

## EARLY HISTORY OF DAG HEWARD-MILLS, FOUNDER OF THE LIGHTHOUSE CHAPEL INTERNATIONAL, A CHARISMATIC DENOMINATION IN GHANA EMMANUEL NTERFUL<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Dag Heward-Mills, the founder and leader of the Lighthouse Chapel International, is a colossus in the charismatic milieu of Ghana. This article seeks to provide a historical background of the founder, his birth, education and early spiritual formation, challenges and successes of the Lighthouse Chapel International on the charismatic movement of Ghana. The story of Bishop Dag Heward-Mills and the Lighthouse Chapel International is a particularly interesting one because, it is a potpourri of events, from the persecutions it was fraught with in its early beginnings to being a shining light onto the nations of the world.

### INTRODUCTION

The history of the LCI cannot be adequately discussed without examining the life, contributions and ministry of its founder. Being a first generation denomination, the church's life and development have largely been shaped by the inputs, insights, directives and vision of the founder.

### BIRTH, EDUCATION AND EARLY SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Paul Gifford (2004:25)<sup>2</sup> provides a reasonably good albeit brief introduction to Bishop Dag Heward-Mills in his book *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy*: "Bishop Heward-Mills, son of a Ghanaian father and Swiss mother, trained as a doctor and his church grew out of his fellowship of medical professionals around Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital". (on 25 December, 2000).

Although Heward-Mills grew up in a Christian home and was made to attend church regularly with his parents at the Holy Trinity Parish of the Anglican Church in Accra, this did not lead to his conversion as a born-again Christian. Heward-Mills alleges that in the Anglican tradition in which he grew up, mission was based on formal education through which children were taught the rudiments of prayer and ritual without emphasis on personal conversion (Audio Camp Message "Give Thyself Wholly", 2004)<sup>3</sup>.

The latter spiritual transformation occurred at the age of twelve at secondary school through his association with Scripture Union (Heward-Mills, 2009:134-5)<sup>4</sup>. Dag Heward-Mills attended the prestigious Achimota School, where he joined the Scripture Union (SU). The SU, a parachurch Christian fellowship which is found in most Ghanaian high schools and tertiary institutions, primarily tutors its members on prayer, the study of the Bible and its application for Christian living and personal salvation, a clear theological distinction from what Heward-Mills had experienced in his parents' church. In the Gold Coast (the pre-independence name of Ghana) by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the foreign Christian missions, including the Basel, Methodist, Bremen and Roman Catholic churches, had established hundreds of mission schools and churches in southern Ghana to Christianize the nation. However, by the 1950s, continuing idol worship by congregants and increasing secularism of the youth eroded the sound biblical teachings on

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<sup>2</sup> Paul, Gifford. *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, 2004.). This book looks at Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy

<sup>3</sup> Audio Camp Message "Give Thyself Wholly", 2004. This is an unpublished camp message Preached by Dag Heward-Mills in 2004. In this message, Dag Heward-Mills narrates his Spiritual formation and upbringing.

<sup>4</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *Many Are Called* (Dansoman, Accra: Parchment House, 2009), 134-5.

salvation and Christian living, weakening the spiritual foundations; the churches needed reminding of the clear gospel message brought by the early missionary pioneers. The SU was born to help the nation “know the distinction between a merely outward profession of Christianity on the one hand, and personal friendship with Jesus Christ on the other” (Barker and Boadi-Siaw, 2003: 8-13)<sup>5</sup>.

The mission strategy employed by the SU was to focus on the youth in Senior High Schools. It limited its mission theology to encouraging them to know Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer and evangelism (Koduah, 2004:329)<sup>6</sup>. The significance of this mission theology approach was that it ensured that the youth discovered the difference between experiential and nominal Christianity, making it possible for personal conversion, and also exposing them to such biblical pneumatic phenomena as glossalia and the other gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4, 1 Cor 12:4-11), something that could not be easily experienced within the spiritual environment of Heward-Mills’ parent church. The spiritual influence of the Scripture Union (SU) in Ghana is appropriately captured by Asamoah-Gyadu (2005:103)<sup>7</sup>: “The tremendous influence of the SU in Ghanaian Christianity is evident in how the movement’s name and affiliation with it became conterminous with conservative evangelicalism”.

It is an established fact that a considerable number of contemporary Ghanaian church leaders of the Pentecostal-charismatic denominations in Ghana had their spiritual roots and upbringing in the SU, as is alluded to by Barker and Boadi-Siaw (2005:161)<sup>8</sup>: “Most of the more recent Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches are led by men and women who were nurtured in the SU and who are happy to give SU the credit for bringing them to Christ and giving them their early teachings ... people like Alfred Nyamekye (House of Faith), Mensah Otabil (International Central Gospel Church), Dag Heward-Mills (Lighthouse Chapel International) ... and Richard Siaw (International Charismatic Church)”.]

Barker and Boadi-Siaw in their discourse on the SU also quote Heward-Mills (2005:161)<sup>9</sup> reminiscing about how he became a born-again Christian and about the subsequent impact of the SU on his life: “Somebody in the SU taught me how to have my quiet time, to read my Bible, to fast, and all that. I definitely got born again through the SU, and from then on the SU was everything to me”.

These statements by Asamoah-Gyadu, Barker and Boadi-Siaw as well as Heward-Mills himself clearly demonstrate that the SU played a significant role in shaping Heward-Mills’ spiritual destiny and that of other contemporary charismatic church leaders. It seems reasonable, however, also to postulate that in Heward-Mills’ case his early parental promptings for church attendance may have introduced him to Christianity.

Even though the future charismatic leaders mentioned by Barker and Boadi-Siaw were exposed to these theological orientations of the SU, this researcher has not come across any clear direct linkage to their calling to engage in church planting. To the undiscerning, it does not appear that the SU had a more than foundational impact on these leaders that have been mentioned by Barker and Boadi-Siaw. Some evidence rather suggests that these leaders had further spiritual developments with other Christian fellowships and received the call of God to serve Him along the way. This latter assertion is alluded to by Larbi (*Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*) when he states, for example, about Mensa Otabil, a protégé of the SU, and a contemporary prominent charismatic church planter, that “he, however, indicates

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<sup>5</sup> P. Barker, &S. Boadi-Siaw, *Changed by the Word: The Story of Scripture Union Ghana*. (Bangalore: Bangalore Offset Printers, 2005), 8-13.

<sup>6</sup> Alfred, Koduah. *Christianity in Ghana Today*. (Accra: Church of Pentecost,2004), 329.

<sup>7</sup> Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Strange Warmth – Wesleyan Perspectives on Ministry, Renewal and Discipleship*. (Accra: Asempa Publishers,2005),103.

<sup>8</sup> P. Barker, &S. Boadi-Siaw, *Changed by the Word: The Story of Scripture Union Ghana*. (Bangalore: Bangalore Offset Printers, 2005), 161.

<sup>9</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *Loyalty and Disloyalty*. (Dansoman, Accra: Parchment House,2005), 161.

that the major influences he experienced came from the AG [Assemblies of God Church], the Tema fellowship and the Powerhouse Fellowship” (2001:336<sup>10</sup>, explanation mine).

This notwithstanding, it is probable that there seems to be an indirect and subtle influence of the SU experience on the eventual launching out of these leaders into missions. The SU clearly did not form churches, but rather “taught responsible church membership right from the start. Consequently, SU members mostly continued to worship and serve in the churches they had come from” (Barker and Boadi-Siaw, 2005: 148)<sup>11</sup>.

However, the born-again experience such people had gone through, coupled with the fact that the historic mainline western mission churches to which they belonged did not encourage the expression of such pneumatic experiences, “drove” them out to form churches to pursue, acquire and express charismata. I concur with Asamoah-Gyadu’s (2005:17)<sup>12</sup> postulation which buttresses this claim: “However, in the process of indigenous assimilation of Christianity, African Christians found unsatisfactory the tendency of traditional western missions to explain away the mighty works of God found in the Bible ...inability of western theologies to respond to their deep-seated yearnings for protection and for the vitalizing experience of the Spirit underscored in the Bible...”.

Expounding further in an attempt to explain the genesis of the churches birthed by these charismatic leaders, Asamoah-Gyadu (2005:17)<sup>13</sup> declares that “in response, the independent indigenous Pentecostal churches initiated what some observers interpret as a “second Christianization”. I note that charismatic churches fall under this classification by the author.

It is most likely, therefore, that even though the mission theology of the SU did not directly involve church planting, the spiritual influence it exerted at least rendered these future charismatic church leaders “uncomfortable” in the older historic western mission churches, a situation which catalyzed their exit to pursue what they perceived to be the call of God for their lives through church planting and in the process to develop their own missiological ideologies.

## EARLY CHRISTIAN MINISTRY WORK

The originator of the LCI learned the rudiments of Christian ministry through his participation and subsequent leadership role in the SU, where he was involved in soul winning, following up converts, as well as singing and playing musical instruments. When he gained admission to the University of Ghana in 1982 to read medicine, Heward-Mills continued to be involved in ministry work. At the university, he started a branch of Calvary Road Incorporated (CRI) which comprised a group of young vibrant Christians who evangelised through music and drama (Heward-Mills, 2008c: 9-10)<sup>14</sup>. Like the SU, the mission theology of the CRI was limited to Bible study, prayer and evangelism, especially of the youth in senior high schools and tertiary institutions, through music and drama. Asamoah-Gyadu (2005:107)<sup>15</sup> rightly describes CRI as one of the evangelistic youth musical teams and ministries which started in the early 1970s. He explains that these groups “innovatively modernized Christian music and helped to chart a new

<sup>10</sup> Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*. (Dansoman, Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001), 336. Explanation given in the text is mine.

<sup>11</sup> P. Barker & S. Boadi-Siaw, *Changed by the Word: The Story of Scripture Union Ghana*. (Bangalore: Bangalore Offset Printers, 2005), 148.

<sup>12</sup> Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu. *Strange Warmth – Wesleyan Perspectives on Ministry, Renewal and Discipleship*. (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2005), 17.

<sup>13</sup> Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu. *Strange Warmth – Wesleyan Perspectives on Ministry, Renewal and Discipleship*. (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2005), 17

<sup>14</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *Lay People & the Ministry*. (Wellington, S. Africa: Lux Verbi, 2008), 9-10

<sup>15</sup> Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Strange Warmth – Wesleyan Perspectives on Ministry, Renewal and Discipleship*. (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2005), 107

course for Ghanaian Christian worship”. I agree with Asamoah-Gyadu (2005:108)<sup>16</sup> regarding the contributions of CRI to Ghanaian Christianity: “If there is validity in Cox’s belief that the root of both jazz and Pentecostalism are to be found in Africa (Harvey Cox, 1996:148)<sup>17</sup>, then the evangelistic style of the music teams of the 1970s and 80s represented a great and ingenious recovery for Ghanaian Christianity”. This innovative musical format (the advocates of *The Cape Town Commitment* 2010: 25<sup>18</sup> consider the arts as “a valid and valuable component of our call to discipleship”) brought about new ways of worship which were associated with excitement and joy, ingredients that were appealing to the masses of the youth, as opposed to the more predominant and lethargic forms of worship by the mainline historic churches and the classical Pentecostals. It is this musical format and worship which prevails among Ghanaian charismatics today, clearly demonstrating the contributions that groups like the CRI made towards the origination of the Ghanaian charismatic movement.

Heward-Mills (2011b:166)<sup>19</sup> contends that the continued existence of the University of Ghana branch of the CRI that he established is evidence that this period of his ministry was successful. The evangelistic emphasis and zeal of CRI helped to shape and cement his love for evangelism. However, Heward-Mills eventually left CRI to start the Lighthouse Chapel International because of some fundamental disagreements with the overall mission of the organization.

Further influences on the spiritual development and ministry of Heward-Mills(2011b: 104)<sup>20</sup> came from the teachings of other church leaders outside Ghana, particularly those of Kenneth Hagin of Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Tulsa, Oklahoma. In several of his writings, Heward-Mills mentions spiritual impartation from Kenneth Hagin, whom he considers one of the spiritual fathers who trained him in ministry. For example, Heward-Mills(2008c:137)<sup>21</sup> has written about receiving an anointing whilst listening to a Kenneth Hagin sermon on tape in 1988 and credits all the blessings of his life as having come through the anointing he received from Hagin (Heward-Mills, 2008b: 84-85)<sup>22</sup>. Other ministers of the gospel that Heward-Mills asserts have inspired him are David Yonggi Cho (of the Yoido Full Gospel Central Church, Seoul, South Korea), Reinhard Bonnke (Christ for All Nations Ministries), Benny Hinn (Benny Hinn Ministries) and John Wesley (the founder of the Methodist Church) (Heward-Mills, 2012: 16-17, 19)<sup>23</sup>.

The effects of these men on the LCI’s founder’s thoughts, ministry development and work are varied. Kenneth Hagin’s audio messages and books (for example, *Exceedingly Growing Faith*, 1973) and Fred Price’s preaching and teaching style influenced the founder’s understanding of the concept of biblical faith and homiletics respectively. Whereas Heward-Mills gleaned the passion for soul-winning and practical mass evangelism practices from Reinhard Bonnke’s audiovisual teachings and books (for example, *Living A Life of Fire*,2010), he claims that he gained clear insights into the healing ministry, a significant characteristic of his Healing Jesus Crusades from following the teachings of Benny Hinn, primarily through his audiovisual sermons and books, and particularly through a videotape sermon preached at Rhema Bible Church, Johannesburg, South Africa (*Seven Steps to the Anointing*, 1990). Heward-Mills explains that contributions from the ministry of Yonggi Cho have come from Cho’s church growth principles, including

<sup>16</sup> Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu. *Strange Warmth – Wesleyan Perspectives on Ministry, Renewal and Discipleship*. (Accra: Asempa Publishers,2005),108

<sup>17</sup> Harvey, Cox. *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century*. (London: Cassell, 1996.), 148.

<sup>18</sup> *The Cape Town Commitment*. (Cape Town: The Lausanne Movement, 2010), 25. A journal that talks about world evangelization

<sup>19</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *How You Can Be in the Perfect Will of God*. (Dansoman, Accra: Parchment House, 2011), 166.

<sup>20</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *How You Can Be in the Perfect Will of God*. (Dansoman, Accra: Parchment House, 2011), 104.

<sup>21</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *Lay People & the Ministry*. (Wellington, S. Africa: Lux Verbi, 2008), 137.

<sup>22</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *Remembrance*. (Wellington, S. Africa: Lux Verbi,), 84-85

<sup>23</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *The Art of Following*. (Accra: Parchment House, 2012), 16-17, 19.



prayer, small subdivisions and the use of monitoring systems like charts to help handle large numbers of church members. It is reasonable to postulate that the variegated ideas of these men have together augmented the missiological and theological philosophies of Heward-Mills' multifaceted ministry. Faith, passion for soul-winning and the manifestation of biblical healing and miraculous phenomena (Matthew 10:7-8) are commonly associated with his worldwide mass evangelistic outreach, the Healing Jesus Crusade. The fact that he employs the church growth principles of "busselization" (small subdivisions, cells which are known in the LCI as bussells) and massive organized congregational prayers, point to the indelible niche that Yonggi Cho's teachings have created in his mindset. The Wesleyan influence on Heward-Mills' missiological approach is manifested in his worldwide itinerant pastoral training conferences, evangelism and church planting, as well as vestiges of the governance structure of the Methodist Church such as pastoral assessment conferences and dioceses in the LCI's own church governance. The combined influences of Heward-Mills' mentors have had a highly significant influence on his life and ministry. They have served as the unmistakable bedrock for the formation, growth and the development of the LCI and its church expansion exploits.

### **CALL TO MINISTRY, ESTABLISHMENT OF LCI, EARLY CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES**

Heward-Mills (2008a:90)<sup>24</sup> intimates that he experienced the first stirrings of the call of God in 1985 and describes how he eventually decided to obey this calling in 1987 as follows: "At 5 o'clock in the morning on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1987 I decided to obey the call of God on my life. It was in the early hours of the first day of that New Year when I decided to take up the mantle and become a pastor. I knew that I had been called and I decided to obey to become a pastor".

During this period, Heward-Mills had relocated to the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital to continue his medical studies; where he established another branch of the CRI([www.daghewardmills.org/about-us/history](http://www.daghewardmills.org/about-us/history)). He contends that he did not have any dramatic spiritual experiences with regards to his calling, but rather followed his desire to serve the Lord, and the conviction of the small voice of God in his heart. Besides, he believed that he had no choice to do anything else with his life except to preach the gospel. The scriptural base of this conviction is I Corinthians 14:1 and I Timothy 3:1, which sanction the presence of a desire for ministry as a positive intention. Heward-Mills (2009:8)<sup>25</sup> teaches his followers to be open to this type of calling by God. Even though some LCI pastors have experienced dramatic supernatural events in relation to their calling, the majority of LCI pastors have followed the founder's example in making the decision to become pastors.

Between 1985 and 1987 Heward-Mills and some other medical students started regular prayer meetings at night in preparation towards a church ministry, being strongly convinced that the Spirit of God was leading him to start a church. He notified the leadership of CRI of this aspiration. The latter refused to support his desire to transform the branch of CRI that he was leading at the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital, Accra, into a church, as this was against the organization's policy. Heward-Mills, however, believed that there was more to evangelizing the youth through music and drama. In reference to the above-mentioned policy, Asamoah-Gyadu noted that "at the time, the leadership of Calvary Road Inc. insisted that their constitution did not permit them to associate with a church" (2005:118, footnote)<sup>26</sup>.

The CRI, like the SU, encouraged their converts to either continue to worship in their mother churches or find appropriate churches of their choice to join, leaving the continuous spiritual development of their converts to the converts themselves. Heward-Mills and some other CRI leaders at this stage had strong convictions to form churches, believing that it was in conformity with their desire to not only see the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) fulfilled, but also provide churches as "spiritual homes" to their

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<sup>24</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *Tell Them*. (Dansoman, Accra: Parchment House, 2008), 90.

<sup>25</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *Many Are Called*. (Dansoman, Accra: Parchment House 2009), 8.

<sup>26</sup> Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu. *Strange Warmth – Wesleyan Perspectives on Ministry, Renewal and Discipleship*. (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2005), 118.

converts for discipleship (Matt 28:20) in order to foster their complete spiritual development. This assertion is endorsed correctly by the *Cape Town Commitment* (2010:38)<sup>27</sup> when it indicates the need for intensified efforts through Bible teaching to make disciples and nurture new believers, and to ensure that those of them whom God may call will acquire the biblical criteria of maturity and servanthood. However, the leadership of the CRI maintained the importance of the continuity of their organization as a music/drama evangelistic approach to missions. This schism proved to be an inexorable theological difference for Heward-Mills, so he departed from the CRI.

Heward-Mills' theological position is very convincing in this matter. This view is predicated on the scriptural examples of Jesus' apostles who translated His command to spread the gospel everywhere by planting churches (Acts 2-5, 11, 13-14); these biblical texts vindicate the posture of Heward-Mills and his companions. Evangelism is incomplete unless it is combined with church planting to garner the most profits from the soul-winning efforts. The *Cape Town Commitment* (2010:47)<sup>28</sup> appropriately observes that the New Testament shows the close partnership between the work of evangelism and church planting. Many missiologists and church growth exponents agree with these positions. Wagner (1991:11)<sup>29</sup>, for instance, observes that "Church planting is the most effective evangelistic strategy under heaven", and Smith (2000:202)<sup>30</sup> explains church planting as the effort to evangelise humanity to Christ and *assimilate them into reproducing Christian fellowships* (emphasis mine).

The inherent weakness in the CRI's theology of mission is revealed by the fact that the organization could not continue to sustain the status quo, eventually reversed its non-church association/church planting policy and metamorphosed into several charismatic churches. I share Asamoah-Gyadu's assertion that this theological mission approach of the CRI seems eventually to have frustrated more of its leaders, including Ebenezer Markwei, who had been its president for eleven years, with the result that they followed the path of Heward-Mills to establish churches (2005:118)<sup>31</sup>.

It would be correct to conclude that the LCI's church expansion effort has a direct link to these early theological beliefs of Heward-Mills to participate in the realisation of the Great Commission. Heward-Mills resigned from CRI to start the Lighthouse Chapel International in 1988. The church was started with five people (2007:166)<sup>32</sup>. Two of these five original church members have been instrumental in the progress and development of the denomination to date: Adelaide Baiden, who later became the wife of Heward-Mills and oversees an enormous Women's Ministry, and Emmanuel Abednego T. Sackey, who became Heward-Mills' main assistant. Of his association with the latter in particular, Heward-Mills(2008a:123) maintains that "During my early days at the university, I met a law student called E.A.T. Sackey...At that time, I was a medical student and he was a law student, but neither medicine nor law could drown our divine call and desire to win more people to Christ. I am glad that we are both in the ministry today".

The main evangelistic tool in the early days of the church was preaching at dawn at the hostels of medical, nursing and other students of the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital. New converts were visited, counselled and prayed for and invited to join the newly formed church. With time, the five-member congregation that started in a classroom of the School of Hygiene of the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital, Accra, grew in numbers and strength, with the bulk of the congregation being made up of young medical, nursing and other allied health students. This core group of initial members of the LCI essentially defined the

<sup>27</sup> *The Cape Town Commitment*. (Cape Town: The Lausanne Movement, 2010), 38. A journal that talks about world evangelization.

<sup>28</sup> *The Cape Town Commitment*. (Cape Town: The Lausanne Movement, 2010), 47. A journal that talks about world evangelization.

<sup>29</sup> Peter, C. Wagner. *Strategies for Church Growth*. (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1987), 11.

<sup>30</sup> E.C. Smith. *Balanced Church Growth*. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 2000), 202.

<sup>31</sup> Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu. *Strange Warmth – Wesleyan Perspectives on Ministry, Renewal and Discipleship*. (Accra: Asempra Publishers, 2005), 118.

<sup>32</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *Church Planting*. (Dansoman, Accra: Parchment House, 2007), 166

professional profile of the church's members; to date, the LCI is often referred to by some people as the "church of medical doctors" because the church has continued to attract health professionals, with several medical doctors and nurses also responding to the call to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. This phenomenon has impacted positively on the social ministry of the church. Having so many health professionals in the congregation has made it possible for the church to engage large groups of medical personnel to undertake medical missions to the underprivileged, especially during the Healing Jesus Crusades (HJC) which is one of the church's evangelistic programmes. Originally known as the Korle-Bu Christian Centre, the church's name was changed to The Lighthouse, then The Lighthouse Chapel International to reflect its desire to reach many more people for Christ, in concert with the biblical injunctions for worldwide evangelism (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47) and removing at the same time the limitation of Heward-Mills' ministry to the confines of the hospital environs. It was important for the fledgling church to harvest not only the surrounding sheep but also to follow in the steps of Jesus when he said "and other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

From 1985 to the end of 1990, Heward-Mills led the church as a lay pastor. During this period, he practised as a doctor at the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital and also had a transport, sand and stone supplies private business to sustain himself in ministry (Bandoh, 2012: 55)<sup>33</sup>. This ministry style later birthed the Lay Ministry initiative, which is one of the defining features of the LCI denomination.

The lay ministry is known to some as the tent ministry, and is premised on the fact that not only is it possible to combine secular work with the ministry but that they are clear biblical examples that should be emulated for effective church expansion. The apostle Paul is the foremost New Testament example of this type of church planter (Acts 18:3-4; 20:32-36). Heward-Mills believes that the laity can be trained and equipped to make great contributions towards church planting, and this policy has led to not less than seventy percent of the LCI's church planters being committed to bivocational ministries. In 1990 Gifford correctly documented that most of the LCI pastors were part-time, a situation which pertains to date. Not only does the lay ministry allow for church expansion at drastically reduced cost but also facilitates their proliferation at a great rate, making it one of the key strategic components of the LCI's church expansion model.

The fledgling church had significant setbacks, including disloyalty to Heward-Mills' leadership by his closest associate and some key members. In the words of Heward-Mills(2005:30)<sup>34</sup>, "I remember early in the ministry, a spirit of disloyalty entered my church". This took the form of incessant criticism of his preaching style and doubt of his ministerial calling, since he was a medical student and lacked formal theological training. Heward-Mills does not give any hint about the existence of theological differences with his key associate, but given that the church seemed to be doing well at this stage, I would want to hypothesize that the attitude of the key associate and others could have been an outward expression of an intrinsic doubt concerning the future security of the church, since to them it was reasonable that the "blind could not lead the blind" (Luke 6:39). It is also reasonable to conjecture that this early experience of disloyalty became an important factor in the eventual development of one of the key theological and missiological beliefs of Heward-Mills, namely, that loyalty is an indispensable ingredient for missions, especially in the context of denominationalism. Heward-Mills(2005:31)<sup>35</sup> himself observes, "some may ask why I teach so much on the subject of loyalty. This is because I have experienced the devastating impact disloyalty can have on the ministry".

Eventually he parted ways with his key associate, who was then replaced by E.A.T. Sackey. Other challenges he faced in the early days of the church included persecution from medical students, as described

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<sup>33</sup> Eric, S. Bandoh. *Transforming Lives Through Christian Mission: A case study of Lighthouse Chapel International Social Ministry*. M.Th. Dissertation, Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Accra, 2012.,55

<sup>34</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *Loyalty and Disloyalty*. (Dansoman, Accra: Parchment House, 2005),30

<sup>35</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *Loyalty and Disloyalty*. (Dansoman, Accra: Parchment House, 2005),31

by Toss Mills-Odoi (2008:141)<sup>36</sup>: “The church came under persecution from medical students who claimed that they were being disturbed by these prayers...and requested that the church be closed down or relocated from the School of Hygiene”.

Later, however, hospital administrators of the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital became increasingly uncooperative, possibly because of the increasing social nuisance characterized by excessive noise from the loud singing, clapping and prayers as well as the mere presence of an increasing large army of intruders in the limited confines of the Teaching Hospital; all of this might have affected the smooth execution of both academic work and healthcare delivery. This stance of the administrators made it difficult for the church to have a consistent meeting place, forcing the church venue to be changed frequently.

There was also opposition to Heward-Mills’ calling by some established ministers of the charismatic denominations, based primarily on their doubts that a medical student without adequate pastoral and theological training could lead a church. Heward Mills(2007: 133, 164)<sup>37</sup>, in describing hostilities against his ministry in the early days of the church’s life, said: “When I started out in ministry, I was utterly and totally rejected by the ministers of my day ... Other pastors claimed I was not called by God and I had no business starting a church”

I do not subscribe to the reasons adduced by the ministerial opponents of Heward-Mills to his ministry. First, there is enough evidence to demonstrate that a majority of the leaders of the charismatic churches frowned on the need for formal pastoral and theological training, therefore basing the entirety of their ministries on what they perceived to be an inner conviction of the call of God as well as “revelation knowledge”. Larbi (2001: 446)<sup>38</sup> critiques this posturing of the Neo-Pentecostals when he asserts: “In the effort of some of the leaders to legitimise old-fashioned views on education, some Neo-Pentecostals have tried in their study of epistemology to coin what appears to be a new vocabulary: “revelation knowledge” (knowledge from above) as opposed to sense knowledge (empirical knowledge)”.

Larbi’s description of the prevailing norm regarding theological education among Pentecostals of the early stock is correct. It is an affirmation of Heward-Mills’ lack of theological education as a Pentecostal and his refusal to allow his status as a medical student to cast a doubt on his ministerial initiatives. The scriptural injunction allows and in fact instructs Christians “to walk by faith and to live by faith” (2 Cor 5:7; Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11), meaning that faith or one’s belief is paramount for any Christian venture. It can be concluded from the above analysis, therefore, that Heward-Mills operated within the pervading charismatic theology of mission at the time.

It is instructive to observe that these theological orientations of Heward-Mills, including the participation of the laity in missions, and the availability of desire for the work of God as a plausible sign of calling into missions, have become key components of his missiological understanding. It is also clear that the current trend over the last decade or so of the acquisition of formal theological education by many charismatic leaders, and the establishment of prominent Bible schools (Koduah, 2004:127)<sup>39</sup> is an indication of a shift from their earlier philosophy of ministry.

Despite the challenges, the church grew steadily and outgrew the capacity of all the available temporary meeting places at the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital. This, in addition to persistent efforts by the authorities of the Medical School to prevent the church from holding its services at the Medical School premises, led to the decision in 1993 to purchase a dilapidated cinema hall in Korle Gonno, one of the poorest slums of Accra. The choice of this property was occasioned by its ready availability and proximity to the church’s meeting place, and also the willingness of the property owner to accept payment for it over

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<sup>36</sup> Albert T. Mills-Odoi. *The History of the Lighthouse Chapel International*. M.Th. Dissertation, Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Accra, 2008.,141

<sup>37</sup> Dag Heward-Mills, *Church Planting*. (Dansoman, Accra: Parchment House, 2007),133&164

<sup>38</sup> Kingsley, Larbi. *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*. (Dansoman, Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001), 446.

<sup>39</sup> Alfred, Koduah. *Christianity in Ghana Today*. (Accra: Church of Pentecost, 2004),127.



a period of time. Although the original purchase price for the building was 37,500,000 cedis (equivalent to a little over 100,000 US dollars) it was later reduced to 35,000,000 (verbal communication with E.A.T. Sackey, 2012)<sup>40</sup>. The events that ultimately precipitated the move to acquire a church building have also been described by Toss Mills-Odoi (2008:143)<sup>41</sup>: “The pressure was spearheaded by the then Executive Secretary of the Medical School, who placed restriction on the activities of the church and levied a fee of 5,000 cedis a month as rent for the use of the place ... A search began to look for an alternative meeting place and an old cinema, Ophir Cinema at Korle-Gonno, was located”.

The church managed to transform this old structure into an ultra-modern church complex, which eventually became the first international headquarters of the LCI denomination, facilitating the stability, growth and security of the church and providing the necessary ambience for the initiation of the church’s expansion to other places. This positive impact propelled the construction and ownership of permanent church halls into one of the key strategic components of the LCI’s model, which has advanced the great gains in church expansion through church planting.

Towards the end of 1990 Heward-Mills felt the Lord leading him to abandon all secular pursuits in order to enter into full-time ministry, which decision he took on January 1, 1991. The call into full-time ministry was received with difficulty, anxiety, apprehension and fear. Heward-Mills (2007: 79)<sup>42</sup> describes these sentiments severally as “it was not an easy decision for me”, and “what if the church didn’t work”.

## CONCLUSION

In spite of all these emotions, he was determined to fulfil his calling as a full-time minister because he was convinced that preaching the gospel was the only alternative he had for his life, and that “I feel that if I do anything apart from preach His word, God will destroy me”. He depended on financial support from his mother and sister to enable him to continue in the early years of full-time ministry (Heward-Mills, 2011c:108)<sup>43</sup>. To God be the all glory, the church has been able to surmount the many persecutions and vicissitudes it was fraught with and today, it has become one of the leading and thriving churches around the world.

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<sup>40</sup> Verbal Communication with E.A.T. Sackey, 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Albert, T. Mills-Odoi. *The History of the Lighthouse Chapel International*. M.Th. Dissertation, Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Accra, 2008., 143

<sup>42</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *Church Planting*. (Dansoman, Accra: Parchment House, 2007), 79

<sup>43</sup> Dag, Heward-Mills. *Remembrance: Those Who Forget*. (Accra: Parchment House, 2011), 108.

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