

CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE REV. DR. MARK CHRISTIAN HAYFORD AND HISTORY OF REDEMPTION BAPTIST CHURCH @ 121 YEARS

... ..

In July 2007, **Rev. Dr. Kojo Osei-Wusuh, a former President of the Ghana Baptist Convention delivered a paper at the Baptist World Alliance's (BWA) Annual Gathering on the History of the Baptist Church in Ghana.** It was attended by Baptists from all over the world and the venue was Ghana.

Rev. Osei-Wusuh's paper and Rev. Dr. J. A. Boadi's compilation of the history of the Ghana Baptist Convention in 1989, confirm that the earliest Baptist work in Ghana was by the Rev. Mark Christian Hayford. The writings of these two Ghanaians are authenticated by /in a most detailed and interesting account of a German historian, Stefan Schmid in 2011.

This presentation draws from the writings of these three persons and covers the following areas:

1. His Family and Origin
2. His Calling, Ordination and Church-Planting
3. Other Achievements (Academic, Establishment of schools & a Bible College
4. Conclusion

HIS FAMILY AND ORIGIN

Mark C. Hayford was the son of a highly respected Methodist Minister from Cape Coast. He was born in Anamabu⁵ on 18 August 1864⁶. His mother was Mary Ewurba Brew.⁷ Her great-great- grandfather was the Irish trader Richard Brew who settled in Anamabu in 1745.⁸

Mark C. Hayford's father, Joseph de Graft-Hayford (1840-1919), father belonged to one of the Fante Royal families.

The Hayford family was a Royal Ethnic Fanti family from the (Afua) Clan of Cape Coast and Accra which had relations with people with surnames like Casely Hayford, Davy Hayford, degraft-Johnson, Yankah, Wilson, Welsing, Hutchful, Wilberforce, Graves and Brew.

As a Christian, he gave up his royal heritage. In British style, Mark Christian Hayford had two Christian names, which showed the Christian conviction of his parents. He never adopted an African name. This was unusual at the time, as many people were reverting to their African names to show the value of their African culture.¹²

HIS CALLING, ORDINATION AND CHURCH-PLANTING

Dr. Boadi's writings show that Rev. Hayford worked initially as a Methodist Minister and as a Clerk in Lagos, Nigeria It was while he was in Lagos that he had his initial contacts with Baptists. He received his call and ordination to the ministry in Nigeria.

Schmid confirms that at the age of 28, he applied from Asaba to be a Methodist minister in the Gold Coast. On 8 August 1892, he wrote in his application letter:

I have for some time past had a desire to enter into the Christian Ministry, and to consecrate my life and work to God. There have been many things which have emphasized the desire, and led me to the conclusion of giving myself to the service of God in this particular way, chief among which is this: that whatever I may do in my private capacity to further the Lord's work, ... will be ... much less than what, under the blessing of God, I could do, were ...my life entirely devoted to the Master's service.³⁰

In March 1898, however Mark C. Hayford gave notice to the Methodist Mission and returned to his hometown_Cape Coast⁷⁰ to begin work as an independent Baptist Minister. He immediately set to work to build a church.

It was a long and hard struggle. His biggest challenge was a lack of funds. Schmid wrote that the Baptist Church and Mission in Cape Coast at the time had few members, but Mark C. Hayford, its "General Superintendent", wanted to build a magnificent church. However, he had no missionary association to support the financing of his building projects. He therefore courageously began the propaganda for his projects so he determined to raise the funds himself.

Often he would leave the guidance of his Baptist Church and Mission" was left to his parents; Mark C. Hayford undertook numerous trips to the UK, the Americas and Canada to raise funds for the building of his church in Cape Coast. In one instance, He travelled to Colwyn Bay, Keswick and London, to meet with the President of the Baptist Union.⁴

He visited many churches and gave lectures in Canada as well as in theological faculties at the Howard University (Washington, DC) and at the Colgate-Rochester Theological Seminary in New York.⁹ Mark C Hayford searched everywhere for financial support.

In England, he published a 68-page booklet *West Africa and Christianity*,²⁹ an accumulation of his most important convictions. He argued, with many quotations, that West Africa already had important civilizations before the coming of Europeans. He pleaded that Africans should receive the same training as Europeans and Americans.³² In the final chapter, he underlined the advantages of native Churches and stressed that Africa could best be really reached with the Gospel by Africans.

He had developed a kind of "travel-mania"; if he did not travel abroad, he travelled around the Gold Coast. He was persistent in soliciting for money establishing new Churches. Beside the earlier Baptist Churches in Cape Coast, Elmina, Salt Pond and Axim, he founded little congregations in Accra, Tarkwa, Obuasi, and Kumasi.

Finally, his long-awaited dream came true on 3 June 1906, when the church in Cape Coast was solemnly inaugurated. This was the result of 7-years of persistent efforts.

Schmid wrote:

Viewed in its proper light, Dr. Mark Hayford's Baptist Chapel is a national building. His single-handed enterprise, strenuous activity and irrepressible enthusiasm that know no difficulty discouragement rebuff or contumely are a valuable national asset. He deserves practical help. Do not let us stone our prophets and leaders now, and afterwards erect monuments on their graves.⁴⁸

In 1913 Mark C. Hayford published the Constitution of his Church,⁸⁹ which described the Baptist Church as a classical evangelical church. Mark Hayford himself however, had recognized that his Church in Cape Coast had suffered greatly because of his frequent absences:

Very much more, I have no doubt, would, under the blessing of God, have been accomplished had I not been placed under the necessity of travelling so extensively to raise the funds required to meet the financial needs of the work, ... it is my earnest prayer that this painful necessity will be saved me in the future, so that I may be able to devote my time more fully to the purely spiritual and evangelistic part of the work, and to its larger development.⁵⁵

From Dr. Boadi's and Schmid's accounts, Rev. Mark Hayford by **1904 had completed the building for his first Baptist church.** The records further indicate that this was the first church established by an **African in the Gold Coast** and it is this church that is now named **Redemption Baptist Church, Cape Coast.**

As earlier indicated, the Cape Coast Church became his headquarters and according to Rev. Hayford's own 'Year Book Report' dated **3 March 1913**, he had also established churches in Accra, Elmina, Saltpond, Axim, Tarkwa, Obuasi and Kumasi. Records indicate also, that by 1926, Rev. Hayford's work had

extended towards the Northern part of Ghana, specifically to Atebubu and beyond to the Ivory Coast, now Cote d'Ivoire.

The same 1913 records, according to Boadi (1989) showed that in the years that followed, Rev. Hayford stuck to his decision to travel less and be more focused on planting churches. Indeed, by 1926, just 13 years later, he had established a total of 45 churches with over 10,000 members.

OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

Rev. Mark Hayford was a strong religious leader whose ministry was not just limited to the Gold Coast and Nigeria but also several West African countries.

Apart from planting churches, he established links with other churches across West Africa to press for pro-self-government from Western Missions.

The Wesleyan Missionaries of the 1890's were strongly opposed to the idea of transferring leadership to indigenous Christians. Rev. Mark Hayford led a strong movement across denominations and across West Africa to encourage churches that were being controlled by Western missionaries to begin to think independently.

In 1898, he officially organized a **fellowship of independent Baptist churches** from Sierra Leone to Cameroon. This marked a new era of religious independence in the Gold Coast.

Mark C. Hayford was a well-educated academician, **a Ph D holder. In September 28, 1900**, he attended a **conference at the Colgate-Rochester Theological Seminary where he presented a lecture.** In 1903, he expanded the lecture into a book and published it under the title: **West Africa and Christianity.**

In his time, Mark C. Hayford was the only person to whom a State University in the US has conferred two honorary degrees.⁷³ He also had success in acquiring

other titles, which gave him respect and prestige. On 29 April 1901, he was officially accepted as Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. Following the British custom, he added the abbreviation "F.R.G.S." behind his name.⁷⁴

After becoming a member of the "Royal Sanitary Institute" in London in 1922,⁷⁵ Mark C. Hayford succeeded three years later in becoming a "Fellow of the Federation of Medical and Allied Services" in London.⁷⁶

Mark C. Hayford's passion for schools & a Bible College

Like his father, Mark C. Hayford had a great zeal for education. He founded with each Baptist Church a primary school. At that time, there was no Bible College on the Gold Coast for the training of ministers so he collaborated with the "African Training Institute" in Colwyn Bay (Great Britain) during 1889-1911 for the training of Africans to become pastors.⁸⁰ Mark C. Hayford is known to have sent several young men to Colwyn Bay to be trained.

In 1910, he began plans for his own Bible Training Centre in Cape Coast. But for the completion of this project, he again needed money and support from Europe.

In August 1934,¹⁸ Mark C. Hayford again arrived in Europe to fundraise.¹⁹ During this journey, he wrote his "Last Will".²⁰ Half a year later he fell ill and died from pneumonia on 10 May 1935 in Bath²¹, London. He was buried in Highgate Cemetery, London, in the same grave as his brother Ernest James Hayford.²³ As the Highgate Cemetery is in private hands, the grave can still be visited today.

The epitaph on the grave reads:

In loving Memory of
THE REV. MARK CHRISTIAN HAYFORD, M.A. D.D.
F.R.G.S. FOUNDER AND GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT

OF THE BAPTIST MISSION OF THE GOLD COAST BORN
18TH AUGUST 1864, DIED 15TH MAY 1935. FROM HIS
DEVOTED CHILDREN MARY, JOHN, AND MARK²⁴

His children described him as having FAITH that SINGS when the dawn is still dark. After his death in 1935, many of his churches began to die. But, even if none of these survived, **Redemption Baptist Church, Ayiko Ayiko, is a living testimony to the fact that over 120 years ago, one persistent individual, sowed a seed that survived and is still growing and bearing fruit to the Glory of God!**

Many of these churches are also still alive and growing. One example is the Mark Hayford Baptist Church in Accra. Indeed, the fact that we have met here today together with our missions: **Amoabeng, Dominase, Katakyaase, Saltpond and Komenda as Redemption Baptist Family, Cape Coast, and the fact there are Baptist Churches spread across the length and breadth of our country are** evidence that Rev. Mark Hayford's hard work which began 121 years ago, was not in vain.

Today, the **Rev. Dr. Mark Christian Hayford, like the Apostle Paul,** has completed his race. Like Paul, he too has entered into eternity. Both men have in their own times, handed over their batons.

CONCLUSION

This narration will not be complete without an acknowledgement of some others who have built on the foundation established by Mark Hayford.

Rev. Joseph Fadipe:

Took up the mantle of leadership at a very difficult and critical time in the life of the church

For his 20 years of service and for his continued love, devotion and dedication to RBC, we are grateful

Rev. Immanuel Kwesi Adjarney

The second **Ghanaian leader** of **Redemption Baptist Church, Cape Coast ... Took up leadership** in a period of time that must have been very challenging.

He was called and used by God to keep this church alive when the Nigerian leaders left. We congratulate him for his outstanding work for the growth of the church to the Glory of God.

Prof. Samuel Abaidoo

An outstanding servant leader... a testimony to that fact that God can use dedicated lay persons to effectively lead His Church. He was very instrumental in building up the lives of church members and in missionary work. Now domiciled in the US, but his love, devotion, commitment, faithful service and support have continued till date.

Rev. Anthony Bentum-Ennin

Rev. Samuel Kyei-Prempeh

Did several years of faithful and loving service in pastoring **Redemption Baptist Church, Cape Coast.** His leadership in church planting that gave birth to many of our mission churches. ... his tireless efforts in church planting during his term as Pastor of RBC is...

Rev. Daniel Amponsah

We honour you **for your outstanding contribution to the leadership, stability and growth of this** Church between ... and ... He steadfastly committed to holding the church together during another of its crises periods. We are grateful for his faithful commitment to evangelism.

Mr Joshua Caleb Mallet

Another outstanding servant leader. A testimony to that fact that God can use dedicated lay persons to effectively lead His Church.

Rev. John Bentum-Ennin

His faithful commitment to raise the church up in the areas of numerical growth, evangelism and praise and worship is a legacy,

And so, after 101 years, the baton was handed over to **Rev. Dr. Isaac Mills-Owoo.** ... as we celebrate 121 years of RBC,

we also celebrate 10 years of dedicated service! We can declare without any reservations whatsoever: **Rev I Mills Owoo, YOU ARE A BLESSING TO THIS CONGREGATION and TO THE ENTIRE REDEMPTION BAPTIST FAMILY.** We cannot fail to see some similarities between you and your predecessor...especially in your passion for training other men and women for ministry.

Mark C Hayford was mostly away from his family doing the work of God. You have done same and we appreciate your family and the sacrifices they have made and continue to make for us.

Today, as we give glory to God and celebrate Rev. Dr. Mark Hayford's achievements, we also remind ourselves that the baton has been handed over to us.

We do not know yet into whose hands the baton will be placed next. For now, however we are challenged to continue walking in the steps of this great man and we can only do this if we sincerely dedicate ourselves to be transformed daily by the same Lord who enabled Mark Hayford to achieve so much for His Kingdom.