

SISTERS
in the
WILDERNESS

*The Challenge
of Womanist
God-Talk*

DELORES S. WILLIAMS

ORBIS  BOOKS
Maryknoll, New York 10545

ORBIS  BOOKS
Maryknoll, New York 10545

 Fathers and Brothers
MARYKNOLL™

Founded in 1970, Orbis Books endeavors to publish works that enlighten the mind, nourish the spirit, and challenge the conscience. The publishing arm of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Orbis seeks to explore the global dimensions of the Christian faith and mission, to invite dialogue with diverse cultures and religious traditions, and to serve the cause of reconciliation and peace. The books published reflect the views of their authors and do not represent the official position of the Maryknoll Society. To learn more about Maryknoll and Orbis Books, please visit our website at www.maryknollsociety.org.

Copyright © 1993, 2013 by Delores S. Williams

Published by Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 10545
All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Queries regarding rights and permissions should be addressed to:
Orbis Books, P.O. Box 302, Maryknoll, New York 10545-0302.

Manufactured in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Williams, Delores S.

Sisters in the Wilderness: the challenge of womanist God-talk / Delores S. Williams.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-62698-038-9

1. Feminist theology. 2. Black theology. 3. Afro-American women—Religious life. I. Title.
BT83.55.W55 1993

230'.082-dc20

93-10654

CONTENTS

Foreword to the 20th Anniversary Edition <i>by Katie G. Gannon</i>	ix
Preface	xiii
Introduction	1

PART I: SISTERS IN THE WILDERNESS

Chapter 1:

Hagar's Story: A Route to Black Women's Issues	15
Motherhood: A Forced Condition	15
Survival, Quality of Life and God	19
Surrogacy Roles and Wilderness Experience	21
Homelessness and Economic Realities	27

Chapter 2

Tensions in Motherhood: From Slavery to Freedom	32
Tensions in the Community over Motherhood	37
“Mamma-Baby” in Blues Literature	39
Black Mamma, Black Preacher, Black Protest	42
Black Women Authors Differ	45
Motherhood in a Context of Resistance	51

Chapter 3

Social-Role Surrogacy: Naming Black Women's Oppression	54
Coerced Surrogacy Roles and Antebellum Realities	55
Voluntary Surrogacy and Postbellum Realities	64
The Black Mammy Memorial Associatio	66
Old Oppression, New Threat	72

Chapter 4

Color Struck: A State of Mind	75
National/Religious Arrogance and Racial Narcissism	79
The Impact of Aesthetic Values	80
The Impact of Religion	81
Economic Impact	82
Enter Statistics, Politics and Science	83
Terror and Poverty for Ex-Slaves	85
For Instance: Eugenics	91

Chapter 5

Sisters in the Wilderness and Community Meanings	96
“Wilderness/Wilderness-Experience” in Black and White	98
Intellectual Significance of Symbolism	106
Social Significance of Symbolism	108
Political Importance of Symbolism: Survival and Resistance	115
Black Women’s Resistance Activity	120

PART II: WOMANIST GOD-TALK*Chapter 6*

Womanist God-Talk and Black Liberation Theology	127
Theological Methodology	127
The Bible and Black Liberation Theology	128
Black Experience, Wilderness Experience, Theological Task	136
Doctrine: Surrogacy and Redemption	143
Re-Enter Black Liberation Theology	148
Ethical Task, Ethical Principles	151

Chapter 7

Womanist-Feminist Dialogue: Differences and Commonalities	158
The Differences	158
What Is Acceptably Female?	159
Scope and Definition of Patriarchy	164

Womanist/Womanist Dialogue in Hermeneutics	166
God and the Oppressed in History	174
There Are Commonalities	176
<i>Chapter 8</i>	
Womanist Reflections on “The Black Church,”	181
the African-American Denominational Churches and the	
Universal Hagar’s Spiritual Church	
“The Black Church” Invisible	181
Then There Are African-American Denominational Churches	182
Background for the Universal Hagar’s Spiritual Church	194
The Universal Hagar’s Spiritual Church	199
Christ According to Father Hurley	202
Afterword	208
Notes	213
Index	255