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# Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

DEVELOPING SUCCESSFUL AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE LEADERS IN THE  
MOUNT CALVARY HOLY CHURCH OF AMERICA

Written by

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and submitted in partial fulfillment of the

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Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary

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MOUNT CALVARY HOLY CHURCH OF AMERICA

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE  
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BY

SUSIE C. OWENS  
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## ABSTRACT

### **Developing Successful African-American Female Leaders in the Mount Calvary Holy Church of America**

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This paper identifies strategies, techniques, and tools that impact personal growth, promote global discipleship, and facilitate the evolution of twenty-first-century theological concepts to produce successful African-American female leaders within Mount Calvary Holy Church of America (hereafter, MCHCA).

MCHCA has an emerging historical concept of women in ministry. Its leadership has consistently embraced women as regional and national leaders. Notwithstanding their roles as National Mothers and Supervisors, the career path for women in ministry has been limited in its expansion. The majority of MCHCA leadership is male, although an attempt is being made to become more inclusive. With the emergence of female seminarians in the twenty-first century, a reformation will be needed within the Church's polity. It is the focus of this paper to capture the contributions women have made within MCHCA and to promote their inclusion within the Church.

The context of this discussion includes the established policy within the active member churches in MCHCA as it relates to the emergence of qualified female theologians. This paper will provide profiles of successful women in leadership within and outside of church leadership roles. The profiles, coupled with substantive research, provide a framework for subsequent discussions. African-American women's common approach to challenges, strategies for self-evaluation, and adaptability evolve as common themes. Strategies, techniques, and tools are presented to build successful leaders, churches, and communities.

This paper examines styles and approaches to leadership and identifies common themes among successful female African-American leaders. This work will take a historical and theological approach to identifying controversial biblical views. Selected biblical texts have presented challenges or problems regarding the role of women. This discourse provides a pathway for emerging female leaders to reach greater heights within MCHCA. This careful glimpse into the future of MCHCA is designed to instill confidence within African-American women and to remind them that God has no respect of class, race, or gender.

Theological Mentor: Kurt Fredrickson, PhD

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
PART ONE: THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCH	
Chapter 1. THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCH	8
Chapter 2. MOUNT CALVARY HOLY CHURCH OF AMERICA	28
Chapter 3. WOMEN IN PROTESTANT CHURCHES	39
PART TWO: LEADERSHIP – WOMEN IN THE BIBLE, THE PULPIT, AND THE WORKPLACE	
Chapter 4. A THEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY	57
Chapter 5. WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP TRENDS	75
Chapter 6. LEADERSHIP IN MOUNT CALVARY HOLY CHURCH OF AMERICA	91
PART THREE: STRATEGIES	
Chapter 7. BUILDING SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN LEADERS IN CHURCHES	117
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	141
APPENDIXES	147
BIBLIOGRAPHY	151

## INTRODUCTION

Calvary is the sight of the most transformational event in human history. On its well-worn dirt plods, the Savior of an entire race yielded to death so that countless millions would have an opportunity for fellowship with our God. On that same place, unbelievers became believers and the wealthy alongside the poor recognized their great King. The willingness of One to sacrifice for so many others etched an example that even those who would will to could not match. No matter how great our love may be for each other, Christians fervently believe that this one person – Jesus Christ – gave all. He reached into the recesses of thought and called forth truth. He chagrined philosophy and theory by demonstrating the way. He was an example of transformational leadership that compels followers into submission.

So, we are today submitted to accomplishing his work in the earth. Men and women have shared the Good News of Jesus Christ for more than two millennia, and the world has never been the same. Men and women have come to know God through Gospel preachers, family members and friends, all worshipping the one true and living God. These same devout followers believe the Word completely, even as God expresses that he has no respect of personal traits. More specifically, he loves men and women with equal and unending love.

With the love of God, and not the defense of sacred identity, this paper posits woman as present in God's plan, not an addendum to it. As such, the same indwelling of God that compels man also compels woman, and she is capable of giving all for the call of Christ alongside her male counterpart or apart from him with equal fervor. This paper

is not a defense of a woman's right to preach any more than it is a defense of the fish's right to swim. By woman's very nature, and her creation at the hand of an omniscient God, she is given every necessary warrant to exercise spiritual relationship with the God of all humankind.

The foundation and justification for women in ministry has been argued and articulated again and again by theologians and laypersons alike. This paper will join their discussion and focus its efforts on the progression of female laity within Mount Calvary Holy Church of America (hereafter, MCHCA), a Holiness Pentecostal organization based in Washington, D.C. MCHCA spans the globe and encompasses members from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. With this thought in mind, this paper will develop an assessment of the Church's approach to female leadership and examine the models of female leadership throughout the history of MCHCA. It will assess the guidelines in Scripture which govern church leaders and determine which efforts are available for women to fulfill.

In Part One, this work will discuss the history and evolution of the African-American Church. It is imperative that the discussion begin with the earliest known faith communities in pre-colonial Africa through the introduction of Christianity to Africans in their native land. The discussion covers the reasons that slaves were converted to Christianity and some of the challenges they faced in gaining acceptance by their White counterparts. At the onset of organized religion among African-Americans, there is no specific gender struggle. Rather, men and women are equally fervent in pursuit of God's Word and his will. It is not until sometime later that gender roles emerge as stated doctrine in some churches.



Education shaped a great deal of the beliefs among the aforementioned groups. It would be impossible to gain a full and personal understanding of a living God without the ability to read and interpret his Word for oneself. Freed slaves who learned to read applied their newfound knowledge to holy texts early and often in the abolitionist movement.

Having built the contextual argument for the development of African-American churches, Chapter 2 continues with introduction to the organization at the core of this study, Mount Calvary Holy Church of America. Since its founding in 1929, MCHCA has held unique beliefs about the roles in which women should be permitted to serve. This chapter explores some of the founder's personal beliefs and how his beliefs have shaped the Church's present day functioning.

Chapter 3 discusses a multitude of responses to Protestant women's inherent desire to serve in church ministries. This work includes doctrinal responses from Methodist and Pentecostal perspectives in order to shed light on a broader Christian population and allow the reader to place the MCHCA perspective in a proper context. The chapter concludes with assessments of other contemporary African-American churches and denominations, some with similar and others very dissimilar beliefs about the role of women in church ministries.

Part Two takes an opportunity to rebuild the construct of the woman in the Church. Chapter 4, the first of three chapters in this section, focuses on the Bible's presentation of women. Controversial Scriptures are addressed with contemporary perspectives within the context of the time period they were written. God's Word is infallible and unchanging. As stated at the onset of this work, he has loved and used

women from the beginning of time. One cannot deny the incredible roles women have played throughout history. Despite cultural influences, God has always had women in his plan, and he is still not a respecter of persons.

The women presented in Chapter 5 are leaders in both the Christian and secular arenas. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the many ways that women have already assumed and performed well the leadership roles afforded to them. Corporate examples are especially relevant because they provide a different context in which to view women. It seems that the group could be considered a control group to demonstrate that where no constraints exist, women perform at levels equal to their male counterparts. Several studies are presented to address the perception of women leaders among men and women because the success of a leader is precipitated by the willingness of his or her followers to follow.

MCHCA has undergone some significant changes in leadership recently. Chapter 6 provides the reader a brief synopsis of the current leadership structure and its vision for the future. It is apparent that the organization has progressive ideas when compared to its peer organizations. The information includes a synopsis of the latest Strategic Plan, including objectives and development plans for the future of many subgroups: youth and young adults, men, and women.

Chapter 7 presents an opportunity to develop some strategies for building successful African-American women leaders in all churches. The ideas presented are intended for the MCHCA audience specifically. However, the inferred publication of these ideas represents intent to join a broader conversation about women in churches. Workshops and conferences are only the start of an effort that generally includes targeted

outreach and mentorship to be successful. Ideas presented in this chapter may be presented to the Executive Board of MCHCA in order to build a model of inclusiveness that others may be led to follow. If adopted—in part or whole—by the MCHCA Executive Board, these sections could become amendments to the pillars of its Strategic Plan, serving as guidance for current and future leaders of the Church.

MCHCA is one of a multitude of Protestant organizations in the United States. It is improbable to imagine that the efforts of this paper will be returned by an immediate change in church polity amongst church organizations and leaders who have defined themselves in direct opposition to the outcomes suggested in this work. Instead, this work is aimed at meeting the most immediate need by seeking to influence policy and decisions as they continue to evolve locally, and to add another voice to the broader conversation in Christian leadership circles.

This paper does not purport to be an authority on all issues facing women in the Church. It does address some concerns as they have been expressed to me personally and as I have experienced them in my own life. Scholarly efforts have again permitted an examination of doctrine and allowed one woman to take a second glance at the way women's issues have been addressed in MCHCA. Using the model of African-American Christians in a post-slavery era, the paper that follows is intended to add scholarly thought to the issues that face women in church leadership.

The conclusion of this document will include strategies, tools, and techniques for women in MCHCA to continue their life's missions. By planning strategically to include women in the progression of MCHCA, the Church can confidently establish itself as a model of inclusiveness. The perpetuity of women as preachers and teachers of the gospel

cannot be subjugated or assumed. Instead, the Church's effort will prioritize the promotion of inclusiveness by celebrating and claiming a seat at the table for women in generations yet unborn.

PART ONE

THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCH

## CHAPTER 1

### THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCH

#### **Pre-colonial African Spirituality**

Much has been noted about the expressive worship styles of enslaved Africans and, later, freed African Americans. Some have opined that their behaviors are residual forms of worship from African religious practices. Still others have touted common behaviors in African-American churches as a newly developed practice with its roots in the North American continent. In his book, *The Spirituality of African Peoples*, Peter Paris states, “The deep structures of African spirituality survived throughout the African Diaspora even though they assumed many different expressive forms.”<sup>1</sup> To this end, “shouting” and call-and-response preaching may have their roots in traditional African culture, finding solace in the African-American Church and its membership as sacred connections to ancient worship.

According to Paris, Africans did not lose their worldviews as they traversed the globe to be enslaved by White Christians. They held tight to the unique beliefs within their tribe or geographic group. Though they had been relocated to a new “homeland,”

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<sup>1</sup> Peter J. Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1995), 33.

Africans carried their memories into their future, including their reminiscences of monotheistic religion. Paris continues, “As have all peoples who are uprooted from their cultures and transplanted to an alien environment, African slaves brought their world views with them into the Diaspora. Though different in many respects, they all shared one primary feature, namely, their belief in a sacred cosmos created and preserved by a supreme deity.”<sup>2</sup> Though some Africans had common beliefs with other enslaved persons, language and geographic dispersion caused the enslaved Africans to sift past their potential differences with other groups and find their similarities. They found that groups commonly believed in one supreme deity, no different from the White Christians’ God. It must have been difficult for them to acknowledge the similarities between their monotheistic expression of God and the White Christians’ God. Their supreme deity did not promote or support the enslavement of human beings; the White Christians’ use of enslavement while teaching Christianity must have posed an immediate contradiction to the Africans’ understanding of God.

Christianity was used by colonists to promote the injustices of slavery and to keep enslaved people psychologically bound to their captors. The attitude of Christians slavers was antithetical to their stated beliefs. Paris sums it up thusly: “Their [Christians’] refusal to acknowledge the full humanity of African peoples implied the absence of any moral issue with respect to slavery. . . . It was only after Christians recognized the full humanity of African peoples that the seeds of abolitionism began to appear.”<sup>3</sup> The spirituality of Africans who were brought to the Americas was greatly shaped by the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 63.

inconsistent message of Christ as a redeemer and emancipator while they stayed bound and helpless. Africans believed in their own humanity, and yet had to wait until others developed the moral aptitude to discern their failures. It was a terrible way to live and more frightful because the African Americans who adopted Christianity had to categorize their experiences within the same Bible that they were taught could keep them enslaved.

Paris continues his discussion about the inherent personhood of African-American people as a precursor to the communal struggle for racial justice. African Americans' quest for personhood is deeply rooted in the African experience of tribal community, the basic condition for familial and individual life.<sup>4</sup> It is easy to tie the Civil Rights Movement's call for social justice with African tribal customs because Africans believed that the prosperity of the community superseded the stated goals of individuals. African Americans joined together to fight for issues that have had generational impact. Their willingness to address social injustice was based in a common belief that meeting the community's needs would always advance the entire group.

Dwight N. Hopkins and George C. L. Cummings, in their book, *Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue*, offer this assessment of African religions as they gave rise to a dynamic interplay between community and individual: "Whatever happened to the communal gathering affected the individual, and whatever happened to the individual had an impact on the community. . . . It seeks to forge a group solidarity and identity, beginning with God, proceeding through the ancestors to the community and immediate

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 118.



family, and continuing even to the unborn.”<sup>5</sup> The group identity began with God as the source, and then it poured down through the spirit (character) of ancestors before resting on current and future generations. No one group owned the identity, and all shared equal responsibility for maintaining its stature.

There are many stereotypical views of Africa and the lives of Africans before their enslavement in the Western world. These views have been documented through primary sources of slave traders from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. From a theological perspective, the stereotype of white as “good” and black as “bad” can be traced back to the interpretation of Noah’s curse of Ham and its subsequent effect on his descendants, including Canaan. Genesis 9:25-27 records, “And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.”<sup>6</sup> Because Ham left the tent and told his brothers of Noah’s nakedness, he and his descendants were cursed with the curse of servitude. In this chapter, there is no evidence of skin color or racial divide, but this Scripture was used as the basis to justify the enslavement of African people. Slaveholders presumed that God inflicted blackness on Ham as a curse for his subtle indiscretion. This misinterpretation of Scripture became the religious basis for African enslavement. The idea contradicted recorded stories about leprosy in the Bible. It was indeed strange that blackness was identified as penance for a sin against God when the most dreaded disease in biblical records actually turned its victims’ skin white.

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<sup>5</sup> Dwight N. Hopkins and George C.L. Cummings, *Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 5.

<sup>6</sup> All biblical references will be taken from the King James Bible, unless otherwise noted.

Slaveholders regarded African slaves as sinful and uncivilized, and Europeans operated as saviors in their enslavement efforts.

Joseph E. Harris, in his book, *Africans and Their History*, notes that seventeenth century Europeans believed that they were rescuing Africans from a life of barbarism. Harris records the words of several writers on the slave trade illustrate the trend. William Bosman, a Dutch slaver, dismissed Black culture out of hand in his book, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (1705). His book was widely read and regarded as authoritative for many years. In 1725, James Houston wrote *Some New and Accurate Observations of the Coast of Guinea*, in which he described Africans thusly: “They [Africans] exactly resemble their fellow creatures and natives, the monkeys.” Thomas Phillip’s slave journal noted that Africans were “generally extremely sensual . . . so intemperate, that they drank brandy as if it were water; deceitful in their dealing with Europeans.”<sup>7</sup>

Another Scripture used to perpetuate slavery is found in the Pauline letter to the Ephesians. Paul states, “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ” (Ephesians 6:5). This Scripture was used inappropriately to teach the slaves about Christian religion, emphasizing obedience and submission as the will of God for their lives.

The Bible was also used as a tool by Europeans to support their theory of personal superiority over the inhabitants of the African continent. It was also used repeatedly as a weapon to establish and maintain oppression. In his article, *African-American Interpretation of Scripture*, Reginald Davis asserts that African Americans were brought

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph E. Harris, *Africans and Their History* (New York: Penguin Group 1998), 7.

to shore with thoughts of inferiority and an indefinite status of servitude. He further states that Europeans used the Bible to help legitimate four hundred years of slavery, one hundred years of segregation, and today's transgenerational oppression of African Americans.<sup>8</sup>

Davis states, "We define this view as 'Eurocentric' because Africans engaged in the mid-Atlantic slave trade learned their religion from their slaveholders, which led to their 'mis-religion and exploitation.'"<sup>9</sup> Europeans looked down on African descendants and condescended to touch nothing but its riches. Ignorance of African history, differences of mores and customs, and ethnic prejudice predisposed the minds of Europeans to distort the moral personality of the African and his intellectual and cultural aptitudes.<sup>10</sup> With this backdrop, one can understand how stereotypes and myths became dominant forces in maintaining slavery.

History might be differently recorded if Africans had submitted their understandings about God to the whim of their captors. Instead, they held firmly to their individual beliefs until (after the Middle Passage) groups would have opportunities to merge their shared beliefs and develop an Invisible Institution – slave churches held outside of masters' watchful eyes. The Invisible Institution aided Africans in developing their own understandings about Christianity, including the inherent disconnect between enslavement and Christian love. Paris states it thusly:

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<sup>8</sup> Reginald Davis, "African-American Interpretation of Scripture," *Journal of Religious Thought* (2005): 94.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Cheikh Diop, *African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* (Westpoint: Lawrence Hill, 1974), 24.

Thus the condition of slavery did not cut them off from their ultimate source of meaning, God, who was the reservoir for all their religious and moral strivings. . . Africans in the diaspora were able to preserve the structural dimensions of their spirituality: belief in a spirit-filled cosmos and acceptance of a moral obligation to build a community in harmony with all the various powers in the cosmos. The preservation of their spirituality under the conditions of slavery was an astounding accomplishment.<sup>11</sup>

The individuals who survived enslavement developed an understanding about God in the process. They worshipped the God of the oppressed, the manifestation of God that is concerned with the poor and mistreated persons in our communities. It is an amazing feat that formerly enslaved persons emerged from their experiences with fully developed and committed forms of Christianity when logic says that they should have rebuked the very religion that kept them oppressed. Rather, they built faith upon experiences with a real God, not the prescribed forms of God handed down by their captors.

### **The “Invisible Institution”**

Slave owners knew that exposure to the truth might endanger their capitalistic endeavor to keep Africans bound in North America. They also knew that the collective power of Africans could be greater than their own, since enslaved African groups used a myriad of languages and since Africans had established communities with laws and governing structures prior to the invasion of Europeans. “The impulse of slave-owners to obliterate every trace of the African heritage in their captives clearly contributed to their dehumanizing intent. Yet, in spite of such severe proscriptions, the African slaves maintained their cosmic understandings of family life.”<sup>12</sup> Slaves were forced into mixed

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<sup>11</sup> Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples*, 35.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

factions in order to break their ability to operate as unified groups with shared language and beliefs. Even though Africans were separated from those with shared experiences, they realized that disparate groups still maintained common beliefs about family and community. Paris explains, “In continuity with their native Africa, the well-being of the community was the foremost moral value among the slaves. Those whose lives exemplified that goal received the community’s highest praise.”<sup>13</sup> Enslaved persons built a foundation of common beliefs in order to sustain themselves and survive the perils of slavery.

Slaves did not set aside the beliefs learned in their homeland. During the mid-Atlantic slave trade, Africans were given warped Christian propaganda that validated and supported the heinous crimes associated with slavery. Rather than assimilate to the new culture in which they were newly immersed, Africans pieced together their memories and held to the spiritual foundation they once knew. Paris contends, “African spirituality (the dynamic and integrating power that constitutes the principal frame of reference for all individual and collective experiences) was preserved in recognizable form among the North American Diaspora. . . . African traditions not only adapted themselves to their new environment but also altered it in many important ways.”<sup>14</sup> Based on this thought, it can be concluded that Africans influenced American spirituality as much as they were influenced by it. Their contributions to the aesthetic of contemporary churches are often seen today in religious assemblies of diverse cultural populations.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 129.

One way that African Americans participate in religious activity is by petitioning the supreme deity through prayer and meditation. Religion and spirituality are indelibly tied to the African American community. So was the case of spirituality in African culture prior to the mid-Atlantic slave trade. Spirituality was an integrated part of life and deemed necessary for success. Paris writes,

Africans and African Americans alike (whether they be traditionalists, Christians or Muslims) offer prayers in the form of petitions for the basic conditions of life: health, food, shelter, and protection from all forms of evil including social abuse, political oppression, and economic deprivation. In fact, Africans view religious devotion and good moral habits as necessary conditions for the prevention and the solution to most practical problems in life.<sup>15</sup>

African spirituality spilled into the Diaspora as the people took their devotion to good moral habits and religion to North America. Thusly, African American spirituality is a composite of experiences from the Invisible Institution created while they were enslaved, as well as a heavy helping of pre-colonial African spiritual beliefs and moral strivings.

Slaves met secretly to develop their own form of religion. Hopkins and Cummings call it the “Invisible Institution” because its activities and beliefs could not be published without repercussion. Historians and anthropologists have uncovered numerous pieces of religious propaganda, which aimed to warp the slave’s mind into believing that enslavement was a mandate by God. Slaves interpreted some Scriptures for themselves, however, and deduced that the slave masters’ God was different from the God they knew and served. They met secretly, after the work was done, much to the chagrin of their captors. Hopkins and Cummings write, “The Invisible Institution symbolized both a cultural statement of slave theology and a liberated space in which

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 131.

slaves controlled the political power to develop their theology.”<sup>16</sup> As they met, they developed their own paradigm of Christianity: liberation theology. That is, they followed the freedom narrative found in biblical texts. Their spirituality helped them to maintain independence while trapped in the snares of American slavery. Hopkins and Cummings write, “The slaves’ autonomy and independence could be expressed in their defiance of their white masters as they sought to communally provide a supportive context for one another. Their religious independence became a means of defying the dominant powers and creating their own means of coping with the reality of their exploitation and suffering.”<sup>17</sup> African American spirituality began here. It has since morphed, as African Americans have become liberated and have been provided access to education and full participation in their communities.

Enslaved Africans believed that God would free them from their bondage, and that he would bring justice to their circumstances. Hopkins and Cummings write, “The most basic and commonly expressed aspect of the reversal in the narratives and conversion stories is that God will turn death into life, a life of freedom and justice.”<sup>18</sup> Enslaved people believed that their bondage was wrong, and that the same God that their masters prayed to would also work on their behalf. The outcome of God’s intervention would be inner spiritual renewal and public displays of social justice. The God of the oppressed slave community became the God who would fight spiritual battles of inheritance. Slaves fully believed that their futures would be filled with abundant

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<sup>16</sup> Hopkins and Cummings, *Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

blessings from a righteous God. As their needs changed, so did their focus on the manifested presence of God in their lives.

Many cultures and practices from Africa were not prevalent during American slavery. However, Africa was a continent rich in its own culture before the invasion of Europeans. Milson Sernett, in his book, *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, writes,

The lineage tree of African American religion is rooted in the cultures of traditional Africa. Africans were a religious people long before encountering European slavers and Christian missionaries. Olaudah Equiano's memoirs, published in 1789 in England and two years later in America, depict the integral relationship of religion to traditional culture. Kidnapped when eleven from his home in what is now eastern Nigeria, Olaudah Equiano (1745-1801) . . . When first able to read the Bible, Equiano expressed amazement at seeing "the laws and rules of my own country written almost exactly."<sup>19</sup>

There are other primary sources which also indicate that Africans were an established race prior to the invasion of European settlers. W. E. B. DuBois wrote that at first sight it would seem that slavery completely destroyed the very being among Negroes. However, the power of the priest in the African culture became an important figure on the plantations. He was believed to have power and operated in the realm of both religion and medicine. He was the one to comfort the sorrowful and became the interpreter of the supernatural.<sup>20</sup> His role, as defined in Africa, carried over to Western culture. DuBois further stated that the Negro Church of today bases itself on the sole surviving institution of the fatherland, which accounts for its extraordinary growth and vitality.

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<sup>19</sup> Milson Sernett, *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 1.

<sup>20</sup> W. E. B. Dubois, *The Negro* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 113.



One of the greatest and identifiable survivals of African traditional religion in the conversion to the western world is the tradition of the great “shout,” or possession by the Holy Spirit. In African religion, individuals are possessed by sub-deities to fulfill a particular need. In Christianity, it is only the Holy Spirit who possesses and causes ecstasy or a feeling of fulfillment. According to Henry Mitchell in *Black Church Beginnings*, the Africans saw faith and religious commitment as a natural part of their culture, and based it on experience accompanied by some aspect of spiritual possession.<sup>21</sup>

### **Africans in America**

African Americans developed a common spiritual ethic as the result of years of shared experiences. Though language and tribe differences hindered the first generation of enslaved persons brought from Africa, generations since have determined that the common anchor of spirituality among African peoples encourages and uplifts the race. Individual spirituality develops as a result of a conscious and committed effort to know and understand a set of divine precepts. As a result, spiritual thought and behavior patterns emerge among believers. Individual encounters allow believers to love and understand God in their own ways. Common practices make it worthwhile for believers to meet for mass worship ceremonies and to provide teachings in group settings. These efficiencies allow the Church to perform its business more effectively and reach more people.

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<sup>21</sup> Henry Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 11.

Each individual gains his or her understanding of God and spirituality and develops among a group of like-minded believers. It would be naïve to assert that all of African Americans share one common belief system with respect to their spirituality. Rather, their shared experiences have allowed them to distinguish aspects of their worship as unique to their culture.

Post-slavery churches with predominantly African American memberships have become known as the “Black Church” in formal and casual settings. The use of the term remains unfounded. Barbara Savage explains the common misuse in her book, *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us*: “Despite common usage, there is no such thing as the ‘black church.’ It is an illusion and a metaphor that has taken on a life of its own, implying the existence of a powerful entity with organized power, but the promise of that also leaves it vulnerable to unrealistic expectations.”<sup>22</sup> Should such an organization exist, the impact would be revolutionary and the range of influence would stretch across theological discussions into social and political arenas. When Black leaders envision change and progress in the communities they serve, the implication is that the “Black Church” has one central repository for an established belief system, declared values, and an organized means by which it expects to be successful. This is simply not true.

Savage sums up her discussion of the term as follows: “The term is a political, intellectual, and theological construction that symbolizes unity and homogeneity while masking the enormous diversity and independence among African American religious

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<sup>22</sup> Barbara Dianne Savage, *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 9.

institutions and believers.”<sup>23</sup> Simply stated, it is erroneous and a bit absurd to believe that all people who share ancestral heritage will believe and behave in the same fashion. By lumping all persons of African descent into one group and assuming there is one shared belief system, all of the individual experiences and virtues are overlooked or, at minimum, denied value. Instead, the formation of African American spirituality can be viewed as a collective assessment of independent choices.

There are many non-profit organizations in the United States that have been organized for the express purpose of advancing the issues that face African American people. Groups like the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People gained traction during the mid-twentieth century as the Civil Rights Movement hit its peak. They experienced great success by working in tandem with Black churches, but the result of their efforts did not create a “Black Church,” nor was it intended to. Savage concludes, “The black church lives on precisely because it is political and cultural shorthand and an all-purpose stand-in for the death of other black institutions.” If this is true, then the Church has been handed a burden it was not designed to bear.<sup>24</sup>

W. E. B. DuBois and Benjamin Mays served the Black community as researchers as they wrote chronologies of the Black experience. They were both researchers and biographers of the anthropological encounters of descendants of African slaves. According to Savage, “The relationship between these black intellectuals and the black institutions they studied illuminates persistent tensions between twentieth-century black

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 9.

elites and the masses of black people they sought to represent.”<sup>25</sup> Their discussions about African American religious practices and the leadership provided by ministers teetered between respect and disapproval. They often acknowledged the need for strong Black churches, but they did not see them as fulfilling their missions effectively or efficiently. Savage sums up DuBois’s views as follows: “He [DuBois] characterized the organized church as ‘curious,’ linked it to African tribal life, and argued that it blended both family and ritual functions. He portrayed churches as primarily social institutions and religious ones secondarily.”<sup>26</sup> By placing the religious function of churches after the social functioning, he both revealed his personal opinion about the role of the Black Church and his observation of contemporary activities in Black churches. It should be noted that generalizations are never warranted when studying a group and its behaviors. However, researchers have recorded the duties and accomplishments of churches primarily in terms of their social and outreach programs. DuBois’s assessment holds true today, as churches primarily gauge their success by the social assistance provided to its members.

Carter G. Woodson had a very unique perspective about the composition of Black churches. In effect, he created two distinct classes of Black churches, one for the small group of educated elite and the other for everyone else.<sup>27</sup> Classism on the basis of socio-economics defies the premise on which the self same movement was created: innate equality for all humans. So, spiritual ideals had again been turned on their head, as scholars floated ideas of logic above the principles of God espoused in the Christian

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 37.

Bible. This poses a significant threat to the emergence of an African American spiritual ethic because inconsistent interpretation of the Bible before, during, and after the transatlantic slave trade was a seminal issue for the emergence of social injustice.

Later in her assessment, Savage admits one very frail truth about the idealized Black Church. She writes, “Beneath all of their complaints about the churches and their hopes for reconfiguration lay the sad reality that these small local institutions could not bear the enormous political responsibilities being laid upon them.”<sup>28</sup> This conclusion means that the enormous responsibilities facing the Black Church dwarfed its original intent—to provide spiritual leadership to its communities. One could also infer that if the Church concentrated so much of its efforts on politics, then its spiritual efforts would suffer. Savage’s assessment is important because contemporary definitions of African American spirituality are clouded with images of church people in a Civil Rights Movement. It can make churches feel overwhelmed if they are tasked to provide spiritual and political leadership to their congregants.

### **Looking Toward the Future**

Educational opportunities shaped the means by which African Americans gained access to spiritual truths. Segregation kept bright African Americans from pursuing professional careers in medicine and law. It also deprived spiritual seekers of critical learning opportunities that would shape their spiritual development. The post-segregation preacher was very different from religious leaders who had little access to education. Savage writes, “Young black people had a profound disrespect for black

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 67.

ministers because they viewed them as morally hypocritical and poorly educated.”<sup>29</sup> The first generations of Blacks who had opportunity to attend school chagrined the uneducated Black minister. While morality does not require advanced educational studies, some ministers suffered poor public opinion because of their lack of access to information. It could be argued that the cyclical unavailability of education produced spiritually poor people who then built spiritual “truths” on mistruths and ignorance.

Contemporary theology also lends itself to public discourse about the role of African American churches in politics today. President Barack Obama had a well-reported disagreement with his then-pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright. The press seized several political statements made by Reverend Wright and asked President Obama to substantiate the claims as if they were his personal beliefs. Savage sums up the sequence of events as follows: “The public clash between two men . . . demonstrates how the tensions between black religion and politics have not been exacerbated in the four decades since the civil rights movement ended.”<sup>30</sup> In short, the president’s refusal to assimilate to the beliefs of his spiritual leader made him a bit of a pariah among some circles, while it highlighted the growing divide among African American political and spiritual beliefs. At one time the collective beliefs of African American people seemed to transcend socio-economics. However, as a newer Black middle class has emerged, so have the beliefs splintered into disparate groups with dissimilar beliefs.

Even today, the African American Church finds its missions more and more diverse. While some churches focus on meeting the primal needs of their parishioners,

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<sup>29</sup> Savage, *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us*, 75.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

others are expanding their outreach to more lofty and lucrative ventures. Savage writes, “One consequence of the movement’s successes was the creation of an expanded black middle class that now supports large, financially prosperous mega churches in major urban and metropolitan centers.”<sup>31</sup> Mega churches exponentially increase their impact by pooling the resources of greater numbers of people to effect change in the community. The mission of mega churches extends beyond critical issues to include more “luxury” ministries. For example, many mega churches have launched educational centers to serve their church population and others. The churches offer curricula with Christian principles, a luxury choice for middle class and affluent African Americans whose children would otherwise attend diverse, integrated public schools.

Education had previously been used by colonizers to reprogram the thinking of Africans. African Americans, like other cultures, passed down thoughts and behaviors to their youth to instill confidence in their culture and advance the culture through another generation. Paris writes, “As a principal tool for alienating Africans from their indigenous cultures, the goal of colonial education was to effect a profound loss of self-esteem and self-identity among a new African elite.”<sup>32</sup> In North America, Africans were provided education sparingly. When provided, the education was tailored to meet the goals of colonizers: to eliminate cultural identity and recreate the African’s character. Paris assesses the response of Africans and African Americans: “The many and varied ways by which Africans and African Americans responded to exploitation and oppression reveal theological understandings and moral virtues that are deeply embedded in the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 274-75.

<sup>32</sup> Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples*, 8.

sacred traditions of Africa.”<sup>33</sup> As it relates to virtues and morals, Africans managed to hold on to their shared value of community over the individual even as they were stripped of language and traces of their ancestral history.

Africans who were exported from their country as slaves held beliefs in their tribal religions that were often misunderstood by observers. Colonizing Europeans mischaracterized Africans as polytheistic, when they had simply created names for the many manifestations of one God. Paris identifies African beliefs as more in line with progressive American Christianity than had been originally thought. Although Americans debate and decide on what the roles of different genders will be in progressive Christian Church today, Africans brought with them a genderless, omnipresent God with many manifestations. Paris writes, “Thus it appears that African understandings of the supreme deity are much less sexist than those of many other religions including Christianity, Judaism and Islam.”<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that the Africans did not worship many different Gods because they had different names for God. Since African names all have meanings that communicate important information about the thing or person named, each society has many names for God because no one name is adequate for describing all of God’s attributes.<sup>35</sup> It has been widely accepted that the Jews have always had multiple references for their one God, and little critique has arisen as a result of many names for one God.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 31.



The enslaved Africans and their descendants became known as African American people. Formerly enslaved Africans did not lose their ideals and goals as they were forced to accept a less-than-human status. Instead they maintained their common ethics as they adapted to a new culture. A comparison of African tribal beliefs with African American spirituality reveals startling similarities and differences. Paris explains, “African and African American ethics are primarily concerned with the development of a moral character, which reflects the basic values of its community. There is no universal morality because norms, values and goals vary by community.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, African American communities’ moral strivings will vary as much as they will be the same. Even though there are significant numbers of Black churches, the norms, values, and goals will vary by community. While mega churches may be working to provide greater recreational opportunities for their children, urban ministries may be struggling to meet basic needs like food and shelter. The God of the oppressed will be presented differently than the God of the affluent. For example, one minister may teach on the parable of the rich young ruler in order to stir up benevolence in the congregation. Still another will call for increased awareness of homelessness and hunger in the church’s community by sponsoring a food drive. It would be erroneous to state the two as mutually exclusive. Rather, assessment of African Americans’ spirituality requires a reflection on the group’s collective efforts, instead of focusing on historic triumphs in social justice alone.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 135.

## CHAPTER 2

### MOUNT CALVARY HOLY CHURCH OF AMERICA

The content and intended audience of this work will focus on the female laity of the MCHCA. MCHCA is a progressive Pentecostal organization with churches across the United States, Europe, and the Caribbean.<sup>1</sup> The organization is headquartered in Washington, D.C. and has an active membership of more than one hundred churches.

An overview of MCHCA's roots provides insight into the group's goals, marking its past and current efforts to support and include women as intentionally purposeful. Bishop Brumfield Johnson founded Mount Calvary Holy Churches of America in 1929. At the time that he founded MCHCA, he was a young, Spirit-filled minister associated with United Holy Church of America, serving as a pastor in Summit, New Jersey. In 1928, Bishop Jonson and Elder Robert Pugsley traveled to Winston-Salem, North Carolina to conduct a revival. During the revival nearly three hundred persons were saved. Many of these expressed desired to build a church if Bishop Johnson would agree

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<sup>1</sup> The information in this section has been gleaned from Mount Calvary Holy Church of America, Office of the Presiding Bishop, *The Official Discipline of The Mount Calvary Holy Church of America* (Washington, D. C.: MCHCA, 2012), 6.

to shepherd the congregation. The Winston-Salem church was incorporated in 1929 under the official name of the Mount Calvary Holy Church of America, Inc.<sup>2</sup>

Bishop Johnson and a large group of parishioners, led by the Spirit of the Lord, traveled back to Summit, New Jersey to continue his outreach ministry. Bishop Johnson's charisma and leadership greatly influenced others. In 1929, during his first conference in the city of Summit, New Jersey, twenty ministers joined with him. The feat sealed his fate as a progressive Christian organizer and made him an instant source of inspiration among his peers.<sup>3</sup>

In that same year, Bishop Johnson and his evangelistic workers attended a conference in Boston, Massachusetts, and MCHCA adopted the principles it still adheres to today. The church's charter, signed in Boston on July 27, 1929, contains the following signatures: Bishop Brumfield Johnson, Bishop Lee R. Ligons, Reverend Van T. Pope, Reverend William Bryant, Brother Augustus A. Granville, Sister Josephine M. Spencer, Sister Bessie L. Lipscomb, and Sister Nancy Hall. MCHCA's original charter contains the signatures of three women, allowing one to infer that Bishop Johnson understood the contribution that women would make in the development and expansion of the Church. Traditional churches minimized the role of women, but he knew their presence was necessary.<sup>4</sup>

During the first decade, the church grew rapidly. In the early 1930s prayer bands were held in Staten Island, New York in the homes of various church members, and a

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

church was formed as a result. Bishop Johnson traveled from city to city, hosting revivals. Women contributed to his success in many traditional and unique ways. It became abundantly clear as people packed churches day after day that Bishop Johnson needed more space to minister. Soon thereafter, a large tent became their church home in New York until a church edifice could be established.<sup>5</sup>

Also during the first decade of founding MCHCA, Bishop Johnson and his faithful group of Christian men and women continued services in Durham, North Carolina and established a church there. The MCHCA of Columbus, Ohio was formed shortly thereafter. In 1932, Reverend Evans of Milwaukee, Wisconsin joined the organization, painting a wide stroke of influence across the Midwest. Bishop Johnson's inclusion of women and strategic placement of churches in unlikely neighborhoods drew the people in when they heard the singing and preaching.<sup>6</sup>

The first MCHCA headquarters was established in Baltimore, Maryland.<sup>7</sup> Shortly thereafter, the headquarters was relocated to Buffalo, New York and remained such until the building was destroyed by a fire in 1960. Church leaders then decided to move the headquarters to Boston, Massachusetts, allowing the organization to add a conference center as well. Bishop Johnson held national conventions there, where church leaders gathered to discuss doctrinal concerns and ministry plans, and receive encouragement from peers. Bishop Johnson's charismatic leadership style propelled the organization

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> The information in this section has been gleaned from Mount Calvary Holy Church of America, Office of the Presiding Bishop, *The Mount Calvary Holy Church of America Strategic Plan* (Washington, D. C.: MCHCA, 2010).

into a new dimension of success, and women were always engaged in the processes, indirectly forging a movement toward inclusion.<sup>8</sup>

Bishop Johnson believed in the ordination and support of women in ministry. This is evident throughout his lifetime of ministry. For example, when Bishop Johnson's ministry was expanded through the use of the airwaves, the first broadcast was sent out in Tennessee where Reverend Elizabeth Harris was the pastor. Broadcasts were established in Boston, Massachusetts where Reverend Nellie Yarborough pastored with Bishop Johnson; in Richmond, Virginia where Reverend Elizabeth W. Johnson was the pastor; and in Baltimore, Maryland where Dr. Amanda Williams served as pastor. As the broadcasting presence of MCHCA increased, the nation was exposed to women in church leadership around the country.<sup>9</sup>

Foreign missions became another passion for the members of MCHCA. In 1962, Reverend Ruth A. Green traveled to Bushwal Island in Morovia, Africa as their first foreign mission outreach. The foreign missions department of the host church later sent Bishop Peter Keke from Africa to MCHCA's national convocation. He was taken on a tour of churches to glean leadership skills and build relationships to foster better outreach mission efforts in Africa.<sup>10</sup>

Today the international headquarters of MCHCA calls Washington, D.C. its home, located within Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church in the heart of the city.<sup>11</sup> The

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Mount Calvary Holy Church of America, Executive Board, *Mount Calvary Holy Church of America Manual* (Washington, D. C.: MCHCA, 1999).

headquarters contains the group's archives. Among the artifacts are pictures of Brumfield Johnson in the early stages of his ministry, as well as pictures of conferences and events that were held in the United States and abroad. The room holds original minutes of administrative meetings dating back to the 1930s. These notes explain the history of the organization and some of the challenges that were encountered throughout the years. It is evident that women played a crucial role in the expansion of MCHCA by the number of women ordained as ministers. At the time the photos were taken, there were few denominations that believed in the possibility or promoted the ordination of women.<sup>12</sup>

One eerie piece of history is contained in the archives of MCHCA. It is a picture of Bishop Brumfield Johnson, taken in Buffalo, New York on February 15, 1972. As told by attendee Nellie Yarborough, Bishop Johnson was in the midst of preaching a sermon derived from Psalms 40:16-17, which reads, "Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, the Lord be magnified. But I am poor and need; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God."<sup>13</sup> Immediately after the sermon's conclusion, Bishop Johnson died while sitting in a chair in the pulpit. Nellie Yarborough's account of the day is sealed in her mind because Bishop Johnson had already provided her with opportunities to participate in church leadership. His death was a great blow because people who saw his movement knew that he was embarking upon something great. The

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Nellie Yarborough, phone interview with the author, February 2000.

question arose: Could someone else pick up the mantle and carry the message forward with the same fervor and goals?

Bishop Harold Ivy Williams succeeded Bishop Johnson. This was a natural progression in leadership as Bishop Williams had grown up in the church under the tutelage of Bishop Johnson. Through close and consistent interactions, Bishop Williams gleaned from Bishop Johnson while studying him and his ministry's focus. He was also the man who eulogized his mentor.

As a result of his promotion, Bishop Williams appointed Hansel H. Henry to pastor his vacated church in Baltimore, Maryland and then merged his Washington, D.C. church with Christ Is the Answer Chapel and Pastor Alfred A. Owens Jr., resulting in what is now known as Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church. Bishop Williams accomplished many milestones while moving the organization forward. One of these accomplishments included the compilation of an official church manual (see Appendix A). Although Bishop Johnson wrote the first manual, most of the church's practices, policies, and guidelines were instituted through oral tradition.

Bishop Williams appointed several committee members to create a Manual of Standard Operating Procedures to safeguard and continue the great work of MCHCA. In 1975, he brought the first elements of a manual to the leaders of the National Convocation for their review, critique, and recommendations. The review process lasted three years and included input from every bishop, pastor, overseer, and mother. During this time, sections were ratified, and the final document was approved at the National Convocation in 1977. In addition to the church's constitution, the manual includes the doctrine, convocation procedures, judicial administration, instructions for local church

formation and national departments, guidance on the order of services, and ordinances. Most notably, women are included in the process and language of the document, carrying the founding vision forward to new generations.

Bishop Williams made good use of the skills taught to him by his predecessor by strategically appointing Alfred A. Owens, Jr. and Hansel Henry as Vice Bishops.<sup>14</sup>

Under Bishop Williams's leadership, MCHCA continued its expansion throughout the nation and abroad. The executive Board of Bishops led the efforts to expand into Barbados, India, Trinidad, Tobago, England, and the Bahamas within the following ten years.

In 2008, Bishop Williams followed in the steps of Bishop Johnson and appointed Bishop Alfred A. Owens, Jr., his confidant and mentee, as the Presiding Prelate of MCHCA. After his promotion to Archbishop, Bishop Alfred A. Owens, Jr. decided to build the organization further, utilizing academics and technology to solidify MCHCA's standing in a coming age. His leadership style would be as radical and deliberate as that of the group's founder.<sup>15</sup>

In 2000, Bishop Owens was appointed as the Dean of the Joint College of African-American Pentecostal Bishops. The College was established in 1993 and has a membership of bishops across many denominations. The mission of the organization is to train and educate newly appointed Bishops on how to develop Christian communities, conduct church business, and develop personal leadership styles. The College

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<sup>14</sup> Mount Calvary Holy Church of America, Office of the Presiding Bishop, *The Official Discipline of The Mount Calvary Holy Church of America*.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



accomplishes its goal by providing seminars, workshops, opportunities for fellowship and mentoring for those members who desire relationship with others in similar roles in ministry. The College provides leadership and guidance and simplified answers to important ministerial issues, all in an effort to preserve, protect, and promote the testaments, teachings, and traditions of the Church.<sup>16</sup> Inclusion of women in Christian leadership is among the many issues the College faces. Bishop Owens's background and demonstrated acceptance of women in leadership increases the exposure that some pastors and bishops have not experienced.

Archbishop Owens shares the pastorate of Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church with his wife of forty years, Susie Carol Thomas Owens. The church that began with six members in 1966 has emerged to an adult membership of nearly eight thousand persons today. The pastor attributes much of his success to the women in his life, his wife and his sainted mother. Bishop Owens holds a deep respect for the contributions of women to the organization, a common belief among each of the past leaders.

The highest office for women at the inception of MCHCA was National Mother. The position was equivalent to the office of a Bishop. The National Mother attended all Bishop's meetings as a contributing member and served in a visible way during National Convocation.

The first two women to be appointed bishops were appointed in 1991 by Bishop Williams. The two women, like their male counterparts before them, had served in the MCHCA for decades as teachers, leaders, and pastors. Prior to ordination, Nellie

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<sup>16</sup> College of Bishops website, <http://www.collegeofbishops.org/> (accessed June 1, 2012).

Yarborough operated as the National Youth President and National Secretary. Gertrude Pitts had been the first president of foreign missions.

Bishop Williams ordained these two women as bishops because they satisfied the requirements for tenure and service. They were highlighted for their longevity in the organization and highly qualified because of their leadership skills. Apart from MCHCA, both women were heavily involved in their communities. Even city leaders have recognized them both for innovative approaches to neighborhood issues. Bishop Yarborough recently received recognition for an ecumenical council in Boston for her many years of service to the Boston interdenominational faith community, and, nearly a decade after her death, Bishop Pitts is still recognized as a stalwart leader who revitalized an urban neighborhood that seemed doomed to fail in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Bishop Owens continues in MCHCA's legacy of granting women positions of authority in the organization. In his second year in office, Bishop Owens ordained Ruth Peterson as the third female bishop in the organization's more than eighty-year history. Given his early acknowledgement of women as partners in leadership, MCHCA can expect to see many others given opportunities to serve and lead where God has planted them.

Prior to becoming a bishop in MCHCA, Bishop Owens had already taken a revolutionary step by appointing his wife, Susie C. Owens, as the co-pastor of his local church. Susie Owens had been preaching for many years before her marriage to Bishop Owens and had been licensed as an evangelist. It was in that capacity that Evangelist Owens was introduced to the MCHCA while serving their Boston church. Evangelist Owens first observed women in leadership by watching her own mother pastor a local

church, and she was keenly aware that women in church leadership was an exception to the rule during this era.

Evangelist Owens attended Bethel Bible College immediately after high school to increase her biblical knowledge and substantiate her calling for others. She continued her education to gain professional training as a teacher, a career that would also prove beneficial to the ministry. Evangelist Owens became first lady of her husband's church after marriage. As first lady, she established a Women's Department and Calvary's Child Development Center. Additionally, Evangelist Owens taught Sunday school and served as the ministry's youth leader.

When appointed as the co-pastor of the church, Evangelist Owens's visibility in leadership greatly increased. She became a part of the Executive Board, the church's decision-making body, and transformed the Women's Department into the Women's Ministry to include mentorship, parenting classes, self-esteem workshops, retreats, and women's health advocacy.

In recent years, Evangelist Owens has been appointed as the International First Lady. The role had hitherto for been largely ceremonial, but recent program initiatives are transforming the role into one of leadership for the benefit of the entire organization. The International First Lady has begun to sponsor a newsletter that celebrates and encourages women in ministry leadership as well as providing conferences and mentorship opportunities.

The first MCHCA International Women's Leadership Conference is aimed to empower and equip women who are in and strive to be in leadership positions. The conference was put together after Evangelist Owens recognized a resource gap and the

absence of significant training opportunities for women in leadership. While it could easily be observed that men had been provided mentorship resources, fewer opportunities were given to women. For those women, men have served as great role models, but women are still needed as mentors. She believes that her role as International First Lady will be a springboard to promote and encourage women in ministry leadership.

## CHAPTER 3

### WOMEN IN PROTESTANT CHURCHES

It is imperative to review the history of the Protestant Church in order to understand the role of women in contemporary Protestant environments. Protestant churches developed as a result of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, led by Martin Luther and John Calvin. These men and others stated theological differences and abusive ecclesiological structures as reasons for separating from the Roman Catholic Church. Pentecostals, Baptists, and Presbyterians have all rejected many of the rituals in the Roman Catholic Church in favor of more inclusive ideology that strictly adheres to the centrality of Scripture.

Methodism is a movement of Protestant Christianity. In the eighteenth century, the Methodist Church permitted enslaved African Americans to sit in the balconies of its churches. They later seceded from the parent church, forming African Methodist Episcopal churches. This chapter will outline the efforts of John Wesley and his contemporaries as they continued the Protestant movement and early forms of what is commonly known as the “Black Church.” AME Churches have a long history of supporting and encouraging disenfranchised and marginalized people, including women.

They believed that individual self-esteem could be lifted through the preaching of the Gospel.

Other Protestant denominations, such as National Baptists, were not as accepting of women in leadership. In contrast, Progressive Baptists now accept and promote the contributions of women in their churches. Additional Protestant denominations, such as the United Holy Church of America and the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, permit women as pastors, but not as bishops.<sup>1</sup> MCHCA is founded on Pentecostal beliefs. This section outlines the origins of Black Pentecostal churches and some of its attitudes about women. MCHCA must address the context and history of the church in order to fully address the needs of its constituents.

### **The Methodist Church**

John Wesley and his brother Charles are credited with the birth of Methodism in the early eighteenth century. In *Wondrous Grace*, published by the General Board of Christian Education, the author writes, “The term ‘Methodist’ was first given by way of derision to four students at the University of Oxford in England, among them John and Charles Wesley.”<sup>2</sup> These students had started a group, coined as “A Holy Club,” for study, prayer, and communion. According to John Wesley, an individual once commented on the regularity of their lives and studies by saying, “Here is sprung up a

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<sup>1</sup> Mount Calvary Holy Church of America, *Mount Calvary Holy Church of America Manual*, 117.

<sup>2</sup> General Board of Christian Education, *Wondrous Grace* (Memphis: General Board of Christian Education, no date), as quoted in the CME website, “A Brief Overview of the Methodist Movement,” <http://www.c-m-e.org/core/cmeheritage.htm> (accessed June 1, 2012).

new sect of Methodist.”<sup>3</sup> The term was meant to reflect the patterned and somewhat predictable manner in which they lived their lives. After about ten years, the Wesley brothers had become famous preachers, and those who followed them were known as the “people called Methodist.”<sup>4</sup>

It is chronicled that John Wesley traveled more than 250,000 miles on foot and horseback, preached 40,000 sermons, and wrote 233 original works.<sup>5</sup> Charles Wesley wrote 6,500 hymnals which are still used in churches across the world, most notably the hymn, “Hark the Herald Angels Sing.”<sup>6</sup> Many Methodist denominations still embrace the elements of Wesley’s ministry which entails an emphasis on preaching, the organization of small groups for prayer and Bible study, the importance of book and tract distribution, and a concern for the poor, oppressed and disenfranchised. Most importantly, the theology of John and Charles Wesley had a major influence on other church denominations. The Wesleys’ emphasis upon the importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and the Church has affected the holiness movement, the Pentecostal movement, and the recent charismatic movement.<sup>7</sup>

As of 1995, the World Methodist Council represented 29 million members of sixty churches that trace their heritage to John and Charles Wesley. From a membership

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> William J. Whalen, “What Makes a Methodist?” *U.S. Catholic* 60, no. 5:21 (1995), as quoted in EBSCO host, <http://search.ebscohost.com/> (accessed March 8, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>7</sup> Roger J. Green, “John and Charles Wesley Experience Conversions,” *Christian History* 9, no. 4:44 (1997), as quoted in EBSCO host, <http://search.ebscohost.com/> (accessed March 8, 2012).

of a few thousand at the time of the American Revolution, by 1850 the Methodist made up the largest Church in the United States.<sup>8</sup> Theologian William Whalen writes that women served Methodism as local preachers from the earliest days, but it was not until 1956 that the United Methodist Church extended full ministerial credentials to women.<sup>9</sup>

### **African-American Churches**

Women have played a tremendous role in the formation of Protestant churches. Through the use of primary and secondary sources, Betty Collier-Thomas does an extensive historical account of the impact of African-American women in church formation in her acclaimed book, *Jesus, Jobs and Justice*. In the prologue of the book, Thomas asserts that it was through the concentrated efforts of African-American churchwomen and their organizations that the struggle for rights of women and Blacks were conducted.<sup>10</sup>

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, before the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denominations – two dominant institutions – the majority of Black Christians were affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal and Baptist churches. Collier states that of the four million enslaved persons residing in the South in 1860, more than 300,000 worshipped in White churches before emancipation. In the North and South, most Blacks joined the Methodist Church because of its antislavery position.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Whalen, “What Makes a Methodist?” 21.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>10</sup> Betty Collier-Thomas, *Jesus, Jobs and Justice* (New York: Random House, 2010), xxiii.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 17.



One of the most prominent Black men in the Methodist movement, Richard Allen, was born in 1760 in Philadelphia. At seventeen, he converted to Methodism and soon thereafter purchased his freedom. He was ordained by Bishop Francis Asbury of the historic St. George's Methodist Church in 1799. In 1816, Allen led the African Methodists into a separate denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (hereafter, AME).<sup>12</sup> Officially born October 1796, the new Black denomination was chartered in 1801 and firmly established in 1820 when the leaders voted themselves out of the White Methodist Episcopal Church. The next year, church founders agreed to call the church the African Methodist Episcopal Church in America.

One of the first female preachers among the AME was Jarena Lee. She was drawn to AME after hearing the preaching of Bishop Richard Allen. She was called and allowed to preach in Philadelphia in 1809. At this time, however, neither Black nor White churches ordained women.<sup>13</sup> Lee writes in her autobiography, *My Call to Preach the Gospel*:

O how careful ought we to be, lest through our by-laws of church government and discipline, we bring into disrepute even the world of life. For as unseemly as it may appear nowadays for a woman to preach, it should be remembered that nothing is impossible with God. And why should it be thought impossible, heterodox, or improper, for a woman to preach? Seeing the Saviour died for the woman as well as the man. If a man may preach, because the Savior died for him, why not the woman? Seeing he died for her also. Is he not a whole Saviour, instead of a half one? As those who hold it wrong for a woman to preach, would seem to make it appear . . . If then to preach the gospel, by the gift of heaven comes by inspiration solely, is God straitened (sic); must he take the man exclusively? May he not, and can he not inspire a female to preach the simple story of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord, and accompany it, too,

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<sup>12</sup> Milton C. Sernett, ed., *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 139.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

with power to the sinner's heart. As for me, I am fully persuaded that the Lord called me to labour according to what I received, in his vineyard. If he has not, how could he consistently bear testimony in favour of my poor labours, in awakening and converting sinners?<sup>14</sup>

Based on her words and the context of her calling, the fact that she was able and given the authority to minister under the leadership of Richard Allen demonstrates that during the beginning of this denominational movement, there was an open door for women who had the boldness to pursue their ministry calling. Her writings further demonstrate that her call was indeed controversial, as she felt the need to defend her position.

The AME denomination continued to evolve during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Their history states that, with the permission of Union army officials, AME clergy moved into states the North conquered and pulled newly freed slaves into their denomination. In 1880, AME membership reached over 400,000 because of its rapid spread below the Mason-Dixon Line. Today, the AME Church has membership in twenty Episcopal districts in thirty-nine countries on five continents.<sup>15</sup>

Also, there have been many doctrinal strides within this denomination, the most significant being the ordination of the first woman Bishop, Vashti McKenzie. Currently, she serves as the 117th elected and consecrated bishop of the AME Church. Her historic election in 2000 represents the first time in the more than two hundred-year history of the AME Church that a woman has obtained the level of Episcopal office.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Marcia Y. Riggs, ed., *Can I Get a Witness? Prophetic Religious Voices of African American Women: An Anthology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 7-8.

<sup>15</sup> AME Church website, "About Us – Our History," <http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/history.php> (accessed June 1, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Vashti McKenzie, "Bio," <http://thisisyourwakeupcallonline.com/bio/> (accessed June 1, 2012).

In 1821, there was dissention between members of AME and the elders of an AME congregation called Zion Chapel. The Zionettes elected to join with Richard Allen in fear of losing their independence, which led to the later formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. James Varick became the first bishop of the New-York based AME.<sup>17</sup> To distinguish the New York-based group from the Philadelphia Black Methodist movement, the word “Zion” was added to the title during the Church's general conference in 1848.<sup>18</sup> Women played critical roles and used the church as a platform to advocate for religious, educational, and social justice rights. Notable women who were members of this institution included Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman.

Sojourner Truth's words in her speeches and writings are a call to the equality of a race and the equality of a woman. In her speech, “The Lord Has Made Me a Sign,” she writes,

The Lord has made me a sign unto this nation, an' I go round a 'testifyin' an' shown' their sins agin my people. My name was Isabella; but when I left the house of bondage, I left everything behind. I wa'n't goin' to keep nothin' of Egypt on me, an' so I went to the Lord an' asked him to give me a new name. An the Lord gave me Sojourner, because I was to travel up an' down the land, showin' the people their sins, an' bein' a sign unto them. Afterward I told the Lord I wanted another name, 'cause everybody else had two names; and the Lord gave me Truth, because I was to declare the Truth to the people. . . . I journeys round to campmeetin's an' wherever folks is, an' I sets up my banner, an' then I sings, an' then folks always come up round me, an' then I preaches to 'em. I tells 'em about Jesus, an' I tells 'em about the sins of this people.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> AMEZ Church website, “About Our Church,” <http://www.amez.org/news/amezion/aboutourchurch.html> (accessed June 1, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Riggs, *Can I Get a Witness?* 21.

The speech is believed to have been published around 1850. Sojourner Truth was a trailblazer and powerhouse during her lifetime, standing up for gender and racial equality. She poses a still relevant question to her hearers in her most famous speech, “Ain’t I a Woman?” She questions authority throughout the work. She questions the skewed views that men had of the roles of women. She believed and shared publicly her belief that she was able to perform any task that a man could do. One famous line is often quoted: “If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they are asking to do it, the men better let them.”<sup>20</sup>

Harriet Tubman also was a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church. Because of her ministry outreach of helping Blacks escape the horror of slavery, she was called, the “Black Female Moses.” She is given a prominent place in history for being a “conductor” of the Underground Railroad. There was a direct correlation between the stories of Moses leading the Egyptians out of the wilderness and Harriet Tubman leading slaves to freedom. Harriet Tubman no doubt, believed and acted upon the fact that she was following God’s command to set her people free.<sup>21</sup>

So it was wid me,” said Harriet, “I had crossed de line of which I had so long been dreaming. I was free; but dere was no one to welcome me to de land of freedom, I was a stranger in a strange land and my home after all was down in de old cabin quarter, wid de old folks, and my brudders and sisters. But to dis solemn resolution I came; I was free, and dey should be free also; . . . Oh, how I prayed den, lying all alone on de cold, damp ground; ‘Oh, dear Lord,’ I said, ‘I aint go no friend but you. Come to my help, Lord, for I’m in trouble!’”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas, *Jesus, Jobs and Justice*, 9.

<sup>22</sup> Riggs, *Can I Get a Witness?* 28.

The Black members of the White Methodist Episcopal Church also birthed the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, now known as the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (hereafter, CME). In 1870, the first general conference was held in Jackson, Tennessee, and William H. Miles and Richard H. Vanderhorst were elected as bishops. In 1989, the organization reported a membership of nearly one million.<sup>23</sup> Over the decades, the CME's view of women has also shifted as their official website states that Teresa Elaine Snorton became the fifty-ninth bishop elected in the CME Church on June 30, 2010 in Mobile, Alabama. She is the first female bishop of the CME Church.<sup>24</sup>

Peter Spencer also chartered Union Church of Africans during this time. Although he was invited to join AME, he declined because he was opposed to the rule of bishops. Further, he did not agree with presiding elders and believed clergy should be local and not itinerating.<sup>25</sup> Although this denomination did not grow, develop, or become as self-sustaining as AME, one of its major strengths for that time was its validation of women preachers. In his book, *Invisible Strands of African Methodism*, Lewis V. Baldwin writes,

Women in the Union Church of Africans were given an opportunity very early to fill a role that was not so readily available to females in the AME, AME Zion, and other black denominations. There is no record of the number of females who actually applied for a preaching license in the Union Church of Africans in the pre Civil War years. . . . It is known that women such as "Mother" Ferreby Draper,

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<sup>23</sup> Black and Christian website, "Christian Methodist Episcopal," <http://blackandchristian.com/blackchurch/cme.shtml> (accessed May 15, 2012).

<sup>24</sup> CME website, "Teresa Elaine Snorton," <http://www.c-m-e.org/core/bishopnorton.htm> (accessed July 10, 2012).

<sup>25</sup> Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 103.

Araminta Jenkins, and Annes Spencer did perform duties traditionally associated with ministry.<sup>26</sup>

The Baptist denomination history is a bit more scattered and broad. Henry H. Mitchell, in his book, *Black Church Beginnings*, writes that the first African-American association in the Midwest was organized in the 1830s.<sup>27</sup> The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. traces its history back to 1880.<sup>28</sup> Rev. W. H. McAlpine of Alabama was elected as its first President. The National Baptist Convention has survived and flourished through many organizational splits and controversy. However, it still remains the largest Black Baptist convention, reporting a membership of 7.5 million, with district associations and state conventions across the United States and around the world.<sup>29</sup> There is no mention of women in ministerial positions on their official website or organizational literature.

The National Baptist Convention of America was part of the Baptist Convention formed in 1880. In 1919, controversy surfaced regarding a charter of incorporation for the Convention and the ownership of the National Baptist Publishing Board. The end result was the emergence of The National Baptist Convention of America (unincorporated) and The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated. In 1987, The National Baptist Convention of America was incorporated in Shreveport, Louisiana

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<sup>26</sup> Lewis V. Baldwin, *Invisible Strands of African Methodism* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1983), 63.

<sup>27</sup> Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings*, 115.

<sup>28</sup> The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., "History of the The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.," <http://www.nationalbaptist.com/about-us/our-history/index.html> (accessed May 15, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

under the new name, The National Baptist Convention of America, Inc.<sup>30</sup> According to their official website, there are presently no women in ministerial leadership positions, including the parent body or board of directors. This convention is estimated to have five million members.<sup>31</sup>

As a result of the split within the National Baptist Convention, USA, and the fact that ten pastors were expelled, a new branch of Baptist was birthed, resulting in the formation of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. (hereafter, PNBC). The PNBC website states,

From a sociological perspective, the United States during the 60s was undergoing a massive social transformation. Movements of freedom and justice led by clergy and churchpersons throughout the United States began to spring up at every level and strata in society. African Americans who at one time accepted the status quo were now propelled into a whirlwind of change from those systems and structures that oppressed them. No structure was sacrosanct. Every African American institution was looked at with a critical eye. The institutional church was no exception. . . . As a result of this two-day intensive organizational meeting, the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. was formed.<sup>32</sup>

A review of the Progressive National Baptist Convention's official website makes the presence of women in leadership very clear. Women are included as part of the organization's executive and trustee boards. They are also appointed to positions of Vice Presidents at Large and are National Chairs for boards, agencies, and commissions.<sup>33</sup> It

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<sup>30</sup> National Baptist Convention of America, Inc., "History," <http://www.nbcainc.com/history> (accessed May 15, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Black and Christian website, "Black Church History," <http://www.blackandchristian.com/blackchurch/index.shtml> (accessed May 15, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Progressive National Baptist Convention website, "PNBC History," <http://www.pnbc.org/PNBC/History.html> (accessed May 15, 2012).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

is interesting to note that the title “Progressive” is prominent not only in the implementation of their ministry, but through the inclusion of women.

### **The Pentecostal Church**

Charles Fox Parham developed the Pentecostalism denomination after he resigned from the Methodist Church in 1895. Parham experienced divine healing from rheumatic fever and first began with a healing ministry.<sup>34</sup> He moved to Topeka, Kansas, opened a healing home, and began writing his first publication, *The Apostolic Faith*. The Apostolic Faith views included: healing in the atonement of Christ; pre-millennialism with the belief in a worldwide revival known as the “latter rain” to precede the imminent coming of Christ; and a blessing beyond “entire sanctification, the baptism with the Spirit.”<sup>35</sup> His foundation for preaching was also rooted in his belief in “missionary tongues,” meaning a belief in Anglo-Israelism and the possibility of foreign tongues given by the Spirit of baptism to facilitate world evangelism.<sup>36</sup> Parham could have been considered a liberal as he allowed women to enroll at his Bible school and encouraged a Black man named William Seymour to listen in on his sermons from the next room, or as oral history has rumored, “from outside the door.”

Parham’s formulation of an “evidential tongues” doctrine became the hallmark of North American classical Pentecostalism; however, his theology insisted on the belief

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<sup>34</sup> Allan Anderson, “The Azusa Street Revival and the Emergence of Pentecostal Missions in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Transformation* 23, no. 2 (2006): 107-18, as quoted in EBSCO host, <http://search.ebscohost.com> (accessed March 8, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*



that tongues were authentic languages (*xenololia* or *xenoglossa*) strictly given for the proclamation of the gospel.<sup>37</sup> This doctrine was taught by William Seymour at the Azusa Street revival in 1906, and it formed the foundation in which Pentacostal missionaries and followers preached and taught throughout the United States and abroad. Parham did not actively engage in world evangelism, but his protégé, William Seymour, would be the catalyst in fulfilling this role.

The Azusa Street revival, held at 312 Azusa Street, spread to make it probably the best known center of early Pentecostalism in North America. The revival began among the poorest of the poor in an interracial and intercultural church led by Seymour. Ironically, the movement took place in a former AME building. Daily meetings began in the early hours of the morning and lasted until past midnight. The services were completely spontaneous with people singing in tongues and falling to the ground under the power or by being “slain in the spirit.”<sup>38</sup>

Interestingly, when Charles Parham was invited to the revival, a controversy emerged. Parham’s own practice was to make segregated altar calls when he conducted revivals. This meant that Blacks and Whites would be separated at the altar. His practice confirmed White theology supremacy.<sup>39</sup> He refused to conduct a united revival and was barred by Seymour and his followers.<sup>40</sup> Seymour desired a unified altar call without

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>39</sup> Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints in Exile – The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 30.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 30.

regard for race or creed. This was the end of their kindred relationship that previously had no regard for race. Race separated the two men and separated a denomination.

Many people were critical of this movement and the manifestations of the Spirit moving. “Weird Babel of Tongues,” one headline in the *Los Angeles Times* warned, anticipating the brand of criticism that “holy rollers” have faced throughout their history. “New Sect of Fanatics Is Breaking Loose,” headlines reported.<sup>41</sup> In fact,

The racial integration in the Azusa Street meeting was also unique at the time, and people from ethnic minorities discovered the sense of dignity and community denied in the larger urban culture. The mission saw its interracial and intercultural nature as one of the reasons for its success, and this too was a reason for Pentecostalism’s remarkable expansion across the globe. Seymour’s core leadership team was fully integrated with black and white women and men being responsible for various aspects of the work (more than half were women). . . . The first American missionaries that went out only five months after the Azusa Street revival had begun, many of whom were women and African Americans, were self-supporting and did not have the financial backing of an organization.<sup>42</sup>

Lucy Farrow and Neely Terry were two pioneering Holiness women preachers. Of particular note, Seymour’s introduction to the idea of the baptism of the Holy Ghost was through Lucy Farrow.<sup>43</sup> She was a Black woman who in 1905 went to work as a governess in the home of Charles Parham.<sup>44</sup> Anderson concludes his history by stating that within three years of the 1906 revival, Apostolic Faith missionaries who had received their experience of Spirit baptism at Azusa Street were found in at least three African and

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<sup>41</sup> Benjamin Anastas, “The Pentecostal Promise,” *New York Times Magazine* (no date), as quoted in ProQuest Research Library, <http://www.proquest.com/en-US/> (accessed March 1, 2012).

<sup>42</sup> Anderson, “The Azusa Street Revival,” 113.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas, *Jesus, Jobs and Justice*, 73.

<sup>44</sup> Sanders, *Saints in Exile*, 28.

six Asian countries.<sup>45</sup> The impact of the Azusa Street movement has been felt beyond its twentieth-century origins.

Charles Harrison Mason also attended the revival. Mason was a former Black Baptist preacher who, in 1894, had been “sanctified” and withdrew from the Baptists to organize a Holiness denomination.<sup>46</sup> The story has been told that while he was walking down the street in Little Rock, Arkansas, the Lord revealed the name “Church of God in Christ” to him. As confirmation, he said God placed upon him the Scripture I Thessalonians 2:14, which refers to “churches of God which are in Christ.” This Scripture and revelation gave way to the birth of a new denomination in 1897. In his history, William Sernett states that no denomination in America has matched the rapid growth and development of the Church of God in Christ (hereafter, COGIC).<sup>47</sup> Under Bishop Mason’s leadership and apostolic direction, COGIC has grown from ten congregations in 1907 to the largest Pentecostal group in America. The membership has grown from 3 million in 1973 to an estimated 5.2 million as last reported in 1997.<sup>48</sup>

The role of women in the COGIC denomination is clear. They are not ordained to preach nor have any women been appointed to executive levels of leadership. The COGIC official manual defines the prohibition against women’s ordination as pastors,

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>46</sup> Sernett, *African American Religious History*, 317.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 324.

<sup>48</sup> Church of God in Christ website, “History,” <http://cogic.net/cogiccms/default/cogic-history/the-founder-church-history/> (accessed May 25, 2012).

elders, or bishops while establishing their roles as evangelists and teachers who may “have charge of a church in the absence of a pastor.”<sup>49</sup>

During this century, there have been four prominent women within the Pentecostal movement. Phoebe Palmer was a dynamic and influential evangelist. The ministry of Amanda Berry Smith, an African American holiness evangelist, began in the 1870s in New York City. Mary Magdalena Tate was an evangelist in the South who established the Latter Day Church of the Foundation of True Holiness and Sanctification, which would later be two separate denominations: the first called The House of God, Church of the Living God, Pillar Ground and Truth (Lewis Dominion) and the second called The House of God, Church of Living God without Controversy (Keith Dominion).<sup>50</sup> Lastly, Aimee Semple McPherson, a native of Los Angeles, gained celebrity status as an evangelist when her popularity soared in the 1920s. The Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (hereafter, PAW) also came out of the Azusa Street revival. Established in 1914, PAW granted women positions of authority equal to men.<sup>51</sup>

### **Conclusions**

The history of these segments of the Church—the Methodist Church, African-American Church, and the Pentecostal Church—clearly reveals that gender discrimination and sexism does exist in some denominations. However, women have experienced levels of success by gaining equal levels of education and participating side

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<sup>49</sup> Thomas, *Jesus, Jobs and Justice*, 118.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>51</sup> Sanders, *Saints in Exile*, 33.

by side with men in ministry for years. The approaches they have used to assert and gain power vary according to religious tradition.<sup>52</sup> Thus, there is no one track or model to follow because the pathways are just as diverse as the denominations Women have contributed greatly to the history of Pentecostal churches. Sanders provides the following list of some of the most well known women founders and preachers in the twentieth century:

- Mother Susan Gertrude Lightfoot who left PAW and founded the True Church of God (1910);
- Ida Robinson who founded Mount Sinai Holy Churches of America, Inc (1924);
- Rosa Horn, founder of the Pentecostal Faith Church in Harlem (1934);
- Elder Lucy Smith, founder and pastor of All Nations Pentecostal Church in Chicago (1928);
- Johnnie Coleman of the Christ Universal Temple in Chicago (1956);
- Barbara King, of the Hillside International Truth Center in Chicago(1974);
- and Audrey Bronson, founder of the Sanctuary Church in Philadelphia (1975).<sup>53</sup>

These women, along with countless others, have sacrificed and paved the way for women in ministry for the twenty-first century.

The MCHCA was founded out of this order of Pentecostalism. Its foundation includes progressive ideologies about youth and women in ministries. In later chapters of this ministry focus paper, MCHCA's current polity will be examined and suggestions made to further the progress already gained.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 117.

PART TWO

LEADERSHIP—WOMEN IN THE BIBLE, THE PULPIT, AND THE WORKPLACE

## CHAPTER 4

### A THEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY

Women serve in a variety of capacities today, including preachers, pastors, and evangelists, as a direct result of others' sacrifices. Confident women from centuries ago have paved the way for women in ministry today. Their resilience and relentless fight allowed them to face those who were biased against them as women. The efforts of these pioneering women have paved the way for women today to take a rightful place in ministry, fulfilling the Bible's assertions that men and women have a place in the body of Christ.

Women's participation in ministry has been controversial in some Christian denominations, and one serious challenge remains today. While some women have been used as pivotal instruments to preach, teach, or prophesy, they represent a much smaller percentage of leaders in such arenas. Fortunately, there are female role models in Christian leadership that highlight the influence of women throughout the Old and New Testaments. This work will review four examples of women in leadership from the Old Testament: Deborah, the Queen of Sheba, Esther, and Huldah. It will then underscore the

work of New Testament examples: Priscilla, Lydia, Mary Magdalene, Dorcas, Mary (mother of Jesus), and Elizabeth.

Each woman identified above will be assessed by her recorded history in order to better understand the contributions these women have made and the models they provide for contemporary female leadership. Bill Hybels offers ten distinct descriptions of leadership styles in his book, *Courageous Leadership*.<sup>1</sup> The ten leadership styles are not gender specific, further nullifying the idea of male or female leadership modes.

### **Old Testament Leadership Models**

Four examples of women in leadership from the Old Testament will be considered: Deborah, the Queen of Sheba, Esther, and Huldah. Each leader will be discussed in light of Hybels's leadership styles. While they differ in style, each woman models how a woman in ministry could lead today.

#### **Deborah**

Deborah's story is one of courage, tenacity, and strength. Her character and leadership traits can be examined through her actions and prophecy. Of the thirteen judges named in the Bible, Deborah was the only woman given this title. In a contemporary society, this is an extreme paradigm shift from patriarchal leadership models.

Deborah's leadership style is both directional and strategic. According to Hybels, directional leaders have a "God-given ability to choose the right path for an organization

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).



as it approaches a critical intersection.”<sup>2</sup> Directional leaders have the ability to move a group’s ambitions forward based on an internal compass pointed toward the will of God. About strategic leaders Hybels writes, “Strategic leaders have the ability to take an exciting vision and break it down into a series of sequential, achievable steps.”<sup>3</sup> A strategic leader will march the group forward with identifiable milestones and a focused approach.

Deborah’s background and activities are found in the book of Judges. The story opens with Deborah seated under the palm tree where she later judged the people. Throughout the Bible, the palm tree represented fertility, growth, and stature. Both King Solomon’s temple and the visions of a prophet (Ezekiel) spoke of the use of palm trees (1 Kings 6:29, 32; Ezekiel 40:16). In essence, the palm tree was a true representation of Deborah herself—a woman who would grow her organization while maintaining high standards. One commentator suggests that she sat under a tree because it was clear that she was judging predominantly men, and she chose to do so outside so that their conversation would be held out in the open. This is just the first example of Deborah’s characteristic wisdom.<sup>4</sup> According to Judges 4:4-5, Deborah was not only a prophet, but the wife of Lappidoth. She was the chosen judge over Israel while they were held in captivity to Jabin, the King of Canaan. Her actions illustrate the fact that she had the ability to be objective and that her words were filled with wisdom. The book of Judges

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 143-144.

<sup>4</sup> Dorothy Richman, “Deborah the Judge.” *Women’s League Outlook* 77.2 (Winter 2006): 23-24.

gives no significant background, historical, or genealogical lineage information, therefore one can surmise that Deborah's appointment was a result of a divine calling to leadership.

The story states that Deborah sent for Barak and told him that the Lord said that it was time for him to prepare for battle in Kadesh. She stated that the Lord would deliver the enemy into his hands. Barak reluctantly responded to Deborah that he would not go unless she accompanied him. Deborah agreed to accompany him as he went to conduct business. However, she told him that the demise of the king would fall to the hands of a woman. It is known from the preceding books of the Bible that women did not traditionally go off to war; thus Deborah's activities were courageous as she pursued an avenue where women had not ventured. Deborah was more than the first and only woman to judge the people of Israel. She is also the first woman known to be present at the scene of a battle. This action demonstrates Deborah's commitment to the strategy God had given her and her faith in God to act upon the prophecy she had been given.

It is also notable to mention Deborah's proactive leadership style. Barak did not come to her seeking advice concerning the captivity. According to Judges 4:3, Israel had been in captivity for twenty years. Deborah persuaded Barak to perform as she had instructed. Though it is often shunned in patriarchal societies, this is a clear example of a woman leading a group to safety in God's word.

The story ends with another woman, Jael, who was able to lure King Jabin into her tent, and kill him by driving a tent peg through his temple all the way into the ground. As Deborah had prophesied, the reign of Sisera ended at the hand of woman. The fifth chapter of Judges is filled with poetry, prose, and song. In one example the author writes, "Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when people willingly offered themselves.

Hear O ye kings; give ear o ye princes, even I will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel” (Judges 5:2). The book ends with gratefulness and thanksgiving, and Deborah does not take any credit for herself. All the honor and glory are given to the God of Israel. The last verse states that the land rested for forty years after the victory of the battle. Deborah was wise and faithful. She served her country and was called “mother to Israel” because she played a significant role in battle and also served as the strategist and encourager. She was, without question, an integral part of Israel’s victory.<sup>5</sup>

### The Queen of Sheba

In the book of 1 Kings, chapter 10 begins with an elaborate, picturesque description of the Queen of Sheba. The first verse states, “When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions.” The Scripture then recounts her journey to Jerusalem, where she made a grand entrance on camels loaded with spice, gold, and precious gems. From this description, it is apparent that the queen was both elegant and wealthy.

From the Bible’s depiction of the Queen of Sheba, one could surmise that she was also powerful and confident. She was seeking to visit King Solomon to learn more about his God. The Queen understood that she had not attained all knowledge prior to her ascension to the throne. Her leadership style was both entrepreneurial and strategic because she developed a very detailed strategy to further her business goals. Hybels

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<sup>5</sup> Jaye Martin and Terry Stovall, *Women Leading Women: The Biblical Model for the Church* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2008), 6.

describes entrepreneurial leaders in a similar vein as visionary leaders because they move a group forward based on their internal motivation.<sup>6</sup>

One could also deduce that the Queen of Sheba was a woman of influence because the Scripture states that she was able to “commune” with the king. *The Message Bible* states 1 Kings 10: 2-5 as follows:

She came to Solomon and talked about all the things she cared about, emptying her heart to him. Solomon answered everything she put to him—nothing stumped him. When the queen of Sheba experienced for herself Solomon’s wisdom and saw with her own eyes the palace he had built, the meals that were served, the impressive array of court officials and sharply dressed waiters, the lavish crystal, and the elaborate worship extravagant with Whole-Burnt-Offerings at the steps leading up to The Temple of God, it took her breath away.

The Queen of Sheba sought after wisdom. Mariam Monges describes the queen’s quest for wisdom as a model for the roots of an epistemological paradigm which she coined “Shebanization.”<sup>7</sup> She expounds on the point that traditionally, among people of African descent, proverbs have been a method to pass on wisdom. It is her opinion that the Queen of Sheba wanted to gain more insight and sharpen her leadership skills, thus she sought for meeting with the king.<sup>8</sup> This is a key point, which exemplifies the necessity for women leaders to follow the same models that men follow and seek wisdom from other successful persons. This can be accomplished through the concept of the mentor/mentee relationship. It is noteworthy to identify that the two had a professional

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<sup>6</sup> Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, 112.

<sup>7</sup> Mairiam Monges, “The Queen of Sheba and Solomon: Exploring the Shanization of Knowledge,” *Journal of Black Studies* 33 no. 2 (November 2002).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

meeting, and Sheba gleaned knowledge from a man. She was provided mentorship by a man, and no notes of concern are available in the text.

Sheba's visit with King Solomon confirms all that the queen had heard, and King Solomon, in all of his wisdom and splendor, would have not entertained her visit if he did not discern her sincere quest for wisdom. The Queen of Sheba's leadership style is rooted in visionary goal setting. She knew the great responsibility of leadership and searched far and wide to obtain wisdom that would help her kingdom. Her male counterpart acknowledged and rewarded her sincere request for knowledge by granting her an audience in his court.

In her departure, the Queen of Sheba showered the king with gifts of gold, spices, precious stones, and almug trees. 1 Kings 10:13 states, "And King Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty." Here is an exchange and prophetic impartation. Their meeting was mutually and spiritually beneficial. The Queen of Sheba confirmed his kingship and elevated the name of Solomon's God. In return, she received everything she asked for. The Bible does not mention whether or not any material possessions were given to the queen. It simply states that she sat with him and gleaned from his wisdom.

### Huldah

Huldah was one of the five female prophets mentioned in the Old Testament. The other prophetic women include: Deborah; Miriam, as mentioned in Exodus 15:20 and Micah 6:4; Noadiah, as indicated in Nehemiah 6:14; and the prophet Isaiah's wife as found in Isaiah 8:3. Biblical scholars will not dispute that these women were used to

speak on behalf of God. As prophets they are also considered seers because God bestows the gift of foreknowledge and revelation according to 1 Samuel 9:9. The definition of a seer is “one who predicts events or developments or a person credited with extraordinary moral and spiritual insight.”<sup>9</sup> Amos 3:7 indicates that God reveals secrets to his prophets. Prophecy is not manifested by the will of a person, but is inspired through the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21). As the lives of these women are considered, the themes of intercession, courage, confidence, and tenacity are common threads throughout their ministry. Although they were prophets who spoke on behalf of God, it is important to note that these women did not surge or usurp the authority above them. In fact, they displayed diplomacy and tact in working within the authority structure of their time. The story of Huldah is consistent with these behaviors.

In 2 Kings 22, Josiah becomes King of Judah at the age of eight. The Scripture states that Josiah walked in the footsteps of his father, David, and did what was right in the sight of the Lord. At the age of eighteen, one of his goals was to restore the temple. The story continues that as the temple was being restored, Hilkiah, the high priest, discovered a book of the law. When King Josiah heard the words of the book of the law, he was so distraught in realizing how idolatrous Judah had become, he rent his clothes. The king sent the priest Hilkiah, along with other appointed men, to inquire concerning the book of the law with Huldah. Huldah’s prophecy was explicit:

And she said unto them, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah

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<sup>9</sup> Merriam Webster online dictionary, s. v. “seer,” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/seer> (accessed August 1, 2012).

hath read: Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, As touching the words which thou has heard; Because thine heart was tender, and thou has humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and has rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord. Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into the grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. (2 Kings 22:16-20)

Huldah conferred the prophecy personally and privately. The revelation that God had given her was clear, and the men did not question her prophecy or give any indication of doubt. The Bible states that the men brought the word back to the king. This story of Huldah confirms that both men and women saw value in her wisdom and sought to gain from her God-given talents.

One might categorize Huldah as both a directional leader and a managing leader. Managing leaders have the ability to organize people, processes and resources to achieve a mission.<sup>10</sup> Directional leaders, as described earlier, take the organization into uncharted territory at critical junctures. They have an inner knowing that is Spirit led, and they move towards the goal confidently. Huldah's example reveals a woman who is faced with delivering hard news and working within an established leadership structure. She excels by skillfully navigating both tasks.

## Esther

The book of Esther is one of two books in the Old Testament where a woman is the focal character; she is a leader and catalyst for change. The entire book of Esther is a

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<sup>10</sup> Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, 145.

chronological account Esther's life. The story of her early years reveals that Esther was not born into royalty. She was, in fact, an orphan raised by her cousin Mordecai. Esther became queen as a result of precipitating acts by her predecessor, Queen Vashti. Vashti had been dethroned because she refused to be paraded around the kingdom during one of King Ahasuerus' elaborate feasts. Perhaps her refusal had to do with the festivities or just an opposition to the stated request. The Scripture states that the king and his guests had been drinking for days. Because of her disobedience, she was removed, and the king, on the advice of his confidants, began a search of virgins to replace Queen Vashti, the woman who refused the king. This story demonstrates the role of women and authority during this particular biblical time. As a result of Vashti's refusal, the king sent out a decree to all households. Esther 1:17 and 20 declare,

For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great), all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.

Esther was among those chosen to go through a one-year purification process to be brought before the king. The second chapter states in verses 14 and 15 that Esther "was fair and beautiful" and that she "obtained favor in the sight of all them that looked upon her." The women were brought before the king and then placed with the concubines. The only way a woman would return to the king is if he delighted in her and if she was called by name. The story continues as Esther finds favor with King Ahasuerus. The king loved Esther above all the women and he crowned her as queen. It is because of this favor that Esther is able to save the Jewish race.



The story continues when Haman, one of the king's officials, had a fight with Mordecai. He did not believe Mordecai revered him and respected his authority. In the text there is no clear explanation for his discontent against Mordecai. However, Haman's emotions overruled his intellect, and he was able to persuade King Ahasuerus to issue a decree to exterminate the Jews.

Esther had not revealed she was of Jewish descent as she had been instructed by her cousin, Mordecai. Once Mordecai heard of the decree, he consulted with Esther and shared with her the hard task ahead. Esther demonstrates her devotion and courage to stand up for her race through her conversations concerning approaching the king and asking for his intervention. She states, "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day. I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16).

At a critical juncture, Esther emerged as a team-building leader. She expressed the need for others to be engaged in order for the plan to be successful. Esther articulated the goals and objectives to Mordecai and oversaw the careful attempt to seek favor in God's eyes. In her often quoted statement, "If I perish, I perish," Esther's self-sacrificing attitude conveys confidence and commitment to the task at hand. She is also leading a single-handed evangelistic effort to lead people back to faith. She reengineered the practice of Jews at the time to include a heavier emphasis on the Lord's ability to change the situation in their favor. As a reengineering leader, Esther took a people who were facing a life-ending moment and reorganized their energies to avoid defeat.

Esther was able to approach the king and make her request known. She was able to use persuasion and honesty to inform the king that she too was a Jew. She used wisdom and strategized her plan swiftly. She demonstrated her commitment to biblical principles when she called a fast. It is clear that she was seeking the presence and guidance of God. She understood that the danger of approaching the king without being called was punishment by death. She respected the authority of the king but stood boldly when the issue and the Lord demanded it. The story ends with the king granting her petition. Haman is hung on the gallows he had built for Mordecai. Esther sacrificed her life to save the life of her people and then closed the generation of wickedness by requesting that Haman's sons be destroyed.

### **New Testament Leadership Models**

From the New Testament, three examples of women leaders will be considered: Lydia, Priscilla, and Mary Magdelene. Each leader will be discussed in light of Hybels's leadership styles. As did the Old Testament leaders, each of these women models how a woman in ministry could lead today.

#### **Lydia**

Lydia was a businesswoman from Thyatira. She met Paul and Silas as they all attended a prayer meeting. Acts 14: 14, 15 states,

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

From these two verses of Scripture it is evident that Lydia was a model for women of her time. First, she is a seller of purple. Only those who belonged to the dyers' guild were allowed to work as dyers. Made from the secretions of shell fish found in the area, these special dyes were only available to the wealthy.<sup>11</sup>

Lydia's prosperity is not questioned as the Scripture states that she worshipped God and the Lord had opened her heart. Another powerful character trait of Lydia is her hospitality. She immediately invited Paul and Silas into her home. Later in the chapter, when Paul and Silas were released from their one-night prison lock-up, they went straight to Lydia's home.

Lydia's entrepreneurial success lends itself to categorizing her as an entrepreneurial leader, one who is able to navigate the world of business but also kingdom business. Lydia's networking with Paul and Silas granted her favor, and her personal success in business made her an asset to the Church by way of resources and influence in the business community. Lydia presents a woman leading with influence and access because of her personal business success.

#### Priscilla: A Married Woman in Leadership

Paul discusses Priscilla throughout his writings in Romans, Acts, Timothy and 1 Corinthians. When Paul mentions her husband, Aquila, they are always mentioned together. Paul states that he lived with them, served hand in hand with them, and that they had put their lives on the line for him. The couple enjoyed a very close relationship

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<sup>11</sup> Ann Spander and Jean E. Syswerda, *Women of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 415.

with one of the fathers of the New Testament writings. He captured their lives and stories with several evident themes.

First, it should be noted that Priscilla and Aquila are often referred to as one unit. One could surmise that they were partners in leadership and played equally important roles in the success of their group. Priscilla is not denied opportunity to participate in leadership activities because she is a woman. Her talents and gifts are instead used to make God's name great.

Acts 18:26 reveals both Aquila and Priscilla both worked with Apollos, one of Paul's mentees, to assist him to "expound upon the word of God more perfectly." It is not stated that only Priscilla's husband worked with Apollos because he was a man. Much like later stories about Timothy, women were seen as providing valuable biblical instruction to men.

Paul also stated that a church met in their home. Priscilla was uniquely identified as a ministry partner with her husband. They guided people who attended their home church and kept others encouraged to pursue the knowledge of Christ. Hybels would call her both a shepherding and motivational leader because of her joint success in both areas.<sup>12</sup>

#### Mary of Magdalene: A Commissioned Leadership Model

There are three separate accounts of Mary of Magdalene's commission in the New Testament. Each of the stories gives us a more in-depth witness of the resurrection of Jesus. Apostles Matthew, Mark, and Luke record the events in the synoptic gospels.

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<sup>12</sup> Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, 148-50.

Biblical researchers implore that it is often important to pay particular attention to events that are repeated from different perspectives throughout the Bible.

In Matthew's rendition, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the sepulcher and were greeted by an angel who gave them a charge: "And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word" (Matthew 28:7-8). On their way to deliver the word, they were met by Jesus and he instructed them, "Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee and there shall they see me" (Matthew 28:10). These women were the first to be commissioned as ministers of the Gospel after the resurrection. They were given their mandate by Jesus Christ himself.

Mark gives a little less detail. He writes, "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that she had been with him, as they mourned and wept" (Mark 16: 9-10). Here again, Mary Magdalene was mentioned by name.

Luke's account (24: 9-11) provides more detail about the women who accompanied Mary Magdalene: "It was Mary Magdalene and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." Although Jesus commissioned the women, Luke is careful to include that when they brought the word to the Apostles, they "believed them not."

Mary Magdalene had a clear picture in mind of what the future would hold. She had experienced a first person encounter with Christ and was among the first to be

commissioned as a minister of the Gospel. Hybels describes these types of leaders as visionary because they “shamelessly appeal to anybody and everybody to get onboard with their vision.”<sup>13</sup> As Gospel pioneers, these women faced undeniable challenges both because of their gender and the fact that they were in a select class of people who even knew that the resurrection had taken place. It would take someone whose mind and objectives are rooted in a vision to tackle the challenge Mary Magdalene faced. The Bible records that she was not hindered by unbelief and stayed her course according to the vision—literally and figuratively—that she had been given.

### **Controversial Scriptures**

Just as the Bible was used in the era of slavery to uphold individual beliefs that African should be “slaves” to their masters, Scripture has been interpreted to keep women captive. The controversy of whether or not a woman should preach is Bible-based. However, it is hermeneutically misinterpreted.

The defense for women preaching dates back to middle nineteenth century. In Betty Collier-Thomas’s book, *Daughters of Thunder*, she explores the history of African American preaching women and the issues and struggles they encountered. This anthology of original sermons of African American women spans over six distinct time periods: the nineteenth century, the early twentieth century: AME Zion; the 1920s: AME and Baptist; the 1920s and 1930s: Holiness and Pentecostal Movements; the 1940s: CME; and Modern Times: the Legacy of Liberation Movement. The traditions and feminist theology is expressed through their own words. Collier-Thomas was able to

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<sup>13</sup> Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, 141.

analyze the changes that occurred in the status of churchwomen as well as the issues they addressed in their sermons, and to recognize the similarities and difference that resonate across time and tradition.<sup>14</sup> Each of these women made references to answer the question of whether or not a woman can preach. The answer was always a resounding “yes.” The foundational Scripture these women stood on was the prophecy of Joel 2:28, which states, “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:” This prophecy is also repeated in Acts 2:17.

These preaching women highlighted in the *Daughters of Thunder* refer to the same controversial Scriptures that are used today to withhold and prohibit the ordination of women (such as 1 Timothy 2:8-11, 1 Corinthians 11:2-13, 1 Corinthians 14:33b-38, and 1 Timothy 21:12-15; see also Appendix B). These Scriptures are found in the New Testament written by the Apostle Paul. The areas he addresses includes a woman’s conduct, headship, praying and prophesying, and teaching.

Many who use these Scriptures take Paul’s words out of context. In fact, there is no consideration for whom, why, what, and where this text was comprised. The proper exegetical approach should be to interpret these Scriptures with these questions in mind. One should also consider whether or not his instructions are repeated anywhere else in the Bible. Paul’s words were to help put the Corinthian church in order. The church in Corinth was an incredible melting pot of ethnic groups, social classes, and converts from

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<sup>14</sup> Betty Collier-Thomas, *Daughters of Thunder* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 2.

a wide variety of religions.<sup>15</sup> If the text is not interpreted in its proper context, it may appear as if Paul is contradicting himself in the guidance he gives. One must also examine the origin of his words as well as keep in mind that words change drastically over time.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Lores Cunningham and David Hamilton, *Why Not Women?* (Seattle: WYAM, 2000), 162.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.



## CHAPTER 5

### WOMEN AND LEADERHIP TRENDS

During the 1950s and 1960s, some seminaries allowed women into their Bachelor of Divinity programs. However, the expectation was that these women would work with their husbands or other male leaders in a less influential role. By the seventies, women began to demand that the gender distributions in seminaries include more women. While men entered seminary with the expressed purpose of church leadership, women did not. Soon, however, more and more women were accepted into and graduated from seminaries in hopes of entering the ministry as a profession. Corporate America has experienced a similar surge in the number of women engaged in leadership positions. These women participate on all levels of management, including government, finance, fashion, media, and non-profit organizations. In both sectors, women have succeeded in becoming extraordinary leaders despite inherent difficulties.

There are very few research studies that provide statistics on African American women in seminaries. In fact, it was not until 1972 that the Association of Theological

Schools (ATS) began to request separate enrollment statistics separated by gender.<sup>1</sup> ATS publishes *The Fact Book on Theological Education* containing data provided by the member schools of ATS. Their official website states, “The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) is a membership organization of more than 260 graduate schools that conduct post-baccalaureate professional and academic degree programs to educate persons for the practice of ministry and for teaching and research in the theological disciplines. The Commission on Accrediting of ATS accredits the schools and approves the degree programs they offer.”<sup>2</sup> The latest report was issued for the 2006-2007 academic year.

In her book, *A Time for Honor*, Delores Carpenter gives an ethnic breakdown from *The Fact Book* to show the growth in Black female Master of Divinity (MDiv) graduates who completed seminary from 1972 to 1984. In 1972 the data reports that only thirty-four Black females were enrolled. In 1984, there were 399 Black females enrolled. This is an increase of 676.1 percent.<sup>3</sup>

The number of Black females enrolled in seminary continues to increase. Table 2 indicates the statistics for African American females in seminary for the years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> Delores Carpenter, *A Time for Honor: A Portrait of American Clergywomen* (St Louis, MO: Chalis Press, 2001), xii.

<sup>2</sup> Association of Theological Schools, “Home page,” <http://www.ats.edu/Pages/> (accessed August 1, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Carpenter, *A Time for Honor*, 63.

Table 2. Numbers of African American Females in Seminary

<b>Degree Program</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Master of Divinity	2,537	2,478	2,486	2,428	2,464
Ministerial Non MDiv	607	667	683	719	748
General Theology	395	359	353	365	341
Advanced Ministerial	325	359	369	426	459
Advanced Research	106	134	121	121	135
Other	346	310	206	370	458
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>4,343</b>	<b>4,307</b>	<b>4,218</b>	<b>4,429</b>	<b>4,605</b>

Source: Association of Theological Schools, <http://www.ats.edu/Resources/PublicationsPresentations/Documents/AnnualDataTables/2011-12AnnualDataTables.pdf> (August 1, 2012).

These numbers are significant when compared to the thirty-four Black females enrolled in 1972. Female theologians have begun to research the reasons and effects of this growing trend.

In 1979, Barbara Brown Zikmund, in her article titled, “Upsetting the Assumptions,” stated that an increase of women enrolled in theological institutions was raising theological questions about the authority, scope, style, and nature of religious leadership and Christian ministry. She stated that this shift would result in challenging traditional sources of religious authority, expanding the understanding of religious life, and changing the style of religious leadership.<sup>4</sup> Thirty years later, her insight is confirmed.

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<sup>4</sup> Barbara Zikmund, “Upsetting the Assumptions,” *Christian Century* (February 7-14, 1979): 126.

## **African American Women: Leaders in the Church**

Scholars such as Bettye Collier-Thomas, Delores Carpenter, Cheryl Sanders, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, and Vashti McKenzie are just a few of the women conducting research and publishing articles and books to address this paradigm shift. Each woman will be discussed separately to analyze her individual and collective impact on ministry. Throughout the discussion, commonalities and differences among the women will be noted to include leadership strategies and ministry foci.

Doctor Bettye Collier-Thomas is a professor in the Department of History and the former director of the Temple University Center for African American Life and Culture. Collier-Thomas is also a Distinguished Lecturer for the Organization of American Historians. She is the founder of the Bethune Museum and Archives in Washington, D.C., the nation's first museum and archives for African American women's history, and served as the first executive director. Now a unit of the National Park Service, this national historic site honors Mary McLeod Bethune, a noted African American educator who headed a division of the National Youth Administration under President Franklin Roosevelt.<sup>5</sup>

Bettye Collier-Thomas is the author of several books, including: *Sisters in the Struggle: African-American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*; *My Soul Is a Witness: A Chronology of the Civil Rights Era 1954-1965*; *Daughters of Thunder: Black Women Preachers and Their Sermons*, and *1850-1979: A Treasury of African American Christmas Stories and Jesus, Jobs and Justice*. Her research provides a fresh

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<sup>5</sup> Temple University, "Collier-Thomas," <http://www.temple.edu/history/collier-thomas/> (accessed August 1, 2012).

perspective on the history of Black women, their collective role in the Black Church, and as progenitors for establishing institutions for social justice.

Doctor Delores Carpenter has been an associate professor of Religious Education at Howard University School of Divinity for twenty-seven years. She also served as the first woman and first African American senior pastor of Michigan Park Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Washington, D. C. for twenty years. Carpenter's academic achievements also include serving as the first woman dean at Essex County College in Newark, New Jersey. Before beginning a career in higher education, she worked for the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Washington, D. C., and Fellowship Center in St. Louis. Her writing and research has spanned over twenty years since she was a doctoral student at Rutgers University.<sup>6</sup> Carpenter's research has been focused on the history and rise of African American women pursuing clergy roles. Her publications include: *A Time of Honor: A Portrait of African American Clergywomen* and *African American Hymnal: Hymns, Spirituals and Gospel Songs*.

Doctor Cheryl Sanders provides another example of a woman who has dedicated her life's passion to African American religion and culture. Like Carpenter, she is an Associate Professor of Christian Ethics at Howard University School of Divinity. She also serves as Associate Pastor for Leadership Development at the Third Street Church of God in Washington, D. C.<sup>7</sup> She has published more than one hundred articles and the following books: *Ministry at the Margins*; *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture*; *Empowerment Ethics for a*

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<sup>6</sup> Carpenter, *A Time for Honor*, xv.

<sup>7</sup> Sanders, *Saints in Exile*, book jacket.

*Liberated People*; and *Living the Intersection*. From 2000 to 2007 she was a contributing guest editor for *Leadership*, a journal for pastors. She is a graduate of the Sidwell Friends School, Swarthmore College (BA in Mathematics) and Harvard Divinity School (MDiv, cum laude and ThD in the field of Applied Theology). She has been awarded two honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees: the first by Asbury College in 2002 and the second by Anderson University in 2007.<sup>8</sup>

Doctor Cheryl Townsend Gilkes is a scholar of religious experiences who examines the complexity of gender, race, and class of African American women. Currently she serves as Professor of Sociology and African American Studies at Colby College in Maine. Her areas of expertise include: African-American religious history; race and ethnicity in the U.S.; African-American women, history and social change; the sociology of religion; Black women, history, and social change; Black religion, religious ideas and practices; gospel music, and W. E. B. Du Bois. She serves as Assistant Pastor at Union Baptist Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She holds degrees in sociology from Northeastern University (BA, MA, and PhD) and has pursued graduate theological studies at Boston University's School of Theology.<sup>9</sup> Her book, *If It Wasn't for the Women*, is a collection of research and essays focused on the roles of women in churches and communities.

Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie remains one of America's leading women in clergy after being ordained as the first female bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal

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<sup>8</sup> Third Street Church of God, "Cheryl Sanders," <http://thirdstreet.org/PastorsPage.htm> (accessed August 1, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Union Baptist Church of Cambridge, Massachusetts, "Rev. Dr. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes," <http://www.ubccambridge.org/ministerial-staff/rev-dr-cheryl-townsend-gilkes/> (accessed August 1, 2012).

Church. Bishop McKenzie serves as the 117th elected and consecrated bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Her historic election in the year 2000 represents the first time in the over two-hundred-year history of the A.M.E. Church in which a woman had obtained that level of Episcopal office. This year, she again made history becoming the first woman to become the Titular Head of the denomination, as the president of the Council of Bishops, making her the highest-ranking woman in the predominately Black Methodist denominations. Bishop McKenzie is the author of three books. The first two, *Not Without a Struggle* and *Strength in the Struggle* concern leadership and professional growth for women, and *Journey to the Well* was written to help women seek new directions for personal growth, following the footsteps of the biblical Samaritan woman. She is a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park; she holds an MDiv degree from Howard University School of Divinity and has earned a DMin degree from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.<sup>10</sup> She is an example of sacrifice, tenacity, and boldness in pursuing her calling not only as a preaching woman, but a leader.

### **African American Women: Leaders in the World**

The paradigm shift in the Church is also a representative of a shift in leadership in other arenas. The Church laid the foundation for women to form leadership skills. These skills were utilized in the Church, but also used at the impetus for women to address other issues to advance the African American race. Women can be found in just about

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<sup>10</sup> African Methodist Episcopal Church, "Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie," <http://www.ame-church.com/directory/presiding-bishops.php> (accessed August 1, 2012).

every major social justice movement in the United States as activists and leaders in the contemporary time period.

Historically, some these women include: Nannie Helen Burroughs, who began her leadership within the National Baptist Convention and left a legacy of activism in the nation's capital; Mary McLeod Bethune, an educator and advisor to President Roosevelt, and founder and first president of the National Council of Negro Women;<sup>11</sup> Fannie Lou Hamer, a political activist whose famous saying, "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired," became the Black women's motto; and most notably, Dorothy I. Height, who devoted her life to the underprivileged.

Dorothy Height was born in March 24, 1912 in Richmond, Virginia. She attended York University and received her Master's degree in Educational Psychology. In 1957 she became the president of the National Council of Negro Women. In this capacity she focused the organization on equality for Black women workers in traditional and non-traditional jobs. Her early career included working with non-profit and social service agencies. Most of her career she was employed with the Young Women's Christian Association. Height devoted her life to advocating for the rights of the underprivileged.<sup>12</sup>

Height mobilized chapters of the Church Women Unites (CWU), National Association for the Advancement of Color People (NAACP), National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), National Association of Colored Women (NACW), and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) to support desegregation campaigns throughout

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<sup>11</sup> Bettye Collier-Thomas, *Jesus, Jobs, and Justice: African American Women and Religion* (New York: Knopf, 2010), 401.

<sup>12</sup> National Council of Negro Women website, "Dr. Dorothy I. Height," <http://www.ncnw.org/about/height.htm> (accessed February 17, 2013).



the South. At the time, she was secretary for interracial education of the YWCA's National Board.<sup>13</sup> She was active in the Civil Rights Movement and served as a strategist and planner along with the men of the movement.

Recognized for her elaborate "church" hat wearing, a musical based on her memoirs, "If This Hat Could Talk," was staged in 2005. In her lifetime, Height received nineteen honorary doctoral degrees. In 1993, she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. In 1994, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton.<sup>14</sup> Height passed away on April 20, 2010 at the age of ninety-eight. She has left a powerfully demonstrative legacy of service. Her spirit lives on as today people are now beginning to see the fruit of her labor for equality and justice.

Cathy Hughes's story is full of what one author has termed, "life changing moments of revelation."<sup>15</sup> As recorded on Nebraska's State Education Association's official web site, Hughes was born on April 22, 1947 in Omaha, Nebraska. She grew up in a home where both of her parents were professionals. Her father was the first African American to earn an accounting degree from Creighton University, and her mother was a registered nurse. Hard work and sacrifice were not new terms for Hughes. At an early age, she was fortunate to become the first African American to attend Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart, a prestigious female Catholic School in Omaha, Nebraska. At the age of fourteen she was hired by *Omaha Star*, an African-American-owned

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<sup>13</sup> Collier-Thomas, *Jesus, Jobs, and Justice*, 382.

<sup>14</sup> Lori Cavanaugh, "Dorothy Height," *Our States: US Government and Civil Leaders* (2011): 1, as quoted in EBSCO host, <http://search.ebscohost.com/> (accessed May 10, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Colleen Brandou, "Happy Birthday, Catherine Hughes, Radio and TV Executive" (April 22, 2010), Finding Dulcinea: Library of the Internet website, <http://www.findingdulcinea.com/features/profiles/h/catherine-hughes.html> (accessed April 22, 2010).

newspaper to sell classified ads. She credits this job as the catalyst to forming her foundational philosophy concerning the responsibility of Black-owned media.

At the age of sixteen, Hughes became pregnant and dropped out of her prestigious academic environment and married the child's father. Two years later, she would become another statistic—a high school dropout and a divorcee. Her life-changing moment was when she realized she had a vision for her life and wanted to secure a future for her son. Hughes returned to the academy and graduated.

Hughes's media career began at Howard University when she was asked to lecture in 1972. From there, she was appointed to several executive positions. In 1979, Hughes purchased radio station WOL-AM for over one million dollars. Her news and talk format was focused on presenting world issues from a Black perspective.

Another decision point for Hughes was when the station began to lose money, and she was in the midst of divorce from her second husband. She lost her home and found herself living in the radio station with her son, “with sleeping bags for beds and a hot plate for cooking.”<sup>16</sup> Hughes worked hard, determined to turn the station around for profit. This station would soon be the vehicle through which Radio One—The Urban Media Specialist—would evolve. The height of her success was achieved in 1999 when Radio One, with an estimated value of \$924 million, was traded publicly for the first time, making Hughes the first African-American woman with a company on the stock exchange. Radio One now has over sixty stations across the country.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Nebraska State Education Association, “Cathy Hughes,” <http://nsea.org/news/HughesProfile.htm> (accessed August 1, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Hughes is a trail blazer. She succeeded in an industry that was dominated by Caucasian men. Her experiences early in her life helped to shape and guide her future. Hughes was not afraid to take risks, and there is no evidence that she ever gave up. Today Hughes has received numerous awards and recognition for her accomplishments in the media industry. In 1995, she received an honorary doctorate from Sojourner-Douglass College in Baltimore, and in 1998 she was the first woman to receive the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Achievement in Radio Awards.<sup>18</sup>

Today, Hughes is Chairperson of the Board and Secretary of Radio One. Her qualifications to serve in this capacity include her being the founder and having over thirty years of operational experience with the company.<sup>19</sup> Hughes advises young people to “persevere, be willing to do any job asked of them, believe in God and work hard.”<sup>20</sup>

Another successful African American woman is Kimora Lee Simmons. Fashion has always been an intricate part of the African-American community. Whether dressing for church, business, or pleasure, fashion has played a role in the perception of wealth and fame. This is especially true for the African-American woman. In a September 2011 Neilson report, researchers collaborated with two hundred African American newspapers and conducted a study titled, “The State of the African American Consumer.” Not surprisingly, the study revealed the following:

The combination of a growing population and higher household income reflects the opportunity to access an increasing number of consumers with a buying power of early \$1 trillion annually and projected to reach \$1.1 trillion by 2015 – due to

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Radio One, “Catherine Hughes,” <http://www.radio-one.com/2011/07/15/catherine-l-hughes/> (accessed August 1, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Nebraska State Education Association, “Cathy Hughes.”

trends in education and a rising number of professional African American women in the work force. 64% of African-American women are in the U.S. labor force compared to 60% of non-African American women.<sup>21</sup>

The report further states that department store spending is fourth on the top-ten list of African American spending patterns. Kimora Lee Simmons is one African-American woman who has profited from these statistics and dominated the fashion industry. She is a representative of beauty, style, and intelligence.

Simmons was born on May 4, 1975 in St. Louis, Missouri. She began modeling classes at the age of eleven and signed her first major contract with Chanel on her thirteenth birthday. She became an international model and traveled throughout the world.<sup>22</sup> In 1999, Simmons launched her own designs known as Baby Phat with then-husband Russell Simmons—the President and Founder of Phat Fashions as the subsidiary to Phat Farm, featuring men’s urban fashion.

In 2006, Simmons wrote *Fabulosity: What It Is and How to Get It*. Her official website states, “The book empowers women to cultivate their inner goddess with independence, fearlessness, and confidence.” Simmons was the star of her own television show, “Kimora: Life in the Fab Lane,” and has appeared in several movies. Her reality show focused on her daily life as a businesswoman who continually strives to balance her family life.

In 2010, Kimora parted ways with Baby Phat and began focusing her full attention on her newly founded KLS Collection, a line of chic and contemporary sportswear designed for the woman who has evolved alongside Kimora over the last ten

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<sup>21</sup> The Nielsen Company, “The State of the African-American Consumer” (September 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Kimora Lee Simmons, “Biography,” <http://www.kimoraleesimmons.org/kimora-lee-simmons-biography.php> (accessed August 1, 2012).

years. Building on her already stellar design career, Kimora established The KLS Design Group as a springboard company for fashion and beauty incubation. In the spring of 2011, KLS Design Group—through a unique partnership with renowned Swiss skincare company Makari De Suisse—is set to launch Shinto Clinical, a credible, clinically proven and groundbreaking line of skincare made with many antioxidants and inspired by centuries-old Asian beauty regimens.<sup>23</sup>

Simmons, who values education and has been determined to give back to the community in which she was reared, established The Kimora Lee Simmons Scholarship Fund through her high school, Lutheran High School North. She also provides financial support for Keep a Child Alive, Ketrick-Martin Institute, Rush Philanthropic, Amfar, and the G & P Foundation.

One of the world's most recognizable figures, Oprah Winfrey, has literally taken America by storm as a TV personality, actor, and philanthropist, and self-made billionaire. Born under the label “illegitimate” and into poverty in Kosciusko, Mississippi, Oprah survived child sexual abuse, rape and at the age of fourteen, and the death of an infant child.<sup>24</sup> Oprah's story of rags to riches has inundated the television media for a quarter of a century. She was considered the queen of daytime television as she built her television empire through addressing topics that were taboo to the American audience; these have included rape and molestation, eating disorders, postpartum

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<sup>23</sup> Kimora Lee Simmons, “About,” <http://kls.com/about> (accessed August 1, 2012).

<sup>24</sup> Lisa Russell and Cindy Dampier, “Oprah Winfrey,” *People* 51, no. 10 (March 15, 1999): 143.

depression, debt, and obesity to name a few.<sup>25</sup> Her show was refreshing to the American audience, as they have watched her help others, and have also shared her personal battle with abuse, rape, and weight. As opposed to having all the answers, her approach was not to focus on overt dogma or deity; instead, America's biggest unofficial religion centered on confession, self-esteem, and communion.<sup>26</sup> This was an original, new approach for a TV talk show host.

Her philanthropic endeavors include donating millions to charity, and she has provided employment to many.<sup>27</sup> One of her major accomplishments is building a school in South Africa to provide education and leadership to an area where educational opportunities were limited. Winfrey spent \$40 million to create an academy equipped with computer and science labs, a library, and a wellness center. In 2011 the first seventy-two members of the school's graduating class have been accepted into universities in South Africa or the United States.<sup>28</sup> This is a 100 percent college placement rate for African young ladies in their pursuit of higher education. The school has survived rumors and scandals. The proof lies within the placement of these young women who would not have had the opportunity to embrace education.

Oprah reinvigorated the idea of reading for pleasure among her readers and increased the popularity of book clubs by selecting a new book each month. Any book

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<sup>25</sup> Deborah Davis Abrams, "The Oprah Winfrey Show: Reflections on an American Legacy." *Publishers Weekly* 258, no. 42 (October 17, 2011): 60-61.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>27</sup> James Poniewozik, "The Oprah Winfrey Show," *Time* 177, no. 22 (May 30, 2011), Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed March 24, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> Associated Press, "Winfrey's School in South Africa Turns Out First Graduates," *Education Week* 31, no. 13 (December 7, 2011): 5.

she has recommended has landed on the bestseller list. She has also initiated the Angel Network to increase philanthropy and other public enlightenment projects using her talk show as her platform. Oprah had the medium to influence the thinking and actions of over forty million American viewers through substantive programming and by challenging people to move beyond their comfort zones to be concerned about others. She is writing her own story and has the courage and ability to share her story with the world.

The Oprah Winfrey Show concluded its final season with syndicated broadcasts in 145 countries. Along the way, she helped launch the television careers of Dr. Phil McGraw, Dr. Mehmet Oz, and Dr. Iyanla Vanzant. Each of the professionals had engaging and rewarding careers before meeting Oprah, but the exposure they received as a result of being on her show catapulted each of them to new professional heights. A *Publishers Weekly* article states that through her career, “Oprah understood that the ultimate subject of each episode was the person watching it, and her confessions told fans that she was them—a woman with weaknesses and demons—albeit an ideal version.”<sup>29</sup>

Oprah Winfrey has yet to write her autobiography. Many books have been written about her, both favorable and not. She has not publicly supported any of these publications. Her story, in her words, has yet to be told beyond the stories she has shared through her show. Today, Oprah’s empire and legacy lives on. She ended her television talk show of twenty-five years to own and operate her television network, The Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN). Her accomplishments are great. Her impact has spanned the test of time and geographic boundaries. She has given millions and continues her life’s

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<sup>29</sup> Abrams, “The Oprah Winfrey Show: Reflections on an American Legacy,” 61.

destiny and purpose in the spotlight of the media. Her legacy continues to evolve through strategic leadership and entrepreneurial prowess.



## CHAPTER 6

### LEADERSHIP IN MOUNT CALVARY HOLY CHURCHES OF AMERICA

Mount Calvary Holy Churches of America, Inc. has demonstrated objectivity with respect to gender from its inception. As the organization prepares to tackle twenty-first-century challenges, it will undoubtedly face concerns about the role of women in ministry and whether their participation is desired or required. Other denominations and groups have stated beliefs that are very different from MCHCA's own beliefs, or they have simply never engaged in a dialogue about the role women play in the success of the Church.

Shortly after he was ordained as presiding bishop of MCHCA, Bishop Alfred A. Owens, Jr. called upon pastors and leaders within the organization to draft a plan that would give direction to church leaders at all levels. Their work includes a look at the scope of women's ministries and the inclusion of women in leadership roles. Although the document is wide in scope, it presents MCHCA's holistic approach to overall success instead of applying prescriptive solutions to narrow assessments. The next section includes excerpts from MCHCA's Strategic Plan, the document that will guide organizational growth and development over the next few years. It has been written by

and for the church's leaders to reflect on their history, current stations, and goals for the future.

### **MCHCA Policies and Procedures: Planning for Change**

MCHCA first drafted written records of its religious practices, policies, and guidelines during the immediate past leader's tenure. Prior to his efforts, MCHCA's practices were communicated in an oral tradition. Everyday and ceremonial tasks were transcribed to safeguard the leadership of the organization and to preserve its history. In 1975, a manual for operating the organization was proposed, and it was subsequently ratified in 1977. The manual became the single corporate statement for the organization and the voice with which the organization would speak. When used appropriately, it was to provide a foundation upon which the organization could grow, safeguarding itself against divisive, malicious, and unintentional destruction of the organization. From the proper deeding of church property, to the authority of pastors, and to the consecration of bishops, this manual served the organization's needs very well.

In 2008, the Church organization officially embraced its new auspicious and charismatic leader, the Honorable Bishop Alfred Owens, who worked passionately and humbly under Bishop Williams for more than two decades. MCHCA is at a critical moment in its history in which it has the opportunity to decide what its future operations will look like. The vibrant legacy and history of the organization requires it to engage in an in-depth comprehensive analysis of its past and current functioning in order to determine the direction it will go. Its current challenge is visibly revealed in the theme proposed for 2009 by the new presiding prelate, "Change We Can Believe In."

The Church must now make vital decisions about its future and must engage immediately in a “futuring” process. Thus, the new leadership, with wisdom and insights on organizational change, launched a charge in January 2009 to commit the organization to a one-year strategic planning process. The charge included developing a vision of the future that could be shared and valued by the entire MCHCA community. One goal of the process is to engage as many necessary components of the organization to share input into the plan in order to draft a design for the organization. At the end of the process, MCHCA will clearly articulate in writing the principles, values, and objectives necessary to embrace the desired change.

### **The Current and Future State of the MCHCA**

MCHCA is experiencing tremendous growth as new churches are springing up and existing churches are drawn to the stability and longevity of member churches. As new churches are built and existing congregations flourish, practices and beliefs must be standardized and published. The message amongst all affiliates must remain consistent and identifiable. Even churches who wish to remain independently governed may choose to adopt the MCHCA model as “partner churches.” This would necessitate multiple levels of participation from churches but a singular vision for them all.

It is equally important in this strategic planning process that the organization conduct a critical analysis of its current leadership structure to determine if it has the capacity to move the organization in the direction which it desires to progress. It has been discovered that amidst all the change that MCHCA has experienced in its eighty-year history, some fundamental qualities and values have emerged and endure. As a

thriving community, MCHCA prides itself in its unity as exhibited by the fact that throughout its history, the organization has never experienced an organizational split. The glue that has held the organization together is attributed primarily to the wisdom of its leadership, always functioning with a mind on the future, working passionately to allow new life to emerge at the most necessary junctures.

The organization values excellence and measures its excellence by several factors: the impact it has made, providing a precedent in the Kingdom of God; the impact it is having on individuals, encouraging them to reach beyond their own boundaries and attain education and success; and the impact it is having on growing churches, strengthening them to carry out their functional purposes as the Church of God. MCHCA views training and teaching as critical tools which give churches and leaders a comparative advantage in becoming in their appointed fields. MCHCA's realm of influence can be observed on an international level as church leaders embrace this model and implement the policies stated herein.

MCHCA's excellence is further demonstrated in its capacity to embrace the multiple backgrounds of its constituency. While some of its constituents wonder about the changing character of the Church and wish to hold on to more traditional modes of operating, others are more vibrant and open to change and wish to embrace the current trends that impact church growth. It is the wisdom of leadership that now creates a dynamic learning organization that will embrace both dimensions and build a bridge that sustains the energy of both perspectives.

MCHCA strives to be a Church that values spiritual gifting and freedom of expression, while simultaneously valuing intellectual engagement, professional

excellence, and the overall well-being of its membership. Love is the thread that weaves the entire organization together, embracing diversity of experiences and cultural sophistication. MCHCA is an organization that is proud of its community impact and seeks ways to perpetuate its missiological reach to change both local and international environments, ultimately making an impact on the world and readying people for the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, as MCHCA embraces change and analyzes its work, it is clear that the function of a strategic plan cannot be to offer restrictive prescriptions or strict timelines for progress. Its purpose is to identify areas of focus, to prime MCHCA's leaders to be alert to ways to build the Church's strengths, and to prepare MCHCA to respond swiftly and skillfully to emerging opportunities in the Kingdom of God. Thus, this plan represents a comprehensive strategy which raises the Church's collective expectations of the quality it can achieve and present to others, directs the services the Church provides, and sets a standard for its community. Each section of the strategic plan briefly summarizes many months of thoughtful discussion and consideration of the eleven pillars of the plan by a representative array of MCHCA's constituents. A more detailed plan and more information on the process can be found at the headquarters of MCHCA or on its website.

While each section was discussed separately, four common themes emerged with each being rooted in the conditions and urgent needs of the Kingdom of God and in Christendom. First, issues arose which made it clear that MCHCA must have prestigious, trained, and competent leadership. This would allow the Church to maximize its impact upon all sectors of society. Second, issues arose that point the organization to focus on

its ability to become a more twenty-first-century model Church concerned with globalization and with its ability to compete technologically in a changing world. Third, the Church has to be more cognizant of the changing trends in human needs that demand a greater level of efficiency and effectiveness. Such cognizance will be demonstrated by allowing people to have a maximized experience in less time, by using diverse methodologies in experiencing ministry, and by having shared experiences that involve the whole family simultaneously. Fourth, MCHCA churches must become wise stewards and expand the financial capacity to generate financial support from multiple resources, as well as manage and invest their current resources in a disciplined way. This will increase the Church's impact on evangelism, help its local congregations, and enable training and development of its parishioners.

It is hoped that the strategic plan primes MCHCA for another decade of making a great impact on those whom the Church touches, and that it increases MCHCA's influence to affect change in the Church and in the Kingdom of God. In the words of Jesus Christ, MCHCA must now "go into the world and preach the gospel of the kingdom, baptizing, teaching and making disciples as [we] go." It is desired that this strategic plan would inspire MCHCA to "go" and would offer the Church direction along the way.

### **MCHCA Mission, Vision, Values, and Relevant Pillars**

The next section will address the pillars that bear the most relevance to this discussion about women in the MCHCA. While the strategic plan has a multitude of information that shapes the overall mission of the group, the selected portions have

significant impact on the successes of women. The mission, vision, and values are presented first, followed by the relevant pillars and brief descriptions of each.

The mission of MCHCA is “to support local, national, and international assemblies in the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.”<sup>1</sup> The vision of MCHCA is

to advance the Kingdom of God by becoming the B.E.S.T. through:  
**B**uilding covenant relationships and partnerships  
**E**stablishing new churches and strengthening and existing churches  
**S**upporting, empowering, and equipping leaders to be effective  
**T**raining churches to embrace innovative ways of doing ministry.<sup>2</sup>

The values of MCHCA are:

**Holy living**, as exemplified by a lifestyle that is lived in conformity to standards of holiness based on the Bible and the moral guidelines of the organization.

**Strengthening the family**, as exemplified by honoring the scriptures in promoting family as being first before ministry and by offering programs and activities that support the whole family.

**Training and development of people**, as exemplified by our focus on offering classes, programs and opportunities for people to develop their skills and increase their efficiency in every area of their lives.

**Excellence**, as exemplified in the culture of our churches and in the way in which we treat and respect all people, along with the way in which we are committed to demanding excellence on every level of functioning.

**Compassionate towards others**, as exemplified in our basic love for mankind and demonstrated in our commitment to engage in missions on both a local and international level.

**Addressing the spiritual and social needs of humanity**, as exemplified in our efforts to help meet the needs of humanity through our giving of our resources and through our servitude.

**Fellowship of the believers**, as exemplified in the mutual sharing with one another in prayer, in worship, and in the celebration of all during times of being together as a body of believers.

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<sup>1</sup> MCHCA, “Mission, Vision, and Our Values,” <http://www.mchca.org/mission-vision-and-our-values> (accessed January 28, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

**Economic development**, as exemplified by our empowerment of people to facilitate change, by our investment of our financial resources to demonstrate change, and by our giving of our tithe, time and talents to participate in change.<sup>3</sup>

### Pillar 1: Structure and Infrastructure

Priorities for properly aligning the structure and infrastructure of the organization are based on the assumption that where there is a great vision there must be a compatible structure and infrastructure to achieve it. Where there is no structure, infrastructure, and a compatible vision, there can be no real reconciliation. The second assumption by which the current organizational structure of MCHCA is analyzed is the belief that “design is the offspring of purpose.” As MCHCA embraces its purpose to become the **B.E.S.T.** church organization that it can be, it is important to create a proper structural and organizational foundation to accommodate the Church’s future. The strategic plan’s emphasis on structure and infrastructure is designed to adequately embrace the present MCHCA with the hopes of hoisting it into the future.

The Church’s goal and effort are to establish a system of organization that will sustain the stability and longevity of the MCHCA, allowing it to support its future growth. If MCHCA is to continue its legacy of excellence and its reach to enhance its attractiveness to others, then the way in which the organization is structured is probably the most important pillar to facilitate all the rest. It is therefore proposed that the organizational makeup of MCHCA consists of an overarching hybrid model, which allows room for growth and expansion, and then a strong tiered leadership model that allows room for recognition of those who have gifts, talents, and abilities to help run the organization.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



## **The Hybrid Model**

As the MCHCA organization prepares for its future, it has become necessary that the organization recognize the movement of the Church universally and the rising demand of apostolic coverings for those who wish to be connected to charismatic leadership but not necessarily come under the total demands of the organization itself. In other words, the emergent church model has expanded to include the possibility of embracing relationships with leaders whose desire is not to operate in isolation, but to discover support and covering from the great generals of God's Church. The MCHCA organization has chosen a leader who is being called upon by many spiritual sons and daughters as an accountability agent and as a father to help shepherd them as they tend to their individual ministries. As a result, the organization has decided to expand its borders by creating a hybrid model of functioning that will allow both MCHCA member churches and the father/son/daughter relationship churches to co-exist (see figure 1).

## Hybrid Model for MCHCA

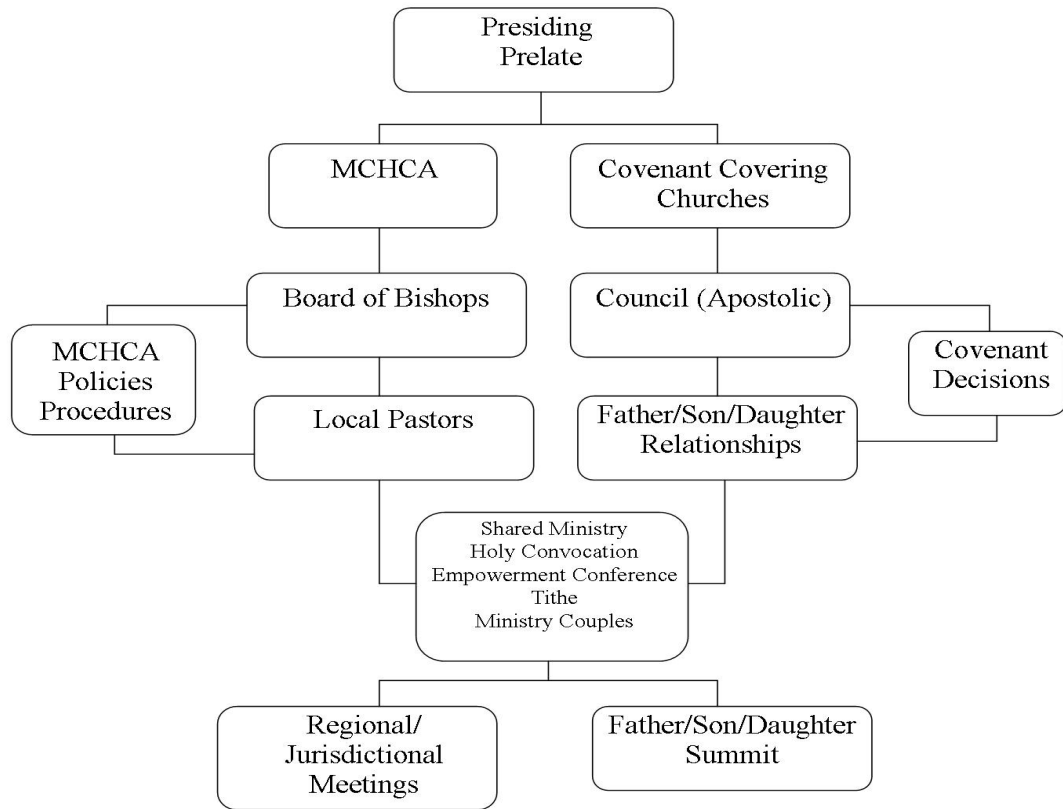


Figure 1. Hybrid Model for MCHCA

The hybrid model will allow MCHCA to embrace the strength of its denominational component while simultaneously celebrating the existence of a second component, that is, a more apostolic model of connection with the organization based on relationship. While each component will maintain its individuality and separateness in functioning, there will be shared opportunities for leadership development and training, shared events that will benefit both groups, and the mutual benefit having dynamic leadership to both the organization's churches and the father/son/daughter council.

### **Organizational Structure**

The purpose of the proposed model is to create and present a structure that will support the presiding prelate in a manner that will allow him to lead and serve the organization without strain or restriction. It is also the intent of the proposed structural design to create viable structures that will meet the present and future growth of the Church. The MCHCA General Board of Directors positions are revealed in figure 2.

1. International Director of Administration
2. International Director of Finance
3. International Director of Education/Training & Development
4. International Director of Youth and Young Adults
5. International Director of Women's Ministry
6. International Director of Men's Ministry
7. International Director of Evangelism
8. International Director of Worship & Arts
9. International Director of Licensing & Credentials
10. International Director of Events & Planning
11. International Director of Growth & Development
12. International Director of Marketing/Public Relations
13. International Director of Hospitality
14. International Director of Technology
15. International Director of Foreign Affairs
16. International Director of Protocol

Figure 2. MCHCA General Board of Directors

## Pillar 2: Model for Unity and Uniformity

As opportunities for the MCHCA organization continue to grow and expand, it has become critically necessary that the organization identify harmonious elements that offer some kind of shared vision, shared experiences, and shared brand. The goal of proposing a model for unity and uniformity is to create a culture of excellence that exists for all MCHCA churches and to identify the core values that all MCHCA churches should embrace and actively support. While the autonomous nature of each local church within the organization is embraced, MCHCA also aspires to some common standards on a macro-level that will give a sense of unity and uniformity to the organization. Such suggestions for macro-uniformity should in no ways impede, compete with, or overshadow the individuality of the local church. The Model for Unity and Uniformity offers five clear tasks for achieving greater church uniformity: 1) creating a culture of excellence; 2) displaying the mission, vision, and core values by way of a graphic design; 3) creating credentials and licenses for all MCHCA leaders; 4) adding a national logo to the website; and 5) teaching national affiliation in new members' classes.

The first task is creating a culture of excellence. MCHCA will identify basic standards of excellence and communicate these standards to all churches. These include: 1) all worship services start on time; 2) all worship services should be no longer than approximately two hours in length unless there is exception by the Spirit; 3) all written and published materials should be done in excellence and grammatically free of errors; 4) all pastors should have an open door policy; and 5) all churches should display a loving church family atmosphere.

The second task is displaying the mission, vision, and core values by way of a graphic design. Each member church will be asked to post this logo in its facilities. This logo will also be used on all organizational MCHCA material.

The third task is creating credentials and licenses for all MCHCA leaders. The MCHCA will establish an office of credentialing and licensing for the MCHCA organization. The Church will require all bishops, overseers, elders, and ministers to receive and renew license based upon established time frame. Finally, the MCHCA will require all licensed candidates to pass a written and/or oral exam based upon established time frame.

The fourth task is adding a national logo to the website. The goal is to ensure that all MCHCA churches have access to the national logos. The national logos should be displayed along with the local church emblems and logos on website, bulletins, and published materials.

The fifth task is teaching national affiliation in new members' classes. Establish a lesson regarding the national Church that can be adopted and adapted as a part of all local churches' new members' curriculum. A national flag will also be made available. The MCHCA will ensure that all member churches have a national flag made available for display.

### Pillar 3: Training and Development Initiatives

One of the strong components of the organization's core values is education. The desire to educate and develop all its constituents, along with the need to have trained and qualified professionals leading the organization and local churches, is very prevalent

amongst the leadership of the Church. The organization knows that its ability to be globally astute, its capacity to attract high caliber leaders, and its effectiveness as a functional Church hinge on training and development. A major part of the apostolic assignment of the current leadership is to push and promote the need for highly qualified servants in the kingdom of God. Therefore, the spirit of excellence places a demand upon all to strive to achieve high educational goals, and also places a demand upon the organization to proactively create and develop learning opportunities for all.

The overarching goal of the training and development model is to identify potential strategies for advancing the organization through empowerment of the people. The need exists for the appointment of an International Director of Training and Development, whose goal would be to create a Training and Development department that would oversee the effectiveness of learning ways to perpetuate the growth of the organization. The Training and Development model will hinge on the four components of: 1) assessments of churches and people; 2) specified training correlated to identified deficits and felt needs; 3) methodological adaptations based on people readiness; and 4) a strong emphasis on the development of future leadership.

In terms of assessment, the first step is to create a training and assessment process to ascertain the needs of the pastors and local churches. The action plan around this objective includes the utilization of tools such as a “Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats” analysis (hereafter, SWOT analysis) to survey pastors and churches online to assess their training needs, and the use of gifts assessment instruments to help pastors in appointing and placing people in leadership positions. The plan would also include establishing a strategy for specified training at all levels with the intent of creating

uniformity in the organization. Such a plan would necessitate the development of a Training and Development website which will serve as a repository for information, offer video training and newsletter briefings, designing a program to orientate new pastors and churches into the organization, and finally, establishing a track of training programs for ministers, elders, deacons, adjutants, ushers, nurses, media, personnel and administration, praise and worship ministers, and others.

In terms of methodology, the action plan involves utilizing existing models from the Calvary Bible Institute and the existing group training manuals as tools for teaching. The methodology would also include maximizing teaching and training opportunities when people are most available such as at the Empowerment Conference and International and District Convocations, as well as using the Internet to host webinars, develop e-training, share links, and create online courses. Finally, as it relates to training and development, there is a strong need to design a Leadership Development Program to train and empower young people to identify their potential gifts and to channel them into positive areas within the Church.

#### Pillar 6: Restructuring Events

Sometimes in the life of an organization it becomes incumbent upon its leadership to distinguish between the concepts of form and function. The basic rule for any design is that “form follows function.” Therefore it is necessary for the organization to examine the functions that it has been engaged in since the early years of its inception, and strongly challenge itself to see if there is another model that could retain the function of its current events and provide additional opportunities for participants. Simply stated, the

question to be asked is: How does the MCHCA organization repackage and re-present conferences, conventions, and convocations for a more twenty-first-century model?

Follow-up questions include: How should MCHCA increase attendance, support, excitement, and effectiveness by restructuring what it does with different aspects of the Church? For example, is there a “mega-fest” concept that brings all people together for training, a youth convention, an ushers’ convention, or some such event?

Using this presupposition as the basis for their work, the Restructuring Events committee identified several items as important elements to consider when thinking of change. The first is to have a representative/recruiter from each of the MCHCA affiliate churches whose responsibility it is to announce, recruit, and encourage participation from their local assembly, their affiliated assemblies, and community churches in the events. The second is to send out a survey to the MCHCA affiliate churches that will provide feedback on events and needs. The third is to identify the purpose/goal of each meeting. This will ensure that there is no overlapping emphasis in each event, help identify opportunities for merger and consolidation, and become a clear source of communication to help market the event based on purpose. The fourth is to merge the Youth and Young Adult Convention with the International Convocation, while adding a dimension for children, and move the event to earlier in the summer when it would be more feasible for families to come collectively. This reduces costs for attendees and makes the events family-friendly, which ultimately results in increased attendance and increased revenues. The fifth is to increase training and development opportunities during the events. The leadership must find ways to maximize participation at the International Convocation by offering more than just church services. The design of the Convocation should be based



on a twenty-first-century church paradigm that encourages the development for the whole being (mind, body, and spirit). The sixth is to establish a greater web presence and make events interactive for registration. This will also assist with marketing and advertisement for the events. The seventh is to identify corporate sponsorships to underwrite the meetings, especially the “Empowerment” meeting, which can be presented as a “Leadership Development Conference,” and to develop additional interest outside the organization. The eighth is to look at non-profit organizations in addition to other church organizations to glean ideas.

#### Pillar 7: Evaluation, Elevation, and Succession Planning

The current success and the future of the organization depend upon its willingness and its ability to create an environment where people feel and believe that there is room for progress, growth, and recognition. For the MCHCA to continue to expand its capacity to do greater kingdom ministry, it is important that a clear system for promotion is identified, as well as a system that provides a sense of equity in terms of access for those qualified to hold key positions. While the Church is theocratic as it relates to its governmental functioning, a well-balanced system that offers opportunities for others to grow and enlarge their territory is to be celebrated. Thus, it is with this underlying assumption that the organization thought it important to clearly articulate its philosophical beliefs and tenets regarding elevation, evaluation, and succession. Part of the historical success of the MCHCA organization is attributed to its ability to properly deal with succession.

The work of this committee involved establishing a team whose purpose shall be to design a process for the purposes of continued evaluation of key positions in the organization. The initial task of the team is to establish clarity around what the key positions in the organization are, and then subsequently to write job descriptions for each key position. A second task requires that the evaluation team assess current functioning of leaders in key positions in conjunction with proper protocol of the organization for who assesses whom, and then offer feedback to leaders in key positions for the purpose of improvement and enhancement. The evaluation data would then be used as a basis for recommendation of elevation to other positions.

A third task of the committee is to review the issue of elevation in the organization, again focusing on the concept of equity in terms of fairness of the system and equal exposure to all as to how the system of elevation occurs. Therefore the committee must identify a clear process for elevation for positions on regional, state, and national levels, and then define the written criteria and basic minimum requirements necessary for elevation.

Finally, the team defined clear criteria for succession on each level of the organization. Proposed in this plan is a model for succession that encourages all key leaders to prayerfully consider those who will succeed them in a timely manner following their own appointment in a given position. This will allow for transitions to be intentionally smooth, strong mentor-mentee relationships to develop, and create a sense of safety and security around the longevity of the organization. Each leader will be held accountable by senior leadership to uphold his or her responsibility to safeguard the Lord's Church by attending to these proactive strategies.

## Pillar 8: Technology Pursuits

MCHCA has emerged from a system of communication that once was predicated on verbal communication and written announcements to a system that now competes and thrives in a more global society with broader ways of connecting. MCHCA must now create an ecosystem that allows it to engage itself in creating a social network between its technology and web-based components and its targeted audience and constituents. Such an ecosystem would allow the MCHCA community to effectively engage in executing the functions of the Church such as evangelism, fellowship, educational endeavors with emphasis on training, and a more efficient communication process.

The proposed technology plan commences with the development of a Technology Department for the organization that will have oversight of the technological needs of the international Church. This would entail the appointment of an International Director of Technology, along with a tech team to ensure that the proposed Internet media and the proposed new ecosystem stay current and progressive. After the team is formed, its duties would be to assess the current and future needs of the international Church, the jurisdictional needs, and the needs of the local churches to determine their status in terms of being technologically functional and savvy. A large part of the assessment is to gauge the pace of the organization in its shift towards a new web-centric paradigm versus the traditional membership model and patterns that most are using.

The team would work to secure relationships with the necessary vendors such as web developers, segmentation partners, and video media platform providers with proven track records to help make the ecosystem efficient. The goal is to establish and provide an access point for all involved that could help facilitate the larger goals of the

organization such as training and development, effective communication systems, providing affordable templates for all churches, more efficient international outreach, and enhancing the global capacity of the organization.

#### Pillar 9: Marketing and Communication Initiatives

The twenty-first-century Church has to utilize the current modes of message transmission while safeguarding the health of existing relationships. In its eightieth year of existence, MCHCA has recognized the need for and the benefits of a strategic marketing plan for the growth of the Church. This will aid the Church to effectively spread its message and vision throughout the immediate community and the broader international community. An added benefit is that such a shift in more contemporary marketing strategies will result in initiating contacts and ultimately developing relationships with currently unconnected people. The plan's initial efforts will be to create a marketing and communication team and then conduct a communication audit to assess what are the barriers that prevent churches that do not utilize current electronic mediums of communication from doing so. This would include lack of proper equipment, lack of trained staff or lack of technical infrastructure, such as lack of internet connection in rural areas, and the like.

This plan addresses five specific goals that will enhance and expand the organization's ability to be more effective in its marketing and communications' efforts. The first goal is acknowledging and addressing the digital divide by using dualistic marketing strategies that targets and focuses on those who are computer literate and technologically savvy and those who are not. The second goal is categorically creating

specific plans that are designed as: 1) “Outreach to the Unconnected,” using methods such as the Internet, websites, technology, and print media; and 2) “Inreach to the Connected” using the Internet, websites, technology, print media, the phone tree system, email blasts, phone calls, and letters. The third goal is developing a more effective means of mass communicating from the national office. The fourth goal is educating Church members about the strategic plan as a tool of communication and a learning instrument about the organization in a one day teaching revival called “A Day for Calvary.” The fifth goal is providing a resource list of activities and opportunities that churches can utilize to expand and enhance their marketing and communication capacity.

In the committee’s opinion, it is the organization’s responsibility to use as many avenues as possible to disseminate information. Currently, the primary modes of communication consist of mass mailings, website, and/or mass emails. It has been determined that there is a need for a centralized hub for distribution of information so that all parties/churches involved can hear or receive the same information from a single trusted source. In addition to the above, the plan proposes that MCHCA continues to employ methods of communication that allow physical interaction with people. The first of these is to set up monthly or bi-monthly conference calls between the presiding prelate and jurisdictional bishops, and between jurisdictional bishops and the pastors they cover. MCHCA would obtain this technology to use to relay and reinforce needed information and to stay more connected to jurisdictional bishops, local pastors, and churches. The second of these is to schedule one physical meeting outside of state/jurisdictional convocations between local pastors and their jurisdictional bishops.

## Pillars Ten through Twelve

The longevity of any organization is closely connected to its capacity to serve its constituency in a manner commensurate with the felt needs of particular targeted groups within and without the organization. In the life of MCHCA, the Church has been effective in group ministries that are auxiliary driven or based on age. As the Church embarks upon this significant journey of embracing change and celebrating new possibilities, it is essential that the organization highlights change within sub-groups of the larger community that are vital to the life of the organization. Three targeted groups emerged in this planning process: women, men, and youth and young adults.

The goals of the strategic planning process as it relates to each of these groups is twofold: 1) to create an environment for maximizing the ministry to each group; and 2) to help develop the capacity of each group to sustain the life of the group. This process will occur in four phases: a) increase the ministry quantitatively and qualitatively; b) engage in leadership development and empowerment issues; c) prepare each sector for leadership within the organization; and d) minister to the needs of the specific groups in a way that perhaps the larger venues for ministry do not focus on.

### Pillar Ten: Women's Ministry

Issues of gender equity and removing a metaphoric glass ceiling for women are foremost priorities as it relates to the women's ministry. This focus emerged clearly in the process of ascertaining data to support future strategies. The MCHCA strategic plan proposes that the organization engages itself in an intentional effort to create equity for women and bridge the disparity and disproportion of female clergy in the level of the

episcopacy. The organization will initially embrace an affirmative action step and resolve the imbalance by instituting steps that will allow the women in ministry beyond the pastorate to reflect at least 25 percent.

In the next chapter of this paper, this pillar will be further explicated, bringing to light the many strategies, techniques, and tools that can and should be used by the governing body to encourage equitable participation by both genders. Many of the aforementioned pillars lend themselves to fulfillment of this subsequent pillar. Chapter 7 will make these connections clear and introduce additional strategies to accomplish a portion of this internationally acknowledged goal.

#### Pillar Eleven: Youth and Young Adult

As it relates to the youth and young adult ministry, future emphasis must be placed on finding a way to bridge the generational divide within the Church. One goal in this regard is to end the exclusivity of youth in major events. A second goal is the development of the leadership skills of this constituent to be competitive in a twenty-first-century Church. Finally, MCHCA must aim to identify a venue in which the youth and young adults can merge to experience empowerment.

#### Pillar Twelve: Men's Ministry

The survey results revealed that at the time of this strategic plan, there was no existing leadership in the women's and men's ministries. Therefore, the first steps will be to identify proper leadership, train and develop a team to foster the ministry, and require this team to develop its plan of group leadership.

### Pillar Thirteen: International Relations

The goals of MCHCA's international focus are to become more intentional in its outreach to the international component of the organization, to enhance and foster the relationship with its international ministries, and to be more linguistically inclusive of this component while discussing the organization. A sub-component of this goal is to effectively create reciprocity in communication so that both the international churches are informed of all events and occurrences within the organization and so that the national churches have a more in-depth knowledge of what is happening abroad. The strategy for achieving these goals involves utilizing the current and future endeavors of MCHCA's technology, marketing, and communications departments to close the divide between the components.

The strategic plans for international relations include revisiting and recreating the work of the foreign missions component of the organization. This would entail appointing an International Director of Foreign Affairs, whose responsibility would include developing a strategy for fostering the work of the organization's mission efforts inclusive of monetary issues such as giving and receiving funds for the work. The International Relations committee would develop proper criteria necessary for accepting churches from overseas into the MCHCA organization, as well as spell out with clarity what the reciprocal expectations are between nations when engaged in ministry opportunities. MCHCA is committed to continuing many of its efforts to bring growth to its international vision and component.



## **Conclusion**

One of the major benefits that the MCHCA gained as a result of engaging in its strategic planning process is the emergence of a diverse group of leaders who are anxiously awaiting and anticipating the change that the organization is about to embrace. This group of leaders has given their expertise and wisdom to engaging in productive conversations that have resulted in the creation of the necessary pillars to sustain the future growth of the organization. An unexpected outcome of the organization participating in the goals and strategies proposals was the implicit revelation that the long-term sustainability of the organization is contingent upon its capacity to produce growth quantitatively, qualitatively, and financially.

Quantitatively, the organization needs to experience growth in all of its local churches by setting goals and strategies to do the same. The results of this growth will then filter upward to the organization in strengthening the whole, while simultaneously resulting in increased revenue that will allow a greater freedom to achieve and accomplish its goals. Qualitatively, the organization has to continue to refine processes and systemic functioning that currently exist and are good, while at the same time create new systems and opportunities that will motivate people to operate in a spirit of excellence. A large part of the qualitative initiative includes embracing intentional strategies to empower the congregants through diverse methods of training and leadership development. This will ultimately ensure that the organization will maximize its purpose and mission.

PART THREE  
STRATEGIES

## CHAPTER 7

### BUILDING SUCCESSFUL AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN LEADERS IN CHURCHES

As the world adopts new theories and develops strategies to tackle social and religious issues, MCHCA will serve as a model for change while maintaining the vision of its founders. The Strategic Planning Committee has been tasked with reviewing and revising church documents as they update church policy. The presiding prelate of MCHCA intends to continue the church's mission of global ministry, while setting the local church as a model for the organization. This section will outline the church's progress as it examines the role and relationship of gender in church issues. In addition, strategies, tools, and techniques will be presented to embrace social and religious changes, allowing the church to be a viable force in the twenty-first century. MCHCA must develop programs, identify targeted educational opportunities, and provide hands-on experience and mentoring activities which highlight the unique skills and qualities of women.

## **Leadership Strategies**

Successful women leaders first have to be successful leaders. They must be equipped with the skills and aptitude for success and fortitude to make their dreams a reality. To this end, this work explores the strategies and techniques that make successful leaders first, followed by an analysis of the soft skills that allow women to realize greater success in leadership. While no technique for building leaders of either gender is absolute, it is imperative that emerging leaders be presented with information that can be used when needed. Women face unique challenges, and those challenges will be underscored herein. However, the best defense against those challenges is an arsenal of confidence, coupled with knowledge and skills that can help women transcend barriers set by others.

For decades, churches have had women's ministries. Their purpose is to present information that is relevant to the success and interest of women. At times, the women's ministry or women's department in a church can be the only place where women are expected to lead. Whether the expectation is based on published church doctrine or centuries-old ideologies, the truth is that women have as much capacity to be leaders as men. This section is not an indictment against churches where the boundaries are a part of expressed church policies and doctrines. In those instances, women who feel that they are called to lead have to seek divine opportunities to exercise their leadership skills.

Each of the sections below addresses a familiar challenge women face in their pursuit of leadership positions. These challenges are not always overcome, just as racial and cultural discrimination have not subsided after decades of progress. Instead, women are equipping themselves with the relevant tools and strategies for mitigating the risks of

their pursuits. For example, women are pursuing higher education at unparalleled rates and developing workforce programs that support traditional roles in families to stave off critics who place them in long-established roles.

This categorical representation of challenges that women face is not intended to resolve the issues by repeating them. Instead, the goal of this paper is to identify social and cultural challenges, genetic predispositions, or circumstances that inhibit women's success in the workplace. The strategies offered bring awareness to the need for women in leadership. The climax is not intended to be an abolition of all gender discrimination. The strategy is to continually bring this issue to the forefront. Each generation has its own set of trailblazers who keep the movement going. New levels are obtained and celebrated, but the fight is never over. As women have become managers, bishops, and CEOs, they look to the triumphs as evidence that success is possible. Women can walk away with a hope that each generation will change the rules in such a way that continuous progress will be made in this area. Women leaders look back, assess the current situation, and pass the baton forward because the plight requires a continuous fight. In the future, success will be measured by women's courageous attempts to excel in leadership roles and their bravery to fight for personal success in male-dominated environments.

### **Natural Leaders**

The first challenge this section will address concerns the inherent leadership qualities that have been attributed to men and seldom find application in the lives of women. Alice Eagly and Linda Carli are co-authors of the book, *Through the Labyrinth:*

*The Truth about How Women Become Leaders*. In their book, they offer a poignant reflection: “Many evolutionary psychologists claim that leadership is inherent in the male psyche. They maintain that men are naturally more dominant and competitive than women and therefore more likely to gain authority roles.”<sup>1</sup> The authors continue to explain this evolutionary school of thought as the primary reason why men and women have been labeled as “competitive” and “domestic” respectively. While the authors do not infer concurrence with the theories presented, it is clear that great care has been taken to understand and present the information for readers to draw their own conclusions.

In the next section of the same chapter, Eagly and Carli ask the question, “What’s wrong with the evolutionary psychology analysis of leadership?”<sup>2</sup> They identify the first fault as the limited amounts of data to support the theory. Scientific data to support the theory must be derived from multiple sources. The theory cannot emanate from one culture or subgroup and then be widely applied to groups that may carry different values, mores, and behaviors. Generalizations distort perceptions of groups and impair the members’ ability to self-describe their own attributes. Rather, they can be subjected to an unfair assertion of rights, roles, and responsibilities by those with vested interest in the proposed agenda, or ignorance about the skill and capabilities of a subset within a group. In the MCHCA, men have often been assigned the title of “natural leaders” without full disclosure as to the validity of the statement.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alice Eagly and Linda Carli, *Through the Labyrinth: The Truth about How Women Become Leaders* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2007), 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

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

If a man is a natural leader, it implies that the leadership he performs is a result of genetic or biological composition. That means that genetic studies and DNA research should allow us to pinpoint hormones, biochemistry anomalies, or other molecular structures which support the theory of male dominance. There should be identifiable strands in the makeup of the male species that predispose him to leading.

Unfortunately, leadership has not been quantitatively reduced to cellular composition. It has not yet been labeled in the deoxyribonucleic acid maps of men, nor is it expected to be. Leadership refers to a set of behaviors and not human matter. Eagly and Carli write, “The essential argument of evolutionary psychologists is that men and women have different personalities because they evolved different behavioral strategies for reproduction in the past.”<sup>4</sup> This statement shifts the search for leadership traits from genetics to reproductive behavior, another case that is not easily made. Eagly and Carli add, “This theorizing concerns *sexual selection*: the strategies by which men and women choose partners for mating. The central starting point for evolutionary psychologists is the observation that males and females differ in their personal investment of time and energy in their offspring.”<sup>5</sup> Because women carry and nurture children with greater time investments, they are limited in the number of children they can conceive and care for.

By comparison, men are not bound to their offspring by physical ties during gestation and can continue to pursue other interests. Given the amount of time that a woman invests in her offspring, she is choosy about a potential mate. By this argument, men must have had to compete for sexual access to women, especially the most fertile

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

women. The men who were more successful in this type of competition would see their genes perpetually reproduced.

It is important to examine how this train of thought has handicapped women in the past. Labeling men as “natural leaders” because of their prowess in pursuit of a mate is unbalanced when leadership is dissected for its real components. Leadership is defined as an ability to lead or provide guidance. Pursuit of a mate, even the many tasks that go along with providing and caring for a nurturing partner, do not innately suggest that a progenitor and provider equates to a good leader. Rather, pre-industrial and agrarian groups are believed to have demonstrated the opposite where men and women shared responsibilities in smaller-scale societies.<sup>6</sup>

Eagly and Carli summarize another train of thought here: “Another claim of evolutionary psychologists is that evolution endowed women with a motive to seek mates with resources and endowed men with a motive to impress women by acquiring these resources in competitions with other men.”<sup>7</sup> In summary, the claims of evolutionary psychologists that men’s natural tendencies to be aggressive, dominant, and competitive are the key to understanding why men predominate as leaders. This reasoning neglects women’s own substantial productive contributions to subsistence activities in most nonindustrial societies and likely also in early human societies.

The lens through which the contributions of men and women are viewed is central to the inferences drawn. Certainly in early societies, men would define the work done outside of the home as central to the success of the family. If the same interview were

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 39.



conducted with women, a different set of answers might be given. Equally significant to a discussion of women as leaders in churches is the manner in which organized business and systems evolved. Men were leaders in early corporations and industry because (as stated above) their reproductive responsibilities permitted them time to do so. Industrial jobs often required travel and time away from home. In hunting-gathering societies, women have historically played more active roles in leadership and governance. In industrial societies, the absence of women from boardrooms and workplace settings for long periods of time left some with the inference that they had no place there. Just as the distorted logic about genetic predisposition to leadership has led to centuries of struggle for women, so too has the nonexistence of women from business settings led to unbelief in some that the absence implies incapacity in women. It is clear, based upon powerful examples like Oprah Winfrey and J. K. Rowling, that the converse is actually true. Perhaps the “sin” women commit by being successful is that they shrug off their passed-down identity and forge a path previously uncovered but always present.

### **Resisting Women as Leaders**

Eagly and Carli describe a “double bind” of leadership that women face based on suppositions for their behavior. They write,

The prescriptions for the female gender role stipulate that women be especially communal, the prescriptions for most leadership roles stipulate that leaders be especially agentic. The communal woman is expected to be more helpful than warm. She avoids being overly assertive or dominant, doesn't promote or very prominently display her accomplishments, and makes no overt attempt to influence others. In contrast the agentic leader is expected to be direct and assertive, exhibit confidence and competence, and exert influence over others.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 101-02.

The authors summarize this dilemma as the “double bind,” where women are bound to traditional characterizations on one hand and simultaneous desires on the other hand to lead and progress their professional lives and the organizations they serve. Women are, at times, held to traditional standards of behavior and disallowed the opportunity to emote the way men do in identical settings.

Studies have shown that men prefer women to be communal in their leadership roles and give high marks to male leaders who are assertive and dominating. Women’s influence is dependent on the reaction subordinates to her leadership. In this case, a subordinate may dislike a female leader who is direct and strong because she disembodies the subconscious definition of a woman in the mind of the person. A man who displays aggressive or assertive behavior is seen as acting out his “innate” role. The two inferences are based in myth and not fact. Human behavior should (in a perfect world) be viewed separately from the genetics of the person displaying it. However, conditioning has led some to believe that the woman should always be self-sacrificing, helpful, and supportive. Men are not expected to display these traits and are praised when they do. Instead, women walk a fine line between fulfilling the myths of their male subordinates while leading boldly and confidently, as good leaders should. Ambivalence about women’s assertiveness may pose more problems for Black women than White women. Limited evidence shows that Black women and girls have a culturally more direct style of communication and are often labeled as “sassy.”<sup>9</sup>

In the context of this work, it should be noted that the Church is as susceptible to these myths and incorrect suppositions as any other organization. Women are labeled as

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<sup>9</sup> Eagly and Carli, *Through the Labyrinth*, 103.

dominating and non-tolerant when exhibiting aggressive traits in any workplace environment. The Church has the added influence of divine revelation, which can complicate matters even more. Denominations and leaders have published opinions about the role and influence women ought to play in churches. While some celebrate and welcome their contributions, others do not. This work is not an indictment against those groups who deny women authority in the Church; it is simply another published opinion. When leaders of organizations interpret Scripture as supportive of women in leadership, they ought to be prepared for the hard work required to tear down centuries of myths and mend relationships between men and women to allow productivity and success.

Women who are given opportunity to lead in churches should be given the authority to do so without encumbrances from their male counterparts. They should not be relegated to communal roles because that is where men (and women) are comfortable seeing them perform. Women must be given the full scope of opportunity presented to men, affording them the right to be assertive, direct, and communal by choice, not by supposition.

### **Compromising for Success**

In a later chapter of their book, Eagly and Carli address areas where women may be required to compromise in order to achieve success. Myths have been passed on for years that women who make it to successful places in leadership must have “slept their way to the top.” While grossly non-applicable to most successful women in the workplace, the myth is perpetuated by people even today. When a woman is named as a

Team Lead, Division Chair, or other managerial position, the jokes and rumors begin to fly.

In some instances, the skills and traits of a woman are entirely overlooked in a quest to validate the person's own prescribed definition of leadership. Often, without realizing their sexist attitude, the person perpetuates the myth, asserting that a woman who is successful could only have used her physical attributes to garner success. It is a travesty and deserves hefty rebuke whenever one encounters it.

In a church or nonprofit arena, one would expect that these myths would be absent, given that the Bible and every Christian leader on the planet shun sexual promiscuity. Unfortunately this is not true. Instead, women face the same type of scrutiny in the Church, and although more infrequently than in secular fields of employment, the thoughts still arise.

Eagly and Carli outline the fact that rules have emerged as a result of familiar behaviors over extended periods of time:

Predictably, people think about leadership mainly in masculine terms. These mental associations about leadership not only shape stereotypes about leaders but also influence organizational norms and practices. As managers follow precedents set by their colleagues, informal norms develop, consensus emerges about what is appropriate, and guidelines become hardened into bureaucratic rules. Over time, organizational leadership has come to embody the preferences, lifestyles, and responsibilities of the men who usually have held these leadership roles.<sup>10</sup>

Like earlier attempts to define leadership as inherent to men because of genetic makeup, this observation screams with unsupported "facts." Just as women have begun to break barriers in sports and entertainment, they should find the same comfort in corporate and

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 137.

non-profit employment. Deals can no longer be made on golf courses that forbid women from playing on their greens, and CEOs cannot choose their successors from “guys who remind them of their former selves.” To do so would disallow women from consideration in important decisions.

The authors continue their discussion with an example.<sup>11</sup> The woman who is profiled serves as an associate attorney for a corporate law firm. She is especially studious, completing her required number of billable hours in less time than most and staying completely focused on work while at work. When the question of her career track began, she was advised to attend more of the extended lunches and weekend events that partners hosted, so they could get to know her better. In fact, she was told that the extra time would be required to “assure partners that her career goals are in harmony with the culture of the firm.”<sup>12</sup> The attorney was already a homemaker and chose to make best use of her time at work by staying focused on the tasks at hand and using her time at work wisely. Her counterparts were rewarded for spending more time off task, socializing with partners. This behavior equated to commitment to the “culture of the company.”<sup>13</sup> As previously stated, continuing a past behavior does not infer that the initial action was actually definitive in its originally stated goal. Carli and Eagly sum up her situation thusly,

Women attorneys in law firms, like women in corporate and other executive positions, face at least two types of problems in achieving positions of authority. One barrier is that extreme time demands can make it difficult to combine employment obligations with a family life that involves more than minimal

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

responsibility for children. The other barrier is that, to convince her colleagues that she is worthy of advancement, a woman is often held to standards that are set higher for women than men.<sup>14</sup>

If a woman is to achieve merit-based success, she should be given the same standards as her male counterparts. In the example given above, the woman completed her work ahead of schedule and remained committed to her work, but she was chastised for not spending time off task with others. She had clearly prioritized her family and home life, and she was discredited because of it.

It is evident that organizations have become more demanding of employees' time when they reach levels of management. The demands placed on an executive are much more intense than those on the average employee. Employers want dedication and loyalty from those in higher echelons of leadership, interrupting family times for business and tethering the executive to his role at all times.<sup>15</sup> Women have to decide if they are willing to assume this level of responsibility from a company.

Even in dual-income households, women assume more of the home responsibilities. Social norms indicate that it is acceptable for a man to be absent from some family functions or late to dinner because of work. But women are shunned from exhibiting the same type of behavior. In fact, they still perform the bulk of child care responsibilities and provide care for ailing relatives.

The first step towards eradicating the compromises women are forced to make is for women to be honest with themselves. Corporate culture and high-achieving executives have to be willing to forgo some degree of independence from work. Men and

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 140.

women who are judged equally will still need to make the choice to give the law firm, corporate employer, or non-profit permission to run their lives. Like in earlier agrarian societies, men found this necessary and possible, given their limited roles in reproduction. If women choose to give themselves over to an executive lifestyle, then they must be aware of the accompanying responsibilities.

Some organizations have begun to offer on-site childcare and flexible work schedules, both plusses for the working homemaker. Women and men should continue to fight to make demanding jobs more respectful of what it takes to make happy and successful homes. That effort will benefit everyone in the long run.

### **MCHCA's Leadership Model for Women**

MCHCA has been in the process of reviewing its official manual (originally published in 1999) for three years. As discussed in an earlier section of this work, the purpose of reviewing the organization's foundational documents is to revise the means by which the church completes its sacred mission. As new technologies and new challenges emerge, the Church must equip itself to meet parishioners' needs and find new ways of spreading the gospel throughout the earth.

The first nine "pillars," as they are called in MCHCA documents, deal with the church's administrative processes. They involve taking a didactic look at what has worked and what has hindered progress in the past in order to reform the way the Church conducts its business. Upon implementation of these strategies, the Church expects to realize significant increases in efficiency and participation from the member churches.

The next three pillars address the ministry foci for ministries aimed at women, men, and youth. While implementation of the entire plan is critical to achieving success in any one area, this section will provide substantive analysis of the first nine pillars to illustrate the way that they will reinforce the goals for women in MCHCA. Relevant pillars will be presented and correlated to the ultimate goal of providing strategies, tools, and techniques to equip women leaders in MCHCA.

By presenting this section to the International Board of the MCHCA, the goal is to perpetuate the successes of women in ministry beyond the four walls of GMCHC. There needs to be greater awareness of gender differences and subconscious instances of gender discrimination. When this published work is presented to the at-large body of the MCHCA, a dialogue will begin in large and small churches all over the world. Again, its stated goal is not the eradication of gender discrimination in non-profit arenas, it is to bring awareness to the surrounding issues and provide strategies, tools, and techniques to overcome the resulting attitudes and behaviors.

MCHCA has membership churches around the globe. Even in the North American churches, the culture and attitudes differ widely. Providing some guidelines and strategies to all member churches will build a foundation of consistency and success. For the purpose of this writing, only the pillars whose content relates to the successful development of African-American women as leaders will be addressed and further discussed. Those relating to the Church's overall function will be left out of this discussion, with the assurance that their implementation is equally as important but less relevant to this discussion.



## Pillar 1: Structure and Infrastructure

Pillar 1 deals specifically with the need to have a consistent structure and infrastructure for all member churches. There are many geographic and cultural regions represented in MCHCA. It would be naïve to assume that tolerances of one another's personal beliefs will lead to ultimate success. Knowledge and empowerment are the solution where there are inconsistencies and ignorance. In the previous section, some myths and ideas that have been perpetuated for years about the abilities of women were discussed. One leader (or one church) who holds fast to those beliefs will spoil the success of the group because that attitude will endanger women with gifts and talents for the kingdom, presenting unnecessary obstacles for them to overcome.

Standardization is paramount to the military success of most countries because it allows for a soldier or officer to be plucked from one environment and placed in another with relatively little adjustment required. If it were the same in churches, people could move from one part of the country to another and expect the same high level of respect for both men and women no matter where they choose to worship. The collective brand recognition associated with a church is weakened when a subgroup is allowed to form ideologies and sub-theologies that negate the authority of the former.

## Pillar 2: Model for Unity and Uniformity

Unity and uniformity work hand in hand with Pillar 1. MCHCA strives to present a consistent model in all of its member churches. Those churches are encouraged to continue their unique presentations of the gospel and to celebrate the culture of those who attend their assemblies. In order to establish ties in visual and organizational details,

churches are asked to agree to some basic tenets. Among them, timeliness and display of the organization's logo represent an attempt to unify the many buildings and pastors as representatives of one company. The message is already consistent because training and development are required for leaders.

When churches agree to implement uniform practices like licensure and accreditation requirements for pastors and leaders, the playing field is kept level for all who wish to enter. Standardization does place all people at the same point and dissuades from allowing subjective assertions. This can be helpful or hurtful in a place where discrimination may have occurred in the past. It could help the woman who has been waiting patiently for her chance to lead, only to see others promoted before her because of subjective standards. It could also hurt if the standardized goal is unachievable for women or wildly out of reach due to years of missed training opportunities. Like those women who were shunned from corporate leadership because the golf course did not permit them to play and the "boys" wanted them to "hang out a little more," women in MCHCA must be ready to confront and overcome any obstacles that may result from uniformity in its churches.

### Pillar 3: Training and Development Initiatives

MCHCA values education and training, strongly encouraging its pastors and leaders to enroll in accredited seminaries to further substantiate their knowledge of the gospel. In addition, MCHCA offers classes in its own accredited program, Calvary Bible Institute. Pastors and leaders are required to obtain and maintain licensure for their respective roles throughout their tenure as leaders. In addition, leaders and laity are

encouraged to keep current in their understanding of the Word by participating in continuing education courses and conferences.

MCHCA has expressed a desire to attract and retain more high-caliber leaders. It is understood that the essential functioning of the Church hinges on some rudimentary and basic skills. In a church environment, it is common for the pastor to serve as spiritual and business leader. To this end, he or she must be equipped with the ability to conduct both sets of business. Some churches have grown so large and the responsibilities have become so great that there are separate roles for the spiritual leader and the business manager. While attainable, this is not a reality for most leaders.

One of the primary strategies for building up African-American women in MCHCA is to encourage them to pursue higher education. As discussed in a previous chapter, those women are already attending seminaries at higher rates than ever before. Unfortunately, their attainment of graduate degrees and the like has not been proportional to pastoral and other church leadership roles. It would serve the population of female seminarians well to see women from all walks of life who have made strides in the church arena. Perhaps one strategy would include a set of regional meetings at the local seminaries where women in church leadership would come to meet with the students, providing insight and example of what the possibilities are for them as well. The lectures and workshops could accompany small group mentoring, providing access to other women as they pick up the torch on their leg of the collective journey. It is difficult for those who are outside of the fray to understand the challenges and opportunities before them. Seeing someone who has broken through the ceiling may propel them to a level previously thought to be unattainable.

MCHCA may also consider some internal programs to promote women in leadership positions. Affirmative action programs have received a lot of negative press due to alleged discrimination against those who have been excluded. Some have argued that the more decorated and talented individuals are excluded in favor of underrepresented groups. In order to ensure equal access to the same goal, MCHCA has to be sure that any biases and demerits received as a result of generations of discrimination is overcome. This is not to say that the special programs designed to assist underrepresented populations will always be necessary. In fact, the very premise is that underserved groups must have sustained access to the same goals and resources in order to eradicate the need for such a quota system.

Though it seems odd to associate a program of this nature with the Church, it is still needed. The Church still needs junior ushers and debutante training in girls' groups, but it also needs to have leadership models and training. It can be seen as chivalrous to defer to a man in a leadership situations, but women and girls can be incorrectly led to believe that they have no place in leadership because they never get a chance to do it.

If MCHCA adopts a uniform standard of education and training requirements for leaders, then women will have full access to the jobs that they are skilled to pursue. When subjectivity is removed, the field will effectively be leveled and church officers will be tasked to determine the effectiveness of the model. Prayerfully, women who have been tasked by God to complete his work in the earth will feel less encumbered and much more supported when they go to work in the Church.

## Pillar 6: Restructuring Events

Pillar 6 involves restructuring church events to elicit the most participation and effectiveness from the church's efforts. MCHCA endeavors to streamline its efforts by combining conferences and events. It appears that the model is working, combining the youth and young adult conferences with the adult-centric convocation. Perhaps this model can be built upon by incorporating women's and men's focused events into the schedule of lectures and guest topics. It is true that the conferences are already laden with a multiplicity of activities, but the opportunity for greater impact is significant, and conference leaders should be encouraged to capitalize on the large crowds by offering a smattering of lectures that address the already-adopted MCHCA strategic plan.

## Pillar 7: Evaluation, Elevation, and Succession Planning

Pillar 7 presents a unique opportunity in the Church. When implemented successfully, pillar 7 will provide the evaluation tool necessary to measure effectiveness. All things being equal, men and women should represent more proportional populations in the pulpit and other church leadership positions. Evaluation of leaders will afford them valuable feedback towards future success, regardless of gender. Men and women who work in the Church should receive constructive reflections on performance where applicable, including outlines for attaining additional skills.

When measured by the same rubric, the most fitting candidates should be given an opportunity to lead and participate on significant committees. In the case of MCHCA, the most influential positions are at the executive board level. Local church leadership usually tops off with the pastor and church administrator. As new leadership positions

are made available, women should be given equal consideration alongside men for their potential fit and function in a given role.

#### Pillar 8: Technology Pursuits

Keeping with the spirit of pillar 8 in MCHCA's guiding document, a strategic plan for increasing the number of women in ministry and leadership would likely be undergirded by strong personal skills in technology. Those skills would afford a leader to utilize a variety of media to stretch the effectiveness of its programming. In some cases, that includes social media, while in others it includes distance learning classes at seminaries and coaching or mentorship opportunities for young women.

#### Pillar 9: Marketing and Communication Initiatives

As a part of its rich marketing plan, the strategic planning committee assigned to address disparities in leadership by gender would undoubtedly have to establish a web presence and subsequent social media sites. The goal would be to grant as much access to pertinent information as possible. The girls and women who visit the site would be encouraged to interact with the web administrators and other peers through interactive surveys and blog posts.

#### Pillar 10: Women's Ministry

The purpose of the women's ministry is to motivate, educate, and train women in ministry. Opening doors of opportunity for leadership serves as a secondary goal within the organization. The International Women's Ministry would give a platform to participants to display their ministry gifts, gaining insight from other women who could

serve as coaches and mentors. In workshops and seminars, women will discuss challenges they face based on gender and regional attitudes. The issues brought to light in this paper will provide a great deal of content for future meetings and will hopefully inspire others to take up the issues presented.

#### Pillar 11: Youth and Young Adults

When the tenets of this plan are released, young women will be presented with opportunities to see other women achieving milestones and participating in aspects of church where they themselves feel compelled to serve. They will be provided multiple opportunities to hone and develop their own skills, including orientation to the women's ministry at an appropriate age.

#### Pillar 12: Men's Ministry

The international men's ministry will receive sensitivity training on how to deal with the impending changes, to include reminders about the inherent fairness doctrine preached in the Bible. That way no one will feel that he is being singled out for age-old ideologies about women in leadership. The men should be permitted to attend classes and lectures that will address some of the known myths and stereotypes about women leaders and given the freedom to grow while addressing any relevant concerns related to women in leadership.

#### Pillar 13: International Relations

As MCHCA grows and develops its leadership, so will the communities and churches with which it associates. MCHCA is not setting out to make a doctrinal or

theological shift in the thinking of church leaders. Rather, it sees itself as a vanguard for Biblical truths that remind us that God is no respecter of persons. When he pours out his spirit on *all* flesh, there are women present as well.

Some cultures and corners of the world see things very differently now. If other denominations and groups choose to exclude women from leadership or otherwise maintain disparities in representation, they have a responsibility to their church communities to explain their positions to those affected. It cannot be stated that “that’s just the way it is.” MCHCA is making strides to fulfill God’s every word, not just the ones that are politically or personally expedient to support.

### **Conclusion**

GMCHC strives to offer a leading example to its sister churches. The Church employs more than sixty staff members, a majority of whom are women. Women who have been serving many years in leadership largely head the church’s auxiliary ministries. The Church holds classes on a traditional semester schedule for all members, highlighting doctrine, Bible characters, and church leadership principles. Other churches in the organization also offer a variety of leadership and training opportunities for women. Like GMCHC, MCHCA churches offer their own (smaller) women’s conferences to include lectures and workshops on pertinent issues.

The strategy set forth in this paper will be named the Christian Women’s Network for women in seminaries and other church leadership positions who have a drive to go higher. In the same vein as others who have also been able to pierce the ceiling of gender differences in Christian churches, it is hoped that a traveling lecture series in seminaries



throughout this region will be offered. Given the right number of opportunities to ask questions and hear stories of those who have “gone before them,” these women will be better prepared to walk in and interview for church leadership positions or apply to be pastors of local assemblies. Current female church leaders bring decades of experience pertaining to balancing family life while pursuing the dreams God has given.

In addition to workshops, it would be incumbent upon the team of seasoned female church leaders to develop internship opportunities for female seminarians to give them a glimpse of full-time efforts. The women who would lead this team include pastors of established ministries, women who work in the faith-based political arena, and non-profit ministry leaders. Those internships could include local churches, non-profit groups, or alongside political juggernauts with faith and policy decision-making authority. The roles should be representative of the many opportunities available to women as well as men.

The team would also offer mentorship opportunities for rising leaders. This would mean that those young ladies would have access to the people who are already achieving the great success they feel led to as well. It will give a real-life portrait of the women who are mothers and wives and still maintain a good sense of self-value in the process. Throughout the process, it would be the team’s goal to help women determine their own identities in Christ while equipping them with the tools to be triumphant.

Presently, women are not fighting as hard for the victories already attained by their predecessors, which gives them liberty to fight in another arena. The goal of this collective effort is to affirm women in leadership, increase acceptance when possible, and acknowledge of the qualifications of women who have not been afforded the opportunity

to lead. The goal is not so much dissolution of all gender gaps, but to realize an equal playing field for all who wish to participate.

## CONCLUSION

In a utopian world, one would expect themes of equality and harmony to be achieved through a more complete understanding of gender issues. Certainly this paper strives to posit women on an equal playing field with men, but there is no expectation that awareness equates to a change in attitude and behavior. On a global scale, groups that have been victims of discrimination for long periods of time are receiving attention and making strides toward recognition and acceptance. For example, women are finding themselves in greater positions of authority in corporate and non-profit arenas, and ethnic minorities are receiving more promotions in historically underrepresented positions.

### **Social Transformation**

The inclusion of women in positions of authority and promotions to high-profile positions are key factors in determining how well the precepts described in this paper are accepted by its target audience. Overall, the constituents of MCHCA should embrace the accomplishments of women the way they would the accomplishments of their male counterparts. That means that both men and women should acknowledge female leaders in their leadership roles and not pigeon hole them into traditionally accepted roles.

Like other groups, women will flourish in leadership when those who they serve rally around them in a show of support for their success. This does not mean that women should be lauded for roles that are poorly performed because of generations of exclusion from consideration for those positions. They should, however, receive well-deserved compliments for the work that they complete, especially when the unique talents they possess propel a group or ideology forward beyond what predecessors have been able to

accomplish. Acknowledging their contributions takes nothing away from those who have come before. It underscores the inherent abilities in people, without respect to distinguishing traits.

When women are given equal access to the boardroom and included in higher echelons of leadership, one would expect stigmas and myths to dissipate. Historic underrepresentation has never justified the falsehoods of inability ascribed to any group. Surely this case would be the same. Gender issues in corporate America and ethnic differences in America's social sphere have presented examples of how character traits play more significant roles than gender and race in predicting personal behavior.

The crux of this work is aimed at identifying and nullifying the effects of years of underrepresentation by women in significant leadership positions in MCHCA. As the opening chapters illustrate, women have played important roles since the inception of MCHCA. Church leaders have never decried women as inferior or excluded them on the basis of gender. Rather, they have been left out of some important meetings or not invited to discuss the church's direction and programs at or near the proportion to which they are represented in the pews.

### **Global Outlook and Leadership**

MCHCA is a global organization with member churches in North America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe. When it implements a set of programs, the effects span all of the aforementioned continents. News reports still show that women are not given equal rights in many cultures. They are not even treated as independent human beings in some cultures. All of MCHCA's churches are located in areas where the greater social

fabric is open and receptive to the notions discussed in this paper. Any pastor or church leader who adopts the ideas presented here may face criticism or pushback from people who are accustomed to the status quo, but it would be in the best interest of the kingdom to fall in line with the very precepts outlined in God's Word. If he is no respecter of persons, then believers should not be either.

The Church should present an example to the world instead of the converse being true. At the present time, the fight for civil rights and equality has become a broad conversation, and some groups have associated themselves with the themes and principles whose goals are counter to the will of God. This paper outlines a clear case for the inclusion of women in all areas of leadership in the Church based on biblical content alone.

Secular shifts affect the attitude of the Church as well. One cannot help but note the many women of color that have been given positions of power in the recent past. From Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor to former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, women of color have torn down boundaries and proven that they are every bit as capable when given the access and tools necessary for success. In the world of entertainment, media giant Oprah Winfrey has achieved what some thought she would never do. All of these women were given opportunities after being sufficiently trained for their future. The Church can look at these three as examples that girls and women are worth the investment of time and resources that it takes to overcome years of absence from relevant venues.

## **A Paradigm Shift for Contemporary Church**

The contemporary Church has a responsibility to plan for the perpetuity of its work. The mission is the same as it has been for more than two thousand years: to spread Jesus to the world. The means by which the goal is accomplished can and should vary based on the surrounding social environment. America finds itself in the midst of debates about marriage equality and political unrest. Inevitably, these issues cause Americans to lean back on their most deeply felt views and draw conclusions based on years of understanding. Decisions will be made about these issues and those of gender equality based on the beliefs of people who already hold positions of power. The Holy Spirit guides Christians' thinking and should be considered the best influence for deciding what is best to do about tough questions.

Civil rights debates have waged for more than a century. At one point in America's history, it was law to own other human beings. It took courage and conviction from legislators to change the status quo. This work is in no way designed to equate women's suffrage with slavery or the disproportion of women in MCHCA leadership positions to the horrors and challenges of the late 1800s. Gruesome reminders should take us to a better place of understanding about our need to engage and verify the validity of power structures.

In Europe and the Caribbean, pastors and leaders have different sets of concerns and social norms to consider. In light of these slight history differences, it would be incumbent upon the groups to consider the audience that would be receiving the changes proposed and to make changes as necessary. This may also be true of portions of the United States in communities where practices have been passed down from one

generation to the next without justification or meaning. When women are respected as equals, it will be difficult for ministries to avoid becoming engaged in the war on human trafficking that seeks to destroy networks that sell women and girls into prostitution in some countries. It will be difficult for the Church to be silent about issues that affect women, like reproductive rights and responsibilities.

Beyond inspiring young ladies to know that they can achieve great success, inclusion of women in the Church fulfills God's Word by preparing the young women on whom he will pour out his spirit and cause them to prophesy. MCHCA sits at the precipice of change. Its example would serve as a standard for other religious and non-profit organizations. It would be great to wake from this state of exclusion and find women happier and more fulfilled because they are permitted to fulfill the call of God on their lives.

Students of this policy change will add spokes to an existing cause instead of reinventing the wheel. The effort of men and women in this vein builds on the many successes of civil rights leaders in America and independence movements around the globe. Keeping this wheel in perpetual motion requires a change from potential to kinetic movement on the part of organizational leaders. It would be a discredit to female pioneers if desire and action diminished. The women to whom the torch will be handed must be equipped like their male counterparts in order to be successful.

Christ's movement has impacted the world. The charge to believers is the same: go out into the world and preach about a soon coming king. Disciples and early Christians watched in awe as Jesus performed miracles, died, and rose from the grave. Upon his ascension to heaven, Christians have been provided a comforter to guide their

actions, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts men and women daily to further God's kingdom through outreach and ministry. When all of God's children are permitted to sit at the same table, another level of success for the kingdom of God will be achieved.



## APPENDIX A

### PURPOSE OF MCHCA, ACCORDING TO THE CHURCH MANUAL (1977)

The purpose of Mount Calvary Holy Church of America, Inc. is:

- A) To found and continue a church or churches to be established within and without the United States of America.
  - 1. To establish, maintain and operate one or more buildings for the purpose of holding religious and other church services therein for the purpose of worshipping God.
  - 2. To establish, conduct and maintain schools in the furtherance of such work
  - 3. To do any and all things necessary, expedient or convenient in the teaching and preaching of the Bible.
  - 4. To hold classes, seminars, religious meetings and do any and all things necessary, convenient, or appropriate to spread the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ and for the teaching of religion to men, women, and children.
  - 5. To do and perform all and everything which may be necessary, advisable, suitable and proper for carrying out the objectives herein expressed and to exercise all implied or stated powers and rights in achieving the work of this church.
  
- B) To attain the said purpose:
  - 1. The Presiding Bishop, by executive prerogative, declares this constitution. The people, pastors,, state and national leaders shall have the privilege to participate in promoting the general welfare of Mount Calvary Holy Church of America, Inc. Herein the unitary organization shall be the principle form of government. Biblical faith teaches that God constantly used the individual in the top office as the source for revelation and truth for the people. However, vested in high office is the prerogative of allowing saved people the freedom to do the will of God. Hence, with the power to give and take authority, the Presiding Bishop declares a unitary organization to be delegated power from the International Convocation to the District Convocation and/or local church to the local church membership. Under this delegation of authority, executive prerogative shall be granted to the Board of

Bishops, Overseers, Pastors and National leaders in so far as said authority shall not undermine the unitary organization's goal or presiding Bishop's office. The Board of bishops will consist of Jurisdictional Bishops and Bishops with portfolio.

2. The voice of the people shall be heard through methods specifically stated in the manual and other encyclicals or methods provided by Overseers, Pastors and local membership of Mount Calvary Holy Churches of America, Inc.

Source: Mount Calvary Holy Church of America, *Mount Calvary Holy Church of America Manual* (Washington, D. C.: MCHCA, 1977), 7-8.

## APPENDIX B

### CONTROVERSIAL SCRIPTURES CONCERNING WOMEN

#### 1. Women's conduct

##### 1 Timothy 2:8-11

I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

#### 2. Headship, praying and prophesying

##### 1 Corinthians 11:2-13

Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

#### 3. Women teaching

##### 1 Corinthians 14:33b-38

For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him

acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

1 Timothy 21:12-15

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

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