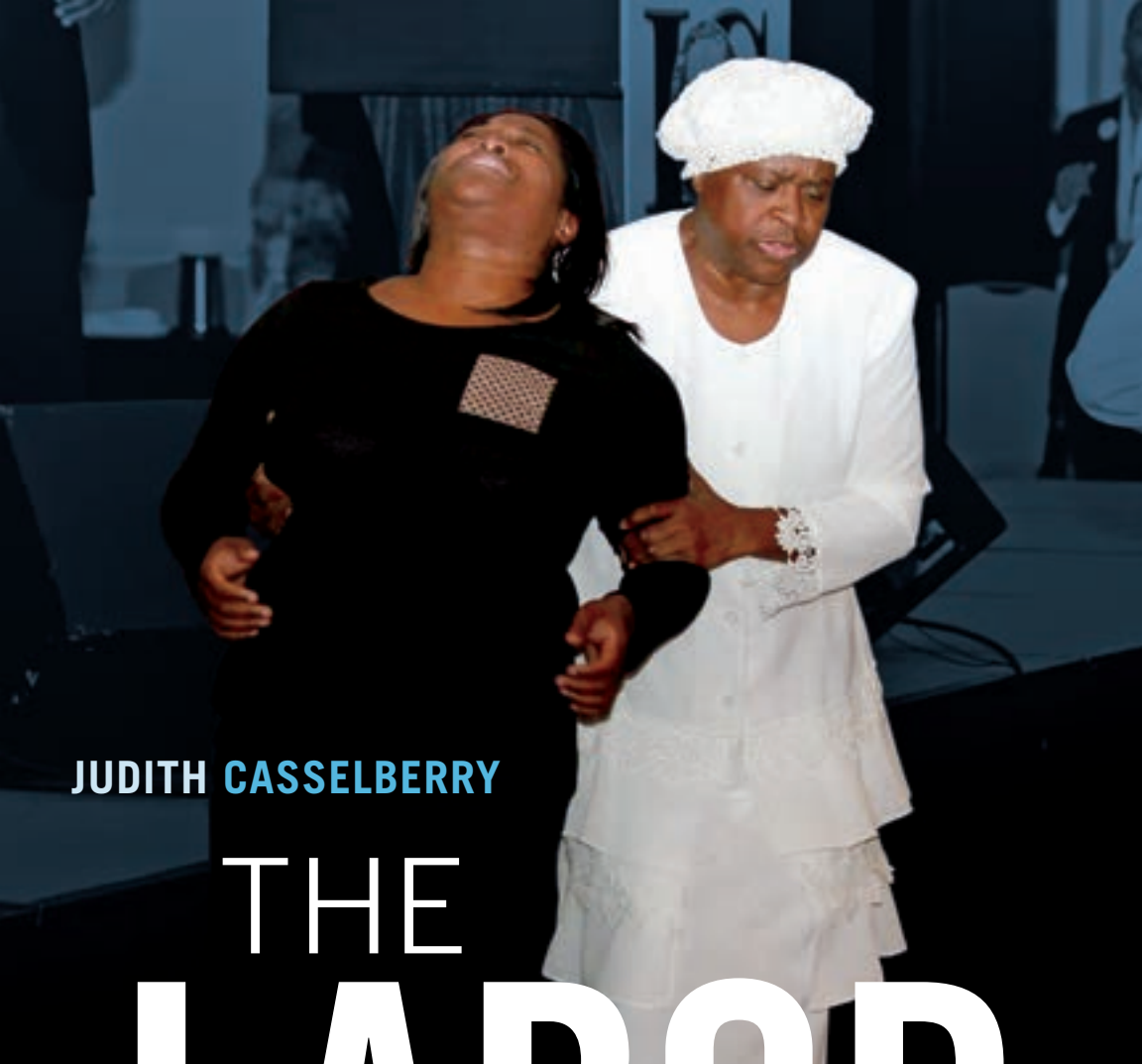

JUDITH CASSELBERRY

THE LABOR OF FAITH

GENDER AND POWER IN BLACK APOSTOLIC PENTECOSTALISM

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Judith Casselberry

Duke University Press · Durham and London · 2017

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Interior design by Courtney Leigh Baker; cover design by Matthew Tauch.
Typeset in Trade Gothic and Minion Pro by Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Casselberry, Judith, [date] author.
Title: The labor of faith : gender and power in Black Apostolic Pentecostalism / Judith Casselberry.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2017. |
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2016048392 (print)
LCCN 2016050622 (ebook)
ISBN 9780822363835 (hardcover : alk. paper)
ISBN 9780822369035 (pbk. : alk. paper)
ISBN 9780822372974 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: African American Pentecostals. | African American women in church work. | African American women—Religious life. | Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith. | African American churches—New York (State)—New York. | Harlem (New York, N.Y.)—Religious life and customs.
Classification: LCC BR1644.3 .C37 2017 (print) | LCC BR1644.3 (ebook) | DDC 289.9/40820973—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2016048392

Cover art: Photograph by Marquise Rose.

Dedicated to the
memory of my mother, father, and sister,
who are on the other side—
Bettye Groomer Casselberry Vance,
William C. Casselberry Jr.,
and Stephanie Renee Casselberry

CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

"Well, Judith, you certainly have stepped into a world." Sitting at breakfast in a Brooklyn restaurant, one of my mentors succinctly summed up my circumstances. I laughed—such an accurate and economical response to my opening fifteen minutes of stories about beginning research in the church.

I entered the world of Apostolic Pentecostalism without having had any long-term, ongoing relationship with a church community. My dad was career military, which kept us on the move. Our inconsistent church life shuttled between generic army Protestant (when we lived on a base), local community churches (when we lived off-base), and sometimes no church. But we always prayed our "thank you for this food" and "now I lay me down to sleep." My most memorable church time took place in Denver during my junior high school years. We lived just southeast of Five Points on 23rd and Downing Street in my grandmother's house and attended a nearby Presbyterian church. Because my mom had been born and raised in Denver, we knew folks in the church beyond Sunday. That, however, didn't keep me there, and I asked permission to join the Methodist church down our street—this was not based on theological reasoning, but rather I happened to see the upcoming calendar of events for the Methodist youth group. The trips looked exciting. Thus, my early investment in church life had nothing to do with sin, salvation, the Bible, Black religious life, or thoughts of the hereafter. I wanted to go camping in the Rockies. My knowledge of and interest in Black women's church work came later in life from friends relating experiences of growing up in church communities. My interest in the world of the spirit grew later in life, as well, but my interest in Black Holiness-Pentecostal women developed in grad school.

The winding route to researching women in Apostolic Pentecostalism began before my doctoral work in African American studies and anthropology. I had discovered that a number of my favorite vocalists/performers had come up in Pentecostal churches—Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Sam Cooke, Marvin Gaye, and Deniece Williams. I wondered in what ways, if at all, the common religious denominator translated into approaches to music making. To my mind, the specifics of the denomination were important—moving away from "*the* Black Church" as a unit of analysis in gospel and popular music production. My undergraduate and master's work in music and ethnomusicology provided a strong foundation, but I needed to learn a great deal more about Holiness-Pentecostalism before I could make any claims about these artists' approach to sound and performance. At the start of my doctoral work, I threw myself into the literature on Black American Christianity, with particular attention to Holiness Pentecostals. The dearth of scholarship on women's experiences and expression was astounding, given that they make up the majority of participants. It became clear to me that I needed to better understand the role of women in the life of Holiness-Pentecostal churches and address the gap in scholarship.

A perfect combination of deliberative action, questionable (at the time) moves, and good fortune—some would say divine intervention—brought me into the world of Black Apostolic Pentecostalism and specifically of the women of Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc. (COOLJC), the subject of this book. In the spring of my first year of grad school, I was advised to spend the coming summer in library research—continuing to review the literature on Black American religious history and social science studies of Holiness-Pentecostalism. Soon after I received that advice, Toshi Reagon asked if I could join the summer European tour of a Black sacred sound opera, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony,* for which she was the musical director. Inspired by the nineteenth-century text by Gustave Flaubert, the piece is a collaboration between award-winning composer Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon and world-renowned theater director Robert Wilson. I had a long history with the Reagons. Dr. Reagon's work as a civil rights activist, historian, and founder of Sweet Honey in the Rock helped shape my understanding of Black political, academic, and cultural work, while Toshi and I had been working together in a variety of musical configurations for nearly twenty years. I genuinely wrestled with the decision—advance my new research or work with the Reagons and Wilson. The music won. At the time, I know some on my committee thought it a bad

decision. And, honestly, if I only considered my academic path, I was not sure it was the smartest move either.

As it turned out, I connected with a cast member on the tour who would bring me into COOLJC. On a flight between engagements, I was talking to two cast members about my budding research into Holiness-Pentecostalism. I happened to mention a recent text I had read about Pearl and Aaron Holmes, African American Pentecostal missionaries in Liberia in the early twentieth century. "Excuse me, what did you just say?" asked a third cast member. I repeated myself, and she looked at me with both disbelief and delight. "Pearl and Aaron Holmes are my grandparents. My mother's parents." Mind-blowing. We moved into deep conversation about my interest and her family and church. She was Apostolic Pentecostal and belonged to COOLJC, a historically Black oneness denomination. "When we get back to New York," she beamed, "you have to come to my church!" Upon returning to school in the fall, I moved into research on denominational distinctions within Holiness-Pentecostalism. By the end of the semester, I felt ready to accept the invitation to visit my new friend's church, True Deliverance Church of the Apostolic Faith, Inc., in Queens; it took my research in directions I could never have imagined.

Fieldwork is all about adjustments. I entered the church with training in music, ethnomusicology, African American studies, and anthropology. Soon after entering the church community, I realized that studying Holiness-Pentecostalism through social science and humanities texts did not give me an understanding of the significance of scriptural interpretation and theology for members. My lack of Bible training would be a problem. These were Bible people. In addition to structured learning in Sunday school, weeknight Bible study, and sermons, scriptural references laced every aspect of church life—songs, testimonies, casual conversations, and even joking around. I had already intended to immerse myself in COOLJC activities, but I needed to do to serious catch-up Bible study to understand my surroundings.

Another key adjustment I had to make involved my sense of time. Attending all-day religious activities required that I "settle in." Initially, I found the temporal world of church overwhelming and disorienting. My first Sunday, I arrived around nine thirty in the morning for Sunday school, which was followed by worship services, dinner in the social hall, one hour of corporate prayer, and evening service. I left close to four in the afternoon, as dinner was winding down (before prayer and evening service)—completely exhausted. Sacred time operated at macro- and microlevels. The

long Sunday was infused with smaller events, extended by worshippers, singers, or preachers "as the Spirit moved." For example, a singer could hold on to a lyric or phrase, cycling over and over, responding to and pushing the spiritual energy in the sanctuary. Each section of the service nonetheless started on time. Sunday school started at nine thirty, and at exactly eleven o'clock a young man walked through the sanctuary ringing a bell to signal the end of the lessons. By eleven thirty each class (arranged by age group) had reported attendance, monies collected, and presented on the day's lesson. The Praise and Worship Team prepared the sanctuary for worship with song, and at a quarter to twelve, the choir processional began. Corporate prayer after dinner began promptly at four o'clock and the evening service at five thirty. Bishop Cook, the pastor of True Deliverance Church, was a stickler when it came to punctuality. "If you say you're going to do something at a certain time, and you don't," he explained, "you're a liar." At the same time, services ran with the understanding that the Holy Ghost would "have His way," creating a relationship with time that was both fixed and fluid. Church folks were always open to the possibility of temporal shifts between the natural and supernatural.

Surprisingly, one issue I anticipated having to deal with did not arise—the push of church members to bring me to Jesus. (They do not use the term *convert*.) As we will see in the chapter on altar workers, to be saved "you have to have your mind made up." One conversation I had with a member proved enlightening in this regard. She had two children, one saved and one not, and mentioned that the unsaved child would go to the movies with her cousins (who were not in the church). I was surprised because I understood the movies to be one of a number of prohibited social activities. "We teach them what we want them to know, but she's not saved, and when she is, she'll listen to the Holy Ghost and us." Initially, members saw me as a visitor and treated me as such—welcoming me and making no assumptions about how long I would be in attendance. Most knew I was not saved, and after the pastor announced that I was an anthropologist working on my doctorate, they knew I was conducting fieldwork. After a number of months, folks would sometimes joke that I was at church more consistently than some members, always on time or early and present throughout the week—of course, this was my "full-time job." I believe they felt God would deal with me, in "His own time," in helping me to make up my mind. Overall, I experienced a "tell, don't ask" culture. Members made personal issues public through testimony. I was very rarely asked personal questions,

including about my relationship with God. This may not be the case with all Holiness-Pentecostal communities or all Apostolic Pentecostal churches, but my experience proved instructive. Members' attitudes toward the unsaved dispelled a misconception I brought in with me about overly zealous church members pushing newcomers toward Jesus.

I say all this to give the reader a sense of who is writing and some sense of my experience. These brief points just scratch the surface of my story in COOLJC. I found this work extremely challenging and rewarding—learning how to pray (for hours at a time, including all-night prayer), learning a new level of patience, and learning about a warm, kind, generous, and amazing religious community. In what follows, I appear sporadically when my presence puts the narrative in context because this is a book about the women of COOLJC. The stories that follow may not map directly onto other Holiness-Pentecostal denominations, but they help us understand women in a denomination that has never received any sustained scholarly attention. And there is still so much more to know.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I extend my deepest gratitude to members of the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc., and specifically the family of True Deliverance Church; this project would not have been feasible without their openness and warmth. In particular, I want to thank the late Bishop Crosley J. Cook for giving me entrée and wholeheartedly supporting my scholarly aspirations. I am grateful to Mother Harrington, Mother Powell, Mother Thomas, Mother Jackson, Mother Bettis, Mother Sockwell, and the late Mothers Bligen, Holland, and Pea, who gave prayers, love, and encouragement. The kindness and generosity of Donna Holland, Melanie Martin, Deirdre Moore, Marie Lashley, Maizie Rice, Kamiko Rice-Barker, Dolores Griffith, Joyce Brown, Karen Fields, Georgia Williams, and Dr. Celeste Ashe Johnson are without measure. Thank you to Minister Lashley, Minister Cobb, and Deacon Moore, and especially Minister Harrington for keeping me rolling with car repairs I could afford! And to my family in and out of True Deliverance Church—Steven, Etienne, Stephon, and Jhetti Lashley, thank you for allowing me to become a part of your lives and for becoming part of mine. I am especially indebted to Marcelle Davies-Lashley for introducing me to her church family and being a loyal advocate and a true, true, for-sure, unwavering, 24-7 teacher, sister, and friend.

My research into Holiness-Pentecostalism began during my graduate years at Yale University. The intellectual inspiration and guidance of my advisor, John F. Szwed, and committee members Paul Gilroy and Kathryn M. Dudley helped me formulate foundational questions, which persisted throughout all subsequent revisions of this work. I thank Kamari Maxine Clark, Jennifer Baszile, Kellie Jones, and Hazel Carby for invaluable contributions to the development of my critical thinking. I am grateful to Helena

Hansen, Ping-Ann Addo, and Lyneise Williams for their camaraderie and assistance in the formative years of this study.

For funding my research in its early and final stages, I would like to thank the Ford Foundation for the Dissertation Diversity Fellowship and Postdoctoral Fellowship, and the Louisville Institute for awarding me the Dissertation Fellowship and First Book Grant for Minority Scholars. I, too, appreciate the intellectual community each institution opened to me, through annual Ford Foundation conferences and Louisville Winter Seminars. My time as an inaugural postdoctoral fellow at the Center for African American Studies at Princeton University brought me into a vibrant intellectual community, which allowed me to deepen my analysis of African American religions and cultures. Judith Weisenfeld, Valerie Smith, R. Marie Griffith, Daphne Brooks, and Alexandra Vasquez provided intellectual insight across a range of disciplinary perspectives and, importantly, friendship. Thank you to Eddie Glaude and Cornell West for valuable counsel. To my dear friend, cohort, neighbor, and brother Jose Emmanuel Raymundo, I cannot imagine my time at Princeton without your razor-sharp mind, kind heart, and hysterical biting wit. I'm sure the innumerable times you reduced me to tears of laughter extended my days on this planet!

My time at the Women's Studies in Religion Program at Harvard Divinity School, in 2012–2013, helped me bring a deeper theological analysis into conversation with my anthropological approach to race, gender, and religion. In addition to director Ann Braude, I am grateful for a brilliant and generous cohort who engaged my work with great care—Kristen Bloomer, Lori Pearson, Hauwa Ibrahim, Zilka Spahić Šiljak, and Gemma Betros. I am thankful for the warmth and encouragement of other members of the Harvard Divinity School community—David and Louanne Hempton, Jacob Olupona, Davíd Carrasco, Leilah Ahmed, Amy Hollywood, and, especially, Aisha Beliso-De Jesús.

I am appreciative of Marla F. Frederick, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, Sue Houchins, and Elizabeth McAlister, colleagues and friends who have contributed significantly to my growth as a scholar. I am thankful for wonderful friends and colleagues at Bowdoin College—Brian Purnell, Jennifer Scanlon, Olufemi Vaughn, Tess Chakalakal, Elizabeth Pritchard, and Krista VanVleet—who provide unconditional support, keen insight, and critical feedback. And my maroon sister, Jessica Marie Johnson, and others in the No Slackers Writing Group kept me on task during hard times.

I am blessed with family and friends who love and support me in all my endeavors. My sister, Dr. Cheryl Casselberry Munday, and brother-in-law, Reuben A. Munday, are always ready with the perfect combination of encouragement, practical advice, and humor. Arline Hernandez has had my back for many years and helped me organize life when all I could concentrate on was this undertaking. Maureen Mahon and J. Bob Alotta, thank you for being solid go-to friends in all things. Before, during, and after my course work, fieldwork, and writing, my sister, Toshi Reagon, and Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon involved me in inspirational artistic projects, which have kept me musically, mentally, and spiritually nourished and balanced. Barbara Nabors-Glass; Nikol Nabors Jackson; my stepfather, Richard Vance; and my brother, John Casselberry, remain staunch supporters. Most of all, Juanita Colón, who is without equal in her benevolence, unwavering care, and dependability, made it possible for me to complete this work. In all these relationships and opportunities I am indeed grateful, and I praise God from whom all blessings flow.

An earlier version of chapters 2 and 4, in a different form, appeared in *Transforming Anthropology: Journal of the Association of Black Anthropologists* 21, no. 1 (April 2013), pp. 72–86. An earlier version of chapter 5, in a different form, appeared in *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 42, nos. 1/2 (Winter/Spring 2014), pp. 33–43.

INTRODUCTION

I will show thee my faith by my works.

James 2:18

"If the women had been in charge, those columns would be clean—*white*-white." Mother Dorothy Shaw's tone was dry, matter-of-fact.[1] She rolled her eyes, shook her head, and chuckled slightly. "The men wanted to handle it, so they did." We had just walked up to the newly constructed open mausoleum at the gravesite of Bishop Robert C. Lawson and Carrie F. Lawson, his wife. Black smudges dotted the twelve narrow Victorian columns of the modest structure. A cement floor, sixteen feet by twelve feet, was framed on three sides by cinder blocks—three rows high. The not-quite-white columns sat atop the cinder-block wall and rose eight feet to the trusses of an A-frame roof. The back wall was adorned with gray granite tiles from the floor to near the ceiling. A few feet in front of the back wall, a double-wide tombstone marked the couple's resting place. As they did every year, church folks had gathered at the Hudson Valley, New York, site for the Annual Founder's Day Celebration. Each year, mostly senior members of the Harlem-based denomination made the 1½-hour drive from the mother church to Shrub Oak, New York, to honor Bishop Lawson, who in 1919 had established the religious organization.

On its face, Mother Shaw's comment could seem as though it was about the surface, but she was talking about more than a sponge and a little Formula 409. In general, the church's women think they work harder than most men and are more responsive to the day-in and day-out needs of the church. One could attribute this to sheer numbers. There are so many more women than men in the church that the women, of course, handle the bulk

of the work. However, women like Mother Shaw talk about a disparity in work ethics. Mother Lorraine Threadgill had served on the Kitchen Committee for eighteen years. She and others on the committee rotated to prepare free dinners in the social hall, each Sunday after service. She recalled the short-lived oversight of the fifth-Sunday dinner by the Brotherhood. She said fifth Sunday happened only four times a year, and the Brotherhood's charge of meals lasted only three years because "they never made enough food, and . . . most of them got their wives to cook it anyway." She acknowledged, "Minister Houston is a good cook, so he was doing it mostly all himself." Finally, the men decided to handle the task by buying chicken from a fast-food place. Laughing, Mother Threadgill continued, "They would bring about ten pieces of chicken. How are you going to bring some ten pieces of chicken with all these people? But you know how men are, so now Sister Lancer does the fifth Sunday."

Women in the church often used "small" examples to make larger points. As a member of the Founder's Day planning committee, Mother Shaw had been involved in preparations that led up to that day, in addition to her other church responsibilities. Mother Threadgill, along with the Kitchen Committee, served on the Usher Board and in the senior choir, and she administered regular blood pressure checks to seniors. Women tended not to make distinctions between different tasks as far as the appropriate religious work ethic they should bring to bear. Whether they were teaching Sunday school, teaching Bible class, ushering, heading an auxiliary, sponsoring services, organizing prayer breakfasts, producing religious tracts, setting up after-school programs, embroidering communion linen, running the kitchen, singing with or directing a choir, playing instruments, preparing gift baskets, taking up the offering, raising funds, praying for souls at the altar, or ministering to the sick, imprisoned, or homeless, work should be done "heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Col. 3:23).[2]

This book is about the religious labor of these women.

FAITH

The women in this study belong to the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc. (COOLJC, pronounced "cool JC"). Sitting under the umbrella of Holiness-Pentecostalism, COOLJC receives its core theological underpinning from the second book of Acts, which tells the story of the day of Pentecost. Fifty days after the crucifixion of Jesus, the Holy Ghost de-

scended on the apostles and others gathered in the "upper room," fulfilling God's promise. The event is described as "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind," and each one present was "filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:2, 4). Thus, in keeping with the larger body of spirit-centered Pentecostal worshippers, COOLJC members merge theology, spiritual experience, and demonstrative worship. Members live out theology in experience and embodied practices of praise and testimony—verbally through speech, shouts, and singing and nonverbally through hand clapping, foot stomping, running, and the "Holy Dance."[3] Similar to many other Pentecostal groups, the church also anticipates the Rapture in "the end times," when the saints will be "caught up in the air" and saved from the ensuing apocalypse.[4] In spiritual and mundane activities alike, church members operate under the overarching frame of the imminent Second Coming of Jesus Christ, "like a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2).[5] The return of Jesus has been at the heart of COOLJC doctrine since the church's inception.

Distinct from the majority of Pentecostal groups, COOLJC is a classical oneness or Jesus-only denomination, asserting "the absolute deity of Jesus" and one person in the Godhead.[6] The church bases oneness theology on John 10:30, 12:44–45, and Acts 2:38; the Acts verse calls for the repentant to "be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."[7] Conversion therefore requires immersion baptism in the name of Jesus (instead of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) and Spirit baptism, evidenced by speaking in tongues. Other gifts of the Spirit may be bestowed on "saints" (as they refer to themselves) as well, such as prophecy, visions, dreams, and divine healing. The church identifies as Apostolic Pentecostal because they follow the Spirit-infilling example of the apostles on the day of Pentecost and the ensuing mission of spreading the gospel. In every worship service, members work to bring down the Holy Ghost, thus generating recurrent Bible time.

Scholarly approaches to the complexities of Black American women of faith initially focused on political resistance with minimal attention to the role of religion.[8] While making vital contributions to our understanding of Black women's political and social power relations, these scholars of the post-Reconstruction and civil rights eras shied away from providing an in-depth exploration of religious faith as defined and experienced by the women and communities in question.[9] "The religious lives of African-American women," Judith Weisenfeld asserts, "loom large as a substantial

and yet largely undiscovered terrain in the study of religion in America."[10] Critical studies in African American women's religious history unearth the details of women's lives and advance our understanding of the ways in which the intersections of gender, race, and class shape and are shaped by the religious worlds of women. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's study of turn-of-the-century Black Baptist women demonstrates the ways in which they "linked social regeneration . . . to spiritual regeneration" in developing and implementing strategies to ameliorate the social conditions of Black people.[11] Similarly, as Weisenfeld makes known, Black YWCA women in New York during the first half of the twentieth century merged Christian ethics and social activism to address social, educational, and cultural issues.[12] Bettye Collier-Thomas, in *Jesus, Jobs, and Justice: African American Women and Religion*, provides a sweeping study that reveals an inseparable connection between Black women's Christian mission and social activism across time and denominations. With these women we see faith and the institution of the church used as springboards to social, civic, and political associations, sometimes under the auspices of the church, sometimes in distinct faith-inspired organizations for Black advancement.[13]

Pushing inquiry into spirituality further, anthropologist Marla F. Frederick, in her ethnography of southern Black Baptist women, offers an astute analysis of "the profound influence of faith" on everyday actions, including civic activism, care ethics, and decisions about intimate relationships. Frederick utilizes the distinction between religion and spirituality given by the women in her study. Spirituality "evoked the idea of maturation over time," which would manifest in "how one follows 'the direction of the Holy Spirit.' "[14] The Holy Spirit also catalyzes action in Anthea D. Butler's historical study of women's sanctified world in the Church of God in Christ, although with important differences. For Holiness-Pentecostals, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is more demonstrative than in Baptist practices. In fact, some in Frederick's study view highly expressive worship as "merely performances" and "question the motive of those *receiving* the Holy Spirit."[15] Butler's attention to the impact of sanctification through Spirit infilling takes on the ways in which embodied spiritual authority empowered women as church organizers, educators, and fund-raisers as they built the largest African American Holiness-Pentecostal denomination. Sanctification then becomes a distinct interpretive lens in the civic and economic realms as the women of the Church of God in Christ move out to sanctify the world. Deidre Helen Crumbley makes a meaningful contribution to the study of

gender, race, and migration in a sanctified community in her ethnography of a storefront church in Philadelphia, founded and pastored by "Mother Brown."[16] Combining historical and ethnographic methods, Crumbley provides vital insight into female-driven, grassroots religious institution building. These works by Higginbotham, Weisenfeld, Collier-Thomas, Frederick, Butler, and Crumbley have contributed significantly to our understandings of Black women of faith and "the actual work that their faith produced" in the world.[17]

Distinct from the historical studies, I look at the religious worlds of twenty-first-century Black women. Whereas Frederick's ethnography exploring the faith practices of twentieth-century Black women offers insight into a rural southern Baptist community, this work focuses on a New York–based Pentecostal denomination. While much of the language and spiritual practice of the saints in Crumbley's study resonate with COOLJC, the church folks in her Philadelphia church do not self-identify as Pentecostal, nor are they part of a larger network of churches. This study is also set apart from earlier works because my interest lies more in the circumstances of producing a holy Black female personhood within faith communities and less in the connection of the religious worlds of Black women to social, civic, and political activism. When church work is analyzed under the rubric of civic and political work, the contours of spiritual labor can remain understudied. Whether Black women bring spiritual authority into sociopolitical domains in a quantifiable way or not indicates neither their recognition of power nor the work entailed in developing, sustaining, and sometimes ceding authority within the church. Linking social, civic, and political activism to an analysis of women's spiritual transformations can obscure the ways in which they understand power and the labor necessary to develop and sustain it. Given that Black women have disproportionately high levels of participation in religious life relative to the general population, and given that, in keeping with the situation in other Pentecostal bodies, women compose 75–80 percent of the active adult membership in COOLJC, this work is vital in expanding our understanding of the particularities of Black women's investment in religious communities.[18]

"Unless agentive value is placed on the labor involved in personal transformation," Frederick argues, "what is often characterized as 'accommodation' does not take into consideration the work of individuals in forming productive personal lives."[19] Understanding the full extent of women's religious labor, regardless of its measurable significance outside of the church,

is critical if we are to recognize the full extent of African American women's labor, past, present, and future. This book teases out the contours of "the labor involved" in spiritual transformations that have both personal and communal implications. I aim to answer Weisenfeld's call to "fully appreciate the range of approaches that African-American women have taken to participate as agents in their own religious lives and in the religious lives of their communities."[20] Although the women of COOLJC are not compelled to take part in church activities, their individual religious conviction, their desires for a strong church community, and pressure from male leadership converge to level tremendous demands on the women's time and energy. As noted above, COOLJC women serve the church community in every way, with the exception of performing water baptism and pastoring. Yet scholars have failed to analyze contemporary Black women's faith work as labor in its own right.

LABOR

As early as 1912, Maggie Lena Walker, a public intellectual, labor activist, and entrepreneur, and the first Black woman bank president, queried, "How many *occupations* have Negro Women? Let us count them: Negro women are domestic menials, teachers and church builders."[21] To my mind, in identifying the church work of Black women as an occupation, Walker places the effort and outcome of women's religious labor in its proper context. This book integrates the spiritual, material, social, and structural spheres of the work of COOLJC women, to highlight the mechanisms and complicated *meaning* of Black women's labor. Church work is as significant, labor intensive, and critical to personhood, family, and community as wage work, work within the family and home, and community service work.

So, why labor? I began this project examining relationships between informal and formal authority in COOLJC, to understand the extent to which spiritual authority creates a particular type of female power in male-headed Black Apostolic Pentecostal churches. Over time, and with invaluable feedback from colleagues, it became apparent that I needed to consider the quantity and quality of the work these women *do* to produce, navigate, claim, and sustain spiritual authority.[22] To tease out the co-constituted nature of churchwomen's spiritual worker-provider authority, within the context of gendered and raced identities, labor theories provide valuable approaches

for determining the ways in which women experience and express power within the church community.

Since the 1980s, labor studies by social scientists have tracked the impact of shifting economies. Increases in service-based economies have expanded our understanding of skill away from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century models of strictly craft or manufacturing work, to include emotional, intimate, and aesthetic labor. These frameworks are useful analytical tools for examining the different registers of labor carried out by COOLJC women, so that we might understand the extent of their spiritual, material, and organizational efforts as they construct individual and communal religious identities and spaces. Exploration of religious labor in COOLJC may prove to have wide applicability as well; however, I argue that it is particularly significant for understanding those who, like the women in this study, spend a great deal of time and energy doing religious work.

First, *emotional labor* studies analyze relational aspects of work. In 1983 Arlie Russell Hochschild's groundbreaking study opened the field by examining emotional face-to-face, worker-to-client requirements that are part and parcel of the job, yet unnamed as such. She also introduced *emotion management*, which has since become an umbrella term encompassing emotional labor and emotional work. Hochschild, however, keeps the dichotomy of public and private intact, defining *emotional labor* as paid-public and *emotion work* as unpaid-private.[23] Three decades of scholarship across the social sciences have since called attention to lived overlapping experiences that upend an either-or model and include analysis of worker-to-worker and worker-to-management negotiations; the organizational benefits of employing skilled emotional workers; unremunerated, yet required labor; unseen and unacknowledged work; gendered and raced expectations; family life; and "boundary-spanning" emotion management between home and work.[24]

Next, analysis of *intimate labor* brings together the reproductive and caring labor of women within the context of commodification. Eileen Boris and Rhacel Parreñas disrupt the idea of analytically discrete types of caring work and instead place them along a spectrum. In this way, they broaden our understanding of "work that involves embodied and affective interactions" and its relation with market forces.[25] Intimate labor studies address the many ways money and intimate life converge in formal and informal economies. In 1912, when Maggie Walker identified church building as a

primary occupation of Black women, she drew attention to the labor of institution building, so we might understand the ways in which intimate (reproductive and caring) labor is directly connected to church economics. Finally, *aesthetic labor* studies examine the ways in which presentation of self is integral to job performance, as the worker is required to materialize institutional values in one's appearance and behavior. To understand a wide range of work settings, Chris Warhurst and Dennis Nickson argue that aesthetic labor must be considered along with emotional labor (I would add intimate labor), because it "foregrounds embodiment, revealing how the corporeality, not just feelings of employees are organizationally appropriated and transmuted for commercial benefit."[26] Embodied theology in worship and tenets regarding dress converge in COOLJC conceptions of the "beauty of holiness," making aesthetic labor essential within the organization.

We might also examine women's religious labor within frameworks provided by analysis of feminized labor in global markets. As global manufacturing and service economies witness the feminization of labor, with corporations combing the globe for plentiful cheap labor, studies of caring labor and globalization show us the historical legacy of care work and social-political inequality. Sharon Harley calls attention to the overwhelming majorities of women of color in many labor pools, making them "powerful as global actors . . . [and] indispensable to the maintenance of a system of global capitalism."[27] Associating "worker power" with overt organized resistance has been foundational to conceptualizations of labor as an area of study.[28] Harley's approach allows us to analyze power apart from resistance, providing a more nuanced way to examine the "indispensable" role of "powerful" churchwomen in the preservation of COOLJC, a female majority, male-headed institution that adheres to tenets of submission and obedience.

POWER

As noted above, thinking about power brought me to this place. Women in COOLJC operate in complex webs of formal and informal power. Women and men alike enjoy spiritual authority through Holy Ghost anointing, yet church doctrine mandates a male-headed hierarchy that prohibits the ordination of women and excludes them from any permanent decision-making position. Tenets of submission and obedience further impact the power dynamics as women create myriad ways of carrying out their work.

On the one hand, women's official auxiliaries are formally integrated into the vertical church structure, without definitive hierarchical authority. On the other hand, women operate in primarily horizontal networks of spiritual authority that weave through the vertical church polity. Women, for example, hold term-limited offices (as president, vice president, and the like) within auxiliaries but are recognized as a "sister" or "mother" in the overarching church structure. All converted women are sisters, as men are "brothers."[29] After a sister exhibits years of sustained spiritual and communal leadership, the local church pastor may elevate her to mother. Apostolic churches rely on mothers' spiritual gifts, organizational acumen, and institutional memory for their very existence. At the same time, sisters in mentorship are the church's primary workforce, foundation, financial base, and future—especially given their numbers relative to the overall church membership.

Analyses of gender power struggles within Black churches across time and denominations have been vital in grounding my understanding of these issues in a contemporary setting. Sociologist Cheryl Townsend Gilkes and historians Anthea D. Butler and Bettye Collier-Thomas speak to the tension between women's and men's linked fates in struggles for racial equality and in gender power relations, in which women work to define and maintain a self-conscious holy Black female personhood and advance a communal agenda within male-dominated religious organizations and wider publics. To acknowledge "the social fact of gendered antagonism in religion," Gilkes argues, "means always addressing the patterns and processes that women and men construct as they go about the routine of doing sacred work."[30] The women in the pages that follow rely on "the patterns and processes" developed by previous generations of churchwomen and develop new strategies "as they go about the routine of doing sacred work" in the twenty-first century.[31]

The power of the Holy Ghost substantiates COOLJC women's understanding of sacred work. The importance of oneness theology cannot be overstated; God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost are one. Saints seek to reveal the indwelling Jesus, folding anointed power into the power to serve. Here tenets of submission and obedience can be the site of gender power negotiations. "Black women and men share a religious life," Gilkes states, "but often disagree about how that life should be organized and the relative importance of women's roles to that life."[32] Women's sense of holy Black female personhood informs the manner in which they create strategies to navigate

"on-the-job" tensions when directives from the male-headed polity and the guidance of the Holy Ghost appear to be out of alignment.

The Labor of Faith is the first sustained ethnographic study of Black American Apostolic Pentecostal women, and I hope to shed light on the particularities of the religious labor carried out by these women. What work do they do? How do they do it? What are the circumstances? What are the benefits to the self, the community, and the institution? Spiritual authority and the character of female power within a male-headed hierarchy anchor my inquiry into churchwomen's labor. Therefore, two interrelated sets of questions regarding Apostolic women's power, and the labor required to develop and exercise that power, guide my inquiry. First, what are the ways in which adherents define, understand, experience, and exhibit spiritual authority? To what extent does spiritual authority enable a particular form of Black female power in a male-headed religious community? Second, what are the ways in which the labor of women shapes and is shaped by structural male domination? What specific work do women have to do to become holy and live a holy Black womanhood in patriarchal spaces, which they are instrumental in (re-)producing?

METHODOLOGY

Day 1: I parked my car on the busy commercial street across from True Deliverance Church of the Apostolic Faith. Sitting for a moment to decompress from the long drive through upstate New York and into Queens, I stared at the face of the building. The yellow-brick façade contrasted with the windowed and gated fronts of the surrounding shops. Over the left half of the single-story edifice was a second-floor residential structure. A sign over the entryway of the building read: *"The Church with the Old Time Power"—Blessings • Miracles • Healings • True Love; Pastor and Founder, Bishop Crosley J. Cook; Chief Apostle, Bishop W. Bonner; Establishmentarian, Bishop R. C. Lawson; Christian School opening September 2003—Day Care (3 months) to 7th Grade (12 years).* I gathered my Bible and purse, got out of the car, and ventured across. In so many ways, this was not my world. I was not raised in a church community. At this point the only thing I knew I had in common with most of the folks here was that we were Black women. I hoped that would ease my entry and pave the way for them to accept me.

Soon after my first visit to True Deliverance Church, I presented Bishop Cook, the pastor, with a two-page formal letter of introduction, explaining

my project and requesting his permission to make "his house" my home base within COOLJC. He accepted the letter, slipping it into his outer suit jacket pocket, and said nothing else to me about it. I continued attending services, taking notes, acquainting myself with the members, and generally learning my way around. I hesitated to bring it up, thinking that he would inform me when he had made a decision and that my pressing the subject would not help my cause.

After six weeks had passed, I decided to approach him. "Bishop Cook, did you get a chance to read my letter?" I asked. He looked at me, smiled slightly, and said, "You write long letters." "Well," I explained, "I wanted to be sure to let you know exactly what my intentions are and what I'm hoping to accomplish." "I see," he said. There was a moment of silence. "Well, we'll see." Walking away, he repeated, "OK, then, we'll see." I knew no more than when I had approached him. Since he didn't directly turn down my proposal, I decided to stay the course and continue as before. The worst-case scenario would be that I would have to change sites, but the information gleaned here would still hold value.

About a month later my school schedule took me away for a few weeks. When I returned, it was a Friday night service. Bishop Cook was characteristically seated in his folding chair at the side entrance to the sanctuary, giving him a view of both the entrance and the sanctuary. As I moved toward him, he gave me a warm and welcoming smile. With a slight laugh, he said, "Well, Sister, where have you been?" I explained that school demands had kept me out of town.

"Well," he said, his eyes twinkling, "you missed a lot. You could have taken a whole *lot* of notes."

"I'm glad to be back." I replied.

Permission granted.

This exchange held two lessons for me, which I did not grasp at the time. First, Bishop Cook was indoctrinating me into the ways of church work. Keep your head down and do the work; don't talk about it. An introductory letter told him very little; my attending and taking "a whole *lot* of notes" told him more. Women in COOLJC do not talk about all they do. To determine the extent and specifics of women's labor, I had to ask probing questions, witness them in action, or learn through coworkers. The second lesson was related to the ways of church work in that my time was not "God's time."

My plan was to spend the next five months conducting part-time fieldwork, as I finished course work and exams for my doctoral degree, followed

by a year of full-time participant-observation fieldwork. As it turned out, a year and a half became two and a half years. Over the course of my fieldwork, from January 2004 to July 2006, I regularly attended church activities including Sunday school and morning and evening services, Monday prayer services and Bible study, Wednesday prayer and missionary services, Friday night choir rehearsals and services, and weekday six o'clock morning and noon prayer on occasion. I joined in as a general congregant in worship, group singing, scriptural readings, prayer, all-night prayer, fasting, and altar calls. I participated as a presenter in Bible study and Sunday school, as an invited speaker at Sunday and Wednesday evening services, and as a soloist at Friday and Sunday services. I attended quarterly regional and annual national organizational convocations in New York, Virginia, South Carolina, and Missouri.

I completed fifty in-depth interviews, collected six oral histories of church elders, collected conversion narratives, administered a survey to church congregants, and documented over a hundred hours of church services on video. Church tracts, bulletins, and organizational and auxiliary publications provided information on current church issues and concerns, and I gathered historical organizational data at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City, in the Sherry Sherrod DuPree African-American Pentecostal and Holiness collection, 1876–1989, and the Alexander and Shirlene Stewart Pentecostal collection, 1925–1993. I returned to the church community sporadically during 2007 and 2008. In the summer and fall of 2012, I returned again, attending services, conducting numerous follow-up interviews, and traveling to the Annual International Holy Convocation in North Carolina and the International Women's Council Conference in New Jersey.

I have been able to move in and out with relative ease because of the warmth and generosity of the saints. The church members form a close-knit group owing to a common worldview and stringent doctrine, which regulate practices and behavior—everything from social activities to dress. A critical portion of my research consisted of socializing with members at church-sponsored events and, of equal significance, in their homes, at family gatherings, at baby showers, and at "homegoings" (funerals), and during mundane activities such as eating out, shopping, running errands, and picking up children from school and summer camp. While it was exhilarating, it was exhausting. (And, different from most churchwomen, I did not have another job and children to attend to. Full-time fieldwork was my primary

responsibility.[33]) So many saints contributed to this project. In addition to the direct interviews and my anthropological "deep hanging" noted above, numerous kind saints welcomed me at churches and conventions. To help carry key issues and concepts addressed in this study, some saints are more present on these pages than others. For methodological and theoretical reasons, I have chosen to expend little ink on physical descriptions of individuals but to have them rise into view through particular areas of labor. The anthropological gaze (if you will) that I adopt deliberately views women through their labor. I included personal-church histories to help distinguish each woman who emerges as an individual through her labor. My approach also ties into the theological perspectives of the church, which I consider significant. "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work *be* pure, and whether *it be* right" (Prov. 20:11), and "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20).

OVERVIEW

Chapter 1, "The Instruments of Faith," examines the tools of faith and processes of reconciliation that were brought to bear following the illness and shocking death of a beloved church sister. Church members needed to make sense of divine healing and death, of the promise of answered prayer and predestination. Saints regularly utilize physical, intellectual, and spiritual activities—including song, worship, prayer, testimony, and Bible study—in multiple weekly services and in everyday settings to interpret their experiences and grow in Christ. After the death of their sister, they relied on the same tool kit in a directed fashion, as they worked to align their inward dispositions with theology and church doctrine.

The theology, doctrine, and practices of this twenty-first-century New York–based religious organization are rooted in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century classical Holiness-Pentecostalism. Chapter 2, "Church Building," follows the winding western and midwestern roots and routes that led to COOLJC's founding in Harlem in 1919 by Robert C. and Carrie F. Lawson. During the early years, Robert Lawson published distinctive theological expositions, which attacked racist and antimiscegenation ideologies by placing Black women at the center of the atonement. His extensive religious, social, political, economic, and civic engagement, along with Carrie Lawson's radio presence as the "Praying Mother of the Air," elevated the church community to national stature. After Robert Lawson's death in

1961 (Carrie passed in 1948), COOLJC experienced a change in leadership and structural reorganization under William L. and Ethel Mae Bonner, and those structures are still in place today. The final section of the chapter examines the establishment of a COOLJC church in Queens, New York, in the mid-1970s, True Deliverance Church, by Crosley J. and Reva E. Cook. Although the official founding and formal leadership of COOLJC and its churches are understood as the province of male ministers, "Church Building" inserts the pivotal work of the wives. The influential legacies of these women garner some attention in church documentation; however, the role of Black women as "helpmeets" in institution building receives more detailed acknowledgment in oral histories. As a result, the contributions of these women to founding sensibilities have been understated in printed church histories and undervalued in scholarship.

It is the rank-and-file female majority, however, that constitutes the workforce and economic foundation of the church. "Church Sustaining," chapter 3, explores the overlapping organizational and spiritual labor of women through the women's auxiliaries. Women began arranging horizontal networks to further the mission of the Jesus-only church in the early 1920s. Through "women's auxiliaries"—the International Missionary Department, the Women's Council, and the Ministers' and Deacons' Wives Guild—formal and informal management at microlevels (re-)produces doctrinal notions of Black religious female personhood. This, in turn, reinforces the vertically structured regional, state, and national hierarchical male leadership. The women of COOLJC promote male headship at church and at home, and chapter 4, "Women's Work," examines the emotional labor and strategies employed to produce "women-driven patriarchies" undergirded by teachings of submission and obedience. It then considers emotional labor in the workplace and positions of institutionalized power, as women confront the challenges of their existence in the worldly labor force, all the while bolstered by a religious community that demands full societal inclusion and an on-the-job meritocracy. As women carry out "boundary-spanning" emotion management, moving between supporting religiously based and resisting race-based patriarchal systems, self-identification as sanctified shapes, and is shaped by, the areas they deem oppressive or empowering in the church community, at home, and in the secular labor force. They therefore devise covert methods to circumvent structures to "get the job done," as well as overt strategies that demonstrate a "militant assertion of personhood," all according to their standards of religious righteousness.[34]

Chapter 5, "Harvesting Souls for Christ," delves into the labor of women at the altar. Altar workers attend to the needs of the saved and unsaved who come for prayer in the final segment of worship services. "Harvesting souls" names the particular work of bringing people fully into the body of the church through the conversion experience of Spirit baptism, evidenced by speaking in tongues. In efforts to deepen our understanding of individual and communal religious identity, scholars of Pentecostalism give us numerous perspectives on what motivates newcomers to convert. Two key queries drive many studies: what are the circumstances under which people convert, and what are the implications for subjectivity, community, and society?[35] This chapter departs from previous studies by asking, what are the contours of women's labor as they (re-)produce a culture of bringing newcomers fully into Pentecostalism? I look at altar work through the lens of intimate labor, an approach that joins together and expands studies of women's emotional, caring, and reproductive labor. An analysis of altar work points out the pivotal work of bringing new followers into the church, carried out by networks of women who pass along intimate practices through an apprenticeship model, cultivating new generations to take up the mantle of harvesting souls, for the benefit of the individual seeker and the institution of the church. These intimate practices tie church members to each other and bolster allegiance to the church community and doctrine, while expanding the labor force and financial base of the institution and reinforcing women's spiritual authority.

Saints in COOLJC evaluate internal and external qualities in accessing spiritual power. Chapter 6, "The Beauty of Holiness," explores the ways in which women perform aesthetic labor in material and immaterial realms to (re-)produce and (re-)interpret the meanings of living a holy life. Regulations on dress, which the church codifies most rigorously on women's bodies, demonstrate the standard of respectable appearance. Examining the aesthetics of presentation, we gain insight into the particular ways saints understand that a woman, by her appearance, exemplifies one of the "ambassadors for Christ" and the institution (2 Cor. 5:20). At the same time as she visually sets a standard, she is also a conduit for access to sacred realms. Women perform aesthetic labor in unrestrained liturgical practices—music making and worship—rendering the invisible (spirit) visible (embodied) to model the beauty and power of holiness. By way of unrestrained and restrained bodily practices, women address ideologies of power and respectability that are foundational to understandings of gender in COOLJC.

Women's spiritual and material aesthetic work reinforces communal and self-understanding of women as spiritual gatekeepers while keeping church polity intact.

In the pages that follow, I hope to do justice to the women who spent so much time with me, bringing me into the many aspects of their day-to-day lives and sharing the intimacies of worship. Complex, brilliant, amazing, hysterically funny, troubled, hardworking, and godly—women in the COOLJC community crosscut ages, occupations, and religious upbringings. They ranged in age from mid-twenties to early nineties. Their work positions outside of church included nurse, school principal, judge, social worker, bank vice president, homemaker, day care worker, college women's basketball coach, high school chemistry teacher, home health aide, hospital nutritionist, and graduate student. Some were born into COOLJC or Holiness-Pentecostalism; others came from Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, and Methodist churches. Their perspectives are the heart of this ethnography.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 *Mother* is an official title granted to older churchwomen who have exhibited years of consistent spiritual and organizational leadership. According to C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, "the phenomenon of the 'church mother' has no parallel in white churches; it is derived from the kinship network found within black churches and black communities." *Black Church*, 275. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes gives a detailed analysis of the role of church mothers across Black denominations, particularly Black Holiness, Pentecostal, and Apostolic churches. *"If It Wasn't,"* 103–4. For a denominationally specific study, see Butler, *Women*, 43–48.

2 I use the King James Version for all scriptural references, as do the members of the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.

3 Cox, *Fire from Heaven*; Murphy, *Working the Spirit*; Hurston, *Sanctified Church*; Paris, *Black Pentecostalism*; and Raboteau, *Slave Religion*.

4 The church's theological roots go back to John Nelson Darby's late nineteenth-century Bible conferences and to Keswick movement revivalists Dwight L. Moody and Cyrus I. Scofield. James I. Clark Jr. argues that the *Scofield Reference Bible* significantly shaped African American Apostolic Pentecostal theology. Published in 1909, "it was the only Bible for my tradition and most, if not all, African-American Apostolic Pentecostalists from 1919 to the last decade of the 1950s." "Christian Religious Education," 85. During the late twentieth century, alternate versions, most often the *Thompson Chain Reference Bible*, came into use.

5 See also 1 Thess. 4:16–17: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

6 "The absolute deity of Jesus" is one of the church's core principles of faith and is printed in weekly church bulletins. The principles are detailed in chapter 1. For doctrinal distinctions between Charismatics, Classical and Neo-Pentecostals,

Holiness-Pentecostals, and Apostolics, see Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*; and Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*.

7 John 10:30: "I and my Father are one." John 12:44–45: "Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me."

8 Notable exceptions include Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*; Fauset, *Black Gods*; and Hurston, *Sanctified Church*.

9 See Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett*; Lee, *For Freedom's Sake*; Jones, *Labor of Love*; Hudson-Weems, "Resurrecting Emmett Till"; and Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*.

10 Weisenfeld, "We Have Been Believers," 1.

11 Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent,* 121.

12 See Weisenfeld, *African American Women*.

13 See E. Brown, "Negotiating and Transforming," for an examination of the period of transition in late nineteenth-century Virginia, as the center of civic and political life shifted away from the church.

14 Frederick, *Between Sundays*, 14.

15 Frederick, *Between Sundays*, 138.

16 See Crumbley, *Saved and Sanctified*.

17 Crumbley, *Saved and Sanctified*, x.

18 African American women report the highest level of religious commitment of any U.S. demographic, with 84 percent "saying religion is very important to them" and 59 percent attending weekly services. A Pew Research Center report notes, "No group of men or women from any other racial or ethnic background exhibits comparably high levels of religious observance." See "A Religious Portrait of African-Americans," *Pew Research Center: Religious and Public Life*, January 30, 2009, http://www.pewforum.org/2009/01/30/a-religious-portrait-of-african-americans/. Joel Robbins notes that women compose 75 percent of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches worldwide. See Robbins, "Globalization," 132. In American Christianity generally, women's majority status has been well documented. Women dominate in nearly every Christian group. Specifically, "members of Protestant churches are eight percentage points more likely to be women than men (54% to 46%); a similar gap is seen among Catholics. Among historically black Protestant churches and Jehovah's Witnesses, however, women constitute a somewhat higher percentage (60%)." See "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Affiliation and Demographic Groups," *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life,* February 2008, http://www.pewforum.org/2008/02/01/chapter-3-religious-affiliation-and-demographic-groups/. While I have no data to support my supposition, I suggest a gap exists between the numbers of men who report being a member and those who are active participants. Within the COOLJC no organization-wide survey has been conducted; however, my data from New York churches are consistent with Robbins's global data, with women constituting closer to 80 percent of active members.

19 Frederick, *Between Sundays*, 213.
20 Weisenfeld, "We Have Been Believers," 3.
21 E. Brown, "Womanist Consciousness," 622; emphasis added.
22 "The question of 'who exercises power?' can[not] be resolved unless [we ask] the question of *'how does it happen?'* " Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, 103.
23 See Hochschild, *Managed Heart.* See Folbre, *Invisible Heart*, for a brilliant analysis of fundamental conceptual errors made by economists who adhere to the dichotomy between public-productive-male and private-unproductive-female.
24 See Grandey, Deindorff, and Rupp, *Emotional Labor*; Mirchandani, "Challenging Racial Silences"; and DeVault, "Comfort and Struggle." For "boundary-spanning" labor, see Wharton and Erickson, "Managing Emotions on the Job and at Home."
25 Boris and Parreñas, "Introduction," 7.
26 Warhurst and Nickson, " 'Who's Got the Look?,' " 386.
27 Harley, "Introduction," 1.
28 See Baron, "Gender and Labor History."
29 The official leadership pathway for men is from brother, through deacon, minister, (officially ordained) elder, and bishop, to apostle. If they attend church faithfully, men are expected to advance to deacon within a relatively short period of time. There is no institutionalized time frame, so a man's promotion from brother to deacon can occur at any time. During my fieldwork, two men joined the church and advanced to deacon within two years.
30 Gilkes, *"If It Wasn't,"* 6.
31 Gilkes, *"If It Wasn't,"* 6.
32 Gilkes, *"If It Wasn't,"* 6.
33 I did teach one course each semester at Barnard College during 2004–2005.
34 Gilkes, *"If It Wasn't,"* 108.
35 For an overview of literature across disciplines in the field of Pentecostal studies, see Corten, "Growth of the Literature." For a study of the religious movement's history, with particular focus on its late twentieth-century development in Africa, see Kalu, *African Pentecostalism.*

1. THE INSTRUMENTS OF FAITH

1 Apostolic Pentecostals use the term *sleep* for death. The scriptural basis is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18, which describes the Rapture. Upon the return of Jesus, those who "sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." Jesus, too, uses *sleep* when talking about the death of Lazarus.
2 Converted members throughout Holiness-Pentecostalism refer to themselves and each other as "saints." This is also of biblical origin: "Saints—'holy ones' who consecrate themselves for God's Service" (Barton, *Life Application*, 2427).