

STRIDES FROM CONVERSION TO LEADERSHIP: PENTECOSTAL WOMEN'S INTERSECTIONS OF FAITH AND TRADITIONS

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***Abstract:** Increased opportunities have been claimed as benefits associated with women's conversion to Pentecostalism. This suggests a link between religious experience of salvation, participation and attaining leadership positions in religions. This paper sheds light on the different factors that enhance and impede women's attainment of leadership positions in the church. It analyses the experiences of three Pentecostal/Charismatic women leaders to see how those experiences influenced their leadership opportunities. The study established that spiritual empowerment, mentoring, marriage, social support, and acceptance are key factors that influence women's position in the Church.*

Key Words: Charismatic, Conversion, Pentecostal, Women-leadership.

Introduction

One of the benefits associated with women's conversions and participation in Pentecostalism is the increased opportunities.¹ Mariz and Machado contend that for Pentecostal women, their "conversion experience does lead to a revaluing of the self concerning God and others that increases women's autonomy."² Asamoah-Gyadu also observes that, especially in Charismatic churches, "the religious experience of salvation is considered the gateway to the renewal and spiritual empowerment of the believer and of the believing community."³

Religious conversion is expected to result in a radical change of worldview and identity. It suggests a complete and total change in a person's life. In the Pentecostal experience, this may reflect in a gradual or dynamic process of leadership development. This paper, thus,

¹ Field data are drawn from the author PhD thesis. Cf. Ernestina Enyonam Novieto, "Women Leaders in Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches" (Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, 2013); <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh/handle/123456789/5458>

² Cecilia Mariz and Maria Machado, "Pentecostalism and Women in Brazil," in *Power, Politics and Pentecostals in Latin America*, ed. Edward L. Cleary and Hannah W. Stewart-Gambino (Scranton, PA: Harper Collins, 1997), 41–42.

³ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2005), 149.

assesses factors that encourage some Pentecostal and Charismatic women to attain leadership roles in the church

In exploring different levels of participation and leadership development in the church, Gooren outlines five levels of church participation in his model of conversion career.⁴ These are pre-affiliation, affiliation, conversion, confession, and disaffiliation. At the pre-affiliation and affiliation stages, the person shares some ideas and/identity with the group. In contrast, the conversion stage brings a radical personal change of life and worldview and a commitment to a new community, thus impacting the person's life. It influences peak participation, which Gooren calls conversion. However, disaffiliation refers to when a person loses commitment and membership to the group, perhaps converting to another church, group, or ideology.

Gooren further notes that the different stages in one's participatory life in the Church are influenced by certain factors, including personality, contingency, social and institutional.⁵ However, it is the individual who decides to join and participate due to issues and contingencies. He explains contingency factors to include "random meetings with missionaries, acutely felt crises, stressful situation, and other contingencies that bring individuals into the orbit of various religious groups. Pentecostals call this Providence or divine intervention."⁶ These may be influences from relatives, friends or members of the group. The institutional factor refers to how the group's organisation, rules, and practices appeal to the individual.

Though this model may seem convincing, Gooren rightly notes that the stages may not be sequential as they are dynamic.⁷ A person may move from the stage of affiliation or conversion to disaffiliation. Moreover, one may not necessarily progress through the different stages to the peak of religious participation. Depending on the individual and other factors and contexts, the situation might vary for different people. The three women leaders studied represent three different categories of women leaders within the Pentecostal and

⁴ Henri Gooren, "Towards a New Model of Conversion Careers: The Impact of Personality and Contingency Factors," *Exchange* 34, no. 2 (2005): 154.

⁵ Gooren, "Towards a New Model," 155.

⁶ Henri Gooren, "Conversion Narratives," in *Studying Global Pentecostal; Theories and Methods*, ed. Allan Anderson Michael Bergunder, Andre F. Droogers and Cornelis van der Laan (Berkeley - London: University of California Press, 2010), 94.

⁷ Gooren, "Towards a New Model," 154.

Charismatic churches in Ghana. One is an ordained woman who has established her own Church (ALK), another is a pastor's wife who is ordained (RRK), and the third is a laywoman leader who has established a prayer camp (DHB). These women were chosen because they are the second generation of women leaders in the Pentecostal movement in Ghana. Hence, their experiences bring different perspectives to the study of women leaders in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches.

The primary materials for this paper are from qualitative interviews. I was accorded a high level of courtesy. Being a woman, a Pentecostal and interested in their work may have also been an advantage and influenced them to be more welcoming.⁸ The interviews were interactive, giving some level of adjustment and seeking more clarifications as occasioned. Their husbands and main assistants were also interviewed. Questions asked were open-ended, allowing the respondents the freedom to regulate their answers.⁹ The analyses were done in the light of Gooren's model, which brought to bear the different levels of participation of respondents before attaining their current positions.

Brief Biographies

A brief biography of the women interviewed for this study is essential in analysing the events and processes that directly or indirectly influence their positions and ministries.

The Pastor's wife, RRK, was born of an Akan parentage in the 1960s into Roman Catholicism. She had primary and secondary education from a Catholic school in Accra. She also had a remedial education in the Volta region. She intimated that from infancy, she knew she would work for God. As a Catholic, she was convinced she would become a nun and thus spent her vacations in a catholic convent. However, later experiences of the strictness of the nuns in the secondary school that she attended discouraged her from pursuing that vocation. It was during her remedial classes that she became a 'born-again' Christian. During her Diploma studies, she was the president of the student body,

⁸ Bahira Sherif, "The Ambiguity of Boundaries in the Fieldwork Experience: Establishing Rapport and Negotiating Insider/Outsider Status" in *Qualitative Inquiry* 7, no. 4 (2001), 440. As a Pentecostal, I did not have to struggle with issues of isolation and acceptance.

⁹ Bill Gillman, *Research Interviewing: The Range of Techniques* (Maidenhead, UK: McGraw-Hill Education, 2005), 4-5.

and she believes that assisted her to harness her leadership traits. She saw that position as a training ground since it allowed her to sharpen her leadership qualities.

She joined a non-denominational fellowship led by the evangelist who guided her to into Pentecostal experience. The same evangelist eventually became her husband in the 1980s. After working in a financial institution for some time, she resigned to help her husband who had established establish a church. Within the same year, she became the first lady Pastor, and after a year, she was ordained as a lady Reverend Minister of the church. She is regarded as the co-founder of the church, not only because she is the wife of the founder but also because she played key roles in the formation of the church. For example, she organised the first meeting of the church since the husband was working abroad at the time.

ALK is the founder and Head Pastor of a Charismatic Church headquartered in the Eastern region of Ghana. ALK was born in the 1960s and was baptised into the Methodist church. She referred to herself as a nominal Christian who considered attending the church as a social activity. She married in the late 1980s after completing her secondary education. She lost her first child at birth and subsequently had some health challenges. Her conversion into Pentecostalism was driven by her desire to be like some Pentecostal Christians and to speak in tongues. She made a vow to God to serve him if she were healed; hence when her health condition improved, she started a prayer fellowship which later developed into a church.

The leader of the prayer camp, DHB, was born of Ewe parentage, brought up in the Western region of Ghana and socialised as a Pentecostal. She had only a basic level education and vocational training as a seamstress. After her vocational training, she worked for a while. She visited a Prayer centre, and the leader who was a prophetess identified her, mentored her, and found a marriage partner for her. Later she established a prayer centre in the central region.

Conversion Experiences

All three women had some form of religious socialisation: they were all introduced to Christianity from childhood. However, two of them talk about their Pentecostal conversion experiences, while one could

not give a particular conversion experience because she was primarily socialised into Pentecostalism. The other two had their primary religious socialisation into Catholicism and Methodism, respectively.

Narrating her conversion into her new faith, the pastor's wife (RRK) was emphatic about the role of the man who would later become her husband and the location of her conversion. She was born into a Catholic family. In 1982, while Secondary school in the Volta Region, she became a 'born again' Christian and was introduced to Pentecostalism. She stated, "that is the part of the story I always want to add to it and thank the God of the Ewes." She also showed much gratitude to the man who enrolled her in the school, playing an essential role in her conversion experience, leading to significant turning points in her life and ministry.

She revealed he [husband] had then finished his advanced level in secondary education, and he wanted to do something for God, so he toured the schools in the Volta Region. By Gooren's model, she was neither pre-affiliated nor affiliated to Pentecostalism before experiencing the 'radical change.'¹⁰ She narrates her experience of publicly committing her life to Christ as:

...I went to the service, he [husband] preached the Gospel. I was actually the first person who went forward with my hands lifted up and tears in my eyes and I said, "Lord come into my life." And I remember so well that night after that experience, I went to the dormitory, people were laughing at me, they thought there was something wrong with me, but I knew it was an encounter I had had... from 9pm to 5am, I was on my bed, weeping, crying, praying telling God let these things be a reality, let this thing not be a nine-day wonder. "Let the cross forever be before me and the world be behind me. Let this thing be so real to me" and I prayed, and I cried.¹¹

Her Pentecostal conversion in 1982 coincided with the popularity of non-denominational fellowships where 'born again' Christians, especially in the mainline churches, joined these fellowships. They were, however, to maintain their membership with their respective churches because the idea was to be revived and send the 'fire' back to their

¹⁰ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 136.

¹¹ RRK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 7, 2010.

churches.¹² It led to a rise of charismatic renewals in the mainline churches. Also, it became a means of maintaining the Pentecostal experiences that many members of mainline churches encountered at the time. In the case of RRK, she explained that with the zeal and joy of her newfound faith, she was encouraged to join a holiday fellowship which was started by the man who would later become her husband. She thus remained a Catholic till she married. One would have expected her to join the Catholic Charismatic Renewal as the group was established and spread throughout Accra.¹³

Explaining her journey as a Pentecostal Christian, she indicates that she had been zealous from the beginning. After her conversion experience and before her marriage, she was involved in activities, which she thinks prepared her for her present position and work. She evangelised in schools, commercial vehicles and organised the children in her neighbourhood on Saturdays to teach them bible lessons. After marriage and with the commencement of her husband's ministry, she has been actively involved in the Church's activities. Her active involvement has culminated in the current positions she holds in the Church.

Like RRK, the church founder's (ALK) conversion was another incidence of contingencies' influences. In ALK's case, however, the primary factor was her health condition, with other social and institutional factors. Narrating what influenced her conversion, she mentioned that:

I got married ... our first baby died a still birth; ... At that time, I was a nominal Christian. I was a Methodist, I used to go to Church, but then it was more of a social kind of life, I used to go not for the spiritual purpose. I was born a Methodist, my grandmother was Methodist, and it was the right thing to do... but I didn't have a relationship with Jesus... But when I lost that baby and the ... process, how my life was spared even though everybody was expecting the worse ... the baby had died two weeks in my womb... There was a word from a nurse in the delivery room, after I had the baby, and the baby didn't cry, and I was crying; she said I shouldn't cry because God really loves me ... it touched my heart. Another thing that

¹² Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2006), 95.

¹³ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 106.

happened was that when I was in labour a cousin of mine and her husband came to pray over me, and they prayed in tongues ... so that set me on a course to seek for God. Initially my purpose was that I wanted to pray in tongues.¹⁴

The loss of the baby had an impact on her, but anytime she felt like crying she said, “I would hear the words ‘God loves you’ [and] so that set me on a course to search for God.”¹⁵ She had a level of curiosity even though it was not high enough to be referred to as a religious experience. She had a pre-affiliation with Pentecostal Christianity in the sense that because she had heard some people pray in tongues and she desired to do the same. However, the urge to speak in tongues may have caused a need that led to a path in Pentecostalism. During a crusade in one of the halls of residence at the university, she accepted Christ as her saviour.¹⁶ The health challenges that she had faced also influenced her decision to participate at a higher level actively. She began as an intercessory prayer group leader, then as an interdenominational fellowship leader, and eventually a founder denominational church.

The conversion experience of the leader of the prayer camp (DHB) is quite different from that of RRK and ALK. In DHB’s case, she had been a Pentecostal from childhood. Thus, her involvement in Pentecostal activities could be said as her primary religious socialisation. In an answer to how she converted into Pentecostalism she said, “as for me God has been gracious to me, Jesus called me from my childhood.”¹⁷ However, her participation in Pentecostalism had been strongly influenced by personal, contingency, and social factors. She revealed that she had always wanted to be in Church and loved to be engaged in the Church’s activities. She always had the desire to move to the stage of confession. It was out of this desire that she was noticed and trained to become a leader. However, to attain her status, there were some institutional concerns.

¹⁴ ALK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 13, 2010.

¹⁵ ALK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 13, 2010.

¹⁶ ALK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 13, 2010. For some people, a public confession confirms their conversion.

¹⁷ DHB, Interview granted to the researcher, January 14, 2010.

Journey Towards Leadership and Authority

Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians have general requirements for leadership, including the Holy Spirit's empowerment and theological formation. However, for women, the spirit's empowerment has been crucial, and it legitimises their call to leadership.¹⁸ It may be due to the negative views and attitudes towards women's leadership in the Church. Thus, they usually have a convincing point of reference to show that God had called them. Despite the importance of the Spirit's empowerment or baptism, a common feature of RRK, ALK and DHB was that they were all married when they became leaders. As indicated, their respective marriages had an impact on their leadership positions.

Scholars have also argued that successful women leaders serve as encouragement and example to other women.¹⁹ Therefore, it is important to assess the influence that the first-generation women leaders had on them as role models or mentors.

The Call/Spirit Empowerment

Pentecostal women leaders have 'call narratives', different from their conversion experiences, which legitimises their position as leaders. Cox asserts that Pentecostals have given more access to women to attain leadership because even though the Bible's authority is not compromised, they also "believe in direct revelation through visions."²⁰ Powers also notes that "the most crucial aspect of the call narrative is the part that convinces the woman that it is indeed God who is calling her."²¹ In the cases of the women under study, much emphasis was placed on the Holy Spirit's empowerment based on Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:16-17 and the unity of the male and female in Christ in Gal. 3:28. With such empowerment, they saw themselves as being "in

¹⁸ Janet E. Powers, "Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: Pentecostal Hermeneutics and Empowerment of Women," in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, ed. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen (Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Books Int., 1999), 319.

¹⁹ Soothill, *Gender, Social Change*, 154–167.

²⁰ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2001), 131.

²¹ Powers, "Your Daughters Shall Prophesy," 319.

possession of the requisite anointing that enabled the demonstration of the power of the Spirit.”²²

ALK believes that her leadership journey started in 1987. After her conversion, she had several experiences – both spiritual and physical or natural. However, she gives religious meanings to some natural occurrences. About a month after she became a born-again Christian, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and had to undergo chemotherapy. The cancer had spread, so she became very sick. The group of cancer patients who endured chemotherapy with her, all died. Thus, she made a covenant with God amidst fear of death based on Hannah’s covenant in 1 Sam. 1:10 -11. In her case she promised that if God would heal her then she would serve Him.

According to her, two weeks after making the promise to God, on her way to a fellowship on the university campus, she heard the voice of God for the first time, telling her that her covenant had been accepted. Furthermore, she also heard that her nuclear family and the entire extended family would become Christians. After this experience, the cancerous nodes in her breast, neck and armpit began to shrink. She has been free from cancer since then (1987). Also, against her doctor’s projection of infertility due to chemotherapy, she had four children, an experience, she asserts, that deepened her relationship with God.

From the time she heard God speaking to her, she knew she had a covenant with God, but she did not know when and how her service to God would be. On the verge of completing her undergraduate studies, she heard a word again from God not to engage in any secular work since He had work for her to do. Interestingly, though she did not plan it, apart from her one-year compulsory national service after university education, her health conditions did not allow her to be involved in any secular work until she started her own prayer meetings leading to the formation of a church. Alongside having children, she continued to have other health challenges, but she believes that every step of those life experiences brought her closer to God, fulfilling his plan for her life.

It was one of those health challenges, diagnosed as lupus, which took her to London for treatment. While there, she went into a coma for

²² J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 124.

two weeks, and this also yielded another experience that influenced her to start working directly on the promise she had made and the voices she had heard earlier. Talking about her experience, she said

In the coma my spirit left me, but I went before the Lord. The first place I went to was like a stopover to hell and later on Jesus came and took me and I went before the Lord, and He spoke to me and made known to me that there is the reality of heaven and hell which ... must be brought into the minds of people especially believers. People should believe this because believers are not taking those things... they were living for today... and He said I should come back and do his work, to fulfil the call; the covenant that we had made so I came back to my body and I was healed.²³

It can be deduced that these experiences may have influenced the chosen vision of the Church, based on Isa. 51:3,

For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

When she was miraculously healed, she started a prayer fellowship, which gradually metamorphosed into a church.

DHB does not link her call experiences to health issues or any covenant she made with God. She believes it was a result of her commitment. She claimed she was identified by her mentor, whom she served as an aide. In addition, she later had an independent experience, which confirmed her call into leadership. According to her, she had a vision in which she saw a big palm tree with gold surrounding it. In the vision, God assured her that she was going to be used to do His work. She was encouraged not to be afraid as God is the stem of the palm tree and cannot be uprooted. The gold around the palm tree meant riches, assuring her that she would not be hungry as she worked for God.²⁴ While serving as aide, she had the “Elijah handing over to Elisha” kind of experience.²⁵ Her mentor prayed for her, removed her

²³ ALK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 13, 2010.

²⁴ DHB, Interview granted to the researcher, January 14, 2010.

²⁵ The story of Elijah handing over to Elisha is in the Old Testament (2 Kings 2:1-15). In the story, Elisha, a servant of Prophet Elijah, becomes aware that his master, Elijah was to pass away. Elisha thus asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit which he achieved in a dramatic way.

necklace, put it on her neck and gave her a stool to sit on. Her mentor also instructed her to obey, to go wherever God would ask her to go and to work for Him.

The encounters with her mentor and the spiritual experiences which are “personal rapport with the divine,”²⁶ marked the beginning of her leadership roles and influenced her movement to her present location.

Unlike ALK and DHB, RRK could not point to a particular dramatic religious experience as she observes that her commitments were noted, and the Church promoted her accordingly. She narrates her progression as follows: “I was first a deacon in the church, I became a pastor and after being a pastor when they found me fit and they thought I had worked really hard I was ordained as a Reverend.”²⁷ Before her ordination, she went on a retreat to pray. She asked God to make her a Kathryn Kuhlman²⁸ of her time. This was confirmed as the same prayers were offered for her on the day of her ordination.²⁹

The inspirational influence and/or spiritual preparation for leadership have been very intense as all three women acknowledge total reliance on the Holy Spirit; however, DHB’s inspirational influence is much stronger. From the stories of these women, they did not refuse or resist the call to leadership, though the biblical narrative testifies that some women and even men initially resist, as in the case of Deborah, Esther, Moses, Gideon, and Jonah. Cox argues that women especially resist the call initially because of religious and cultural restrictions.³⁰ For ALK, DHB and RRK not to resist the call to leadership does not mean they were not aware of the cultural restrictions.

Formal Theological Formation Versus Mentorship

The three women studied did not have any formal theological training at the time of becoming leaders.³¹ Pentecostals in the past had frowned

²⁶ B.M. Sackey, *New Directions in Gender and Religion: The Changing Status of Women in African Independent Churches* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006), 74.

²⁷ RRK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 7, 2010.

²⁸ Kathryn Kuhlman (1907-1976) was an American evangelist and preacher who was known for faith healing.

²⁹ RRK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 7, 2010.

³⁰ Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 132.

³¹ Generally, women in the past could not assess major leadership roles in church and theological education was also limited to men. Mercy A. Oduyoye, “Theological Education for Women in Africa: 1978-1996,” in *Transforming Power: Women in the Household of God*, ed. Mercy A.

on formal theological and even secular education, which to them hindered the work of the Holy Spirit and promoted worldliness.³² Anderson notes that most of the successful Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders “...had little or no theological education.”³³ He further observes that “a certain tension exists between academic integrity and spirituality, especially when education does not seem to further spirituality.”³⁴ This was because qualification for leadership had been placed more on spirituality than theological formation. Therefore, the mainline churches that focused on the formal theological formation were described as engaging in “dead intellectualism.”³⁵

Ogunewu cites instances of some Pentecostals in Nigeria where “...educated members who declared for full-time ministry would have their secular certificates burnt because these were considered irrelevant to the work of the ministry.” To many Pentecostal Christians at the time, education “was to give in to worldliness at the expense of souls that were perishing.”³⁶

By the time that these women were assuming leadership positions, however, the general Pentecostal perception on theological education had begun changing, and as Omenyo points out, there was already “a growing desire for theological education.”³⁷ This raises the paradox of whether their inability to access theological education before being established as leaders was because they are women. Could they not have taken advantage of the many Pentecostal theological institutions and increasing opportunities for theological education,³⁸ which some women leaders in Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches had already taken advantage of? Probing the reasons for which they had no formal theological training prior to assuming leadership roles, it is evident

Oduyoye (Accra: Sam-Woode, 1997), 51-65; Lisa Meo, “Pacific Island Women & Theological Education,” in *Transforming Power*, ed. Oduyoye, 66-74.

³² Leke Ogunewu, “Charismatic Movements and Theological Education: Past, Present and Future,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 13, no. 2 (2008), 65-66.

³³ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 243.

³⁴ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 244.

³⁵ Cephas Omenyo, “The Spirit Filled Goes to School: Theological Education in African Pentecostalism,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 13, no. 2 (2008), 46; Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 244.

³⁶ Ogunewu, “Charismatic Movements,” 66.

³⁷ Omenyo, “The Spirit Filled,” 46.

³⁸ Omenyo, “The Spirit Filled,” 46-51.

that there was an intersection of factors and each of them had their peculiar circumstances accounting for it.

According to ALK when she started the Church, she did not have any formal training. This is not very different from several Charismatic leaders, who start their own churches without any formal training. She, however, gives credence to the Holy Spirit for leading her through till she acquired some form of training. She enrolled for a correspondence Bible course with the Assemblies of God, Berean College in America. She opted for a correspondence bible course for several factors; she opines that “at that time I was a mother of three, doing the ministry and being a wife, I couldn’t leave home so that helped me because I could study in my own home.”³⁹ There is no doubt that even though overseeing the infant church was a factor, it is also clear that being a mother and wife were the most compelling factors that made her choose this kind of training.

Interestingly, even though one of the women did not have any formal theological formation, she enrolled and studied public administration and further pursued a master’s programme in leadership and governance. She believes the courses have positively enhanced her leadership skills in the Church.

In the absence of formal theological training, these women have had ‘to learn on the job.’ RRK and ALK participate in seminars organised for pastors’ wives and women pastors. DHB on the other hand took advantage of retreats. Besides, she takes inspiration by consistently travelling to her mentor. These women have learned many practical things from these seminars, meetings, and trips regarding their work as leaders.

Additionally, the role of mentors cannot be overemphasised as learning from role models or mentors becomes very important in the quest to become leaders; it is practical training for them. A major factor that influenced the leadership aspirations and skills of the women under study is the impact of role models. These role models or mentors are also seen as people who had been successful as first-generation women leaders, inspiring other women to take up such positions. Rev. Christie Doe Tetteh, founder of Solid Rock International, Mama

³⁹ ALK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 13, 2010.

Francisca Duncan-Williams (who was then married to Archbishop Duncan-Williams, Presiding Bishop and General Overseer of the Christian Action Faith Ministries),⁴⁰ and Maame Grace Mensah founder of Edumfa Prayer Centre can be mentioned as examples of women who either mentored them.⁴¹ RRK looked up to Rev. Christie Doe Tetteh. In her own words, RRK said “There aren’t too many women General Overseers, but I looked at her at the time from afar, starting a church, preaching, being invited to big platforms, I just looked at her from afar and told myself, I would get there.”⁴²

At that time the women under study were becoming leaders, Francisca Duncan-Williams had accomplished a lot as a pastor’s wife and leader. She did it through her Pastors’ Wives and Women in Ministry Association,⁴³ whose main objective was to facilitate networking among pastors’ wives and women pastors; that is to “study the Scriptures and pray for one another, share Holy Communion and provide moral support to members.”⁴⁴ The association earned Mama Francisca great respect and prestige, as Soothill observes,

Mama Francisca is treated as the so-called ‘mother’ of charismatic faith in Ghana. There are two elements to this: first, Mama Francisca acts a role model to other pastors’ wives and second, as the head of a hierarchy of pastors’ wives, she presents herself as someone who can ‘make things happen’ for other people.⁴⁵

Soothill cites Moha Amoako,⁴⁶ for organising the women in her Church along the lines of Mama Francisca.⁴⁷ Through association with Mama Francisca, the ‘daughters’ learnt some skills which they practised in their respective churches. Also, the rise of some second-generation pastors’ wives in the Charismatic movement can be attributed to the influence Francisca Duncan-Williams especially before she divorced.

⁴⁰ Mama Francisca Duncan-Williams and Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams divorced in 2006.

⁴¹ J.E. Soothill, “Gender, Social Change and Spiritual Power in Ghana,” in *Studies of Religion in Africa*, ed. Paul Gifford (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 150-179.

⁴² RRK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 7, 2010.

⁴³ Soothill, “Gender, Social Change,” 159.

⁴⁴ Sackey, *New Directions*, 169.

⁴⁵ Soothill, “Gender, Social Change,” 159.

⁴⁶ Mrs. Moha Amoako is the wife of Bishop Elisha Salifu Amoako, founder and Overseer of Alive Chapel International.

⁴⁷ Soothill, “Gender, Social Change,” 159.

The Ghanaian society has had its fair share of social changes, with an awareness of gender issues and advocacy. This has resulted in a few high-profile positions for women in the country. Some of these women have brought their leadership experiences to bear, especially on the Pentecostal scene, possibly influencing the increasing acceptability of women leadership in the Church. One of the respondents for instance did not point to any specific role model, but she agreed that the successes of other women leaders became a motivation factor. One of such women that was pointed out by another respondent was Gifty Afenyi-Dadzie⁴⁸ who “combines the secular and the spiritual;” even on her secular platform, Afenyi-Dadzie identifies herself as ‘a woman of God.’ The respondent admired her good leadership skills both in the society and the Church, and desired to become a versatile leader like her.

The Pastor’s wife acknowledged her husband as one of her mentors. She intimates that being the ‘First Lady,’ she had some practical experiences working with her husband. She was also privy to some information on issues regarding leadership, which for her amounted to training. She says:

Yes, I would say I did. I didn’t go to a Bible school *per se*, I didn’t go to any seminary, but I did what you would call on the job training, I met my husband on the job. What I did was to sit back and watch him, when he preaches, I listen to him carefully, I make notes. I listen to other men of God and then I make notes so when I was ordained it was like I had received in – service training or on the job training though I didn’t go out to train. Within the Church I had been trained and I had been equipped.⁴⁹

To conclude, in addition to their reliance on the Holy Spirit, these women have been inspired by role models. They overcome challenges because they had seen others succeed as leaders.

Women Leadership and Family Life

One common feature about the women under study is that all were married before becoming leaders and were still married at the time of

⁴⁸ Mrs. Gifty Afenyi-Dadzie is the prayer leader of Women’s Aglow International (Ghana), whose monthly prayer meetings she leads. Mrs. Afenyi-Dadzie brings to the group her background, not only as a successful businesswoman but also a seasoned journalist who rose through the ranks to become the President of the Ghana Journalist Association.

⁴⁹ RRK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 7, 2010.

this study. It is vital to see how their marriages could have influenced their leadership roles or otherwise. In the case of RRK and DHB, their marriages have directly influenced the current leadership roles they play. However, ALK's marriage does not seem to have a direct bearing, though she had great support from her husband.

First, it has been presumed that women access power through their relationship to men, in their position of the First Lady. Soothill maintains that Charismatic Churches in Ghana have patterned their leadership along the lines of modern Ghanaian politics emphasising conjugal relationships giving special places to the spouses of leaders.⁵⁰ Though this may partly be the case of RRK, she also shows that she became a leader in her own rights, not necessarily 'clinging on the shoulders' of her husband. She is recognised as the co-founder because she resigned from secular work and started Sunday services before her husband joined from abroad. She does not, however, deny the support of her husband to attain those personal successes. Her position as the First Lady brings to the fore the parallel and complementary gender roles in the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches.⁵¹

Founding the Church together with her husband, and in the time when women leadership was not well accepted, she played the typical roles of pastors' wives. She formed and headed the ushering department, the Sunday school teachers, the protocol, and the security team. She also started the children's ministry, training the Sunday school teachers in the Church as well as establishing the women's ministry of the Church. According to her, it was through the recognition of her work that she was ordained. However, as noted by Brusco about Pastor's wives, "...in many ways her influence can be equal to that of her husband."⁵²

Again, part of the conditions to access leadership was the 'marriage clause' attached to her calling 'package.' When her mentor identified her as a potential leader, she added she would not let her go, but would also find her a husband. This could be a forced marriage in disguise. She agreed to marry her husband because of the word her mentor said.

⁵⁰ Soothill, "Gender, Social Change," 131.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Brusco, "Gender and Power," in *Studying Global Pentecostal*, ed. Anderson et al., 83.

⁵² Brusco, "Gender and Power," 84.

She had the impression that the marriage proposal was access to realise the revelation of God concerning her. In her words:

When he was introduced to me, I saw he was much older than me and he had married before, so I really did not love him. But my brothers said because he is the son of the prophetess and the woman herself said she had found me as gift and the grace of God was on me... But the love of God that was in me was greater than the marriage.⁵³

Even though her call came as a package, when she had the confirmation to start her own prayer camp, she had to do that without the knowledge of her husband for fear of not having his permission. She narrates that this circumstance nearly led to a divorce.⁵⁴ For married women, the support from the nuclear family is crucial to their efforts in coming into leadership. If the family, especially a husband, does not support the woman's move into leadership, it can disturb and even cause a break in the marriage. ALK and RRK talk about the full support their nuclear family gave them. In the case of DHB, because she was not sure of the support of her husband, she moved to another location to start her leadership roles without informing her husband.

According to RRK when she was engaged in freelance evangelism, her parents said she was a disgrace to the family. However, later as a pastor's wife, when she declared her intentions of becoming a pastor, she received the support of both the nuclear and extended family. ALK recognised her husband as being of great support. She believes that because her husband had been with her throughout her health challenges, he understood her circumstances and had been very supportive. Her parents, relatives and close friends had also been witnesses to her challenges as well as her miraculous healing through which a lot of her friends had become Christians. Thus, they supported her move to become a pastor. Her children were relatively younger at the time she became a leader, and they have had no choice but to accept what their mother was engaged in.

Women Leadership and Societal Support

Though the incidence of women leadership is growing, it still not generally accepted by the wider society. Indeed, as is reflected in the case

⁵³ DHB, Interview granted to the researcher, January 14, 2010.

⁵⁴ DHB, Interview granted to the researcher, January 14, 2010.

of DHB, even though women are making great strides in leadership, with society accepting them more and more as leaders, they still face and must deal with instances of resistance to their leadership.

RRK, for instance, noted that she prayed earnestly saying:

“God give me acceptance.” Why did I ask God to give me acceptance? I said this is a man’s world; this is a man’s territory. I was going to into a man’s territory, God must give me acceptance; acceptance before people because you could go somewhere, people would not accept you as a woman of God they won’t accept you as a preacher, they won’t accept you as somebody called of God, so I really prayed for acceptance. I said God ‘everywhere I go to minister everywhere I go to preach the word of God give me that acceptance.’ I really prayed.⁵⁵

In breaking the status quo, they depended on the support of their family as well as from the general society. However, women ought to provide evidence of their ability to occupy the position and work. Thus, the support is also dependent on the access of those family members or the society to a preview of their abilities. It appears they are not given the benefit of doubt or opportunities to grow as men do have.

Acceptance by the Christian fraternity, as well as the society at large is essential to the success of women leadership in the Church. The traditions and attitudes of churches and societies have had great impact especially on emerging positions of women in Church. The women were aware that becoming leaders was breaking into an unpopular space for women. This in a way influenced the thoughts and perception of these women as they transitioned into leadership positions. RRK reveals her perception as follows:

I think our culture does not help us. We live in a man’s world where certain things or certain professions are left for men so once you try as a woman to move into the territory of a man certainly you get eyebrows being raised at you, you get people asking questions: ‘Is this woman sure of what she is doing? Is she sure can do the work? So for me our society and our culture doesn’t help us because we’ve been trained that certain things are men’s and remember that the orthodox [Mainline] churches and then the old Pentecostal churches

⁵⁵ RRK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 7, 2010.

didn't help us... the old Pentecostal churches didn't accept women as pastors. So our culture, our society, the world in which we are doesn't help us as women coming out to preach the word of God.⁵⁶

In addition to the traditional societal norms, the practice of the classical Pentecostals did not support women in leadership positions. The nonexistence of high leadership positions in the classical Pentecostal churches for women posed a challenge to Neo-Pentecostal churches. Thus, being the first lady pastor to become ordained in her Church, RRK also sensed that certain people had doubts. For her, becoming a pastor was entering into a man's world; since at the time the Church did not have a lady pastor, she thought people wondered, "what is this woman coming to do as a pastor, would she be able to do it?"⁵⁷ However, being the president of the women ministry, she had their support. To this end, she says, "everybody was happy for me and they encouraged me that I could do it."⁵⁸

ALK also sensed the scepticism of churches and the society, but for her it is the anointing of God and the character of a person that will change the perception of people. She also believes that to overcome the scepticism of women leadership, one needs to prove the results of her ministry. She cites instances of how churches warned their members not to attend her programmes and some even started similar programmes in their churches to prevent congregants to attend.⁵⁹ However, she also noted that "Bible says that by their fruits, you shall know them and also the power of God will also speak whether this thing is of God and so we had a lot of opposition in terms of slander, malicious words but as the ministry started growing, people started appreciating the ministry and that's when people started coming..."⁶⁰

Conclusion

This paper has established that second-generation Pentecostal/charismatic women leaders have several factors intersecting to influence their efforts to become leaders. The freedom women had to be ministers at the beginning of the contemporary Pentecostal movement was

⁵⁶ RRK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 7, 2010.

⁵⁷ RRK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 7, 2010.

⁵⁸ RRK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 7, 2010.

⁵⁹ ALK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 13, 2010. This may be due to the fear that churches have regarding 'sheep stealing' and not necessarily because of her being a woman.

⁶⁰ ALK, Interview granted to the researcher, January 13, 2010.

Ernestina Enyonam Novieto

based on the Holy Spirit's empowerment. The successes of the first-generation women leaders have encouraged second-generation women to assume leadership roles in the Church. Additionally, there are the factors of mentoring, marriage and family support coupled with increasing acceptance of women leaders in the society.

In their quest to become leaders, they encountered challenges because Ghanaian Christians were struggling with women's leadership in the Church. However, their experiences reveal a significant change in the Ghanaian attitude towards women leadership.

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