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## **Pentecostal Plurality and Sexual Politics in Africana Worlds**

**Adriaan van Klinken**

### **Introduction**

Some years ago, in December 2016, I attended a church service of a small group of LGBTIQ<sup>1</sup> Christians in Nairobi, Kenya, which was the focus of my research at the time. Congregants came from a wide range of backgrounds but were united in their quest for an understanding and experience of Christian faith that is inclusive and affirming of their non-conforming sexuality and gender identity. Although interdenominational, worship in the church was clearly influenced by the Pentecostal-Charismatic styles that in recent decades have reshaped the expression of Christianity in Kenya, as in other parts of Africa. The room where the church had gathered, in a building on a busy street of Nairobi's central business district, was filled with the noises of intense prayer, passionate preaching, and loud music. Half-way the service, I needed a break. I walked out, down the stairs, onto the street, to buy some water and airtime. While waiting in the shop, on the ground floor of the same building block, I could hear the ecstatic worship continue. Then, my eyes fell on a poster put on a wall of the shop, just next to me, reading:

Cry for our nation

O Lord God

Allow this note!

Kenya is great and mighty, blessed

KENYA IS GOD'S PILLAH POINT

That is why "they" want to

destroy and prepare

it for the 666,

the Satan's mark (the BEAST),

by making it to be a nation of

GAYS & LESBIANS

The capitalized words were printed in red, to reinforce the alarming message. The poster was signed by "seer prophet: James K. Mwangi" of "Christ our Redeemer Churches (Adonai)." I have not been able to trace this pastor or his church, but one can safely assume that they, too, are part of Kenya's emerging Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian movements.

If Pentecostalism in urban Kenya presents a "spirit of revitalization" (Mugambi 2020), my experience that Sunday illustrates that this is far from a unified spirit. The point made by several scholars (e.g., Marshall 2009), that Pentecostal Christianity does not present a single, consistent program of religious, ethical, social, and political renewal, apparently also applies to the sphere of sexual politics. The poster exemplifies the investment of many Pentecostal-Charismatic groups in the politicization of sexuality, in particular campaigns against same-sex relationships and LGBTIQ rights, both in Kenya (Parsitau 2021) and in other parts of Africa in recent years (e.g., Bompani and Valois 2017; Kaunda 2020; van Klinken & Obadare 2019). The specific language used on the poster presents an example of what Asonzeh Ukah (2021) has dubbed "apocalyptic homophobia," while also illustrating a sense of Pentecostal nationalism with direct repercussions for sexual

politics (van Klinken 2014). The worshipping LGBTIQ Kenyan Christians, in a packed room just two floors up from the shop with this poster, demonstrate, however, that other possibilities of sexual worldmaking do exist within Pentecostalism. In this community, the Pentecostal spirit of revitalization serves to create an inclusive and affirming space of faith, as an alternative to mainstream Christian circles that are experienced as judgmental, exclusionary, and discriminating. Although the existence of one such community is perhaps not enough to speak of a new trend, as a matter of fact this community does not stand alone. The church in case recently opened a second branch in Kisumu, Kenya's third-largest city. I am aware of similar initiatives elsewhere in East Africa, such as in Uganda and Rwanda, while on the other side of the continent, in Nigeria, already in the early 2000s a charismatic "gay church" was launched, called House of Rainbow (Endong 2020; Macaulay 2010). Some of these initiatives, including the church in Kenya, are linked to the originally American organization, The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM), which has strong roots in US Black Pentecostalism (Lewin 2018) but has also become active on the African continent (van Klinken 2017). The work of TFAM and other charismatic LGBTIQ-inclusive ministries has begun to challenge any monolithic image in which Pentecostalism as a whole tends to be associated with homo- or queer-phobia, and with anti-LGBTIQ theological stances (Kay and Hunt 2014; Herrin 2020). In Ashon Crawley's words (2017, 31) such work serves "to create the space of possibility ... and to let folks know that an alternative exists."

The twofold aim of this chapter is, first, to demonstrate the plurality of Pentecostal discourses on, and attitudes towards, issues of sexual diversity in Africana (African and African diaspora) contexts.<sup>2</sup> As Allan Anderson (2010, 15) has pointed out, rather than using the term Pentecostalism as a singular, "it is probably more correct to speak of Pentecostals in the contemporary global context." This chapter explores this plurality by

foregrounding very different Pentecostal theologies, ethics and politics regarding sexuality. Thereto, it compares and discusses two case studies that represent what appears to be the extremes of Pentecostal positions on sexuality: on the one hand, Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries (MFM), founded in Nigeria in the early 1990s by Daniel K. Olukoya, which since the 2000s has grown an active presence in North America and Europe; on the other hand, the just-mentioned US Black Pentecostal organization, The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries, founded in 2000 by its current presiding bishop, Yvette Flunder, which since the 2010s has developed a global ministry mostly focused on Africa. Admittedly, the former is perhaps more representative of Pentecostal, and especially neo-Pentecostal, movements which “despite their diversity continue to be unified around issues of sexuality, using sexual discipline as a primary form of defining what it means to be human” (Homewood 2020, 114). However, by drawing attention to an emerging progressive Black Pentecostal narrative about sexuality, and its recent nascence in Africa, I suggest that this seemingly unified position is not uncontested, and I foreground the multiple possibilities of sexual politics within Pentecostalism. Although originating from different contexts, and representing different strands of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, the two contrasting case studies are both part of what can be called Africana Pentecostalism, that is, Black African and African American Pentecostal movements that are active on the African continent and its global diaspora, or shortly, in Africana worlds.

Second, beyond merely showing this plurality, I aim to identify some characteristics, or “family resemblances” (Anderson 2010, 15) that these case studies, despite their profound theological differences, have in common in the way they engage in sexual politics. Thereto, I will distinguish and explore three discursive registers through which Pentecostals engage in sexual world-making: spirits, eschatology, and mission. I demonstrate that each of

these complementary frames is broad and flexible enough to allow for very different theological narratives and socio-political implications. Thus, although Pentecostal sexual world-making takes place within these discursive frames, reflecting the family resemblances within global, and specifically Africana Pentecostalism, the discourses within these frames reflect a considerable degree of flexibility and plurality and thus represent very different possibilities of Pentecostal sexual politics. The following sections outline these three discursive frames and position the two case study ministries within them.

### **Spiritualizing sexuality**

In Pentecostal Christianities, the emphasis on the Holy Spirit tends to come with a broader concern with spiritual realities which often are understood in a dualist scheme of God and the Holy Spirit versus the devil, demons, and evil spirits. This scheme profoundly shapes Pentecostal understandings of sexuality. Building on the biblical invocation that the body is “a temple of the Holy Spirit”, Pentecostals are generally concerned with bodily purity, and specifically with sexual purity (Kaunda 2020). However, this can be interpreted and applied in different ways.

It has been observed that many contemporary Pentecostals “imagine the cosmos as brimming with evil spirits waiting to penetrate the body” (Homewood 2020, 116). Discussing this with reference to West African Pentecostal imaginaries, scholars have pointed out that the body is seen as penetrable by spirits through physical sex acts. Naomi Richman (2021, 260) analyzes that according to MFM discourse, “physiologically, demons enter the subject via the bodily openings, and the sexual openings in the body are especially prone to becoming sites of demonic incursion.” Although sexual “sins” in general are seen as putting the body at risk of demons entering and possessing the body, this appears to apply

specifically to male same-sex activity. In particular, anal penetration of, and ejaculation in, a male body by another man is believed to have profound material and spiritual consequences, as it destabilizes the social and cosmic order. Elaborating on this with various examples from Ghana, Nathanael Homewood (2020, 119) concludes that, “for Pentecostals, the gay body is a site of death via penetration, death and penetration acting as synonyms for the ultimate loss of control over the boundaries of the body by demonic possession.”

The suggestion that same-sex (or otherwise deemed immoral) sexual activity *causes* demonic possession is one way in which the spiritualization of sexuality manifests itself in Pentecostal churches such as MFM. However, simultaneously one can also find the idea that same-sex attraction itself is *caused by* evil spirits. Exemplifying a broader trend of African Pentecostals having “successfully managed to pit the Holy Spirit against local demons” (Omenyo 2014, 139), MFM particularly invokes West African beliefs in water spirits that are seen as forces bringing misfortune and havoc, and which are specifically associated with sexual sins. According to Adewale Adhlakun (2017, 4): “Marine spirits are (...) believed to be the principal demons in charge of adultery, fornication, abortion, incest, homosexuality, lesbianism, pornography, polygamy and other sexual perversions.” Anthony Akerele, an MFM pastor in Virginia (USA), develops this point specifically in relation to homosexuality. The premise of his book with “deliverance prayers” for gay and lesbian people is that “being gay is not a choice but rather (...) a spiritual imposition that can be reversed” (Akerele 2011, ix). Elaborating on this, he refers to a range of spiritual phenomena that cause homosexuality, such as curses and witchcraft, including “marine witchcraft” (Akerele 2011, 161).<sup>3</sup> In particular, he identifies the root cause of homosexuality to be generational spiritual bondage or spiritual marriage, which refers to the demonic grip that evil spirits hold on one’s life because of the involvement of one’s parents or ancestors in the worship of

indigenous gods and deities. Thus, “your ancestors, back to the originating point of this bondage, constitute your foundation and the origin of gay lifestyle” (Akerle 2011, 83).

The above discussed discourses consider homosexuality as caused by, or as the cause of demonic spirit possession. In either case, the only way to break this possession is believed to be through deliverance rituals that invoke the power of God. See, for instance, the prayer that Akerle (2011, 140) prescribes: “Holy Ghost Fire, work deep in my root and consume the originating point of gay lifestyle, in the name of Jesus.” Churches such as MFM organize deliverance programs where participants can overcome personal challenges, such as in the area of sexuality. The assumption is that because these challenges have spiritual origins, “solutions should also be sought in the spiritual realm” (Richman 2021, 256).

The term “Holy Ghost Fire,” in Pentecostal parlance, refers to the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, which is believed to be both purifying and empowering believers. Where in MFM this fire is believed to purify and deliver people from same-sex attraction and the evil spirits associated with it, in a progressive Pentecostal ministry such as TFAM the same fire is believed to affirm people in their sexuality and to authenticate LGBTIQ people of faith. This is reflected in TFAM’s central tenet of radical inclusivity, which is directly inspired by the biblical story of Pentecost. As stated on the ministry’s website: “We will seek to proclaim the same message proclaimed on the day of Pentecost: that God continues to pour out God’s spirit upon all persons;” explicating the latter, it is clarified that this outpouring of the Holy Spirit happens “without regard to race, ethnicity, social class, age, gender/gender identity, or affectional orientation” (TFAM 2018). As Ellen Lewin demonstrates in her ethnographic study of the ministry, TFAM explicitly builds on the history of racial and gender equality that characterized the Azusa Street Revival in the early twentieth century – often seen as the birthplace of modern Pentecostalism – but expands this egalitarianism to



include sexuality. According to Lewin (2018, 141), “Fellowship preachers draw on this history to argue that their practices are consonant with what occurred at Azusa Street, and that radical inclusivity in fact offers a more authentic re-creation of Pentecostalism than what became normative in most other churches that trace their origins to Azusa Street.” The womanist theologian, Keri Day (2018) also argues that the work of TFAM founder, Bishop Yvette Flunder, continues and expands the original Azusa experience of forging “community across differences (...), a community that announced a new humanity.”

Many LGBTIQ people involved in the ministry have had experiences of being ostracized because of their sexuality and gender identity in the denominations they used to attend. Such ostracization the facto means “being distanced from the possibility of direct communication with the Holy Spirit” (Lewin 2018, 15). Worship in TFAM-affiliated churches means that they regain this access to, and experience of, the Holy Spirit, not despite but in affirmation of their sexuality and gender identity. Thus, in addition to the more general Christian LGBTIQ-affirming theological tropes, such as that one’s gender and sexual identity are part of how God created that person, TFAM’s affirming theology takes a distinctly Pentecostal angle when drawing a close connection between the experience of the Holy Spirit and accepting one’s sexuality. According to Lewin (2018, 100), “communion with the Holy Spirit both demands and enables coming out.” She points out that subsequently, in the practice of autobiographical storytelling that is central in TFAM, the genre of coming-out stories is blurred with the genre of testimonies of the experience of the Spirit. In this context, remaining in the closet presents spiritual dangers: if one cannot accept themselves the way in which God created them, one hinders the work of the Holy Spirit, which effectively obstructs personal and spiritual growth, and might result in bad life choices. Coming out of the closet, on the other hand, is a spiritual liberation – a deliverance, so to

say – from what is seen as the demons of self-denial and self-hatred, and of internalized homophobia, fueled by what TFAM presiding bishop, Yvette Flunder (2014, 117), describes as “oppressive theology, biblical literalism, and unyielding tradition.” Thus, for TFAM, coming out “becomes a religious or spiritual obligation, indeed a central element of worship, and thus a first necessary step toward spiritual cleansing and being filled with the Holy Spirit”, and the ministry subsequently “offers a fundamentally different way to think about the expression and revelation of LGBT identity, one that demands that space be left open for the ingress of the Holy Spirit” (Lewin 2018, 100, 113).

### **Eschatologizing Sexuality**

Pentecostalism historically tends to be characterized by a strong eschatological concern with the end of the world as we currently know it. Although there are different strands of Pentecostal eschatological thought, they mostly center around a premillennialist belief in the second coming of Christ which is believed to be preceded by apocalyptic signs and increasing clashes between God and the Devil.

The idea of a culminating clash between God and the Devil is particularly prominent in spiritual warfare theology, which emerged in North American evangelical circles and has profoundly influenced (neo)Pentecostal traditions. MFM is an exponent of this trend, describing itself as “an end-time church where we build an aggressive end-time army for the Lord” (“About MFM” 2015). The church aims to build a community of “true” believers who are ready for “the rapture” and the second coming of Christ. As part of this, it promotes a practice of “aggressive prayer,” as an “aid to spiritual focus and a check against being overwhelmed by the flesh” (“About MFM” 2015). Through intense and persistent prayer, the church seeks to combat the influence of the Devil and to resist the spiritual attacks from

the demonic world. Akerele (2011, 16) echoes the broader MFM apocalyptic worldview when he writes that there are demonic “covenants, sacrifices and altars of darkness working together to provoke and enforce a homosexual lifestyle.” Subsequently, his prayers of deliverance seek to “shake the kingdom of darkness and constitute a shock treatment to the powers behind homosexuality” (ibid., 27). Constructing a narrative about a demonic plot that seeks to destroy marriage and the family by promoting same-sex marriage and gay rights, MFM declares homosexuality a spiritual warfare issue and invests it with eschatological significance: it is one of the major signs that the end of the world is near. This exemplifies what Asonzeh Ukah (2021) has dubbed a discourse of “apocalyptic homophobia” that in recent years has emerged in West African Pentecostalism. This form of homophobia is born out of an “eschatological fear [that] homosexuality and homosexuals are agents of the doomsday destruction of the world” and that the “LGBTQI community is the veritable instrument of Satan to destroy the world” (Ukah 2021, 85). Similar discourses have been found in other parts of the continent, such as in Cameroon where the Pentecostal “end-time gospel” has been identified as a major contributor to public homophobia (Lyonga 2016), and in Zambia where international advocacy in support of gay rights was framed in apocalyptic language of false prophets and the Antichrist (van Klinken 2013). Much of this discourse appears to reflect a postcolonial African anxiety about “the gay agenda” as part of Western neocolonial imperialism. Ironically, it also reflects a form of cultural amnesia – as it reinvents African traditions of sexual and gender diversity into a mythical “heterosexual Africa” (Epprecht 2008) – while reproducing American Christian Right narratives about “the gay agenda [as] the Devil’s agenda” (Herman 2000). MFM, like other Pentecostal ministries, responds to the perceived threat of homosexuality by promoting heterosexual marriage and the nuclear family. As Richman (2021, 257) puts it, in

Olukoya's writings "the most important spiritual domain is the Christian family home. Not only is marriage 'the best thing that can ever happen to man', but is imbued with eschatological promise, as it offers humanity a 'foretaste of what to expect in heaven'." Thus, not only homosexuality is invested with eschatological significance, but so is heterosexuality, with "family deliverance" being a central concern in the church's spiritual warfare strategy (Olukoya 2005).

In a very different way, TFAM also frames sexuality as an eschatological concern. Bishop Flunder has explicitly denounced the apocalyptic homophobia dominating the American Christian Right. She is found preaching:

There is this tendency to blame everything on the impending second coming of Jesus. (...) It's always "The four horses of the apocalypse and the gays," as though these things are going to bring impending doom. But if the Kingdom of God is to come, it will be because the people of God usher it in. It is problematic to cede our responsibility to a cataclysm (2016).

This quote is significant, because Flunder here problematizes not only the depiction of "the gays" as an apocalyptic threat, but also the apocalyptic eschatology of her Pentecostal upbringing more broadly. Elsewhere, she has stated to have "moved beyond" such an eschatology, in particular because of its a-political orientation that discourages believers to participate in democratic processes or in social justice activism. Rather than waiting for Christ to return to the world and create a new earth, she claims, in typical Pentecostal parlance: "I believe I've seen in the Spirit how this thing will end. Peace is possible; but we'll have to work for it" (Flunder 2015). This quote presents a shift from an other-worldly to a

this-worldly eschatology in Pentecostalism (Macchia 2007). It can be seen as exemplifying an emerging “progressive premillennialism” (Webb 2007), which considers social transformation as part of the working of the Holy Spirit in which Christians are called to participate towards the eschatological fulfilment of God’s Kingdom.<sup>4</sup> For TFAM, promoting “radical inclusivity” is at the heart of its vision of social transformation, and obviously the inclusion of same-gender loving people is a key part of what has been described as the organization’s “eschatological strategy” (Voelkel 2017, 101). Importantly, the dualism of good versus evil that characterizes much of apocalyptic eschatological thought, is reproduced in the discourse presented by TFAM, but with a rather different twist. Instead of fighting the Devil and his “gay agenda,” TFAM seeks to counter the Christian Right and its agenda of fueling homophobia. Thus, when launching TFAM’s global ministry, which has a strong focus on the African continent, Bishop Joseph Tolton stated: “As black gay Christians who identify with Pentecostal worship and as people of social justice, we are countering the work of conservative, mostly white American evangelicals who are doubling down on their attempt of spiritual colonization of Africa” (quoted in Amyx 2015). Particularly remarkable here is the racial dimension, with TFAM imagining itself part of a “pan-African progressive Christian movement” that seeks to resist the colonizing agenda of American white conservative Evangelicalism (van Klinken 2017, 225).<sup>5</sup> The dualism of good versus evil becomes a dualism of two opposite forms of Christianity, and the eschatological battle becomes one about the fundamental nature and future of Christianity as a defining factor for sexual politics in our contemporary world. Rather than being invested in an ideal of heterosexual marriage and family life, TFAM understands itself as an alternative, or queer, family, centered around values of inclusivity, non-judgment, and solidarity (Lewin 2018, 170).

## **Missionizing Sexuality**

Inspired by its eschatological concern and its belief in the era of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostalism from its beginning up to date has been characterized by a strong missionary zeal. This is reflected in both MFM and TFAM, both having significantly expanded the geographical scope of their work in order to reach a global impact. However, the differences in eschatology, and in theology more generally, that can be observed in contemporary global Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have a profound impact on how mission is understood and put into practice, and also affects the ways in which various churches engage in sexual politics.

MFM explicitly describes itself as an other-worldly oriented church, its priority being an evangelistic one, “for people to make heaven” (“About MFM” 2015). This requires building “heavenly-bound and aggressive Christians” who are ready to join the “end-time army for the Lord” and engage in spiritual warfare. As Samuel Fabunmi (2016) puts it, for MFM “deliverance is a veritable mission strategy that can bring about holistic Christian ministry” and that is seen as key to religious change in society. Embarking on this mission of deliverance, MFM demonstrates a particular concern with delivering people from homosexuality. After all, homosexuality is not only a sin that one needs to repent from, but also a spiritual bondage one needs to be delivered from, in order to reach one’s destiny. As Adedokun (2017, 2, 4) argues, in MFM discourse “sexuality and destiny are inseparable,” the idea being that “good sexuality begets a fulfilled destiny” (and “bad sexuality” blocking such destiny). The concept of destiny here refers both to the here-and-now, in the form of material prosperity, and in the hereafter, in the form of access to heaven. In this context, promoting “good sexuality” and the fight against “bad sexuality” and the demonic spirits

advocating it are at the heart of what the church perceives to be its mission in these apocalyptic times. This has a profound impact on MFM's contribution to sexual politics in its home base country, Nigeria, where, with other Pentecostal churches, it actively fuels anti-LGBTIQ campaigns and advocates for the criminalization of same-sex relationships (Ukah 2021). Yet it also shapes the church's activities in Europe and North America, where it advocates gay conversion therapy notwithstanding public controversy (e.g., see Richman 2021). African Pentecostal churches such as MFM are frequently associated with a project of "reverse mission," that is, the movement of African Christians "bringing back" the Christian faith to its original but now largely secularized heartlands (Burgess 2020). Reverse mission is also concerned with the moral regeneration of a de-Christianized society, and matters of sexual morality are at the heart of such efforts (Adogame 2013, 122). This is clearly reflected by the Nigerian Pentecostal scholar Jacob Kehinde Oladipupo – a missionary and church planter in the US himself – when he writes:

The current challenges of relativism, postmodernism, and homosexuality in Western countries call for the church in Africa that had been the beneficiary of Western missionary efforts in the past to now engage the Western culture with the authentic witness and effective testimony of the gospel. (Oladipupo 2018, 64). Thus, MFM's mission of deliverance in relation to homosexuality can be seen as part of this broader global economy of reverse mission and moral regeneration, spearheaded by Nigerian and other African Pentecostals.

TFAM is involved in a different form of "reverse mission." As an originally African American organization, it has become active on the African continent in order to promote a renewed engagement of the diaspora with "the African motherland" (Kalu 2011). Although there is a long history of such re-engagement (Nathan 2012), TFAM adds a new chapter to it by explicitly aiming to promote a progressive, pan-African, and charismatic form of Christian

faith, in order to intervene in “the global economy of Christianity” (“Empowering Progressive Clergy” 2013). Elaborating on the latter, Tolton (2016) stated:

Whatever strain of Christianity Africa embraces over the next fifty to hundred years will be what Christendom is known as in the world. Because this is the place where it will be defined, this is where Christianity is growing. That’s why we’re engaged here. We also see this as an incredible opportunity for reconciliation between the diaspora and the motherland. And God is calling queer black folk to lead this next reformation.

The use of the phrase “next reformation” is significant, because also Flunder is known to use this term in relation to her idea that TFAM is continuing, and expanding, the history and legacy of the Azusa Street Revival, particularly its egalitarian and inclusive nature (Lewin 2018, 49–50). Indeed, the fellowship’s mission statement speaks of “a mandate from God to proclaim a gospel that is radically inclusive of all persons” (TFAM 2018). This concern with inclusivity is intersectional and is certainly not limited to sexuality, although that is a central aspect of it. Reflecting its this-worldly eschatological orientation, the fellowship understands its mission as establishing “peace on earth” (Flunder 2015). This includes social justice activism, but in a distinctly Pentecostal style and narrative. As for style, Tolton (2016) refers to the “anointing” with the Holy Spirit that even the most conservative pastors he encounters in Africa recognize in him, and that as much as it confuses them also allows them to connect with him. As for narrative, the discourse in the fellowship about the movement “rewriting the Book of Acts” (Lewin 2018, 149) is highly significant, especially in the light of the biblical Book of Acts being the foundational scripture of Pentecostalism. In



the same way as the early church, according to the Book of Acts, was led by God's Spirit and partook in God's plan with the world, TFAM and its associated churches are "believed to be at the forefront of a Holy Spirit-driven movement crucial to realizing God's mission" (van Klinken 2017, 229). Thus, TFAM considers its mission of promoting a gospel of radical inclusivity as a continuation, not only of the historic Azusa Street Revival, but also of the biblical Day of Pentecost as narrated in the Book of Acts (Lewin 2018, 148). Furthermore, this mission is, in a way, a form of "reverse mission," as it is about African American Christians re-connecting with the African continent, not to re-evangelize Africa but to combat the influence of conservative white evangelicalism and to promote a progressive, Pan-African Pentecostal Christianity.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have compared and discussed two case studies that represent what appears to be the extremes of Pentecostal positions on homosexuality: an originally Nigerian neo-Pentecostal deliverance church with a self-declared "aggressive" strategy of spiritual warfare, and an originally US Black Pentecostal ministry with a self-declared "progressive" theological and political orientation. The chapter has explored the very different ways in which these two organizations engage in sexual politics in Africana worlds: on the one hand, a strategy of delivering the world from the perceived evil of homosexuality, and of combating the demonic powers behind it with "Holy Ghost Fire"; on the other hand, a strategy of affirming same-gender loving people through a practice of radical inclusivity, and of spearheading a Spirit-led movement for progressive social change. My suggestion is not that the two case studies are equally representative of broader strands of Pentecostalism, or are equally influential in shaping the dynamics within Pentecostal-

Charismatic Christianities. I am simply not in a position to make such assessments regarding their representativity and influence. Yet contrasting these opposite ends of Pentecostal sexual theology and politics is valuable in any case, because it draws critical attention to the plurality within Pentecostalism. Thus, it interrogates any homogenizing depiction that associates this strand of Christianity with a conservative moral agenda, and in particular with homo- or queer-phobia. The chapter has also identified three discursive registers – of spirits, eschatology, and mission – that each of the case study ministries engage in relation to sexuality. This is valuable because it highlights the family resemblances between global, and specifically Africana, Pentecostal movements, even if they have profound differences of ethics, theology, and politics. It also allows for thinking about uniquely Pentecostal ways of sexual world-making, in contrast to other Christian traditions and denominations. The multiple possibilities of Pentecostal sexual politics in Africana worlds that this chapter has explored are particularly important in view of the fact that, in Africa and its diaspora, sexuality has become highly politicized, and in light of the realization that Africa and its diaspora are of an ever-increasing significance for the future of Pentecostalism, and indeed Christianity in general, globally. With Pentecostalism being fragmented and pluralized, and with its sexual discourses being diverse and complex, the spirit of revitalization that Pentecostalism presents will continue to shape sexual politics in dynamic ways and in multiple directions.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'Africana' is increasingly used (especially in North America) to study Africa and its diaspora together as a unit of analysis, and to acknowledge the multiple 'Africas' that have emerged in global contexts. The emerging field of 'Africa religious studies' is promoted by the *Journal of Africana Religions*. For a mapping of this field, see Stewart & Hucks 2013; for a discussion specifically focused on Christianity as an Africana religion, see Settles 2021.

<sup>3</sup> The latter term appears to refer to an intentional deployment of the power of marine spirits against somebody else, for instance to make them gay.

<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to my colleague Stefan Skrimshire, for a conversation that helped me better understand Flunder's eschatology, and her version of millennialism, as reflected in this sermon.

<sup>5</sup> About the American Christian Right's involvement in struggles about sexual diversity in Africa, see Kaoma 2017.