

Judith Casselberry. *The Labor of Faith: Gender and Power in Black Apostolic Pentecostalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017. 213 pages. \$25.95.

The Labor of Faith: Gender and Power in Black Apostolic Pentecostalism offers the reader a look into the world of Black Pentecostalism through various forms of women's labor as described by Judith Casselberry. In the book, Casselberry specifically examines the labor of the women of the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc. (COOLJC) in Harlem, New York. The historical lens, combined with Casselberry's compelling narratives from interacting with the women of COOLJC, provide critical insight into women's ways of working and worship within the context of Black Pentecostal faith. By centering the voices and practices of Black women, Casselberry offers the reader insight into different forms of leadership and the ways that power is wielded beyond and within the hierarchical institutional structures. Each chapter posits a different type of labor that women engage in within Black Apostolic Pentecostalism, specifically at COOLJC.

Chapter 1, "Instruments of Faith," shows the variety of reactions and perspectives around the death of a beloved sister in the community, Louise Franklin. This chapter engages questions about proclaimed faith versus practiced, and highlights religious labor as a practice of the women. Casselberry notes that while all of the women found a role and a way to labor through and within their grief, their theological ideas were different. As these women held community through grief, however, this labor was not without questions as they tried to reconcile the death of their beloved with their belief in concepts such as healing.

Chapter 2, "Church Building," reconsiders history through the labor of the wives of the men who are considered founding fathers of the church. Through the work of Reva Cook, Ethel Mae Bonner, and Carrie Lawson, the reader sees clearly that the "founding" was influenced by far more than the men who have historically received the credit. Black women's church labor was critical to the development and advancement of the COOLJC and the church at large.

Chapter 3, "Church Sustaining," discusses three women's auxiliaries of the church. Casselberry mines tension within these groups that simultaneously support and subvert the gender constructions that create boundaries for where women can labor in the church. Similarly, Chapter 4, "Women's Work," discusses the emotional labor of women within these systems. Women must navigate gendered boundaries within and beyond the church that often differ from each other. This type of labor requires maneuvering multiple systems of positionality.

In Chapter 5, "Harvesting Souls for Christ," Casselberry discusses the work of the altar workers through the lens of intimate labor. She observed the altar as a place where women primarily lead and maintain the practices, such as assisting individuals who are moving towards conversion, leading prayer, and attending to those that have been "slain in the Spirit." Casselberry considers these practices through the narratives of three generations of altar workers to see how the work is passed down and maintained. In the final chapter, "The Beauty of Holiness," the reader is introduced to what Casselberry calls "aesthetic labor." This labor involves maintaining a collective ideal of "holiness" standards of appearance, how they conflict across generations, and yet are in many ways maintained with continuity throughout time.

In conclusion, *The Labor of Faith* invites the reader to move deeply into the world of Black Apostolic Pentecostalism with the labor of the women of COOLJC as their guide. The book provokes the reader to think both theologically and practically about the different types of labor Casselberry considers. The survey structure of the book allows for a breadth of ideas to be

discussed. Yet each chapter's topics still warrant more focused attention. For example, as a homiletician, I would have appreciated more work discussing the gendered nature of speaking power and the rhetoric of the women operating in the spaces of "teaching" versus men "preaching" as mentioned in chapter 2. Nevertheless, Casselberry's use of historical narrative, interesting concepts of labor, and the testimony of living witnesses make this an enjoyable and thought-provoking read. This book will benefit those considering the gendered domains of power within religion and religious organizations, and anyone interested in rituals and faith practices, specifically within Black Pentecostal faith, as well as those who want to center voices that have often been on the margins in scholarship.

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