The Spirit and The Body

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Selina R. Stone

The Spirit and The Body

Towards A Womanist Pentecostal Social Justice Ethic

BRILL | SCHÖNINGH

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For Millicent, my mother in spirit and body.

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Introduction

The questions that led to my PhD research, my thesis, and now this book, began, for me, as a young teenager. My upbringing was formed by three core contexts: the home where I was raised by my parents, alongside my three younger siblings; the inner-city area of Handsworth in Birmingham, UK, where my grandparents arrived from Jamaica in 1962–3; and my majority-Black Pentecostal church. When I was around thirteen, my dad, who had been raised in church by his parents, would from time to time take me and my brother out for a walk as soon as the offering was collected which was the sign that the 45–60-minute sermon was about to start. We would walk around the inner-city area of Aston where my church was located and have conversations with the people we met as we strolled. My dad asked us questions that I would later come to learn were theological: "we come to this building every week, to clap and sing but what difference does this make to this community?" I would look up at him, feeling instinctively that it was not as it should be, but I could not explain why. We would then walk for a few more minutes and come across an Asian woman wearing a hijab carrying shopping bags, and my dad, would ask us – "how is what we do, every week, good news for this lady?" It was not long before these questions led me to my own, as I trained as a community organiser, seeking to connect worship, spirituality and faith to the problems of poverty, inequity and exploitation. My wrestle being: what does it mean to say, "God is here" and "God is with us," as we struggle to survive and thrive against the odds? What does it mean to declare that God has filled us with the Holy Spirit and with power?

This book is an examination of British Classical Pentecostalism through the lens of womanist ethics and in dialogue with Pentecostalism in the United States of America (US). It is historical, looking back to the roots of the movement and its development in the US, in Jamaica and then in the UK. It is contemporary, analysing Progressive Pentecostal theology and ministry in the UK and the US. The core questions undergirding the book are: what has prevented (and currently prevents) Pentecostals from embodying a social justice ethic and working towards a more just future for all? And on the contrary, what can we say of those who do seek to address the problems of poverty and social injustice? What is needed to enable Pentecostals to live out their political potential in terms of overcoming hierarchies and binaries which exclude and oppress in their own communities, in wider society and even the world?

Pentecostal spirituality is often described as distinct in relation to other Christian traditions because of its particular emphasis on embodiment and

experience. In *Thinking in Tongues* for example, James K.A. Smith asserts that Pentecostalism amounts to "performative postmodernism," due to its embrace of the body as seen in bodily healing.[1] Yet as a movement, there has been a general lack of consistency in recognising and tackling issues of social justice – as embodied experiences – within its walls and in wider society. The reticence of Pentecostals with regard to social engagement or political action such as community organising has generated frustration for some Pentecostal individuals who are inclined to do this this kind work, as well as those who seek to work with Pentecostals on local issues, and scholars of Pentecostalism.[2] British scholars have sought to analyse and explain this Pentecostal paradox. Valentina Alexander describes the problem of "passive radicalism," whereby Black Christians (including Pentecostals) are supported inwardly by their faith and care for those in need, but do not imagine that they might transform or recreate the unjust systems and structures that surround and impact them.[3] Marcia Clarke, Joe Aldred, Nicole Toulis and Richard Burgess support Alexander's argument by highlighting the ways in which Pentecostals in England support and care for individuals especially those in need, without necessarily addressing the need for structural change.[4] William Kay has highlighted Classical Pentecostalism's historic disengagement from politics, particularly due to their pacifist stance.[5] Robert Beckford has spoken of the "bewitchment" of Black Pentecostalism by colonial Christianity, which undermines its political activism.[6] But by focussing predominantly on political theology or on political and sociological analyses, these critiques overlook what I see as the theological (and arguably philosophical) spanner in the works: Pentecostalism's body

1 James K.A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 59.

2 David Muir has highlighted a few instances when Pentecostals have engaged with broad-based community organising, but these occurrences have been sparse. See David Muir, "Pentecostals and Political Engagement," in *Pentecostals and Charismatics in Britain: An Anthology*, ed. Joe Aldred (London: SPCK, 2018), 207–211.

3 Valentina Alexander, "'Breaking Every Fetter?': To What Extent has the black led church in Britain developed a Theology of Liberation?" (PhD., Warwick University, 1996), 228–9.

4 Marcia Clarke, "Pentecostal spirituality as lived experience: an empirical study of women in the British Black Pentecostal Church" (PhD Diss., University of Birmingham, 2016), 113; Joe Aldred, *Thinking Outside the Box on Race, Faith and Life* (Hertford: Hansib, 2013), 70–71; Nicole Toulis, *Believing Identity: Pentecostalism and the Mediation of Jamaican Ethnicity and Gender in England* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1997), 19; Richard Burgess, "African Pentecostal spirituality and civic engagement: the case of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Britain," *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 30:3, (2009): 255–273.

5 William Kay, "British Assemblies of God: The War Years," *Pneuma* 11, no.1 (1989): 51–58.

6 Robert Beckford, *Documentary as exorcism: resisting the bewitchment of colonial Christianity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 4.

problem. It is my argument throughout this book, that Pentecostalism is experienced as a spirituality that integrates the body with spirituality but that this integration is limited. In reality, Pentecostalism historically and in the present, retains an inherent dualism regarding the work of the Holy Spirit which undermines a holistic understanding of the Spirit's ministry for the individual body and the bodies of the oppressed in particular.

In regard to oppressed bodies, Miroslav Volf has sought to emphasise the "materiality of salvation" as the point of commonality between Pentecostals and "liberationists," who are often depicted as opposed to one another.[7] In both cases, he suggests that "salvation is not merely a spiritual reality touching only an individual person's inner being but also has to do with *bodily* human existence.[8] This is true of course, but the fundamental differences in exactly which aspects of "bodily human existence" each group expects might be touched, and the means by which each group imagines that this occurs, renders their understandings of salvation almost incomparable. Attempts to outline a Pentecostal theology geared towards liberation – rather than simply borrowing from a liberationist perspective – must first deal with the fundamental question of how Pentecostals encounter the Spirit as embodied beings and what they believe the Spirit's presence means for the embodied person and embodied community (i.e., what Volf's "materiality of salvation" actually means for Pentecostals). If Pentecostals can – as I will argue they have done historically and do in the present – both acknowledge the Spirit as one who fills and heals the body, while failing to attend to and address the exclusion and violence meted out towards particular bodies, then how does this challenge our understanding of Pentecostal pneumatology and spirituality and its potential to contribute to public life? Where Pentecostals claim to be Spirit-filled and sanctified, and yet fail to identify and divest themselves of various forms of oppression, can these inconsistencies be resolved?

Pentecostalism and Womanist Theological Ethics

In order to examine these questions, I hold Pentecostalism under the microscope of womanist theological ethics, which offer us a framework for considering Christian faith, theology and spirituality in the context of class, race and gender injustice. But let us begin by defining what we mean by Pentecostalism.

7 Miroslav Volf, "Materiality of Salvation: An Investigation in the Soteriologies of Liberation and Pentecostal Theologies," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 447–467.

8 Volf, "Materiality of Salvation," 448.

"Pentecostal" is often used as part of the hyphenated phrase "Pentecostal-charismatic" to describe the wide range of people, churches, denominations or traditions that practice charismatic spirituality within Christianity around the world. In the UK, this includes a broad range of groups: majority African Caribbean denominations, charismatic Anglicans, neo-Pentecostal West African megachurches, charismatic Roman Catholics, indigenous Latin American Pentecostals, and others. "Pentecostalism" or "Classical Pentecostalism" are also both used to describe the churches and denominations which emerged as a result of the revival which took place at the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission (hereafter Azusa Street) in 1906. This is the manner in which I will use the word "Pentecostal" in this book, which focuses on Classical Pentecostal denominations in the UK and the US, including Church of God based in Cleveland (COG), Church of God in Christ (COGIC), Church of God of Prophecy (COGOP), New Testament Church of God (NTCG) and Assemblies of God in Great Britain (AOGGB). For many, the doctrine of speaking in tongues as initial evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit is the cornerstone of Classical Pentecostalism, which consequently makes Charles Fox Parham – the promoter of this teaching – a founder of Pentecostalism.[9] Others describe Classical Pentecostalism in broader terms, which is helpful, as speaking in tongues is not unique to Pentecostals even if the link to baptism in the Spirit is.[10] Steven Land, for example, defines Classical Pentecostalism in doctrinal terms, as imbibing the "full gospel," which includes an emphasis on justification, sanctification, healing and the pre-millennial return of Christ, as well as the doctrine of tongues as initial evidence of spirit-baptism.[11] On the basis of its particular eschatological emphases, some would also define Classical Pentecostalism as being additionally marked out by a particularly intense missionary fervour.[12] However, describing the Pentecostalism of Azusa Street as "classical" could be considered problematic for several reasons, which cannot necessarily be resolved, but must be noted. First, the attempt to define Pentecostalism according to one set of criteria on which everyone agreed or agrees is impossible. Even at Azusa Street, the early Pentecostals

9 Leonard Lovett, "Black Origins of the Pentecostal Movement," in *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, ed. Vinson Synan (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975), 129; Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited* (Oxford: Oxford, University Press, 1979), 55–56.

10 Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 11; Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, Mi: Baker Academic, 1987), 15–16.

11 Steven Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 18.

12 Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 18.

did not agree on all areas of doctrine or practice, as seen in the debates about the nature of sanctification, or the significance of tongues, which often to splits within the early days of the movement.[13] The second issue is that even if there were agreement on what constituted Pentecostalism, naming Azusa Street's Pentecostalism, "classical" carries certain connotations of "original" or "ideal" Pentecostalism, which risks confirming the myth that Pentecostalism is an export from the US. This Pentecostalism that is rooted in the US could simply be recognised as one of the many indigenous forms of Pentecostalism from around the world. However, since this language is commonly used we will continue to use it, but with an awareness of these nuances. I will follow the convention of using lower case "p" in the few places where I refer to the Pentecostal-charismatic movement as a whole, and upper case "P" to refer to Classical Pentecostalism. While Classical Pentecostalism is the general focus of this book, in Chapter 4 we will focus on a particular strand within this stream, named Progressive Pentecostalism. Suffice to say at this point, that Progressives recognise social engagement as core to their ministry as Pentecostals, and thus offer a prime location for the exploration of our key questions. A full explanation of this term is provided at the beginning of that chapter. In the final chapter 5, we focus on the work of Black women within this Progressive stream, in order to locate a womanist Pentecostal ethic.

In a similar way to Pentecostalism, defining womanism is also a challenge, due to the range of perspectives and opinions on this intellectual and political movement. Alice Walker was the first to use the term "womanist" in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, and therefore her definition is often cited by womanist theologians and biblical scholars as a foundation on which to build their work. Katie G. Cannon was the first to use "womanist" in the field of theology and religion.[14] Walker offers a long definition of "womanist," which I have abbreviated below:

> 1. From *womanish* (Opp. Of "girlish," i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color … Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *wilful* behaviour. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one. Responsible. In charge. *Serious*.
> 2. Also: a woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes

13 Dayton, *Theological Roots,* 17–23; William J. Seymour, *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission, 1915* (Joplin: Christian Life Books, 2000), 81.

14 Katie G. Cannon, "The Emergence of Black Feminist Consciousness," *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1985), 30–40.

> loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female. Traditionally universalist.
> 3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless.
> 4. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender.[15]

If a womanist "loves the Spirit," "loves music" and "loves dance," then the opportunities for dialogue between womanism and Pentecostalism are clear. The words "outrageous," "audacious," or "courageous" might also be viewed as Pentecostal traits in view of the worship styles, the faith and the determination of those named "Pentecostals." Yet tensions with Pentecostalism arise with Walker's celebration of the "wilful" woman who is "in charge," and the possibility of sexual love between women. In some contexts, Pentecostals continue to prevent women from holding certain leadership positions due to their sex and those identifying as LGBTQ+ are generally excluded from leadership and many aspects of community life. Where the theme of sexuality and inclusion of LGBTQ+ people is mentioned in the context of Black Pentecostal women's scholarship, the emphasis is placed on offering pastoral care, while reinforcing traditional views such as celibacy for same -sex attracted people and restrictions in leadership.[16] Monica Coleman has criticised previous generations of womanist theologians for failing to engage fully with Walker's definition, especially in relation to sexuality, which I consider to be a fair critique.[17] This tendency to overlook sexuality within womanist theology may be due to the conservative perspectives of the theologians themselves, or the communities they seek to impact who are often determined to maintain traditional views on sexuality and gender. In the UK, there have been no notable signs of movement within Classical Pentecostal denominations towards the inclusion of those who identify as LGBTQ+ which would be consistent with the welcome given to cis-gendered, heterosexual believers. This is due to what Anthony Reddie describes as "a rigid form of heteronormativity that is often predicated on such binaries between those who are deemed as righteous (and saved) and those who are not."[18] Not only can churches be unwelcoming through the

15 Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983) xi–xii.

16 Estrelda Alexander, "When Liberation Becomes Survival," in *Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Ministry*, eds. Margaret English de Alminana and Lois E. Olena (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2016), 325–6, 333–5.

17 Monica A. Coleman, "Roundtable: Must I be womanist?" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 22*, no. 1 (2006): 88.

18 Anthony Reddie, *Theologising Brexit: A Liberationist and Postcolonial Critique* (London: Routledge, 2019), 117.

mechanisms of exclusion into community life, but Christian theology can also generate and reinforce the harm being done as Jarel Robinson Brown states:

> As thousands upon thousands hunger for the gospel of redemption, grace and love, the Church has found itself more invested in the exertion of power over people's bodies while the cupboard of the Queer poor remain empty, and young Black children become estranged from both family and communities who refuse to accept them because of "what the Bible says."[19]

As one of the most pressing matters of our time, womanist work cannot refrain from engaging with matters of LGBTQ+ life and wellbeing in the church and wider society. In this book, I explore the matter of sexuality and LGBTQ+ inclusion through a case study of Bishop Yvette Flunder and the City of Refuge, in the final chapter. I have generally limited my analysis throughout the book to race, gender and class, as a starting point for womanist Pentecostal ethics in Britain, but with an awareness that a more thorough consideration of sexuality and Pentecostalism is required. It is evident that despite the points of connection between Pentecostalism and womanism, ultimately there are some fundamental points of discord between them. If womanism "opposes all oppression based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical ability, and caste as contrary to the essence of the gospel message,"[20] then the tensions are clear for many Classical Pentecostals who consider the exclusion or marginalisation of certain people due to sex, gender or sexuality as consistent with and even necessary for Christian faithfulness.

Despite Walker defining a womanist as a "black feminist or feminist of color," subsequent debates have raged regarding the relationship between womanism and Black feminism. For Black feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins, Monica Coleman, and others, Black feminism is preferable over womanism (the intellectual movement rather than Walker's "womanist"), because it makes room for Black women's experiences of a range of religions and spiritualities, it is unapologetically political and activist, and it addresses the particular issues of Black LGBTQ+ women.[21] For others, these distinctions are superfluous, since womanist theology can include all of these elements, as seen in the definition provided by Linda Thomas:

19 Jarel Robinson-Brown, *Black, Gay, British, Christian, Queer: The Church and the Famine of Grace* (London: SCM Press, 2021), 3.

20 Yolanda Pierce, "Womanist Ways and Pentecostalism: The Work of Recovery and Critique," *Pneuma* 35, 1 (2013): 25.

21 Patricia Hill Collins, "What's in a name? Womanism, Black Feminism, and Beyond," *The Black Scholar* 26, no. 1 (1996): 11, 12, 14–16; Coleman, "Roundtable: Must I be womanist?" 85–134, 86–92.

> In a word, womanist theology is a theory and practice of inclusivity, accenting gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and ecology. Because of its inclusive methodology and conceptual framework, womanist theology exemplifies reconstructed knowledge beyond the monovocal concerns of black (male) and (white) feminist theologies.[22]

This is the basis for my own understanding of womanist theology as bringing multiple critical lenses to the analysis of human experience and the exploration of God's presence and action within it. However, the question remains whether I, as a Black British woman can be a womanist? Womanism gives hermeneutical privilege to the lived experiences of African American women and particularly the history of African enslavement, segregation and the various other forms of racial, gender, socio-economic and political violence meted out against African peoples in the US. This history should not be usurped and subjugated in an attempt to make everyone womanists. I remain convinced that as Black women scholars in Britain, we must consider how to define and name the particularity of our work especially in light of the complex wide range of Black communities and identities we represent. As Kate Coleman has explained in one of the first explorations of womanism in Britain: "we cannot simply depend upon the insights of our African American cousins. Our voices must also be heard if we are to achieve liberation."[23] However, it is also important to recognise that the history of forced removal from ancestral lands and enslavement is shared by the wider African diaspora outside of the US. This suggests that we may also lay claim to the word term "womanist" to some extent, at least in the meantime.

I find Monica Coleman's reflections on what she calls "third wave womanism" helpful in this regard. For Coleman, third wave womanism is indebted to the first wave, the foremothers who founded the field, namely Katie Cannon, Jacquelyn Grant and Delores Williams. The second wave includes those who were heavily influenced by them and who established womanism in particular disciplines, such as Emilie Townes, Renita Weems, Cheryl J. Sanders, Kelly Brown Douglas, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, Linda Thomas and Stacey Floyd Thomas, among others. The third wave which Monica Coleman would belong to, contests various of the assumptions of the first two waves, including a definition of "blackness" which is rooted in the racial codes of the US:

22 Linda E. Thomas, "Womanist Theology, Epistemology, and a New Anthropological Paradigm," *Cross Currents* 48, no. 4 (98, 1999): 498–9.

23 Kate Coleman, "Black Theology and Black Liberation: A Womanist Perspective," *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Praxis*, no. 1 (October 1998): 10.

> Outside the U.S., third wave womanist religious thought may encompass the religious experiences of those in the Caribbean, South America, various continental African experiences, or even the diaspora and women of color in Asia and Australia. In those contexts, "black" and "color" and "ethnicity" are construed in relevant local terms with particular meanings and significations. "Black" is also problematized by the voices of self-identified multi and bi-racial individuals with a level of black "African" cultural and geographic heritage, however far removed.[24]

Third wave womanism explicitly includes Black women of the African diaspora, including Black women in Britain, and even non-Black women of colour. Womanism in Britain can and should be broadened to include post– and anti-colonial critiques that recognise and address the points of shared connection between Black life (and in particular Black women's lives) and Asian, Latino/a, and indigenous communities in Britain and beyond. In view of the particular plight of Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities in Britain, womanism might also extend to critical consideration of the matters of justice concerning these often-overlooked groups. It should also involve theorising, theologising, educating and organising, alongside all those in Britain and beyond who strain under the weight of class inequity, racism and sexual or gender-based oppressions and histories of British imperialism and colonial violence. This includes ecological destruction, which is rooted in western colonial expansion. It should pay particular attention to Black women in lower classes whose lives are impacted by interweaving forms of marginalisation and exclusion, as well as their children, and all those who fall through the cracks of our collective socio-economic, cultural and political consciousness.

Literature Review

Though Black and Womanist voices are underrepresented across the board in the field of Theology and Religion in Britain, they are most prevalent in the field of Pentecostal studies. Several key figures have brought Pentecostalism into dialogue with Black liberation theology or political theology and action but often without an intersectional focus on class, race and gender. Valentina Alexander's thesis "*'Breaking Every Fetter?': To What Extent has the black led church in Britain developed a Theology of Liberation?*" considered the oppression of Black people in Britain and the potential for Black-led churches – many

24 Monica A. Coleman, ed. *Ain't I a Womanist, Too? Third Wave Womanist Religious Thought* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 42, 43.

of which were Pentecostal – to develop and embody a theology of liberation.[25] While Alexander did not focus exclusively on Pentecostalism, she discussed the interplay between Black spirituality, theology public action, concluding that Black churches overall embodied a "passive radicalism" in which spirituality strengthened individuals without working towards a liberative agenda.[26] Subsequently, Robert Beckford's *Dread and Pentecostal: A Political Theology for the Black Church in Britain* examined how African Caribbean Pentecostals might discover a liberative theological framework geared towards Black freedom.[27] For Beckford, Pentecostals must embrace the "internal and external" dimensions of "dread Pentecostal theology" (DPT).[28] In the former, the individual is empowered spiritually and psychologically as consciousness is raised, and in the latter, believers engage in action. By challenging the church-world dualism and colonial theological frameworks which discourage any action on "earthly matters," he advocates for "a more concrete link between the life of the Spirit (or 'pneumatic') and the political" in order to see the church empowered for transforming oppressive realities.[29] David Muir's work has critiqued British Pentecostalism and sought to promote political theology, as well as to highlight strategies for practical organisation and action.[30] Joe Aldred has also contributed work addressing Pentecostal theology and social engagement in Britain historically and in the present.[31] Delroy Hall's *A Redemption Song: Illuminations on Black British Pastoral Theology and Culture* offers an examination of Black life in Britain, racial trauma and healing through the lens of pastoral theology.[32]

In addition, there have been several examinations of Black women's spirituality and experiences within Pentecostal churches which have not examined the broader issues of class, race and gender in wider society. Elaine Foster's essay "Women and the Inverted Pyramid of the Black Churches,"[33] is generally

25 Alexander, "Breaking Every Fetter?" 1.

26 Alexander, "Breaking Every Fetter?" 228–9.

27 Robert Beckford, *Dread and Pentecostal: A Political Theology for the Black Church in Britain* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

28 Beckford, *Dread and Pentecostal*, 188–9.

29 Beckford, *Dread and Pentecostal*, 62.

30 Muir, "Pentecostals and Political Engagement,"; David R. Muir, "Power in Black and Pentecostal: An Engagement with Bretherton," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 33, no. 2 (May 2020): 253–261.

31 Aldred, *Thinking Outside the Box*, 63–74, 89–90.

32 Delroy Hall, *A Redemption Song: Illuminations on Black British Pastoral Theology and Culture* (London: SCM Press, 2021).

33 Elaine Foster, "Women and the Inverted Pyramid of the Black Churches," in *Refusing Holy Orders: Women and Fundamentalism in Britain*, ed. Gita Sahgal and Nira Yuval-Davis (London: Virago, 1992), 45–68.

recognised as the first notable contribution to the study of Black Women and Christianity in Britain. Foster expounds the complex dynamics of power within Black Pentecostal churches between church leadership hierarchies which are dominated by men, and congregations comprised almost entirely of women. Nicole Toulis' *Believing Identity: Pentecostalism and the Mediation of Jamaican Ethnicity and Gender in England* was a primarily sociological piece which focused on a NTCG congregation. Toulis highlighted the importance of the Black Pentecostal churches as a "powerful forum for the construction of new identities" in the midst of a challenging social context for migrants from the Caribbean and especially Black women.[34] Marcia Clarke's thesis "Pentecostal spirituality as lived experience" examined Black Pentecostal women's spirituality in the context of their social and political struggles as often working-class women. Clarke argued that Pentecostal spirituality engages the whole of life and lived experience for women on an individual level,[35] but acknowledged the limitations of Pentecostalism in regard to generating long-term social and political change. Deseta Davis has written a critique of patriarchal language in COGOP in the UK, with an emphasis on the detrimental impact on Black women.[36] Janice McLean Farrell's *West Indian Pentecostals: Living Their Faith in New York and London* represents another sociological study of Classical Pentecostalism in the US and UK. It examines a range of themes including the place of women, the impact of colonial history and the generational consequences of disengagement from social and political issues.[37] Patrice McDonald represents an emerging voice in womanist Pentecostal studies, with the publication of her essay "Pentecostalism: A democratizing, liberating force for black women?" which examines the historic place of Black women as leaders within Pentecostalism and contemporary objections to women's ordination as bishops in the NTCG.[38] Though not dealing exclusively with Black Pentecostal women, Maxine Howell and Olabisi Obamakin have both made important contributions to Black British women's biblical hermeneutics.[39]

34 Toulis, *Believing Identity*, 19.

35 Clarke, "Pentecostal spirituality as lived experience," 113.

36 Deseta Davis, "The Use of Patriarchal Language in the Church of God of Prophecy: A Case Study," *Black Theology*, 14:3, (2016): 252–256.

37 Janice A. McLean-Farrell, *West Indian Pentecostals: Living Their Faith in New York and London* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

38 Patrice McDonald, "Pentecostalism: A democratizing, liberating force for black women?" *Journal of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity* 42, no. 2 (2022): 159–175.

39 Maxine Howell, "Towards a Womanist Pneumatological Pedagogy: Reading and Re-Reading the Bible from British Black Women's Perspectives," *Black Theology* 7, no. 1 (April 2009): 86–99; Olabisi Obamakin, "Don't touch my hair: a feminist Nigerian/British reading of the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her hair in Luke 7," *Practical Theology* (2023): 36–50.

I have drawn extensively from the wealth of scholarship produced in the US in the field of Pentecostal Studies. The work of Estrelda Alexander has been invaluable to understanding Black Pentecostalism in the US specifically, especially her monumental work *Black Fire: 100 Years of Black Pentecostalism*.[40] Keri Day's work in both Pentecostal and Womanist public theology has been essential to my understanding and analysis of Azusa Street's political significance in particular.[41] In addition, Anthea Butler's *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World*, added helpful nuance to the discussion of gender in Pentecostalism by emphasising the subversive ways in which women exert power in patriarchal Christian contexts.[42] James Forbes, Leonard Lovett, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, Cheryl Sanders, Jonathan Langston Chism, Frederick Ware, David Daniels III, Antipas Harris, Cecil Robeck, Eric Williams, Judith Casselberry, and William C. Turner have also been important contributors to my understanding of Black Pentecostalism and the matters of race, gender and liberation in the US.[43] I am indebted to Douglas

40 Estrelda Y. Alexander, *Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism* (Downers Grove: IVP Press, 2011).

41 Keri Day, *Azusa reimagined: A radical vision of religious and democratic belonging* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022); Keri Day. "The Politics of Azusa: Transforming Citizenship at the Margins." *Political Theology* 22, no. 7 (November 2021): 611–26.

42 Anthea Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). 11, 15, 36–37.

43 James Forbes, "Shall We Call this Dream Progressive Pentecostalism?" *Spirit: A Journal of Issues Incident to Black Pentecostalism* I, no. 1 (1977): 12–15; Leonard Lovett, "Black Origins of the Pentecostal Movement," in *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, ed. Vinson Synan (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975), 123–142; Leonard Lovett, "Ethics in a Prophetic Mode: Reflections of an Afro-Pentecostal Radical" in *Afro-Pentecostalism: Black Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in History and Culture*, eds. Amos Yong and Estrelda Y. Alexander (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 153–166; Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *"If It Wasn't for the Women ...": Black Women's Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001); Cheryl J. Sanders, "Social Justice: Theology as social transformation," in *Routledge Handbook to Pentecostal Theology*, ed. Wolfgang Vondey (New York and London: Routledge, 2020), 432–442; Jonathan Langston Chism, "'The Saints Go Marching': Black Pentecostal Critical Consciousness and the Political Protest Activism of Pastors and Leaders in the Church of God in Christ in the Civil Rights Era," *Pneuma* 35, no. 3 (2013): 424–443; Frederick Ware, "African American Pentecostalism and the Public Square," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 44 (2016): 99–114; David D. Daniels III, "Navigating the Territory: Early Afro-Pentecostalism as a Movement within Black Civil Society" in *Afro-Pentecostalism: Black Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in History and Culture*, eds. Amos Yong and Estrelda Y. Alexander (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 43–62; David D. Daniels III, "Doing All the Good We Can": the Political Witness of African American Holiness and Pentecostal Churches in the Post-Civil Rights Era," in *New Day Begun: African American Churches and Civic Culture in Post-Civil Rights America*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Durham: Duke

Jacobsen,[44] the Consortium of Pentecostal Archives and the University of Southern California Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Archives for online access to early Pentecostal primary sources.

Despite the rarity of literature (especially in the UK) that brings womanist theology and Pentecostalism into dialogue there are three reasons why this should be considered essential work. Primarily, Pentecostalism is a movement which began among Black communities, many of whom were Black women from lower classes. Pentecostalism has been located within Black women's religious experience and thus should be a central concern for womanists. Secondly, Pentecostalism is a movement which was and in some places continues to be recognised as radical, in its capacity to transcend (even momentarily) the dehumanising hierarchies of race, gender and class, as seen in the early days of the Azusa Street revival. In this way, it finds itself embodying core aspects of womanist ethics by being in its truest form, anti-classist, anti-racist and pro-women. Thirdly, Pentecostalism continues to grow exponentially among African, Latina/o and Asian groups around the world with 86% of Pentecostals and charismatics being located in the "global south."[45] Globally, women make up the majority of church members, meaning that it is women of colour who represent the core of Pentecostalism.[46] Womanist Pentecostal studies (including theological ethics), is therefore crucial to the future of academic research

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University Press, 2003), 164–182; David Daniels III, "Race: Reordering the world on the principle of grace," in *Routledge Handbook to Pentecostal Theology*, ed. Wolfgang Vondey (New York and London: Routledge, 2020), 421–431; Antipas L. Harris, "Black Folk Religion in Black Holiness Pentecostalism," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 28, 1 (2019): 103–122; Antipas L. Harris, "Black Pentecostal Hermeneutics?" *Pneuma* 41, 2 (2019): 193–217; Cecil M. Robeck, "The Azusa Street Mission and Historic Black Churches: Two Worlds in Conflict in Los Angeles" African American Community," in *Afro-Pentecostalism: Black Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in History and Culture*, eds. Amos Yong and Estrelda Y. Alexander (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 19–42; Eric L. Williams "More Than Tongues Can Tell: Significations in Black Pentecostal Thought," (PhD Diss., University of Edinburgh, 2014); Judith Casselberry, *The Labor of Faith: Gender and Power in Black Apostolic Pentecostalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); William C. Turner, "Pneumatology: Contributions from African American Christian Thought to the Pentecostal Theological Task," in *Afro-Pentecostalism: Black Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in History and Culture*, eds. Amos Yong and Estrelda Y. Alexander (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 167–190.

44 Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Indiana University Press, 2003); Douglas Jacobsen, *Reader in Pentecostal Theology: Voices from the First Generation* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006).

45 Gina A. Zurlo, Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F Crossing, "World Christianity and Mission 2021: Questions about the Future," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 45, no. 1 (January 2021): 18.

46 Gina A. Zurlo, Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F Crossing, "World Christianity 2023: A Gendered Approach," *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, 47, no. 1 (2023): 14–15.

in religious studies, theology and world religions, and the future of Christian faith and ministry.

Methodology

Both Pentecostalism and womanist ethics require us to move beyond the strictures of western epistemology, which promote objectivity, disembodiment and rationality over story, felt knowledge and embodied experience. Therefore, qualitative methods (including interviews, observations and spatial analysis) have been utilised alongside more traditional text-based methods and the analysis of online data (such as websites and social media posts) and quantitative data. This is unusual in the wider field of theology, which is recently coming to terms with the use of such methods,[47] but is foundational for womanist theology, which recognises lived faith and experience as the starting point for the theological task. Lived experiences are essential for Pentecostal faith, with spirituality being as Steven Land states, the "fundament of all theology."[48] It is, as we will see, within the context of encounter with God through the Holy Spirit that theology is formed, and believers are empowered to live out their theological commitments. In addition, it is the stories and voices of those who are often excluded from critical analysis and reflection on life, faith and God who are brought to the forefront in womanist research as well as Pentecostal faith.[49] Interviews for this project were semi-structured, allowing participants to share their stories of conversion, alongside their experiences of socio-economic struggle, violence, imprisonment, migration, family challenges and the faith born and sustained through their journeys. Allowing participants to offer these personal testimonies provided invaluable context to the calling they discerned, the work they do and the concerns which drive their activism and social action as Pentecostals.

Case studies and interviews (in most cases) were conducted with three churches and six community organisations associated with Classical Pentecostalism. All of them were chosen due to their commitment to responding to urgent social issues in England's inner cities which experience high rates of socio-economic deprivation. It is in these contexts that the matters of class and poverty, race and gender were recognised and explored through practice.

47 For an introduction to qualitative methods in theology, see Knut Tveitereid and Pete Ward (eds), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research* (Newark: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2022).

48 Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 183.

49 Thomas, "Womanist Theology," 498–9.

Emmanuel Community Church International (ECCi) is an AOGGB congregation in North-East London which has supported the development of various charities and community institutions alongside running projects such as a winter shelter for the homeless. I interviewed two senior leaders and staff at two organisations they have supported. I also analysed two other large AOGGB churches in major cities in England, which will remain anonymous. Emmanuel Community School (ECS) is a free school initiated through the leadership of Mrs Oluwatudimu, a member of EECi, and supported by the senior leaders and many within the congregation. I conducted interviews with Mrs Titilayo Oluwatudimu, the Director of Education, the head teacher Mr Philip Lewis and one other staff member. I was also able to conduct spatial analysis and an observation of a school assembly. Spark2Life is a rehabilitation charity for young people who have been convicted of serious violence. It was founded by Dez Brown while he was serving as a pastor at ECCi and has been supported by ECCi since its inception. I interviewed Mr Brown and two members of his staff team, as well as observing a staff meeting which included prayers and planning. Bringing Hope is a charity based in Birmingham, which works primarily with men who are at risk of being drawn into violence, and those who need rehabilitation after serving time in prison. I interviewed the founders and leaders: Rev Dr Carver Anderson, an ordained NTCG pastor, and Rev Robin Thompson, ordained with the Apostolic Pastoral Congress, an African Pentecostal Denomination. The Pentecostal Credit Union (PCU) is the most significant financial institution run by Pentecostals in Britain, and was founded by COGIC pastor, Rev Carmel Jones, in the 1980s. I interviewed the current CEO, Shane Bowes, and the Director of Marketing and Communications, Elaine Bowes. The Nehemiah United Churches Housing Association (NUCHA) is the result of the merger of two Birmingham-based initiatives, founded by Black church leaders in the 1980s, some of whom belonged to COGOP. This organisation has addressed the housing needs of the most vulnerable in the West Midlands for around 40 years and continues to thrive. I interviewed the current CEO, Bishop Llewellyn Graham, and one of the founders Bishop Wilton Powell. I have anonymised contributions where possible except where the person's own contribution or role would make them easily identifiable. I have used a pseudonym in one case to protect the participant's identity.

Structure

This book can be understood as a journey through time and across disciplines. It begins with Pentecostalism's roots before Azusa Street, continues through its global history and then comes to rest with its contemporary manifestations

in Britain. It draws predominantly on history, theology, religious studies and sociology. In the first chapter, we will explore two main threads which compose the complex heritage of Classical Pentecostalism at Azusa Street: African Traditional Religion (ATR) and John Wesley's Methodist Holiness movement. Yorùbá spirituality provided early Pentecostals with a holistic worldview in which all of life was spiritual and the body was revalorised in worship and divine healing. However, the focus on the individual body undermined attention to structural or political critique. On the other hand, Methodism, though concerned in some quarters with social holiness as well as personal morality, overall failed to deal decisively with racial and gender hierarchies which prevented a social justice ethic from being lived out. In both cases, these inconsistencies in terms of embodiment, spirituality and justice can be traced forward through Pentecostalism.

In chapter 2, I focus on the Azusa Street revival as a site of theological, spiritual and cultural tensions. I recount the story of the revival among predominantly Black people who tended to be from the lower classes, critiquing the notion that "the color line" was "washed away," and exploring the complex position of women. This is followed by the main analysis underpinning this book: that far from resisting modern dualisms, early Pentecostalism retained dualistic perspectives on the work of the Spirit in relation to human life. Overall, encounter with the Holy Spirit was understood to be restricted to the individual's religious experience rather than impacting the class, race or gender-based oppressions that shaped believers' social, economic and political experiences, including within the church.

Having completed this historical analysis of Pentecostalism based in the US, in chapter 3 we turn our focus to Classical Pentecostalism in Britain. We will examine the history of Classical Pentecostalism among working-class majority-white communities in Britain and Pentecostals from Jamaica before considering the contemporary context in which British Pentecostalism finds itself. Particular focus is given to Britain's colonial history and ongoing race problem; neoliberal politics and class; and complex gender-based injustice which impacts women and Black men.

In Chapter 4, I examine Progressive Pentecostalism in England, firstly by providing an account of the shifts in Progressive Pentecostal theology and worldviews compared to the broader Classical tradition. I then conduct an analysis of race and faith in Progressive Pentecostal churches and look to community organisations to examine the innovative forms of ministry which transcend dualisms in theology and practice.

In the final chapter, I critically explore the marginalisation of Black women in Progressive Pentecostal churches and organisations, while recognising the ways they carve out roles for themselves. This is followed by the construction of a womanist pneumatology, that centres on the Spirit's resurrection of Jesus' body, and the significance of his post-resurrection scars. I end the chapter by reflecting on the ministry of Bishop Yvette Flunder and the Church of Refuge (COR) in San Francisco, as a potential embodiment of a womanist Pentecostal ethic.