Book Reviews

Yolanda N. Pierce. *In My Grandmother's House: Black Women, Faith, and the Stories We Inherit*. Minneapolis, MN, Broadleaf, 2021. Pp. xviii + 178. \$13,76.

This narration of stories by Yolanda Pierce highlights a deep theological and missiological understanding of the (American) Black church as experienced by Black women. Through rich storytelling, Pierce invites readers into an intimate consideration of the divine from a Black woman's perspective. As a womanist theologian living in the tension between an inherited Christian faith tradition and the new lessons her faith teaches her, this book is her “attempt to retrieve the religious legacy she inherited and keep it alive for future generations” (xvi). This is what Pierce calls “grandmother's theology,” originating from generational wisdom of the knowledge of God acquired through age and maturity (xvii).

Throughout the book, Pierce shares honest stories of faith, including those of legalism and patriarchy. Her sources include the Bible, poetry, Black church traditions which honor women/grandmothers, and others who contributed to her theological formation, growth, and transformation. She emphasizes that in a world hostile to Black women's bodies and spirits, these women used truths from their lived experience and survival strategies to protect and prepare her for a world with microaggression, vulnerability, fear, tears, systemic racism, and injustices.

Pierce argues that theology can be done anywhere: at grandmother's kitchen, bedside, pulpit, or classroom; and by those not typically considered as ‘theologians.’ In explaining places where grandmother's wisdom and theology can be experienced, Pierce shares a story of her grandmother's hands that reminded me of Rasmaa Menakem's description of his grandmother's hands (*My Grandmother's Hands*, 2017: 4). These hands have witnessed sacrifice, trauma, resistance, racism, unconditional love, compassion, spirituality, tenderness, freedom, memory, faith, and prayer, and have held Pierce through life's struggles as a scholar, mother, leader, and preacher. Likewise, an interesting

transatlantic comparison might be made with the works of Ghanaian feminist theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye, founder of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.

The book's strengths include Pierce's intentional way of displaying her scholarship, inherited traditions, and implications for ministry. With love and respect for her faith tradition, Pierce objectively criticizes patriarchal aspects needing transformation. Uniquely, her work achieves the balance which many others do not: successfully bridging the gaps between pulpit, pew, and academy. Therefore, Pierce's ability to create a balance that engages scholars, theologians, preachers, and lay church leaders is significant. It is my hope that some young African Americans or young Black folks will not misunderstand the right to criticize objectively towards transformation to challenging traditions and practices in the Black church promoted mainly by our mothers and grandmothers in a way that could feel disrespectful and dishonoring.

This book enriches our global, missional understanding of the imago Dei specifically through the lens of Black women, arguing that their experiences represent significant theological resources for future generations. As a Black woman raised in a Pentecostal church with similar experiences, Pierce reminds me that traditions like prayer, relationship to the name of Jesus, and a family of faith have formed me theologically and missionally. I recommend this book to scholars, theologians, missionaries, and all Christians, especially those in the Black church, whether in the United States or elsewhere.

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Reference Cited

Menakem, Resmaa (2017). *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies*. Las Vegas: Central Recovery Press.