"TROUBLE IN MY WAY, I HAVE TO CRY SOMETIMES": SILENT PRAYERS OF SORROW & LAMENT

Submitted to Regent University

School of Divinity

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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Valerie Ranee Landfair

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses the role and functions of silent prayers of lament and sorrow in light of individual and communal suffering of black women due to their triple oppression of sexism, racism, and classism. Silence is used theologically in two respects: (1) it refers to the rarity of articulated sentences, but not to the absence of sound; and (2) it refers to the various forms of lament from the disenfranchised that historically and contemporarily are silent within the dominant theological discourse. Silence is the intimate communication which may be quietness or the audible sounds and symbolic actions that may not follow normal rules of speech that persons use to convey their deepest thoughts and most intense feelings, including pain and anguish to God. A Pentecostal Womanist methodology utilizes pneumatological transformation of pathos as a theological framework to examine the ways marginalized people deal with oppression.¹ The Holy Spirit effects change in the act of lamenting prayers by turning the expressions of sorrow, anguish, and afflictions toward the triune God, but also serves as the catalyst for imparting glimpses into the fellowship of Christ's suffering and power of resurrection (Philippians 3:10). Orthopathos is a pneumatological transformation of suffering experienced by marginalized groups. Silent prayers of sorrow and lament have been foundational in empowering African American communities.

¹ Samuel Solivan, *Spirit, Pathos and Liberation: Toward an Hispanic Pentecostal Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 146.

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DEDICATION

To my father's memory (John Lynch), adorable mother (Julia), and my beloved siblings (Larry, Bryan, Jeffrey, Julie, and Robert).

PREFACE

This dissertation is my attempt at trying to articulate my experiences of several different emotions, including the sudden deaths of Horatio Martin Jr., Gloria Mikell, Lynn K. Davis, and Roopal Patel. However, for whatever reason, I have not found the words to express my father's passing away. The different emotions that I experienced writing my dissertation on silent prayers of sorrow and lament in 2016 while my mother battled breast cancer, followed by cervical cancer, completed chemotherapy for both cancers, and radiation therapy that required a hospital stay and 30 days outpatient treatment. My laments were inaudible, however, God's love kept me, strengthened me, and never left me.

Trouble in my way, I have to cry sometimes.

Trouble in my way, I have to cry sometimes.

I lay awake at night, but that's alright;

Jesus will fix it after while. — Clifton Jones

INTRODUCTION

Prayers are a major feature of African and African American women's spirituality as they probe the ways they confront the weight of their human experiences, including sexism, racism, and classism. Prayers of sorrow and lament are both conduits in the examination of personal and communal suffering. However, this dissertation extends the conversation to include social suffering or the suffering of entire groups or communities as well as generational suffering, which is experienced from one generation to the next. The affective dimensions grant the ability to feel individual and communal pain and righteous anger, which are theological virtues that informed African American people and especially depicts a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament. This study of silent prayers of lament and sorrow also probes the ways black women negotiate and confront oppression and give voice to their pain of oppression, resistance to oppression, and longing for a liberated existence.

This dissertation also makes a distinction between prayers of sorrow and prayers of lament. Prayers of sorrow are the unutterable language of outcry at inexplicable loss or pain. The operative definition of prayers of lament is that a lament is a persistent cry uttered from the "depths of the soul." It is not unusual to find both sorrow and lament in one's prayer. However, not all expressions of sorrow lead to lament. Still, research has shown that there are important threads of connection and overlapping areas that one cannot lessen nor ignore but that need to be explicated. For that reason, prayers of sorrow

² Katherine D. Billman, "Saying Goodbye: Relearning the World," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 24, no. 3 (June 1997): 198. Prayers of sorrow is the language of cry of inexplicable loss or pain. *Oxford Dictionary* defines lament as a "passionate expression of grief and sorrow" derived from the French from *lamenter* or Latin *lamentari*, from *lamenta* (plural) 'weeping, wailing'. Moreover, sorrow originates in the Old English *sorh*, *sorg* (noun), *sorgian* (verb), meaning the "outward expression of grief; lamentation." Oxford English Dictionary, 3rd ed., s.v. "lament"; ibid "sorrow."

are expressions that include complaints of pain and anguish. Prayers of lament are a method for dealing with sorrow and especially regard how persons make a transition from complaint to hope and worship. This research will argue that prayers of lament are often the catalyst that empowers the one praying to action. Further, it will show that the lines distinguishing the two types of prayer are substantially blurred within the African American spiritual legacy and in contemporary expressions.

Pentecostal Womanist Theory of Silence in Prayers

Silent prayers of sorrow and lament emphasize silence as a salient feature of these prayers, which are foundational to a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament.³ The author's identity as a Pentecostal and African American Womanist will play heavily in the groundwork of the theological construction of prayers of lament. Alice Walker coined the term "Womanist" in her book *In Search of Our Mother's Garden* from the African American folk-term "womanish," a counter to the term "mannish." Walker's definition captures the historical, communal, sexual, and holistic ways that black women are committed to wholeness of black male and female.⁴ Womanist theology addresses the experience of African American women's "spiritual, ecclesial, social, political, and

³ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 5: "Language shattering" occurs in situations where all verbal language has been shattered due to suffering, evil, and sorrow; See also "African Lament" (Epic LN 24011 Mono) released in 1961 by Epic Records, US. Composed by Sascha Burland and Pat Williams. Miriam Burton's wordless vocal performance captures the anguish of an African's sorrow set in traditional African instruments. Accessed October 26, 2017, https://soulsafari.files.wordpress.com/2010/04/miriam-burton-rites-of-passage-pts-1-3-mastered.mp3

⁴ Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Garden: Womanist Prose*, (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), xi.

economic implications of the 'tridimensional phenomenon of race, class and gender oppression.'"5

In using the term Pentecostal Womanist, I am making clear my distinct Christian womanist identity and particular methodological approach in doing theology. A Womanist approach allows me to reflect on the particular lived theology of African American women and to capture their silent voices and silenced experiences in which 62% belong to the "black church" or what C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya describe as the "seven major historical black denominations:" The Church of God in Christ (COGIC), The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ), The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME), the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated (NBC), the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA), and the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC). African American female religious scholars are encouraged to capture the historical and contemporary varied voices within these historic African American denominations. Those women have served as midwives, church mothers, preachers, teachers, prayer warriors, singers, evangelists, ushers, secretaries, trustees, and lay members. These black women who might have read or never read Alice Walker, Emilie Townes, or Katie Cannon's works used their varied wisdom, revelations, and

⁵ JoAnne Marie Terrell, *Power in the Blood?: The Cross in the African American Experience* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 6.

⁶ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 1.

⁷ Neha Sahgal and Greg Smith, "A Religious Portrait of African-Americans," *Pew Research Center*. January 30, 2009. http://www.pewforum.org/2009/01/30/a-religious-portrait-of-african-americans/

prayers that laid the foundations that birthed every liberation movement within the black experience.

Monica A Coleman provocatively asked if a black female religious scholar is synonymous with womanist. 8 Womanist scholarship focused on the various voices and themes that influenced my decision to "write all the things that I should have been able to read." It provides a larger canvas to engage the African American experience and the value of the theological contributions of black women. Moreover, Womanist and Black Feminist scholars are both concerned with the tridimensional oppression of race, class, and gender. The term Womanist stems from a southern black term referring to "outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior." But for Womanist thinkers, their concern has been to uplift the black family structure. It critiques black males' oppression of black females. However, it is "committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female." Survival and wholeness is dependent on what Kelly Brown Douglas terms a womanist way of relating: "community understanding of family"; "willingness to do what was necessary for the well-being of the family/community"; "female networking and cooperation"; and "reciprocal relationship of equality and respect" with African American men. 12

 $^{^8}$ Monica A. Coleman, "Must I Be A Womanist?," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion. 22 no. 1 (Spring 2006): 85–96.

⁹ Walker, In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens, 13.

¹⁰ Ibid., xi.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Kelly Brown Douglas, "To Reflect the Image of God: A Womanist Perspective on Right Relationship," in *Living the Intersection: Womanism and Afrocentrism in Theology*, ed. Cheryl J. Sanders, 67-77 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995): 73.

Yolanda Pierce has emphasized that a Womanist's aim to understand Pentecostalism by providing a "framework to identify the means by which women of color, specifically African American women, have engaged, studied, and experienced the work of the Holy Spirit, which is at the very core for the Pentecostal faith." Here the intersection of Womanist and Pentecostal theology creates new areas of discussion. It includes but is not limited to personal and communal revelation and experience of the triune God; affirmation of historical and contemporary contextual reading and interpretation of biblical texts; and the ongoing relevant empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. For Pierce, there are some points of tension between Womanist and Pentecostal theology. As she explains, the crucial difference is that Womanist theology reflects the embodied theology of the 'everyday' black women, the imago Dei of women of African descent; critiques white racism and classism in the European feminist movement; exposes sexism and patriarchal thinking in Black Theology; and opposes all systems and structure of "oppression based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical ability, and caste as contrary to the essence of the gospel message." ¹⁴ Pierce also points out that Womanist discourse critiques the internal structures of oppression within Pentecostalism. She notes that within Holiness Pentecostalism, racialized systems and structures of oppressions marginalize people of color and the tridimensional intersection of racism, sexism, and gender. As a result, the experiences of black women and women of color remain shrouded in silence.

¹³ Yolanda Pierce, "Womanist Ways and Pentecostalism: The Work of Recovery and Critique." *Pneuma*, 35 no. 1 (2013): 25.

¹⁴ Ibid., 27.

Indeed, Aimee Semple McPhearson, founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel denomination, would sometimes denounce the Klu Klux Klan activities. However, as Matthew Avery Sutton observes, "On other occasions, she asked for and received its support." MarKeva Gwendolyn Hill's critique of European feminists applies to those within and outside of Holiness Pentecostal denominations and church communities. Holiness Pentecostals did not speak to the pervasive experiences of discrimination by women of color or embraced issues that were culturally specific; some "White feminists [even] failed to distance themselves from white supremacy." ¹⁶

A Pentecostal Womanist theology embraces the many forms of prayer, which validate the complexity of the ethno-cultural experience. In their research, Ann and Barry Ulanov argue that all forms of prayer, including silent prayers, are primary speech to God. Primary Speech is basic and foundational communication of who we are. "God hears all the voices that speak out of us—our vocal prayer, the prayer said in our minds, the unvoiced rising from our hearts, the many voices of which we are not conscious but which cry out eloquently." The focus of this dissertation is on orthopathos, which takes suffering seriously and confronts it in silent prayers of sorrow and prayers of lament within a Pentecostal Womanist theological framework. The three forms of prayers, including "with words understood, without words, and with words not understood," will

¹⁵ Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2009), 34.

¹⁶ MarKeva Gwendolyn Hill, Womanism Against Socially-Constructed Matriarchal Images: A Theoretical Model Towards a Therapeutic Goal (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 64.

¹⁷ Ann Ulanov and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 1.

¹⁸ Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland, CPT, 2010), 170.

also be explored. This research contributes to the definition and articulation of Pentecostal-Charismatic theology and to larger interdisciplinary discourses on religion, prayer, practical and contextual theologies, and church history. ¹⁹ The contextual theological dialogue engages a wide range of experiences, which highlight the richness of this endeavor.

Silent Prayers of Sorrow and Lament: Empowerment for the Oppressed

As a woman formed by the African American Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition and who uses the Womanist theological method, I acknowledge numerous streams of experience and traditions. ²⁰ Estrelda Y. Alexander situates the roots of American Pentecostalism within African spirituality and slave religion. The social implications for the first three years of the Azusa Street revival, 1906-1908, meant that "worshipers were from the lower and working classes, there was no stratification neither by class, race, gender or age in involvement or leadership in the service." ²¹ Consistent with their heritage and history, African American Pentecostal Christian communities practiced silent prayers of sorrow and lament as a response to being oppressed and interacting with

¹⁹ Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator's definition of theology will be appropriated in this research as "faith seeking understanding love, and hope." Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008), 5. By theological tradition, I will "review those common theological ideas and commitments that are shared widely across the many discrete ecclesial traditions that in a larger sense make up what has been referred to . . . as the Black Church." Stacey Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 74.

²⁰ Allan Anderson says, "Pentecostalism is not a movement that had a distinct beginning in the USA or anywhere else, or a movement that is based on a particular doctrine—it is a movement or rather a series of movements that took several years and several different formative events to emerge. Pentecostalism then as now is a polynucleated and variegated phenomenon." See Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2007), 4. For discussion of Pentecostal theology, see Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), and Cecil M. Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Nelson, 2006).

²¹ Estrelda Y. Alexander, *Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Academic, 2011), 16.

the triune God. While historically African Americans used spoken prayers as a form of empowerment, silent prayers of sorrow and lament also empowered the oppressed. Prayers of lament have undergirded and directed people from the margins even when it appears that these communities are voiceless and powerless. Silent prayers of sorrow and lament for marginalized populations so far have not been included in the theological discourse of lament. The omission of a serious critical engagement of their prayers of sorrow and lament continues to minimize the historical and contemporary existence of people of color. In order to frame the argument, a Womanist theological method will be used, which will prove useful for the historical retrieval of the silent conversations of the Spirit by African American women. African Americans tend to embody prayer in the aforementioned three forms "with words understood, without words, and with words not understood."²² The manifestations of these prayers include silence which means no words but not the absence of sound. Therefore, in this dissertation, moaning, groaning, fasting, shouting, dancing, and weeping are expressions of prayers without words as they lament the injustices that plague their communities and subsequently worsen the pain of their human existence. Larry R. McQueen terms this the "prophetic pathos" among early Pentecostals; evident in their publications was their acknowledgement of pain, anger, sin, resistance and suffering.²³ These embodiments of silent prayers often lead to actions of liberation within Black communities in America. Silent prayers of sorrow and lament are

²² Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, (Cleveland: CPT, 2010), 170.

²³ Larry R. McQueen, *Joel and the Spirit: The Cry of a Prophetic Hermeneutic* (Cleveland: CPT, 2009), 73.

catalysts for sociopolitical action and change. ²⁴ Within African Americans' silent prayers of lament, hope is often present in a spirit of expectation that God will intercede. Celebration in song, shout, and dance is often present as the Black communities remember to thank God for "how we got over," confident that if God did it before, God can do it again. Furthermore, African Americans' stories and testimonies of silent prayers are complex and varied. To be more specific, the disempowered silent prayers of lament are representations of voiceless acquiescence, complicity, unnatural extrusions, and imposed domination and violence.

The Importance of Silence in Prayers of Sorrow and Lament

In the African American Pentecostal context, it is important to establish that prayers of lament arise out of prayers of sorrow, and together they include silence as a crucial component.²⁵ This recognition and appreciation are the result of healing virtues of silent prayers of sorrow and lament. After the unexpected death of my father at 58 years of age due to an aneurysm, a ruptured blood vessel in the brain, for months my prayers consisted of silent screams as I was unable to verbalize thoughts and emotions.

Nevertheless, the triune God was communing with me through my prayers of silence, moans, and groans. Silent prayers of sorrow and lament often encompass prayers of loss, affliction, disappointment, grief, sadness, and regret.

Among African Americans and Pentecostal-Charismatic scholars, there are some key contributions on prayer. The African American scholar Marsha Hanson says prayer is

 $^{^{24}}$ Emerson B. Lowery, "The Groans of "Brother Saul": An Exploratory Reading of Roman 8 for "Survival," World & World 24 no. 3 (Summer 2004): 321.

²⁵ Orobator describe three levels of theological discourse: "introductory stage" or "theology for the people of God"; "theology for professionals"; and theology that "is not easily accessible to ordinary Christians." Orobator, *Theology Brewed*, 9. The description of silent prayers of sorrow are at the first level of theological reflection within my African American Pentecostal-Charismatic context.

a "refuge and a lifeline. It is a hiding place in times of trouble, a sure anchor for life and thought and hope." For instance, Cheryl Sanders rightly discerns that prayer is the experience of God within the Holiness-Pentecostal churches and not merely a religious idea. David Daniels III defines tarrying as a form of contemplative prayer. Steven Land says, "Prayer is the primary theological activity of Pentecostals." Harold Carter concludes that prayer has undergirded and directed Black people in bringing change to social and political patterns in the United States. James Washington, a noted historian of African American religion, examined two centuries of African American's prayers. According to Washington,

Prayer is an attempt to count the stars of our souls. Under its sacred canopy, an oratory of hope echoes the vast but immediate distances between who we are and who we want to be. This peculiar trek sentences its devotees to an arduous discipline. Prayer demands focus and obedience, as well as intimacy and faithful nurture. A certain civility is inherent in this transaction.³⁰

The perspectives of these scholars confirm that all prayers are attempts to communicate with inner intimacy with God. The discipline is to pray "with words understood, without words, and with words not understood."³¹ The inner longing is to share unmediated desires, anguish, fears, hopes, pains, and bewilderment from a place of authentic

²⁶ Marsha Hansen, *My Soul Is a Witness: The Message of the Spirituals in Word and Song* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2006), xi.

²⁷ Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints in Exile: The Holiness Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 57.

²⁸ See David D Daniels, III, "'Until the Power of the Lord Comes Down': African American Pentecostal Spirituality and Tarrying ," in *Contemporary Spiritualties: Social and Religious Contexts*, ed. Clive Erricker and Jane Erricker, 173-190 (New York: Continuum, 2001), 178.

²⁹ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 165.

³⁰ James Melvin Washington, *Conversations with God: Two centuries of Prayers by African Americans*, (New York: HarperCollins), xxx.

³¹ Ibid., 170.

awareness of "who we are and who we want to be."

Prayers of lament may be categorized as two streams of songs. One stream of songs is prayed because of marked suffering and loss. The other stream denotes prayers that are sung in the midst of great sorrow. Silent prayers of sorrow and lament are drawing from both streams in contemporary prayers. Silent prayers of sorrow and lament refer to the types of prayers that one travails in one's spirit to the Holy Spirit that ushers in radical hope, agency, psychological empowerment, and sustaining and flourishing power to African and African Americans—in spite of their experiences on the shores of the United States. As Karen Baker-Fletcher and Garth KASIMU Baker-Fletcher put it, "The context out of which Womanists construct theology and ethics is a complex context of struggle and celebration, evil and goodness, abuse and survival, bondage and liberation, illness and health, sorrow and hope." 32

Claus Westermann argues that in contemporary western society, it appears that prayers of lament are "totally excluded from human relationship with God." To ameliorate this situation, Walter Brueggemann has dedicated a great deal of his work and research on prayers of lament. Brueggemann attributes the lack of lament in western culture to its prosperity. Walter Brueggemann pursues Claus Westermann's inquiry regarding the theological significance of prayers of laments in Western European

³² Karen Baker-Fletcher and Garth KASIMU Baker-Fletcher, *My Sister, My Brother: Womanist and Xodus God Talk* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 7.

³³ Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith Crim and Richard Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 265.

³⁴ See especially Clause Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta: Kohn Knox, 1981); Also, Walter Brueggemann discusses "what happens when the appreciation of lament as a form of speech and faith is lost." Walter Brueggemann, "The Costly Loss of Lament," *Journal for the Study of Old Testament* 11 no. 36 (Oct 1986): 102; Additionally, Soong-Chan Rah states, "The loss of lament in the American church reflects a serious theological deficiency." Soong-Chan Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times* (Downer Grove: InterVarsity, 2015), 24.

Christianity. Brueggemann has extensive writings on the prayer of lament, concurring with Westermann that one cannot lament unless one is able to call out and verbalize in words of protest to God.

Absent from the authors above is the important tradition of silence in prayers of lament, which play a central part in the spirituality of peoples from other cultural communities. This study contends that silent prayers of lament have been foundational within the African American's experience, yet they are absent from prevailing understandings of prayer. The tradition of lament, as part of prayer, goes as far back as the experience of the African slaves. It is strongly believed that this genre of prayer occurred on the Atlantic slave boats during the Antebellum Period (1781-1860). It was also active throughout the Civil Rights and Black Power movement, and it is present today within contemporary African American churches and struggles for social justice.

The notion of silence in prayer from the perspective of the one praying is also absent from many treatments of prayer. *Silence* is a central feature of prayers of lament and a profound resource for personal and corporate healing, empowerment, and

³⁵ The studies of Walter Brueggemann have given insight to Samuel Balentine, Patrick Miller, Nancy Lee, and others who have added significantly to the understanding of human relationship with God in the midst of suffering from this point of departure.

³⁶ The following are examples of prior publications on lament, demonstrating that lament was talked about prior to the western domination of the subject. I offer that Westermann and Brueggerman are recovering the European conversations on prayers of lament. Ugandan poet, Okot p'Bitek's international recognition of *Song of Lawino: An African Lament*, a long poem dealing with the lament of a rural African wife whose husband wishes to be westernized. Self translated to English and published in 1966.; Okot p'Bitek, *Song of Lawino: An African Lament* (Nairobi, East African, 1969).; Andrew Steinmtez, *A Voice in Ramah, or Lament of the Poor African* (University of California Libraries, 1842).

³⁷ See the definition of prayer of lament by Kathleen Billman and Daniel Migliore: "By prayer of lament we mean that unsettling biblical tradition of prayer that includes expressions of complaint, anger, grief, despair, and protest to God." Kathleen Billman and Daniel Migliore, *Rachel's Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 6.

resilience. This research intends to provide a theological articulation of silence in ways that help fill the present gap in contemporary scholarship on prayers of lament. More importantly, it will provide a perspective from the voices of the marginalized and emphasize the role silence plays in their prayers of sorrow and lament. Engaging contemporary writing on prayer, as well as including authors from other marginalized communities, this study will note some of their contributions and pinpoint their gaps and tensions as it relates to prayers of lament. Ultimately, this study will engage in the task of constructing a Pentecostal-Charismatic Womanist theology of lament with a critical emphasis on silence.

Absent from Studies of Prayer: The Pentecostal-Charismatic Experience

In the last few decades, there has been a focus within Pentecostal-Charismatic scholarship on rethinking Christian theology through the lens of Pentecostal-Charismatic experience and tradition. Currently, two recent published books within the vein of Pentecostal-Charismatic theology have examined prayers of lament in depth. Scott Ellington discusses two risks regarding prayers of lament. The first risk is to admit openly that things have gone wrong. The second risk is the abandonment of the old world and the possible abandonment of a relationship with God. Stephen Torr discusses what happens when suffering continues after what appears to be unanswered prayers and God's silence. Torr appropriates Kevin Van Hoosier's dramatization as a performance of the scripture. While these authors identify and analyze Pentecostal-Charismatic

³⁸ See Scott Ellington, *Risking Truth: Reshaping the World through Prayers of Lament* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2008); Stephen Torr, *A Dramatic Pentecostal/Charismatic Anti-Theodicy: Improvising on a Divine Performance of Lament* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013).

³⁹ Ellington, *Risking Truth*, xi–xii.

⁴⁰ Torr, A Dramatic Pentecostal/Charismatic Anti-Theodicy, 9–14.

practices, they have not taken seriously its various contextual theological reflections.

Conspicuous is the absence of other cultural groups as it relates to prayers of lament.

This attention to the theme of silent prayers of sorrow and lament is pertinent for a Pentecostal-Charismatic Womanist scholar. The writings of slaves as well as published prayers and recorded testimonies available from more recent times are witnesses that these communities have not lost their dependence on prayers of lament. Silent prayers of lament have undergirded and directed people from the margins even when it appears that these communities are voiceless and powerless. The tendency within the academy to exclude African American, Native American, Asian, and Latino/a scholarship has resulted in the impoverishment of fuller understandings of prayer, sorrow, and lament, and the role of silence.

Serious interpretive Womanist scholarship has included lament within its study of African American communities. Womanist theologians, however, have yet to provide an examination of the background, influence, and contribution of prayers of lament. While silent laments have various expressions in the life of African American women, this study will explore the contours of a practice of Pentecostal prayer within a theological framework that grants space for embodied prayers of tears, moans, and groans as well as prayers with an eschatological focus, silent prayers of awe, and tongues of resistance. Thus, according to A. Elaine Brown Crawford, "The primal holler of black foremothers is a resounding communal lament in the souls of African American women."

For the most part, this dissertation is a conversation with Womanist and Black Holiness Pentecostal-Charismatic scholars, including Delores Williams, Yolanda Pierce,

⁴¹ A. Elaine Brown Crawford, *Hope in the Holler: A Womanist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 1.

Shawn M. Copeland, Cheryl J. Sanders, Emilie M. Townes, JoAnne Marie Terrell, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, Estrelda Y.Alexander, Frederick L.Ware, Barbara A. Holmes, and David D. Daniels III. It does, however, draw on a wide range of interdisciplinary literature in order to develop a distinctive Pentecostal-Charismatic Womanist theology of lament. Clearly, such a comprehensive work is needed to extend the definition of prayers of lament and to include the function of silence within such prayers; to make known the historical and current prayers of laments within the African American church; and to revise the formulation of an enlarged sanctioned canon of lament texts within the Bible through the inclusion of Hagar's narrative.

Methodology and Overview of Chapters

In this study, a Womanist multi-theological review has been examined to determine to what extent these ideas of prayers of sorrow and lament are functional; to determine whether these approaches of developing these varying theories are both traditional and/or somewhat inadequate; and to discern whether these ideas present a flimsy basis for the establishment of a theological theory by which each can be evaluated on a continuous basis. To analyze the accumulated data, a review of the literature has been used to illustrate the differences and similarities between the biblical story of Hagar and the development of African American Pentecostalism illustrated in the ministry of Elizabeth J. Dabney. A development of a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament that takes seriously silent prayers in the development of a universal theory of prayers of sorrow and lament in today's society followed from the work of women like Elizabeth Dabney.

The research will draw on multiple sources seeking insights on the function and centrality of silent prayers of sorrow and prayers of lament. It will appropriate biblical texts such as Hagar's narrative in the Book of Genesis as well as draw on the African and African American collective experience regarding scholarship on slavery and primary sources of slave narratives. Hagar's narrative gives a more comprehensive perspective on prayers of lament in comparison to the Psalms. I will examine contextual embodied expressions of prayer and explore common beliefs about the communal role of the Spirit. This research is intended to elucidate how these multiple sources treat silence and lament as they appear in connection with persons' acts of prayer and how those acts are informed by daily experiences of transformation and empowerment.

In the first chapter, the historic role of silent prayers of sorrow and lament within African and African American experiences will be discussed. African Americans often suffer generational trauma in silence, along with "black identity issues, and rage have been identified as the hallmarks of oppression and a psychological residual of slavery." ⁴² Through personal testimony and historical analysis, the centrality of prayers of sorrow and lament through the themes of despair, survival, and resistance will be explored. ⁴³ The study will show that prayers, with a focus on prayers of lament, are prominent within African and African American contexts.

The second chapter demonstrates that the practices of prayers of lament are not unique to African Americans. Therefore, a sample of silent prayers of sorrow and lament

⁴² Ibid., 74.

⁴³ See George Cummins, "The Slave Narrative as a Source of a Black Theological Discourse: The Spirit and Eschatological," in *Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue: Black Theology in the Slave Narrative*, ed. Dwight Hopkins and George Cummings, 33-46 (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991); see also George Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, volume 1 of *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westpoint: Greenwood, 1972).

perspectives of specific historical moments will be provided in which prayers played an important role in the quest for liberation and clearly demonstrate that prayers of lament are central and, in some contexts, are one of the dominant modes of prayer. The study will examine Isaiah Majok Dau, Chung Hyun Kyung, Andrew Sung Park, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and key interlocutors with focus on their cultural contexts and the role of bodily prayers in light of silence and prayers of sorrow and lament. The intersection of the lens of race and culture extends into biblical, theological, and praxis. ⁴⁴ Silent prayers of sorrow and lament are examined within a theological framework of suffering: political suffering; *han*—a social concept of suffering; and the suffering of the underclass.

The third chapter considers the use of silent prayers of sorrow and lament in African American contemporary life. While Womanist and Black Theology have not written extensively about prayers of lament per se, their writings reflect that they are wrestling with individual and communal sorrow. A sampling of important figures in the development of black liberation theology and Womanist theology on the importance of lament in the twentieth century will be examined, in particular by M. Shawn Copeland. In Black Theology, an examination on the racial and class suffering and, in Womanist Theology, the tridimensional suffering of racism, classism, and sexism experienced by black women will be explored.

The fourth chapter offers a theological reflection on silent prayers of sorrow and lament from a Womanist perspective. The biblical narrative of Hagar will be appropriated

⁴⁴ In Randall C. Baily's "The Bible as a Text of Cultures," in *The Peoples' Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009),13; he says: "Too often we have failed to look at the biblical text as a cultural production within its own time and geographical location, and we have not recognized that our interpretations of the biblical text have been prodded and shaped by our own cultural understanding and time."

as a case study to construct a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament that takes seriously the role of the historical and contemporary experiences of silent prayers of sorrow and lament. Here, the narrative of Hagar, the slave's silent lament, will be appropriated as a paradigm for conceiving the dynamic relation beyond oral articulations made possible by the person's experience with God. Elizabeth J. Dabney (1903 - 1967), who was affectionately called Mother Dabney, is used as a contemporary case study in the construction of a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament.

In conclusion, this dissertation will provide a contribution to the theology of lament. This contribution takes seriously the element of silence. The research will show the evidence of historical and contemporary practices of lament within marginalized communities. These silent prayers have served as forms of survival, resistance, empowerment, and human flourishing. Silent prayers of sorrow and prayers of lament continue to be shaped by the Spirit of the triune God.

⁴⁵ For Womanist theological appropriation of Hagar's narrative, see the classic study: Deloris Williams, *Sister in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), 15-33; also, Billman and Migliore, *Rachel's Cry*, 26, include Hagar (Genesis 21: 8-21) in their survey of lament in the Old Testament.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth J. Dabney, *What it Means to Pray Through* (Memphis, Church of God in Christ, 1987).

CHAPTER ONE:

KNEEOLOGY

Racked with agony and pain she was left alone again,
With a purpose naught could move
And the zeal of woman's love,
Down she knelt in agony
To ask the Lord to clear the way.
True she said O gracious Lord,
True and faithful is thy word;
But the humblest, poorest, may
Eat the crumbs they cast away.⁴⁷

Though it was her sad and weary lot to toil in slavery
But one thing cheered her weary soul
When almost in despair
That she could gain a sure relief in attitude of prayer. 48

Jesus wept. — John 11:35⁴⁹

Introduction

African American Christian prayer traditions consist of various types, forms, and functions. Nonverbal expressions of prayers of lament are one practice of African American prayers. Prayers among African American Christians are developed in relationship with African Religions, Slave Religion, and Western European Christianity. It is the intent of this study to provide a brief discussion of a collective consciousness of trauma, appropriating a cultural trauma theory mode of engagement and expression in the form of silent prayers of sorrow and silent prayers of lament. In chapter one, and in concert with African American holiness tradition, it will begin with an autobiographical section as a personal testimony of silent prayers of sorrow and prayers of lament. In

⁴⁷ L. S. Thompson, "The Story of Mattie J. Jackson (1866)," in *Women's Slave Narratives*, 43-78 (Mineola: Dover, 2006), 51.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 59.

⁴⁹ All scriptures are quoted from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

telling my story, I hope to honor my ancestors' silent prayers of sorrow and lament that were modeled for me by foremothers and forefathers, in church, and in other community settings. It will demonstrate how to cry out to God until the problem is fixed or until one is enabled to keep pressing on. These various contexts nourished my spiritual formation of praying with words, without words, and in unknown tongues. Secondly, this study will examine the rich legacy of enslaved Africans' prayers of lament. And thirdly, it will argue that silent prayers of sorrow and lament have been the response to and strategy for surviving trauma experienced by generations of African Americans. In the United States of America, the denial of the humanity of Africans and their descendants was a European/British dominant narrative, which included the disciplines of theology, science, and history.

The intention in this chapter is not to reinforce the unfavorable and negative stereotypes of African Americans but to celebrate that they were made in the image and likeness of the triune God. Research shows that even in the silent prayers of sorrow and lament, African slaves showed their agency and resilience, resisting the forces that enslaved them. In the same way, African Americans for centuries have also resisted the forces that discriminate against them. They have also shown their sense of urgency in the ways they have sought to change the social structures of the United States of America even under conditions of utter poverty, social marginalization, and racial discrimination. As Christians, our role model is Christ, but African American history helps the universal church in understanding the depths at which God has been present among African Americans. For this reason, I insist that developing a Womanist theology of silent prayers of sorrow and lament necessitates that we revisit the experiences of enslaved African and

African communities, both in the ways in which they have suffered and in the ways they drew on silent prayers of sorrow and lament in the midst of such suffering to find solace and hope along with the energy to resist their immediate context.

This study proposes that nonverbal expressions of prayers of sorrow and lament served as a form of protest against European and especially European American Christianity's claimed right to rule over African slaves and extends to other nationalities, such as Native Americans in the Americas. Far from being passive subjects, the silent prayers of sorrow and lament reveal the urgency of African slaves. These prayers also brought embodied healing for African slaves and their descendants even while the dominant European narrative denied them the ontological claim of being made and therefore being carriers of the *imago Dei*.

Prayers served as a catalyst, even in secrecy, to seek the God who sees, speaks, calls, comforts, heals, delivers, and reminds them of their identity in Him. Even in situations of forced silence, they were able to offer their protest by embodying silent lament; words could not describe their trauma. Despite oppressions, African slaves and today's African Americans were able to appropriate their experience of God by silent prayers of sorrow and laments as counter-narratives, affirming their sense of human agency to counterbalance the forces that denied their humanity and offer resistance amidst generational trauma.

A Personal Testimony of Silent Sorrow and Silent Lament

Silent prayers of sorrow and laments are a manifestation of pain, anguish, and trauma. Perplexing life experiences are moments when one's spirit is stirred from deep within to express sorrow that cannot be expressed through words. People often express

their response to severe life-changing events through prayers of tears. Silent prayers of sorrow are the initial primal responses that precede prayers of lament. They are the non-rationalized immediate responses. When people face sorrow, they often respond with silence because of its inexpressible character. Deep within, however, their spirit is screaming, communicating in the spirit realm with the triune God.

A brain aneurysm killed my Dad in his sleep. Two weeks prior to Dad's death, the family had just been in Mississippi burying maternal Uncle Abraham. Uncle Abraham died from a massive heart attack while showering and preparing to go to the doctor's office due to flu-like symptoms. When Mom called to break the news of Dad's death, I sensed something in her tone that was different. As a youth, I was always considered Daddy's girl. We shared a close relationship. I cherished him dearly. This call to inform me of my Dad's death rendered me almost speechless for months. It cannot be labeled as silence, for I groaned and moaned deep within. However, there were no words to express my heartache. The pain of losing a loved one deeply cherished is a pain that renders one speechless.

Because that phone call rendered me speechless, it silenced me. Neither scriptures, hymns, nor gospel songs registered in my spirit. Months passed before I could tearfully verbalize my lament in articulate words to what felt like God's broken promise in scripture. I wrestled with God, asking, 'Why my Dad? You said seventy years (Psalm 90:10), and Dad was fifty-eight!" I never received an answer! Nevertheless, one thing that I do know is that the triune God and I were communicating with each other throughout my agony. I do not remember wondering if God was there. The fact that I was able to dress and make decisions based on Dad's home-going ceremony was proof of

God's presence. I sensed God's presence throughout my endless tears and persisting screams. Thankfully, God allowed me to reach my final destination even though I was only going through the motions. I, the self-described extrovert-of-extroverts, found myself bereft of words by the pain of Dad's unexpected death.

I quickly moved from silent prayers of sorrow to silent prayers of lament. In my soul, I was screaming at God, yet no sounds ever left my lips. I sensed that God was speaking, but my mind could not muster words. Weeks slipped into months, and I struggled with communicating with words. During this season, which I now term a period of "suspended reality," I found using spoken words to be very hard and taxing. I could not articulate a sentence during my frequent outburst of tears, moans, and groans. I saw Dad's body in a casket, but to verbalize my Dad's death would take me months to do. All I could utter was, "My Dad is gone." Seventeen years later, I am still unable to visit Dad's grave, and I continue to struggle to articulate the profound inexpressibility of his absence—that which is beyond words.

I am forever thankful for a community of faith and loved ones who modeled silent prayers of sorrow and lament. According to Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, "Community is an on-going dynamic experience of humanity relating to God, and there are hundreds of ways to talk about and embody God." I witnessed their brokenness in spirit during worship services, all night prayer services, and family prayer. Silence, wailing, tears, screams and moans were the expressions of individual(s) and the community's sense of anguish over the death of a loved one gone too soon.

⁵⁰ Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, *Soul Pearls: Worship Resources for African American Congregations* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 13.

Humans respond to pain and sorrow differently. Many of these expressions are also found among other cultural communities. Among African Americans, they often take the particular form of prayers of sorrow and prayers of lament. In the midst of despair, doubt, anger, and fear, African Americans often move to prayers of sorrow and lament. In the midst of unspeakable pain, there is a piercing holler and a scream deep within the core of their being that only God can hear. The distress of life leads us to "barely whisper a prayer" (Isa 26:16). The strength to articulate a prayer verbally is gone, yet God understands whispers, silence, and tears. I learned from my community that I could come boldly to God's throne of grace just as I am. I was taught to cry out to God in the moments when the weight of pain and sorrow overpower me. I also learned that God sees my sorrow, pain, and disappointments, and He accompanies me through them.

In conducting research, I noted that most Western Scholars agree that lament is missing or lost from our worship services.⁵¹ This view is challenged. Is lament missing from the universal church? Has biblical and theological research concluded that Native Americans, Latinas/os, and Asian communities focus only on praise? The idea that lament is missing and worship focuses only on triumph and happiness is contrary to personal experiences of religious and cultural expressions in inner cities. These expressions of worship include faith traditions and denominations that are historically black Protestant denominations, including Pentecostal, Charismatic, and neo-Pentecostal.

The statement that "lament is missing" has served to frame theological and biblical research in ways that only register the experiences and stories of European

⁵¹ Walter Brueggemann, "The Costly Loss of Lament," *Journal for the Study of Old Testament* 11 no. 36 (Oct 1986): 102; Walter Brueggemann, *Disruptive Grace: Reflections on God, Scripture, and the Church*, ed. Carolyn J. Sharp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 185.

Christians. Such framing creates the conditions for silencing the prayers of people of color, who actually constitute a majority. Michel-Rolph Trouillot says,

Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospectives significance (the making of history in the final instance.⁵²

The claims by scholars concerning the absence of prayers of lament presuppose that the religious experiences of people of color are invisible to the Western church. As a result, the Western church fails to see and hear the voices from the margins. Their prayers of laments do not exist! It follows, then, that the dominant culture can continue to create, edit, and appropriate European Christian history and theology as the only proper narrative. The presence of one unchallenged dominant narrative within the church and the academy serves to silence the experiences and laments of contemporary and future generations. It also silences the records of the prayers of generations past.

The dominant narrative concerning the absence of prayers of lament within the Western church silences the prayers of lament that have shaped the worship, survival, and human flourishing in the African American collective and individual experience. Prayers of lament give credence to the sweat, pain, and toil of all people groups who exist in the lower strata of society. Prayers of lament are embedded within a historical, social, and cultural context. For African Americans, prayers of lament testify to pain, fear, agony, anger, and recurring traumas of injustice.

Prayers of lament affirm that God's love does not depend on one's skin color but rather on how the people of God thrive despite the fact that their dignity and moral

⁵² Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon, 1995), 26.

agency are undermined within and outside of their communities. How can I stop wondering if my Dad had been born of European descent and did not have to deal daily with the trauma of racism and classism, would he have lived a few more years? What was the cost of his concerns and fears in surviving, thriving, and flourishing within systems and structures designed to keep him and his loved ones in the margins of society?

Because different cultural communities have different experiences with prayers of sorrow and lament, this study argues that present scholarship on the matter needs to be enriched by the stories, experiences, and narratives from various groups. The academy needs to engage, listen, and read practices from many culturally diverse Christian traditions.

Subsequently, a few of the voices that have been silenced from African and African American generations past will be highlighted. In the following chapter, I will explore the experiences and perspectives of scholars from other cultural groups.

Enslaved Africans Lamented

As African Americans, it becomes necessary to recall the experiences of slavery of their ancestors and the multiple ways in which they confronted the evil of slavery with prayers of sorrow and lament.⁵³ However, how does one write about a theology of lament or a theology of suffering without engaging those of enslaved black bodies? Charles H. Long inquires, "To whom does one pray from the bowels of a slave ship? To the gods of

⁵³ Mother Africa was not the "sole source of the enslaved." Other active trades from central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans had supplied the Renaissance Mediterranean as well as later Ottoman provinces at least into the nineteenth century. Arabia and the Persian Gulf also imported slaves from India, Baluchistan, Indonesia, and possibly even China into the twentieth century. Large numbers of slaves were moved through eastern and southeastern Asia from early times, from a range of sources touching Japan and Melanesia and even sending some 'Chinese' (as they were known) to sixteenth-century Mexico. See Joseph C. Miller, "Women as Slaves and Owners of Slaves: Experiences from Africa, the Indian Ocean World, and Early Atlantic," in *Women and Slavery*" *Africa, the Indian Ocean World, and the Medieval North Atlantic*, eds. Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers, and Joseph C. Miller, 1-42 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 5–6.

Africa? To the gods of the masters of the slave vessels? To the gods of an unknown and foreign land of enslavement?"⁵⁴ Long asserts, for the enslaved bodies in the bowels of the slave ships "this was the beginning of African American religion and culture. In the forced silence of oppression, in the half-articulate moans of desperation, in the rebellions against enslavement."⁵⁵ How can one define biblical lament to a narrow definition of spoken words amidst the exploitative and brutal legacy of colonialism throughout the nations and their forced silence? Did they not have prayers of sorrow and lament spoken within the very fiber of their humanity?

As Donald H. Matthews stated, "African Americans were able to produce expressions of community out of their sorrow and oppression." He says that in the African American churches, "We don't cry the blues, we sang the blues." I contend that many of the songs were sung to the triune God both wordless and soundless. Why were they wordless and soundless? Because enslaved African's religious practices and cultural behaviors were suppressed. "Their languages were silenced, and their captors required them to learn a new tongue." My foremothers and forefathers modeled the necessity to every-now-and-then pray and sing one's troubles to God in silence. Their lived theology affirm the "common power and work of creativity as a holy Trinity," implicit in Karen Baker-Fletcher's analysis of the "parenting relation" of the first person, the "relational"

⁵⁴ Charles H. Long, "Passage and Prayer," in *The Courage to Hope: From Black Suffering to Human Redemption*, eds. Quinton Hosford Dixie and Cornel West, 11-21 (Boston: Beacon, 1999), 17.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Donald H. Matthews, *Honoring the Ancestors: An African Cultural Interpretation of Black Religion and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 22–23.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 5.

activity" of the second in the "Word and Wisdom of God," and the "empowering, teaching, healing, comforting, encouraging, and unifying relation" of the third person of the Trinity.⁵⁹ The moans and groans from the church mothers and church fathers at my Pentecostal church in Chicago enlarged my understanding of what it means to communicate with the triune God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

Whose Prayer is This?

Ann and Barry Ulanov provide a conceptualization for my theological articulation of prayer presented in this study. According to them, "Prayers start without words and often ends without them." They affirm "every time we ask for help, understanding, or strength" we are praying. It is agreed that the Ulanovs' concept of prayer is that of primordial conversation; it is "basic and fundamental." Prayer as primary speech includes that "unconscious voice that exist in us." From the moment of birth, the "language of primary-process thinking is not verbal." Primary speech is the "language of instinct, emotion, and images" seldom spoken in words. Prayer enables the fullness of speech in all forms by the Spirit of God and "extends us beyond our known self into the unknown God." Now we know that God hears "all the voices that speak out of us—

⁵⁹ Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Dancing with God: The Trinity from a Womanist Perspective* (Saint Louis: Chalice, 2006), 64.

⁶⁰ Ann Belford Ulanov and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer*, vii.

⁶¹ Ibid., 1.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 9.

our vocal prayer, the prayer said in our minds, the unvoiced longing rising from our hearts, the many voices of which we are not conscious but which cry out eloquently."⁶⁷ What is so remarkable is that God hears silence, actions, moans, tears, groans and thoughts. When we are unable to give verbalized articulated language to the depth of our fears, angers, doubts, pain, anguish, grief, heartbreak, torment, and agony, the triune God hears them.

Silent prayers of sorrow and lament served as forms of protest against systemic racial and ethnic forms of discrimination, economic oppression, and the weakening of brown and black families and community's infrastructures. The cries of anguish, fear, anger, and protest reverberate within the bodies of the marginalized, screaming against the sins of the past and the contemporary sins of the ongoing systematic racialization and discrimination of peoples. Silent prayers of sorrow and lament birthed out of the livedexperiences of the homeless, invisible, and powerless are often without words because the horror of their situations renders them without words. Nevertheless, nonverbal and verbal expressions of lament cry out to God against legalized and justified systems, orchestrated to keep black and brown bodies at the bottom of the social barrel. African American nihilism is what Lewis Brogdon defines as "survival in the absence of hope" due to internalize or mirror racial oppression. ⁶⁸ Racial oppressions in a society contribute to ongoing narratives that proclaim African descendants and African Americans' dreams and hopes are of no social importance. Mirror racial oppression contributes significantly to shattered dreams.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁶⁸ Lewis Brogdon, *Hope on the Brink: Understanding the Emergency of Nihilism in Black America* (Eugene: Cascade, 2013), vii.

Prayers of lament are uttered consistently while African descendants are being asked why race is still an issue. Why do scholars of African descent continue to rehash the slave narrative? I question why it is more comfortable to discuss and act against the enslavement of the Jews and the senseless killings that occurred throughout the Holocaust than to discuss various historical enslavements in America? Susan Sontag in *Regarding the Pain of Others* asks,

to have a museum chronicling the great crime that was African slavery in the United States of American would be to acknowledge that the evil was here. Americans prefer to picture the evil that was there, and from which the United States—a unique nation, one without any certifiable wicked leaders throughout its entire history—is exempt.⁶⁹

Silence imposed by "masters" continues even with topical increase in books and articles on lament within the last few years.

The Holocaust is revisited in various conversations, and new words are constructed to bring the past sins and horrors to memory—within the purview of its readers. Though the laments of enslaved African and African Americans are condemned to silence by their exclusion from the dominant discourses on lament, this research refuses to engage in a binary discussion on lament, pitting the evil and terror of the Jewish holocaust against African slavery, the massacres of the Native Americans, the culturecide of Latinas/os, or the internment of Japanese Americans in concentration camps. Moreover, the silence of these voices is part of the fiber of our contemporary economic and political structures. Instead, this work offers fertile grounds of insights for studies of lament. This study reclaims the prayers of lament of African Americans and "other" groups of people. It suggests that wherever injustice, pain, or anguish occurs,

⁶⁹ Susan Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others (New York: Picador, 2004), 87–88.

nonverbal expressions of sorrow quickly turn into prayers of lament offered unto God as a silent scream of protest and a testimony of hope in the triune God's power.

Dat Be My Peoples

The point of departure for the construction and description of African American silent prayers of sorrow and lament must start in the distant past, at the point of past generational screams: Screams passed down through the generations; silent screams of sorrow unify people from the margins; the silent screams that come with a look that knows, with a glance that tells, "I see you, and I understand, I know what it is like." Silent screams are often without words but are embodied in the spirit. The simple act of nodding one's head transfers dignity and empowers; when eyes collide, they tell each other, "I know your pain because it is my pain."

George P. Rawick contends that American slaves were "among dozens of distinct peoples, each with their distinct customs and religions," who were "jumbled together on board the slave ships" and "had to give up their own language and learn to express themselves through all the media of communication." Albert J. Raboteau affirms, "Among the Africans who became slaves in the Americas were those, such as the Wolof, Serer, Mandinke, Bambara, Fulani, and Hausa." African "merchants, or Arabic scholars, or craftsmen, or peasant farmers, or cattle-tenders" were transformed into American slaves. Africans were removed from their families, communities, and kinship

⁷⁰ George P. Rawick, From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community, vol. 1 of The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography (Westport: Greenwood, 1972), 6.

⁷¹ Ibid., 7.

⁷² Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 5.

⁷³ Ibid.

systems; they were shackled and chained. There in the slavery boats, they saw their fear in the mirror, in the eyes of another like themselves, full of anguish and pain. It is relatively certain that they were not singing songs or praying prayers of thanksgiving. Raboteau asserts that this treatment was an intentional ploy he terms "process of seasoning" or "breaking in" new slaves, which required the prohibition of African languages. "Slaves were under continual surveillance and control . . . Gatherings of five or more slaves without the presence of a white observer were universally forbidden." Enslaved Africans were unable to speak and understand the native language of the sailors on the Atlantic, the slave traders, and slave owners in the United States. "Slaves bound for the Americas came from many different nations, tribes, and language groups." African women, men, girls, and boys were packed tightly in the slave pins and in the holds of slave ships. Still, they were able to understand communal fear, anguish, disbelief, and pain.

John Newton was held captive for eighteenth months in West Africa. He was later rescued and returned to England!⁷⁶ Newton testified that during this period he was "depressed to the lowest degree of human wretchedness."⁷⁷ Despite his woes of being a slave, and soon after his Christian conversion, Newton became captain of a slave ship. As an eyewitness to the "process of seasoning," he said,

two-thirds of cargos are males . . . a hundred and fifty or two hundred stout men, torn from their native land, many of them never saw the sea; and who

⁷⁴ Ibid., 53.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁶ John Newton, *The Journal of a Slave Trader: (John Newton) 1750-1754*, eds. Bernard Martin and Mark Surrell (London: Epworth, 1962), 98.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

often bring with them an apprehension that they are bought to be eaten . . . they are all put in irons: in most ships, two and two together . . . the hand and foot of each on the same side, whether right or left, are fettered together: so that they cannot move wither hand or foot . . . for many months (sometimes for nine or ten months). ⁷⁸

One would maintain that enslaved Africans could not have endured this "process of seasoning" without drawing from the depths of their pain, crying out, and silently screaming throughout the very process of an enslaved life. Their silent laments of fear probably escalated while surrounded by Europeans who looked different and spoke differently. They were unable to communicate with each other nor with their captors. The encounter took place in unfamiliar surroundings; many of the African slaves had never seen "the sea, much less a ship." Unbearable grief rendered African enslaves mute. Silent prayers of sorrow quickly turned into silent prayers of lament for the enslaved; upon embarking the "process of seasoning" began, and all measures were taken to squash their hopes and desires for an insurrection. Newton asserts,

I have seen them sentenced to unmerciful whippings, continued till the poor creatures have not the power to groan . . . I have seen them agonizing for hours . . . women and girls are taken on board a ship, naked, trembling, terrified, perhaps almost exhausted with cold, fatigue, and hunger, they are often exposed to the wanton rudeness of white savages. The poor creatures cannot understand the language they hear, but the looks and manner of the speakers are sufficiently intelligible . . . resistance or refusal, would be utterly in vain. ⁸⁰

For many African slaves, physical and psychological trauma became the rule of the day. Shane White and Graham White record laughter, songs, shouts, and stories from the lips

⁷⁸ Ibid.,103.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 105.

of former slaves from the mid-eighteenth century to the immediate post-bellum period. 81 In their recovery of slavery's sounds, "For nearly three centuries of African American history, much of what was distinctive about black culture was to be found in the realm of sound, a characteristic that was particularly clear in the hours in which slaves were not toiling for their owners."82 In their exclusive focus on the sounds of United States of America slave culture, these scholars captured moans, groans, sighs, screams, and laments. In retrieving the interviews with former slaves by employees of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s, Shane White and Graham White attest that "some of the most distinctive sounds made by slaves were not easily categorized, being neither speech nor music but more howl or shout."83 African American ex-slaves gave firsthand testimonies of their memories of the unique sounds derived from their African homeland and the formation of enslaved African American culture:

The anguished cries of families whose members were sold away; the repetitive crack of the master's or overseer's whip: these were emblematic sounds for captive African American . . . 'All time, night an' day, you could hear men an' women screamin' to de tip of dere voices as either ma, pa, sister, or brother wus tak without any warnin' an' sell,' Augustus Ladson declared. 'People wus always dyin' frum a broken heart.' After lamenting that 'babies wuz snatched from dere mother's breas' an' sold to speculators,' and 'chilluns wuz separated from sisters an' brothers an' never saw each other ag'in,' Delia Garlic scornfully rebuked her interviewer's subsequent query: 'Course dey cry' you think dey not cry when dey was sold lak cattle?'⁸⁴

One of the paradoxes of slavery is that enslaved bodies were considered objects, chattel or other articles of trade, which their owners could easily dispose of if desired. The fact

⁸¹ Shane White and Graham White, *The Sounds of Slavery: Discover African American History through Songs, Sermons, and Speech* (Boston: Beacon, 2005).

⁸² Ibid., ix.

⁸³ Ibid., xvii.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 3.

that they were regarded as "objects" is a muted fact in United States history. Frederick Douglass wrote in his autobiography, "by far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs . . . The white children could tell their ages . . . [my master and misses] deemed all such inquiries on the part of a slave improper and impertinent."85 Wilma King examines young people, under twenty-one years old, enslaved in the nineteenth-century South, who in 1808 were 56% of the 3,953,760 slaved population. 86 King concludes that American slaves in early childhood were "smaller than children in developing countries today."87

Yea, Lawd!

According to Charles F. Irons, the "greatest indication of black spiritual initiative in the early national period was the formation of autonomous black Baptist churches." Irons defines evangelicalism as a subset of Protestantism yet not synonymous with it. For him, European evangelicals "forged their policies on slavery in response to the spiritual initiatives of black evangelicals" in biracial congregations that emphasized a "personal, saving experience of faith and their sense of missions." We cannot overlook the fact that "during the seventeenth and much of the eighteenth century there was a great deal of

⁸⁵ Frederick Douglass, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass," in *The Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr., 323-436 (New York: Signet Classics, 2012), 339.

⁸⁶ Wilma King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1995), 7.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁸⁸ Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 48.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 3.

indifference, reluctance, and hostility to the conversion of the slaves."91

There were differences in faith and practices between white and black Virginia.

For the black church, the aspect of African cosmological evidence in the "necessity of an emotional conversion experience," "special emphasis on the role of the spirit," and preference of the enslaved for "Old Testament stories of emancipation" was in sharp contrast to white Christians in Virginia. 92 The foundations of Black Christianity were built simultaneously with slave resistance: "slaves and free blacks were interested in worshipping God as much as plotting rebellion or building racial consciousness." It was in the holy space of worship where African descendants discerned the faulty appropriation of scripture that affirmed slavery was a God-ordained institution because "men and women of African descent fit the description of *ered csnaani* (non-Hebrew slaves)." ⁹⁴

African slaves learned that in Virginia, the service of the African as alien slave was perpetuated by the European interpretation of Leviticus 25. Allen Dwight Callahan demonstrates that African slaves and their descendants were able to discern that Bible passages like Leviticus 25 were used out of context. They might have been illiterate, yet they "discerned in scriptures a" God who "sits high and looks low," as a traditional African-American prayer puts it; that the humble are exalted and the exalted humbled;

⁹¹ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 66.

⁹² Ibid., 5.

⁹³ Ibid., 15.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 25.

and where the judgment of God would be the justice of the slave. ⁹⁵ Timothy Lockley documents that it was "Arabs who first arrived at the concept of the biblical curse as an explanation for the skin colors of blacks," the curse of Ham. ⁹⁶ "The Arab overlords of North Africa generally believed that sub-Saharan darker-skinned people were culturally and intellectually inferior," a belief "dating back several centuries before Europeans began to explore the world." ⁹⁷

Proslavery Theology

Virginian colonists had already exploited and enslaved black people for more than a generation when the colony's elected assembly, the House of Burgesses, passed a comprehensive slave code in 1705 to solidify their commitments to enslaving 1,000 new slaves per year between 1700 and 1740. By 1760, "40 percent of Virginia's population was African-based." The vast majority of the enslaved African population spoke African languages and practiced African traditional religions, others practiced Islam, and still others had knowledge of Christianity. Nevertheless, their religious practices, languages, and cultures were different than the European's versions of Christianity in Virginia, thereby justifying pro-slavery Christianity.

The theology of pro-slavery Christianity reflects the hypocrisy within the generational trauma of racism and discrimination. African and African Americans' silent

⁹⁵ Callahan states, "Among the 3,428 WPA interviewees were 179 former slaves who said they learned to read and write while still slaves." Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), xiv.; see also King, *Stolen Childhood*, 79.

⁹⁶ Timothy Lockley, "Race and Slavery," in *The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas*, eds. Robert L. Paquette and Mark M. Smith, 336-356 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 338.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 24.

prayers of sorrow and lament are screams from the depths, warring in the Spirit against those who enslaved black and brown bodies. African Enslavement still is a distortion of the *imago Dei*. The distortion of the *imago Dei* provided the historical framework for the generational lament of Africans slaves and their descendants. Unwarranted physical and psychological pain and suffering was inflicted upon "12.5 million Africans [who] were shipped to the New World." This distortion of the *imago Dei* caused the conditions for the emergence of a pro-slavery Christian theology that did not offer redemptive liberation from suffering in the seventeenth century.

Many of the enslaved Africans did arrive in the Americas with the understanding of the existence of a Supreme Creator. African cosmology and culture gave them the fortitude to conduct spiritual battle in prayer. Enslaved Africans did not pray, sing, shout, groan, and moan because they believed they were destined to be generational slaves for European Christians. Rather, they escaped to the invisible church; they sat in the segregated sections of the church and cried out to the supreme God as they were beaten, whipped, and quite often killed. African and African Americans prayed with words, without words, and unknown words, lamenting before the triune God. Their prayers of lament functioned as their active offensive weapon of spiritual warfare as well.

In 1831, the West Indian slave Mary Prince published her autobiography. She wrote at a time when slavery was legal in Bermuda and British Caribbean. ¹⁰¹ She was the first woman to present an anti-slavery petition to Parliament and the first black women in

⁹⁹ Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "How Many Slaves Landed in the United States," *The Root*, January 06, 2014. http://www.theroot.com/how-many-slaves-landed-in-the-us-1790873989

¹⁰⁰ Albert J. Raboteau, Slave Religion, 8.

¹⁰¹ The Abolition Project, "Mary Prince (1788-c.1833): The First Woman to Present a Petition to Parliament," *The Abolition Project*, accessed April 3, 2016, http://abolition.e2bn.org/people 37.html.

the United Kingdom to escape enslavement. Prince recalls her psychological trauma because she was physically separated from her mother, who was already enslaved at a different location. 102 Prince described the visit as follows:

[It was a] sorrowful meeting; and we lamented with a great and sore crying our unfortunate situation . . . I cannot bear to think of that day.—It is too much.—It recalls the great grief that filled my heart, and the woeful thoughts that passed to and fro through my mind . . . the pitiful words of my poor mother, weeping for the loss of her children. I wish I could find words to tell you all I then felt and suffered. The great God above alone knows the thoughts of the poor slave's heart, and the bitter pains which follow such separation as these. All that we love taken away from us.¹⁰³

The enslaved screamed out loud, in silence, and loudly because of the predicament of enslavement in perpetuity. They had no rights or freedom to their bodies or the bodies of their spouses or children. They were taught that because of God's love, they were blessed to be enslaved in the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Spiritual Warfare

Enslaved and free blacks promulgated much of their singing and dancing as spiritual warfare. Lamenting is an engagement in spiritual warfare about problems and issues that the enslaved could not solve. These embodied acts of religious practices testified that they came to do battle in the spiritual realm to temper the agonizing waves of pain, anger, fear, and rage regarding the rejection of their humanity by the dominant culture. Douglass concludes that slave psalms of lament were

thoughts that came up, came out—if not in the word, in the sound . . . I did not, when a slave, understand the deep meaning of those rude and apparently incoherent songs. I was myself within the circle . . . The told a tale of woe which was altogether beyond my feeble comprehension: they were tones loud, long, and

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Mary Prince, "The History of Mary Prince," in *The Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Signet Classics, 2012), 256-57.

deep; they breathed the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains . . . To those songs I trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery. ¹⁰⁴

The enslaved lamented and engaged in spiritual battles until they knew in their spirit that they were heard by God; their responses varied from an uncontrollable laughter, being slain in the spirit as if they were struck dead, or being engulfed in a silence that penetrated their sorrow. Their prayers of sorrow and lament were mirrored in the scripture of their owners—hence their embracing of Hebrew scripture.

Latta Thomas notes the parallel between the ancient Israelite and Black

American: "people who, beyond their share, suffered consequences not self-imposed,
who in seeking liberation and meaning looked to God for an interpretation of their
peoplehood, task, and destiny." These are silent generational screams of prayers of
lament of one's heritage, rooted in enslavement. In the United States of America alone,
one may note the growth of slavery from twenty Africans enslaved in "Virginia in 1619
to the four million at the beginning of the Civil War in 1861." In 1862, African
Americans were allowed to join the Union army; they comprised about ten percent. By
the end of the American Civil War, nearly 40,000 African American soldiers of the

¹⁰⁴ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 348–349.

¹⁰⁵ Latta Thomas, *Biblical Faith and the Black American* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1976), 46.

¹⁰⁶ James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Slavery and the Making of America* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2005), 7.

¹⁰⁷ Library of Congress, "Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861-1877: African-American Soldiers During the Civil War," accessed April 3, 2016, http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/civilwar/aasoldrs/

"approximately 180,000" had died over the course of the war. ¹⁰⁸ The ratio of African American soldiers who died of disease due to poor medical care because of discrimination in comparison to those that died in the battlefield was 9 to 1. ¹⁰⁹ Faust reports,

Men thrown by the hundred into burial trenches; soldiers stripped of every Identifying object before being abandoned on the field; bloated corpses hurried into hastily dug graves; nameless victims . . . more than 40 percent of Yankees and a far greater proportion of Confederates 110

It is estimated that sixty six percent of the remains of the African American soldiers were never identified. 111 Those silent shrouds were never identified as they fought for their freedom, respect, and dignity as well as that of loved ones. From their unmarked graves, they silently cry out for vindication, for their stories to be told. Unmarked graves are lamenting in protest, against the "circles of silence" lest their identities and contributions would disappear altogether. White and White states,

In the same way, impassioned falsetto might effectively express grief, a grainy rasp anguish, a sonorous wail despair. If, as we might anticipate, southern slaves too made freer use than did whites of different tones (strictly timbres, or tone "colors") to express the pain and emotional trauma that must have been part and parcel of their lives, it is not surprising to find whites describing such sounds as "wild and barbarous," "uncouth," "a dismal Howl," or "hideous noise." The African and African American practice of weaving a variety of wordless intensifiers—shouts, cries, yells, groans—into a melody, translating, thereby, their strongly felt emotions into sound, can only increase whites' sense of alienation. 112

African and African American's laments were not derived from a place of duplicating

¹⁰⁸ Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage, 2008), 48.

¹⁰⁹ Library of Congress, "Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861-1877."

¹¹⁰ Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 102.

¹¹¹ Library of Congress, "Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861-1877."

¹¹² Shane White and Graham White, *The Sounds of Slavery*, 30.

respectability nor acceptance by the dominant culture; however, these distinct sounds captured their despairs, hopes, and longing that could not be contained in words. Riggins R. Earl Jr. shares that debates over the "authenticity of the ex-slave's autobiography" were common, ranging from "I can't believe it," to "ridiculous falsehoods." Nevertheless, European responses to "acts of writing poetry and autobiography" were proofs that "exposures to 'white man's civilization' had developed in those of African descent a higher level of affections and moral sensibility. . . . Clearly, white readers expected ex-slave writers to be what they termed objective in the accounts of their slave experience." The "wild and barbarous" and "hideous noise" were the unmediated expressions of the enslaved African and African American's psychological, emotional, and physical experiences. The "sound" of their anguish and trauma refused to be colonized by the standards of European sensibilities. Even in these expressions, prayers were and are important personal and communal agencies for Africans and African Americans as embodied spiritual practices to resist structures of oppression.

But Gawd!

There were many reasons for which the Africans and their descendants lamented.

There was lament because Europeans drew on the Christian faith to support ideologies that justified the separation of infants, suckling babies, and children from the arms of their loving mothers. 115 "By any standard, splitting families apart was one of the harshest

¹¹³ Riggins R. Earl Jr., *Dark Symbols, Obscure Signs; God, Self, & Community in the Slave Mind* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), 108.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 109-110.

¹¹⁵ Ellen M. Barry states, "Of all the negative consequences of slavery in the United States, perhaps the most horrific is the multigenerational damage caused by the [separation] of children from their mothers and fathers." She also argues that as enslaved African women's children were forcefully removed, women in prison and jails lament due to their painful removal of their children who are often placed in

aspects of bondage. The slaves' fear of separation gave owners their most powerful weapon of control,"¹¹⁶ and "These mournful partings were worse than death . . . By contrast, death in its finality erased uncertainties and provided hope beyond the temporal world."¹¹⁷

It is not surprising that an ongoing internal lament rises from the voices of the marginalized, crying out to God. Olaudah Equiano attempted to answer this question in his autobiography. He started his narrative in Eboe (Igbo in Nigeria) where he was kidnapped and eventually sold into slavery around the age of eleven. He tells us that he served the captains of slave ships and British navy vessels. Henry Pascal, the captain of a British trading vessel, gave Equiano the name Gustavus Vassa, which he used throughout his life. The complexity of his naming is reflected in the fact that he published his autobiography under both his slave name and his African name in hope to "remove the prejudice that some conceive against the natives of Africa on account of their colour." Indeed, Equiano raises important issues to be considered: slavery was not a white's only enterprise. He was captured by Africans and after several months sold and placed on a

foster care. However, the author notes women who resist within the prison wall just as enslaved women suffer "retaliation for their resistance." Ellen M. Barry, "From Plantations to Prisons: African American Women Prisoners in the United States," in *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies*, ed. Bernadette J. Brooten (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 78-80; also, female population has become the fastest growing correctional population. Lauren E. Glaze and Danielle Kaeble, "Correctional Policies in the United States, 2013," Bureau of Justice Statistics, *U. S. Department of Justice*, December 2014. https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus13.pdf

¹¹⁶ Wilma King, Stolen Childhood, 99.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 105.

Vassa, The African (London, 1978), 45; Olaudah Equiano writes, "my captain and master named me GUSTAVUS VASSA... and [I] told him, as well as I could, I would be called Jacob; but he said I should not... And when I refused to answer to my new name, which at first I did, it gained me many a cuff; so at length I submitted." Olaudah Equiano, The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, 66.

slave ship. Equiano delineates between enslavement in his own country versus the "multitude of black people, of varied description, chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow."¹¹⁹

The visual embodiment of internalized lament left Equiano without words to capture the horror before him. We can hear the ongoing psychological trauma in which Equiano himself, while describing his middle passage, writes, "I had no person to speak to that I could understand, in this state I was constantly grieving and pining, and wishing for death." However, Equiano was convinced slavery was not part of God's plan. He insisted that all enslaved persons are the creation of God, who captures their prayers of sorrow, "the shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying." In his autobiography, he recorded the unheeded voiced and voiceless prayers of what he terms "the sable race." 122

Douglass' screams of lament are manifest when he writes: "I have no accurate knowledge of my age...by far the largest part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs." Slavery deprived people of their ability to maintain one's name, know one's date and place of birth, and without any hesitation recall one's age. Lament also leads to resilience. It is no wonder, then, that after centuries of murders, atrocities, floggings, lynching, rebuke, discrimination, oppression, alienations, exploitation, degradation, and human devaluation, African Americans are still alive.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 57.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 64.

¹²¹ Ibid., 60.

¹²² Frederick Douglass, Autobiography Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, 144.

¹²³ Ibid., 341.

African Americans are not always well, they are not always flourishing, but as a people they are, nevertheless, alive. 124

The commodification of bodies resulted in a common custom of separating mothers from their nursing children. The penalty of whipping occurred for a variety of reasons; sometimes it took place in order to separate mothers from their children, and at other times, those attending to the illness, death, or burial of one's parent or child were whipped:

As a child in Virginia, Allen Wilson saw his mother tied to a tree and whipped. The punishment was terrible enough without the further degradation of seeing her stripped naked. As if paralyzed, Wilson remained at a distance and prayed to the "Lawd" with hopes, "dat someday he'd open a way . . . to protect mother." ¹²⁵

At other times, it happened simply because someone had the authority and power to enforce violence upon the enslaved. Black girls and boys suffered added trauma; often their masters and owners were their fathers. Douglass questioned whether the story of Noah's curse of Ham—and therefore God's "curse" of the African people, the descendants of Ham—provided the scriptural support for their enslavement. Such a notion, he said, had to be unscriptural in the South, "for thousands are ushered unto the world, annually, whom like myself, owe their existence to white fathers." 126

Dis Gal Not Safe Near Masta

Thomas Jefferson denied the full humanity of Africans slaves: "Blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the

¹²⁴ Ibid., 1-2.

¹²⁵ Wilma King, Stolen Childhood, 98.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 342.

whites in the endowments both of body and mind."¹²⁷ As a result, he withheld equal participation in the rights of government from poor white men, people of color, and women of every race and class. Ironically and unfortunately, Jefferson started a sexual relationship with a "thirteen-to-fourteen" year old girl when he was in his mid-forties. ¹²⁸ Most certainly, he was the father of some of his own slaves that were born to Sally Hemings. ¹²⁹

According to Mia Bay, from the beginning of the eighteenth century through the Civil War, one finds no record of any white man being convicted for raping an enslaved woman." By contrast, the law specified that the father or the husband of a white woman "was entitled to claim damages for any injuries, as well as for the violation of his property rights." Callahan concludes that the sexual experiences of slaves in the USAare evident within the multiple shades of African American pigmentation. As he puts it, "Wolof, Ibo, Akan, Fon, Yoruba, and Mandinka mixed in the cauldron of the Middle Passage. Their sojourn in the New World added to this mixture Narraganset, Yamassee, Cherokee, Choctaw, and Creek and, through the miscegenation wrought by rape, Dutch, English, Irish, Spanish, Portuguese, and French." Perpetual sexual terrorism is a source of African and African American generational lament.

¹²⁷ R. B. Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson: The Revolution of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 62.

¹²⁸ Mia Bay, "Love, Sex, Slavery, and Sally Hemings," in *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies*, ed. Bernadette J. Brooten, 191-212 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 197.

¹²⁹ James Horton and Lois Horton, *Slavery and the Making of America*, 56.

¹³⁰ Mia Bay, "Love, Sex, Slavery, and Sally Hemings" 194–195.

¹³¹ Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book*, 114; Jeffory Clymer points out that interracial marriages were illegal through the 19th century; the "enslaved mixed-race children of these sexual unions, as property, remained outside the legal definition of family and so possessed no inheritance rights-or

The actions of clergy, as well as leaders like Thomas Jefferson, served to sanction the sexual violence of Africans and their children, which is evident in the lack of legal protection for Africans, Native American, and "Mixed-Race" females. ¹³² Slavery was possible because enslaved Africans and African Americans were deemed to fall outside of the *imago Dei*; laws prohibited mothers, wives, sisters, and children from defending themselves. Until the end, Jefferson refused to acknowledge his slave children and failed to leave them any form of inheritance or provision for freedom. Such behavior exemplifies how the African and African American slaves occupied the space of non-persons. ¹³³ Physical and sexual abuse of enslaved women, men, girls, and boys was a source of African and African American silent prayers of sorrow and lament.

Girls and women suffered more than men and boys. Harriet Ann Jacobs published her autobiography under a pseudonym: Linda Brent. 134 She shares, "When they told me my new-born baby was a girl, my heart was heavier than it had ever been before. Slavery

'inheritable blood.'" Jeffory Clymer, *Family Money: Property, Race, and Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11.

¹³² Diane Miller Sommerville, *Rape & Race: In the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina); Bailey wrote, "The 1850 census counted 406,000 mulattoes among 3,639,000 Negroes. In 1910, it counted 2,051,000 mulattoes in a total Negro population of 9, 828,000." Eric J. Bailey, *The New Face of America: How the Emerging Multiracial, Multiethnic Majority is Changing the United States* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013), 43; Also, Finkelman stated, "More southerners accepted slavery and gradually the intellectual leaders of the South constructed from religious and secular sources a sophisticated proslavery ideology that allowed them to defend slavery and let it expand. This process began with Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia (1748), which provided a defense of slavery based on pseudo-scientific arguments about race." Paul Finkelman, "United States Slave Law," in *The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas*, ed. Robert L. Paquette and Mark M. Smith, 424-446 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 426.

¹³³ Mia Bay, "Love, Sex, Slavery," 206–207.

¹³⁴ Linda Brent, "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl," in *The Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr., 437-668 (New York: Signet Classics, 2012).

is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women."¹³⁵ Dr. Flint, her master at the time, had

told me I was his property; that I must be subject to his will in all things. My soul revolted against this mean tyranny. But where could I turn for protection? No matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony or as fair as her mistress. In either case, there is no shadow of law to protect her from insult, from violence, or even from death; all these are inflicted by friends who bear the shape of men. The mistress, who ought to protect the helpless victim, has no other feelings towards her but those of jealousy and rage. . . . I longed for someone to confide in. I would have given the world to have laid my head on my grandmother's faithful bosom, and told her all my troubles. But Dr. Flint swore he would kill me, if I was not as silent as the grave. . . . I was very young, and felt shamefaced about telling her such impure things. 136

The various hues of black and brown African Americans testify to the long history of sexual violence. Jacobs laments her exclusion from the *imago Dei* and the cult of true European womanhood when she says,

But, O, ye happy women, whose purity has been sheltered from childhood, who have been free to choose the objects of your affections, whose homes are protected by law, do not judge the poor desolate slave girl too severely! If slavery had been abolished, I also, could have married the man of my choice . . . but all my prospects had been blighted by slavery. I wanted to keep myself pure; and, under the most adverse circumstances, I tried hard to preserve my self-respect; but I was struggling alone in the powerful grasp of the demon Slavery; and the monster proved too strong for me. I felt I was forsaken by God and man. ¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Ibid., 526.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 470–72.

Violation of Enslaved Women and Contemporary Contradictions in Black Female Sexuality," in *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies*, ed. Bernadette J. Brooten, 41-60 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 51–52. The legacy of enslaved stereotypes feeds African American's generational lament regarding economic, political, and social afflictions. The "asexual Mammy [Hattie McDaniel in *Gone with the Wind*] and hypersexual Jezebel [Halle Berry in *Monster Ball*]" contributed to black women in America sexuality being labelled as "animal-like and naturally immoral," in contrast to "white women as essentially pure and moral, corruptible, but not innately corrupted."; See also Emilie M. Townes, "From Mammy to Welfare Queen: Images of Black Women in Public-Policy Formation," in *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies*, ed. Bernadette J. Brooten, 61-74 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 64–65. The stereotyping of the Mammy, Matriarch, and Welfare Queen lets European off the hook for a "tax system designed to keep and grow wealth in the hands of those who already have it (Whites); less funding for education, health care, transportation, housing, infrastructures, and other public services in poor areas"; See Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860," *American Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 151–174.

Even in these situations of pain and horror, slaves were not passive. Brent felt ashamed for having to take a European unmarried lover, Mr. Sands, instead of submitting her body to rape by her owner. Yet she chose her lover to enrage her owner. Still, there is more here than meets the eye. She calculated that Mr. Sands would purchase her, and if so, her freedom would be easier to obtain. She was also afraid that her owner would sell her and her children once Dr. Flint's desires were satisfied. Fortunately, having children out of master/slave relationships opened the doors to ask for their freedom. Thus, the selection of her lover was "akin to freedom."

Brent's autobiography should be understood as a lament, for "Delicacy and propriety enjoined [European] ladies from speaking in public, from signing their names in print, and even from permitting their names to be in the public press." The silent prayers of sorrow and lament cry out to anyone and everyone who is willing to hear and see the complex history of slave breeding. This historical sexual violence against Africans and their descendants—male and female—did not cease when the Civil War ended in 1865. It persisted, especially within the Protestant Christian organization of the Ku Klux Klan. 141

Still, European women in the Civil War era were greatly alarmed. They were afraid of blacks: "I fear the blacks more than I do the Yankees," confessed Mrs. A.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 502.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 501.

¹⁴⁰ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 27.

¹⁴¹ Dorothy Roberts, "Paradox of Silence," 44.

Ingraham of besieged Vicksburg."¹⁴² In the middle of the war, 'Miss Ann' and 'Miss Dorothy' discovered their public voices to "express their anxieties—insult, outrage, 'harrow of harrows," dishonor, stain, and molestation" themes of the big monster, the foundations of contemporary hypersexual stereotypes of black males. ¹⁴³ Could it be that the generational stereotypes of the pervasive black males are historically rooted in the sexual exploitation of their fathers, brothers, sons, and overseers? Nevertheless, European women in the South and the North had recourse. ¹⁴⁴ European women had laws, systems, and structures to appeal to in order to maintain the cult of true European womanhood.

Colored Folks' Identity

The resulting outcome was the establishment of "whiteness" as the supreme norm, even in the ordinary ways of life, such as physical expressions and mannerisms, determination of what qualifies as pleasure, and social organization of space and time. ¹⁴⁵ Theologians were complicit: Protestant theology concerning God's "presumed" blessing of whiteness granted Protestant Christians the entitlement to name, enslave, rape, and kill the African and African American "others" without repercussions. ¹⁴⁶ The ability to name

¹⁴² Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 59.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Diane Miller Sommerville, *Rape & Race: In the Nineteenth-Century South*, 242; Ida B. Wells-Barnett "cited the behavior of male slaves during war as evidence that black men were not predisposed to commit outrages upon white women: 'The worlds knows that the crime of rape was unknown during four years of civil war when the white women of the South were at the mercy of the race which is all at once charged with being a bestial one.' Wells-Barnett cited case after case of black men betrayed by their white lovers, who for fear of vigilant neighbors, pregnancy, or venereal disease cried rape to avoid public scorn. In nearly all cases, the black men were lynched or barely escaped being lynched."

¹⁴⁵ Dwight N. Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 8.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 16.

and distinguish people and cultures added to the formation of a racially divided social hierarchy in the United States culture.

Yet, as Ian McFarland argues, the "distinctiveness of human beings within creation lies not in any intrinsic qualities or capacities that people share, but rather, in the differences that mark their lives under God." He further states that the criteria appropriated to "define personhood are in practice shaped by the dominant group within society," which invariably brings with it the authority and power to assimilate the "other" to the norm of the dominant group. He ideological lenses through which they see the world, Christians of European decent interpret and determine who does or does not reflect the *imago Dei*.

Dwight Hopkins contends that the "first interaction and domination of blacks by whites on North American soil would plague an ensuing white Christian theology." ¹⁴⁹ The Eurocentric Christian theology holds captive the image of God. The "white" Anglo U. S. A. culture expects and demands compliance and silence from the poor, non-white, and females. Hopkins proposes that Europeans imported a theological attitude of racial difference to colonial United States of America. In addition, a theological attitude of gender difference was part of such a complex of racialized ideology and theology. Examples of the interwoven nature of empire and European Christian theology are evident in the naming of slave boats: "Brotherhood, John the Baptist, Justice, Integrity,

¹⁴⁷ Ian McFarland, *Difference & Identity: A Theological Anthropology* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2001), viii.

¹⁴⁸ Dwight N. Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over*, 8.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 17.

Gift of God, Liberty, Mary, Hope, and Jesus."¹⁵⁰ Hopkins correctly points out that European/British was the standard of normalcy against which all other peoples were measured.

All forms of communication regarding enslaved African and African Americans implied the political powers of negative naming. In terms of language in the United States of America culture, a way of talking about race relations developed by appropriating and distorting biblical images, symbols, and metaphors, such as "dark," "cursed," "heathen," and "savage." Indeed "black" life emerges from a theory of negativity in colonial and postcolonial United States of America in contrast to the blessing and normalcy of "white" life. Consequently, the naming of blackness references "white" identity. Hopkins argues that "so-called standard English has been established in early America that, under the guise of objectively expressing correct methods of communications, separated the blacks who would inch toward full life from those who would not." As a result, a successful or good slave was one who could mimic so-called "standard" English.

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of "mimicry" in postcolonial studies appropriately describes the dynamics of this process of mimicry. As he explains, "Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. . . . Colonial authority repeatedly turns from mimicry—a difference that is almost nothing but not quite—to menace—a difference that is almost

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 19.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 40.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 41.

total but not quite."¹⁵⁴ One of the established beliefs of European colonization was that if enslaved African and African Americans mastered conversational English and worked hard and honest, they would have access to the same privileges afforded within Western civilization. ¹⁵⁵ However, the enslaved African learned that conversational English included mastering the "American accent" while suppressing their language and culture. Colonial mimicry continues to influence the psyche of the "recognizable other."

Perhaps the most radical alteration of identity was the renaming of slaves by slave owners who "intervened silently in the naming process with their own names, which reflected ownership rather than kinship. It was not uncommon to refer to slaves as John Newton's Sally or Sarah Willingsley's Osborne." The ability to rename slaves denoted the direct power of slave owners in racial and social relations. This power is all the more evident in the contradiction between claims to private property—exercising the right to identify him/herself—and the owner's sacred claim to lord over all of his enslaved "creation." The reality of renaming runs opposite to the Africans and African American's belief that one's name is very much part of the personality of the individual. The act of naming is taken seriously, and a name is chosen with much care and after much consideration. Naming rituals and the power to name likewise underline the vital

¹⁵⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial, 279-286 (London: Routledge), 338, 342.

¹⁵⁵ For example, "Laws prohibited slaves and free blacks from gathering in groups or even conducting their own church services without white observers. By the 1850s, most slave states had similar laws . . . prohibited slaves (and sometimes free blacks) from learning to read or engaging in certain professions, such as pharmacists or gunsmiths. In general, the laws of the South were developed to limit the options of slaves, and free blacks, so that they would be subordinate to white society." Paul Finkelman, "United States Slave Law," 437–38.

¹⁵⁶ Wilma King, Stolen Childhood, 7.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 82.

interplay between the individual's connection to community and the communal obligation to the person. ¹⁵⁸ The celebration of God and the redemptive power of God's Spirit created a context in which blacks could explore, express, construct, and transform their existential condition. If indeed blacks were not socially free to be full citizens in society, their spirituality and celebration of God said otherwise. Through their faith expressions and spirituality, blacks exercised their agency culturally and spiritually to construct their own reality, emotionally insulate themselves from the terrors of dehumanization and subjugation, and with some modicum of "freedom," celebrate their human dignity. ¹⁵⁹

The disconnect experienced by African slaves and African Americans is explained succinctly by W.E.B. Dubois. He too lamented, "Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house?" ¹⁶⁰ In a few sentences, he articulated the African American psycho-social framework of double consciousness as the

sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body. 161

The constant reminder at a conscious and a subconscious level is that the history of African Americans is a record of surviving, thriving, and even flourishing. Nevertheless, the never-ending silent voices of lamentation seek answers: "Am I not human?" The question describes not a posture of being victim but rather one resisting victimization.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 112.

¹⁵⁹ Carlyle Fielding Stewart III, *Soul Survivors: An African American Spirituality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 109–110.

¹⁶⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005), 8.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Among the enslaved, internal screams were rebellious cries to be treated as human, but the outward display of tears indicated once again the social, political, economic, cultural, and theological borders that the dominant society had established to dehumanize them and their children.

Africans slaves confronted the loss of their own identity: many of them did not know their date of birth and given name at birth; they did not have the ability to trace their lineage. They also lamented this loss! James Washington's testimony speaks to this loss: "I underwent the traumas of confronting the need to change from a Negro to a black man. Then from black to Afro-American, and now to African American." People groaned because they could not trace their ancestors. They wondered about their place of origin, the land of their forefathers and foremothers. In moaning and reflecting, they found their land. They asked, "when will I be treated with the same dignity afforded to others? How long will my Christian brothers and sisters refuse to acknowledge that we are also created in God's image? When will the systems and structures based on my complexion be eradicated?"

For generations, the sounds of weeping, mourning, travailing, and groaning have passed down through the blood and sweat of the outcasts within the European colonies and in the United States of America. One does not learn this sound by studying and reflecting on the prescribed Psalms of lament. Rather, one learns this song existentially and experientially, from within the created space of community, from the hostile shores of enslavement, from the inhumane conditions in the slave ships, and from the unabashed

¹⁶² James Melvin Washington, Conversations with God, xxvii.

auctions of slaves. From all these, a long silent cry of lament is uttered. 163

African and African American Generational Trauma

JoAnne Marie Terrell examines the parallels between the African American slave community and the early Christian martyrs. She observes,

Jesus death by crucifixion is a prototype of African American's death by circumscription. This circumscription does not simply entail being proscribed within a class of servants to whites, as in slavery and the post-slavery labor; it involves a history and ongoing experience of social and political interdiction, brutality and death at the hands of white people and white power structure. ¹⁶⁴

She raises the crucial question when dealing with suffering: Can a Christian group of people who affirm the Bible as the inspired word of God, who believe that God speaks directly to them, who claim to have received God's revelation and mystery within their historical contexts, not see that the same God said something about suffering? For African Americans, the question is critical for today. We can also ask how an examination of the historical black collective experience might offer critical and constructive insights regarding contemporary experiences of abuse and oppression. The silent screams of lament of African Americans have never ceased because the unspeakable varying forms of violence to their bodies, minds, and spirits of their children have not ceased. 165

^{163 &}quot;Communities of color experience racism at every level of the criminal justice system, from unjustified searches and traffic stops; to higher instances of arrest for similar conduct; to inequity in bail, higher levels of prosecution, more frequent convictions, and longer prison sentences" in the United States. See Barry, "From Plantations to Prisons," 76.

¹⁶⁴ JoAnne Marie Terrell, *Power in the Blood?*, 34.

¹⁶⁵ The United States Department of Justice published in December 2014, 2.2 million people are in jails and prisons and 4.5 million are on probation and parole—for a total of 6.8 million people. See "Correctional Policies in the United States, 2013," U.S. Department of Justice, accessed April 12, 2016, http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus13.pdf.; The United States has the largest prison population in the world and more than "65 percent" are men, women, and children of color." See Barry, "From Plantations to Prisons," 75.

The psychological effects of these multiple forms of suffering are enormous. Ann Belford Ulanov discusses trauma as constituting collective consciousness. According to her, a collective consciousness of trauma is not a personal "lack but a pattern of lack in shared experience." Speaking about the history of mistreatment of black Americans, she argues that because of their racialized and social location, they are already conditioned to suffer pervasive trauma. Collective consciousness is helpful in understanding the generational silent prayers of suffering and lament. This research acknowledges that this aspect is not only applicable to African American communities but to all communities of "color." That is to say, when a person from the margins experiences constant trauma, such experiences trigger in them an ongoing process of trauma.

In Ulanov's analysis, the psychological consequence of trauma is that one feels "invisible, inaudible, to our self and to the other(s) who injured us." ¹⁶⁷ Ulanov provides a helpful guide in the examination of generations of descendants from Africa who have suffered trauma since the time they were born to the time they die. Ulanov is helpful here. She posits the motif of "knots" to speak of deep levels of woundedness; it is difficult to "untie" or undo those knots. The notion of knots helps us recognize that one's particular experience (within the collective experience of trauma) begins with the realization and acknowledgment that something terrible has occurred. Part of this collective experience of trauma includes denial, the undermining and/or deflection of unbearable hurt and

¹⁶⁶ Ann Belford Ulanov, *Knots and Their Untying: Essays on Psychological Dilemmas* (New Orleans: Spring Journal, 2014), 12.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 28.

bubbling rage. 168 It suggests that the generational trauma intensifies when laments are unheard, disavowed, and negated. Those are tearful laments, heart-wrenching groans; bottomless moans are the sound effects of prayers from the 12.3 million forced laborers. 169

Darnell L. Moore proposes that

it is not uncommon for slavery and racial oppression to be regarded as cultural traumas in that they are spectacles that have been fixated in the collective memory of African-Americans and have been constituted by African-Americans, and others, as being laden with adverse effect, represented as ineffaceable, and regarded as having violated the existence of African-American. Cultural trauma theory allows us to conceptualize trauma not as a single event or a psychogenic disturbance, that is, a disturbance originating in the mind having a psychological origin that affects an individual, but, as Jeffery Alexander suggests, that which is the result of the "acute discomfort that enters into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity."170

His appropriation of a cultural trauma theory is a more proper framework for the discussion of the systematic generational trauma of people of color. He engages the idea of black bodies as a site and embodiment of trauma, and the black church as the site of the responses to embodiment and sexuality. His framework is helpful for understanding all communal laments of racism: the deliberate, systematic eradication of identities, religion, values, traditions, and norms of African American, Latino/a, Asian, Native American, etc. 171

Cultural trauma theory is helpful in framing the psychological collective

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 26.

¹⁶⁹ Bernadette J. Brooten, "Introduction," in. Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies, ed. Bernadette J. Brooten, 1-32 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3.

¹⁷⁰ Darnell L. Moore, "Theorizing the 'Black Body' as a site of Trauma: Implications for Theologies of Embodiment," Theology & Sexuality, 15 no. 2 (May 2009): 184.

¹⁷¹ Prayers of lament of the voices from the margins serve to vent and combat generational selfhatred due to the internalization of European standards of beauty, speech, culture, and acceptability.

consciousness. One of the spiritual modes of translation of trauma was silent prayers of sorrow and lament. It is an understanding that defies "modern" logic because it highlights the resilience of these people. It allows for the active celebration by a socially despised people as those that can converse with the triune God despite extraordinary historical, social, economic, and theological challenges to and assaults on their identity as *imago* Dei. Cultural trauma theory provides an interpretative frame for conceiving verbalized and nonverbalized prayers of sorrow and lament. One can concur with Moore that bodies remember and bodies speak. At the same time, it can be added that there is a vast collection of emotional and earnest prayers residing within the bodies of the oppressed. Yes, there are times when they feel forsaken by God. Yes, there are days when they are sick-and-tired of being sick-and-tired. Still, the historical and daily traumas of racism render them dependent on asserting their agency: we too have impact—we are not a throwaway people! Discourse with the triune God in silence is not void of speech or meaning. Throughout a history that kept them oppressed from speaking out, from praying, and even from worshiping, they have recognized the mystery of the triune God who dwells within their embodied trauma, who wanted to know what happened, who witness their oppressions, and who listened intently as they struggled to speak the unspeakable.

God recognizes those that were terribly oppressed. Even as they were deprived of their languages, cultures, and names, and often forbidden to learn the written words of Holy Scripture, the triune God granted them the gift of lamentation. Their collective trauma rendered their verbal rage into a shared language of silent protest, which became the mode of existence and agency for those people who felt they were being annihilated

and could not bear the pain.

The silent prayers of sorrow opened a holy space for the unconscious and conscious shedding of tears, wailing, rocking, moaning and groaning. The silent prayers of lament allowed for a shared language of resistance. This language was a silent cry of justice for the forgotten, marginalized and repressed. Lament became the unspoken language of these invisible communities as they recognized the limits of spoken words, and as they sought to find expression for the untranslatable trauma they endured. Placed within their traumatized bodies are languages that transformed their anguish and experience of pain. Their faith in God and the activity of the Spirit changed their present reality of hell into a posture of hope.

One can conclude that "Yes, [the Black body] is a site of trauma that bears many painful memories, haunting ghosts, and terrifying manifestations; yet, it is Divine, Spirit, Grace and it is good." Through lament, they—in their interaction with God—changed their generational trauma into a generational hope.

Conclusion

The enslaved voices were silenced because their white "Christian" slave masters and misses did not think they reflected the *imago Dei*. The Europeans saw the Africans and their descendants as work mules, infantile servants, and embodied perverse hypersexual non-persons. The universal church, believers everywhere, should be thankful that their stories are being told and should be intentional in retelling their stories. This is not a rehashing of African slaves or African Americans as victims. Rather, this story has sought to show that even in their "non-entity" condition, enslaved Africans and their

¹⁷² Darnell L. Moore, "Theorizing the 'Black Body,' 187.

descendants found a sense of agency and resilience through their faith, spirituality, and prayers of lament and sorrow.

It is gratifying that despite their enslaved status, they left us a legacy of testimonies of what exactly happened to them. There is also an inheritance of their profound sense of spirituality and connectedness with God. Part of that inheritance is our broader understanding that talking to God includes communing in silence, moans, groans, and tears. We also inherit their sense of confidence that the Most High hears the cries of alienated and isolated peoples.

The dehumanizing effects of enslavement for the 12.5 million Africans were an incubator for silent, wailing, screaming, verbalizing prayers of sorrow and lament.

They lamented the separation from everything that reshaped their identity. They lamented that they had to abandon their African cultures and assimilate as working mules and breeding animals. Yes, silent prayers of their sorrows and prayers of their laments were instrumental as they resisted their experience of dehumanization and loss of human dignity. Slavery forced their bodies and minds to disconnect; screaming to God in silence became their only recourse. Silent prayers of sorrow and lament for the generational sins of racism and classism against the African and African American peoples were one response for addressing the pain of injustice. ¹⁷³

Yes, enslaved African and their descendants verbalized their lament and forcefully resisted their extreme oversexualization. They countered racist stereotypes of

¹⁷³ Love Henry Whelcher, Jr., Lecture at the Thirteenth Annual C.M.E. Pastors Conference entitled "The Genius of the Black Preacher," January 2009 (Phillips School of Theology at the Interdenominational Theology Center: Atlanta), 16–22; Whelcher offers that because of the hostility directed at enslaved Africans and their descendants (i.e., language, culture, and values), their assimilation processes should be viewed as racialized identity theft. These practices consisted of dehumanization, depersonalization, desexualization, and desocialization.

black women and men that reduced them to sexual objects, more libidinous than

European women and men. They seemed to have no recourse, yet they screamed, cried,
danced, and shouted. They moaned and groaned, lamenting their cultural genocide and
the murder of their own identities. They were forced to re-socialize into a theological
system where racialized slavery was understood as ordained and sanctioned by God. 174

They made it through two hundred and forty-five years of generational enslavement
because they knew within their spirit that God was with and for them. God saw them, and
God heard their embodied lament, tears of lament, their anguished laments, dancing-tokeep-from-dying laments, and midnight moaning-and-groaning laments. The Spirit of the
Living God assured them of His love and presence even in the context of their living hell.
Even today, the generational prayers of laments that continue within The Black Lives
Matters Movement scream about the senseless death of mothers, fathers, sisters and
brothers.

Record my misery; list my tears on your scroll- are they not in your record?

Psalm 56:8

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO:

FOLKS DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO SAY

From the straw of the delta,
I reach for the desired sky
The bird choosing seeds and nightingales singing
Which life do I owe and forget?
Which kind of bird that forever pecks the wood
Forever attached to a delta's quagmire
Forever plaiting a silent curse
The pitiful cry binds its own life... 175

When death has occurred
Women leave their hair uncombed!
They remove all beads
And necklaces,
Because of sorrows.
The woman who adorns herself
When others are wailing
Is the killer!
She comes to the funeral
To congratulate herself. 176

Sin, he reflected, is not what I usually thought to be;
It is not to steal and tell lies.
Sin is for one man to walk brutally over the life of another and to be quite oblivious of the wounds he has left behind.
And then for the first time a real prayer rose up in his heart. 177

Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. —1 John 4: 20

¹⁷⁵ In Trầm Hương's *Kỳ Nam*, translated "Letter to the Daughter on the Other Side of the Ocean," in a personal email on March, 25, 2016, she reports, "More than thirty years ago, leaving the Delta for Sai Gon with a torn bag to pursue a career in literature, I wrote this poem." Sai Gon is the unofficial name of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

¹⁷⁶ Okot p'Bitek, Song of Lawino, 55.

¹⁷⁷ Shusaku Endo, *Silence* (New York: Taplinger, 1980), 132.

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the ways in which silent prayers of sorrow and lament play a central role in the spirituality of African Americans were described, starting with the original experience of slavery of their African ancestors. ¹⁷⁸ It was argued that silent prayers of sorrow and lament are silenced and made absent from mainstream discussions on prayer. The discourses and practices within lament scholarship frequently conflate and ignore the voices from the margins by insisting that lament begins with verbalized words. As pointed out in the first chapter, some of the laments of former slaves are now readily accessible via written transcripts and contents of oral history that include the anguish sounds of their sorrow. ¹⁷⁹

Silent prayers of sorrow and laments are not unique to African Americans. They are also manifest among people of color. However, there is an apparent lack of their visibility within the academy. To overcome the presumption that the research and discourse on lament included the voices from the margin, the term lament has been extended to include "silent" prayers of lament. Traditional Western descriptions of lament either omit people of color or offer a cursory page or footnote to include Liberation, Black, and Womanist theologies with no intention to seriously engage these theological currents in-depth. These underrepresented voices are writing from different

¹⁷⁸ Henry Louis Gates Jr, "How Many Slaves Landed in the United States," n.p. There were more than 12.5 million African people who were enslaved and whose bodies were violated.

¹⁷⁹ Library of Congress, "Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938," accessed November 6, 2017, https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938; this collection includes "2,300 first-person accounts of slavery and 500 black-and-white photographs of former slaves."

¹⁸⁰ The following recent scholarships on lament provide a cursory discourse on the lament from the voices from the margin: Kathleen Billman and Daniel Migliore, *Rachel's Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope*; Rebekah Eklund, *Jesus Wept: The Significance of Jesus' Laments in the New Testament*

historical experiences and cultural contexts of prayers of lament. They share much in common with African Americans in the sense that they have also experienced the destructive effects of Western European colonization, including internally in the United States, as well as imperialism in their insidious expressions of racism, sexism, and classism. Much like African Americans, the silent prayers and laments of these communities are screaming for survival and restoration of their human dignity.

Womanist theology seeks to understand the oppressions of race, class, and gender in communities of color around the world, challenging European supremacist claims and colonization. In other words, it seeks to rethink how these communities might unify against what Cheryl Townsend Gilkes refers to as "economic exploitation," "political subordination and exclusion," and "systematic cultural humiliation" that have produced and reproduce generational trauma. ¹⁸¹ Therefore, this chapter explores how notions of lament and prayers of sorrow find their way into other ethnocultural groups. The focus is on scholars corresponding with the three regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. As demonstrated, scholars from these regions engage prayers of lament and sorrow differently. Each of these continental regions of the world is large, and proper discussion falls outside the scope of this chapter. Thus, this study will limit itself to providing samplings of scholars for each of the regions to illustrate some of the ways in which questions of lament and sorrow are engaged. As noted in the introduction, this research will appropriate and extend Solivan's framework of orthopathos. Indeed, as Solivan

(New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016). It would appear that Western scholarship on lament omitted serious examination of racism and classism, therefore, excluding the African American, Native American, Latino, and other people group experiences.

¹⁸¹ Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "We Have a Beautiful Mother: Womanist Musings on the Afrocentric Idea," in *Living the Intersection: Womanism and Afrocentrism in Theology*, ed. Cheryl J. Sanders, 21-42 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 34.

notes, lament that is Spirit-infused is transformative, especially for marginalized people. At the same time, however, the Holy Spirit not only moves on us to lament the burdens, sin, and suffering about which God feels pain but also empowers us to respond and resist such suffering.

Lament in the Face of Political Suffering in Africa

In Mercy Amba Oduyoye's book, Hearing and Knowing Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa, she surmises that prior to the turbulent 1960's, the only recognized theology was confessional like Lutheran or German: "Asian theology, black theology, water-buffalo theology, and so on, did not exist as recognizable bodies of distinctive Christian thought." The counter-cultural movements of the 1960s heightened a sense of awareness of geographical exclusion and led to the inclusion of other theological discourses. Silent minority voices appropriated the tools of the academy in their articulations. For many, it was not a search for validation but an expression of lived and embodied theology experiences. Western theologies rooted in European culture often enforced the silencing of those theologies that did not meet their claims to universal applicability. As an expression of resistance, invisible and marginalized communities transposed their oral histories into publications. The people from the margins penned their painful historical accounts along with their laments. In the reality of incomprehensible anguish, their writings tell the story of how these peoples from the margins experienced the incomprehensible love of the triune God.

Silent prayers of sorrow and lament in Africa have various embodied expressions.

This dissertation investigates political suffering in the writings of Isaiah Dau within the

¹⁸² Mercy A. Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 1.

context of civil war in the country of Sudan. Prisca Tanui Too examines the "causes of the civil war and why it has become difficult to obtain peace" between a mostly Muslim Arabic-speaking Northern Sudanese and a mainly Christian Southern Sudanese. The Sudanese Civil War, which started in 1955 and extends to the present, only enjoyed eleven years of peace. Dau testifies that "the psychological, emotional, economic and spiritual impact of war and suffering is deeply embedded in our minds. War is all we have known" since 1955. The political suffering rooted within the complexity of colonization, political domination, foreign interventions, religious intolerance, economic differences, and racism destroyed many of the elements that gave cohesion to this African society.

Dau laments this reality of pain and sorrow. As he writes, he has lost most of his family in the war. 185 The Sudanese people experience silent screams of anguish, fear, and anger because of the physical and psychological death and near-death experiences of loved ones. These are expressions of grief, pain, and suffering in the face of traumatic loss and the absence of Sudanese traditional grief, mourning, and sometimes even burial rituals. Even today, the ubiquitous trauma of civil war continues to infringe on the survivors in Northern and Southern Sudan and the scattered refugees on both sides of the civil war.

This is aggravated by the presence of non-Sudanese who have enslaved people and destroyed their traditional society. The Sudanese had no choice but to acquiesce.

¹⁸³ Prisca Tanui Too, "A History of the Sudan Conflict," *African Ecclesial Review* 44 no 3-4 (June-August 2002): 96.

¹⁸⁴ Isaiah Majok Dau, Suffering and God: A Theological Reflection on the War in Sudan: Suffering and God (Nairobi: Paulines, 2002), 11.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

Nevertheless, they remained defiant. This tension led to silent prayers of sorrow and lament for deliverance as testimonies of the endurance and toughness of millions of Sudanese. Lament responds to the loss and suffering of the wars. Silent prayers of sorrow and lament, prayed in protest of the imminent ongoing threats of civil war, are a way of finding relief when one is facing real danger.

Dau shares his insights regarding the sinfulness of humanity. He affirms, "[the] biblical record has it that from the fall of humanity, sin and suffering entered the world." However, how can one reconcile free choice with the inescapable "problem of evil and suffering" while, at the same time, recognizing that not all kinds of sufferings and evil are caused by human agency? The importance of invoking moral free agency highlights the dynamics of embodied evil and suffering and helps us understand inherited forms of lament. Certainly, the church has a moral responsibility to hear the silent prayers of sorrow and lament over war-torn countries, genocide, and corruption.

Might the church's faithful lament expose political suffering? Dau argues that in his context, suffering and evil are intentionally used interchangeably with the sense that "[it] may be true that not all suffering is evil but it is also true that suffering is inseparable from the problem of evil." He appropriates Mary Ann Fatula's definition of suffering as "the disruption of inner human harmony caused by physical, mental, and emotional forces experienced as isolating and threatening our very existence. As deprivation of

¹⁸⁶ Isaiah Majok Dau, "Following Jesus in a World of Suffering and Violence," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31 no. 4 (October 2007): 359.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 366.

¹⁸⁸ Isaiah Majok Dau, Suffering and God, 18.

human good, suffering is inseparable from the mystery of evil." The multifaceted ways of pain have a direct correlation to all the various expressions of lament.

Dau develops a theology of suffering, arguing that "if the cross provides the basis of a distinctive response to suffering, the community provides the environment, the place for that same response to be genuinely Christian." Dau frames four Christian community dimensions of suffering—or what I believe is the lived expression of Christian love. For him, the Christian community provides encouragement from God's word, engages in incessant prayer, constitutes companionship, and provides material assistance for those who suffer. In this way, Christians know what it means to share in the "koinonia of Christ's sufferings." 191

Dau claims that silent prayers of sorrow and lament are expressions of the koinonia of Christ's sufferings. He constructs his theology of suffering amid personal and communal political suffering. As a Sudanese theologian, he speaks to the experience of pain, fear, distress, death, and decay by drawing on the triadic framework of the Holy Spirit, scripture, and community. His prophetic lament concerning the embodied reflection of koinonia of Christ's sufferings exemplifies the injustices inflected upon the universal church. As he notes, "If the Sudanese war were adequately covered by the world media like the genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia or the recent crises in Kosovo and

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 18.

¹⁹⁰ Isaiah Majok Dau, "Facing Human Suffering: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," in *Suffering, Persecution and Martyrdom: Theological Reflections*, eds. Christof Sauer and Richard Howell (AcadSA and VKW, 2010), 120.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 121.

East Timor, the extent of the destruction, suffering and loss of life would have horrified the world."¹⁹²

As mentioned earlier, the biblical concept of participating in Christ's suffering is not limited to our brothers and sisters in Africa as is the case in Dau's work or African Americans as demonstrated in the previous chapter. Christ's blood informs and unites Christians through Jesus' love. The suffering of Christ informs our association, participation, and communion. It is now time to reflect on the silent prayers of sorrow and lament within the context of Asian American and South Korean experiences of han—untranslatable expression of social lament. 193

Lament when Facing Social Suffering in Asia

Anne Anlin Cheng examines the racialization of African Americans and Asian Americans. She notes that "the politics of race has always spoken in the language of psychology" and defines "racial melancholia" as "a sign of rejection and as a psychic strategy in response to that rejection." ¹⁹⁴ In both, European culture and racial others suffer from melancholy. ¹⁹⁵ Silent prayers of sorrow and lament are examples of the articulation of a different language of anguish of the racialized "other." The difficulty is that often the racialized "other" is not often conscious of the complex and sometimes contradictory processes of racialized grief.

¹⁹² Isaiah Majok Dau, Suffering and God, 51.

¹⁹³ Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 15.

¹⁹⁴ Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 28; 20.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., xi.

Sang Hyun Lee offers a helpful discussion of the racialized "other." He shares a personal testimony of what it means for a people group—Asian Americans—to live in the "liminal space" of American society. He writes, "Where are you from?' After fifty-three years in this country, they still asked me, 'Where are you from? . . . every day, someone reminds me that I do not belong here." Lee unmasks the dominant European ideal of America that excludes while claiming it includes the racialized "other" Americans. 197 The "Model Minority Myth," often ascribed to Asian people, masks the silent screams of lament because of racism, sexism, and classism that Asian Americans experience. Antony Alumka also notes the contradictions that even though Asian Americans are generally well educated and thus seen as a "model minority," they are still "outsiders." Unfortunately, Alumka laments, Asian Americans "suffer from the same intellectual scandal as their European-American counterparts. To a large extent, they have accepted mainstream American evangelical theology as synonymous with 'Christianity." 199

According to Lee, in the United States as well as within Asian American communities, the general impressions are that racism against Asian Americans does not exist.²⁰⁰ Meanwhile, Cheng notes that the internalization of the "model minority" is more

¹⁹⁶ Sang Hyun Lee, *From a Liminal Place: An Asian American Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 1.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 29.

¹⁹⁸ Antony Alumka, "The Scandal of the 'Model Minority' Mind?: The Bible and Second-Generation Asian American Evangelicals," *Semeia* 90-91 (2002): 238.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 239.

²⁰⁰ Sang Hyun Lee, From a Liminal Place, 12.

destructive than open racism.²⁰¹ The racialization of Asian Americans has served to silence their laments because of the outstanding achievements of Asian American-owned businesses, while effectively silencing the oppression and disparity among Asian American ethnic groups. The paradox of the "model minority" allows some Asian Americans to be viewed as "white" or possibly residing on the fringe of "whiteness." In this way, Asian Americans silence their prayers of sorrow and lament that would engage in protest regarding racism, classism, and sexism. Internalization of the "model minority" by Asian Americans has resulted in the silencing of their voices even as they appropriate European-American versions of theology. Conceptions of the *imago Dei*, supposedly universalized over human experience but actually restricted to whiteness, have silenced Asian American voices in the development of Christian perspectives that resonate with their unique experiences.

Lee concludes, "prolonged exposure to discrimination is a contributing factor to heart disease, pain, respiratory illnesses, and other chronic health conditions." He emphasizes that Asian immigrants have no problem with "cultural assimilation"—the adoption of many of white America's cultural values and mores. Those Asian Americans who are born here, of course, have all the cultural traits of their white American peers." Asian American histories and experiences differ considerably from African American and Native American. Contrary to widespread perception, one must remember that Mexican Americans and many other Latinos/as were residing on the land that would

²⁰¹ Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race*, 23.

²⁰² Sang Hyun Lee, From a Liminal Place, 13.

²⁰³ Ibid., 29.

become the United States; therefore, these people groups are not immigrants.

Nevertheless, they share much in common in terms of their experience of discrimination and racism as well as their own traditions of prayer and silent lament.

Lee asserts racism is embedded within the American culture "in which white individuals live. When two or more white individuals are together, the racist culture takes over, and white individuals ineluctably and thoughtlessly act according to the cues from that culture." He maintains Asian Americans are denied "structural assimilation" because in the "eyes of the dominant group, [Asian Americans] are never 'one of us." The sinful intentional and deliberate actions of Christians and non-Christians to exploit and misinterpret the foundational truth of the *imago Dei* contribute to nourishing the destruction of human flourishing of underrepresented communities.

The silent screams of lament for Asian Americans do not originate on the shores of the United States, however. Generational silent prayers of sorrow and lament are caused by the history of external colonization of Asian people by the "Portuguese, Spanish, British, French, Dutch, American and Japanese colonial powers." ²⁰⁶ Pui Lan Kwok provides insight into a source of embodied silent prayers of sorrow and lament. The indescribable anguish within the colonial processes includes "sexual violence, rape and torture" of Asian women and men. ²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 12.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 29.

²⁰⁶ Pui Lan Kwok, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology*, *Testament* (Ohio: Pilgrim, 2000), 12.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 20.

Asian women, men, girls, and boys lament their forced sexual enslavement by the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II. 208 Hellena Moon notes, "The so-called 'comfort wo/men' issue has been a 'silent' topic until 1991 when a Korean woman, Hak Soon Kim, first publicly came forward and spoke out about her ordeal." 209 Yani Yoo concludes that over fifty years of silence were due in part because of the silent prayers of sorrow and lament of "comfort wo/men' who committed suicides or were shot, buried alive, and abandoned by the Japanese military." Moon notes with respect to the testimonies of the "comfort wo/men" that a common thread among many of their stories is that "comfort wo/men" came from the lower classes, so it was easy for all of society to ignore their sexual slavery. 211

Similarly, Heesung Chung contends that the "comfort women" numbered somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000 Korean woman and other women who came from "China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Philippines, Indonesia, and Pacific Islands." During World War II, for example, both Korea and Taiwan suffered under the harsh and oppressive colonial rule of Japan. To satisfy the sexual appetite of the

²⁰⁸ In Korea, the population in 1939 was 23,400,000; in World War II, the civilian deaths were 60,000 while the military deaths were 22,182; see C. Peter Chen, "Korea," accessed November 6, 2017, http://ww2db.com/country/korea; Also, "Koreans were even pressured by the colonial authorities to change their names to Japanese names, and more than 80 percent of the Koreans complied with the name-change ordinance." See Asia for Educators, "Korea as a Colony of Japan, 1910-1945,"Accessed October 1, 2016, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main_pop/kpct/kp_koreaimperialism.htm.

²⁰⁹ Hellena Moon, "Voices of Korean 'Comfort Wo/men' in the Wo/men's Human Rights Movement: A Pastoral Care Analysis," *The Journal of Pastoral Theology* 22 no. 1 (Summer 2012): 4.1.

²¹⁰ Yani Yoo, "Han-Laden Women: Korean 'Comfort Women' and Women in Judges 19-21," *Semeia* 78 (1997): 39.

²¹¹ Hellena Moon, "Voices of Korean 'Comfort Wo/men' in the Wo/men's Human Rights Movement," 4.9.

²¹² Hee-Sung Chung, "Spirituality of trans-borders: a narrative of a Korean sex slave," *Pastoral Psychology* 59 no. 4 (August 2010): 484.

Japanese soldiers located throughout the Asian and Pacific region, these sex slaves were forcibly drafted. ²¹³ It is estimated that 80 percent of the enslaved were Korean women between the ages of "eleven and twenty-seven." ²¹⁴ Chung states, "the sex slave served twenty to thirty Japanese soldiers on weekdays, and forty to fifty soldiers on weekends or holidays. Beating, electrical shock, and physical torture were common. Those who refused to obey were often punished with death." ²¹⁵

Korean independence after World War II led to physical, economic, and psychological deprivation. Kwok says that the enslaved sexual exploitation became institutionalized during the Vietnam War for American soldiers so that sexual tourism has now become the largest industry in Thailand. Silent laments of horrors, brutalities, suffering, and starvation continue in the present reality of enslaved sex tourism. Hyun Kyung Chung claims that Asian women's theology is the result of

Asian women's cries and screams, from the extreme suffering in their everyday lives. They have shouted from pain when their own and their children's bodies collapsed from starvation, rape, and battering. Theological reflection has emerged as a response to women's suffering. Throughout the long history of colonization, Asian women have cried out both openly and secretly as they confronted the injustices in their lives. Most of the time no one heard their cries.²¹⁷

Asian women were and are "systematically silenced through domestic violence, rape, public censure, imprisonment, and torture."²¹⁸ Moreover, child sex tourism is on the rise,

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Kwok, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology*, 20–21.

²¹⁷ Hyun Kyung Chung, *Struggle to Be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology Books* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990), 22.

²¹⁸ Kwok, *Introducing Asian Feminist*, 22.

with "children as young as two or three used in parts of Asia" due to the prevalent rate of the HIV and AIDS epidemic among enslaved sex workers.²¹⁹

Chung's refusal to be a victim of colonization has resulted in a theology that is both personally and politically searching for the answers regarding "what it means to be fully human in my struggle for wholeness and in my people's concrete historical fight for freedom."²²⁰ The experience of colonization has deeply shaped the way people in Asia, Africa, and Latin America think about their experiences of faith in God and the way they do theology. Theirs is a theology written because of the experience of racialization, discrimination, and impoverishment. Their theologies include the silent prayers of sorrow and lament.

In Korea, a central concept to identify social suffering is the concept of *han*. It is described variously but often includes the recognition of physical, psychological, social, and spiritual suffering. Chung describes *han* as an internalization of unexpressed anger and resentment that results in physical and mental illnesses. She observes,

Han is the most prevalent feeling among Korean people, who have been violated throughout their history by the surrounding dominant countries. This feeling arises from a sense of impasse. Often Korean people, especially the poor and women, have not had any access to public channels through which they can challenge the injustice done to them. Silenced by physical and psychological intimidation and bodily violence by the oppressor. When there is no place where they can express their true selves, their true feelings, the oppressed become "stuck" inside. This unexpressed anger and resentment stemming from social powerlessness form a "lump" in their spirit. This lump often leads to a lump in the body, by which I mean the oppressed often disintegrate bodily as well as psychologically.²²¹

²¹⁹ Ibid., 21.

²²⁰ Chung, Struggle to Be the Sun Again, 1.

²²¹ Ibid., 42.

Han demonstrates that silent prayers of sorrow and lament provide a crucial contribution to all discourses of prayer and especially prayers of lament. Lived experiences of anger, resentment, shame, frustration, and helplessness are embodied within voiceless and invisible communities. The internal screams seek an audience of compassion and justice. Han is a response to suffering influenced by the assemblage of human issues, concerns, and sins distinctive to Korea.

According to Kwok, "han is a Korean Word that expresses the deep feeling that arises out of the experience of injustice." Chung adds, "This feeling of han comes from the sinful interconnections of classism, racism, sexism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and cultural imperialism which Korean people experiences every day." 223

Andrew Sung Park defines han as a

critical wound of the heart generated by unjust psychosomatic repression, as well as by social, political, economic, and cultural oppression. It is entrenched in the hearts of the victims of sin and violence, and is expressed through such diverse reaction as sadness, helplessness, hopelessness, resentment, hatred, and the will to revenge. ²²⁴

Along the same lines, Meehyun Chung describes han as a "synthesis of both resentment and sadness." Han is a distinctive aspect that emerges from the Korean culture. Soo-Young Kwon notes that "most Korean Minjung theologians call their theology the theology of han . . . Han is the relational consequences of sin; it is the pain experienced

²²² Kwok, Introducing Asian Feminist Theology, 87.

²²³ Hyun Kyung Chung, "'Han-pu-ri': Doing Theology from Korean Women's Perspective," *The Ecumenical Review* 40 no. 1 (January 1988), 30.

²²⁴ Andrew S. Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 10.

²²⁵ Meehyun Chung, *Liberation and Reconciliation: Feminist Theology's Relevance for Korea* (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2014), 20.

by the victimized neighbors."²²⁶ For him, a relationship with Jesus Christ soothes one's *han*, the "frustrated hope, the collapsed feeling of pain, letting go, resentful bitterness, and the wounded heart."²²⁷

Park expands the concept of *han*; for him, it includes "conscious vs. unconscious and active vs. passive expressions" transmittable through generations. ²²⁸ As he puts it, "Dread, horror, anger, resentment, hatred, and even killing" are manifestations of active personal *han*. ²²⁹ Still, han is most commonly experienced as passive personal embodied "self-denigration, low self-esteem, self-withdrawal, resignation, and self-hatred." ²³⁰ Park affirms the failure of human language to express the depth of human suffering. For this reason, "han is essentially untranslatable." ²³¹ It is irreducible to words. The silencing of Korean prayers of sorrow and lament "cannot be spoken, but only cried out or groaned" residing in the "empty soul" of its victim. ²³²

Park nuances our understanding of *han* as having a twofold level of consciousness: the collective conscious and the unconscious. These levels aid in the appreciation of historical and contemporary generational forms of lament. He observes, The collective conscious *han* is "disclosed as people resist the oppressive systems of the

²²⁹ Ibid., 32.

²²⁶ Soo-Young Kwon, "How do Korean Rituals Heal?: Healing of Han as Cognitive Property," *The Journal of Pastoral Theology* 14 no. 1 (Spring 2004), 42.

²²⁷ Andrew S. Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 31.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid., 33.

²³¹ Ibid., 15.

²³² Ibid., 24.

world" in a "collective will to revolt." The collective conscious *han* manifests in "corporate despair" due to long periods of oppression. Indeed, "At the unconscious level, however, *han* is immersed in the ethos of group or racial mourning. Many years of social injustice, political oppression, economic exploitation, or foreign invasions create collective unconscious han."

Park speaks of the collective unconscious *han* as a form of spiritual bondage that is passed down from one generation to another via the "framework of ethnic ethos, tradition, and culture." He argues that as the "collective conscious han toward a person, a group, or a race accumulates for a long time, it becomes the unconscious han of the group or race. This han is subliminal collective resentment." Moreover, the "ethos of racial lamentation" is an example of the passive collective unconscious *han* evidenced in the "moaning spirit" of "hundreds and thousands of years of oppression." ²³⁸

The experience of praying in the Holy Spirit has contributed to the growth of the Yoido Full Gospel Church (YFGC) in South Korea. Its founder, David Yonggi Cho, used to teach that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was an experience distinct from conversion. He divided glossolalia in two categories: "sign" and "gift."²³⁹ He also proposed that spiritual power is connected to Spirit-baptism in the form of miracles, signs, and

²³³ Ibid., 36.

²³⁴ Ibid., 37.

²³⁵ Ibid., 38.

²³⁶ Ibid., 39.

²³⁷ Ibid., 39–40.

²³⁸ Ibid., 40.

²³⁹ Young-hoon Lee, *The Holy Spirit Movement in Korea: It's Historical and Theological Development* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 104.

wonders. Keeping this duality, Cho regarded glossolalia to be the "most common and unique external sign," although, of course, for him glossolalia is not the only evidence of speaking in tongues.²⁴⁰

Similarly, Dongsoo Kim contends that traditionally Korean women have been taught not to express their feelings or emotions freely, in accordance with Confucian philosophy.²⁴¹ However, the Pentecostalism context of prayer and worship gives Korean people the opportunities for the expressions of silent prayers of sorrow and lament. Pentecostal minjung, claims Kim, hope for a release of *han* energized by the work of the Holy Spirit.²⁴² In the words of David Kwang-Sun,

Tongue-speaking is indeed the language of minjung. It is those who have been ill, failed in business, suppressed by their mothers-in-law and by their husbands who received the gift of tongue-speaking. So it is possible to state that through speaking in other tongues minjung feel the release of han, and as a result they can live comfortable lives.²⁴³

Praying in tongues allows the Spirit to access God's power, wisdom, discernment, and revelation even in the midst of "weakness, suffering, imprisonment, scoffing" so that a person can freely express their deepest selves to God in praise, thanksgiving, prayer, and intercession.²⁴⁴ Prayers of lament have undergirded and directed people from the margins even when they were taught not to publicly express their emotions. The "unraveling of

²⁴¹ Dongsoo Kim, "The Healing of Han in Korean Pentecostalism," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 7 no. 15 (October 1999):136.; Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang, eds., *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011); Kimberly Ervin Alexander notes, "One of the salient features of Pentecostalism is it emphasis on healing of the sick." See Kimberly Ervin Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing: Models in Theology and Practice* (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo, 2006), 1.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴² Dongsoo Kim, "The Healing of Han in Korean Pentecostalism," 134.

²⁴³ Cited in Dongsoo Kim, "The Healing of Han in Korean Pentecostalism," 134.

²⁴⁴ Gordon Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 119.

han" in Pentecostal prayer and healing services allows for the historical retrieval of the people's silent prayers of the Spirit. The language of Pentecostal minjung includes screams, moaning, groaning, fasting, shouting, yelling, and weeping. Pentecostal minjung are contextual expressions of prayers of lament seeking for a special time, place, and location to "experience the release of han." ²⁴⁵

Young-hoon Lee traces the emergence of the prayer mountain movement back to the time when South Koreans were liberated from Japanese colonial rule in 1945. Most large churches in South Korea now have their own prayer mountain. ²⁴⁶ He adds that another unique contribution of Korean Pentecostal spirituality is the early morning prayer meetings, which often attract great crowds.

In conclusion, as we can see, *han* is an example of social lament originating from within the experience of pain, sorrow, and injustice by Korean people. *Han* seeks to make visible the invisible communities within the largest continent in the world—Asia. *Han* provides a perspective on prayer, particularly silent prayers of sorrow and lament that could be applicable in the engagement of key interlocutors in India, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Philippines, and Taiwan, to name a few. The Western world needs to hear voiceless cries from around the globe so that their understanding of lament and prayer can be enriched and expanded.

The formation of Latin American liberation theology is understood as the articulation of marginalized communities' silent prayers of sorrow and lament. The poor

²⁴⁵ Kim "The Healing of Han in Korean Pentecostalism," 137.

²⁴⁶ Young-hoon Lee, *The Holy Spirit Movement in Korea*, 103; See prayer mountains in Wonsuk Ma, "Asian (Classical) Pentecostal Theology in Context," in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, eds. Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 58–62.

and the oppressed of Latin America also cry and lament. In what follows, I discuss how these notions of prayers of lament and sorrow are articulated in the Latin American theological context amid protest against injustices, poverty, and oppression.²⁴⁷

Lament & the Suffering of the Poor in Latin America

In this section, the focus is primarily on the writings of Gustavo Gutiérrez. In his *Teología de la liberación* (1971, *A Theology of Liberation*), he emphasizes the Christian duty in civic and political affairs is to aid the poor and oppressed. This research does not want to overemphasize imposed silence; rather, this study wants to pay attention to the silence that draws from deep within, which words cannot express, but where upon investigation, one find the cries of sorrow of those who have suffered injustice.

Addressing issues of the cry of the poor, Gutiérrez argues that "solidarity with the poor implies the transformation of the existing social order. It implies a liberating social praxis: that is, a transforming activity directed towards the creation of a just, free society."²⁴⁸ Gutiérrez reminds the universal church that scripture is clear about our responsibility for those who suffer, about the biblical command to "love one another" (Romans 12:10).

The teachings of Liberation theology interrogate the unjust nature of the suffering of the poor. Suffering and sin provide the context within which to understand and examine the silent prayers of sorrow and lament of the Latin American people. Lament is not a frequent word in the writings of Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Dominican priest considered

²⁴⁷ Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland, trans. Judith Condor, 19-39 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 19.

²⁴⁸ Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Liberation, Theology and Proclamation," in *The Mystical and Political Dimension of the Christian Faith*, eds. Clade Geffré and Gustavo Gutiérrez, 57-77 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1974), 60.

by many as the father of liberation theology. He observes, "The theology of liberation, like any theology is about God. God and God's love are, ultimately, its only theme."²⁴⁹

Prayers of sorrow are not common themes; he tends to emphasize instead Latin

American's contemplative mystical prayers. Nevertheless, Gutiérrez explores why silence

matters in Christian prayer:

Contemplation and practice feed each other the two together make up the stage of silence before God. In prayer we remain speechless, we simply place ourselves before the Lord. To a degree, we remain silent in our practice as well for in our involvements, in our daily work, we do not talk about God all the time; we do indeed live in God, but not by discoursing on God.²⁵⁰

In examining the Book of Job, Gutiérrez asks, "How are human beings to find a language applicable to God in the midst of innocent suffering?"²⁵¹ He suggests two languages are needed in the midst of innocent suffering: the language of contemplation (God's unmerited love) and prophecy (inspired utterance regarding systems and structures of injustices and deprivation)."²⁵² For him, this twofold language is mystical: "Only within the framework provided by mysticism and practice," Gutiérrez observed, "is it possible to develop a meaningful discourse about God that is both authentic and respectful of its object."²⁵³

As he elaborates,

Silence is a condition for any loving encounter with God in prayer and commitment. Experience of the inadequacy of words to express what we live out

²⁴⁹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," 19.

²⁵⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk and Suffering of the Innocent*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), xiii–xiv.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 12.

²⁵² Ibid., 97.

²⁵³ Gustavo Gutiérrez, Essential Writings, ed. James B. Nickoloff, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 52.

in our depths will make our speech both more fruitful and more unpretentious. Theology is talk that is constantly enriched by silence.²⁵⁴

As can be seen, at the core of liberation theologies as proposed by Gutiérrez (and all liberation theologies for that matter) is a theology of suffering shaped by prayers of sorrow and lament with words that are understood, without words and only silence, and with words that are not understood because of the inability of language to convey the depth of the cry of sorrow of the people. Liberation theology includes the articulation of the silent prayer of sorrow and lament out of the experience of the voices from the margin. This makes the historical and contemporary oppression of the underclass visible by making the broader society aware of their plight. 255

The triune God laments over explicit and implicit unlovable thoughts, unlovable words, and unlovable actions. Consciously and unconsciously, the church despises our sisters and brothers by rendering individuals and communities invisible, voiceless, and often powerless. Gutiérrez contends that proclaiming and embodying the love of God requires a more humane and human society for everyone regardless of one's social class.²⁵⁶ In this way, Gutiérrez exposes the ethical ambivalence about love and consideration of "others."

For Latin American liberation theology, the Kingdom of God is the central theme of Jesus' teachings. The Kingdom of God is made "incarnate in historical mediations

²⁵⁴ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), 3.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 8.

²⁵⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Liberation, Theology and Proclamation," 72–73.

which affect all levels-political, economic, social and religious- of human reality."²⁵⁷ The Kingdom of God provides a framework to articulate and critique the injustices against the poor within a broader discussion of systematic discrimination of the unequal valuing of communities of color. Gutiérrez laments three concepts of poverty: (1) material poverty, (2) spiritual poverty, and (3) voluntary poverty as an act of protest and solidarity.²⁵⁸ The poor and downtroddens' silent prayers of sorrow and lament are critiqued and disdained by the universal church. Human dignity deserves more than alms and prayers.

The Parable of the Great Banquet challenges the root of classism by challenging the beliefs and cultural attitudes toward the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. (Luke 14: 12–24). The parable ends with the master telling the servant, "still there is room."²⁵⁹ The servant is charged to go out now to the "highways and hedges and compel people to come."²⁶⁰ Liberation theology in Latin America points to the universal church's banquet tables and critiques the invitation lists, seating arrangements, and the portions and equal distribution of food.

Gutiérrez invites us "to remember [that] to be poor is a way of life. It is a way of thinking, of loving, of praying, of believing and hoping, of spending free time, of struggling for a livelihood."²⁶¹ The Great Banquet parable narrative examines which

²⁵⁷ Claude Geffré, "Editorial: A Prophetic Theology," in *The Mystical and Political Dimension of the Christian Faith*, eds. Claude Geffré and Gustavo Gutiérrez (New York: Herder and Herder, 1974), 15.

²⁵⁸ Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," 25–26.

²⁵⁹ Luke 14:22.

²⁶⁰ Luke 14:23.

²⁶¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Option for the Poor," in *Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Political Theology*, eds. William T. Cavanaugh, Jeffrey W. Bailey, and Craig Hovey, 174-193 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 236.

groups of people receive invitations to the banquet and which communities are missing: Who exactly are the poor, cripple, blind, and lame? Who are the friends, relatives or wealthy neighbors? Who issues the invitations? Who prepares the banquet table? Who purchases and distributes the food? Who makes the seating arrangements? In the same way, today we ought to ask similar questions: who obtains a quality education? Who benefits from wealth inequality? Who will go to bed hungry? Who will not have access to primary resources? Who will oust corrupt politicians? Who will boycott exploitative businesses? Who will promote economic equality and opportunity? Who will join the poor in repentance and lament? Who is hearing the voice of the voiceless?

As we have seen, the individual and social laments of the poor challenge the standards of living of rich societies because of their connection to poorer ones. The cry of the poor articulates the generational and contemporary sounds of Latin Americans' tears of intentional inflections of intolerable sins committed against them, on their shores.

Jesus' love repeatedly ministered and lamented on behalf of the poor, those at the bottom of the social ladder; those whose *imago Dei* is violated because of racism, classism, and other forms of discrimination start here.

Lament among Pentecostals

The *imago Dei* is a primary teaching of the Christian church. Jesus emphasized this teaching when he stated, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13: 34–35). When persons and communities from the margin experience loss, affliction, disappointment, grief, sadness, and regret, they believe that Jesus loves them and enables them to navigate their social reality of

anguish. The social reality of suffering includes their inherited historical marginalization; they were born into communities who daily—consciously or unconsciously—negotiate the intersection between their Christian identity and their experience of discrimination and marginalization.

Does the triune God speak and commune with various disabilities? If some cannot articulate a confessional faith, does this mean they are not created in the imago Dei? If prayers of lament are defined as verbalized words, will the church silence and condemn mentally disabled persons? Amos Yong opposes ableism, which is the "discriminatory attitudes, negative stereotypes, and sociopolitical and economic structures and institutions" that "presumes that people with disabilities are subhumans, menaces to society, or objects of pity."262 He advances a holistic Pentecostal theology of embodiment that goes beyond ideas of healing of disabled bodies and minds to emphasize that the triune God is revealed through the "multiple sensory modalities of the human constitution, even as God redeems and saves us as fully embodied creatures." ²⁶³ He claims that the triune God communes with us regardless of what language we speak or do not speak. Persons with disabilities and chronic illness often suffer from isolation by society and the church, yet many have experienced God in ways that would perplex able persons. God's love extends to the gifts of the Holy Spirit poured out on all of humankind, irrespective of ability, race, gender, or class.

In Samuel Solivan's examination of the "multilingual, multicultural, and multiracial" characteristics of Hispanics/Latinos in the United States of America, he

²⁶² Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 11.

²⁶³ Ibid., 77.

states that the notions of orthodoxy and orthopraxis miss (what he calls) orthopathos, the feeling people experience regarding their "poverty and suffering in a concrete manner."²⁶⁴ As he notes,

Amid our cultural diversity, the orthopathic activity of the Holy Spirit works to achieve the unity sought as a sign of God's reign . . . Our inability to perceive and accept our commonality is the result of our estrangement from God. Our sinfulness distances us from God and each other, thereby requiring reconciliation.²⁶⁵

Orthopathos, I maintain, is a pneumatological transformation of suffering experienced by marginalized groups. The experiences of people who suffer unjustly as a result of racism, sexism, and classism are in direct opposition to God's reign. Therefore, the expressions of pathos must be taken seriously as a norm for theological reflection.

Groaning in the Spirit

Building on Dorothee Sölle's work, Phil C. Zylla defines suffering as a "multidimensional" disruption with four key dimensions: physical pain, psychological anguish, social degradation, and spiritual despondency. ²⁶⁶ Drawing on Simone Weil's insights, he also notes that the presence of all four dimensions is understood and interpreted as experiences of affliction. ²⁶⁷ As he articulates his theology of suffering, he identifies a "first movement" that he notes moves "from mutism to lament." ²⁶⁸ He

²⁶⁴ Samuel Solivan, Spirit, Pathos and Liberation: Toward an Hispanic Pentecostal Theology, 11.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 143.

²⁶⁶ Phil C. Zylla, *The Roots of Sorrow: A Pastoral Theology of Suffering* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), 54.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 10. The three movements include mutism to lament; loneliness to community; and indifference to compassion. Chapters Three, Four, and Five respectively begin developing a paradigm for a pastoral theological engagement of suffering.

describes "mutism" (and not silence) as the sense of "inexpressibility," the first response to severe suffering.²⁶⁹ It is within this first movement that Zylla teases out the "feebleness of known words to communicate the depths of despair" and "groans too deep for words."²⁷⁰ As he says, indescribable anguish forces individuals and communities to discover a "new language" due to the failure of their "known words" to express their deepest agonies.²⁷¹ It is for this reason that he calls for mature "pastoral theological responses to suffering" in order to "tease out the groans, the inarticulate sighs, and to assist in the full expression of suffering."²⁷²

Zylla, however, highlights the role of the Spirit amid suffering. Based on Romans 8, he provides a biblical framing that enable us to understand suffering "as a reality that must be confronted in compassionate protest." He outlines Paul's list of seven forms of suffering included in verse 35: "trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword." He even insists that in this chapter of Romans, we find three kinds of groans: "groaning of 'the whole creation' (8:22), the groaning of the Spirit with 'groans that words cannot express' (8:26), and the inward groaning of the redeemed community of God (8:23)." The groaning of the Spirit reminds those who are suffering to never forget God's love for the people of God manifested in the life, death,

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 11.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 74.

²⁷² Ibid., 87.

²⁷³ Ibid., 131.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 132.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 10.

resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. The Spirit, a gift of God's love that daily seeks to uproot unjust social, economic and political conditions. The empowered liberation of the Spirit reveals the immeasurable love of God in the groans, moans, and sighs that are beyond words. The Spirit endeavors for all of God's creation to experience God's love. Therefore, the Spirit compel the people of God to name and repent from all sins of complacency, greed, and privilege and protest structures that condemns marginalized ethnic groups to a disproportionate amount of "trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword." 276

For Pentecostals/Charismatics, these can be understood as varying levels of prayer. As Gordon D. Fee explains,

With prayer in particular the Spirit helps us in our already/not yet existence. Because in our present weakness we do not know how or for what to pray, the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with "inarticulate groanings" (Rom 8:26-27), an expression that most likely refers to glossolalia (speaking in tongues). 277

Moreover, Paul boasted about how often he spoke in tongues to the Corinthians, yet Fee noted that even within biblical scholarships speaking in tongues are often associated with Pentecostal or charismatic and not Paul, the prolific writer of scripture.²⁷⁸ There is much that we can learn from the life of prayer of the Apostle Paul, one of the most important figures within early Christianity who proclaimed God's love in the midst of extraordinary experiences of suffering. Nevertheless, he prayed with words that were understood,

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 132.

²⁷⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Grand Rapid: Baker Academic, 2011), 147–148.

²⁷⁸ Gordon D. Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, 105; Indeed, stressed that contrary to the stereotype of the Azusa Street Revival of Los Angeles, California as a "wild service of hand-waving fanatics grasping after experiences with the Holy Spirit, there was a quieter side. Early eyewitnesses tell of long periods of soft singing, hushed prayers, and gentle quietness."; Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 38.

without words, and with words which were not understood.²⁷⁹

Historically enslaved Africans and their descendants prayed in the Spirit. Praying in the Spirit included what Fee dubs two kinds of glossolalia, by which he meant "human speech"—which is speech inspired by the Spirit but unknown to the speaker or the hearers—and "angelic speech"—which is speech inspired by the Spirit to speak in a heavenly dialect.²⁸⁰ For Fee, even though unintelligible to the speaker, such prayers "in the Spirit" edify the one speaking and those hearing the spiritual utterance.²⁸¹

African foremothers and forefathers modeled how to "pray through" all forms of oppression until the "peace of God" rested in their souls or until they were confident that God not only heard them, but most importantly that God saw them. Praying through included inarticulate groaning, moaning and glossolalia; it included silent prayers of sorrow and lament. These historical and contemporary prayer warriors were empowered by the Holy Spirit to survive and thrive despite different forms of oppression that shattered their ability to put their pain and sorrow into words.

As demonstrated, people from the global South deal with varying forms of oppression, which resonate with the experience of African Americans. These communities have also developed their own forms of engaging in silent prayers and lament. These ethnocultural communities uncover the arrogance behind reducing suffering and pain to linguistic articulations and sophisticated reasoning.

²⁷⁹ Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 170.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 114.: 1 Corinthians 13:1.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 110.

In the same way, we also learned that the Holy Spirit's inarticulate groans, together with the groans of creation, anticipate the day of redemption. In moments of shattered speech of anguish, fear, and terror, God gives believers the Holy Spirit to pray for us. The Spirit's groaning for us is rooted in the love of God. Silence means no words, but it does not necessarily mean the absence of sound. It is the love of the triune God for all creation which provides a way for us to express the inexpressible via human groans of anguish, despair, and silent prayers of lament.

Nevertheless, hope and awe are often present. Silent prayers also embody the expectation and anticipation that God will intervene. Moved by the Spirit, those who suffer or find themselves discriminated against or marginalized cry out silently to God. This silence sweeps over individual and communal prayers, which creates new moments for experiencing the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Zylla's threefold groaning paradigm is helpful in the discussion of silent prayers of sorrow and lament. It is evident in the description of his first movement that while he acknowledges the importance of silence as the first step in sorrow and anguish, he maintains lament as a prayer of known words. While his theology of suffering includes silence, groans, and sighs, he fails to recognize that they are an entry point to silent prayers of sorrow and lament. In fact, communication with the triune God does not start with spoken words. Hannah's first recorded prayer in scripture was in the form of a prayer of the heart, for "her lips were moving but her voice was not heard"; the

²⁸² Phil C. Zylla, *Roots of Sorrow*, 84. According to Zylla "Lament therefore moves beyond mutism to express in full the experience of suffering . . . Saying 'how bad things really are' is at the core of the lamentation." I argue that the absence of articulate words does not imply the absence of speech and communication. Silence, moans, tears, groans, and inarticulate speech are powerful tools of communications.

manifestation of Hannah's prayers included her "deep anguish," "weeping bitterly," being deeply troubled as she cried out to God, bearing witness to her "great anguish and grief" (1 Samuel 9:10-16).

Moaning, groaning, fasting, shouting, dancing, and weeping are expressions of prayers without words, as people lament the injustices that plague their communities. Hannah embodied silent prayers of lament. Nevertheless, in her inaudible prayers, she brought all of her sorrow to the triune God; Hannah worshiped God in her silence. She brought her sorrow, the ache of bareness, and the embittered wounds in her heart; voiceless, Hannah prayed.

Thinking of Hannah's example begs the question: do we not have Hannah's daughters weeping in silent anguish in our communities? In the words of Solivan, "No normal human being seeks suffering for suffering's sake . . . they who suffer do so because of their inability to overcome the structured [classism, racism, and sexism] that oppress them." For him, a theology of suffering, and I would say of silent prayer and lament, must seek physical, psychological, social, and spiritual transformation. 284

Conclusion

Silent prayers of lament and sorrow are found in the various communities of the global South. The aim of this chapter was to provide a brief sampling of silent prayers of sorrow and lament from those voices that are often silent and absent from dominant Christian discourses on prayer and mainstream scholarship. I am painfully aware that I provided a cursory sketch of complex historical contextual embodied theologies.

²⁸³ Samuel Solivan, Spirit, Pathos and Liberation, 61.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 100.

Nevertheless, this cursory exploration shows how people from other ethnocultural communities give language to their own understanding of prayers of sorrow and lament.

Finding these instances of lament and prayers of sorrow give us a clear indication of how lament plays a central role in interacting with God. It is for this reason that I argue that lament is a gift from God, given to the people of God to cry out in anguish and protest, and to uncover injustice. We are called to participate in prayers of sorrow and lament especially for those who are 'the least of these,' the outcasts—communities that reside at the fringes of the dominant society.

One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: "Power belongs to you, God, and with you, Lord, is unfailing love"; and, "You reward everyone according to what they have done." Psalm 62: 11–12

CHAPTER THREE:

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING

My master used to ask us chillum, 'Do your folks pray at night?' We said 'no' 'cause our folks had told us what to say. But the Lawd have mercy, there was plenty of that goin' on. They'd pray, "Lawd, deliver us from under bondage.' 285

This is a powerful weapon of all oppressed peoples. Often they communicate with each other in a language that has a double meaning...They make their bodies and their minds commit to memory ways of behaving that will tend to reduce their exposure to violence...If the choice is between annihilation and survival, does that mean that deception and hypocrisy take in a moral quality that drains them of their toxin. ²⁸⁶

Introduction

In chapter two, laments were presented as a sampling of silent prayers of sorrow derived from marginalized communities. In chapter three, the peculiar sounds of lament will be examined. This brief survey includes the kinds of languages and vocabularies that exist outside the mainstream of standard, formal language of lament. The classification of lament takes seriously the significant linguistic and cultural differences incarnate in the *imago Dei*. Western European and Anglo North Atlantic theologians have not examined racism as an operative category in the experience of suffering. People of all races, ethnicities, and backgrounds suffer. The fact that all share this in common can be easily used to undermine the impact of racism; nevertheless, Womanist theology demonstrates the intersection of various injustices with racism. The articulation of Womanist theology of lament grants space for the voices of African descendants to analyze the language of lament derived from the tridimensional suffering of racism, classism, and sexism as endured by black women. First, this study will give three personal testimonies of racial

²⁸⁵ Stephen Ashley, ed., "Mary Lee," in *Christ, Prayer and American Slavery*, American Slaves and the Christian Church, 54-55 (Lexington: CreateSpace Independent, 2012), 54.

²⁸⁶ Howard Thurman, *Deep River and The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death* (Richmond: Friends United, 1975), 45–46.

fatigue that has led to lament. By "racial fatigue," I mean the daily wearisome experiences of racialization in the United States. Second, M. Shawn Copeland's Womanist perspective on suffering rooted in "Black women's account of pain and anguish, of their individual and collective struggles to grasp and manage, rather than be managed by their suffering" will be examined. ²⁸⁷ Third, this chapter will explicate the language of lament and hope from the perspective of an African American Pentecostal Womanist.

The content of this third chapter considers testimonies of lament resulting from the dismissal of black women's voices. Such dismissal is what the old folks of my tradition called, "puttin' that black gal in 'er place." The way language is used by the dominant culture informs one's identity and gives clues into how one is or is not valued by members of that culture. As an African American Pentecostal Christian woman, my lived experience attests to the devaluing of black women's voices and the rise of their silent payers of sorrow and lament. This research draws from my experience to illustrate the type of lament and hope that remains invisible in traditional theologies of lament. The intention is to provide a Pentecostal Womanist framework for including the lived experiences of persons like me, which I hope to articulate more fully in chapter four.

This chapter will examine a brief sampling from a representation of important figures in the fields of Liberation theology and Womanist theology. Even though various forms of Liberation theologies, including Womanist Theology, have not written extensively about prayers of lament per se, the literature of these theologies reflects a

²⁸⁷ M. Shawn Copeland, "'Wading Through Many Sorrows': Towards a Theology of Suffering in Womanist Perspective," in *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspective on Evil & Suffering*, ed. Emilie M. Townes, 109-129 (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), 111.

wrestling with lament in its engagements with evil and suffering. The focus is particularly on a Womanist theology that engages the tridimensional suffering of racial, class, and gender oppression.

My Lived Experience

In drawing from personal experience, this study will note three particular instances that illustrate the kind of silent lament being described. First, as a seminary student, it became evident to me that the majority of the urban seminary classes did not have writings by authors of color listed as required textbooks, and there were only one or two texts by authors of color listed under supplemental books for consideration in the completion of assignments. The second item that was obviously absent was any publications by Pentecostal or Charismatic scholars. I considered approaching this subject with the advisory professor whom I felt would be open to revisions to his syllabus. It was not a request for him to alter his list of required textbooks but rather a recommendation for him to add to his bibliography of other recommended books. I assumed that it would be easier to address the absence of the fastest growing religious movement instead of the exclusion of voices of color. My intention was to have an informal conversation outside of classroom time.

I brought this matter to his attention with an offer to email a list of Pentecostal and Charismatic scholars within his discipline for his consideration. He looked me in the eye and replied, "Are there any Pentecostal scholars?" He spat those words at me and immediately walked away. Understandably, I felt the dismissal of my religious experience like those shared historically by poor blacks, yellow, brown, red and white bodies. My thoughts and heritage were dismissed with one sentence, leaving me shocked

and speechless. I was silenced by the attack. Not knowing and perhaps not caring about the effect of his words on me, my professor walked away. I sat without words, shaken to my core and feeling as if I had been physically slapped. Sometimes, there are no words to express the effect of an assault upon our very being; sometimes, we are left to lament in silence.

On a second occasion, as a doctoral student at Regent University in Virginia, a few of my peers and I went to the house of one of our professors. We sat at the dinner table, eating and having great conversations. I was the only person of color. Then, a question was posed: "Valerie, Nat Turner testified that the Spirit of God told him to kill all those white people. What do you think about that, and what does that say about the Holy Spirit?" I replied, "The same Holy Spirit that allowed white men to rape black girls and women and castrate black male bodies was the same Holy Spirit speaking to Nat Turner." It was to convey that the same misconception of the Spirit that led Turner to violence had also led to the numerous atrocities that whites committed against black people. Prior to this time, there had been no topic of Nat Turner, slavery, or the Holy Spirit. However, it seemed to me like the professor and others present felt it was the time to say, "Let's require the African American woman to speak on behalf of all African descendants, clarifying their thoughts, behaviors, and actions."

Sometimes our lament comes from racial fatigue. We become racially fatigued when we are put on the spot day in and day out, having our worth measured by outward performance stereotypes and not simply in the fact that we all are created in the *imago*Dei with inherent worth. We are racially fatigued due to hurt, anger, and shame when the audience refuses to acknowledge and speak out against atrocities, such as shootings or the

psychological and emotional death of an unarmed person of color. There are no words to describe the depth of pain that comes with having to defend one's worth over-and-overagain.

The third event happened to me as a member of the oldest black sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA), founded in 1908. In 2016, we celebrated our 60th boulé in Atlanta, Georgia. One of my European neighbors is a vendor for the AKA national headquarters. While lamenting that I would not be able to attend due to financial restraints, coupled with the fact that all my focus and energy were on the writing of my dissertation, she stated, "Valerie, there are some things that need to be done because I had never ever heard of AKA before I started working with them. I mean, white people need to hear about their community services, their commitment to education, and that this group is comprised of educated and professional black women." This retort rendered me silent, and I simply smiled. The thought came to me, "You have never thought of a professional educated organization for black women performing acts of service and promoting education in their communities?" I also thought, "Why do I have to inform you about my world? Why in the 21st Century is the onus still on people of color to create opportunities to share the counter-narratives to the media's stereotypes?" Sometimes, our silent lament is over the burden we still carry that weighs down our souls.

Martin Luther King, Jr. observed, "Whites, it must frankly be said, are not putting in a similar mass effort to reeducate themselves out of their racial ignorance. It is an aspect of their sense of superiority that the white people of America believe they have so little to learn." My three testimonial narratives highlight a few intentional and non-

²⁸⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon, 1986), 10.

intentional assaults to my identity that I have experienced. This attack occurs even after one chooses the right time, right words, and tries to frame it in a way that does not place the 'other' on the defense. Nevertheless, I was dismissed!

These experiences of my life are examples of what African American women the world over, along with many other women of color, have experienced and continue to experience at the intersections of racism, sexism and classism. The suffering and pain that is experienced is particular. The framework that is needed to understand these experiences must also be particular to African American women and people of color for that reason.

Toward a Womanist Theology of Suffering

As indicated earlier, this section engages M. Shawn Copeland's explorations of a Christian understanding of humanity beginning with the *imago Dei*. The presence of Christ is represented by the diversity of human communities in which many of these communities' experiences of humanity are threatened or challenged. A Womanist theology of suffering acknowledges different African Americans' Christian response to suffering. Diana L. Hayes argues that the plight of women of color is not unique to Protestant Christians: "women of color were only seen as 'ideal' models for slavery, sexual abuse, racial discrimination and ...[y]et somehow they remained women 'clothed with strength and dignity." A Womanist theology of suffering takes seriously the range of African American women's cognitive practices. It asks, "Where is God in the life of African American women, those who are bound by the triad of sexism, classism,

²⁸⁹ Diana L. Hayes, "Faith of Our Mothers: Catholic Womanist God-Talk," in *Uncommon Faithfullness: The Black Catholic Experience*, eds. M. Shawn Copeland, LaReine-Marie Mosley, and Albert J. Raboteau, 129-146 (Orbis: Maryknoll, 2009), 129.

and racism? If Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed the 'good news' that the 'Kingdom of God' has come, why are our souls and bodies still crying? Are we destined to stay in survival mode, or will we one day be able as a people cross over to the Promised Land on this side of glory?"

In M. Shawn Copeland's Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being, she argues for a re-envisioning of theological anthropology from the understanding of black women's experiences. By placing the bodies of black women at the center, her research engages ethics and theology with questions of race, gender, and sexuality. She seeks to answer the question of what it means to be human in the bodies of black women. This question challenges the traditional treatments of theological anthropology, which is often articulated as universal. Here, Copeland attempts to recover the voices of the poor red, brown, yellow, and white communities by focusing upon black women and their bodies. This inquiry provides graphic details of physical and sexual violence and portrays "visible black bodies of pain" 290 that have been "marked—made individual, particular, different, and vivid—through race, sex, and gender, sexuality, and culture."²⁹¹ The incarnate body of Jesus of Nazareth, she contends, makes the "Infinite God present, disrupts every pleasure of hierarchy, economic, cultural domination, racial violence, gender oppression, and abuse of sexual others" through his flesh, marked body, and blood.²⁹²

Copeland's critical engagement of the new and other crucified bodies, besides the

 $^{^{290}}$ M. Shawn Copeland, $\it Enfleshing\ Freedom:\ Body,\ Race,\ and\ Being\ (Minneapolis:\ Fortress,\ 2010),\ 3.$

²⁹¹ Ibid., 56.

²⁹² Ibid., 65.

crucified body of Jesus, honors the enfleshed bodies of black women. She constructs key tenants that should be included in a theology of suffering from a Womanist perspective that helps us to understand the interconnections between racism and suffering.

Copeland's framework starts with the testimonies, narratives, and autobiographies of enslaved and runaway slaves. She underscores the appropriation of Christianity by enslaved Africans who instituted distinctive "psychic moments, spiritual experiences, preaching and teaching, rituals of passage and praise, spirituals and shouts and dance, visions and vocations," which constitute "fundamental resources for womanist resistance." For Copeland, the essential features of a womanist theology of suffering include a hermeneutic of suspicion and hermeneutics of resistance.

In the discussion that follows, I will examine a few features included in the canvas of her initial musing of a Womanist theology of suffering: "remembering, retelling, resisting, and redeeming." These four signposts serve as the backdrop to a brief survey of Womanist and Black Theologians' discourse of suffering. Along similar lines, Flora Wilson Bridges asserts a triadic composition of recalling, remembering, and remolding African "values, social norms, and religious beliefs," and how they function as a "cultural precedent to black religion and black spirituality." and how they function as

Remembering

Copeland claims that world suffering defies classification and ranking; however, she offers the anguish of African American women as a case study for Christian

²⁹³ M. Shawn Copeland "Wading through Many Sorrows," 118-119.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 123.

²⁹⁵ Flora Wilson Bridges, *Resurrection Song: African-American Spirituality* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001), 9.

theology. She retrieves the silenced voices of sorrow and laments. What profound insights might one retrieve in remembering the "lives and suffering of those who 'came through' and those who have 'gone on to glory land'"?²⁹⁶

In remembering black women's experience of suffering, one might concur with Anthony B. Pinn that suffering is multi-faceted, based on the "[h]istorical, psychological, legal, and social mechanisms" designed, established, and implemented to "safeguard the inferiority of the African and the superiority of the European."²⁹⁷ The very act of remembering the historic and contemporary suffering of black women occurs within black religion. The participation of religious praxis, therefore, serves as embodied remembrance of shared sufferings but also shared hopes and joys. Furthermore, for Pinn, suffering, entirely and unequivocally, has no redemptive, empowering, or productive attributes.²⁹⁸

The act of remembering the laments of black women counters narratives that stifle linguistic and cultural diversity. It serves to validate the humanity of the multitude of unmentioned bodies who died in Christian faith. The act of remembrance encourages this generation and the next generation to recall God's love and faithfulness bestowed upon their ancestors and to pay tributes to their family roots in the passing down of family history and traditions. Without question, remembering their experiences underscores God's presence in the midst of the tridimensional suffering of racism, classism, and sexism endured by black women—they were included in the plans of the

²⁹⁶ M. Shawn Copeland, "Wading Through Many Sorrows,"123.

²⁹⁷ Anthony B. Pinn, *Terror and Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion* (Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress, 2003), 27.

²⁹⁸ Anthony B. Pinn, *Why, Lord?: Suffering and Evil in Black Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 10.

triune God. This generation and the next generation are encouraged to lament past and present individual and social sins of the stubborn and rebellious generations.

Retelling

A theology of suffering from a Womanist lens encourages the black woman to remember and retell the testimonies, trials and tribulations of her foremothers. As Copeland indicates, retelling "evokes growth and change, proper outrage and dissatisfaction, and enlarge Black women's moral horizon and choices." The retelling points to generations of praying women. They lamented to the "Lawd in prayer," often with silent prayers of lament out of fear of being beaten, auctioned off, or raped; they were retelling that the "Lawd" delivered their ancestors from the deadly peril of slavery and will deliver them from the snares of their enemies. Nevertheless, even if they are not delivered, the "Lawd" is able to give them strength, wisdom, discernment, and power to endure their adversities.

In retelling, one must "repel every tendency toward any *ersatz* spiritualization" of their silent prayers of sorrow and lament.³⁰⁰ We retell how the triune God would "enable them to turn victimization into Christian triumph."³⁰¹ It is in retelling that we can share what we know to be truth: the truth regarding the religious, political, and economic contributions of the Atlantic Slave Trade, enslaved African, and African American; the truth that African American women carried the knowledge that God would see about them and take care for all their "kinfolks" in their souls amidst dehumanizing suffering.

²⁹⁹ M. Shawn Copeland, Enfleshing Freedom, 124.

³⁰⁰ M. Shawn Copeland, "Wading Through Many Sorrows," 123.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 119.

Remembering and retelling are the sentiments of African American women's testimonies that "if God did it before, God could do it again." Yolanda Norton adds to a Womanist theology of lament by stating that biblical stories may be that which is remembered and retold. For example, the story of Ruth may serve to re-center the historical and contemporary suffering of black females. Like Ruth was devoted to Naomi's survival, African Americans have a history of being committed to the survival of others. 302

Resisting

Copeland points to sassing as a weapon of resistance. The impudence and insolence of black women to lament aided in eradicating the impact of racism, sexism, and classism in their lives and communities. According to Mitzi J. Smith, sass includes verbal and nonverbal behaviors of resistance and defiance of societal norms that support systems of subordination in economy: civil, political, social, and cultural. For Copeland, Harriet Jacobs [Linda Brent], Lizzie Williams, Louisa Picquet, Mary Prince, Mattie Jackson, and countless unnamed black women embody sass in their quest for survival as they lamented the "full and arrogant self-assertion of white male power and privilege, white female ambivalence and hatred, [and] the subjugation of Black women and men."

While her analysis may be correct, one must resist minimizing their reliance on prayer and encounters with the triune God. These enslaved foremothers would testify that

³⁰² Yolanda Norton, "Silenced Struggles for Survival: Finding Life in Death in the Book of Ruth," in *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader*, ed. Mitzi J. Smith, 266-280 (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015), 266-280.

³⁰³ Mitzi J. Smith, "Race, Gender, and the Politics of 'Sass': Reading Mark 7:24–30 Through a Womanist Lens of Intersectionality and Inter(con)textuality," in *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible Expanding the Discourse*, eds. Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace, 95-112 (Atlanta: SBL, 2016), 97.

³⁰⁴ M. Shawn Copeland, "Wading Through Many Sorrows," 118.

their prayers and the prayers of their ancestors were the foundations for resisting what Raquel A. St. Clair acknowledges as the "dehumanizing effects of racialized sexism that results in classist oppression." Prayer and songs of prayer were weapons of our foremothers and forefathers. Spoken prayers and sung prayers of sorrow and lament, of hope and praise were powerful tools in the slave ship, on the auction block, at lynchings, and during the sanctioned rapes and forced breeding. Their prayers gave them spiritual insight and wisdom regarding their struggles of oppressions. Lament led to actions, and actions led to lamenting before the triune God. Praying in silence, with words, in their native tongues, and with inarticulate words are all forms of protest and resistance. The ability to cry out to Jesus, who also experienced dehumanizing suffering, brought healing in the midst of their trauma along with a greater dependency and expectation that Jesus was with them in suffering and that this same Jesus would be with them in their resurrection and ascension.

For ages, Black women have faced the "Strong Black Woman" trope. It is a stereotype that worked to resist the victimization of black womanhood. We saw our foremothers purchase the hog, cut up the hog, cure the bacon, fry the bacon, and serve the bacon to their loved ones and their communities. They accomplished these great acts while working for pennies, sending their children to school, worshipping and serving faithfully at church, and tending to the affairs of all persons. This was the model in our families, church, and communities that taught black girls to gracefully juggle multiple tasks with an attitude of humility and a smile on their faces. They were being groomed at a young age to be the matriarchs for their generation.

 305 Raquel A. St. Clair, Call and Consequences: A Womanist Reading of Mark (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 6.

Woman stereotypes. It is often within the very fiber of resisting suffering that African American women must endure the pressure to maintain an image of strength and resilience. Norton argues that Ruth is an example of the racialized gender identity of a Strong Black Woman comprised of three core attributes: "caregiving, independence, and emotional strength/regulation." Ruth is esteemed because she gladly took on the burden of caretaker and surrogate for others. Ruth was a Strong Black Woman. 307

In most of the world, a theology of lament acknowledges the paradox regarding the realities of individual and collective suffering and the affirmation of a loving and good God. For Yolanda Pierce, the question is "Why would a theology of suffering appeal to a slave who had known nothing but misery and pain?" In her examination of conversions within antebellum spiritual narratives, enslaved blacks identified intensively with the suffering of Christ, and thereby the appeal for enslaved blacks was that from "unimaginable sufferings" to "meaning engenders hope." The plight of individuals and communities from the margin begs the question of how one can formulate a theology of suffering that applies to all people without engaging the experiences of the invisible and voiceless communities in the United States of America and the rest of the world.

³⁰⁶ Chanequa Walker-Barnes, *Too Heavy A Yoke: Black Women and the Burden of Strength* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014), 3.

³⁰⁷ Yolanda Norton, "Silenced Struggles," 271.

³⁰⁸ Yolanda Pierce, *Hell Without Fires: Slavery, Christianity, and the Antebellum Spiritual Narratives* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 118.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

Redeeming

Copeland notes, "In their narratives, Black women invite God to partner [with] them in the redemption of Black people. They make meaning of their suffering. Over and over again, Black women under chattel slavery endured pain, privation, and injury; risked their very lives, for the sake of the lives and freedom of their children." Their relationships and experiences with the triune God granted them the strength to love, provide, help, support, and nurture. Even though some consider death preferable than the constant various mental stresses, emotional abuses, and physical cruelties, their abilities to lament their circumstances in silence opened new opportunities that transcended their plights. They were able to face and overcome their suffering, knowing that the "Lawd" did not sanction the "commodifying, objectifying, and sexually violating" of black women's bodies. 311

William R. Jones' examines black liberation perspectives concerning black suffering and finds them too limiting. Instead, he prefers the notion of ethnic suffering which is, for him,

characterized by three essential features: it is maldistributed, enormous and non-catastrophic. By accenting the ethnic factor, I wish to call attention to a suffering that is maldistributed; it is not spread more or less randomly and equally over the total human race. Rather, a double portion of suffering is concentrated in a particular ethnic group.³¹²

Jones provokingly states, "One is tempted to ask: Is God a white racist?" ³¹³ He raises this

³¹⁰ Ibid., 124.

³¹¹ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 4.

³¹² William R. Jones, "Theodicy: The Controlling Category for Black Theology," in *The Journal of Religious Thought*, 30 no. 1 (March 1, 1973): 34.

³¹³ Ibid., 35.

question wondering if God is in solidarity with the liberation and resistance of black people, then why are their sufferings and oppressions maldistributed? Could it be that God is like a white racist, working against the flourishing of people of color instead of the liberator espoused in various forms of Liberation theology? Jones' question does not address the connection between racism and prayers of lament and sorrow. The Christians from the margins are not asking, "Where are the prayers of sorrow and lament?" Rather, they are asking, "Why, Lawd, are we a people that pray?" Prayers are foundational to the African American experience and expression of Christianity. As Cheryl J. Sanders points out, prayer was an "important symbol of resistance for a people forbidden to pray." The hardships of life do not discriminate by race, gender, national origin, color, or sex.

Nevertheless, there are racialized social systems and structures that foster, produce, and replicate the suffering of many. Different cultural and social woes produce dynamic prayers and peculiar laments.

Expanding Jones' critique, one might contend that the structures of domination demarcate *ethnic* laments. Zora Neale Hurston observed that the African American sanctified churches were "putting back into Negro religion those elements which were brought over from Africa and grafted onto Christianity." Sanders further asserts that the Sanctified church is "an African American Christian reform movement that seeks to bring its standards of worship, personal morality, and social concern into conformity with a biblical hermeneutic of holiness and spiritual empowerment." The label "sanctified

³¹⁴ Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints in Exile*, 13.

³¹⁵ Zora Neale Hurston, *The Sanctified Church* (Berkeley: Turtle Island, 1983), 106.

³¹⁶ Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints in Exile*, 5.

church" includes the Holiness, Pentecostal, and Apostolic churches that promoted sanctification. As a "congregations of saints," the Sanctified churches are "in the world, but not of it." One can conclude that the "exilic consciousness" of alienation based on race has birthed religious practices that protested the plight of the African American people at the turn of the century. 317

Class also contributes to this "exilic consciousness" as it birthed prayers and laments produced by black religious experiences of suffering. French Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu helps us appreciate "exilic consciousness" as a question of class different from questions of racism. As he writes,

Between ethos and logos, practical mastery and verbal mastery, there is a radical discontinuity. There is no necessary link between the practical mastery which can guide everyday practice, including all of its (objectivity) political aspects, without ever being made explicit or, still less, systematically conceptualized, and the symbolic mastery of experience which is expressed in discourse socially recognized as political and which pre-supposes the bracketing of all direct, exclusive reference to the concrete particularity of a situation. Because this is so, and because the relationship of experience to expression, that is, to consciousness, is relatively undetermined, the same experiences may recognize their images in very different discourses.³¹⁸

Prayer expressions are derived from individual and communal experiences of heartbreak, joy, trauma, hope, sorrow, delight, grief, and faith. The articulation of prayers is not easily confined or contained within categories. Accordingly, enslaved Africans having a limited exposure to scripture placed great significance in their prayer experiences of lament, which included moans, groans, shouts, and utterances. The following section examines the language of suffering that contributes to a theology of lament—and

³¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

³¹⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 461.

especially to a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament.

Expressions of Lament

The laments of the oppressed offer a matrix of social experiences and expressions of suffering. The popular language of lament heard in the homes, churches, and streets by the oppressed refuses to engage in a "language which never engages with reality but churns out its canonical formulae and slogans" and "discredits and destroys the spontaneous." African descendants' prayer language constitutes a peculiar blending of protest, resistance, hope, awe, reverence, and a touch of mystery. The shore of the United States of America could not take away our language, despite old and new laws that seek to render this people group voiceless. Moreover, the code of silence did not stop generational prayers even with gagged mouth and threats of whipping; they kept on praying.

Informed by David D. Daniels III's work, "language" contributes to the theological underpinning of lament. According to Daniels, the language of suffering provides helpful markers in rethinking a theology of lament: social, underclass, political, existential, psychological, and sociological suffering. ³²⁰ I offer a brief survey of the language of suffering: Andrew Sung Park's social conception of *han*; Gustavo Gutiérrez' theology of engagement with the underclass; Isaiah Majok Dau's concept of political suffering; Howard Thurman's concept of existential suffering; and Ann Ulanov's concept of psychological suffering. What language does a scholar of religions appropriate in their assessment of suffering? What are the effects of suffering? Does suffering produce

³¹⁹ Ibid., 462.

³²⁰ David D. Daniels, III. Interview by author. Tape recording. Chicago, October 5, 2016.

anything salient? Why is there suffering? These are the questions guiding my survey of these scholars' works.

Han—Pain of the Victim

Park's appropriation of the Asian concept of han is insightful to an articulation of a Womanist theology of lament for its corrective to the "largely overlooked . . . pain of the victims of sins."³²¹ Han is "frustrated hope, the collapsed feeling of pain, letting go, resentful bitterness, and the wounded heart."322 According to Park, a theology of suffering expands the traditional view of salvation and sin from the perspective of the sinners to include the anguish, guilt, and trauma of the victims of sin as well. Han is a social concept of suffering of "interreligious, interracial, and intercultural" oppression. 323 The han, the "frozen energy" of the victims, can be dealt with positively by the transformation of the social injustice which caused han in the first place, or negatively by killing the oppressors and slipping into fatalism. 324 The depth of human suffering in "han" bears witness to the way in which sin infiltrates interpersonal relationships, i.e., "child abuse, family, sexual, and racial violence, labor exploitation . . . [r]acial or religious violence increases between Israelis and Palestinians, Azerbaijanis and Armenians"³²⁵ Park critiques the concept of original sin because it reduces the accountability of sin by "universalizing the guilt of humanity." 326 Han also contributes to

³²¹ Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 10.

³²² Ibid., 31.

³²³ Ibid., 137.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid., 9.

a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament by recognizing the threefold roots of *han*: the capitalist global economy, patriarchy, and racial and cultural discrimination, which often leads to transgenerational suffering that is transmitted biologically, mentally, spiritually, socially, and racially.³²⁷

The Mystical Language of the Underclass

Gustavo Gutiérrez' Liberation theology gives language to a theology of lament that takes seriously the poor, destitute, and forgotten communities in the world.

Language, spoken and silent, depends on human and religious situations and experiences. 328 Gutiérrez laments, "how are we to talk about God" amidst innocent people suffering characterized by the trauma of poverty, such as food, shelter, safe water, health, education, economic resources, and access to basic human needs. 329 Womanist, Black, Asian, and Latino/a theologies of liberation prophetically critique and resist various kinds of systematic oppression and exploitation.

The language of Job, Jesus, and the innocent sufferers in Latin America are the languages of contemplation and prophecy. Prophetic language permits solidarity with the innocent victims of poverty, injustice, and inequality. "Belief in God and God's gratuitousness love leads to a preferential option for the poor and to solidarity with those who suffer wretched conditions, contempt, and oppression, those who the social order ignores and exploits." For Gutiérrez, prophetic language buttresses and promotes

³²⁶ Ibid., 79.

³²⁷ Ibid., 79–81.

³²⁸ Gustavo Gutiérrez, On Job, 30.

³²⁹ Ibid., 12.

³³⁰ Ibid., 94.

mystical language inspired by contemplation of God and God's love.³³¹ The prophetic laments refuse to be suppressed, stifled, hushed, muted, or silenced. Prophetic lament cries out against all forms of historical injustices. Moreover, prophetic lament embodies the resistance of "correct speech about God" by entering solidarity with those who are invisible and powerless to alleviate human suffering.

One may ask how God's love empowers prayers in the appropriation of mystical language to combat the "starvation of millions, the humiliation of races regarded as inferior, discrimination against women, especially women who are poor, systematic social injustices, a persistently high rate of infant mortality, [and] those who simply 'disappear.'"³³² One of the significant insights one finds in Gutiérrez work on Job, which coincides with Womanist theology, is that prophetic language does not cause a person to suppress or minimize one's experiences of suffering. A person or community's ability to appropriate sounds, words, and embody expressions to convey their suffering creates space for a greater discernment regarding the suffering of others and God's gratuitous love.³³³

Psychological Imagination

A Womanist theology of lament employs the "creative activity of both psyche and soul"—the imagination.³³⁴ Ann and Barry Ulanov contend that God who dwells in us

³³¹ Ibid., 94–95.

³³² Ibid., 102.

³³³ Ibid., 88.

³³⁴ Ann Ulanov and Barry Ulanov, *The Healing Imagination: The Meeting of Psyche and Soul* (Canada: Daimon, 2008), 13.

"starts us wanting to pray and to go on praying." They declare that

the mere recital of sacred words, no matter how well intentioned, may not get us much beyond a self-congratulatory sanctimoniousness. A garbled cry of anxiety, with few details clear except those that convey an aching uneasiness and the trust that somehow somewhere somebody will answer the cry with help, will almost always do better.³³⁶

Neither religion nor religious symbols are gender neutral. They are reflected through a "gender lens which itself reflects the psychological and social contexts that shape us."³³⁷ While language used in the articulation of suffering will be influenced by one's mode of being; the imagination allows us to "rethink and re-feel" our understanding of masculine and feminine modes that reside in each person.³³⁸

The bridges of imagination cross the "gap between our personal and social lives."³³⁹ It "delivers us over to paradox, to the oblique and contradictory,"³⁴⁰ and it allows us to experience the triune God and to create a space between "our single unconscious life and our shared conscious life with others."³⁴¹ Imagination heals ourselves and our communities."³⁴² The Womanist imagination of being God's beloved allowed African and African American women to unburden their trials and tribulations to God. Historical and contemporary shackles did not stop their encounters of God's

³³⁶ Ibid., 118.

³³⁵ Ibid., 117.

³³⁷ Ibid., 116.

³³⁸ Ibid., 115.

³³⁹ Ibid., 16.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 17.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 15.

³⁴² Ibid., 16.

transformative love. For the Ulanovs, the imagination allows a person to envision an end to the needless suffering. Their silent prayers of sorrow and laments are only for a season. It embodies the generational hope that one day African descendants and their brothers and sisters of color will be free to flourish.

Mother Africa's Turmoil

Isaiah Majok Dau articulates the concept of a theology of lament from a Sudanese worldview. In his African worldview, God is omnipotent even though many of the problems facing Mother Africa are the result of human free will. The language of political lament in an African cosmology is based on beliefs of the Supreme Being, "spirits or divinities, ancestors, the living-dead, the living, the unborn, animals and plants and so on."343 As Dau argues, in most traditional African contexts, God will never be rejected during suffering; rather, people "will cling to God even more" despite evil and suffering³⁴⁴ In traditional African communities, individual sins affect the society and the community. A Womanist theology of lament grapples with human activities, evil forces, or mysteries that must be aggressively confronted. Silent prayers of sorrow and lament express sentiments about matters that are "deeply troubling."345

Existential Spirituals

Howard Thurman's writings underscore an existential theology of lament "deeply influenced by the genius of the spirituals." The Negro Spirituals were derived from the Bible, the world of nature, and individual experiences "emerging from their inner life"

³⁴³ Isaiah Majok Dau, Suffering and God, 158.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 161.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 163.

³⁴⁶ Howard Thurman, *Deep River and The Negro Spirituals Speaks of Life and Death*, 7.

understood within their communities.³⁴⁷ They drew on Old Testament "experiences of frustration and divine deliverance."³⁴⁸ The Negro Spirituals suggest a correlation with the African and African American struggles and the suffering of Jesus Christ, a "cry of the heart that found a response and an echo in their own woes,"³⁴⁹ and the world of nature provided rich analogies that often conveyed multiple meanings. The religious experience of the slaves allowed for the expression of desires despite "limited and circumscribed" emotional, psychological, and verbalized modes of expressions: "Don't leave me, Lord, Don't leave me behin'."³⁵⁰

Recently, Bisola Marignay noted that "[e]nslaved composers and singers of the Spirituals used the songs to address and resolve conflict related to death, the first of the four existential givens to which awareness is directed in existential psychology."³⁵¹ Thurman's laments are understood by the distresses of the black race, the distress of alienation, sadness, and loneliness. Spiritual sensitivity to suffering, he argues, is "always personal at the point of contact with the individual."³⁵²

Thurman considers suffering is a spiritual discipline that requires one to face ongoing challenges and to overcome challenges in this hazardous world. He proposes that death is an "experience within Life, not happening to Life" and that one suffers as a "part

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 14.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 12.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 22.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 25-26.

³⁵¹ Bisola Marignay, "Prayer Songs: Therapy that Aided a People's Survival," *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* 35 no. 1 (2016): 104.

³⁵² Howard Thurman, *Disciplines of the Spirit* (Richmond: Friends United, 1963), 65.

of the growth of life."³⁵³ He recognizes that life is nourished by the love of God and contained in the finality of God as the Creator of Life.

In African American religion, especially in the Sanctified church, silent prayers of sorrow and lament engage demonic human and spiritual activities that produce sorrow, agony, and trauma. Laments cry out to God for wisdom, protection, and insight to deal with every manner of concerns. Laments affirm their trust in the triune God because the African Americans' narratives include abundance of proof for not trusting government policies, doctors, law enforcement, and lawyers.

Conclusion

A Womanist theology of lament resists reductionism of the lived experiences of black women in contemporary culture. How are we to worship when life circumstances seek to remind us that racial fatigue is an ongoing silent lament in the depth of our souls? How do we handle testifying to the reality of the triune God's love while good Christians mock our identity in Christ? How do we name that which is unnamable because of the tidal waves of anger and distress that are pervasive in our lives?

Silent prayers of sorrow and lament express agony and trauma. However, these prayers also express the hope and awe that God remembers us as well as our praying mothers and fathers. Prayers of sorrow and lament allow for vulnerability with God and a hope for the future. Lament provides the ability to communicate things, events, and issues we often pretend did not exist or did not occur. Silent prayers of sorrow and lament allow for communing through the Holy Spirit to name and address suppressed memories of

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³⁵³ Ibid., 81.

humiliation, anger, shock, rejection, and scorn. It is in communication with the Holy Spirit that one receives soothing comfort and peace.

The paradox of silent prayers of lament is that one can release pent-up cries, and yet the Holy Spirit places a resolve in our spirit with the boldness to ask, "Who knoweth whether thou art come for such a time as this?" Silent prayers of sorrow and lament grant God's children the freedom in the Holy Spirit to cry out before God because of their past and current brokenness. Silent prayers of sorrow and lament are often asking in the depth of their souls, "God, WHY? Why do the wicked prosper? Why can't we catch a break? Why do people of color struggle like this? Why do we have to face more adversaries simply because of class or race? When will the God of Big Mama and Papa remove all divisions based on race, creed, nationality, ethnicity, age, education, income, and respectability?"

Scott A. Ellington underscores that prayers of lament are "simply honest and faithful speech."³⁵⁴ The truth—anger, fear, despair, grief, doubt, loneliness, and loss—sometimes paralyzes individuals and communities. Even in a state of seeming paralysis, lament enables the communion of God to still go forth. Ellington argues that the "use of silence, questions, poetry, and metaphor in the prayers of lament all point to the intrusion of experiences that transcend the familiar and exhaust the speaker's established structures for coping."³⁵⁵ Nevertheless, people who lament cope, and they are given hope through the Spirit.

³⁵⁴ Scott A. Ellington, *Risking Truth*, 65.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 27.

African American women's experiences are all of this, plus more.³⁵⁶ Our stories do not and will not end in lament. Hope reminds us of this truth. The Hebrew scriptures testify that Haman, the very one who was plotting for the destruction of all the Jews, was destroyed by his own device of destruction. Yes, Scripture testifies that Rachel was crying and wailing, and she refused to be comforted because her children were no more. However, in Jeremiah 31:16-17,

This is what the Lord says: "Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded," declares the Lord. "They will return from the land of the enemy. So there is hope for your descendants," declares the Lord. "Your children will return to their own land."

Will Gafney wrote a lament for our daughters:

My eyes grieve continually for the souls of all the daughters who are raped. . . . sold . . . bartered . . . stolen . . . illiterate . . . unemployed . . . who don't have health care . . . who can't feed their children. . . . did not consent to their marriages. . . . child brides of adult men. . . . who live in a world, culture or society that treats them as less than human . . . who did not choose their motherhood. . . . who are going hungry. . . . selling themselves . . . hate their own bodies . . . dying of HIV/AIDS. . . . killed by someone who should have loved them. 357

Hope in the triune God means to cry until there is a knowing that God's ear is tuned to our cries. Like Rachel who refused to be comforted, a Womanist theology of lament affirms God's liberating word, power, love, and justice—and that this is not the time to hold our peace.

We will lament until God hears the cries of God's people. We will lament until God's daughters and sons have equal access to prosperity. We will lament until God destroys racialized health policies and procedures. We will lament until the senseless

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 65.

³⁵⁷ Wil Gafney, "A Lamentation For Our Daughters," WillGafney.com, May 8, 2014, http://www.wilgafney.com/2014/05/

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death of bodies of color cease. We will lament because a womanist theology of lament

recognizes that this is not the time to hold our peace. We will lament until the triune God

comes and sees about God's people. We will lament with the awareness that "God is our

refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). Silent prayers of

lament and sorrow are the force that keeps African American communities standing

despite the many challenges they face due to race, class, and gender. A Womanist

theology of lament is incomplete without reclaiming these silent prayers.

Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see!

Isaiah 42:18

CHAPTER FOUR:

HAGAR'S SUBVERSION

It is not easy to sleep when people are wailing. We need the sounds of gnashing teeth, moans, and distress to wake us from our cultural slumber...The world is a place where the opportunity for great good and astonishing evil are always within reach...Christ calls us to be good stewards of our resources; society tells us that we need to pimp our rides. Christ calls us to love our neighbors, which includes the poor: society pretends that the poor don't exist or that poverty is a failure of character or work ethic. Faith tells us that our lives are about service, self-sacrifice, submission, and salvation: society tells us that life is about ego, expenditures, excess, and extremes, and needing more and more thrills to feel alive. Whose report will you believe? Will you ever hear this report if you are asleep at the switch?³⁵⁸

The experience of God, or in any case the possibility of experiencing God, is innate. 359

Introduction

In chapter three, the language of lament was used to highlight the connections between suffering and racism. The examination of the insights by a wide range of scholars served to provide a framework for rethinking questions of lament from various ethnocultural vantage points. This chapter includes a fuller expression of a Womanist Pentecostal theology of lament which offers to enrich the larger theological dialogue on suffering and prayers of lament.

In this chapter, the aim is to construct a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament by explicating Hagar's silent prayers of sorrow and lament. I argue that Charles Taylor's power of recognition together with Susan Sontag's aesthetic of silence provide a framework for examining Hagar's narratives in Genesis 16 and 21. A Pentecostal Womanist perspective of Hagar's story empowers an alternative vision and gender

³⁵⁸ Barbara A. Holmes, "For Such Time as This: Lament as a Herald of Joy," paper presented at the Princeton Lectures on Youth, Church, and Culture, January (Princeton, New Jersey, 2006), 32–33.

³⁵⁹ Alice Walker, You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down (Orlando: Harvest Book, 2003), 119.

construction for women by recognizing a divine visitation and blessing to a slave woman, This chapter is a re-reading of the interpretations of Hagar's narratives (Gen 16:1-16; 21:1-21) in recent decades. An analysis of various hermeneutical approaches to Hagar's narrative reveals that a dominant reading strategy was imposed upon this story of an Egyptian woman.

Critique of the Egyptian Handmaid

Readers and hearers encounter a dilemma regarding the Genesis storyteller's inclusion of the Hagar account. One would argue that European and Anglo American translators and commentators have examined this text with a gender bias, maintaining an image of Abraham as the father of the faith who has only minimal flaws and blemishes.

The inconsistencies in Abram's faith and actions are often trivialized (Gen 15:6, 7-21).³⁶⁰

According to Nahum Sarna, God did not specify Sarai as the mother of Abram's offspring.³⁶¹ In order to preserve the righteousness of Abram, his sin of doubting the word of God is often downplayed. However, Hagar's "uppity vernacular" attitude towards her mistress Sarai is remembered. Sarna blames Hagar for her and Ishmael's near death experiences. Sarna reasons that if Hagar had "not lost her way," then "the original supplies would have been adequate." Similarly, Skinner contends that Abram loved Ishmael but did not have any "particular affection" toward Hagar. ³⁶³

³⁶⁰ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27 –50:26: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 179.

³⁶¹ Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 118.

³⁶² Ibid., 147.

³⁶³ John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* on *Genesis*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), 322.

Hagar has also not fared well in traditional scholarship. Her exploits have been minimized while her perceived flaws have been used to define her character.³⁶⁴ Hagar is relegated to her social role as slave, concubine, and Sarai's helper in order to maintain a more favorable picture of Abram and leave the structures of patriarchy unchallenged.

Today's Womanist and feminist scholars have examined Hagar's narrative at great length. This chapter attempts to contribute to this discourse with a narrow focus on Hagar alone. Since Abram and Sarai's roles, actions, and responsibilities have been discussed extensively, the focus here is exclusively on Hagar's side of the story; thus, both Abram and Sarai play a peripheral role in this analysis.

Delores Williams argues for a correlation between Hagar's story and the historical experience of African-American women. The appropriation of the biblical story of Hagar by African women, she tells us, is part of what she calls the survival/quality-of-life tradition of African-American biblical appropriation. As she writes,

consistent with the Black American community's way of appropriating the Bible so that emphasis is put upon God's response to Black people's situation rather than upon what would appear to be hopeless aspects of African American people's existence in North America.³⁶⁵

The narrative shows, then, that the voice of God came to Hagar at that "moment of crisis"; lamenting in silence, she was overwhelmed by a compelling urge to seek her liberation. It was Hagar's critical faith in her experience with God that convinced her that God was a very present help in times of trouble.

 $^{^{364}}$ The name Hagar is found fourteen times: Genesis 16:1, 3, 4, 8, 15 [2xs], 16; 21:9, 14, 17[2x]; 25:12; Galatian 4:24 – 25.

³⁶⁵ Delores S. Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness, 6.

That Gal Din Ran Away

Phyllis Trible argues that Hagar is the "first female in Scripture to experience use, abuse and rejection."³⁶⁶ According to Trible, Genesis 16:1-16 is a circular story, moving from bondage to flight to bondage.³⁶⁷ In her feminist reading of the narrative, she sees Hagar as a woman undermined, silenced, and stripped of power, and her story is suppressed by the narrator, who shifts the focus to the fatherhood of Abram.³⁶⁸

Along similar lines, LaVerne Gill constructs a social justice reading of Hagar's story in Genesis 16 as a precursor to the Exodus story. This author believes that justice for Hagar and the Hebrews is "comprised of God's response to oppression at a point when God sees, hears, and acts with a blessing and a promise, but the promise of God comes with recognition that life and the enduring struggle for liberation are a part of a renewing and renewable process." God introduced patience and faith in both stories as evidenced by Hagar and the Hebrews wandered aimlessly in the wilderness. These two biblical texts interconnect by themes of justice that come out of wilderness experiences where God responds by sustaining and blessing. By recasting the story of Hagar's first encounter, the author draws from the Civil Rights movement initiated by the actions of Rosa Parks, who also responded to God's call in her wilderness of a segregated bus. The story of Rosa Parks, who also responded to God's call in her wilderness of a segregated bus.

³⁶⁶ Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*`` (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 9.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 10.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 19.

³⁶⁹ LaVerne McCain Gill, *Daughters of Dignity: African Women in the Bible and the Virtues of Black Womanhood* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2000), 20.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

Alice Bellis sees the story of Hagar as using contemporary parallels in terms of the employer and employee relationship. Hagar's narrative in Genesis 16 is that of the domestic workers who struggle for economic survival, independence, and status against the tides of abuse and exile. The tension in the text is between a woman of privilege, a mistress, and her domestic help, the maid. She concludes that "it is not the story of a black woman oppressed by a white one. Whatever ethnic tensions underlie this story, they are not the ones familiar to people living in the United States." ³⁷¹

Meanwhile, Esther Fuchs interprets Hagar's narratives as a contest-type scene between Abram and his two wives: Sarai, who is barren, and Hagar, the fertile co-wife. God, intentionally or unintentionally, redeems the humiliation of the barren wife through divine intervention. Furthermore, Fuchs argues that Hagar must return because not only is Ishmael not yet born but also Sarai is still barren. Hence, Hagar is not yet expendable. It is only after the birth of both sons that the story permits Hagar, the second wife, to depart from the household for good.³⁷²

Fuchs sees Hagar, the Egyptian fertile mother, in a paradoxical nature as both affirmed and stigmatized as foreigner, as neglected, and as mistreated in comparison to Sarai, or as morally inferior: "she looked with contempt on her mistress." The literal meaning of the clause is "her mistress was lessened in her eyes." Fuchs concludes that

³⁷¹ Alice Ogden Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville: Westminster, 2007), 66.

³⁷² Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 150–52.

³⁷³ Ibid., 83.; Lot's daughter, Tamar, Ruth excluded from the Abrahamic lineage allows for the portrayal of "sexual fertile foreign" mothers.

³⁷⁴ E. A, Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Note*, The Anchor Bible (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 117.

although both barrenness and foreignness are "defects" that are often ultimately "redeemed" through their male offspring, both characteristics imply an otherness that justifies their exclusion from patrilineal genealogies. God's paradox is that foreignness and moral imperfection are characteristics attributed to naturally fertile mother figures. 375

This biblical text continues to shock the reader's sensibility regarding Abram and Sarai's domination of an Egyptian handmaid called Hagar. Genesis 16 draws the audience into a world that seems to perpetuate gender inequality and patriarchy. Hagar is portrayed as a nameless victim of her master and mistress, and she is silent in the narrative except when she converses with God after his intervention in her pain and suffering (Genesis 16:8). These actions affirm ancient and modern stereotypes that the "good woman is one who is obedient and long-suffering . . . productive only when [she is] reproductive."³⁷⁶ Once her reproductive purpose has been fulfilled by giving birth to Abram's seed, she is no longer useful. She disappears from the story. Hagar stands subdued—some would suggest by God—in this epic. This "unnamed" servant, who has been marginalized by her Egyptian slave status and made invisible except for her capacity to produce an heir for others, has an experience with Yahweh. This "Egyptian slave's" survival mode reverted to a primal mode of bodily expression: she lamented. Her transformative experience through an encounter with God makes her the ideal model for a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament.

Modern scholars and theologians, including those discussed above, have looked at the story of Hagar and have provided interpretations on various levels. The basic premise

³⁷⁵ Esther Fuchs, Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative, 83.

³⁷⁶ Tina Pippin, *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 75.

of this chapter is that the account of her pain and suffering within the Hebrew text resonates within the historical accounts of physical, psychological, and emotional violence against women. Hagar's silent prayers of sorrow and lament engage the repeated misuse of power and control.

God's commandment for Hagar to return to Sarai is less than ideal. Still, can the reader find redemptive qualities in a less than ideal situation? Hagar has a personal transformative experience with the God who saw her during her abuse and misuse, cared enough to initiate a relationship during her pain and suffering, called her by name, and blessed her and her seed. We find a parallel story in the African American church mothers, evangelists, preachers, prayer warriors, and Sunday school teachers within the Pentecostal movement in North America. Hagar is a prototype of African American women in modern Pentecostalism who were and continue to be unknown, unrecognized, and unimportant. Nevertheless, God acknowledged and responded to their plights. God heard their silent prayers of sorrow and lament, and the triune God responded; although, admittedly, it was often not according to their ways or timings, God nevertheless blessed them and allowed their ministries to be fruitful and to be a blessing to their communities, churches, denominations, and nations. A woman's encounter with God can transform a victim into a heroine and a nobody into a somebody.

Aesthetics of Silence

Despite her non-speaking role in the larger part of the story, Hagar does exercise resistance to oppression as she flees from her tormenter, Sarai (Genesis 16: 6). To make this case, this research will begin by challenging the notion, in keeping with the argument

of many feminist commentators, that silence is a sign of weakness and subjugation.³⁷⁷ Susan Sontag constructs an aesthetic of silence that provides a paradigm for "artistic resistance."³⁷⁸ Sontag's example of silence as "artistic resistance" comes from her study of the visual and literary works of artists and authors. Silence is the conscious choice of the artist to evoke from the audience a particular emotional, visceral experience and corresponding set of actions. There is an imperative of silence.³⁷⁹ The void created by silence compels the hearer and the reader to seek a way to fill in the silence.

Sontag explains that there is a difference between just looking at art and staring at it. Looking is a voluntary, random, and unfocused act with varied degrees of intensity. On the other hand, staring is an involuntary response to the beauty or horror of the art form that demands our attention, draws us with a captivated focus, and causes us to contemplate the unspoken discourse of what we see. "Art that is silent engenders a stare." True art does not need words to explain its beauty; otherwise, it fails as art. It speaks, but without language. True art commands our undivided attention. The silence produced by art has the dual effect of creating anxiety in the hearts of the audience who wants to fill in the void; however, it also establishes a claim to power for the artist, an inviolable position of strength. The artist uses the silence as a means of influencing and directing the stare of others.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 74–80; see also Adela Yarbro Collins, "Feminine Symbolism in the Book of Revelation," *Biblical Interpretation* 1 (1993): 20–33.

³⁷⁸ Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence," in *Styles of the Radical Will*, ed. Susan Sontag, 1-34 (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), 1–34.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 12.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 16.

Sontag argues that we can only perceive fullness if we also retain an acute sense of emptiness. Emptiness or silence helps the audience perceive the zones surrounding the void, how open these zones are, and with a heightened sense of perception and detail.

Likewise, the narrator of Hagar's story might employ a voiceless heroine's silent lament to draw the readers into the void of the narrative. Therefore, the readers focus their vision on the upcoming scene or zone of the literary landscape that one chooses to highlight.

In Genesis 16:8, the readers and listeners are drawn to focus on the interaction between the angel of the Lord and Hagar. Genesis 16:7–14 says,

The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

"I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.

Then the angel of the Lord told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." The angel added, "I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count."

The angel of the Lord also said to her:

"You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."

She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me." That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

The narrative introducing Hagar's voice functions to direct the audience's attention toward a God who gives voice to the voiceless. The angel of the Lord hears, sees, seeks, and acts upon Hagar's pain, sorrow, and distress. God hears this wordless woman and draws her into a life-altering encounter. That which she could not articulate in words, the pain that produced her silent screams of lament, was validated by the angel of the Lord.

Miguel A. De La Torre asks, is Hagar the "true matriarch of the Hebrew Bible"? 381 Hagar is the first woman selected by God to behold his manifested presence. 382 This Egyptian woman is the first to receive a promise from God, who addressed her directly. 383 Hagar is the first person to receive a birth annunciation and the first woman to receive promises from the Lord to bless her within a covenantal framework (Gen 16:10-12). Hagar is the only person to bestow a name upon God (16:13). 384 Because Genesis 16:7 is the first reference to "the angel of the Lord," Hagar is the first person in the Bible whom the angel of the Lord visits. 385 Sarai's slave-girl also bears the honor of not one but a double theophany (16:7-12; 21:17-18). 386 The angel of the Lord speaks four times (Genesis 16:8; 9, 10, 11) in describing Hagar's covenant. 387 The language of the promise is similar to that which God made to Abram. 388 Kenneth Mathews understands that God's blessings to Hagar are conditional; she must remain submissive in Abram's household

³⁸¹ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Genesis: Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 176.

³⁸² The following are a sample of theophanies in the Old Testament: Noah (Genesis 6:13); Hagar (Genesis 16:10; 21:17); Abraham (Genesis 12: 7–9; 17:1; 18:1); Lot (Genesis 19:1; 21); Jacob (Genesis 28: 11–19; 31:11); Moses (Exodus 3:2 – 4; 19:20; 24: 9–11; 33:18-34:8); and Gideon (Judge 6: 11–12; 14).

³⁸³ Hagar, Hannah, and Mary are all addressed personally by Yahweh or Yahweh's representor concerning their children's destinies.

³⁸⁴ John L. Thompson, *Writing the Wrongs: Women of the Old Testament among Biblical Commentators from Philo through the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 18. Samson's mother, Hannah, and Mary were also recipients of a divine annunciations.

³⁸⁵ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 188. The "angel of the Lord" occurs forty-eight times throughout the Old Testament.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 179.

³⁸⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Louisville: John Knox, 2010), 152.

³⁸⁸ Abrahamic Covenant: Genesis 13:16; 15:5; 17:2; 22:17; 26:4, 24; 28; 3; 35:11; 48:4.

(12:3; 17:20). 389 However, the covenant obligates God but demands nothing of Hagar. God blesses whom God wants to bless. The angel of the Lord asks Hagar to return and submit; however, Hagar's blessings are not framed within conditional clauses based on her obedience to return to Sarai. 390 According to R. Hollis Gaus, it is uncharacteristic in the Hebrew scriptures; nevertheless, God's promises to this North African woman seem to deal with Hagar as a "tribal head." 391

There is no other person in the Bible, other than Jesus, who has been honored by God as Hagar, the recipient of so many "firsts" mentioned within the Old and New Testament. However, Hagar's theophanies and blessings are granted by virtues of her relationship to God and not solely by her relationship to Abram (Genesis 16:10; 21:13, 18). Williams articulates the paradoxical nature of this matriarchal narrative because her full testimony includes the only person in scripture who names God, but her testmony also involves slavery, poverty, ethnicity, sexual and economic exploitation, surrogacy, rape, domestic violence, homelessness, motherhood, and single parenting. 392

The same God who granted her the honor of naming him also allows the subjection of her body by Sarai and Abram. Hagar's silent lament is the first time in recorded biblical history where God dispatched the angel of the Lord and it was in order to find this run-away-slave teen girl. Could it be that Hagar's return was an opportunity for Abram and Sarai to repent of their mistreatment of Hagar and her baby? Might it be

³⁸⁹ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis* 11:27–50:26, 189.

³⁹⁰ W. Gunther Plaut, ed. *The Torah a Modern Commentary* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregation, 1981), 111

³⁹¹ Kimberly Ervin Alexander and R. Hollis Gause, *Women in Leadership: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Cleveland: Center for Pentecostal & Leadership, 2006), 48.

³⁹² Delores Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness, 4.

that the angel of the Lord's command to Hagar to return and submit served as a critique of Abram and Sarai's treatment of the "other"? The paradoxical nature of Hagar's story baffles the readers and hearers of both ancient and postmodern society. God, who approves of her eviction from the house of Abram, meets her a second time in the desert and blesses her one more time.

According to Walter Brueggemann, there is no need to render a moral judgment against the alternative device for securing a son as this is an attested legal practice in the biblical period. However, the narrator selected Hagar as the catalyst to define the "other" for Abram and later in the spheres of Judaism and Christianity. Hagar's silent prayers of sorrow and lament cry out for judgment upon behalf of her and her son while they assert that Abraham and Sarah did not believe the promise. ³⁹³ This Egyptian slave's narrative serves as a critique to pervasive social roles, norms, and practices. One ponders if moral judgments are not rendered by scholars and lay people alike regarding the dismissal of Hagar (Ishmael) and the acceptance only a few generations later of Israel's sons by two concubines—Bilhah (Dan and Naphtali) and Zilpah (Gad and Asher) in Genesis 30. Is this not parallel to the contradictions of interpretations of European women's faith journeys and the faith journeys of African American women? For example, the images in the Bible, despite historical evidence, connects Hagar (Ishmael) as African while Bilhah (Dan and Naphtali) and Zilpah (Gad and Asher) are assumed to be European.

Hagar's silent prayers of lament at the beginning of Genesis 16 only heightens the anxiety of the reader to find ways to name and apprehend the splendor and mystery of a personal encounter with God. One is left with a sense of wonder that God would do this

³⁹³ Walter Brueggemann, Genesis, 151.

for a slave, concubine, maid, second wife, "other," and throwaway female.³⁹⁴ The readers find themselves staring at God, struggling to make sense of Hagar's story. When one finally begins to comprehend God's ways and acts within one's own cultural and conceptual world, a person is reminded of the earlier commandment: "Go back to your mistress and submit to her" (Genesis 16:9). Hagar, who had an unmediated experience with God, must return and surrender to Sarai, who represents privileged stature and authority. Hagar's laments continue.

Power of Recognition

One can argue that while the narrative of Hagar's epiphany in Genesis 16 describes her status as a "servant to Sarai," in the course of the events, she has been transformed by her encounter with God. Awe gives way to recognition. She clearly emerges from the silence as a figure of empowerment. Charles Taylor provides a framework for a discourse on recognition that is relevant to Hagar's encounter with the Angel of the Lord. God sees Hagar within a context and culture shaped by her gender, ethnicity, race, and economic status yet initiates a relationship with her in the midst of her desperation.

Taylor contends,

The demand for recognition . . . is given urgency by the supposed links between recognition and identity, where this latter term designates something like a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being. . . . our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non-recognition or mis-recognition can inflict harm, can be a form of

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 17.

oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.³⁹⁵

Hagar experiences the Angel of the Lord who sees her as a person worthy to receive an encounter with God, identifies with her sorrow and pain, acknowledges her non-recognition or misrecognition from Sarai and Abram, and proclaims a blessing upon her and her descendants. Hagar's testimony does not stop there; God recognizes Hagar, and Hagar recognizes God. God mirrors that she too is created in the *imago Dei*.

During Sarai retelling of her conflict with Hagar to Abram, the Egyptian slave is nameless:

Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me." "Your slave is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." (Genesis 16:5–6a).

In the dialogue between the husband and wife, Hagar's identity is objectified as property. Hagar is nothing more than Sarai's slave and affirmed by Abram to be nothing more than Sarai's slave. Hagar is lied to Sarai's power and control, even in her pregnant state. Hagar cannot petition Abram, Sarai's husband, because the narrator reminds us that Hagar is Sarai's expecting handmaid.

Hagar's legal position was divided: first to provide Abram with a child, and second, to remain the property of her mistress Sarai. Her mistress could order her around, discipline her, and sell her at will. Sarai takes the initiative in suggesting that her husband, Abram, have intercourse with Hagar.³⁹⁷ The act of intercourse promoted the

³⁹⁵ Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25.

³⁹⁶ Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 11.

³⁹⁷ The act bearing children was performed by a wife for her husband (Genesis 16:1, 16; 17:17, 19, 21; 21:2, 3, 5, 7, 9; 22:20, 23; 24:15, 24, 47; 25:2, 12).

maidservant to the position of "second" wife (Genesis 16:3). Hagar's recognition, in part as Abram's wife, points to the possible reason for which Hagar treats her barren mistress with contempt (Genesis 16:4). Sarai responds to Hagar's triumphalism by seeking permission to "oppress" her (Genesis16:6). Sarai This is a reminder to Hagar of the uneven power differential: her identity remains linked to Sarai. This is a reminder that her tears and internal screams of protest—her laments—will go unheeded by Abram. She is Sarai's property, and she must remain subject to her mistress. The Jewish scholar and theologian, Tikva Frymer-Kensky, points out that in the Islamic tradition, Hagar was not a slave but a princess wed to Abram, and that a Jewish Midrash relates that Hagar was a princess in the house of Pharaoh. Might this be the reason that the Egyptian slave/princess treated her mistress with contempt?

The narrative places Hagar on center stage. She is neither exiled nor banished. Hagar takes the initiative and flees. The text suggests that Hagar's flight prefigures the wilderness experiences of Israel in the Exodus (Genesis 16; 21), as already mentioned. Hagar seeks out her own liberation from the confining and demeaning position and from the social structures of her community. Sarai takes the initiative to bear children for her household; Hagar takes the risk to initiate her liberation. The Angel of the Lord seeks out

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³⁹⁸ Daniel I. Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, ed. Ken M. Campbell, 33-102 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Academic, 2003), 77–78.

³⁹⁹ This same verb later describes Egyptian abuse of the Israelites and judgment, reflecting the narrator's negative disposition toward Sarai's action and signaling to the reader that such a treatment violates Israel's ideals. This is recorded in later legislation regarding inheritance rights of the firstborn son (Deuteronomy 21:15–17).

⁴⁰⁰ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 226.

Hagar as the speechless slave who is given voice to speak to an angel and to name God. 401 The wounds of Hagar's inner spirit are disrupted by an encounter with God.

In her "wilderness," God recognizes Hagar. Williams argues that in Genesis 16:7, there is no clear distinction between God and the Angel of the Lord. God, in visible form, recognizes her personal affliction and destitution. God stopped by to see about an Egyptian slave woman in the wilderness. Hagar is rendered speechless! However, her inclusion in scripture bears witness to God's faithfulness: "when faced with hostile opposition," God intervened on her behalf. God heard her tears, moans, groans and protests. Likewise, the wilderness is the place where the Jewish people found their freedom and liberation from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 15:1-27).

God in "self-manifestation" calls out to Hagar by name. De La Torre suggests that the angel of the Lord addressing Hagar as Sarai's property (Gen 16:8) constitutes a denial of her personhood. He minimizes the fact that the first word uttered by God was her proper name; 403 Hagar hears her name from the lips of God (Genesis 16:8). 404 This fact is insightful because God generally addresses heads of households, who tended to be men. By juxtaposing the distorted identity and status of Hagar in Abram and Sarai's words and actions with God's own calling out Hagar by name, the narrator forces readers to revise their views concerning Hagar's worth and value.

⁴⁰¹ Delores Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness, 19-20.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 20.

⁴⁰³ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Genesis*, 175.

⁴⁰⁴ Daniel I. Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," 42. The normal patterns of divine address are Genesis 3:9; 12:1; 35:1 with the exception of Judges 13:1-23 another unnamed female.

Taylor states that one's "identity" is largely fixed by one's social position, which means that whatever an individual or community recognize "as important to themselves" is "to a great extent determined by their place in society, and whatever roles or activities" are attached to that position. Taylor's premise is that every human being inherently demands recognition because "recognition forges identity."

If one agrees with Taylor's model, then Hagar's identity and mis-identity are shaped in part by seeing herself through the "gaze" of others. The knowledge that God recognizes and acknowledges her by name serves to unmask the misrecognition by her mistress and husband. Nevertheless, Williams reminds the reader that God "still identifies Hagar as Sarai's property." She argues that God is not "concerned with, nor involved" in Hagar's liberation; therefore, she concludes that God is primarily concerned with securing Hagar and her child's well-being. Williams believes that the fact that Hagar also addresses Sarai as her mistress demonstrates that she "still sees herself as property." After all, Renita Weems' writes, "Hagar's body was free, but her mind remained in bonds." The reality of the historical and contemporary suffering of black women due to tridimensional suffering of race, class, and gender means that many of us do not have the privilege of a "free mind." Still, the fact that we are "still here" is a

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 66.

⁴⁰⁷ Delores Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness, 20.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Renita Weems, *Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible* (Philadelphia: Innisfree, 1988), 13.

testimony of God's favor to sustain us amid perils.

God recognizes, sees, initiates, and draws Hagar into a transformative personal experience with God as El-Roi. Frymer-Kensky suggests that Hagar's naming "God El Roi, 'God of my seeing,' can mean both 'the God I have seen' and 'the God who sees me." El Roi, the God who sees, blesses Hagar to carry Ishmael (God hears) within her womb. Seeing and hearing is important in this text because Hagar represents the invisible and muted individual in our community. According to Frymer-Kensky's reading, "Ishmael's name emphasizes the God who listens even when we are not aware of God's activity." The narrator appropriates a threefold structure of naming: God names "Ishmael" (Genesis 16:11, 15); Hagar names God "El Roi—the God who sees me" (16: 13); and Hagar names the holy place of her visitation "Beer Lahai Roi" (16:14). 413 Encapsulated here is the dual search for God (the God she sees and the God of seeing) and the care of God for her (the God who sees me). Perhaps the notion of seeing also contributes to Hagar's flight because she "saw" that she was pregnant and, consequently, despised Sarai (16:4). Hagar marvels at the grace of the One who took pity on her even though she was a person of low standing (cf. Hannah's prayer, 1 Samuel 2:8). 414 This El-Roi, "the God of seeing," is the all-seeing God, the "God of my seeing," the God whom I have seen, and "the God who sees me." Most likely, the several meanings are intended to convey various nuances. Of course, when God "sees," it is an expression of God's concern and extension of protection, but when Hagar "sees," she experiences God's self-

⁴¹¹ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, Reading the Women, 231.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis* 11:27–50:26, 183.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 192.

manifestation.415

The result is that a disenfranchised and marginalized woman is empowered because the creator of heaven and earth recognizes and acknowledges her personhood. She is the recipient of a personal encounter and speech by God, an honor never given to Sarai. Scripture mentions three times that Hagar bore Ishmael (God hears), confirming God's blessings. If one's identity is in dialogue with the other, then the storyteller is signaling to the readers that because of Hagar's experience with God, her social position is Sarai's maid; however, is it not the narrator who emphasizes her personal and salvific encounter with God? This experience told a "nobody" she was a "somebody" even within the context of a hostile community. Also, God did not wait for Hagar to cry out verbally. God heard her silent lament and engaged Hagar in her wilderness of hopelessness, suffering, pain, and prayerful lament.

I's free, I's free?

When Sarai noticed Ishmael playing with her son Isaac, she turned on Abram—who is now ninety-nine years old—ordering him to banish Hagar and her son (Genesis 21:10). Another paradox appears as God intervenes in the affair. God instructs Abram to harken unto the words of Sarai, once again because the promise God gave will not be fulfilled through Ishmael but through a child to be born to Sarai. It is interesting to note that the promise is to Sarai, not to Abram. After all, Abram already has a son, and after Sarai's death, he will have six more children with Keturah. Sarai's womb carries the

⁴¹⁵ Nahum M. Sarna, Genesis, 121.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Delores Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness, 3.

promise—not Abram's seed.418

Wealthy Abram provides meager provisions for the journey: some breads and a skin of water. Abram had the means to ensure his son and his slave wife would arrive at a new destination with sufficient provisions to reestablish their lives. He also had enough slaves to accompany them on their journey. Instead, Abram casts out Hagar and Ishmael with no concern for their future well-being. Hagar was abandoned; she was left alone in the desert, facing death, and questioning the promises of God, whom she named El Roi.

Hagar's lament was audible in her second wilderness experience. 419 God proves faithful again and comes in two forms: a voice from heaven (Genesis 21:17) and an opening of Hagar's eyes (21:19). God heard (twice in vv. 9; 17) and speaks from heaven and discloses the future greatness of her son. 420 God carries out again the rescue of Hagar and Ishmael (16:7). That "God heard" her cries reminds the readers and hearers the earlier pun on the name "Ishmael" (16:11). The angel of the Lord speaks from heaven (22:11, 15), indicating the supreme authority of God. Curiously, in both encounters with Hagar, the messenger enquiries about her condition (21:17; 16:8). God's question to Hagar is rhetorical because God is a seeing God and fully knows her plight.

The desert is the ultimate abode for Ishmael (21:20-21) and his descendants. Matthews tells us that, by the Lord hearing the child in the wilderness, the narrative shows that God's blessings extend to outsiders. 421 The phrase "God [or the Lord] was with him," explains the success achieved by his servants. In ancient Near Eastern society,

⁴¹⁸ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Genesis*, 178.

⁴¹⁹ E. A. Speiser, Genesis, 156.

⁴²⁰ John Skinner, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis, 323.

⁴²¹ Delores Mathews, *Genesis* 11:27–50:26, 273.

the father had to obtain a wife for his son, as was the case with Abram and Isaac later in the story. This time, it is Hagar who takes over the responsibility as a "tribal head." ⁴²² If fertility is an outward sign of God's blessings, Ishmael and his Egyptian wife were richly blessed with twelve princes (Genesis 17:20).

It is worth noting that the image of Ishmael in the Bible, as distinct from later Jewish literature, is not a negative one. He is not an inveterate enemy of Israel. In fact, it appears that there was intermingling between the tribe of Simeon and the Ishmaelites, for the clans of Mibsam and Mishma are associated with both (Genesis 25:13; 1 Chronicles 4:25). The Ishmaelites are not mentioned among the victims of David's raids into the south even though these incursions encroach upon their habitat (1 Samuel 27:8; Genesis 25:18). David's sister married "Jether the Ishmaelite," according to 1 Chronicle 2:17, and among David's administrators of the royal treasures were "Obil the Ishmaelite" and "Jaziz the Hagrite" (1 Chronicles 27:30). 423

Hagar's narrative in Genesis does not end in a condition of victimization but as a heroine in Scripture. Yes, the reader is invited to hear her whole testimony. She is an abused, runaway pregnant handmaiden, but God finds her in the wilderness. As previously mentioned, Hagar is the first person in Scripture whom the Angel of the Lord visits. Hagar's experiences with God in the wilderness undercut her pain and suffering and recognize God's ability to see, speak, and call her by name. She is Hagar; for her, "You are the God who sees me!"

⁴²² Kimberly Ervin Alexander and R. H. Gause, *Women in Leadership*, 49.

⁴²³ Sarna, Genesis, 122.

Pentecostal Womanist Theology of Lament

The reader should not over-romanticize Hagar's status. At the same time, it is possible to find parallels of her story in human history and today's reality. The story of this Egyptian princess/slave is reminiscent of the accounts of black enslaved women during slavery. Their narratives recount the experience of brutal rape and beating; "their bodies" remained in bondage while "their minds" were free.

The story of Hagar has not always inspired thoughts of liberation. Katherine Clay Bassard notes that "while the figure of the slave woman Hagar would seem a more natural representation of black womanhood in the nineteenth century . . . Hagar's Egyptianness would have been too dangerous to the pre-Emancipation cause" because African American women writers identified with the Hebraic line of Ham. 424 Under American slavery, slaves were mere bodies taken from them by their owners and according to the laws of the land. In American slave religion, the slaves would take their bodies back in singing, dancing, praying, preaching, baptizing, and shouting. 425

Through the mass evangelism of the Great Awakening, Evangelical Christianity collided with African American religion and formed various contours of African American Christianity. In this period of American history, black and white as well as rich and poor came together at the camp meetings. The revival gatherings created space for "emotional leveling of otherwise rigid castes of the new American society" and brought the powerful and the powerless into a community of "spiritual equality," if only for

⁴²⁴ Katherine Clay Bassard, *Transforming Scriptures: African American Women Writers and the Bible* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 16.

⁴²⁵ Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book*, 62.

fleeting moments. 426

The premium placed on experience in African American Christian worship was the spiritual heritage of slave religion. Christian slaves grounded their faith in their experience:

He tied me with a rope by both arms and carried me to the smoke-house. When he got in he throwed the rope over the joist of the smoke-house and left me there all night. He just allowed my toes to touch the floor when he tied me up by my wrists. But, my child, the Lord was with me that night! I managed to get my wrists out of the rope, and I sat up nodding in the smoke-house all that night. I was afraid to let him see me down, so just as he was about to unlock the door the next day I slipped my hands back in the rope. He thought I had been tied all night; but, bless the Lord! I was just like Paul and Silas when they were in jail; I cried to the Lord, and He loosened the rope.⁴²⁷

The Holy Spirit came upon African Americans enslaved and free in the form of ecstatic worship as well as through more traditional Christian rites, such as baptism and Holy Communion. The Spirit of God endowed them with wisdom, discernment, knowledge, peace, joy, healing, survival skills and encouragement.⁴²⁸

Hagar's narrative is an example where God privileges those without privilege, honors those without honor, names those who are unnamed, and recognizes those without recognition.

The people who emerged from slavery were called many things, but the most common term was 'Negro.' The name pointed neither to land of origin nor to line of descent: it signified only color, color without reference to ancestry or territory. Identity was reduced to a matter of melanin: 'Negro' and its more objectionable cognates simply mean 'black.' It was not and could not be a sign of nationality. 429

Slavery's children came to see in Scripture that God "grants victory to the unlikeliest

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁴²⁷ Octavia V. Rogers Albert, *The House of Bondage* (New York: Cosimo, 2005), 90.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 63.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 115.

people—people like themselves—and by the unlikeliest means."430

Hagar returns out of obedience to God, who sought her and found her in the wilderness—where nobody could hear her praying—and ministered to her in her brokenness. The Egyptian maidservant returns not as a victim but in a spirit of worship and obedience. Hagar's obedience to the words of God is an act of worship. How can one disobey the word of God when one is the beneficiary of a transformative lived encounter? Likewise, the stories of enslaved and free African Americans testify that they too had transformative lived encounters with God. Yes, God was involved in their history, in the provision of personalized instructions, and in commandments.

In contemporary terms, one is reminded of Elizabeth J. Dabney (1903-1967), who was affectionately called Mother Dabney, a member of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). In the wider African American church traditions, older women are given the respectful title of "church mother" or "mother." Church mothers have "started churches, initiated prayer meetings, led testimony services, cooked and served on Sunday dinners, interpreted tongues, taught, evangelized, donated their money and time, fasted, taken care of children in the church, and "held up the blood-stained banner of Jesus Christ." According to Anthea Butler, in the COGIC Women's Department, these mothers "included women from the upper and lower classes, light-skinned and dark-skinned women, women who were wives and mothers, and women who transcended the boundaries of motherhood to become spiritual mothers, or church mothers." 432

⁴³⁰ Ibid., xiii.

⁴³¹ H. Carlyle Jr., "The Accommodation and Liberation of Women in the Church of God in Christ," *The Journal of Religious Thought* 52/53 no. 2/1 (1996): 78.

⁴³² Anthea D. Butler, *Women in the Sanctified Church of God In Christ: Making a Sanctified World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 2.

Contemporary church mothers are not excluded from being entrepreneurs, civic leaders, domestic services, corporate executives, and clerical support.

Cheryl Townsend Gilkes notes that within Pentecostal and Holiness denominations, church mothers in the Sanctified Churches are

older, venerated, Spirit-filled women who hold considerable power within nearly autonomous and well-organized parallel women's worlds. Such women may be known as heroic coworkers of powerful elders, bishops, and church founders. Others may owe their prestige, and occasional real power, to their roles as wives and widows of elders, bishops, pastors and church founders. Some are community prayer band leaders or prayer warriors.⁴³³

Within the sacred and secular African American communities, even today, the title "Mother" is bestowed as a remnant of West African concepts of family. 434 In the role of church mother, "regardless of the level of 'formal' sexism, an ethic of female autonomy operates to enforce a reality of more or less shared power in a 'dual-sex' political system." Womanist lens provide a helpful framework to challenge the apostasy, domestication, apathy, indifference, and injustice within a 'dual-sex' system.

Nevertheless, Gilkes affirms that despite the patriarchy within some black denominations, including COGIC, black women experience the black church as a "women institution" even in spite of its "dual-sex" political system. 436 Thus, while this "dual-sex" politics prohibits or restricts ordination of women as elders, pastors, or bishops, the religious experiences of black women often include their calling to the black church within their commitment to their communities. Their ability to assert their personhood, leadership,

⁴³³ Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For the Women*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001), 68.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 63.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

preservation of life, impartation to next generation, and the support and affirmation of black women religious experiences remains one of the "most important social, psychological and spiritual resources they possess."⁴³⁷

Elizabeth Dabney was such a mother in COGIC. Andre L. Price's defines COGIC's church mothers as "elders within the community of faith who live a life of consecrated holiness unto God, possess both godly and practical wisdom, and are seen as exemplars of faith and hope to men and women."438 Dabney became a legendary spiritual leader in Philadelphia because of her prayer and healing ministry. Mother Dabney and her husband, Elder Benjamin Dabney, founded the Garden of Prayer Church of God In Christ in obedience to God. The temple had a seating capacity of twenty-five hundred. 439 In her autobiography, Mother Dabney writes that she and her husband were raised in Christian households "where the family altar was the center of attraction. The Holy Bible was taught, obeyed and lived . . . The Name of Jesus was hallowed both day and night."440 She received a vision that she should covenant with God to pray every day at the church at nine o'clock in the morning, for three years, and fast for seventy-two hours per week. Her obedience contributed to the founding and formation of her interracial, interdenominational, intergenerational, international prayer and healing ministry, supported by Charles Harrison Mason, founder of the Church of God In Christ (COGIC). Donyelle McCray concludes that church mothers are showered with hugs and kisses,

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 117.

⁴³⁸ Andre L. Price "Mothers in the Spirit: A Pneumatic Reflection on Mary the Mother of the Church and Church Mothers in the Sanctified Tradition," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 25 no. 2 (2016): 272; "holiness is an attribute of God" extended as God's gracious gift and sovereign purpose; ibid., 273.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁴⁴⁰ Elizabeth J. Dabney, What it Means to Pray Through, 11.

depicting elderly black female bodies as safe, nurturing, beacons of hope and wisdom. The increased number of women's ordinations and new models of leaderships might shift the influence of church mothers, but this role within the black church will never cease. Church mothers are not infallible, and some are given to gossip, social respectability, leadership manipulation, and control of church and family affairs. Nevertheless, they are the ones who are sought after for godly wisdom, revelation, and counsel. The "church mother's theology of prayer reflects a high view of intercession, unusual sensitivity to suffering and abiding hope."

David D. Daniels III highlights the peculiar spiritual practices of COGIC as "praying, tarrying, fasting, congregational singing, testifying, praising, and consecration." He develops a composite of COGIC's eight prayer traditions: (1) prayers in concert (praying together in unity for regular times of prayer); (2) altar prayers (usually prayers of repentance at the sacred place of the church altar at a sacred time after the sermon); (3) prayer lines (intercessors are available to pray on behalf of any and all prayer requests and provide an assurance of hope); (4) pastoral prayers (the minister's prayers of request and thanksgiving prayed on the behalf of the congregation); (5) prayer meetings (a designated time gathered at church usually outside of regular worship services for an hour or more); (6) personal prayer times (time of personal conversation with the triune God); (7) tarrying (a form of contemplative prayers of waiting on God);

⁴⁴¹ Donyelle McCray, "Mothering Souls: A Vocation of Intercession," *Anglican Theological Review* 98 no. 2 (April 2016): 298.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 291.

⁴⁴³ David Daniels III, "Church of God in Christ Distinctives: Celebrating our Uniqueness in Christ," in *Church of God in Christ Discipleship Bible* Centennial Edition, (Memphis: Church of God in Christ, 2007), A17. The total article goes from A17-A19

and (8) the consecration/shut-in (extended time of prayer, fasting, and worship often all night seeking a visitation and miraculous power of the triune God). 444 A prayer and healing ministry within COGIC would incorporate all of these eight prayer traditions.

Mother Dabney described her three-year covenant consecration with God in 1945:

I am unable to tell you how I felt, or to describe what it means to enter into such a covenant with the Lord. The next morning at nine o'clock I met the Lord on time. I became so accustomed to meeting Him at that hour, I never had to look at my clock to find out the correct time; however I did. At nine o'clock each morning the doorknob of the church would turn. I knew it was the Lord; therefore I greeted Him with a hearty, "Good morning, Jesus." 445

Spiritual experiences of talking to God, hearing God, and walking with God created a dependence for the daily manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life: the power to abide and to "seat in heavenly places with Christ" (Ephesian 2:6), bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatian 5: 22-23). Mother's Dabney's autobiography mirrors Hagar's narratives and provides insights into what Cheryl J. Sanders calls the "distinctive songs, speech, and dances" created by an empowering openness to the Holy Spirit by a people that were "rejected by the dominant host culture because of their race, sex, and class." As one of Hagar's daughters, Mother Dabney's ministries resulted in spiritual transformation of her community and the broader society.

Historically, African American Pentecostal women acted upon their calling in the

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Elizabeth J. Dabney, What it Means to Pray Through, 16–17.

⁴⁴⁶ Cheryl J. Sanders, "African-American Worship in the Pentecostal and Holiness Movements," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 32 no. 2 (Fall 1997): 119.

⁴⁴⁷ Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 139–153.

face of structures and systems of oppression as well as individual and collective oppositions. They exercised resistance, "spiritual agency that contradicted the use of biblical admonitions for women to be silent and invisible." Hagar and her daughters had the audacity to believe that God refuses to remain aloof while God's people are locked in battle with the forces of evil. In the midst of great persecutions and the possibility of future persecution, they recognized that even when they are unrecognized or misrecognized, the living God saw, heard, sought, and acted on their behalf.

In using Mother Dabney as a case study for a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament, seven categories are identified that are fluid and often overlap in the construction of a theological framework of silent prayers of sorrow and lament: they are incident, reaction, internalization, pneumatic response, intuition, release, and empowerment.

Incident

An incident in the framework of a theology of suffering and lament is the situation, setting, or context that is so troubling to victims or so out of their hands or their control that they are helpless in their own strength, often without words to express the depths of their sorrow or pain. Be it isolation or rejection, physical, emotional, or structural violence, the person feels a burden and seeks God. The incident, therefore, propels them to a place of lament. Mother Dabney experienced just such an incident. Mother Dabney wrote in 1929,

One afternoon I went to North Philadelphia to pray. The Lord called my attention

⁴⁴⁸ Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "'You've Got a Right to the Tree of Life:' The Biblical Foundations of an Empowered Attitude among Black Women in the Sanctified Church," in *Philip's Daughters: Women in Pentecostal-Charismatic Leadership*, eds. Estrelda Alexander and Amos Young, 152-169 (Eugene: Pickwick, 2009), 154.

⁴⁴⁹ Brian K. Blount, *Can I Get a Witness? Reading Revelation through African American Culture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 83.

to the situation in the neighborhood. I asked Him would He give us the victory, and break through the bonds, so that the gainsayers would have nothing to say; if I went under a covenant and vow with Him in prayer. He did not ask me to make the covenant: nor did He answer me speedily, but he said: He would break through and bless; if I wanted to make the sacrifice. 450

Silent prayers of sorrow and lament are derived from presenting issues of grief, anguish, and trauma. Mother Dabney was empowered to live a holy sanctified life "in" a world that was "sinful, oppressive and discriminatory." However, she was not "of" this world! She was called to create a "place where the oppressed outsider" would be welcomed and loved. She was called to birth an "other" world, an international, interdenominational, and, intergenerational ministry at the height of Jim and Jane Crowism where one's testimony of faith in Christ was measured by the external manifestation of being "loving, honest, and pure, even in relation to their enemies." The experience or encounter may feel like an assault to the body or to the senses as the issue(s) at hand is revealed. In the case of Mother Dabney, the triune God was the initiator in "calling" her attention to the reality and impact of suffering in her midst. The incident(s) places the backs of individual and communities against the wall without any foreseeable help or ally.

Reaction

In the framework of a theology of suffering and lament, reaction is a response to the incident. Reactions occur in many forms, but it is our agentic means of responding when we do not quite even know how to respond. This reaction is typically the beginning of the lament. Mother Dabney described her physical, psychological, and emotional

⁴⁵⁰ Elizabeth J. Dabney, What it Means to Pray Through, 15.

⁴⁵¹ Cheryl J. Sanders, "African-American Worship," 119–120.

⁴⁵² Ibid., 120.

response to the incident. Her covenant of prayer was manifested in bodily fashion. Her silent prayers of sorrow and lament found expressions in rocking, tears, and fasting. As she wrote,

I would sit down and pray; I kneeled until I wore all the skin off of my knees on those hard floors. They were so sensitive, many times I was in great pain; however I had to use them without murmuring or complaining. At times I was so worn in my body . . . I never permitted anything to interfere with my conversation with God. I suffered. The flesh on my bones was numb; I fasted, not eating or drinking natural food; but I had a direct supply from heaven. The days were dark, and I did not see my way; but of one thing I was confident, the Lord guided my footsteps; I enjoyed his company and He enjoyed mine. 453

The foremothers and forefathers of the African American Pentecostal movements spent hours praying and fasting on behalf of their communities, families, political systems, and for the nations. They believed that the triune God would harken unto their laments, petitions, supplications, and thanksgiving in all-night prayer meetings. It was not uncommon to conduct periodic prayer shut-ins seeking spiritual wisdom, guidance, and counsel regarding personal, communal, national, and international challenges and opportunities. Mother Dabney's consistent, active, persistent life of prayer and fasting granted her the spiritual discernment to travail in prayer before the triune God in a spirit of hope and in anticipation of divine intervention and manifestation.

Internalization

Internalization as a stage of lament is the stage where the person feels the burden or weight of the incident and its effects on others. It is through internalization that the lamenter identifies both with the suffering of the other and, more importantly, with the pain that God feels regarding the injustice of the incident. Mother Dabney's prayers were expressed through vocal and sometimes unspoken utterances, such as moaning, groaning,

⁴⁵³ Elizabeth J. Dabney, What it Means to Pray Through, 17.

glossolalia, silence, confessions of scriptures, and silent tarrying before the triune God for help. Sanders, in her examination of worship in the African American Pentecostal and Holiness movements, recognizes that

Glossolalia is not the only ecstatic speech used in worship. The vocabulary of utterance spoken spontaneously in worship is not random or undefined. There is a definite lexicon for intelligible ecstatic utterances in the sanctuary, which may manifest cultural and regional variants . . . Usually, these terms found in the Bible with reference to the praise and attributes of God: "Hallelujah," "Amen," "Glory," "Holy," and "Praise the Lord." In the ecstatic state, the worshipper may repeat one or more of these expressions many times, in a loud or subdued voice. ⁴⁵⁴

It is not uncommon during communal anguish and trauma that laments and praise are simultaneously offered by the same person. The laments of one's present situation or conditions do not negate one's worship of praise. One of the attributes of African Americans resilience is their ability through prayers, singing, shouting, crying, preaching, teaching, and dancing to counter physical, spiritual, and psychological distress.

These interventions promoted communal strength and health during a time in African American history where they were often prohibited from seeking professional medical treatments. Dabney said,

I will walk with You for three years in prayer; both day and night. I will meet You every morning at nine o'clock sharp; You will never have to wait for me; I will be there to greet You. I will stay there all day . . . if You will hearken unto the voice of my supplication and breakthrough in that wicked neighborhood . . . I will fast seventy-two hours each week for two years. While I am going through the fast, I will not go home to sleep in my bed. I will stay at church. 455

Among some black Pentecostal practices, "[a]ll-night prayer vigils called 'shut-ins' and consecrations, three-to four-hour prayer meetings, and twice a week fasting along with

⁴⁵⁴ Cheryl J. Sanders, "African-American Worship, 117.

⁴⁵⁵ Elizabeth J. Dabney, What it Means to Pray Through, 16.

Determinents of prayer and healing ministries. 456

Uttered sounds mark the Azusa Street Revival and contemporary black Pentecostalism worship services. These sounds include "speaking in unknown tongues, different languages, shouts, praises, singing in English, singing in tongues, gospel hymns, 'heavenly anthems,' as well as laughter, shrieks, cries, moans, groans, and silence, along with music of various instruments." If the communities were under perceived spiritual attacks—such as police officers shooting and killing black leaders, woman, man, or child—it would not be uncommon for churches and ministries to schedule prayer shut-ins lasting all night or starting at daybreak. These communities would come together, crying out to the triune God for help and mercy. With Isaiah 58:6, they believed that communal and individual burdens would be restored and repaired for all who are oppressed.

Response

In this framework, response is the person's actions as related to the insight they received from the Spirit in the internalization stage. It is no longer a reaction to the circumstance but instead is a response to the Spirit moving within them. Much like Hagar, Mother Dabney lived with the external knowledge and assurance that because God saw and heard her, God will intervene on her behalf, as she exclaimed,

As soon as I had made this covenant unto the Lord the heavens opened on that river bank; and the glory of the Lord fell from heaven all around me. It fell in the water like large drops of hail and rain. 458. . . His glory filled the room all day long. He was my guest . . . I talked with God. I related unto Him the story of my

⁴⁵⁶ David Daniels III, "African-American Pentecostalism in the 20th Century," in *The Century of the Holy Spirit*, ed. Vinson Synan, 265-292 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 281.

⁴⁵⁷ David Danels III, "Gotta Moan Sometimes': A Sonic Exploration of Earwitness to Early Pentecostal Sound in North America," in Pneuma 30 no. 1 (2008): 7.

⁴⁵⁸ Elizabeth J. Dabney, What it Means to Pray Through, 16.

covenant. I reminded Him of the words He had spoken to me at the river bank. 459 . . . At nine o'clock each morning the door knob of the church would turn. I knew it was the Lord; therefore I greeted Him with a hearty, Good-morning, Jesus. 460

Harold Carter provides analysis of the form, technique, style, and theology embedded in the prayers of postbellum and Southern Blacks in the 20th-century. He argues that the prayer tradition of Black people is a "spiritual force necessary for the Black community's continued growth and a vital contribution to the community of mankind."⁴⁶¹ Carter contends that the African American community had a preference for the prophetic traditions in the Bible; their preference is found in the person of "Jesus, a savior, a friend, and a fellow sufferer at the hand of the unjust oppressor, who would do anything but fail."⁴⁶²

Prayer has "undergirded national movements, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Opportunities Industrialization Centers, and the efforts of ministers in local communities, to call attention to social injustices." These communities had and continue to have many reasons to pray; they had and continue to have hope and faith in the almighty name of Jesus. They were convinced that prayer was the conduit for a liberating empowerment of social change. It is this conviction that encouraged radical obedience to the word, leading, and unction of the Holy Spirit. They were confident that

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Elizabeth J. Dabney, What it Means to Pray Through, 17.

⁴⁶¹ Harold Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1976), 19.

⁴⁶² Ibid., 47.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 99.

God would not give them more than they could bare, even though they did not actively pursue a life of sorrow. Their hope was that "if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with Christ" (2 Timothy 2:27). They had faith in reigning with Jesus on this side of glory, for themselves and their descendants.

Intuition

The intuition is a knowing that emerges from the Spirit's encounter. It is revelatory and brings confidence that one has been and is being moved and directed by the Spirit. Mother Dabney acknowledges that there were many individuals who tried to stop her from praying at the church and that "[t]hese were not sinners, but they professed the same love of God."464 Moreover, she was accused of being "mentally deranged," "an old witch; a magic book reader,' and a 'master-mind woman."465 Nevertheless, she persisted. Despite warnings of bodily harm if she did not cease her prayer meetings, she continued to pray. 466 As she noted,

When I got off the trolley car, I saw two men standing on opposite corners. . . One of them started towards me; my heart was praying so loud it seemed as if it went to the bottom of my feet, and they joined in prayer with me. I did not run; I called om the Name of Jesus. I requested Him to let the blood cover me completely. I know He answered my payers immediately, for the man stopped following me . . . I knew then the Spirit of the Lord had prevailed for me and the angel of the Lord guarded the highway . . . Down in my soul I heard a multitude singing: 'Be not dismayed, whatever betides, God will take care of you' . . . I was aware of His divine leading . . . I thanked Him for protecting me life; I felt His arm embracing me, as a child would feel the arms of her father. The fragrance from Him was so sweet, I feasted. 467

Drawing on James K.A. Smith's metaphor of "thinking in tongues," Pentecostals have "a

⁴⁶⁴ Elizabeth J. Dabney, What it Means to Pray Through, 17.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 17–18.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 19–20.

distinct way of thinking; embedded in [P]entecostal practice is not only a spirituality"468 but also included is a distinctive "worldview that offers a unique interpretation of and orientation to the world."469 However, within Pentecostalism, there are distinctions unique to African American Pentecostal and religious expressions. Flora Wilson Bridges suggests that within the black communities, "African American religion and African American spirituality are not identical."470 In her examination of black history and culture even into the twenty-first century, African American spirituality's dominant themes are "a unified worldview," "self-definition of human identity," "spirituality embodied as the call to protest," and "the quest for community."471 They have a sense of knowing that the triune God has heard their prayer and is present in every situation and will "see one through" the difficulties and despair. This is one reason why space is given to hearing the testimonies of one's experiences with the triune God, which serves to encourage and empower the believers regarding miraculous healing, deliverance, and provisions.

Release

In this framework, release is the freedom to act upon the Spirit's promptings. It emerges from the intimacy that is enjoined in the internalization stage and strengthened in the response and intuition stages. Mother Dabney re-tells the joy of an intimate encounter with the triune God:

the 'Gospel Ship' is on life's sea of time, sometimes conditions make it

⁴⁶⁸ James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contribution to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 25.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁷⁰ Flora Wilson Bridges, Resurrection Song: African-American Spirituality, 3.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 5.

impossible to go forward, but we dare not go backward against the contrary winds . . . We can converse with God when we cannot utter a word; prayer becomes more realistic than just a desire of the heart, uttered or unexpressed. It gives you a vision of the future . . . Thank God for the prayer, that . . . locks the mouths of those 'hungry sea monsters' who ride the waves of time . . . [prayer] overpowers the minds of high and great [people] . . . sometimes there is no manifestation or outward demonstration, but in the heart the prayer fire burns . . . It is not a selfish prayer . . . We must be wise when it comes to this Christian warfare. We do not have to study a course on how to love each other. We love because Jesus lives in our hearts. We have a vision of that great 'love feast.' 472

Silent prayers of sorrow and lament are more than a catharsis. These prayers are rooted in an assurance of hope and awe and in a confidence that the triune God will direct one's step to an assurance that all will be well. "Many of those women who prayed with me all night and all day, were not members of our particular church, but they were Christians, and honest hearted workers, and representatives of God from various churches." Testifying, Dabney maintained that "God is able to do exceedingly above all" (Ephesian 3:20). The Egyptian slave/princess Hagar was recognized in her personal wilderness and in a hostile community. Pentecostal sounds of lament, hope, and joy are in many ways a "subversive" circular continuum undermining the dominant linear continuum of the Protestant majority's "predictable and ordered sound."

Empowerment

Empowerment is the final stage of this framework that speaks to the ability under the unction of the Spirit for the lamenter to now act under the Spirit's power. In this empowerment stage, it is clear that the person must rely totally upon and move by the Spirit. The earlier stages have set the tone for this reliance and surrender to the Spirit.

⁴⁷² Elizabeth J. Dabney, What it Means to Pray Through, 2728.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁷⁴ David D. Daniels III, "Gotta Moan Sometime," 12.

Finally, because of "praying through," one now has a greater sense of the realities behind the incident along with a reception of and reliance on the triune God's power. As Dabney exemplifies,

He said, in a calm voice, sweeter than anything I had ever heard, "Your three years are up." You have prayed through into my glory. My strength came, it seemed as if the world lifted from my poor shoulders . . . The heavens, the tree tops, the house tops, everything was praising God in these words, seemingly the sunshine joined in the great refrain, "You have prayed through into my glory." . . . the Lord appeared before me with a paper in his hand. He said, "You made the covenant, you vowed; you did not break it; this day I have anointed you with the gift of soul saving, wherever you shall go and pray souls shall be delivered out of bondage. Both men, women, girls and boys . . . While you pray, I will send finance to help my suffering pastors and the church. I will also take care of you. 475

In the throes of marginalization and ostracism by those in power and authority, "Pentecostals envision a world in which God's power is available for personal and social transformation."⁴⁷⁶

Regarding African-American women, Pentecostalism is a culture of both exclusion and embrace. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is one of recognition, liberation, and empowerment because even Mother Dabney was forbidden from officially fulfilling priestly/governmental functions in the Church of God In Christ.⁴⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Mother Dabney's prayer ministry included people from all parts of the world, including Syria, Africa, China, Australia, and England.⁴⁷⁸ She had a staff of sixteen women who worked with her in the prayer ministry and the correspondence department. In one year, they

⁴⁷⁵ Elizabeth J. Dabney, What it Means to Pray Through, 32.

⁴⁷⁶ Frederick L. Ware, "Neo-Pentecostal Spirituality and Theology of Creativity in the Work of Barbara A. Holmes," *Pneuma* 35 no. 1 (2013): 81.

⁴⁷⁷ Cheryl Bridges Jones, "Spirited Vestments: Or, Why the Anointing Is Not Enough," in *Philip's Daughters: Women in Pentecostal-Charismatic Leadership*, eds. Estrelda Alexander and Amos Young, 170-184 (Eugene: Pickwick, 2009), 170–172.

⁴⁷⁸ Elizabeth J. Dabney, What it Means to Pray Through, 43.

mailed out "seven million blessed handkerchiefs which had been anointed and prayed over for the sick and afflicted." 479

The legacy of slave women, a people who were often without speech and power, is that they trusted the God of their wilderness to speak on their behalf. Hagar and her daughters, like Mother Dabney, represent the transformed women who, protest against all forms of distorted "mirroring" to God. In the midst of their wilderness and adversities, they remember that they can depend on hearing and receiving a word from the Lord.

Pentecostal sounds of prayers resist the hierarchical reductionist classification of "emotional outbursts or liminal experiences." Daniels offers a sonic interpretation of primal cries as that which "emphasizes the agency of Pentecostals in participating in the production of their respective soundways and the construction of their soundscape." The sonic discourse supplies an explanation of cultural borrowing that eludes dependence on functionalist theories of social deprivation, psychological disorder, secularization, or globalization."

Mother Dabney's ministries remain in the shadow; however, this prayer warrior started and formed an international and interdenominational healing and deliverance ministry that drew in thousands of followers across international waters. To engage in a conversation with God and expect God to answer back was a remnant from an African worldview where the triune God is encountered in prayer. The God of Hagar is the same God of Mother Dabney. Hagar provides a corrective to a traditional biblical theology of

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁴⁸⁰ David D. Daniels III, "Gotta Moan Sometime," 11.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

lament, which always begins with articulated known words. This understanding of lament excludes Hagar's story from being seen as contributing to a theological discourse of lament. In contemporary society, the traditional construct of lament continues to marginalize and exclude those on the margins of society.

The re-reading of Hagar's narrative is crucial to give hope and empower those on the margins of contemporary societies. Her relationship with God and God's care for her and Ishmael points to Jesus Christ's claim that God loves everyone—especially those on the margins of society. Yes, God has a special relationship with the people of Israel, but that relationship did not exclude the rest of the world as evidenced by Hagar's and Mother Dabney's experiences and encounters with God. Their silent laments and, most importantly, God's response affirms their identities are not in the systems and structures of oppressions but are in the image and likeness of God—the uncorrupted *imago Dei* that finds expression in eradicating the status quo of Christianity that maintain racist, sexist, and classist ethos.

A Pentecostal Womanist theology of silent prayers of sorrow and lament arises out of black women perspectives and experiences of the tridimensional oppression of race, class, and gender. Their response to this oppression often begins with silent prayers of sorrow and lament. Voiceless screams of trauma are demonstrations of urgency and demand that God hears, responds, and empowers them to action. They are empowered to survive the onslaught of daily oppressions; empowered to stand against injustices; empowered to imagine a society that embraces her humanity; and empowered to prophetically decree and declare the sins of racialized privilege. Hagar names God, and God in turn recognizes her and promises blessings to future generations to come. The

generations of enslaved Africans are blessed. Hagar represents the paradoxical tension between European women and African American women. Traditionally, Sarai has been seen as the main female character in the Abramic cycle of biblical stories. This has relegated Hagar to a position of insignificance. To reclaim the story of Hagar as lament is to empower those on the margins with issues, concerns, and challenges outside of the purview of European women.

Mother Dabney's autobiography mirrors Hagar's narratives. Both stories provide insights into how one can be transformed by an encounter with God. In both cases, they remained in their patriarchal context. Hagar was transformed so that she was able to survive as a slave to raise Ishmael as a single mother. Mother Dabney was empowered to pursue her own calling to ministry although she was never ordained as a "minister." Women like Hagar and Mother Dabney are examples of the countless unnamed and unrecognized change-agents within biblical, historical, and contemporary societies. They serve as models in the construction of a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament because while COGIC celebrates the legacy of Mother Dabney, it officially has a patriarchal structure, often embraced by women in leadership. There are female and male leaders within the COGIC who are vested in the maintaining of parallel ordinations. It is for this reason that Frederick L. Ware prophetically critiqued the lack of formal ordination of women in COGIC—though there have always been exceptions to the rules. Speaking of "spiritual egalitarianism," he argues that "all persons are equal before God... . [and] spiritual gifts are bestowed impartially by God," but this reality has not been fully

realized yet within COGIC.⁴⁸³ Ware adds that ecclesial pragmatism, by which some women are ordained even while official policy is not changed, should be challenged until its policy includes spiritual egalitarianism. Womanist aim and discourse does not threaten or demonize black men. Instead, it seeks to advance the full civil liberties and religious freedoms for the entire African American population.⁴⁸⁴

On the other hand, a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament examines the ongoing revelation of the triune God that connects to the legacy that our foremothers were praying, fasting, tongue-talking, shouting, slain-in-the-spirit women of God. Like Hagar, they often had to lament in silence. These virtuous women were often overlooked, but in the face of oppression, they tarried in prayer and sang the songs of Zion until they had a sense of a visitation from the "Lawd". They were able to blaze trails and share their gifts and talents because of their calling from the "Lawd". Hagar, Mother Dabney, foremothers, grandmothers, mothers, and sisters were and are endowed by the Holy Sprite to ministries of service that mirrors the image and likeness of God. This is the challenge for the future. Silent prayers of sorrow and lament will persist until "that" future is manifested.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has presented the argument that a Womanist Pentecostal reading of Hagar provides a construction of gender that can potentially be positive for women even within the patriarchal context. Through Sontag's aesthetics of silence, one

⁴⁸³ Frederick L. Ware, "Spiritual Egalitarianism, Ecclesial Pragmatism, and the Status of Women in Ordained Ministry," in *Philp's Daughters: Women in Pentecostal-Charismatic Leadership*, eds. Estrelda Alexander and Amos Yong, 215-233 (Eugene: Pickwick, 2009), 215.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 216.

has come to appreciate that Hagar's silence is not a sign of subjugation but rather has the effect of focusing the audience's attention upon God's response to her suffering and pain. Through Taylor's politics of recognition, we have come to appreciate Hagar's personal transformative experiences with the Angel of the Lord. Finally, through the appropriation of Hagar's story, we encounter Hagar's daughter, a pioneer of the Pentecostal movement, in Mother Dabney, a Church Mother in the largest Black Pentecostal denomination, the Church of God In Christ. Her experiences with the triune God propelled her to acts of obedience, the epitome of true discipleship in the midst of real or potential hardship, suffering, and pain. Amid brokenness, God taught her to overcome evil, not with brute force, but by faithful obedience and endurance.

The stories of these two women reflect the abilities of "nobodies" to receive an authentic experience with God in the midst of marginalization. Hagar's narrative ends not in a position of victimhood but as a heroine in Scripture. Yes, the reader is reminded to hear her whole testimony. She is an abused, runaway pregnant handmaiden, but God finds her in the wilderness. Hagar is the first person in Scripture whom the Angel of the Lord visits. For the first time, an actor within the narrative speaks to Hagar and uses her name. God acknowledges and recognizes her personhood in a manner where Sarai and Abram have not. 485 God grants her holy ground for her silent prayers of lament and her verbalized lament. And Hagar the Egyptian is the first to receive an annunciation consisting of "the prediction of the birth of a male child; the naming of the child, and the future of the child." 486 Hagar's experiences with God in the wilderness undercut her pain

⁴⁸⁵ Genesis 1-2 suggests that men were obligated to treat their wives with dignity.

⁴⁸⁶ Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 17.

and suffering because of her personal transformative experiences with the—"God who sees me."

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, Thou has brought us thus far on the way.⁴⁸⁷

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1

⁴⁸⁷ James Weldon Johnson, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," Black Culture Connection, *PBS*, accessed February 9, 2017, http://www.pbs.org/black-culture/explore/black-authors-spoken-word-poetry/lift-every-voice-and-sing

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has demonstrated that a Theology of Lament begins with silence. Silence is used theologically in two respects: (1) it refers to the rarity of articulated sentences but not to the absence of sound, and (2) it refers to the various forms of lament that emanate from cultural groups that have been historically and contemporarily absent within the dominant theological discourse. Silence does not mean the absence of sound but the absence of articulated words or speech. I distinguish between silent prayers of sorrow and silent prayers of lament: silent prayers of sorrow are unutterable outcries in response to inexplicable loss or pain while silent prayers of lament are persistent internal cries and screams intensified by seemingly unendurable physical, emotional, and psychological effects of ongoing trauma. Not all prayers of sorrow lead to prayers of lament; however, within the African American traditions, the expressions of these forms of prayers are fluid and interconnected. Both have been the responses to and strategies for surviving trauma experienced by generations of African Americans.

Yolanda Pierce asked, "When did Pentecostalism stop affirming a feminist or womanist identity?" ⁴⁸⁸ The history of the Pentecostal movements in the United States affirmed the call, talents, wisdom, gifts, discernment, leadership, revelation, and influence of African American, Hispanic, Asian, and European women. In their fervent pursuit of the triune God and their disregard for "respectability," they sought to live a life that was pleasing to God, in alignment with the word of God, and in harmony with their community of faith. The institutionalizing of this "counter-Reformation" movement

⁴⁸⁸ Yolanda Pierce, "Womanist Ways and Pentecostalism" 27.

opened the gates of formalized, doctrinal, sinful oppressions. 489 Claims of baptism in the Spirit could not eliminate the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, the first being "love" (Galatian 5:22–23). A Womanist lens allows for new inquiries regarding Pentecostal historical narratives and conversely challenges us to gather together in community to repent and lament all sinful overt and covert rampant practices of racism, sexism, and classism. How is one to interpret the leading of the Spirit in the midst of racism, discrimination, and trauma to the lives of African American, and especially African American women?

Chapter one shows that this Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament has been informed mostly by sociological and psychological analysis. This thesis examined the psychological research of Ann and Barry Ulanova, which describes prayers as primary speech to God. The historical silent prayers of sorrow and lament of the enslaved African in the Middle Passage and in America embody primary speech as described by Ann and Barry Ulanova. These enslaved Africans in this study responded to their dehumanization by their masters through silent laments. Acts of violence to the souls of African Americans have continued throughout history, and these silent laments have continued throughout the generations of African Americans.

Chapter two acknowledges that silent prayers of sorrow and lament are not unique to African Americans. The brokenness of humanity lends itself to lament regardless of race, creed, and class. This chapter explored the commonalities of silent prayers of lament within different ethnocultural communities. An attempt was made to examine the writings of Isaiah Dau regarding the Sudan War, the Asian American and South Korean

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 31.

concept of han, and the work of Latin American liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez. This brief worldwide sampling demonstrates the universality of silent lament as an experience and response that arises out of the intersections of race, class, and gender: political suffering in Africa, social Suffering or han in Asia, and suffering of the underclass in Latin America. This study appropriates and expands Samuel Solivan's definition of orthopathos using a Pentecostal-Charismatic Womanist theology of lament to develop a pneumatological transformation of pathos. This theological framework is utilized in the examination of the tridimensional aspects of trauma regarding sexism, classism, and racism. The work of Phil C. Zylla and Gordon Fee support the complexity of expressions of historical and cultural realties of suffering within a Pentecostal ethos. Zylla's work engages Romans 8 and the role of the Spirit that informs a pneumatological transformation of pathos. Gordon Fee offers insight into a Pentecostal lament from Romans 8. A Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament includes groaning, moaning, and glossolalia; it includes silent prayers of sorrow and lament. People on the margins are empowered by the Holy Spirit to survive and flourish in the context of systems and structures of oppression. The Spirit infuses agency amidst the raging onslaught of individual and corporate sins.

Chapter three examines the languages of lament that exist outside the mainstream discourse on lament. A Womanist theology of suffering is derived from the tridimensional suffering from racism, classism, and sexism. Liberation theologies, including Womanist theology, have developed a theology of suffering; however, they have not constructed a theology of lament that engages silent prayers. This theology of suffering is the lens that is appropriated in the construction of a Pentecostal Womanist

theology of lament that takes silent prayers of sorrow and lament seriously. M. Shawn Copeland provides insight into the formation of a Womanist theology of suffering by presenting findings of remembering, retelling, resisting, and redeeming black women's experiences in slave narratives and bibliographies.

In chapter two, different causes of suffering were examined while chapter three focuses on the various peculiar languages of suffering around the world. The work of David D. Daniels III contributes the following classification regarding the language of suffering: social, underclass, political, existential, psychological, and sociological. Daniels' classification is illustrated by the following scholars: Andrew Sung Park's social conception of han, Gustavo Gutiérrez' theology of engagement with the poor, Isaiah Majok Dau's concept of political suffering, Howard Thurman's concept of existential suffering, and Ann Ulanov's concept of psychological suffering. The language of silent prayers of lament highlights the connections between suffering and racism from various ethnocultural vantage points.

In chapter four, a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament is constructed by appropriating Hagar's silent prayers of sorrow and lament embedded within her narrative. It is argued that this re-reading empowers an alternative vision and gender construction for women. Building upon the interpretation of Delores Williams, the Hagar narrative in Genesis does not end in a condition of victimization for Hagar but sees her as a heroine in Scripture. A Pentecostal Womanist reading of Hagar takes seriously her encounter and experiences with God in the wilderness that serve to undercut her pain and suffering. A Pentecostal Womanist reading marvels at God's willingness to see, speak, bless, and call

⁴⁹⁰ David D. Daniels, III. Interview by author. Tape recording. Chicago, October 5, 2016.

her by name. She is Hagar; for her, God is "the God who sees me!" Hagar's narrative is an example where God privileges those without privilege, honors those without honor, names those who are unnamed, and recognizes those without recognition. This re-reading of Hagar is supported by Charles Taylor's power of recognition and Susan Sontag's aesthetics of silence.

Mother's Dabney's autobiography mirrors Hagar's narratives and provides insights into what Cheryl J. Sanders calls the "distinctive songs, speech, and dances" created by an empowering openness to the Holy Spirit by a people that were "rejected by the dominant host culture because of their race, sex, and class." As one of Hagar's daughters, Mother Dabney's ministries resulted in spiritual transformation of her community and the broader society. Hagar and her daughters had the audacity to believe that God refuses to remain aloof while God's people are locked in battle with the sinful forces of evil. Amid great persecutions and the possibility of future persecution, they recognized that even when they are unrecognized or misrecognized, the living God saw, heard, sought, and acted on their behalf. From her autobiography, one is able to construct a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament, which offers seven categories that are fluid and often overlap in the silent prayers of sorrow and lament: incident, reaction, internalization, response, intuition, release, and empowerment.

The significance of this research for a Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament is that it gives voice to the silent historical and contemporary ethnocultural laments that are

⁴⁹¹ Cheryl J. Sanders, "African-American Worship, 119.

⁴⁹² Steven Jack Land, Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom, 139–153.

⁴⁹³ Brian K. Blount, Can I Get a Witness?, 83.

silent within the theological discourse of lament. This research serves as a corrective to the Western European definition of biblical lament, which privileges verbalized articulate speech. A Pentecostal Womanist theology of lament highlights the fact that the traditional discourse of lament actually excludes the tridimensional suffering of people from the margin. This traditional theology of lament focuses on a historical racialized classification of speech, interpretation of biblical text, and negation of African spirituality that includes prayers, especially prayers of lament. It underscores patriarchal exclusion and racial stratification. The generational trauma of racialized suffering and their expressions demand scholarly attention to the varied forms of communication in silent lament: groans, moans, tears, sighs, silent, glossalia, inarticulate words, shouts, and inner screams, etc. Blaine Charette proposes that the spiritual gift of "glossolalia is a form of speech, issuing from a profound encounter with God's Spirit." The gift of the Spirit, she claims, facilities access to God's wisdom, discernment and revelation by speaking to God and yet at the same time "speak that which God gives" to the speaker.

The deeply embodied prayers of African American Pentecostals granted the Spirit access to stretch, challenge, and enrich every facet of their lives. Might the primacy of piety which is often integral within African American Pentecostal prayers, serve as a gateway for European Evangelicals to lament with their sisters and brother? This is an invitation to reclaim the roots of pietism within the various strands within Evangelicals that have been historically and contextually appropriated and transformed by the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁹⁴ Blaine Charette, "Reflective Speech: Glossolalia and the Image of God," *Pneuma* 28 no. 2 (2006): 197.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

Future research needs to include a continued serious theological engagement with communities from the margin that refuse to be reduced to stereotypes regarding their theological contributions. A Womanist approach concerns itself with African American children and the children of "other" vulnerable communities of color. Research is needed for a more robust global religious study of spiritual formations and expressions. The intentional inclusion of Pentecostal-Charismatic scholars within the discourse of religious studies would expand the horizon of scholarship. Even within Pentecostal-Charismatic scholarship, there is an exclusion of voices from the margins of society, and a continued conversation within the various branches of the academy with Pentecostal-Charismatic scholars can enlighten scholarship and transforms future the worldview of future generations.

In spite of the rapid growth of Holiness Pentecostal-Charismatic religious movements in the majority of the world, the scholarship from communities of color are shrouded in silence. Pentecostal scholarship designation is determined by the promotion of research by the European Pentecostal gatekeepers, who are experts of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement in African American churches and churches in Africa, Asia, and South America. It appears as if the Holy Spirit does not lead Euro-Holiness Pentecostal-Charismatic scholars to take seriously the scholarships of their brothers and sisters of different pigmentation. The Holy Spirit does unction them to expand their ecumenical efforts with European males and females outside of their faith traditions. More specifically, one can be a Euro-Pentecostal Feminist without dialoguing with Womanist or Black Feminist scholars.

It is for this reason that I call into question Steven J. Lands conclusions that "early Pentecostals maintained that the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon a consecrated vessel, emptied of carnal desires and resistance to God." I have heard countless testimonies within the Holiness Pentecostal-Charismatic faith traditions of racist jokes and statements espoused within their Spirit-filled churches, homes, and within the academy. The majority has opted for not speaking to the internal racism in their denominations and church communities, among their friends, and in the academy. The individuals are quick to affirm their sensibilities to racism and bigotry, but they do not invest any efforts in changing the present racialized structures. This reality begs the question: when does the Holy Spirit lead the people of the triune God to naming, repenting and lamenting of personal, communal, and generation sins?

We see then that the African American communities and other racial and ethnic minority communities are shrouded in silence. Silent prayers of lament can also be called the silent cries of the heart. The silent cries of the heart, silent prayers of sorrow and lament, create space for confessional repentance. For the people of God to experience the presence of the triune God, they will have to learn to see, hear, and care enough to pursue a radical love of transformation and inclusion of African American women and "those" who continue to be oppressed inside and outside the context of the community of faith.

 $^{^{496}}$ Steven Jack Land, "Be Filled with the Spirit: The Nature and Evidence of Spiritual Fullnes" *Ex auditu* 12 (1996): 113.

GLOSSARY

Church Mothers: Elders within the community of faith who live a life of consecrated holiness unto God, possess both godly and practical wisdom, and are seen as exemplars of faith and hope to men and women. (Andre L. Price, "Mothers in the Spirit," 272).

Colonial Mimicry: The desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. (Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," 338)

Community: An on-going dynamic experience of humanity relating to God, and there are hundreds of ways to talk about and embody God. (Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, Soul Pearls, 13)

Holiness: An attribute of God, extended as God's gracious gift and sovereign purpose. (Andre L. Price, "Mothers in the Spirit," 273)

Orthopathos: A pneumatological transformation of suffering experienced by marginalized groups.

Pneumatological Transformation of Pathos: The Holy Spirit affects change in the act of lamenting prayers by turning the desires of sorrow, anguish, and afflictions toward the triune God, but also serves as the catalyst for imparting glimpses into the fellowship of Christ's suffering and power of resurrection (Philippians 3:10)

Prayer: Starts without words and often ends without them. We are praying every time we ask for help, understanding, or strength. (Ann Belford and Barry Ulanov, Primary Speech, vii, 1)

Prayer as Primary Speech: The unconscious voice that exist in us. The language of primary-process thinking is not verbal. (Ann Belford and Barry Ulanov, Primary Speech, 2-3)

Primary Speech: The language of instinct, emotion, and images that is seldom spoken in words.

Silence: Used theologically in two respects: (1) it refers to the rarity of articulated sentences but not to the absence of sound, and (2) it refers to the various forms of lament from the disenfranchised that historically and contemporarily are silent within the dominant theological discourse.

Silent Prayers of Lament: A persistent cry uttered from the depths of the soul. (Katherine D. Billman, "Saying Goodbye," 198)

Silent Prayers of Sorrow: The unutterable a language of outcry at inexplicable loss or pain. (Katherine D. Billman, "Saying Goodbye," 198)

Womanist/Womanish: A southern term formed from the African-American folk-term "womanish," a counter to the term "mannish." A womanist, who acts "womanish," is mature, responsible, and intentional in her conduct. She is inquisitive, a seeker of truth. She is a black feminist or feminist of color who values women's cultural practices and creations. Committed to her well-being as well as the survival and wholeness of others, she loves herself, other women, and men. She loves also the Spirit. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender. (Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Garden*)

Womanist theology: A theology that addresses the experience of African American women's spiritual, ecclesial, social, political, and economic implications of the tridimensional phenomenon of race, class and gender oppression. (JoAnne Marie Terrell, *Power in the Blood?*, 6)

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