriarch - the Head of the Church.

c) His Administration As The Patriarch

He was anointed as the third Patriarch for the organization at the Church Headquarters, Labone on 25th of June, 1989, by Primate Sagoe from the Holy Church of the Lord, at Korle Gonno. Since Bishop Epton took office seven years ago, there has been much improvement in the administrative set-up, as well as in the offices of the resident ministers. Many rituals and other Aladura practices have been put to an end and others are in the process of being cancelled from the Church doctrines.

His main aim is to present Christ to the Church and that is all. For no man goes to the Father but by Him (Christ) - John 14:6. This statement has been the motto for his ministry, and has resulted in Bishop Epton's effort of sending eleven ministers, one deaconess and one elder to Good News Theological College and Seminary since he assumed office in the year 1989, to learn the truth and to teach the lost sheep - 2 Timothy 2:16,17.

The misunderstanding which prevailed among ministers and the laity recently came to an end successfully 4th May, 1996. A lot of advice was given to both the laity and the ministers for successful work to be attained.

Permanent temples are being put up at various branches and others have just started theirs - Tema No.1 Branch, and Anyan Abaasa. Youth Fellowships also have been formed in some of the branches, like, Apam and Tema No.1.

With the increase in the number of Parochial Churches, membership has grown considerably. There have been petty squabbles and differences within, but these are not serious enough to undermine the smooth running of the organization. These are due to the problems of finance, postings, position of trust and immorality. Plans too have been made that most of the pastors receive full-time tuition at the Good News Theological College and Seminary. Recommendations too have been made for the laity to join the Theological Education by Extension classes provided by the Seminary to enable them broaden their knowledge of the Bible. Some of the pastors have been difficult in the past, but due to the inservice training provided by the Good News Theological College and Seminary, there has been tremendous improvement. There is discipline among both Ministers and the entire membership.

Most of the causes for break-aways which are due to power struggles, finance, greed and petty jealousies, have ceased, and all the necessary negotiations are also made to bring the churches together again in a sound manner, to abolish this leadership disease which is killing Ghanaian Churches today.

When Bishop Epton was questioned about the power words used in the Aladura type Churches, he said: "The Church does not work by charms, every exercise is based on the power of prayer and fasting. This is to the best of my knowledge. Dr. Oshitelu did not leave any power words. What I know and accepted were certain utterances given to him through fastings and prayers which are now called Holy Words. This experience is now common and most of us had gone through and can testify. The Bible says, ask and it shall be given, seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened. With this faith all those who request do receive" (1966).

The Church has a Constitution which directs and controls the organization's day to day administration; both the clergy and the laity are requested to abide by the regulations, rules and rights as the onstitution may provide.

With good leadership and stewardship, coupled with well planned administration by Rev. Bishop Benjamin Peace Epton, the Church of the Lord (Ghana) has a bright future. Some arrangements

have been made for the Church to grow towards internal standards. He is determined to achieve these goals. (Bishop Benjamin Peace Epton, COLG, Tema, Ghana).

CHAPTER 7**THE PRESENT CHURCH IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN GHANA****a) Administration****The Clergy**

The Church is headed by the Spiritual Leader who is called the Patriarch. Succession is spelt out in the Church Constitution: a new leader of a rank of a Bishop is voted for at the National Delegates Conference. The ranks of clergy include Bishops, Senior Prophets and Evangelists, Junior Prophets and Captains, and the Disciples (Pastors-in-training). Senior Ministers who are illiterates are designated Arch Deacons on their final promotion.

The Ministers have a common forum, the Minor Conference at which matters affecting the welfare of the Church and members are discussed for consideration by the National Delegates Conference.

The Laity

The top appointment is the Deacon and Deaconess, normally appointed by the Patriarch from the rank of Elders of the Church. This is in line with the appointment of men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, to take charge of the day to day management of the Church and members, recorded in Acts 6:18.

There is a Laity Conference which meet to discuss matters of interest and for the welfare of the Church, for the consideration of the National Delegate Conference.

Dioceses and Districts

The country has been divided into Dioceses comprising the Greater-Accra, Eastern, Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo, Central and Western. Each Diocese is headed by a Bishop or a Senior Prophet where there is no Bishop in the region. The Diocesan head chairs a Diocesan Committee to handle issues in the region. Each Diocese is also divided into Church Councils, comprising not less than three branch Churches. District Church Councils are headed by Senior Prophets and Prophetesses.

Parochial Church Councils

They comprise the Minister-in-Charge of a Branch and some elected Elders and members to take charge of the affairs of Branches.

b) Liturgy and Practices

The Church uses and teaches the Holy Bible. It believes in the Holy Trinity, and the singing of the Apostles' Creed forms part of the worship. Hymns and prayers are sung for each service. Spiritual songs accompanied by drumming and dancing are used. The daily programme of service includes an important item of "Visions, Messages and Dreams," during which the Pastor interprets what visions of messages some members experienced during the service. Dreams of general nature affecting the Church are interpreted for any necessary action to be taken in accordance with the messages involved. Private dreams are, however, dealt with privately when the dreamers are requested to consult the Pastor.

The Church believes in prayer for healing, both physically and spiritually; and olive oil and water are elements consecrated for healing purposes.

c) Effect of the rising number of African Instituted Churches (AICs)

Ghana has had four Republican or Civilian Governments since her independence in 1957. There have been three major interventions by the Military during the period: between 1966 and 1969, 1972 and 1979, and 1981 and 1992. Constitutions written for each civilian administration contain clauses of freedom of worship for all citizens. As the impact of AICs began to be felt for the fulfillment of the cultural aspirations of Christian religion, more and more of the AICs began to be established in all corners of the country. A conservative figure of the number is about one thousand.

Church Registration

In 1991 the military Peoples National Defence Council (PNDC) introduced a decree, PNDC Law 221 which required the registration of every Church organisation. The decree failed and was later abolished, mainly because of the refusal of the main line Churches (Methodist, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian) to register. The exercise was seen apparently as one which the PNDC wanted to use to clamp down on the AICs. Today, there are African Instituted Churches many of which, being one-man-church organizations are scattered all over the country.

Many of them worship in wooden and iron sheet structures, in school classrooms and under palm branch sheds. These numerous churches are supposed to operate as members of the Pentecostal Council of Ghana (PCG), which should regulate their activities. Obviously, as the nature and activities of some AICs are often criticized, the well-to-do AICs are also looked down upon by fellow Christians. The attitude has certainly had an ill-effect on the growth of the Church of the Lord (Ghana).

d) Is the Church growing?

One aspect of conditions affecting the growth of the Church has been mentioned above. There are others, like lack of motivation of the part of some Pastors of the Church, the mode and place of worship, etc., which have had a negative impact on the Church as a whole. Some of the branches have less than six regular attendants, although they have scores of "pray-for-me" members who do not make the Church grow. On the whole, however, there are clear signs of growth in many of the Branches. About eighteen more stations have been added to the number of Branches, making fortyfive in all as this date. (See Appendix No. 3 for the list of Branch Churches).

It is pathetic to note the decreasing number of members of some of our key Branch Churches. Takoradi and Kumasi are worth mentioning for this phenomenon. During the administration of the late Patriarch Yamoah, these two churches had large numbers of followers. At the Church's annual Tabornar Service, members attending from Kumasi, for instance, could be about 120. Today, the situation is different, and we cannot count a regular attendance of ten members in that Church.

e) Missions

The Church in recent years has opened new stations in the Greater-Accra Diocese, and up in the northern part of the country. The two notable stations of great importance, are the missions to entirely new remote areas of the country by two Pastors, both being graduates of the GNTCS.

i) Chinderri Mission Under Pastor Simon Atiso-Doe

Chinderri is a small farming village in north Volta Region, near Dambai, beyond the Volta Lake and the Oti River. The people are predominantly Kokombas. The village has no electricity and no good drinking water. The main farm produce is yam, although the millet is also grown; the standard of living can be described as poor.

Simon went to Chinderri in 1991. He met a small Christian community of Catholics. With patience and by dint of hard work, Simon has established a branch of the Church. He started with fifteen men and one female. Women did not like to join because the Pastor was single. Simon is now married and has a three-month old baby. He now has a membership of about 50.

Almost all of his members worshiped idols, and had no knowledge of Jesus Christ. He has succeeded to teach Christ as the saviour for all believers, and released them from paganism. From the start, the people feared to throw away their idols; but with prayer and fasting, Simon has been the instrument of the Holy Spirit to make them Christians.

They worship in a mud house with a thatch roof. The Church has acquired a six-acre plot for future development. Simon is now evangelizing in the villages around Chinderri. The Patriarch and two other senior ministers have visited to encourage him in his noble achievement. Pastor Atiso-Doe wants to remain there for some time.

ii) Bassa Quarters Mission Under Pastor James Andoh

Bassa Quarters is a small fishing village, near Bassa in Kwame Danso district of the Brong-Ahafo Region. The village is close to the Volta Lake, and the people are all fishermen and traders in the fishing industry. The people are predominantly of the Kokomba tribe, but there is high degree of mixed tribes coming from the inland fishing communities in the southern portion of Ghana.

James went to meet a community of pagans, and by hard work with the support of the Holy Spirit, he built a chapel roofed with iron sheets. He has had interesting experiences with the people as they threw away their idols to accept Christ Jesus as the Saviour of all believers.

James has opened a school for formal education in the village, the first of its kind, and has three classes.

Bassa Quarters is surrounded by many small fishing communities, and James has started to evangelize in those places. His appeal for help was given immediate attention by the Labone Church members, who purchased a bicycle for him to use for his visits to the scattered members of his mission. He is married with two children. James and Simon have the respect of the Labone Church because of the honest and obedient service they rendered during their stay in Accra in their discipleship and student days.

CHAPTER 8

NEED FOR REFORMS

The Church, as already noted above, came out of the Church of the Lord (Aladura), and inherited the way of worship, rituals and practices of the mother Church. In recent years, there have been discussions in trying to find out why most of the Branches are not increasing in their membership.

At a joint meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Bishop Council and the National Executive Council held on 18 October 1994, it was the view that the majority of members in many Churches are aged above fifty, and that the youth forms a small proportion of the membership. It was discovered that some practices in the Church are not attractive, they repel or distract the youth and others from joining. These include the washing of feet and the removal of sandals or shoes before entering the temple; the compulsory wearing of white gowns by both men and women; and the seating of women in menstruation in a special area in the church building called "Behind". It was noted that new members found it difficult when nicely dressed to walk around barefooted. This wearing of gowns too, is not in accordance with the culture of Ghanaians, it is foreign. On the isolation of women in their menstrual condition, moreover, there are no Biblical supports for these practices. The need to stop the use of "holy words" or "power words" we did not understand was raised for recommendation.

Recommendation

The Laity Conference met on 20-21 January, 1995, after examining the issues thoroughly, resolved to modify or put an end to them. The restriction of washing of feet and removal of sandals and women "behind the tent" should be abolished. The wearing of white gown should be modified for the women to have white slits and "kaba" as our culture shows.

The National Delegates Conference held in Accra on 18 February, 1995, examined the reforms, and generally agreed to the proposals. The Patriarch sent a circular asking Branches to study the proposals and submit their recommendations.

Opposition

As expected, it is an uneasy task to call on a person to put an end to old practices and change for new. Naturally, there has been opposition, unfortunately coming from the clergy. With time and education, the reforms will stay to enable the Church to be in a position to meet the challenges of the modern times. There is a call to stop the use of "holy words" or the "power words" of Dr. Oshitelu since no one understands any of them.

It is worthwhile at this point to record here the sort of protest that was raised by the Clergy, as we examine a letter dated 14 November, 1995, from Bishop J.K. Bassah Akorful, which begins:

After serious meditation and sleepless nights for months on the events going on in the Organisation, I am moved to write these few lines to save the entire organisation of our illustrious "Church of the Lord (Ghana)." Many know how I have been very persistent in hitting at the "Truth" which has earned me names in the organisation, I shall however not give my eyes to sleep or rest on my oars until I satisfy my conscience that my best has been done to save the organisation degenerating into obscurity.

Supporting his views with Bible references, the Bishop warned against the departure from the truth, faith, and salvation. After quoting Christ:

They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men; (Mark 7 V 7, NIV Bible).

The Bishop wondered why the exponents of the reforms did not "believe in the voice of the spirit as spoken through the late Dr. Oshitelu to Patriarch Yamoah." The letter ended with a threat:

I am extremely sorry that by the unholy and unscriptural system as now obtains in the Church, will scare many of us the top hierarchy to advise ourselves with those who stand by the "TRUTH".

A crucial decision on the future of the Church

A high powered meeting was convened on Saturday, 4 May, 1996, at the Bishop Yamoah Memorial Temple, Labone, Accra. The meeting comprised the Bishops, Senior Ministers, Trustees and the National Executive Committee. (see Appendix 4 for the list of the attendants). The purpose was for members to study the protest letter and make recommendations which will shape the future of the Church.

The four hour meeting discussed as the central theme of the above, what should be the Church's teaching on salvation. After discussing other theological expressions of Truth and Faith, the meeting concluded the acceptance of salvation which implies the Christian being saved from the guilt and penalty of sin, and being saved from the habit and slavery of sin, will be saved in the last days of the Lord's second coming (Romans 6:14,13:11; Gal. 2:19-20). Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus our Saviour. It is a free gift and does not depend on the works of man (Romans 3:27-28). The Word of God leads us to salvation in the teaching of Jesus Christ. It is the Christian belief in the righteousness of Christ that saves us. We noted Peter's statement in Acts 4:12 "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

The meeting agreed that the writings and visions of a church leader do not lead to salvation. Since it is not by the works of man that we obtain salvation, the Church should not depend on rituals or so called "holy words" or "holy acts" like washing of feet and removing shoes to worship God. These should be rejected. The "holy words" which are in the Church of the Lord (Aladura) hymn book which we use, are not understood by any person. The Church should produce a revised Hymn Book. Bishop Bassah Akorful's letter, attached to Appendix 4, was totally rejected for its contradictions and none conformity to the teaching of salvation and the gospel.

A declaration was made, that the Church Reforms as outlined above, should go on, and that the message should be carried on to the Districts and parochial Churches.

Labone Branch: A Model

The National Delegates Conference held in February, 1995, suggested the branches in Accra, Tema and Apam to put the reforms into practice. The Labone Church, Bishop Yamoah Memorial Temple, opened her doors and welcomed the reforms:

The female elders replaced the white gown with white slit and a nicely cut "kaba." The unions changed theirs too. The Ladies Praying Union (LPU), formerly wearing a blue cape and girdle, with a blue sash worn over the shoulder, changed to a white "kaba" on a blue slit. Similarly, the Band of Hope and the Dorcas Band formerly using green and blue purple respectively, changed to white tops over green and purple slits.

Other women wore any dress of their choice and taste. Those who chose to wear the gown were not stopped. The male members stopped the gowns and their multi-colour girdles, and changed to wearing any decent outfit, shirt with/without a tie over a pair of trousers, or a suit or a national cloth worn over the shoulder.

The washing of feet at the gate was abolished. Shoes and sandals were permitted in the temple, although some still take off their sandals during the course of worship.

Everyone enjoyed this freedom of dressing to attend church services. The restriction on ladies to sit at "behind the tent" if in their periods of menstruation, was abolished. Labone Church, however, maintained discipline among the members. The dress of the female members was recommended to be modest.

The Labone Church has seen significant changes over the past year. The regular number of Sunday worshippers of about thirty to forty, has more than tripled in recent weeks. Benches were used as seats, but now the Church has been filled with about fortyfive pews each seating five or six persons.

Twelve ceiling fans have been provided to keep the interior cool. Toilet and bath facilities have been provided. Above all, in the history of the Church of the Lord (Ghana), the first wedding ceremony took place in the Bishop Yamoah Memorial Temple on 25 May, 1996. Extra chairs were provided to seat about four hundred guests.

The Future of the Church

Much education is required so that the reforms can be effective in the rural areas. The Branches at Tema and Apam have reported progress since the reforms were put into practice. Nothing should be rushed through for the sake of a change, but with proper Bible teaching, the Church will attract more worshippers.

The Church has started reaping the benefit of giving her Pastors good theological and pastoral training at the GNTCS. The work of some of the past students has been commendable. Shortly, two more Pastors and one Bible Teacher trained at the GNTCS will join their colleagues in the field to improve upon the Church's missionary work.

Through these efforts, the Church hopes to get Bible studies intensified, TEE classes encouraged and the existing Youth groups improved upon to evangelize more of the youth to join the Church.

The hurch has a National Educational Committee headed by the Bible Teacher. It is the policy of the Church that the Bible Teacher will take the responsibility of organizing seminars for both Pastors and the Laity, and take charge of the education programme of the Church. The teaching in respect of reforms will be given enough attention, to take into consideration effective quantitative and qualitative growth of the Church.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

A. INTERIM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (IMC) 1988.

24. CHURCH OF THE LORD (GHANA)

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Elder E.K. Osafo | --- Chairman |
| 2. Elder E.K. Nsiah | --- Member |
| 3. Deacon T. Agyare | --- Member |
| 4. Elder J.K. Eshun | --- Member |
| 5. Rev. E.K. Turkson | --- Member |
| 6. Rev. Osei Somuah | --- Member |
| 7. Elder S. Tawiah-Buttah | --- Member/Fin. Secretary |
| 8. Elder M.T. Sappor | --- Member/Secretary |

APPENDIX 2

A. BRANCH CHURCHES DURING THE PERIOD OF THE INTERIM

ACCRA DISTRICT

1. Osu/Labone
2. Tema 1
3. Tema 9
4. Somanya
5. Nsawam
6. Malam
7. Mateheko

SWEDRU DISTRICT

1. Swedru
2. Apam
3. Saltpond
4. Enyan Abaasa
5. Baafi Krom
6. Winneba
7. Agona Asafo
8. Asebu
9. Kwanyako

TAKORADI DISTRICT

1. Sekondi
2. New Takoradi
3. Tanokrom

KOFORIDUA DISTRICT

1. Suhum
2. Anyinam
3. Asamankese

KUMASI/WENCHI DISTRICT

1. Kumasi Asafo
2. Wenchi
3. Dicheonso

APPENDIX 3

BRANCH CHURCHES AS OF JULY, 1996

GREATER ACCRA DIOCESE

1. Labone
2. Tema 1
3. Tema 9
4. Tema Newtown
5. Madina
6. Somanya
7. Bubuashie
8. Achimota
9. Mamprobi
10. Nsawam
11. Teshie

EASTERN DIOCESE

1. Koforidua
2. Suhum
3. Asamankese
4. Kwabeng
5. Anyinam
6. Asesewa

ASHANTI/BRONG AHAFO

1. Kumasi Asafo
2. Wenchi
3. Bassah-Quarters
4. Chinderri

APPENDIX 4

LIST OF ATTENDANTS AT THE HIGH POWERED MEETING HELD ON 4TH MAY, 1996 TO DISCUSS BISHOP ARKORFUL'S PROTEST LETTER ON THE REFORMS

CENTRAL DIOCESE

1. Wenneba
2. Enyan Abaasa
3. Baafi Krom
4. Saltpond
5. Apam
6. Swedru
7. Kwanyako
8. Agona Asafo
9. Asebu Gomoa
10. Ahwem
11. Bawjuase

WESTERN DIOCESE

1. Tanokrom
2. Sekondi
3. Adiembra
4. Kwasi-Mintim
5. Tarkwa
6. Wassa-Manso
7. New Takoradi
8. Effiekuma
9. North Ridge
10. Pepease
11. Danfare

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Patriarch Ben P. Epton | – Chairman |
| 2. Bishop J.K. Bassah-Arkorful | – Diocesan Head, Western |
| 3. Bishop A.K. Hackman | – Diocesan Head, Central |
| 4. Arch-Deacon Peter Essiem | – Diocesan Head, Eastern |
| 5. Senior Evangelist Thomas Agyare | – Registrar |
| 6. Senior Evangelist Grace Onoma | – Senior Minister |
| 7. Deacon E.K. Nsiah | – Chancellor |
| 8. Deacon C.A. Assiamah | – Trustee |
| 9. Deacon K.G. Anguah | – Trustee |
| 10. Deacon J.K. Ewuakye | – Trustee |
| 11. Deaconess Paulina Eyiah | – Trustee |
| 12. Deacon J.K. Ghunney | – Trustee |
| 13. Elder Sam Tawiah-Buttah | – Financial Secretary Gen. |
| 14. Elder Faustina Dennis | – Trustee |

In Attendance

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Church-Mother Elizabeth Epton | – Mother General |
| 2. Deaconess Mercy Nsiah | – Bible Teacher |
| 3. Elder Vet Okuley | – Bible Teacher |
| 4. Jnr. Prophet M. Pekyir | – District Head |
| 5. Jnr. Prophet John Teinor | – District Head |

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WRITTEN NOTES

H.E. THE PATRIARCH, BISHOP BEN PEACE EPTON THE CHURCH OF THE LORD
(GHANA).