Becoming the Temple Of God

Femininity construction in West African Pentecostal churches in the UK

Alkali, Mabel

Award date:
2023

Awarding institution:
Coventry University

BECOMING THE TEMPLE OF GOD:

Femininity Construction in African Pentecostal Churches in the UK.

By

Mabel Agmada Alkali (MA, BSc)

January 2023

BECOMING THE TEMPLE OF GOD

Femininity Construction in African Pentecostal Churches in the UK.

Mabel Agmada Alkali (MA, BSc)

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University's requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2023

Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant:

Mabel Alkali

Project Title:

Becoming the Temple Of God; Femininity construction in West African Pentecostal churches in the UK

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Medium Risk

Date of approval:

16 June 2020

Project Reference Number:

P98012

ABSTRACT

This thesis builds on the growing body of work on gender within African Pentecostalism, by attending to the question of how femininity is constructed within African Pentecostal churches (APCs) of West African background in the UK. Following on from the question of how femininity is constructed within APCs and by women that attend APCs, the use and interpretation of the Bible to construct ideas about holiness and its relatedness to femininity are also examined. This thesis is original in that it adopts an interdisciplinary approach by using sociological feminist, womanist, and theological lenses to examine femininity construction and gender relations within APCs. Using qualitative research method of semi structured conversational interviews this thesis examines the narratives and theological hermeneutics of 30 women from African Pentecostal churches across the UK. Thematic and narrative analysis were used in interpreting and analysing the interview data.

Following three literature chapters that examine the concepts of femininity, gender, and holiness within African diaspora Pentecostalism and in Britain. This thesis locates the importance of African cultures, secular culture, language, and narratives in the construction of gender roles and ideal femininity in APCs. This shows that Contrary to the popular notion that the Church is a rigid institution and quite separate from the secular world, religion is fluid as it converses with local (African & church cultures) and secular culture in the way it influences how women in this study construct femininity. This thesis finds that femininity in African Pentecostal churches is constructed through a narrative of strong and independent Christian womanhood. This narrative as articulated by the women in this research is constructed and performed through a fusion of postfeminist, neoliberal and womanist reading and understandings of the Bible.

This thesis makes an original contribution by examining women's articulation of femininity in APCs of West African background in the UK and by exploring their lived experiences, their use of African cultures, postfeminist, neoliberal and womanist lenses in interpreting the Bible to construct femininity.

Dedication

For Myself and all the women in African Pentecostal Churches.

Acknowledgements

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns (Philippians 1:6).

I am grateful to God for the privilege to undertake this study and see it through to its completion. I am also grateful for the privilege to share in a loving community of African women from different parts of the world. I thank my mother, Mrs Charity Alkali for supporting me throughout the entirety of my higher educational experience in the UK. I would also like to thank my Friend and Brother Opeoluwa Bada, for your tireless support and encouragement throughout the course of this study and for this reason I remain grateful to God for the absolute gift of you in my life. I thank my sisters and friends, Gladys and Godiya who have been an immense source of support, inspiration, and encouragement to me.

I would like to thank my supervisory team, Kristin Aune, Christopher Shannahan, Stephanie Denning, and Nella van den Brandt. You have been more than a supervisory team to me. You have been like Parents, friends, colleagues, therapists, counsellors, and mentors to me. I am immensely grateful to God for having brought you, my way. This thesis would not be successful without your academic and emotional support. I hope I get some of your academic genes and pay it forward to others in future. I know words are not enough, nonetheless, thank you.

I thank the Christian community, for your support, prayers, and encouragement throughout the course of this study. Pastor, and pastor Mrs Teju, I thank you for your encouragement and pastoral support to me in the early years of this journey, which has benefitted my mental and spiritual wellbeing. To my participants, thank you all so much for agreeing to be part of this study, there would be no thesis without you. To my friends and colleagues, Emmanuel Johnson, Jacinta Odonye, Clytie Zhaohui Tian, Dolapo Osiyemi, Ying-Qi Liaw, Ugochi Ibeawuchi, Ejiro, Auntie Debbie and my Elim church family, you have kept me sane during this period. Your love to me has been instrumental in the process of this PhD. And for my colleagues at CTPSR, thank you. I thank my spiritual mentors Pastor Jeremiah and Janet Orduen for your emotional and spiritual support during this time.

Contents

CHAPTER FOUR: BECOMING THE TEMPLE OF GOD: THE CONCEPT OF HOLINESS

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER SEVEN

Part Two: Embodying Religious and Cultural Femininity

CHAPTER EIGHT

Part Three: God, Church, Culture and Femininity

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION: LINKING IT ALL TOGETHER

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 WHY THIS STUDY?

Gender has been a site of inquiry in many disciplines as it is not only an identity marker, but it also affects the way we experience life and our relations to people and our environment. In this thesis I have undertaken to study gender, specifically womanhood from a sociological, cultural, religious, and theological perspective. According to Järviluoma, Moisala, & Vilkko (2003:22) "there is no such thing as innocent research", and Daly (2007:187) asserts that "reflexive research recognizes that the self cannot be excluded from the research process and that accumulated life experiences colour all aspects of the research process from the selection of focus to the shaping of questions, to the interpretation of data". Hence, in this introduction I provide a personal reason for choosing to carry out this research. Then I explain the ways through which I approach this study and the structure of the thesis.

In the year 2017, I left Nigeria for the United Kingdom to undertake Master's studies at Coventry University. When I got here, I did what I was told by family and friends back home in Nigeria, I found a Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) to attend. Everything reminded me of the church back in Nigeria, it felt like being in Nigeria whilst being in the United Kingdom (UK). During my stay in the UK, my experiences led me to being interested in identity and the factors that influence identity. Thus, my Master's thesis was on investigating the cultural identity of Nigerian female students in the UK. To do this I made use of focus group discussions held around the activity of cooking and kept an autoethnographic diary. My use of cooking as method in the focus group was informed by Cairn & Johnston's (2015) research on *Food and Femininity,* where they linked ideas about femininity construction to food and everything it entails. This was particularly useful because my participants and I, as Nigerian women are expected to know how to cook.

The focus group discussions and my own personal experience impressed on me the importance of religion in identity construction and performance. The central position of religion in the lives of the women in my focus group and their talk of other women's relation with women in religion prompted me to be interested in the roles other women played in each other's life in the church. Furthermore, I had read about the female gaze (see Riley, Evans & Mackiewicz 2016) at this time which prompted me to be interested in investigating the female gaze in Pentecostal churches, since this was the Christian tradition, I grew up in. This concept of the female judgemental and surveillant gaze was reminiscent of my own experiences in church, for it was always the women saying to me as a young girl, "why is your skirt short? Why are

you wearing this colour of nail polish? Why this hair style? Why are you talking to a boy? Why were you where I saw you? And so forth. I had experienced the policing, monitoring, and judgemental gaze of other women in church. Hence, I initially decided to investigate intergenerational relationship between women in African Pentecostal churches in the UK. I was under the impression that the situation might be different in the UK than back home in Nigeria as I thought the UK was less conservative than Nigeria.

As I began my PhD journey, it became apparent to me that I needed to examine women's relationship with other women from a different perspective. Thus, my research topic changed to examining femininity construction in APCs through the theologies of the church with an emphasis on Holiness theology. This meant that I could question intergenerational relationships between women after first finding out what it means to be a woman in APCs. Because I thought to myself that there must be an ideal feminine identity that the older women wanted me to cultivate. This was because, In the words of Williams D. (1993:111) “the question of "acceptable female identity" in culture is important because its exploration often reveals what a society regards as good and beautiful. We get to the heart of the culture's oppressive aesthetic values, and we see the great tragedy in women's lives when they try to live up to these values”. Therefore, I aimed to examine what acceptable femininity in APCs look like and whether there are any tragedies in women’s lives. Hence, my research focus changed from wanting to examine women’s looking gaze to how femininity is understood in APCs in the UK, and to examine the notion of holiness within these churches. Holiness was often the reason the women that policed and monitored my appearance gave me. Based on this, I come into this research from the positionality of being a Nigerian female who has attended APCs all her adult life. I discuss more of my positionality as a Nigerian woman who grew up in an African Pentecostal Church and attended one in the UK in more details in section 5.5 of page 108 of this thesis.

1.1 RESEARCH AIM & QUESTIONS

The aim of this thesis is to understand how femininity is constructed in APCs in the UK in order to question the role of gender in these churches.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do women in APCs in the UK construct and negotiate femininity?
2. How is the Bible interpreted and used in APCs in the UK to construct ideas about gender?

3. How do women in APCs in the UK interpret and use the Bible in constructing and negotiating ideas of femininity that they encounter in church and wider society?
4. How is holiness understood by APCs and women in APCs?

These questions are based on assumptions made from personal experience and my Master's study about what femininity means in most African societies. These assumptions are

1. Femininity in many African societies is defined along the lines of domesticity, marriage, motherhood and upholding moral ideals
2. African Pentecostal Christianity uses the Bible to reinforce African notions of femininity and masculinity
3. Women in African Pentecostal churches are also active agents in ascribing and performing femininity.
4. Britain is a more secular and gender equal society compared to many African societies, therefore, the way APCs in Britain approach gender might be different.

According to Cairns & Johnston (2015:vi), femininity refers to "collective ideas about how to be and act feminine, and signal our gendered identity to others… We perform femininity through our, physical cues and manner of speech." Their approach to femininity was based on how women feel pressured to make good food choices and the relation between these choices and femininity performance. This definition enables me to ask "what collective ideas do women in African Pentecostal churches (APCs) have about femininity? This makes me consider ideas about femininity and gender through their cultural and religious lenses. I contend that femininity involves a performance and 'a doing'. Indeed, participants give account of having to perform ideal femininity and in other instances give accounts of 'doing' Biblical femininity as understood by them[1]. Therefore, I locate this research as an interdisciplinary thesis that draws from gender and feminist studies, cultural studies, sociology of religion and theology. In the following sections I give a brief overview of gender and femininity within gender and feminist studies. Afterwards, I examine religious dimensions of gender and femininity within sociology of religion and the study of lived religion. Thereafter, I pay attention to the theologies that may influence lived experiences of femininity within APCs. Subsequent sections locates where the research sits concerning similar studies and provide the structure of the thesis and definitions of key terms in this thesis.

[1] See section 6.4 of this thesis for more on performing femininity.

1.2 GENDER AND FEMINIST STUDIES

Gender is one of the key factors in shaping individual identity. Gender indeed, impacts our everyday lives and how we relate with others. For simplicity's sake I make the sex, gender distinction using Holmes (2009:2) definitions:

> **Sex** refers to whether a person is considered female or male, based on the kind of body they have. **Gender** describes the ideas and practices that constitute femininity and masculinity.

Considering these definitions, I approach gender expectations and practices as socially, culturally, and religiously constructed. For instance, Oakley (1996, 2015) asserts that the biological differences between women and men should not account for the assigning of gender roles. Because society is ever changing but the ideas of gender roles somehow remain static, Oakley (2015:1) contends that we "need to separate our bodily endowments from our cultural positioning". This means that the ideas around what it means to be feminine, and masculine are culturally ascribed, thus we learn how to act feminine or masculine through social conditioning[2]. In the context of this study, femininity is ascribed and achieved through African cultural and Pentecostal Christian conditioning. Oakley (2015) argues that the way we perform our identities can be traced back to our childhood and the social conditioning we experienced and assimilated growing up. This enables me to consider what kinds of background participants are coming from and to ask; what are the cultural and religious expectations of femininity for the women in this research.

Consequently, feminist researchers question these expectations because, femininity becomes something that women have to achieve. For instance, Brownmiller (2013) argues that women are constantly working on themselves to produce versions of femininity that their societies expect of them to the extent that it is almost a competition. This effort to achieve a feminine ideal that is always out of reach can be seen as what West & Zimmerman (1987) call 'doing gender'. West & Zimmerman (1987) assert that gendered behaviour is not innate but are socially ingrained constructs of how to act. They argue that in our interactions with others, we are constantly acting in the ways that we have been taught that the gender we belong to, ought to act. Thus, gender becomes something we have to accomplish. Therefore, gender has nothing to do with innate personality traits, rather, gender is an accomplishment. In the context

[2]See for instance the negative qualities of mammies, jezebels, prostitutes, and brute strength to black women to justify their oppression. That is the masculinisation of black women in P. Collins 2000: 5.
See also, the stereotypical definition of Black womanhood in Alexander V 2005:87 'A mouse in a jungle': the Black Christian woman's experience in the church and society in Britain. In Reconstructing womanhood, reconstructing feminism (pp. 103-126). Routledge.

of this research, is femininity understood by APCs and women in APCs as innate? or is it something to accomplish?

Using Butler's (1990) concept of performativity, I frame femininity as construction and performance. According to Butler (1990:191-192) gender is:

> a stylized repetition of acts . . . which are internally discontinuous . . .so that the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief.

This means that we learn what is considered ideal femininity, internalise it and enact on it repetitively to an audience. This audience can be our families, friends, workplace, religious institutions or even ourselves. Although it is a performance, we believe it, thus gender is not just a mindless pantomime, rather, it becomes who we believe we are. Following the view that gender is inscribed, Butler (1990) argues that biological sex is inscribed as well, therefore it is essentially socially constructed. However, I would argue that biological sex is real, but the roles assigned to gender because of biology is socially, culturally and in the case of this research, religiously ascribed. For instance, Black feminist writers assert that Black womanhood has been historically defined in terms of labour, breeding; as mammies, jezebels, and Aunt Jemima's (see Hill 2000; 5). Consequently, Black feminist writers have argued that Black women reclaim their womanhood and define it on their own terms (see hooks, b 1982 Williams, D 1993; Douglas K.B 2001; Coleman, M 2008) even whilst acknowledging the struggle for survival.

Therefore, I approach femininity construction in APCs from an intersectional perspective by presenting alternative ways of understanding and analysing gender and feminism based on the understanding of my participants.

According to Crenshaw (1989:149) intersectionality "challenges the conceptual limitations of single-issue analysis" of Black women's oppression. Crenshaw (2006:7) asserts that"

> Intersectionality offers a way of mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identities and the ongoing necessity of group politics. While the descriptive project of post-modernism of questioning the ways in which meaning is socially constructed is generally sound, this critique sometimes misreads the meaning of social construction and distorts its political relevance. To say that a category such as race or gender is socially constructed is not to say that that category has no significance in our world, on the contrary.

In the context of this research, intersectionality as defined by Crenshaw (2006) enables me examine femininity construction within APCs through the intersections of gender, ethnicity,

culture, class, religion, and secularity. Whilst these categories can be socially constructed, they are significant in how we create our identities (see Crenshaw 2006). For instance, in this thesis we shall see how considering the different factors that influence femininity construction in APCs shows a unique experience of oppression. For example, because women in many African societies are empowered as mothers and because the Bible can be used as an empowering and liberative tool, oppressive practices for women in APCs can be hidden. Considering hidden oppressions, Oduyoye (1995:13) asserts that:

> the "our women are not oppressed" stance is an ideological statement that emanates from Africa ad extra. It seeks to render feminism a non-issue for Africa. The rest of the world is expected to believe this, while the women of Africa are expected to collaborate with this essentially male propaganda. The same is true of the call to African women to be African, especially when it connotes submissiveness.

Because many women in African societies work and have careers, the belief is that women are not oppressed, more so for women in most Churches that hold offices or leadership positions in their churches. However, using a feminist analytical lens alone in analysing oppressive situations in APCs will also hide the ways in which these churches can be spaces of empowerment for women. Therefore, intersectionality enables me to bring together in this thesis different frameworks of gender analysis, liberative theologies, cultural hermeneutics (that is African worldviews. see Kanyoro 2001, Kalu 2008, Adogame 2016), and women's everyday theologies in analysing femininity construction in APCs.

1.3 SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION & LIVED RELIGION

Pentecostalism adds to the changing face of global Christianity and in Britain. Indeed, Pentecostalism seems to be ever expanding with African Pentecostal churches being one of the fastest growing Christian traditions in Britain. Therefore, the importance of studying gender ideology within APCs cannot be overemphasised. African Pentecostalism in Britain has been widely interrogated by sociologists of religion and theologians. For instance, Toulis (1997) examines how African Caribbean Christianity offers a space for creating and negotiating Black identity in Britain. Similarly, Burgess's (2008:3) research on African Pentecostalism asserts that:

> African Pentecostalism appeals to popular religious sensibilities precisely because it resonates with the pragmatic and power-oriented nature of African indigenous spirituality, while at the same time allowing individuals to break free from the religious and social ties of the past and construct new identities for themselves.

Indeed, Hunt & Lightly's (2001, 2002, 2008) research on the redeemed Christian church of God (RCCG) in Britain shows that APCs enable members construct new identities and negotiate boundaries in British society. Consequently, this thesis is concerned with finding out if APCs in the UK indeed provide a space for women to break free from religious and social ties of the past being that many APCs interpret and use the Bible through a cultural lens (see Hunt & Lightly 2001, 2002, Adogame 2016). What kinds of new identities are women able to construct in these churches? Does breaking free from the past involve social justice for women? Indeed, whilst Beckford (2000) agrees with research on Black Pentecostalism in Britain that asserts that Black churches offer a space for identity construction and negotiation. He contends that Black Pentecostalism is more than that. Beckford (2000) criticises Black Pentecostalism's indifference to racial and social justice. He argues that in Black Pentecostalism he sees an opportunity to create truly liberative theologies that impact social justice and breaks down social hierarchies. The implication of this for my research is that I question if indeed the APCs that the women in this study attend have utilised the opportunity that Pentecostalism provides to break down gender hierarchies. Indeed, Beckford (2000:55) states that "in my opinion, the status of women can be a litmus test for the nature of sexism and awareness of systems of oppression within the church". Consequently, I examine if there are systems of oppression and the power structures involved in how femininity is constructed in APCs.

In Addition to studying gender in African Pentecostalism in Britain, which is sparse now, lived religion is another site to investigate gender. Lived religion enables us to understand religion as an everyday practise rather than a set of doctrines and institutions. For instance, Ammerman (2021:5) argues that:

> to study lived religion is to expand our lens beyond the official texts and doctrines so as to see how ideas about the sacred emerge in unofficial places. It is to include the practices of ordinary people, not just religious leaders…it is to focus on what people are doing, as well as what they are saying.

Lived religion therefore shows how individuals bring to life religious beliefs and practices. In this thesis, I consider the ways women create narratives about, morality, materiality, and the body and how they use these narratives to construct femininity. I also look at how they embody these religious, cultural, and secular narratives about femininity. Similarly, Avishai (2008) uses West & Zimmerman's concept of 'doing gender' to argue that the analytical framework for viewing women's agency or lack of it in religion is inadequate. Instead, she proposes that in studying women's religious experience, we find that they are doing religion. consequently, I explore how the women in this study 'do' religious femininity by paying attention to their lived experience. I do this because in the study of lived religion in the UK, African Pentecostal

women's experiences and voices have not been adequately researched. Hence, I analyse their responses based on a holistic understanding of the conversational interviews we had. That is, I take seriously the narratives and stories they tell about their experiences in my analysis[3], because it encompasses their 'doing' of religion and theological reflections. Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute to scholarship on African Pentecostal women's experiences of 'doing religion'. In examining women's agency in 'doing' religion I find it helpful to use Burke's (2012:1) review of women's agency in gender- traditional religion. Because examining women's agency in APCs locates them as 'actors' rather than simply being acted upon. Burke (2012) outlines 4 approaches to women's agency: 1) resistance agency, 2) empowerment agency, 3) instrumental agency, 4) compliant agency.

Resistance agency according to Burke (2012) is employed when women in religious organisations do not passively accept doctrines that they find oppressive. Instead of complying, women who employ resistance agency challenge these doctrines. This kind of agency might be overt or covert. For instance, overt resistance might show up in actively speaking out against lack of female leadership within churches, trying to influence change in doctrines that are not fair to women. Overt resistant agency can also be expressed by women leaving churches that do not align with their beliefs about gender equality. Covert resistance agency on the other hand can be expressed is subtle ways. Burke (2012 citing Arthur 1998:87) gives an example of Mennonite women taking back control of their bodies by deviating from strict dress codes. However, Burke (2012) warns of the consequence of defining women's agency only from a resistant approach. This is because, it ignores the agency of women who comply and favours Western notions of freedom and agency that does not apply in other cultures.

Women who employ empowerment agency do not necessarily challenge the doctrines of the religious group they belong to. Instead, they 'change their response to beliefs or practices' (Burke 2012: 7). This agency is particularly useful in this thesis as we shall see in chapter 6, 7 and 8. For example, some women in evangelical churches whilst accepting the subordination from men, find aspects of evangelicalism empowering. Casselberry (2017) and Pierce (2021) also found that women employed empowerment agency in their research on Black Pentecostal and Apostolic Christianity in America. Whilst they believed in the headship and authority of men, they found ways to negotiate with patriarchy to live their lives as women in the ways they found suitable.

Instrumental agency focuses on how women use religion to progress in other areas of their lives. Instrumental agency is not focused on the ways women resist or are empowered in religion, rather it focuses on the ways religion benefits women. In this approach to agency,

[3] see section 5.9 page 131-132 of this thesis for more on narratives, testimonies, and stories as theology.

religion becomes a means to an end (Burke 2012). For instance, it might be the benefit of getting a job because of being associated with a particular religion or having authority at home because of spiritual gifts (see Brusco 1995). Compliant agency on the other hand focuses on the ways women choose to carry out their beliefs. This approach to agency sees women as complying to religious beliefs, doctrines, and practises in different ways (see Avishai 2008). According to Burke (2012:10-11):

> compliant agency seeks to identify the multiple ways in which religious women comply with religious instruction in their everyday lives. This approach recognizes the ''sensibilities and embodied capacities'' that are contained within religious customs and traditions (Mahmood 2005, 115). In other words, the ways in which women understand their world – what they are capable of – may lead to intentional actions of conformity or resistance, both of which should be considered as agency.

Consequently, I approach this thesis with the understanding that all women in this study have agency, and no one is more agentic than the other. This understanding of agency enables me to examine the ways the women in this study 'do' religion.

Due to this, I have also explored the everyday theologies[4] of the women in this research. Exploring the theologies of the women in this research enables me to articulate how they use and interpret the Bible in constructing and negotiating ideas about femininity that they encounter in church and in wider society. I do this through the lens of feminist theologies, womanist theologies and African womanist theologies. Feminist theology critiques sexism and advocates for equality. However, feminist theology alone is inadequate for analysing how the women in this research use and interpret the Bible. Nor is it adequate for examining their lived experience. This is because, there are other intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, and social and cultural location that play a role in how they interpret the Bible.

Womanist theologies like feminist theologies are also liberative theology. Womanist theology is a branch of feminist theology that developed primarily within African American cultural and religious contexts in the 1980s. Womanist theology pays attention to Black women and women of colour's tripartite oppression of race, classism, and sexism[5]. It pays specific attention to how

[4] In this thesis, everyday theologies refer to participants own theological reflections on the Bible without any formal theological training. See also ordinary theology in Astley, Ordinary Theology, 2; Cartledge, Practical Theology, 20-21, and Clarke, M. 2016.

[5] Womanist theology is more complex and nuanced than articulated in this thesis. For a deeper understanding of Womanist theology see, 1. Coleman, M. A. (2008). Making a way out of no way: A womanist theology. Fortress Press. 2. Townes, E. M. (2003). Womanist theology. 3. Williams, D. S. (2006). Womanist theology: Black women's voices (1986). The womanist reader, 117-125.

Black women use the Bible based on their social location. Thus, womanist theology seeks to address the unique experiences and perspectives of Black women, emphasizing their roles in religious spaces and examining all forms of oppression. According to Douglas (2001), womanist theology should start from the point of view of the marginalised. She offers an example of Williams (1993) reading of the Hagar, Sarah, and Abraham story in Genesis 16:1-16 and Genesis 21:9-21 from the view of Hagar, the marginalised. Consequently, womanist theology explores the experiences, beliefs, and struggles of Black women in relation to God, spirituality, and the broader religious community. Womanist theology recognises the intersectionality of Black women's experiences both in church and wider society. Thus, its key themes are intersectionality, a holistic view of spirituality, emphasis on community and relationships, critique of patriarchal structures, and recognition of women's agency and liberation.

Similarly, Africana Womanism builds on womanism but seeks to distinguish itself as a framework specifically centred on African and African-descended women. The term 'Africana' encapsulates Africa and its diaspora, and acknowledges the historical context of slavery, colonization, and racial discrimination, which have contributed to the specific struggles faced by African women and women of African descent (Hudson-Weems 2001; 2019; Norwood 2013). One of the key principles of Africana womanism is acknowledging the importance of African and African-descended women naming and defining their own experiences on their terms. This is particularly important to this present thesis as it seeks to explore African Pentecostal women's own interpretation of the Bible in constructing their femininity. This thesis also acknowledges their socio-cultural contexts in articulating their spirituality, thus I rely heavily on the works of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (CCAWT) in this thesis[6].

Like womanist theologies and Africana Womanism, African women's theologies is concerned with the wholeness of the community, so they promote the contextualization of theological concepts and practices to address the specific realities of African women and their communities. By focusing on the lived experiences of African women, the Circle (CCAWT) seeks to bridge the gap between theology and lived experiences (Fiedler, R.N 2017; Mwaura, P.N 2015; Phiri, I.A 2005). Central to the Circle's ethos is the desire to reclaim and reinterpret theology and religious traditions in ways that empower women and challenge patriarchal

[6] The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (CCAWT) emerged in the late 1980s to provide a platform for African women theologians to address theological, social, and cultural issues from the perspectives of African women. The organization was founded in 1989 in Accra, Ghana, during the second Pan-African Conference of Women Theologians (Phiri 2005; Fiedler 2017).
CCAWT aims to promote the voices and scholarship of African women in theological discourse and to address the specific challenges faced by women in Africa.

norms and practices. The key tenets of CCAWT are its drive for empowerment, contextualisation of theology through engagement of religious text to challenge patriarchal interpretations. They place emphasis on collaboration, networking, and an interdisciplinary approach to theology to enrich their theological analysis[7].

Therefore, I find it useful to use feminist, womanist, and African women's theologies because they provide a fuller tool of analysis and allow an intersectional and interdisciplinary approach. This is because having said that APCs use and interpret the Bible through African cultural lenses, I must pay attention to the cultural locations of the women in this research.

1.4 HOW THIS WORK RELATES TO OTHER STUDIES IN THIS FIELD

I have stated that academic literature on African women's religious lives in Britain is sparse. Given the fact that women make up the largest numbers of attendees to Pentecostals churches and indeed African Pentecostal churches (See Brusco 2010; Foster 1990; Hunt & Lightly 2001, 2002; Burgess 2008; Kalu 2008). It comes as a surprise to me that Black women's faith lives have not received the scholarly attention that they warrant. Having said that, it is worth noting that much of the academic scholarship on Black women's religious lives and experiences both in wider Christian traditions and in Pentecostal churches has been produced by African American Scholars (see for instance Douglas K.B 2001, 2004; Grant, J. 1989, 2004; Casselberry, J 2017; Pierce, Y 2021). Similarly, there is a growing body of scholarship on gender within Christianity and African Pentecostalism across the African continent (see for instance Oduyoye 2002; Moyo 2004; Hackett R.I 2017; Dube 2018; Bawa 2019). Whilst African women, African American women and Black British women share come commonalities, they are however not a homogeneous group. Therefore, African Pentecostal women's religious lives and voices in a British context warrants their own scholarship. Hence, my work builds on and adds to work about Black British women's Pentecostal experiences. What follows below is an introduction to three women whose work intersects with mine.

Elaine Foster (1990), a Black British woman of African Caribbean descent, uses interviews, church sermons and literature as well as photographs to examine the role of women in Black Led churches in her Master's thesis. Foster (1990) starts by tracing the history of women and their roles in Black led churches in the UK and asserts that women were the foundation and backbone of the church. However, she criticises the hierarchical nature in which the churches operate that inadvertently encourages sexism. Foster (1990) identifies two pyramids. An inverted pyramid which is female and is life giving and exemplifies spirituality. The second

[7] Womanist theology, Africana womanism and CCAWT owe their debt to Black feminist writers like bell hooks, Angela Davis.

pyramid on the other hand is hierarchical and patriarchal, sustaining inequalities and oppression.

My research finds resonance with Foster's (1990) inverted pyramid in the patriarchal structure of the APCs that the women I interviewed attend. There is also similarity in the expectations of femininity for the women in this research and Foster's own articulation of the expectations of the Black church sister. According to Foster (1990: 60- 80) a Black church sister can be defined in two ways. 1. A Black church sister is characterised by her spirituality which includes having a vibrant fasting, worship, Bible studying and prayer life, and secondly in the way she dresses. This is evidenced in the way the women in this present study articulate the expectations of femininity in APCs.

Whilst Foster (1990) identifies implicit womanist theology in the ways that women in the Black churches she researched hope to emulate feminine qualities of Jesus, she however hopes that it becomes more explicit and both women and men confront the sexism in the church. Hence, she hopes that womanist theology is more explicitly emulated in the churches to respond to any form of oppression in the church and society and include the experiences and realities of Black women in Black led churches to foster equity, equality, and social justice.

Similarly, Valentina Alexander (1998) in her article (1988; 11-18) articulates the complexities she found in Black led churches. She bemoans the fact that the Black led church has not lived up to its potential of offering support to the oppressed and addressing issues of inequality, inequity and exclusion and instead holding on to a 'Europeanised theology'. She questions the insistence of Black and liberation theology to assigned roles for women. She questions the continued marginalisation of women in black led churches and asks if she must reject herself to put others need for liberation continuously. This is one of the barriers to liberation in Black led churches, in that they have an 'ambiguous relationship to broader contexts of oppression'.

Consequently, in her book chapter, Alexander (2005) articulates how women in Black led churches are expected to fill in the roles of a caring and nurturing mother who is strong when her strength is needed for the struggle for liberation in the Black led churches. Yet, leadership roles and authority are not given to women, instead they are marginalised. She bemoans the fact that some women also collude with patriarchal structures and doctrines in the church to further keep women marginalised. She too advocates for a Black theology of liberation that 'aims to emancipate from oppressive structures both inside and outside the church'. This theology should also include 'an analysis of the status of women within the black led churches' (Alexander 2005: 97).

Another work that intersects African Pentecostalism and gender is that of Katrin Maier (2012) whose thesis examines the wholistic impact of African Pentecostalism on the lives of RCCG

members in London and Nigeria through an ethnographic study. The thesis focuses on the experiences of Nigerian Pentecostals living in London, exploring the intersections of gender, self-identity, and mobility within this religious community. Maier (2012) delves into how Nigerian Pentecostals navigate their religious beliefs and practices, particularly in the context of migration to a new cultural and social environment like London. Her research expounds on the ways in which religion impacts the construction of gender roles, self-identity, and the opportunities for social mobility among RCCG members.

In this thesis, Maier (2012:6) shows how moral authority is articulated in gendered terms in RCCG and the 'power dimensions in religious performance' in RCCG. She asserts that Pentecostal authority influences all aspects of RCCG members lives including the areas that are deemed 'non religious'. This is evidenced in this present study in how women are seen as the moral bearers of the church and community, hence moral standards are higher for women. In this way, women are expected to be more self-disciplined, to be submissive to authority and to be responsible. In Maier's (2012) research, the rhetoric of submission is placed as authority. Hence, the process of Pentecostal authority is gendered through the processes of singlehood, marriage, and the raising of children for women.

Foster and Alexander's works are theological in nature and have both taken a Black liberation approach. Maier's work on the other hand is more anthropological in nature and brings together the studies of migration, Pentecostalism, and gender, and focuses on gendered aspects of religious performance[8]. My study brings together sociology of religion, gender studies, theology and lived religion in examining gender within APCs. My study focuses on women's own account of their experiences of gender construction in APCs and their own interpretation of the Bible to construct their gendered identities. Furthermore, this present thesis focuses on APCs of West African background where academic literature on women's everyday theologies and their lived religious experiences are sparse.

1.5 THESIS STRUCTURE

[8] See also Kate Coleman and Lorraine Dixon in Jagessar, M., & Reddie, A. (2007). Black Theology in Britain: A Reader. Toulis also writes about the religious experiences of African Caribbean women in Toulis, Nicole. Believing Identity: Pentecostalism and the Mediation of Jamaican Ethnicity and Gender in England. Oxford: Berg, 1997. See also, Clarke, M., 2016. Pentecostal spirituality as lived experience: an empirical study of women in the British Black Pentecostal Church (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).

This thesis has started with an introduction to the topic of this thesis, which includes my personal motivation for undertaking this research. I then outline my research aims, questions and the assumptions these questions are based on. The introduction also introduces the academic disciplines I locate this thesis in and the areas in these disciplines my thesis contributes to. Additionally, I provide a brief review of literature on gender and feminist studies, sociology of religion and lived religion. I also locate three works that intersect African Pentecostal Christianity and gender. My work builds on and adds to academic scholarship that examine Black women's religious experiences in Britain. Chapter 2 provides an in-depth review of literature on gender and femininity within gender studies, sociology, and within the sociology of religion, focusing on Christianity. Chapter 3 discusses academic literature on Pentecostalism, highlighting the changing history of women's position within Pentecostalism and African Pentecostalism. Chapter 4 focuses on the theology of holiness, its roots and how African Pentecostal churches conceptualise holiness. This chapter also discusses the ways that the concept of holiness as understood by APCs relate to femininity. Chapter 5 attends to the methodology of this research. In this section I discuss how I conducted the research, my positionality and reflexivity as well as offering the background of my participants. In chapters 6, 7 and 8 of this thesis, I discuss the key findings of this study. Each finding and discussion chapter answers the research questions provided in section 1.2 of this thesis. I start each chapter with a quote from a participant or an interview excerpt. Participants quotes are in italics.

LITERATURE CHAPTERS

CHAPTER TWO: FEMININITY CONSTRUCTION IN AFRICAN PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

Me: so uhm, most especially for African Christians, do you think that there are expectations of what an ideal African woman should be or look like?

Mariam : yeah, I think the ideal African woman, is supposed to look after her 5 kids, be like proverbs 31 woman, she's supposed to be resourceful, have a business, do everything, keep her husband satisfied and notice that I've said the Biblical African woman is also married, have you noticed, so she's married, she keeps her husband happy, keeps his belly full, she has to be submissive, she doesn't talk to you much but she's wise with her words, on top of that she serves in church, she gives, she's all of those things and then you look at the quality of her husband and then you think, why does she have to be all of those things and he has to be 5 of those things, help me understand, I don't get it.

Interview excerpt 2021.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This excerpt from an interview with one of the participants of this study speaks about the expectations of religious vigour and the domestic roles women in African households often have to perform simply because they are female. This perception reflects mine and other women's questioning of normative African traditional gender roles in African Pentecostal Churches (APCs), which has served as a motivation for this research. In this thesis, like many others before me (see for example Brownmiller 2013, Oduyoye 2001; 2004, Dosekun 2007; 2015, Junior 2015) I take the stand that there is no such thing as an inherent feminine attribute. This standpoint is the motivation for my research into the concept of femininity in African Pentecostal churches in the UK.

Even though women's lives have improved considerably, their roles and identities in both private and public spheres continue to be a contested issue. Considering the many levels of gender construction – (for example Wharton 2012 refers to the individual, interactional and institutional levels), this chapter will start with an overview of sociological approaches to gender, to argue why femininity construction in African Pentecostal churches in the UK should be examined. Subsequent sub-sections will examine the concept of femininity in general terms, and within the Christian tradition, and how this concept came to be established, starting with historical perspective of women in early Christianity and Biblical accounts of women's activities in church. This helps to map the changes that have occurred (if any), as most people tend to romanticise the roles of women of the past or conversely explain that women have achieved liberation. Additionally, I explore research on Christianity across Africa and the roles of women to understand the cultural lens through which femininity may be ascribed or inscribed in African Pentecostal churches in the UK.

There has been a large body of work on women's roles and identities over the past five decades, with many researchers challenging normative ideas about femininity and women's roles, both in the public and private sphere. However, it is important to examine how notions of femininity are constructed in African Pentecostal churches in the UK, because gender roles in these churches remain mostly unquestioned, leading to continued gender inequalities both at home and in the church. It can be argued that institutions are gendered, and that religious institutions remain an aspect of the public sphere, where religious notions overlap with how traditional femininities are ascribed (for instance, see Harris 2012, Woodhead 2007; 2008, Halsaa & Nyhagen 2016). That is, religious beliefs cannot be ignored in the public lives of individuals, because they have considerable influence in identity construction and performance. Starkey & Tomalin (2021:1) state that religion plays a role in shaping people's

identities and relationships. Therefore, religious notions of gender roles will have an influence in how people understand their femininities or masculinities even in the public sphere.

Bearing this in mind, it is of concern that one of the largest and fastest growing religious and diasporic groups in the UK, that is African Pentecostal churches, remain largely unresearched in terms of their gender ideology. Additionally, research on how women in African Pentecostal churches construct, interact, and negotiate ideas about femininity on a personal level and in wider society, is sparse. There is a large volume of work on African American women's religious lives and on evangelical women's experiences (for example see; Lawless 1993, Maddox 2013, Aune 2004, Gaddini 2019). The same can be said about women's lives on the African continent (for example see; Mate 2002, Pype 2016, Oduyoye 2002, Moyo 2004, Bawa 2019). But academic literature on African diasporic women's experiences, and how they negotiate their cultural and religious ideas of femininity within British culture and society is still rare.

Although different religious groups prioritise different aspects of their faith, such as submission to male headship in church and in home life, self-sacrifice, worship, charitable giving or fasting, in African Pentecostal churches, holiness is a particularly important notion, which affects how gender is constructed. For this reason, femininity in APCs is related to holiness as we will see in Chapters 4, 7 and 8. Moreover, their understanding of holiness makes femininity something that APCs require women to actively work on. This can be burdensome, positive, or neutral depending on how individual women in these churches see it. Nonetheless, femininity is still something to be achieved rather than, or as well as, ascribed.

It is worth noting that the use of the term 'church' here is broad because to cover the church's history will be an overwhelming task. Therefore, by church, I mean the church recorded in the New Testament, and from the 21st Century history of Christianity in the West, North America, Britain, and West Africa until the present. Additionally, my use of a generic 'Africa' here is not because there is one Africa, rather like Oduyoye (2004:75) I use it because "for religio-cultural considerations, Africa may be treated as one on the basis of the similarities one observes from nation to nation". It will be an enormous task to try to represent the whole of Africa as a continent in this thesis. Therefore, I do not claim to speak for the whole of Africa or indeed to represent the realities of all the African Pentecostal churches. I would also like to note here that I have privileged more African writers over North American writers in this thesis to give voice to African scholars.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF FEMININITY

2.2.1 *Gender*

Despite the significant body of work on gender and the notable progress made by women's movements in creating access to equality and gender justice, gender continues to be a much-researched topic because ideas about gender identities and roles are still being contested (for example, see Oakley 1996; 2015, Wharton 2005, Eagly & Sczesny 2019). Over the past five decades, research on gender, gender roles, and identity have been carried out in fields such as sociology, feminist studies, cultural studies, media studies and theology (Aune 2004; 2008; Sharma 2008, Evans & Riley 2014; 2016, Coleman 2008). This, according to Kimmel (2000) is because gender is central to our everyday lives. Feminist scholars in various disciplines have, made us aware of the importance of gender in shaping our everyday activities and choices. This means that the impact gender has on how we live our lives and the choices we make cannot be overemphasised. To this end, gender scholars of various disciplines bring their diverse perspectives in their work which better equips us to articulate our own ideas of gender.

Many sociologists of gender agree that gender operates on a multilevel system that impacts social life and is connected to many social processes. For instance, Risman's (1998/1999) research on American families shows that societies have a gender structure which influences the expectations placed on individuals which equally affects social positions and becomes weaved in with social institutions (see also, Wharton 2005, Kimmel 2000). Therefore, the study of the sociology of gender equips us to develop a fuller understanding of the gender inequalities still prevalent in our societies. Gender is more complicated than just women versus men and because of this there is no collective understanding of gender. On one hand, gender means sex identification, that is, male and female (see Kimmel 2000). On the other hand, gender is understood as a cultural and social construct of feminine and masculine roles (see Butler 1990, Kimmel 2000, Holmes 2009). For most sociologists, sex and gender are distinguishable. Kimmel (2000) summarises, suggesting that ideas about sex are based on bodily identification, while gender relates to combined impact of the ideas and practices that constitute femininity and masculinity and the meanings of femaleness and maleness (see also, Beauvoir 1953; 1993, Oakley 1996; 2015).

Within this premise, gender is a cultural and social construction rather than an innate or biological thing. Consequently, the cultural and social construction of gender varies from one society to another, and its meaning is constantly being recreated and re-prescribed. This is to say that what it meant to be a woman or man decades ago will have changed today and will be true for two decades after now. This implies that the cultural and social construction of gender will vary from person to person and from society to society as anthropologists of gender show (For examples see, Ortner 1974; 1996, Lewin 2006, Lamphere 2012). For instance, in many African societies, the concept of gender is such that women are believed to be the

custodians of moral values and beliefs, hence there is pressure for women to be 'good women'[9] (see Moyo 2011, Oduyoye 2001).

In this research, I approach the roles ascribed to gender as a social construct, that is, the ideas and practices of what is considered feminine, or masculine as ascribed by whatever societies we belong to. In this regard, my focus here is on the roles assigned to gender by social, cultural, and religious factors. For instance, the interview excerpt at the beginning of this chapter infers that femininity is influenced by certain religious practices and domesticity. However, one is not born with innate knowledge of religious practices or knowing how to perform domestic duties. Rather, one learns it. Therefore, it is safe to say that the roles ascribed to genders are socially, culturally, or religiously constructed. This aligns with Beauvoir's (1953; 1993) assertion that society shapes femininity through biology, psychoanalysis, literature, and history. Indeed, media and the other intersecting factors mentioned above have played crucial roles in the shaping of society's understanding of femininity and masculinity. Hence, gender roles are a societal construct.

Having said that, it is worth noting that there are varying ways of defining or approaching the subject of gender even in sociology. Over the years, the sociology of gender has evolved from being the sociology of women, where the approach was to add women, and stir (See Harding 1987; 1991, Stanley & Wise 1993). It has evolved to sociology of gender, examining the lives of women and men, acknowledging that there are multiple expressions of gender. These studies discuss gender in relation to other identity markers such as age, ethnicity, and social class. It is the interrelation of such factors that shapes our experience of the world. Considering this, Amy Wharton (2005) offers three frameworks for understanding gender which I employ as guidelines in investigating and analysing the multilevel systems in which gender operates. These frameworks are individualist, interactional, and institutional approaches to gender (Wharton 2005). Although these approaches differ from one another in some respects, they overlap and together are essential to examining gender.

The individualist approach is based on studying individuals and their perceived commonalities and differences in gender attributes and expressions. This helps to construct a basic or general perception of what femininity or masculinity is. Wharton (2005) argues that sociologists who approach gender from an individualistic perspective, see gender as being defined by sex, woman versus man. This means that the sex of an individual defines the

9 For alternative ways of understanding the concept of gender in African societies see Cornwall, A. (Ed.). (2005). Readings in gender in Africa. Indiana University Press. See also Katulushi, C. (1999). Teaching Traditional African Religions and Gender Issues in Religious Education in Zambia. British Journal of Religious Education, 21(2), 101-111.

personality, mind, body, and all other traits/characteristics that individual possess. Whilst it can be argued that our sex can define how our bodies behave, for instance, the fact that most women bleed and feel pain every month is a function of their biological sex. Or the fact that most women can potentially give birth to children is a biological function of the female body. However, as we shall see in chapter 6 of this thesis, this does not then translate to 'all women are strong'. Therefore, it is incorrect to argue that a person's personality, traits, or characteristics are based solely on whether they are female or male. This will imply that to understand how gender operates, we must focus primarily on perceived traits that are considered masculine of feminine.

Considering the above, the individualist approach argues that gender develops separately from other intersecting factors such as age, class, or ethnicity. This approach assumes that gender is stable, therefore environment and social situations have relatively little influence on gender. In the context of this research, this would imply that the understanding of what constitutes a woman is stable and other factors do not change it. For instance, this approach will assume that a woman remains the same despite a change in age, social class, or any other life experience she would have gone through. Of course, this approach to gender is not without its critics. For example, Holmes (2009) sees gender as a lived experience by and from different forms/types of bodies. Holmes (2009) concludes that the differences between women and men are overemphasized, while their similarities are underemphasized. As such, sex differences have been used by societies as a basis for unequal treatment and exclusion (Holmes 2009, Kimmel 2000, Wharton 2005).

However, there is also a social aspect to individualists' approach, which is gender socialization. According to Wharton (2005), socialisation is the process through which people become gendered. This process is especially important to individualists' approach to gender, as it explains the way people embody gender characteristics that their society sees as appropriate. For example, most African societies expect their women to be strong but submissive, and to be bearers of morality (see Oduyoye 1995; 2004, Dosekun, Hussein 2005). Hence, girls are socialised into constructing and performing a strong and morally upright femininity. This perspective of gender socialisation has been widely used to support gender differences in the hope that it will mitigate gender inequalities. The view that socialization results in gender differences is also criticized by some sociologists because it creates a perspective that women and men possess unchanging behavioural characteristics and motives (Wharton 2005; Holmes 2009).

The second and third approaches, interactionalist and institutional are quite similar. They view gender as a system of social practices which produces difference and inequalities. These social practices shape social relations and interaction patterns through social institutions and

organisations. In these perspectives, gender is not only about the individual, but also about the forces operating outside the individual. People's behaviours and reactions will vary according to their interaction with others and the setting of the interactions. For example, women In APCs may take up a more prayerful and nurturing persona in church and at home, where these roles are expected. On the other hand, they may adopt a more assertive and independent role at work where this is expected. Consequently, these approaches presume that there is "a repertoire of possibilities from which individual women and men choose different responses on varying occasions with different degrees of self-consciousness" (Deaux & Major 1990:91). Therefore, in this perspective, social structures and organizations promulgate gender distinctions more than gender socialisation. Individual characteristics can be offset by social and organizational structures (Wharton 2005; Kimmel 2000; Rahman & Jackson 2010).

In this respect, West & Zimmerman (1987) argue that gender is not a stable set of personality traits, rather, it is a product of human effort. Gender, therefore, is a thing to accomplish. This view is known as 'doing gender.' For West & Zimmerman (1987), doing gender is not an option, but a required part of our engagement with people that we willingly participate in. In this sense, we are constantly working to reproduce notions of femininity or masculinity in relation to others, and through this, gender is produced. Butler (1990; 1993) shares much with this approach to an extent but tries to get away from it in a sense that it is too voluntaristic. That is, the doing of gender is not necessarily exercised by one's own will, rather one conforms to expected gender ideals. For Butler (1990), gender performance is not voluntary, instead, we are socially constructed as gendered subjects which creates a reality in which we live our lives. That is, there are certain behaviours expected of each sex and that is how we live our lives; through enacting these expectations. For instance, women in African Pentecostal churches are expected to dress in certain ways and be prayerful, thus the women in this research perform these expectations, not always out of self will, but because it is expected of them. Therefore, they become modest and prayerful women when it is expected of them.

Therefore, gender is not something that we voluntarily perform, but is something that comes into being by people imitating what they think is appropriate gendered behaviour. Gender is something we learn to do. For example, women imitate popular ideas of what it means to be feminine. Ideas such as ways of dressing, speaking, make-up, hairstyles, or performing Christian femininity. These ideas may come from family, media, workplaces, or religious institutions to which they belong. In this way, we become part of a social framework in which we can only understand people as gendered. However, for Butler (1990), even though ideas about gender make people who they are, people can play with these ideas in shaping themselves and in so doing, there is a possibility of causing gender trouble. For example, a woman taking up body building as a career will be thought of as being manly (Butler 1990).

Therefore, when we do not act according to suitable gender expectations, we are thought to be causing gender trouble. In the case of APCs, gender trouble may occur by a woman refusing to get married or have children or wanting an equal distribution of chores at home. This is because it is thought that women are naturally nurturing, therefore women have a natural desire to have children and a home to care for. Therefore, a woman refusing to do so would be seen as acting contrary to her gender, thus causing gender trouble.

Consequently, I approach this research on the premise that gender roles, behaviours and expectations are influenced by many factors, including sex, socialisation agents, social structures, and organizations. Therefore, the ways of doing femininity are constantly changing and they change according to time, place, and context.

2.2.2 *Femininity*

Femininity can be said to be the attributes or characteristics thought to be appropriate for women. For instance, in many societies it is suggested that one of the attributes of womanhood is soft spoken-ness. Another example is the belief in many African societies that womanhood is synonymous with strength and virtue (Oduyoye 1995; 2004, Kanyoro 2005). The strength attributed to womanhood in any African societies is not that of physical strength, instead it is emotional strength and an ability to endure. However, it can be argued that strength is not something one is born with, rather, one learns to be strong and to endure during one's life's experiences. In respect to virtue, according to Sheldon (2017) and Dosekun (2007), most African societies expected women to be the bearers of morality. However, when it comes to morality, one is not born with an innate ability to be morally upstanding, as one does not even know yet what is considered moral in the society that they belong to and would have to learn. Therefore, biology is not an adequate basis for femininity.

The concept of femininity can be said to be intricately linked with a woman's sense of self and subjectivity. This concept cuts across disciplines such as sociology, psychology, media, and cultural studies, and many more (See Marsh & Byrne 1991; Kalof & Baralt 2007; Aapola, Gonick & Harris 2005). The concept of femininity is often defined in terms of gender attributes and expressions (see Beauvoir 1953, Rahman & Jackson 2010, Wharton 2005, Holmes 2009). Historically and even now, femininity has been regarded as the qualities, behaviours, and practices typically attributed to women (Macdonald & Dolan 2013). According to feminist thinking, these attributed qualities are not always innate, but exist as ideological constructs, defined in opposition to masculinity and masculine values Wood (2005). For example, the idea that women are inherently soft spoken, empathetic, and nurturing, is an essentialist view that is not necessarily true for all women.

In her ground-breaking work, Simone Beauvoir (1953; 1993) asserted that women were not born with these qualities deemed feminine, instead, these attributes have been and are being shaped by many factors. In her famous words “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman”, Beauvoir (1953:330) shows that femininity is not an inherent attribute for women, rather, it is constructed and shaped by many factors especially in opposition to men. That is, biology alone does not dictate the actions of women, instead, the socio-cultural environment of the woman influences femininity construction. In this sense, it is not biology that has defined an African woman as being strong, it is her socio-cultural positioning and upbringing amongst other factors such as religion that have necessitated this strength. Although biologically different, it is not a basis to position women as the weaker sex.

Moreover, feminist scholars believe these ‘so called’ feminine attributes are ascribed by a patriarchal society to keep women under subjugation. These expectations of the feminine ideal and its restrictions placed on women, led to several protests, and calls for women’s liberation and emancipation. Brownmiller (2013:8 &12) highlights that:

> Femininity, in essence, is a romantic sentiment, a nostalgic tradition of imposed limitations…The principle of femininity is composed of vulnerability, the need for protection, the formalities of compliance and the avoidance of conflict – in short, an appeal of dependence and goodwill that gives the masculine principle its romantic validity and admiring applause.

This idea of feminine values place women as less powerful in contrast to men to make them feel masculine as Gonick (2006:4) also strongly argues that society had positioned women as “Other to man’s rationality, agency, and individuality”. This places women in subordinate positions to men where we are object and victims. Gonick (2006) argues that this positioning robs women of their personhood. Additionally, this would suggest that a woman’s identity is subjected to public scrutiny and is dependent on society’s construct. This positioning of woman as the antithesis to man’s masculinity devalues femininity. Because femininity is ascribed by society, MacDonald & Dolan (2008: 1) notes that:

> feminine values are historically and culturally specific and are variously inflected through other formations, such as class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and age, that produce hierarchies between women.

For example, ideals of femininity may differ when class hierarchies come into play. Skeggs (1997) explores this in her research on working-class women in Britain, where her participants struggled everyday with respectability. Respectability was their term for the middle- and upper-class ways of doing gender which are more valued within society. In this instance, Skeggs (1997) participants could not afford to behave with ‘ladylike delicacy’ as they had to work and

could not conform to the dominant ideals of femininity of the upper class. Therefore, ways of 'doing' femininity differ based on intersectional factors.

In this sense, expectations of feminine identities are culturally varied, for example, what it means to be a woman in Nigeria may differ slightly from what it means to be woman in the West. Dosekun (2015) & Moyo (2004) posited that, being a Nigerian woman comes with an expectation to be an embodiment of family, community values and strength. This notion of ideal Nigerian womanhood is reflected in some African societies where women ought to be strong pillars of the family (Moyo 2011). This may seem that women in African societies are empowered, however it can be a strenuous tightrope to walk, as women are expected to be both strong and submissive. Adichie (2014:10) clearly expresses this expectation in her exposition, saying that:

> We say to girls, 'You can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man. If you are the breadwinner in your relationship with a man, pretend that you are not, especially in public, otherwise you will emasculate him.

In this respect, many African traditions imply that an ideal African woman should be independent enough to contribute to the finances of the family but not too independent. This African narrative of femininity may differ slightly from popular Western notions of femininity where women are seen as vulnerable (Oduyoye 1995).

Although there has been considerable progress in challenging traditional notions of femininity, there is still work to be done, hence a lot of ongoing research on the subject. To understand gender relations, it is helpful to look historically at the changes that have occurred in women's lives. Rahman & Jackson (2010) identify the urbanisation and industrialisation of the Western world as the period where many aspects of gender and sexual relations were established as traditional. As industrialisation began to pick up, with more women able to participate in the workforce, gender disparities began to change. Women were increasingly able to work just as men did, but they still had the bulk of domestic chores to do. Furthermore, they still faced similar gender expectations in the workplace. Holmes (2005:59) calls it a 'shift from private patriarchy to a public patriarchy'. Even though modernity brought with it shifting notions of family life and new possibilities, the inequalities brought by the social construction of gender hierarchies and gendered institutions were still prevalent.

According to Holmes (2005), the lived experiences of women and men are significantly affected by societal, social, and historical changes. History does not just mean an account of the past events but encompasses the conditions that characterise the time and environment in which the people lived. Hence, I look at the history of Christianity to contextualise the environment in which in which women lived in early Christianity. The following sections look

at how the concept of femininity has been constructed over the years from Biblical account. Although, this account will by no means be exhaustive, it will however examine the roles women occupied in the church and family life. It begins by considering historian's commentary on gender in early Christianity. However, because of the vast amount of information to cover in the history of the church, I narrow things down to Biblical scholars' commentary on gender in the Bible.

Even though there are different forms of Christianity today, most denominations of churches have some traditions that were from the early church. Additionally, the Bible is a central tenet of Christianity and can provide a lens through which gender and identity is focused. In this sense, members of African Pentecostal Churches may draw from these Biblical narratives and African cultural narratives in articulating their own ideas of femininity. This is also evident in most African diasporic churches as the churches still have strong ties to African countries. This puts the church in a position where they try to hold on to the traditions of their homeland as well as adapt to some of the cultures of their environment. Additionally, the importance of the Bible in APCs cannot be overemphasised, hence my focus on the Bible.

2.3 WOMEN IN EARLY CHRISTIAN THOUGHT: A BRIEF BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Although, Women were notable members of the early church as recorded in the New Testament, their work seemed to have been effectively side-lined at some point in history (McNamara 1994, Miller 2005, Clark 2001, Hughes 2012). For example, some New Testament letters record women hosting and leading church services in their houses. There are women Paul addresses as co-workers and missionaries in his letters or extols (see Romans 16). It is not surprising that the issue of women's role in church, home and society continues to be a contentious one as most societies have been patriarchal, and any attempt to change the status quo would attract opposition I would argue.

In her writings and documentaries of women in early religion, historian Bettany Hughes posits that women played important roles in the first 200 years of the church. According to Hughes (Huffington post 2012):

> a lot of the early churches in Rome were founded by women, paid for by women and dedicated to women. Females were also clearly involved not just in the administration but also the theological practice of the early Christian church. We know this, as there are wall paintings of women administering Eucharist, and women dressed as priests.

However, Hughes (2012) traces the moment when women were side-lined in Christianity to when it became the official religion of the Roman Empire. "Suddenly Christianity had this huge geographical territory to cover, so the value of the military became that much greater,"

(Huffington post 2012). In her research, she suggests that women had a significant role in faith during the early years of human society, a status that gave way to male-dominance in what she calls the “hard politics of Christianity”. This created a shift towards subjugation made easier by “an underlying suspicion of women”, that continued to early modernity where private and public spheres could no longer been seen as separate spheres, where women belonged to the private and men to the public sphere. However, although secular views of women are changing, religious institutions remain gendered. It seems that some religious institutions support their continued gendered hierarchies with Biblical references as we shall see in section 2.4. Therefore, it is important to examine the scriptures commonly used to support their sustained subordination of women or their claim that Christianity empowered women.

To trace the roles women played in Christianity, I look to the Biblical references about women, and how Jesus and church leaders after him (that is, his early disciples) perceived them[10]. From Biblical account and the academic literature available on women’s history, there is evidence that women were present in Christianity not only as wives, but that, they also held leadership roles in the church. In his book *A Short History of Christianity* Blainey (2011) wrote that women were more significant during Jesus' ministry than they were in the next thousand years of Christianity. Blainey draws his opinion from several Gospel accounts of Jesus teaching women like Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42), the sisters of Lazarus. His meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4: 1- 25), the anointing of his feet by Mary of Bethany (see Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, John 12:1-8), his public admiration for a poor widow who gave her last mite (Luke 21:1-4, Mark 12:41-44). His stepping to the aid of the woman accused of adultery (John 7:53- 8:11), and the presence of Mary Magdalene at his side as he was crucified (John 19:25-27). Blainey (2011:333) concludes that, "as the standing of women was not high in Palestine, Jesus' kindnesses towards them were not always approved by those who strictly upheld tradition." Therefore, Blainey (2011) concludes that Jesus’s ministry empowered women.

[10] In this thesis I have focused on Biblical accounts of women in the early church. To read about women in the early histories of the church see Clark, E. A. (1990). Women in the early church (Vol. 13). Liturgical Press. Hylen, S. E. (2015). A modest apostle: Thecla and the history of women in the early church. Oxford University Press. Madigan, K., & Osiek, C. (Eds.). (2005). Ordained women in the early church: A documentary history. JHU Press. Shaw, B. (1994). Women and the early church. History Today, 44(2), 21-28.
Witherington III, B. (1991). Women in the earliest churches (No. 59). Cambridge University Press. Allison, R. (1988). Let women be silent in the churches (1 cor. 14.33b-36): what did Paul really say, and what did it mean? Bates College, Lewiston, Maine 04240, Journal for the study of the New Testament 32

On the matter of Jesus taking a stand with and for women, New Testament scholar Witherington (1990:29-51) gives a few examples of how Jesus related with women in the Bible. For instance, he argues that Jesus's admiration for the widow's devotion in Luke 21, and Mark 12, show that "Jesus is stepping forward as a strong advocate of oppressed or abused widows" (Witherington 1990:35). He also asserts that the fact that Jesus raised the widow's devotion to his disciples as worthy of emulation shows that for Jesus, "the advent of the kingdom means just recognition of the truly Godly, and just judgement of those who oppress the poor and disenfranchised" (ibid 1990:36).

Another example of Jesus's ministry providing an empowering space for women that Witherington (1990) cites are Jesus's teachings on the mount about adultery and divorce and oh his handling of the adulterous woman's case in Mathew 5:27-32, Mathew 19:3-9, John 8: 2-11, and Mark 10: 2-12. For Witherington (1990: 49), Jesus's teachings did not only reaffirm men's positions and duties in the society, but his teachings were also to liberate women from societal stereotypes. That is because "Jesus does not approve of a system where a man's lust is not taken as seriously as a woman's seductive wiles" (Witherington 1990:49). This can be understood as Jesus' upholding men and women to the same moral standards. Furthermore, Jesus's stance on marriage and divorce also privileged women at the time. This meant that women had better security in marriage because husbands could not unjustly divorce their wives. Furthermore, Jesus's position on women meant that he did not have different standards for men and women, rather everyone was held to the same standard of righteousness.

Another important part of the Bible to examine when considering gender relations in the early church is the Pauline epistles. Although the apostle Paul had strong opinions about a woman's place in the church, he also appointed women to leadership roles as leaders of church groups hosted in their households and he commended some women by names in his letters (see Luke 8:1-3, Acts 16:11-15). However, his letter to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians Chapter 14 verses 33b- 35 which states that "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church" (NKJV) seems contradictory. This portion of his letter to the Corinthians has evoked many controversies and caused distrust amongst feminist scholars towards the church. Among Biblical scholars themselves, this Bible verse and other verses addressing women have pitted conservatives against liberals, contributing to the downfall of the myth of value-free hermeneutics (Allison 1988, Junior 2015). Given that people might produce portions of the Bible based on their own biases. Consequently, many preachers and indeed many men have used these portions of Paul's letters to conveniently relegate women in the church (Junior 2015).

Witherington's (1990) approach to gender within the New Testament's records of Jesus's ministry speaks of a more liberal interpretation of the Bible[11]. This interpretative method aligns well with Feminist and womanists' approach to the Bible (see for instance Junior, N 2015) who seek to reclaim the Bible for women and the oppressed by paying attention to the contexts, history, and texts of the Bible, perusing the language used. Kalu (2008) outlines four possible positions that feminist hermeneutics can be classified under which are 1) rejectionist, 2) loyalist, 3) reformist-liberationist, and 4) reconstructionist. Whichever approach feminist critics of the Bible take, there is one thing in common and that is, they focus on gender, approaching the Bible with hermeneutical suspicion and reading the Bible contextually and bringing 'social analysis into contact with the scriptures. Consequently, Douglas (2001) encourages us to read the Bible from the perspective of the marginalised and interpret it in liberatory ways. This womanist way of interpreting the Bible is evidenced in the understandings of some of the women in this research as opposed to the ways some of their pastors interpret the Bible in a literal manner.

The role of women in the Bible as shown in this section shows that for Jesus, there was no separate standards for women and men. However, the way the Bible is read and understood by many Christians have created different standards for women and men as we shall see in chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis. Whilst the Bible can be a liberative tool, it can also be used as a weapon of oppression. The next section pays attention to research on the history of African Christianity, examining the influence of culture and traditions within African Christianity.

2.3.1 *African Women, History and Christianity*

Research into sub-Saharan African histories has shown that, one of the most controversial aspects of colonialism was religion. Therefore, the site of contest for many African History scholars, is in the coercion of African Societies to abandon their religion for the religion of colonial missionaries (Kalu 2008). Bawa (2019), Mbiti (1991) and Kalu (2008) assert that African society was deeply religious to the point that non-religious life and religious life were indistinguishable. While African traditional religious practices are not the same across ethnic groups, these religions are accompanied by their own pantheons, in which their deities usually included gods and goddesses, who had priestesses as custodians of their shrines and

[11] There are various methods of interpreting the Bible, some of which include Historical-Critical Hermeneutics, Literary hermeneutics, contextual hermeneutics, womanist hermeneutics, feminist hermeneutics, liberation hermeneutics and post-colonial hermeneutics. For more on interpretation of the Bible, see Junior, N. (2015). An Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation. Presbyterian Publishing Corp. Shomanah, M. W. D., & Dube, M. (2012). Postcolonial feminist interpretation of the Bible. Chalice Press.

religious practices (Bedana 2016, Oduyoye 1995; 2004). Moreover, when it comes to gender stratification, it is hard to ascertain the impact of traditional belief system in precolonial societies, especially because religion was arranged along family and kinship lines. However, it is important to note that traditional African religions were and still are to a considerable extent less gender oriented than Christianity due to the multiplicity of deities and spirits in African traditional structures (Bawa 2019, Oduyoye 2001). Therefore, the introduction of Christianity to Africa significantly altered traditional social life.

There are similarities in the concept of femininity across many cultures and societies. However, in the context of African societies, Christianity is heavily influenced by indigenous traditions, as it incorporates elements of traditional spirituality and beliefs. Therefore, Christianity emerges against a backdrop to African traditional spirituality and beliefs (Bawa 2019, Kalu 2008, Adogame 2013). In this sense, their culture and traditional religious practices affect their interpretations of Biblical texts. Consequently, African Christian femininity as ascribed by most African churches is heavily influenced by cultural notions of femininity. Examining the concept of femininity in African traditional history and Christianity is a difficult endeavour because scholars approach it from different perspectives. Eurocentric and African American perspectives have predominated in Western writing about the history of women in Africa; it is lacking in depth because African experiences and perspectives are not adequately captured.

Although African American women scholars have captured their own Christian experiences, these accounts cannot be taken as the overall experiences of ALL Black women as there are some distinctions in African women's experiences. However, the emergence of studies on African women histories has acknowledged that a history of the Western world is not the history of the rest of the world (Dosekun 2007;2015). Interestingly, feminist writers from Africa have begun to write and tell stories of the African woman and where she stands. Considering this, Sheldon (2017: xii) argues that:

> Knowing African women's history will make it possible to better understand where African women stand today. Women once had greater power in many African societies where they were able to wield both individual and collective authority, sometimes with greater success than others.

This shows that the representation of African women as being under threat and unable to help herself or as subordinate to man is from a pan Eurocentric perspective (Kangwa 2017, Sheldon 2017). On this matter, Sheldon (2017:10) argues that "western observers viewed other societies through the lens of their own experiences". Consequently, it is imperative to understand the context under which a society operates before a deduction of that society can be made. For instance, the perspective that women were subjugated in many African societies

conceals the various ways women were empowered in these societies, through their positions in the family and community. This perspective also erodes their spiritual, cultural, and economic contributions that helped shaped African histories.

I am not suggesting that the situation of African women was ideal or that they lived in a utopian society that was not patriarchal. Rather, African women suffered and continues to suffer inequalities but always found ways to negotiate with patriarchy "especially in the religious sphere, where women stood at the centre of life in the clan, as religious leaders, priestesses, or medicine women. They had the authority to be final arbitrators in marriage proposals" (Mwania 2021:83).

Consequently, many African traditional societies respected women as mothers within a valid marriage. Women in African traditional societies were not always viewed as having inferior status. Women in matrilineal African Society had prominent status, while in a patrilineal society they found respect as mothers. Typically, motherhood defined the real purpose of a woman. In every patriarchal African society, a married woman without children especially sons were culturally and socially less respected than a married woman who bore sons. To be a barren woman in the African society is to be a failed woman (Bedana 2016, Oduyoye 2004). Although a woman was respected, thought to be strong, and in some spheres allowed to be the voice of authority, she was however not seen as equal to the man. Thus, the position of a woman in traditional African societies was not a linear one.

Conversely, in Hussein (2005), women in many African traditions were seen as weak, foolish, frivolous, evil, and seductive. In this sense women were not allowed to manage the finances of the family because they were thought to be foolish to man's rationality. In examining African proverbs, Hussein (2005) found that the language used to portray women in African traditions had two conflicting imageries. One is the one mentioned above. The second is that of warm motherhood and comforting family goodness as noted by Sheldon (2017). She was simultaneously saviour and villain, strong and weak, good, and bad. This is a hard position to occupy as women are left to the whims of men's emotions. How can one be both evil and comforting? Weak, yet expected to be strong. Such is the conundrum of many African women. This tradition seeped into women's roles in early years of Christianity in most African churches. Women were expected to be spiritually active but also treated with underlying suspicion. Therefore, it can be argued that women in most African churches suffers some limitations because of a patriarchal society (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000 p. 6 cited in Okiriguo 2016; Adichie 2012; Olusola 2013). This view of women has informed how some African churches interpret scriptures to reinforce cultural notions of femininity. Considering the interpretations of scriptures, the next section focuses on two models of gender construction common in

Christianity. These approaches are based on how proponents have interpreted the Bible on the issue of gender roles.

2.4 TWO MODELS OF GENDER CONSTRUCTION

Over the years, Christianity (with emphasis on modern Pentecostalism) has continued to evolve in terms of the role's women can take, with many churches ordaining women clergy and women as founders of churches such as foursquare gospel church (see Adogame 2013; 2016, Kalu 2008). Although women's attainment of leadership in church and wider society has increased, the debate around where women stand, and the issues surrounding submission and authority in most churches is far from over. The question of whether women should even be in ministry continues to be disputed in some denominations and has become a polarizing issue for the modern church. This is not unusual as women's role in the church has never been free of controversy (Hargrove 1985). Likewise, the debate on the role and place of women in homes and society is an on-going one.

Because there is a large body of work available on different issues affecting contemporary women in the church, I have picked up on the themes of gender roles at home and church as I am interested in how femininity is constructed in APCs and in the homes of the women I interviewed. I aim to examine church culture and family orientation on gender roles. What roles are women to play in homes and churches in contemporary times? With the momentum that feminists have garnered in recent years, the role of women in society has come under more scrutiny. One area of continuous debate is the role of women in the church and family. Some churches whose doctrines and practices are not rigidly tied to the scriptures have begun to allow women attain and retain positions of leadership such as ministers, and pastors. Other churches, which interpret the Bible more literally have been slow to adopt such changes (Adogame 2013). Two conflicting approaches to the question of the role of women that are common among Christians today are the traditional/complementary approach and the Egalitarian approach (Johnston 1988; Eliason, Anderson, Hall, & Willingham 2017).

In the traditional/complementary approach to gender roles, the emphasis is on women's submission and dependency on men in marriage. According to this approach, a woman's role in relation to the home, the church and society is to submit to the authority and headship of her husband (Aune 2004, Eliason, Anderson, Hall, & Willingham 2017, Bishop 2019). Although she can exercise her spiritual gifts, she is however only allowed to do that under the leadership of her husband in the home and a male in church. This opinion is grounded on the hierarchical understanding of the relationship of God to Christ to man to woman ((Frederick, 201o, p. 184, Bishop 2019) This understanding stem from Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 11, where he

presents a chain of hierarchy: Christ is subject to the Father, man to Christ, and woman to man. Also, Ephesians 5: 22-32 alongside other scriptures are used to place emphasis on women's submission (Ward 1988, Maddox 2013). These Bible verses talk about wives respecting and submitting themselves to their husband because man is the head over his wife just as Jesus is head over the church. However, verse 21 that says "submitting to one another in the fear of God" is often neglected.

The egalitarian approach to gender on the other hand argues that there are no scriptures that explicitly say women cannot maintain leadership positions in the church (Ward 1988, Bishop 2019). Nor is there a reason they cannot have a marriage relationship that is based on a principle of shared submission and co-dependent love. The emphasis in the egalitarian view is on mutual submission between men and women both in the church and in the home. Each side support their arguments with New Testament texts of the Bible (Bishop 2019, Johnston 1988, Junior 2015).

Most adherents of traditional/complementarity approach argue from five or six texts of the New Testament, starting with 1 Corinthians 11:2-6, which teaches that the head of the woman is the man; and 1 Corinthians 14:33-35, which says that women are to keep silence in the church. 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is interpreted that women are not to hold offices in church because this scripture mentions that women should keep silent in church. Ephesians 5:22-33, where Paul wrote that the responsibility of wives is to submit to their husbands and husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Of course, not all traditional/complementarity adherent would agree that women are not to hold offices in church. However, they mostly agree on women's submissiveness to husbands, and laity to pastor's authority. That is, men and women have different roles to play (Maddox 2013, Bishop 2019). There are other texts, like 1 Peter 3:1-7, where again wives are urged to be submissive to their husbands, and husbands to be understanding to their wives as they are the weaker sex.

Egalitarians consider Biblical teachings of the roles of men and women in society both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Egalitarians argue that God made man as male and female (not just male) in his image. Both man and woman have a direct relationship with God, and each share jointly the responsibility of bearing children and having dominion over the created order (Ward 1988, Frederick 2010). However, there has been much debate over what 'the image of God' means. Some school of thought think about it in terms of the body and humans as triune beings, whilst others tend to look at it from a creating and characteristics standpoint. That is, human beings have some attributes of God like the ability to create things. This interpretation is used by some of my participants as we shall see in chapters 6 and 7.

I would argue that women and men jointly share in the image of God. Egalitarians assert that there is no suggestion in the narrative of Genesis that woman is subordinate to man prior to

the fall and excommunication from the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3:16 the subordination of woman is not established but predicted. This, along with other situations, like having to toil because of sin, is because of the fall, rather than prescribed as a part of the created order. Furthermore, subordination in Genesis 3:17 is mostly related to the husband/wife relationship. There is no indication in this verse that women should be, or would be, under the authority of men. Egalitarians further argue that the results of the fall are reversed for in Christ there is a new creation. As Paul in Galatians 3:28, says that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

This new creation, egalitarians point out, was demonstrated in Jesus' life. Despite the opposing customs and social norms of his day, Jesus embraced women and did not look down on them. There are lots of instances in the Bible that set Jesus apart from his Jewish context. He had women disciples, he spoke with women in public, and he had friendships with women like Mary and Martha. Some wealthy women supported him and his disciples in their ministry and were identified with him. Women stood by the cross, and women were also the first eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. Also, in the New Testament scriptures, the Holy Spirit is given to all without distinction. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are also given to both women and men without discrimination (see Acts 2). There is no mention in the New Testament of any of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that only given to men and not women. These controversies continue to plague the church and sometimes divide it as feminist scholars accuse religion of patriarchy and androcentric ideas about God contained in scripture which make for basis of female oppression - notwithstanding that women are God's creations too (Longman 2001, Dorschel 2011).

Considering the above, African Pentecostal churches may not be necessarily divided into traditional and egalitarian approaches like many evangelical churches in the USA and UK. They are more likely divided into churches that focus on holiness, prosperity, or faith teachings. These churches interpret Biblical texts in the way that is consistent with their cultural approach to life[12] (Spickard & Adogame 2010, Acquah 2011). Therefore, according to Oduyoye (2002) they tend to be less concerned with gender inequality and support gender complementarity (Oduyoye 2002). As it pertains to gender; scriptures are often quoted reminding congregants what the Bible says about women, with a focus on women's sexual purity and submissiveness to God and men (Oduyoye 2002). Considering this, Dube (2018:1) has accused African churches of "implicitly reinventing traditional hegemonic models under the pretext of Christian spiritualties". Moreover, rarely have African theologies addressed the

[12] I mean the ways that they view life through their different African traditions and culture. That is, the traditions and cultures in their home countries. For how African cultures and traditions are used in interpreting the Bible See Kalu, O. (2008). African Pentecostalism: an introduction. Oxford University Press.

issues affecting women in the church, this is where the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians have come in to raise issues of gender inequalities in the church and the society. Their movement is distinct from other women's liberation movements in that their theologies are formed in the context of African culture and religion. Just as womanist theology is focused on theologies in the context of the place of Black women in Black history of freedom fighting, their role of authority in the lives of other women and the Black community. Oduyoye, Musimbi & Kanyoro (2005:10) express the problem of inequality in many African societies in the following words:

> the position of women in Africa today - both within the wider society and within religion is normally prescribed by what is deemed to be beneficial to the welfare of the whole community of women and man. Unfortunately, most of the prescribing tends to be carried out by male authorities, and the resulting role of women tends to be circumscribed by an unchanging set of norms enshrined in a culture that is equally unchanging.

This implies that in many African churches, men prescribe for women roles that put women in subservient positions, saying it is for the overall good of the society. Consequently, In the next section I discuss current sociological and feminist research on gender roles in protestant Christianity to further situate the problem of gender roles.

2.5 21ST CENTURY PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY AND FEMININITY

Although we now have feminist and womanist theology, religion remains a contested site of gender construction. Some contemporary conservative protestant churches continue to promote conventional gendered identities and construction of femininity. For example, in her research on young women's experiences in protestant Christianity in Britain, Sharma (2008) argues that scriptures are interpreted to encourage normative gender practices which reinforces gender stratification in a time where there is discontent about normative traditional gender relations. The implication is that Church culture, while it can be empowering in providing a sense of community and belonging, it can also be oppressive when it comes to normative or confined behaviour (Sharma 2008). Much contemporary conservative church culture continues to encourage the notion that married life is a goal to be achieved, and nonconformity to marriage and childbearing expectations, is frowned upon (Sharma 2008). This tends to be more common in APCs I would argue, as their cultural values also support and actively promote this notion. Many African societies find any form of nonconformity to marriage ideals problematic, both at home and in diaspora (see for examples Bawa 2019).

Feminist research on gender equality in Christianity shows that many contemporary conservative churches promote and teach this notion of normative or conformative femininity (see for examples, Chong 2007 (South Korea), Ampofo 2017 (Ghana), Sharma 2008 (Britain) Gaddini 2021 (Britain), Dube 2014). Sharma (2008) argues that when women perform their femininity, they do so in relation with others, that is, they consider how their church community will react to their performativity. They consider what is expected of a good woman in their church community and attempt to conform to or deviate from that image. The construction of a good woman is not only an internal thing constructed by the individual herself, but by forces outside of her, that is, her church community; the groups where she has formed attachments of belonging. Hence, women internalize these constructed gendered identity and expectations. It can be argued that the community is powerful, like Foucault's panopticon (Sharma 2008: 347), its gaze is always upon her even when she is not in their presence.

These gendered expectations within contemporary church culture indicates that things have not changed much. Where there seem to be changes, women are only practising secular postfeminist notions of femininity (Sharma 2008, Aune 2004). For example, Maddox's (2013) research in Sydney's Hillsong Church finds that women reject secular views on equality but reinvent themselves through postfeminist notions of femininity. It examined teachings on gender directed to women, men, and the whole church. The differences in same teachings at women's conferences and conferences for the whole congregation were also considered. Her research found that the teachings of the church promote gender complementarity, with roles being divided according to gender stereotypes. Her research also found that the notions of femininity constructed by the church reflect magazine/postfeminist notions of beauty and what it means to be feminine or commercialised interpretation of femininity.

Another example is Gaddini's (2019) recent ethnographic study of unmarried evangelical Christian women in London. Her research showed that ideal Christian femininity as described by her participants showed "overlapping markers of normativity: internal dispositions such as subservience and calmness, and externally recognisable modes of femininity communicated through the roles of wife and mother "(ibid: 410). What these works show is that ideal Christian femininity in many protestant churches run along the lines of postfeminist ideals and traditional gender roles where a woman is or aspires to be a wife and mother, and leadership is assigned to the man. It can be argued that headship is emphasized in many Protestant congregations. Although women hold positions of authority both in the church and in wider society, they are still 'required to function under men's oversight' (Maddox 2013: 10) and expected to be humble, as there is an underlying language of male headship.

Many Protestant churches advocate for male leadership quoting scriptures of submission and respect for the man. Several studies have concluded that headship and submission talk is

just an identity marker for religious communities (Maddox 2013). It is, however, a pervasive discourse in the church, according to Maddox (2013) that serves as more than a simple identity marker. Maddox (2013) compares the ideology of authority within marriage, and authority as experienced by married couples, through an ethnography of Sydney's Hillsong church. Maddox posits that Pentecostal churches have downplayed the 'real world' experience of couples in marriages, the language used in gender relation, and how it affects women. Whilst I would argue that not all Pentecostal churches and indeed other strands of Christianity have downplayed real life experience of marriage. I take her point that language does more than just speaking, as it carries meaning and acts as signifiers. The semiotics of language, and imagery, carry representation (Hussein 2005, Polkinghorne 1995, Ammerman 2021). How women are positioned in contemporary Pentecostal churches can also be identified through the 'language' used in church. The language of 'submission', authority', 'headship', provokes interesting questions such as: Do these churches have messages addressing 'submission ', and humility' in men, in a similar way that they address to women?

Ammerman's (2021) work on lived religion asserts that words, language plays an important role in understanding religious dimensions. This is because language help create narratives about us and our place in the world. Language here is not just about words, but also about semiotics and discourses. Examining religious language enables us to confront the power structures involved in religious narratives. For instance, if we pay attention to the language of submission and male headship that Maddox (2013) highlights in her research, we can then begin to question what narrative comes out of that. Who does the narrative privilege and how does it create boundaries? Hence, language is not innocent, it creates narratives that people act upon.

In the African Pentecostalism sphere, Hackett's (2017) research on the aspect of women's religious leadership and agency sheds light on gender construction within these churches. The research explored ideas about women's leadership in African Christian communities, and whether these positions served as a source of empowerment for women. Her research showed that, because Christianity in African societies is influenced by tradition and culture as it is in many places, many of the churches founded by women reject what they consider Western secular notions of femininity, and instead express feminine aspirations by opposing cultural norms such as polygamy, which are detrimental to women's rights and wellbeing. Conversely, Hackett's (2017) research showed that women leaders did not repudiate gender roles, instead they adhere to them. In this sense, women's leadership in many African Pentecostal churches seem to be a bargain with patriarchy instead of a challenge of it. The implication of these for African Pentecostal churches where women are in leadership positions in the words of Chong (2007) 'serve to re-feminize, re-domesticate, and depoliticise women'.

It is no wonder that Eriksen (2014: 263) asserts that “Pentecostalism, in spite of its fundamental egalitarian ethos, is structured on gendered, binary differences”. That is, many Pentecostal churches in theory are egalitarian, but in practice they believe in separate spheres for women and men. Here a woman is respected and more likely to attain leadership positions in church if she is married. Whilst men can attain leadership positions whether they are married or not (see also Gaddini 2019).

Additionally, Hackett (2017) argues that a woman is not seen as successful if she is not married, whereas a man can be considered as successful even without being in the institution of marriage. And when he is advised to marry it is often the purpose of being taken care of, procreation, that his name might live on. Furthermore, marriage tends to privilege men more than it privileges women, as domestic duties are seen as the job of the woman, whilst the man's responsibility is to provide. When the woman works it is not seen as providing it is seen as ‘contributing’ as we shall see in chapter 6. The upbringing of the children is also left to women. In this context, a woman’s place is that of wife and mother (Kaunda 2020).

Hackett (2017) contends that most women founders of African Pentecostal churches focus on liberating women through spirituality, that is, having received a divine calling, they aim to promote liberation of women in the form of higher service to God. This means that women are encouraged to develop their spiritual giftings and to use it to serve God through serving their families and communities. I would argue that this focus on spirituality in this context, echoes precolonial times, when women were priestesses in African religions and evoked respect in society. Although these women leaders promote the rights and emancipation for women, they are reluctant to be branded as feminists, because many African Christians understand feminism as a western notion that is un-African and weakens the family unit and community (Hackett 2017). Therefore, even though they try to break away from old traditional norms that are unhelpful, they do not explicitly talk about structural inequalities, instead they promote the image of an empowered modern woman who is also a loving and submissive wife.

There is the potential for African Pentecostal churches to contribute positively to women’s empowerment through the deconstruction of patriarchal interpretations of the Bible. However, this potential is highly dependent on factors such as education and socioeconomic status of women in the Church, and the willingness of women to critically engage with religious and cultural ideologies (Bawa 2019). Discussing how Christian beliefs impacts notions of gender equality in Pentecostal churches in Ghana, Bawa (2019), found that Christian activists found a way to use the Bible in challenging the beliefs of women’s subservience in the society. What this implies is that a contextual reading and interpretation of the Bible is called for, to break with the narrow definitions of submission by African churches. Because many African churches take submission to mean total and unchallenged subservience of women in homes,

and unmerited respect for men in the society. In this sense it is like women are second class citizens (Bawa 2019). However, if Bible verses that address the issue of submission and gender relations are read critically and contextually, we may be able to break away from old and limiting notions of gender relations.

A considerable amount of research has been carried out on diasporan African Pentecostal churches and gender relations in Pentecostalism in Africa has also been explored (Hunt &Lightly 2001; 2008, Adogame 2013, Kalu 2008). However, there is little to no research on how femininity is ascribed and inscribed by women in African churches in diaspora. The question of how African culture, combined with African practices and British society all connect to influence how women of African diasporic churches construct their femininity, has not been explored. Women of African churches in diaspora occupy a unique position as they experience sometimes overlapping and sometimes conflicting notions of femininity as ascribed by the ethnic, religious, and societal groups they belong to; having to negotiate these notions of femininity. Their parents raise them for acclimatisation and socio-economic advancement in the secular British society without conforming to secular culture, while maintaining some form of African-ness and African Christian norms. Also, the roles older women play in how younger women construct their femininity in African diasporic churches have been ignored. Therefore, this thesis seeks to examine the above questions.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on how femininity is constructed culturally, historically and by religion. It has focused on exploring the roles of women historically from Western perspective as well as an African perspective. The importance of linking the history of narratives of what it means to be a woman to contemporary times is shown; because despite the significant changes culminating in the emancipation of women, not much has changed. Society's definition of femininity continues to devalue and disadvantage women (Wood 1994, Bishop 2019). This chapter has shown that femininity is defined along essentialist lines especially in connection to biology. That is the qualities that are deemed inherently feminine is due to the meanings that have been accorded the female body. However, this chapter has shown that characteristics deemed feminine are not inherent. Whilst we cannot deny biological differences of women and men, it is not an adequate basis to define femininity. Therefore, femininity is socially, culturally, and religiously ascribed. This chapter has determined that women's experience vary in location, and other intersecting factors need to be considered in studying women's positionality as shown in the research on Christianity in the West and in sub-Saharan Africa.

Furthermore, this chapter has highlighted the importance of the interpretation of the Bible to how women are positioned in Christianity. If scriptures are interpreted differently, the position of women will change as well. The Bible is used and interpreted through cultural perspectives to reinforce gender roles. Whilst Jesus's actions towards women as recorded in the Bible has a potential to create gender equality in Christianity, this chapter has shown that bias in the use and interpretation of the Bible have only reinforced social and cultural definitions of femininity. What this chapter has shown is the interconnectedness of social, cultural, and religious factors in ascribing femininities.

The next chapters will give a brief overview of Pentecostalism and African Pentecostal churches in diaspora focusing on their notions of holiness, and how they affect gender relations, and the concept of an ideal African Christian femininity. Understanding Pentecostal ideas about the temple of God, holiness and sanctification offers a lens through which to examine how women in African Pentecostal churches in diaspora may construct femininity.

CHAPTER THREE: PENTECOSTALISM

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Academic claims from theorists studying religion and secularity about the increasing secularisation of the UK (United Kingdom) were prominent in the late 20th and early 21st century. However, Pentecostalism defied these claims by becoming one of the most rapidly growing religious movements. It comes as no surprise that the movement has received scholarly attention especially in areas like their theology, conservative approach to politics, racism, and their use of prosperity gospel (for examples see, Burgess 2008, Anderson 2003; 2010, Adogame 2013; 2016). According to Anderson (2010), Pentecostalism has become one of the main branches of contemporary Christianity and the most rapidly growing religious movement in the world. Although Pentecostalism has been widely studied in Britain, its gender ideology has not received the scholarly attention that it warrants in Britain[13].

In research on the growth of Pentecostalism, there is always a focus on church attendance with women making up the highest numbers of attendees (Hunt & Lightly 2008). However, African Pentecostal gender ideology in Britain has not been adequately researched especially APCs of West African background[14]. Having said this, it is worth noting that there have been some exceptions to this. For instance, Toulis's (1997) research on identity construction in an African Caribbean Pentecostal church in Britain which showed that in the congregation (New Testament Church of God) she conducted her research, gender was socially, culturally, and religiously constructed based on sexual difference. Here, men were leaders, husbands, fathers, providers, and ultimate decision makers. While women on the other hand were the 'necks' of men, providing help to them and fulfilling their duties as wives, mothers, and female saints (Toulis 1997: 212-264).

Therefore, this thesis contributes to the growing academic literature in the sociology of religion on Pentecostalism and African Pentecostalism in diaspora with a focus on women in African diasporic churches (of West African background) in Britain. I do this by examining African Pentecostal beliefs about gender as they are expressed through their theology as understood by the women in this research. Such a focus unravels the specificities of constructions of

[13] Unlike the scene in Britain, there is a large body of work on Black women's experiences and spirituality in African American Christianity. For instance, Douglas, K. B. (2004). The Black church and the politics of sexuality. In Loving the body: Black religious studies and the erotic (pp. 347-362). New York: Palgrave Macmillan US. Grant, J. (2004). Black theology and the Black woman. The Black studies reader, 421-34. Williams, D. S. (2006). Womanist theology: Black women's voices (1986). The womanist reader, 117-125. Casselberry, J. (2017). The labour of faith: Gender and power in Black Apostolic Pentecostalism. Duke University Press.
Pierce, Y. (2021). In My Grandmother's House: Black Women, Faith, and the Stories We Inherit. Broadleaf Books.

[14] Although research on Black women in Pentecostalism in Britain is sparse, there have been some work done for example, Foster, E.F., 1990, Alexander, V., 2005, Clarke, M., 2016. See also Chapter One section 1.4-page 23 of this thesis.

femininity and women's embodied experiences in Pentecostalism in Britain. This is important given that knowledge about African Pentecostalism often does not take gender into account, whereas gender constructions shape the lives of women and men in overlapping but also diverging ways. Therefore, this thesis also contributes new insights to theology, British womanist theology, sociology of religion, and gender studies.

Having noted that Pentecostalism has defied secularisation prophecies, I begin by giving a short overview of secularisation claims in Britain to situate the importance of Pentecostalism in contemporary Christianity. I then give a brief historical overview of Pentecostalism because Pentecostalism itself is a broad topic (see for example Anderson 2010, Miller & Yamamori 2007) and covering all literature would be too broad and too much. Afterwards, I discuss the context of Pentecostalism in Britain. Subsequent sections attend to Pentecostal values, women in Pentecostalism and African diaspora Pentecostalism.

3.2 SECULARISATION: AN OVERVIEW

Secularization theory was more prominent in the last decade of the 20th century and the start of the 21st century. Secularisation (through the lens of secularisation theory) was seen as the death of religious consciousness as the West began to become industrialised, with modernity taking over. Sociologists like Peter Berger (1967, 1999) saw modernity as an inevitable turn to secularism due to pluralism, leading to the construction of a private/public divide, which further led to increasing individualism, and a competing social environment. According to Berger (1967,1999), secularisation happens at a structural and subjective level. For the structural level, Berger saw secularisation as:

> The process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols... in modern Western history, of course, secularization manifests itself in the evacuation by the Christian Churches of areas previously under their control or influence – as in the separation of church and state, or in the expropriation of church lands, or in the emancipation of education from ecclesiastical authority (Berger, 1967: 107).

On the subjective level, Berger understood secularisation as the loss of religious consciousness or the loss of belief in the plausibility of religion due to modernity. Modernity here being an era that brought about industrialisation and technological advancement which brought different ways of thinking, living, working and being. This era brought about pluralism which meant that individuals now had a separate public and private sphere, thereby leading to a separation between the state and religion. Therefore, because religious institutions would no longer have influence over the state, Berger feared that secularism would become the new

norm. For Berger (1999) pluralism meant that there were many competing religious and secular alternatives which will inevitably lead to a separation of the state from religion, leading to decline in religious commitment. For a while, this view served as a paradigm for the study of religion (Berger 2014).

However, he changed his stance as he no longer believed that a secular society would necessarily lead to the death of religion (ibid 1999). Instead, he saw that the differentiation between state and religion had realigned the role of religion in the lives of individuals. In his de-secularisation theory, he argued that, although, modernity gives way to pluralism in society, the choice for individuals is not between religion or no religion. He asserts that:

> Most religious people, even very fervent ones, operate within a secular discourse in important areas of their lives. Put differently, for most believers there is not a stark either/or dichotomy between faith and secularity but rather a fluid construction of both/and (2014: 20).

To this end, Berger believed that people could be secular on the structural level but maintain a vigorous religious life on the individual level. On this point, Davie (1990) notes earlier than Berger (2014) the change of religion rather than its decline. She argues that secularisation claims in Britain does not often account for social class, racial groups and differing religious behaviours between women and men. Furthermore, Davie (1990) argues that in contemporary British society, belief in religion did not always equate with practice. That is, religious beliefs have become a private thing where individuals do not necessarily need affiliations to believe, practice or belong to their religions.

Contrary to Davie's (1990) assertions of religious change, Bruce (1990:7) argued that secularisation is very strong in Britain as the church has lost its influence on society. For him "the Christian Church in England has gone from being the civil service and judiciary to being a small and easily ignored opposition to the Tory government...and there is a general decline in the plausibility of religious belief." This, I would argue, does not take account of Church's enduring social and religious capital or the diverse nature of the Christian community in Britain. His attitude towards religious consciousness in Britain is that secularisation has not only affected the influence of the church on government, economic and other aspects of social life in Britain. Indeed, he asserts that religious commitment in the lives of individuals has also suffered a decline. For instance, he argues that "even the most optimistic Christian would not assert that the inhabitants of twentieth-century Britain live in a world where God and the Devil are close to every act and fact of life" (1999: 8). However, what this does not account for is different forms of belief. For instance, I would argue that people may not necessarily believe God, or the devil is involved in every happening of their life. But this may not be an indication that they do not believe in the existence of God or the devil or that indeed, they have no

religious belief or commitment. Rather like Davie (1990) argues, the way many people do religion has changed and is changing.

Woodhead (2005; 2008) argues that theories of secularisation always account for men's declining interest in religion and overlook women's religious life or lack of it. Woodhead (2008) argues that on one hand conservative religions might be attractive for women who choose traditional roles of home makers rather than paid work outside the home because these religions provide a space where they are not stigmatised, rather they are affirmed. Furthermore, although some women who chose careers might not find religion useful or have the time for it, those that decide to juggle traditional roles with their careers might find these religions attractive not "because it sanctifies domestic labour" (Woodhead 2008:191), but because they offer a space away from everything for these women to be themselves. New forms of spirituality also offer some women the space to forge new identities if they were not satisfied with their old ones. Therefore, researchers of secularisation or religion should factor in the complexities of gender before making secularisation claims.

However, having said that, not all secularisation theorists believe religion is dying and most sociologists of religion now adopt a post-secular perspective, for example, David Martin (2016) has paid attention to the changes in Christianity in Europe and across the globe. He argues that" instead of regarding secularization as a once-for-all unilateral process, one might rather think in terms of successive Christianisation followed or accompanied by recoils" (2016: 3). Hence, Martin does not directly correlate modernisation to secularity, instead he maps successive Christianisation and the resultant 'recoil'. That is, the application of Christian values in a nation or state, and the eventual resistance to Christianity.

According to Martin's (2016) estimation, there are two Catholic Christianisation and then two Protestant Christianisation. In the Protestant Christianisation, he pays attention to Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianisation in Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. He asserts that religious values remain relevant today despite the pluralism of modernity in society. He argues that the values in most western governments have their roots in Christianity, even though these values are no longer known by their Christian names. His reflections on secularity also factor in the expansion of the evangelical and Pentecostal movement in Europe and across the globe. These expansions can be understood as religion (and its many manifestations) being transformed rather than dying. Therefore, the next sections pay attention to one of the ways religions, especially Christianity has transformed and is being transformed.

3.3 PENTECOSTALISM: A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

It is difficult to trace the exact beginning of Pentecostalism because some scholars claim that isolated Christian revivals were taking place in different places (see for instance Kalu 2008). For example, there was the Welsh revival of 1904 which I explore in more detail in section (3.3.1). However, for the origin of Pentecostalism, North America claims its beginning, with popular theory locating the movement's origins in the Azusa Street revival that occurred in 1906 in Los Angeles, where there was a manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit evidenced by the speaking of tongues. However, some Pentecostalism scholars claim that this is contentious. For instance, Kalu (2008:11) suggests that:

> The first question in reimagining the genealogy of global Pentecostalism is to insist that the Azusa Street story is a local North American story and that the global dimension of Pentecostalism is not the geographical spread of a religious impulse and movement that started from North America and spread to other regions of the world.

That is to say that the Azusa Street revival should be understood as an experience that occurred in Los Angeles and not as something that happened simultaneously around the world lest it gives the impression that the west 'is the faith' and distorts the image of Christianity and Pentecostalism in other regions of the world. Kalu (2008) argues that, before the Azusa Street revival, individuals across the globe spoke in tongues, and experienced the move of the spirit independently. He acknowledges the event of the Azusa Street revival; however, he asserts that even that movement can be traced back to the holiness movement. For Kalu (2008), it is unacceptable to claim that all non-American Pentecostal and charismatic movements be traced to the Azusa Street revival and 'merely adopted and adapted the spirituality without paying due deference to the origin' (Kalu 2008: 13). That is to say that other parts of the world were not empty canvasses waiting for North American preachers to come write or paint on them.

Whilst it is important to acknowledge that Pentecostal revival or speaking in tongues could have been taking place in other regions of the world before the Azusa Street revival, it cannot be denied that the Azusa Street revival is of importance for the spread of Pentecostalism. Hence, I start my imagining of the spread of the Pentecostal movement from the Azusa Street revival led by William Seymour, a Wesleyan holiness preacher. This revival is understood to have engineered the spread of Pentecostalism in the United States and missions to the rest of the world. Before I begin an overview of the birth of Pentecostalism as a coherent movement and its subsequent spread, it is worth noting that in many senses early Pentecostalism was a counter cultural Christian movement shaped by Black experiences of racialised oppression in Jim Crow America (Beckford 2000; 2006).

This Pentecostal revival saw no racial or gender discrimination as the gifts of the Holy Spirit evidenced by the speaking of tongues was the credential (Beckford 2000, Chapman 2004).

This revival included critiques of racial and gender discrimination. Key preachers in the revival did indeed see race and gender, but in a way that made them want to encourage countering inequalities. Hence, in this period, women were empowered to preach and prophesy as led by the Holy Spirit. The intermingling of races and the encouragement of women to preach was remarkable and counter cultural, because 1906 was the height of the "Jim Crow" law of racial segregation and this was prior to the women suffrage of 1920 in the United States (Beckford 2000; 2006). Irvin (1995:32) opines that at the heart of Seymour's theology:

> was a pastoral vision emerging at the intersection of unity and holiness. This was manifested in the interracial and trans-cultural experience of worship in the Spirit, with the gift of tongues playing an important (but not exclusive) role as a biblical sign of the fullness of the human community. Moral holiness was the necessary condition of this new (or eschatological) baptismal experience in the Spirit; only the truly sanctified (morally pure) believers could expect to receive the empowerment for love and service.

Robert Beckford (2000; 2006) also notes that for Seymour, the evidence of the Holy Spirit would break down all racial, class and gender barriers, which would culminate in all humans being one in Christ. Considering this, his church was multi-cultural, and women were encouraged to preach. Interracial worship services were held, and missionaries were sent from Azusa Street to other parts of the country and the world. It is important to note that interracial congregations were uncommon and countercultural, and it was even more uncommon for a Black preacher to preside over a congregation with white members. Hence, it comes as no surprise that these services were met with criticism by some Christian theologians like Charles Parham and secular media of the time like The Los Angeles Times. For example, Charles Parham, the former teacher of William Seymour, had this to say of the meetings "Men and women, white and Black people, knelt together or fell across one another; a white woman, perhaps of wealth and culture, could be seen thrown back in the arms of a big 'buck nigger,' and held tightly thus as she shivered and shook in freak imitation of Pentecost. Horrible, awful shame!" (Fulop & Raboteau 1997:305).

It was unfathomable for Parham that Black people did not know what he considered to be their place in Seymour's church and so, he concluded that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Seymour's meetings was fake and manipulated (Streeval 2018). This was only the beginning of schisms in the movement, as despite that "the leaders at Azusa Street believed that what was going on in their midst, both in the physical signs and wonders and in the breaking down of racial barriers, was, in fact, the work of the Holy Spirit' (Murphy 2000: 195). Parham made away with most of Seymour's white members and created the mostly white dominated Assemblies of God in 1914. Thus, this counter cultural and counter hegemonic stance faded as Pentecostalism was established and became more conservative and hierarchical, and

Seymour's influence on Pentecostalism gradually faded with many issues arising till his death in 1922[15]. Afterwards, racial segregation and doctrinal issues further split the churches apart. This was an opportunity lost to promote ecumenical consciousness in Christianity like the Apostle Paul's admonishment to the Galatian Church in the Bible about what the church of Christ should genuinely be like, where "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28 NKJV).

Whatever the fate of the early Pentecostal churches in North America, it cannot be denied that the Azusa Street revival was a major influence on the beginnings of the Pentecostal movement. In doctrinal terms, Beckford (2000) highlights five theological practices of early Pentecostals: "justification by faith, sanctification by faith, healing of the body, the pre-millennial return of Christ and baptism in the Holy Spirit" (2000:170). The early Pentecostals believed in the imminent return of Christ and were keen to return to what they saw as the New Testament type of Christianity where the workings of the Holy Spirit were key and manifested through the theological motifs mentioned above. This means that the early Pentecostals like their Wesleyan holiness counterparts believed that Christ's atonement on the cross had paid for their sins and had made the unrighteous righteous through this Saving work. In this sense, it is God's grace and faith in Christ rather than our works that saves us. Hence, Christians are by faith also delivered from the power of sin, thereby becoming saved from present and future sin by God's grace and by the power of the Holy Spirit who makes it possible for Christians to live a sanctified life. It is also the power of the Holy Spirit that provides healing for the body, after all, Christ has already paid for it, in that "he was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes, we are healed." Isaiah 53:5 NKJV. However, it is worth noting that this belief in 'Penal Substitution' is not confined to early Pentecostals. It is still common amongst a wider range of conservative evangelical Christians who are neither Pentecostal nor Holiness Christians (Dieter et al 1987).

The early Pentecostals believed that authentic Christianity was modelled by the early Christians as recorded in the New Testament by focusing on the workings of the Holy Spirit, which they believed had been lost "through centuries of formal, detached, hierarchical and scholarly Christianity" (Beckford 2000:170). This authentic Christianity as understood by early Pentecostals was manifested in the New Testament Christians as they experienced the workings of the Holy Spirit and the power of God (see Acts of the Apostles in the Bible). Thus, the theology of the early Pentecostals emphasised personal experience of God through

[15] It is also worth noting that, although women participated in the early days of the Azusa Street revival, they later became side-lined as patriarchal norms became part of the structure of the church. For more on women's involvement and eventual decline in the Azusa Street revival see, Espinosa, G. (2014). William J. Seymour and the Origins of Global Pentecostalism: A Biography and Documentary History. Duke University Press.

worship and the power of the Holy Spirit. However, Beckford (2000) contends that the emphasis on the experience of God and the power of the Holy Spirit was more than an attempt to restore a New Testament type of Christianity. Analysing Harvey Cox's study of Pentecostal spirituality, Beckford (2000) argues that it was an attempt to recover primal spirituality evidenced by their emphasis on personal piety, 'primal hope' which is the "belief that a new age is upon us and that all we see is not the full picture" (ibid:171), and glossolalia, that is speaking in tongues. Thus, this attempted retrieval of primal spirituality was intrinsically linked with the recovery of 'a Black Christian politics of faith' (Beckford 2000:171), which I explore in more depth in section 3.5 of Black Pentecostalism in Britain.

3.3.1. Early Pentecostalism in Britain

In Britain, Bebbington (1989:195) asserts that Pentecostalism was born at a time when evangelicalism was ebbing and there were dissenting views on the issue of holiness and sanctification by faith amongst the churches. Hence, British Pentecostalism can be traced to the Welsh revival that occurred in 1904-5. The Welsh revival, according to Bebbington (1987:195), swept "through much of Wales and affecting churches elsewhere in Britain, ordinary church life was suspended, whole communities anxiously sought salvation and some 100,000 people professed conversion". The Welsh revival is said to have started in a congregation in Cardiganshire which encouraged Evan Roberts, a young Calvinist who had earlier experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, to share his own enthusiasm for the baptism of the Holy Spirit with others, which he did starting from October 1904 in his home church in Loughor near Swansea. Thus, Evan Roberts is credited with being the central figure of the Welsh Revival that saw many attendees committed to experiencing the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and seeking God anew.

On the other hand, Chapman's (2004) account traces early Pentecostalism in Britain to Thomas Barratt's six weeks mission to Rev Boddy's church in Sunderland in 1907 which saw the introduction of the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. This practice and its associated teachings were further disseminated by Andrew Boddy, an Anglican vicar of All Saints Church, Sunderland (Blumhofer 1986, Goodhew 2012, Walsh 2012). Boddy had also attended the Welsh revival where he was impressed and stirred by the preaching on practical experience of spiritual power. Thus, it can be rightly claimed that Pentecostal growth was influenced by the Welsh revival of 1904.

Edith Blumhofer (1986) highlights the Keswick conventions and the Welsh revival as being instrumental in shaping the context of early British Pentecostalism. The Keswick convention was a movement that was established in 1875 by an Anglican, Canon T.D Harford-Battersby,

and a Quaker, Robert Wilson in Keswick (Bebbington 1989). The convention comprised of Evangelical Anglicans and Non-Conformists who had resolved to overcome sin and believed in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Boddy's personal witness of the outpouring and power of the Holy Spirit at a revival meeting in Oslo, Norway, encouraged him to accept the Pentecostal message in his own personal quest for spiritual renewal; and to pray for his own parish to experience the empowerment of the Holy spirit and the revival evidenced in these revival meetings he attended.

Although there is no evidence that Pentecostal practices were incorporated into Boddy's regular Anglican services, he however added prayer and teaching sessions patterned after the Pentecostal practice of spontaneous and emotional worship. The messages from these meetings were carried across Britain. Bebbington (1989:196) records that Boddy's church in Sunderland became the primary dissemination centre of the Pentecostal style messages up to the First World War. Afterwards, in 1908 and 1909 Cecil Polhill organised meetings regularly in Sion College on the Thames embankment in London. It did not take long for it to grow and for many more centres to sprout up.

Other preachers such as David Powell Williams who would later consolidate the Pentecostal assemblies at the time to become the apostolic church, and George Jeffreys of the Elim Evangelistic band, further influenced the expansion of Pentecostalism in Britain. Thus, Sunderland holds a legacy towards the organisation and growth of Pentecostalism in Britain. For instance, Kay, W.K (2008: 3) contends that:

> Sunderland, in other words, provided a template for later Pentecostal conferences and conventions and methods by which contentious issues might be addressed, acceptable doctrinal norms might be disseminated, and a wealth of information communicated through testimony about experiences that could be regarded as safe, sane, and free of the demonic.

On the genealogy of Pentecostalism in Britain and in North America, it can be argued that several movements such as the Holiness movements (and even movements before then), and afterwards served as a catalyst for the establishment of the Pentecostal movement. Therefore, none of these movements happened in isolation; rather, they made way for and influenced each other.

To a considerable extent, British Pentecostalism adhered to the doctrines of their North American counterparts mentioned above. In its initial stages, the British Pentecostal teachings included a search for personal holiness, practical experience of spiritual power (such as healing and deliverance) through the infilling of the Holy Spirit. The teachings that characterised the emerging Pentecostal assemblies at the time focused on a Christian's inner life, hence the preaching of holiness and sanctification. The teachings on holiness were

influenced by their preceding movements such as Methodism, which stressed the importance of letting go of 'worldly' desires and dedicating one's life to God. There was a lot of emphasis on morality, ethics, and reformation of one's character which might manifest in the form of personal piety, giving to the poor, doing social work, evangelising, and missions (Kalilombe 1997). This emphasis was heightened by their expectations of the imminent coming of Jesus Christ; hence Christians were exhorted to be ready. Bebbington (1989:196) describes it in these words "Pentecostalism was united, however, in its advent teaching, which was often more prominent than its advocacy of tongues, and its summons 'back to the Bible."

Hence, there was an urgency to preparing for the second coming of Christ. Added to this was the believe that a Holy Spirit baptism was needed for an end time revival manifested in spiritual gifts such as Apostolic power, gifts of healing and the working of miracles, hence the emphasis on the person and workings of the Holy spirit. This is in line with the promise of Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (NKJV). As evidenced in the Acts of the Apostles. The arrival of the Holy Spirit, which is described in Acts 1 and 2, also signalled an era where the early Christians were able to speak in other languages not known to them before as in the account of the Apostle Peter in (Acts 2:1-13). They were also able to perform miracles. Consequently, the early Pentecostals understood that the power of the Holy Spirit was needed for missions of preaching the gospel in all parts of the earth. Which can be an explanation of why there was an explosion of Pentecostal Evangelism to other regions of the world.

3.3.2. Women in Early Pentecostalism in Britain

In the genealogy of the growth and expansion of early Pentecostalism, women's involvement is often overlooked. Therefore, it is important to note that women were very instrumental in the spread of Pentecostalism in Britain. Diana Chapman (2004; 2008) notes that women played important roles in the years prior to, and in the early days of, Pentecostalism in Britain and were not restricted from participating and preaching in any aspect. Having noted in earlier sections that other Protestant movements made way for the birth and expansion of Pentecostalism, it is only right to mention that women pioneered some of these ministries, led churches and spoke at church conventions. They operated based upon their perception of the call of God on their lives with their accompanying spiritual gifts and anointing. According to Chapman (2004), women who had ministries in the early years of Pentecostalism in Britain had a major impact on the Pentecostal theology of their generation. An example of one of such women is Phoebe Palmer, an American who preached in packed houses in England between 1859 and 1863. Although Palmer was a Methodist and instrumental in the revival of

the Holiness movement with Methodism. It can be argued that she influenced Pentecostal theology and language years before its spread. She phoebe palmer held meetings in major cities which saw the salvation of many, and scores being baptised in the Holy Spirit, with some of them speaking in tongues (Hetherington & Eyre 2020:143-144).

Chapman (2004) suggests that Phoebe Palmer (1807-1874) was instrumental in providing the language and experience of Pentecost as well as the place, that is, Sunderland. In her sermons, she taught that "Holiness is power,' replacing Wesleyan terminology to describe the second blessing, with Pentecostal language. Instead of 'sanctification,' it was the 'baptism of the Holy ghost,' and instead of 'cleansing from sin,' it was 'an enduement of power for service'' Chapman (2004: 219). Although she faced opposition as it was not common for women to preach at the time, this did not stop Palmer from using and preaching about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Nor did it stop her from encouraging other women to do the same, for she strongly believed that grace from God was available to all irrespective of gender. She also believed that it was the responsibility of those who had received the grace of God to share it with others. Thus, women who have received grace from God had the responsibility of sharing it with others.

Notable among women who contributed to early Pentecostalism in Britain are Catherine Price, Margaret Cantel, Mary Boddy and Polly Wigglesworth. Using a Pentecostal hermeneutic of the power of the Holy Spirit, these women appealed to Bible verses such as Joel 2:28-32 and Acts 2:17-21 to argue that women also had the authority to preach and could be called and used by God. For Instance, Acts 2: 17 – 18 promised that "'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy" (NKJV). Therefore, if women can be baptised with the Holy Spirit and anointed, why then can they not be allowed to preach, Pentecostal women argued? These women rode the waves of these Biblical scriptures to teach and lay hands on people for healing, showing that God did not discriminate in whom he chooses to use.

For instance, Catherine Price is recorded to be the first person associated with the revival of 1907 to have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and to speak in tongues. Catherine led a small prayer group in her home in Brixton where many also received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Some count her as one of the leaders of the movement (Chapman 2008), and such was her importance that her signature appears alongside 30 other prominent leaders of the movement in the London declaration of 1909 which was a response to the Berlin declaration against the Pentecostal movement which they called the 'tongue movement' (Chapman 2008: 134).

Margaret Cantel on the other hand, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit when Mary Boddy, Alexander Boddy's wife, laid hands on her. She contributed to the early Pentecostal movement in Britain and together with her husband she led Pentecostal work in Upper Street, Islington, London. Even after her husband died in 1910, she continued to lead the work. She was commended by Alexander Boddy and was often praised and promoted in Confidence, which was a monthly publication that contained news of the Pentecostal work happening in Britain and abroad. It is also recorded that Margaret was the only woman amongst a group of fifteen that met in Birmingham to draft a constitution for the Assemblies of God church (Chapman 2008:135)

One of the more prominent women who influenced early Pentecostalism in Britain is Mrs Mary Boddy, the wife of Alexander Boddy. Mary operated mainly in the area of divine healing and the laying on of hands, on others specifically for the purpose of them receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. She had a healing ministry and mostly taught on the finished work of Christ on the cross which afforded believers a life free from sin and sickness. Her strong belief in the availability of divine healing influenced her husband, Alexander Boddy who became interested in divine healing. Mary Boddy's teachings also had a strong holiness theme, where she asserted that a "second blessing of sanctification was required believing that the Holy Spirit would only fill a 'cleansed vessel'" (Chapman 2008: 136). It is recorded (see Chapman 2008, Wakefield 2008) that she preached annually at the Sunderland conventions, and that the Pentecostal publication Confidence is filled with her teachings. It is also recorded that she was a signatory, alongside her husband, to the London declaration.

Another influential woman in early Pentecostalism in Britain woman was Polly Wigglesworth. Although she died in 1913, she played a role in the early days of the movement. Polly was a preacher and wife of Smith Wigglesworth, and together with her husband, she ministered in different Pentecostal centres in Britain, going as far as starting an annual Easter convention in Bradford in 1909. In the early years of their ministry, Polly was the preacher in the family and her spiritual life had profound influence on Smith's own life and spiritual Journey. Such was her influence that even after she died her "influence in the early days of Pentecostalism outlived her as Smith was able to say, 'All that I am today, I owe under God to my precious wife. Oh, she was lovely!" (Chapman 2008: 139).

It is worth noting that most of the women mentioned as being influential to the spread and growth of early Pentecostalism in Britain were pastors' wives or were in ministry together with their husbands (the position of pastor's wife continues to be relevant today in Pentecostalism). It is, therefore, worth reflecting whether these women would have been given platforms to preach if they were not married and in ministries with their husbands?

This reflection on whether it was their positions as pastor's wives that influenced receptivity in early Pentecostal meetings is important because, their ministries and participation suffered a decline over the coming years as church leaders debated the place and role of women in the church and home. 1914 saw Sunderland Convention addressing the issue of ‘a woman's place in the church’ (Chapman 2008:142). Prior to this, the Sunderland convention had made a commitment in 1913 to give precedence to ecclesiology instead of missions and to do that, they had committed to restoring apostolic faith. That is, developing the church and its doctrines according to that handed over to Christians by the Apostles in the Bible. This means that, the Sunderland convention had committed to abiding by the standards of the New Testament on how a church should function. Hence, it is of no surprise that the dilemma of what roles women were allowed to play in the church arose. For if the New Testament is read literally, it infers two opposing views. That is, women can prophesy and preach, and on the other hand, women are to keep quiet (Blumhofer 1993:176, Chapman 2008:142).

If Acts 2:17-21 is read alongside with Galatians 3:28 that says, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (NKJV) it can be inferred that women can preach and prophesy since God does not discriminate when he pours out his Holy Spirit. Hence “there was a consensus regarding the prophetic element in women's ministry, that 'a spirit baptised woman, had the same privilege in the church as a man to use every gift God had given her' (Chapman2008:142). However, another contentious matter was whether a woman had any authority over men. The arguments on this issue were based on creation story in Genesis 1:1, where God had made man first and then made woman after deciding that man needed a companion. And Corinthians 11 and 14, where Apostle Paul says that ‘Women should remain silent in the churches. Another scripture used was 1 Timothy 2:12, where it says, ‘I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man: she must be silent’. Thus, the convention concluded that women were only allowed to preach, prophesy, lay hands or teach, strictly if God had called them or there was no man to take on the position. Chapman (2008) criticised the convention for not considering the cultural and social context in which the New Testament was written and suggested that the convention was also following what was socially acceptable in Britain at the time. Consequently, women’s active role in the early years of Pentecostalism in Britain suffered a decline.

The next section will examine Black Pentecostalism in Britain. First, however, I set this discussion in the wider context of global Pentecostalism, before focusing on Black and African diaspora Pentecostal churches (ADPC) in Britain today. Their current values and the role of

women will be examined to determine whether the position of women has improved or declined.

3.4. GLOBAL PENTECOSTALISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Pentecostalism has witnessed an upsurge in popularity and global expansion by adapting to whatever social and cultural context it finds itself whilst maintaining its identity. It has shown an ability to adapt to diverse cultural context and integrate into the continuously modernising world (Anderson 2010, Miller & Yamamori 2007). Wariboko & Oliverio (2020) say the "current global distribution of Pentecostal/charismatic Christians, counts 230 million in Africa, 195 million in Latin America, 125 million in Asia, 68 million in North America, 21 million in Europe, and 4.5 million in Australia and Oceania." This means that Pentecostals/Charismatics account for up to 27% of Christians in the world. Research has shown that Pentecostalism is particularly strong in the Black churches in the West. Furthermore, Pentecostalism has had a strong influence on mega churches such as Hillsong in North America and Australia. The Pentecostal movement also boasts one of the largest churches in the world, the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea, where up to 250,000 people attend each Sunday. This shows that Pentecostalism as a global phenomenon continues to grow.

In their book *Global Pentecostalism: The new face of Christian social engagement*, Miller & Yamamori (2007) examined selected Pentecostal churches in twenty different countries in Africa, eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia for four years. They found Pentecostal churches in these regions to be vibrant and growing because they were providing practical solutions to people's needs. For instance, Miller & Yamamori (2007) assert that Pentecostalism has an ethos of individual and community transformation. That is, it is not only expected that the lives of converts be transformed through the power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, but that they also have a duty to transform the communities they are in, hence, they identify amongst Pentecostals what they call 'progressive Pentecostalism.' According to them, progressive Pentecostalism means that the churches they studied are involved in social ministries. They categorised the social and individual transformation that Pentecostal churches in the countries they studied are involved in, into eight types of services, programs, and ministries, namely, A) Mercy ministries (providing food, clothing, shelter). B) Emergency services (responding to floods, famine, earthquakes). C) Education (providing day care, schools, tuition assistance). D) Counselling services (helping with addiction, divorce, depression). E) Medical assistance (establishing health clinics, dental clinics, psychological services). F) Economic development (providing microenterprise loans, job training, affordable housing). G) The arts (training in music, dance, drama). H) Policy change (opposing corruption, monitoring elections, advocating a living wage). Miller & Yamamori (2007: 43).

Consequently, from the list of social services that many Pentecostal churches provide, as articulated by Miller & Yamamori (2007), they portend that the growth of the movement can be attributed to the holistic approach to religion, where salvation is not only about being saved but also about being transformed. Hence, Christianity becomes more than a belief in the supernatural or belief in an abstract God, rather, it becomes tangible and transformative. However, I would argue that this is not unique to Pentecostalism as other Christians can lay claim to this in their own traditions. Moreover, many researchers would agree that Pentecostalism has conservative attitudes towards gender. Where traditional masculinities and femininities are promoted. Additionally, Beckford (2000;2006) argues that Pentecostalism tends to withdraw from social action.

Pentecostal churches have a wide variety of forms and could be made up of small number of people in households or large mega churches (Anderson 2010). This has made it hard for Pentecostalism to be reduced to a generalised description or formula because it is diverse, and the study of Pentecostalism is multi and inter- disciplinary in nature. Hence, Pentecostal theology is hard to articulate because it manifests in different forms, especially because Pentecostalism as a movement was influenced by the theologies of other movements prior to it. For example, the Pentecostal movement has its roots in the Holiness movement, afterwards, the charismatic and third wave evangelical movements also emerged and influenced each other. Thus, we have the classical Pentecostals which include churches like Assemblies of God, the Church of God in Christ, and the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. These churches trace their roots to the late 19th century Holiness movement (Anderson 2010; 2013, Miller & Yamamori 2007). Classical Pentecostals believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and understand Spirit baptism as “a subsequent experience usually accompanied by speaking in tongues” Anderson (2013: 6). This means that speaking in tongues is a sign that a believer has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic Pentecostals are those who remain in the established denominations like the Roman Catholic Church. They believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit but contend that other gifts of the Holy Spirit can serve as a sign that one has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit rather than tongues. (Anderson 2010; 2013). There are also Indigenous independent churches, such as the spirit churches or the Aladura churches of West Africa. Although they do not have defined theologies, they also believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and in the use of the gifts and working of the Holy Spirit during worship. There are also the Neo–Charismatics or the third wave Charismatics. These are independent churches that do not have their roots in the Azusa Street revival nor old existing forms of Christianity like the Roman Catholic Church. They also embrace the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of glossolalia (speaking in tongues). They believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are available for every Christian.

However, no matter what kind of Pentecostalism, there are common characteristics that link them together. In writing about Pentecostalism, Anderson (2010) identifies five typifying characteristics of Pentecostalism namely, 1) an emphasis by Pentecostals on the role of the Holy Spirit and the creation of a conducive environment for the operations of the Holy Spirit, 2) Focus on achievement of numerical growth. 3) the flexibility of the movement by adapting to the cultural heterogeneity of the world whilst remaining loyal to its identity. 4) attraction of a wide variety of audience, and 5) its location in the southern hemisphere. According to Anderson (2013:179):

> all the various expressions of Pentecostalism have one common experience, a personal encounter with the Spirit of God enabling and empowering people for service. Pentecostals often declare that 'signs and wonders' accompany this encounter, certain evidence of 'God with us. Through their experience of the Spirit, Pentecostals and Charismatics make the immanence of God tangible.

This means that one of the central and distinctive themes of Pentecostal theology is the belief in the power and baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is in relation to the words in Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be [a]witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." This was the promise made to the disciples by Jesus. As described in Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, the disciples were baptised in Holy Spirit and received the power to heal the sick and perform miracles. Therefore, for Pentecostals, the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives makes this power available to them too. The baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gifts and fruits of the Spirit are all to enable the believer to live their lives as God wants them to. However, Pentecostals like their holiness counterpart also believe in living a holy life to make themselves worthy recipient of the Holy Spirit (Dieter et al 1987). The call to creating a conducive environment for the Holy Spirit to thrive is also linked to the Bible. Hence, the Bible is important in Pentecostalism, indeed, Pentecostals have been accused of Biblical literalism (Chike 2007).

For Pentecostals, the Bible is God's word to them, and it contains all the answers to life's questions. Anderson (2013: 223) asserts that "Pentecostals take the Bible as it is and look for common ground in real-life situations. On finding these correspondences, they believe that God is speaking to them and can do the same things for them. The Bible therefore has immediacy and relevance to life experiences." Since the Bible is relevant to their everyday lives, and is God's spoken word to them, they (like most people do) use it to explain realities and are sometimes unaware of their own bias in interpreting the Bible.

On the aspect of numerical growth, the call to missions is the driving force for growth. Pentecostals take the call to mission and evangelism seriously, which accounts for the rapid growth of the movement. According to Anderson (2013: 198) "the first Pentecostals believed

that the Spirit had been poured out on them in order to engage in the end-time harvest of souls that would accompany the preaching of the 'full gospel' throughout the world". This is consistent with the beliefs of contemporary Pentecostals as they make use of new media available to them and a variety of outreach programs to 'convert' souls for the Kingdom of God. This call to mission is also connected to the gifts of the Holy Spirit as many missionaries either heard the call on their lives through prophesy, dreams, or visions.

Pentecostalism can adapt and mutate depending on the environment it finds itself in. For example, in Africa, Pentecostalism is thriving as it has adapted itself to solving the social needs of the people by incorporating narrative style sermons and incorporating indigenous beats into their worship. Pentecostalism is able to appeal to all audiences as it seeks to provide individual and community transformation. However, it is worth noting that some Pentecostals are also known for being hostile to what are considered to be traditional or indigenous traditions, such as ancestor rituals. These are seen as luring people away from a holy life and being saved. Therefore, it can be said that Pentecostalism adapts itself to local environments. But at the same time, there are sometimes also these tensions with 'traditional' and 'indigenous' ways of life (see Anderson 1993, 2006, 2013, 2018; Kalu 2008, Bawa 2019)

Considering Pentecostalism's adaptability, both Anderson (2010) and Beckford (2000) note that Pentecostal churches function like extended families creating a community that gives members a sense of belonging, because members are surrounded by people that care about every aspect of their lives. Most Pentecostal churches include various groups that cater to the needs of people, for example, there are children's groups, young adult groups, women's groups, and men's groups. Beyond that, many Pentecostal churches run home or cell groups, which have a more personal nature with fewer members. In these kinds of home cell groups, people can share their burdens and joys as well with the members in their cell groups (Miller & Yamamori 2007). Whilst providing a sense of community, Pentecostal churches also provide an avenue for members to express themselves in the worship (Toulis 1997). It is not rare to find people crying during worship or dance exuberantly during praises. This style of expressive worship which is more than music but also very spiritual endears members to Pentecostal churches (Miller & Yamamori 2007).

Considering this, Pentecostalism can attribute its continued growth to addressing the various aspects of people's lives. Pentecostal theology emphasises the experience of the Holy Spirit manifested through the speaking of tongues. It lays emphasis on the born-again conversion experience and a distinction between the 'world' and the 'church.' Therefore, Pentecostals like other Christians are concerned with having a personal relationship with God through prayers, praises, giving and hearing from God. In this sense, a Pentecostal is expected to have a conversion where they become 'born again' by letting go of their sinful nature and handing

over control of their lives to God through the Holy Spirit. After the initial conversion, the new believer is expected to seek to live a life worthy of God's kingdom, since they are called to be peculiar people. This is in keeping with ideas about holiness and sanctification. For the believer is the temple of God, therefore there are many things that the believer cannot do as they are deemed 'worldly.' Due to this, there are various restrictions on what can be worn, what can be eaten, where one can go (clubs, parties), the kinds of friends one can keep and how one speaks.

Another orientation in some modern-day Pentecostalism is the prosperity gospel-oriented churches. The emphasis in these Pentecostal churches is the power of God to perform miracles in healing and bringing wealth to faithful members (Anderson 2010; 2013, Miller & Yamamori 2007). Here, the work of the Holy Spirit is also emphasised but with a focus on the 'power' to heal and provide supernaturally. The churches with this orientation often make use of modern media outlets. Although criticised by other forms of Christianity and even other Pentecostal denominations, one way of looking at these kinds of churches is that they are adapting to the modern cares and concerns of their members as modern world increasingly becomes capitalist.

3.5. BLACK PENTECOSTALISM IN BRITAIN

In Britain, the 1950s and 1960s saw an upsurge of new Black Pentecostal churches established by Black people from the Caribbean, and the 1980s saw a new West African churches. Beckford (2000; 2006) argues that Black Pentecostalism in Britain shares a history and theological hallmarks with Azusa Street Pentecostal movement. He links this assertion to William Seymour and his vision of a Christianity that saw no racial, class or gender divide. However, because Black Christianity emerged out of a need to cater for Black people's needs, and in some cases because of racism and rejection by other – traditional/White led – denominations to which migrants had belonged in the Caribbean – for example, Church of England, Methodist, Baptist, or Roman Catholic. Black Christianity in Britain has a distinctive form of Christianity that developed in response to Black Christians experiences as minorities in Britain. However, it is important to note that Black Christianity in Britain cannot be reduced to Pentecostalism. For instance, Reddie (2000) identifies two broad categories of Black churches in Britain; Black Pentecostal led churches which he says are more visible and Black majority churches in White historic denominations where Black theology and traditions are being developed.

According to Kalilombe (1997: 307) Black Christianity "developed in response to the need for Black Christians to make sense of the state of 'ethnic minority' imposed on them when they

came to Britain". That is, after the arrival of Black Christians from the Caribbean and parts of Africa, they were met with the uncomfortable experience of being an ethnic minority which meant that they faced racism and discrimination (Kalilombe 1997). For example, when Black Christians sought to integrate themselves with older existing denominations that they thought of as 'mother churches' (Kalilombe 1997: 310), they were, in most cases (but not always) not welcomed. However, feeling unwelcome was not the only difficulty they faced, the church style of British churches was not appealing to some of the new immigrants. That is, according to Kalilombe (1997) many of the white majority churches lacked the exuberance and zeal for God that most Black people expected. He asserts that "Black people found the white-majority churches, especially the mainline ones, quite 'cold', without enthusiasm or excitement about their faith" (ibid:312).

Therefore, British churches could not meet the needs of the new immigrants especially as racism was rampant. Thus, there arose a need to either leave the churches, remain within the denomination, and endure, or create their own denomination. Black immigrants began to create their own denominations.

Beckford (2000:171) identifies three distinct theological traditions of modern-day Black Pentecostalism - the experience of God, a dynamic spirituality and empowering worship. These theological hallmarks characterise Black British Pentecostalism. However, it is important to note that 'Black churches' are not all the same. Kalilombe (1997: 314) opines that Black Pentecostal tradition in Britain can be divided into two main groups; African Caribbean Pentecostal churches and those of African origin. Therefore, Black Pentecostalism finds expression in African Caribbean Pentecostals and African Pentecostals.

Although, Black Pentecostal churches have served as a place for creating and negotiating identities, liberation, self-actualisation, and expression for Black Pentecostals (see Toulis 1997). Beckford (2000) is critical of their underutilisation of Pentecostal theology to bring about structural and social change. He asserts that they have been lax in "making the gospel message apply to the need for social change" (ibid:179). Social change in the context of this thesis includes emancipation from structural gender hierarchies in African Pentecostal churches[16].

3.6. AFRICAN DIASPORA PENTECOSTALISM

Pentecostalism as a movement spread to Africa through evangelisation efforts soon after the Azusa Street revival that took place in Los Angeles in 1906. However, some African scholars

[16] Elaine Foster in her thesis gives a more detailed account of women's involvement in the early days of Black led churches and indicates that women were the backbone of the churches. see, Foster, E.F., 1990. Black women in black-led churches: a study of black women's contribution to the growth and development of black-led churches in Britain (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).

contend that the spread of Pentecostalism in Africa was due to Africans evangelising Africans (Kalu 2008, Adogame 2013). Whichever may be the case, the growth of Pentecostalism has been rapid since the decolonisation era of the 1950s and 1960s (Adogame & Spickard 2010, Kalu 2008). Other forms of Christianity such as the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches were already present in the continent. Due to how intertwined imperialism and mission Christianity were, there were tensions over whether to accept what was perceived to be European religion while repudiating African culture (Adogame & Spickard 2010). This is because Christianity as brought to Africans by missionaries required Africans to reject their own religious traditions. In other words, African religious traditions were demonised (and continues to be demonised even today by African Pentecostal churches). Apart from their religious traditions being repudiated, Africans faced the dilemma of racism even from missionaries who claimed to be brothers and sisters in the Lord. For example, Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) which was commissioned in South Africa in 1913, where White leaders of the church started passing racist laws that saw no African occupying a position of leadership in the church (Anderson 2013). It was therefore hard to separate colonialism with the missionaries.

Indigenous, and independent Christianity began to emerge as members of former classical Pentecostals churches began to leave to create their own churches. The subsequent expansion of Christianity in Africa has largely been by Africans themselves. In the UK and the global north, most African diaspora Pentecostal churches (ADPC) emerged as a form of reverse missions in an attempt to evangelise the now 'secularized' West (Adogame & Spickard 2010, Adogame 2013, Burgess, Hunt & Lightly 2001, Kalu 2008). Reverse missions according to Adogame (2013:169) is an "(un-) conscious missionary strategy and zeal by churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America of (re-) evangelising the West". This is based on the understanding by these churches that the west has become secularised and no longer have spiritual fervour. For instance, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), has a clear mission to evangelise the world and win souls from all nations for Christ (see www.rccguk.church).

Adogame (2013:169) also gives an example of a notice on the mission's office of RCCG's headquarters in Lagos that has the following words "Europe: A prodigal Continent!... Europe: A Mission field in need of church attention". Whether this attempt to win back Europe for Christ has been successful is debatable because most of these churches have become a means of social identity formation for African immigrants and a means to cope and adapt to British society. The intent of the reverse missions envisioned by the African Pentecostal churches in Africa was to reintroduce the gospel to the West which they saw as having declined into secularisation, an after effect of modernity. What has resulted from this reverse mission enterprise is that ADPC's now function in ways that reflect the development in West Africa and

provide a means for members to adapt to British society. This means that they maintain home traditions in British society whilst also trying to adapt to it.

Using the Redeemed Christian Church of God as a case study, Hunt and Lightly (2001) highlight the theologies and doctrines of African Pentecostal churches. Whilst, the doctrines of African Pentecostal churches are consistent with global Pentecostal culture and modernised modes of worship, they have produced their own distinct Pentecostalism imbued with African tradition and histories that reflects the daily experiences and needs of their people. In his research on Nigerian Pentecostal theology, Burgess (2008) points out the correlation between their interpretations of the Bible and culture. In-fact, a running theme in Burgess's (2008) research is how culture is intertwined with the theologies of the Nigerian church be it the theology of holiness, prosperity, or deliverance.

On the issue of holiness, African diaspora Pentecostal churches like other forms of Christianity, place a lot of emphasis on purity. Teachings of holiness have been central to the Christian faith; therefore, the members of ADPC's are exhorted to be morally pure, in speech and dressing and are expected to be model citizens. Hunt & Lightly (2001) suggest that this teaching is a backdrop from the African continent where corruption has permeated every sphere and at such Pentecostals strive to separate themselves from vulgar worldly culture. Upholding strict moral codes and adhering to more pious behaviour is the evident fruit that one is born again. Purity boundaries serve as a useful tool to create new notions of self as morally upright vessels to be used by God. Of course, this is also linked to the workings of the Holy spirit in an individual's life. As stated in section 3.4 Pentecostals believe in creating a conducive environment for the Holy Spirit to function, this is linked to ADPC's understanding of holiness. Consequently, the issue of holiness as it relates to Pentecostal theology and the focus of this thesis is important. Therefore, it warrants more consideration than this current chapter allows. I discuss this in more detail in chapter 4.

3.7 WOMEN IN AFRICAN PENTECOSTALISM

Contemporary Pentecostalism is known to have conservative approach towards gender as I have noted in earlier sections. When it comes to African Pentecostalism, research has shown that they maintain this position as well. For instance, in researching NCCTG, an African Caribbean Pentecostal congregation in Britain, Toulis (1997) found that, whilst the church served as a space where women could feel appreciated and affirmed. It was also a space that reinforced conservative gender hierarchies. Similarly, Beckford (2000) identified a limitation to the emancipation and social transformation capability of Black Pentecostalism In that, whilst women did play important roles in the Black Pentecostal churches he researched, women did

not preach. Indeed, the churches had not been successful in breaking down structural hierarchies.

Kalu (2008:148-165) identifies four categories of female discourses in African Pentecostalism. They are founders, sisters, first ladies, and jezebels. According to Kalu (2008) Founders are women who have founded churches like Margaret Wangare of Kenya, Dorcas Olayinka from Nigeria, and Stella Ajisebutu to name a few. In this category, women founders have more leadership power than women in male founded churches. According to him, these women (especially those with a healing or deliverance ministry) are respected because the roles they play are reminiscent of indigenous roles of priestesses and prophetesses. Women founders serve as role models and support for other women through gender specific pastoral care. Although these women may exercise more power, it is done within traditional gender ideologies. For instance, it is common for women to start churches alongside their husbands. Additionally, whilst empowering and inspiring other women their ministries are mainly within the healing and deliverance domain.

Sisters, according to Kalu (2008), are women within African Pentecostal churches that have spiritual gifts who are allowed to minister with those gifts in ways that do not challenge patriarchal structures of the church. For instance, women are allowed to belong to or even lead evangelism, worship, missions, or prophetic groups in the church. This influence is mostly contingent on having spiritual gifts. The first ladies on the other hand are pastor's wives who give pastoral care to the women in the church. Kalu (2008) asserts that different first ladies adopt differing leadership or pastoral styles such as the 'queen leader' who oversees certain aspects of the church, 'the mama' or 'wise woman' style who is a motherly figure to church members and gives advice to all. Accordingly, first ladies are given respect because "they image family values and a certain theology" (ibid:153). Adogame (2013) contends that, whilst first ladies empower and inspire women in African Pentecostal churches, and may seem egalitarian in principle, it is still along the lines of conservative gender ideologies. He says this because, there is often a preoccupation with encouraging women to seek marriage, work on their marriages and children whilst also excelling in their careers. The positions of first ladies are quite important for how ideal femininity is understood and constructed by participants of this research as we shall see in the discussion chapters. They serve as models of behaviour, dressing and morality.

The antithesis to the other categories is the Jezebel. Men in African Pentecostal churches are warned of this type of women and women in turn would not wish to be labelled as such. For instance, Kalu (2008:153) opines that "preying pastors who fall into sexual sins usually avoid taking personal responsibility by alleging that 'Jezebel' attacked and seduced them in order to ruin their successful ministries". At such, Jezebels are seen as a seductive, immoral, and

controlling women. This typology is based on the Biblical character Queen Jezebel who was wife to one of Israel's Kings. In response to the Jezebel typology, women in African Pentecostal churches are encouraged to dress modestly to avoid unintentionally seducing men (Kalu 2008). This is evidenced in my conversations with participants during fieldwork, where some participants asserted that women are to dress properly so as not lead men into sin. These categories of female discourse within African Pentecostal churches provide a framework for understanding and analysing how the women in this research construct femininity.

3.8 CONCLUSION

Having examined gender and femininity in western and African societies in chapter two of this thesis, as well as examining notions of femininity within the broader sense of the Christian religion. This chapter has aimed to situate gender within Pentecostal branch of Christianity. I have done this by first examining the importance of Pentecostalism within discourses of secularity claims in Britain. Despite claims that Britain is secular, this chapter has shown that this claim does not consider the different modes and complexity of religious beliefs and practices. Consequently, this chapter has further situated Pentecostalism in British society as it is a thriving branch of Christianity that has defied secularity claims. Secularism has also been explored in this chapter to further situate ADPCs because, it is understood by women in this research that Britain is a secular society. Secularism have also been visited to show the importance of Pentecostalism in the study of religion in the UK and to further situate it in the British society.

Furthermore, I have examined the history of Pentecostalism, because looking at the history of a place or movement helps us understand the context in which it operates. Therefore, the history of Pentecostalism has shown that the movement in its early years operated under a liberative and emancipatory praxis, in that, it broke down racial, class and gender barriers. This has shown that the movement was favourable to women. The importance of linking the histories of global Pentecostalism and African Pentecostalism in Britain is to show the declining place of women in the movement. And the part culture and patriarchal reading and understanding of the Bible plays in maintaining the status quo of gender inequality. This literature chapter on Pentecostalism has also shown the lost opportunity of Pentecostalism to be truly liberative by breaking down structural hierarchies within the church and participating in social action that brings about transformation to societies.

The next chapters will focus on the roots of holiness theology. This is because understanding Pentecostal ideas about the temple of God, holiness and sanctification offers a lens through

which to examine how the Bible is used and interpreted in APCs and by the women in this research to construct ideas about gender.

CHAPTER FOUR

BECOMING THE TEMPLE OF GOD: The concept of holiness.

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 2 of this thesis, I examined the historical, cultural, and religious narratives used in constructing ideas about femininity to situate the focus of my research. I also, examined the use of the Bible in the construction of ideal feminine values. Having done this, I turned to Pentecostalism in chapter 3 to further situate my research because the women I interview belong to a Pentecostal Christian tradition. I offered a brief history of Pentecostalism and African Pentecostalism as well as their principal values to further contextualise the Christian values of the women interviewed in this research. Hence, in this chapter, I focus primarily on APCs theology of holiness as it relates to being the temple of God. I summarise the Christian concept of holiness as it is understood within African Pentecostal Churches (APCs) and discuss the ways in which these perspectives impact on ideas about femininity.

To situate the importance of holiness within femininity construction in the context of this thesis, I provide a brief context on the place of holiness in my research and show how it relates to becoming the temple of God. Secondly, I render an overview of some of the Christian understanding of holiness within Protestantism because they have had an influence on Pentecostal theologies. I also discuss Otto's (1958) concept of holiness because, participant's own understanding aligns with Otto's (1958) concept of holiness. Third, I focus on African Pentecostal understanding of holiness and then link it to gender. Finally, I consider the moral dimensions of holiness and their implication for the women in this research.

In various Christian traditions, the concept of holiness is tied to the moral conduct of an individual (Barton 2003). Holiness is most closely linked with Wesleyan tradition. Take for instance, in 19th century Wesley Holiness church, John Wesley's ideas about scriptural or social holiness can be linked to morality but also [1] ideas about separation from 'the world' and [2] attempting to live 'like Jesus'. This is tied to the notion that Christians have been called

by God to be ‘peculiar’ people and to be like Him, thus becoming his living temples as his spirit dwells in them.

Before I go further, a word on the symbolism of the temple and how it relates to Christians being living temples. The Old Testament describes Israel’s temple where God dwells. First is a movable tent that was made according to instructions given to Moses by God in Exodus 25 -40. This tent was called the ‘tent of meeting’ or ‘the tabernacle of the congregation’. This tent or tabernacle was where God met with his people (the Israelites). Consequently, in 1kings 6-7, a more permanent temple was built, this time too with specific instructions from God on how it should be built. Because it was the dwelling place of God amongst his people, the temple was to be kept holy because God is holy. Rituals were observed as not everyone had access to the temple and the priests that did have to adhere to strict rules and rituals. Beale (2004) links the garden of Eden in Genesis to the Old Testament temples since it was a meeting point for God and man. One of the symbolisms of the temple according to Beale (2004:31) is that the temple reflects God’s heavenly abode and his plan for humanity. Therefore, the Old Testament temples reflect God’s glory, beauty, and holiness.

Consequently, since the temple reflects God’s plans for humanity, the New Testament scripture of 1Corinthians 3:16 links the sacredness of the physical Old Testament temple with our bodies as temples of God. This scripture describes followers of Jesus as temples in the following words:

> Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone [a]defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are (NKJV).

Therefore, followers are exhorted to keep themselves pure because they carry God’s presence just as the tabernacle and temple in the Old Testaments were God’s dwelling place. On this premise, notions about holiness often create a binary where being ‘worldly’ is the opposite of being ‘holy.’ This reflects a very particular understanding of creation as flawed and Christian discipleship as separation. This kind of separation can be understood as transformative holiness according to Gathje, P.R, (2022:51). In this kind of transformative separation, God calls Christians out of an old way of living into a new lifestyle that is God centred. Take for instance the New Testament verse that says, “but you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light;” (1Peter 2:9 NKJV). These words echo the ones found in the Old Testament verse of Exodus 19:6 NKJV that says, “and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These scriptures are often interpreted as a separation from others, wherein Christians are the chosen people

called out of darkness unto righteousness and to proclaim God's praises to the rest of the world as we shall see in discussion chapter 8.

One way of proclaiming God's praise can then be understood in terms of mirroring God's character to the rest of the world, one of which is holiness. In this sense, God is holy (sacred), and the world is profane. Christians are therefore called out of this profaneness unto the sacred. We can see this in the apostle Paul's admonishments to the New Testament Christians to "therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "be holy, for I am holy." (1Peter 1:13-16 NKJV). Here, this scripture is also echoing many Old Testament scriptures such as Leviticus (20:26 NKJV) where it says, "and you shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.

Consequently, many Christians believe they are exhorted through the scriptures to behave as people that have a different lifestyle than those of the world. They believe they have been called out by God to be like him. This can be found in many books of the Bible (but not often in the teaching of Jesus), for example Romans 12:1-2 NKJV that says:

> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Hence, some might argue, the binary of profane and sacred is created wherein Christians strive not to be 'worldly.' Based on this premise, the scriptures quoted can be interpreted as encouraging Christians to live morally upright lives where they strive to be holy like God as he now resides in their hearts rather than in a temple. That is, Christian are now the temples of God. Hence, striving to live above moral impurity should be the goal of a Christian, and a Christian's sense of self ought to be shaped around these ideals. Therefore, the focus of this chapter arises from such understandings of holiness, which are foundational within African Pentecostal Churches. It also arises from questioning how African Pentecostal understandings of holiness might influence ideas about femininity?

Having established earlier in chapter 2 that in African Christianity, the Bible is interpreted alongside African traditional/cultural lenses, and for many Africans, religion is indistinguishable from daily life. Therefore, for African Christianity, holiness is also tied to one's lifestyle. This means that the Bible and Christian traditions should ideally shape a person's life. In this sense, notions of holiness also shape the lives of church members. Even if the sermon was about

prosperity, it is somehow also tied to salvation, as well as about living a good Christian life (Hunt & Lightly 2008:117-118). The main goal of this thesis is to study how notions of holiness influence femininity construction in African Pentecostal churches (APC). Since attitudes towards gender within APCs are influenced by approaches to the Bible and Christian doctrines, we need to understand some of the theological underpinnings of ideas about holiness. This is what the current chapter sets out to do.

4.1 THE CONCEPT OF HOLINESS

Holiness is a central theme in many religions; however, it can mean different things for these religions. Whilst holiness has a moral dimension, it is much more than morality (Otto 1958). In most Christian traditions, holiness has much to do with God's fundamental character. God's innate character or personality is understood to be holy, and it is out of his (God) grace that he gifts us (Christians) with holiness. In this sense, holiness is a key aspect of sharing in God's presence – for without it "no man shall see God." Hebrews 12:14 NKJV

The word 'holy' connotes purity, sacredness and everything that is good. However, Otto (1958) argues that holiness is more than a state of being holy, or a simple case of goodness, that is, the concept of holiness is much more than a moral dimension. In the Judeo- Christian tradition, holiness as a fundamental character of God is evidenced in many places in the Bible. For example, in Exodus 3: 1- 15, the Bible offers an account of Moses's encounter with God. In this chapter of the Bible, we are presented with Moses. In this encounter, God appears to Moses in the form of a burning bush that is not consumed by the fire and as he approaches this burning bush, he hears God say to him ""Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." (Vs 5 NKJV). Here, the place where God has been, is perceived to be holy. Therefore, it can be assumed that God's presence is seen as holy.

Another example can be found in Isaiah's account of a vision he had where he saw the throne of God and the angels said of God; "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" (Isaiah 6:3 NKJV). Isaiah was a prophet of Israel. The Bible is full of many mentions of God being holy or the house of God being holy. For instance, Ezekiel 36:23 says, "And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord," says the Lord God, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. (NKJV). Here alludes to a distinction between sacred and profane, God is sacred and some of the acts of humans can be seen as profane. Many chapters in Leviticus and Deuteronomy addresses God as holy, for example Leviticus 11: 44 (NKJV) says to the Israelites "for I am the Lord your God. You shall

therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Here too, there is the distinction between profane and sacred. Therefore, it can be said that this distinction is important in conceptualising holiness. Especially as women in APC are expected to be bearers of morality in the community (see chapters 2, 7 and 8), there is an emphasis on being different from the women in the 'world'. Hence, women in APCs are expected to exemplify all that is 'sacred' seeing as their bodies are now the temple of God.

Likewise, the New Testament references the holiness of God. For instance, the Bible verses cited in section 4.0 where the New Testament Christians are exhorted to strive to be holy like God who is holy. Because holiness is understood in the Bible beyond its ethical dimensions and is seen as an attribute of God, I examine the concept of holiness within Protestant traditions and then I look to Otto's "the idea of the holy".

4.1.2 *Protestantism*

The term Protestantism refers to a broad range of Christian denominations that emerged during the Reformation, beginning in the late fifteenth century CE, and in subsequent centuries. Protestantism in its early years was very reformist in nature given that the start of the movement is credited to Martin Luther, a German monk of the Roman Catholic Church who was later excommunicated (Tarr & Randell n.d, Kleinig 1985). Martin Luther had published what he called 'Ninety-five theses' and pinned them to the door of the main church in Wittenberg in protest at the abuses of the church. Luther was initially triggered by the selling of 'indulgences,' a paper certificate that promised the forgiveness of sins. Later, Luther began to study the Bible and became convinced that the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church on salvation was wrong (Kleinig 1985). Luther believed strongly that the answer to knowing God's will for our lives were contained in the Bible alone, and that heaven was only obtainable through faith alone, which in turn would produce good works. This was contrary to the Roman Catholic teachings that the Pope had the power to forgive sins and that heaven could be attained by continuous virtuous deeds. Thus, Luther set out to reform what he regarded to be the errors and abuses of the Roman Catholic Church (Tarr & Randell n.d, Kleinig 1985).

Therefore, it can be said that early Protestantism was interested in how holiness should be understood in relation to God's plan for the world, church, and believers. Protestantism is made up of many denominations and reflects a wide range of understandings of the Christian Gospel and the calling of the Church. However, one of the first Protestant denominations to conceptualise holiness theologically is the Lutherans. The Lutherans concept of holiness is heavily rooted in the doctrine of Martin Luther. For Luther, holiness is a gift from God to people,

and can only be gained through faith (Kleinig 1985:21-29). In this tradition, holiness is from God and only God can make a person holy. That is, a believer can only attain holiness through the saving work of Jesus Christ and not through their own effort (Kleinig 1985). Therefore, human effort is of no consequence in attaining holiness as the Roman Catholic Church taught, rather, according to Lutherans, the emphasis should be placed on preaching God's gift of holiness through the Bible and the sacrament.

Following this kind of reformist thinking, another Protestant group coming out of Britain in the 16th and 17th century that conceptualised holiness is the Puritans who followed the reformed teachings of the Calvinists. The theology of the Calvinists is rooted in the teachings of John Calvin which critiqued aspects of the Roman Catholic Church. The teachings of John Calvin influenced the Church of England in the 16th century in that there was a rise of reformists in Britain such as the Puritans. Like Lutherans, Puritans emphasised that God is holy, and that holiness comes from him through grace (Kleinig 1985, Dieter et al 1987, Tarr & Randell n.d). In this sense, one can only be made holy through the Grace of God through Jesus Christ. For Calvinists Jesus has already sanctified the church by going through sufferings and dying on the cross, therefore just as he died on the cross, Christians are also dead to sin (Kleinig 1985, Dieter et al 1987, Svanberg 2002). Because of Jesus's death and resurrection, believers' sanctification has been bought by the suffering of Jesus and his obedience to God the father. Therefore, believers partake in Jesus's holiness through grace and not by any means of the actions of believers. This understanding of holiness is evident in some of my participants responses to what holiness means to them and how it is understood in the church that they attend. For most of the women in this research, holiness has nothing to do with individuals, rather it involves a holy God making an unworthy and unholy individual holy through belief in and acceptance of Jesus. This, participants call grace.

However, Calvinists also believe that just as they have received the holiness of Jesus Christ by faith and partake in his justification and sanctification, believers should live their lives as one 'dead to sin' (Dieter et al 1985, Lowery 2001, Knight III. 2010). Therefore, this new life involves constant self-examination to purify oneself of sinful thoughts and actions by adhering to strict Calvinist's idea of holy living such as simplicity in dressing, avoidance of things like singing and dancing. Although Puritans believed in adhering to a simple lifestyle, they also believed that Godly wealth was a sign of God's blessings. Although there is no avoidance of singing and dancing, Calvinist ideas of holiness can be seen in some participants understanding of holiness. These ideas are rooted in some APCs conceptualisation of holiness as we shall see in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Another Protestant denominations in Britain most strongly associated with the idea of holiness is the Methodist church, which was started in the 18th century by an Anglican priest, John

Wesley. An important doctrine in the Methodist church is the doctrine of Christian Perfection, which is a belief that one can attain holiness. However, this life of holiness is only accomplished through God's grace and sanctification (Kleinig 1985, Wesley 1872). Wesley (1872) suggested that total sanctification was theoretically possible but was about what he called 'perfect love'. For Wesley 'perfect love' meant:

> loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies, that no wrong temper, non-contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love. It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul. It is love 'rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, in everything giving thanks'. (Wesley's sermon 43 cited in umcdiscipleship 2014)

This meant that Wesley tied love to holiness because the fruits of the spirit will be evidenced in a believer's life and that will also reflect in how the believer relates with others. Thus, he placed a strong emphasis on the link between holiness, love, and social justice.

Consequently, John Wesley viewed on holiness as being a state which "enables us to present our souls and bodies… as a sacrifice to God. However, even this is only made possible by the transforming light of God which brings us out of darkness and sin" (Knight III. 2010). Wesley considered this transformation, by the Holy Spirit, to be necessary for an individual's eternal salvation (Knight III. 2010)**.** This suggests that only God can truly sanctify one as holy, however, believers must play an active role in submitting their bodies and desires to the discipline of righteousness as outlined by the Bible, to become holy. In this way, holiness becomes us living transformed lives where through the help of the Holy Spirit we let go of our old ways of living and embrace God's way of life. This portion of Wesley's perspective formed the cornerstone of the Holiness Movement that emerged in the 19th century.

The holiness movement focused on re-establishing the theology of perfection, which they deemed lost. The movement believed that after "regeneration" or the initial cleansing from sin at the acceptance of Jesus Christ, there is a "second work of grace," which is perfection in love (Knight III. 2010, Dieter et al 1987). This teaching was primarily promulgated by Phoebe Palmer, and later by Charles G. Finney. They believed that holiness is a gift from God but is attained by an individual over the course of her lifetime, and it is a state in which the individual is not tempted to sin anymore.

4.1.3. *Rudolf Otto*

Having stated in section 4.1.1 that holiness can also be understood as numinous, having to do with the divine nature of God, I turn to Otto (1958) who sought to examine holiness beyond the rational and moral dimension accorded it at the time. Otto's (1958) emphasis on the numinous quality of holiness provides a useful theological lens with which to critique the concept of holiness in APCs.

Rudolf Otto was a German theologian from a Lutheran background, whose most popular work was *The Idea of the Holy.* In this book, Otto attempts to define the word holy beyond the general meaning of 'good.' He begins his schematisation of the meaning of the word holy from a Christian perspective as he considers the religion to be more superior to other religions. Otto (1958:94-108) understands holiness beyond its rational connotation from studying Luther and from identifying it in the Old Testament and in his study of the history of religion. Whilst he gives credit to Luther for identifying holiness beyond rationality, he however bemoaned the fact that Lutheranism did not do justice to the non-rational aspect of God and his holiness but had given moral interpretations to the meaning of the word 'holy.' (Otto 1958)

Therefore, Otto (1958) contends that holiness is more than a state of being holy, or a simple case of morality, that is, the concept of holiness is much more than a moral dimension. Although, we take the word 'holy' to mean absolute moral attribute, complete goodness, Otto (1958) argues that it is limiting to conceptualise holiness as simply 'consummation of moral goodness'. He contends that to define holiness only in terms of moral conduct is inaccurate, even though it is true that holiness does include moral and ethical dimensions. Therefore, he argues that the word holy cannot be understood only in rational terms, hence, the non-rational aspects of the holy should be given its due place in religious thought. The non-rational aspect that goes beyond simple morality is reflected in participants assertion that for them holiness has to do with God transforming them. The women I interviewed acknowledged that the transformation they had experienced as a result of 'giving their lives to God' did not come from them, rather it was the Holy Spirit of God working in them.

Consequently, Otto (1958) offers us a schematisation to how the word holy can be understood. In this schematisation, he calls us to begin from what he calls 'numinous' to understand what holiness means. He describes numinous as 'creature feeling' that cannot be taught but evoked. That is, this numinous (holiness) occurs in relation to an 'other, with this 'other' being God. Otto's idea of the numinous is of the otherness, the mystery, the grandeur, the divine energy of God. Hence, the numinous is an experience that can be evoked when we come into the presence of God. And holiness should be understood as that non rational experience of total dependency of the creature on the creator. In other words, holiness can be understood as the feelings we have when we encounter the 'holy' (God). For example, Moses's experience

with the burning bush as described in Exodus 3:5. We can see the Jewish understanding of holiness as originating from God and the idea that it cannot be fully understood reflected here, however, what Otto (1958) focuses most fully on is the feeling that the presence of the 'divine, or deity' evokes. In my participant's case, when they became 'born again' and started to know God for themselves, He (God) gave them a consciousness of total dependence on him for achieving holiness. This they said is because the way they understood holiness in moralistic terms was not necessarily how God might see holiness. For instance, one of the women stated that the way she understood holiness was in terms of being religious. But one day after praying, God convicted her of how she thinks badly about her neighbours because they were not religious. Here after this participant encountered God in place of prayers, He (God) brought to her consciousness her hypocrisy because she did not have a generous heart towards her neighbours. Therefore, this participant's idea about holiness came from encountering God.

Therefore, Otto (1958) goes on to identify ways in which we might feel in the presence of the holy. He argues that in understanding the resultant feelings about being in the presence of the holy, we might be better equipped to understand and conceptualise the meaning of holiness beyond its rational and moral considerations. In the context of this research, holiness then can go beyond considerations of how one is dressed or speaks and instead the emphasis will be on the transformation that has occurred from being in the presence of the Holy God. Therefore, for Otto (1958), holiness was something difficult to articulate. According to him holiness is:

> dealing with something for which there is only one appropriate expression, mysterium tremendum. . .. The feeling of it may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship. It may pass over into a more set and lasting attitude of the soul, continuing, as it were, thrillingly vibrant and resonant, until at last it dies away and the soul resumes its "profane," non-religious mood of everyday experience. . .. It has its crude, barbaric antecedents, and early manifestations, and again it may be developed into something beautiful, pure, and glorious. It may become the hushed, trembling, and speechless humility of the creature in the presence of—whom or what? In the presence of that which is a Mystery inexpressible and above all creatures." (Otto 1958:12-13).

One of the ways identified by Otto through which the numinous is experienced is in concrete but unexplainable real-life experiences like the one described above. For example, Isaiah's cry of "woe is me, for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah 6:5 (NKJV). The emotions that the divine presence of God evoked in Isaiah was that of unworthiness. Another New Testament example is that of Paul in Acts 9. This Bible chapter gives an account of Paul's experience on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians.

In this account, Paul comes across a bright light from heaven that causes him to fall to the ground in trembling and astonishment. This experience led to his conversion.

Similarly, there are records of some Christians in Pentecostal services falling to their knees, crying, laughing or being 'overcome by the holy spirit' during worship services (see for example Miller & Yamamori 2007). Otto (1958) calls these feelings and experiences 'mysterium tremendum'. According to him, mysterium tremendum comprises of five elements which are a) awefulness b) overpoweringness c) energy d) wholly other and e) fascination. According to Otto (1958:13) awefulness is not necessarily fear, but more like 'religious dread.' That is "to keep a thing holy in the heart.' This translates to having a 'fear of God' which in turn creates in us the need to avoid the wrath of God thus acting in ways that ensures we do not incur God's wrath. For instance, some of the women I interviewed shared experiences of wanting to dress modestly and checking their speech after becoming born again. They said that this desire did not come from trying to keep all the rules of their churches, rather it came from encountering the Holy God.

On the overpoweringness that comes from being in God's presence, Otto says power and 'absolute unapproachability' are the key words in understanding the holiness of God (ibid:19-22). Hence, Otto (1958) describes this overpowering nature as the majesty of God. In this schema, the majesty of God creates in us the feeling of 'religious humility' and dependence on God. In contemporary Christianity as we will soon see in later sections, there is an emphasis on the Christians inability to live a holy life on their own effort without the help of God's Holy spirit.

Regarding the element of energy, Otto (ibid:22-24) argues that this comes from experiencing the 'awefulness and majesty' of God. This feeling also encapsulates the energy of experiencing the Living God. Thus, Otto (1958) attributes holiness to God. The idea that human holiness is a reflection of God's own holiness is especially important in this thesis. As seen in section 4.1, If God's holiness is what provokes a corresponding response from us (his creation) of awe, of our profaneness and thereafter an awareness of our sin and need for atonement then the Judeo-Christian understanding of holiness as separation to purity and difference in the New Testament of the Bible is understandable (see Leviticus 20:7-9; Romans 12:1-2; John 17:16-26; 1 John 2:15-17). What this separation, purity and difference means for femininity construction in APC will be explored in detail in later sections.

Within the Judeo- Christian tradition, holiness is a fundamental character of God. The Bible records in Isaiah 6 that the prophet Isaiah had a vision in which he stood before God and because he was in such much awe of the holiness and glory of God, he could not help but proclaim "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts." (Isaiah

6: 5). This can be said to illustrate otto's argument that holiness is first experienced in relation to an 'other' (God), in which we might feel awe at God's presence and then feel inadequate. Because holiness begins from God, his creation might experience this 'creature feeling' of inadequacy and realise their own profanity just like Isaiah did and then aspire to be holy just like God is, so that they may become worthy. However, we can only conceptualise holiness in the ways that we understand as humans, that is, through the rational. We tie holiness to moral and ethical considerations. In this regard, Holiness is tied to right living, that is righteousness and purity and possibly separation (Stephen Barton 2003). Hence, this chapter is interested in the ways through which these feelings of inadequacy may be experienced by women in APC's by first examining APCs conceptualisation of holiness.

4.2 HOLINESS IN AFRICAN PENTECOSTALISM

Having given a brief background on some theological perspectives of holiness that have influenced most Pentecostal traditions as well as African Pentecostal denominations, I now turn to African Pentecostal Churches (APCs). Like most Pentecostal denominations, holiness is a key aspect of their theology. For instance, The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) describes it mission in the following way "1. To make heaven. 2. To take as many people as possible with us. To accomplish No.1 above, holiness will be our lifestyle" (www.rccguk.church) What then does it mean to live a holy lifestyle for members of APCs? For most Pentecostals, holiness starts with becoming 'born again' wherein transformation and growth in all areas of life is expected through the help of the Holy Spirit (Asamoah-Gyadu 2009, Burgess 2008). After becoming 'born again', converts are expected to have new identities in Christ. This new identity is one where a convert's sins have been forgiven and one has been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore, converts are expected to let go of old lifestyles and cling to new ones in Christ. This new identity that is constructed serves as a boundary marker for APCs, that is, them versus the 'world' (Hunt 2002; Asamoah-Gyadu 2009).

The emphasis on having a relationship with God through direct access in the personality of the Holy Spirit without adhering to African traditional rituals has made Pentecostalism attractive to Africans (Asamoah-Gyadu 2013, Kalu 2008, Burgess 2008). There is a resonance between Pentecostalism and what Kalu (2008) calls African maps of the universe. This means that the way most Africans view the world can be found or manifested in Pentecostalism. Therefore, the following paragraphs link African traditional concepts of holiness with African Pentecostal understanding of holiness. It is however important to note here that, although African traditions bear some similarities, there is no **one** African tradition. Therefore, when I mention African maps of the universe here, I am referring to the similarities that can be found

in the various African religious belief systems. Kalu (2002:117) articulates this by saying that "the size of the African continent and her myriads of cultures could defy any attempt to construct an African worldview. But scholars agree that there is a deep-seated and underlying cultural pattern that makes us all Africans". Consequently, the cultural patterns of how many African societies perceive the world and what they consider good and bad is rooted in their indigenous religions.

In writing about the concept of holiness in African Pentecostal churches, Chimuka (2016) tries to tie Christian and African traditional notions of holiness together, even though he notes that the concept of holiness in African traditions is debatable, since many African spiritualities did not place emphasis on God as the author of holiness. This attempt stems from Kalu's (2008) argument that African Pentecostals have synthesised African tradition in their theologies. This assertion is contentious as research on African Pentecostal churches show that most APCs tend to distance themselves from traditional practices, even going as far as demonising them (see for example Hunt & Lightly 2008; Burgess 2008; Chimuka 2016). However, while African Pastors distance themselves from traditional modes of worship, their beliefs, and their charisma bear resemblance to traditional rituals. For example, Burgess (2008:35-36) found that "the belief in the plurality of lesser spirits... and the belief in the efficacy of prayer (*adura,* Yoruba) … as the key ritual for influencing the powers" are remnants of traditional believes. The emphasis on deliverance and prayers against witchcraft and ancestral spirits in the Mountain of Fire Ministries (MFM), a prominent Pentecostal Church in Nigeria also shows the continuity of African traditional beliefs albeit in a unique way; that is rather than offering sacrifices and prayers to gods, they pray and cast out demons in the name of Jesus.

On the issue of holiness, Chimuka (2016) questions whether the holiness of the Christian God can be supplemented by the notions of holiness in African traditions. A look at Mbiti's *An Introduction to African religion* and Kalu's (2008) *African Pentecostalism: An introduction* gives us the perspective with which to understand holiness in African Pentecostalism. Mbiti (1991) shows that traditional African spiritualities had notions of good and endeavoured to eliminate evil in the society so that the members of the society could have a good life. Evil for many Africans manifested in various forms such as barrenness, sickness, witchcraft, and 'moral evil.' In most African traditions, the hierarchy of gods as understood by various African groups had a hierarchy where there was a supreme God and then other lesser gods, spirits, ancestral spirits which could be good or bad, therefore it was imperative to be on the good sides of these pantheon of gods. This can be juxtaposed with the idea of the trinity and angels in Christianity. Goodness translated to "truth, justice, love, right and wrong, good and evil, beauty, decency, respect for people and property, the keeping of promises and agreements, praise and blame,

crime and punishment, the rights and responsibilities of both the individual and his community, character, integrity, and so on" (Mbiti 1991:12). Some of these have been incorporated into African Pentecostalism, where they find parallels with the Bible.

In his research on Nigerian Pentecostalism, Burgess (2008:34) found that, although Nigerian Pentecostal churches try to develop their theologies in strict adherence to the Bible their theology is also shaped by "local concerns and contexts." Hence, there is an emphasis on purity, however "the display of personal morals is the central evidence of a new life in Christ" (Hunt & Lightly 2008:117). The emphasis here is on personal morals such as honesty, praying and reading the Bible every day, and a general emphasis on ethical living and not necessarily on 'creature feeling' of Otto (1958). Here, morality is an exchange, where one does what is considered good to please God and in return, God will provide quality of life. This is reflected in some participants descriptions of how they had been taught in their churches whilst growing up. For instance, one of the women told me how she expected things to work out for her because she paid her tithes, prayed, read her Bible, and did general good. And when things were not going the way she wanted, she was told in church to check if she had any sins. Therefore, doing good deeds is tied to receiving blessings from God.

Considering the above, Chimuka (2016) contends that the notion of holiness in African tradition can also be understood from the idea of personal purity and communal purity with respect to certain rites in relation with impurity. For example, the impurity of women's menstruation or after birth, and other forms of pollution and impurity in the traditional society such as breaking the taboos of the society, adultery, wickedness, wrath, amoral behaviour etc. These ideas of taboos created a binary of sacred and profane, where certain things, people or actions were forbidden. For example, some shrines could not be entered by ordinary individuals, or a caste could not marry into another. These sorts of taboos were not to be tampered with to avoid calamities befalling families, the environment, or the society at large. If a taboo was broken or any other thing considered immoral was committed, purification for such individual, family or the whole society was necessary to ask forgiveness from the gods and spirits and to avoid punishments or repercussions. In this sense, it could be argued that the sense of binary of things, events and people considered sacred or profane count as holy.

Although Kalu (2008) argues that African society did not have a sense of sacred or profane because they believed that gods and spirits everywhere who were either good or bad. However, Kalu's (2008) argument seems contentious given that he agrees that there are gods and spirits everywhere. Furthermore, general understanding of histories of gods and spirits contradict his stand because the histories mention that some things were permissible and other things prohibited (Chimuka 2016; Mbiti 1991). For example, a shrine dedicated to a certain god is usually prohibited to other people except the priest of that god. This shows that

African traditions did have a distinction between sacred and profane, things that were permissible and things that were not.

On the aspect of distinction between profane and sacred, whilst APCs may not carry out ritual cleansing or bar women from coming to church because of menstruation, the call to personal purity and to be different from the 'world' can be interpreted as constructing a binary between the profane world and the sacred living that God has called Christians to. According to Hunt & Lightly (2001:117-118):

> The display of strict personal morals is the central evidence of a 'new life in Christ.' Besides the significance of the inerrant 'word,' Bible reading, and the importance and efficacy of prayer and praise, every aspect of daily life must exclude all lying, cheating, stealing, quarrelling, gossiping, bribing, consuming alcohol, smoking, fornicating and any unwillingness to help those in need.

Hence, it can be interpreted that this new life in Christ requires members of APCs to avoid the aforementioned as taboos, and constant church attendance and the reading of the Bible as well as praising and praying to God are rituals that are performed to be in the good graces of God. Although RCCG has on its webpage a declaration of its belief in the justification (new birth) and the sanctification (holiness) of believers, they also believe in the work of the Holy Spirit to teach believers how to live and in praying always.

> We believe that a Christian without condemnation of heart has a right to thank God in adoration and in prayer always. The Holy Spirit also helps us to pray according to the will of God (Rom. 8:26). We must pray only in the name of Jesus (John 16:23; ; I Tim. 2:25). Without faith, our prayer is powerless before God (James 1:6-8; Heb. 11:6). Much trouble and danger are encountered in the absence of prayer (Zeph. 1:4; Dan 9:13-14; Hosea 8:13-14). We are commanded to pray without ceasing (Col. 4:2; I Thess. 5:17; I Cor. 7:5; Luke 18:1). It is God's plan and order that we should pray to receive all the goods He has promised in His treasure for us (James 4:2; Dan. 9:3; Matt. 7:7-11; Matt. 9:24-29; Luke 11:13)" (www.rccguk.church).

This shows the emphasis RCCG places on prayers and worship. Indeed, the women in this research assert that being prayerful is one of the markers of holiness in the APCs they attend. This is because, these practices serve to distinguish members of APCs from the 'world'. Also, these practices are understood as enabling believers receive blessings from God and keeping them from sin.

Chimuka (2016) further expands on the idea of holiness in African traditional spiritualities by focusing on the purification rites performed by traditional Africa to address pollution and eradicate evil. For Chimuka (ibid), some of these rites of purification and sanctification

resonate with similar notions of sanctification and purification in Christianity, for example, the idea of the blood of Jesus serving as atonement for the sins of the people and a means of cleansing their hearts. Additionally, the Pentecostal idea of the Holy Spirit or Spirit baptism imbuing Christians with the power to cast out devils and to heal the sick and perform miracles resonates with African traditions wherein the priests were also given these powers by their gods. In this sense, the notion of holiness is tied to spiritual power. This is evidenced in African Pentecostal churches where the members are encouraged to seek spiritual gifts and baptism of the spirit evidenced by 'speaking in tongues.' Having these spiritual gifts and speaking in tongues therefore becomes a sign that one is holy (Asamoah-Gyadu 2020). For example, Asamoah-Gyadu (ibid) asserts that to discuss religion is to talk about the spirit and the body. Therefore, he asserts that it is important to examine Pentecostal perception about the human body especially as it is a Holy Spirit focused denomination. Hence, he examines embodiment in relation to Pentecostal religion and the human body. In relating Pentecostalism to African tradition, he writes that

> In African traditional religious discourses of spirit-possession, for example, a distinction is often made between a call to priesthood and lunacy. The two situations involve some form of spirit-possession; whereas in priesthood deities possess people in order to have them serve in sacred mediatorial roles as religious functionaries, in the case of lunacy, evil spirits take over the executive faculties of human beings to bring them to ruin. 'The things of the Spirit are spiritually discerned' (I Corinthians 2:14) may be a Biblical saying but it has resonances within traditional worldviews of how the incorporeal works through the corporeal (Asamoah-Gyadu 2020: Viii).

Considering the above, it can be argued that 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 "do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" is reflected in African Pentecostal understandings of holiness. This raises the following question: if the bodies of members are temples where the Holy Spirit of God resides, how does that manifest in their everyday lives? Does this not mean that according to most African understanding of priesthood (Asamoah-Gyadu 2020), members of APCs are now priests? Indeed, the author of 1 Peter 2:9 (NKJV) does say to Christians "but you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light". Based on the understanding that most African traditional priests carried out ritual cleansing and sacrifices to the deities they worshipped, it means that these living temples of God will also have to do the same. After all there is the command to "but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15-16 NKJV). Indeed, Asamoah-Gyadu (2020) citing Wilkinson (2017: 15-35) notes that

> Pentecostal bodies, therefore, restricted what entered that temple so as not to defile God's abode...bodies must be clean in order for the Spirit to enter and live. Evil spirits too must be exorcised from the body since polluted sinful bodies must be cleansed for the Holy Spirit to enter.

Consequently, the belief in Spirit baptism and the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers has enabled women to be accepted into leadership positions based on Spiritual giftings. This is reminiscent of the honour accorded to women in African religions as priestesses (see Hackett 2017). Their spiritual gifts have enabled women with power to operate in an otherwise male dominated sphere (in terms of leadership and authority). However, with this power also comes the need to perform pious femininity as we will see later in section 4.3.

Although Chimuka (2016) has attempted to link African traditional understandings of holiness with Pentecostal ideas of holiness in African Pentecostal churches in southern Africa, his primary focus is on the spirituality of pastors and commercialisation of spiritual powers. Chimuka (ibid) is primarily concerned that true holiness is not being preached and practised by APC pastors. Chimuka's (2016) frustration lies in the findings that holiness in APCs is understood in terms of the workings of the gifts of the spirit and speaking in tongues as proof of God's presence in the pastors and members lives. Hence, Chimuka (ibid) problematises African Pentecostal understanding of holiness that is based on works rather than on God. This dissatisfaction with African Pentecostal understanding of holiness is reflected in the interviews I conducted with women in APCs in the UK (see chapter 8) as they call for a more holistic approach to holiness that goes beyond having the gifts of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. Another example of dissatisfaction with holiness that is based on works can be found in Casselberry's (2017) work on holiness in African American Pentecostalism. Casselberry (2017) found that this kind of understanding of holiness placed a burden on women in African American Pentecostalism to perform religious labour which further created gender inequality as women are tasked with being the bearers of morality and Christian piety (see section 4.3).

Kalu (2008) has also written about African Pentecostalism from the view that the holiness doctrine of classical Pentecostals is lost in African Pentecostalism and that Pentecostalism has been appropriated by African churches and used for their prosperity following the prosperity teaching which he identifies as originating from the United States of America[17]. Therefore, both Kalu (2008) and Chimuka (2016) concur that Pentecostalism in Africa has

[17] Kalu (2008) also opines that African Pentecostal theology is a mix bag of homegrown theologies and derived theologies through African American influence and the influence of missionary theologies of former colonial powers. For more, see Kalu, O. (2008). African Pentecostalism: an introduction. Oxford University Press.

been permeated with African traditional culture, which provides a helpful lens through which to view holiness in African Pentecostal churches in the UK (given that African Pentecostal churches have strong affiliations or ties with their mother churches or other churches in the African continent). However, using African cultural lenses alone to understand holiness without considering its implication on gender could prove problematic.

From here on, I briefly examine Pastor Adeboye's view on holiness to better understand notions of holiness in African Pentecostal churches. Pastor Enoch Adeboye is the general overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), one of the largest African Pentecostal churches. He is respected and recognised as a spiritual father or mentor to many African Christians. In a book of his sermons on holiness, Pastor Adeboye expands on the concept of holiness by first defining is the term and why it is important for Christians to be holy. He further articulates how believers can achieve holiness, the things that believers should stay away from and the rewards of holiness. According to Pastor Adeboye (2017: 291), holiness "connotes sanctity, divinity, godliness, sacredness, spirituality, virtuousness, perfection and purity". These, according to him are all attributes of God because God is holy. However, believers have been invited by God to share in his holiness, therefore a true Christian should aim to live a life of holiness, for God has commanded his children to 'be holy, as I am holy' (1 Peter 1:16). God's holiness is evidenced in his love, mercy, strength, justice, and glory. Everything about God is holy, therefore his possessions are also holy, and if Christians are called the children of God, it stands that Christians are also called to holiness. Adeboye's (2017) understanding seems to equate holiness and Godliness with morality, whilst Otto (1958) equates holiness with the divine nature of God, going beyond moral considerations.

Adeboye (2017) further explains that holiness is not the absence of temptation (with a note that temptation is not sin either) nor is holiness avoidance of certain food, looking sorrowful or in the garments you wear, keeping certain rules – all these may be fruits of holiness, but they are not holiness themselves. He then defines holiness as "being like God, to live like him, think like him, talk like him, and love like him. Holiness is having the same nature as God's." (Adeboye 2017: 376). Hence, holiness is the imitation of God. This takes me back to the idea of the body as the temple of God. For if God is holy, the Old Testament books of the Bible that talk about the rituals of cleansing the temple may apply here. Because the temple that houses God ought to be clean. Therefore, Christians are called to be imitators of God. It can be said that Christians are called to be embodiments of what they perceive to be the characteristics of God. An example of the embodiment of this holiness that is love, mercy, strength, justice, and glory (Adeboye ibid) can be found in Asamoah-Gyadu's (2009) research on the Embassy of God Church, an African Pentecostal church in Eastern Europe where he opines that purity is no longer about retreating from the temptations of the world, rather "salvation is expected to be physically evident. A person must look well, take control of resources channelled away

from previously wasteful lifestyles, seize opportunities in education and business, and be prosperous in life's endeavours through the application of the principles of sowing and reaping, commitment, and hard work" (Asamoah-Gyadu 2009: 58:1-14). The emphasis on this aspect of holiness as imitation of God is on the glory aspect. That is, glory comes as a result of holiness, and this glory should be evident in material things. However, does this mean that if a member is not doing well, such person is not holy enough? Indeed, like the participant mentioned earlier, who was asked to check if she has any sins because her life was not going as she expected. The women in this research are critical of this understanding of holiness.

Emphasis on living like God, especially as temples presents APCs members as custodians of morality and social values (Togarasei 2020:19). In this way, members of APCs are expected to be the living examples of God for wider society, which is why women in APCs are held to strict codes of sexual purity. Whilst men and women in APCs are expected to show the 'glory' of God to the 'world' through material achievements, women are held to higher standards of purity as the bearers of morality. For example, Mapuranga (2020:36) in a study of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe found that "one way with which male dominance in Zimbabwe is expressed is in the semiotics of dress. This is expressed through male dominance and patriarchy, which determine how women should dress, and any woman who does not dress as such is given negative labels such as being loose or being a whore". Biblical references such as Timothy 2:8–10, 1 Peter 3:3, Isaiah 3:16–26 can be used to reinforce particular ideals about the 'good woman'. Similarly, an earlier study by Chitando & Chitando (2004:1-21) found that women's hairstyles, make up, dress and any show of sexuality are questioned using cultural and Biblical references. Quoting interview participants some of whom were pastors, Mapuranga (2020:39) found that the moral expectations for women in APCs are

> Modest dressing for the woman is that which has "dignity." women should dress decently, as stated in the Bible. Dressing with dignity for the woman is that which is characterised as (a) is long enough, (b) does not expose women's breasts (known as cleavage in contemporary Western fashion) and (c) is not too tight.
>
> A woman should dress in a way that shows that she is a quality for marriage. Asked what he meant, he explained, "a woman should dress in clothes that are long enough to cover the knees, where possible, her clothes should go to ankle level... these are what we call *matsigandiku- roore* (be decent and I will marry you).

Having defined what holiness means, Adeboye explains that holiness is crucial to being a Christian as it signifies 'sonship,' that is holiness ascertains a believer's right to be called a child of God. Holiness also gives a Christian the ability to manifest the power of God by overcoming sin and sickness and all other works of the devil. In addition to these, the rewards of holiness include divine promotion, divine provision and finally making heaven. The book

also expands on characteristics of an unholy person such as stealing, pride, unbelief and doubts, envy, anger, telling lies, being talkative, unforgiveness, adultery and fornication. The theme of holiness as power (Asamoah-Gyadu 2009; 2020) and as moral binary (Hunt & Lightly 2008) is rife in APC holiness theology. Holiness as power here implies that Christians through righteousness receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and through that, they overcome "the wages of sin" (Romans 6:23) and are also able to manifest the glory of God in ways that their unbelieving counterparts would not. This also means that Christians receive power from God to carry out their God given ministries (purpose). For example, Adeboye (2004:36 cited in Burgess 2008: 54) says:

> God requires purity before power. Our God is a holy God. He demands that his children be like him. One of the reasons for this is that those who operate the gifts of God are usually targets of attack from the enemy. Another reason is that the gifts of God are precious and are meant for the pure and holy. The third reason is so that the operator of the gifts of God may not be a castaway in the end. God demands purity before giving power.

Therefore, deliverance from sin and from all the works of the devil as well as material and spiritual prosperity are rewards of holiness. On the other hand, holiness as moral binary, Hunt and Lightly (2008:117-118) opine that "the significance of purity... must be seen as boundary maintenance... Nigerian Pentecostal churches have long been symbolically separating its members from the moral chaos of outer society by a strong emphasis on purity of lifestyle..." Thus, APCs through ideas about holiness create and sustain a moral binary where they are the carriers (temples) of God's presence and the rest of the world needs an encounter with God through seeing God's glory in the lifestyle of Christians. For example, the Bible in Matthew 5:14-16 says "you are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

4.3 MORAL DIMENSIONS: HOLINESS AND PERFORMATIVITY

Having discussed the ways holiness serves as boundary maintenance for APCs, I look now at the moral dimensions of holiness. Ammerman (2021:166-175) asserts that by looking at the boundaries of religious communities we can ascertain which moral practices are central to the community. In the case of APCs in Nigeria, Pearce (2002:28-84 cited in Ammerman 2021:170) noted that the moral practices of the congregations she studied were around sexuality and reproduction. These practices involved 'constant advice from counsellors,' Bible meetings,

fellowships targeted at specific demographics of the congregations, seminars, and conferences. All these practices reiterated ideals on sexuality and reproduction with particular focus on advice and prayers for women on areas such as preparing for marriage, "infertility, raising Christian children, being a Christian wife, good health and so on." (Pearce 2002: 28-84). These practices served to 'keep the status quo' (Ammerman 2021:170) and may involve some form of policing. For instance, Sharma (2008:346) in her research on sexuality in British Protestantism, found that the women interviewed had the sense of being monitored by their church communities as well as carrying out self-policing. This form of policing serves to maintain conservative Christian modes of femininity and masculinity. The Christian mode of femininity to be maintained here being "femininity in which married heterosexuality, chastity and appropriate conduct and body presentation (for example how young women dress) were key aspects, and very much tied to participants Christian beliefs and values" (Sharma 2008: 346).

Consequently, the moral dimension of holiness in religion places emphasis on bodily conduct and aesthetics. Pierce (2021:17) writes about being reminded to cover her head in an African American Pentecostal church by one of the church mothers. She says:

> *Holiness is right:* it was a catchall phrase meant to remind us that as Christians, particularly as Pentecostals, we were to live in the world but not be of the world. It was the phrase repeated when someone's skirt was too short, or someone's head was uncovered in the sanctuary. It was the phrase that barred drinking alcohol and going to the movies. It was the phrase that condemned lipstick and nail polish. Holiness is right: it attempted to impose a legalistic definition of what it meant to be a faithful witness for Christ. It led to a list composed mainly of 'thou shalt nots.

Whilst it can be argued that holiness as understood by most African American holiness Pentecostals focuses on human effort rather than on God, Pierce (2021 borrowing Williams 1993 'survival in life) asserts that the admonishment by Black church women to live by a legalistic definition is an *act* of survival. Like Williams (1993:236) who says that:

> Reflection upon Black women's sources revealed to me the survival strategies they have used to keep the community alive and hopeful. The strategies I saw were: 1) an art of cunning; 2) an art of encounter; 3) an art of care; and 4) an art of connecting. I use the word art here to indicate the high level of skill many Black women developed as they created and adapted strategies to ensure their survival and that of their families. (However, some of this high-level female skill is exploited in the Black community and in the churches.)

Pierce (2021) understands that Black church women use holiness in employing strategies for survival; hers and theirs. These arts of survival outlined by Williams (1993) are evident in the

experiences of the women I interviewed in this research who sometimes have to perform pious femininity in order to get married or engage in arts of cunning to get their husbands to listen to them.

Judith Casselberry (2017) in her study of an African American Pentecostal congregation found that the women in the church went through a lot of what she calls religious labour in performing holiness. This religious labour involved emotional, aesthetic, mental and even physical labour to meet the ideals of feminine holiness. According to Casselberry (2017: 21)

> Baptism in the Holy Ghost is an event, while living in holiness is a process that requires religious labour. To develop and fortify a holy life, a saint expends considerable energy on individual practices and communal activities including worshipping, praying, and giving testimony; absorbing and reiterating scripture in Sunday school, Bible study, orations, and conversation; and explaining current experiences and reinterpreting past events through the lens of church theology. If she remains steadfast, in the end, by way of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, she has the promise of eternal life.

Whilst Williams (1993) and Pierce (2021) understand Black church women's theology of holiness as survival in life- which is also a form of liberation. Casselberry (2017) however, sees holiness as performative. Of course, whilst it might be the case that performativity of holiness by women in Pentecostalism is an act of survival or liberation, Casselberry (2017) focuses on the religious and aesthetic labour involved. Of course, the women in the Africa American Pentecostal church studied attribute the work they put into performing ideal feminine holiness to God. For instance, one of the women she interviewed is of the opinion that:

> "Walking with Christ means you decide about how you gonna act all the time. You do not follow your natural mind. You follow your spiritual mind. You let the Holy Ghost lead and guide you. She explained that wanting to live in the world is natural. Holiness is not natural. It is unnatural. You have to work against the world. You have to work at living a holy life (Casselberry 2017:22)

For this woman, she is simply doing religion (see Avishai 2008) and being a faithful Christian. Whilst the women in Casselberry's (2017) study acknowledge the patriarchal and controlling nature of Pentecostalism that they experience in their church; they simply forge ahead with finding ways to survive by making do (see Williams 1993; Coleman 2008). Furthermore, the findings of Casselberry show the binary of the 'world' and the 'Christian' where the Christian must work daily with the help of the Holy Spirit in fighting and overcoming 'worldly' desires. Therefore, holiness does not occur naturally, it is something that is worked on continuously for the rest of the Christian's life. In this way women must carry out self-surveillance and police each other to overcome their 'worldly' desires to conform to ideal Christian femininity. The

church also works to regulate feminine behaviour as we will see in chapters 7 and 8 where women discuss how dressing and ways of being feminine are regulated.

Like Butlers (1999) theory of performance, where gender is performed through repeated enacting of what is considered feminine ideal. The women in this African American Pentecostal congregation do religion by performing holiness through repeated actions of going to church, reading, and speaking the scriptures, dressing appropriately, and reiterating to themselves the expectations of holiness. Casselberry (2017) calls this religious labour because it encompasses emotional labour of Black Church women, physical and spiritual labour as well as aesthetic labour in the form of regulating dressing, hairstyles, and make-up to have the appearance of Christian piety. This is because women are seen as bearing the image of the church. Therefore, for these women, holiness is indeed much more than a simply doing 'good.' Rather, holiness also encompasses religious activities. Conversely, Casselberry (2017:172) found that religious labour provides women with complicated authority within Pentecostal Christianity, whilst also providing them with a means to "gear their religious labour toward personally growing in Christ and growing the church – both the institution and the Kingdom. They perform religious labour with the goal of becoming an authentic religious subject" (ibid: 172).

Similarly, in researching about sexuality amongst Pentecostal African Indians in South Africa Kaunda (2020) found the same emphasis on regulating feminine behaviour in terms of dressing and sexuality. The narrative was that women are enticers and at such men are to be protected from them. Therefore, women were instructed to avoid dressing 'provocatively, speaking loudly or demonstrating sexual immodesty. Women were to cultivate behaviours appropriate for a good Christian woman (Kaunda 2020:238)[18]. Here, the burden of men's morality is placed on women who must also manage their own morality. However, Kaunda (2020) also finds complexity in African Pentecostalism in that, although it holds on to patriarchal notions of gender roles, it also serves as empowerment for women to have equal partnership marriages and provide a space where women can thrive and challenge social status quo of singleness and other challenges.

Considering the above, this thesis approaches the concept of holiness from how women in APCs use the Church's understanding of holiness and articulate their own ideas about holiness from the Bible and conversations in wider society to construct their femininity.

[18] Mercy Oduyoye (2002:86) criticises the misinterpretation of Christian concept of holiness by Western missionaries in what she says has its 'source in western traditions of prudishness '. This emphasis of holiness on how women dress and their sexuality show the colonial theology still at work, because for Oduyoye (2002), men and women were equally held to the same standards and regulations concerning morality and keeping the laws deemed sacred. See Oduyoye, M. A. (2002). Beads and strands: Reflections of an African woman on Christianity in Africa (Vol. 3). Ocms.

Although the research on African Pentecostalism by Kalu (2008) expands on the relation between African tradition and Africa's brand of Pentecostalism, it does not examine the aspect of holiness and its implication for ascribing femininities and masculinities. The same can be said for Chimuka's (2016) research on APCs in Southern Africa, because whilst he does try to find similarities in African cultural understanding of holiness and Pentecostal theology of holiness, his focus is on the abuse of the power of the Holy Spirit by Pastors. Although, Mapuranga (2013) examines the role of women in African Initiated churches in Zimbabwe, the focus is not on the theology of holiness, women's own understanding of holiness nor is it on the influence of the theology of holiness in constructing femininity. This thesis therefore contributes an empirical study of holiness and femininity within African Pentecostal churches in the UK and thus adds to our understanding of APCs theology of holiness and how it impacts gender.

4.4 CONCLUSION.

This chapter has laid a foundation for the empirical parts of this thesis by giving a brief overview of the concept of holiness as understood by the theological traditions to which African Pentecostal churches subscribe to. The concept of holiness as understood by African Pentecostalism has furthermore been reviewed through the lens of traditional African concepts of holiness and how these have been synthesised in African Christianity. Finally, the concept of holiness as understood by Pastor Adeboye of RCCG has been examined to lay a foundation of how participants and their churches may understand notions of holiness. Given that all the theological perspectives mentioned in this chapter understand holiness to at least mean separation, creating a binary of good and evil, sinner and saint, the church and the 'world,' this overview gives further credence to my research question of how women in APCs negotiate these ideas with contrasting ideas in wider society.

Additionally, I noted that although research on African Pentecostalism is flourishing, there is sparse work on how the Bible is understood and used by women in APCs in the UK to negotiate notions of holiness and femininity in their lives. Consequently, this thesis seeks to contribute to academic scholarship on African Pentecostalism beyond prosperity gospel, to include an emphasis on their theologies of holiness. This thesis also aims to contribute lay-women's holistic approach to the concept of holiness. The next chapter attends to my methodological approach to this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Research, as defined by De Vos et al. (2005: 41) is a "systematic, controlled, empirical, and critical investigation of natural / social phenomena, guided by theory and hypotheses about the presumed relations among such phenomena". Within this thesis, the phenomenon under enquiry is how femininity is constructed and navigated by women in West African Pentecostal churches in the UK. My research examines the ways Bible, church culture and 'African' culture is used in constructing, performing, and navigating femininity in the African Pentecostal churches my participants attend. I also examine how (if it does) this is reflected in their everyday lives.

Therefore, this chapter introduces my theory of knowledge (epistemology), and it attends to my methodological approach to examining how women in African Pentecostal churches (APCs) in the UK construct and navigate femininity. I employ a qualitative feminist and theological approach within an interpretive paradigm in this research to allow for a deeper understanding of the various means women in African Pentecostal churches employ in their performance of femininity.

Consequently, I discuss how I draw from feminist epistemology to outline my theoretical framework. I summarise key aspects of womanist and African women's theology to serve as

a framework with which to examine how APCs and the women I interviewed use the Bible and culture to construct and perform femininity. Afterwards, I justify my use of feminist approach and within it, the use of African women's theology. Next, I give a detailed account of the methods used, the ethical considerations and the research limitations of the project. My researcher positionality and reflexivity are also considered.

5.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Brown (2006:12) "Methodology is the philosophical framework within which the research is conducted or the foundation upon which the research is based". Therefore, the research methodology employed in a research project should be the most appropriate to achieve the objectives of the research and should be easily understood by other researchers pursuing the same line of enquiry. This means that the research methodology should be viewed as a means to answering our assumptions and research questions.

This thesis aims to explore and understand the meanings constructed by women in African Pentecostal churches in the UK. The study does not aim to provide the ultimate truth about the research topic but to examine the ways women in African Pentecostal churches in the UK construct their femininity. The overarching aims of this research are:

- To analyse the ways women in African Pentecostal churches in the UK construct femininity.
- To analyse the ways the Bible is used by women and APCs in the UK to construct ideas about femininity.
- To discover how these Christian women, experience and respond to ideas about femininity that they encounter in the church and in wider society.

As a result, this project was guided by the following research questions:

- How do women in APCs in the UK construct and negotiate femininity?
- How is the Bible interpreted and used in APCs in the UK to construct ideas about gender?
- How do women in APCs in the UK interpret and use the Bible in constructing and negotiating ideas of femininity that they encounter in church and wider society?
- How is holiness understood by APCs and women in APCs?

Bearing in mind that a research methodology should be determined by the nature of the research and the research questions (Denzin & Lincoln 2005), a qualitative research methodology seemed more appropriate for this research because it reinforces an

understanding and interpretation of meaning as well as intentions underlying human interaction. Leavy (2014: 9) defines qualitative research as research that is "characterized by inductive approaches to knowledge building aimed at generating meaning". She further explains that researchers use this approach to "explore; to robustly investigate and learn about social phenomenon; to unpack the meanings people ascribe to activities, situations, events, or artifacts; or to build a depth of understanding about some dimension of social life" (ibid.) This means that qualitative research places value on acquiring a depth of understanding of people's subjective experiences and their process of making meaning of themselves and their environment. Qualitative research is concerned with the mean making process and not the size of a sample, thus, detailed information from a small sample is valid (Leavy 2017). This way I can examine patterns of belief and practice amongst the women I interviewed to make a broad conclusion about femininity construction and performance in APCs. Since it is the meaning making of femininity at the intersections of culture, the Bible, and a secular British society I am interested in examining, I have deemed a qualitative approach to this research as being more appropriate as opposed to a quantitative approach. For this qualitative research I have adopted a feminist, qualitative and interpretivist methodology.

5.2 INTERPRETIVE APPROACH

An interpretive paradigm is a philosophical belief system that lays emphasis on "people's subjective experiences which are grounded in socio-historical contexts" (Leavy 2014:13). Interpretivists view the world as an interrelated connectedness where meaning is constructed and reconstructed through our daily interactions. Thus, the social world in which we live in is made and remade through patterns of interaction and interpretive processes, and in doing so we ascribe meanings to events, situations and so forth (Leavy 2014). Therefore, interpretive researchers pay attention to things such as words, behaviours, symbols, or artefacts in examining the patterns and processes of everyday life (Leavy, 2014; Denzin and Lincoln, Guba, and Lincoln 1985). This approach is particularly useful in this research as it enables me to pay attention to the language and semiotics of the women I interview. It also enables me to analyse the meanings they attach to the Bible and how they use it to create narratives about femininity that influences their behaviours and everyday lives.

The Interpretivist approach is attributed to Max Weber's concept of "understanding something in its context" (Holloway 1997:2). The implication of this for my research is that I examine the construction of femininity from the context of African Pentecostal churches who have different conceptions of how the world works which also influences their theology, in a British context. This means that the women I interview will have shared meaning making process, cultural and religious language, socio- cultural norms and shared symbols and to an extent, shared

narratives about the world and their place in it. If these are removed from the research process, the results may be different. This means that:

> People create and associate their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them". What may be of significance to one group, may mean nothing to another. Thus, interpretive research attempts to understand phenomena through accessing the meanings participants assign to them (Orlikwowski & Baroudi, 1991:5).

For instance, this study aims to understand the way women in African Pentecostal churches use the Bible and culture to construct ideas about femininity. However, the Bible and African culture may not be of importance to a British Muslim or atheist. Furthermore, the way the Bible is interpreted in a British evangelical church may differ in an African Pentecostal church. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 elucidated on the different contexts through which femininity is understood in APCs and the lens through which the Bible is read and understood in these churches. Hence, an interpretivist approach enables me pay attention to these contexts that participants draw from.

Additionally, Interpretivism encourages the study of meaning through the observation of everyday experiences as it believes that reality is multiple and relative. The interpretive position sees knowledge as a social and cultural construction, thus encouraging the researcher to take into consideration how their assumptions impact the research process rather than taking a stand of objectivity. This means that human beings are complex in nature and their actions cannot be limited to a scientific experiment as people respond differently depending on various context at play. Therefore, interpretivists do not depend on rigid structural frameworks like their positivist counterparts, rather, they adopt a more flexible and personal approach in capturing meanings in human interactions.

In this way, I am not divorced from this research like an objective bystander only observing. Rather, I also ascribe meaning to the research process because I make judgements and analysis about what I have observed. This is to say that the researcher and participants are mutually interactive and interdependent in the research process. Therefore, I bring my own subjective meaning into the research process which is implicated in the kinds of questions I ask and how I ask them. Thus, an interpretivist researcher cannot claim total objectivity as she already had prior assumptions which prompted the inquiry in the first place. The implication of this for my research is that my experiences of femininity construction in African Pentecostal churches is implicated in the choice of research area in the first place, which in turn is implicated in the questions I choose to ask and the ones I ignore. It is because of this, that my research aims to uncover the meanings women in African Pentecostal church ascribe to the discourses they encounter, in church and in wider society about femininity.

5.3 FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology refers to a theory of knowledge, the study of the process of knowing or how we know what we think we know (Harding 1991; Leavy 2014; Stanley& Wise 1993). Harding (1987: 3) defines epistemology as:

> a theory of knowledge, that answers questions about who can be a knower (can women?); what tests beliefs must pass in order to be legitimated as knowledge (only tests against men's experiences and observations?); what kinds of things can be known (can 'subjective truths' count as knowledge?), and so forth.

My point of departure for this research is the practice of gender and the range of ways femininity is constructed and navigated in African Pentecostal churches. To explore how women in APCs think about and understand what being a woman is and how they use the Bible, African and church culture to embody (or not) and negotiate ideas about femininity, I look to feminist epistemology.

In developing a feminist theory of knowledge, Anderson (2012) asserts that feminist epistemology studies the way gender influences concept of knowledge and how dominant ideas and practices disadvantage women. To this end, a feminist epistemology tries to create knowledge from the perspectives of women by situating them as knowing subjects. Therefore, I employ feminist theory because it places gender (although an enquiry about women does not necessarily make it a feminist research) at the centre of my enquiry and situates my participants as knowing subjects who are able to generate knowledge. This helps me analyse the extent to which the practice of gender in African Pentecostal churches disadvantages women with an aim to address it. Various factors characterize research as feminist. Although not all research about women can be considered feminist. What makes a research feminist is that feminist research is often 'done by, for and about women' (Brayton, Ollivier & Robbins n.d). This means that feminist research is concerned with women's struggles with an aim to address those struggles. Not only is feminist research done by, for and about women, but it is also usually driven by feminist values and beliefs such as creating "spaces and opportunities to reveal lived realities of power inequalities and difference and provide evidence that can be deployed in working towards addressing these engrained inequalities" (Jenkins, Narayanaswamy & Sweetman 2019:415-425). It is conversations with other women in APCs about these engrained inequalities and how they can be addressed that is the driving force of my research.

Additionally, Feminist research usually examines women's struggles within institutions that are still considered patriarchal so that they can identify to what extent women in these institutions are empowered or disempowered so that they can address it. To this end, feminist research continues to be defined and redefined by the concerns from diverse perspectives because women from diverse backgrounds have different experiences in these institutions. Therefore, this research can be considered feminist because it is interested in analysing the extent to which the construction and practice of gender in African Pentecostal churches disadvantages (if it does) women with an aim to address it. This research also seeks to understand how women in APCs have positioned themselves based on how they understand and use church culture and the Bible in relation to femininity construction and performance.

In trying to articulate a feminist theory best suited to how I carry out this research, I read extensively about feminist theories, perspectives, or epistemology as some would choose to call it (Harding 1987, 1991; Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002). I found that there is no distinct feminist methodology. Although there is no one distinct feminist epistemology, three broad feminist epistemologies have stemmed from an attempt by feminists to give authority to women's voices, to situate women as knowing subjects in issues concerning and about them and social life (Harding 1987). Harding's (1986) tripartite classification of feminist epistemologies are: feminist empiricism, feminist postmodernism and feminist standpoint. I give a brief overview of feminist empiricism and postmodernism before expanding on feminist standpoint, my chosen epistemology for this research.

Feminist empiricism combines notions of positivism with the objectives of feminism to critique and remove male bias in research. This does not however mean that feminist empiricism is inherently positivist. Feminist empiricism proposes that feminist theories can be proven objectively whilst also criticising the inadequacies within mainstream research methods. (Delamont 2003, Harding 1987, Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002). Feminist postmodernism on the other hand questions and rejects notions of foundationalism as well as the androcentric ideal of creating general narratives about women's condition and oppression (Stanley and Wise 1993:190, Harding 1987, Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002, Anderson 2004). Feminist postmodernism is framed within the concept of intersectionality as it posits that women's experiences exist on a multitude of levels (Anderson 2004).

Although feminist empiricism and feminist postmodernism as articulated in Harding (1987) place emphasis on different things, they have proved useful in feminist research by locating women in the social order and exploring social life and science from women's perspectives, asking questions from the viewpoints of women, and situating them as knowers (Harding 1987). However, my research approach is informed by the third type: feminist standpoint epistemology, because it enables me examine femininity construction in APCs from women's

social, cultural, and theological position. In this way, I look at the African church and its culture from the standpoint of women in the church.

First propounded by Dorothy Smith (1989), standpoint advocated for a sociology for women by looking at the social world from the viewpoint of women and the way they construct their world, she called this the 'standpoint' of women. Hartsock (1983) expanded on this by arguing that a 'feminist standpoint' could be used to criticise patriarchy and examine systemic oppressions in a society that easily devalues women's knowledge. Feminist standpoint can be seen as a way of privileging women's experience as a source of knowledge on issues concerning them especially in political relationships between men and women. This epistemic privilege is based on the assumption that only women will be able to tell the truth about their situation as men will not be able to see the way that women are oppressed by practices that they deem normal (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002: 68-69). This is because men have historically (and even now) occupied dominant positions in the social hierarchy. Hence:

> It can tentatively be said that the notion of standpoint is a way of taking women's experience as fundamental to knowledge of political relations between women and men (of which people may or not be aware). Taking a standpoint means being able to produce best current understanding of how knowledge of gender is interrelated with women's experiences and the realities of gender (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002: 62-63).

Consequently, standpoint epistemology enables me produce knowledge that examines the unequal social relationships of my interviewees because of gender. It allows me to develop a feminist political consciousness in myself and my participants whilst carrying out research. I am also able to examine how my participants may experience life differently from others because of their specific social situations such as being women and attending a church that is considered patriarchal on a multi-level of culture and theology.

Furthermore, feminist standpoint theorists argue from the point of view that knowledge is socially located. That is, what can be known, who knows what and what is permitted to be known are shaped by the social location of the knower such as their gender, race, class, ethnicity etc. The social location or situation plays a role in forming or limiting what we are capable of knowing and what we are allowed to know. Therefore, feminist standpoint looks to provide a representation of knowledge from the perspectives of marginalised groups. It looks to question the distorted reality provided by male dominated ideologies. For feminist standpoint theorists, research inquiry should start from the point of the marginalized or under-represented, especially research focused on power relations. Harding (1991: 185) asserts that "starting off research from women's lives will generate less partial and distorted accounts not only of women's lives but also of men's lives and of the whole social order". Consequently, I

begin my enquiry about how the Bible and church culture is used in constructing femininity in APCs from the standpoint of women. This is because, women's account of church culture and APCs understanding of the Bible as it pertains to femininity may help me uncover gender inequalities amongst African Pentecostal Christians.

Considering the above, women are situated as knowers and their experiences and observations count as knowledge in feminist research. Feminist epistemology studies the way gender influences knowledge and how dominant ideas and practices disadvantage women (Anderson 2004). Thus, feminist epistemology is concerned with the empowerment and emancipation of women by situating women at the centre of its enquiry. The implications of this for my research are that my participants and I can examine dominant ideas about femininity in APCs, examine who it privileges and see if these dominant ideas are emancipatory or not.

Additionally, in feminist epistemology, knowledge reflects the perspectives of the knower, that is, knowledge is situated in the viewpoint of the women I interview. For this purpose, I can examine how femininity is constructed overtly or covertly in APC through culture and the Bible from the perspectives of women as I believe I will get a truer account from the women involved. This is because women experience things differently from their male counterpart. For example, if asked about gender roles in the home, I believe women will have a unique perspective different from that of men because they experience it differently. It is my aim that this research looks reflexively at religious beliefs about gender in African Pentecostal churches in the UK; thus, challenging what it means to be female, and a feminist enquiry will enable it to do so.

The use of a feminist approach not only gives me access to knowledge from the perspectives of women in APCs, but it also enables me to capture their voices (Anderson, 2012; Leavy, 2014). Additionally, because feminist qualitative research approach enables me to "place gender at the centre of my inquiry and incorporate multiple intersectionalities"[19] (Marshal & Rossman, 2010: 27 cited in Leavy, 2014) I can consider, ethnicities, socio-cultural and religious context in this research. This approach especially enables this research to tackle the issue of gender inequality in African Pentecostal churches through the voices of my participants as they give accounts of their own lived experience.

Talking about intersectionality, it is important to note that one framework that emphases intersectionality is Black feminist epistemologies. Black Feminist epistemologies is a framework within feminist theory that centres the experiences, perspectives, and struggles of

[19] Kimberle Crenshaw is the foremother of the theory of intersectionality in the late 1980s (building from a larger body of Black feminist scholarship). See Crenshaw, K. (1989) 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex' [online] University of Chicago Legal Forum. 1, 139-167.

Black women. It emerged as a distinct field of study during the 1970s and 1980s and has been shaped by the works of scholars and activists such as bell hooks (1987), Audre Lorde (1984), Angela Davis (1981), Patricia Hill Collins (1990), and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). Black feminist epistemologies analyse the intersections of race, gender, and class and show how these intersecting identities shape the experiences of Black women in society. Black feminist epistemologies privilege the lived experiences of Black women and seek to carry out research from their standpoint whilst also paying attention to the interconnections of oppression. Black feminist epistemologies are concerned with the community as a whole and places emphasis on solidarity and empowerment of marginalised groups. Hence, this thesis is concerned with the interconnections of race, ethnicity, religion, class, and gender in examining the experiences of women in APCs. This thesis also considers the interconnectedness of different kinds of oppression.

Consequently, feminist research also considers power relations during research. Feminist researchers are keen not perpetuate inequalities during the research process. To this end feminist researchers are conscious of their positioning as researcher where participant could see them as holding power. Therefore, in this research, I am not viewed as the ultimate source of knowledge, rather, the participants and I (the researcher) jointly generate knowledge (Harding 1987, Leavy 2014). This position influenced my use of conversational interviews which I discuss in section 5.6.2.1 of this chapter.

Furthermore, feminist research suggests that a feminist methodology often include an acknowledgement of the researcher's own subjectivity as no research can be free of bias (Harding 1987, Hoggart 2012). To this end, a feminist qualitative approach enables me to acknowledge my own subjectivity and the possible influence it could have on the analysis and interpretation of the research data. I do this in more depth in sections 5.5 and 5.8. Due to the fact that reflexive sociology is encouraged in feminist research, I can include my own experiences as empirical evidence because I take my experiences seriously. This can be incorporated into my research findings because I can acknowledge my beliefs and do not have to pretend to carry out value-free research. This subjective element of reflexivity in feminist research increases the objectivity of the research because it confirms the bias representation thus making it freer of misrepresentation without disputing the claim to reality (Harding, 1987, Harding, 1993, Hesse-Biber, 2012). Sections 5.5 and 5.8 attend to my positioning as insider and outsider and my reflexivity in more depth.

5.4 THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

My research is also shaped by African women's theology which can be categorised as belonging to a wider family of feminist and African theologies which are further located within liberation theology. To explore how African Pentecostal churches and the women I interviewed interpret the Bible, I employ an understanding of theology that is shaped and informed by theologies of liberation. In the following paragraphs, I begin by outlining briefly what liberation theology is. Then I give a brief overview of feminist, womanist and African women's theologies and their implication for my research.

Liberation theology developed as a social and political movement to interpret the gospel of Jesus Christ through the lived experience of oppressed people within society. It was pioneered in Latin America from the mid-1960s onwards by Gustavo Gutierrez who placed emphasis on the socio-political and economic liberation of the poor within society (Pinn 2010, Parrat 2004). Liberation theology aimed to reflect the marginalization of the poor and create a system that does not oppress the poor. Consequently, other liberation theologies such as Black theology, feminist theology, womanist theology and African liberation theology have arisen to reflect the experiences of the groups they belong to and to abolish systems of oppression (see for example, James Cone 1970; Grant J. 1989; 1993, Oduyoye M. 1992).

Theologies of liberation are critical of traditional theology and normative interpretation of scriptures. This means that theologies of liberation question the taken for granted interpretation of scriptures and how it has been used to promote suppression and oppression. On this, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff (1987) point out that "liberation theology was born when faith confronted the injustice done to the poor" (1987: 3). For example, African Liberation theology and feminist theology question the use of the Bible to justify colonialism and any oppressive intensions (Krog 2005). The emphasis of theologies of liberation is not only injustice to the poor but to every and any group that are oppressed and marginalized.

Additionally, liberation theologies question the methodologies of theologizing where the dominant western culture has been the basis upon which the Bible has been interpreted. Liberation theologies argue that it is essential to include the world views of different groups when theologizing because "theology is not unrelated to socio-political realities of existence; and historically it has been used to maintain the social and political advantages of the status quo" Grant (1986:195). For instance, when Christianity was presented to colonial Africa, it meant that Africans had to reject their notions of God and the divine and embrace the idea of a universal God as understood by westerners. However, as shown in chapters 3 and 8 of this thesis, African maps of the universe and their concepts of God, and holiness, influences the way they understand and apply the Bible. Therefore, it is important to do theology bearing in mind the contexts of diverse people groups.

On the issue of alternative ways of understanding Christian theology, Cone (1969) examines Christian love and the love of Jesus in relation to racism. Cone questions the understanding of Christian love that ignores social justice and instead seeks for the status quo to remain because it favours. In exhorting all Christians to practice the radical love of Jesus that spoke out against injustice, Cone says:

> It seems that whites forget about the necessary interrelatedness of love, justice, and power when they encounter Black people. Love becomes emotional and sentimental. This sentimental, condescending love accounts for their desire to 'help' by relieving the physical pains of the suffering Blacks so they can satisfy their own religious piety and keep the poor powerless. But the new Blacks, redeemed in Christ, must refuse their 'help' and demand that blacks be confronted as persons. They must say to whites that authentic love is not 'help', not giving Christmas baskets, but working for political, social, and economic justice, which will always mean a redistribution of power. It is a kind of power which enables the Blacks to fight their own battles and thus keep their dignity. 'Powerlessness breeds a race of beggars" (1969: 53-54).

Consequently, if I were to paraphrase Cone (1969) in the context of this research, the above quote will read thus "it seems that African Pentecostal churches forget the interrelatedness of love, justice, and power when they encounter women. For APCs, love seems to be sentimental, emotional, and condescending. Where they offer to 'help' women by offering token equality where women are allowed to preach in churches but are reminded of their gender roles based on the biology of the female body. They offer to 'help' women with chores at home so that they can satisfy their own religious piety and keep women powerless. But new women, redeemed in Christ and loved by God should refuse this 'help' and demand that they be confronted as persons who are equal partakers in God's kingdom".

Thus, feminist and womanist theologies enable me to question the status quo in African Pentecostal churches[20]. That the admonishment of wives to respect their husbands that is often touted in Christendom as the basis of submission and marginalisation of women should be read and understood from the perspective of women. The Bible says in Ephesians 5: 22-29:

[20] For in-depth analyses of feminist theologies and Biblical interpretations, see Junior, N. (2015). An Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation. Presbyterian Publishing Corp. Dube, M. W. (1997). Toward a postcolonial feminist interpretation of the Bible. SEMEIA-MISSOULA-, 11-26.

> Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.

Like James Cone (1969), I seek to question the normative and traditional understanding of this Bible chapter. I question the normative understanding of 'submission' and 'love'. What does the admonishment to 'love' in this context really means in African Pentecostal churches. Does this mean that women must reject their personhood to be 'submissive'? or does loving like Christ, for men in African Pentecostal churches mean 'helping' women with chores? Does the concept of 'ubuntu' require that only one gender works towards the wholeness of community? Like Goldstein (1960 cited in Grant 1986:197) asks:

> if women were to believe the theologians, she will try to strangle other impulses in herself. She will believe that haven chosen marriage and children and thus being face to face with the needs of her family for love, refreshment, and forgiveness, she has no right to ask anything for herself but must submit without qualification to the strictly feminine role.

Therefore, I confront this research bearing the above in mind, because feminist and womanist theologies are inherently liberationist, and they enable me give voice to the experiences of women in APCs and the ways they interpret Bible verses pertaining to femininity. They provide a critical lens with which to read and interpret the Bible.

5.4.1 *Feminist Theology*

For feminist theologians, it is not only the exclusion and oppression of women that is at stake. Rather, the interpretation of the Bible from the vantage perspective of men is also scrutinised. Thus, Feminist theologians approach scriptures with hermeneutics of suspicion. They question the normative interpretation of scriptures that reinforce gender roles and inequalities (for examples see Oduyoye 2001; Phiri 2004; Reuther 2002; Ursic 2021). Feminist theology questions and rejects sexist theological assumptions that placed women as inferior to men. In this context, feminist theology is intent on criticizing sexist tradition within the church that

overtly or covertly denigrate women by affirming men's superiority over women and encourages submission to men.

Christian feminist theology is aimed at liberating women from ideologies and structures that restrict women's full participation and self – actualization in church and society. To do this, feminist theology gives attention to "interpretation of women's experience as a source for religious reflection" (Anne Carr 1982). It is with this aim in mind that I approach the women taking part in this research project, to reflect on their religious experiences in church, family, and society. The aim is to examine whether the church culture and interpretation of the Bible in African Pentecostal churches reinforce gender roles and inequalities. Also, do the women that attend these churches agree with the interpretations or do they come up with theirs and how does the overall church culture reflect in the construction of their femininity. Bearing these in mind, I employ womanist and African feminist contextual interpretation of the Bible in analysing my participants accounts, because I understand that the perspectives of my participants are influenced by their contexts of ethnicity and religion. This is because individuality is not the most important for my participant from the point of culture and religion. On the cultural font, working for the good of the community is important. On the Christian front, working together for the good of the body of Christ is also important to participant (see chapter 2 and 1Cor 12:12-27; Romans 5).

5.4.2 *Womanism*

Womanism came about in response to the exclusion of Black women's experience in Black and feminist theology and emerged initially in the USA. However, rather than reject these two forms of theology, it draws from them and creates its own experiential epistemology based on the history and the complexities of Black women's experiences. It can be said to be a fusion of Black and feminist theology with emphasis on Black women's diverse way of experiencing the world. The term womanism is attributed to Alice Walker who first coined the term in her short story, *Coming Apart* (1979) and again in her book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983).

She describes a womanist as a Black feminist or feminist of colour, who is concerned with struggles against racism and sexism. Womanism envisions a peaceful coexistence between people of different colours and foster a better relationship between Black women and Black men. This is because, womanism is concerned with the wholeness of the whole community of people. Walker (1983) articulates it thus" a womanist is committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. she is no separatist". This aspect of womanism appeals to an African concept of Ubuntu which relates to doing good for the community.

Womanist theologians draw upon these definitions to develop a theology that included Black women's tripartite experience of racism, sexism, and classism and how these affected their Christian life. According to (Pinn 2010: 9) womanist theology "is a liberation theology that critiques the sexism of Black theologians and calls for greater attention to issues of gender and class". The focus of womanist theology is on the lived realities and everyday practices of Black women and is committed to doing theology through the perspectives of Black women by providing "theories and methodologies that seek to unmask, debunk, and disentangle the interlocking forces of racism, sexism, and classism". (Ibid:9).

Although womanist theology calls for a theology that reflects the experiences of Black women and accuses Black and feminist theology of only highlighting the experiences of Black men and white women (for feminist theology), whilst excluding the voices and experiences of Black women (Grant 1993). This is not all there is to womanist theology. According to Grant (1986), womanist theology poses a challenge to Black and feminist theologians by bringing into focus Black women's experiences of theology. By focusing on Black women's experiences, we can then understand how they have created meaningful interpretations of their Christian faith. For Grant (1986), one of the ways of doing womanist theology is by focusing the way that Black women read the Bible. Because "Black women considered the Bible to be a major source of religious validation in their lives… the source for Black women's understanding of God has been twofold: first, God's revelation directly to them, and secondly, God's revelation as witnessed in the Bible and as read and heard in the context of their experience" (Grant 1986: 202).

Therefore, womanist theology enables me focus on my participants own interpretations of the Bible rather than what their pastors preach. I am also able to root my research in their experiences of their Christian faith and how this has influenced their construction and performance of femininity within a secular society. Because womanist theology is critical of normative (patriarchal) interpretation of the Bible[21], I can conduct my interviews as conversational interviews so that my participants and I can critique these understandings of the Bible. After all, Jesus died for everyone, therefore, liberation is for all. In this respect womanist theology enables me to highlight the Christian experience of women in African Pentecostal churches at the same time incorporating their cultural perspectives.

5.4.3 *African Women Theologies*

[21] Keri Day offers a critique of normative interpretations of the Bible and ideas of holiness in Afro-Pentecostalism. For more see Day, K. (2018). "I am Dark and Lovely": Let the Shulammite Woman Speak. Black Theology, 16(3), 207-217.

For African women theologians (the CCAWT), liberation from oppressive patriarchal norms is approached from the viewpoint of African women as, ethnicity, culture, religion, and socio-political situation colour their experiences of gender discrimination and oppression. Pioneered by Mercy Oduyoye (1988), African women's theologies are concerned with how culture and religion shapes African women's experiences with the history of colonial ideologies. They argue that although culture can help in providing a sense of identity and belonging for the African women, it can also be used as a tool to dominate and oppress women. Therefore, culture should be approached critically. Due to the way scriptures is used in African Pentecostal churches to support some cultural norms especially when it concerns submission, I use African feminist and womanist theology as a critical lens with which to examine femininity construction in these churches.

African women theologians articulate their own methodologies in the reading and understanding of Biblical texts in the context of their African culture and socio-economic location. They criticize traditional western theology's reading of Christology of imposing Western ideals (Krog 2005; Dube 2016). For African women's theologies, Jesus has mother like qualities as he lovingly came down to earth to share in the burdens of humanity. Jesus associated with women and the oppressed to liberate them, for:

> Christ becomes truly friend and companion, liberating women from assumptions of patriarchal societies, and honouring, accepting, and sanctifying the single life as well as the married life, parenthood as well as the absence of progeny. The Christ of the women of Africa upholds not only motherhood, but all who, like Jesus of Nazareth, perform 'mothering' roles of bringing out the best in all around them. This is the Christ, high priest, advocate, and just judge in whose kingdom we pray to be (Oduyoye 1988:32).

In this context, African women theologians advocate for a reading and interpretation of the Bible in a way that is liberating rather than manipulated to reinforce dominant patriarchal ideals as some African churches do (Kanyoro 2002; Masenya, 2015). The above quote (Oduyoye 1988:32) also highlights different ways that women are often burdened in most African churches. There is the burden of singleness, absence of progeny and assumptions of patriarchy. Therefore, scriptures should be read and interpreted in the context that it was written, understanding that although inspired by God, it was however written by men in a patriarchal culture (Masenya, 2015; Phiri, 2007).

Therefore, my research questions and analysis are rooted in these frameworks. I bring together feminist, womanist, and African women's theologies within a qualitative and interpretive paradigm to frame my interview questions and analysis of the research data.

5. 5 RESEARCHER POSITIONING

I have stated in the introduction of this thesis that I am female, Christian and an international researcher of Nigerian descent. I explained how my experiences in African Pentecostal churches and undertaking a Master's study in the UK prompted this research. In this study, I research femininity construction in African Pentecostal churches in the UK around the idea of becoming the temple of God. This foregrounds the kind of relationship I have to the group I study; the research aims and questions I address. According to (Järviluoma, Moisala, & Vilkko 2003) "there is no such thing as innocent research", thus questions of my perspectives of life, how I know what I think I know about life, the impact these have on the way I respond to people and situations will certainly have an impact on this research no matter how objectively I try to carry out this research. Therefore, I acknowledge here that I come into this research with a lot of bias. The bias of being a woman, Christian, Pentecostal, Nigerian and the bias of my life's experiences as such.

My Christian faith and culture imbibed from my parents and my interactions with different ethnic groups in Nigeria have shaped my knowledge of life. This has meant that the Bible is of great importance to me and that the moral codes and ethics of my parent and the society I grew up in have greatly impacted how I approach life situations and people. This highlights how my experiences of being a woman through the lenses of Bible and culture is the driving force of this research. Therefore, my understanding of truth and knowledge is linked to my understanding of the Bible. As we have seen in chapters 2 and 3, the reading and understanding of the Bible by many Africans (Nigerians in this case) is intertwined with cultural norms. Thus, the way I understand the Bible and practise my Christian faith is linked to my experience of my own brand of Nigerian Christianity.

Additionally, my experience of schooling amongst other ethnic groups in Nigeria and understanding their cultures and their own practise of Christianity or other religions have also given me a broader understanding of life. This is because I can understand that other people know truth differently from the way I do, and I have been able to respect other people's ideologies even when I do not agree. Consequently, my privilege of having an education in the disciplines of communication, media, and cultural studies both at undergraduate and Master's level have further influenced my perspectives. This has made me conscious of the different structural, political, religious, and cultural power that may have an influence in how people develop and practise their identities. This consciousness coupled with my

understanding of a Bible verse has shaped my critical position. The Bible verse says “beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Thus, I approach the Bible and church culture not only from a believing position but also from a critical perspective.

Consequently, I am influenced by a critique of cultural and patriarchal interpretations of the Bible that renders the category of woman as subordinate to man. The characterisation of women as moral burden bearers and sufferers for the good of the community by most African Pentecostal churches had brought my personhood into question. On one hand, I was taught to be independent and fearless. On the hand I was taught, policed, and monitored into preparing for submission, servitude, and motherhood in marriage. However, as my Christian faith no longer became a belief that was passed on to me by my parent and church, but mine. One which I had consciously entered. I began to read the Bible for myself and question some of what I was taught.

There are many unforgettable memories I have of coming to peace with my place in God’s kingdom, but I shall refer to one here. At the age of 24 or so, I had consciously decided to live in God’s purpose as I had read in the Bible and been taught in church. However, one fateful day, I came out of the kitchen where I had been labouring all day for my family and cried because I suddenly had a feeling of suffocation. The thought that all my life’s purpose will end in the kitchen made me feel suffocated and less of a human being. I had dreams I believed where inspired by God, I had hopes and plans that did not only have to do with loving and sustaining a family. If I have been made in God’s image and likeness (Genesis 1: 27), loved by a God whose plans for me are good (Jeremiah R29: 11). If I have been chosen by God to also contribute to humanity, why was I the only one to sacrifice everything for the family. If several Bible verses say we (as Christians) are called by God to a life of holiness and humility, that we are “God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col 3:12. See Eph 4:12, James 4:6 &10, 1pet 5:5, Micah 6:8, Philippians 2:3-4). If all Christians have been called to a life of sacrifice where we put others needs above ours, looking out for each other and submitting to one another. Why are all these then viewed as feminine attributes? Why is the expectation that women be submissive not placed on men as well? Why was my questioning of normative interpretation of the Bible as it pertains to women a thing of concern? Like Mercy Oduyoye (2004:70) I was, and I am concerned with “who defines the humanity of woman? Is it male or is it God? If it is God, how do we get at the God- originated definition of woman-ness? Is family life a vocation, a demand of biology, or a convenient base for organising human society?”

Thus, I began to question the ways that the Bible had been taught to me by my parent and church. Another experience was when I came to the UK as an international student (see

chapter 1) and discovered that things were not different even here, in a society I understood to be more secular than Nigeria. It was then I truly understood the extent to which the power of culture has influenced African Christianity. As a result of my experiences in African Pentecostal churches and my personal Christian experience, I no longer believe in value free hermeneutics. This has influenced how I approach the issue of holiness in African Pentecostal churches and femininity construction. This also influences my reflexivity in this research.

5.6 RESEARCH METHODS

There are different ways of generating knowledge from the study of people's everyday experiences in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln 2018; 2005). These different techniques of generating and representing knowledge are known as research methods (Harding 1987). Initially I had intended to employ participant observation and semi structured interviews to have a robust understanding of women's experiences in the discourses about femininity in African Pentecostal churches in the UK. I had identified two African Pentecostal churches and had gained access through gatekeepers to attend and observe their church meetings and social gatherings. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the participant observation method of inquiry was no longer viable. Therefore, I opted to carry out semi- structured interviews instead. This choice enabled a wider geographical coverage, so that rather than only interviewing women from two churches in one locality, I could now interview women from different Pentecostal churches with a West African background across the UK, carrying out all interviews online.

5.6.1 *Sampling*

In order to carry out research that is based on people, especially if you are going to be interviewing, you do need participants that will take part in your study. Qualitative research mostly relies on purposive sampling to identify participants in accordance with the research aim and overarching research questions (Leavy, 2017; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). I have reiterated throughout this chapter that my research examines femininity construction and performance in African Pentecostal churches in the UK. Therefore, I was looking to interview women who have attended or attend APCs in the UK for more than a year. This was because I wanted to know about the church and family culture as experienced by participants. Therefore, they I needed participants that have an experience and understanding of African Pentecostal church culture in the UK. However, participants did not need to be African or have come from an African background prior to attending an APC. This ensured that if they did not come from an African home or APC background, I would be able to compare the influence of culture in the interpretation of Bible verses as it pertains to femininity.

My first set of participants were recruited based on their characteristics that meet the goals of this research project. That is, all 30 of my participants are women and are aged 18 and above who attend or have attended African Pentecostal churches in the UK. The first set of participants of this research were recruited from my contacts in everyday life, that is, University and church. Initially, I had wanted to use participants observation (which was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic) of two case study churches, because of this I had built rapport with some women in those churches which enabled me to recruit them as participants. Snowballing technique was also used to increase the number of participants. In Denzin & Lincoln (2017: 149) snowball sampling is defined as "a process whereby each participant leads to the selection of another participant". In this process, some participants may offer on their own with no prompting from the researcher to introduce other participants, or researchers may directly ask for participants (Denzin & Lincoln 2017). For example, some of my participants who are leaders in their churches offered to introduce other participants because they feel the research is interesting and would be beneficial for the dissemination of the Christian gospel. I have also directly asked some participants to suggest others who would be interested in being interviewed for this research project.

Although I used snowballing sampling to recruit participants, I had to ensure that I did not ask the same kinds of friends for referrals. This is because, since I was no longer using case study observation of two churches, I wanted to have a diverse group of churches. Even though most of my participants ended up coming from redeemed Christian church of God (RCCG). That is understandable as it is one of the fastest growing APCs with many branches all over the world. However, many of the participants who attend RCCG came from different branches across the UK and were not from the same group of friendships. The reason why I did not want the same friend groups making up the larger part of my research was not only due to wanting a diverse selection of APCs, but also because I wanted to avoid sample bias. One of the criticisms against snowballing sampling technique is that it is hard for researchers to generalise because chances are that the sample size come from the same demographics since it is based on referrals. Therefore, to eliminate this, I asked referrals from other network groups that were not taking part in the research and made sure not to have more than 4 participants from one referral source.

Additionally, because snowballing sample technique has been criticised because it may not be representative of the sample under study (Leavy 2014). I made sure that not all participants are of Nigerian background. Rather, my criteria for recruitment were, that participants attend (or have attended for more than a year) African Pentecostal church of West African background. Participants did not have to be African to participate. Although, women with Nigerian background did make up many of my participants. This is because most of the churches that participants attend have their headquarters in Nigeria or a strong link to Nigeria,

as you will see in fig 1 in the Appendix. My focus on African Christian women who attend Pentecostal churches with a West African background is because my overarching aim is to shine a light on how culture and the Christian religion may influence how African women perform femininity. This is also to narrow down my focus to West African diasporic churches for specificity. Most of the participants in this study belong to the Pentecostal denomination.

For reliability and validity, I am aware that qualitative research is critiqued for:

- Absence of hypotheses.
- Absence of control groups,
- A lack of randomization.
- Having a small sample size and bias in purposeful sampling.
- A lack of standardized data collection protocol and instruments.
- Absence of standard analytic procedures for coding and scoring data.
- Lack of measurements for determining results.
- Arbitrary formation of the results.
- Lack of reproducibility.
- Absence of generalizability (Denzin & Lincoln 2005: 1379)

For this study, I recruited 30 women. Although the sample size is small, and the knowledge created restricted to the research participants. However, my aim is to provide a detailed account and analysis of how women construct femininity in African Pentecostal churches and how they interpret scriptures and apply them (or not) in a seemingly gender-equal country like the UK. So, there is room for more research into this area in a larger sample size. My use of a small sample supports the interpretive approach and conversational interview style I have adopted for this research as I am interested in starting a conversation about this topic amongst women in APCs. My hope is that these 30 interview conversations will cause a ripple effect (see chapter 9 on research impact).

5.6.1.1 *Participant Description*

All the women recruited and interviewed for this research at one point or currently attend(ed) an African Pentecostal church in the UK. At the point of this research, all participants reside in the UK, and were aged 21 – 65. 28 Participants are of African descent, One Participant is of Jamaican descent and one participant is of Polish descent. Participants have all been educated to at least undergraduate level. 10 of the women I interviewed are leaders in their church, 12 serve in different departments of their church, and 8 of them have no formal duties in their churches. Out of the 10 women that are leaders, 5 are pastors or assistant pastors. See fig 1. for participant demographics.

FIG 1. Research Participant Details

S/N	Age Range	Relationship status	Name of church	Position in church	Job description/occupation	Length of stay in church
P1 Keisha	Not stated	Single	RCCG	None (preacher's kid)	Health care worker	9-10yrs
P2 Anita	24yrs	Single	Winner's Chapel	Worker	Recently graduated	Long enough
P3 Faith P4 Rachael	29yrs 27	Single Married	RCCG RCCG	Children's department Media/worship leader/ children's department	Entrepreneur Nurse	Long enough
P5 Rita	21yrs	Single	RCCG. Later I-Chapel	None	Student	Long enough
P6 Busayo	21yrs	Single	RCCG and later Dominion city	Hospitality and Pastor's assistant	Student	Long enough
P7 Mercy	Not stated	Married	Mustard seed international	Shepherd and lay schoolteacher	Not stated	Long enough
P8 Charity	26-35	Single	Christ Embassy	Music instructor Service management team	Funding officer for communities	Since birth
P9 Pauline	46-55	Married	RCCG	Not stated	NHS	Long enough

P10 Oreoluwa	Not stated	Single	Winner's Chapel	Sanctuary department	Student(undergrad)	Since birth
P11 Everest	25	Single	Winner's Chapel	Sanitation department	Student (postgraduate)	Since birth
P12 Jamila	26	Single	Halifax Bible believers church	None (preacher's kid)	Nurse	Since birth
P13 Evelyn	24	Single	Kingston/RCCG	Usher	Student	Long enough
P14 Michelle	37	Married	International Chapel	Associate Pastor	Doctor	Long enough
P15 Grace	28	Single	RCCG	Church Admin/ chorister	Lecturer	Long enough
P16 Micheala	36-45	Single	Winner's Chapel	Choir Director	Lecturer	Long enough
P17 Gift	36-45	Married	Unclear	Deaconess	Student (masters)/ Entrepreneur	Long enough
P18 Godiya	Not stated	Married	RCCG	Pastor	Nurse	Long enough
P19 Goodness	28	Single	United life chapel (current church) Catholic Church (since birth)	None	Master's student/ Project Manager	
P20 Maxine	21	Single	RCCG	Keyboardist	Student (full time undergraduate)	Since birth

P21 Joanne	Not stated	In a relationship	Christ Embassy	Choir	Applicant	Long enough
P22 Mariam 23 Patience	25	Single	New convenient ministries, and King's Christian center-16yrs C.A.C- since birth	Head of media and marketing department	Entrepreneur	Long enough Long enough
P24 Tamiya	22	Single	Int'l chapel	Deaconess (since 16yrs old)	Business/creative executive (university graduate)	Long enough
P25 Tracy	Not stated	Married	Int'l chapel	Pastor	Works from home	Long enough
P26 Adebunmi	18-25	Single	New covenant church (2014-2015) RCCG (since 2019)	Chorister	Student	Long enough
P27 Adaeze	26-35	Single	Winner's chapel, C.A.C(since birth)	Worker, leads choir groups, teens choir, youth choir and youth executive	Teacher	Long enough
P28 Omolade	24	Married	RCCG, and later Dominion city.	No	Post graduate student	Long enough
P29 Hauwa	18-25	Single	RCCG	No	Student	Long enough

P30 Martha	26-35	Complicated	RCCG	Hospitality	Engineer	2 years

5.6.2 *Semi Structured Interviews*.

Interviews are a commonly used qualitative research method in producing knowledge in the social sciences (Denzin & Lincoln 2018). An interview can be defined as a face-to-face verbal exchange in which the interviewer attempts to obtain information or expressions of opinions from the interviewee (Denzin & Lincoln 2018). These days there are various kinds of interviews that do not necessarily have to be face to face. Interviews can be conducted over the phone or the internet, making it possible to interview people who are far away. For this study, the present condition of the COVID-19 pandemic warranted that I find ways to carry out interviews without physically meeting people. Thus, I opted to use online interviews mediated through the phone and the internet, specifically using Microsoft Teams or Skype in line with university guideline.

Due to the focus of my research in exploring women's attitudes and experiences around the discourses of femininity they encounter in the forms of sermons preached in church, Bible verses they have read, and the wider society, I chose to use semi structured in-depth interviews as a technique in generating knowledge about this. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005: 696)

> Interviewing is not merely the neutral exchange of asking questions and getting answers". It is an active process that involves the researcher and the participants who both bring in their interpretations and meanings to the interview process. They are both "historically and contextually located, carrying unavoidable conscious and unconscious motives, desires, feelings, and biases- hardly a neutral tool.

Choosing qualitative interviews attends to my desire to be actively present in my research since research cannot be done neutrally, nor can the researcher distance herself from the research process as an objective bystander. To this end, the interview method is appropriate for this research because it allows me to engage with participants in the context that they are in simultaneously acknowledging my own biases and location of my own social, cultural and in this case religious construction. Additionally, in-depth interviews are inductive and have no right or wrong responses, moreover, participants are allowed to use their own words and can provide detailed and long responses as the questions are open ended (Leavy 2017). In-depth interviews can be unstructured, semi- structured or unstructured.

For this research, I used semi-structured interviews. Parker (2005) have argued that there really is no such thing as a structured interview as participants inadvertently spill beyond the structure. Also, sometimes, the things participants say outside of an interviewer's structure can enable a better understanding of the participants and important to the overall interview process as "interviews are interactional encounters and the nature of the social dynamic of the interview can shape the nature of the knowledge gained" (Denzin & Lincoln 2005: 699). For example, because I used semi- structured interviews, I had several specific Bible verses that talk about holiness, and I wanted my participants to tell me about how they interpret these scriptures. Due to the semi structured nature of the interview, I found that participants provided me with several other Bible verses which I had not thought about. This indeed gave me better understanding of the participant and provided a wider scope for the meanings I was trying to explore.

5.6.2.1 *Conversational Interviews*

When I chose this research topic, what was most important to me was starting a conversation about how femininity is understood in African Pentecostal churches (see chapter 1). Initially, I did not dare to envision an impact beyond the pages of my thesis and academia. So, starting a conversation about it with participants and the ripple effect it might cause was the most I hoped for. Therefore, it was a logical choice to have conversational interviews as one of the methods of my data collection. According to Conrad & Schober (1999:2) Conversational interviewing is an alternative approach, designed to assure that all respondents understand questions as intended. Interviewers say what is needed to help respondents correctly interpret the questions. It is not wording, therefore, but meaning that is standardized in a conversational interview (Suchman and Jordan, 1990). The approach is based on a view of communication that requires partners to collaborate, to converse about what is being said until they are confident, they adequately understand each other (see, e.g., Cicourel, 1973; Clark, 1992; Schegloff, 1984; Tannen, 1989).

Keeping this understanding in mind, I ensured that I and my participants understood each other during the interviews. For instance, during my interview with Racheal (a participant), she asked me to elaborate on a question I had asked her about gender roles in her family and church, by giving me examples of how she understood things as a child. Her asking me to elaborate ensured that she and I were on the same page about what I was really asking. Her examples also gave me a fuller picture. Consequently, I sometimes also gave participants examples of scenarios during the interviews to further clarify my question.

Although this approach has been criticised because researchers could lead and mislead participants (Conrad & Schober 1999:3), it however ensures response accuracy and removes

chances of misrepresenting participants meanings. For example, I sometimes repeated my paraphrased understanding of my participants responses to clarify that I understood what they were saying. There were instances, where participants told me that is not what they meant and clarified so that I understood what they meant. In this way, I was able to eliminate misunderstanding and any chance of misrepresenting their responses.

Additionally, conversational interviews ensured that the interaction between I and my participants enriched the data collection process. Because the interviews were semi-structured and that I allowed it to flow organically, participants felt like they were having a conversation and not an interview, thus they were able to express themselves unreservedly. Conversational interviews also helped meet the feminist concern of power imbalance between I and my participants, because I was not the only one asking questions during the interviews. I often had to reflect out loud to my participants on some assumptions I had held prior to the interviews. Therefore, the interviews were moments of shared knowledge and reflection between I and my participants.

Another critique of conversational interview is that it is time consuming. This is certainly true, as my interviews ran long from 40 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes. However, because we were having conversations rather than just interviews, the interviews did not feel long. This also ensured that the data collected was rich.

5.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Feminist research as with all research, calls for ethical considerations so that as a researcher you are not continuing exploitation of your participants. For this research I went through a rigorous ethical process before I could gain permission to carry out interviews. This rigorous process enabled me to consider things I had not thought about before about my ethical practice. Questions of who I will be excluding in my research process, how ethical are my questions, how do I ensure privacy, confidentiality and anonymity for my participants came forth. I have worked within the ethical guidelines provided by the University and the Centre for Trust, Peace, and Social Relations. I am also aware that ethical guidelines cannot account for all happenings that may ensue during a project (Leavy, 2017). For instance, when one participant mentioned in passing something that alluded to domestic abuse, I faced ethical considerations of whether to ask further questions or to ignore. In the end, I decided to go with what I and my supervisory team had discussed prior to starting interviews. In the participant information forms I sent to participants I had included contact information of support services should they need them. I decided to ignore this and point them to the support services instead

because I am not a trained counsellor or professional. However, this was a cause of ethical concern for me because I worried that I had not done enough.

Another ethical consideration I had during the cause of data collection was when a young woman preparing to get married volunteered to partake in the research. I wondered if I should turn her away because from having carried out more than 6 interviews, I knew that the conversations often veered towards the unequal expectations for women in marriage. Indeed, my concern was not unfounded as she told me of her fears concerning what was expected of her in marriage. She told me she feared she would lose herself after getting married. At this point I asked her if she wanted to continue with the interview as I did not want our conversation to influence her in anyway. She was happy to continue. Consequently, when I had a follow up conversation with this same participant and found out that she had changed church. I wondered if her reflection on the fact that the church she attended during the interview did not have women in leadership position influenced this change of church, and my part in it. However, since my aim from the beginning of this research was to have meaningful and impactful conversation with women in APCs, I felt that this was okay. She also reiterated to me that she wanted to have the kind of marriage where she could flourish, and she felt that her old church would not help her accomplish that. The way marriage may be constraining and burdensome for women is discussed in chapter 6 for a better understanding of why this was a concern.

5.7.1 *Informed Consent*

I have stated earlier on that the first set of my participants were recruited from my everyday contacts in church and University and were aware of what my research project is all about. However, I sent them a participant information leaflet alongside an informed consent form which contained detailed information about the research and their rights in relation to the research. The participant information sheet also contained contact information of I and my supervisors as well as helplines in case they were in need of those. Confidentiality and anonymity were also addressed in the participant information leaflet. The participants were reminded before the interview began that they could renegotiate their participation at any given time during the research. Although my participants gave verbal consent, they were also sent an informed consent form which was signed and returned to me before the interview. For anonymity, participants were given numbers instead of signing with their actual names. In this thesis I have also used pseudonyms in place of their actual names. In the discussion chapters, there are instances when I do not give the age of a participant, that is because some of the participants were hesitant to mention their actual age, so instead they provided me with an age range.

5.8 RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY

I have stated elsewhere in this chapter that feminist research encourages reflexivity. Bearing this in mind, I offer my reflexivity in this section. Haynes (2012:1) describes reflexivity as:

> an awareness of the researcher's role in the practice of research and the way this is influenced by the object of the research, enabling the researcher to acknowledge the way in which he or she affects both the research processes and outcomes. It is often termed as the process by which research turns back upon and takes account of itself. Reflexivity involves awareness that the researcher and the object of study affect each other mutually and continually in the research process.

This means recognising and taking responsibility for my positionality in research. Having stated in an earlier section of this chapter that I cannot claim objectivity because I come into this research with bias, reflexivity is particularly important for me. Whilst I acknowledge and take responsibility for my bias, reflexivity helps me explore the social frameworks that govern the beliefs and everyday practices of I and my participants. It is useful in helping me identify what constitutes valid and authentic knowledge in my research process.

Even though this research is close to my personal experience, I intended to treat it with distant objectivity. This was because I had an assumption of what academic writing and 'good research' looks like. This was demonstrated in my refusal to include autoethnography as a methodology because I wanted to be as objective as possible whilst acknowledging my bias. However, as I commenced data collection via interviews, I discovered that, because my own experiences were the inspiration for this research, an autoethnography would have added depth to the research. Hence, this has limited my own voice in this research. However, because my participants experiences are like mine, their voices have become mine as well.

Following Hesse-Biber & Leavy's (2011), I wrote down my reflections on the interviews in an electronic journal. I also kept a poetry journal where I wrote poems inspired by the feelings each interview left me with. This helped me keep track of how my positionality affected the research process and responses I considered 'negative' and how I reacted to these. This helped me determine if my positionality and reactions compromised the research process in anyway. Keeping a reflexive journal and account of my feelings was useful because it was what informed my decision to undertake conversational style interviews and to include narratives in my analysis of the interviews. I did not start out wanting to have conversational interviews, instead the interviews turned out that way. And I am quite glad that it did.

The following paragraphs give account of how my experiences and reflections influenced data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

I approached my participants as an insider. However, I became conscious of my outsider status during data collection. To give context, I and many of my participants shared the commonalities of being women, African and belonging to Pentecostal churches in the UK. However, I was also an outsider as not all my participants were of African descent, when they were African, not all were Nigerian. And when I interviewed Nigerians, only one was from my tribe, but even then, social class, background and religious perspectives differentiated us. Therefore, I would say that I was simultaneously insider and outsider. Dwyer & Buckle (2009: 58) assert that

> Insider research refers to when researchers conduct research with populations of which they are also members (Kanuha, 2000) so that the researcher shares an identity, language, and experiential base with the study participants (Asselin, 2003). The complete membership role gives researchers a certain amount of legitimacy and/or stigma (Adler & Adler, 1987). This insider role status frequently allows researchers more rapid and more complete acceptance by their participants. Therefore, participants are typically more open with researchers so that there may be a greater depth to the data gathered.

This was demonstrated in my research as all the women I interviewed including the non-Africans saw me as an insider on the basis of my being woman, Christian and Pentecostal. This made them quite eager to share their experiences as they felt that my research was for the good of all of 'us'. This was also reflected in how I and my participants often used 'we' when talking about ourselves as Africans, Pentecostals, Nigerians, or women. Additionally, my participants were able to share intimate details of themselves which I assume they would not have shared if they did not consider me one of them. At this point, I would like to point that any sense of being an outsider were my own thoughts as I reflected on our differences and how these differences reflected in our perspectives and practise of our shared Christian faith.

In my role as an insider researcher, I faced the challenge of having to navigate assumed shared knowledge and uncomfortable topics such as women's complicity in the subjugation of other women. I solved this by asking for clarity on issues of shared knowledge based on having to share my research with a wider audience that might not have the same understanding of the knowledge we share. On the issue of uncomfortable topics, I had decided during the interviews to share my own personal experiences with participants as I wanted to be transparent and to remove the power imbalance between interviewer and interviewee.

5. 9 USE OF NARRATIVES AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Ammerman (2021) encourages students of the study of religion to pay attention to narratives when studying religious group. She argues that, whilst studying religious practices and beliefs are essential to understanding faith communities and individuals, narratives help us to focus on words, and ideas. These enable us connect people's understanding of their religious beliefs and practices. This is because, according to Ammerman (2021:177) "practices are shaped by implicit stories about what is happening and why, and those temporal and relational narrative structures are important". Hence, I look at the narratives embedded in the stories my participants tell to understand femininity construction in APCs as the telling of religious beliefs and practices and the doing of them are intertwined. By stories, I mean the perception of self that participants have created over time, that is, the narratives they have of themselves and their place in the world. Hinchman & Hinchman (1997: xvi cited in Elliot 2005) propose that "Narratives (stories) in the human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connects events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it".

Although Ammerman (2021) argues that sometimes narratives do not have clear sequence of plotlines, looking at narratives have enabled me to have a better picture of the kind of femininity expected of my participants. I look at their individual narratives alongside, cultural, and religious narratives of the churches they attend and how they bring these together to form their beliefs around God, femininity, and holiness. Narratives require a teller and an audience. In the regard of this research, my participants and I were simultaneously tellers and audience because we had shared knowledge and we also shared our experiences. The narratives of how femininity is constructed, navigated, and performed by participants are grounded in emplotments that include family life, cultural and religious values as well as secular notions of femininity.

Furthermore, when it comes to theological reflections, there is a large body of work on narratives as theology (see for instance Ross, R.E 2003; Stoltzfus, R 2009; Day, K 2021). This refers to the use of storytelling, oral traditions, and personal experiences to convey theological concepts, moral lessons, and spiritual insights within the context of the African American religious tradition. Narratives are rooted in oral traditions that include testimonies and stories of God's presence in everyday life. According to Ross (2003) testimonies are spoken affirmation of belief in God and of divine intervention in everyday life. "In testimony, people speak truthfully about what they have experienced and seen.... in testimony a believer describes what God has done in her life, in words both Biblical and personal" (Thomas Hoyt cited in Ross 2003). This aspect of testimony as theology was evident in my interviews, for example where one participant shared how she got healed from menstrual pain by praying

and she quoted a scripture to emphasise why she had to pray for such a seemingly mundane matter. Here, the divine had stepped into her ordinary life and made a difference. This also served as a preaching moment for her, where she exhorted me to pray about my own menstrual pains.

Stoltzfus (2009) also states that storytelling as a form of theology in Black churches are "part of a long tradition of the telling of truths—the truth of life's experiences, the truth of our own humanity, and the truth of the goodness of God, the liberating power of the gospel of Jesus the Christ". In this sense, testimony/storytelling carries the weight of truth, because it involves witnessing about God. Day (2021) calls it telling the 'hard truth' about your everyday life. In the context of this research, testimony, storytelling and narratives involved confronting the hard matters of our collective experience of sexism and patriarchal structures in our churches. It involved confronting and telling the truth that the way the Bible is used in our churches undermines equality for women.

In Addition to narratives, I make use of thematic analysis in trying to categorise the data collected. Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative form of analysing data. It is "a method for analysing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyse, and report repeated patterns" (Braun & Clarke 2006). This informed the way I approached my data set. I grouped the answers to my main research questions mentioned above in section 5.1 and grouped them into themes. For example, the overarching aim of this research is to examine how femininity is constructed, navigated, and performed in APCs. Therefore, one of the interview questions was "what do you think it means to be a woman? And are there any cultural or religious expectations of femininity in APCs? I grouped together the words used repeatedly by participants which were mostly words like *strong* or *independent* or could be paraphrased as such. Coupled with the common narratives of expected and performed femininity by participants, I was able to come up with the theme "strong independent woman". This formed one of the key findings of this research.

Furthermore, Braun & Clark (2006) argue that "thematic analysis can emphasize the social, cultural, and structural contexts that influence individual experiences, enabling the development of knowledge that is constructed through interactions between the researcher and the research participants, revealing the meanings that are socially constructed". This was reflected in my research as I and my participants had shared social, cultural, and religious context which enabled me make judgements about our conversations about what femininity and holiness means in APCs. Thus, I combined examination of participants narratives with thematic analysis to make meanings of our (I and participants) conversations.

5.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have synthesized ideas explored in earlier chapters on women's positioning in the church to discuss my research approach. This has been influenced by my own positioning and is evident in my theory of knowledge and research approach. I have explored feminist and womanist theologies which has influenced the way I read and interpret Bible verses which in turn has framed the way I carry out interviews. This chapter has also discussed my sampling method and the ethical consideration of this research. I have discussed the influence my positionality may have on the way I carry out research, therefore, I have acknowledged my bias and discussed my reflexive process during the research. The next 3 chapters will discuss the findings of this research.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

PART ONE: CONSTRUCTING THE STRONG INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN WOMAN

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The overarching aim of this research has been to discover how femininity is constructed, performed, and negotiated in African Pentecostal churches (APCs) in the UK. It has also been the aim of this thesis to examine how the Bible is used by APCs and women in APCs to construct ideas about femininity. This is because, despite the volume of academic research on African Pentecostalism in diaspora as a vibrant branch of Christianity, rarely have gender ideology within this group being addressed. This research has sought to examine gender from

the perspective of women. Hence, the literature chapters have examined the cultural, social, and religious meanings of femininity within Western and African societies. Theories of gender and the changing roles of women in society and Christianity have also been examined in the literature chapters to better situate APC's construction of femininity in contemporary discourse about femininity.

The next four chapters focus on the key themes that emerged from my analysis of the interviews I conducted during my fieldwork. These interviews explored how women in African Pentecostal churches in the UK construct their femininity and how they interpret scriptures in relation to their femininity. This chapter focuses on the first theme: constructing a strong independent Christian femininity. The following paragraphs discuss what the making of a strong and independent Christian woman looks like in APCs, as well as the culture around the concept of ideal femininity in these churches. This also includes the way that participants enact this concept of a strong independent Christian femininity and the ways it is rationalized. Women's agency in complying, resisting, or negotiating these ideals and the ways participants of this study interpret the Bible to reinforce existing gender norms or empower themselves are also discussed. Thereafter, drawing on post-feminists and neoliberal sentiments in the expectations of ideal womanhood and participant's personal definition and performance of femininity are discussed, concluding the chapter.

The findings of this research show that one of the ways women in APCs construct their femininity is in relation to the idea of a strong independent Christian woman. This notion of womanhood echoes existing literature on femininity in African Christianity (for example see; Oduyoye & Kanyoro 2005, Hussein 2005, Adichie 2014, Bedana 2016, Sheldon 2017). These literatures suggest that ideal or appropriate African femininity is defined as strong yet weak, independent but still reliant on men. This quote by Adichie (2014:11) succinctly echoes this paradoxical notion of a strong yet weak African woman: *"we teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls, you can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful, but not too successful. Otherwise, you would threaten the man"*. This suggests that although most African women are not seen as fragile damsels that faint at everything or in need of saving (Oduyoye 2001), a level of physical, emotional, and mental strength is required of them, but this strength is only applauded insofar it does not threaten men. However, it is important to note that the findings from my interviews do not necessarily apply to all women in APCs as the sample size is non representative. However, the experiences and accounts of the women in this research may be indicative of the situation of the women in the wider African diaspora. Therefore, when I make mention of 'African women in APC's', I specifically mean the participants of this research and the stories of friends, acquaintances, and family they shared with me during the research.

In earlier chapters I discussed the ways in which theorists argue that individual and group identities are shaped by society, culture, religion, and other intersecting factors. Chapter three on gender and femininity discussed some of the ways through which gender and femininity are approached by sociologists of gender, with particular reference to the socialisation theory, West and Zimmerman's 'doing of gender' (1987) and Judith Butler's 'performance' of gender (1990). These theories apply to the participants of this research, having been socialised by the communities they come from and the religious institutions and social groups they belong to, as well as having to perform certain expected gender norms. Even though West & Zimmerman and Butler were not talking about religion, their theory that gender is something we 'do' and 'perform' can be widely applied in relation to the construction and performance of gender in a religious context as Orit Avishai (2008) demonstrates in her work on 'doing religion'. Therefore, I have employed these concepts as a lens through which I analyse how participants of this study construct and perform their femininity and the tensions of religious beliefs, culture and a person's own ideals involved.

6.2 APC WOMEN'S NOTION OF FEMININITY

In this study, the key words frequently used by participants to describe womanhood or femininity were *strong, powerful, responsible, and independent*. When asked "what do you think being a woman is?" 27 out of 30 participants responded by describing femininity as being strong and independent even though most were accepting of the notion that women are not equal to men. For example, Anita, a [22]24-year-old Nigerian British graduate of architecture who attends a popular Nigerian Pentecostal church responds to the question in these words:

> *I think a woman is a personal interpretation of who the person is, I don't feel you can generalize what a woman is, but if I can say one word, is strong, we are strong, because I feel like a woman ties the whole family together*.

Jamila and Busayo, a 26-year-old Zimbabwean British single parent who works as a nurse and a 21-year-old Nigerian undergraduate student gave the following responses to what being a woman is:

> Jamila: *I feel like being a woman means in a nutshell I feel like it's a caregiver. A caregiver, someone who's very strong and not to be looked down upon".*

[22] Throughout this thesis, age, educational background, and occupation if the participant gave it. Where there is no mention of age, the participant did not feel comfortable disclosing their actual age and instead gave a range.

> Busayo: *so, I have this belief that women are actually the most powerful beings on earth and the reason why I say that is because, we literally are like, not like we are, the life force, like the spiritual realm and the physical realm, every time I think about the fact that a human being comes out of a woman, I'm just like wow.... in terms of emotions, we're very much emotionally strong, compared to the men and yeah, we just carry on a lot of responsibilities, we shoulder a lot it just shows how powerful, so I would say women are powerful beings, like I said before, strong, I like to see women like a flower, so beautiful and we can be able to resist the wind as well…*

These participants' notion of femininity revolves around emotions, care, nurturing and family (all traditional notions of womanhood) juxtaposed with strength. In this regard, it can be argued that the strength participants allude to is emotional strength and resilience. For example, Jamila mentions that a woman is a "*caregiver"* and immediately follows it up with "*someone who's very strong*". This I interpret to mean a woman is strong because of the emotional strength that comes with being a caregiver. However, this participant also follows it up by saying a woman should "*not be looked down upon*", which I argue, indicates that in her opinion women are being looked down on and their strength underappreciated; in other words, emotional strength does count, and it should not be looked down upon. I also interpret Busayo's assertion that women "*can be able to resist the wind"* to mean that a woman is strong because she is resilient. "*Resisting the wind*" alludes to being able to withstand a force, therefore it is safe in this instance to say that the strength they talk about stems from the ability to withstand the hardships or challenges that have been thrown at them. In this regard, power or strength means endurance, resilience, and emotional strength.

Throughout the interviews, participants used words like *independent*, *a person of value, responsible, hardworking*, and other words that translate to being strong and independent. While the three women who did not explicitly say that African women are strong were older women and leaders in their respective churches; they however asserted that women ought to be strong. For these women strength can come in the form of submission and in the work that they do for the family and community. For instance, Tracy, one of the older women who also is a church leader says;

> *I started studying women in the Bible and then I found out that a woman can be whoever she wants to be, as far as she is submitting to authority. And I saw that submission is something that God asked of everyone not only the women but particularly, the issue of the home, which is a constant part of our lives for those who are married, but I started learning submission and I started learning how to be a*

proverbs 31 women and I can do anything I want to do as far as that gift is inside of me.

This can then be taken that all 30 participants in this research define femininity in terms of strength and to an extent independence. For example, Michaela above who says a woman should be *free to explore* and should be able to make decisions for herself. Also, the Proverbs 31 woman that Tracy references is understood by the women in this research to be the consummate wife who is also financially independent. However, according to my participants, this independence does not mean independence from the community, it is an independence of free will that works in the interest of the overall community. That is to say that independence in this sense does not necessarily involve being self-sufficient as a woman, it is financial independence in a way that benefits your family and the larger community. Like Tracy above, who says that women have the choice to be anything they want to be insofar they are submitting to authority. In the words of Miriam "*I think the ideal African woman, is supposed to look after her 5 kids, be like Proverbs 31 woman, she's supposed to be resourceful, have a business, do everything, keep her husband satisfied"*. Charity also says that in women meetings at her church *"the idea of making or having multiple streams of income, that is also like touched on, that I've heard quite a bit, when I like attend these women things"*.

Therefore, independence for the women of this research involves balancing being independent enough to contribute to the well-being of your family whilst still being subordinate to the men in your life.

The word 'construction' is key to this theme because it reflects the different processes involved in developing as a strong, independent Christian woman. Construction suggests a process of building, or creating something, in this way, the strong independent Christian woman also has to do with building. Imagine for a moment how a building comes to be, it is a process that starts with the laying on of a foundation, followed by other processes. The foundation for the women at the centre of this research is their nuclear family (who were often brought up in Africa or have strong ties to Africa), then the wider African communities made up of many aunties and uncles related and unrelated by blood. Afterwards, it is the church family. Therefore, the process of femininity construction for the participants of this research is made up of various interlocking factors and is a process that involves other individuals. This supports existing literature on identity construction and the processes through which we become gendered (see for examples Holmes 2009; Wharton 2005; Kimmel 2000; Rahman & Jackson 2010).

Therefore, we should consider the process of socialisation involved in how femininity is viewed in most African homes and communities. When asking participants about their notions of

femininity, I also asked about their families' notion of gender roles. This is important because according to Oduyoye (1995), individualism in most African societies is frowned upon, and everyone is expected to live their lives in ways that benefit the community. Moyo (2004; 72-78) explains it in these words:

> to be human in Africa is to be a community, that of female and male, young and old, whether abled or differently abled. A specifically African anthropological philosophy which goes 'I am because we are and since we are, therefore, I am', captures the African communitarian spirit, which is supposed to be the basis of human relations.

This I would argue, suggests that femininity in many African communities can be understood in communal as well as individual terms. Considering this communitarian spirit, culturally accepted gender identity and roles are passed on to girls from early on (Oduyoye, 2001; Phiri, 1997). This was true in the case of my participants, even while their families are egalitarian in their beliefs. These notions of gender roles through early socialisation are continued through APCs where culture and Christianity is intertwined as gospel. For instance, in writing about how gender roles are learned, Oakley (1991: 127) says that

> Both male and female children are exposed to traditional masculine and feminine activities... there is evidence that mothers encourage the female child's identification with this aspect of gender role as part of a permanent process in which the child's imitations are a stopgap until she becomes adult and can act out her domesticity in reality: mothers distinguish between the kind of chores assigned to boys and girls even with five-year-olds. Cleaning the dishes, making the beds and laying the table are girls' work; emptying rubbish, cleaning ashtrays and emptying waste baskets are for boys.

This is reflected in the narratives that participants tell of how they learned gender roles at home through what they saw their mothers do and what was expected of them at home, as is the case with Rita and Adaeze. In Rita's case (Rita is a 21-year-old recent graduate), she says:

> *Ok I was made to learn how to cook earlier and more pressured because I'm a woman, I mean I love cooking…but generally as a female because women are meant to cook... I feel like the emotional strength I have now are linked to certain things I've gone through as a female and those things that a male wouldn't go through…when I was in secondary school, that gender role thing was a problem I would, I fought it at a point I was expected to like, I was in*

charge of the kitchen, in the kitchen, I will clean the kitchen my brothers will come and mess it up, my mum walks into the kitchen and it's me, it was like I was the owner of the kitchen, it was like yeah, expecting that at this age you should know how to cook, if the kitchen is a mess, it's on you, nobody else, if the house is a mess, it's on you. it used to be like if I'm waking up late, they'll be like you're sleeping at this time and you're a woman and I never really understood that. how does that have anything to do with being a woman? I don't know how it should be a woman's thing.

Although Rita grumbles about the gender roles her family expected of her, she is accepting of the old notion that men and women belong to different spheres and that a woman is strong because of all these expectations placed on her. I say this because during the interview she expressed that women are made differently, and a woman is motherly and is supposed to be a helpmate according to her understanding of the Bible. Another participant, Adaeze, an unmarried teacher aged 26 – 35 shares her experience thus:

Being a woman, as African, there's a way you've been brought up, a woman does this and a woman does that, so that kind or shaped my understanding that a woman is the help mate of the man, brings up the home… There's something my mum used to say… she says, as I am right now I am a lady, the only time I become a woman is when I've been wooed by a man, right now, as I said I'm single, I do things a woman would, because I live at home, I have my siblings, they are all younger than me, because I'm the oldest out of 7, so I still carry out those duties that will be expected of me as a woman…just being able to do a million and ten things as a woman, so for me, I have that mentality of the way I'm brought up, a woman does this, a woman does that, it's been heavily influenced by parents, that's my own definition of what a woman is.

Adaeze's view of womanhood is influenced by her mother and as she later told me, also largely influenced by the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) she grew up in here in the UK. In this sense cultural notions of gender roles and identity are perpetuated by the family and reinforced by APC. This is further shown even in participants that are not African who, after becoming members of APCs become circumscribed to the African notions of gender roles. For example, Joanne, a young Polish woman who attends a popular APC has this to say about being a woman in APC:

I feel like it depends on culture as well, for example, females in Poland are very different from females in, let's say, in Nigeria because I feel like for you guys it's very, I mean I'm not saying for the whole population of Nigeria but that's what I kind of noticed since I moved here that a lot of the females have quite strong character, but in

Poland, it's, I think it's the way they kind of teach kids that, it's like, be humble, so that's why I see the strong character as quality of a man because of the cultural, let's say the way it is in Poland… female identity is shaping, some girls get into, let's call it very independent, manly manner and some of them take both and just mix it together… I always had this doctrine that a woman needs to know how to take care of herself, because no one will ever help you type of thing...so I feel like I'm kind of mixture of both, like I'm not very feminine but at the same time I'm not very manly, which is something in between.

This participant links strength and independence to masculinity because of her Polish upbringing, however she tries to compensate with other feminine characteristics because she further described herself as calm, caring, and empathetic. The difference between her Polish upbringing and that of the women in APCs is that in addition to being independent, strength and humbleness is also a required trait. Take another example of Mercy, a 35-year-old Jamaican woman who attends a Ghanaian- Zimbabwean APC who says that *"what we hear in church is that a woman should be godly, be submissive, honour men…."* She goes on to share an experience where men sat on chairs and women sat on the floor after an exhausting day of work in the kitchen. She further shared experiences of members of the church who immediately after childbirth or an illness resumed working in the home because no one would do it. She also expressed disappointment in herself on how she had begun to train her children along those lines by assigning gender roles and giving 'manly' responsibilities to her son and 'womanly' responsibilities to her daughter. It is clear from these experiences that the notions of gender in APC are seen through a very cultural lens which then become internalised. This is more so for some women in African homes as their roles and contribution to the community is set from when they are born as that of caregivers, nurturers, and general domestic roles.

However, the women in this study can be classed as agentic situated knowers[23] (see Haraway 2001; 2020) as they are aware of normative gender stereotypes of women being submissive to men but are critical of this. The women in this study choose which gender stereotype to adopt and are also subversive in their understandings and performance of femininity. For instance, Mercy's narrative above indicates that she expresses disappointment in herself for beginning to fall into some of these stereotypes in her expectations of her own children. This

[23] refers to the idea that knowledge and cognition are not solely determined by internal mental processes but are influenced and shaped by our environment and the specific context in which we operate. Hence, our view of the world is shaped by the information available to us and the constraints of our location. see Anderson, E. (2020) 'Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science' [online] The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2020 Edition), Haraway, Donna, 1991, "Situated Knowledges," In Simians, Cyborgs, and Women, New York: Routledge.

is more so the case for younger participants in this study, as their accounts indicate that they are aware of normative gender codes and stereotypes but are often also critical of these and selective in their adoption, and indeed, their subversion.

Having said this, the foundation may be set by African cultural expectations (as expressed by participants) for ideal femininity, but notions of gender within APCs' then plays a crucial role in cementing these ideals in the minds of church members. Women and girls in APCs are therefore socialised from when they are young to always think beyond themselves. Thinking beyond oneself is an act of love, and love is seen as what women inherently possess. Hence, women are socialised into seeing themselves as the ones that nurture the community. The act of nurturing comes with responsibilities, and with these responsibilities' women 'possess God given strength'. Yet the apparent burden placed on women is open to critique. For example, Moyo (2004; 72-78) takes issue with this kind of communitarian spirit, because while community spirit of Ubuntu Philosophy (an African version of unconditional love Mbigi & Maree, 1995) is good, she however asks "how can this be a communitarian spirit for both men and women, if the very command to love unconditionally seems to be a burden for some (women), resulting in much self-sacrifice*".* Whilst having a communal spirit that is built on unconditional love and hospitality is a good thing, however, if the duty to love unconditionally and to always be hospitable is on one gender only, that gender's goodwill can be taken advantage of, and it can become burdensome. Therefore, this 'strength and independence' that my participants speak of is arguably problematic because it requires sacrifice due to the myriad of responsibilities involved in being a nurturer. For example, Pauline a 48-year-old British born Nigerian who is a married mother of 6 who says that:

> *To me, a woman in the real sense of the word is a busy person. A woman multitasks, even as a single person. You have responsibilities that you have take up with. Now, when you move into the marriage side of things, the responsibilities in my opinion get wider because yes, you've got the husband, you've got the children then the extended family on both sides but in particular, your own home, you've got responsibilities to keep your home, keep your relationship with your husband and with your children and then the extended family.*

Her statement implies that she views womanhood as having great responsibility, requiring arduous work. However, it appears she may not view this as demanding work because she has learned that arduous work comes naturally to women. We can also see from her statement, that this responsibility does not only end with herself but extends to others, particularly to her immediate community. During the interview, she explained that a woman is busy with personal and career development, nurturing her family, community, and church

activities, while pursuing a personal relationship with God. By the same token, we can also deduce from her statement how conscious she is of this responsibility, which is reflected in her description that a woman must multitask to meet up with these responsibilities, which requires mental and physical strength. Consequently, this arduous work that is required to keep the community together and to take on many responsibilities has been taken for granted by participants and has become something that they see as 'innately' woman. This is reflected in their assertions that *'God created women differently, women are naturally caring*'. Therefore, participants in this research see strength and independence as something they were born with.

6.3 - ENCOUNTERING AFRICAN CONCEPTIONS OF FEMININITY

The narrative that an African woman is strong and independent is shown in Oduyoye's (1995, 2004) research on African women and Christianity. Her study shows the importance of the use of language in reinforcing ideas about gender roles. This is shown in the way proverbs and folktales were used (and are still used) by most African societies in everyday language describing why something is and how life should be lived. Even in matrilineal societies such as the Akan tribes of Ghana, West Africa, women were ridiculed through folktales and proverbs. And the bulk of work and responsibility was on them to keep the growth of the community. Hence, in today's African Pentecostal churches with a West African background, this sense of responsibility creates women who have to be self-sufficient, strong but also meek (Oduyoye 1995, 2004).

The use of language, folktales, and proverbs in everyday speech of Africans is also used in most African churches as sermons and Bible interpretations are sprinkled with African proverbs and stories. For example, in many creation stories in African society, women are seen as having wielded power, but power was taken away from them and given to men because they abused it, hence women are termed as malicious witches. "The character of women is painted in colours that form an image of disharmony and sinister motivations", as Oduyoye (1995: 19-54) puts it. This underlying suspicion of women is also present in a lot of proverbs and language used in relation to gender. (Hussein 2005: 21) provides an example of an Oromo proverb *"Women and donkey do not complain about burden,"* and an Igbo proverb "*a dog trained by a woman (always) bites people to death"* is the patriarchy's pronouncement of the dangers that follows women's agency in the society. Another Yoruba proverb says, "*A male child is the pillar of the family, a female one is a seasonal stream."* These proverbs are reminiscent of many other proverbs that provide a glimpse into gender ideology of some African societies.

Hence, it is no wonder why the story of Eve is appropriated by some APC pastors to say that the burdens that women must bear is a consequence of their disobedience in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, the Bible verse "to the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." (Gen 3:16 NKJV) is often suggested to be the reason for women's continued subjugation by men. Whilst not all African Christians will interpret the Bible verse above the same way (see for instance Gafney 2017, Junior 2015), most participants interviewed say their church see it that way, some agree with this interpretation, a few disagree.

One form of language that is often used relates to the idea of headship and authority, and how women should always be humble as illustrated in stories about female gods. Although Maddox's (2013) research on 'headship talk' in evangelical churches (Sydney's Hillsong church was the case study) indicates that most of the families were egalitarian despite the church's emphasis on male leadership, this is not true in the case of this research. It is the opposite for women in APCs because women are taught to view themselves as '*necks',* '*support systems'* or the '*key that holds the family together'* (Participants' words). Of course, strength is required of a 'neck' if it is to carry a head, likewise the person keeping the family together. Another participant felt that women are empowered as wives and mothers and nothing else. In her words:

> *I think that we've done ourselves a disservice by making it almost like the only focus of a woman's life, especially an African woman's life and so she feels empowered. Often times, especially in my case, I felt empowered to be someone's wife, but I was disempowered in my other areas of gifting, and I think it took me being in a different environment to now awaken. But, that sort of thing should be awakened in the church. My focus first shouldn't be meeting a husband, my focus first should be becoming who I am. But there's a type of womanhood that is commonly pushed amongst churches…. but we do not often equally address men. From my observation, where I'm sitting, there are not enough platforms addressing men and engaging with men.*

Mariam, a 25-year-old British Nigerian entrepreneur, laments the lack of empowerment for women in all the APCs she has attended. According to her, APCs try to manage the strength of women and rather define womanhood as *'sensual, soft, fluffy, emotional'*. They want to control how a woman expresses herself, therefore women are empowered to be mothers and wives rather than on an individual level that allows them to explore their strength. She further expressed that she felt that because of the normative definitions of gender within APCs, Biblical manhood as understood by APCs is in identity crisis today.

This suggests that women are *"...*socialised with these kinds of generalisations, they become 'normal' women, woman-beings with womanly skills and traits that are called feminine. Men become masculine through the same process, but with the added stipulation that a man does what pleases him" (Oduyoye 1995: 60). Therefore, I would argue that there are not enough platforms speaking to men on being humble and being better people and helpmates, rather it is all directed to women where women are expected to be strong and independent enough to support a man as a helpmate. This could also be problematic as womanhood seems to be defined in relation to their roles in a man's life. The language of APCs, as seen from the responses of participants of this research, is constantly defining femininity in relation to headship talk. For example, the word '*helpmate'* is used a lot in describing femininity, and when women are being encouraged to be independent, it is so that they do not become burdens to the men to whom they are or will be helpmates to. This begs the question: can women not be independent in their own right? Who becomes the helpmate of a woman? Who is the support for these women? The use of headship language in relation to women and the appropriation of the Genesis creation story by some APC pastors is shown in how some participants construct their gender ideology, where they think that subjugation is the punishment given to women through Eve. For example, Gift a woman aged between 36 – 45 who describes herself as a wife, a mother, a deaconess and an entrepreneur, educated to Master's level and Everest a 25-year-old single woman have these to say:

> Gift: *A woman is a help mate, it's, it's, it's clear in the Bible, when God formed Adam and he said, he, the man needs, the man is lonely and he needs someone who could be there for him, a help mate, you are not equal to the man, at every point in time, they are, they are the head.*
>
> Everest: *when Eve met Adam, like there was a scripture I saw that she was like equal to Adam but then after the fall, after she ate the apple, she became, like she's now supposed to be submissive, like she's now lower, I would not say lower but Adam is supposed to be like the head of her, so from that I feel like a woman, I would not want to use the word but then like, a man somehow is supposed to lead a woman.*

Considering these, I would argue that these women are having to define their strength and independence in relation to men whether single or married. So, they must manage their strength and independence in ways that will not intimidate men. Of course, this is not to say that women should aim to intimidate men, rather a culture of mutuality should be encouraged. This reflects Oduyoye's (1997, 2004) assertion that African culture, and by extension APCs (that the participants of this research attend), put a lot of pressure and responsibility on women

to be strong and independent to an extent, insofar as the strength does not undermine the strength and authority of a man. Similarly, Phiri (1997: 11) goes further to assert that:

> The construction of womanhood by patriarchy is one of the central issues for feminist theologians globally and particularly in Africa because it has influenced the way women and the roles that women can play in African Church and society are imaged. Patriarchy has defined women as inferior to men thereby perpetuating the oppression of women by religion and culture.

In the context of this research, this is shown in the way women's strength is managed and contained in the guise of religion and culture. African Pentecostal Churches that the women in this study attend do not demand much from men except that they be financially responsible for themselves and their families, but even this is suspect as women must also be enterprising to contribute to the general wellbeing of the family. In this way a woman is taught from childhood that to be a woman is to be able to bear the burden that comes with womanhood. Therefore, these women grow up having to navigate the notions of femininity they come in contact within their community and wider society, they must find a balance if they wish to be accepted by their community. Here is where the performance of gender comes in.

6.4 - PERFORMING A STRONG, CHRISTIAN FEMININITY

Considering the above, the type of femininity that women in APCs aspire to, reflects the assertion made by West & Zimmerman (1987) that we put considerable effort into doing gender in order to engage with people. This is shown in research participants' efforts in constructing an ideal femininity that serves the community they belong to, and a femininity that they also find acceptable. This process of construction often requires a 'performance' (Butler 1990) when in the midst of their African or church community. Butler (1990) uses the case of a transgender person who was born male and learns how to be a woman whilst transitioning and drag performance, to show how the category of womanhood is not stable or what is considered feminine is not biological but learned through repetitions. She argues that:

> gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions—and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction "compels" our belief in its necessity and naturalness (1990: 190)

Whilst Butler (1990) in the above quote is writing about gender in relation to sex categories and drag performance, this can be applied to participants of this research who actively construct what is considered ideal femininity in APCs. This ideal femininity is not seen as a

constructed notion, but as something 'natural' rather than ideals that have become normative through repetitions. For instance, Butler (1990) encourages us to:

> Consider gender, for instance, as a corporeal style, an "act," as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where "performative" suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning…the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is at once a re-enactment and a reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation (Ibid: 191).

This means that for something to become naturalised, it has to be done repeatedly that it becomes part of you. The act of repetition then becomes the performance that Butler (1990) talks about. This performance becomes legitimised to the extent that it renders the work involved invisible. For instance, the comments by the participants below show the pressure to 'perform' ideal femininity and the work involved in constructing a femininity that satisfies the woman's need for something other than marriage or motherhood whilst also conforming to expected femininity.

> Anita: *Yes, I feel very pressured… You tend to have to you know be the first one up to start domestic chores and you can't go out too late cause they feel like something might happen to you or having friends who are guys, that's wrong, that's taboo cause you give a bad impression on who you are, just I don't know…. Yeah*.
>
> *Rachael: So, there's emphasis on actually, you need to have time to pursue your purpose and the things that make you happy…. But there may be some things that you want to fulfil, that you're still working towards and it's very important that the partner that you're united with understands that and gives you time within your marriage to fulfil and pursue those things. So now my idea of womanhood is that I can actually be that traditional sort of woman, but I can also be a modern woman where I can work, be career minded but also pursue my passions really*.

Comments like these reoccurred during the interviews which shows the tension between conforming to expected notions of African femininity and remaining true to their own ideals of what a woman should be. While Anita must adopt all the domestic roles that are expected of her at home, she goes on to explain that she is a driven and ambitious person because her father expects her to do well and be financially independent to an extent until she gets married. According to this participant, who is an architect, her family is very aspirational, therefore they have career expectations of her. Racheal on the other hand, is a 27-year-old nurse married with two children who has to balance being a traditional wife and a career woman. She told me she is very assertive as a person and that it reflects in her workplace where she is currently

working on her promotion. She is also quite active in her church where she holds several roles and is dedicated to them because, according to her, God has a purpose and vision for her life which she intends on pursuing. This shows that participants in this research have learned to behave in certain ways to the audience that requires it. They have learnt to be domestic goddesses (see Donner 2016) when needed whilst pursuing their own goals. It can be argued that the reason they describe themselves as strong independent Christian women is because of wanting to resist the status quo but at the same time still fit into the model of femininity acceptable to the community they belong to. These sentiments are indicative of post-feminist sensibilities which will be discussed in greater details in section 6.6 of this chapter. Also, this performance of ideal femininity alongside strong and independent femininity also shows their agentic subversion of ideal femininity. They do this by empowering themselves financially, and by pursuing their dreams alongside

The responses of the participants above mirror those of the other 27 participants whose concept of femininity coalesces around the idea that women should be able to make something of themselves and should have identities outside of marriage and motherhood and to do so, they are required to be strong. It is however interesting as mentioned earlier, that they believe that strength is a natural thing that women are born with rather than something that has developed over time. Participants do not think that this strength has come because of how women are situated in society. This can be linked to the work of leading Womanist theologians Coleman (2008: 884) refers to as 'making do' and Williams' (1993:15) as the concept of survival and quality of life among Black women. It is about making the best of the situation they find themselves in, that is, "making a way out of no way" (Coleman 2008). Although Coleman (2008) and Williams (1993) look at it from a positive perspective, they were conscious of where this strength has come from and why it is needed in the first place. According to them, (writing of Black women in the USA), strength has come out of their suffering during and after slavery. Therefore, Black women have had to 'make do' and that requires strength. This can be used to view my participants' situation. Although their situation cannot be likened to slavery, it is burdensome nonetheless, and it is because of the burdens placed on them that they have had to acquire the strength to be all that is required of them. This is reflected in how participants also described themselves as adaptable and able to navigate African and Christian culture with that of their peers in wider society. They become the version of femininity that each community demands of them depending on where they are. Within Womanist theologies such 'making do' forms the basis for an ultimately liberative ethic. It's the first step on the road on the liberative practice of Black women, which I argue is a form of agency for my participants as we shall see in section 6.5.

Furthermore, this 'making do' (Coleman 2008) attitude is reflective of the way African women in the context of this research consciously do or perform gender in various social situations. This is because making do requires acting out in certain ways in front of certain audiences. This links to Butler's assertion that:

> Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed. It seems fair to say that certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity, and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in some way (Butler 1988: 527).

In this regard, in most African societies, resilience and the ability to survive even in harsh conditions (making do) is seen as an inherent feminine attribute, however, this is something that has come about through a history of repetitive acts that is then viewed as normal or natural. This means that acting as if one can do all things that is expected of her and managing situations in a way that is expected of her. This is evidenced in the accounts of my participants, many of whom have had to wake up early to do chores, police and regulate themselves as well as manage the impression others have of them. They learnt how to manage and behave themselves in certain ways from their mothers and other women in their community. They saw their mothers do everything from house chores to being resourceful with the finances of the family, to taking care of the children and still pursuing their own businesses. For example, Patience, a 25-year-old Congolese woman describes it this way:

> *because of how I've grown up, so I've always been surrounded by very, my mum is a very strong character herself, I've been surrounded by very vocal African women and that's been a trend throughout, so I always see us as strong, but I see that we often try and put things in place….*

Another participant, a British born Nigerian also has this to say

> *Growing up, my mum, (I wasn't a fan of the kitchen) was always in the kitchen, and it's not her fault, that's how she's been taught, my siblings are ok, I have the common sense to tell you that "I can't do that or this", my family makes me feel ok with that, but a of course my parents are very into me being a good wife, learn how to cook, clean, even though they love me, it's still out of fear.*

These narratives may seem to imply there was no father in the home, but there was. It just was what was expected of a 'good, Godly' woman. In contrast, the father's responsibility is to provide financially for the home and to offer protection as 'the man' of the house. This is also what young boys grow up seeing. Another thing to take away from this is that these women did not outrightly fight this, instead, they found ways to adapt to the situation or other ways to improve the situation. For example, some of my participants could not complain about the load

of domestic chores that they were expected to do while their brothers or husbands watched television or played, they could not complain when they had to be the carers for their siblings or children or when they are asked to give up things simply because of gender. For Oduyoye (1995) it is not that African women are not aware that these expectations are burdensome, rather it is because "over time, African women had to learn to know their oppressors but had held their peace, because "when your hand is in someone's mouth, you do not hit that person on the head" (Oduyoye 1995: 3). She further explains that "survival in such a situation depends on how skilfully a woman can manipulate circumstances to her advantage" (Oduyoye 1995: 54). To this end, my participants learned to be silent like their mothers and other women even while burdened. They had to behave in ways that seemed like they were complying even though they did not always, in order to have their way (see also Bedana 2019, Kaunda 2020, Oduyoye 1995).

Consequently, this idea of a strong, "do it all" woman, also meek and docile, is supported by the APCs that participants attend through the appropriation of Bible passages and Bible characters that fit their gender ideology, particularly Proverbs 31. For example, when asked what an ideal African Christian woman is supposed to be like, these were the responses of some of my participants:

> Busayo: *uhm, let's see, maybe because an African Christian woman should be very obedient, very quiet, like she can't question anything, she's supposed to be very virtuous I would say, like the proverbs 31 woman, very calm, so yeah, I think an African woman and a Christian woman do go hand-in-hand, they are like let's say, they fall hand-in-hand, it's just if you know who you are or you want to challenge what the norm is, then you're still an African Christian woman but you just want to be different.*

> Mariam: *I would say the African Christian expectation is that of Proverbs 31, a woman is to be married, keep her husband happy, take care of her five children, submissive, doesn't talk too much but wise with her words*".

> Adebunmi: *Yeah, sure I would say, that modesty aspect for example, I think, especially African Christians expects African Christians woman to be modest, to be maternal; I guess that whole helpers mentality like they want the helpers to, yeah it's an interesting one because I think a lot of the times, culture really mixes with faith it's hard to separate the two at times because a lot of things that we know are not Bible based or Christian and often get thrown into the mud because of a particular culture, so yeah, those things, definitely maternal, modest, subservient I would say*.

These participants, aged 21, 25 and 25 respectively, described themselves as curious learners, powerful, and disciplined. However, from their responses, their own notion of femininity is different from what is expected of them. The expectation they infer from the teaching they receive at church is that they should be good wives, mothers, daughter in laws and good homemakers, hence they are expected to be strong in these areas in lieu of emotional strength. Financial strength and independence on the other hand is something they ought to have as a source of help to their spouses and not for the sake of their ambitions or as providers. However, most of the participants interviewed believe they have gifts and talents given to them by God, which they aspire to fulfil be it as entrepreneurs, nurses, academics, or doctors. Therefore, the type of strength and independence they mean is different from what they experience at home and in church, in that there is a sense of 'how things should be' in their own notion of femininity. That is, they have an ideal of how they want things to be, but their reality is otherwise. It can be assumed then that the kind of strength my participants mean, and experience is that which is derived from the burdens and responsibility placed on them and from striving to fulfil their own life's calling. Their understanding of this strength for most participants is that it has come from God through 'natural' means and divine providence. For example, Gift says:

> *God himself spent extra, extra time on the woman, so we are wonderfully and fearfully made, you know, the woman is complete, totally complete, and my experience of being a woman for the mere fact that we can bring forth….it's awesome and, we can strive in the face of challenges, marriage and job, children, extended family, church, you name it, the woman is balanced.*

This suggests that, although the African families and Pentecostal churches these women belong to did not explicitly say what it means to be a woman, the language used in everyday life and sermons as it relates to gender roles and women, create a situation where women's lives are regulated by what is seen as their natural makeup. Because most women can give birth (or at least are expected to), women are seen as natural nurturers and therefore have a lot of responsibility. On the issue of childbirth, the women in this research link childbirth and the ability to bear its pain and period pain to strength. When looked at closely, this can mean that strength for participants of this research means the ability to endure and bear burdens or pain. Strength equals being able to put up with the unfairness of the situation they have found themselves in and living their lives with what they have been dealt. This is not to say that they are resigned to their lot, rather, their strength is also shown in their ability to make the best of their situation despite the odds stacked up against them. Therefore, femininity for participants can be defined as being strong enough to bear burdens and responsibilities and an ability to create, and nurture what is created.

This goes back to an earlier statement I made about how strength in African women has come to be seen by participants in this research as something natural, something biological, how women are made. Most participants mirrored this comment in that they believe that women have an inherent ability to multitask and that women can, to quote a verse some of them used, 'do all things through Christ who strengthens them' (Philippians 4:13 NKJV). Although this verse is gender neutral, participants have appropriated it to mean that God created women with the strength to bear burdens, therefore women are expected to bear burdens because it is natural. This indicates that the strength that participants are talking about is an ability to endure and persevere through hardship and then triumph over these hardships through submission. Williams (1993) makes this connection to victory when she explains how Black women have appropriated the story of Hagar in viewing their relationship with God. She argues that God has given Black women special strength to overcome the hardship that they face. However, for Williams, God's response to Hagar's story the first time she runs away from Sarah and Abraham is not liberation but is that of "survival and involvement in their development of an appropriate quality of life that is appropriate to their situation and heritage" (Williams 1993: 15).

This can also be seen in how participants of this research use the Bible in constructing a strong and independent woman. For Williams (1993), when Hagar ran away the first time, God asked Hagar to return to her masters and submit to them. This submission also means enduring every hardship that comes her way and out of that submission she will get her victory, victory being independence and a chance to decide her own fate. Although participants of this research do not appropriate Hagar to construct their strength, they however, appropriate other Biblical stories or passages to construct a femininity that they are comfortable with. For example, most participants reference the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 as the kind of woman they aspire to be, because in her, they see strength and courage to be a working woman as well as a wife.

Women in APCs strive to construct an image of themselves as strong independent Christian women that satisfies their community and satisfies themselves as well. But this does not mean that they are not their authentic selves in each community, rather they have found ways to negotiate these often-conflicting notions of femininity by creating a strong independent Christian woman. This further reflects the significant impact African and church communities have in the way women construct their femininity. Their personal definition of what it means to be a woman is closely related to the definition of womanhood as defined by culture and the

church. However, a considerable amount of what Foucault calls 'technologies of the self' is employed in constructing their femininity which can be agentic. According to Foucault:

> technologies of the self… permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (1982: 16-49).

He further asserts that technologies of the self are not independent of other factors rather are embedded in the technologies of dominant powers such as cultural beliefs, social norms and religion which ascribe regulations and truths that individuals obey. He describes these technologies as:

> technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject (Foucault 1982:16-49).

According to him these technologies rarely function independently but are interconnected and require some level of domination, acquiring of techniques or behaviours. He links this to Christianity where it is expected that one learns to take care of oneself which means taking care of one's soul. Taking care of oneself leads to renouncing the self which leads to purification of the soul. Therefore, he opines that Christianity

> imposes very strict obligations of truth, dogma, and canon, more so than do the pagan religions… The duty to accept a set of obligations, to hold certain books as permanent truth, to accept authoritarian decisions in matters of truth, not only to believe certain things but to show that one believes, and to accept institutional authority are all characteristic of Christianity…"(Foucault 1982:16-49).

In this way, technology of the self becomes useful in seeing how participants in this research construct meaning in their lives and imagine an ideal self. Consequently, the women in this research show that despite the socialisation process involved in doing or performing gender according to cultural expectations, they still have agency as they are not passive recipients of these institutional definitions.

6.5 - NAVIGATING RELIGIOUS AGENCY

Agency, as scholarship in the sociology of religion and gender has demonstrated, comes in various forms (see for instance Avishai 2008, Gaddini 2019). On one hand participants feel empowered by their faith, the church and culture to be what they want to be, yet there is a

constant struggle in navigating personal goals and group expectations (church and African social networks, that is, family and friends) because this empowerment is only 'allowed' if family life comes first before career. On the other hand, older participants find comfort in their assigned gender roles and find a form of empowerment in trying to reinforce these roles in younger women through policing or surveillance of their behaviour (see Evans & Riley 2014, Burke 2012 on female gaze). This is a cyclical thing as young women get married and join the women's groups in church and continue the tradition.

Burke's (2012) review of four approaches to understanding religious women's agency are a) resistance b) empowerment c) instrumental and d) compliant agency. These approaches (see chapter 1 section 1.3 for a fuller account) help us to understand forms of agency employed by women in gender traditional religions. When women adopt the resistance approach, agency involves rejecting the status quo and resisting oppressive and constraining traditional gender roles. In this approach women's agency is most visible because of their non-compliance with gender traditional roles. However, as Avishai (2008) and Burke (2012) show, resistance is not without its repercussions, one of which is the possibility of being alienated from your church community, because resistance to the status quo is seen as deviant and unacceptable. This has led many to leave or change the church and African communities they belonged to. This happened to a few of my participants who had to change church because the church culture did not fit their understanding of life. One of the women interviewed for this research changed church because she felt her former church did not equip her with useful means to tackle real life situations because it was too focused on prosperity teachings. Another participant also changed church because of the pressure to be married, she was made to feel less of a person for being single as in most African cultures and churches, it is important to be married, that is, femininity is tied to marriage. Another participant also changed church because of the constant 'policing' because she is the daughter of one of the pastors of the church. These are some of the reasons why some participants of this research changed churches. However, participants remain largely circumscribed to the gender ideology of APCs, thus it cannot be said that they resist the status quo outrightly.

On the other hand, empowerment agency (see Avishai 2008 & Burke 2012) is particularly employed by some of the young women of this research because though they do not think they are equal to men; they however do not believe they are lesser beings. They offer alternative readings of Bible verses and stories which in academia can be categorised under liberative womanist theologies and Biblical hermeneutics. One way which they offer a womanist reading of the Bible is on the issues of submission. According to the participants, the only men requiring submission or compliance are their own husbands, pastors, and elders. Here, Bible hermeneutics becomes a useful and subversive agentic tool to empower them as

they reinterpret the scriptures used to reinforce their subjugation and gender roles. Liberative womanist theologies, of which African women's theologies are a part (see Grant 1986, Williams 1987, Martin 1990), offer an intersectional lens of understanding and interpreting the Bible which I see employed by participants of this research. More importantly, participants in this research are critical of a literal interpretation of Biblical scriptures and make comments like "*the Bible was written by men and the time and culture it was written for is different"* (Participant Charity).

Furthermore, participants consider the context the Bible verse or story was written in and do not just pick one verse without considering the whole chapter or an overall context in which it was written. Therefore, this suggests that the women in this research apply Biblical hermeneutics and like Oduyoye (2004: 92) "question any uncritical reading of Biblical texts, knowing something of the fluidity of their many translations". Here, participants interpret the Bible considering the context of era, gender, class, and culture of the writers and those whom it was written for. Several participants lamented that the men they know and the pastors of the APC they attend interpret the Bible in the way that suits them.

Unlike most APC pastors, most of the women in this research offer a liberative womanist rereading of the Bible even though they do not call it that and like Oduyoye ask that when reading the Bible preachers should "place emphasis on love, honour, and care…rather than subjugation, for love means security for both parties – in love there is no loss of face" (Oduyoye 2004:92 interpreting Eph 5:28-31). For example, they offer their own understanding of this Bible verse that says *"wives, submit to yourselves unto your own husband as unto the Lord"* (Ephesians 5: 22 NKJV of the Bible). For the women in this research that agree with gender traditional roles, this Bible verse means that submission is only needed from them when they are married and only their husbands are deserving of such submission. However, no other man can lord himself over them as far as he is not their husband, father, pastor or elder. Bible verses such as this empower them not to think less of themselves or feel beholden to any man because submission is not to ALL men.

Also, they advocate for mutuality in their interpretation of the above Bible verse, in that submission to one another is needed from every Christian and that the whole of Ephesians should be read to get a better understanding of what Apostle Paul was saying rather than picking and dropping only what suits us. Hence, it is their own (not necessarily the church's interpretation) interpretation of Bible verses that serve to empower them into what they consider strong and independent women.

It can also be said that the empowerment agency my participants make use of is a form of resistance as well. Take for instance, the frequently mentioned Bible character that served to empower the participants of this study, the Proverbs 31 woman. This Bible chapter describes

a virtuous woman who has become the model to which participants aspire to. For them, the Proverbs 31 woman is a person of strength who is an entrepreneur and a good manager of her home and employees. Herein they apply their empowerment agency and resist the gender ideology that sees them as only belonging to the domestic sphere or financially dependent on men. This Proverbs 31 woman serves as a symbol of empowerment my participant look up to. In her, they see the courage to fulfil their potentials without compromising their virtue. This enables them to fulfil their own aspirations and the expectations of ideal African Christian femininity. Being a Proverbs 31 equals being a virtuous woman.

For instance, Busayo says:

> *as a woman, I don't know, erm, I like how people are always saying the Proverbs 31 woman, I haven't really read it in a long time, I've been wanting to go back to it, but I think it's like, it kind of shows the strength of a woman, I don't know how to explain it, maybe I should open it, as a woman, Proverbs 31 is very common, it kind of shows like how priceless we are, that's another thing I think a woman is, priceless, but yeah, I know it sounds cliché but obviously, a lot of us aspire to be proverbs 31 woman, although people have a misconception about what Proverbs 31 woman is, even here it says "virtuous woman" but the whole Bible was written by men… the Proverbs 31 woman, she works while some people believe that she should not work but like still have time to kind of take care of her home, but men it doesn't mean that men shouldn't take care of the home as well, it should be both of them, but like she's able to achieve so much… she also had servants to make work easy, she told them what to do, she was the boss in her home.*

Whilst Busayo is critical of the appropriation of the Proverbs 31 woman by APCs by acknowledging that the Bible was written by men. She however finds inspiration from her entrepreneurial endeavours. Like the Hagar character appropriated by African American women (Williams 1993, Coleman 2008) as a symbol of salvation, survival and quality of life, the participants in my research also appropriated the Proverbs 31 woman as a symbol of strength and empowerment. Through her example, participants believe they can do all that they are called to do. They are important, they can be entrepreneurs, employers, and managers. Another example of a Bible character appropriated by participants is Mary the sister of Lazarus who sat at Jesus's feet listening to his teachings (Luke 10: 39). Anita sees Mary as a symbol she wants to emulate:

> *I think with her she was able to realize that it's not about making food or making the house clean but also taking advantage of the knowledge you're getting straight away,*

first-hand…., her foundation was just to be patient and listen and by listening you'll be able to gain wisdom and that wisdom could be applied.

For this participant, being able to listen to Jesus frees her from being only relegated to the domestic sphere; at the feet of Jesus, she can gain wisdom which can help her in life. In this sense, God has not only called her to serve in the domestic sphere, instead, she is also worthy to receive Jesus's teachings which she can pass on to other people. This is not only liberation but an assurance of quality of life that wisdom will provide.

Another Bible character who serves as a symbol of empowerment for my participants is Old Testament character Esther, who was a young Jewish woman in the Persian Kingdom that became queen and risked her life to save the Jewish people living in Persia at the time (late Persian/early Hellenistic period (fourth century B.C.E.) from destruction (see the book of Esther in the Bible, or Crawford white 2021). Michelle says:

Esther just reminds me of, she's just a lady to me like when I picture Esther in my head she's just this elegant lady that come from a poor background, she had the opportunity to be the wife of the king and she just brushed herself up and presented her case well, like it makes you think that whenever you get an opportunity, don't think "oh my God, I don't have an experience, I don't know this," when you find yourself in a position, take that position and bring your best into it.

With Esther, Michelle sees opportunity for a position of influence, even if it comes through a man, it should not be scoffed at, but should be properly utilised. Another participant mentions the beauty, poise and elegance of Esther which encourages her to carry herself like a queen, like a person of worth, so that when opportunity comes her way, she can walk into it elegantly. Subsequently, another participant sees Esther's ability to be a queen even as a foreigner in a land where her people are the minority as evidence that God can uplift a woman and use her as a tool to liberate her people just as Esther did for the Israelites.

Another participant, Jamila, who is a single parent, could relate to Rahab the prostitute. Rahab as described in the Bible was a Canaanite prostitute who helped the Israelites conquer the city of Jericho by housing their spies. She is also included in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (for reference see; Joshua 2 NKJV). For this participant, Rahab is a symbol of second chances and that God does not give up on people when they make mistakes. This shows her that God is accepting of her with all her flaws even when the church turns its back on her. Rahab also gives her courage to have plans for a brighter future *"because mistakes don't end you, rather they give you strength to go on" (Jamila).*

Additionally, some participants like the one above are able to identify with women who are often depicted as 'villains' of the Bible. For example, Grace says:

> *When we talk of Jezebel, we are like, oh my God, demon, Satan, no, yes, obviously yes, she was evil, however that lady was a good wife. She was a good wife. I do not know if you remember the story when Ahab had things troubling him… the woman went above and beyond to please her husband. How she did it obviously was wrong because she got the man killed. Whatever she did but the motivation behind it is Biblical because she was prioritising the needs for her husband...There's Delilah, there is Abigail. Abigail is just amazing. Abigail killed somebody. No, that's not Abigail...It's Jael the one that killed somebody…There's Rahab, who was a prostitute and for.... I just love how God is and how beautiful he, the Bible says he takes the foolish things of this world and obviously, makes the wisdom of men look foolish...There is Rahab, there are lessons to learn from her. She was a prostitute quite all right, but she also made it to the genealogy of Jesus.*

Whilst participants who identified with the 'bad' women of the Bible might not be reading it in great detail, they however make the same connections that Howard (2015: 120) makes when she says, that "Jezebel is antithesis of Elijah and epitome of monarchic ruthlessness, she is also an ideal wife a la Proverbs 31. Devoted to her husband, "she considers a field and possesses it; with the fruit of her hands, she secures a vineyard" (31:16).

The participants quoted above are examples of some of the Biblical characters and passages that have been appropriated by women in APCs to navigate their femininity in ways that they consider empowering. However, this empowerment agency as used by participants of this research can arguably be problematic as it may continue to create men that feel entitled and further increase the burden for women to become these many things. For example, if women uphold this strong and independent femininity without confronting the root of the problem, which I argue is the unrealistic expectations set for women in APCs. This will only make men expect their wives to be strong and independent without considering that these expectations are a burden. This arguably does not uphold men to the same standard that women are expected to live by.

Additionally, this model of empowerment may further disadvantage already disadvantaged women. For example, not all women are in positions to own businesses or afford help with cleaning, not all women have the luxury of learning or have access to ways to interpret the Bible differently than what is being taught at church. Therefore, I argue that some of the empowerment models provided by participants does not account for the issue of class. This is not surprising as my participants are relatively privileged in terms of attaining education and

belonging to a social class that can afford to adhere to the kind of empowerment model articulated here.

In her review of Instrumental agency, Burke (2012:9) asserts that:

> Like resistance and empowerment agency, instrumental agency assumes women want to free themselves from patriarchal culture and particularly stifling aspects of their lives. Unlike empowerment agency's emphasis on the internal feelings of power that may result from religious participation, instrumental agency emphasizes external advantages (either material or relational) that may result from religious participation.

This understanding of instrumental agency is exhibited by the women in this research in various ways. For instance, some participants enjoy the idea that they are not held to the same financial responsibilities as men are in a marriage. Therefore, this enables them to keep their own earnings as they are only 'contributors'. Whilst these women agree that the domestic ideals set up for women are burdensome, they are content with being mere contributors as they do not aim for great career achievements. Another example is of women in this research that feel empowered as wives and mothers in most APCs. These participants feel affirmed not wanting to pursue a career (see Woodhead 2007; 2008). On relational advantage, Tracy says that the Biblical injunction for wives to be submissive to their husbands have accorded her much honour and respect in her home. This is reflective of many of the married women in this study who say that being submitted to their husbands have worked in their favour in that their husbands listen to them and take their advice on major decisions. Hence, participants exhibit instrumental agency by taking advantage of what they consider the positive aspect of ideal femininity expectations in APCs.

The other approach to women's agency useful to understanding my participants is complaint agency (Avishai 2008). As the name implies, this form of agency involves complying with the notion of ideal femininity as ascribed by APCs. The older women and a few younger women comply with APCs' religious notions of femininity and women's roles in life, and they strive to apply it in their everyday lives. This is also shown in the way they interpret the Bible as opposed to other participants who are either resisting or finding ways to empower themselves. Like Everest and Gift quoted earlier who do not believe that women are equal to men. Even the participants with strong, assertive personalities, who interpret the Bible in empowering ways, are still circumscribed to African gender ideologies as extolled by their families and APCs. In this sense it can be said that the strong, independent Christian women of this research are mostly compliant in some ways to what is presented as an ideal African Christian femininity, which is the Proverbs 31 woman.

However, it can be argued that, although women in gender traditional religions exhibit agency in many ways, none exhibit more agency than the other. Rather, like Avishai (2008)

extrapolates, women in APCs are simply 'doing religion' the way they consider fit. Whether resisting, complying or empowering, women in this research have the same goal, the desire to please God. For the women in this research, part of pleasing God comes by obeying his calling upon their lives and by adhering to the mandate they identify in the Bible to have submissive natures.

6.6 CONSTRUCTING A STRONG INDEPENDENT WOMAN THROUGH POST-FEMINIST AND NEOLIBERAL SENSIBILITIES

Post-feminism and neoliberalism provide another lens for which to study femininity construction in African Pentecostal churches in the UK. Whilst post-feminism is not easily defined, it does serve as a lens to understand the narratives through which participants and their acquaintances that belong to the same church and cultural community interpret the Bible in constructing their femininity. In feminist cultural analysis, post-feminism has become a useful tool for analysis, yet there is little agreement on the definition of post-feminism. Post-feminism as the word 'post' denotes, can be taken to mean after feminism. That is, it is a sense that the society we live in now is no longer defined along rigid patriarchal lines, and as such, feminism is no longer needed[24]. However, this is too simplistic of a definition because post-feminism is made up of "several interrelated themes (Gill 2007: 147). According to Gill 2007(ibid), these interrelated themes include the notion that:

> femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; an emphasis on self-surveillance, monitoring and self-discipline, a focus on individualism, choice, and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm and a resurgence of ideas about sexual differences".

Aspects of this definition are expressed by participants of this research. For example, most of the participants of this research will say things like "*you know men are logical… we women are naturally emotional..."* This indicates a resurgence of notions of sexual differences. Post-

[24] Post feminism represents a departure from the ideas and goals of second-wave feminism, which focused on issues such as gender equality, reproductive rights, and women's liberation. Instead Post feminism focuses on individual choice and empowerment, commodifying empowerment. Post feminism focuses on traditional notions of femininity as agency and power. Post feminism has also been linked with neoliberalism and capitalism as different sides of the same coin. For more see Alice, L., & Star, L. (1995). Feminism Postmodernism post feminism. Women's Studies Programme, Massey University. Brooks, A. (2002). Post feminisms: Feminism, cultural theory and cultural forms. Routledge.

Kauppinen, K. (2013). At an Intersection of Postfeminism and Neoliberalism: A Discourse Analytical View of an International Women's Magazine. Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines, 7(1).

feminism therefore becomes a useful framework through which the women of this research construct their femininity as well as interact and navigate ideas of femininity they encounter, in their churches and in wider society.

Whilst the self-surveillance performed by women in Gill (2007) is carried out on the body and how it is dressed and as active sexual agents, it is however carried out differently by the women of this research in the context of this chapter. The technologies of self employed by the women of this research aims to produce themselves as strong independent women. This is not to say that it does not overlap with the technologies of self employed by women as outlined by Gill (2007). It does overlap in that it is built around women constructing themselves as subjects resembling the APCs men's desire. Gill puts it this way: "girls and women are invited to become a particular kind of self and are endowed with agency on condition that it is used to construct oneself as a subject closely resembling the heterosexual male fantasy found in pornography" (2007: 152). In the case of APC, it is the fantasy of a strong independent, yet domesticated, virtuous, pure, and submissive woman.

However, it can also be argued that the women in this research have not only constructed a strong independent Christian femininity because it is expected of them but also as a means of maintaining an identity that is independent of the men in their lives through a neoliberal lens where a woman can achieve what she desires as long as she works hard for it no matter the limitations she may have[25]. According to Rose (1996:154 cited in Kauppinen 2013) 'neoliberal governance' refers to a mode of political power that seeks to interpolate human beings as 'enterprising individuals, striving for fulfilment, excellence and achievement' as part of a wider 'economization of the social' – postulated as the golden way to societal well-being. This means that individuals are positioned as entrepreneurial authors of their lives, therefore fulfilment can be achieved if they work hard. This resonates well with women in this research as during the interviews, they frequently quote the Bible verse that says "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me "(Philippians 4:13 NKJV). For instance, Participants Anita and Goodness say that:

[25] for more on neoliberalism and its connection to post feminism see, Kauppinen, K. (2013). 'Full power despite stress': A discourse analytical examination of the interconnectedness of post feminism and neoliberalism in the domain of work in an international women's magazine. Discourse & Communication, 7(2), 133-151.
Kauppinen, K. (2013). At an Intersection of post feminism and Neoliberalism: A Discourse Analytical View of an International Women's Magazine. Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines, 7(1).
Gill, R., & Scharff, C. (Eds.). (2013). New femininities: post feminism, neoliberalism and subjectivity. Springer.

Elias, A., Gill, R., & Scharff, C. (2017). Aesthetic labour: Beauty politics in neoliberalism (pp. 3-49). Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Anita: *I think for me, it's just genuine; I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me Phil.4:13 and I think for women, the reason why I say this is because people always perceives us as the strong ones and the ones who can carry the load and we are the ones who's gonna get the family out of it, or you as a woman no matter what trial or tribulation comes before you, you know that you are just gonna, get over the lump and just succeed in life, but I think for me , for a woman especially, knowing that God has always done his 50% in your life, its done, it's up to you to build upon that 50 and actually be the word that God has for you ….and I think like I said as women we need to realize that there are things placed in us, that we can use to help us and help others share the load…"*

Goodness: "*femininity for me is having the choice of everything, femininity for me is, I can do this, I can do that, these things are available for me, I can do what I want you know,... you're just fighting for yourself, so that is how I would explain femininity, having all the choice that is available to everyone and choosing what I want to do".*

From the above quotes we can surmise the interrelation of post feminism and neoliberalism where emphasis is on choice and working hard to have a fulfilling life. This choice that participants speak about, the ability and capability to be traditional women and at the same excellent career women is what post-feminism and neoliberalism tells us we can achieve if we work hard for it. In this sense, happiness is a thing that can be grasped by hard work. However, as Sara Ahmed (2010) shows, this success that encapsulates happiness is somehow something we can never get a hold of, thus it is always a future thing. For instance, girls are taught that it is only by putting on good behaviour that they can be happy in future. Therefore, girls work hard to learn to cook and do chores, keeping themselves pure for that future happiness they do not yet see. They are encouraged to get good grades in school, get good jobs, so as not to be liabilities tomorrow. They must work at dressing themselves appealingly albeit modestly too for the reward of a good future husband. They also start to learn to pray and fast and be good Christians to secure their future homes. Thus, their femininity is always in conversation with their future.

Therefore, the ways that the women understand femininity is through a post-feminist and neoliberal sensibilities that promises that women can have it all, they can keep traditional roles and still have successful careers. Neoliberalism also promises that the women in this research have choices before them and if they work hard enough, they can achieve the lives they want. However, these sentiments do not put into consideration the apparent burden that being a

‘super woman’ is. Nor are the limitations of background, social networks and other intersecting factors put into consideration.

6.7 CONCLUSION

The overarching aim of this thesis as stated in earlier chapters has been to examine how femininity is constructed in APCs, the use and interpretation of the Bible in constructing these ideas about femininity. To achieve this, the literature chapters have examined theories about gender and femininity in secular societies and in religion with particular focus on gender performativity and the doing of gender socially and in religion. This thesis has also examined Pentecostalism and the place of gender within African Pentecostalism. I have synthesised these to conduct interviews and used the lenses of feminist and womanist theologies to analyse the data which has led to the current findings of this research. The literature chapters have revealed the paucity of work examining gender in African Pentecostal churches in diaspora. Therefore, this chapter contributes to academic debates on gender and femininity within African Pentecostalism in the UK.

This Chapter has discussed one of the main findings of this research which is how women in APCs construct their femininity as strong, independent Christian women. This chapter has shown that the process of constructing this strong independent Christian woman requires a lot of work and sacrifice. This strong independent Christian woman is created in response to gender ideologies of African Christianity juxtaposed with participants' own visions for their lives. This form of femininity is borne out of the struggles of participants wanting their own identity versus that of an African Christian woman’s identity which is often tied to men and domestic life. Therefore, to fulfil ideal African femininity as well as what they think a modern woman ought to be, women in APCs perform gender in religiously acceptable ways and through a postfeminist and neoliberal lens.

Consequently, femininity for women in APCs is a future thing as well as a continuous thing because it is something they must keep working at and the rewards are something to look forward to. These rewards are marriage, motherhood and fulfilling careers. Women in APCs practice self-policing and self-management to achieve respectable femininity whilst remaining true to their faith. Therefore, they interpret the Bible in ways that empowers them to pursue this. The technologies of the self, employed by participants points to how post- feminism and neoliberalism are useful for self-surveillance in cultivating themselves as strong independent Christian women. This shows the unique way that religious beliefs and secularity have become interconnected in constructing gendered identity. This chapter has shown that religious beliefs and tools such as the Bible can be used in making sense of notions that are considered secular, that is post-feminism and neoliberalism. The next chapter builds on the theme of

strong and independent Christian woman to show how women in APCs embody this concept through their bodies. I discuss this through the concept of embodiment and materiality of the body.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Part Two: EMBODYING RELIGIOUS and CULTURAL FEMININITY.

Our bodies are ourselves: yet we are also more than our bodies

Birke 1998.

Obviously, like physical perception is what will first judge, is that a woman or a man, and then once you talk to a woman, cause obviously, behavior is a factor to determine her maturity, her personality, her morals and then determine that this is a woman or just a little girl, so I guess that's also another factor that you weigh in to define a woman…. you have to like pray and fast and be that idealistic woman who looks like she's holding unto the lord, that her religion is worn on her front, if that makes sense, so as she walks and as she talks, everything she does should portray that "Christian lifestyle.

Anita (Participant). 2021

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the quest to find out how women in African Pentecostal churches (APCs) in the UK construct and negotiate ideas about femininity in the church and wider society, I encountered embodiment. Ammerman (2021:75) asserts that "nothing is more empirical than a human body" and that "we can't talk about the lived character of religion without attention to the physical beings doing the living". Therefore, in this chapter I focus on the ways that the women in this research bring to life APC ideas about femininity. How they make tangible, the gendered notion of holiness in APCs. When asked to define what femininity means to her, Participant Anita quoted above points to the body first before attending to the mind. She also goes on to articulate how ideal femininity is embodied by women in the African Pentecostal Church (APC) she attends. Indeed, when asked to identify a person we do not know, the first thing we often look at to determine the gender of the person is their body (see Butler 1990). Therefore, Birke (1998) is right to say that we are indeed our bodies and at the same time more than just our bodies. Because we not only experience the world and interact with people through our minds, research on the body and how we embody social realities have become a key component of evaluating people's experiences.

Furthermore, within the study of lived religion, Ammerman (2021) advocates that to understand religious practices, careful attention should be given to embodiment and the body, because religious practices are inherently embodied. Consequently, Feminist studies understand embodiment as "the idea that there is a constitutive relationship of the lived body to thought, to knowledge, and to ethics, taking leave of the modern idea that bodies can be left behind as the mind does its work" (Bergoffen and Weiss 2011, 2012). This implies that the body is enmeshed with the mind in how we make ideas concrete in our everyday lives. In this

sense, to study embodiment means to consider the body and what it does, that is, how bodies bring to life ideas and concepts. It can be said that body is like a container that houses a person, at the same time it is a vehicle used by this same person to perform their identity. Therefore, it is safe to say that the body is an identity marker. Hence, this chapter attends to the way women in APCs embody religious, cultural, and secular notions of femininity.

My study of the ways in which women in African Pentecostal churches in the UK construct, define and perform femininity points to the importance that women in these churches attach to their bodies. The findings show that one of the ways participants and the churches they attend define femininity is in terms of bodily properties. That is, their understanding of femininity is based on a focus on the body, an emphasis on the natural difference between women and men, with the body no longer only an object, but a subject that can be under 'self-surveillance, monitoring and self-discipline'. (See Gill 2007:149-159; 2017; Brook 1999). In cultural and media studies, Gill (2007: 150) calls this "intense focus on women's bodies as sites of femininity a postfeminist sensibility.

The findings of this research shows that the monitoring, surveillance, and self- discipline of the body is not only a postfeminist sensibility, but also an aspect of embodied religion. Here, the governmentality at work is not just the media that Gill (2007) writes about, but religion and culture (see Foucault 1980, 1999), wherein we learn religious and cultural expectations of behaviour and we embody them without the need for outside enforcement (see Ammerman 2021:88). In the case of this research, the expected religious and cultural behaviour shaping how bodies are understood, monitored, and disciplined is that of morality and ideal femininity in African Pentecostal churches.

Building on the theme of femininity as signifying being a strong and independent Christian woman, I have appropriated Ammerman's (2021) dimensions of embodied lived religion as broad categories of how women in APC's embody femininity in the ways that they discuss the body. My theoretical understanding of how participants imagine their femininity through their bodies can be elucidated under these dimensions. a) materiality and emotions. b) narratives, and c) morality, with emotions and aesthetics running concurrently in these categories. Following the mapping of the body as a site for contesting discourse, this chapter also looks at how the meanings ascribed to the body are then taken by the women in this research to brand themselves as agents of postfeminist and neoliberal sensibilities, and how this self-branding is also in conversation with their interpretations of the Bible to create modern moral subjects. I appropriate Dosekun's (2017) concept of aesthetic surveillance to argue that participants in this research also carry out religious surveillance. However, it is important to note that these themes overlap and are interconnected, and at such, do not stand alone.

7.2 MATERIALITY & EMOTIONALITY OF THE BODY

Materiality of the body and emotions are increasingly becoming a critical area of research in sociology of gender and feminist studies. This is shown in the turn to researching the body as a site of cultural, social, and religious inscriptions (see Lupton 1998, Price & Shildrick et al 1999, Butler 1993, Elias, Gill & Scharff 2017). Although Ammerman (2021) focuses on the material world of religion, that is, the places, spaces, and objects of religious practice in her chapter on materiality in lived religion. I find it useful to also examine the materiality of the body when studying lived religion because "bodies live and eat; eat and sleep; feel pain and pleasure; endure illness and violence" (Butler 1993: ix). This is because, just as objects, practices, and spaces are given religious meanings that then form a religious narrative (Ammerman 2021:98 -120), the materiality of the body does the same. Therefore, my focus in this chapter is on the body as material. This means that I take materiality as the notion that the physical characteristics of the body have consequences for how the body is used. For instance, Butler (1993:4) on the materiality of the body questions "the model of construction whereby the social unilaterally acts on the natural and invests it … with … meaning". This enables me to examine the ways the women in this research construct and negotiate femininity through the social, cultural, and religious meanings they have attached to what their bodies can do.

Considering this, I argue that the shared religious and cultural meanings that participants have attached to their body's capabilities influences how they 'do' femininity. In this context, the materiality of the body means the focus on the material and physical properties of the body to understand it. That is, what constitutes the body and the things that it can do influences the understanding of the personhood of an individual. As stated in chapter 6 of this thesis, one of the ways women in this research construct femininity is through the idea of strength and independence. And the strength they talk about is based on bodily properties and emotions. Therefore, the body matters not just in its propertied sense, but in the way it interacts with and embodies its environment, thereby becoming a vehicle for many discourses. Consequently, one of the ways in which women in this research conceptualise their femininity is around the biology of their body. Therefore, the things their bodies do influences the way they interact with and experience the world. For instance, many of the participants say that a woman is one who has all the feminine attributes such as breasts, vaginas and can bear children. So, they are very aware of their bodies and what their bodies, hence they employ regulatory practises in living with and managing their bodies. For instance, menstruation which I will discuss in more details shortly.

In considering the body, it is almost inevitable to consider the accompanying emotions as bodies can be a site for the representations of social and religious identity. According to Denzin

(1984: 1 & 20 cited in Lupton 1998) “People are their emotions. To understand who a person is, it is necessary to understand emotion…. To consider only the biological body independent of the lived body, and the person’s consciousness of his or her body as the source of his or her emotion, is to treat the body as a thing and to locate emotion in disorders of the body”. This means that it is not enough to focus on what a body does to understand a person’s identity. Rather, focusing on both the lived body and the accompanying emotions provides a more holistic understanding of a person’s identity.

Additionally, Ammerman (2021:122 – 139) asserts that studying emotions in lived religion requires an understanding of the patterns of shared religious knowledge and the social rules that manage the expression of emotions. This means that, understanding the emotions in this context will reveal the social patterns at work. For instance, the accompanying emotions that the women in this study have from the meanings they attach to their body’s functions reveal their social, cultural, and religious narratives about femininity. Hence, looking at the emotions involved in how participants experience the materiality of their bodies is key to understanding their embodied experience. Consequently, materiality and emotionality of the body can help us articulate the ways through which the women in this research embody femininity.

7.2.1 The body as a site of Pain and strength

7.2.1.2 *Menstruation*

When asked what they think it means to be a woman and if there are things they love or dislike about being a woman, or what their church says a woman is, the overwhelming response was always in bodily terms. These questions were asked to understand participants’ own notions of their womanhood and to ascertain how they embodied theirs, and other social and religiously constructed notions to perform gender. There was an overwhelming dislike for menstruation, particularly by younger participants. In fact, during the interviews, there was a sense of connection as we shared personal accounts of how we experience menstruation every month and how our lives are built around this monthly event. For instance, Mariam and Grace spoke about what they did not like about womanhood.

> Mariam: *I wouldn’t say that I dislike certain, oh ok, maybe period, I think, I wouldn’t say I dislike it but it’s distasteful*
>
> Grace: *The thing I do not like about being a woman, periods... Yes, periods are just like, ufff, every month like, without fail. It is just so annoying... Yes, it is strange like, it limits you in some ways, but I guess in some ways it can be a good thing.*

On the issue of menstruation, Hasson (2020:669) says:

> The varying meanings attached to menstruation, the stories we tell about it, the ways we manage it, and even how we experience menstruation differ depending on time, place, culture, and individual embodiment. But menstruation itself should seem self-evident. Menstruation is a biological reality, after all—a material fact, a fluid produced by the body that can be seen and felt, a reality that gives rise to a range of materials and products designed to absorb or contain it

Although, menstruation and its accompanying discomfort for some women seems self-evident, participants in this research have woven the narrative of pain into strength and resilience. Even though they experience the discomfort and the disruption that menstrual pain brings to their lives, they are hesitant to declare their dislike for it. Instead, they turn their attention to gratitude because it is God that has made them women and it would be ungrateful of them to complain. They express gratitude because they think of women who cannot menstruate, because menstruation for them is a sign that they could potentially become mothers. We have seen in earlier chapters of this thesis that motherhood is particularly important for the conceptualisation of femininity in some APCs. Gift and Godiya, both leaders of their church and aged 45-65 express gratitude in the following words

> *Gift: God himself spent extra, extra time on the woman, so we are wonderfully and fearfully made, you know… sincerely speaking, it's not easy, the pains are there. The experience, some people go through pain when they are on period, you know, and let me just, after I gave birth to my first child, I just realised all of a sudden, I start having pains, you know, menstrual pains or like, what is not there before, but being a Christian gives you access to God and you can ask him what you want and what you don't want*

> *Godiya: I do not think I mind. I am a person who feels I am unique and like the Bible tells me that I am beautifully and wonderfully made by the Almighty God, so I have taken it, this is what God wanted me to be... (*talking about periods*)*

These two participants use scripture to dismiss the experience of menstruation and childbirth especially as they also expressed that they found joy in being able to 'bring forth' and so the pain could be overlooked. However, menstrual cycles are a necessary evil, so to speak, for most of the women in this research as they are very aware of the ways it limits them. However, this pain and limitation is easily dismissible because of the meanings that they have attached to menstruation. Tamiya, a 22-year-old deacon in a relatively new APC expresses her understanding of the way menstruation might be restrictive in this way:

I believe the female experience is quite unique in the sense that the world system, especially in terms of career and societal structure, is kind of engineered to work more for men, so as a woman you kind of always have to be in a position where you have to pave your own path, figure out how you want to be not what's expected of you, how to adapt things to work for you and particular things for example, going through the your period and being a working person if you've somebody that has insanely intense cramps and all those for of things, adjusting how you take your sick days, if there's allowances for that, you'd have to find a way to make the system work for you, some people take pills ……..there are several other things that are quite unique to women that impacts how they interact with the world, so yeah, that's what I'll say it about being a woman.

Tamiya's statement echoes that of all (including those that are grateful for it) the participants in that they are very aware of their bodies in visceral ways. She shows how women oftentimes must negotiate everyday life even whilst dealing with pain. Aune, Sharma & Vincett (2008) show how women experience exclusions or inclusions through their bodies. Kim Knott (2006:133 cited in Aune, Sharma & Vincett 2008) also points out that "we all negotiate boundary issues in our everyday embodiment: our bodies are at once subject, object and tool, a means by which we engage with things". Menstruation can serve as boundary marker for the women in this research because they discussed the ways in which it can be limiting and how they must manage their lives around it. However, most of the women believed that God allowed them to go through it for a purpose. Therefore, the body as subject, object and tool is shown in participants conceptualising of femininity where they have positioned themselves as Christian subjects in the way they define femininity. They believe that they have being created for a special purpose by God and that they have been *'wonderfully'* and *'beautifully*' made. Their ability to menstruate and therefore give birth and endure all kinds of hardship is grace given by God. Hence, they take ownership of their femininity and are agents that concomitantly understand their bodies as objects and tools used by God to perform the God given purposes of procreation and nurturing for the community.

Like Tamiya, most of the women interviewed related their femininity to their bodies, expressing gratitude for how they are made. For the women in this study, being able to menstruate is a clear mark of femininity, therefore, the ways it disrupts their lives and the pain that it comes with is of no consequence. They see the body as both strength and weakness, linked to life, emotions, and pain. Although Menstruation can be limiting and comes with pain just like childbirth, it is a reminder for the women in this study that they can give life, which they find empowering. The emotions and hormones attached to menstruation and childbirth are an

annoyance; however, the women in this research are of the opinion that this is what makes women peculiar and different from men because women can '*feel.'*

Having noted that the women in this research are aware of their bodies and attach meanings to the things that their bodies can do. I argue that they also in one way or the other embody these meanings that they have ascribed to the things that their bodies can do. For instance, participants accept the nurturing and domestic roles ascribed to them due to their femaleness, but at the same time pursue their own personal goals that may have nothing to do with their assigned roles. This is evidenced in how participants discuss femininity as being able to manage a home as well as pursue one's own career. In fact, these women's account of femininity mirrors that of all the participants, even the most liberal of them. In their discussions about femininity, they constantly refer to how 'women were created' differently from men. Their use of the word, 'create' indicates their religious influence. Because the Bible in Genesis 1:27 says that "so God created man in His own image; in the image of God, He created him; male and female He created them". They believe that they are fulfilling their God- given purpose of being co-creators with God. Hence, they are actively involved in policing and managing their bodies in terms of fatigue and health to perform these duties.

Some participants see pain and discomfort as their due as they relate it to the start of the book of Genesis in the Bible. In this context, menstruation, and all that it entails is seen as punishment for Eve listening to the serpent in the Garden of Eden and leading Adam (man) astray. According to the Bible, this is the pronouncement made to Eve for disobeying God "to the woman he said: I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3: 16). Here the power of language becomes important, because some participants take it for granted that it is because of this event that they must suffer through the pain of menstruation and of childbirth. Indeed, their understanding of this Bible verse is a very conservative reading of Genesis 1-3 that is not shared by most Christians. It is also worth noting that this part of the Bible does not mention menstruation. However, most of the women in this study interpret menstrual pain as punishment from God. This shows that people do not approach the Bible in a neutral manner. Our interpretation of scripture is shaped by pre-existing values and ideas. Their interpretation of menstruation and the pain that often comes with it reveals the cultural and religious narrative at play in how these women construct, perform, and embody femininity. Hence, pain is a reminder that they are subordinate to husbands especially as marriage is heavily encouraged in APCs. An example of this is Everest, a young lady aged 25 who is currently studying for a second Master's degree who said:

> *yes, but then chapter 3 vs 16 now says that, that's after the fall "to this woman, I'll make your pain by childbearing very severe, with painful labour you will give birth, your desire*

will be for your husband and he will rule over you" it did not say any man, that any man will rule over you, it's your husband.

This use of language in describing womanhood in terms of pain and punishment, encourages the idea that women are responsible for man's fall. This also encourages the notion that women are built to endure pain, hence the strength. This notion dismisses the physical pain that their bodies feel and instead cover it up with the notion that women in APCs are strong. This again ties back to the idea of a strong Christian femininity. For example, Martha, an engineer within the age range of 26-30 says

We are strong, women, we like evolving, we are very meek, I would say, that's all I would say about a woman…. A woman is the heart of the community, you know men are more logical and women are more emotional, so she's the heart.

The above statement begs the question, what does it mean to be strong and very meek? What does it mean to be the heart? In the context of the materiality and emotionality of the body, this participant like other participants uses her body to perform these feminine attributes of being strong by preparing for motherhood within marriage, meekness by subservient attitude and by employing emotional strength to be the 'heart' of the community.

The use of words such as strong and evolving can be interpreted in bodily terms too. For example, the body is strong when it undergoes such monthly turmoil, and it is always in an evolving state. Price & Shildrick (1999: 112) put it this way "the proper female body is penetrable, changes shape, swells, gives birth, contracts, lactates, bleeds". This shows the evolving ability of the body, it is not only the mind /soul that evolves, but the body is also always in a state of becoming as well. Now the use of the words strong, meek, emotional, heart, affects her experience during menstruation. During the interview, this participant like others said she dislikes menstruation, and it is often an uncomfortable time for her as she also experiences pain. However, since her view about femininity is tied to strength, she goes through her menstrual cycle managing the pain. Therefore, her body performs strong femininity by enduring the pain whilst managing any emotion that might arise because of the pain. In fact, many of the women interviewed expressed dislike for the emotional part of the menstrual cycle even though they described womanhood as 'emotional'. For instance, Busayo a 21-year-old recent graduate and a pastor's assistant has this to say:

I feel like God created a balance to men cause men are physically stronger, most men are physically stronger and most women are not as physically strong as men, on the other hand men are not emotionally strong, men generally can't handle emotion, that's why they don't like to "show" emotion, but women are so, the fact that at the end

of the month go through emotional turbulence… ok, the thing that I love most about being a woman is the fact that I'm going to bring human beings into this world, it's just mind blowing.

For this woman, emotions that arise from menstruation are a strength, and this is because she has tied menstruation to childbirth. Hence, the body as object, as material have been given religious and cultural meanings which is that of pain that births strength.

7.2.1.3 *Childbirth*

Majority of the women in this research described femininity using the word 'strong.' They attribute the strength they have, to how they have been created by the divine. Now, the strength they talk about it is not necessarily the ability to carry physical things, but the ability to carry a child through pregnancy, endure pain and hardship. How then does this relate to the body? As we shall see in section 7.3, language and narratives are important in how we construct religious identities. It involves the meanings that we attach to our bodies, things and events, and the narratives we form about them. In this research, I found that the narrative of strength is in relation to menstruation, childbirth, and the multitasking they do in terms of combining house chores and pursuing a career. On the issues of menstruation and childbirth, it is the pain associated with these events that make them think of women as strong. Thus, pain and endurance equal strength. Adebunmi who was 25 at the time of interview explains femininity in this way when asked what it means to be a woman:

A woman carries a baby, even though everything you seem like a womb carrier, honestly you can make it positive because, you have the strength to carry, if a man wants a child, it is up to you, you are the one carrying the baby, carrying the baby for 9 months that is strength already, it is the toughest and the interesting thing.

This woman's idea of strength is related to the childbirth. It is worth to noting that this participant is unmarried and has never given birth, but she relates her idea of strength to the biological function of childbirth because it is what she has been taught to prepare for. Her use of the word 'you' indicates her sense of closeness to childbirth, as she personalises it rather than seeing it as something that happens to other women. Other participants also relate their idea that a woman is strong through the functions of the body.

This also relates to postfeminist sentiments of taking back the female body and owning it. Gill (2007) opines that this aspect of post feminism focuses on choice and empowerment. This choice and empowerment rely heavily on the body and is closely linked to neoliberalism as discussed in chapter 6. Considering this empowerment mantra of post feminism, I theorise that, participants look at the ability to '*bring forth'* and endure the discomfort and pain of

childbirth as empowering. This is shown in how this participant has repurposed this idea of childbirth in a positive way to show that women are strong and are in a position of ownership. Adebunmi further explains that:

> *I like the fact that I'm able to bring something to life, I'm able to create something, I'm able to carry something, so that is the child aspect, I don't think there's anything more powerful than that, to be able to breathe human or life and I think that's one powerful thing I like about being a woman, because no other gender can have it, in that aspect, men can't have it, it's something that we own.*

Whilst childbirth can be powerful and positive for many women, it however, does not mean that the risks involved should be ignored. Neither should the ability to give birth equate to it being the main purpose of a woman. However, for the women in this research the body is a site of strength. Not only is it a site of physical strength through childbirth and endurance, but it is also a site of mental strength. This is expressed by Pauline, a 55-year-old married woman when she says *"To me, a woman in the real sense of the word is a busy person. A woman multitasks, even as a single person."* She goes on to elaborate on the many duties of a woman after marriage and how most of this come about because of the mothering duties that women have. Hence, there is a return to feminine ideals of mothering, nurture, and care especially in the ability to do house chores. All of this '*busyness*' and *multitasking* are carried out by the body; thus, the feminine body is in constant state of movement as it embodies this 'strength' that has been inscribed on it.

Womanist writer Oduyoye (1995:81) laments that this ideology of strength has come about because "African society expects childbearing and homemaking of its women... homemaking is taken for granted, like breathing in air." This is true of the participants, because they talk about this strength as if it is an innate thing, simply because they have embodied cultural meanings given to the act of childbearing. However, she does point out that women do not find this role oppressive, instead, like the women in this research, "being a source of nourishment is a symbol of the African woman's sense of self giving in the service of home and community". Hence, the women in this study see it as strength that they can carry out nurturing roles. It is this type of strength that Walker (1983) celebrates when she says a womanist is "a woman who appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as a natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength". Although the celebration of Black women's strength that she talks about may have come from the masculinization of their bodies because of the kinds of jobs they were historically asked to do. It can nonetheless be applied to the women in this research, as they also celebrate their strength. In fact, this strength serves as a marker of differentiation between them and British women. For example, Charity, a 27-year-old woman says:

I don't typically also enjoy the idea of a woman that seems very weak and vulnerable, that is how I see a British woman, I don't admire the British woman so yeah it's not something that I've ever admired because I don't know, I don't think there are much values that they have that I can say, uphold them as an idea of a woman, I think it's a very much at the mercy of men, that's' what I've observed from how long I've been in Britain.

Therefore, they glory in their perceived strength as it further differentiates them from women of other ethnicities and possibly religion. Ammerman (2021) writes that in studying embodied religion, we should look at the things that serve as boundary markers. In discussing materiality of religion and embodied religious practices Ammerman (2021) asserts that embodied experience of religion can serve as cultural boundaries especially through the body. In the case of the women in this study, the fact that they understand themselves as being strong, independent Christian women serves as boundary markers that differentiates them from the women they see as 'secular'. For instance, Charity's comment above reveals the idea that the way they understand their bodies is in terms of strength, however, they see British women's bodies as vulnerable and weak. During the interviews, most of the women believed even the makeover paradigm of modern femininity that they attribute to British women is still somehow at the mercy of men. What they see as lack of morals of British women is something they also see as weakness. We shall see in the next sections that narratives and morality also serve as boundary, making it an 'us' versus 'them' thing.

7.3 Narratives: Embodying femininity through Christian and Cultural Language.

To study embodiment as shown in previous sections, is to study the body and the ways it senses, responds to, and interacts with the environment and other people. This also encompasses studying the narratives people form about themselves through shared know how's and meanings ascribed to everyday practices and the bodies that carry out these practices. Hence it is important to study the language used by participants because it helps us understand how the women in this study have creative the narratives they have about femininity. Therefore, this section discusses how language influences ideas about femininity which then becomes a narrative about expected forms of femininity in APCs. Elaborating on how language influences femininity performance, this section connects with academic literature that posits that for a long-time gender role have been instituted in terms of the body. That is, the biology of the body has been used to institute what is deemed as feminine or masculine, aided by science. In this regard, the science of the body has been understood to

hold meanings through which femininity and masculinity are ascribed or constructed. Price & Shildrick (1999:145) articulate this in these words:

> the discourses of science and medicine are a powerful influence… on the construction of the female body, and on what it is to be a woman…within the fields of biology and biomedicine, the characteristic notion has been of the biological body as a universal stable entity, outside of history, culture, geography, and language, and of a belief in the givenness of the biological foundations of the body.

Hence, people believe that the body and its functions are indisputable facts for how gender is inscribed, and that these facts are independent of cultural, social, or religious influence. For example, it is an indisputable fact that most women can give birth and most biological men cannot give birth. This truth is then taken to mean that women should be more nurturing or caring. This assertion of the supremacy of biology in ascribing gender role is arguably an ideological position, but it can also be culturally and religiously bound. For instance, most African societies (as shown in chapter 2) believe that because most women can give birth, all women want to be married and have children. Thus, marriage and motherhood become an aspiration for women in APCs as it is culturally and religiously expected. In this way, women are then expected to occupy service roles in the family and church. For example, Gift has this to say when asked if her church has specific gender rules:

> *Yeah, the church is a complete body, the church is just like a family, you know, when you're in a family, the man plays his role, the wife plays her role and the children also plays their role, so I see the church as a complete family, where the men because we are, we are all coming from the family, it also has a direct effect on the church, men have their role, women too have their roles, children too, in the church, you, you cannot say that the man should come and serve, serve drinks, serve food, even though some will, but majorly, the women take care of that aspect and mostly surely because of the nature of the woman, we are more hospitable than the men.*

This participant was not the only woman I interviewed with this view. On one hand there is the association of women with service and nature. Even younger participants who identified as feminists believe that women are to be associated with emotions and are more nurturing and hospitable based on natural inclinations, that is, based on biology. Thus, women are more equipped for service which then decides what kind of role they will play in the family and the church. On the other hand, Gift's response gives us an understanding of the role religious language plays in our conceptions of self. This language of the church being a '*body'* with everyone performing their assigned roles can be found in the Bible in Ephesians 4 which talks about Christians being one body with different gifts working together. Verse 7 says "But to

each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" and verse 16 says "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (NKJV). 1 Corinthians 12 also has the same analogy of describing Christians as the Body of Christ and encouraging unity through the sharing of roles. We can see how the understandings of these scriptures influences their affirmation of gender roles.

Hence, religious, and cultural language in describing ideal femininity is another way in which the women I interviewed embody femininity through the narratives that they have created for themselves. As shown above by Gift, and in chapter 6, the language and narrative for ideal femininity in APCs is that of sacrificial service and nurturing hospitality which I have termed the strong and independent Christian femininity. Where the women I interviewed perform a strong and independent femininity based on their understanding of the biology of the female body and their cultural and Christian understandings of the Bible (see Philippians 4: 13 and the Proverbs 31 woman).

On the issue of gender performativity, Butler (1993) asserts that sex and gender are constructed by society and that language in turn constructs gender. That is to say that language marks sex, which in turn inscribes gender thus birthing gender roles according to biological functions of the body. In this sense attributes of femininity are inscribed by language and bodies enact these inscriptions, thus we become what language has inscribed. Therefore, it can be argued that we do not always perform gender outside of these cultural, social, and religious influences. For instance, even when people are said to be causing gender trouble (see Butler 1993), they also do it within the confines of socially and culturally constructed norms of gender. Indeed, bodies (we) embody most of these influences which are instrumental in how we shape our identities.

Consequently, we often embody cultural, social, and religious practices in one way or another even in our everyday lives and our speech. This is evident in this research in the way that cultural and religious language influences the way participants talk about femininity. For instance, Gift cited above in section 7.2 who understands that she is fulfilling God's purpose in her life by multiplying through childbirth, her business and career. Another example is how the women in this research understand femininity as strong and independent through Biblical understanding of the Proverbs 31 woman. Their understanding of this Bible chapter can be linked to APCs expectations of ideal femininity. Mariam has this to about ideal femininity in APCs:

> *yeah, I think the ideal African woman, is supposed to look after her 5 kids, be like Proverbs 31 woman, she's supposed to be resourceful, have a business, do*

> *everything, keep her husband satisfied and notice that I've said the Biblical African woman is also married, have you noticed, so she's married, she keeps her husband happy, keeps his belly full.*

Mariam's understanding of APCs ideal femininity even though she says she does not subscribe to it anymore also influences the narrative that she has about what femininity means to her. During the interview she said one of the things she dislikes about being a woman is the responsibility that comes along with it. For Mariam, femininity has to do with being responsible at church and at home, that is upholding relationships and being home builders. The analysis of the interviews showed 15 women using the language of 'being a virtuous woman' as an expectation of ideal femininity and one that they aspire to. The virtuous woman is a reference to Proverbs 31:10 - 31, a book chapter in the Bible which is a letter by a woman to her son, King Lemuel. These 21 verses of Proverbs 31 describe what being a good woman entails (see Proverbs 31).

According to Ammerman (2021:88)

> embodied religious practices are inherently social, forming and transforming us, they also shape our identities, which means they mark both membership and exclusions. Bodies are in fact, a primary site where society regulates and where there are political struggles over identities and power".

As much as religious practices shape our identities, narratives about these practices also help shape our perception of our place in this world and we act according to our perceived place in the world. What religious practices then shape the identities of the women in this research? And what are the power and identity politics inherent in these embodied practices, and how are their bodies involved in these? Although it was not their everyday religious practices, I was keen on researching, religious language and narratives proved to be one of the ways that participant embody religion, especially in the ways that they discussed their bodies. For example, using words found in the Bible, Gift says:

> *I'm being created from the, the likeness and image of God, that Genesis, chapter one from verse twenty-eight, it's, it really means a lot, the creation, God rained blessings upon man and he said be fruitful, more to repair and replenish the earth, so as a woman, I'm following scriptures, not only in child bearing but also in career, financial life, and all ramification, being fruitful to the glory of God, I've given birth, career wise, I am progressing.*

For Gift, the God given ability to give birth colours the way she sees femininity. When we began the interview and I asked her to describe herself, she told me she is a married woman

and a mother of two boys. Marriage and motherhood are an essential part of her identity. Her understanding of the purpose for which God has created her determines the way she sees her femininity. In this research, all of the participants talked about purpose in one way or the other and their understanding of what purpose God had called them to influence the way they construct and embody femininity. For instance, their dismissal of the pain of menstruation and childbirth which I have discussed above in sections 7.2.1 shows the way they use religious and cultural language to embody strong femininity. This woman's narrative about femininity have not been created in vacuum. During the interviews I asked about church and family culture around femininity. Participants responses showed that the practices of women serving in hospitality, welfare departments, children's departments and being associated with food and the kitchen were common in the APCs that they attended. The sermons preached at women and the general attitude about what expected femininity is in the churches that participants attend have enabled these narratives about femininity. It is also worth noting that many of the leaders of these churches are men except for one participant, whose church leader is a woman. However, even this female church leader has to have an attitude of humility and show excessive reverence for the men in her church. Consequently, participants account of pastor's wives' sermons also shows a reinforcement of these narratives about ideal femininity.

This research has shown that the way participants interpret the Bible is through a cultural and social lens based on a particular conservative theology and hermeneutical perspective which also influences their ideas about femininity. Ammerman (2021) posits that one of the ways lived religion can be studied is through how bodies embody religious practices. Whilst she mentions the acts of worship in church which involve singing, dancing or meditation, she also argues that religious language – which she terms narrative - is one of the ways through which bodies embody religion. In this sense, we can say that the religious language that participants in this research have learnt is one of the ways through which they embody religious notions of femininity. For example, Gift says that she is *'wonderfully and fearfully made'*, which is a reference to a Bible verse Psalms 139: 13&14. This theological assertion was made in reference to how she sees herself as a woman and accepts the nurturing role that is attributed to women as God given. She goes on to further explain that *"God himself spent extra, extra time on the woman… it's also my experience of being a woman for the mere fact that we can bring forth... yeah, it's awesome and, we can strive in the face of challenges, marriage and job, children, extended family, church, you name it, the, the woman is balanced".* This 'religious dialect' as Ammerman (2021) calls it, mirrors the responses of all the women interviewed and is evidenced in the way that they discuss what their bodies do. Arguably, this framing ignores the role of theology and Biblical hermeneutics, which, I suggest are an important of the picture.

Writing about religious narrative, Ammerman (2021:177) asserts that:

> there are religious practices of storytelling…. Practices are shaped by implicit stories about what is happening and why… Every time a person engages in assessing a situation and deciding how to act, they are working with a kind of structured story in their heads, even as they may be called to improvise.

Consequently, the women I interviewed have created their life's stories through shared religious knowledge of what should do or not do. They have structured a narrative about what an African Christian woman should be like and are working with it in defining femininity as strong and independent, yet submissive. Participants talk about their femininity through what their bodies can do, and the strength involved in the process. Elaborating on the performativity of gender, Butler (1993) places emphasis on not only the body as a passive object that is what it is, but how it moves and what these movements mean. She asserts that bodies are constructed through linguistic appropriations. Butler (1993) uses speech act theory to make her argument that words do no not act as symbols but that words do something. Butler (1993:13) asserts that "within speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names". This means that the speech acts we engage in helps in creating and shaping our reality. In the context of this research, participants repeatedly perform femininity based on gender ideologies of family, church, and their social world. Hence, they combine all of these and create a narrative of their own brand of femininity.

Although heavily criticised for an over reliance on discursive and linguistic interpretations of the body, her assertion that bodies are constructed through discourse and language can be used in analysing how women in this research understand their bodies. We can take Butler's (1993) insistence that bodies are constructed and Ammerman's (2021) view that bodies are a site for many regulations to mean that bodies are not just bodies. Indeed, Butler takes this further by explaining that even though bodies are concrete matter that we can see and touch, bodies are constructed and performed through sex and gender. Indeed, bodies embody the dominant cultural, religious, and social meanings that mark and shapes it, and the bodies performing these ascribed meanings become the meanings. Hence bodies are constructed through language too. For example, what religious and cultural meanings of the feminine body have been inscribed on femininity performance in African Pentecostal churches? Sections 7.1 and 7.2 have shown us that nurture and care have been attributed to women because of childbirth. Hence, women are associated with care and nourishment.

The sections above have considered how religious femininity is embodied by the women in this study based on their understanding of the abilities of their bodies. I have also shown how language plays a role in the narratives that these women create about ideal femininity. Another implication of this for my participants is the theological claim that bodies are temples of God, and that people are made in the image of God. This then means that bodies have to be

regulated to be fit temples for God as God cannot abide in filthy temples. The next section focuses on regulation of the body in being temples of God to perform morality as understood by APCs.

7.4 MORALITY

Another aspect of how the women in this research view femininity in bodily terms is where the body is seen as a site for morality shown through dressing and virginal purity. Here, ideas about holiness are attributed to what the body can and cannot do and how it should be dressed. This contributes to definitions/meanings of acceptable femininity. Ammerman (2021:159) writes that "the way we perceive and react to the everyday world around us is shaped by our deeply held intuitions about what is right and wrong, good and evil". This means that we pattern our lives around our cultural and religious perception of what is good and bad. We make judgements about situations and create moral frameworks with which to operate. Consequently, we act based on the "informal theories we have in our minds (and hearts) about what is to be desired" (ibid). In the context of this research, what is to be desired for Christians is to become temples of God and this requires living a holy life. In chapter 4 of this thesis, I discussed the concept of holiness and how it is understood within APCs in terms of morality. Hence, one of the ways the women in this research embody religious femininity is based on morality. In chapter 4 of this thesis, I discussed the theological claim that bodies are temples of God and how this is understood in APCs.

The findings of this research show that embodied religious language produces technology of the self, employed by the participants in this research to present themselves as morally upright Pentecostal women and as temples of God. The idea about being the temple of God is found in 1Corinthians 3: 16 & 17 "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." This is to mean that the body does not belong to an individual, instead, it belongs to God and should be treated as sacred. According to the participants of this research one of the expectations of ideal African Pentecostal femininity is sexual purity, and sermons are preached both in church and at homes on dressing. This is because in the homes and churches of these participants, dressing and purity are linked. Women are encouraged to dress modestly so as not to fall into sexual sin or lead men astray. In this context, women's bodies are linked to sexual desires which they must control. For instance, discussing the issue of how morality is preached to women in APCs, Grace says;

it always boils down to, virgin. Till your my husband marries you, keep yourself you women! Keep yourself! When I was 16 years old, it was bla bla bla, be a virgin till my husband marry me. Ok, thank you. Mary was a virgin; you should be a virgin till you marry".

Women's bodies are also seen as a site for the potential downfall of men, hence the admonishment to dress 'properly.' On one hand, women are expected to dress modestly in other not to attract male attention which might lead them to losing their virginity. On the other hand, they should 'cover up' to avoid being labelled as 'Jezebels' that cause the downfall of men (see chapter 3 on Jezebels). So self-surveillance, peer surveillance and surveillance by church members are employed to attain this goal. This is like the findings of Sharma (2008) in her research on young women's sexuality in a protestant church in Britain. Sharma (2008) found that the women she interviewed had feelings of guilt because of the expectation of sexual purity when they did not conform. She also found that they engaged in self and community policing to keep them accountable while trying to maintain this expectation. For the women in this research, they seem to have found a way in navigating these expectations versus their own lived experience.

In talking about these moral expectations, Participants Keisha and Anita said:

Keisha: The pressure started because I was the oldest of the 6, the senior pastor's daughter was younger, so she got away with a lot i.e. her dressing, while for me, the spot light was on, so it was so much pressure because when you're going to events, you have to be all dressed up,… being an African Christian, there's a lot of expectation, people judge you if you don't dress right, talk right, you're judged. So, you're somehow pressured to live a certain life, and I remember when I was in uni, it was a hard to be me, because I had to put on a certain demeanour to fit the environment, I'm in. Being a pastor's child there is pressure, because when you go to events, the way people look at you, even the way you breathe, your dressing is chastised so to say, the way you talk is chastised.

Anita: As a Christian, you have to like pray, and fast and be that idealistic woman who looks like she's holding unto the lord, that her religion is worn on her front, if that makes sense. So, as she walks and as she talks, everything she does should portray that "Christian lifestyle" …. Image is a big thing and perception is bigger, so if you are able to portray your image outside of the home better than inside. Whereas my generation being 24, looking good, as in your weave texture, your braids which is another type of hairstyle is looking good, your clothing fits your body, it is not revealing but you look good and buoyant. So, again generation determines what a Christian woman would

look like on the outside, but both generations wouldn't want to show too much in terms of assets like your breast, your bum…

Workers in the church have definitely portrayed what a woman should look like or act like, so depending on what department you're working with in the church, they would give an outline on what you should wear, in Winners you can't show your shoulders, you have to have like either full sleeve or short sleeve, but you can't show your shoulders and obviously us with our body stature, a lot of us do have like big bums and boobs, they would want you to wear a blazer that covers your bum or a dress or trousers that are free, so you're not wearing tight clothing cause they feel like that's a distraction in church.

A Christian woman should be modest, should be, and by modesty, that obviously means in the way she dresses, should be humble, should be, erm prayerful, should be respectful, you know.

The narrative around ideal femininity in APCs as articulated by participants is that of modesty and sexual purity. Although being able to pray and fast are understood as desirable Christian acts to engage in, the outward appearance of moral piety is more important. However, these accounts by participants show that the narrative about morality in APCs have placed the moral burden on women to maintain sexual boundaries with men by dressing modestly. For example, in discussing why there is emphasis on women to uphold morality, Gift, a deacon in the church she attends says that

> I *feel the reason why they are targeting the women more, like they said, is because men fall into sin based on what they see, they are beings moved and attracted from what they see, so if the woman can dress properly, and decently, I think there would be a reduction in sexual sin.*

Making women the bearers of morality can be tied to the conservative reading of Genesis 3 (see section 7.2) where women are blamed for the fall of man. Following this conservative reasoning, women then have the potential to cause men to sin, therefore, they should 'cover up' so as not to lead men to sin. Here, I see an emphasis on the female body as a site of sin, that needs to be managed. Indeed, the statements show that there is a form of surveillance that go on in the APCs that these women attend on how a woman should dress to perform piety. One participant mentioned that in some APCs she has attended, women were not allowed to sit in front of the pulpit so that the preacher does not get distracted. With so much attention on women's bodies, I wonder why there is no surveillance for the men that stray.

The monitoring and policing experienced by some of the women in this study caused young participants to pretend to dress modestly when in church or with Family and church members. Because modest dressing is linked to sexual purity, this also gave the illusion that they were not sexually active. This, I would argue is a coping mechanism for them. During the interviews, many of the younger participants told me that marriage and motherhood is heavily encouraged, and to get approved by parents and church mothers, they would have to pretend to be pious. So, for these participants, it was about acting in the desired way, to get an outcome. Therefore, they would dress in certain ways to church and would avoid talking or walking with male friends in certain areas where their church members might see them.

In her research on the transnational style of femininity in Lagos, Nigeria, Dosekun (2017) found that women practiced aesthetic surveillance of beauty regimes to produce hyper femininity amongst class privileged women. According to her, "aesthetic vigilance is a calculative and self-governmental labour of risk managing one's attachments to beauty and its technologies." This vigilance is shown in this research in the way participants talk about the strategies they employ to be dressed in the way they want and still appeal to the moral expectation of how their churches. For instance, Adaeze, a teacher says:

> *Now I'm part of the choir, first thing, joining the choir, skirt below the knee, cover your head as a woman... you can't dress a certain way, there's a few times I've had few clashes with the leadership in winners and this is a man that will come to me and tell me that you're exposing too much and then as a child of God... and I'm the type of person that I'm fashionable, I actually put a lot of effort into how I dress, how I look, I'm a make-up artist as well, as so the full look is always up there.*

This religious vigilance is the type that goes both ways, members of the church and the family acts as upholders of moral values and pay attention to women in case anyone strays from the moral path. The other vigilance is done by the person been monitored. In the case of Adaeze, her strategy is to wear skirts to church even though she told me during the interview that she loves to wear trousers as well. She also spoke about her voluptuousness and how it makes people in church pay attention to her dressing a lot. In this instance, this young woman must also pay attention to how a dress or a skirt on her body is perceived so she is not seen as a seducer. This kind of religious vigilance is also done by young girls in negotiating these discourses, so it does not seem like they are sexually active. The young women interviewed in this research are creative in the way they do it because they also believe that they are in the age of empowerment. However, they still want to belong to their church and wider African communities.

In exploring the emotions involved in religious surveillance and vigilance, most participants in this research did not share the guilt shown in Sharma's (2008) research, instead their own ways of reading the Bible gave them comfort. For example, Grace understands the story of Esther in a way that assures her that she is worthy. Although Esther is often extolled for her virtue and by inference purity by some preachers in APC, this participant asked,

> *Mary was a virgin; you should be a virgin till you marry". Oh yes, I know that is right but please tell me something else. There is Esther, but when she went to go and present herself to king Ahasuerus, what do you think happened? Abi Esther just went to show herself and turned around and showed her cloth to the king? No! the king, she probably slept with him but that's what I guess, yes, so people don't, people don't think about all of these things."*

Her understanding of Esther's story in the Bible enables her to negotiate these narratives about sexual purity and modesty. Hence, she does not feel guilt or shame for any choice she may have made contrary to her Church's and family's expectations.

Similarly, the younger women in this research discussed how they found it ridiculous that women's bodies were under constant surveillance to ensure purity amongst church members. They opined that the moral responsibility should be equally shared amongst all. Therefore, they refused to feel shamed by their churches for the way they dressed as that to them did not mean they were sexually promiscuous. One participant asserted that it is God that made her and gave her the body she has, therefore she will not try to hide it.

7.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed how women in this research embody personal and church ideas about femininity, especially as strong Christian women through the meanings they have attached to what their bodies can do. It has also examined materiality and emotions, taking the body as material because often times in the study of materiality in religion, it is the artefacts, objects and spaces of religion that are examined, and the body as material, excluded.

What this research has shown is that for the most part, all the participants in this research have an essentialist view of the female body. That is, because the female body functions in certain ways, then it is only natural that females have certain attributes or ought to behave in certain ways. In this research, the body is viewed in terms of what it can do, how it appears and the emotions. The body is also seen as holy, housing God, therefore, the body is a site of

many things such as sin, fear and as a site for procreation. Having discussed how the body is seen as a site for morality, the next chapter focuses on holiness and how this concept has become feminised in APCs.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Part Three: God, Church, Culture and Femininity

8.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the research questions within this thesis is, how do women in African Pentecostal Churches in the UK use the Bible to construct their femininity? Hence, one of the themes identified in this research is the synchronisation of African traditional religious values with Christian values in interpreting the Bible to construct gender ideology and Christian identities. The concept of holiness plays a significant role in this, because as stated in chapter 4, examining the moral dimensions of a community may help understand how gender ideology is shaped. Therefore, this chapter attends to ways that African Pentecostal churches (APCs) Interpret and use the Bible to define femininity. How APC's ideas about femininity are linked to holiness which in turn can be gendered. I also discuss women's own theologies on holiness and how they use their understanding of the Bible and holiness to construct and embody femininity and their Christian identities.

Academic scholarship on African Pentecostalism shows that African Pentecostals focus on Biblical literalism in their approach to the Bible (see Kalu 2008, Amadiume 2001; 2005; Oduyoye 1998; 2002). That is, APCs have been accused of a literal reading of the Bible and an overuse of narration in their interpretations of the Bible. Kalu (2008) offers an example of how pastors in APCs use narration and Biblical literalism in their sermons by illustrating that an APC pastor would use narrative storytelling to situate the events of the Bible in the everyday lives of the congregants. Hence, he asserts that African Pentecostals' approach to reading the Bible can be useful in situating the Bible in the everyday language of congregants. However,

he cautions that this can lead to misinterpretation of the Bible especially in the hands of an untrained Pastor or charlatan (Kalu 2008).

This situational narrative reading of the Bible shows that APCs use, and interpretation of the Bible has been influenced by culture. Kalu (2008) and Chigor (2007) further assert that for Africans, religion and culture is intertwined, therefore, it permeates every aspect of their lives. Therefore, it is not surprising that their religious nature plays a significant role in their use of the Bible to construct their own notion of Christian gender ideology. Because of this, I analyse how the Bible is used by APC churches to define femininity through the narratives of my participants. In addition, I examine how the notion of holiness is linked to gender and to femininity specifically.

In the study of contemporary Christianity and Pentecostalism, African Pentecostalism has become a major area of interest as the west has begun to look to the 'majority south' in the study of religion and the majority south have also begun to write about their own religious experiences. However, in attempting to articulate African theologies much work has focused upon other aspects of African Pentecostal theology such as healing, the over reliance on the Bible (as mentioned above) and prosperity gospel (Adogame 2016). There has also been little engagement with African Pentecostal theology of holiness on which, arguably the other theologies hinge. Consequently, the gendered notion of Holiness as a key theme have not been explored in research on the theologies of APC, rather, there has been an excessive focus on the prosperity gospel preached in African Pentecostal Churches. Therefore, this research contributes to scholarship on African theologies from the everyday theologies of women leaders and lay members of APCs about holiness and gender.

The focus on holiness in this thesis is because when holiness is discussed in APCs it is usually in terms of personal morality and can be gendered as the expectations of morality are different for women and men. As a result, in this chapter, I attend to APCs understanding of holiness and how they link it to morality. I examine research participants', and their churches', understanding of morality as expressed through many rules about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. I draw upon debates within studies of African Pentecostalism that link APC's notions of holiness to African traditional concepts of what is considered, pure, sacred, and good (see chapter 4). These traditional definitions focused more on outward purification and rites which may be one reason there is so much focus on the outward in APCs (Chimuka 2016).

Additionally, this research widens the debate in African Pentecostalism beyond an over reliance on the Bible, to examine the contextual womanist reading and interpretation of the Bible by women in African Pentecostal churches. In this respect, rather than just focusing on how leaders interpret and use the Bible to develop their theology, I look at the everyday

theologies of the women in this research. This goes beyond church leadership's understanding of the Bible and explores lay-women's own interpretation and use of the Bible to construct and negotiate their gendered identities. This research also supplements existing holiness theology including and critiquing the gendered nature of the concept of holiness in APCs. I draw upon participant interviews and academic literature to highlight ways that holiness in African Pentecostal churches is characterised in gendered terms, for example, the typologies given to women, a) pastors wives b) good women/sisters c) Jezebels d) aunties (mama/older women).

The following section explores church and personal ideas about the Bible and God and how participants understand and use the Bible in articulating their identity. I start by articulating participant's conceptions of God because it determines how they read and understand the Bible. Afterwards, I analyse the ways APCs understand the concept of holiness through the idea of *'becoming the temple of God.'* I explain what it means to be the temple of God and how it relates to holiness. Subsequently, I examine the relationship between holiness (as it is understood by APCs and participants) and gender. I conclude by exploring women's challenges to the way APCs understand holiness as morality by highlighting their everyday theologies.

8.2 GOD & THE BIBLE

One of the foci of this research is the way the Bible is interpreted and used to construct church and personal ideas about femininity. Hence, I begin by examining African Christians' conceptualisation of God through the Bible, and how it fits the African Maps of the universe[26] (see chapter 4 section 4.2). Afterwards, I link their use and interpretation of the Bible to the concept of 'being the temple of God,' holiness, morality, and gender.

When asked "what does the Bible mean to you?" participants responded with sentences such as

> *it is the word of God. The Bible to me, it is what I live by it dictates what I do and how I live my life potentially, so I see it as God's word to me*. *it is a manual, yeah, the Bible*

[26] African maps of the universe refer to African primal religions. It indicates African belief systems and their conceptualisation of the cosmos, the world and the interconnectedness of human beings, the environment and the supernatural (spirit beings). It is the way they understand the world. There is no singular African belief system. For more, see Adogame, A. (2016). Mapping African Christianities within religious maps of the universe. Princeton Seminary Bulletin, 33, 1-31. Kalu, O. (2002). Preserving a worldview: Pentecostalism in the African maps of the universe. Pneuma, 24(2), 110-137.

it is like an instruction manual, like a guide. For me the Bible is that ultimate guide, it's my assurance, it's a reminder as well, a reminder of God's promises and an assurance that God has me, Jesus is with me through thick and thin no matter what. Sometimes when you feel stuck, you don't really hear the Holy Spirit, I see the Bible as that guide.

Considering the above statements, we can see that the way participants view God is as a relational being that talks to them through the Bible and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, '*God is central to their lives and that he is the foundation of every decision they make and how they live their lives*' (Participants quote). These responses are indicative of how seriously they take the Bible as God's words and how they view God. For the women in this research, God is not a remote being somewhere they cannot reach him, rather, God is ever present in their lives through the Bible and the Holy Spirit. It can then be said that reading the Bible and praying is an especially important aspect of their Christian lives/journey since they would need to do so to hear the Holy Spirit.

Scholarship on African Christianity has shown that African understandings of a Christian God and the Bible is often linked to cultural conceptualisations of God. The responses above show that the way the women interviewed perceive the Bible as God's words to his creation is indicative of their view of God. Although, there was no specific question asked to participants about who they think God is, their view of the Bible as God's spoken words to them on how to live their lives reveal how their conceptualisation of God fits an African map of the universe where God is sometimes viewed in transactional terms, but also as an all-powerful God who preordains events. According to Chigor (2007), African Christians perceive God as creator, healer, provider, and the God of ancestors, paying credence to their view of him as an all-powerful God. The women in this research perceive God in the same way, probably due to the influence of their culture. For example, Pauline, a British born woman, when asked what Biblical scripture she most identifies with has this to say:

For you created me in my inmost beings, you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be," Psalms 139, and that just reminds me that common me, God has ordained me before I existed God has already created everything, all about me, He knows everything about me, that google map, He already has it in hand for me, so yeah.

This participant also mentions Isaiah 43 which also talks about God being all powerful, and despite their sins, he created and redeemed Israel, chose them to be his people and blesses

them. The Biblical scripture goes on to say that God loves them and would protect and do everything for them (paraphrased). She discusses these Bible passages in personal terms and says God is her father who has preordained the kind of life she will have on earth. She further expresses that God already made a 'google map' for her life. Here she ties her whole existence to God and the idea of God is very real to her. During the interview she also says that God has a reason he made her a woman, and that he equipped her for her role on earth. Hence, the women interviewed, view God as creator of their lives and destiny. Despite living in a British context, the women in this research conceive of God in a way that fits an African understanding of a creator being who oversees all that goes on in the world (the Bible reinforces this). For instance, Oduyoye (2001; 2004) gives accounts of several African creation stories that can be juxtaposed with the creation story in the Bible.

However, African conceptualisation of God as creator also include a give and take relationship with creations making sacrifices to the creators to receive protection and blessings. Thus, it can be suggested that African maps of the universe conceptualise God in transactional terms. An example of this is, Anita, a 24year old architectural graduate at the time of interview, who says that:

> *...like I don't know for you, Mabel, but I know like in my family, my dad will say okay, if you save souls, God will reward you, or if you save souls, more people are going to heaven and that's good or if you tithe, your prayers will be answered, it's like Ying for yang, tit for tat, you do this get that.*

This participant made the above comment when she was explaining to me that African Christianity is mixed with culture thus causing a blurring of lines where it becomes almost indistinguishable to know where culture and tradition ends and where Christianity begins. She further explained that for Africans, Christianity had become a religion of hope of *"if you abide in God and obey certain rules, good things happen to you."*

Although this participant was born in, and has lived in Britain all her life, her father's understanding of God in transactional terms has influenced her own understanding of God and the way she reads and interprets the Bible. However, this participant is also aware of the influence of culture in the understanding of the personhood of God and having been influenced by modern Christianity in a British context, she has come to crave a God who is more relational. Although Chigor (2007) asserts that Africans conceive of God in more relational terms, it can be said that they conceive of God through a bricolage of ideas from culture, the Bible, and the secular. For my participants, even though their conceptualisation of God involves a give and obtain formula, they also see God as a creator that cares about their everyday lives in the sense that he provided the Bible as a guidebook and the Holy Spirit to *'teach them all things'* (John 14:26), especially providing them with a means to navigate life.

For instance, Anita quoted above, goes beyond the understanding imparted by her father to incorporate Pentecostal theologies of the Trinitarian nature of God and God's fatherhood into her narratives about God. During the interview, she (like other participants) kept mentioning God in more relational terms by calling God *'father'* and saying, *'God has got my back.'* But they also believe that there are certain things they need to do to be blessed by God, much like the neo-liberal capitalist societal notion that if you work hard, you get blessed by achieving a good life. This shows a synchronisation of many ideas in their conception of God. Other participants also mention God as creator, and the workings of God through the Holy Spirit in their lives (Note that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the trinity of God). This ties in with traditional African maps of the universe where there is a belief in a creator God and in spirits through which other jobs are carried out (see Kalu 2006; 2008, Chimuka 2016 & Oduyoye 2001; 2004).

Whilst participants believe in their own participation in the process of obtaining God's divine blessings, with cultural and secular notions reinforcing this, they have moved beyond this, where God is no longer perceived in transactional terms only, where you make some sacrifices to God and in turn, he gives you protection from the evils of this world. Rather, participants articulate a more relational perception where their identities are formed and found in God, and he cares about every aspect of their lives. This is reflected in Anita's words that:

> *..God has always done his 50% in your life, its done, it's up to you to build upon that 50 and actually be the word that God has for you and I think as a woman as well, we tend to take on a lot of issues in our life and think we can carry everything on our back but what we need to realize is, we can share the load with God because he's there all the time, he's not a mythical creature, he's not a ghost, he's actually you, he's in you, he's beside you, like everything you encounter is of God's doing, and I think we need to realize, it*.

Here Anita articulates that God is not far away from her but lives inside of her through the Holy Spirit and he helps in carrying her burdens. Therefore, she can be certain that God cares about her because he is doing life with her. Having said all these, it is important to note that, although there is no one African perception of God, there are similar themes in African ideologies about God. Hence, most Africans have the notion of a supreme God with other smaller gods or deities performing various duties. It is also possible to speak of a common belief in spirit beings and in a supernatural world separate from the natural world, where everyone has a "guardian spirit who determines his or her fate in the passage through life" (Kalu 2008:176). The concept of God as a supreme being and the idea of the Trinity appeals to African spiritualities as indicated above. In this way, many African Pentecostals' concept of God and his place in their lives aligns with the way that many traditional African spiritualities

conceive of the Divine. Yes, God is provider and healer, but he is also a creator and father who has a preordained life for APC women. God as creator, father and friend also desire an intimate relationship with his creations who are now his children through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, he has called his children into a relationship with him by also providing them with the Holy Spirit who dwells within them. This Holy Spirit is the spirit of God himself.

Consequently, because God is seen as holy and his spirit (which now dwells in believers) is holy, he requires his children to be holy in order to have that relationship that he wants. Hence, the call to be the 'temple of God' where God's spirit will dwell in them, thereby making them carriers of God's presence. But they cannot be holy through their own effort therefore they need a guide, the Bible. This is influenced by Wesleyan notion of holiness where "victory over sin was only possible through the Christ life implanted in believers by the Holy Spirit" (Dieter et al 1987: 14). According to Wesleyan understanding, this victory over sin can only be won through obedience to God through his words to humanity, the Bible. The Bible is believed to be God's holy word to his people and inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. Hence the Bible is central to APC and participants as it is a guide to how they should live their lives as indicated by their responses.

Therefore, the women I interviewed strive to live their lives according to what the Bible says. Although, participants respect what their pastor's say and their interpretations of the Bible, younger participants are much more critical in their reading and interpretation of the Bible. Although their interpretations of the Bible are also influenced by secular ideas; they still compromise in some areas to fit in with their church's own interpretation especially in areas of femininity as I will discuss in later sections.

8.3 BEING THE TEMPLE OF GOD

In researching conversion narratives of African- led eastern European Pentecostals, Asamoah-Gyadu (2008) found that conversion usually implied, a "personal decision for Jesus Christ… presenting their human bodies to God as temples within which his Spirit now comes to dwell". This conversion narrative is also visible in the personal narratives of the women I interviewed as they described their Christian identities. For instance, as shown in the section above, when asked to describe themselves, participants say that God is at the centre of their lives, and they aim to live according to his perceived plans and purposes for them. In this sense, there is a personal decision that has been made by participants for Jesus Christ. Participant Charity also says that the Bible is *"what I live by and how I live my life potentially as I see it as God's word to me"*. Therefore, it can be said that their decision to choose Jesus is reflected in how they live their lives, as the expectation is that they live Spirit-led lives and

lives pleasing to God, after all 1 Corinthians 6:19 (NKJV) says “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”

The imagery and symbol of the temple can be found in several parts of the Old and New testaments of the Bible. However, in this chapter, I am particularly concerned with the imagery and symbolism of the temple of God found in the New Testament Biblical scriptures. In this regard, I focus on the concept of being the temple of God that come from the Biblical scriptures such as the one above and, in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 that says, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” This Pauline epistle and others with the same message likens the Christian believer, the body of Christ (the church) to a temple where God dwells. To fully understand the weight of this imagery, I provide a brief theological reflection on the imagery and symbolism of the temple in the Old Testament and then link it to New Testament imagery of the temple of God.

In examining the meanings of the Israelite temple of God (ark of the covenant, the tabernacle of meeting, or the tabernacle of testimony as some may call it), many Biblical and theological scholars take different approaches, with some looking at its meaning in the Old Testament and juxtaposing it with its eschatological meanings in the book of the prophets and revelation (see chapter 4). The Old Testament temple is linked with heavenly temple described in the New Testament book of Revelation which will not only house God but his chosen people. According to Spatafora (1997:16), one of the symbolisms of the temple of the Israelite in the Old Testament of the Bible is that of “a place where the worshipper could encounter God because it was God’s chosen dwelling place. It was a place where sacrifices could be legitimately offered.” In this way, the temple was a place that people could meet with God and communicate with him through his high priests.

The temple referred to in the Bible was a physical building that was kept sacred through a series of cultic traditions and purification rites. Because of how sacred the temple was, not everyone had access to it, and not everyone could keep all the rituals necessary to enter the temple, therefore a priestly caste cut off from the rest of the people was ordained to observe all the ritual practices on behalf of the rest of the Israelites. The temple being a place where God could be accessed and communicated with is reflected in contemporary Pentecostal understandings of becoming born again (conversion) and the work of the holy spirit, where a believer is saved through the washing away of their sins through the blood of Jesus Christ and afterwards is expected to hear God through the Holy spirit and live a holy after. This is reminiscent of the sin offerings offered in the temple in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus’s death and resurrection is seen as all the cleansing and sacrifice that was

required of believers and now believers are to continue in that sacrifice by offering up their bodies as a place of dwelling for God and as an act of worship. This can be seen in Grace's understanding of what being holy means when she says: *"I feel like when you're born again, obviously, God lives inside of you, so you are let's call it automatically holy,"* That is, being born again involves becoming a new person who carries a holy God inside of themselves and God's holiness makes them holy.

In a similar manner Mary Coloe's (2001) reflections on the Gospel of John juxtapose the role of the temple in the Old Testament with the role and identity of Jesus, individual Christians, and the Christian community. For Coloe (2001) the temple as a dwelling place of God's presence was a symbol of Jesus' identity and role as God's presence which then transferred to the Christian community to become God's presence in the world. Although Coloe (2001) refers to the Johannine Christian community in her reflections, this symbolism of being called to be carriers of God's presence can be seen amongst African Pentecostals (Asamoah-Gyadu 2008), and in this case my participants. For instance, Keisha, Anita, Faith, Racheal, and Rita say that "*holiness is purity, walking with God, living a God-like life, being seen as a reflection of God and seeking to be like Christ*". These words echo those of the other participants and are also reflected in Adeboye (2017: 379) where he exhorts his congregation that they have been called to be sons of God, thus if "God is your father, then you have to be like him. You have to be holy." This, much like Coloe (2001), is identifying believers' identity with that of Jesus Christ, who is believed to be the son of God and God incarnate himself. That is, they are sons of God just like Jesus Christ is, and like him, they are to be temples, carriers of God's presence, houses where God dwells. And their role is to live like God through the Holy Spirit who is like a high priest. This is reflected in one participant Martha's statement where she says, *"the most important thing is to listen to the holy spirit and let him lead and guide…follow what the spirit of God is saying."* This participant's admonition to listen to the Holy Spirit is not an isolated statement as all the women I interviewed have the same inclination.

Hence, to be the temple of God is to be a place where God dwells. Because God dwells in you, you must be holy, after all you have been called to be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). This idea of being called out as special people and given a standard to live by creates a binary between Christians and the 'world.' This is reiterated in many sermons in APCs where congregants are reminded that they are not of this 'world' but have been bought and paid for by the death and resurrection of Christ. Hence, the expectations that the women in APCs are not to behave like the women in the 'world' but are to be virtuous and to live in a way that God finds pleasing.

8.4 HOLINESS & MORALITY IN APCs

Having linked the concept of being the temple of God to holiness, I now examine the meaning of holiness in APCs through the narratives of my participants. When asked what holiness is in the African Pentecostal churches they attend or attended, participants said:

> *Anita: "Culturally I think the way we see holiness in the church is you know, you are somebody that prays 100 times a day, you can speak in tongues, you can prophesy, you are so close to God that God speaks to you in visions, in your dreams, you know, that kind of thing."*
>
> *Grace: "Okay, umm, I would say they preach a lot about being in the world and not of the world so there is a lot of emphasis on, yea even though we are in this environment, we go to work, we go to school, we should never be part of them like we shouldn't allow that to dominate us. I guess with the unmarried it still goes, well like, no sex before marriage, yes, bring like some specific, how we should be holy, and we shouldn't defile ourselves and things like that. Like also, we shouldn't make our bodies impure with wine, that's to say alcohol and drugs and smoking and all of that. Yea, I'd say that's how we speak about holiness in our church."*
>
> *Mariam:" holiness is focused on the outward looks and on sexual purity and is restrictive to women and gives men license to have a weakness".*

These responses reflect that of 27 women out of the 30 women I interviewed with 2 saying that holiness is a goal to strive for, following the Bible on what God says you should do and one saying she does not remember how her church views holiness. Their responses indicate that the way APCs understand the concept of holiness has to do with setting yourself apart from those that are not Christians, living according to the standards set by the church and avoiding certain things such as premarital sex, alcohol and so forth.

Although Adeboye (2017) says "holiness is the state of being holy. It connotes sanctity, divinity, godliness, sacredness, spirituality, virtuousness, perfection, and purity. A holy life is a life of total devotion to God. Holiness is the essence of God." You would think that in practice, APCs will focus on cultivating virtue and pursuing Godliness as the quote above (by the General overseer RRCCG (Redeemed Christian Church of God) one of the biggest African led Pentecostal churches in the UK) indicates. However, the focus of holiness in APCs seems to be primarily on things like being prayerful, speaking in tongues, being able to recite the Bible, having spiritual gifts, excessive focus on the body, what goes into it (alcohol, smoking), how the body is dressed, and what the body does.

Thus, holiness in APCs is then about morality. For APCs as narrated by participants, morality is about being '*free of sin,*' *'living like Christ*,' with emphasis on *'sexual purity*, *prayerfulness*,

and a whole list of things to avoid. Therefore, rather than morality being a whole life ethic on how we relate with God and others, morality as understood by APCs is a set of forbidden rules. Some of these rules can be seen in Adeboye's (2017) book on holiness. This book is a compilation of his sermons on the topic. Although he says that "it is not a set of rules that makes you holy but that which is on the inside of you… all these things are related to the fruit of holiness but not holiness itself (referring to the set of rules)" Adeboye (2017:10). It is however interesting that the rest of the book is on a list of things to avoid or to do such as restitution, stealing, pride, adultery, and fornication, telling lies to mention a few. These things are some of the things that he exhorts his readers to avoid to be holy. Even though, in theory, APCs view of morality focuses on living in a way that pleases God, when it comes to practices, morality for them appears to refer to a series of dos and don'ts.

Consequently, the moral dimensions in APCs serve to encourage gender stratification as in the words of my participants, morality means different things for women than it does for women, with exception of alcohol intake and smoking. When what it means to be good is talked about in relation to holiness, the Proverbs 31 woman is often referred to. Therefore, it is safe to say that morality as understood by APCs is gendered. Morality is linked to Proverbs 31, dressing for girls and submission to parental authority and husbands in marriage. Hence, the practise in African homes and churches as narrated by participants is that girls are brought up with a lot of restrictions. According to Ammerman (2021:159):

> The way we perceive and react to the everyday world around us is shaped by our deeply held intuitions about what is right and wrong, good, and evil. This is more than just following norms and doing what people expect us to do. Those are moral practices too, but some cultural expectations for behaviour carry even more weight because they are situated in emotionally laden stories and practices marking them as good.

That is to say that the moral meanings attached to certain actions, words or objects have conscious and subconscious influence on our decisions and actions. For instance, in many African homes and churches a good Christian does not mingle or make friends with certain kinds of people. A good Christian dresses modestly, does not smoke or take alcohol.

This is reflected in my participants' narratives of themselves as they make deliberate and sometimes subconscious decisions based on their understandings of what it means to be a 'good woman.' For example, Grace says that when at university she had to be choosy about what kinds of friends to have and what kind of gatherings to attend because of her African and Christian upbringing. Anita and Evelyn are careful not to be found wearing certain kinds of clothes, even if they thought they were modest, nor be caught with men because they will be labelled *'loose*.' Joanne recounts how she and other women in the church must be seen as hardworking by doing chores even when they are tired, just gave birth, or are recovering from

an illness, because this is what a good woman will do, she will cook for her family and submit to her husband.

Gift goes as far as saying women who do not like submission and want their husbands to help with chores are lazy. This participant also tries to justify the gendered way it is preached by saying *"I feel the reason they are targeting the women more, like they said, is because men fall into sin, based on what they see, they are being moved and attracted from what they see, so if the woman can dress properly, and decently, I think there would be a reduction in sexual sin."* When I told her that she is placing the burden of men's promiscuity and moral laxity on women, she said that women should not tempt men.

We can see from this participant's comments that the cultural and religious understanding of what is right and wrong is instrumental to how she puts the blame on women for men's sexual misconduct rather than holding them accountable. She also sees women that are not domesticated as lazy and that is why they are unwilling to listen to sermons that have to do with submission. During the interview, she said women that consider sermons about holiness unfair to women are being bias because they know they are not living up to the standards of the church.

Because the women I interviewed come from cultural and Christian backgrounds that frown on young girls associating with men that they are not married to and on men doing house chores, it is then understood by them that it is immoral to be 'lazy,' or to be seen with men while unmarried. The moral dimensions in the religious practices of the churches my participants attend suggest that people are expected to be prayerful and dutifully obey the Bible whilst also adhering to the doctrines of these churches. However, more is expected of women because they are seen as the moral carriers of the community, since they are expected to nurture the next generation (children). The moral obligation on the other hand for men is that they provide financially for their homes. This could be an understanding of the Biblical text that says, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8 NKJV).

Considering the above, it can be argued that the social and religious capital embedded in the moral ethics of APCs for women mean that in order to get husbands, get a leadership position in church, the women have to be seen as being 'virtuous and good 'sisters. During the interviews, some of the women lamented that if you wanted to get a husband from the church you had to be seen as '*being spiritual, being put together,' being humble and a home maker*. Because getting a husband outside of the Christian community is not encouraged as you are not to be *'unequally yoked'* with an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6:14). An example of this, is Racheal's account of how she was not accepted by the women in her church in the early days of her courtship with her now husband because she was not seen as spiritual enough. Not

until she joined a church department and became involved in church activities, doing the things that were expected of a woman was she accepted and taken in by an older woman *"trying to monitor me and groom me and see the kind of mindset I have and try to change what she perceived as the wrong mindset or what she thought an ideal Christian woman should be and try to groom me into that."*

Racheal's experience shows the kind of monitoring of young women that goes on in APCs so that they are not seen as lacking morals.

For the women leaders on the other hand, they have to be seen as possessing spiritual gifts and having an appearance of humility in order to be listened to in church. For instance, Tracy lamented about how men do not listen to her even though she is the pastor's wife and is a pastor herself. She said, "*a lot of Christians don't like seeing women take that leadership role, some people, if they go to a church and see a woman as a pastor they'll leave and its crazy, I don't know why."*

Ammerman (2021) is of the opinion that moral evaluation can reinforce status quo or also be used to resist the status quo as we would find out in later sections of this chapter. Evaluation of moral dimensions also reveal the power structure inherent in groups, in the case of this research it is the gender dynamics, stratification and inequalities inherent in APCs. For example, the focus on the body as a site of morality ensures that for women, there are more restrictive practices such as what to wear, whom to associate with and upholding an image of purity, humility, and submissiveness at the risk of being labelled '*bad*' or excluded from the group.

8.5 MORALITY & FEMININITY

Having noted that holiness is linked to morality in APCs and that its understanding is gendered, what then does femininity and masculinity look like to them in relation to being the temple of God? I focus first on femininity. In APCs as stated earlier, holiness is linked to morality which is interpreted differently for women and men. For women morality has to do with sexual purity, dressing, domestic duties, and submission. According to Hitlin & Vaisey (2013:55&60 cited in Ammerman 2022:159) morality:

> Encompasses any way that individuals or social groups understand which behaviours are better than others, which goals are the most worthy, and what people should believe, feel, and do...moral assessments are thick understandings about what kind of person (or society) it is to be good... Morality is not just about personal beliefs or intuitions but also involves a combination of psychological processes, social identities, and institutionalised meanings and practices.

Therefore, examining what constitutes morality in APCs shows how it is linked to femininity construction. As shown in chapter (chapter 6), it is considered good that women are strong, enduring, God-fearing, and independent, therefore my participants construct their femininity as strong and independent women. In the context of 'being the temple of God,' the moral expectations are different as stated above, with more focus being on sexual purity. As a result, women are brought up in many African homes to be conscious of their bodies with emphasis placed on abstaining from sexual activities until they are married. This is reiterated by APCs as sermons on holiness or being God's temple focuses on women more. In keeping with the exhortation to remain sexually pure, women's dressing is monitored. For instance, when asked how holiness and the concept of being the temple of God is preached in the APCs the women I interviewed attend, the overwhelming response was something like this "*it has to do with living like Christ, drawing people to church. Holiness is more on women than men. Somewhat, women have to be holier than men...when it comes to holiness, a lot is expected of women especially in the aspects of sexual purity, dressing, humility, and submission."* (Participants quotes).

My analyses of APCs understanding of holiness as articulated by participants especially as it relates to femininity found a link between what it means to be holy in APC and how femininity is defined in APCs. When asked what it means to be a woman in APCs, Participants responded with:

> *As a woman there are expectations to be home keeper, domesticated, prayerful and religious. You should dress and behave in a certain way. You are pressured to be domesticated, humble, obedient, more kitchen concerned, submissive, financial wisdom and prudent in spending.*
>
> *Modesty in dressing, prayerful, respectful, enduring, maternal, early marriage, Proverbs 31 woman, sexually pure until marriage.*

Comparing the responses of what it means to be a woman and what holiness means in APCs shows that femininity and morality are synonymous. The key words used to describe femininity and morality can be categorised into sexual purity, spirituality, domesticity, and submissiveness.

8.5.1 *Sexual Purity*

"What they say about femininity is keep yourself away from sex, do not enjoy anything, it's always about waiting for someone to come and marry you". Participant Mary 2021

Based on the responses of the women interviewed in this research, sexual purity encompasses sexual abstinence, modest dressing, and an image of piety. Pastors often support these with narrative interpretations of some Biblical scriptures. Therefore, femininity in relation to holiness is defined by APCs as sexual purity and moral conduct in terms of appearance. This overconcentration on the body as a site of holiness (being the temple) can be problematic as it creates inequalities in the expectations of women and a lowering of standard for men in APCs. Mariam's lengthy exposition on the matter encompasses the feelings and views of most of the participants:

> *holiness for women is don't sleep with a guy cause it will make you cheap, don't look too sexy because it'll make you cheap and then no one will marry you and you will attract the wrong type of attraction, so women, holiness for women is all about not using our bodies or our sensuality as a weapon, and then what that teaches men is that men have sex drives because women are tempting them, not the issue is that they have lust and they need to deal with that....*
>
> *I think that the massive differences is that women, I have a brother so I'll tell you, can you notice that with women we've been trained from a young age, don't sit like that, sit up straight, close your legs, why is your legs open, you're wearing a skirt, all these things condition you to believe that my body can be a weapon at times, men are not safe because they can see me as prey, but we're also using that as training for girls...*
>
> *I think that holiness needs to come away from sexuality, clothing and it needs to go back to what it really is which is being like God, being made in his image, walking in that reality, the attributes of women will now mean, not sleeping around, not being loose, not dressing anyhow, those will be the by-products of holiness but holiness is not related to my sexuality, related to how I dress, that's not what holiness is.*

Considering the above, it is evident that femininity in APCs is synonymous with sexual purity as women are expected to remain 'pure' until their marriage, however, it does not matter if a man remains pure before marriage as it is not expected of them. Femininity is also defined as being modestly dressed, with modest here meaning anything that will not call attention to your body. Many of the young women I interviewed shared experiences where they were called aside by older women in the church to discuss their dressing. Omolade narrated an experience where she was singing in the choir, but the pastor shut down the worship session just to ask her to go to her seat because her lipstick was too *'loud*,' and her hairstyle (faux Locs) was not appropriate. She said it was an embarrassing experience for her. It is evident from participants' experiences that sexual purity also extends to how we look in terms of dressing, make up, nails and hair. This might be because, according to some participants, men are visual

creatures, and we would not want to '*tempt them with our appearance*.' This image of piety also links to spirituality, which is also a marker of a 'good' woman in APCs.

8.5.2 *Spirituality*

Another way that morality is understood in APCs as it relates to femininity is in relation to spirituality. Here spirituality means being able to pray, speak in tongues, read your Bible and having an overall appearance of piety. Keisha and Anita express the expectations of femininity in APCs in the following words:

> *there's that pressure of being a Christian that knows the word inside out, I remember when I gave my life to God, I think I got baptized between 17 and 18, no 17, everybody was in my business, because you give your life to God in front of everybody, so when you decide to have that baptism, everybody is there and... you're expected to answer questions in Sunday school, you'll be expected to know the word, recite bible verses, I remember there was a time I cried for many months, I was told "you must know the Bible inside out, if you don't know the Bible, you're not a good Christian.*

Anita suggested that:

> *As a Christian, you have to like pray and fast and be that idealistic woman who looks like she's holding unto the lord, that her religion is worn on her front, If that makes sense, so as she walks and as she talks, everything she does should portray that "Christian lifestyle" but I think doing that is you idolize Christianity and change it from being a way of life to a religion, and what I mean by that is you start doing things for the sake of others, rather than for the sake of yourself, so you go away from that relationship you have with God start doing things to please others around, to say ok she's a really strong Christian, cause I see her going to night vigil or saying she's going to fast, as I'd like to say, those aunties in church that sends you prayer chains on WhatsApp. It's really hard, because you've portrayed this image of a 100%, 24hours with God when realistically she's doing it to maintain an image, so society believes that she's Christian.*

The statements of these participants show that the expectations of femininity in APCs are also based on portraying an image of piety. Other participants shared how they are pressured to dress, talk, behave, and live in a certain way that indicates that they are good Christians especially if they are to remain in their religious community. Another participant, Keisha says *"I remember when I was in university, it was a hard time for me, because I had to put on a certain demeanour to fit the environment.* Participants said that having a spiritual demeanour

is important in APCs because women are expected to be the teachers of Biblical principles and morality to their children and to be the '*prayer warriors*' for their family. Hence, the expectation of a devout spirituality. However, because having an image of piety is important if you are to be considered a good woman in APCs, many of the younger women told me how they have to pretend to be pious in the midst of their African Pentecostal community. Those that 'derailed' on the other hand are judged, made fun of, and abandoned by the community and labelled as 'jezebels (see chapter 3).

8.5.3 *Domesticity: A.K.A the Proverbs 31 Woman*

Having said that APCs define holiness as moral conduct of which femininity is synonymous to. With moral conduct being sexual purity and spirituality. Another way moral conduct is understood in relation to femininity is based on domesticity and submission. According to my participants, the ideal African Pentecostal Christian woman is one who knows how to pray, fast, keep a home and is submissive. Women are to uphold their homes in prayers and through physical sustenance. Although domesticity is not directly linked to holiness, participants said that when holiness or being the temple of God is preached in relation to women in their churches, domesticity is often mentioned. This may be because domesticity is linked to women's role in the house which is also linked to submission. Rita articulates it this way "*a woman is pressured to be domesticated, humble, obedient, more kitchen concerned, submissive, have financial wisdom, prudent in spending".* Keisha also says in APCs a woman is "*pressured to succeed, knowing the Bible inside out, dressing right, speaking and behaving in a certain way*". Mariam expresses it more succinctly in these words:

> *I think the ideal African woman, is supposed to look after her 5 kids, be like Proverbs 31 woman, she's supposed to be resourceful, have a business, do everything, keep her husband satisfied and notice that I've said the Biblical African woman is also married, have you noticed, so she's married, she keeps her husband happy, keeps his belly full, she has to be submissive, she doesn't talk to you much but she's wise with her words on top of that she serves in church, she gives, she's all of those things and then you look at the quality of her husband and then you think, why does she have to be all of those things and he has to be 5 of those things, help me understand, I don't get it.*

The frustration of this participant is shared with the younger participants I interviewed. They expressed disappointment that when holiness is preached in their churches especially when the preachers say they are talking about character, the emphasis is always on women to be

good wives and mothers and so on. Adaeze says when holiness is preached and the emphasis is on women, that:

> *Honestly, it has nothing to do with God, they can say, if woman of virtue, Proverbs 31 woman, but everything has to do with being a good wife, so the expectation is, you're not respected unless you're married, if you notice, you ask the question and I'm responding as a wife, because they don't see girls, they don't see career ladies, they don't see woman as a president, they don't see a woman working in fire service, the woman that they only have in their mindset is about being a wife, so that's their expectation.*

Therefore, it can be surmised that a good woman in APCs is one who is married, nurturing and submissive. This can be linked to the proverbs 31 woman who is always extoled in APCs as the symbol of virtuous femininity. The character of the Proverbs 31 woman as a symbol of virtue for women is especially important in APCs as 15 out of 30 participants explicitly mentioned her in their description of an ideal Christian woman with the rest implying it. The proverbs 31 woman as described in the Bible is a wife, she manages her home whilst her husband sits at the gate, she is good with money because she is described in the Bible as doing business. This expectation of domesticity is evident not only in the homes of many African Pentecostals but also in their churches as women are mostly in charge of the serving in church especially when it has to do with food and refreshments.

Submission for women is also an important topic in APCs because it is understood as one of the duties of a woman. The Biblical scripture often cited to defend this is Ephesians 5:21-33 of which the emphasis is on verses 22-24 "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."

One participant, Adebunmi, expresses submission as moral conduct in these words"

> *the meaning of good is submission, the meaning of submission is good wife so you have a British Christian, and you have an African Christian, an African Christian should be of no sin, she should not even know what sin is, she should be perfect and she should do everything to please her husband and her in-laws and of course the major one, she should be a good cook.*

Thus, the way that APCs understand the scripture quoted above is that men or husbands are the leaders of a home and that women are not equal to men, therefore women are to submit to the authority and leadership of their husbands. Although most of the women interviewed were critical of the way this scripture is used and interpreted in the Bible, they all agreed that

women are to submit to their husbands with some participants making the distinction that submission is in marriage and to 'husbands' not all men.

For example, when articulating how preachers and men in APCs understand submission, Rita says:

> *what happens is that they tend to take a lot of things out of context, you know that thing about being submissive, somebody used it to explain how women are meant to be submissive not even just to their husbands, he said Black women will be protected when they listen and submit to Black men and the scripture he used, funny enough was Ephesians 5:22 which said "wives submit to your husband for the husband is the head of the house even as Christ is the head of the church" but somehow he was talking about women submitting to men, not just their husbands.*

This shows that while frustrated by how submission is understood as subordination in APCs, the women I interviewed still conform to gender complementarity where men are the heads of their homes and women are the 'neck.' Femininity is then defined by APCs as serving God through piety and submission. Key Bible characters used to expound on these as identified by participants are Esther, the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31, Deborah, the sisters of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. They exalt these women for having wisdom in managing their homes with humility instead of haughtiness. They emphasise how even though these women were capable women, they still humbled themselves before their husbands. Therefore, women whether married or unmarried are encouraged at home and in church to work towards being submissive.

Having examined how the understanding of holiness, morality and what it means to be 'good' in APCs creates gender stratification with women having to perform 'good' femininity, I conclude that women are the bearers of morality in APCs. Because women are the bearers of morality, religious surveillance is carried out by participants, family, church, and other women. The next section pays attention to how APCs understand Biblical masculinity (as articulated by the women in this research). This is to show the disparity in the expectations for men in APCs when juxtaposed with the expectations for women.

8.6 MASCULINITY

When asked "what does it mean to be a man in APCs" Participants responded with: *to be a man is to have responsibility, leadership, breadwinner, head of the family and a protector"* with responsibility meaning financial independency. The key words used by participant to define masculinity were "*the head, leader, and provider*". When I asked how holiness or morality is

preached for men, these key words also used alongside admonishments not to smoke, take alcohol, and avoid fornication and adultery. Therefore, according to my participants, masculinity as defined by APCs is to be a provider and when it comes to moral expectations, it is still in terms of being responsible financially. No one focuses on their dressing or sexual purity before marriage. Instead, the moral standard set for men in APCs is incredibly low and is not as extensive as that of women. For instance, Racheal says:

> *to be honest, I feel like with boys, nobody tells them, oh, you need to be holy and you find that as men you're allowed to make mistakes, like the issue of virginity, I feel like that is drilled on girls than boys, like it's okay for a man to not be a virgin before he gets married, I feel like its pardoned but if you're a girl, it's like oh gosh, you're not even, you'll not make heaven, you're not holy, but for a boy it's different, I just feel there's so much gender discrimination.*

They are not asked to be submissive or indeed develop character as a whole life ethic, instead they are exhorted to work on being the leaders of their homes and to do well financially. It is worth noting that financial wisdom and some sort of financial independency is also expected of women. This moral laxity for men may result in fostering inequality and oppression for both women and men in APCs as men become preoccupied with earning and do not focus on 'being carriers of God's presence, that is, character building is not their life ethic. Inequalities will continue as its only women's characters that are scrutinised and are told to prepare for marriage, while their male counterparts do nothing in preparation for marriage. On the other hand, the pressure to attain a certain level of financial success as expected by the African and church community might become too much.

Furthermore, is Biblical manhood as understood by APCs in crisis if their role of sole provider is no longer needed since women also work and provide these days especially in a place like Britain where there are no strict gender roles? The implications of femininity as understood by APCs may also have an impact on the kinds of masculinity that comes out of these churches. This is because gender is performed with reference to others, therefore if men think that ideal Biblical masculinity is that of leadership in terms of being authorities at home and fulfilling financial obligations at home. There is a danger of developing toxic masculinity especially in marriages where women (in APCs) are taught to be more responsible and to submit to the headship of their husbands. There is a possibility of masculinity equalling irresponsibility and authoritarianism as they expect the ideal woman to be an enterprising, strong, yet subservient woman.

8.7 WOMEN'S EVERYDAY THEOLOGIES.

Analysis of interviews show that participants see holiness as about character rather than an outward look, therefore I also discuss the ways participants understand the notion of holiness and draw comparison between their own understanding and that of the churches they attend. Having said earlier that the views of the women in this research does not often align with that of their church. I discuss the everyday theologies of the women in this research as it pertains to holiness. As stated in earlier sections, holiness for the women in this research is more about character. The character set identified by them are a) right living with oneself, family, and neighbours. Here, right living involves bearing fruits of the spirit such as love, joy, patience and so on (Galatians 5: 22) to be like Christ and show Christ to those around you. b) Fulfilling your God given purpose which might be in the place of work, the society, church, and your family and c) Submission.

When asked "what does holiness mean to you?" Participants said:

> *Holiness is how you work in God's word, your lifestyle as a Christian.*
>
> *Holiness is living a God-like life, being sinless, but knowing that you are not perfect, therefore it is not by your works you are saved.*
>
> *Holiness is internal, a state of mind, not by outward appearance, the Holy Spirit dwells in us and convicts us. It means setting yourself apart to become like God, adopt his nature of love and wisdom. It is being like Christ and working on your character.*
>
> *it's just following the example that Christ set and obeying God, that's what holiness is really about, being able to just showcase your life in a way that really, it's like exemplifying Christ in your behaviour, your character and God will be pleased with you.*

From the responses of participants, it Is clear that for the women in this research, holiness, morality or what it means to be good is a life ethic and is not restricted to certain dos and don'ts. Holiness is about cultivating good character, much like the character of Jesus. Hence it can be said that the women interviewed truly aim to be the temples of God, carrying his presence to those around them by adopting the identity and role of Jesus. During the interviews, one participant, Michelle shared how the Holy Spirit convicted her of not showing Godly Christian character to her neighbours instead of being judgemental towards them because they do not attend church. This participant shared that she had to look inside of herself and check if she has Godly love towards others, and this self-reflection prompted a change of attitude towards her neighbours and non-Christians. This participant's experience of self-reflection mirrors that of all the participants on what holiness means to them and how it does not have much to do with outward appearances but is focused on the heart. This understanding of holiness by participants aligns with Otto's (1958) *The idea of the Holy,* where

holiness has to do with encountering the divine (see chapter 4). For the women in this research, it is God that produces holiness in them. Consequently, many of them link holiness with walking in God's purpose which they further link to submission.

On the issue of living a life of purpose, many of the participants believe God created them as women for a purpose and living in their purpose is obedience to God which is true holiness. For example, Racheal believes that her purpose is to be a good wife, mother and a good doctor to her patients and a good colleague. According to her, God has great plans for her, plans to 'prosper her and give her and expected end' (Jeremiah 29: 11). God has a vision that he wants her to accomplish on earth, and he will provide her with all that she needs to accomplish it as long she leans on God's words, wisdom and promises instead of leaning on her own understanding. Tracy also believes that God's purpose for her is to be a good wife and mother and pastor, so in line with that, she has been called to teach submission in the right way to women in the church. This is because, she had to learn through submission to be a good wife and mother, hence her mission now is to teach the right kind of submission to Christians.

Submission, as mentioned in section 8.5.3, is an important concept for women in APCs. Therefore, the women interviewed view submission as one of God's mandates for them. For instance, 25 out of 30 participants are of the opinion that women are supposed to submit to their husbands. However, their acceptance of the concept of submission for women is complex and nuanced. For instance, whilst younger participants agree that a good woman submits to her husband, they are of the opinion that the concept of submission is misunderstood by APCs. Racheal says:

> *I feel like again as I was saying to you, my church, this is the mistake that churches have made over the years and that scripture "wife submit to your husband" has so much been taken out of context, you would naturally submit to who treats you well, but when you're forcing somebody to submit to a man that treats you badly etcetera, for instance, that's where I'd question the theology or meaning behind that scripture really, I feel like the focus has been for women to submit and your husband is the head of the house, he's the head you're the neck, you follow as your husband says, I feel this is where we need to evolve from that cause sometimes some men lead their family astray.*

This participant also lamented the emphasis placed on men as decision makers in the home and expectations that women just follow along. Hence, she is critical of the way the idea of submission is understood by APCs and instead advocates that, women be discerning and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in making decisions rather than blindly following their

husbands. In this sense, submitting to God is what is most important. Tracy, a pastor, and wife of the founder of her church says:

> *I wanted to be God's kind of woman and I saw that submission was going to get me there but I didn't have the right understanding of submission, so as I studied the word and as I mentored women, now I believe in submission because I see it as a position of warfare, that from my place of submission, the critical thing is that I have authority with God not with man and I submit to the authority around me, whether it's the authority of the government, my husband, anyone so it's not just at home, even now as my children are growing, I honour them, I submit to them because the Bible says I can't tell them what to do, I find out what they want to do and I help them.*

For this participant, submission is not about men but about God, and it encompasses submitting to God, one's government and even to her children. Submission is a strength rather than a weakness, and it does not mean subordination to her. Marriage and submission are purposeful to her as a means of fulfilling God's plans and purposes for her life. The responses of all participants inclined towards agreeing with the concept of submission in the terms of how they understood it and not in the terms of how APCs understand it. For the women I interviewed, submission is about both men and women submitting to God and to each other and not women been subordinate to men.

8.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have shown how APCs understanding of God through the Bible fits into African religious understandings of the divine, which gives us an insight into how culture influences their understanding and use of the Bible. African map of the universe here means the way Africans understand creation, gods, spirits and how the world operates. I have also linked the importance of the Bible in APCs to the concept of being the temple of God which links to holiness and morality. This chapter have also shown that holiness is understood as morality in APCs with morality been preached differently to women and men. For women, morality encompasses sexual purity, modest dressing, spirituality, domesticity, and submission. For men, morality is about economic responsibility and leadership. However, participants own understanding of holiness or morality differs from their church's understanding. In this thesis, the temple of God, holiness and morality as understood by participant is doing what God wants of you by obeying the Bible and the Holy Spirit.

The words of Racheal offer a good conclusion to how the women I interviewed feel about African Pentecostal understanding of holiness

Racheal: if you're not a virgin, you're not holy, you are just, you're not really sanctified, you're not really a definition of what a Christian woman should be etcetera. I hear that a lot, I totally agree, I feel like also this is one of the things that puts people off in the church cause it seems like we've created this perfect picture of how a woman or a Christian woman should be, they should be virgins they should be tongue-talking, they should be prayerful, they should be that proverbs 31 woman, that you know that gets up early in the morning, you pray, but I think we miss that actually we really need to look from the perspective that some people may have made mistakes in the past, some people may not even grow up as Christians in their childhood and it's like what about the people that come into their faith earlier on, how do they direct them to make or become holy but not like you're judging them cause I feel it's used to judge people really rather than help people.

The women in this study are frustrated with the way that holiness has become linked with femininity. The legalistic understanding of holiness in APCs is unsatisfactory to the women, rather they seek a more transformative holiness that begins with God, instead of list of dos and don'ts. Consequently, if holiness is seen as transformative power of God in an individual's life, there will be no differing standards for women and men.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION: LINKING IT ALL TOGETHER

9.1 INTRODUCTION

I think having this conversation, with you, I think even though I submit that my church specifically doesn't teach, certain harmful Ideas about women and feminism and all that or femininity. I think that also there is a place for addressing it because something that is in the world, that we live in, addressing and not touching on it is… women are affected by a society that they live in. And also, I think I mentioned, the church members, so addressing how you want your women to be and when I say that I mean like they are equal and valid to the man. That they can do anything, that it doesn't always have to revolve around a man and the home and maternity stuff. I think will be beneficial to many women in African churches because like we don't have any allies in church, we don't have anybody kind of looking out for us, just what the word of God says and that's it. And that's great, we agree with it. But then talks around

how to navigate that in the world we live in I guess is going to be very beneficial, so I think that's just my submission as I reflected on in the discussion, so yeah.

Participant Charity.

The question of how femininity is constructed in APCs in the UK is of deep relevance to this study, especially in relation to addressing gender roles in these churches. This study has aimed to examine femininity construction and the theology of holiness from the perspective of women in African Pentecostal churches in the UK. Therefore, this chapter summarises the key findings of this research as it relates to the overarching research aims and questions. This chapter also identifies the research impact and contribution to knowledge of this thesis. Subsequent sections address the limitations of this study and offers some direction/areas for future research. This qualitative research answers the question of femininity construction in the context of women's experiences and everyday theologies in APCs in the UK. I demonstrate how this study has met my research aim in the following sections.

9.2 RELIGIOUS & SECULAR PERFORMANCE OF FEMININITY

The focus of this research has been on what it means to be a woman in African Pentecostal Churches in the UK. I have done this by paying attention to the narratives of participants, and in so doing, I have paid attention to how the intersecting factors of ethnicity, gender and religion and popular culture impacts the reading, understanding and interpretation of the Bible in constructing femininity. My research aims and questions were met by linking existing literature to the findings of my research. For instance, to answer the research question of how femininity is constructed by the women I interviewed, I examined existing literature on how gender and femininity have been defined in most Western and African societies. I have done this because most participants are ethnically Africans and or the churches, they attend have African backgrounds and some of them are still linked with their mother churches across Africa. This has enabled me to examine how these women negotiate femininity in a western context, considering that they consider the West to be secular. These literatures on gender and femininity have revealed that gender is not stable because it keeps being inscribed and reassigned with meaning considering the time and context in which it is being defined (Holmes 2009, Kimmel 2000). The context for many of my participants is that they belong to African families and still have ties but live in British society. They are African and British. The

implication of this for my participants is that they must negotiate different cultural boundaries, that of their African culture and that of British society. They also belong to African Pentecostal churches that reinforce African traditional values and culture, whilst also trying to create moral boundaries, hence femininity is constructed and negotiated along cultural, religious, and secular lines.

In this thesis I have defined femininity as the characteristics, qualities or behaviours attributed to women such as being soft-spoken, caring, nurturing and emotional (McDonald &Dolan 2013). Although, feminists have argued that these characteristics are not innate but constructed, I have found that the women in this research consider expected feminine attributes as innate. Therefore, for the women in this research, femininity is being strong and independent. This understanding of femininity aligns with academic literature that asserts that the expectations of femininity in many African societies differs from popular Western notions of femininity that considers women to be vulnerable (Oduyoye 1995;2004). Instead, women in many African societies are expected to be strong. Moyo (2004;2011) and Dosekun (2015) articulate that femininity in many African societies as expectations to be the embodiment of family values and strength. Hence, I have taken Adichie's (2014) articulation of the contradictory nature of expected feminine values in most African societies where she says women are encouraged to be ambitious but not so much that it threatens or emasculate men. This is reflected in the ways that participants have discussed femininity. Therefore, I conclude that femininity for the women in this research is constructed and negotiated along the contradictory lines of being strong, independent, yet submissive women. The findings of this research show that these contradictory expectations of femininity are further complicated by religious conceptions of gender that emphasises male headship and female submission. This is because religion in the case of the women in this study reinforces cultural and social notions of femininity.

Additionally, the findings of this research show that the women in this research use the Bible to employ secular notions of post feminism and neoliberalism in constructing and performing strong and independent Christian femininity. Post feminism promises that modern women can have it all, a family, and a career (Gill 2017). Neoliberalism also promises that if one works hard enough, all their dreams are achievable. This application of post feminism and neoliberalism is aided by participants understanding of the Proverbs 31 woman and of several Bible verses, one of which is Philippians 4:13. This Bible verse says: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me". Therefore, religion, secularity and culture are complicit in the ways that the women in this study construct and perform femininity. Bringing together these theories within gender studies, cultural studies and sociology of religion has given a fuller picture of how gender is negotiated in APCs.

Consequently, the findings of this research have shown that not only do the women in this research conceive of femininity as being strong, independent, and Christian women. They embody these ideals through the meanings they attach to what their bodies can do. Therefore, I have synthesised the theory of embodiment and materiality as understood by the disciplines of lived religion, cultural and feminist studies to analyse the way they view their bodies. The findings show that the ways participant understand their bodies is through an essentialist view. Therefore, their bodies are sites for many discourses. For instance, the body is understood as a site of pain and strength. For the women in this research, pain and strength are a consequence of being able to menstruate and potentially give birth. Hence, they translate it to mean that women ought to be emotionally and physically strong. This discourse of the body as a site of pain and strength is understood by the women in this study through the ways they interpret the Bible. Therefore, APCs and many of the women in this study understand Genesis 3 as punishment for women leading men into sin. This also means that the body is a site of religious discourse of purity and sin. Here, it is understood that women are potentially responsible for men's sexual sins. Therefore, women ought to dress modestly so as not to tempt men. Purity in this thesis is linked to modest dressing and sexual abstinence. This thesis has argued that womanist reading, and interpretation of the Bible should be used as a tool in APCs to mitigate male bias in the ways the Bible is used in APCs.

Furthermore, I have also examined how the Bible is used and interpreted by women in APCs to construct and negotiate ideas about femininity. In doing this, I have examined their conceptions of holiness. For the women in this research, holiness is a life ethic rather than a list of dos and don'ts. This understanding of holiness situates God as the giver of holiness and requires the women in this research to have a relationship with God beyond just going to church. This notion of holiness also has no gender bias. Consequently, I have argued that, paying attention to congregants' own theologies is an important way of understanding lived religion rather than only looking at church leaders' theologies, examining sermons and church service observation. Doing this has enabled me situate women's voices in discourse about African Pentecostalism in the UK and the diaspora more broadly. In the context of this study, women's everyday theologies have shed light on their use and interpretation of the Bible in constructing their version of ideal femininity. They have used the Bible as an empowering tool and a guideline for life. This research has also shown that although the Bible can be a liberative tool, how it is used and interpreted can undermine its liberative power.

9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS AND PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

This research journey has left an impact in my life, especially the conversational interviews I had with the women that participated in this study. I am forever grateful to have been able to

have conversations with other women about a topic such as this. Having come to the end of this journey, I can see clearly that there is much work to be done on addressing gender issues within APCs. This research has ignited in me a desire to carry out further research on gender and theology within APCs. The following sentences discuss my reflections on the research process.

Even though the interviews produced rich data that answered my research questions, I believe that my inexperience in carrying out research of this size might be a limitation. Additionally, time constraints did not allow me to speak to more women and men in churches. I also believe this thesis would have benefitted from a larger sample size. Additionally, even though the multidisciplinary nature of this thesis adds richness to the analysis of the data, there are other areas that this thesis would have benefitted from. For instance, this research would have been a different kind of research if I approached it from a purely Biblical studies and womanist theological angle. However, my background in cultural studies and sociology of religion has also produced a unique result. Furthermore, including the intersection of class alongside other factors that I considered in this thesis would have nuanced how women negotiate femininity within this thesis. Based on the findings of this thesis and the interviews, further areas for future research are:

- Mental Health: The issue of mental health came up in some of my interviews, however, because it did not meet my research aim, I did not discuss it in this thesis. Some of the women I interviewed mentioned that APCs do not take mental health seriously. I also wondered about the mental health of women in APCS if they are trying to conform to the ideal of being a strong and independent Christian woman.
- Masculinity: Because the aim of my research was to examine femininity construction, I could not focus on masculinity. Moreover, it will be a disservice to represent men in my thesis when none of my interviewees were men. However, from the conversations with my participants, I believe studying masculinity in APCs is important.
- Marriage, Motherhood, and Issues of domestic abuse within APCs.

9.4 RESEARCH IMPACT

I have indicated in the introduction of this thesis that I desired to have conversations with women about femininity within APCs, and this research enabled me to do so. I hoped these conversations would have a ripple effect where participants would discuss it with other people outside of this research. This hope was fulfilled when one of the participants spoke about it on her podcast. Another church leader that I interviewed started a Bible study group in her church

specifically to discuss the topic of femininity in the Bible and how it is understood in APCs. The change of church of a participant because her old church did not have women leaders even though they seem to encourage women to be all they can be, was also one of the real-life impacts of this research. Additionally, many of the women leaders (and non-leaders) have requested for reports after I have completed my thesis in order to discuss in their churches.

9.4.1 *ACADEMIC IMPACT*

I have presented versions of the findings of this research in seminars and conferences. Plans for Further dissemination such as CTPSR impact page on the website, an anthology of the poems I wrote as part of my reflections, and research articles.

I end this thesis with a poem I wrote as part of my reflective process. This poem, one of many reflects how I felt after the interviews.

My Mothers Daughter

I am mother's daughter.

She clenched her fists,

Gritted her teeth, opened her legs wide and pushed me out.

Grit: I saw her strength as I drew life giving milk from her breasts.

She went about her life quietly fuming.

She was amiable; but I knew

Oh, how I knew!

In agony was I conceived

And agony I have received,

Or is it not so?

I am, but I am not.

Human? property? A vista to be conquered?

Life giver or burden bearer?

Am I earth's answer to creation?

Or am I dust and dross

Look! Look!

They've built me a throne and crowned me queen.

I smile as blood flows from my head to my lips, a bloody smile.

Is this a throne?

Am I queen over all? Am I free?

The earth is nourished with blood.

Oh, how I bleed!

I wave and I bear it all!

Grit; gritted teeth

Thorns, thorns everywhere!

But I was born for this; so, I triumph

Or do I?

REFERENCES

Aapola, S., Gonicnk, M. and Harris, A. (2004). Young Femininity: Girlhood, Power, and Social Change. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Adeboye, E. A. (1995; 2017). Holiness

Adeleye-Fayemi, B. (2000). *Creating and Sustaining Feminist space in Africa: Local Global Challenges in the 21st Century*, Toronto

Adichie, C. N. (2012; 2014). We should all be feminists. Nigeria: Fourth Estate

Adichie, C. N. (2012; 2014). We should all be feminists. Nigeria: Fourth Estate

Adogame & Spickard (2010). Africa, the New African Diaspora, and Religious Transnationalism in a Global World

African American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture.

Ahmed, S. (2010). The Promise of Happiness. United Kingdom: Duke University Press

Allen. J. (1975). 'Aba Riots or the Igbo Women's War? - Ideology, Stratification, and the Invisibility of Women' [online] Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies, 6 (1). Available from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1700p1w0> [23 September 2020]

Alexander-Floyd, N. G., & Simien, E. M. (2006). Revisiting" what's in a name?": Exploring the contours of Africana womanist thought. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 67-89.

Alexander, V. (2005). 'A mouse in a jungle': the Black Christian woman's experience in the church and society in Britain. In Reconstructing womanhood, reconstructing feminism (pp. 103-126). Routledge.

Allison, R. (1988). Let women be silent in the churches (1 cor. 14.33b-36): what did Paul really say, and what did it mean? Bates College, Lewiston, Maine 04240, Journal for the study of the New Testament 32

Althaus-Reid, M. M. (2001). 'The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology (Book Review)'. Political Theology. 2 (4) 119

Ammerman, N. T. (2021), Studying Lived Religion, New York University Press.

Anderson, A. (2003). African initiated churches of the Spirit and pneumatology. Word & World 23(2): 178-186

Anderson, A. (2013). An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Introduction to Religion).DOI: 10.1017/CBO9781139524063

Anderson, A. (2013). To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity. New York, NY: Oxford UP, Print.

Anderson, E. (2020) 'Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science' [online] The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/feminism-epistemology/> [23 September 2020]

Anderson, P., Clack, B. (eds.). (2004). Feminist Philosophy of Religion: Critical Readings

Andre P. A, Maryann, K & Christopher L. W. (2018). Reconciling the god and gender gaps: the influence of women in church politics, Politics, Groups, and Identities, 6:4, 682-701

Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena. (2008). 'Conquering Satan, Demons, Principalities, and Powers. Ghanaian Traditional and Christian Perspectives on Religion, Evil, and Deliverance' in Doorn-Harder, Nelly van and Minnema, Lourens (eds.). Coping with Evil in Religion and Culture. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi

Aune, K. (2008). Evangelical Christianity and Women's Changing Lives. *European Journal of Women's Studies,* 15(3), 277-294, https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506808091508

Avishai, O. (2008). '"Doing Religion" In a Secular World: Women in Conservative Religions and the Question of Agency', *Gender & Society*, 22(4), pp. 409–433.DOI: 10.1177/0891243208321019

Barton, S (ed.) (2002), Holiness: Past and Present, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London. Available from: ProQuest eBook Central

Beauvoir, S.de (1993). *The second sex*. London: David Campbell (Everyman's library 137).

Beauvoir, S.de (1953). *The second sex*. London: Cape.

Bebbington, D. W. (1989*). Evangelism in Modern Britain*. London: Routledge

Bedana, L., Laishram, S., & Singh, M. P. (2016). Impact of Christianity on African Women in Buchi Emecheta's Novels

Berger, I. (2003). African Women's History: Themes and Perspectives. Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History 4(1), DOI:10.1353/cch.2003.0005

Berger, P.L. (1967). The Sacred canopy. Elements of a sociological theory of religion. Garden City, NY: Doubleday

Berger, T. (2011). Gender Differences and the Making of Liturgical Tradition: Lifting a Veil on Liturgy's Past, Ashgate Liturgy, Worship and Society Series

Berger, T. ed. (2001). Dissident Daughters: Feminist Liturgies in Global Context. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press

Bergoffen, D., Gail, W. (eds), (2011). Ethics of Embodiment, special issue of Hypatia, 26(3).

Bishop, C. (2019). Exploring Gender Roles and Gender Equality within the Evangelical Church. Ph.D. chapman education. Available from < https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/education_dissertations/1 > [20 September 2020]

Blay, Y. A. (2008). All the 'Africans' are Men, all the" Sistas" are" American," but Some of Us Resist: Realizing African Feminism (s) as an Africological Research Methodology. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, *2*(2).

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3, 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Blainey, G. (2011) *A short History of Christianity*, Penguin: Australia

Boff, L., Boof, C. (1987) Introducing Liberation Theology. Kent: Burns & Oates

Brownmiller, S. (1984) Femininity. New York: Linden Press/Simon & Schuster

Brusco, E. E. (2010). Gender and power. *Studying Global Pentecostalism*, 74-92.

Burgess, R. (2009) African Pentecostal spirituality and civic engagement: the case of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Britain, Journal of Beliefs & Values, 30:3, 255-273,

Burke, K. (2012). "Women's Agency in Gender-Traditional Religions: A Review of Four Approaches". *Sociology Compass* 6: 122-133

Butler, J. (1988). Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. Theatre Journal, 40(4), 519-531. DOI:10.2307/3207893

Carby, H. (1982). 'White woman listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood' [online] The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70's Britain. 212-35. Available from <https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/carby%20white%20woman%20listen.pdf> [20 September 2020]

Carr, A. (1982). 'Is a Christian Feminist Theology Possible?' [online] Theological Studies. 43 (2) 279-297. Available from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/004056398204300204> [23 September 2020]

Casselberry, J. (2017). The Labour of Faith. Gender and Power in Black Apostolic Pentecostalism. Durham and London: Duke University Press

Chapman, D. (2004). The Rise and Demise of Women's ministry in the Origins and Early Years of Pentecostalism in Britain. *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*. [online] 12(2):217-246 DOI: 10.1177/096673690401200203

Chapman, D. (2008). The Role of Women in Early Pentecostalism 1907-1914, *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association,* 28:2, 131-144, DOI: 10.1179/jep.2008.28.2.004

Chimuka, T. A. (2016). Afro-Pentecostalism and contested holiness in Southern Africa. Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae [online] 42(1), 124-141. Available from < https://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2412-4265/2016/307 > [23 September 2020]

Chitando, E. (2004). African Instituted Churches in Southern Africa: Paragons of Regional Integration? African Journal of International Affairs. DOI: 10.4314/ajia.v7i1-2.57226

Clark, E. A. (1990). *Women in the early church* (Vol. 13). Liturgical Press.

Clark, E. (2001). Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History: Church History, [online] Vol. 70, No. 3, pp. 395-426. Cambridge University Press on behalf of the American Society of Church History Available from <: https://www.jstor.org/stable/365449 > [23 September 2020]

Clarke, M., 2016. Pentecostal spirituality as lived experience: an empirical study of women in the British Black Pentecostal Church (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).

Coleman, M. A. (2008). Making a way out of no way: A womanist theology. Fortress Press.

Collins, P. H. (1990). Black Feminist Thought. Boston: Unwin Hyman

Collins, P. H. (1997). 'Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method': Where's the Power?' [online] Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society. 22 (2) 375-381. Available from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/45c9/5fd496ed633cb407b6ca5a99ba548b63e657.pdf?_ga=2.22815807.522743885.1600897246-531293676.1600897246> [23 September 2020]

Collins, P. H. (2000). Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment (2nd ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203900055

Cone, J. (1970). 'Christ in Black Theology'. In A Black Theology of Liberation. (ed). by Cone, J. Philadelphia: Lippincott

Coloe, M.L., (2009). Temple imagery in John. Interpretation, 63(4), pp.368-381.

Cornwall, A. (Ed.). (2005). *Readings in gender in Africa*. Indiana University Press.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex' [online] University of Chicago Legal Forum. 1, 139-167. Available from <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf> [23 September 2020]

Creswell, J. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. 4th edn. Los Angeles: SAGE

Cummings, S. (2009). New Women of the Old Faith: Gender and American Catholicism in the Progressive. The University of North Carolina Press, 2009. Available from <ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/coventry/detail.action?docID=454> [23 September 2020]

Daly, K. J. (2007). Qualitative Methods for Family Studies and Human Development.

Davis, A. (1981). Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves. The Black Scholar, 12(6), 2-15.

Davis, A. Y. (2011). Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday. Vintage.

Dayton, D.W., (1979). The Holiness and Pentecostal churches: Emerging from cultural isolation. Christian Century, 96, pp.786-792

Delamont, S. (2003). Feminist Sociology. SAGE Publications

Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y. (2005). The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research. 3rd edn. Los Angeles: SAGE

Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y. (2018). The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research. 5th edn. Los Angeles: SAGE

Dosekun (2007). Defending feminism in Africa.

Dosekun (2015). Feminist Africa.

Douglas, K. B. (2001). Marginalized people, liberating perspectives: A womanist approach to biblical interpretation. Anglican theological review, 83(1), 41-48.

Douglas, K. B. (2004). The Black church and the politics of sexuality. In Loving the body: Black religious studies and the erotic (pp. 347-362). New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.

Dube, Z. (2018a). Patriarchy Reinvented? 'Spiritual Parenting' within African Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe. Verbum et Ecclesia, 39(1) 1-6. Available from <http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2074-77052016000200004> [23 September 2020]

Dube, Z. (2016bs). 'The African Women Theologians' Contribution towards the Discussion about Alternative Masculinities' [online] Verbum et Ecclesia. 37 (2) 1-6. Available from <http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2074-77052016000200004> [23 September 2020]

Duncan Hall (nd). https://www.tutor2u.net/politics/reference/post-modern-feminism

Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The Space between: On Being Insider-Outsider in Qualitative research. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8, 54-63. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800105

Elias, A., Gill, R., & Scharff, C. (2017). *Aesthetic labour: Beauty politics in neoliberalism* (pp. 3-49). Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Eliason, K.D., Anderson, T., Hall, M.E. & Willingham, M. (2017). "Where Gender and Religion Meet: Differentiating Gender Role Ideology and Religious Beliefs about Gender", *Journal of Psychology and Christianity,* vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 3-15.

Ellison, M. M., & Douglas, K. B. (Eds.). (2010). *Sexuality and the sacred: Sources for theological reflection*. Westminster John Knox Press.

Fiedler, R. N. (2017). Introduction. In *A History of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians 1989-2007* (pp. 7–9). Mzuni Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh8r2j5.3

Skeggs, B. (1997). Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable – Sage Publications.

Foster, E.F. (1990). Black women in black-led churches: a study of black women's contribution to the growth and development of black-led churches in Britain (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).

Foucault, M. (1988). "Technologies of the Self." Lectures at University of Vermont Oct. 1982, in Technologies of the Self, 16-49. Univ. of Massachusetts Press.

Frankenberry, N. (2018) 'Feminist Philosophy of Religion' [online] The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. ed. by Zalta, E. Available from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/feminist-religion> [23 September 2020]

Fulop, T. E., & Raboteau, A. J. (Eds.). (1997). *African American religion: interpretive essays in history and culture*. Psychology Press.

Gafney, C. W. (2017). Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to The Women of the Torah And The Throne. Westminster John Knox Press (August 14, 2017)

Gathje, P.R., 2022. Holiness, Separation, and Hospitality. *Practicing the Kingdom: Essays on*

Hospitality, Community, and Friendship in Honor of Christine D. Pohl, p.48.

Gerloff, R. (1999). The Significance of the African Christian Diaspora in Europe: A Report on Four Meetings in 1997/Journal of Religion in Africa Vol. 29, pp. 115-120

Gilbert, J. (2015). ‘Be Graceful, Patient, Ever Prayerful’: Negotiating Femininity, Respect and The Religious Self in A Nigerian Beauty Pageant. Africa, 85(3), 501-520. DOI:10.1017/S0001972015000285

Gillis, S. (2004). Third Wave Feminism. Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited

Gill, R. (2007). Postfeminist media culture: Elements of a sensibility. European journal of cultural studies, 10(2), 147-166.

Gill, R. (2008). Culture and subjectivity in neoliberal and postfeminist times. *Subjectivity*, *25*, 432-445.

Gill, R., & Scharff, C. (Eds.). (2013). *New femininities: Postfeminism, neoliberalism and subjectivity*. Springer.

Goldstein, A., (2018). A theology of holiness: historical, exegetical, and philosophical perspectives

Gonick, M. (2006). ‘Between “Girl Power” and “Reviving Ophelia”: Constituting the Neoliberal Girl Subject’, NWSA Journal, 18 (2): 1-23

Grant, J. (1979). ‘Black Theology and The Black Woman’. In Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979. ed. by Wilmore, G., Cone, J. New York: Orbis

Grant, J. (1989). *White women's Christ and Black women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and womanist response*. Scholars Press.

Grant, J. (2004). Black theology and the Black woman. *The Black studies reader*, 421-34.

Griffith, R. M., Savage, B. D. (2006). "Women and Religion in the African Diaspora: Knowledge, Power, and Performance," African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter: Vol. 9: Iss. 4, Article 20. Available from: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan/vol9/iss4/20

Hackett, R. (2017). Women, Rights Talk, and African Pentecostalism. Religious Studies and Theology, 36(2)

Haig, B. (1999). ‘Feminist research methodology’ [online] Issues in Educational Research. 222-231

Hall, S. (1996). ‘Who Needs Identity?’ in S. Hall and P. du Gay, ed. Questions of Cultural Identity. London: Sage

Hall, S. (1997). ‘The Work of Representation’, in S. Hall, ed. Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices. London: Sage

Hannam, J. (2012). Feminism. 2nd edn. London: Routledge

Hannay, T. (1950). The Temple. *Scottish Journal of Theology, 3*(3), 278-287. doi:10.1017/S0036930600057549

Haraway, Donna, (1989). Primate Visions, New York: Routledge.

——, (1991). “Situated Knowledges,” In Simians, Cyborgs, and Women, New York: Routledge.

Harding, S. (1987). Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Harding, S. (1991). Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?: Thinking from Women's Lives. New York: Cornell University Press.

Harding, S., Hintikka, M (ed). (1983). Discovering Reality. Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science. Secaucus: Kluwer Academic Publishers, Secaucus.

Hargrove, S., Davaney (1985). The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science Vol. 480, Religion in America Today, pp. 117-131

Hartsock, N. (1983). 'The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism'. in Harding S., Hintikka M. (ed). Discovering Reality. 1st edn. Dordrecht: Springer

Hesse-biber, S. (2012). Feminist approaches to triangulation: Uncovering subjugated knowledge and fostering social change in mixed methods research. Journal of Mixed methods Research, 6(2), 137-146. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689812437184

Hetherington, N., Eyre, A. (2020). Nineteenth-Century Religion, Literature and Society. London: Routledge

Holloway, I. (1997). Basic Concepts for Qualitative Research. Oxford: Blackwell Science

Holmes, M. (2008). Gender and everyday life. Routledge

hooks, bell (2015a). Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center. 3rd edn. New York: Routledge

hooks, bell (2015b). Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center. New York: Routledge

hooks, bell. (2015c). Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics. London: Pluto Press

hooks, bell. (1999d). Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics. Boston, MA: South End Press

hooks, bell. (1990e). Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics. Boston, MA: South End Press

hooks, bell. (1982). Aint IA Woman. Argument, 24(JUL), 534-541.

Hudson-Weems, C. (2001). Africana womanism: The flip side of a coin. Western Journal of Black Studies, 25(3), 137.

Hudson-Weems, C. (2019). Africana womanism. In *Africana Womanism* (pp. 10-20). Routledge.

Hussein, J. (2005). The social and ethno-cultural construction of masculinity and femininity in African proverbs. African Study Monographs, 26(2): 59-87

Hussein, J. (2005). The social and ethno-cultural construction of masculinity and femininity in African proverbs. African Study Monographs, 26(2): 59-87

Hylen, S. E. (2015). *A modest apostle: Thecla and the history of women in the early church*. Oxford University Press.

Irvin, D. (1995). 'Drawing All Together in One Bond of Love': the Ecumenical Vision of William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival. Journal of Pentecostal Theology 3, 6, 25-53, Available From: Brill https://doi.org/10.1177/096673699500300603 [Accessed 13 May 2022]

Jagessar, M., & Reddie, A. (2007). Black Theology in Britain: A Reader.

Järviluoma,D.H., Vilkko, A., Moisala, P. (2003). Gender and Qualitative Methods. *Introducing Qualitative Methods series*. Sage.

Jean Danielou, God and the Ways of Knowing, trans. Walter Robert (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2003), 117

Jenkins, K., Narayanaswamy, L., and Sweetman, C. (2019). Feminist values in research: Gender and Development

Joseph Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity (Revised Edition), ed. J. Translator Foster (Ignatius Press, 2004), 263

Kalilombe, P. (1997). *Black Christianity in Britain.* London: Routledge

Kalof, L & BARALT, L. (2007). The sociology of femininity, in 21st century sociology, pp.116 - 122. SAGE Publications

Kalu, O. (2008). African Pentecostalism. An Introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kang, Z. (2008). Lifelong learning, identity, and the moral dimension: The 'reflexive project of the self' revisited1 University of Exeter, UK Gert Biesta, University of Stirling, UK. Paper presented at the 38th Annual SCUTREA Conference, 2-4 July 2008 University of Edinburgh

Kangwa, (2017). Indigenous African Women's Contribution to Christianity in NE Zambia – Case Study: Helen Nyirenda Kaunda Feminist Theology 2017, Vol. 26(1) 34–46

Katulushi, C. (1999). Teaching Traditional African Religions and Gender Issues in Religious Education in Zambia. *British Journal of Religious Education*, *21*(2), 101-111.

Kauppinen, K. (2013). 'Full power despite stress': A discourse analytical examination of the interconnectedness of post feminism and neoliberalism in the domain of work in an international women's magazine. *Discourse & Communication*, *7*(2), 133-151.

Kauppinen, K. (2013). At an Intersection of post feminism and Neoliberalism: A Discourse Analytical View of an International Women's Magazine. *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*, *7*(1).

Kaunda, C., (2020). *Genders, Sexualities, and Spiritualities in African Pentecostalism*. Springer International Publishing.

Kay, W. (2008). Sunderland's Legacy in New Denominations. Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association. 28. 10.1179/jep.2008.28.2.008

Kgatle, M. S. (2017). African Pentecostalism: The Christianity of Elias Letwaba From Early Years Until His Death In 1959. Scriptura. 116. 10.7833/116-1-1197

Kisitu, G., & Siwila, L. (2016). Whose Body Whose Language? A Feminist Critique of the Construction of Discourses on a Woman's Body in African Religious Spaces and its Effect on Well-being. *Alternation Journal*, *23*(2), 185-200. Retrieved from https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/soa/article/view/1282s

Kimmel, M. S. (2000). The gendered society. Oxford University Press, USA

Kleinig, J. W. (1985). Luther on the Christian's Participation in God's Holiness. *Lutheran Theological Journal* 19/1 (1985): 21-29

Knight III, H.H. ed., (2010). From Aldersgate to Azusa Street: Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal Visions of the New Creation. Wipf and Stock Publishers

Krog, L. (2005). 'African Hermeneutics: The Current State – Theology in Africa' [online] South African Theological Seminary. Available from <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/12244704/african-hermeneutics-the-current-state-theology-in-africa> [23 September 2020]

Lawless, E. J. (1993). Holy Women, wholly women; Sharing Life Stories and Reciprocal Ethnography. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

Lawless, E. J. (2003). Transforming the Master Narrative. Frontiers; 2003; 24, 1; ProQuest Central pg. 61

Leavy, P. (ed.) (2014). The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research. Cary: Oxford University Press, Incorporated

Leavy, P. (2017). Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches. New York: Guilford Publications

Lehmann, D. (1996). Struggle for the Spirit: Religious Transformation and Popular-Culture in Brazil and Latin America. Oxford: Polity Press.

Lennon, K. (2019) Feminist Perspectives on the Body, The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Edward N. Zalta (ed.) Available from https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/feminist-body/

Lightly, N., Hunt, S., Lightly, N., & Hunt, S. (2001). The British black Pentecostal 'revival': Identity and belief in the 'new' Nigerian churches. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 24(1), 104-124 https://doi.org/10.1080/014198701750052523

Linden, I. (2000). 'The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology (Book Review)'. Reviews in Religion & Theology. 7 (1) 89.

Lindley, S. (1996). Changing Roles of Women within the Christian Church in Canada. Edited by Elizabeth Gillan Muir and Marilyn Färdig Whiteley. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995 London: Routledge

Llewellyn, D. (2016). Maternal Silences: Motherhood and Voluntary Childlessness in Contemporary Christianity.

Lorde, A. (2012). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Crossing Press.

Lupton, D. (1998). *The emotional self: A sociocultural exploration*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Macdonald, M., Dolan, J. (2008). Femininity and Feminine Values. The International Encyclopaedia of Communication

MacHaffie, B. J., ed. (1992). Readings in Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition. 2d ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992

Maddox, M. (2013). Rise up warrior princess daughters: Is evangelical women's submission a mere fairy tale?' Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 9-26

Madigan, K., & Osiek, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Ordained women in the early church: A documentary history*. JHU Press.

Maier, K. D. (2012). *Redeeming London: gender, self and mobility among Nigerian Pentecostals* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Sussex).

Mapuranga, T. P. (2020). The Zimbabwe Council of Churches and Women's Empowerment

Marsh, H.W., Byrne, B.M. (1991). Differentiated additive androgyny model: Relations between masculinity, femininity, and multiple dimensions of self-concept. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 61(5), p.811

Marshall, R., (1993). Power in the name of Jesus': social transformation and Pentecostalism in western Nigeria 'revisited. In Legitimacy and the state in twentieth-century Africa (pp. 213-246). Palgrave Macmillan, London

Martin, C. J. (1990). Womanist Interpretations of the New Testament: The Quest for Holistic and Inclusive Translation and Interpretation. Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, 6(2), 41–61<. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25002134 > [23 September 2020]

Mayer, W. (1999). Female Participation and the Late Fourth-Century Preacher's Audience. Augustinianum 39: pp 139–147

Mbiti, John. (1991). An Introduction to African Religion, 2nd edition. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers

McDonald, P., (2022). Pentecostalism: A democratizing, liberating force for black women? Journal of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, 42(2), pp.159-175.

Miller, P. (2012). Women in Early Christianity: Translations from Greek Texts. Catholic University of America Press. ProQuest Ebook Central, Available from < http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/coventry/detail.action?docID=3135089 > [23 September 2020]

Mokotso, R. I. (2021). How coloniality generated religious illiteracy in Africa, and how to compensate the situation: Perspectives on Lesotho. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, *77*(4).

Moyo, F. (2004). Religion, Spirituality and Being a Woman in Africa: Gender Construction within the African Religio-Cultural Experiences. Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity, No. 61, Religion & Spirituality, pp. 72-78. Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of Agenda Feminist Media Available from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4066604 > [23 September 2020]

Murphy, L. (Ed.). (2000). *Down by the riverside: readings in African American Religion* (Vol. 8). NYU Press.

Muwati, I., Gambahaya, Z., & Gwekwerere, T. (2011). Africana womanism and African proverbs: Theoretical grounding of mothering/motherhood in Shona and Ndebele cultural discourse. Western Journal of Black Studies, 35(1), 1.

Mwaura, P. N. (2015). The circle of concerned African women theologians and their engagement in public theology: A pathway to development. Pathways to African Feminism and Development, Journal of African Women's Studies Centre, 1(1).

Njoroge, N. J. (1997). The Missing Voice: African women doing theology Journal of Theology for Southern Africa; ProQuest Central pg. 77

Norwood, C. (2013). Perspective in Africana Feminism; Exploring Expressions of Black Feminism/Womanism in the African Diaspora. Sociology Compass, 7: 225-236. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12025

Ntiri, D. W. (2001). Reassessing Africana womanism: Continuity and change. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, *25*(3), 163.

Nwaoga (2016). Christianity and Literature: The Need for Feminism in the Church.

Oakley, A. (2016). *Sex, gender, and society*. Routledge.

Odudoye, M. (2002). Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa New York: Orbis Books.

Oduyoye M. A. (2010). 'Gender and Theology in Africa Today' [online] A Journal of Sustainable Human Development. 6 (12). Available at <http://www.pelicanweb.org/solisustv06n12page3mercyoduyoye.html> [23 September 2020]

Oduyoye, M. A. (1992). The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa. New York: Orbis Books

Oduyoye, M. A. (1995). Daughters of Anowa: African women and patriarchy. New York: Orbis Books

Oduyoye, M. A., & Kanyoro, M. R. (Eds.). (2005). The will to arise: Women, tradition, and the church in Africa. Wipf and Stock Publishers

Ogunyemi, B. (2014). The Configuration of Gender and Identity in Nigerian Literature. International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies June 2014, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. American Research Institute for Policy Development

Økland, J. (2004) Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space. JSNTSup 269. New York

Orabueze, O. (2015). Society, Women and Literature in Africa, M & J Grand Orbit Communications Limited. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/coventry/detail.action?docID=4560548> [23 September 2020]

Orgad, S., & De Benedictis, S. (2015). The 'stay-at-home 'mother, post feminism and neoliberalism: Content analysis of UK news coverage. *European Journal of Communication*, *30*(4), 418-436.

Osirim, M. J. (2008). African Women in the New Diaspora: Transnationalism and the (Re) Creation of Home. African and Asian Studies 7: 367-394

Palmer, P. (1807-1874). *The Way of Holiness*. Wentworth Press.

Parratt, J (ed.) (2004). An Introduction to Third World Theologies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Phiri, I. A. (2005). The Circle of concerned African women theologians: its contribution to ecumenical formation. *The Ecumenical Review*, *57*(1), 34-42.

Pierce, Y. (2021). *In My Grandmother's House: Black Women, Faith, and the Stories We Inherit*. Broadleaf Books.

Pinn, A. (2010). Liberation Theologies in the United States: An Introduction. New York: New York University Press

Pope, H. (1910). Holiness. In the Catholic Encyclopaedia. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved March 9, 2021, from New Advent: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07386a.htm [23 September 2020]

Potter, M. (1986). Gender Equality and Gender Hierarchy in Calvin's Theology. Signs, Vol. 11, No. 4 pp. 725-739. The University of Chicago Press Available from <: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3174141 > [23 September 2020]

Rahman, M., & Jackson, S. (2010). Gender and sexuality: Sociological approaches. Polity

Ramazanoglu, C., Holland, J. (2002). Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices. London: SAGE

Reddie, A. (2000). Black Liberation Theology and Practical Theology

Rieger, J. (2000). The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology. ed. by Rowland, C. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Risman, B. J. (2004). *Gender As a Social Structure: Theory Wrestling with Activism* Volume 18, Issue 4 https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243204265349

Rosen, D. (1983). 'The Peasant Context of Feminist Revolt in West Africa' [online] Anthropological Quarterly.56 (1) 35-43. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3317948> [23 September 2020]

Rowland, C. (ed). (2007). The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Ruether, R. (2002). 'The emergence of Christian feminist theology'. In S. Parsons (Ed.). The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology (Cambridge Companions to Religion). Cambridge: Cambridge University, 3-22

Saniel, J. (2018). Conceptualizations on Femininity and Identified Issues in Women. In Fifth International Conference on Women & Gender Studies (p. 80)

Sered, S. (1988). The Domestication of Religion: The Spiritual Guardianship of Elderly Jewish Women: Man, New Series, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 506-521. Royal Anthropological Institute of

Great Britain and Ireland. Available from <: https://www.jstor.org/stable/2803263 > [23 September 2020]

Shankar, A., Elliot, R. and Fitchett, J.A. (2009). 'Identity, Consumption and Narratives of Socialization', Marketing Theory, 9 (1): 75-94

Shannahan. C. (2010). Voices from the Borderland: Re-Imagining Cross Cultural Urban Theology in the Twenty First Century. London: Routledge

Sharma, S. (2008). 'Young Women, Sexuality and Protestant Church Community: Oppression or Empowerment? European Journal of Women's Studies, 15(4), pp. 345–359

Shaw, B. (1994). Women and the early church. *History Today*, *44*(2), 21-28.

Sheldon, K. (2017). African Women: Early History to the 21st Century. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017. Available from Project MUSE. <https://muse.jhu.edu/ > [23 September 2020]

Smith, D. (1989). *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*

Spatafora, A. (1997). From the 'Temple of God' to God as the Temple: A biblical. Gregorian University Press; Serie Teologia 27 edition (August 1, 1997)

Stanley, L., Wise, S. (1993). London: Taylor & Francis Group.

Stimpson, C. and Herdt, G. (ed). (2014). Critical Terms for the Study of Gender. University of Chicago Press

Streeval, J. M. (2018). The Oneness Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries. Lulu Press, Inc.

Swaminathan, R., & Mulvihill, T. M. (2017). 'Critical Approaches to Questions in Qualitative Research'. American Psychological Association

Thomas F. (2010). An Interpretation of Evangelical Gender Ideology: Implications for a Theology of Gender, Theology & Sexuality, 16:2, 183-192, DOI: 10.1558/tse.v16i2.183

Tina, B. (2005). Accessed from: https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/feminist-theology-christian-feminist-theology

Toulis, N. (1997). *Believing Identity: Pentecostalism and the Mediation of Jamaican Ethnicity and Gender in England*. Oxford: Berg.

Townes, E. M. (2003). Womanist theology.

Townes, E M. (2006). "Womanist Theology." Encyclopaedia of Women and Religion in North America, Set. (ed). Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Ruether. Indiana UP. 1165–1173s

Trinklein, J. (2016). "Holiness unto Whom? John Wesley's Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in Light of The Two Kinds of Righteousness". Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation.25. <https://scholar.csl.edu/phd/25>[23 September 2020]

Walker, A. (1983). Alice Walker's Definition of a "Womanist" from *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose Copyright 1983.*

Ward (1988). The role of women in the church, in society, and in the home. Priscilla papers. Available from <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resources/article/priscilla-papers/role-women-church-society-and-home> [23 September 2020]

Wariboko, N., and Oliverio, L., Jr. (2020). The Society for Pentecostal Studies at 50 Years. Pneuma 42, 3-4, 327-333, Available From: Brill< https://doi.org/10.1163/15700747-04203021> [15 May 2022]

Weedon, C. (1997). Feminist Practice and Post-Structuralist Theory. 2nd edn. Oxford: Blackwell

West, C., Zimmerman, D. (1987). *Gender and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2., pp.125-151

Wharton, A. S. (2009). The sociology of gender: An introduction to theory and research. John Wiley & Sons

Williams, D. (2012). 'Black theology and womanist theology' in Hopkins, D. N. and Antonio, E. P. (ed.). The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Cambridge Companions to Religion), pp. 58–72.

Williams, D. (1993). Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk. Maryknoll:

Williams, D. (1987). 'Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices' [online] Christianity and Crisis. Available from :< https://www.religion-online.org/article/womanist-theology-black-womens-voices/> [23 September 2020]

Williams, D. (2006). Womanist theology: Black women's voices (1986). *The womanist reader*, 117-125.

Witherington III, B. (1991). *Women in the earliest churches* (No. 59). Cambridge University Press.

Wood (1994) Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on Views of Gender. Chapter 9, pp. 231- 244

"Womanist Theology." Contemporary American Religion. Retrieved August 11, 2020, from Encyclopedia.com:https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/legal-and-political-magazines/womanist-theology

Wynkoop, M. B. (1958). "An Existential Interpretation of the Doctrine of Holiness". Faculty Publications George Fox Evangelical Seminary. Paper 33. Available from S<http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/gfes/33> [23 September 2020].

Zoey A. Heyer-Gray. (2000). Gender and Religious: Sociology of Religion, Vol. 61, No. 4, Special Issue (Winter, 2000), pp. 467-471 Published by: Oxford University Press. Available from <: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3712531> [23 September 2020]

APPENDIX

FIG 2.

INTERVIEW QUESTION

The following interview questions are guidelines to follow as I interview my participants. I expect that questions will lead to question as we go along during the interviews. I want the interviews to go along like conversations; whilst making sure we remain on topic. In addition, these interview questions only serve as prompts and may not be followed word for word.

Interview participant demographic information (to be completed by all participants)

Age	18 – 25 26 – 35 36 – 45 46 – 55 56 – 65 66 – 75 76 – 85 86 – 95

	Other
Sex	Female Male Other
Relationship Status	Single Married Prefer not to say
What Church do you attend?	
Do you hold any position in your church?	
What is your nationality?	

Preliminary Questions

- How long have you been in the UK?
- How did you find the UK when you first came here?
- What church did you attend back in your home country?
- Please tell me about your church. Is there any difference or similarity between your church in your home country and the one you attend here?

Questions on how women in African diasporic churches construct their femininity

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What do you think being a woman means?
3. Are there things you love /hate most about being a woman? What are they?
4. Do you think African Christians have any expectations of what an African Christian woman should be?

5. What do you feel about cultural norms, either African or British ones? Is it important to abide by either set of norms while here?
6. What does your church say being a woman is? Do you agree? Is there a church culture around being a woman in your church? Can you tell me more about this? How do you feel about it?
7. How do your family and friends make you feel about being a woman? Are there expectations regarding gender roles in the family or elsewhere?

<u>Questions on how women in African diasporic churches interpret scriptures pertaining to their femininity</u>

8. Who would you say has influenced who you are?
9. What does the Bible mean to you? What Bible verse would you say means much to you as a woman? Is there a story in the Bible you identify most with? Why?
10. How do older women and younger women relate in this church?
11. What scriptures have you heard preached on in church concerning femininity? (prompt: for example, 1Cor 3: 16, 6:19, 2Cor 6:14- 18, 1Pet 2:5).
12. What was the preacher's interpretation? Do you agree? Would you apply them in your life?
13. The Bible talks about holiness in various passages. What does holiness mean to you? Do you think it means different things to women than it does to men?
14. Have you discussed the issue of holiness with others? If so, with whom, and do you remember what they had to say?

<u>Questions on how their responses relate to feminism</u>

17. Do you think society has a different understanding of what a woman should be from your church's? If so, what are the differences? What's your response to that?

18. What do you know about feminism? Would you identify as a feminist?

19. What do you think about equality? Do you think women in church should stand up for equality?

Participant No.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM:

BECOMING THE TEMPLE OF GOD: Femininity construction in African Pentecostal churches in the UK

You are invited to take part in this research study for the purpose of collecting data on the following:

- How the Bible is used by older and younger women in African diaspora churches to construct femininity.
- How Christian women experience and respond to ideas about femininity they encounter in church and in wider society
- Intergenerational relationships between women in the church.

This interview is likely to last from 30 minutes to an hour and a half. Before you decide to take part, you must **read the accompanying Participant Information Sheet.**

Please do not hesitate to ask questions if anything is unclear or if you would like more information about any aspect of this research. It is important that you feel able to take the necessary time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

If you are happy to participate, please confirm your consent by circling YES against each of the below statements and then signing and dating the form as participant.

1	**I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions**	**YES**	**NO**
2	**I understand my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my data, without giving a reason, by contacting the lead researcher at any time until the date specified in the Participant Information Sheet**	**YES**	**NO**
3	**I have noted down my participant number (top left of this Consent Form) which may be required by the lead researcher if I wish to withdraw from the study**	**YES**	**NO**
4	**I understand that all the information I provide will be held securely and treated confidentially**	**YES**	**NO**
5	**I am aware of the risks involved**	**YES**	**NO**
6	**I am happy for the information I provide to be used (anonymously) in academic papers and other formal research outputs**	**YES**	**NO**
7	**For Interviews: I am happy for the interview to be audio recorded**	**YES**	**NO**
8	**For Bible Study: I am happy for the researcher to take notes for her research**	**YES**	**NO**
9	**I agree to take part in the above study**	**YES**	**NO**