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**EDITOR: HARVEY C. KWIYANI**

# *Mission from Africa: A Call to Re-imagine Mission In African-led Pentecostal Churches in Britain*<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

The Christian landscape in Britain is being transformed by the emergence and continued proliferation of African-led Pentecostal churches. This has further led credence to the role of African Christianities in the shaping of mission in the twenty-first century as Africa is now one of the major missionary-sending continents. Having their origin in Africa, or having been established by Africans in Britain, these churches carry their vision beyond their own sociocultural boundaries with narratives of mission to re-evangelise Britain. However, it seems that their claims of mission to Britain are more a farce than reality, since these churches are yet to rise to the missionary challenges of the British context. This article is written from a missiological perspective with sociological underpinnings to explore and critique the mission narratives of these African immigrant churches as well as to highlight the need for re-imagining both their mission and evangelism strategies.

**Keywords: Migration, Identity, Acculturation, African Pentecostal-led Churches, Religious worldviews, Rituals, Britain, African Pentecostalism**

## **Introduction**

**T**he history of Christianity in the twenty-first century would be incomplete without the inclusion of a chapter on the exponential growth of African Christianities in Africa and in the African diaspora. It has been observed that over five hundred million people have converted to Christianity in the space of one hundred years, with 80 percent of them converting after 1970.<sup>2</sup> Andrew Walls, the mission historian, was quite

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<sup>1</sup> A modified version of a lecture delivered at the Missio Africanus Conference themed “The Rise of African Christianity and Its Place in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Missions” held at Birmingham Christian College, Birmingham, United Kingdom, on 27 June 2014.

futuristic about the importance of Africa in the history of Christianity in the twenty-first century as he observed over a decade ago that “if you want to know something about Christianity, you must know something about Africa.”<sup>3</sup> Strictly speaking, mission in the twenty-first century will be totally different from what it has been in the past two centuries.

The shift in the centre of gravity of Christianity to the majority of the world has overlapped with the global rise of Pentecostalism characterised by its emphasis on mission. Pentecostal and charismatic movements, in all their “multifaceted variety, probably constitute the fastest growing churches within Christianity today.”<sup>4</sup> Barrett and Johnson noted that if present trends continue, by 2025, 69% of the world’s Christians will live in the global South, with only 31% in the global North.<sup>5</sup>

The twenty-first century missionary movement may, therefore, involve more non-western than western Christians. Having many non-western Christians on the mission field will create a very new identity for both mission and the missionary. The typical identity of a missionary in the twenty-first century ceases to be that of a European or North American serving in some remote area of Africa, Chile, Columbia, or Seoul; more likely it will be that of a Mexican, a Nigerian, or perhaps a Korean, serving practically anywhere in the world.

African Christianities, especially Pentecostalism, are not geographically delineated as they are quite visible in the West and North America. African Pentecostalism seems to be one of the most veritable exports from the continent to Europe and North America. In the midst of the proliferation of African Pentecostalism in the West, it is imperative to acknowledge the contributions of Asian, Caribbean and Latin American charismatic and Pentecostal churches. This has largely contributed to the redefinition of world Christianity to world Christianities, in the light of a shift from the territorial ideology of the Euro-centrism of the Christian faith. The globalisation of African Pentecostalism has largely been associated with globalisation,<sup>6</sup> migration,<sup>7</sup> and the declining fortunes of Christianity in the West where it has largely been consigned to the private space. Western Christianity has lost its influence in the

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<sup>2</sup> Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross, and Sandra S. K. Lee, *Atlas of Global Christianity, 1910-2010* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 110-113.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Walls, “Of Ivory Towers and Ashrams: Some Reflections on Theological Scholarship,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 3:1 (2000): 1.

<sup>4</sup> Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1.

<sup>5</sup> David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, ‘Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 2002’, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 26:1, January 2002, 23.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Tennent observed that globalisation has redefined mission as being everywhere and by everyone as he states that: “globalisation has fostered dramatic changes in immigration, urbanization and technological connectivity. The result is that the traditional sending structures and geographic orientation that have dominated missions since the nineteenth century are no longer tenable ... The long-held distinction of ‘home’ missions and ‘foreign’ missions is passing away.” For further study, see Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2010), 12.

<sup>7</sup> Jacqueline Hagan and Helen R. Ebaugh, “Calling upon the Sacred: Migrants’ Use of Religion in the Migration Process” *International Migration Review* 37, no. 4 (2003), 1145-62. Also see Jehu Hanciles, “Migration and Mission: The Religious Significance of the North-South Divide”, in *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*, ed. A. F. Walls and C. Ross, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008), 123.

social, religious and political sphere.<sup>8</sup>

During the last three decades, Europe and North America have witnessed new theological encounters as “non-western theologies are no longer confined geographically to the majority world. They abound in western cities.”<sup>9</sup> However, despite the proliferation of these churches across the Atlantic, western theological discourses disparage non-western theologies as inferior, or totally disregard them. Kwiyani observes that such a disposition within western theological discourses is not just wrong; it is a failure to be relevant to the current western context of cultural Christian diversity.<sup>10</sup> In the light of the reconfiguration of the map of world Christianity, a by-product of the “southernisation” of Christianity has been a reformation of theological development as Christianity is no longer viewed only through a European lens.

African-led Pentecostal churches are the most visible variety among the different genres of new African Christianities that have burgeoned in Europe and North America, especially since 1980, up to the present. For instance, the Christian landscape in Kiev, Ukraine, has been redefined by Pastor Sunday Adelaja, who leads the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations. Ludwig and Asamoah-Gyadu observe that Pastor Sunday Adelaja leads over 100 congregations in Ukraine and over 200 daughter congregations in twenty-two other countries.<sup>11</sup> Adelaja’s missionary work has permanently altered the ecclesial landscape of Eastern Europe, instilling African religious sensibilities in a region that was previously dominated by Orthodox Christianity.

Similarly, in the United Kingdom, the largest single congregation is Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC) led by Pastor Mathew Ashimolowo with a membership of 12,000 adherents. Other mega churches in London include Jesus House, a parish of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, which has a membership of 3,000 and is led by Pastor Agu Irukwu; Victory Pentecostal Assembly, in Barking, London, led by Pastor Alex Omokudu with a membership of over 3,000; and Mount Zion Christian Ministry International (Freedom Arena) Plumstead, London, pioneered by Pastor Debo Akande, with a membership of over 2,000.<sup>12</sup>

Other popular African-led Pentecostal churches in Britain include the Deeper Life Bible

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<sup>8</sup> Adedibu Babatunde, “The Changing Christian Landscape in Britain: The Case of Black Majority Churches” in *Swedish Missiological Themes*, Volume 100, No.3 2012, 283-302

<sup>9</sup> Harvey Kwiyani, “Pneumatology, Mission and African Christianity in Multicultural Congregations in North America: The Case of Three Congregations in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA”. PhD dissertation, Luther Seminary, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Harvey Kwiyani, “Pneumatology.”

<sup>11</sup> Frieder Ludwig and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Christian Presence in the West* (Trenton, Africa World Press, 2011), 7.

<sup>12</sup> See the church website <http://www.freedomarena.org.uk> [accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2015].

Church led by Pastor Kumuyi with its headquarters in Lagos, Nigeria; the Church of Pentecost led by Apostle Opoku Onyina, headquartered in Ghana; Believers' Love World Incorporated also known as "Christ Embassy," headquartered in Lagos, Nigeria led by Pastor Chris Oyakhilome; Winners Chapel, led by Pastor David Oyedepo, the son of the founding bishop of the denomination, Bishop David Oyedepo Senior. It is apt to note that some of these churches have their headquarters outside Britain; others were established in Britain and are spreading their denominational frontiers to Africa, such as Kingsway International Christian Centre, the World Harvest Centre led by Pastor Wale Babatunde, and the Dominion Christian Centre, led by Pastor Sam Ohene-Apraku.

To encounter the richness and diversities of African Christianities in Britain, all you might need is just a day bus pass to Old Kent Road in South East London. In his report entitled *Being Built Together, A Story of New Black Majority Churches in the London Borough of Southwark*, Rogers states that "Old Kent Road [in Southwark Borough, London] has become something of a shop window for their growth, proclaiming the globalisation of Christianity" with over 25 Black Majority churches [mostly African-led Pentecostal churches] on a road less than 1.5 miles long.<sup>13</sup>

It has been observed that Pentecostals, inclusive of African Pentecostals in Africa and the diaspora, are notoriously committed to aggressive forms of evangelism which are yet to translate to significant Caucasians being members of these churches.<sup>14</sup> The declining of Christianity in Europe due to secularisation and the relegation of the faith to personal space are often cited as the basis for the re-evangelisation of the West by these churches.<sup>15</sup> Some scholars have described these churches as migrant sanctuaries or diasporic congregations but it is imperative to state that these churches are meeting authentic social, religious and cultural needs of Africans in diaspora.<sup>16</sup> The next section of this article examines the mission claims of Britain's African-led Pentecostal churches whether it is rhetoric or reality.

## Mission out of Africa or Diasporic Perpetuation of Africa in

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<sup>13</sup> Andrew Rogers, *Being Built Together, A Story of New Black Majority Churches in the London Borough of Southwark* (Final Report, June 2013), 17

<sup>14</sup> Babatunde Adedibu, "Reverse Mission or Migrant Sanctuaries? Rhetoric, Symbolic Mapping and Missionary Challenges of Britain's Black Majority Churches," *The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Pneuma*, 35 (2013), 405-423; Richard Burgess, African Pentecostals in Britain: The Case of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, in Ludwig and Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Christian Presence in the West*, 256; A. Ukah, "Reverse Mission or Asylum Christianity? A Nigerian Church in Europe," in *Africans and Politics of Popular Cultures*, ed. T. Falola and A. Agwuele (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 104-32;

<sup>15</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "African Pentecostals on Mission in Eastern Europe: The Church of the 'Embassy of God' in the Ukraine," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 314; A. Adogame, R. Gerloff, and K. Hock, (eds.), *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora* (London: Continuum, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Babatunde Adedibu, "Reverse Mission or Migrant Sanctuaries?" 410

## Britain?

The proliferation of African Christianities in Europe and North America in the last three decades has come under the scrutiny of various scholars.<sup>17</sup> However, recent scholarship has observed the distinctive ethos and the missionary zeal of these churches across the Atlantic.<sup>18</sup> The last seven decades heralded a new era in British church history with the proliferation of transnational African-led Pentecostal churches predicated on the migration and occupational mobility of Africans. Migration has inevitably contributed to the role of Africans in diaspora in the shaping of Christianity in the West.<sup>19</sup> The migratory pattern is often from underdeveloped economies to Europe and North America in the quest for economic and social leverage: but an observable trend is that these economic migrants travel not only with their skills but also take with them their religious “idiosyncrasies.”<sup>20</sup> In view of the transnational presence of African Pentecostal Christianities across the Atlantic, Christians and Christian workers have been a significant part of the constituency of the migration. This has invariably redefined mission.<sup>21</sup> This directional shift of mission from Africa and Asia to Europe and North America came as a surprise to many westerners, including Christians. It was Walter Hollenweger who observed that “Christians in Britain prayed for many years for revival, and when it came they did not recognise it because it was black.”<sup>22</sup> Migrant Christian groups from the global South, especially Africans in Europe, “have come to see themselves as charged with a divine mission to re-evangelise a continent that they consider to have lost its Christians.”<sup>23</sup> The claim of re-evangelisation of the British Isles or the West and North America by churches from Global South has been described by scholars as reverse mission. However, it is imperative to note that Kwiyani suggests that the term “reverse mission” is a misnomer utilised for mission initiatives from the Global South only whilst mission, being God’s initiative – *missio Dei* – is an all-encompassing concept

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Burgess, ‘Bringing Back the Gospel: Reverse Mission among Nigerian Pentecostals in Britain’, Special Issue of *Journal of Religion in Europe, Theoretical reflection on Christian migrants from Africa*, 4, (2011), 429-49; ‘Walking down the Old Kent Road: A Story of New Black Majority Churches in a London Borough’, in J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, et al. (eds.), *Babel is Everywhere! Migrant Readings from Africa, Europe and Asia*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, (2013), 199-214; ‘Online for God: Media Negotiation and African New Religious Movements’ in Afe Adogame (ed.) *Who is Afraid of the Holy Ghost: Pentecostalism and Globalization in Africa and Beyond*. Religion in Contemporary Africa Series. Trenton / Asmara / Ibadan et al: Africa World Press, (2011), 223-238.

<sup>18</sup> Mark Gornick, *Word Made Global: Stories of African Christianity in New York City* (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Jehu Hanciles, ‘Migration and Mission: The Religious Significance of the North-South Divide’, in *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* ed. A. F. Walls and C. Ross, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008), 123.

<sup>20</sup> Burgess, Knibbe and Quaas examined the operational modalities of Transnational Pentecostal Churches, networks and believers operating in public space in Britain, Germany and the Netherlands. For detailed study see, R. Burgess, K. Knibbe and A. Quaas, ‘Nigeria-Initiated Pentecostal Churches as a Social Force in Europe: The Case of The Redeemed Christian Church of God,’ *PentecoStudies* 9:1 (2010), 117.

<sup>21</sup> Some of the recent publications include A. Ukah, ‘Reverse Mission or Asylum Christianity? A Nigerian Church in Europe,’ *Africans and Politics of Popular Cultures*, ed. T. Falola, and A. Agwuele, (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 104-32; and A. Adogame, R. Gerloff, and K. Hock, *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora* (London: Continuum, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, ‘Foreword’, in Roswith Geldoff, (ed.), *A Plea for British Black Theologies: The Black Church Movement in Britain in its Intercultural Theological and Cultural Interaction*, Bern: Peter Lang, vol. 1, 1992, ix.

<sup>23</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, ‘African Christians in Europe: A Mission in Reverse’, in *Changing Relations Between Churches in Europe and Africa: The Internationalization of Christianity and Politics in 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. Katharina Kunter and Jens Holger Schjorring, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, Verlag), 241-9.

that informs and shapes all aspects of mission.<sup>24</sup> Various attempts have been made by various scholars to define the phenomenon of reverse mission which are explored below.

## Defining Reverse Mission

Paul Freston highlights the multifaceted challenges associated with the definition of “reverse mission.”<sup>25</sup> He observes that the broad generalisation of the concept by some scholars is synonymous with the movement of missionaries from the global South to the global North; he argues that such a broad spectrum definition as posited by Ojo – that “reverse mission refers to the sending of missionaries to Europe and North America by churches and Christians from the non-western world, particularly Africa, Asia and Latin America” – is no more than geographical inversion.<sup>26</sup> However, Freston posits that “reverse mission is also *from below*. Along with the changed direction of arrows on the map go inverted social positions, resembling the expansion of Christianity in its first centuries.”<sup>27</sup> In view of the broad generalisation leading to geographical inversion, many scholars run the risk, as observed by Daugherty, of ignoring the Eastern forms of the faith. Daugherty criticises the obsession of western scholars with the cliché of the shift in the centre of gravity of Christianity to the global South. He raises a number of questions such as whether the centre of gravity was ‘in the North’ up till now? “Do we really mean the North-West when referring to the North? By North do we actually mean the non-orthodox North? If we think in terms of ‘North–South’ then what do we do with the East? Will eastern Christianity yet succumb?”<sup>28</sup> However, Adogame’s perspective of reverse mission is at variance with the identified caveat of previous scholarship, with the exception of Freston and Daugherty, due to the specificity associated with his definition, with which I concur, and which undergirds its usage in this article. Adogame defines reverse mission as “mission understood as evangelical and missionary zeal of the formerly missionised to reawaken Christianity in the former ‘Christian West’, especially Europe and the United States.”<sup>29</sup> However, Adogame asserts that “the rationale for reverse mission is often anchored in claims to the divine commission to ‘spread the gospel’; the perceived secularisation of the West; the abysmal fall in church attendance and dwindling membership; desacralisation of church buildings; liberalisation; and in issues of moral decadence.”<sup>30</sup> The religious mosaic across the globe

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<sup>24</sup> Harvey C. Kwiyani, *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, ASM Series. 2014), 74.

<sup>26</sup> For further study see Michael Ojo, “Reverse Mission”, in *Encyclopedia of Mission and Missionaries*, ed. J. J. Bonk, (London: Routledge, 2007), 380.

<sup>27</sup> Freston, “Reverse Mission,” 155.

<sup>28</sup> For detailed study see Dyron Daugherty, “Ignoring the East: Correcting Serious Flaws in World Christianity Scholarship”, in Adogame and Shankar, *Religion on the Move*, 46.

<sup>29</sup> Afe Adogame and Shobnar Shankar, “Exploring New Frontiers in Global Religious Dynamics”, in Adogame and Shankar, *Religion on the Move*, 1.

has the footprints of Africa amongst mission churches: members of charismatic and Pentecostal denominations are sent from Africa to lead existing denominations or pioneer new churches. Adogame observes the changes in mission landscape in Europe and North America when he states that “there are growing numbers of Nigerian Roman Catholic and Anglican priests in the USA; Tanzanian Lutheran and Ghanaian Methodist priests in Germany; and South African Presbyterians in Scotland. African priests and ministers in these churches are sometimes employed by the host churches but have the African congregations as their primary constituency.”<sup>31</sup>

A major feature of reverse mission that is almost transnational is the sacralisation of the mission enterprise in the West by African and Caribbean Pentecostal leaders. The reinterpretation of the economic and social migration of African and Caribbean Christians has led to the creation of new identities as agents of the re-evangelisation of Britain which are alien to the migration narratives of moving from developing countries to developed countries. Nevertheless, the reality is that Britain’s African-led Pentecostal churches need to exercise “bold humility” as their missionary enterprise has not translated to membership from the indigenous Caucasian population, as many are repositories of migrant sanctuaries.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the re-evangelisation claims by Britain’s African-led Pentecostals, it is imperative to assert that the missionary effort and zeal of these churches has been centred on their kith and kin. These churches have been noted to be social service centres to meet the existential challenges of their members as a result of social, economic and financial discontinuities experienced in a new cultural frontier. The moral ethics of the “born again” phenomenon in African Pentecostal churches facilitates reorientation in terms of discipline, moral consciousness, hardworking and assimilation of the western way of life. The reorientation is based on various teachings on health and wealth ideologies of these churches to their members. The leadership of most African-led Pentecostal churches in Britain serves not only as clergy but also as immigration consultants, financial advisers, legal advisers and cultural gatekeepers. The multifaceted skills required to successfully pastor an African led-Pentecostal church in Britain cannot be over emphasised. An obvious fact is that Britain’s African-led Pentecostal churches have not risen to the missionary challenges of their host

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<sup>30</sup> Afe Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora* (London, Bloomsbury, 2013), 169.

<sup>31</sup> Afe Adogame, “Reverse Mission: Europe - a Prodigal Continent?” [www.wcc2006.info/fileadmin/files/edinburgh2010/files/News/Afe\\_Reverse%20mission.pdf](http://www.wcc2006.info/fileadmin/files/edinburgh2010/files/News/Afe_Reverse%20mission.pdf) (accessed 28 June 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Babatunde Adedibu, *Coat of Many Colours: Origin, Growth, Distinctiveness and Contributions of Black Majority Churches to British Christianity* (Gloucester: The Choir Press, 2012), 234-9.



country.<sup>33</sup>

I have sketched how Britain's African-led Pentecostal churches claim they are on a special mission to bring the white British back to Christianity, but they actually focus most of their congregational energies and attention on the needs of immigrant populations from Africa. Rather than seeing their rhetorical claims to missionary enterprise as empty or insincere, I would like to suggest that this rhetoric of mission *and* this focus on the lives of African migrants work together to challenge the marginality not only of immigrants within British society but also of African and African diasporic Christians more generally to the political maps of Christianity. Nevertheless, the continued proliferation of homogenous churches amongst African-led Pentecostal churches raises wider concerns with respect to the need for re-imagination of the missionary enterprise in the host society.

## Re-imagination of Mission- A Call for Paradigm Shift

The need to re-imagine the missional praxis of most African-led Pentecostal churches has been noted by some scholars.<sup>34</sup> According to Grant McClung, "The very heartbeat of Pentecostal missions is their experience with the power and person of the Holy Spirit."<sup>35</sup> However, this position has not always been well articulated, as African Pentecostal missionaries in Britain get on with the job due to claims of the imminent second coming of Christ, believing that the time is short and that the need to actualise the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) is expedient. It is thus imperative to note that the mission praxis of these churches is a by-product of "theology on the move"<sup>36</sup> as emphasis is placed on global evangelisation to the detriment of contextual missional praxis across various cultural frontiers.

The missionary praxis of these churches, which have largely been shaped by commitment to church planting, evangelism and the continued provision of social and religious capital to their members who are mostly migrants, raises fundamental questions with respect to their understanding of the cultural context of the host communities. The transplanting of church practices and the religious ideals of these churches from Africa lack contextual

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<sup>33</sup> Adedibu, "Reverse Mission or Migrant Sanctuaries?" Also see Ukah, "Reverse Mission or Asylum Christianity?" And Adogame, et. al., eds., *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora*.

<sup>34</sup> Richard, Burgess, Bringing Back the Gospel: Reverse Mission among Nigerian Pentecostals in Britain", Special Issue of *Journal of Religion in Europe, Theoretical reflection on Christian migrants from Africa*, 4, (2011), 447; Afe Adogame, 'African Christianity in Diaspora', in Diane B. Stinton (eds) *African Theology on the Way. Current Conversations*, London: SPCK, (2010), 161-171

<sup>35</sup> L. Grant McClung, Jr., ed. *Azusa Street and Beyond: Pentecostal Missions and Church Growth in the Twentieth Century*, (South Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1986), 72

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 42

pragmatism in the host communities. Richard Burgess, in his research on the RCCG in Britain, posits that one of the reasons for the continued homogenous composition of most of Britain's African-led Pentecostal churches is due to the fact that "their Pentecostal spirituality is insufficient to break down the cultural barrier between African and indigenous British society."<sup>37</sup> The lack of understanding of the British cultural context by leaders of these churches and the "failure to adapt their message, strategies and styles to cater for a western audience, is antithetical to their quest for multicultural congregations."<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the aspirational modalities exemplified by some of these churches indicated in use of prefixes such as 'Churches for All Nations' and 'International' churches are not matched with intentional cross-cultural knowledge.

In the light of the multicultural and multi-ethnic nature of Britain, the salient question for the leadership of African-led Pentecostal churches is how they can build relationships in the host communities and commence the difficult task of mutual understanding of their context, as well as the cultural intelligence about the migrants by members of the host communities as the gospel transcends social and cultural differences. Cultural intelligence is not about simply adapting and changing our patterns and personality. It is not about acquiring specific skill sets on a list that we can check off. It is about systemic change. It is about creating an environment that welcomes different cultures. It is about developing cultural intuition as well as gaining a knowledge set. To a large extent the approach to the task of developing a multicultural church by most African-led Pentecostal churches is aspirational whilst the most of the leadership of these churches are not intentional and willing to sacrifice privileges of having large homogenous membership to risk of commitment towards raising a multicultural church.

African Pentecostal church leaders in Britain should understand the practical implications of being missionaries in their various communities. Missionaries are mediators standing between two different worlds, seeking to build bridges of understanding, mediating relationships, and negotiating partnership in ministry. Interestingly, most African-led Pentecostal churches in Britain are best described as *glocal* congregations, as many are shaped by the forces of globalisation and technological developments but situate their religious ideals within the cultural framework of their former homeland in Africa, neglecting the host context. The leadership of these churches and their members are

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<sup>37</sup> Richard Burgess, *African Pentecostals in Britain: The Case of the Redeemed Christian Church of God*, in Ludwig and Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Christian Presence in the West*, 265.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 36

struggling towards a missionary orientation. Britain's African-led Pentecostal churches are caught outside the missionary concern of the church and an understanding of contemporary culture. There is the urgent need for intentional change to help Britain's African Pentecostal churches to make a leadership, organisational and conceptual leap from their present situation to that of functioning missionary congregations.

In order to be effective missionaries in Britain, leaders of African Pentecostal churches need to contextualise their message, mission, evangelistic methods and churches into the host culture. This should entail astute theological reflection within the host communities' conceptual categories which should be evaluated in the light of global theologising. However, it is important to "link abstract, experience-distance concepts (which are often reductionist) with the concrete experience – near manifestations of theology in everyday life that have rich implications."<sup>39</sup> Leaders of African-led Pentecostal churches in Britain should replicate the incarnational model of Jesus Christ in the Gospels for the incorporation of the church into the local social systems. Contextualisation is a slippery path that requires boundary delineation to avoid under-contextualisation or over-contextualisation in the use of local signs, beliefs and practices. This implies that there is a need for Britain's Pentecostal church leaders to be theologically astute and to develop greater understanding of the host culture in order to build bridges between them.

African Pentecostal churches in Britain seem to be replicating the mistakes of eighteenth and nineteenth century western missionaries to the majority of the world with their indifference to ecclesiastical structure in a new cultural frontier. The lack of embodiment of the church in local structures invariably alienates these missionaries from the communities in which they are situated. Paul Hiebert noted that "if they [western missionaries] come from Episcopal churches, they set up Episcopal styles of organisation. If they come from American Protestant churches, they assume that democracy and elections are the best way to organise a church, even though these styles lead to law suits in many parts of the world."<sup>40</sup> Most of Britain's African-led Pentecostal churches have failed to study the host society to enable them to organise their religious communities. For instance, the authoritarian and pyramidal leadership model that has enabled some of these churches to thrive in Africa potentially militates against their missionary initiatives in Britain due to the fact that equity, transparency and accountability are values embraced by all and sundry in the British context. If African Pentecostal churches persist in perpetuating Africa on

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<sup>39</sup> Paul Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts, Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI., Baker Academic, 2009), 190.

<sup>40</sup> Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts*, 181.

British soil, their missionary potential might never be realised.

Despite globalisation and technological advancement which are reflected in the utilisation of the various communication and social media approaches by most African churches in Britain, it is rather shocking that the evangelism strategies of most of these churches seems patterned after the Roman evangelism model. The Roman model of evangelism seems very logical to most African church leaders. It is the evangelism of revival, door knocking, tract distribution at street corners, and brochures that ask where the reader will spend eternity. It is the evangelism that unchurched people usually respond to negatively. This model is about the presentation of the gospel to the unchurched; a decision is made by the unchurched and the converts are assimilated into the church. These churches over time have a messianic orientation of creating sacred spaces which provide the opportunity for the gospel to be encountered which is contrary to the missionary nature of God.

In contrast to the Roman model of evangelism, African churches in Britain should learn from the history of the Celtic movement. The Celtic movement provides a model for the contemporary church to communicate the gospel to post-Christian and pre-literate peoples and also different approaches that allowed the Celtic Monks to evangelise Europe. The Celtic movement combines a deep commitment to Trinitarian theology with a deeply experiential, sensual, and visual spirituality as well as incarnational. The Celtic movement through the leadership of Patrick advocated and developed an apostolic church, which replaced the Roman parish church and thereby succeeded in winning the Celtic peoples to faith in Christ. Patrick's mission to the Celtic people focused on being and doing church in a manner that suggests a mission ecclesiology for reaching the west again. The Celtic evangelism presents a missional model which seems more effective in the light of the prevailing post Christian culture prevalent in Britain.

Hunter articulates five themes that may facilitate effective evangelisation of postmodern peoples today. First, Celtic Christians evangelism was team oriented. Second, the Celtic movement led by Patrick "prepared people to live with depth, compassion, and power in mission."<sup>41</sup> Third, Celtic evangelisation incorporated imaginative prayer that engaged people's feelings as well as their minds. Fourth, the Celtic approach placed a high value on hospitality by welcoming foreigners, invitees, and emigrants into the communion. Fifth, the Roman model of evangelism which entails Presentation, Decision, and Fellowship- is reversed by Celtic leaders to create a Celtic model of which Fellowship with the people to be evangelised, then Presentation of the gospel and Decision to believe in the gospel and

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<sup>41</sup> George G. Hunter, III. *Church for the Unchurched* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), 28.

be part of the Christian community. Britain's African Pentecostal churches should adopt the "believing before belonging" strategy of the Celts which seems to be a more effective evangelistic methodology in view of Britain's post Christian culture.

It is imperative to assert that Britain's African-led Pentecostal churches should take academic theological education as an important part of their ministerial formation. There are, nevertheless, various denominational Bible Colleges established by some African-led Pentecostal churches which are mostly providers of non-accredited programmes. However, most of the theological courses offered by these Colleges are largely non-contextual and no longer meet the needs of black Pentecostal ministerial training. Robert Beckford posits that "the issue is more than just raising the standard of education among clergy; it is also a matter of what kind of theological education is foregrounded."<sup>42</sup> The theological education in question should ensure that the course contents are reflective of the contextual needs not only of African Pentecostal church leaders but also the wider urban needs. The culture of equating honorary degrees with earned degrees within these communities should be discouraged, as honorary degrees do not in any way translate into theological competence. Of course, the critical and analytical skills that are developed over time during accredited theological education have been a major source of concern to most conservative African Church leaders as some have observed that such graduates might speak with enticing human words but not meet the confessional expectations of their denominations.

However, since 2005 there seems to be greater awareness amongst African Pentecostal church leaders of the importance of theological education in ministerial formation. For instance, Christ the Redeemer College, London, which is the theological institution of the RCCG, UK, is a partner College with Middlesex University. The College offers degree programmes leading to Bachelor in Ministerial Theology; BA in Pastoral Theology and BA in Counselling. It is imperative to note that most African-led Pentecostal pastors in Britain do not have an academic theological formation but are graduates of other disciplines. This raises wider concerns with respect to the need for intentional commitment of these churches to change their denominational culture to include academic theological formation in their ministerial training programmes.

Similarly, African Pentecostal church leaders in Britain need to maximise their prophetic voice to bring about social and political transformation, particularly utilising theological and biblical scholarship. However, it is pertinent to note that some African Pentecostal churches have taken the prophetic role of the church seriously and have made significant

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<sup>42</sup> Beckford, *Documentary on Exorcism* (Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2013), 194.

contributions in their communities, for example, Nims Obunge of Peace Alliance and Bishop Webley of the New Testament Church of God, Birmingham, who is the chair of the West Midlands Police Authority. However, I concur with Beckford's assertion that "individual efforts [within Black Church leadership] do not compensate for the historic structural indolence of major denominations and their leadership."<sup>43</sup>

In the light of the declining of Christianity in the public space in Britain, there is an urgent need for the broadest possible cooperation between Christians if mission is to be successful. I therefore posit that there should be "evangelical catholicity"<sup>44</sup> as an essential basis for mission in the West to be successful. Catholicity within this context highlights the need for an inclusive spirit amongst various denominations in Britain. I am quite aware of the fact that there exist diverse ecumenical initiatives today in Britain, but ironically most are mere denominational signposts rather than positioning mission as God's initiative.

Moreover, the "interactions between British evangelicalism and African neo-Pentecostalism that took place from 1985 to 2005 illustrate three strong commitments: first, evangelicalism's commitment to inclusiveness; second, African neo-Pentecostalism's commitment to distinctiveness; third, evangelicalism's own commitment to distinctiveness. It is these three commitments that have led to the constant interplay between adherence to principles and adoption of practicalities throughout the twenty year period."<sup>45</sup> There is an urgent need for the "funeral of bigotry"<sup>46</sup> between historical denominations and African neo-Pentecostal churches mission initiatives in Britain. It is most definitely the 'funeral of bigotry' that is constantly required if Christian mission is to be effective, particularly in Britain which has suffered from the consequences of such narrowness characterised by a desire for building denominational empires rather than kingdom mindedness. Rather, denominations (historic and neo-Pentecostal) are called to share in God's mission and that is always more puzzling, uncertain and disturbing than any denominational initiative. Mission is no longer Kipling's 'white man's burden' but is shared by millions of witnesses, known and unknown, who are inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit.<sup>47</sup>

## Conclusion

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<sup>43</sup> Beckford, *Documentary on Exorcism*, 199.

<sup>44</sup> W. R. Ward, *Faith and Faction*, (Epworth: Epsom Press, 1993), 207.

<sup>45</sup> Hugh Osgood, "African Neo-Pentecostal Churches and British Evangelicalism 1985-2005: Balancing Principles and Practicalities." (PhD dissertation, London: University of London. 2006). 237.

<sup>46</sup> Ward, in his essay on the development of the Baptist Union, points to the connection between the emerging revival of the late eighteenth century and a new view of evangelism. Ward posits that "when, in the 1790s, the barriers to evangelism at home and abroad began to collapse, the new panoramic view of history produced spectacular fruit in the movement [known] as Catholic Christianity, and induced in the evangelical Calvinists of England a mood of euphoria at the 'funeral of bigotry.'" For further study, see Ward, *Faith and Faction*, 207.

<sup>47</sup> The poem was originally written for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, but exchanged for "Recessional"; Kipling changed the text of "Burden" to reflect the subject of American colonization of the Philippines, recently won from Spain in the Spanish-American War.

The proliferation of African Pentecostal churches and the missionary zeal of most have reconfigured the map of Christianity in Britain. These churches are indeed meeting the social, religious and cultural ideals of their membership which is mostly African. This might be antithetical to claims of re-evangelisation of Britain as most of their members are Africans. The effectiveness of missionaries from Africa to Britain is yet to translate to membership amongst the Caucasians.

In order to maximise the missionary potential of these churches their leadership urgently needs reevaluation of their missional agenda. The creation of sacred spaces and evangelistic initiatives to the unchurched to come to these sacred spaces negates the incarnational model of Christ. In order to maximise their missionary potential, these churches need to be intentional in being missional churches, and to contextualise their liturgy, rituals and practices to be reflective of the context in which they are. Similarly, more attention needs to be focused on the prophetic role of these churches in bringing about social and political transformation in their communities.