

The Economies of Pentecost: Postcolonial Reflections on Pastoral Care, Healing, and Christian Worship Danjuma Gibson, Ph.D.

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.
There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

How can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a foreign land?
If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget its skill.
May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
if I do not remember you,
if I do not consider Jerusalem
my highest joy. ¹

The Case for Context and Indigenous Practice

For Psalm 137, the focal point of many homilies is in response to the question, “How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?” However, I tender a more intriguing interrogatory: Why do the Babylonian captors need to hear “songs of Zion?” In the aftermath of war and the pillaging of an entire nation, the defeated survivors are now subjects of Babylon. Why the demand for songs of joy from an enslaved people?

It seems that in this passage describing the conquest, enslavement, and subjugation of the Jewish people, the demand for them to sing songs of Zion with joy would require the participants to deny their context of enslavement, deny their culture in which the songs of Zion were nurtured and cultivated, and forget about their heritage and history. That is to say, such worship could be achieved only by assuming an acontextual and ahistorical position on the part of the worshipers. Moreover, such worship stands in direct opposition to the true worship Scripture testifies in John 4 that God desires: *pneuma-worship* and *truth-worship*.

In examining the question of why Babylon would need to hear songs of joy, Memmi’s (1957) description of the colonizer is useful. For Memmi, the privilege and spoils of conquest enjoyed by the colonial victor (or in this case, Babylon) produces an emotional and cognitive dissonance, as the very objects the captors enjoy have been achieved through reprehensible means (or in this case, the conquest of Israel). According to Memmi, what is then needed is a legitimation of usurpation. He states that “accepting the reality of being a colonizer means agreeing to be a nonlegitimate privileged person, that is, a usurper. . . . [T]his amounts to saying that at the very

¹ *The New International Version*. (2011). (Ps 137:1–6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

time of his triumph, he admits that what triumphs in him is an image which he condemns.” Consequently, individual and group efforts to relieve anxiety-provoking dissonance most likely explains what Memmi ascribes to the colonizer as “his strenuous insistence, strange for a victor, on apparently futile matters,” or in our case, Babylon’s demand for songs of joy. In conclusion, Memmi suggests the colonizer “endeavors to falsify history, he rewrites laws, he would extinguish memories—anything to succeed in transforming his usurpation into legitimacy” (p. 52). Additionally, I suggest that even with the best of intentions and altruistic hospitality, any community is susceptible to Babylonian-style worship when there are uninterrogated power dynamics between church leadership and laity—or a community that hosts the stranger. Such injurious power dynamics are the result, in part, of latent and unconscious biases, fears, stereotypes, bigotry, and suspicion toward those who represent “the other.” From a pastoral theological lens, when this occurs, what is mistaken for worship ultimately encapsulates the oppressive practices of enculturation.

As such, this raises an important pastoral theological question: How do we know when the worship and liturgical practices of a community emulate the practices we see in Babylon, thereby imposing further harm, suffering, or secondary trauma on those who exist at the margins or are experienced as “the other” in those respective communities? Jagessar and Burns (2007) offer some insight with their assertion that a postcolonial lens should be engaged to a greater degree in liturgical studies. Even in the absence of overt racism or prejudices that the average person or community would denounce, we still must be aware of latent practices of colonialism that foster a cultural ethos supporting “the implied and overt view [of] native peoples’ cultural practices as childish, superstitious and under-developed” and “the assertion of a dominant group as the harbinger of a civilized/enlightened/rational ethos and the marginalization and the eventual disappearance of native symbolisms” (pp. 42–43).² Simple good will by an individual or a community does not mitigate this risk of violence to the human spirit.

Any Christian community is at risk of Babylonian-style worship as opposed to *pneuma-worship* and *truth-worship* that, pastorally speaking, contribute to healing and human flourishing. As such, I suggest that a Pentecostal worship ecology can yield a counter-hegemonic strategy to colonial worship practices. In this study guide, I use the term “Pentecostal” not in the constricted sense of the word that refers to the early-twentieth-century religious tradition birthed out of the Azusa Street revivals (i.e., Pentecostalism). Instead, I use the term “Pentecostal” more broadly to emphasize the work of the Spirit to advance the purposes of God in the earth and the intentional work of the Spirit to achieve those purposes through the multiplicity of peoples throughout the earth. In a Pentecostal paradigm, the illusion of a worship epicenter is turned on its head. The second chapter of Acts reveals a pneumatological play on redemptive history: Divine disclosure is neither confined to nor disseminated through any one person, culture, or group. God makes direct contact with devout persons from every nation under heaven. Pentecostal worship suggests that no temporal intermediary in the form of individuals, groups, cultures, or nations is required for a liturgical encounter with the Divine. As such, a Pentecostal sensibility signals that God is most fully revealed in the multiplicity of humanity—not in the singularity of any one nation, ethnic group, or cultural expression. “Economies” refers to the irreducible mystery, complexity, and multifaceted traditions and practices of any culture or

² Bold is my emphasis.

community as they pertain to its religious heritage, thereby subverting violent and monolithic interpretive lenses commonly used to interpret the worship practices of the subaltern. With “ecology,” I suggest the underlying values, worldviews, and convictions that shape and inform worship in a community are not limited to religious texts and symbols alone, but in many instances are overdetermined—that is to say, the motivating factors that inform liturgical praxis in a community *necessarily* include the social, political, and economic critical principles that underwrite and sustain group life and identity. Pastorally speaking, then, we understand worship praxis in a more robust way when we name and examine the underpinnings of a cultural ecology. In many religious communities, the critical principles that prop up group identity (and by extension its liturgical praxis) are taken as normative and reside latently in the unconsciousness of the community.

As a practical/pastoral theologian, scholar, and psychotherapist, I ask questions in relation to how interior affect, individual and corporate practices, and the lived experiences of the church contribute to (or detract from) the healing and flourishing of human beings and communities (body, soul, and spirit). This is especially pertinent for wounded and broken persons and communities. In relation to worship, then, I am concerned with how religious ritual contributes to healing and human flourishing. By ‘worship,’ I mean the intentional or unintentional practices and rituals of individuals and communities for entering and experiencing the presence of God. Pentecostal economies suggest that while there is one gospel, the expression of the gospel in worship will necessarily manifest itself in a variety of ways across cultures. The robustness of the gospel can be fully expressed not through or contained in one person, group, or culture, but only in the expansive being of the universal catholic church.

As such, in this study guide I suggest the *indigenous* and *contextualized* worship practices of any community add to the healing of the broken and wounded soul—that is, the worship practices of any community are neither attributable to happenstance or simply reducible to mere aesthetics and style. Intentional reflection upon the indigenous worship practices of any culture or community has the potential not only to expand our understanding of worship and liturgy in the church and theological education, but to vastly expand pastoral and practical theological imports related to individual and communal healing and flourishing. Indigenous worship that fosters such personal and corporate healing reflects more than just aesthetic or symphonic preferences. From an epistemological perspective, indigenization suggests that through embodied communion with “the other,” we learn more about who God is. The potential for such divine illumination is compromised when our worship ecology is confined to a homogeneous environment over the long run.

Even when individual or communal practitioners are not consciously aware of intent, *indigenous* worship—all at once—reflects the history, heritage, subjectivity, autonomy, and agency of a community to self-determine and to enter the presence of God in the fullness of their humanity. Over the past several decades, psychology of the self has emerged as a significant interpretive lens to help pastoral psychologists and psychotherapists better understand how religious experience is spiritually and psychologically accretive to healing, coping, and human flourishing. A psychology of the self recognizes three basic human psychogenic needs: (1) the need to be affirmed and desired by others (mirroring selfobjects); (2) the need to associate ourselves with others that we idealize (idealizing selfobjects); and (3) the need to associate with others we feel

are similar to us (twin-ship selfobjects). Scholars have come to understand how various facets of the religious enterprise can be used as selfobjects and, as such, be integrative to psychological and emotional development (Rector, 2000) (Holliman, 2002) (Randall, 1988). Therefore, the importance of indigenous and contextualized practices cannot be overemphasized.

Simply put, the worship ecology of a community over the long run should mean something to its worshipers. Religious legalism that postulates a universal standard for liturgical practices and seeks to seduce people of all nations to the singularity of a Western worship praxis reflects a colonial ideology at odds with Pentecostal sensibilities. It is only when worship is relevant and meaningful to the worshiper that she in turn can use it in sacred meaning-making processes, thereby integrating into her interior space the ebbs and flows of human experience. The call for relevant and meaningful worship signals a mutuality of *servant leadership* and *distributed leadership*, where the worship ecology is imagined and conceived in dialogue with the community (as opposed to a paternalistic monologue where the community is always told what is best for them). The healing and flourishing advocated in this study guide is in relation to the loss, pain, grief, and suffering that are neither incidental to nor byproducts of life, but constitutional to the human project—especially the experiences of those who have been forced to exist on the underside of modernity.

As such, in this study guide and the ensuing annotated bibliography, I highlight the worship practices of Black faith communities and the works of Black scholars. Because such communities and individuals have traditionally existed on the underside of history, their worship practices and theological reflections more often than not reflect methodologies that highlight *contextualization* and *indigenized* faith praxis—the main thesis of this study guide. Moreover, I adopt this approach because scholarship out of Black religious experience tends to be overlooked or marginalized in the academy. This focus in no way suggests that methods of contextualization or indigenization are limited to Black religious tradition. Indeed, many faith traditions reflect such methodologies. Moreover, this guide resists the common temptation and theoretical blunder to reify the Black church experience. Scholarship on the Black church will reflect an empathic balance between resisting the creation of an ontological blackness (Anderson, 1999), while at the same time observing the painful and messy historical context in which much of Black religious life emerged—a context and material reality that is commonly ignored in the theological academy and the broader church. Glaude (2014) captures this dilemma cogently, suggesting that uncritical postulated claims about the Black church—as if it were a singular entity devoid of individuality and subjectivity—effectively essentializes only one aspect, thereby “denying complexity, ambiguity, and contradiction by snatching varied practices out of the messiness of history.” Instead, he suggests, “it is much better to understand such utterances as a *procedure of differentiation and invocation*: as a way of saying that you ought to give more attention to *this* as opposed to *that*, and a **recollection of history that makes that distinction worthwhile**” (pp. 8–9).³

In many segments of Black religious tradition, worship tends not to be confined to song and ritual alone, but involves the entirety of the religious community’s life. In liturgy and other ritual acts, the content of worship reflects time, space, and context that names and affirms both the sufferings of a people as well as their humanity. Pinn (2002) rightly observes the complexity of

³ Bold is my emphasis

Black liturgy and ecclesiology, noting that “there are a variety of components to worship, including the reading of announcements related to weekday activities, reading of scripture and confessions of faith, communion, and the collection of money to meet the church’s expenses,” but more importantly observing that “worship in the Black church is primarily defined by music, preaching, testimonies, and prayer” (p. 46). Depending on the context of the church, elements of the worship service could extend beyond religious symbols to incorporate the wider concerns of the community. In many traditions of Black religious experience, the welfare of the broader community—secular and sacred—are deemed to be relevant biblical, theological, and ecclesial concerns. There is no distinction between a *personal savior* and a *social savior*. Said differently, in many parts of the Black religious tradition, an acontextual liturgical praxis—worship that turns a blind eye to the historical or present concerns and sufferings of the community—is simply not an option. Paris (2015) articulates the interconnectedness of all of Black life and worship when he postulates, “At every stage of their development the theologies of the black churches have been closely related with the spiritual, social, economic, political, and moral needs of their people whether or not they were members of the churches. That is to say, no sphere of the people’s lives was outside the purview of their theologies, which may be one of the most telling marks of their deep African roots where all life is directly related to the sacred” (p. 292).

The Black church has a long tradition of engaging methods of contextualization in biblical and theological reflection and in religious ritual. Reflecting on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Black spirituals embraced by a people suffering under the terror of slavery and postbellum jim crow, Du Bois (1903) refers to them as Sorrow Songs, recognizing them as vehicles for an oppressed people to give concrete voice to the systemic oppression in which they were forced to exist and as worship conduits that allowed people to internalize a temporal and eschatological hope for freedom. For Du Bois, the songs could even depict the rare moments of solitude when individuals or communities could “steal away” from the horrors of plantation life and be to themselves in religious or family gatherings. No matter the case, Du Bois recognized that the songs were formed out of the context, and that giving voice to the horrors of the context was accretive to the building up of individual personhood and communal peoplehood:

What are these songs, and what do they mean? I know little of music and can say nothing in technical phrase, but I know something of men, and knowing them, I know that these songs are the articulate message of the slave to the world. They tell us in these eager days that life was joyous to the black slave, careless and happy. I can easily believe this of some, of many. But not all the past South, though it rose from the dead, can gainsay the heart-touching witness of these songs. They are the music of an unhappy people, of the children of disappointment; they tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world, of misty wanderings and hidden ways (p. 157).

In his theological examination of Black spirituals and blues, Cone (1992) identifies Howard Thurman and Benjamin Mays (former president of Morehouse College) as early-twentieth-century scholars who recognized the spirituals as not merely arbitrary lyrics and musical renditions, but compilations of worship that reflected the subjectivity of a Black community and their agency to self-determine. According to Cone, Thurman’s work suggests that “the black spiritual is an expression of the slaves’ determination to be in a society that seeks to destroy their personhood . . . it is an affirmation of the dignity of the black slaves, the essential humanity of

their spirits” (p. 16). Moreover, Cone suggests that Mays was among the first to examine Black spirituals in theological categories. Mays identified several incommunicable attributes of God, including omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and other themes related to sanctification and eschatology. Cone concludes that, “according to Mays, the spirituals affirm a complete trust in God to make right in the next world what was done wrong in this world. . . . [T]he spirituals provided an emotional security for oppressed slaves during turbulent times. . . . [T]hey put their trust in Jesus, whom they believed would make everything all right” (p. 17).

Reacting to elements of contemporary gospel music (a successor of Black spirituals), Abbington (2016) offers a meticulous critique of the music, observing a loss of biblical, theological, and contextual substance in the worship. For Abbington, the modern-day genre of gospel music (and its place in worship) has all but abandoned the biblical treatise “to serve the least of these and to liberate” (p. 102). Consequently, when a worship ecology emulates colonial sensibilities that reduce any form of liturgical genre to style and aesthetics, we must concede that “the selection of music and styles of worship in many of our churches is being dictated by the mass media and record companies, whose goal is not winning souls to Christ but selling music to consumers” (p. 109). Most important to understand in Abbington’s analysis is that social critique and contextualization, as part and parcel of theological methodology, are not mutually exclusive with biblical literacy or theological orthodoxy. He is clear that “pastors, ministers, and music leaders must never forget that they are stewards of sound doctrine and biblical teaching and as stewards are responsible for biblical and theological soundness and integrity of communication” (p. 108). This point—contextualization as a component of theological and worship methodology—is often grossly misunderstood in cultures that represent the beneficiaries of modernity and Western expansionism. With the work of James Cone and Wyatt Tee Walker as interlocutors on the sociological and theological ramifications of Black liturgical praxis, Abbington concludes:

Music and worship of the Black community cannot be properly analyzed or understood apart from the people who sing it and the context that produced it. Hence, in addition to studying music for form, rhythm, and meter, and studying worship for liturgical elements, appointments, and parameters, the study of music and worship should incorporate the studies of sociology, history, and theology in order to more fully, authentically, and comprehensively understand music and worship’s meaning and significance (p. 102).

In many segments of Black religious and theological tradition, attempts to divorce the elements of worship from the lived realities of systemic oppression in the United States have long been viewed askance and in collusion with systemic evil and oppression. In his classic text *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Thurman (1949) sets out to examine Christianity’s seeming impotence in addressing the systemic oppression of marginalized persons. He observes that “the masses of men live with their backs constantly against the wall. . . . [T]hey are the poor, the disinherited, the dispossessed. . . . [W]hat does our religion say to them?” (p. 11). Thurman takes to task the age-long practice of decontextualizing the Christian story—the creation of a non-Jewish Jesus—thereby interpreting Jesus, in Thurman’s words, as *religious object* versus *religious subject*. This disembodiment strategy effectively neutralizes the redemptive power of the gospel and, by extension, Christian worship. For Thurman, the fact that Jesus was a Jew, that he was poor, and that he was a member of a minority group forced to exist under Roman empire and domination are irreducible components of the gospel story. In this classic work, Thurman calls attention to

the violence inflicted on the Christian narrative, the gospel message, and its adherents—both rich and poor—through the recreation of an ahistorical Palestinian protagonist. In rhetorical fashion, Thurman laments “how different might have been the story of the last two thousand years on this planet grown old of suffering if the link between Jesus and Israel had never been severed” (p. 15). The potential this severing has to rob those who suffer of the healing possibilities of the gospel (and by extension, Christian worship) is clear to Thurman:

The basic fact is that Christianity as it was born in the mind of this Jewish teacher and thinker appears as a technique of survival for the oppressed. **That it became, through the intervening years, a religion of the powerful and dominant, used sometimes as an instrument of oppression, must not tempt us into believing that it was thus in the mind and life of Jesus.** “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” **Wherever his spirit appears, the oppressed gather fresh courage;** for he announced the good news that fear, hypocrisy, and hatred, the three hounds of hell that track the trail of the disinherited, need have no dominion over them (p. 25).⁴

Postcolonial Pastoral Reflections & Implications

A postcolonial pastoral theology recognizes the healing and redemptive power inherent in Christian worship that is both *indigenized* and informed by the *context* of the worshipers. By *indigenization*, I mean a radical respect and honoring of the culture, tradition, heritage, and subjectivity of the indigenous person(s) or group that underwrites any given worship ecology. By *contextualization*, I mean an empathic reflection upon the political, economic, cultural, and social backdrop against which any expression of Christian worship is enacted. *Contextualization* and *indigenization* in part underwrite the essence of worshiping in truth that the gospel writer in John 4:23 alludes to. This is to say that any worship ecology that directly or indirectly denies, represses, or subjugates the history, time, space, lived realities, and experiences of its worshipers effectively undermines the very essence of the *pneuma-worship* and *truth-worship* God desires. The engagement of a postcolonial pastoral lens to interrogate liturgical praxis reflects an interdisciplinary approach that subverts latent and discursive ideological legacies of colonialism and empire. The need to examine how worship, religious symbols, and practices have been shaped by a colonial logic cannot be overstated. Any worship ecology is positioned at the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and nationality, and is consequently susceptible to a degenerative colonial influence. Such uninterrogated worship ecologies run counter to *pneuma-worship* and *truth-worship*. Young (2001) postulates the “postcolonial critique focuses on forces of oppression and coercive domination that operate in the contemporary world” (p. 11). A postcolonial pastoral approach to liturgy, then, seeks to uncover, recover, or create spaces where the voices of the subaltern are privileged in the worship encounter.

A postcolonial pastoral lens employs a multidisciplinary interrogation of the theological academe and church to uncover latent ideologies fostering violence to the personhood and communities of those driven to exist at the periphery. This approach is crucial, as the evil and oppression associated with Western expansionism itself was interdisciplinary, leaving no part of human existence untouched. In the absence of the postcolonial pastoral theological analysis called for in

⁴ Bold is my emphasis

this project, internalized racism, sexism, or bigotry, intracultural or intercultural contempt, or the negation of personal and communal heritage and subjectivity can be easily mistaken for pious attempts at doctrinal purity or endeavors to create a more pure form of worship, but ultimately reflect the asphyxiating internalization of the colonial logic, which only yields a life-limiting caricature of godliness but denies the power of the Divine. Sugirtharajah (1998) offers up a compelling telos of the postcolonial critique and the religious space:

Postcoloniality is a critical enterprise aimed at unmasking the link between ideas and power which lies behind Western texts, theories, and learning. . . . It is an active interrogation of the hegemonic systems of thought, textual codes, and symbolic practices which the West constructed in its domination of colonial subjects. In other words, postcolonialism is concerned with the question of cultural and discursive domination. It is a discursive resistance to imperialism, imperial ideologies, and imperial attitudes and to their continual reincarnations in such wide fields as politics, economics, history, and **theological and biblical studies. Resistance is not simply a reaction to colonial practices, but an alternative way of perceiving and restructuring society** (p. 17).⁵

Lartey (2011) provides an example of a postcolonial pastoral lens in his reflections on a 2007 public ritual in Ghana that engendered the healing potentials posited in this study guide. He examines Ghana's fiftieth anniversary of independence and the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the Transatlantic slave trade. The rituals included music, singing, prayers, confessions, and other symbolic enactments that commemorated Ghanaian history and context. The contextualization and indigenization of the rituals were intentional. For Lartey, there were two primary indigenous cultural perspectives that provided currency for this public event: (1) a belief that past sins were connected to contemporary suffering, and (2) using ritual intentionally to symbolize death-dealing life circumstances in a way that brings about change, healing, and transformation. Lartey explains that "to the traditional African mind, ritual is a spiritually powerful means of effecting change in both the seen and unseen world," and "this linking of past misdeeds to present sufferings argues that there can be no real economic, political, and social progress on the African continent until this 'social sin' has been atoned for and cleansed" (p. 3). For Lartey, the public ritual contributed to individual and communal restoration in that it ritualized remembering, cleansing (symbolically), healing of emotional wounds, and reconnecting with communities that had a history of conflict and divisiveness. I use this example from Lartey as an illustration of how taking the context and the indigenous subjectivity of worshippers seriously can be accretive to the care and healing of souls—healing that is central to pastoral theology. Lartey posits, "If with **courage and theological creativity**, redemptive postcolonializing liturgies can be created for even as devastating an occurrence as the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, then **surely Westerners can also devise appropriate rituals** that can have a lasting impact for good on the lives of persons globally" (p. 14).⁶

Conversely, the attempt to universalize the worship practices of any culture or community, or the attempt to extol any one worship model as a universal standard to be uncritically emulated, not only is inconsistent with divine revelation at Pentecost, but also severely undermines the healing potentialities of any worship praxis. The colonial tendency to trivialize, delegitimize, or

⁵ Bold is my emphasis

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denigrate the worship practices of the subaltern—groups, faith communities, or cultures who exist at the periphery—solely based on the normalized traditions of the dominant group or culture is an outright act of violence in the form of ideological reductionism. My own religious trajectory has included various stays in several religious spaces including Catholicism and an array of traditions in Protestantism. To my dismay, I have often witnessed and experienced the denigration of Black religious experience—it being likened to irrationality, emotionalism, barbarity, club music, erratic worship, or lacking a coherent theological framework. In the Western church and academy, there has long existed an eagerness to discipline Black religious experience—to uncritically rebuff and chastise any form of an African American theologic—as opposed to engaging it as a *mutual* conversation partner (including appropriate critiques) with other theological traditions. Such reckless examinations of Black religious tradition suggest that it is not viewed as a legitimate divine image bearer.

This is the inherent danger behind idealistic and grandiose efforts to create epicenters of worship: It suggests the worship ecology of any community can be reduced to style and preference, as if it were a dinner menu or store catalog. Typically, after such experiments in global worship have run their course, the potential for rich and substantive healing, both individually and communally, is all but lost. Sernett (1999) challenges the pervasive tendency to essentialize the Black religious tradition, which ultimately results in a flattening of the African American story and how we understand its liturgical enterprise. Challenging this fallacious practice, he argues:

Generalizations about black religion, whether made out of ignorance or ideological blindness, frequently fail upon close attention to particular examples. The diversity revealed in even this anthology suggests that monolithic constructs such as “the Black Church” are suspect. When measured against sociological realities, they must give way. **The contours of ethnoreligious identity of any group appear more homogeneous when compared with another group, but aggregate patterns break up when individual stories are accounted for.** Contextual factors such as economic status, educational level, rural or urban lifestyle, family history, and personal experience make generalizations difficult (p. 5).⁷

Idealistic global worship strategies—many times implemented with good intentions—run the risk of reactivating the currency-conversion business practiced by money changers in the Jewish temple of antiquity. Currency conversion (required for travelers to Jerusalem to purchase the requisite sacrificial offerings for worship), or for our purposes *cultural conversion*, was rendered obsolete by the Passion. Similarly, *cultural conversion* is irrelevant to Pentecostal economies. The group unconscious bias that unwittingly engages practices of cultural conversion in its worship praxis—over the long run—effectively undermines Pentecostal economies and short-circuiting healing technologies that are necessarily connected to indigenization and contextual awareness. *There is no one culture, person, or group that serves as a culture conversion conduit for the peoples of the world to access the presence of God.* Worship and community cannot be imposed, legislated, or enforced. The worship ecology that believes its liturgical praxis to be normative risks erecting a binary of *mimicry* and *mockery*, with the former reflecting the indiscriminate internalization of the dominant culture’s worship values (as a means of social or group acceptance), and the latter essentially reflecting the community’s inability to take seriously

⁷ Bold is my emphasis

the culture and heritage of “the other.” With *mimicry*, the “other” is suspended in a liminal space of being “almost like—but not quite like” (Bhabha, 1994). At stake for those forced to exist at the margin, then, is the harmful internalization of the stereotypes, bigotry, racism, or sexism that prop up the colonial logic—all at the expense of renouncing their indigenous heritage and culture. Indeed, the writer of Psalm 137 offers up a telling insight in this regard: “If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.” Babylonian-style worship ecologies, typically enacted out of annihilation anxiety and fear of “the other,” undermine the possibility of worship generating the Pentecostal sensibilities required to foster individual and communal healing and flourishing.

The following analogy illustrates the position outlined in this study guide. While attending a religious academic conference several years ago, I was awestruck with the degree of hospitality displayed by the conference center and the numerous hotels needed to support the thousands in attendance. It seemed that the hotels, conference centers, and all other vendors spared no expense in relation to accommodations, dining, leisure and entertainment, transportation, business centers, parcel post support, or any other resource deemed necessary to ensure the complete satisfaction of the attendees. In fact, one could argue that at gatherings such as the one just described (or at any other vacation resort), a temporary illusion is created such that regardless of the actual circumstances in which the attendees exist, at such conferences or vacation resorts, everyone *appears* to live and exist on a level playing field or in a state of bliss. Regardless of one’s race, gender, class, or sexual orientation, commoditized hospitality is designed to flatten the experiences and realities of all its consumers such that everyone in attendance has the appearance of living a lifestyle commensurate with the degree (i.e., star rating) of luxury being proffered by the hotel. Time, space, history, context, and social location are irrelevant to the goal of customer satisfaction. After all, it is the illusion that is being sold.

However, notwithstanding the robust accommodations, after a few days of attending this conference, I sensed a growing desire to return home. Despite the luxurious lodging, I experienced an increasing awareness that no degree of hospitality—no matter the degree of luxury—could replace the comforts and norms of home that are foundational in the formation of one’s identity and subjectivity. The hotel room could not replace the particularity of one’s bedroom. The cuisine provided by the hotel, ultimately, could not replace the particularity of home-cooked meals. That is to say, while the hotel was prepared to go to great lengths to satisfy the needs of patrons, we were ultimately limited to the hospitality framework imagined by the hotel. Moreover, while the hotels were prepared to patronize and affect attendees, they were not interested in *being* affected by the attendees. It was not a two-way relationship. The hotel had no intention of (or interest in, for that matter) allowing guests to be co-creators of the space. The leisure industry defines rest and relaxation, packages it, and then sells it.

In many respects, Western Christian worship resembles the leisure and hospitality industry by commoditizing liturgy in a way that reduces worship to a system of ideological preferences and superficial performativity. *Indigenization is replaced by a binary of mimicry and mockery.* The attempt to universalize Christian worship runs the risk of it being ensconced in self-righteous legalism and vain caricatures of holiness. Such a model encourages appropriation without the possibility of reciprocation. The co-creation of mutual spaces is discouraged. The press for one

voice forecloses the creative chaos witnessed on Pentecost. The complexities of human experience, brokenness, need, desire, and happiness are commodified. In Babylonian-style worship, the community effectively immunizes itself against experiencing a need for the “other.” Consequently, the *mystery* of the “other” becomes an object of gaze and surveillance instead of representing an opportunity to learn more about what it means to be human and about who God is. Social and cultural appropriation is mistaken for hospitality, as the colonial logic has little experience (and an even lesser inclination) for reciprocation from the “stranger.”

Pentecostal worship economies, then, reflect a subversive counter-hegemonic movement from Babylonian-style worship to *pneuma-worship* and *truth-worship* ecologies. The postcolonial lens is helpful to this end. In applying a decolonizing optic, communities must engender the courage to scrutinize all aspects of the liturgical ecology that has historically maintained the social and economic power to exist in isolation, thus fostering the façade of a worship epicenter. This warning is fit for any group or community that has enacted physical, emotional, psychological, or spiritual violence on the most vulnerable among us. Jagessar and Burns (2007) again are useful here:

In the process, questions such as the following become pertinent: Do the discourse, texts, symbols and imageries perpetuate bondage and notions of empire? How do they represent Black peoples, ethnic minorities, the Other, gender and sexuality? What do the symbols, the language and the shape of our liturgical/worship spaces communicate vis-à-vis the agenda of empire/colonialism and the politics of location? What do they communicate in terms of inclusivity of recent migrants who have to re-negotiate sacred spaces? (p. 45).

Dr. Martin Luther King’s metaphor of beloved community is useful in imagining the possibilities of Pentecostal economies and the postcolonial pastoral lens. In the beloved community paradigm, the community not only welcomes and accommodates “the other,” but has the earnest expectation to be influenced and possibly transformed by the welcoming of the stranger. It is a liturgical logic of mutuality. The maintenance of a colonial model of worship undermines the long-term health and viability of Christian communities. Pentecostal worship economies intuit that just as all are image-bearers of God, all are distorters of divine imagery as well. Consequently, no community can go it alone under the guise of a worship service provider. The danger of one voice was exposed and countered through divine action at the tower of Babel in Genesis 11. In the church I pastored for almost seventeen years on the south side of Chicago, one of our central themes was “I need you, you need me, and we all need each other.” This ethic of interpersonal and intercommunal care must supplant Western individualism and be replicated on a global level. Colonial practices of worship at their most fundamental level reflect the instantiation of the racial delusion that underwrote the Western colonial project. Dr. Martin Luther King understood this best when in April of 1965 he declared to an audience at the 105th General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church, “The ultimate logic of racism is genocide—and every Christian must take a stand against it” (p. 319). While his push for integration is commonly reduced to civic goodwill, King understood better than anyone a far more sinister prospect: segregation, the erection of borders, and exclusionary practices, especially in the church, ultimately produce illusions of purity, safety and security but cover over latent hatred, racism, and xenophobia and eventually yield violence and destruction. Yet one of King’s most cogent observations remains hauntingly true to this very day: “Eleven o’clock on

Sunday morning is one of the most segregated hours, if not the most segregated hour, in Christian America” (1960). Advocating for a postcolonial optic, Burns and Jagessar (2014) plainly state the long-standing problem for Christian worship and the resulting implications when they note: “The relationship between imperial realities and the theology of Christian worship has been largely neglected,” with such neglect resulting in the “impoverishment and distortion of diversity within the Christian family. . . . The task, therefore, is both analytical and constructive, with the latter depending on the former” (p. 23).

Instead of simply representing an altruistic act of hospitality, a movement towards Pentecostal economies is a move towards life and healing, as the welcoming of the stranger opens the community to new ways of understanding what it means to be human, what it is to live and to love, what it is to love one’s neighbor, and ultimately what it is to love God. Without Pentecostal economies of liturgy and worship, Christian communities risk being undermined by an identity politics that ultimately forecloses our understanding and experience of the Divine and stunts the human imagination in terms of creating vibrant, life-giving, beloved communities. The model called for in Pentecostal economies is a paradigm of mutuality, where those who exist at the margin are now co-creators with the broader community of the worship ecology. In the beloved community, the potential hybridity of the worshipping community is embraced instead of being evaded or feared. The reflection of Keller et al. (2004) about this is both timely and beautiful, and it reflects the potential for Pentecostal economies:

A theology that decolonizes the between-spaces of our interdependence will shift its tasks from boundary-protection to border-crossings: hardly an “alien” metaphor for Christianity. **The task of a postcolonial theology will not be to shore up the barriers** between the Christian and the non-Christian, the holy and the profane, the church and the world, the ethical and the immoral, even the Creator and the creation. . . . We will want instead to pay careful attention to what happens in all these in-between places. . . . Postcolonial theory in theology will increase the church’s capacity to speak meaningfully within an ever more globalized and cosmopolitan environment (p. 14).⁸

Final Reflections and Future Research

In the Pentecostal worship ecology, pastorally speaking, no community will be able to satisfy every individual or collective need. Any thought to the contrary reflects the narcissism of the colonial logic—a narcissism that seeks to flatten the alterity of the “other” by commodifying human experience. This mindset is consistent with the logic of the leisure and hospitality industry: Prepackage human desire and happiness, then design a product to meet that need. There is no amount of goodwill that will overcome human finitude in terms of a limited capacity to satisfy the needs of others. Efforts to do so undermine the potential for human flourishing. Still, we are called to be intentional in creating Pentecostal economies. The postcolonial pastoral work that is called for here will not occur organically, but purposefully. Likewise, the worshipers of the community must relinquish the archaic expectations that somehow any given faith community should be liturgically equipped to satisfy their every need.

⁸ Bold is my emphasis

The religious academy must decenter Eurocentric religious experience as that to which all other religious claims are measured and compared. This study guide suggests that pastoral and practical theology, in both theory and praxis, must necessarily study and research the history, culture, and religious experiences of the subaltern—not as a fringe topic, but as a core practice of the guild. To be sure, theological education has expanded the reach of voices it incorporates into its identity to include women and ethnic minorities. But this effort remains woefully inadequate. This study guide calls for the inclusion of voices that range beyond the academy. This calls for both qualitative and quantitative projects that resource ethnic-minority scholars to conduct empathic research in their respective communities. The multiplicity of Black religious experience in Pentecostal, Charismatic, Catholic, and a variety of Protestant traditions is vastly underrepresented in theological education. A gap of this magnitude does a disservice to all seminarians of all backgrounds. Theological education cannot afford to entertain revisionist history and ignore the traditions of black and brown people just because the realities of genocide, the slavocracy, and other forms of radical evil create cognitive dissonance and anxiety over and against illusions of Christian-American innocence and triumphalism. No longer can the *mystery of the other* be reason enough to suppress the redemptive power of Pentecostal economies.

As a final observation, in my dissertation (Gibson, 2014), I suggest that just as Jesus in Luke 8 allowed himself to *experience* the community of “the other” such that virtue left his body when touched by the woman who was hemorrhaging blood, theological education must allow its very subjectivity to be immersed in the community of “the other.” For the sake of its own survival, North American theological education must allow its hem to be touched by “the other.” The academy and the broader church must be willing to surrender a portion of its narcissistic virtue (i.e., familiarity, Eurocentric norms, power, etc.) that has propped it up for centuries, in the hopes of experiencing the fullness of God that can only come by communing in mutuality and solidarity with a multitude of voices.

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In this annotated bibliography I included relatively few pastoral theological resources that exclusively take up the study of liturgy and worship. Instead, many resources in the field engage various themes related to pastoral/practical theology and use worship (broadly defined and understood) as one of many conversation partners. To this end, my annotations are in keeping with main thesis of the study guide: Indigenous and contextualized worship praxis is accretive to the health and healing of the wounded soul. As such, I offer up texts that I believe demonstrate and support this argument.

[Annotated Bibliography](#)

Andrews, Dale P. *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

In this project, Andrews reflects on bridging the chasm between Black theology's historic liberation agenda and a Black church religious tradition that tended to emphasize spirituality, personal salvation, and piety. Andrews traces the historical development of both categories, critiques Black theology's disparagement of Black church worship and spirituality, and ultimately highlights the insidious nature of American individualism and its latent effect on black religious tradition. While not directly referencing liturgy as an academic category, this work is an excellent tertiary resource that highlights the absolutely necessity of the academy and the church as reciprocal conversation partners in the goal of strengthening pastoral and worship praxis.

Cone, James H. "Black Spirituals: A Theological Interpretation." *Theology Today* 29, iss. 1 (1972): 54–69.

In this classic article from Dr. Cone, a theological commentary on Black spirituals is offered. While this article is dated, it is very relevant to this study guide, as eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Black religious experience and worship is rarely engaged as a source of theological authority and reflection, but simply limited to aesthetic interpretations. In addition to stressing the importance of history and context in any theological interpretation of Black spirituals, Cone also highlights (in great detail) theologies of suffering, theodicy, and eschatology that are embedded in the Black spiritual genre. This article exemplifies a life-giving methodology and approach for the theological interpretation of liturgy and worship in communities that exist at the margins.

Cone, James H. "Sanctification, Liberation, and Black Worship." *Theology Today* 35, iss. 2 (1978): 139–152.

Again, in this classic article Dr. Cone offers a scholarly account of the complexities of Black worship. Cone names six principal features of Black worship: testimony, conversion, prayer, shouting, singing, and preaching. He explicates the granularity of Black liturgy through a strong sociological, pneumatological, and liberation lens that seeks to undergird and affirm the personhood and humanity of the Black church. For

Cone, “black worship . . . is primarily a happening in the lives of the people” as opposed to a formal event that just transpires on Sunday morning (147). Regardless of whether people are versed in the academic disciplines of theology or liberation theology, according to Cone, “both the content of what is said and the manner in which things are expressed emphasize that black worship is an eschatological event, the time when the people experience a liberation in their present existence for what they believe will be fully realized in God’s coming future” (147). While dated, this article remains an excellent resource in academia for understanding the nuances of Black liturgy and the pastoral implications of healing in the community.

Cone, James H. *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.

In this text, Cone engages in a theological and sociohistorical examination of Black spirituals (as informed by slave experience) and the blues, two very distinct genres in Black worship and music. As it pertains to understanding how context and heritage inform worship ecology, this text is a must-read in terms of theological methodology, hermeneutics, and how these elements inform Black music and liturgy. For Cone, “whatever form black music takes, it is always an expression of black life in America and what the people must do to survive with a measure of dignity in a society which seems bent on destroying their right to be human beings” (130).

Costen, Melva Wilson. *African American Christian Worship*, 2nd ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007.

Costen offers a solid scholarly account of the historical development of Black Christian worship and Christianity as it emerged in North America. While Costen is careful not to explicate Black religious experience as monolithic, she names points of commonality in the struggle to survive amidst slave oppression and jim crow, a more holistic view of personal and communal life, and elements of a common African heritage that has manifested itself in Black church communities over the past three centuries. Costen’s project continues to be a needed resource in understanding the potential for the healing of souls in African American religious experiences. Her historiography and hermeneutics on Black worship counters a colonial logic that reduces Black church experience to simple performativity.

Crumpton, Stephanie. *A Womanist Pastoral Theology Against Intimate and Cultural Violence*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

This text by Dr. Crumpton is a powerful example of the care and healing of wounded souls when a worship ecology is embodied, contextualized, and intentional toward the brutality and suffering that marginalized bodies have incurred—in this case, intimate partner and cultural violence on black female bodies. As I have highlighted in another review, the strength of Crumpton’s project resides in the case studies she presents from the abused women interviewed for this text. For trauma as insidious as intimate partner violence, when coupled with cultural ideologies inside and outside the church that further objectify victims, abstract theological and liturgical constructs are insufficient. According to Crumpton, “the women identified the church as a formative and foundational source of their spiritual consciousness, but it wasn’t until they interrogated the gender and sexual

socialization they received from the church and members of their religious communities that they felt genuinely connected to God” (93). This is a must-read for any church community that seeks to construct worship praxis in a way that addresses the ubiquitous and pervasive abuse of women in North America.

George, Cathy Hagstrom. “Howard Thurman's Practice of Intimacy in the Development of Community.” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 26, iss. 1 (2016): 29–46.

In this article by Cathy George, the work of Howard Thurman is explored in relation to his practices of intimacy and how it was used to foster worshiping communities. For George, the absence of intimacy eventually stifles the very life and vitality of the church and instead posits an alternative to the “isolation, loneliness, and alienation” ubiquitous to North American society and culture (29). Thurman spent a great deal of time in his scholarship developing a praxis of intimacy and community that ultimately led to the founding of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in 1944. Communal worship and liturgy is one way to achieve this. According to George, in her reflections on Thurman, she concludes “his invitation into silence and the use of art, liturgical drama, and music are all aspects of worship that have the capacity to bind spirit to spirit across differences” (43).

Jagessar, Michael, and Stephen Burns. "Liturgical Studies and Christian Worship: The Postcolonial Challenge." *Black Theology: An International Journal* 5, no.1 (2007): 39–62.

This critical work by Jagessar and Burns calls for the field of liturgical studies to be critiqued via a postcolonial lens similarly to the way other fields such as theology and biblical studies have been deconstructed and reconstructed. According to the authors, the term “postcolonial” does not suggest the end of colonial domination (especially in an age of unbridled globalization), but calls for an alternative approach to engaging the overarching discourse—in this case liturgical studies—in a way that exposes and subverts oppressive colonial ideologies that do violence and harm (directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly) to minority and marginalized populations. For pastoral theology, postcolonial sensibilities are indispensable to the care and healing of souls—especially broken or wounded souls.

Johnson, Cedric C. “Resistance Is Not Futile: Finding Therapeutic Space Between Colonialism and Globalization,” in *Healing Wisdom: Depth Psychology and the Pastoral Ministry*, ed. Kathleen J. Greider, Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, and Felicity Kelcourse, 157–175. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010.

In this article, Johnson engages the language of depth psychology in a very practical way to describe how communities that exist at the margins—sandwiched between the material and ideological structures of colonialism and the cultural practices of globalism—can think about ecclesial praxis in a way that effectively resists such life-limiting practices. For Johnson, religious experience (including pastoral care and worship as a care tool) has the potential to facilitate psychological and emotional healing related to injury incurred by the hand of demonic colonial practices that rob people and communities of their God-given personhood and subjectivity. According to Johnson, pastoral care (and by

extension, I would argue, its engagement of liturgy) must support communal efforts aimed at resisting structural oppression; this “includes detecting ‘indigenous’ responses to domination that occupy subliminal spaces in local communities” (168).

Jones, Serene. *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*. Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

In this work, Jones offers up a theological reflection on trauma and how it affects the human soul’s capacity to worship God. Her question is poignant: “How do people whose hearts and minds have been wounded by violence come to feel and know the redeeming power of God’s grace?” Central to Jones’s question, then, is the correlation between trauma, community, and worship. Her reflection upon the value of the psalms and on a group of traumatized women engaged in the worshiping community makes this an important work that arguably any pastor should read in preparation to journey with those who suffer from trauma.

Lartey, Emmanuel Y. *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2003.

In this seminal text, Lartey tracks the historical development of pastoral theology and care in the Western academy, then seeks to illuminate and interrogate various facets of the discourse through the lens of other religious and ethnic cultures. He highlights the fact that terms as basic as “pastoral care” and “counseling” can be understood in a multiplicity of ways once culture is introduced. Understanding the pastoral implications of worship through a multicultural lens is not simply an act of charity, but a requirement for the long-term health of theological education and the American church. According to Lartey, this project “takes it as self-evident that we can no longer talk of these or any other matters exclusively in a white, middle-class, Eurocentric fashion that deliberately ignores, or else fails to realize, the normalcy of pluralism in every part of the world. . . . It must attempt to include the voices of very many players—women and men; people of color as well as white; African, Asian, Caribbean, South and North America, European, Australian, Pacific; old and young” (15).

Lartey, Emmanuel. "Postcolonial African Practical Theology: Rituals of Remembrance, Cleansing, Healing, and Re-connection." *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 21, no. 2 (2011): 1–16.

In this article, Lartey examines a public ritual of lament that occurred in Ghana in August of 2007. The ceremony, called the Joseph Project, was organized to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Ghana’s independence and the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the North Atlantic Slave trade. For Lartey, this ecumenical ritual ceremony—designed to foster remembrance, healing, and restoration in subsequent generations of people and communities that have suffered the adverse effects of the Atlantic slave trade and decades of colonial hegemony—has significant implications for pastoral/practical theology and Christian worship. According to Lartey, if similar postcolonial worship practices can be emulated in the Western church and academy, such liturgies “can have a lasting impact for good on the lives of persons globally.”

LaRue, Cleophus J. *The Heart of Black Preaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.

In this work, LaRue reflects on the essence and historical development of Black preaching beyond mere aesthetics and style (as is often done in theological education) to explicate how the subjectivity, heritage, intentionality, context, and culture influence hermeneutical method and homiletical delivery in Black worship. For LaRue, context is indispensable to understanding preaching in the broader worship ecology of the Black church. Preaching that denies the lived heritage and reality of Black history and experience robs it of its healing potentialities. This text provides a commonly under-emphasized (or outright overlooked) dimension for hermeneutics that is necessary for all of theological education, not just Black students of the Black church. According to LaRue, “the distinctive power of black preaching is to be found, first and foremost, in that which blacks believe scripture reveals about the sovereign God’s involvement in the everyday affairs and circumstances of their marginalized existence” (1).

LaRue, Cleophus J. *Rethinking Celebration: From Rhetoric to Praise in African American Preaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016.

In this recent edition from LaRue, he critiques, deconstructs, and then reconstructs what he argues has been a critical historical element of Black preaching, but in recent years has become the ideological essence of Black preaching: celebration and praise. For LaRue, in remaining faithful to the heritage of Black preaching and worship, celebration and praise are elements of worship that should occur in response to sound examination and presentation of biblical, theological, and practical themes that affect and influence people’s lives. Regardless of whether one agrees with LaRue’s critique of other scholars or preachers that he highlights in this text, I suggest this work as a methodological example of how to empathically approach a critique of worship. When this study guide emphasizes *indigenous* and *contextual* worship, it is not to suggest that the worship of any one culture or group is beyond reproach or critique. In this project, LaRue methodically deconstructs what he believes to be harmful about celebration, and reconstructs the worship genre, all within the discourse of Black preaching. This method stands in stark contrast to a common practice of cross-cultural critiques of worship that essentially reflect a biased and outright rejection of the cultural practices of “the other.” Such colonial violence stands over and against what LaRue attempts to achieve here. After he critiques what he believes to be harmful praise practices, he is clear that “there is no doubt that many black sermons contain the rhetoric of strong closure” and that “black preachers should never be ashamed of that or attempt to deny that dimension of our preaching tradition, but we must also remember that it is not the only way to engage in a celebratory close to our sermons” (67).

Mitchell, K. R. “Ritual in Pastoral Care.” *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 43 (1989), 68–77.

In this article, Mitchell makes the connection between pastoral care, ritual studies, and worship, observing how rituals can cultivate and enhance community. For Mitchell, ritual also has the potential to be therapeutic in its response to certain pathologies. While he doesn’t go into significant detail on any one topic, Mitchell sets the stage for further research regarding indigenous healing resources in ritual and worship that can be used in conjunction with other traditional mental health resources.

LaMothe, Ryan. *Empire, Systemic Violence, and the Refusal to Mourn: A Pastoral Political Perspective*. *The Journal of Pastoral Theology* 23, iss. 2 (2013), 1–26.

LaMothe critiques the inability of the United States—as an empire—to mourn. According to LaMothe, this ineptitude for mourning reflects “individual and collective decisions to avoid being moved by the stories of Others—stories that are counternarratives in that they subvert dominant, official narratives of exceptionalism, superiority, and innocence” (8). While LaMothe offers a pastoral political perspective in this article, his reflections are very relevant to Christian worship and the tendency for such worship to enter into lament and mourning. LaMothe’s work challenges us to critic Christian worship for latent evidence of nationalism, cultural exceptionalism, and illusions of innocence.

Moss III, Otis. *Blue Note Preaching in a Post-Soul World: Finding Hope in an Age of Despair*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015.

In a brief selection of his sermons coupled with scholarly reflection, Dr. Moss seeks to mobilize the essence of the blues genre in Black preaching for the purpose of fostering hope in people forced to exist at the margins. According to Moss, the preaching he seeks to engender in the pulpit—blue note preaching—stands in stark contrast to preaching that has lost its prophetic edge in service to individualism and capitalism. Similar to the central claim of this study guide, which bemoans disembodied and ahistorical liturgy, Moss posits, “the pain of the week is connected to the sacred service of Sunday. . . . There is no strict line of demarcation between the existential weariness of a disenfranchised person of color and the sacred disciplines of prayer, worship, and service to humanity” (4). Moss presents a challenge to Black preaching (and worship in general) to respond the human spirit that underwrites blues expression.

Pembroke, Neil. *Pastoral Care in Worship: Liturgy and Psychology in Dialogue*. New York: T&T Clark International, 2010.

Pembroke sets out to connect the discourse of pastoral care and weekly worship in the local faith community. In doing this, Pembroke identifies four major themes—hope, communion, lament, and reconciliation—that he says reflect critical discourses that heighten the pastoral sensibilities of any conception of worship and liturgy. In placing liturgy in conversation with psychology, and in exploring the psychodynamic dimensions of hope, communion, lament, and reconciliation, Pembroke hopes to augment traditional theological limits encountered when reflecting upon human experience in a way that furthers the conversation between pastoral theology and liturgy.

Rah, Soong-Chan. *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.

Dr. Rah calls critical attention to the avoidance of lament in the North American Christian church. Engulfed in a paradigm that reflects a caricature of godliness, Rah seeks to challenge and offer a corrective to the triumphalism, growth, and success-oriented framework that cloaks itself as the gospel in many sectors of American Christianity. He cogently observes that in many denominational, liturgical hymnals, songs of lament—while representing a significant portion of the psalms—represent a small part of worship repertoire. Intentionally engaging lament is a gospel response to

human suffering and the injustice enacted upon those at the margins of society. “Lament,” Rah says, “recognizes the struggles of life and cries out for justice against existing injustices. . . . The status quo is not to be celebrated but instead must be challenged” (23). As a resource for crafting redemptive liturgical praxis, Dr. Rah’s text is seminal and long overdue.

Reed, Tamilia, and Helen Neville. “The Influence of Religiosity and Spirituality on Psychological Well-Being among Black Women,” *Journal of Black Psychology* 40, iss. 4: 384–401.

This article represents one of several in the journal presenting an empirical study on the connection between the religious experience of African Americans and emotional well-being. In this particular study, “religiosity frequently emphasizes an observable set of behaviors and actions that demonstrate a devotion to or worship of the sacred” (386). In a sampling of 167 Black women, a positive correlation is made. The author’s hypotheses are confirmed: (1) There was a strong correlation between religiosity and psychological health, and (2) “spirituality fully mediated the relationship between religiosity and mental health and between religiosity and life satisfaction” (396). Such research empirically validates the necessity for ongoing conversation between liturgical studies and pastoral theology.

Steinhoffsmith, Roy Herndon. *The Mutuality of Care*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999.

In this important work, Steinhoffsmith is concerned with oppressive and debilitating power dynamics and how they manifest in pastoral ministry and Christian worship. His extensive use of case studies to analyze various components of worship within the ecclesial setting makes this an excellent resource for understanding how Christian communities can be unconscious of latent cultural power dynamics that result in the condescension of the “out-group” in a worship setting. Such violence is injurious to the entire faith community. Case studies that examine practices such as communion and tithing make this a very appropriate study for liturgy.

Thomas, Frank A. *They Like to Never Quit Praisin’ God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2013.

Thomas offers a scholarly account of the place and function of celebration in the African American preaching tradition. As preaching is deemed among the central components of Black worship—and a useful pastoral tool that is accretive to the healing of the soul—this treatise offered up by Thomas is included in this study guide. Contrary to popular convention in the broader academy, which tends to suggest celebration in Black preaching is nothing more than stylistic meandering, Thomas unapologetically and forcefully makes the case that homiletics within the worship enterprise is about more than verbal oration; it engages the entirety of the presenter’s humanity, the Spirit-inspired heritage and tradition from which the preacher emerged, and the humanity of the hearing congregation. Pastorally speaking, then, the argument put forth in this text—that preaching engages the whole person (cognition, body, and emotion)—is a crucial principle in the care and healing of wounded souls.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949.

In one of his hallmark works, Thurman does a masterful job of answering two critical questions: (1) What does the Christian religion say to the scores of men whose backs are against the wall? and (2) For the socially and politically disinherited, under what terms is survival possible? In order to address these questions, Thurman contextualizes and indigenizes the gospel in a way that locates Jesus (via time and space) in his historic Jewish heritage and in the context of an oppressed group under Roman occupation. For Thurman, such truth-telling of the Christian story—by observing context and cultural heritage—only serves to bolster the potency of Christian worship in the temporal realm. The methodological approach of contextualization Thurman takes in this work should be applied in some respect or another to all of Christian worship.

Thurman, HHoward. *The Inward Journey*. New York: Harper & Row, 1961.

In this text, Thurman compiles a collection of meditations that reflect on various existential quests common to human experience. The meditations are designed to aid the reader in worship via the examination of one's interior space. Mysticism and spirituality are common themes in Thurman's body of work. For Thurman, such an intentional inward journey had a direct correlation to one's capacity for loving God, neighbor, and community. He is clear that his intent for this text is "to focus the mind and heart upon God as the Eternal Source and Goal of Life. . . . To find Him as Companion and Presence is 'to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly' with Him" (7).

Vondey, Wolfgang. "The Making of a Black Liturgy: Pentecostal Worship and Spirituality from African Slave Narratives to American Cityscapes," *Black Theology: An International Journal* 10, iss. 2: 147–168.

Vondey traces the historical development of Pentecostalism in African American religious tradition and makes the case for this worship genre to be included more widely in how we understand liturgy in the academy and the church. While more common understandings of liturgy reflect tendencies of highly structured process, content, and formalization, Vondey emphasizes more embodied elements of Black liturgy that emphasize experience, expression, empowerment, and pneumatological praxis. For Vondey, "the making of Black 'liturgy,' therefore, refers more broadly to the actualization of a reflection on the Christian life than to the ordered performance of spirituality in worship" (150). This piece offers valuable insight for liturgical studies in the understanding of contextualization and indigenization in worship.

Wimberly, Edward P. *Using Scripture in Pastoral Counseling*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994.

In many parts of Black religious tradition, the biblical text represents a central component of liturgical praxis. In this classic text from Wimberly, an in-depth model for using scripture in pastoral counseling is outlined that takes seriously the context and heritage of the counselee, cultural mythology, and family of origin—all of which tend to be themes central to Black experience in America. While worship is not the primary theme of this text, it is my experience that the counseling a pastor performs in the Black church is strongly correlated to the overall worship praxis in the local church. That is to say, the

preaching, singing, and other elements of worship tend to have a strong influence on the spiritual and emotional state of the counselee (and vice-versa). This text offers up a more life-giving alternative to engaging the biblical text compared to a legalistic approach practiced in more fundamentalist traditions.

Wimberly, Edward P. *African American Pastoral Care and Counseling: The Politics of Oppression and Empowerment*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2006.

In this classic text, Wimberly makes the case that for African Americans, a historically oppressed and marginalized people in the American political process, the ecclesial and ecumenical experience—including pastoral care and counseling—is fundamentally a political process as well. In this text, Wimberly crafts a cogent argument to suggest that the politics of oppression and empowerment are inseparable from religious experience in Black life. While this text is not specifically about liturgy and worship, as pastoral care and counseling is connected to the worship apparatus of Black religious life, Wimberly is clear that such resources should “help people become aware of how these market-driven and commodity-oriented images of self-worth impact their lives and to help them find alternative and more growth-facilitating images of their worth” (99).

Additional Works of Importance for Pastoral Theology/Care and Worship

Warnock, Raphael G. *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, and Public Witness*. New York: New York University Press, 2013.

Duncan, Carol B., and Alton B. Pollard. *The Black Church Studies Reader*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Cone, James H. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013.

Ramshaw, Elaine. *Ritual and Pastoral Care*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1987.

Poling, James Newton, and HeeSun Kim. *Korean Resources for Pastoral Theology: Dance of Han, Jeong, and Salim*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012.

Albers, Robert H., William H. Meller, and Steven D. Thurber. *Ministry with Persons with Mental Illness and Their Families*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012.

Moessner, Jeanne Stevenson, ed. *Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1996.

Neuger, Christie Cozad, and James Newton Poling. *The Care of Men*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997.

Douglass, Kelly Brown. *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015.

Park, Andrew S. *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004.

Townes, Emilie. *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993.

Peterman, Janet S. *Speaking to Silence: New Rites for Christian Worship and Healing*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.