



**The mission of the African immigrant churches in the  
multicultural context of the UK**

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree [Doctor of Philosophy in Missiology](#) at the North-  
West University

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Graduation ceremony: July 2018

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores how the African immigrant churches can change their theologies and practices to become churches that can strategize to be the vanguard of spiritual, emotional, economic and social liberation in the United Kingdom by consistently addressing the crucial areas of people's lives and focusing their time, resources and actions to transforming lives. For the African immigrant churches to become relevant within the multicultural context of the UK, they need to adapt to an ecclesiastical style that would be different from those practised in most churches in Africa.

Today, the central challenge facing the future of the African immigrant churches is the possibility of harnessing the historic resources that have informed and governed their existence to date. The African immigrant churches are in imminent need of a new vision, openness and loving service in whatever communities they are located.

Clearly, the African immigrant churches preach the Gospel and are the antitheses to values that counter godly living to their own kind. However, this study believes that these churches can work with the White majority churches for a more effective sharing of the Gospel within a multicultural context of the United Kingdom.

**Key words:** African immigrant churches, White majority churches, the professing church, Multi-ethnic, Ethnic minority, reverse mission, *missio Dei*, African Christian, host Christian, second generation migrant.

## **PREFACE**

I am a British citizen but originally, I am from Ghana. I migrated to Britain in 2005 to pursue my master's degree in mission. One of my lecturers, Dr Martin Robinson, encouraged me to remain in the country in order to undertake Christian initiatives. I have since been working with the Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland as a church minister.

In 2011, there was a youth riot in many of the UK cities. In this riot, young people from all backgrounds battled with the law enforcement agencies and brought unrest in some communities. After witnessing this riot, I was struck with the realization that all Christian leaders, regardless of race, need to come together to address the existential concerns of the young people in the country.

I realized that the migrant Christian and the host Christian can both come together to play a very important role in transforming Britain's communities. This realization brought about this research.

This thesis, therefore, is original, except where references are made to literature. Neither this thesis, nor any substantially similar one has been or is being submitted for any other degrees at other universities and colleges.

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Philosophiae Doctor (Ph.D.)* in missiology at the Potchefstroom Campus of North-West University in co-operation with Greenwich School of Theology, UK.

The research described above was conducted under the supervision of Professor Brian Talbot of Greenwich School of Theology and Professor Naas Ferreira of North-West University.

The thesis contains 89827 words.

Johnson Ambrose Afrane-Twum

6<sup>th</sup> October 2017

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to thank all those who have made it possible for me to undertake this study. I am very grateful to my two promoters and the GST and NWU administration members of staff for their understanding and endless support.

I am extremely grateful to all the church ministers who allowed me unrestricted access into their churches.

Thanks also to my friend, Dr Harvey Kwiyani, for the encouragement I received from him during the early stages of my work.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my family for their love, support, and encouragement.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

*ANC* All Nations Church

*COP* Church of Pentecost of Ghana in the UK

*HBC* Harborne Baptist Church

*ECFC* Ethiopian Christian Fellowship in the UK

*PAUKE* Pentecostal Association of UK and Eire

*GCF* Ghana Christian Fellowship

*ACF* African Christian Fellowship

*PIWCs* Pentecost International Worship Centre

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study combines my interests in missiology and the study of the 'black church' in the UK. It is about the role that African immigrant churches can play in the twenty-first century context of mission in the UK. Frankly, African immigrant churches play a vital role in the everyday lives of black communities across the UK. However, this study argues that these African immigrant churches can also play a very important role in the wider UK community as well, and in so doing, help transform Britain.

There was an influx of migrants from the sub-Saharan countries to the UK in the past few decades. The independence of the sub-Saharan countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia, Malawi and others from the British colonial rule in the 1950s and beyond, led to diplomatic corps, students and refugees migrating to the UK. In a similar fashion, the latter part of the twentieth century and the twenty-first century also saw immigrants from the sub-Saharan countries coming to the UK to fill positions in the UK job sectors. Some immigrants also came as students to further their education (Kwiyani, 2014:78). Upon arrival in the UK, most of these migrants first made an attempt to join congregations affiliated with the UK mainline denominations they belonged to in Africa. But they discovered that the UK established churches were unwelcoming (Olofinjana, 2013:121).

These factors among many others led to the establishing of the African-led churches in the UK Christian landscape. One of the pioneer churches was the Church of the Lord, popularly known as *Aladura*. This was planted in South London in 1964, by the late Apostle Adejobi, a Nigerian migrant, and many others followed and arguably, today, there is a proliferation of these churches in the UK Christian landscape (Olofinjana, 2013:122).

It is clear to say that the African immigrant churches are now established in the UK Christian landscape. But the congregations of these churches are mainly "black" Africans, yet, ideally churches should not seek to be organized primarily in terms of ethnicity as this distracts from the Biblical principles of unity in diversity (Galatians 3:28). However, there is also the argument that for some categories of

people – such as recently arrived immigrants – ethnic churches are necessary to help in their integration into their new communities<sup>1</sup>.

Today, the greatest challenge facing the African immigrant churches is the need to develop a model of Christian mission that inspires and transforms life in spite of members' background and how they can partner with the mainline UK churches for a more effective delivery of the Gospel in the UK.<sup>2</sup> The study has argued that for the African immigrant churches to fulfil their God-given mandate in the UK they will have to work with the White majority churches. However, this poses a serious challenge to the African immigrant churches, as it is obvious that there are cultural differences that in a way have kept them apart. Yet, in partnering with each other, the author is of the opinion that both sides will be able to challenge the aspects of their culture and cultural influences on theology (Matthew 15:6) that are not in line with Biblical principles.<sup>3</sup>

The study, therefore, was about looking for a new way of how the African immigrant churches could work with the White majority churches to promote the Gospel in the UK.

### **1.1.1 Problem Statement**

The author was of the view that if the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), was to be fulfilled effectively in the UK, cultural and ethnic barriers would have to be crossed. Galatians 3:28 makes us to understand that being in Christ, prevents the distinctions of race from hindering fellowship, because Christ's Kingdom is meant

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<sup>1</sup> McIntosh G.L & McMahan (2012:66-67) are of the view that the migration of millions of people around the world is creating great challenges and opportunities and that the migration of people into urban centres and cities could lead to the creating of multi-ethnic churches, yet, they also accept that mono-ethnic churches will continue to be necessary for the recently arrived migrants and people with a high people-consciousness.

<sup>2</sup> After witnessing the 2011 youth riots in which young people from all backgrounds battled with the law enforcement agencies and brought about unrest in some UK communities, I was struck with the realization that all church leaders- regardless of colour-need to come together to look for new ways of encouraging their communities to embrace the gospel which, I believe, has life transforming power.

<sup>3</sup> Lingenfelter, S.G. (2008) argues that it is only as Christians are motivated and inspired by the Holy Spirit and through the Word of God can they relate to one another within the structures of human society to accomplish the purpose of God.

to bring communion and belonging to Christ's people in spite of their ethnic backgrounds. More so, in Revelation 7:9 we see the beautiful picture of the fulfilment of the Great Commission as the redeemed out of all people groups throughout all of human history stand before the Lord. That is not to say, the events in Revelation 7 do suggest that differences will be wiped out completely rather the diversity here reflects God's glory even further, in that God's people from different backgrounds are united in a common act of worship.

The African Christians must consider the wider community as another stage in their missions endeavour to the United Kingdom as they reach out with an expanded vision of God's whole heart for the uttermost part of the world in line with the Biblical pattern of Acts 1:8. In the Book of Acts, the Bible provides us with the understanding that the early Church began fulfilling the Great Commission when the disciples started reaching out in Jerusalem which was the centre of Judaism, and then continued in Judea and Galilee, where others of their own kind lived, and also in Samaria, where members of a different but familiar people lived and finally within the unreached peoples of other parts of the world. The Great Commission calls Christ's people to measure their lives by this heavenly vision with its universal scope of the task specified in the objective of reaching *all nations*. It is therefore right to say that it is the purpose of God that every human being would be reached with the Gospel (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).

Ideally, the existing relationships between the White majority churches and the African immigrant churches have been cordial in some ways. For example, some White majority denominations such as the Salvation Army, the Methodist Church and the Church of England share the use of their places of worship with some African immigrant churches. Yet, for a more effective collaboration, the author is of the view that there is the need for the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches to engage in cross-cultural ministries. Crofton Park Baptist Church in London was one of the few White majority churches that has a history of worshipping with people from all backgrounds (Olofinjana, 2013:125); so there is much to learn from their experience. The author is of the view that there is a strong case for further research into churches that are engaged in cross-cultural ministries.

In view of the aforementioned evidence, the research question that this study was asking is: How may the African immigrant churches effectively work with the White majority churches for a more effective sharing of the Gospel in the UK?

This question is of great importance, as the author is of the opinion that if the African immigrant churches partner with the White majority churches, this could result in creating multi-ethnic churches<sup>4</sup>. The multi-ethnic congregations would then serve as alternative to the cultural relativism seen today, because of its diversity, hence would lead into creating a platform which would be tremendous in sharing the Gospel, leading Christ's people, making disciples and modelling the love of Christ, with a greater impact in the British communities.

Further research questions that have arisen from this problem were:

Why is it that in spite of the fact that African immigrant churches profess and desire to be truly international and integrationist in their vision they, yet, do not have many non-Africans among their congregations?

How can the African immigrant churches, on a small scale, give hope to the wider population in the United Kingdom through offering a model of a transformed, fulfilled and purposeful approach to living, in an increasingly secular social context?

### **1.1.2 Purpose of the study**

The main aim of this study was to explore how the African immigrant churches could partner with the White majority churches for a more effective sharing of the Gospel within the multicultural context of the UK.

The objectives of this study were seen in their relationship with the research questions. The author's main objectives for writing this thesis were:

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<sup>4</sup> The late missiologist Paul Hiebert (cited in McIntosh & G.L. & McMahan A, 2012:27) defined a multi-ethnic church as "a church in which there is an attitude and practice of accepting people of all ethnic, class and national origins as equal and fully participating members and ministers in the fellowship of the church; and the manifestation of this attitude and practice by the involvement of people from different ethnic, social and national communities as members in the church."

To attempt to find ways through which the African immigrant churches could become more relevant in the UK landscape and contribute to creating a society that shows forth the Kingdom of God.

To explore ways through which the African immigrant churches could work with the non-African churches in the UK for a more effective sharing of the Gospel.

To attempt to explore ways of developing a model of Christian mission that inspires and transforms life in spite of one's ethnic background.

To attempt to look for a new way of bringing about unity in diversity among Christ's people which might lead to creating multi-ethnic congregations.

To make recommendations for the design and implementation of ideas expressed in relation to this work.

### **1.1.3. Central Theoretical Argument**

The central theoretical argument of this research is that the African immigrant churches in the UK have enabled their members to find a refuge from discrimination and discover a sense of identity, respect and belonging, but they should work harder and in more creative ways in partnership with the White majority churches in the UK to create a society that models the values of the Kingdom of God.

## **1.2. Literature Review**

A literature review was carried out in order for the author to place his investigations in the context of previous research. In recent years discussions on the 'Black Church' in the UK have become of significant interest. Scholars such as Joe Aldred, Keno Ogbo, Anthony Reddie, Chigor Chike, M and T Phillips, Mark Sturge, Israel Olofinjana, Afe Adogame, Harvey Kwiyani and more recently Babatunde Adedibu have made major contributions to this field.

Chike (2007) documents how Africans have migrated to live in the UK in recent years, which has resulted in a proliferation of churches. Chike states that Africans brought with them a type of Christianity shaped by their own African roots. He makes mention of the fundamental Christian doctrines of these migrant churches;

he explains the African Christian's views of doctrines such as 'God,' 'Jesus Christ,' and 'Salvation' and explains further the meaning of African Christianity in contrast to the predominant expression of it in the Western society. Chike's work is an attempt to explain African Christianity in the West, yet, it falls short of how these churches could team up with the indigenous UK churches to influence UK communities.

Phillips & Phillips (1991) on the other hand, writes about the first wave of immigration of Africans, mainly from the Caribbean to the UK in 1948 to the present. In their book entitled *Windrush*, they inform us of the changes in British social history in the 1950s which came as a result of the first West Indian immigrants in 1948 and the resulted social stratification the United Kingdom would have to carry forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Phillips & Phillips's work provides a distinctive historical insight into what appears to be the first phase of black migrants coming to settle in the UK with their version of the Gospel, but the focus of this work is mainly Caribbean hence has a limited scope since it does not address the issues of African originated churches in the UK.

Olofinjana (2010) claims in his *Reverse in Ministry* that there has been a shift in global Christianity from North to South and he attributes this to God's providence; he feels that it is God's providential time for Africans who first received the Gospel message from the West to now bring it back to them. It is clear to say that Olofinjana's contributions to the writings of the 'Black Church,' though distinctive, yet, is limited to the historical aspect of European missions in Africa in the past and the recent emergence of African originated churches in UK and Europe and the contributions of these migrant churches to British Christianity and society in general.

He went further to document in the new book he edited, Olofinjana (2013) the experiences of contemporary missionaries from the southern part of the globe migrating to the UK for mission endeavours and occupying the UK Christian landscape. In this work, he explores the growing connections and shared values that exist between migrant Christians in the UK and the indigenous British Christians. Olofinjana's work helps us to understand contemporary Christian mission and transcultural endeavours, to some extent.

Reddie (2008) adopted a new way in his work. Reddie (2008) outlines what appears to be a fresh vision for a new model of Christianity with insights from Black Theology. Reddie claims that a re-imagined Black theology will enable Christianity in general, as well as Black Christian faith in particular to influence the world. Reddie's work seeks to offer black people an empowerment through which white people and others may be inspired and act differently. However, it falls short of how blacks, whites and others could work together to advance the Gospel in the UK.

Sturge (2005) has provided a significant contribution to the writings on the 'Black Churches' by attempting to explore the Black Christian faith in the UK. However, in Sturge's work, it appears that not much attention was given to the contributions of the 'Black Churches' to Christianity in the UK.

There has been a distinctive work done by Aldred and Ogbo (2001). Aldred and Ogbo's work, to some extent covers the key issues facing the 'Black Churches' in the UK today and their uncertain future. They also tell us of the current challenges of the 'Black Churches' and the need for style and substance. Their work, even though distinctive, still lacks scope and analysis as it is mainly historical and with a Jamaican perspective.

Adedibu (2011) in his recent work, has made a substantial contribution in an attempt to reshape the 'Black Church' with mainly a historical approach. Clearly, Adedibu's thesis and recently his book Adedibu (2012) are a historiography of Black Christianity in the UK. In both works, Adedibu documents the richness and diversity of the mission endeavours of the 'Black Churches' and explains their impact on British Christianity. He feels that the time is ripe for the 'Black Churches' to assess themselves in line with their mission endeavours into the UK.

Adedibu's work provides a general overview of the tremendous influence the 'Black Churches' have in the UK and Western societies, but it has a limited scope as the emphasis is on the history and significance of Africa and African Caribbean Pentecostalism in the UK.

More recently, Kwiyani (2014), in his *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West* has argued that the growing presence of African Christians in Europe and North America reflects the missionary work of Africans in the Early Church and in



the first five centuries of the church. According to Kwiyani (2014), it would be fair to say that African immigrant Christians in the West signify the rise of the 'African missionary movement'. But he also thinks that this missionary movement, which is in its early days, faces many challenges, the most powerful of which is racism. He suggests that God's preferred future for mission is a multicultural missionary movement, especially in the current context of cultural diversity in the West. Clearly, Kwiyani's work is very distinctive, but lacks an explanation of how the African immigrant churches can partner with the non-African churches in the UK for a more effective delivery of the Gospel.

Having reviewed the work of the abovementioned authors, it is clear, at least to the author, that there was still a gap in this area of study. To date, very little research work has focused specifically on how the African immigrant churches could partner with the non-African churches to bring about the change needed in Britain's communities. This research thus sought to explore how the African immigrant churches could work with the White majority churches, to bring about unity in diversity among Christ's people, which might result in creating multi-ethnic congregations, which was the focus of this study.

### **1.3 Methodology**

This study was done from an Evangelical Christian point of view. In writing this thesis, some of the author's initial emphasis was both historical and theological investigations into the historical developments of the African immigrant churches and their theological relevance in the UK. However, as time developed the author's emphasis was shifted more clearly to a participant observation in qualitative methodology, in which the author chose to investigate four denominations (two denominations with African roots in the UK and two White UK denominations that integrate blacks). The author believed the advantages of an in-depth study of four denominations rather than much wider sampling of denominations or churches was a fairer choice. The author's main concerns were to make sure that the right participants were chosen. This was the key issue at the initial stages of the fieldwork he carried out in the four case study churches. The author's choice of the right participants helped to speed up the process of acceptance and gaining trust.

It also enabled him to reach the various church leaders and gain valuable insight into the structure and activities of these churches.

The foundation of the methodology of this study was therefore, based on the main research question: “How may the African immigrant churches effectively work with the White majority churches for a more effective sharing of the gospel?” This research question inspired the choice of the general methodological framework for the study. Thus, the dialectics<sup>5</sup> that provide the framework of this thesis are as follows:

Having observed situations in the African immigrant churches in the UK, that raised questions in relation to the relevance of these churches in the UK landscape, the author initially carried out a literature review into this area (see Section 1.2 above), and articulated the views of authors on the ‘Black Church.’

Thus, the author started the primary research process with a literature review to learn more about what was already known and what gaps needed to be filled on this subject matter. Research work requires some evidence of reading and a literature review provides the researcher with an awareness of the current state of knowledge on the subject matter, according to Driscoll (2011:158). A literature review therefore, was carried out in order for the author to place his investigation in the context of previous research and justify how he approached his investigation. The author also used secondary data later in this work to provide evidence to help explain the findings of his study.

The author’s reason for using historical investigation and theological analysis in his initial investigations was to engage with the fundamental questions of the historical developments of the African immigrant churches in the UK and also to attempt to construct a theological praxis model for the African immigrant churches. In the UK, there was the perception that the ‘Black Churches’ have a different theology termed as ‘Black theology’<sup>6</sup>. Hence, it has become obvious that the African immigrant

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<sup>5</sup> The “dialectic” used here means the art or practice of logic discussion as employed in investigating the truth of a theory or opinion. ([dictionary.reference.com/browse/dialectic](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/dialectic)/accessed 29.11.14).

<sup>6</sup> Dr Robert Beckford is one example of the scholars who ascribe theological meaning to ‘Black Churches’ in the UK. In his book, *Dread and Pentecostal: A Political Theology for Black Church in Britain*, Dr Beckford asserts the need for Black British theology of liberation for the ‘Black Churches’ as opposed to what he

churches would need to re-define themselves in relation to the UK White churches and would need also to clarify their theology. The author therefore explores the key elements of the theology of the African immigrant churches in a broader framework of a Biblical theological basis<sup>7</sup>. According to Schreiter (1985:32) theological praxis could be made up of the different theological contexts growing up in response to the needs in certain local contexts and that theology in a local context could be formed from a number of factors, such as other theologies already in place, and events within the community that presented themselves and called for a response. Ukpong (1999:109) asserted the need for Christ's people of all cultural backgrounds to realize that all forms of Christian expression have connections with the cultural context from which they originated. Similarly, Bevans (2014:7) shared the view that there was no such thing as a comprehensive or all-embracing theology for the Universal Church today, and that theology was the way religion made sense in a particular cultural context.

The author argued that in order for the African immigrant churches to become relevant in the UK landscape, they would have to change their theology in line with Scripture, to suit the UK environment in which they operate and also adapt to an ecclesiastical style that would be different from those practised in most churches in Africa. Therefore, in his theological construction on what could generally be accepted as a Biblical theological basis for the African immigrant churches, the author uses the tools of Biblical criticism and hermeneutics to consider texts particularly favoured by Bible scholars such as Stephen Bevans, Robert Schreiter, David Bosch and David Hesselgrave. This, the author believed would result in at least, a tentative conclusion concerning theology while constructing a model for a theological praxis for the African immigrant churches in the UK.

The author continued his investigations by using participant observation in qualitative research as his main methodology for his fieldwork. The author carried out investigations into four denominations in the UK: two with African roots, such

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terms as their Black Christian theology which in his words comprises of 'church life, worship and witness.' He also feels that the 'Black Churches' are different in their theology from the UK mainline churches by their particular forms of worship and liturgy.

<sup>7</sup> Biblical theology is an attempt to articulate the theology that the Bible contains as its writers addressed their particular settings ([www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/biblical-theology](http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/biblical-theology) accessed 25.05.18)

as The Ethiopian Church and the Church of Pentecost of Ghana and two White UK denominations that integrate blacks. Examples of these are Harborne Baptist Church, Birmingham, a congregation in fellowship with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and All Nations Church, Wolverhampton, a congregation in fellowship with the World Assemblies of God Fellowship.

The data of participant observation in qualitative research is most often people's words and actions and so the author collected data through face-to-face, in-depth interviews and participant observation of group and leadership meetings, leadership interviews including probing, chatting and interviewing church members during church activities in the churches mentioned above. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994:45-46), this method of gathering data is the most useful way of data collection in participant observation in qualitative research<sup>8</sup>. The author carried out his investigations of the participating churches from their own perspective and within the context of their living experience (the churches investigated were located in London or the West Midlands region of the United Kingdom). The author had the opportunity to talk to the participants, ask questions, while learning from them by observing and participating in their church activities. The author also collected observation data in the form of field notes and audiotaped interviews, which were later used in analysing data.

The author adopted different approaches in gathering data but relied heavily on the use of in-depth interviewing for collecting data.<sup>9</sup> The author believed that this approach of using in-depth interviewing, was the best way of encouraging interviewees to come out whole-heartedly with their views and then also this approach could be used to explore interesting areas for further research hence it was fairer than using a questionnaire and a more structured interview.

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<sup>8</sup> According to DeWalt B. & K (2002:17) this method of gathering data is very useful. But they advised that it is important that the observer develops an attitude of tolerance to poor conditions and unpleasant circumstances and resist impulsiveness, particularly interrupting others.

<sup>9</sup> J. Manson, in his book, *Qualitative Researching*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (London: Sage, 2002) ps63 &64, argues that the use of interviewing people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations and experiences are meaningful properties of the ontological reality that research questions are designed to explore, and that it is an epistemologically valid method of generating data.

In interviewing the four denominational leaders (this took place in their various church environments), a checklist was prepared to make sure that all relevant areas were covered in the interviews. Questions on the checklist were covered on how the beliefs, values and practices of the case study churches fell into the outlined aims and objectives of this study. This type of interview was useful in the sense that the author could still probe further during the interview by exploring questions deemed useful to the study as these could be done within the boundaries of the aims and objectives of the study.

The author also used in-depth interviewing or unstructured interviewing to collect data during activities in the case study churches by engaging participants in chats, and asking questions which came from the immediate context; this the author believed was useful for exploring other topics for investigations. By conducting in-depth interviewing in an open situation (as described above), there was the likelihood that new research directions could emerge through the use of techniques such as probing.

Because the author relied heavily on interviews in gathering data, he first familiarized himself with the interview techniques informed by literature before collecting data. According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1989:79), the use of “asking questions” through encounters is very important in participant observation in qualitative research. They also stressed the importance of researchers understanding questioning techniques before conducting interviews. The author was aware that not all the participants he chose had the same opinion about the topics for investigation. Therefore, in order to help determine the differences, the author sought out participants with different points of view. The author was of the view that seeking out participants with different points of view, would enable him to fully flesh out the understanding of the case study church environment. De Munck and Sobo (1998:165) share this view.

The author used the following questioning techniques that are supported by literature:

Kvale (1996:130) suggests that clear questions should be asked and questions should be easy to understand and that it is also important to use words that make sense to the respondents.

Patton (1987:27) wants one thing or question be asked at a time in order to ease the unnecessary burden on the respondents. He (Patton, 1987:122) suggests that asking a truly open-ended question allows room for the interviewees to respond in their own terms. Patton (1987:115) again went on to say that asking behaviour questions before asking questions on opinion, will help the respondents to establish a context to express their opinion.

According to Patton (1987:125), the use of probe and follow-up is necessary in gathering data, since it will deepen the response and increase the richness of the data being collected.

Kvale (1996:149) suggests that, in order to avoid misinterpretations, interviewers should clarify and extend the meanings of the respondent's statements and in order to establish rapport, Kvale (1996:128) would want respondents' opinions to be respected and their responses recognized.

Data collected were analysed and findings interpreted (Action, Data Collection and Data interpretation). The study incorporated findings from the field of missiology and the information gained was integrated into a critical thesis, utilizing methods of comparison, analysis, critique and evaluation.

The purpose of using qualitative research with a participant observation approach was for the author to acquire understanding of the subject matter from a subjective perspective. This enabled the author to acquaint himself with the beliefs, practices and values of the churches investigated in this study (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984:2). Adopting a participatory observation research approach therefore highlighted the observer's experience as an insider. Spradley (1980:53) shares this view. This methodology, which uses the techniques of observing, interviewing, experiencing and examining, including archival research, has the advantage of enabling the author to acquaint himself with the experience from within.

This methodology allowed the researcher to gain insight into the activities of these churches. The author's experience as a church minister enabled him to be received with a degree of trust and openness by respondents in the case study churches (Jorgensen, 1989:70). According to Swinton and Mowat (2006:60) all field research, to some extent, is carried out in the context of the researcher's own experience and beliefs (personal reflexivity). Therefore, the study partly drew upon the researcher's experiences and the writings of other authors of the 'black church' in the UK, who are the advocates of the writings popularly known as *Reverse Mission*. The author was also aware of how epistemological reflexivity sets out the way the author's beliefs, values and interests could influence the way the research questions were framed and investigated and so the researcher made sure that this research was a disciplined attempt to address the research question through an epistemologically valid method of generating data. Notwithstanding this point, the research question showed a willingness to take into account the author's existing commitments in this area of study and critically reflected on the practical matters that involved the African immigrant churches in the British population, hence the author's choice of a practical methodological approach.

#### **1.4 Ethical considerations**

There are insurmountable cases of unethical research and so this makes the field of ethics a complex one. It is therefore advisable that researchers observe a high standard of conduct to ensure moral practices in research ethics (Banks, 2006:39). The strong element of field research in this thesis required a consideration of research ethics, as such the researcher made sure that all the ethical dimensions of the research work were properly maintained and covered. Adequate information about the study was given to the participants of the research project. Even though, it is participant observation, for ethical reasons the author chose to make it overt. In relation to the author's role as a participant observation, he suggested that his presence as a researcher be announced to the various congregations of the churches under investigation in his first visits to these churches to avoid any unnecessary appearance of subterfuge. The confidentiality of any representation of data, whether through questionnaires, interviews and otherwise were all protected (McMillan & Weyers, 2007:85).

## 1.5 Classification of headings/chapters

The thesis was structured as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter raised the main issues of why the author chose this topic. It also gave an outline and overview of the whole topic.

This chapter also reviewed the work of previous scholars and key thinkers that supported and provided a context of this study and provided evidence to help explain the findings of the author's investigation.

Here research methods were described and details provided in order that other researchers and scholars could evaluate this research. The methods for the primary and secondary research were reviewed in this chapter and methods used for analysis were explained.

Chapter 2: This chapter presented the historical investigations into the historical developments of the African immigrant churches in the United Kingdom.

Chapter 3: This chapter undertook the theological analysis of the African immigrant churches in the United Kingdom.

Chapters 4-7: Findings and Implications:

Chapter 4 provided an overview report of the main findings from interviews, documentary and observer based analysis. Here, all the main themes that were uncovered in the process of the research were discussed.

Chapters 5-7 also presented a systematic analysis of the results of the findings and discussed how the results were related to the research questions stated in the problem statements. Findings were integrated into a critical thesis, utilizing methods of comparison, analysis, critique and evaluation:

Chapter 5: Implications for *missio Dei*.

Chapter 6: Crossing the Racial Boundary to Reach Non-Africans.



Chapter 7: A model of Christian Mission.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations.

Having taken results from interviews, documentary and participant observations the author drew conclusions to the study and identified issues for further study.

## 1.6 Concept Clarification

This section defines some key terms and expressions commonly used within the evangelical circles. The term '**African immigrant church**' used here means 'black-led churches' in the UK with roots from sub-Saharan Africa. The term '**Black Churches**' is also used to mean black majority churches in the diaspora. I have also used the term '**Multicultural**' primarily to mean all cultural and ethnic groups in Britain. '**Multi-ethnic**' is a term used in this work to constitute several ethnic groups in the UK including the indigenous British people. I have also used '**Ethnic minority**' to mean people who differ ethnically from the main indigenous British people and I have used the expressions '**White majority churches**' to indicate churches with mainly White congregations and '**Non-Africans**' to mean people who are not of the black race.

'**Missiology**' is used here to mean an analysis and synthesis of the theological, sociological, anthropological, historical, and practical processes that God uses to bring all peoples to himself (McIntosh & McMahan, 2012).

The term '**reverse mission**,' which is commonly used by authors of the 'Black church,' is used in this work to mean the conscious missionary strategy by mother churches in Africa of evangelizing the diaspora (Adogame, 2007).

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN IMMIGRANT CHURCHES IN THE UK

#### 2.1 Introduction

In the past few decades, there has been a big increase in the cross-border migration of people from all over the globe as a result of globalization and other factors such as wars including political and religious persecution, and this trend of movement has affected many Western countries; notable among them is the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom has experienced inward movements of people from many parts of the world, but a greater number of the immigrants coming in have been mainly from their former colonies, for example, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and India.

The Second World War ended with a shortage of employment opportunities throughout mainline Europe, but on the contrary, there were labour shortages in Britain as there were more job openings without the requisite labour force. The British government's policy to fill the job vacancies during this period brought in more than 150 000 Polish workers (Office for National Statistics, 2013:13). However, there were still job vacancies in the transport sector of the economy, so in order to fill these vacancies, the government recruited labour from the Caribbean Islands from 1948 onwards. Upon arrival in the UK, these Afro-Caribbean immigrants drove public buses. The years when the Caribbean immigrants came to live and work in Britain were termed the *Windrush generation*. This is so called because the ship that the Caribbean boarded to the UK in 1948 was named 'Empire Windrush.' It is believed that over 120 000 Caribbean immigrants came to Britain within the ten years beginning from the first arrival of the Empire Windrush (Fryer, 1984:372). Accordingly, this period marked the beginning of mass immigration to the UK and it also brought with it a significant change to Britain's socio-economic, cultural, religious and political landscape<sup>10</sup>. For instance, the Caribbean immigrants came to the UK with their own version of the Gospel and established churches with

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<sup>10</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in\\_depth/uk/2002/race/short\\_history\\_of\\_immigration](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/uk/2002/race/short_history_of_immigration) (accessed 15.02.15).

an ecclesiology that suited their own worship style; an expression of worship which was unique to their cultural heritage (Adedibu, 2011:105-106). The first of these churches was the Calvary Church of God in Christ, which started in London in 1948. Others, such as The New Testament Church of God and the Church of God in Prophecy started in London in 1953. According to Adedibu (2011:1), it is estimated that by 1962, there were almost 80 congregations representing the Afro-Caribbean Pentecostal churches in the United Kingdom and today, arguably there is a proliferation of these churches in the country. This increase in the congregations representing the Afro-Caribbean churches is primarily due to the mass migration of the Caribbean nationals into the UK and partly due to their evangelistic efforts in Caribbean immigrant communities.

Similarly, Aldred (2005:83-88) highlights that even though the Caribbean migrants came to the UK as economic migrants some discovered their missionary calling not only to their own people but also to the wider British populace. An example of a Caribbean migrant who came to the UK to work as a missionary was the late Philip Mohabir, who migrated to Britain in 1956 to plant churches. He also founded the African and Caribbean evangelical Alliance (Olofinjana, 2013:193-197)<sup>11</sup>. It is also true to say that some Caribbean migrants were accepted into the UK mainline and evangelical churches. For example, the congregations associated with the Baptist Union of Great Britain were seen as an acceptable context of a place of worship for some Caribbean migrants who were members of the Caribbean Baptist congregations in their native countries before they migrated to Britain as such when they arrived in the UK, they joined their UK local Baptist congregations (Hiro, 1992:32). Patel and Grant (1990:12), on the other hand, argue that the reason why some of the Afro-Caribbean migrants stayed with the mainline and other UK churches was not that they were fully involved in the church activities of any kind but for the fact that they were at best tolerated.

Frankly, the Baptist 'church' was not the only UK denomination that in a way welcomed the Caribbean migrants, as some migrants also joined other mainline and evangelical churches. However, they soon discovered that British Christianity

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<sup>11</sup> The African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance aims to facilitate relationships between African and Caribbean congregations as well as UK White majority churches.

as demonstrated in the mainline and other UK churches was not what they had expected (Hiro, 1992:33). Some of the mainline denominations and the evangelical churches the migrants came into contact with were churches whose practices and ecclesiology were different from those practised in most churches in the West Indies. They saw the UK mainline and the evangelical churches as the churches with poor attendance and their Christian living not much different from the ways of the secular society around them (Edwards, 1999:50).

Therefore, some of these migrants left the mainline and the evangelical churches and started or joined new ones that they thought would be more vibrant and serve their spiritual and emotional needs (Wilkinson, 1993:79). They created a worship environment where they could demonstrate and express their faith with much enthusiasm (Pearson, 1978:342). Most importantly, this triggered the emergence of what was known later as the 'black majority churches' in the UK, which came about as a result of the coming of the Caribbean people to the UK from 1948 onwards.

Similarly, the UK has also welcomed migrants from its former colonies in Africa. After their independence in the 1950s and beyond, many migrated to the UK as diplomatic corps, refugees, to fill UK job vacancies and to further their education (Kwiyani, 2014:48). However, recently the immigration patterns in the UK have changed from people of former British colonies or the Commonwealth being the majority of incomers to the European Union members being in the largest group of migrants. This is due to the unrestricted movement of citizens between the European Union member countries. However, a new point-based system introduced by the British government in 2008 still allows skilled migrants to enter from outside the European Union (Somerville *et al.*, 2009:5). Such a large number of new immigrants still presents challenges and opportunities for churches in the UK and the UK social sector. Subsequently, the migration of people from Africa in the past few decades, especially from sub-Saharan Africa have witnessed the coming into existence of the African immigrant churches in the UK. Today, the African immigrant churches, though a more recent phenomenon, occupy a prominent place in the UK Christian landscape, hence have come increasingly to the attention of the wider UK public.

According to Kwiyani (2014:106), the African immigrant churches have always been studied by scholars in the shadows of the Caribbean immigrant churches, hence have not received the appropriate level of attention from scholars and researchers. In this connection, Olupona and Gemignani (2007:14) suggested the need for the re-conceptualization of the study of 'Black Churches.' The study of the re-conceptualization, he asserts should be a step further in drawing the desired attention to the type of Christianity African immigrants are involved in, in Britain and the West (Western Europe and North America).

## **2.2 History of immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa in the UK**

According to Killingray and Edwards (2007:20), there has been a black presence in Britain since the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, by Europeans as far back as the advent of slave trade. Despite the black presence in Britain in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, the era of clear Black Christian witness and church presence comes of age during the period of the Second World War.

More specifically, the United Kingdom's early post war immigration had been chiefly driven by immigrants coming from their former colonies or the Commonwealth while in later years it had reflected worldwide trends whereby new immigrants have been increasingly a cross section of those on the move in Europe and beyond (Office for National Statistics, 2013:13). Perhaps even more significant is the fact that until the 1950s the direction of migration involved movement of people from the Western world to areas in the non-Western world where the colonial masters expanded their colonial agenda which has recently changed to the mass influx of immigrants from the former British colonies or the Commonwealth to Britain (Hanciles, 2008:172).

Similarly, Owen (2008) highlights how migration of Black Africans to the UK started rather later than that of the Afro-Caribbean people. According to him, until the 1980s, total migration into the UK was around 5000 a year but the total reached twenty thousand in a number of years in the 1990s. The number of migrants increased rapidly at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and remained around thirty thousand per year during this decade. Migration from West and Central Africa also

increased rapidly. Migration from East Africa increased rapidly in the early 1990s, afterwards falling, but increasing again after 2000.

Likewise, there was a massive increase of migration from South Africa, which was the highest among African immigrants in the year 2000. Before the 1990s, many South Africans had left as a result of apartheid. After majority rule was established in 1994, the numbers of South African-born persons in the UK continued to rise: up 108 per cent from 64 000 in 1991 to 132 000 in 2001. Of the 191 000 South African born people recorded in the 2011 Census, 94 000 stated that they arrived in the UK before 2001; the 71 per cent of the South African born residents recorded in 2001 Census was 132 000 (Office for National Statistics, 2013:1-2)<sup>12</sup>.

According to Owen (2008), between 1960 and 2007, migration for asylum reasons was a major factor underlying Africa migration to the UK. David Owen gives the following records of asylum seekers into the UK within this period: the total number of asylum applications from Africa steadily increased throughout the 1990s, peaked in 2002, afterwards declining. It peaked at 30 500 in 2002 and by 2007, there were still 8 800 applications waiting to be considered by the Home Office. Overall, between the period 1998 and 2007, there was a total of 171 500 asylum applications from African principal applicants (this does not include dependants of applicants).<sup>13</sup> The reason for this mass influx of asylum seekers from sub-Saharan Africa in the UK was that from 1990 onwards, many countries in sub-Saharan Africa have experienced political unrest including military coups, wars and civil conflicts. Incidentally, the greater number of these asylum seekers have come from former British colonies or the Commonwealth. Owen (2008) discovered that between 2002 and 2008, migrants from sub-Saharan Africa into the UK migrated for work related reasons and the number of this category of migrants known in the UK as 'economic migrants' far exceeded those who migrated to seek asylum.<sup>14</sup> Dr Owen gives a

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<sup>12</sup> The census of the South Africans who migrated into the UK and those born in the UK covers all South Africans in the Britain (Blacks, Whites and others).

<sup>13</sup> Figure 3 in the Annexure A is a graph illustrating the number of asylum applicants in the UK from sub-Saharan Africa between 1998 and 2007.

<sup>14</sup> This account focuses on African migrants born abroad; it does not take into account African migrants born abroad who over the years, staying in the UK have become British citizens. The account also does not reflect on the second or next generation of children born to African migrants in the UK. But Owen (2008) estimates the Black African born population of Britain to be 500 000 in 2008.

short analysis of migration from Tanzania and notes that 31 per cent of the 35 000 Tanzania born residents in the UK arrived in the UK between 1971 and 1980. He further states that the reason for this trend of migration may be partly due to the disruption caused in East Africa by the Uganda crisis, and by disruptions to food supplies as a result of droughts and famines in this period. The number of Zimbabwe-born residents in the UK also increased by 109 per cent (from 7 000 to 15 000) over the same period as the Tanzanians, due to instability caused during the struggles of Zimbabweans for their independence in the 1970s.

Tragically, there was political repression and ethnic discrimination after Zimbabwe's independence and this resulted in the second wave of Zimbabwean-born migrants arriving after independence in 1991. This resulted in the increase of asylum applications of Zimbabweans from 1 700 between 1992 and 2000, to 30 300 between 2001 and 2011 (Office for National Statistics, 2013:15-16).

The civil war in Rwanda and its ensuing genocide in the 1990s also triggered the migration of Rwandan-born migrants into the UK. Out of the 4,000 Rwandan-born residents in 2011, 36 per cent arrived between 1997 and 2000 and thirty-two per cent between 2001 and 2003. Similarly, Angola experienced civil war between 1975 and 2002, hence the records of Angola immigrants into the UK reflect this period. Some 46 per cent of the 14 000 Angolan-born residents in 2011 arrived in the period between 1997 and 2003. Rwanda and Angola had no colonial ties with Britain and so their reasons for their citizens migrating to the UK was mainly based on human rights issues as they ran from wars and civil unrests in their various countries to seek asylum in the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2013:17).

Conversely, in West Africa, a period of political instability and subsequent economic hardship may explain the number of arrivals of Ghana-born residents in 1981-1990. Despite this, it should not be ruled out that some Ghanaians came to further their education and others came as economic migrants in the same period. Nigeria-born immigrants, on the other hand, had risen from 87 000 in 2001 to 191 000 in 2011. The majority of this increase came between 2004 and 2009. The

reasons for Nigerians migrating into the UK are often related to educational, economic and social factors (Office for National Statistics, 2013:21).<sup>15</sup>

More specifically, Owen (2008) discovered that by 2008 Nigeria, Ghana, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Kenya were the countries from which 20,000 (Black African) migrants from sub-Saharan Africa lived in Britain.<sup>16</sup> Frankly, the reasons are complex, but may include the restoration of democracy in 1999, civil conflict, the economic opportunities and educational prospects. There is also a religious reason as some Nigerian and Ghanaian migrant Christian leaders came to the UK to establish churches that can serve the Nigerian and Ghanaian migrant population. The influx of migrants from a diverse background therefore, poses a big challenge for Britain, which it appears has become a country of immigration.

### **2.3. The Emergence of the African immigrant churches in the UK landscape**

British society uses the term “black majority churches” with reference to churches formed by people of black African heritage whether coming directly from Africa, the Caribbean, or born in the UK; it can also be used in its general sense to mean all dark-skinned people from any part of the globe (Aldred, 2007:1-2)<sup>17</sup>. While scholars such as Dr Joe Aldred, Mark Sturge, M Phillips and T Phillips and many others have written about the ‘black majority churches’ from a Caribbean perspective, not much has been written about the African immigrant churches whose congregations are mainly ‘black’ Africans from sub-Saharan Africa. This research is therefore about the ‘black’ Africans from sub-Saharan Africa who have migrated to settle in the UK and the children born to these migrants in the UK.

The establishment of the African immigrant churches in Britain was not a recent phenomenon. It began as a result of Africans migrating to Britain at the beginning of the last century. There have been some efforts by Africans to plant churches in the UK as far back as 1906 but the mass migration of Africans to the UK in the late

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<sup>15</sup> There is an enormous amount of variation in the numbers of African migrant population in the four countries that form the United Kingdom. However, the greater number of African migrants in the UK are concentrated in England. The figures therefore will not be an indicative of the total number of African migrants in the UK. The statistic here excludes Scotland and Northern Ireland but it is attempt to get an idea of the number of African migrants coming over to occupy the British landscape.

<sup>16</sup> Figure 1 in the Annexure A gives a graphical illustration of the year of entry and the number of sub-Saharan Africa immigrants to Britain between 1960 and 2007.

<sup>17</sup> The speech delivered by Dr Joe Aldred in the EEA3 Conference Forum on Migration held in Sibiu, Romania from 4-9 September 2007.



1950s until recently paved the way for the establishing of the African immigrant churches in Britain. The earliest known endeavour was led by a Ghanaian immigrant to Britain, Thomas Kwame Brem-Wilson, who started the Summer Road Chapel (now called Sureway International Ministries), a mainly 'black African' Pentecostal congregation in South London in 1906 (Olofinjana, 2013:119).

Adedibu (2011:9) attributes the establishment of the Summer Road Chapel to the history of the Azusa Street revival of 1906. In 1931, the African Churches mission was formed. It was a church and mission agency in Liverpool, England, planted by a Nigerian called Daniels Ekarte. Ekarte who was a seaman migrated from his country of birth, Nigeria, to Britain and lived in Liverpool in 1915. He converted to Christianity in 1922, got married to an English woman and settled in that city and then established a church there (Olofinjana, 2010:34).

There were several other factors that led African immigrants to establish their own churches in the UK. Many of these factors were similar to the ones that led Caribbean immigrants to establish their own churches. Thus, just like the Caribbean immigrants had done, most African immigrants made an attempt to join congregations affiliated with the mainline denominations they belonged to in Africa, but soon discovered that they were not very welcoming (Olofinjana, 2013:121). In other cases, when the Africans realized that the churches they belonged to in Africa were not operating in Britain, they founded new congregations that affiliated to the parent denomination back in Africa. Another reason was the racial exclusion and abuse the Africans experienced in the mainline UK churches, although it must be mentioned that this was not a usual experience of African immigrants as some were welcomed into the mainline churches (Olofinjana, 2013:121).

Similarly, Biney (2011:27) attributes African migrants establishing their version of churches to the usual problems immigrants face in their new communities. The African Christian community has become a place of refuge for Africans, especially the newly arrived immigrants. Biney (2011:27) observes that the African community in the West, including the African immigrant churches, have always enabled Africans to find refuge from discrimination and social injustice. He had this to say:

Faced with harassment by the government and discrimination by society, the immigrants' community becomes their important source of help and existence. This is where immigrant congregation comes from.

Kwiyani (2014:110-111) shares Biney's views and suggests that the African immigrant churches in the West operate within African communities and exist in four strands. Dr Kwiyani states these four strands as follows: the first is the churches with Pentecostal/Charismatic traditions followed by those who join the main line churches, some also join the Roman Catholic Churches and lastly the African Independent Churches.<sup>18</sup> Naturally, Africans will always congregate because the social, spiritual and other factors motivating them to come together have significant cultural connotations that are shared by most of them as these churches operate in a non-threatening and conducive environment that meets their needs.

In 1964 the late Apostle Adejobi, a Nigerian migrant, planted a church which he named 'Church of the Lord,' popularly known as *Aladura*, in South London. According to Olofinjana (2013:121), the late Apostle Adejobi's church-planting effort paved the way for many African-led church plants and the following are some of the initiatives which followed: In 1974, Apostle Omideyi, a Nigerian started the Christ Apostolic Church in London. About the same time, a Ghanaian called Joseph William Egyanka Appiah established an apostolic church called the *Musama Disco*

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<sup>18</sup> Dr Harvey Kwiyani in his book, *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West*, affirms the existence of African Christianity in the West in four streams. He has this to say: "the largest group consists of Pentecostal and charismatic Christians. The Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians formed most of the African immigrant congregations in the UK. The second consists of mainline African Christians who have joined mainline Western denominations or formed ethnic-specific congregations within mainline denominations. Most of the Africans in this group usually have strong ties with the African led Pentecostal/charismatic churches and visit them for spirituality in what they called "revival meetings". Many will actually belong to two congregations at one time, one mainline and another African immigrant or ethnic-specific community. The third belongs to the Roman Catholic tradition. These Christians will generally join the nearest Roman Catholic Church. However, even among them, the Roman Catholic influences from Africa often lead them to visit African charismatic churches. The fourth stream is that of African Independent Churches. These are usually exclusive in their approach and outlook. They rarely make missional connections with others around them (Kwiyani, 2014:110-111)."

*Christo Church* (translated Army of the Cross of Christ Church) in London. From the late 1990s until today, the church-planting efforts of Africans who have been establishing churches in the UK have been tremendous because they have witnessed rapid numerical growth and are involved in such Christian services as feeding the poor and helping the needy in their communities. Churches such as the New Covenant Church, the Deeper Christian Life Ministries, the Church of Pentecost of Ghana, the Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Kingsway International Christian Centre have all emerged and occupied a prominent place in the British Christian landscape. There has been a proliferation of these churches throughout the United Kingdom in the last 25 years.

Similarly, McIntosh and McMahan (2012:66-67) support the view that mono-ethnic churches such as the African immigrant churches, will continue to be necessary to serve the needs of recently arrived migrants and people with a 'high people-consciousness.' For some African immigrants, coming together to worship with fellow Africans affords them a sense of community in the church environment where services and events are conducted in line with their cultural beliefs and practices.

Furthermore, Adedibu (2011:59-60) argues that the Black Majority Churches are among the fastest growing churches in the UK, hence it is a new phenomenon that has ushered in a distinctive era in British history.<sup>19</sup> He further states that the growth of the Black Majority Churches, which includes the African immigrant churches in Britain have been phenomenal in the past few decades and that they deserve greater recognition from the mainline churches and UK society in general.

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<sup>19</sup> Dr Adedibu's work generalized all Black led churches in the UK and not just the African immigrant churches. He had this to say: "Black Majority Churches are the fastest growing and among the largest churches in the UK, and substantial numbers of these churches are Pentecostals. It is estimated that there are over 4,000 congregations and a membership of one million, the majority of them in urban cities (Black Majority churches, 2008; Tearfund, 2007) as result of growth of these churches in the 1980s."

Dr Adedibu, writing for Black majority churches and not just the African immigrant churches in the UK had this also to say: "The growth of these churches over time has gradually given most of the churches a global identity, as these denominations or churches are continually exporting their brand of denominationalism into the Western world through their missiological agenda to re-Christianize secularised Europe as they engage in reverse mission.

### 2.3.1. African migrants & the micro-melting pots in the UK cities

It is important to highlight that the United Kingdom of today is regarded as a multicultural country as a result of over 500 years of integration of people from various ethnic backgrounds and this diversity has made the UK a unique place (Adedibu, 2011:79). However, Asamoah-Gyadu and Ludwig (2011:3) argue that migration is becoming an increasingly complex issue with socio-economic, cultural, political and religious dimensions. Clearly, the trend of migration over the past few decades has led to the establishing of new churches, and also new forms of religious worship led by African immigrants in this country.

For most parts, what we are seeing today in Britain is the development of micro-melting pots in which the migrant ethnic minority populations have established a presence in the major cities of UK. It is observed that, migrants, upon arrival in the UK, usually settle in the main cities such as London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Cardiff, Glasgow and Leicester. The rapid spread of African immigrant churches is found in these cities. Olupona and Gemignani (2007:3) despite the popularity of notions of immigrant identity, agency, and cultural pluralism, argue that the West has understood African immigrants according to a “melting pot”<sup>20</sup> model of immigration. Mass migration to the UK cities has resulted in different races, cultures and people from diverse backgrounds coming to live together in the cities and sharing social and economic benefits together. The problems encountered by people from diverse backgrounds trying to assimilate into a cohesive whole, are shared by John Rex (as cited by Solomos, 2003:19), who defines race relations in the following terms:

Race relations situations and problems have the following characteristics: they refer to situations in which two or more groups with distinct identities and recognisable characteristics are forced by economic and political circumstances to live together in a society.

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<sup>20</sup> ‘Melting Pot’ is a place (such as a city or country) where different types of people live together and gradually create one community or a place where a variety of races, cultures, or individuals assimilate into a cohesive whole. Available from [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/melting pot](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/melting%20pot) (accessed 28.04.15). ‘The melting pot model of immigration’ is used here to mean a situation where by people from diverse backgrounds and cultures migrate to the West and contribute aspects of their cultures to create a new, unique Western culture and the result is that the contributions from these diverse cultures become indistinguishable from one another.

Within this they refer to situations in which there is a high degree of conflict between the groups and in which ascriptive criteria are used to mark out the members of each group in order that one group may pursue one of the number of hostile policies against the other. Finally, within this group of situations true race relations may be said to exist when the practices of ascriptive allocation of roles and rights referred to are justified in terms of deterministic theory, whether that theory be of a scientific, religious, cultural, historical, ideological or sociological kind.

John Rex's definition of race relations suggests the problems commonly encountered in race relations through mass migration to UK cities and elsewhere. Consequently, mass immigration in the 1950s and beyond brought with it the rise of racial violence and prejudice. Many areas in Britain including cities like London (mainly West London), Birmingham and Nottingham experienced unrest as the White population became concerned about the arrival of 'black' people in their communities (Casciani, 2015).

According to Owen (2008), the black population is found mainly in the southern and eastern regions of England and Wales. In 2001, more than three-quarters of African immigrants in the UK who were born in the sub-Saharan Africa lived in London. Nearly half lived in Inner London. The South East has the second largest number of Black African people, but mainly in the larger cities and towns near London. This account of Owen shows how concerned the local people would be seeing their demography changing rapidly.

Owen (2008) again draws attention to the immigration pattern of people from sub-Saharan Africa to the UK which he rightly maintains has been growing in the last 20 years and that the Black African-born population in the UK has reached 500 000. He attributes this rise in migrant population to economic migration, which he acknowledges is now becoming more important than asylum migration. Owen went on to describe the economic circumstances of the African population as relatively

favourable and that African migrants are more likely to work in non-manual than manual occupations, but over a quarter work in low paid jobs<sup>21</sup>.

Clearly, the 'Black' Africans in the UK have gained space in the British economy but they are always caught up in what is perceived as an 'entrapment'<sup>22</sup> in British society which undermines their ability to feel at home in their new found country. On one hand, these migrants have been offered jobs, but on the other hand, many have been experiencing racial prejudice (especially in their work places) that they had never anticipated. Furthermore, the British government passed legislation in the 1970s which had allowed the UK government to restrict immigration quite significantly, but it had not stopped it altogether as some 83 000 immigrants from mainly the Commonwealth settled in the UK between 1968 and 1975, migrating as economic migrants and obtaining visas to join families<sup>23</sup>.

Brown (1995:1) writing on racism and immigration in Britain observes:

Whatever the hard facts, the need for immigration controls is widely accepted. The tabloid press is very fond of scare stories about immigrants 'fiddling' in benefits systems. The fact that Labour Party and trade union leaders have always supported immigration controls means that racist ideas about immigration can sometimes gain a hearing among workers. Central to much racist ideology about immigration into Britain is the notion that immigration is a very recent phenomenon, which began only with the arrival of black workers from Caribbean and Indian-sub-continent in the 1950s and 1960s. This view rests on the assumption that the British nation and the 'British character'

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<sup>21</sup> Figure 2 in the Annexure A is an illustration of a graph showing the number of sub-Saharan Africa immigrants in the UK given permission to work as economic migrants between 1997 and 2007.

<sup>22</sup> To entrap is to trick (someone) into committing a crime in order to secure their prosecution (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2009:476). The 2007 report of the Home Affairs Committee on the experiences suffered by young black people living in the country made these comments: "The reality of day to day living of black young people in UK today demonstrates various levels of persecution which is reinforced by negative stereotypes and media portrayals. Unprofessional stop and search practices by the police continue to be high on the list of experiences suffered by black boys and statistics from recent published figures illustrate the scale of the negative encounter of black people with the police and other members of the CJS and the reality of disproportionality." Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2007. *Young People and the Criminal Justice System Volume 2* (EV.354), The Stationery Office

<sup>23</sup> Available from:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in\\_depth/uk2002/race/short\\_history\\_of\\_immigration.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/uk2002/race/short_history_of_immigration.stm) (accessed 17.02.2015).

were developed, throughout history, in splendid isolation from the rest of the world, untainted by unwelcome contact or exchange with 'foreigners' or 'outsiders.'

This perception held by some elements of the British public misses the main point. It appears that their view of immigration depends on a deliberate rewriting of history. Homes (1988:3) describes the public view on migration as a version of the past which excludes not only all black people, but most other 'non-British' nationalities from the history of civilisation in what is now called Britain and draws the public's attention to the fact that, the people of what is the United Kingdom today, have always been composed of people from different ethnicities. His examples include the Celts, the Anglo-Saxons and Vikings who migrated to present day Britain as the result of various invasions, making the British the most ethnically diverse of all European peoples.

Britain's immigration policy had two prongs: the government admits a degree of overlap in the strict controls, but has also put in place legislation to protect the rights of ethnic minorities (or migrants). It is rightly maintained by some that the government's two pronged immigration policy in a way gives conflicting signals on the place of the immigrant communities and the second generation of migrants (children born in the UK to migrants) in UK society.<sup>24</sup>

Consequently, the UK experienced riots in 1981 largely caused by racial tensions. In Brixton, a suburb of London with a majority population of Afro-Caribbean people, youths rioted amid resentment citing the constant police entrapment, as they believed that the mainly White police were targeting more and more young black men in the belief that it would stop street crime. Some cities in the Midlands and Liverpool also experienced riots in the same period as the Brixton riot. The subsequent Scarman Report ordered by the government discovered in the investigations carried out that "racial disadvantage is a fact of current British Life."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Available from:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in\\_depth/uk/2002/race/short\\_history\\_of\\_immigration.stm](http://www.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in_depth/uk/2002/race/short_history_of_immigration.stm) (accessed 17.02.2015).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

Similarly, Dixon (2011) highlights that some UK major cities again witnessed youth riots in 2011 in which young people from mainly a black background (and others) battled with the law enforcement authorities. Dixon further states that it is widely perceived that a mix of youth disaffection, poverty, poor parenting, educational underachievement and a lack of godliness and morality were some of the factors that triggered the public disorder.

Arguably, the influence of the wider society has caused many, especially children born in the UK to their African immigrant parents (or children born to black parents), to lose faith in God, which frankly, has been the source of strength for 'black' people over the years. The question before the African immigrant churches is how they can meet the existential concerns of the next generation of children born in the UK to African immigrant parents since these children are experiencing a process that is termed *acculturation*. They acknowledge their ethnic heritage but place a greater premium on adapting their lives to the culture and values of the majority of the population. This is a serious problem when an increasing proportion of the wider society does not adhere to the Christian faith.

### **2.3.2. Finding a Refuge from Discrimination, and discovering a sense of Identity, Respect and Belonging**

It is sadly true that the common experience of immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa (and blacks from elsewhere) in UK society or in the mainline churches has been one of racism, exclusion and struggle. The view taken here by Aldred (2007:3)<sup>26</sup> is that the history of 'black churches' is associated with the history of racism. The point here is that while racism may not be the reason for the existence of 'black churches,' it is a catalyst in their growth and relevance to black immigrants in the UK. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that the African immigrant churches serve as places where African immigrants discover their identity. Undoubtedly, these churches have become places for African immigrants where they meet in fellowship with fellow blacks, share and socialize with them. In addition, for the newly arrived African migrants, the African immigrant churches help to aid their integration into their new communities.

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<sup>26</sup> Dr Joe Aldred speaking at EEA3 Conference Forum on Migration in Sibiu, Romania from 4-9 September 2007.



Equally significant is that, over the years, there has been an improvement in the UK concerning matters of race but the biases against immigrants by some elements of the society have hardly changed. Recently, the rise in asylum seekers arriving and being given social housing and other state benefits has seen a rise in racial tensions. The British National Party<sup>27</sup>, which is a party with a political agenda to stop migration into the UK, won three local council seats in May 2002 and had an electoral breakthrough between 2008 and 2009 that led to the party gaining over 50 seats in the local council elections. The British National Party, has since 2014 declined in membership but the rise of the United Kingdom Independence Party, another right-wing populist anti-immigration party, which came fourth in the number of seats won in 2013 local elections and won majority seats in the 2014 European elections and also had two Members of Parliament (in the last Parliament)<sup>28</sup>, cannot be underestimated. Perhaps even more significant is the British government's plans for new nationality and immigration legislation that includes a citizenship test in the English language and has sparked new controversy.<sup>29</sup>

Kwiyani (2014:109) writing for African immigrant churches in the West, observes that the African immigrant churches play a very important role in supporting African migrants. He refers to the fact that the African immigrant churches have become places of abode for all categories of African immigrants even those who might not have been as involved if they stayed in Africa still become active members in these churches. Notwithstanding this, Dr Kwiyani declares that there are also many immigrants who have converted to Christianity after the process of immigration.

There is a clear indication that African immigrants have been struggling to re-define themselves in their newly chosen country, create a distinct identity and express their cultural values, yet, they are conscious of the need to develop a voice and a presence and one of the ways they do this is through their Christian affiliations. Many of the immigrants have found a refuge from discrimination and discovered a

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<sup>27</sup> Recently, the British National Party has declined in membership and has as at 2014, lost forty-eight of the fifty local council seats. Their leader, Griffin, also lost his MEP seat in 2014 elections [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/generalelections/general-election-2005-the-bnp-has-almost-vanished-from-british-politics-10176194.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/generalelections/general-election-2005-the-bnp-has-almost-vanished-from-british-politics-10176194.html) (accessed 29.04.2015)

<sup>28</sup> Available from: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-22396689](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-22396689) (accessed 29.04.2015)

<sup>29</sup> Available from: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in\\_depth/uk/2002/race/short\\_history\\_of\\_immigration.stm](http://www.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in_depth/uk/2002/race/short_history_of_immigration.stm) (accessed 17.02.2015).

sense of identity, respect and belonging in the different churches established by persons of their own ethnic or national origin where they can profoundly assert themselves. This idea was the motivating force behind the African immigrant churches in the UK.

## **2.4. Summary**

The movement of people of African heritage from a wide range of backgrounds into the UK has been influenced by a range of factors including economic conditions, connections through family and cultural ties and political factors, both real and perceived influence that has led to the migration of people into this country. Arguably, the English language has become a global language and so the wider use of English globally is also pertinent to factors influencing migration into the UK hence it is not a surprise to observe that historic and Commonwealth ties may have influenced the migrants' choice of destination country as Africans from the mainly former British colonies make the UK their main choice for migration. Therefore, over the past few decades the migratory pattern, though voluntary, has greatly been influenced by imperialist ties, as most of the migrants were already integrated into the British socio-economic system in the countries of origin through their previous colonial ties.

Migration in the UK in the last decade differs markedly because of the surge in net immigration. Following the European Union enlargement the UK government allowed migrants from the Eastern European countries particularly from Poland to take advantage of the job opportunities in Britain and so since 2004, immigration levels have been boosted by wave of migration from some Eastern European countries, whose citizens have enjoyed free movement and exemption from UK immigration control to the detriment of nationals of other countries, particularly from former British colonies like, Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya which have had their access to the UK progressively eroded (Somerville *et al.*, 2009).

The advent of mass migration has raised the levels of public anxiety on immigration and clearly, this has been fuelled by media reports. For example, the monthly polling data from the *Ipsos Mori* agency shows that beginning in late 1990s, the British people identified race and immigration as one of the top three most

important issues facing the United Kingdom and other opinion polling data from different sources also show a similar picture, with between two-thirds and four-fifths of the UK public clearly indicating their dislike for mass immigration (Somerville *et al.*, 2009). In this context of rising numbers and rising anxieties among the British people, the British government have passed legislation and drawn up other policies to manage immigration. Therefore, over 50 years since the start of mass immigration to the UK, questions are still being asked by the British public about whether or not Britain has truly become a multicultural society at ease with itself as politicians claim, or whether there is still a long road to be travelled.

It is obvious that the African immigrant churches have found a Christian space in Britain but Olupona and Gemignani (2007:3) observe that the factors bringing the African immigrants together in the West are not just spiritual but other factors bringing them together could also include:

Social identities, transnationalism, migration as a process, civic engagement, political incorporation and gender relations.

Certainly, these factors will remain with the African immigrant churches because they are good for the recently arrived immigrants and migrants with 'high people-consciousness'. But there is an uncertain future for any church or church movement whose numerical growth or existence depends on the number of immigrants coming into the country. For instance, in the UK, government policies are a major factor in seeking to reduce international migration into this country; hence it is extremely difficult to predict what immigration will look like for example, ten years from now.

At this stage in their work in the UK, it is very surprising to say that African immigrant churches have already attributed a theological relevance to this recent phenomenon of establishing black initiated churches in the UK that some African scholars called *reverse mission*<sup>30</sup>. But Kwiyani (2014:75) contends that the term *reverse mission* is a misnomer because African immigrant churches in the West

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<sup>30</sup> Reverse Mission means the conscious missionary strategy by mother churches in Africa of evangelizing the diaspora (Adogame, 2007).

and Britain in particular are still centred around black African congregations and with very little or no cross-cultural ministries with the West. For the African immigrant churches to regard their mission endeavours in the UK as *reverse mission*, they would have to consider their next stage of the task of reaching out to the wider UK communities, because the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19 & 20) calls Christ's people to measure their lives by its universal scope of reaching all people groups. Truly, the time has come for the African immigrant churches to re-define their God-given mandate to Britain. They must strategize in such a way that they would become the vanguard of spiritual, emotional and social liberation to the UK Christian communities and the wider society.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE AFRICAN IMMIGRANT CHURCHES IN THE UK

#### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has discussed how in the past few years the UK has opened its doors to migrants from all over the globe and that today, it has become one of the most culturally diverse countries of the world. The previous chapter discussed also how the country's cultural diversity presents both challenges and opportunities to the Christian enterprise. The previous chapter explains also that the African immigrant churches have now been established in the UK Christian landscape but their congregations are mainly "black" Africans, however, it is probably right to say that they have attained a measure of success in establishing themselves in Britain. However, they are now faced with a choice of reaching out to the whole British society, something they should regard as another stage in their mission endeavours to the wider UK communities.

It is also important to highlight that immigration which has been the key to opening the door for the African immigrant churches to be established in the UK, has also been their greatest challenge. For example, one of the challenges faced by the African immigrant churches is how they can meet the existential concerns of the next generation of children born in the UK to the African migrant parents since these children are experiencing a process that is termed acculturation.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from the social and cultural factors that have emerged in the UK as a result of the migration of people from different backgrounds, there have also been ecclesiastical developments within the Christian circles over these past few decades, as such there is the need for a new way of theologizing among the various churches that occupy the UK Christian landscape in line with the current contexts.

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<sup>31</sup> The second generation of children born to the African migrant parents acknowledge their ethnic heritage but place a greater premium on adapting their lives and values to the culture and values of the majority population.

This chapter argues that in order for the African immigrant churches to expand their base and reach out to the wider UK communities, they would have to develop a contextual approach to ministry that is suitable to their Western environment. This clearly poses a serious challenge, as it is obvious that there are cultural differences that in a way have kept both the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches apart. Yet, there is the possibility that in partnering with each other, both sides will be able to challenge the aspects of their culture and cultural influences on theology that are not in line with Biblical principles. That is to say, in order for the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches to work together, they would have to share the Gospel and minister in a way that is both faithful to the Bible and suitable to their cultural contexts.

On the part of the African immigrant churches, they would have to change their theologies and the practices that would be different from those practised in most churches in Africa. However, there is also the risk that their desire to contextualize in order to be relevant to the host (UK) culture so as to attract the wider community could leave them vulnerable to the danger that their churches will be shaped more by those (cultural) concerns than by the designs of the Lord (Hammett, 2005:11). Therefore, in order to strike the balance, they would have to contextualize the Gospel critically, achieving that delicate balance of faithfully communicating the unchanging truths of the Gospel in a way that is suitable to their cultural context without compromising the centrality of Scripture.

The perception in the UK that the 'Black Churches' have a different theology has to be cleared. It has now become obvious that the African immigrant churches need to re-define themselves in relation to the White majority churches and need also to clarify their theology because their new environment would definitely have an influence on their theological emphases. In order to theologize in this emerging context of multiculturalism in Britain, the multicultural nature of the country should be taken into consideration; this calls for Christ's people from all backgrounds to realize the importance of dialoguing with the different cultures that make up the UK Christian communities. As such, there is the need for a critical *contextual theology*, which can ensure the universality of other theologies in the UK, which may in turn result in establishing multi-ethnic churches with a multicultural identity.

Clearly, the time has come for Christ's people in Britain (black, White and others) to respond to the new realities that have arisen as a result of the mass migration of people from different cultural backgrounds into Britain in the past few decades. This study therefore, believes that for the African immigrant churches to be effective in their outreach to the wider UK communities, they would have to be sensitive to the culture of their new environment and share the Gospel in a way that is suitable to their new cultural context without compromising the core message of the Bible.

In this chapter, key elements of the theology of the African immigrant churches are also explored. The chapter seeks to examine the theological context that could be generally accepted as a Biblical theological basis for the African immigrant churches by using the tools of critical contextual theology and hermeneutics to consider texts particularly favoured by Bible scholars. Through such an exercise, a comprehensive understanding of theologizing will emerge, but not in its full complexity (the entire work of theologizing for the African immigrant churches is beyond the scope of this study), but at least it will result in a tentative conclusion concerning theology while constructing a model for a theological praxis for the African immigrant churches. Hence, this chapter will discuss a number of key features of theology that will provide a vital means through which the theology of the African immigrant churches can be analysed.

### **3.2. Theology and Its Contexts**

Hiebert (2009:38) notes that theologies are shaped by the societies and cultures in which Christ's people live. He cited the following quotation as representative of his viewpoint:

we are assuming here that Scripture is divine revelation given to us by God, not our human search for God. Theology, then, is our attempt to understand that revelation in our historical and cultural contexts.

Similarly, Boff and Boff (1987:3) also argue that every true theology springs from a spirituality – that is, from a true meeting with God in history. On the whole, one of the major challenges facing cross-cultural missions and for that matter all contemporary missions are the theological issues involved. The above definitions clearly indicate the importance of theology in the mission endeavours of Christ's

people. It is true to say that for Christ's people to reach out effectively, there is a need for a strong Biblical grounding and theological understanding of their mission. The issue here is that, for any meaningful breakthroughs in their mission endeavours, Christ's people would need the fundamental truths of God and the divine principles of the Scriptures, which would give them a thorough Biblical understanding and missiological bases as well as the theological framework for their mission. According to Davis (1978:23), the theological framework will boost their knowledge of God and their relationship with him. To this end, Christ's people must be grounded in Biblical doctrine and adept at theological thinking, not theology based on creedal statements that do not express with a sufficient degree of adequacy the experience of believers. They must understand the Scriptures and its interpretation and application in their day-to-day lives and mission endeavours.

In the past generation, there have arisen many theologies that have come about as a result of human suffering and oppression. For example, feminist theology rightly argues for the recognition of the fact that Western theology is male-dominated, and is opening up space for women to have a voice in their society and communities. Liberation theology emerged in the face of oppression under the hierarchical structures within the traditional practices of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America, hence human experiences of oppression and injustice were the starting points of liberation theology (Bosch, 2014:448-450). Then there is the Black theology<sup>32</sup>, a theological reflection of black people's understanding of God. In addition, there is African theology, which develops in the context of poverty, exploitation and diseases among many uniquely African social and spiritual issues (Bosch, 2014:449-451).

Schreier (1985:13-15) was making the point when he indicated that there are two models of theologizing contextually: First, he speaks of the ethnographic model, which emphasizes cultural identity, and secondly, the liberation model, which emphasizes social change from oppression and social evils. Schreier (1985:21)

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<sup>32</sup>"Black theology in the United States arose out of the civil rights and black power movements of the 1950s and the 1960s. However, its historical roots go back to the beginning of African slavery in the United States and the founding of black independent Baptist and Methodist churches in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries...As in the United States, the struggle against institutionalized racism, often legitimized by religious beliefs was the source of black theology in South Africa during the Apartheid era..." [www.encyclopedia.com/topic/liberation\\_theology.aspx](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/liberation_theology.aspx) (accessed 20/04/2015).



further states that the Gospel can come into full realization only in the local church and that without the church, the incarnation of the Gospel will be highly improbable but according to him, culture is the context in which this interaction occurs. The following quotation is cited as Schreiter's view on the interaction of Gospel, church and culture:

It represents a way of life for a given time and place, replete with values, symbols, and meanings, reaching out with hopes and dreams, often struggling for a better world. Without sensitivity to the cultural context, a church and its theology either become a vehicle for outside domination or lapse into Docetism, as though its Lord never became flesh (Schreiter, 1985:21).

As has been noted, the values placed on local cultures and the necessities of the situation compel Christ's people to understand and interpret their faith differently, and so a contextual way of doing theology in a particular way emerges. For instance, the human experiences of oppression and injustice are the starting points of liberation theology. Liberation theology was developed in reaction to the focus of dominant theology as a response to the issues of oppression within the contexts of individual groups, communities and societies (Schreiter, 1985:13).

### **3.2.1. Black Theology in Context**

In the UK, there is the perception that the 'Black Churches' have a different theology termed as 'Black theology.' There have been suggestions by some British Bible scholars with Caribbean roots that the Afro-Caribbean churches in Britain should adopt what they called 'Black theology.' One example of such scholars is Dr Robert Beckford, who affirms the need for a 'Black British theology of liberation' as opposed to what he terms as their Black Christian theology that in his own word comprises "church life, worship and witness."<sup>33</sup> It is probably true to say that

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<sup>33</sup> Dr Robert Beckford, speaking for African Caribbean community in the 'Presentations on Black Majority Churches in Britain' (this was a conference chaired by Bishop Joe Aldred in December 1995; organised by the Black Majority Churches) [www.pctii.org/wcc/reports95.html](http://www.pctii.org/wcc/reports95.html). Dr Beckford raised a series of issues that have emerged from dialogue with African Caribbean- British church leaders: issues such as Domestic neo-colonialism; he said the Caribbean diaspora in Britain face systems and structures of discrimination and white supremacist thought that has, in some aspects of black life in Britain, been internalised and led to the denial of blackness and use of white colour symbolism in theologising. Speaking in the same conference Reverend Jerisdan Jehu-Appiah of Musama Disco Christo Church in Britain speaking for the African community in Britain

Beckford (with a Caribbean root) speaks out of his cultural context addressing people who are oppressed and discriminated against and have found themselves excluded by the British society, hence he positions his theology in liberation as a type of theology to address the needs of these people. The new form of theology he suggested for the Caribbean people is a theology that has political implications that he calls the Black British theology of liberation. Dr Beckford explains his new form of theology as follows:

In order to counter the harmful effects of European thought, people of African descent must construct an alternative way of thinking, believing and doing. In other words, Afrocentricity advocates that the best way of empowering Black people is by developing their own epistemologies for analysis of the social and political world” (Beckford, 2000:14).

Dr Beckford’s view on Black theology is about modelling a form of Black British theology which is politically inclined and grounded on a contextual hermeneutic which is rooted in a form of spirituality that has a willingness for radical social, economic and political change. He understands that for a Black theology of liberation to be meaningful for the people of African origin, it must be a communal theology that places the black individual firmly within the community of faith as well as within the black community itself (Beckford, 2000:172-174).

Similarly, Reddie (2014:16-18), also a theologian with a Caribbean background, highlights what appears to be a fresh vision for black Christians by challenging the existing frameworks; namely, traditional, missionary Eurocentric, historical, doctrinal Christianity into which he affirms, a lot of black people over the globe have been inducted. When speaking of Black theology, Reddie (2014:17) suggests of re-interpreting Christian traditions and practices in the light of liberationists’ concepts that arise out of black experiences. Reddie (2014:14) is of the view that a true emphasis on Black theology should be on its commitment to a liberating praxis and social transformation. Reddie further argues that a re-imagined Black

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among other things said that African churches in diaspora need to re-define themselves, not only in relation to the European churches but also to the African Caribbean and North American Black churches. He went on to say that the Afro-Caribbean church will also have to clarify their theology in terms of systematising it from within the African movements.

theology will enable Christianity in general, as well as Black Christian faith in particular to impact the world (Reddie, 2014:14).

Clearly, the Afro-Caribbean churches, especially the Pentecostals, concern themselves with creating a contextual theology in response to their experiences of oppression both past and present which Williams (1994:32) states as the reasons for their “inability to achieve self-actualization.” Hence, the emergence of a liberation theology that has been influenced by their historical experience of oppression and which they believe can address their political, cultural and social realities. It is worthy of note that the African immigrant churches have not experienced the struggles the Afro-Caribbean countries have gone through and hence their emphasis on liberation praxis is different.

However, it is also very important to highlight that it is rather in South Africa (not all sub-Saharan African countries) where a Black theology of Liberation focusing most explicitly on issues of contemporary social analysis has developed (Mbali, 1987:4). Chike (2007:5) expresses that because of the experiences black South Africans went through during the apartheid<sup>34</sup> era, they have been on a different theological trajectory from the rest of sub-Saharan African countries. Furthermore, Mwambazambi (2010:1) highlights that during the liberation struggles from the apartheid era, some black South African theologians created the South African Black theology of liberation during the late 1960s and the early 1970s as a conscious and theological dimension of the liberation struggle against apartheid. The distinctive theology of apartheid that the black South Africans were rejecting was what is termed the “Afrikaner Calvinism.”<sup>35</sup> Afrikaner Calvinism is an ideology that developed out of cultural and religious development of Afrikaners that distorts the Calvinist doctrine by adding a ‘chosen people syndrome’ (Ransford, 1972:11).

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<sup>34</sup> Saul Dubow in his book, *Apartheid, 1948-1994* underscores the early formulations of the Apartheid ideology which he attributes to the missionary wing of the Dutch Reformed Church. According to Saul Dubow the late 1920s saw the influence of missionary leaders in the Orange Free State in South Africa stressing the need to develop a more communal approach to the Apartheid ideology centred on the premise that it was God’s Will that their distinctive identity be protected (Dubow, 2014:17-19). According to Dubow (2014:16) Apartheid was developed as a theory of how the native blacks should be treated, even though it was first meant to be a theory of the special nature of the calling and the God-given tasks of the Afrikaners.

<sup>35</sup> John Calvin’s 16<sup>th</sup> Century doctrine convinced the Afrikaners that the separation of the people of the world into different races was done deliberately by God and that it was not their responsibilities to bring different races together. They also believed that it was in God’s providential plan to create the white race to be his highest image and likeness (Ransford, 1972:11-12).

The black South African theologians rejected the Afrikaner theology and developed the South African Black theology of liberation, which drew inspiration from African-American theology, Biblical hermeneutics and experiences gained from their struggles with apartheid. While many related questions remain unanswered, it is true to say that the idea of creating this type of theology was to create a new theological paradigm as well as social and political orientation to liberate black South Africans from apartheid and all perceived foreign domination and influence. In other words, the South African Black theology was a liberation theology aimed at helping to eradicate the then existing socio-political order of South Africa (Mbali, 1987:4; Mwambazambi, 2010:1).

In general, the South African Black theology of liberation is a contextualized theology within the sub-Saharan African context. In contrast to what has been said about South Africa, other sub-Saharan African countries, even though, they had had struggles with colonialism, they had not gone through the type of struggles experienced by black South Africans. According to Mwambazambi (2010:1) during the apartheid<sup>36</sup> era, the Afrikaners viewed themselves as people pioneering civilization in Southern Africa. They saw themselves as a chosen people. They probably thought that they were more superior to the 'Black South Africans' and the Coloured people and therefore felt they were right to segregate them. Consequently, the Black Theology of Liberation, emerged out of the context of the black South Africans' experiences of the brutalities of the apartheid era and according to Mbali (1987:4) it was an attempt to respond to the very material concerns of the oppressed in the South African region in ways which were not considered possible within the Western theological perspective. The black South Africans borrowed much of their black consciousness sentiment from the United States and developed their theology contextually. This theology offered a critique of an oppressive South African society.

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<sup>36</sup> "...The White minority in South Africa consisted of two rival groups: The Afrikaners and the White British immigrants. In 1948, the Afrikaners, who formed the majority of White people in South Africa elected into office the National Party to rule the nation on the basis of Apartheid ideology. Apartheid was a political system that depended on extensive police power and it aggressively entrenched and enforced the existing segregation between White and Black people" (Mwambazambi, 2010:1).

Allan Boesak (1977:13) understands Black South African theology as a situational theology and feels that it is an attempt for black South Africans to come to terms theologically with their black situation in the midst of apartheid and emphasized the need for a social analysis which critiqued the overall structure of society as well as the individually oppressed components of it. A further factor to consider in the Black South African theology of liberation is that this theology seeks to transform the theology black Africans inherited from Western theologians into a dialectic medium of liberation theology, which could advocate a radical transformation of segregation and oppression in the South African society (Boesak, 1977:13). Frankly, this was a theology for the oppressed black people seeking liberation from religious, socio-cultural, economic and political bondage they found themselves in the apartheid era.

Conversely, South Africans have recently experienced a changeover to majority rule; they have in fact witnessed the end of apartheid, but it is still too early to say whether this has had a significant effect on the socio-political and economic transformation of South African society. One thing is certain, it is clear that seeing the end of apartheid and initiating black majority rule has not ended what necessitated the birth of Black African theology of liberation in the country.

### **3.2.2. The theology of the African immigrant churches**

Sub-Sahara Africans and the Afro-Caribbean people have different histories and cultures that affect their worldviews. According to Kwiyani (2014:106) the African immigrant churches have always been studied by scholars in the shadows of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora churches, hence not received the appropriate level of attention. In this connection, Olupona and Gemignani (2007:14) suggested the need for the re-conceptualization of the study of 'Black Churches,' which he asserts should be a step further in drawing the desired attention to the type of Christianity African immigrants are involved in, in Britain and the West (Western Europe and North America).

Tanner (1997:19) was right to say that every theology is a theology of a particular context. As such, a given Christian theology is an interpretation of the Christian faith from a particular context, making faith sensible to the realities of that context.

For the African immigrant churches, their theological emphasis is on “spiritual freedom.”<sup>37</sup> Even though there are similarities between the African immigrant churches and the Afro-Caribbean churches, there are still variations in the cultural context in which these churches operate. In the African theology, the place of the Holy Spirit and his empowerment is very significant. As such, African believers place much emphasis on the power encounters with demonic forces, which are confronted and overpowered by the power of God (Chike, 2007:37). It is true to say that one of the most striking differences between the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches is the emphasis African immigrant churches place on the spirit and power of the Holy Spirit and their use of Scripture which have been missing in White majority churches, even though very prominent in the Bible.

Recently, there was speculation in the UK that the African immigrant churches have been practising exorcism and witchcraft and in the symposium themed ‘*Christianity or the Occult? Emerging Trends in the African Diaspora*’ (held in London in May 2006 by the Lapido Media), issues such as the ‘alleged witchcraft being imported into Britain by migrants’ were discussed. Among the people present at this forum was Angus Stickler, the award winning investigative journalist who covered the original story of ‘Child B’<sup>38</sup> and ritualistic abuse in Angola for the BBC Today Programme.<sup>39</sup> Stickler was accused by some African leaders for his brand of journalism. He certainly, was not familiar with the culture from which he was reporting, hence made the cultural phenomenon his report covered appear strange by generalizing an alleged major problem from only one particular example. Clearly, the African leaders told the participants that it was not true that African immigrant

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<sup>37</sup> African churches, both home and abroad, emphasize on moving in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, particularly healing and deliverance from demonic powers (Acts 10:35); Africans whose lives are mainly ravaged by poverty, diseases and occult religions are desperate to find spiritual freedom and so the place of their worship is where the depressed, the hurting, “the cultural dropouts,” and the destitute can find salvation, hope and acceptance and encouragement to become what they are supposed to become in their Christian lives.

<sup>38</sup> In May 2006, a story emerged in the BBC News Community Affairs about an eight-year old girl called ‘Child B.’ The UK authorities adopted ‘Child B’ as the child’s assigned pseudonym name to ensure confidentiality. Child B who was brought into the UK from Angola, was mistreated by her aunt and two others who believed she was a witch. The case sparked widespread fears over whether a new form of child abuse centred on African “healing” customs had arrived in Britain ([www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/5002054.stm](http://www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/5002054.stm) accessed 08.09.2015).

<sup>39</sup> Stickler had travelled to Angola following the ‘Child B’ trial, and filmed a boy, who was suspected of being possessed by an evil spirit and was being tortured by a traditional healer who suspected him of being possessed by evil spirits. The boy eventually died. Stickler broke the news in BBC Today linking the ‘Child B’ case in the UK with the ritualistic child abuse in Angola, making it appear as if this is a general practice among Africans ( [www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/?124](http://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/?124) accessed 08.09.2015).

churches practise a mix of Christianity and traditional practice as alleged by some members of the British public (Taylor, 2006:2).

Contrary to this negative report, Pastor Agu Irukwu (also at the symposium) who is the senior pastor of the Jesus House for All Nations and chairs more than 200 Redeemed Christian Church of God congregations drew to the public's attention the positive impacts of the migrant churches within British communities. He gave an example of how the majority of the African derived churches have grown to affect their communities through social action and that today, these churches could be described as vibrant, engaging and inclusive contrary to the negative perception presented by a few (White) British individuals (Taylor, 2006:2).

Reports such as this heart-breaking news of exorcisms and witchcraft including child abuse among a few African immigrant churches put the migrant churches at the margins of British society (Kwiyani, 2014:108). It is a fact that there have been some abuses in some African immigrant independent churches but these are just remote cases (Kwiyani, 2014:108). On the whole, it is fair to understand that the African theology is a theology of liberation, born among people that are struggling with immense poverty and diseases who seek to understand God in ways far away from the mind-set of the West.

### **3.2.2.1. The Ecclesiology of the African immigrant churches**

It is also important to highlight that culture influences the theological thinking and missiological endeavours of Christ's people and to the African immigrant churches, it is through their spiritual practices that they have maintained continuity and innovation. As an example, it is fair to say that, though the African immigrant churches believe that the main objective of the Christian's ministry is not to cast out demons, but to proclaim the good news to the unsaved, yet, they believe also that preaching the Gospel must be done in the demonstration of the spirit and power of God (1 Corinthians 2:4). The ecclesiological<sup>40</sup> understanding of the African Christian is different from the Western Christian. In this way, it is rather

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<sup>40</sup> Ecclesiology is the study of the church and investigates what the Bible teaches about the universal church as well as the local church. Ecclesiology is important for all Christ's people since it guides them toward a scriptural understanding of how Christ's people should relate to God, one another and to the unsaved (<http://www.compellingtruth.org/print/ecclesiology-PF.html> accessed 17.07.15).

understandable that there is indeed a difference in the way Africans read Scripture from that of the West. For instance, African Christians understand the Universal Church as a divinely-ordained organism rather than a man-made organization and as such believe that the Church (universal) must have a divinely-gifted leadership as suggested by Mahoney (1997:219); while Western theology continues a two thousand-year heritage mediated through science and reason in the Enlightenment and modernity with leadership based mainly on academic achievement, human calling and appointment (Kwiyani, 2014:180). Olofinjana (2010:52) observes that there is a high view of the African immigrant clergy and this according to him, breeds strong leadership. He had this to say:

The congregation believes in the leadership and they do not enter into debates about issues. The democratic process is not really part of the culture; there are principles of democracy in terms of trustees and leadership, but it is not an open debate.

Olofinjana (2010:52) suggests that the top down system of leadership in the African immigrant churches or for that matter the Black Majority Churches is one of its success stories. The role of church members in the African churches also differ; the African churches model the book of Acts by involving their church members in ministry with less formal requirements (such as formal theological training), and a high level of involvement and commitment in evangelism, including other ministerial responsibilities. To the African Christian, the purpose of the Church is what is defined in Acts 2:42-47. The purpose of their gathering include fellowship, teaching, ministry, prayer and outreach. Kwiyani (2014:182) is making the point when he stated that the Christianity of the African migrants is lived in a spiritually awakened context. It is true to say that many of these churches model the book of Acts. The book of Acts (Acts 2:1-4) records the coming of the Holy Spirit which empowered men and women in the early church for the work of the ministry that God has commissioned them to do and this applies to the African immigrant churches too. There is also the renewed interest in personal disciplines like prayer, Bible study, meditation and fasting in the African immigrant congregations.



Since most African immigrant churches in the UK are Pentecostals or charismatics in their faith, they have common rituals and liturgy.<sup>41</sup> For example, the Lord's Super (communion) is observed by all African immigrant churches, even though with different meaning and styles. The praise and worship style of the African immigrant churches is contemporary. The form of worship is using dance (2 Samuel 6:14), innovative hymnody, singing in tongues and also dancing to the tone of lively joyful music is the type of worship found in the African immigrant churches (Mahoney, 1997:12). Similarly, Olofinjana (2010:52) observes that the dynamic style of worship (music) of the African immigrant churches is expressed through art, dance and graphic design, which is very appealing to all, especially the young generation. According to Chike (2007:63), many songs used by the African migrants in Britain are about the power of Jesus Christ. It is true to say that the African Christian's praise and worship is based on the Scriptures and it is all done to glorify the name of the living God who is their great provider in all aspect of their lives (Chike, 2007:12).

Mbiti (1986:32) maintains that the African Christian's understanding and use of Scripture liberates them from the ready-made and imported Christianity of the West as they theologize the kind of Christianity that more fully embraces the totality of their existence. That is to say, the African theology models theology and contextualizes it in their African context, hence the outcome is different from Western theology, which arguably, has problems understanding the spirit and the spirit world. Chike (2007:12) again notes that the African immigrant churches (like other African Christians elsewhere) undertake regular Bible studies, which they call 'Sunday School.' Chike (2007:12) went on to say that the Bible, clearly is the centre of the life and development of the African Christian and further indicated that most African preachers show this commitment to the Bible by supporting every point in their sermons with Biblical references. Chike affirms that the authority of the Bible is respected among African Christians to the extent that even when providing solutions to practical issues they take references from Biblical texts (Chike, 2007:12-14).

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<sup>41</sup> Liturgy has to do with praise and worship, type of music, prayer and sacraments.

### **3.2.2.2. The Hermeneutics of the African immigrant churches**

Unquestionably, the majority of the African immigrant churches preach the full Gospel and are the antitheses to values that counter godly living to their own kind and do not have a mix of Christianity and traditional practices in their worship as assumed by some in the UK. They rather respond contextually to a wide range of Christian experiences and ascribe spiritual factors to all incidents (Kwiyani, 2014:182). For example, they believe that sickness entered the world as a result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Therefore, the sin that humankind inherited from their first ancestors (Adam and Eve) is the root cause of all sicknesses (Romans 5:12) and that evil spirits can sometimes be the cause of illness and affliction as in Matthew 9:32-33 and Luke 13:11-16 (Mahoney, 1997:46). Indeed, some in the West may see this experience strange and may argue that it is unscriptural but Boff and Boff (1996:3) particularly make the telling point with their holistic argument, which in their own words say: “every true theology springs from spirituality.” It is probably true to say that the Holy Spirit would work through only those who believe and yield to him as his divine instrument to bring spiritual release (Mark 16: 16-18).

According to Chike (2007:77-79) the African Christians’ emphasis on deliverance from evil forces and being blessed materially in this world is their understanding of salvation. That is to say, what African Christians expect from God in their worship is God’s protection, healing and material blessings.

In Genesis 12, the Bible says that God blessed Abraham in many ways; the blessings of God came to Abraham as a result of rewarding Abraham for his obedience to him. It is clear from the account in Genesis that these blessings promised to Abraham included material blessings (Genesis 13:1-2). In Galatians 3:13-14, the Bible indicates that God’s promises for Abraham extend to all Christ’s people. That is to say, Jesus became a curse for Christians so that they may receive their salvation, which also includes the blessings of Abraham. This, however, begins with the new birth of the believer. The Bible is clear about how the Lord wants his people to prosper spiritually, emotionally and physically, and materially (3 John 2). The problem here as noted by Chike (2007:90) is that in many cases some African originated churches have presented material blessings as the

result of being saved and this has led to the 'prosperity Gospel' which clearly relegates the message of salvation to the 'promise of material blessings.'

The emphasis on the spirit's empowerment and attribution of material prosperity as a sign of being saved among African Christians has got much to do with their background, but the greatest influence on the emergence of this material prosperity teachings which is described in some circles as 'health and wealth Gospel' was the late Oral Roberts.<sup>42</sup> Oral Robert's teachings were embraced by the late Archbishop Benson Idahosa of the Church of God Mission in Nigeria whose ministry influenced several others in sub-Saharan Africa. The teachings of American evangelists such as John Avanzini and Kenneth Copeland have also influenced many Africans on the prosperity Gospel<sup>43</sup>. For one thing, the fact that Africans' understanding of salvation is linked to their culture is worrying. Hesselgrave (1994:71) when writing about contextualization, stated his concerns about contextualizers re-enforcing a number of theologies that eventually would give priority to the interests and values of certain cultures and subcultures and warned that in theologizing contextually, it is necessary that the cultural preferences and social concerns that gave birth to these theologies should not relegate the Bible to a secondary position. Hesselgrave (1994:72) cited the following quotation as a representation of his viewpoint:

It should be made clear that the cultural preferences and social concerns that gave rise to these theologies were for the most part legitimate. Our quarrel is not with the sensitivity of theologizers to those concerns. Rather, it is with a contextualization meaning and method that gives priority to those concerns and relegates the Bible, the Biblical Christ, and Biblical doctrine to a secondary position when theologizing. When that happens the Bible loses its authority and merely provides an appropriate "reference points" and pertinent paradigms.

Hesselgrave further argues that with the liberation theology, the central Biblical paradigm is the Exodus and that Christ is only portrayed as the 'Liberator par

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.lausanne.org/content/the-prosperity-gospel>

<sup>43</sup> This was an article written by Femi Adele on "The Prosperity Gospel: A Critique of the Way the Bible is used." (<https://www.lausanne.org/content/the-prosperity-gospel> accessed 18.01.16).

excellence,' in his own words. He goes on to say that liberation theology has proved to be Bible-related but not Bible based (Hesselgrave, 1994:72).

It is fair to heed Dr Hesselgrave's warning about liberation theology because his analysis is very useful in that it recognizes that the central truth of our theologizing should be the person of Jesus (Hesselgrave, 1994:72). Hence, in approaching theology through an analysis of society, liberation theology, for an example within its Latin American context has become associated with Marxist thought and its proponents have sought to highlight the limitations of this connection.

The focus point of the African liberation theology, however, is the active faith and spirituality of the African Christian who though he has gained spiritual freedom believes that God can also deliver him from poverty and diseases (Abraham, 1990:46). The tools of analysis of the African theology are drawn from the realities of economic and social situation of Africans but the points of reference to which these tools are ultimately responsible are the faith of the African believer and the Gospel of liberation as interpreted from the Scriptures.

Another point to consider about the theology of the African immigrant churches is how many of these churches offer practical assistance to their congregations in all aspects of life such as education, career, marriage and family support and act as social hub for the newly arrived immigrants (Olofinjana, 2010:52). Some critics call this action a 'social Gospel' but ideally, one of the principal concerns of nearly all of liberation theology's expressions is the liberation of the economically poor. As such, their theology has sometimes been described as social Gospel. Yet, Jesus in his mission on earth did not only teach and practise spiritual things, but also demonstrated practical Christian living. Therefore, Kee (1986:5) suggests that any true expression of a theology of liberation should involve a critical reflection on human praxis in the light of the praxis of Jesus and the demands of the faith.

Contrary to Hesselgrave's assertion that liberation theology proves to be Bible-related and not Bible based (Hesselgrave, 1994:72), the African immigrant churches have arguably, developed their own epistemology; a liberation theological reflection and expression by African Christians based on their African experiences (Mbiti, J, 1980:119). However, it is also important to highlight that their theology

has the use of the centrality of the Scripture as a foundational tool, notwithstanding this, there are common roots of different African immigrant churches with different styles of ecclesiology and holistic Christianity emphasis. Yet, overall, they combine to form a uniquely African contextualization of Christianity, which places emphasis on the power of God. This is so because Africans are very much aware of the demonic forces such as evil spirits and witchcraft hence, their absolute trust in the power of the Holy Spirit dealing with these forces on their behalf.

### **3.3. Theologizing within the multicultural context of Britain**

Thompson and Keller (2002:124-125) echo the concerns local people may have about migrant Christians reaching out to them in the West. They offer some very cogent reasons why it is realistic to understand that in today's secularized society, people (the indigenes) will not listen to strangers. They therefore suggest that it is crucial to share the Gospel intentionally along existing networks in order to attract new membership from the wider communities. Perhaps what Thompson and Keller mean here is that it is strategically important for migrant churches to use the existing network for their mission endeavours to the wider communities. Such a possibility as suggested by Thompson and Keller (2002:124-125), however, may not be the only scenario. Nevertheless, it is true to say that the central challenge facing the African immigrant churches is the need to develop a model of Christian mission that inspires and transforms life in spite of one's background and how they can partner with the White majority churches for a more effective delivery of the Gospel in the UK. Therefore, the African immigrant churches would have to re-define themselves in relation to the White majority churches and also clarify their theology, if they are truly going to partner with them. This poses a serious challenge to the African immigrant churches, as it is obvious that there are cultural differences that in a way have kept them apart from the White majority churches.

Yet, in partnering with each other, there is the likelihood that both sides will be able to challenge the aspects of their culture and cultural influences on theology that are not consistent with Biblical principles. Even that which appears strange to their particular sensitivities, coloured as they are by their theological and cultural presuppositions, may be a dynamic and fluid movement on the way to becoming a truly African expression of the Lord Jesus Christ. As such, for the African immigrant

churches to become relevant in the UK landscape, they would have to change their theology in line with Scripture, to suit the environment in which they operate (the wider British environment) and also adapt to an ecclesiastical style that would be different from those practised in most churches in Africa. Their theology should be a type of theology that is keen to eliminate the harmful effects of an over-spiritualized expression of Christian faith.

Schreiter (1985:150) asks very pertinent questions concerning the relationship between what Westerners too easily write off as “syncretism” and contextualization:

If contextualization is about getting to the very heart of the culture, and Christianity is taking its place there, will not the Christianity that emerges look very much like a product of that culture? Or (to follow out the “heart of the culture” image) are we going to continue giving cultures the equivalent of an artificial heart – an organ that can do the job the culture needs, but one that will remain forever foreign?

Clearly, there is no single theology that is valid for all peoples and cultures at all times but theology evolves as a result of the interaction between the Gospel and the human cultural context in which the Gospel is preached. Mission historian Wilbert Shenk was right to state that one of the key features or definitions of contextualization is that “it is a process whereby the gospel message encounters a particular culture, calling forth faith and leading to the formation of a faith community which is culturally authentic and authentically Christian” (CF Shenk 2001:56-57). When one reflects on this definition the necessity of the process becomes apparent. It is an observable fact that today, the African immigrant churches in the UK find themselves living on the fringes of the environment of the Western cultural context in which they have established their landscape. In a way these churches are already contextualized but only to the minority African communities, yet, ideally churches should not seek to be organized primarily in terms of ethnicity as this distracts from the Biblical principles of unity in diversity (Galatians 3:28). There is therefore the need for contextualization with respect to the wider British society.

Rooms (2011:16-17) suggests that human culture and historical context play a part in the construction of the reality in which they live, so the human context influences their understanding of God and the expression of their faith. Rooms cites a situation whereby English Christians' integration of their faith and culture would definitely affect their worldview of life and values (Rooms, 2011:16). Clearly, the African immigrant churches have become established in the Western context and so they can work with the White majority churches to promote the Gospel in their new context by developing a new way of how being in Christ sees ethnic differences disappear<sup>44</sup> and celebrates God's gift of diversity. Both sides must develop a theology that is truly rooted in a culture and moment of history.

It is probably true to say that the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches are the subjects of culture and cultural change, as such are seeking to understand the Christian faith in a contemporary context that has developed as a result of mass migration into Britain in the past few decades and that has resulted in creating multicultural communities. Therefore, a type of theology, suitable to the emerging contexts, is to be developed in terms of dialogue between the various cultures.

In the current context of pluralism and multiculturalism in Britain, there is the tendency that contextualization could also result in competing attitudes, hence in theologizing contextually; a balanced approach is needed in maintaining identity and relevance. The issue here is how the African immigrant churches can contextualize by freeing themselves from the identification with Western cultures, and manifesting in their own ministry the global nature of the church and mission. The African immigrant churches must utilize critical contextualization without compromising Scripture. Developing an understanding of the principles of hermeneutics in order to interpret the Bible properly is very important since this could lead to the establishing of Biblical churches and ministries (Bosch, 2014:435-442).

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<sup>44</sup> The author is not suggesting that differences in cultures will be obliterated. What he means is the differences brought about by class and race. The issue here is a situation where there is an intentional diminished view of Christ's people from different backgrounds by other Christians having inflated view of themselves. These differences in the author's view, will disappear and give way to the celebration of God's gift of diversity in a true Christian relationship.

According to Hesselgrave (1994:71-72), the cultural preferences and social concerns that give rise to contextual theologies are for the most part legitimate but the concerns here is with a contextualization meaning and method that gives priority to those concerns and relegates the Biblical doctrine to a secondary position in theologizing. Hesselgrave feels that when that happens, the Bible loses its authority and merely provides appropriate “reference points” and pertinent paradigms (Hesselgrave, 1994:72). The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (NKJV) had this to say about winning souls from all backgrounds without compromising Biblical morality:

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews...Now this I do for the Gospel sake that I may be partaker of it with you.

Clearly, Paul would go to any length to break cultural barriers in order to reach out to people from diverse backgrounds. Hiebert (2009:29) also had this to say about contextualization:

The Bible is seen as containing divine revelation, not simply humanly constructed beliefs. In contextualization, the heart of the Gospel must be kept by encoding it in forms that are understood by the people, without making the Gospel captive to the contexts. This is an ongoing process of embodying the Gospel in an ever-changing world. Here cultures are viewed as both good and evil, not simply as neutral vehicles for understanding the world. No culture is absolute or privileged. We are all revitalized by the Gospel.

### **3.3.1 Challenges to theologizing within the multicultural context of the UK**

Barring the variety of definitions, explanations and evaluations on the subject matter of contextualization, Winter (1993:27) points out that contextualization is a dangerous word. In a similar fashion, Hesselgrave (1994:68) maintains that the problem of contextualization is that it has not been properly defined by its originators. He has this to say:



But in the case of contextualization, the definitions supplied by its originators were so biased in the direction of theological liberalism or neo-orthodoxy that some conservatives felt duty-bound to reject it altogether while others went to considerable lengths to redeem and refashion it.

In the past few decades, the nature of the context in the UK has been undergoing rapid changes mainly due to the phenomena of pluralism and multiculturalism. It has therefore become necessary for contextual theology to seek new ways of doing theology in a credible manner. According to Tanner (1997:19) every theology is a theology of a context, hence every human interpretation is done in the context of the interpreter. That is to say, a given Christian theology is an interpretation of the Christian faith from a particular context, making faith sensible to the realities of that context. The differences between the theological understandings of various interpreters therefore correspond to the differences between their particular contexts. And it is fair to say that culture influences the theological thinking of Christ's people. For example, if one works out of an empirical notion of culture, not only can there be a theology for every culture but there is also the possibility that other theologies will emerge for every period of history and this certainly will lead to proliferation of contextual theologies.

According to Schreiter (1985:13-16), when pluralism is considered a reality of the human context, the plurality of contexts directly leads to multiple contextual starting points. Considering different social factors, he proposes two contextual models in theologizing: an ethnographic model, which emphasizes cultural identity, and a liberation model, which emphasizes social change from oppression and social evils. Bevans (2014:11) on the other hand, identifies four essential realities of context that determine and influence the nature of contextual theology. They are personal or communal experience, culture, social location and social change. Contextualization in ethnographic and liberation models interacting with the pluralities of the above four realities of context can bring out a proper understanding of numerous contextual theologies (Schreiter, 1985:21). While the ethnographic model looks into the issue of identity and continuity, the liberation model, on other hand concentrates on social change and discontinuity (Schreiter, 1985:21).

While many related questions remain unanswered concerning the concept of contextualization, Bevans (2014:1-6) affirmed that there is no such thing as theology other than contextual theology and suggested that even European (Western) theology was also a contextual theology. The only difference with it was that it was not confronted by pluralism and was consequently imposed as a universal theology for all contexts. It is certainly true to say that pluralism creates distinct identities of individual contexts, hence encourages the development of different contextual theologies and when this happens, there is the tendency that each of these contexts will forge ahead with their own type of theology tailor-made for that specific context (with questionable epistemology) and this leads to numerous contextual theologies of different natures.

Bosch (2014:437-438) observes that when theology was contextualized in the West (Europe and North America), and exported to other parts of the world, contextualism then became the universalizing of the Western theological position. Bosch (2014:437-438) warns that non-Western contextual theologies also have the same tendency to replicate the mistakes of the West and when this happens it will, certainly, lead to new imperialist theology. With the emphasis on ethnic identity, cultural logic reacts against global theological flows and the tension of universal versus local continues to exist in contextual theology. In the background of multiculturalism, contextual theology can repeat the same historical mistake of presenting one contextual theology of a local church, leading to neo-imperialism. There is always the tendency for new imperialism in theology too, which simply replaces the old as has happened with tradition (Bosch, 2014:437).

Schreier (1985:26-27) rightly observes that certain elements of differences are given more prominence while some elements of identity are overlooked. In the UK, for instance, there is multiculturalism and multi-belonging, and people live together with attempts to express their unique identities but in seeking identity and relevance in this multicultural setting, Christ's people are always going to experience tensions between particularity and universality in their current way of doing theology. These limits of contextual theology propel Christ's people to look for a new way of theologizing to suit the emerging contexts. There is the suggestion that 'an experimental theology in which an ongoing dialogue is taking place between text

and context, a theology which, in the nature of the case, should remain provisional and hypothetical' (Bosch, 2014:437).

### **3.4. Developing a Biblical Theological basis and Hermeneutics for the African immigrant churches in the UK**

It is important to highlight that for the African immigrant churches to become relevant in the UK landscape and reach out into the wider communities, they would have to change their theology in line with Scripture to suit the British environment in which they operate; they would have to adopt the type of theology that explores the universal dimension of the Christian faith. Bevans (2014:7-8) understands that there is no such thing as a comprehensive or all-embracing theology for the Universal Church today, and that theology is the way religion makes sense in a particular cultural context. The African immigrant churches have become part of the landscape in Britain and are part of the wider British communities and it is incumbent upon them as Christians to minister to the wider communities. In order to do this, they would need a theology that appeals to their new context. However, they would not necessarily have to adapt to a theology that is based on creedal statements and dogmatics as practised in the West and also not the theology which over emphasizes spirituality and emotionalism as inherited from their African roots but by a proper understanding of the eschatological order as demonstrated in the Bible.

Schreier (1985:117) was making a point about theologizing locally when he argued that for a local theology to be valid, it has to be genuinely reflective of the Gospel and faithful to the Christian tradition. Schreier (1985:143) cited the following to support his view on local theology:

Local theologies are, in many ways, the expressions of popular religions. To develop local theologies, then, one must listen to popular religion in order to find out what is moving in people's lives. Only then can local theologies be developed and the liberating power of the Gospel come to its full flower.

According to Boff and Boff (1987:44-46), the human experiences of injustice are the outcomes of theological reflections on liberation and that in its ecclesiology, the

church must show that it is an instrument of liberation of the poor. They further argue that in order for the church to develop an ecclesiology of liberation that typifies the image of the poor, the church would have to realize its responsibilities for the poor. By the same token, they demonstrated that the Bible should place emphasis on supporting the poor and the oppressed in the society (Boff & Boff, 1987:44-46).

Similarly, Schreiter (1985:38) suggests that ecclesiology is going to be one of the major issues in developing local theologies – as prominent as hermeneutics, modes of cultural analysis and Christology. He further states that the struggles of contemporary poor Christians have helped to remind Christ's people that the issues of rich and poor are the most commonly raised moral problem in the Gospels (Schreiter, 1985:34 & 35) and that the theme of justice has been resurrected by the experience of these communities into an awareness of many communities (Bosch, 2014: 99-100).

Likewise, Gutierrez (1988:83-85) argues that liberation theology must address itself and suggested that the following concerns should be taken into account: conditions of social, political and economic oppression, the need the oppressed have of historical autonomy and the emancipation from sin and the acceptance of new life in Christ. Only when all these conditions are properly taken into consideration in circumstances where the poor are allowed to vocalize their needs and lead the way through to their liberty, can authentic liberation theology be said to have taken place.

This brings into focus the concerns for a Biblical approach to questions of interpretation of the Bible on one hand, and also concerns for positive outcomes for churches and missions in other cultures on the other (Hesselgrave, 1994: 60). The response to challenges of pluralism and relativism that manifest themselves not only in the way secularist approach questions the truth and goodness and also in the way in which Christians from different backgrounds approach the Scriptures cannot be underestimated.

Hammett (2005:11) was right in his assertion that the pragmatic approach of Christ's people, in spite of their background, to church life, their concern to be relevant to their culture, and their desire to see their churches grow leave them

vulnerable to the danger that their churches will be shaped more by those concerns than by design of the Lord of the church. In the light of these powerful cultural influences, Christian workers desiring to utilize critical contextualization must find an anchorage in the Scripture. They must also develop an understanding of the principles of hermeneutics in order to interpret the Bible properly in spite of their background. It will certainly be useful for them to be equipped and grounded in Biblical principles, and adept at theological thinking. For example, they need to understand the character and mission of God. This preparation will help them develop a Biblical ecclesiology in their mission endeavours. For instance, if the African Christians' understanding of salvation, as affirmed by authors such as Chike, is all about being saved and blessed (Chike, 2007:77), this will hinder their message to the already rich and those in the wider communities who do not face the social problems which in a way have defined the African theology of salvation.

There is no doubt that African Christians understand salvation in soteriological terms (salvation of individuals from eternal damnation) but the issue here is their over emphasis on material blessings which they claim come as a result of their being saved as well as the spiritual emphasis they place on spiritual warfare. It is true to say that there were several instances in the Bible, especially in the ministry of Christ and the early Apostles where people were said to be afflicted with spirits of infirmity and the only way for them to be healed was to first deal with the evil spirits by casting them out and once the demonic spirits have been cast out such persons received their healing (Matthew 8:3; Acts 3:1-16) but the problem here is the too much emphasis many of these migrant churches place on this doctrine.

In contrast to what has been said about the leadership of the migrant churches in the UK by authors including Olofinjana (2010:52) that one of the success stories of the migrant churches is their 'top down' leadership style, Gibbs and Coffey (2001:87) echo the principle of the 'lone leader' in the 'top down' system, as abnormal and has negative impact on those being led because such a leadership style does not identify the gifts of those being led as their goal is not empowerment but submission. Similarly, Robinson and Smith (2005:126) were making an important point when they said: 'we are left to die the death of the strengths and weaknesses of the man at the top.' It suggests that Robinson and Smith (2005:126)

see this type of church leadership as a kind of leadership that has no knowledge of building a team to get the work done and also fails to understand that those who want to be leaders must be servants of all. The cult of personality dominates many African-led churches today and this certainly, interferes with the progress of the ministries because this type of leadership places emphasis on the individual, limits the ministry to that person's vision alone and sadly channels much of the church's resources to the 'man at the top' enhancing their image as super pastors (Brodersen, 2007:7). Gibbs (2005:31) suggests that Christian leaders should follow Paul's example of demonstrating the importance of teamwork to get the work done. Corporate leadership expands the church's leadership base, which eventually leads to the diversification of the church's leadership gift and results in a properly developed and balanced manner. Gibbs and Coffey (2001:87) also highlight that Christian leaders who build strong relationships and expand their networks are those who relate well to one another in their congregations, hence command respect and influence within the network.

It is clear to say that any meaningful theologizing would involve interpretation and so doing theology in this emerging context of the UK would involve the human activity of interpretation. According to Tanner (1997:19), every human interpretation is done in the context of the interpreter. For the African immigrant churches, the factors that informed the development of their African liberation theology are not the same as the factors that define their new Western environment. This creates the need for a new theology defined by their new environment. To do this, they would need a proper understanding of the principles of hermeneutics which is very important in interpreting the Bible properly as suggested by Tanner who argues that a given Christian theology is an interpretation of Christian faith from a particular context, making faith sensible to the realities of that context; the differences between the theological understandings of various interpreters correspond to the differences between their particular contexts (Tanner, 1997:19). The challenge here is how they can make their theology contextually relevant and universally credible. For them to achieve this there is the need for the African immigrant churches and the UK White majority churches to develop an intercultural hermeneutics that is unique for both churches.

Larkin (1988:325-328) develops a Biblical theology of hermeneutics and culture and sets forth hermeneutical guidelines for interpreting and applying the Bible by providing examples from Western and the majority world cultures. Larkin's work involves four approaches: an overview, analysis, interpretation and application. Larkin (1988:325) in offering a reflective overview and analysis on how Scripture can be used effectively to communicate the message of the good news to all contemporary contexts suggested some very cogent view point:

This method of interpretation and application moves back and forth between the part and the whole, the text and the various contexts in which it is to be understood. In overview, interpreters consciously adopt a Biblical preunderstanding in viewing the literary and the historical context of the text. They take stock of their own cultural preunderstanding to assess its relation to the message. The next step views the parts through analysis, as interpreters study the grammatical, literary, and historical-cultural factors and what they contribute to the meaning. At this point interpreters return to a concern for context, as they engage in interpretation.

Having considered the above points, interpreters will then put together a coherent understanding of the text in its various literary contexts and relate that understanding to their own cultural context, considering how to propagate the message of the text and how to use it to communicate to the contemporary cultural context and finally, its application, which determines the implementation of the message in the immediate context (Larkin Jr, 1988:325-326).

Similarly, Starkloff (1994:69) understands that the propagation of the Gospel involves a conversation between the Gospel and the cultural context in which the message is delivered. Certainly, in several significant but limited ways, a person can contribute to the contextualization of theology in a cultural context that is not their own. But when they do this, they must approach the host culture with both humility and honesty. In order to reach out to the wider communities, the African immigrant churches must observe that the good news is always propagated through a particular cultural context and that the Gospel itself has the power to

transform these cultures to reflect the Scriptures. However, a real danger in contextualization is that one could mix Christianity and culture in a way that does not enhance but compromises and betrays Christianity. The fact is that a theology that takes culture seriously can easily become a “culture theology.” Geertz (1993:89) has this to say about culture:

It denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which (men) communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about the attitudes towards life.

Similarly, Rooms (2011:16) highlights that the meaning a person places on the world, the values he or she holds and the actions that ensue all constitute that person’s culture. Newbigin (1989:184-185), however, in talking about plurality of human cultures warned:

...from the point of view of a sociologist, religion is part of culture, and no religious belief is without implications for culture. On the other hand, religions may be multicultural, and that is certainly true of Christianity. There are enormous cultural variations between the ways in which Christians in Nigeria, India, Samoa, and the USA express their faith. The question of the relation between the Gospel and the different human cultures is a very live one in contemporary missiology.

Newbigin (1984:184-185) further indicates that McGavran absolutized culture and minimized the cultural changes which brings conversion into the believer’s life. McGavran, according to Newbigin (1984:184), affirmed that people who accept the Gospel ought to retain their traditional culture. Newbigin (1984:184-185) went on to say that what McGavran perhaps meant here was such aspects of culture as music, art, dress, habits of eating and drinking and language and not elements of culture such as cannibalism, the death penalty for petty offences, or the ancient Indian concept of sati.<sup>45</sup> All in all, Newbigin (1984:184-184) maintains that there is

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<sup>45</sup> The burning of a man’s widow with his body on the funeral pyre (Newbigin, 1984:184).



no absolute concept of a total relativism in respect of varieties of human culture but suggests that the most fundamental element in culture is language. Clearly, culture plays a role in missions but a fear of “syncretism” has been evident almost from the beginning of the discussions about contextualizing theology. Because of contemporary pluralism in theology, to which the contextualization of theology is an important contributing factor, contextual theologians have been challenged to search for criteria to help provide a way of theologizing. If theology is really grounded in a particular context, it cannot easily co-exist with culture that is inimical to human development. Therefore, the Bible must speak with binding authority to our different historical and cultural situations.

Rooms (2011:16) describes a given Christian theology as an interpretation of Christian faith from that particular context, making faith sensible to the realities of that context. Rooms further states that any attempt of Christians to integrate their faith and culture will affect the meaning they place on life and values (Rooms, 2011:16). In other words, any attempt to contextualize the theology of the African immigrant churches in order to make sense to their new British environment must take into consideration the worldview of the African Christian.

The Gospel, however, is propagated through a culture, hence cannot be understood without a particular cultural expression. This calls for inculturation. However, Rooms (2011:18) suggests that the definition of inculturation should go beyond finding correspondences between faith and culture or adapting faith to culture. Magessa (2004:189) argues that:

True inculturation is a deep experience in the life of an individual and the community that occurs when there is a constant search for identification between Gospel and culture, and when there is mutual correction and adjustment between them.

Rooms (2011:18) noted how implicit inculturation could potentially be inconsistent, but also argues that there could still be a sort of integration of faith and culture, however, helpful or unhelpful (in the UK). He suggested that Christ’s people bring the hidden, implicit inculturation to the surface and examine it afresh in the light of faith, creating a hopefully more helpful, explicit inculturation. There is therefore the

need for Christ's people to recognize outreach as a mutual partnership and conversely, dialogue in a particular culture within a Biblical perspective. Their mission endeavours should also continue to seek appropriate expressions of the Gospel in the cultures that make up the multicultural British communities and reflect inclusivity within these cultures.

It is true to say that the theological concept of inculturation does not sufficiently explain the interaction between Gospel and culture as argued by Starkloff (1994:69) when he said:

The introduction of the term "inculturation" into theological discourse can be compared to the proverbial stone cast into a pond; it has sent ripples throughout the Christian world. This has happened with such rapidity that inculturation is still often misunderstood in popular conversation, and at times in pastoral workshops and classes. However, I resist attempting to clarify the term further. A summary of existing works on inculturation indicates that it always involves a conversation between two partners – the universal Gospel or fundamental "good news" and the cultural uniqueness of each context in which that message is heard.

In the light of these contrasting backgrounds, it is clear that "inculturation" does not take into account the complicated reality of the interaction between the accumulated Christian culture in which the Gospel is propagated and the various levels of meanings that other cultures manifest. Bosch (2014:466) affirms that the philosophy that "anything goes" as long as it seems to make sense can be catastrophic. Different cultures have different meanings to matters such as illness, death, prosperity, spiritual warfare, sin and forgiveness and many others but few to mention. For example, the African Christian places emphasis on spiritual warfare, divine protection, healing and prosperity while in the West where guilt is an issue, the emphasis is on sin and forgiveness (Chike, 2007:79). It is probably true to say that the concept of inculturation overlooks serious issues such as the interaction between the Christian culture in which the good news is being propagated and the other meanings manifested in other cultures within the same society.

Bosch (2014:466) affirms that the concept of inculturation remains a tentative and continuing process not just for the reason that cultures are sporadic but the likelihood that the church (universal) may discover new truth of the Christian faith. Bosch (2014:466) states that there is no eternal theology, no *theologia perennis* that exercises influence over other theologies. Bosch went on to say that “in the past, Western theology arrogated to itself the right to be such an arbitrator in respect to Third-World theologies. It implicitly viewed itself as fully indigenized, inculturated, a finished product.” Conversely, Bosch (2014:467) suggests that all theologies, and that includes the Western theologies, need one another because they influence, challenge and inspire one another, and clearly this can in a way liberate the Western theologies, from what he describes in his own words as “Babylonian captivity” which they had been held for many centuries.

In relation to this, Bosch (2014:467) understands that what the Christian world is involved in is not just inculturation but what he terms “interculturalism”<sup>46</sup> which he argues is an appropriate way of theologizing in the emerging context of pluralism, multiculturalism and globalization. In this new approach the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches could have shared common ground to do theology in the process of a mutual understanding of ‘give and take’ and this will initiate a paradigm shift in their understanding of ecclesiology.

It is important to recognize that attention to the role of culture in interpreting Scripture and communicating its meaning and its message to the nations is not the same as attention to the mission itself. Attention to, and interaction with, the Word of God should lead us to both a realization and explication of God’s great plan to include representatives of the various peoples of the world in his eternal family-

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<sup>46</sup> Interculturalism assumes that local incarnations of the faith should not be too local. On the other hand, a “homogeneous unit” church can become so ingrown that it finds it impossible to communicate with other churches and believes that its perspective on the gospel is the only legitimate one. The church must be a place to feel at home; but if only we feel at home in our particular church, and all others are either excluded or made unwelcome or feel themselves completely alienated, something has gone wrong (Bosch, 2014:467). Intercultural theology is the scholarly theological discipline that operates within a particular cultural framework without absolutizing it. It will select its methods appropriately. Western academic theology is not automatically privileged over others. They also have the responsibility to search for alternative forms of doing theology. All theologies must be measured for their capacity for bridge building between diverse groups (Jongneel, 1992:11-12)

and to his desire to use Christ's people in the fulfilment of that plan (Hesselgrave, 1994:33-34).

### **3.5. Summary**

For the African immigrant churches to work with the White majority churches, there is the need for contextualization. However, the issue here is how they can contextualize the Gospel critically in a way that will be appropriate to their adherents, by achieving the delicate balance of their various cultural contexts without compromising the truth of the Scriptures. There is therefore the need for the emergence of new paradigms of theologizing that are faithful and consonance to Scripture.

Contextual theology is appropriate for theologizing in this emerging context of globalization and pluralism, taking into consideration the multicultural nature of Britain. It is a theology that gives significance to the specific contexts of the Christian communities and their particular issues. However, it has its downside of competing attitudes. For the most part, the multiplicity of contextual theologies and the subsequent tendencies of mutual exclusivism, relativism and absolutism are some of the challenges of pluralism in the process of contextualization. There is therefore the need for a proper methodological framework that can help balance the particularities and universalities and maintain identity and relevance while doing theology contextually.

A critical contextualization would ensure that it is not simply the interaction between Gospel and culture as if they represent two monolithic meanings but rather between multiple cultural orientations (Bosch, 2014:437-444). All Christ's people are shaped by the culture in which they are nurtured and their culture influences their theological thinking and missiological endeavours. For the most part, Christ's people remain unaware of their cultural biases until someone from another culture is sufficiently frank to confront them with the issues.

It is true to say that waves of immigration have influenced the shape of the White majority churches in the UK, particularly in the cities, from the grass-roots level up. African immigrant churches preach the Gospel and are the antithesis to values that counter godly living to their own kind. They have a strong 'spiritual worldview.' In

addition, the White majority churches also have organizational skills and so these are examples of some of the values that can be extended to the wider UK church communities through partnering.

However, theologizing in multicultural Britain comes with challenges. For instance, the nature of the context undergoes changes due to emerging scenarios of pluralism and so for contextual theology to be relevant there should be the need for Christ's people to study the Scriptures to understand and to bear witness to the Gospel. However, studying Scriptures alone does not help to see their sociocultural biases and so Christ's people need to study also human cultural contexts to understand themselves and others in order to communicate effectively (Tanner, 1997:18-19).

Christ's people need to study divine revelation and communicate that revelation in ways that remain true to it and yet are understood by people from all cultures. Failure to do so leads to syncretism in which the truth of the Gospel is lost and Christ's people go astray. Church leaders, therefore, have a greater responsibility in nurturing their congregations to become mission-minded with the understanding that all Christ's people are together in the mission of God, in spite of their background or ethnicity.

Non-Western churches such as the African immigrant churches have emerged in the UK with their own local theologies but they are caught between two cultures: they have discovered that they are no longer in Africa but they are not yet at home in the host culture too. They could therefore play a role by creating space for particularities and universalities as admitted by Wijzen and Nissen (2002:221-222).

Arguably, dialoguing between the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches has always been problematic but not impossible. Clearly, the superiority complex of some White British Christians and the suspicions of the African migrants make dialogue very difficult as rightly highlighted by Kwiyani (2014:110) who argues that the issue of race, among other things, is the main factor hindering dialoguing. Kwiyani (2014:110) mentioned that the pain of discrimination some Africans face in the White majority churches make them resolve to going to the African-led churches where 'they do not have to apologize for being African.' It

is fair to say that, in most cases, migrants in the White majority churches have been made to feel like outsiders despite having all learned to speak English fluently.

Conversely, Wijsen and Nissen (2002: 222-223) suggest that theology should be used to tackle the issues of race in a way that Christ's people could see their racial differences as diversity. This perception could bring about unity within the Body of Christ. Clearly, the use of effective dialoguing is very important in bringing about unity but this can only be achieved in the environment where Christ's people from the different cultures can come together to theologize with mutual respect (Wijsen & Nissen, 2002:222-223).

Reddie, A.G. (2014:18-20) suggested that for black Christians in Britain to say they do not see colour as a factor in their hermeneutical engagement with the Christian faith is a misnomer. Reddie affirms that there are racial differences but maintains that the differences should not bring a disunity into the Body of Christ. He feels that it is not much of the physical differences that are the problem but our value system. That is to say, the meanings we attribute to notions of race and ethnicity have always divided people from different racial backgrounds. Reddie cites the experience in Pentecost (Acts 2) to bolster his claims. He had this to say: "In the Pentecost narrative, we see the difference itself is not a problem. The believers at the epoch-making event in Jerusalem are united in faith and adherence to God and not through a sublimation of their material differences" (Reddie, 2014:20).

There have been some suggestions by Bible scholars such as Kwame Bediako that Africans should have their own version of the Christian faith that responds to their own context and that this would affirm their humanity and enable them to be more genuinely Christians because they would be practising Christianity that rings true within (Bediako, 1992:237). In contrast to the assertion of Bediako, which to some degree can apply to the Christian faith in Africa, the African immigrant churches in the UK find themselves in a different cultural context. Ideally, they must regard the whole British society as another stage in their mission endeavours, as such if they are truly going to reach out to the wider communities, their theology would have to reflect their new environment.

There is therefore, the need for a contextualization of the African immigrant churches,<sup>47</sup> and contextualization, if handled critically, can result in free interaction and involvement of people from the diverse backgrounds without ignoring their individualities but recognizing their differences as a gift to the Body of Christ. Creating an atmosphere of sensitivity to each other's culture will result in *intercultural* relationship, which will bring about a reciprocal interaction of the diverse cultures that make up the British communities. This can result in reconciled unity, which will reject the false belief that one particular culture is the best and that all others must follow their ways (Bosch, 2014:466-468).

In general, it is true to say that one of the challenges facing cross-cultural missions is the theology. However, theologizing in the emerging context alone will not bring about the desired unity. Christ's people, in spite of their background must take Biblical inerrancy and authority seriously. They must also use valid principles of interpretation and application. A common theological approach in part can prevail in the diversity between the White majority churches and the African immigrant churches as this may increase their conversation which will create awareness and move the dialogue forward, even though, uniformity is not to be sought.

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<sup>47</sup> The African immigrant churches have now gained their landscape in the Britain and are now part of the fabric of the British society. If they really want to reach out to the wider communities, they would need a theology which reflects the culture of their new environment.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The author carried out historical development and theological analysis into the mission of the African immigrant churches in the UK in the last two previous chapters (Chapters 2 and 3). The initial investigations in Chapter 2 were to engage with the fundamental questions of the historical developments of the African immigrant churches in the UK; how diversity brought by international migration has resulted in a rich ethnic blend in Britain's urban communities that naturally finds its way into churches. The theological analysis of the African immigrant churches (Chapter 3) was undertaken to determine the theological relevance of these migrant churches in the UK Christian landscape.

It was discovered in Chapter 2 that through the mission endeavours of the African immigrant churches, many migrants have found a refuge from discrimination and discovered a sense of identity, respect and belonging in the different churches established by persons of their own ethnic or national origin where they can profoundly assert themselves. Undoubtedly, the African immigrant churches have found a Christian space in Britain and it is true to say that the factors bringing them together are not just spiritual but also other factors include social identities, transnationalism, migration as a process, civic engagement, political incorporation and gender relations as observed by Olupona and Gemignani (2007:3)<sup>48</sup>

Certainly, these factors will remain with the African immigrant churches and frankly, they are good for the recently arrived immigrants and migrants with a high people-consciousness, yet, ideally churches should not seek to be organized primarily in terms of ethnicities as this distract from the Biblical principles of unity in diversity (Galatians 3:24). More so, there is an uncertain future for any church or church movement whose numerical growth or existence depends on the number of immigrants coming into the country.

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<sup>48</sup> See Olupona, J.K. & Gemignani, R (eds.), 2007, *African immigrant Religions in America*, New York, NY University Press p 3



How then can the African immigrant churches re-define their God-given mandate to Britain and work cross culturally with the White majority churches? In addition, how can they strategize in such a way that they would become the vanguard of spiritual, emotional and social liberation to the UK Christian communities and the wider society?

In general, it is true to say that one of the challenges facing cross-cultural missions is the theology. However, this study proved in Chapter 3 that theologizing in the emerging context alone would not bring about the desired result. Even though, a common theological approach in part can prevail in the diversity between the White majority churches and the African immigrant churches, as this may increase their conversation and thereby create awareness and move the dialogue forward, yet, in this case uniformity is not to be sought. There is therefore, the need to learn from other churches and denominations that have African roots and also White majority churches that integrate blacks, on how their visions, values and practices can bring about the desired aim of this research.

This chapter therefore focuses on investigations into four denominations in the UK: two with African roots, such as the Church of Pentecost of Ghana in UK and the Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church and two White UK denominations that integrate black people such as the All Nations Church (ANC) and the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

It is fair to say that any attempt to investigate all the four denominations would take several years so the author decided to undertake a study of a single local church taken from each of the denominations.

The primary sources of information used in this chapter include research findings obtained from observation, interview, field notes and documentation. The author will gather the themes, insights and patterns that will emerge from the research fieldwork and integrate them into a critical thesis, utilizing methods of comparison, analysis, critique and evaluation in the next chapters (Chapters 5-7).

## 4.2. Case Study Selection

The ANC was chosen because it was a White majority church that incorporates people from diverse backgrounds, hence has the potential to suit the description of a multi-ethnic church with a multicultural identity. The Harborne Baptist Church (HBC) was chosen because it is a welcoming church which has integrated people from 19 diverse backgrounds; the Church of Pentecost (COP) was chosen because it is a migrant church which has made an attempt to work with a White majority church in the UK; it also offers a strong cross-current debate of what African Christian scholars termed as 'reverse mission.' The Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church (ECFC), on the other hand, was chosen because it is an African immigrant church that has become part of the Christian landscape in Britain, and now has many branches in different parts of the country.<sup>49</sup>

The author made initial contacts with the leadership of all the four churches by writing to ask their permission to carry out this research fieldwork. The author was assigned a minister by the leadership of each of the four churches to act as the main 'gatekeeper.' (See Section 1.9 of RP for a discussion on research ethics in relation to this study).

After submitting his Research Proposal to the leadership teams of all the four churches, it was agreed that the author could carry out the fieldwork.<sup>50</sup> The author received a full co-operation of all the four pastors and their congregations. A high degree of access and intensive participant observation were carried out as listed below:

The fieldwork was carried out during five Sunday visits to each of the four churches and during some of their week activities. This lasted for a period of 24 months starting from April 2015 to April 2017.<sup>51</sup> There were also follow-up visits during and after the fieldwork.

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<sup>49</sup> The full lists of all the acronyms are stated in the "Abbreviation page."

<sup>50</sup> See Annexure B-E for the consent letters sent to the four churches.

<sup>51</sup> The author started making contacts with the case study churches from August 2014 but started the fieldwork in April 2015.

Five different sources of evidence were collected during this period, in order of significance in this study: in-depth interviews, participant observation, field notes and other documentation (including the churches' websites), sermon recording and archival records.

It was worthy of note that the interviewees were given the opportunity to check and comment on a copy of the interview transcript, and a draft of this chapter was sent to the four pastors of the four churches for comment. All the questions remain open-ended and have been designed to generate theory inductively (See RP).

The study also aims to be reliable, yet, in this instance, sampling was an issue of little concern, as the number of churches involved could not be regarded as representing the various four denominations, due to their small sampling size. The reader should therefore be cautious about generalizing the results from the study as they may not have wider implications because of the size of the sample. Nevertheless, it is important to report findings from this research, as the context in which the study is done is relevant; the different churches involved in different settings will result in separating the "relevant" from the "irrelevant" facts of the study. The author will then carry forward a critical analysis of the relevant facts. In this case, all the interview scripts, sermon recordings and relevant field notes would be gathered into a case study database, from which the analysis could be reported.<sup>52</sup>

#### **4.2.1. Interviews**

The author adopted different approaches (listed below) in gathering data but relied heavily on the use of in-depth interview for collecting data (see Section 1:7 of RP). First, the author recorded a series of 26 interviews with a cross section of leaders and church members from the four churches using in-depth interviewing. In interviewing the four churches, a checklist<sup>53</sup> was prepared to make sure that all relevant areas were covered in the interviews. The interview with each of the church leaders lasted for one and a half to two hours and as short as 30 minutes with each of the members. All interviews were recorded.

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<sup>52</sup> See Yin, Robert, 1994, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Sage Publications p 37-40

<sup>53</sup> See Annexure F-N for the in-depth interview checklists of all the four case study churches.

#### **4.2.2. Participant Observation**

The author also used unstructured interviewing to collect data during activities in the case study churches by engaging participants in chats and asking questions that came from the immediate context:

- Full participation in some of the activities of the four churches.
- Attendance at 20 services over 20 Sundays proportionately in the four churches.
- Participant observation of a variety of the midweek ministry activities of the churches, including youth groups, in the case of the Church of Pentecost, the Akan service and Chinese and Asian services in the case of ANC.

#### **4.2.3. Field Journal**

A field journal was kept for observations and questions throughout the visit.

#### **4.2.4. Documentation**

All the four churches have documented their vision statements and values in their churches' websites and in other documents. The COP, for example has documented their vision statement in a document called *The Church of Pentecost Vision 2018, Five-Year Vision for the Church of Pentecost, Covering the Period 2013-2018*. During the author's visits to these churches, he collected some of the teaching notes given out at services and other meetings and conferences.

#### **4.2.5. Sermon Recordings**

All sermons in the four churches were available for download from the websites of their churches.

#### **4.2.6. Archives**

The author examined church records for attendance at services, baptism and weddings, funerals for the past four years of the various churches.

### **4.3. History, Structure, Vision and Practices of the four case study churches**

The four churches were covered by the narrative responses of four church ministers and 15 members of their churches. Included is also the observation of 20 recorded services and other events.

The interview responses and observation work carried out among these groups provided significant data from which to formulate an evaluation of the extent to which the aims and purposes of the research will be achieved. The following are the history, structure, vision and practices of the four denominations that were researched:

#### **4.3.1. All Nations Church, Wolverhampton**

The ANC was initially called Temple Street Pentecostal Church. It is based in the geographical centre of Wolverhampton in the West Midlands. ANC, Wolverhampton is missional, charismatic and compassionate. It was planted by two young sisters in 1941 from Lancashire. The initial vision was to reach out to the poor in the poorest communities. In other words, the aim was to make it a place where the hurting, the depressed, the frustrated and destitute could find salvation, hope, forgiveness, restoration, acceptance and love as well as help and encouragement to become what they were supposed to become in their Christian lives.

There was a major shift in ministry practice when Pastor Steve Uppal became the senior minister in 2001. Even though, the church still maintains the vision of the founders in serving the poor and welcoming people from diverse backgrounds, when Pastor Uppal became the senior minister, he and his team of ministers changed the church's name to the ANC as they believe the new name reflects the vision of the church and think that it is a prophetic name that suits the diverse nature of the Wolverhampton communities as well as the multicultural identity of their ministry.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Copied from the All Nations Church website: [www.allnations.org.uk/about/values](http://www.allnations.org.uk/about/values) (accessed 15.12.2016). This was also mentioned in a recorded interview with the All Nations Church leadership.

#### **4.3.1.1. Vision and Values**

The church's vision is for all people to glorify God through knowing Christ, becoming like Christ and making Christ known.

The values of the church are written on their website and during the interview with the leadership, they mentioned these values with much emphasis.<sup>55</sup> Building a healthy culture that attracts the Holy Spirit to stay is the church's main goal and they believe they can achieve this by practising the following values:

The centrality of Christ is their core values. That means Jesus is supreme in all things and is central and the example in all things and they can seek for his presence at all times.

They believe in an authentic community, valuing relationships above gift and function as they think that the greatest commandment is relational. They are of the view that every believer must have audacious faith, insurmountable hope and extravagant love since they believe that these three are supernatural powers for all believers.

They believe that spiritual disciplines such as prayer and fasting should be practised by their followers.

Another value is living a life of humility and sacrifice since they believe that God esteems humility and sacrifice and that believers must follow the example of Jesus.

They are committed to extending the Kingdom by proclaiming the good news to the poor, bringing deliverance and new life to all. This, they think is the Great Commission which requires urgent full obedience as the whole world is their mission field.<sup>56</sup>

#### **4.3.1.2. Sunday Worship and Ecclesiastical Style**

During his fieldtrips, the author observed that there were three main Sunday services: the first service starts at 9.30 am to 12.00 pm. It is a multi-ethnic service

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

officiated in the English language; the second service starts from 12.00 pm and it is officiated in the Chinese language; the last service is the Asian service ministered in Punjabi. This service starts at 3.30 pm. The Sunday morning services are contemporary, with lively band led worship and an informal feel. They have recently built a large modernized church auditorium with modern facilities which has created a conducive environment for their church activities.

#### **4.3.1.3. Other Groups**

The author discovered during his fieldtrips to the ANC that the church is involved in a variety of ministry activities including preaching, teaching, pastoral care and prayer meetings. Besides, the Sunday services, there are other regular groups for different ages which meet during the weekdays. For example, there are other groups like the Friday Night's Frontline Youth service, which is a fellowship of 11-18 year olds. They meet on Fridays from 6.30 pm to 9.00 pm. They also have home groups, 319 Café and other citywide activities.

#### **4.3.1.4. Church Leadership and Structure**

The ANC is intentional about raising leaders. They equip Christ's people to maximize their potentials through practical hands-on experience, discipleship and leadership development. Currently, their leadership team comprises of two Asians and two White British and their wives. The team's role is to work together to support the Senior Pastor to develop and communicate the vision of the church, oversee and facilitate the work of the ministry. As well as meeting for church business, they also meet as a Life Group because, according to them, authentic community matters.

There is also a pastoral team who helps disciple and care for the various ethnic community of believers. The pastoral team's primary function is to help provide care and discipleship to the ANC family through overseeing, supporting and developing Area Leaders and Life group leaders. They also step in to help with particular pastoral needs, although the senior minister is clearly, the main leader of the church, yet, the role of guiding and directing is delegated to a wider leadership structure and in some cases along the ethnic variations of the church. For example, there is a Zimbabwe-born minister in charge of the Zimbabweans in the church.

Clearly, the responsibilities of leadership are not the sole responsibility of the senior pastor as it is structured for the benefit of the wider community of believers from a diverse background. The ANC also enjoys good working relationship with other churches especially churches and fellowships within the Wolverhampton municipality.<sup>57</sup>

#### **4.3.2. The Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church, London**

The ECFC is located in Kings Cross in London. It started in London in 1979 as a home fellowship with a handful of believers desiring to coming together to worship God in their local language. The ECFC started a full church service in 1994.

Over these years, growth was fuelled from two sources. In the initial stages of the church's history, this was predominantly through the arrival of Ethiopian migrants, most of whom were evangelical Christians who came into the country as refugees. In recent years, it has primarily been through the evangelization and conversion of Ethiopians and Eritreans living in the UK.<sup>58</sup>

##### **4.3.2.1. Vision and Values**

ECFC has the broader vision of reaching out to all people irrespective of their ethnicities, but their emphasis is on the Ethiopian and Eritrean communities in the UK. Their ultimate desire is for their adherents to know and experience Jesus Christ in his fullness. It is their desire to worship and enjoy God and they strive to achieve this by living sanctified lives that may be pleasing to God.

The church's vision has developed over time and over the years has become more outward looking in their outreach to the lost. The emphasis on winning only Ethiopians and Eritreans has been shifted as the church has adopted a broader vision of reaching out to the wider community.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid

<sup>58</sup> Copied from the Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church's website: [www.ecfcuk.org](http://www.ecfcuk.org) (accessed 15.12.2016). This was also mentioned in a recorded interview with one of their ministers.



It is their firm and unequivocal belief that it is the mission of the whole church to win the lost and disciple them for Christ. It is also the role and responsibility of the leaders to equip and mobilize the church to accomplish her mission

Evangelism is the primary purpose of the ECFC. They believe that evangelism is a God-given task for Christ's people to deliver the Gospel to the unsaved, as such they have created a department for evangelism. They absolutely believe that Christ's commission to the Christian is to preach the Gospel and make disciples of people. Moreover, to ensure that the Gospel is preached among Ethiopians and Eritreans and for that matter all others, the church in its vision statement expects adherents to win a minimum of three souls to Christ every year.

The department of evangelism explores every possible way of equipping, encouraging and organizing its members to the task. By engaging the church in prayers for the lost, adherents are encouraged to have a list of people they could pray for as they lead them to Christ. They believe in the local church as the 'pipeline' of the Gospel to all people. The purpose of their department of evangelism therefore, is to bring glory to God by making followers of his son Jesus Christ.<sup>59</sup>

#### **4.3.2.2. Sunday Worship and Ecclesiastical Style**

It was observed during the author's fieldtrips that the ECFC meets at the Pentonville Road, Kings Cross, London for their Sunday service, which starts from 10.00 am to 12.00 pm. There is also an afternoon Sunday service held at the Lillie Road, Fulham, South-West London, which starts from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm. This service is conducted in the Amharic language, which is the Ethiopian national language and which is widely spoken by Eritreans. The ecclesiastical style is grounded in their understanding of Scripture, but it is also contextualized within the Ethiopian culture as the music, the dance and the liturgy are all based on their Ethiopian cultural and religious practice.

#### **4.3.2.3. Other Group**

The author observed during his field trips that there is a small group in ECFC called the Kingdom Youth Ministry that is open to all high school pupils aged between 11

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid

and 18 years. During meetings, they study the Bible and apply it to their lives. This programme helps this particular age group to understand that Christ is more than just a person from history and that the Bible is more than just a book. There have also been events such as sporting activities for boys and girls, and this has in a way created a conducive atmosphere for the youth who are mainly the second or even third generation to socialize and understand their roots as well as the culture of their newly found country.

#### **4.3.2.4. Church Leadership and Structure**

In his fieldtrips, the author discovered that the ECFC maintains a simple leadership structure. They believe that the Church (universal) is divinely ordained organism rather than a man-made organization such as a club or association; as such their leadership ministry is not based solely on academic achievement but by the calling of God. They have the pastoral staff as well as deacons and elders. These men and women must always possess certain personal qualifications (see 1 Timothy 3). They think that Christian leadership should be supernaturally chosen and ordained by God and that these should be gifted leaders, which Christ has provided for the church. As part of a wider spectrum their ministry practices are not evident only in their leadership structure and tenets of faith, but more often in the unwritten theological belief system informed by their cultural beliefs, which they would claim is consistent with Scripture.

#### **4.3.3 The Church of Pentecost of Ghana in UK**

The COP is a worldwide Pentecostal church with its headquarters in Accra, Ghana. The beginning of the COP was linked to the missionary efforts of Pastor James McKeown, an Irish missionary who in 1937 was sent by the Apostolic Church in Bradford, UK, to the then Gold Coast which became Ghana after independence in 1957.

In the 1980s, many African migrants in London became members of Christian associations such as PAUKE, GCF and ACF<sup>60</sup> recognized the Kensington Temple

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<sup>60</sup> See the full names in the “Abbreviations page.”

(Elim Pentecostal Church) and other Elim churches in London as their established places of worship.

The idea of starting a COP Britain was devised through the arrangement of some Ghanaians who were members of the above-mentioned associations and also worshipping in Elim churches in the 1980s. Even though, these Ghanaians were welcomed into the Elim churches, they still thought that in order to have a unique Ghanaian/African identity in worship in the UK, they would need a separate fellowship based on the Ghanaian culture. Hence, in 1986 they gathered at 15 Lawrence Road, N15 4EN, 79 Axholme Avenue, Edware HA8 5BD and 76 Roll Gardens, Ilford, Essex for fellowship. Much progress had been made by 1989 when the fellowship, which began as informal meeting, gained the attention of the COP headquarters in Ghana who then arranged for a minister from Ghana to migrate to the UK to take care of the newly planted church.<sup>61</sup>

#### **4.3.3.1. Vision and Values**

The vision of COP is to establish a global Pentecostal church that is holistic in ministry, vibrant in evangelism, church planting and discipleship. They do this by spreading the Word of God, transforming lives and bringing the world to the saving knowledge of Christ Jesus. Their mission statement states that: *‘the COP exists to establish responsible and self-sustaining churches filled with committed, Spirit-filled Christians of character, who will impact their communities.’*

The COP believes that reasons for its continued existence are their involvement in missions because mission is the heartbeat of God. Therefore, at COP, they see missions as a great responsibility of making significant contributions to global mission. They think that their success in this direction will depend on their ability to rise up and meet the challenges of the contemporary world.

Therefore, at the COP, evangelism is the responsibility of every member. They believe in ‘power evangelism’ and think that members have a duty to share their

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<sup>61</sup> Copied from the Church of Pentecost’s website: [www.copuk.org/core-values](http://www.copuk.org/core-values) (accessed 15.12.2016). This was also mentioned in a recorded interview with one of their ministers.

faith after conversion. They maintain high standard of excellence in all ministries by seeking to honour God who gave humankind the Saviour.

They believe in the presence and leadings of the Holy Spirit in worship and in their daily lives. They think that the new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit and that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is for power to do God's work. In addition, the gifts of the Spirit, is for the building of the Body of Christ and the fruits of the Spirit, to them, help Christians to develop Christ-like characters.

Their distinctiveness is in their self-supporting attitude, faithfulness and integrity, prayer life, church discipline, liberality, mutual respect and respect for authority, and the sense of belonging for all members without discrimination.

In their discipleship training, they emphasize on holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, honesty, sincerity, humility, prayer life and a disciplined and responsible life.

Some of their core practices are regular prayer for the baptism in the Holy Spirit with initial evidence of speaking in tongues but emphasis is placed on the believer bearing the fruits of the spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Their leadership development is based on the apostolic foundation, hence their appointment and calling into ministry are also based on the character and charisma, and the directions of the Holy Spirit. Clergy and lay ministries are equally encouraged.

Faithfulness in all forms of contributing to the church is welcomed and there is much emphasis of members giving offering and paying tithes (one tenth of their incomes) to the church.

The COP believes in communal living with members supporting one another, participating in communal work. The church, in some cases helps the entire community by providing social needs such as health services, schools and agriculture as well as donating to the needy in society. There is an elaboration on providing sacrifices to the church without expecting pecuniary reward.

They teach their adherents to abstain from alcohol, tobacco and other hard drugs and monogamous marriage is enforced as well as chastity before marriage.<sup>62</sup>

#### **4.3.3.2. Sunday Worship and Ecclesiastical Style**

The COP local assemblies conduct their services mainly in the Ghanaian Akan language with their ecclesiastical style modelled on the Ghanaian culture, but recently there has been the establishment of PIWCs that run concurrently with the Akan services. The PIWCs provides a well-organized, cross-cultural church, primarily for people of non-Ghanaian cultural background who want a place of worship. This is also open to all Christ's people, especially the second-generation members in the UK and elsewhere, who want to worship in the English language or in a multicultural setting. Praise and worship in the PIWCs is contemporary.<sup>63</sup>

#### **4.3.3.3. Other Groups**

There are other groups such as children's ministry, Youth ministry, Women's and Men's fellowship and prayer groups in the COP local assemblies. Some of these groups meet on Sundays while others meet during the weekdays.<sup>64</sup>

#### **4.3.3.4. Church Leadership and Structure**

The General Council at the COP headquarters in Ghana is the highest governing body of the COP and while the planting of new COP branches in the UK by individuals is not centrally controlled from the headquarters in Ghana, the international headquarters plays a supervisory role and intervenes in matters where appropriate. The headquarters serves as a centre of excellence in COP's administration. It sharpens its effectiveness by offering periodic and relevant training for the staff. Recently, it has acquired the Birmingham Christian College premises in Selly Oak, Birmingham for the training of its leaders in Europe as it sees ministerial training and development partly as the answer to the challenges Christ's people go through in the ever-changing dynamic and trends of the

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<sup>62</sup> See the Church of Pentecost Vision 2018, Five-Year Vision, Covering the period 2013-2018.

<sup>63</sup> This was observed during the author's fieldtrips to the Church of Pentecost branch in Birmingham.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

contemporary environment. These challenges, to them, call for a constant upgrading and increasing of knowledge and skills for all ministers.<sup>65</sup>

#### **4.3.4. The Baptist Church, Harborne, Birmingham**

The HBC is an evangelical church located in Harborne, a suburb of Birmingham. It is within walking distance of the University of Birmingham campus. It is an old Baptist church, a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, hence operates within its tenets and principles. It was once housed in an old building but its transformation came in 2012 when, by the generosity of some of its members the old building was transformed into a simple and exciting new building as an attractive place of worship. This transformation of their worship place, according to them, *would allow those passing by the location of the church to see clearly into the church building so they can see their transparent worship and be challenged to see how they are proud of God in their worship.* The front of the church has become a beautiful glass atrium, topped by a simple cross, which was purposefully designed to attract the world to share their love of Jesus Christ.<sup>66</sup>

##### **4.3.4.1. Vision and Values**

The HBC has a vision to be a community of believers who seek to use their gifts to propagate the good news. The vision statement is *“we desire to be a family, rooted in the Word of God, whose love for Christ and for one another overflows in joyful sharing of the good news of Jesus with all, irrespective of background or status.”* Their mission statement is *“we are learning to live with God and to love like Christ.”* Their mission is clearly to glorify God with the worship of their lives as they believe that he has called them to the following priorities in this time: community, teaching and learning, prayer, evangelism and mission, students and internationals ministries. HBC is a community of Christ’s people who are committed to following Jesus Christ because they believe that a right relationship with God is possible only through him. They also believe that God’s written word, the Bible, is an unerring word and shows them the way to know God and live for him. Their convictions can

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<sup>65</sup> See the Church of Pentecost Vision 2018, Five-Year Vision, Covering the period 2013-2018. This was also confirmed in a recorded interview with one of the pastors.

<sup>66</sup> Copied from the Harborne Baptist Church’s website: [www.harbornebaptistchurch.org](http://www.harbornebaptistchurch.org) (accessed 12.03.2017). Also confirmed in a recorded interview with the senior pastor.

be described as what we term as 'evangelical and Baptist.' Their mission, therefore, arises both from these convictions and from their understanding of the time and place in which they live. They believe that as their church grows spiritually so it grows in mission, reaching the wider community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ that is shaping lives together. They also think that in a diverse city like Birmingham, more so, being located near a university campus with its international students, there is the need to create a community where, as the Bible says: "*there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus.*" The HBC believes that all Christ's people have a duty to share their faith with the unsaved and they recognize that mission is not just evangelism, but includes, promoting justice, social welfare, healing, education and peace in the world. They think that religious freedom should be for all people and this generally, has always been a keystone of Baptist understanding. Acceptance of differences of outlook and diversity of practice is encouraged within the HBC and in the Christian community as well as in the wider world.<sup>67</sup>

#### **4.3.4.2. Sunday Worship and Ecclesiastical Style**

The HBC's approach to ecclesiology begins with Scripture. Their preaching is mainly expository even though, in some cases they do topical preaching. They interpret the Bible as teaching Baptist positions on the traditional ecclesiological questions (Hammett, 2005:20).<sup>68</sup> HBC understands the church as a community of believers gathered in the name of Jesus Christ for worship, witness and service. There is no set liturgy. As a local church of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, HBC is free to determine its own pattern. Prayer and praise, listening and reflecting on Scripture, and sharing Holy Communion has always been central to their worship. Their praise and worship is mainly hymnal in a typical Sunday service but in some cases they use contemporary worship especially in the days that they give the youth the opportunity to conduct service. There is moderation in their worship.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> Hammett, J (2005) Doctrine of the Church from Baptist Perspective in his book, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, Kregal Publications, MI, USA.

<sup>69</sup> Copied from the Harborne Baptist Church's website: [www.harbornebaptistchurch.org](http://www.harbornebaptistchurch.org) (accessed 12.03.2017). Also confirmed in a recorded interview with the senior pastor and observed by the author during his fieldtrips to the church.

#### **4.3.4.3 Other Groups**

There are many groups in the HBC. Groups such as the Christianity Explored are well patronized. This is a course for people who would like to investigate or just brush up on the basics. Over seven weekly sessions, it examines who Jesus was, what his aims were, and what it means to follow him today. There is also the Southlink Charter Centre, which is next door to the church and has proved to be an important part of the community. This is opened seven days a week; it offers support and friendship for adults who have experienced mental health problems of any kind. The Charter Centre can also provide information on welfare and mental health issues. It is equipped with a kitchenette, a pool table and a television and offers recreational activities, day trips and coffee mornings. It provides a conducive environment for people to relax and feel accepted.

There is also a Discipleship Explored course, which is intended as a 'follow-on' course from Christianity Explored, but can also be attended as a stand-alone course for Christ's people who want to go a little bit deeper. This course is an informal 8-week course for people who wish to make the most of their Christian lives.

They also have a dedicated team of children's Church leaders in charge of their children's ministry. This ministry is very important to the church because they want to create a conducive environment to make sure that all children in their church feel safe, loved and supported and that these children will have the chance to grow up learning about God and his love for them.

They have a café called International Café which is organized by a group of Christians who live locally in the Harborne vicinity and is hosted at HBC for international students living in the Harborne area. This café is opened on Thursdays between 8.00 pm to 9.30 pm; coffee and tea with light refreshments are served free. Added to this is the Coffee Stop, which opens on Tuesdays from 11.00 am until 2.30 pm. It serves as Harborne latest coffee and cake venue. Homemade



soup, baked potatoes, sandwiches and toasties, including various teas and coffees are served to the community.<sup>70</sup>

#### **4.3.4.4. Church Leadership and Structure**

The HBC practices congregational church government. In this type of church government, the congregations exercise the ultimate authority in the local church but they assume to do this under the divine authority of Christ hence they do not recognize the positions of, for example, bishop, general overseer and many others over their local church.

They believe that everyone who attends the HBC has a role to play and can use their God-given skills and talents for the good of the church and the community. These gifts include teaching, evangelism, social action, pastoral care, prayer and healing, taking part in worship, administration or hospitality.

At HBC when a person is baptized (through immersion), they normally become a church member. Church members are called to discern prayerfully God's will for their shared life. Final authority does not rest with the ministers, deacons or any other local, national or international body, but with the members meeting together under God's guidance. Church members, during church meetings make significant appointments including ministers, and agree financial policy and mission. Clearly, HBC is outwards focused as it is linked regionally, nationally and internationally with other churches for support and fellowship.<sup>71</sup>

#### **4.4 The Interviewees**

For the purpose of confidentiality, all the names used in interviewing the church members are pseudonyms. However, the pastors of all the four churches indicated their consent for their personal names and the real names of their churches to be used.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> This was copied from the Harborne Baptist Church's website: [www.harbornebaptistchurch.org](http://www.harbornebaptistchurch.org) (accessed 12.03.2017) and was observed by the author during his field trips to the church.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> See Annexure F for the real names of the ministers and the respondents from their churches. The names of the church members are pseudonyms. See also Annexure G-N for the interview checklist used in the in-depth interview for all the four ministers and the respondents from their churches.

#### **4.5. Interview, documentary and observer-based analysis of the four churches**

The interview responses and observation work carried out among the case study churches provided significant data from which to develop a Christian mission that inspires and transforms life in spite of one's background. The following characteristics were identified during, the in-depth interview and observation during the fieldwork. Although there are some differences as a result of the different denominational emphases, yet, these elements can be considered as key to the values of these churches. The fieldwork conducted for this study revealed the following headings:

- (i) Vision and Values
- (ii) Leadership Style
- (iii) Causes of Disagreement among Christians
- (iv) Christian Unity
- (v) Discovering a sense of identity, respect and belonging
- (vi) Reaching out to the wider community
- (vii) Worship and liturgy
- (viii) The emphases of the Spirit and Power of the Holy Spirit
- (ix) The Existential Concerns of the next generation in areas of ecclesiology.
- (x) *Missio Dei* and its implications

##### **4.5.1 Vision and Values**

Despite the fact that these four churches differ in their ecclesiastical styles, their visions and values are similar. The four case study churches have different backgrounds and doctrinal emphases but they share in common similar visions, which in a sense is to glorify God through the evangelization of their area and city for the transformation of lives and communities. They also ascribe high value to team working and team building. Their compassion is expressed by showing the

practical love of Christ through social actions within their churches and wider communities.

They are aware that the youth are the 'life wire' of their ministries, hence are keen to develop further their young people's initiatives, which they believe are key for the future of their churches. They encourage their adherents to develop confidence in their faith in God concerning their personal spiritual lives and the ministries the Lord has commissioned them to undertake. There is therefore an encouragement in the areas of participating in small groups, a culture of invitation, and having fun together as they deepen their commitment to Jesus. The ANC and the HBC, which have a multi-ethnic membership, rejoice in the great diversity of their membership and the rich variety of their social context. They value the unique contributions and ideas that every member of their community of believers brings of who they are, their cultures and what they do as Christ's people.

The four church leaders did not wish to be tied down by specific vision statements (even though they have these statements in their churches' websites and the COP has a vision statement for 2013 to 2018) as they believe in the leadings of the Holy Spirit in all matters pertaining to ministry. In the author's observation, four fundamental values came to the fore at the heart of church life of all the four case study churches. The author is of the view that the following values were born out of the genuine spirituality of these churches resulting from the depth of their relationship with God:

- (i) A very important place was given to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God; the Bible to them is inerrant, clearly respected as the supreme authority on all matters of faith and practice and as the main source of revelation.
- (ii) A central value was placed on worshipping (music) which was corporately expressed primarily as praising and worshipping God by singing and in some cases dancing to the tune of the music. The worship is mainly contemporary but in some cases hymnal (as in the case of HBC), yet, they are all focused on God and done to his glory hence, worship time is a

moment of expectancy for these congregations as they release their faith to 'receive from God.'

- (iii) The supernatural attributes of God were heightened in the ANC, ECFC and the COP with the expectation that the church (universal) could reach out for more manifestations of the supernatural in its regular life and in the lives of their adherents corporately and personally. Their goal was to express the manifestation of the spirit and power of the Holy Spirit in their congregations and their members' daily lives to bring personal as well as community transformation.
- (iv) The expression of church as a living and growing community of believers cannot to be overemphasized in these churches. They do not just see the church as a place where only spiritual matters should be addressed but they also see it as a place to belong and make friends centred upon the love of Christ. The Christian journey, as presented in these churches appears to be an exciting adventure hence their adherents seem to be naturally committed to advancing the vision of their churches, especially in the areas of evangelism and other meetings without been cajoled into doing so.

It was observed that the COP believes in equipping its members for the work of the ministry, hence spends a considerable amount of time in shaping a shared vision that captures the aspirations of its adherents. This vision, supported by good Biblical preaching and teaching and stated in their document detailing the activities of the church, is kept before their congregation worldwide as a reminder of the main goals that the COP shares together within a particular period of time. For example, they currently have the COP Vision 2018 document and this in a sense, is their vision for a five-year period starting from 2013 to 2018. They believe that God's vision requires their obedience so they first wait on the Lord to be clear of the leadings of the Holy Spirit, obey by taking the necessary steps, and then share the vision with their adherents by inviting them to come together to pray.<sup>73</sup>

At the COP, following Christ is the first priority of their members and this would mean that one has to become a born-again Christian and become a committed

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<sup>73</sup> See the Church of Pentecost Vision 2018, Five-Year Vision, Covering the period 2013-2018.

member before he or she can consider a calling to lead. They believe that they began by the Holy Spirit and think that God will go to tremendous lengths to make certain that his chosen leaders rely on his Spirit and not on their own understanding:

The Church of Pentecost was begun by the Holy Spirit and we believe that every movement of God which is born of the Spirit must also remain in the Spirit. We don't want to be hot today and then get cold tomorrow. Yet, church history will tell you that some movements which were born in the Spirit ended up in the flesh. This, we have observed, continues to be a cycle in the history of the church (universal). There are some movements that were once alive in the Spirit and have become dead in ritualism. So here, it is our practice to constantly renew our spiritual lives. We do this by respecting the Word of God, our daily prayer lives and in some cases we seek the face of God in fasting.<sup>74</sup>

At the COP, proper care is taken in order not to adopt the ways of the world and all its entrapments (as they called it) as such they try to avoid taking on in their ministry, the complexity of human wisdom by not trying to be an attraction church by merely using carnal techniques. They have simple faith in God and they absolutely believe in the Bible and what it says. They seek the face of God in prayers and fasting concerning important ministry decisions. Obviously, this and many other good practices inform their ministry practices today.

The HBC is a place where the hurting, the depressed and the destitute can find salvation, hope, forgiveness, restoration and love to enable them become what they are supposed to become in their Christian lives. As the senior pastor puts it with regard to their openness to people from all walks of life:

At the Harborne Baptist Church, we seek to minister to the hurting. It is our desire and ministry responsibility to see them restored, back on their feet, functioning as sanctified Christians again. Our goal is

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<sup>74</sup> One of the Church of Pentecost pastors in a recorded interview.

restoration of souls as such we have it in mind that repentance is necessary. We are all delighted to see a life that has been bruised or gone astray become fruitful again for the Kingdom of God. We are deeply sensitive to the people we lead to Christ hence it is our desire to see them mature in their relationship with Christ so that they can also become part of the work of ministry to reach their communities with the Gospel.<sup>75</sup>

In the author's fieldtrip encounters to the case study churches, he observed that the HBC and the ANC emphasize character qualities that focus on efforts and work values. That is to say, they place emphasis on reliability, humility and commitments. The HBC gives a higher priority to the formation of a community of believers where there is trust rather than giving priority to attaining vision and meeting goals. The COP and the ECFC on the other hand, emphasize spiritual and social values. They want to work with people who manifest the calling of God, sanctified for the work of God, showing love for fellow Christians and the unsaved, being compassionate and generous to all people.

It is clear that all the four churches are congregations that take the inerrant and inspired Word of God seriously and believe in the workings of the Holy Spirit. They may have different ways of expressing their mission, vision and values but they all have a mission to make whole-life disciples of Jesus Christ wherever they have the opportunity and their vision is to grow spiritually, cultivating the fruits of the Holy Spirit and growing their local churches numerically for the sake of the Kingdom. They all share values that embody the teachings and character of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures.

In essence, it was discovered that all the four churches see their mission as people of God who have been given a new identity in Christ with a calling to the mission of God, hence they have no intention of looking down on people but value equally individuals of all ethnic identities. They are all welcoming churches and respect all people irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds or positions in the society.

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<sup>75</sup> The Harborne Baptist Church pastor in a recorded interview.

The key element, for example of the ANC is simplicity. A conducive atmosphere is created in their services. Their church services are very informal, conducted in a non-threatening environment and, are intentionally programmed to attract people from all walks of life. For the ANC, diversity is not about acknowledging that all human beings are the same; they accept the differences in the people from a diverse background who fellowship with them but they also think that they can embrace those differences as they strongly believe that people from different ethnicities make a stronger and healthier community of believers.

#### **4.5.2. Leadership Style**

Creating a leadership structure that mirrors all the decision-making and leadership styles of the various ethnicities is a complex task that perhaps only a few Christian ministries can master. All four pastors believe that leading people is much more than having people follow you. They accept that leading Christ's people is about mentoring them in such a way that they can be empowered and released to do the same thing on their own that their leaders have done for them. As one pastor put it with regard to relational leadership:

As a Church of Pentecost pastor, my understanding of ministry is that I must be prepared to value and practise the essential lessons of ministry taught to us by Jesus. I see this as my priority. The next thing is that I must be willing to follow the example of the early church, who were absolutely dependent upon the leadings of the Holy Spirit. And finally, as a leader I must be serious with my devotion and maintain my personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I believe that having a good relationship with Christ is the source of power for all Christians and Christian leaders. In fact, the obedience to do his will is the basis of Christians and Christian leaders' ability to fulfil their God-given tasks. When we have fully lived up to God's expectations as leaders, then we can likewise lead others to also follow.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> One of the Church of Pentecost pastors in a recorded interview.

The COP view is that Jesus Christ is the head of their church. They believe their church, like any other living church is his and that he (Jesus) is the one in charge. As pastors, they think they need to be leading the church in such a way that Christ's people will know that the Lord Jesus is the one in control. They also have the elders who are there to support the pastors in different ways including praying and supporting them in seeking the face of the Lord concerning what he is doing in his church.

The COP realizes the hard facts that leading is a very difficult thing to do, and that the challenges of leadership usually result in something less than the success to which leaders anticipate. In view of these challenges, they have learnt to depend on prayers and the leadings of the Holy Spirit especially in the very sensitive decisions they take as leaders.

The COP leadership style reveals the importance of having godly men and women who recognize that God has called and ordained their senior pastor<sup>77</sup> as the one to lead their church movement. There are men and women who work diligently with the pastors in the local churches and support those things that God is directing them, as pastors, to do in their local assemblies. The leadership believes that a good board is one of the greatest assets that they can have in this worldwide movement as such there is much trust in their board.

Besides, the pastoral staff in the local assemblies, they have the elders who, they believe are people yielded to the Holy Spirit. They serve as a real protection for the pastors and their local assemblies. For example, one of their responsibilities is to act between the pastors and the congregation as the congregation brings any problem they see, to them and also to lead the local assemblies in the absence of their local pastors.

The ANC also believe that God's model is that the senior pastor is ruled by the Lord Jesus Christ and aided by assistant pastors and elders to discover the mind and will of Jesus Christ for his church. The senior pastor is recognized by the

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<sup>77</sup> The senior pastor of the Church of Pentecost is a designated 'Apostle'. There are many such apostles in the church's leadership but one of them is selected to the position of a Chairman to lead the entire movement for a period of five years, and could be renewed for further five years.



congregation as God's anointed instrument to lead the church, with the board guiding and directing. Complementing this is the role of the pastoral staff who is there to minister to the spiritual and emotional needs of the congregation. It is worthy of note that they ascribe high value to team working and team building, having a leadership which fully affirms men and women equally in ministry. They strongly encourage vocations, lay and ordained. They celebrate and take pride in their diversity. Their numerical growth was due partly to their diversity, which has become a tremendous resource for evangelism. They have clearly presented an alternative to the cultural relativism seen today in some circles. As a diverse church, they value the unique contributions and ideas that every member of their community of faith brings because of who they are and what they do. They think that diversity recognizes that God gave his children different skills, abilities and gifts for a good reason and that God's church should exist to train, equip and release all within the body for the work of the ministry as one pastor illustrated:

At the All Nations, we recognize the complexity of leading our church cross-culturally lies in the challenge of building a church community of faith with trust among Christ's people who come from different cultures, different nationalities and a diverse background. These people, because of their diverse backgrounds come to us with different cultural identities, traditions and diverse worldviews. But we believe that what the Lord is looking for is a church which is united in fellowship and diverse in ministry, a church which is multi-ethnic with a multicultural identity. So, here in the All Nations, our goal therefore, is to create a congregation with a multicultural identity and this is given all serious attention in everything we do as a church: in our worship service, teachings, preaching, discipleship ministries, and leadership structure.<sup>78</sup>

The model of leadership of the ANC is ideal as they seek to recruit into their leadership, members that reflect the multiple background of people from different ethnicities. Natural and gifted leaders from diverse backgrounds have emerged in

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<sup>78</sup> The All Nations Church pastor in a recorded interview.

the church and these leaders have credibility and respect from their relationships networks. For example, there are ethnic minority leaders who are in charge of different nationalities and ethnicities such as Zimbabweans and Punjabis.

They believe also that churches will have to find a balance between the unity of the Gospel and how God calls Christians as people with different identities. They present the Gospel as something that holds for people from all backgrounds hence their multicultural identity is manifested in all their gatherings, especially during their Sunday morning worship. They want their members to develop confidence in their faith and to be enabled to participate in every-member ministry. Central to this are their small groups, strong pastoral relationships, a culture of invitation and having fun together as they deepen their commitment to Jesus. They believe that the secret to a diverse mission strategy is to ensure that they identify and understand the needs and aspirations of their communities and then seek to engage them in all areas of their lives.

The ECFC leadership is very simple. Because their congregation values open sharing of all available resources, their emphasis is on mutual, rather than superior relationship. The leadership is committed to relational goals and relational activities as one respondent explained:

At the Ethiopian Church, we have a leadership style which identifies with our mono-ethnic membership. Our type of leadership is spiritually, culturally and socially relevant to the needs of our church members. After all, we are here to serve our people, most of whom have language barriers and prefer to worship in the Ethiopian language. Anyone visiting our church will discover the strong bond of relationship between us and our church members.<sup>79</sup>

The ECFC believes that wise planning rather than too many goals will reap a good result in ministry. First of all, they think that it is necessary for them to know where they are going and what their prime objective is. The next thing is to quickly and properly prioritize every activity and resource. They then

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<sup>79</sup> The Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church pastor in a recorded interview.

allocate resources to each need according to its importance. They think that it is wise for leaders to avoid the mistake of doing tasks that others can do. They therefore, delegate the less sensitive tasks to others within their congregation.

The HBC leadership style is on the premise that leadership activity should align their members by translating their vision and values into understandable and attainable acts. They understand the challenges in leadership and believe that the godly leader should be concerned about how power can easily be abused so it is their practice to use power biblically. They are of the view that Christ's people should reflect on their thoughts, words and actions in the areas of diversity. Rather than denying that in some cases, Christ's people intentionally or unintentionally stereotype people on the basis of ethnicity, or subtly seek to disassociate themselves from people of other ethnicities, Christians need to take positive and practical steps to appreciate the wonderful diversity that is in the Body of Christ as one respondent enthused:

At the Harborne Baptist Church, we don't spend time figuring out and coming out with programmes that will grow our ministry but greater priority is given to building trust relationships essential for leadership in our fellowship which is very diverse. We make sure that the way we do things here does not offend others from different backgrounds.<sup>80</sup>

The HBC realizes that they cannot accomplish the work of the Kingdom of God unless they are willing to work together in the fellowship of a loving community hence they welcome Christ's people from different backgrounds who seek to fellowship with them. They have practically expressed their compassion across all contexts through initiatives such as their International Student Café and service at Field House and other community initiatives such as ministering to the elderly. They believe that having people from a diverse background brings with it stronger and more creative ideas and so produces more imaginative solutions to problems that are likely to result from the best efforts of just one ethnicity.

The COP, the ECFC and the ANC don't see formal theological training as the only prerequisite for ministry, because they believe that by imposing educational

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<sup>80</sup> A White respondent from the Harborne Baptist Church in a recorded interview.

standard on Christ's people, they could possibly keep many gifted people from fulfilling God's true calling upon their lives. Therefore, intentionally, they encourage both the laity and clergy to exercise their ministries in the congregation and wider community.

The leaders of the four churches are all mission-minded pastors hence are equipped to shape the culture and the identity of their congregations by reminding their congregations of God's purposes concerning them as Christians and communicating to them the core values of Christianity which give definition to the vision of their various churches.

#### **4.5.3. Causes of Disagreement among Christians**

All the four pastors accept that disunity among Christ's people is a negative reflection on the character of God, however, they believe also that the life and teaching of Jesus gives Christians the spiritual resources essential to meet the challenges of interpersonal conflicts and misunderstandings that arise when Christ's people find themselves with conflicting views.

The pastors believe that the witness of the church (universal) over the years, has been ruined many times for the lack of Christ's people's expression of love for one another, and more often than not, Christ's people have been lukewarm in dealing with conflicts and issues among fellow Christians. Consequently, this has resulted in creating divisions and factions within the Body of Christ. These divisions and factions, which are mainly over petty issues of what is regarded as 'secondary doctrines' have caused so much havoc to the evangelization of the world and the work of the ministry, yet, in most cases, these are matters which should not in any way bring divisions. All the pastors share the view that when Christ's people disagree about deeper values and essential doctrines such as those regarding one's relationship to God, for example, the virgin birth of Christ, the death and resurrection of Christ, they think that at this point the gulf of mistrust may become so wide that working together will surely be impossible. They think also that when Christ's people are working together as a multicultural team, they will definitely have disagreements about core values, as a result of their cultural differences. For example, they all accepted the fact that there is a vast difference between what

Africans regard as values in terms of their culture and what the White British people accept as their cultural values. There is much evidence to suggest that the British (Whites) are more task-oriented while most Africans place greater value on relationships than fulfilling a particular task no matter how valuable these tasks may be. Three of the pastors had the following to say to support their viewpoints:

The All Nations is a culturally diverse church. We receive people from different countries and ethnicities. Frankly, there are a lot of cultural differences in the people who make up our congregation but then we also realize that when culturally diverse people try to work towards mutual goals, their assumptions about structure and working relationships may create serious issues of conflict and disagreement. This is natural because there is the difficulty of identifying and maintaining coherence and unity within a congregation which comprises of people from diverse backgrounds. This obviously means that there will be a time when there will be tension. Hence leaders will be faced with the challenge of listening and taking into consideration diverse views. What Christians have to understand is that, there is no perfect culture and that all Christ's people, in spite of their ethnic and cultural background, come to the church with some sort of cultural biases but we understand that when we mature in the Word and are filled with the Holy Spirit we will be able to overcome these biases.<sup>81</sup>

There are many good Christians who unfortunately teach and practise misguided doctrines especially in areas of church leadership. They ignorantly teach and practise leadership that seems right but jeopardizes and sometimes destroys their vision and ministry. We, at the Church of Pentecost, don't believe that effective cross-cultural ministry can happen unless God's people are willing to learn about and accept the views of the other Christians they are partnering with. For instance, how can you

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<sup>81</sup> The All Nations Church pastor in a recorded interview.

think that the African-led churches can work with the White majority churches when there is obviously cultural differences including disagreements over legitimate forms of our behaviour and action especially when it comes to matters of holiness and sanctification? I think for us to come together in any form, we first of all have to listen carefully to one another with an attitude of respect and acceptance.<sup>82</sup>

In the UK, your fellow Christian can use their cultural values to criticize the way you do or approach issues. I believe that disunity among Christians happen when our own Christian brothers and sisters, who are not like us use their cultural values to criticize people like us who cannot speak their accent and in most cases, in their own view, think that we fail to live up to their values. However, I believe that if we are truly born-again Christians, we will all follow God's ways despite our backgrounds and as Christians, our focus will be directed towards loving one another as Christ commands us to do.<sup>83</sup>

All the pastors believe that there are theological and cultural issues that need to be addressed if Christians from a diverse background desire to work together to impact their communities. For example, there are still liturgical and ministerial differences but the pastors believe that these should not divide the Body of Christ. However, they also think that the issue of concern here is a situation whereby there is a clear difference in the fundamental doctrines such as the one triune God, the Deity of the Lord Christ, the salvation of mankind and many others but few to mention. The pastors think if these differing views (in the fundamental doctrines) exist in any Christian relationship, it will bring genuine divisions of Biblical teachings hence it cannot be regarded as a healthy diversity of expression.

They accept that unity among Christ's people would be proved too challenging to be realized when for example, both the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches do exactly what they think is good in their various cultures

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<sup>82</sup> The Church of Pentecost pastor in a recorded interview

<sup>83</sup> The Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church pastor in a recorded interview.

instead of learning about each other's culture. They admit that there is a perceived arrogance among some of the White people that reflects in their Christian relationships with others who are not like them. They think that some of these White people approach cross-cultural relationships with only their culture to interpret a given situation, and this approach, according to them always results in doubts and a weakening of the relationship. They also accept that it will be more appropriate if Christ's people from all backgrounds can at least agree on matters of the greatest importance, which according to them are issues that can deepen their relationship with fellow Christians and result in unity. However, they believe also that unity in itself does not necessarily depend on sharing similar views and expecting a situation where all differences will be obliterated, because unity is not uniformity, yet, it can lead to diversity if handled appropriately:

There are many different cultures in different churches, be they White or African-led but don't forget that what the Bible teaches should be the final judge of all kinds of cultures be they Western cultures, African or otherwise. I think the White British people must acknowledge that they do not have exclusive insight into rights and wrongs and that the Spirit of God works among all people in spite of their background. I think the people here (Whites) have to humble themselves so that they can understand people from other cultures. After all, we all have something to offer to the Body of Christ no matter where we come from.<sup>84</sup>

Obviously there are cultural differences between us (Whites) and lots of people in our church so what we have learnt to do is that we encourage our members to acknowledge our differences but we don't stop there; we work on those differences with all humility. We don't look down on people because they are not like us or they don't speak like us, instead we try to respect all people in spite of their background and by

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<sup>84</sup> A respondent from the Church of Pentecost in a recorded interview.

so doing we have been able to build bridges across the various cultures that make up our church.<sup>85</sup>

Obviously, Christ's people have the opportunity of building bridges across the diverse cultures that make up the UK urban communities but the way to do this involves commitments; Christ's people must have the intention of dealing with their own shortcomings, first of all. For instance, believers in spite of their backgrounds should first of all deal with the aspect of their cultural biases and realize that the need for working together as people with the call of God to achieve the highest goals of the Kingdom is their ultimate goal as Christ's people.

It was also observed that it is the desire of the ANC and the HBC not to divide Christ's people over non-essential (secondary) doctrines. On other issues they try to recognize the Scriptural validity of both sides of a debate and avoid excluding or favouring those in one camp over the other.

An example of this kind of inclusiveness is found in their approach to debatable issues concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Their desire is to be able to minister to as broad a group of people as possible. However, in the fundamental doctrines they take a firm stance. In other words, they accept that people may differ in the secondary doctrines and think that the differences in the secondary doctrines should not divide the Body of Christ. As one pastor put it:

At the All Nations Church, we worship with people from a diverse background and this comes with its challenges. For example, one of the challenges is how we the leadership can help our multi-ethnic members whom we think are called to ministry in our church, to draw their identities from being an English, Ghanaian, Nigerians, Chinese or Punjabi to being first and foremost Christians.<sup>86</sup>

Asked what they think could be the solution to disagreement, all the pastors suggested that Christ's people should follow what Christ said in John 13:35, that

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<sup>85</sup> The All Nations Church pastor in a recorded interview.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid



his disciples would be identified by their love for one another. The HBC pastor went further to state that if love can cover a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8); it certainly should cover disagreement of Christ's people. The HBC pastor remarked:

It is my observation that in some cases, I may not agree with a particular philosophy of ministry or doctrine but I don't think I will speak out harshly against those with a differing viewpoints or condemn them. Also I may not agree with certain theological views but I won't deny that there are many good Christians who hold different theological views. My view is that it is only when the love of Christ is no longer the driving force of Christ's people that a church enters into unnecessary theological arguments and misunderstandings.<sup>87</sup>

Overall, they believe that it is possible for them to agree to disagree and still maintain a spirit of unity and love and that Christ's people can always resolve their cultural differences, but only when they have committed themselves to building the spiritual relationships of mutual love and trust necessary to working together. They therefore, accept that areas where disagreement between Christ's people becomes a problem are in situations where Christians refuse to use their God-given abilities to listen, without being biased by taking sides in matters. They must therefore, be accurate in assessing information from both sides of any argument in relation to Scripture.

#### **4.5.4. Christian Unity in Diversity**

All the four pastors believe in the unity of Christ's people. However, they think that unity in the most important sense should be matters concerning the things that are of primary significance. For example, Christ's people can unite to conduct nation-wide prayer meetings for the country and they can also unite to evangelize their communities and country. They do not think that unity should necessarily result in uniformity, as they admit that there is always going to be challenges of unity when dealing with a diverse body. Certainly, in multi-ethnic churches, there would always be a challenge of holding together diverse views, showing where they hold

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<sup>87</sup> The Harborne Baptist Church senior pastor in a recorded interview.

consistent views and also where there is an obvious disagreement but an acceptable approach to understanding other people's views is a good beginning for partnership of Christ's people and all cross-cultural ministry efforts:

We believe that unity is not something Christians have to ask for as the Bible makes us to understand that unity already exists and so what we have to do is to preserve it as Christians. Our understanding of unity in the Ethiopian fellowship is a situation where Christians share together. The Body of Christ is not divided; Christians need one another and we all have to learn from other Christians with different cultures especially their hermeneutics. We have to find out the reasons why people from different backgrounds interpret Scripture differently. I think we all need a similar approach in interpreting the Bible, which in my view, stands as final authority over all cultures.<sup>88</sup>

I actually don't think that unity implies uniformity. Unity does not in my view, mean that all Christians will have to think alike, and approach ministry the same way. My understanding of unity is a situation where there is an intentional common purpose and interdependence within the Body of Christ. Our unity as Christians can advance when we as Christians share the same fundamental doctrines and love as Jesus commands us to love.<sup>89</sup>

At the All Nations Church, functional unity is our goal. We believe in the gifts of the Spirit and we think the diversity of these gifts enhances and necessitates unity among believers. In our church, we see it as a responsibility to model unity amongst the diverse group which comprises our congregation. We believe that God intentionally authored diversity as he loves it. Hence God will welcome Christians who embrace and celebrate it.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> The Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church pastor in a recorded interview.

<sup>89</sup> The Church of Pentecost pastor in a recorded interview.

<sup>90</sup> The All Nations Church pastor in a recorded interview.

I think, as Christians, we have to apply Biblical principles into our relationships. The right relationship is the relationships guided by the love of Christ. As human beings, we might not always agree with everything someone else is doing, but our true Christian love 'covers multitude of sins.' The Christian love looks past any differences we may have with others and maintains the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.<sup>91</sup>

We at the Harborne Baptist Church believe that the way Christ lived his life whilst on earth should be an ideal model for all Christ's people. We all know that in Christ's ministry on earth, he was very humble and treated all people he met with respect and dignity. He also accepted all who came to him. He ministered to all of them. He gave his followers a ministry of reconciliation and he expects all Christ's people to express this in all their relationships with fellow Christians and all other people.<sup>92</sup>

The above responses of the pastors reveal an understanding that was manifested repeatedly in a variety of forms throughout the research. They all believe that Christ's people have to be united in one spirit and have to work towards a common goal. For example, they can come together to win their communities for Christ. Pastors of local churches should be mission-minded and pass this vision on to their congregations. All pastors have the responsibility of shaping up their congregation, equipping them for cross-cultural ministries and getting them to work co-operatively with Christ's people from other backgrounds. All the four pastors believe that the unity of believers with Christ is a gracious work of the Holy Spirit and think that the set-up of every local church should be like the triune God: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, even though are different persons, yet, are completely united. Certainly, the Scriptures make us to understand that God chooses to reveal his glory through the solidarity of his people, which occurs when Christ's people are united towards a common purpose. The ANC and the HBC's understanding of unity in diversity is a situation where Christ's people from diverse backgrounds

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<sup>91</sup> The Harborne Baptist Church pastor in a recorded interview.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid

congregate together. This may also include Christ's people from different denominations sharing together. The ECFC is a mono-ethnic church (and this is for cultural reasons) yet, they believe in Christ's people from different denominations working together for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. The COP, on the other hand, defines diversity as having people from other parts of sub-Saharan Africa worshipping together. Overall, they all believe that a diverse church, no matter what forms it takes, provides the best kind of community for the personal development of Christ's people.

All the four pastors are of the view that the vision of their church should be shared with their congregation with the understanding that the church is a community serving people from diverse backgrounds and that they exist as a church with a mission of service as followers of Christ. They think that they all have the responsibilities as ministers to be mission-minded and pass on this vision to their congregation. Obviously, there exist cultural differences within the ANC and the HBC church communities because both churches embrace diversity, but there is also an opportunity for them being multi-ethnic churches as they can agree to a new vision which in a way, addresses their cultural behaviours by accepting that their Christian faith rather than their cultures should define the way they relate to one another in their Christian environments and their communities.

As one of the pioneer members of the ANC respondents enthused:

The All Nations Church is a conducive place to develop deep relationships centred upon the love of Christ and also mutuality and interdependence that are needed for healthy interaction, partnering and empowering of all believers in spite of their backgrounds.<sup>93</sup>

Another respondent remarked:

We at the All Nations Church believe that there are theological and practical reasons for us to understand and appreciate the cultures of the diverse people in our fellowship. Making this

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<sup>93</sup> A senior member of the All Nations Church in a recorded interview

commitment to loving and appreciating people from different cultural backgrounds reflects God's character, for the Bible reveals that God loves diversity.<sup>94</sup>

The ANC looks very vibrant during their Sunday service with their multicultural identity. Looking around during service, one can see people from all walks of life, traditions and cultures. Generally speaking, the ANC's service is an example of the beauty God has chosen to express in people from diverse cultures.

The perspective of all the four churches is that unity among Christ's people can become a powerful witness tool to the UK communities (especially the urban communities) in regards to the reaching out with the Gospel to the UK diverse communities. They believe that the healing of broken relationships is an essential message of the Kingdom of God. Hence, the prejudice and racism that divide Christ's people of different ethnic groups has no place in God's Kingdom. Unity among believers therefore, should always be a hallmark of the Christian faith.

The four pastors believe that churches that are true to the teachings of John 17 are the model that seek to disciple and educate new believers as to the implications of their new faith. In John 17, Jesus rejoices his relationship with the Father (God) by stressing the oneness he has with him, then he turns his attention to his disciples, praying for them to have the same oneness he has with the Father. He and his Father share the same purpose, plan and power. He prays for his disciples' protection from the evil one. He prays also that they might have his joy in doing the Father's will. He then sanctified them for God's use so that there will be no distraction from the world and through their message, the world would believe in him.

The pastors think that once a new believer begins to experience relational reconciliation and growth in sanctification, it becomes increasingly necessary for him or her to become proactive in addressing the ethnic divides that are common in society at large. The context and intensity of Jesus' prayers in John 17, therefore shows the priority Christ places on the unity of Christians as his main and repeated request in this prayer was their unity. Unity is Christ's miracle of oneness. The unity

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<sup>94</sup> A respondent from the All Nations Church in a recorded interview.

of Christ's people is dependent on sharing the priority of seeking and doing the will of God, especially his desire to reach those who do not know him so they too, may become one with all believers.

They do not think that unity comes through the constant gazing into one another's eyes as practised in some churches since such inward looking unity is only emotional and not Biblical; the unity which is Biblical comes when Christ's people are united in their efforts to reach out in love to one another and to their communities. In other words, unity is at best when Christ's people come together to practise the Bible in the Spirit and power of the Holy Spirit. For example, effectiveness in evangelism will increase with Christian initiatives such as Christ's people coming together from diverse backgrounds to reach out to diverse communities. Christ's people coming together in unity does not necessarily mean they are seeking uniformity but they believe that the Spirit of God is very creative as there is a variety in God's creation, gifts and talents (1 Corinthians 12). The most exciting thing therefore, is that the differences in personalities, appearances and gifts among Christ's people make up the diverse Body of Christ.

#### **4.5.5. Discovering a sense of identity, respect and belonging**

The fieldwork carried out in the COP and the ECFC indicates that these migrant churches have enabled their members to find a refuge from discrimination and discover a sense of identity, respect and belonging. They provide spiritual support as well as social and emotional support to their adherents. They are also the antitheses to values that counter godly living to their members. For example, they provide counselling, high moral standard (they teach their members how to live in holiness and sanctification). As migrants, their reliance on the supernatural is total, hence they live the life that is pleasing to God and they will not do anything to offend the God who will bring their blessings to pass. Matters of immigration have contributed to eroding the trust that many migrants have for the British government. Immigrants, especially the newly arrived migrants, put their trust in their church leadership as they can confide with them with sensitive matters of immigration. Migrants realize that they need inner strength and divine favour, which they believe would sustain them in their immigration, economic and other social matters in their journey in their newly found country and their church leaders are always ready to

give them the necessary support. As one interviewee put it with regard to migrants' reliance on their leadership and dependency on God:

Our dependency on God as Christians is very important and vital. Christians need strong faith to believe; we totally depend on God for without him all Christians are lost; lost not just in the sense of no intimacy with God, but lost because of the situation in Britain which calls for divine intervention from intercessors from all walks of life in the tasks that confront us as migrants in this country.<sup>95</sup>

The ECFC and the COP's congregations experience a sense of identity as individuals, respect and belonging in their place of worship. They are able to discover in their worship community (church) a source of identity whether it is social or cultural and this enables them to pass on their values to their next generation. The community spirit of their worship place affords them the necessary encouragement to survive in a foreign country where there is a perceived discrimination and stereotype. In these welcoming migrant church environments, the migrants are made to feel valued and respected.

For example, when asked why there were existing churches in the UK but they decided to attend migrant churches, most of them thought that they could only worship with a worship community that understands their culture and also serves as a welcoming church, hence their choice to worship with fellow Africans. They think that in the African-led churches there is an experience of Christ's people submitting first to God and then submitting to one another in love.

A range of explanations were given by both the ECFC and the COP pastors who explained that they have the responsibilities not only to give spiritual guidance to the congregations but they also feel obliged to provide a social environment where their congregations' needs such as marriage, funeral celebrations, child dedication and others social needs are met. In other words, the migrant church community also serves as a place where migrant Christians meet their fellow migrants for celebrations, mutual support and assistance.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid

These African Christian communities organize themselves in such a way as to reinforce their sense of identity to counter the problems migrants face in their new communities. The church community becomes a place of refuge from discrimination, social injustice and a place that clearly ensures their security and solidarity.

Migrants are always faced with harassment by the government, especially on immigration matters and they face discrimination by some in the wider society too. They seek refuge with their church community that understands their needs and are ready to tackle the structural injustice within the British society in which they live. The migrant churches therefore, have a great responsibility towards their congregations as they provide the necessary environment for their adherents to experience a sense of community and belonging. Certainly, these migrant churches have provided a context for the development of working, practical, everyday relationships where their adherents can become responsible for one another's needs.

Observation carried out in the COP and the ECFC was also to find out whether members developed friends with people of other ethnicities in their closest friendship circles. It was identified that members' circle of closest friends is surprisingly homogeneous. Almost all of the members' closest friends are of the same ethnic and cultural background.

Community responsibility within the ECFC and the COP was frequently cited by respondents as an explanation for being part of their congregations. These churches offer their members a sense of stability and belonging. For example, when Ethiopian/Eritrean refugees arrive on the UK shores, the social services direct them to the ECFC. From this experience, the Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees are brought into a community of believers from the same cultural background and here take on memberships of a mutual support system. There was a strong sense of belonging in these churches because their personhood is discovered and affirmed in these African-led church communities.

Naturally, Africans will always congregate because the social, spiritual and other factors motivating them to come together have significant cultural connotations that



are shared by most of them as these churches operate in a non-threatening and conducive environment that meets their needs. Africans think that being part of a community gives them a sense of identity, security and accountability, which gives them survival in their newly found country. The African's sense of community and belonging is not restricted to their fellow church members, but it is extended to other African Christian communities across board.

The following interviewee, for example joined the COP on his arrival from Ghana:

In Ghana, I attended a Pentecostal church. When I was coming over from Ghana my pastor advised me to join a black-led church upon arrival in the UK because I will meet other Christians from my culture who understand my needs and will be able to help me settle in my new country. And so that is the reason why I joined the Church of Pentecost. Here, the pastors and the church members are all willing to help me to settle in the country.<sup>96</sup>

The above statement by a participant clearly explains some of the reasons why migrants choose African immigrant churches as their place of worship. It is true to say that there are cultural reasons that in part inform their choice. Cultural norms are unique to migrants, especially the newly arrived migrants who may be very suspicious of people from the wider community. This cultural identity serves to strengthen the cohesion of the migrant community, but can also discourage them from any attempt of integration into the wider community. Clearly, there is the need for a complete overhauling of the both the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches so that they can become relevant to the mind-set of the twenty-first century context of mission in Britain.

#### **4.5.6. Reaching out to the wider community**

Through interviews and observations in the various case study churches, it was discovered that some migrants have already attributed a theological relevance to the recent phenomenon of establishing black-led churches in the UK. Some of the church leaders think it is time for the African immigrant churches to re-define their

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<sup>96</sup> A respondent from the Church of Pentecost in a recorded interview.

God-given mandate to Britain. When asked what they expected in partnership, the respondents from both the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches stressed a Christ-centred relationship is essential to accomplishing their outreach goals in the UK.

Over the past few decades the migratory pattern, though voluntary has greatly been influenced by imperialist ties, as most of the migrants were already integrated into the British socio-economic system in the countries of origin through their previous colonial tiers. For example, migrants from the former British colonies such as Ghana, Nigeria and Malawi start their integration in their home countries before they even travel to the UK as their lingua franca is the English language and the socio-economic and political structure of these countries such as their educational system, public service and other social services are modelled on the Westminster system.

During the fieldwork, it was also observed that some of these migrants (from the former British colonies) consciously seek to integrate with the UK society, but they do it in a way that allows for the preservation of their unique cultural distinctiveness. The ECFC, on the other hand, prefers instead to intentionally organize themselves around their specific cultural allegiances. This is because Ethiopians unlike those from the former British colonies such as Ghanaians and Nigerians, were not colonized by the Western 'powers.' The Ghanaians as well as the Nigerians and others from the former British colonies start their integration from their home countries because their socio-economic and political structures are framed on the British system as mentioned above.

At the ECFC, where the first generation migrants lack English language skills necessary to integrate into the existing local churches, these migrants find that the Western model of church does not adequately reflect their cultural expression of worship. These migrants also do not fit into other African-led churches because of language difficulties as such they see the need for an independent mono-ethnic church that best suits the needs of their Ethiopian/Eritrean community.

When asked whether it was important to have the ECFC since there are other living churches in the UK the pastor had this to say:

We are a first generation migrants; we speak a different language, and so we are comfortable in our own culture and way of worship.<sup>97</sup>

This response reveals that the ECFC was not planted out of animosity towards the White majority churches or other cultures instead the Ethiopians feel that unlike migrants from the former British colonies whose lingua franca is English, most of them (Ethiopians/Eritreans) have to start learning English as beginners as such they can best connect with God with the people who speak their language, have the same history, culture and the same needs. They can only use their native language in worship because of their limited English skills. They go back to their native culture as the necessary reference point for their values in worship. They are also careful not to lose the importance of their social and cultural values and more importantly, they want to preserve their identity. They therefore, find it appropriate to come together for mutual support, encouragement and protection in their newly found country. In this sense, the ECFC's way of excluding outsiders in their worship is not by intention since there are cultural and language issues which need to be considered.

The ECFC provides social functions along with spiritual care for their migrant communities and often serve as the only means of social support to their adherents especially the newly arrived migrants. The ECFC therefore, serves as a community for the Ethiopian/Eritrean refugees who find themselves in a foreign land far away from home. The survival of this church community therefore, will always be at mercy of the British government's policies on refugees and not necessarily any strategic mission endeavour.

It was also observed during the fieldwork that other than the establishment of a few African immigrant churches, the impact of the COP and the ECFC is not felt in the wider community, for these African originated churches have minimal contacts with the wider community and the White majority churches. A range of explanations was provided by respondents within the COP and the ECFC. For example, they saw themselves as belonging to a community of believers who shared in a common understanding of God, a cultural background and the same sense of identity along

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<sup>97</sup> The Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church pastor in a recorded interview.

with an experience of discrimination and stereotype within British communities. These African originated churches are therefore considered as places where African migrants meet for social, spiritual and other factors motivating them to come together. There are significant cultural connotations, shared by most of them as these migrant churches operate in a non-threatening and conducive environment that meets their needs. One of the pastors enthused:

We are a migrant church and we know the needs of our congregation. We are here to preach the Gospel and win souls to Jesus as he sends forth his communications to those committed to fulfilling the Great Commission. We do our best to be the church that Jesus intended but we reach out to our own people first of all because our people understand our culture and want to be ministered to in that culture. It is our responsibility as pastors to meet their spiritual as well as social needs. Our priority therefore, is to diligently share the Gospel with people from our cultural background, and when they respond, we bring them together into fellowship and teach them the basic doctrines and practices of the Christian faith but we also understand that as migrants their social and emotional needs have to be met.<sup>98</sup>

During the author's field encounter at the ECFC and the COP, while engaging in participant observation he observed that these churches which are designed to minister to their cultural group become a place of safety and acceptance. They offer the best support for their members during their early years in their new country.

The COP, for instance has the desire to reach out to the wider community as the above interviewee explained, but they believe the members' ability to participate in multi-ethnic gatherings will increase as they develop confidence in their own ability to navigate the social spaces of the new host culture. Several factors come together to create different forms and types of multi-ethnic churches. The COP, which claims to be a multi-ethnic church, is far less so than they imagine as their congregation

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid

come mainly from the diverse African backgrounds. The COP is yet to have breakthroughs reaching out to the wider UK community, however, it was observed that it has moved towards inclusive mono-ethnicity with the result that it has become more accepting and appreciative of other ethnicities and is eventually working a strategy to reach out to the wider community.

For some migrants, especially in the ECFC, their place of worship becomes the centre of their community and cultural identity. It is here that they seek and find people who hail from their background. This community of believers is typically mono-ethnic, not out of hatred of others, but because those who attend are desperate to preserve their roots in a foreign land. The ECFC will remain a mono-ethnic church for the foreseeable future because it is observed that the issue of identity for the Ethiopian/Eritrean believer is one in which their Christian faith and cultural loyalty is connected.

The ECFC and the COP will remain mono-ethnic churches for the foreseeable future, but these churches are working to become more inclusive, intentional in moving towards multi-ethnic engagements. For example, the COP has put in place a service conducted in the English language in a contemporary worship style. This, they think will attract people from diverse backgrounds, not necessarily from the wider community but from the various African ethnicities. The ECFC on the other hand, conduct their service in Amharic language which is widely spoken by Ethiopian and Eritrean ethnicities as such they make up of the Ethiopian/Eritrean congregation, but the ECFC leadership co-operates with other non-Ethiopian churches in different ways. For example, their leadership is actually involved in cross-cultural initiatives that bring Christians from diverse background together by building bridges and other initiatives such as reaching out to communities.

When asked in the interview with a respondent from the HBC, how in his own view the White majority churches could work with the African immigrant churches, he had this to say:

Church leaders of the White majority churches must challenge their congregations to face their fears of the unfamiliar people they see around them in the church. They should set aside their

bias cultural and social views and ask God for forgiveness. They should ask God to purify their hearts of prejudice so that they can understand what God is doing through the migration of people into their communities.<sup>99</sup>

The ANC arises from a wise and practical understanding of the demography of the City of Wolverhampton, a city with people from diverse backgrounds. This view is shared by a respondent:

Our church is a place where people from all backgrounds are welcome. It is a welcoming church. There are many people from different cultures and backgrounds during our Sunday worship but each finds this place as a home. Our diversity goes beyond simply mixing ethnic diversity because our intention is to build a church which is biblically faithful.<sup>100</sup>

All the four churches are contemplating reaching out to the whole of the wider communities; they believe that ideally, churches in multi-ethnic communities must have multicultural identity but they realize that if they are to reach out to the wider community, there are cultural issues that would need to be addressed. Even though, they do not see the reasons why both the White majority churches and the African immigrant churches cannot work together to reach out to their diverse communities but in part, they believe that churches are different. For example, the way White British people interpret the Bible (hermeneutics) may be different from the African approach. Hence, they all think that it will be appropriate for churches to recognize the importance of their diversity, which reflects the differences in their communities that in a way mirror their demography. In addition, they should see their cultural and theological differences as diversity, which should be respected by all. As one respondent explained:

The present day Britain is experiencing migration of people from all backgrounds into our communities. I think Christians have to re-define what is mission as it is clear that the modern day mission is not viewed

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<sup>99</sup> A respondent from the Harborne Baptist Church in a recorded interview.

<sup>100</sup> A respondent from the All Nations Church in a recorded interview.

as what Westerners simply do overseas. We see people coming from Saudi Arabia, Libya, North Korea and other places where it is difficult to send missionaries. These migrants are now in our universities, in our streets and communities. I think, reaching out to these new comers in our communities could also be regarded as mission. The problem, however, is how we can catch the new way God is working and respond to this trend. I'm not saying we can't go to other countries as missionaries but we have to also realize that 'mission is on our door steps.' Church leaders must therefore, take advantage of the new trend of movement of people so that our churches become more ethnically diverse to reflect the ethnic makeup of our communities.<sup>101</sup>

The ANC pastor supported this viewpoint:

Churches can be inclusive but they still have to be culturally sensitive. It is true that the multi-ethnic nature of the British communities, especially in the cities call for multi-ethnic ministries. If you look at the Wolverhampton city for example, you will see that the past few decades have brought about changing demographics in our communities. There are now people from more diverse background who makeup our communities. Added to this is the University of Wolverhampton community where we have people coming from different nationalities. I think these new changes in our communities call for a multi-ethnic churches and the All Nations Church has emerged in a time as this to serve these diverse communities.<sup>102</sup>

Clearly, the HBC is generally inclusive, except for a few elderly people who find the transition brought about as a result of their inclusiveness uncomfortable, however, overall, the church believes that churches should be Christ centred and follow Christ's incarnational model of mission. The senior pastor explained:

Unless we understand the priorities that God has for our working relationships with other people who come to us, we will always be

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid

<sup>102</sup> The All Nations Church pastor in a recorded interview.

lukewarm against them and distort them. We have to see all people in our midst as the Lord sending them to us. Christian principles should guide us as we seek to negotiate our working together with people who are from different cultures. We have to deal with our often stereotypical and biases and figure out how we could learn from people from different cultures and how we can worship and work with them.<sup>103</sup>

An elderly member of the church explained:

The problem is that in reality most of us (Whites) feel threatened by those who are not like us. Some of the people who come to us have different views from ours. We don't make any attempt to understand their point of view instead we tend to behave as if the weakness is theirs, stereotyping and speaking about them for their error of judgement in what is clearly our lack of understanding of people from other cultures.<sup>104</sup>

Another member of the church had the following to say when asked what he thought could bring about unity among Christ's people:

We need to be full of God's grace, compassion and love for all people in spite of their backgrounds. This does not mean that as Christians, we cannot address and discuss serious issues that concern the church, but we need to do so with the spirit of love, humility and a desire for unity. We have to understand that the 'Body of Christ' is not divided' and that the Christians who come to us from other backgrounds are also our brothers and sisters in Christ.<sup>105</sup>

The HBC is located very close to the University of Birmingham and the ANC is also located very close to the University of Wolverhampton. These two churches have

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<sup>103</sup> A recorded interview with the Harborne Baptist Church senior pastor.

<sup>104</sup> A respondent from the Harborne Baptist Church in a recorded interview.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid



put in place systems that attract international and local students. They have tried many different ways of getting involved with their local communities, which are diverse. One of the most successful is their coffee shops. The ANC called theirs Café 316 and the HBC called theirs International Café and Café Stop. It was a simple idea: they both adopted the front of their church hall, prepared the place and had all the necessary equipment in place and began selling coffee to students and local people. The HBC and the ANC café have become a little community in its own right with many regulars coming in to drink and building relationships cross-culturally.

Christ's people have to come up with solutions now, not just identifying the problems. They should realize that the type of church required for the multicultural context of Britain would be the church whose culture affects the values and ethos of the congregation which is made up of Christ's people from diverse backgrounds. However, ministering to people from a diverse British multicultural context will require an awareness and understanding of the culture that informs local mission as one interviewee responded:

We (Whites) are not against the idea of worshipping and working with people from other backgrounds but we also think that these migrants have to first of all integrate. Some of them hate our way of life but I think they need to adjust their ways to our culture. How can they win the people whose culture they don't understand, to Christ? It is true that we (Whites) also have our weaknesses. We are very individualistic hence overlook the needs of people from other cultures. We need to improve how we relate to people who are not like us but the problem is that we instead try to impose our ways on other people because we think that our ways are better than theirs. We need to improve upon the way we relate to others.<sup>106</sup>

The above comments from a participant is a real indication of some of the challenges involved in the African immigrant churches partnering with the White

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid

majority churches for the advancement of the Kingdom in Britain. It is true to say that proper understanding and expression of cultural values from both sides will be necessary. It is a fact that different cultures play by different rules yet, Christ's people should not ignore cultures unless they violate Scripture. The vision essential for cross-cultural leadership is based on an understanding of what the Scriptures teach of the Kingdom of God and the vision empowered by the Holy Spirit to for the engagement in mission endeavours.

All of the four pastors have the desire to work together for the advancement of the Kingdom in Britain. However, it will be appropriate if they work out the modalities with regard to the possible outcome in their involvement in cross-cultural ministry initiatives. It has been their desire to preach the Gospel that they think offers a hope and a future but they also accept the fact that the church (universal) needs a renewed understanding of its part in what God is doing in the world today.

#### **4.5.7. Worship and Liturgy**

The four case study churches have common rituals and liturgy. For example, they practise believer's baptism by immersion only; they also observe the Lord's supper, even though with different meanings and styles. They however, differ in their praise and worship styles. The ANC has contemporary worship style and the HBC uses innovative hymnody and in some cases contemporary worship style. Hymns provide great themes to inspire the HBC fellowship and furnish it with anthems of praise. While the COP and ECFC's form of worship is dancing to the tone of lively joyful music.

They all believe that singing praises to God is a sign of gladness and contentment. It is also a sign of joy, indicating a satisfaction with the believer's lot in life. It is a healthy expression of positive emotion that ministers strength in the total being of Christ's people.

All the respondents in this interview thought that worship and liturgy is very important in their choice of church. They all felt that the church they attend should be a welcoming church and besides it should be vibrant and serve their spiritual and emotional needs. Moreover, the worship environment should be a place where they can express their faith freely.

The following interviewee, for example, joined the HBC on his arrival from Jamaica:

In my native country (Jamaica) all my extended family members starting from my dad's grandparents were members of the Baptist Church. This is the church I have been attending from my infancy and as such when I arrived in Britain I joined the local Baptist congregation in my community. All Baptist churches naturally welcome strangers.<sup>107</sup>

The HBC, being a welcoming church is a view shared by the senior pastor:

Baptist communities have Biblical commitment and response to embrace and celebrate differences as well as respecting the uniqueness of the diversity. At the Harborne Baptist Church, our congregation comprises of people from 19 diverse backgrounds. We worship harmoniously with these people because we see their presence as an expression of God's purpose for his children.<sup>108</sup>

The local churches associated with the Baptist Union of Great Britain are seen in the eyes of some migrants as welcoming and are regarded as an acceptable place of worship for migrants who were members of the Baptist congregations in their native countries before migrating to Britain. The reception into the mainline churches that these migrants experienced was not the norm. Although the majority of migrants did feel very welcome at Baptist churches, in their native countries some of these migrants had attended a church belonging to the same Baptist denomination.

The HBC is a multi-ethnic church with a multicultural identity, it, nonetheless, has a mono-cultural approach in its worship style and ministry expression, yet, migrants fit so easily into this mode of worship because the Baptist denomination as a whole, is a denomination with an international dimension hence most of their migrant members were members of the church in their countries of origin as such were integrated into this system in their countries before migrating to Britain.

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid

<sup>108</sup> The Harborne Baptist Church senior pastor in a recorded interview.

For the most part, Bible exposition is one of the hallmarks of the HBC. They preach and teach the Bible as the very life of their church depends on the Word of God because they believe it has the power to save lives, change lives and give life. This does not mean that on some occasions they do not address a particular topic or give topical messages. They are not saying that topical messages are wrong but they think that by expositional preaching they are delivering to their congregation a whole counsel of God as they believe in the supremacy of the Bible.

Another experience of a respondent (migrant) who joined the ANC was:

When I arrived in Britain, I first joined an orthodox church but I soon discovered that the type of Christianity as demonstrated in this church was different from those practised in Africa so I joined the All Nations Church, which in my view is a welcoming church and has a contemporary worship style.<sup>109</sup>

Another respondent put it with regard to his place of worship:

When you come to the All Nations Church, you will experience a very strong family relationship; we are one family in Christ and no matter who you are, your nationality or your ethnicity, we receive you equally, for 'God is no respecter of persons.' Our church is a vibrant church; we have a vibrant worship and the Word of God is taught in the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of God is present in our church and where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. It is a church where all feel being loved. In fact, it is like a community where members are concerned about one another's welfare.<sup>110</sup>

To describe the ANC as a community of faith for believers from diverse backgrounds is not to suggest that church discord, which is normal in churches, is obliterated. What it does suggest, however, is that it is a place where people from diverse backgrounds meet in a relaxed atmosphere where they expect to encounter God. God's word is relevant for them today as it was the day it was

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<sup>109</sup> A respondent from the All Nations Church in a recorded interview.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid

written. Members are encouraged to learn and memorize Scriptures and ministers preach and teach the full Bible. They firmly believe that corporate worship should involve the coming together of peoples from diverse backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, class, age or otherwise, to glorify God and to help one another to follow him. They think that such gatherings require sacrifices in terms of preferred styles of singing and preaching, yet there will be other occasions where differences are recognized.

It is not only spiritual matters that bring the ANC together in worship, but they are structured in such a way that communication and support are always extended to all members, especially those from the different backgrounds. Through the week, small groups comprising of people from diverse backgrounds gather in home fellowship, youth club meetings and the café 316 is opened to the public. They are at a different level of development. For example, they are involved in other projects, such as putting up a new church auditorium, which is at various stages of development. The ANC encourages its members in both spiritual and social matters. It is a welcoming community and a sense of community is a major identity that it offers its congregation.

When asked the reasons for having a multi-ethnic congregation instead of mono-ethnic church, one respondent argued that he viewed the Wolverhampton city as a diverse community, hence it would be wrong for their church not to reflect the people in their community. He remarked:

The Wolverhampton community where our church is located is a multicultural community. It is also a university city; in this case we come across a lot of international students and for us to ignore them just because they are different from us, is not the way we understand Christianity. Therefore, we believe that to fail to address the needs of our surrounding community is not a simply cultural issue but a theological issue of failing to live up to our Biblical responsibility.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid

The ANC has the desire intentionally to celebrate the diversity that is in their congregation. They have a common multi-ethnic worship service, but also language specific worship services. They clearly have a multicultural identity in their worship attendance as their congregation represents a wide diversity of ethnicities but the culture of their Sunday morning service is decidedly mono-cultural. They could also go a step further by intentionally weaving various cultural traditions into a single service instead of mono-ethnic groups, such as the Punjabi and Chinese services, so that they can worship separately in their own language and culture without having to give up their identity. That is to say, in modifying their worship styles, the ANC, though quite intentional about blending the cultures at some levels, often use a combination of multi-ethnic gatherings and mono-ethnic groupings in their worship. They serve the diversity of the congregation by adopting separate worship services based on languages. For example, there is Chinese and Punjabi services ministered in their various languages.

Praise and worship is regarded very much at the COP, where believers sing songs based on the Scriptures which is done to glorify the name of the living God whom they see as their great provider in all aspect of lives. As one of their pastors explained:

At the Church of Pentecost, we think that our contemporary expression of church should be recognizable as the Body of Christ and that our practices should actually resemble the ministry of Jesus. As a Body of Christ, we have to truly display Jesus in our worship and so here, we worship God in the spirit and in truth and we believe that worshipping him this way results in the visitation of the Holy Spirit in our gatherings.<sup>112</sup>

The COP is of the view that as Jesus boldly declared his mission in Luke 4:18-19 as the Messiah, a proper evaluation of the church (universal) all these centuries later, must certainly bring recognition of the ministry of Jesus in churches. All churches must replicate the mission of Christ in their worship.

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<sup>112</sup> A respondent from the Church of Pentecost in a recorded interview.

Even though the four churches have different worship styles, they have all created faith communities that take worship seriously and have made it (music) an intentional part of the experience of their adherents to share in their communities of faith. Their worship focus is on God as the source of all that they are as Christians.

#### **4.5.8. The emphases of the Spirit and Power of the Holy Spirit**

Even though, all the four churches believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in their ministry, yet, the emphases of the Spirit and power of the Holy Spirit differs from one church (denomination) to another. For example, it was discovered during the fieldwork that the COP places much emphases of the Holy Spirit in all areas of their ministration. It was observed that they acknowledge the importance of the Holy Spirit in the work of evangelism and church life as such they do not emphasize philosophy instead of the Bible They teach their members to prepare for a spiritual battle with Satan and his demons. They also teach their members how to heal the sick, cast demons and preach the Gospel with miracles confirming the ministry of the Word. They have a Bible College where they prepare their members for the work of the ministry, but in their Bible College, instead of merely turning out students with degrees which they do, their emphasis, however, is to raise up God's people who are aflame with the Holy Spirit. These they believe could dispel the demonic influence spread over the United Kingdom (Acts 8:6-7). They emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit as one of their core values:

We believe in the presence of the person of the Holy Spirit and that the Christian life can be led only by God's grace. The new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit, and then the baptism in the Holy Spirit for power to serve and the gifts of the Spirit for building the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit helps the born-again Christian to develop a Christ-like character which is manifested through the bearing of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The leading of the Holy Spirit in all aspects of the believer's life and all spheres of activity in the church is paramount.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> A respondent from the Church of Pentecost in a recorded interview

The emphasis of the Holy Spirit in the work of the ministry was evident repeatedly in a variety of forms throughout the fieldwork with COP:

I know that some people possess great intellect and powers of speech. These people because of their oratory are able to impress the minds of people but I don't think that kind of preaching can penetrate the heart of people. Our understanding of preaching is that the Bible should be ministered in prophetic power. It is the demonstration of the Spirit and power of the Holy Spirit and not an exercise of human wisdom and ability as described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2.<sup>114</sup>

Another member also had this to say:

The church is supposed to be a place where people sense God's presence and hear his voice. The spirit filled preacher's voice should be the medium through which the Lord can speak to his people. Our pastors are people who pray and seek the face of God.<sup>115</sup>

These views were shared by a respondent from the ANC:

As we spend time in prayers preparing for ministration of the Word, it is advisable that we regard the sensitivity of the Holy Spirit and preach the Word. The Book of Acts tells us that the apostolic church was under the directions of the Holy Spirit. Sadly, what we see in some circles today is human work rather than Holy Spirit directed work, but the early Apostles were dependent on the leadings of the Holy Spirit as such all Christ's people can emulate the example of the early church.<sup>116</sup>

It was observed in the fieldwork that the COP shares the need for baptism in the Holy Spirit and then gives opportunity for those who would like to receive the

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid

<sup>115</sup> Ibid

<sup>116</sup> A respondent from the All Nations Church in a recorded interview



baptism to be prayed for. If people are sick or suffering, they are being encouraged to be prayed for. Believers lay hands on them and pray for them. Those praying are encouraged to share a word or revelation they received from the Holy Spirit for the person they are praying for. The COP's concept of church is that a church should be a place where people not only learn about God but also experience his presence. Therefore, the place of the Holy Spirit and his empowerment is very significant in their worship as they place much emphasis on the power encounters with demonic forces that are confronted and overpowered by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The ANC believe in the gifts and ministry of the Holy Spirit, but they also have a strong emphasis on Biblical teaching and look to the Scriptures to guide their experiences with what the Holy Spirit reveals to them. At the ANC, one finds the teachings of the Bible and there is also an open heart for the work of the Holy Spirit, which makes the ANC distinct and unique.

The COP, the ECFC and the ANC do not think that their churches can properly accomplish their God-given task without the gifts of the Holy Spirit. To these churches, the baptism in the Holy Spirit was not optional for the first century church, neither should it be optional for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century church today. They believe that the Lord wants to empower believers for ministry and the gifts of the Spirit are to empower Christ's people for the work of the ministry. They therefore, encourage the exercise of these gifts and give their congregations the opportunity to use them.

In the ministry of the Holy Spirit, one characteristic of the HBC is their relaxed casual style. They do not get involved in spiritual hypes because they do not want to motivate their congregation carnally. They simply trust in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and they teach the Bible, deeply trust and absolutely rely on the Scriptures. They actually believe in the validity of the gifts of the Spirit, and that the gifts can be expressed today. What they do not believe in is the excesses that so often accompany a freedom in the use of these gifts of the Spirit. For example, they encourage members who want to speak in tongues to do so in a private devotional setting such as prayer meetings but not necessarily in their public services like for example, Sunday worship service. They are of the belief that Christ's people should

have a spirituality based on an intimacy with the Heavenly Father and an involvement in the lives of fellow believers as well as people of the world.

Realizing that their fellowship was the Lord's church relieves them from the burden of being pressured, so they are not under pressure to create schemes and manipulate people. They believe that it is the Lord's church and if it is the Lord's church then the Lord will take care of his church and build it in his own time (Matthew 16:18). It is the Lord's responsibility to add to the church and to build his church (John 21:16). But it is also the responsibility of pastors to love the congregation, equip them for the work of ministry and trust the Lord to build his church by adding those that should be saved:

We believe that our emphasis on the Scriptures ministers to the spirit of our congregation as our Bible-based ministration does not come from the wisdom of the world but the guidance and wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit.<sup>117</sup>

The HBC realizes that there are some Christians who place a heavy emphasis on speaking in tongues and look on that gift as the primary evidence of the infilling or baptism in the Holy Spirit, but they think this gift in the believer's life may not evidence anything if there is no love. They understand that God's supreme desire for his people is that they will experience his love and share that love with others. That love needs to be demonstrated by Christ's people in actions, attitudes and life.

When asked during the in-depth interview with the pastor (the HBC pastor) about how the gifts of the Holy Spirit are ministered in his congregation, he admitted that they do not allow speaking in tongues during Sunday services and other public services but members are encouraged to use the gifts in their own personal devotional life:

We don't allow public utterances in tongues as practised in some Pentecostal churches but there are a group of believers in this church who gather for prayers and exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In as much as it's done in their own personal

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<sup>117</sup> A respondent from the Harborne Baptist Church in a recorded interview.

devotion and not in our public service, I don't think there is any problem with it.<sup>118</sup>

It was observed that the ANC, the COP and the ECFC emphasize tongues as the primary manifestation of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, while the HBC looks for emphasis on love as the fruit of the Spirit.

#### **4.5.9. The Existential Concerns of the next generation**

All the four churches have an active children and youth ministries and see the growth of these ministries as a vital part of their vision as a church.

The HBC is a missional and forward-thinking church helping young people to grow to a strong and mature faith so that they would take responsibilities not just in their local church and communities but also worldwide. They emission and guide their young people in an adventurous, outgoing and pioneering ministries. For example, during an observation, the Sunday worship service was devoted to some of the youth (18-23 years) who just returned from their missionary trip to Uganda. In their message to the congregation, they shared their missional experiences and the motivations they had received from their mission endeavours in Africa.

The ANC has developed programmes that help to shape the church's engagement with young people in some exciting and challenging contexts. Their youth development is focused on providing mentorship and support. It is about growing leaders for Christian ministry. Their programmes are organized by implementing fellowships, worship, Biblical teaching, discipleship, and evangelism as well as ministry and mission. The youth are equipped and empowered to take responsibilities in the church, such as leading praise and worship, prayer meetings, youth evangelism and developing strategies to reach and meet specific needs of their community. The leadership prioritize the exploration of vocational leadership among the youth:

Here, we see it as the pastors' responsibilities to instil in the next generation of believers' absolute confidence in the

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<sup>118</sup> The Harborne Baptist Church senior pastor in a recorded interview.

authority of the Bible and an absolute dependence on it for their understanding of the Christian life and ministry.<sup>119</sup>

The author's notebook reveals the information he gathered during a conversation with some of the second-generation youth during his fieldwork at the COP reveals the tension the youth have towards the liturgy and ecclesiology. These second-generation immigrants who have been assimilated into the dominant culture in the British system want their church to embrace a contemporary worship style aligned with the host culture. During a casual conversation with a couple of them, the author observed that even though, the second generation remains in the church's fellowship but not without stress. The leadership does not appear to have a deep understanding of the needs of the youth who complain about the type of ecclesiology used in their church setting. But in their effort to please their parents, these young people still remain in the fellowship, however, with a negative attitude and some of them become disengaged and eventually leave as one respondent explained:

Everything we do in worship here is as if we are still in Ghana. We can't invite our (White) friends here. The way our people organise worship here is difficult for young people like us to understand. We want our worship songs to be contemporary worship and these are 20<sup>th</sup> Century songs. If not because of the respect I have for my parents I would have left this church a long time ago.<sup>120</sup>

The specificity of the above response led the author to ask in the in-depth interview with the COP pastor, how as a church, they could address the existential concerns of their next generation in areas of worship (music). The pastor in response admonished the COP as being gifted in the area of worship:

The issue of the second generation is a complex one. We encourage those who don't want to worship in the Akan way to join our multicultural service where service is conducted in the

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<sup>119</sup> The All Nations Church pastor in a recorded interview.

<sup>120</sup> A second generation respondent from the Church of Pentecost in a recorded interview.

English language and the praise and worship is contemporary. We are aware of the challenges they face as they are caught between two cultures. We are very prayerful about addressing these issues.<sup>121</sup>

This issue about the existential concerns of the second-generation youth of the COP was made evident in numerous responses during the fieldwork. It is evident that there is a misunderstanding between the second generation and the first generation in the areas of theology and ecclesiastical style. The COP is aware that the future of their diaspora church depends on the young generation catching the vision of the first generation migrants. Therefore, several measures have been initiated to mentor the youth to know Christ in a personal way and also to know the distinctiveness of the church. COP allows the youth to ask questions on issues they do not understand and the youth are encouraged to bring forth their ideas for discussion on how to move the church forward. The leadership identifies the giftedness of the youth, trains and encourages them to preach during services on weekdays, as well as some Sunday services. COP local churches are encouraged to establish youth centres where counselling, recreation and reading facilities will be provided for the youth. These youth centres should also provide career counselling and guidance as well as mentoring.

The practices of the ECFC on the other hand, help their second generation to replicate their cultural heritage and maintain their identity. Their ecclesiology is designed to act out the continuity of their cultural identity to the next generation. It is for this reason that many of the Ethiopian/Eritrean youth interviewed, expressed a strong preference for an Ethiopian/Eritrean pastor whom they think could lead them to replicate their cultural heritage and maintain identity. They also think that having a pastor from the same background would mean the desire to empathize with their spiritual, emotional and material needs. Because the ECFC offers its members a sense of community, their youth and most of them, British citizens, still think they are Ethiopians and Eritreans, first of all, before being British. In other words, they identify themselves as British but retain the lifestyle of their parents. They demonstrate allegiance to their cultural identity and this in part has been

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<sup>121</sup> The Church of Pentecost pastor in a recorded interview.

encouraged by their first generation and also the polarized communities in which they find themselves.

#### **4.5.10. *Missio Dei* and its implications**

All the four pastors believe that God is the initiator of the Christian mission and that Christ's people are all respondents. Christ's people should therefore endeavour to be led by the Holy Spirit and should not be afraid of what the Lord is leading them to do. It is a thrill to see how God is blessing when Christ's people dare to step out and allow his Spirit to do what he wants to do, giving themselves over as instruments through which he can do what he wants to do if he so desires. They all believe that priority should be given to the creation of a covenant community in which team members commit first to one another as people of God and to working together as people on the mission of God:

God wants to work among Christians. God has a work that he desires to do, and God is simply looking for his people who are in harmony with what he desires in order that he might show himself strong on their behalf. If we step out to see what God might want to do, we don't press and manipulate. We believe that if God is in it, it is going to be successful. Don't forget that the vision is for an appointed time, and if it is truly his he will surely bring it to pass. I believe that the vision, mission and the ministry are all God's. It is *missio Dei*. The responsibility of the Christian is to be intentional about showing God's love, grace and acceptance to people in spite of their backgrounds. We, as Christians have the task of demonstrating God's truth and love to all we come into contact with.<sup>122</sup>

The key to discovering what God is doing is to step out in faith. We believe that Christians must have the confidence that God's will and purposes will surely be fulfilled. God will do his work, but Christians have the opportunity to be part of what God is doing in a particular instance. They can avail themselves as vessels through which God

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid

uses. Some Christians think that they can do God's work on their own initiative but those of us in the Ethiopian Church believe that God gives power and authority to whom he pleases.<sup>123</sup>

All that God needs is Christians living in harmony with his purpose. Christians who come together with his purpose as their goal or Christians who have made themselves available for his purpose.<sup>124</sup>

Some Christians struggle at the promises of God because they try to find out, in human way, how God could work among them. We believe that it is not the responsibility of the Christian to figure out how God would work among them. God is alive and he directs the steps of believers. He is ever ready to direct the steps of his people. In other words, Christians are right to say that God has got a work that he desires to do and that Christians can choose to be participants. It is his work.<sup>125</sup>

The above responses reveal an understanding the four pastors hold on God's mission and the response of the church to this mission. These reflections on mission were discovered in a variety of ways throughout the fieldwork.

The HBC, ECFC and the COP do not rely on church growth programmes and various kinds of contests in an effort to build their various fellowships, which they believe is the Lord's work. They believe that the Lord would do it and he will add to his church in his own timing. They do not necessarily strive to maintain God's church because they think that striving to maintain can create ministerial burnout as one of the pastors commented:

Striving to build God's church will lead you into all kinds of programmes and negative practices. We believe that the church is God's church and God knows exactly what he wants to do, and

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<sup>123</sup> The Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church pastor in a recorded interview.

<sup>124</sup> The All Nations Church pastor in a recorded interview.

<sup>125</sup> The Harborne Baptist Church pastor in a recorded interview.

all he expects of us as Christians is that we obey the instructions given in his word and follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit.<sup>126</sup>

Striving to build does not just mean buying into the latest church growth programmes and resorting to all kinds of carnal ways by using marketing strategies to build, but it can also happen in an overemphasized spiritual environment, where church growth is created by spiritual and emotional excitement and the hyping of the gifts of the Spirit. All the pastors think that Christians must submit their value for achievement to the Kingdom priority of trusting God for all outcomes. Since it is God's Kingdom and God's spirit who is moving God's people, he, God is responsible for the result.

#### **4.6. Summary**

All the four ministers believe that God's vision clearly takes diversity seriously. They also believe that God does not obliterate the differences, but they think that the differences exist to create room for diversity, which is God's nature. They all think that bringing hope to the world, and in so doing demonstrating Christ's love for it must be the priority of all Christ's people. Therefore, the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches must see themselves as players in bringing about God's Kingdom to the communities in the United Kingdom.

Apart from their normal Sunday worship services, all the four churches have weekday programmes such as small groups, youth club, prayer meetings, men and women fellowships and other programmes that encourage interaction among their congregations. A sense of community and belonging is developed during these week day services because of their informal nature and then also these meetings are conducted in a non-threatening environment hence as a result supports in different forms are extended to members for their developments and to meet their needs. The COP and the ECFC were established as a worship place where their African members can discover a sense of identity, respect and belonging. This sense of need has immensely contributed to the development of a healthy prayer and devotional lives of their adherents. Racism may not necessarily be the reasons for the existence of these churches, but it could be the catalyst in their growth and

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<sup>126</sup> The Church of Pentecost pastor in a recorded interview.



relevance to the African community as these churches serve as places where African migrants meet with fellow Africans, worship, share and socialize with them.

The sense of identity that is so prevalent among these churches was not intended by their congregations to ignore people from other cultures or the wider community. It is worthy of note that the primary concern of most migrants is not with integration; faced with immigration matters and other social issues, migrants are first concerned with how they will survive in their newly found country and this is where the African immigrant churches come in. Frankly, the roles played by the COP and the ECFC in assisting their congregations have facilitated the role of their churches as both social and spiritual liberation for their adherents. This action is rare in the traditional White majority churches. It is not so much of the fact that the traditional churches are consciously deciding that they will never change; it is just the fact that some Christians tend to get comfortable with the way things are.

It was noted that most disunity among Christians happen when there are doctrinal differences. For example, when churches take a dogmatic position on issues such as being Arminian or Calvinist, in the view of all the four pastors, this brings division but this should not bring division as Scripture teaches both the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of God's people. The disunity among Christ's people becomes imminent when they take either of these positions to an extreme, to the denying of the other, then there is definitely a problem. God's people must realize that the very fact that they can produce as many Scriptures and make as good an argument as they can in this matter demonstrates that there are two sides of the argument.

The pastors therefore, feel that it would be appropriate to accept people they come across with, who in some cases have different doctrines (secondary doctrines), but they also think that unity should not be at the expense of the Biblical truth; as much as they all agree in the fundamental doctrines, secondary doctrines should not divide the Body of Christ as such Christians must realize in all their interactions with other Christians that, all Christ's people form his body (the Body of Christ) and are called together to express and continue his ministry of reconciliation by representing his words and deeds to the human race. Therefore, the metaphor of the Body of Christ ministering to itself in love should be the example in all Christian

endeavours as long as they share the same beliefs in the fundamental doctrines. Clearly, the fundamental doctrines shape the view of Christ's church and determines how Christ's people live out their mission and this view is respected by all the pastors.

The study shows that the four churches have different emphases of the Spirit and power of the Holy Spirit. The COP, the ECFC and the ANC have similar understanding of the gifts of the Spirit. The HBC, however, shares different views as they believe in the Holy Spirit, but not in its charismatic sense. The other three pastors argue that the New Testament states that Christ gave to the Church (universal) apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11) to enable God's people to fulfil their ministries, hence they all think that it is difficult for them to believe the type of theology which says that spiritual gifts including apostles and prophets died out with the early Apostles. They remarked that such thinking is not true to Scripture, to history or experience and that today, there are apostles who are pioneers, church builders and there are prophets too who bring clarity, vision and perspectives to the church (universal).

All the pastors, including the HBC pastor, agree that there are evangelists, pastors and teachers but the view held by the other three pastors is that all of the five leading ministries gifts in Ephesians 4:11 are essential if the Body of Christ is to function properly. According to them, Christ gave these gifts to the church (universal) for the equipping of Christ's people and for the work of the ministry.

Equally significant, is the fact that the absence of spiritual hunger is a real problem for the indigenous British (White) Christians. The fact is they recognize this thirst for spirituality but the structures (leadership) in their places of worship stand in their way of satisfying this thirst for spirituality.

It was noted that any attempt for the ECFC to assimilate into the British culture of contemporary worship would often build a stiff resistance from its first generation migrants and this may result in the members withdrawing and moving into places of worship that they are familiar with. In this case the ECFC pastors and in some cases, pastors of other black-led churches have the responsibility of helping their congregations to centre on their new identity in Christ and help lead them in a

process of commitment to Christ and to one another to be the people of God on a mission together with the wider community in Britain. The ECFC leadership is actually involved in cross-cultural initiatives that bring Christians from diverse background together by building bridges and outreaches to communities. They have gone a step further by allowing the Church of England in the Kings Cross area of London to share the use of their church building. However, the gathering of ECFC is typically mono-ethnic, yet, not out of hatred towards others, rather those who attend the ECFC are desperate to preserve their roots in a foreign land. The ECFC will remain a mono-ethnic church for the foreseeable future because it is observed that the issue of identity for the Ethiopian/Eritrean believer is one in which their Christian faith and cultural loyalty is connected.

The ANC and the HBC are churches modelling diversity. As they find ways of creating, building and connecting truly diverse communities rather than mirroring a society divided by race and other negative factors, they are announcing the Kingdom of God here on earth. Clearly, the demography of Britain is diverse as there are people from different backgrounds, varied ethnicities and diverse countries and so churches must take this into consideration in their mission endeavours.

The goal of the pastoral staff in both mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic churches should be to recognize where different people are in their journey to becoming more culturally, inclusive, and to serve them in a way that is appropriate to what God is doing in their hearts and lives.

It is understandable that the need for unity in diversity is about Christian unity; the idea of unity here does not mean the promotion of religious pluralism or bringing all Christian churches under one umbrella. In other words, the need for unity in diversity does not mean that all religions must come together in unity. The Gospel, unlike other religions is about what the Apostle Paul clearly described in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

There are existential concerns about the second-generation migrants who themselves are valuable assets for reaching out to the wider community because they naturally negotiate between their parents' cultures and the host (UK) culture.

It is on these next generation migrants that new cross-cultural ministries can be constructed. The challenge, however, is how these second-generation immigrants can maintain the identity of family, culture, and their Christian beliefs, while at the same time adapting to the culture of the host country.

For example, it was observed that the COP's youth are the generation to establish a multi-ethnic church because they understand the culture of their first generation parents and are also comfortable with the White British culture. The COP leadership has put in place measures to encourage their second generation and some of these measures are the 'open forum' given them to operate in the church in order to identify with them in matters of concern to them (the youth) and also opportunities to teach and preach when necessary.

None of the four churches had a type of leadership that reflected the diverse backgrounds of their congregation. Most of the leaders of the COP were Ghanaians and the ECFC also has its leaders from Ethiopian /Eritrean communities. The ANC's leaders come from diverse backgrounds. Notwithstanding, there are still some disparities. The HBC, on the other hand, is in a process of building a multicultural team. All four pastors understand that the factor that informs selecting or choosing leaders as the case may be, is making sure that one chooses the type of leaders who will broaden the experience of the existing team and that they make sure that the types of leaders they choose listen to their congregations.

The study has shown that changes happen when people move to new places. In the new communities, one can find people (like recently arrived migrants) who have experienced a great deal of change and are open to new relationships. It is clear that mono-ethnic churches offer immigrants, who may not fit the conforming expectations of many traditional churches, a place to grow spiritually and relationally, a place to call home as they worship with people of their own kind.

Ideally, all churches must be biblically inclusive, seeking to grow in love and respect for people who are different from the majority of their congregations. However, these outward looking qualities are generally perceived as lacking within many White majority churches. Hence there is the need for some of these churches to learn to be welcoming churches, seeking to overcome the cultural barriers that

separate them from people 'who are not like them.' Clearly, they have a responsibility as Christ's people, to be concerned about the wellbeing of the minorities who share the same faith with them and worship with them. But getting involved in the lives of people from other backgrounds is a difficult task hence the need for mission-minded pastors who will equip the existing members of their White majority churches about the reality of the ethnic changes going on around them in their communities. They should see the people they meet in their communities as people who could also be part of the Kingdom.

The study shows that churches do not necessarily have to be multi-ethnic before they become faithful to God's vision. However, due to the multicultural nature of the UK urban communities, the multi-ethnic church has a role in these communities. However, there is also a place for mono-ethnic churches in the communities. In most situations, mono-ethnic churches are best for reaching first generation migrants because in the mono-ethnic churches there are not many cultural issues to be addressed while the migrants adjust to a new life. There will always be people who prefer not to cross-cultural barriers in order to understand, accept and practise the Gospel. This is where the ECFC and the COP come in. They offer their congregations a sense of community, identity and belonging but this does not suggest that these churches do not have misunderstanding but what it does suggest is that they are united against a common 'enemy' racism in their newly found country. The COP has recently initiated a programme called *welfare of church members and other social obligations*.<sup>127</sup> With this programme, they expect every local assembly to devise special welfare schemes for the less privileged among them. The local churches are also tasked to identify the economic situation of church members and a conducive environment is created to enable members to share their economic, educational and other social needs with the church.

Certainly, this study makes us to understand that there will always be communities in places (towns and villages) where there is only one ethnic group and also there will always be people with a common identity (like the Ethiopian/Eritrean community in Britain) with a language barrier; in these cases, mono-ethnic

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<sup>127</sup> See the Church of Pentecost Vision 2018, Five-Year Vision for the Church of Pentecost, Covering the period 2013 -2018.

churches would be ideal. Leaders, whether from a multi-ethnic or mono-ethnic background, must therefore be mission-minded and passionate about their church and communicate a great deal to their congregations about their church's values whether mono-ethnic or multi-ethnic.

The themes, insights and patterns that have emerged from the research fieldwork would be integrated into a critical thesis, utilizing methods of comparison, analysis, critique and evaluation in the next chapters (Chapters 5-7).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. THE AFRICAN IMMIGRANT CHURCH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR *MISSIO DEI*

#### 5.1. Introduction

The foregoing theoretical study of Chapters 2 and 3 and the empirical study of Chapter 4 reveal the importance of formulating an understanding of “mission” based on theological reflection on the unity that arises among Christ people. God is a relational God and as such, he expects Christ’s people from all backgrounds to express their theology and communicate his love relationally to all people in spite of their backgrounds. Therefore, the framework of any meaningful partnering between the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches should be based on the formulation of a proper understanding of mission on the basis of theological reflection and not anthropological underpinning. Verstraelen et al. (1995:120) shared this view when they emphasized the impossibility of formulating an overall perspective on mission from one perspective, which in their view, has always been the Western perspective.<sup>128</sup> In the interview with the pastors of the four churches, it was discovered that all the four pastors share a similar view on ‘mission.’ They all accepted that basically ‘mission’ is God’s mission and that God has called the church (universal) to participate in his mission. They believe also that God can do everything in the world through people and nations to establish his Kingdom here on earth – within the church and beyond the church, but salvation is only through God’s son Jesus Christ as such they think that Christ’s people in spite

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<sup>128</sup>Verstraelen, et al. had this to say: “...the theological undergirding of the church’s mission has often been intertwined with a legitimation of the superiority of Western Christianity. That is, the undergirding of missions often served to justify views and actions that in retrospect betray a denial of and contempt for contextual diversity. Therefore, it is no longer possible to formulate an overall perspective on “mission” naively from one perspective, and certainly not from a Western perspective. It will only be possible to formulate such an understanding of “mission” on the basis of theological reflection on the unity that arises in, behind, and above contextual diversity. This unity will then have to be defined “missionarily”: It will have to be defined on the basis of an understanding of the journey of Christianity in the world as a journey with a starting point (Jerusalem) and a point of reference (the kingdom of God). And it will have to be defined in terms of the “real presence” of that starting point and the focus on the common point of reference becoming visible in all the (contextual) ramifications of the journey.” (Copied from Verstraelen, F.J. et al (1995:120), *Missiology, An Ecumenical Introduction*, Eerdmans Publishing Co. Michigan).

of their backgrounds, are privileged to be called to participate in God's mission wherever they happen to be in this world.

It is obvious that the church (universal) does have a special role, sent by God to continue in his (God's) mission of salvation of humankind. Christ's people, in spite of their background, must deeply take to heart the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-28) which calls all Christians to measure their lives by this heavenly vision of reaching all nations. In view of this, it will be fair to say that the African immigrant churches have a divine mandate to fulfil in Britain. However, the African immigrant churches must regard the whole British society as another stage in their mission endeavours to the United Kingdom as they reach out with an expanded vision of God's whole heart for the uttermost part of the world in line with the Biblical pattern of Acts 1:8 (See Chapter 1.1.1). Evidently, the African immigrant churches have a mandate in Britain in what some African Bible scholars called '*reverse mission*'.<sup>129</sup> These African Christians believe that they have a God-given mandate for the rediscovery of Christianity in Britain, which in a sense was the former heartlands of Christianity and has now arguably become a mission field. The assertion of Wan (2014:275),<sup>130</sup> supports the view of migrants' claims of having a God-given mandate in their newly found land, when he stated that international migration could be interpreted as a God-given opportunity to spread the Gospel as the golden age of the mission endeavours of Western missionaries appear to have come to a halt.

It is clear to say that Western Christianity and for that matter Christianity in Britain, is declining and many people are very pessimistic in the West today. This reinforces the reason why the African Christians and the British Christians must discern the divine providence in their partnering together with a missional intention because it is obvious that the influx of migrant Christians into the UK is a providential means for reaching out to the host in post-Christian British society. However, it is also

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<sup>129</sup> Adogame, had this to say about reverse mission: "...Nineteenth-century Britain was a golden age for Christian missionaries who took the word of God around the globe to countries in which that religion remains and is now thriving. In a reverse of those great missionary journeys, idealistic modern-day missionaries travel to Britain to discover the historical roots of their faith and try to pursue their own missionary agenda in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Britain, trying to breathe new life into churches with declining attendance..." (Adogame (2013:172).

<sup>130</sup> Wan, Enoch ed. (2014:275), *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology and Practice*, IDS, USA



amazing to note that many churches in Britain do not come to this same place of faith.

It is obvious that the African immigrant churches have a God-given mission to reach out to UK communities, but what immediately comes to mind is whether these churches have the kind of theological framework that could unpack itself through their missiology, which in a way can shape their ecclesiology (Chalke, 2006:13). In order to reach out to the wider community, it is necessary for the African Christians to change their theology and practices so that they can consistently address the crucial areas of people's lives across all cultures. In their missionary effort, Adogame (2013:177)<sup>131</sup> was right to suggest that the African Christians must shape their theological thinking and also must have a drive for ecclesiastical liberation from *the paternalistic apron strings of Western mission bodies*.

If God has a mission in Britain and the African immigrant churches are participants of God's mission in this country, what then is the mission? The mission of God as correctly analysed by the four pastors in Chapter 4 is what missiologists term as *missio Dei*.<sup>132</sup> The history of *missio Dei* can be traced back to Augustine and has over the years emerged as a theological concept. However, its origin and historical concept is not the author's main concern in this work. The author will in this chapter

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<sup>131</sup> Adogame (2013), *The African Christian Diaspora, New Currents and Emerging Trends in World Christianity*, Bloomsbury Academic, London

<sup>132</sup> The idea that the mission of the Church (universal) is the mission of God and that God is the originator of mission and the Church is the respondent to what God is doing in his mission has its origins in the thought of Karl Barth. Barth's argument that God is the originator of mission and that mission must be understood as an activity of God was first proposed in a paper given at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932. However, the full concept of the mission of God was articulated in 1952 at the Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council. It is worth noting that the expression *missio Dei* was not used during the conference but it featured in the report of the Wurttemberg by Karl Hartenstein, the former director of Basle Mission. He created the term *missio Dei* to state in a nut shell, the outcome of the conference's closing statement which said: "*The missionary movement, of which we are a part has its source in the Trine God Himself. Out of the depths of His love for us, the Father has sent forth His own beloved Son to reconcile all things to Himself, that we and all men might, through the Spirit, be made one in Him with the Father in that perfect love which is the very nature of God... We who have been chosen in Christ... are by these very facts committed to full participation in His redeeming mission. There is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world. That by which the Church receives its existence is that by which it is also given its world-Mission*" (Richebacher, 2003:589). Mission was understood to derive from Trinitarian nature of God: The Father sends the Son, the Father and the Son send the Spirit; and the Trinitarian God sends the church (universal) into the world as an embodiment of divine love towards God's creatorship. In this case, 'mission' is no longer seen merely as the practical extension of the Church; it has to be understood fundamentally as a representative of the Triune God (CF <http://www.postost.net/category/tags/mission-evangelism> (accessed 07.08.17).

concern himself more about its implications for the mission endeavours of the African immigrant churches in the UK.

The author is of the view that salvation is the aim of *missio Dei* but it also includes the vertical dimension of communion with God and the horizontal dimension of human relationships. The author supports the view of Bosch (2014:399-400) who argues that mission is understood to be derived from the very nature of God and that the church (universal) is viewed as an instrument for that mission, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate. He also had this to say:

To participate in mission is to participate in God's love towards people, since God is a fountain of sending love... Since God's concern is for the entire world this should also be for the scope of *missio Dei*..." (Bosch, 2014:400-401).

This chapter seeks to understand the concept of *missio Dei* that God has always been on a mission to seek, save and redeem. The mission of God dominated the life and teachings of Jesus and calls all Christ's people in spite of their backgrounds and no matter what part of the world they find themselves, to embrace this very lifestyle of Christ. Christ's people are asked to live by the same rule that governed his time here on earth, however, adaptations to his approach to ministry must be made to suit the situational context in which they find themselves. For example, the strategy Christ adopted in the Mediterranean culture over two thousand years ago would not be the same techniques he would use today, yet the core message would remain the same. Coleman (1992:54)<sup>133</sup>, thinks that methods are variable, conditioned by the time and circumstances, which are constantly changing, however, the principles, inherent in Christ's way of life would never change. These principles, he believes provide guidelines for making disciples in every society and every age. How then do Christ's people seek to understand the Christian faith in a contemporary context, which has developed as a result of mass migration into Britain in the past few decades?

This chapter indicates that the essence of missional theology is relationships. The triune God, the ultimate relational being, expects Christ's people from all

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<sup>133</sup> Cited Coleman, R (1992:54), *The Great Commission Lifestyle*, Baker Book House, MI, USA

backgrounds to express their theology and communicate his love relationally. In Britain, 'mission' is still perceived by some people (mainly White British) as the initiative of the church and more specifically with missionaries from the West travelling to foreign lands, generally portrayed as taking the Gospel from Western developed countries to the unreached parts of the world. In the context where the professing church has for several hundreds of years accepted that it has the authority for mission, how can the professing church respond to the new realities that have arisen as result of mass migration of people from different cultural backgrounds who have gained their Christian landscape in Britain in recent years?

What then is the existing relationship between the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches? As Christ's people, called to be the light and salt of the world, are Christ's people striving to invest God's resources at their disposal where it makes the most impact? The new covenant in Christ calls Christ's people to covenant with God by participating in his mission, by being a light and salt to the nations while proclaiming the Gospel of Christ. The *missio Dei* therefore, calls all Christ's people to re-define their local context. Where they work, play and live is a mission field and that is where their ministry begins. In other words, due to the multicultural nature of the UK urban communities, cultural and ethnic barriers would have to be crossed if the Great Commission is to be fulfilled effectively. How can Christ's people from all backgrounds share the Gospel in a way that is suitable to their new cultural context without compromising the core message of the Bible?

This chapter seeks to understand that the ways the African immigrant churches relate to their new communities should be missional and that they should not only seek to minister to their own kind but should also focus on the wider community. Frankly, how the White majority churches seek to understand the Christian faith in a contemporary context that developed as a result of mass migration is very important because their mission endeavours must indicate action on the part of God, who calls for a response from his church, be they a White majority or a black-led.

It is true to say that there are lots of talks going on in the evangelical circles in Britain that identify the problems that are encountered in the African immigrant churches partnering with the White majority churches but it is more important to

come up with solutions now. For example, in Olofinjana (2013:8)<sup>134</sup>, Steve Clifford, the General Director of Evangelical Alliance, stated that their 'One People Commission' was working to see the type of unity for the purpose expressed in Jesus's prayer of John 17:21, reflected in their mission endeavours to Britain. However, Christ's people in Britain are yet to see the implementation of this fresh expression of unity among Christians from diverse backgrounds. Finding solutions to the identified problems therefore, is the essence of this work. Christian mission in a diverse British urban context requires an understanding of the culture that informs the local mission. Local church pastors must therefore, be mission-minded in order to equip their congregations to understand that the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches, both agree on winning souls to Christ but they are just the subject of cultural change. Just imagine what might happen in the communities of Britain if believers from all backgrounds are empowered and encouraged by their churches to invest themselves fully in propagating the Gospel across cultures.

## **5.2 The African immigrant church as an instrument for God's mission to Britain**

The African immigrant churches in the UK have gained a Christian landscape in their host country. They have clearly enabled their members to find refuge from discrimination and discover a sense of identity, respect and belonging, but they need to work harder in more creative ways and in partnership with the White majority churches to create a society that models the values of the Kingdom of God. They must therefore regard the whole British society as another stage in their mission endeavours to the United Kingdom as they reach out with an expanded vision of God's whole heart for the uttermost part of the world in line with the Biblical pattern of Acts 1:8 (see Section 1.3.2. of RP).

It is certain that reaching out to the wider UK communities would mean a situation where the African immigrant churches develop a contextual approach to ministry (ideally ministering in Britain should mean doing ministry in the British context), but this poses a big challenge as it is obvious that there are cultural differences that

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<sup>134</sup> Olofinjana, I ed. (2013), *Turning the Tables on Mission, Stories of Christians from the global south in the UK, Instant Apostle*

would need to be addressed. For example, the perception in the UK that the 'African originated' churches have a different theology has to be cleared (see Chapter 3).

The African immigrant churches preach and teach the whole concept of the Bible but their inability to reach out to the wider community as revealed in the fieldwork is worrying (see Chapter 4). Adogame (2013: 202-203) also raised concerns about the inability of the African-led churches reaching out to the wider community when he rightly stated that at this stage of their mission endeavour to the West, and for that matter to Britain, what the African immigrant churches are currently involved in, is developing a set of structure and practices to help their African migrant members maintain and reproduce their cultural and religious heritage, identities and to also assist them in a process of adapting to the new host context. He had this to say:

The African-led churches' communities represent pivots of attraction to their African congregations and the reasons for this is that most of these churches replicate the cultural and religious sensibilities of their home context, in a way that creates a comfort zone for many African immigrants. Despite targeting both Africans and non-Africans in their membership drives, their social-ethnic composition is still dominated largely by the former with White converts forming a negligible percentage.

Adogame (2013:205) understands that African Christians would have to rework language, and would also need a good approach, and move away from their present theological understanding if they really want to do cross-cultural ministries in their new context. They also need to repackage their context and make it more appealing to their new environment.

Edward, Joel (cited by Adogame, 2013:208) shares similar view:

African and Caribbean Christian communities often suffer from an acute case of 'cultural dissonance,' 'contextual abstinence' and 'a crisis of self-preservation.' It is one thing to talk about black churches influencing British Christian faith,

but it is quite another to recognize the number of black Christians seeking cultural refuge in White-led churches. African congregations replicate Africa on Sunday and co-exist with the culture for the rest of the week. They have a crisis of self-preservation which threatens to castrate the mission enterprise. In this sense, sometimes remaining and being African or Caribbean in the mission.

The above comments from Joel Edward, (as cited by Adogame, 2013:208) indicate that the African communities in the UK are not totally inclusive in their orientation. For these churches to become relevant within the multicultural context of the UK they would have to explore ways of changing their theologies and practices to become churches that can strategize to be the vanguard of spiritual, emotional, economic and social liberation by consistently addressing the crucial areas of people's lives and focusing their resources to transforming lives. These churches would have to negotiate between adapting and changing their religious cultures to more comfortably fit into their new UK cultural context.

Duane Elmer (1993:12-13)<sup>135</sup> underscores that there are sound theological reasons for understanding other cultures and appreciating them because making that commitment according to him, "will unfold for us new and wonderful dimensions of God's character, for our God can be properly revealed only through diversity." It is true to say that there are cultural differences between the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches, but by partnering with each other and understanding each other's cultures as suggested by Duane Elmer, both sides will be able to challenge the aspects of their culture and cultural influences on theology that are not in line with Biblical principles. Christ's people from both backgrounds would have to grow in a knowledge of and appreciation for what God has been doing in the migration of people into the UK over the last few decades and to combat the mission ignorance and apathy that has over the years affected the work of the ministry in the country.

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<sup>135</sup> Cited Duane Elmer (1993:12-13), *Cross-Cultural Conflict, Building Relationships for Effective Ministry*, InterVarsity Press, Illinois, USA

### 5.2.1. The Theology of Migration and the African immigrant church

From Genesis Chapter 1 to Chapter 11, the Bible describes the goodness of God's creation, the fall of humankind and the resulting satanic dominion over God's creatorship. Chapter 12 makes us understand God's plan to save people from within every tribe, tongue and nation as though his Kingdom was to *strike back* against Satan. From Genesis 12 to the end of the book of Revelation, the theme of the Bible is the reversal of this evil world by the coming of God's Kingdom, which will bring reconciliation and God's righteousness into every people on the earth. According to Ralph Winter, the reason why God sent Abraham to Canaan was that it was centrally located in the largest land mass of the planet. At the same time was a key to the centres of trade and communication in the world (Winter, 1995:2-3).<sup>136</sup> The mandate given to Abraham was to lead to the blessing to all the nations. These promise and mandate are clearly continued in the New Testament. Galatians 3:6-9 describes God's call and covenant with Abraham as the theme of the Bible, hence the marching orders of all Christ's people. According to Galatians, Christ's people are heirs of the same covenant God had with Abraham as well. Just as Abraham left the comfort of his home, God's people everywhere may voluntarily or involuntarily move away from their familiar surroundings to get a fresh perspective on missions.<sup>137</sup> Christ's people, from all backgrounds are all part of the cause of completing the Great Commission wherever they find themselves.

Certainly, God's unchanging purpose throughout the Scriptures is that all peoples would be blessed through those who know him and that missions is the basis of the Bible as such there is only one cause, the mandate of completing the Great Commission, and all Christ's people have been called to be part of it in spite of their background and no matter where they find themselves; this assertion is brought out clearly by the Apostle Paul in Acts 17:26-28 (NKJV) as he spoke to the people of Athens:

And he has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on  
all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed

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<sup>136</sup> Winter, R (ed.), (1995:2-3), *Vision for the Nations*, US Centre for World Mission, William Carey Library, Pasadena, CA, USA.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid

times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us; for in him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'for we are also his offsprings.'

It is clear from the above quotation that migration is in the will of God and that all Christ's people are the offspring of God hence all people are equal before him in worth and all have an equal right to respect. If all people are equal in his sight and that he uses migration of his people to advance his Kingdom, it will be appropriate if God's people in Britain and elsewhere understand the role of migrants in their communities. The fieldwork revealed that the opinions of the church members of the various churches were that they were all eager to share fellowship and partner with people who are not like themselves but the reasons they gave for partnering together were mainly anthropological and sociological. This is very concerning as these opinions prove to be more complicated. It is fair to say that the church members' opinion only gives Christ's people humanistic explanations and not a proper missiological understanding through the concept of *missio Dei* (see Chapter 4).

Ideally, it will be appropriate, among other things, if Christ's people from all walks of life in the UK could seek his face in prayer concerning what he is doing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century context of mission in Britain. Payne (2012:30)<sup>138</sup> warns Christians not to look at the trend of migration from sociological and anthropological point of view, but suggests that the focus of Christ's people should be that God is working out his will in the universe and that migration of people is not in his own words *serendipitous* (Payne, 2012:30). Arguably, the professing church in Britain still carries forward the inherited deficiency of an anthropocentric approach to ministry but for the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches to work together there is a need for formulating an understanding of mission based on theological reflection. Hanciles (2008:140)<sup>139</sup> understands that if Christ's people

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<sup>138</sup> Cited Payne, J.D. (2012:30), *Strangers Next Door, Immigration, Migration and Mission*, InterVarsity Press, IL, USA

<sup>139</sup> Cited Hanciles, J. (2008:140), *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the West*, Orbis Books



are to accept that the Biblical God is a God of mission, then they also have to accept that he makes himself accessible through experiences like migration of people.

Understandably, the waves of immigration have influenced the shape of the White majority churches, particularly in the urban areas, from the grass-roots level up. For example, there have been priests, pastors and missionaries, who themselves were African ministers in the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Assemblies of God, Methodist and other orthodox and evangelical churches in Africa coming over from the sub-Saharan Africa to fill ministry positions in the UK, mainly at the request of their British denominations. In addition, there are also independent churches from Africa extending their mission endeavours to Britain. Some African theologians and Bible scholars apply theological relevance to these efforts of African Christians reaching out in the diaspora in what they termed as “reverse mission.” However, Adogame (2013:167) feels that this “reverse mission” initiative cannot be claimed to be a peculiar feature of African Christian communities, nonetheless, he thinks that the Africans have made an attempt to spread their type of Christianity beyond their immediate geo-ethnic context.<sup>140</sup>

At this stage of the mission endeavours of the African immigrant churches, Kwiyani (2014:75)<sup>141</sup> thinks that the term “reverse mission” is a misnomer because according to him, the African immigrants’ Christianity in Britain is limited to only African immigrant congregations with just a limited cross-cultural ministry effort with the wider community.

The author is of the view that “reverse mission,” even though a major shift in understanding of the migrants’ mission endeavours to Britain which once brought the Gospel to the Africans’ countries of origin, yet, at this stage in their efforts, the African Christians’ claims of fulfilling their mission in the UK is obscured. It is true to say that, the Great Commission, and for that matter their mission in Britain should

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<sup>140</sup> Adogame (2013:169-170), understates: “the rationale for reverse mission is often anchored on claims to divine commission to spread the gospel...It is so far unclear whether ‘reverse mission’ is simply operating as mere rhetoric, and/or what shape, structure and dynamic will emerge through the process in the long run. Nevertheless, ‘reverse mission’ as a rhetoric or an evolving process is of crucial religious, social, political, economic and missiological import for the West and World Christianity, as the non-Western world were hitherto at the receiving end of missions till the late twentieth century.”

<sup>141</sup> Cited Kwiyani, H.C. (2014), *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West*, Orbis Books, NY, USA

not be limited to people of their own kind, yet, evidentially, the African Christians have not been able to have breakthroughs in the wider community. Frankly, their inability to have much impact on the wider community is evidenced by the homogeneous complexion of the people who worship in these churches. It is therefore, obvious that any talks of “reverse mission” in terms of missions still remain a concept for now.

In like manner, priests, pastors and missionaries coming over to the UK from their denominations in Africa<sup>142</sup> to work in their ‘mother’ denominations in the UK, for example, the Anglican Communion, cannot be regarded as a “reverse in mission,” however, the missional content of this cannot be downplayed. Arguably, this type of mission encounter is more of a “Macedonia call”<sup>143</sup> rather than a “reverse mission.” The reason being that the ministry efforts of these African Christian ministers in this case appear to be more of a global extension of their Christian faith than a new expression of faith in their host country.

Yet, if these Christian ministers realize the need to live and work in their host country with a missional intention, they can use their platform (in their local churches) for a more effective cross-cultural ministry endeavour. They must therefore regard working with the African immigrant churches as another stage in their mission endeavours to the United Kingdom as they reach out with an expanded vision of God’s whole heart. For example, they can serve as a link between their denominations and the emerging churches to bring about meaningful Christ centred partnership. This process will in a way re-define their present ministry efforts as local church ministers to mission-minded ministers involved in cross-cultural missions and eventually result in what is termed as “reverse mission.”

It is worth noting that, the author does not limit the impact of African Christians’ efforts in Christianity in Britain. It is not his intention to diminish their important ministry contributions to British Christianity. For example, they have enabled their members (mainly African migrants) to find a refuge from discrimination and

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<sup>142</sup> This type of migration is not limited to African Christians alone as there are other Christian leaders coming over to the UK from Eastern Europe and elsewhere to fill positions in the mainline and evangelical churches.

<sup>143</sup> ...a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him saying, “come over to Macedonia and help us. Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them (Acts 16:9-10 NKJV).

discover a sense of identity, respect and belonging; they have also created spiritual awakening in their host country and a tremendous awareness of spirituality is spreading through their mission endeavours. However, the author thinks that they need to work harder and in more creative ways in partnership with the White majority churches in the UK to create a society that models the values of the Kingdom of God. But at this stage in their missionary effort to the UK, the African Christians have not been able successfully to reach out to the wider community as their adherents are predominantly 'black Africans,' hence the term "reverse mission" still remains a concept; a work in progress and not a reality at this stage. Nonetheless, one thing is clear and it is that African Christians in Britain are filled with hope and aspiration, and are providentially working for the Kingdom expansion in their host country.

At this stage of their mission endeavours to Britain, it will be premature for the African immigrant churches to assume that they have accomplished their mission to Britain. For them to be successful in cross-cultural missions, they would need to develop a theological framework of their mission endeavours. In this case, there will be a need for them to develop a strong Biblical grounding and theological understanding of their mission. That is to say, they would need the divine principles of the Scriptures, which would give them a thorough Biblical understanding and missiological bases as well as the theological framework for their mission. This will in the long run pave the way for them to do cross-cultural ministries and subsequently, lead to the accomplishment of what they term as "reverse mission."

Overall, it is God's sovereignty<sup>144</sup> that establishes the framework of missionary expansion of the Gospel in any context as revealed in the Bible, hence the need for Christ's people on a mission, to seek his face in prayer for directions. The spirit-led theological framework will pave a way for a genuine partnering between the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches, a partnership, practised in the spirit of Kingdom orientation. This view is shared by Newbigin

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<sup>144</sup> LCWE 2010 (Wan ed. 2014:267), recognise this view in their statement: "...Far from haphazard, this scattering is superintended by a sovereign God who determines the precise times and places in which people will live in order to accomplish his missional purposes." Frankly, God leads his people on a mission through converging circumstances. The African migrants and their host Christians must discern what God, in his providential time identity, is doing in a diverse Britain (in such a period as this). God's people have a portion of responsibility to constantly seek his face for the directions of exactly what he has called them to do.

(1995:186),<sup>145</sup> who suggested that any participating in dialogue must mean believing and expecting that the Holy Spirit can and will use this dialogue to do his own sovereign work, to bring about the desired result.

### **5.2.2. Embracing both divine and human activities across cultures**

The fieldwork revealed that the emphases the African immigrant churches place on the spirit and power of the Holy Spirit is different from the White majority churches. Certainly, the emphases of the Spirit and power of the Holy Spirit have been missing in many White majority churches and this is concerning. There is therefore, the need for the White majority churches to embrace both divine and human activities and free resources to engage in discipleship across cultures. While the church (universal) is the key to God's work in the world, *missio Dei* teaches us that Christ's people need to see God on a broader canvas than just through the work of the church. Mission as *missio Dei* makes Christ's people to understand that God cannot be restricted to what has been and is happening in Western cultural context and for that matter in Britain, because God's work is universal in its impact according to Guder (2000:20).<sup>146</sup> The notion that God is at work in a universal sense implies that White British Christians must have a proper theological understanding about the presence of the African immigrant churches in their communities. Understandably, it is clear in the Scriptures that the Gospel in its universal scope and application, demands a universal proclamation (Romans 10:11-15).

It is true to say that the church (universal) has a participating function and also plays an instrumental role in what God is doing in the world today. That is to say, God is the originator or initiator of mission but his (God's) mission is carried out in and through the church as its primary locus. The deeper theological reason for this is that humans are saved only by faith in Christ, and that this faith comes by hearing the Gospel, preached in word and deed (Romans 10:13-15). In other words,

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<sup>145</sup> Cited Newbiggin (1995:186), *The Open Secret, An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, Eerdmans Publishing, MI, USA.

<sup>146</sup> CF Guder, (2000:20), *The Continuing Conversion of the Church (Gospel & Our Culture)*, Eerdmans; Seventh Impression edition.

Christ's people have the responsibility of making the Gospel known to people from all backgrounds.

For the most part, missionaries from Britain and other Western countries have played their role in spreading the Gospel to different parts of the world especially to their former colonies. Arguably, this was done, among other factors, in obedience of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). The call to 'go and win souls and make disciples' was necessary in an age when the geographical spread of Christianity was so limited. When the professing church in Britain acted in missionary work, it did so out of intended obedience towards the will of God. That is to say, it believed it was spreading Christian values and furthering God's Kingdom on earth and that the community of believers were motivated to share the salvation that they themselves had received from God. However, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century reality of mass migration into Britain, still awaits the evangelization response from the professing church. Clearly, migration of people from different parts of the world has created tremendous opportunities for the expansion of the Gospel in Britain.

There should be the realization that the same people the church is sending missionaries to witness to abroad, are now in their streets, schools and communities as result of the mass migration into Britain in recent decades. For example, today there are migrants from countries such as Saudi Arabia, Libya, North Korea and countries that were once deemed 'closed countries,' in the UK communities. By reaching out to these newcomers, you reach out to many of the unreached people groups and some of the disciples who emerge from this outreach will in turn evangelize their own people when they return to their native countries. There is therefore a theological justification for this type of mission efforts. It is fair to say that its justification is based on the continuing strategic applicability of the Great Commission. It is worth noting that this type of mission effort does not obliterate the 'traditional' missiology of sending people from the 'West' to the unreached parts of the world rather it supplements it.

The heart of every church's mission should be to communicate the Gospel of Christ's incarnational, death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). However, the message must be communicated in a manner that is consistent with the character of Christ. The incarnation demonstrates that God's mission is not dependent on

any one human culture or language (Guder 2000:78). It is the responsibility of local churches to develop disciples of Jesus Christ who love God and their neighbours in an urban environment that has traditionally been underserved. Certainly, it is very difficult to understand why the White majority churches cannot discern to understand the calling of the African immigrant churches to their communities in such 'a period as this' (Esther 4:14) when the professing church is experiencing dwindling congregation and most of their local churches are already dead. However, the existing relationships between the White majority churches and the African immigrant churches have been cordial in some ways. For example, some White majority churches such as the Methodist Church, the Church of England and the Salvation Army share their places of worship with some African immigrant churches, yet, for a more effective partnering, there is the need for them to engage in cross-cultural ministries.

Any meaningful partnering should first, be determined by a sound theological underpinning for the White majority churches and the African immigrant churches; the churches involved in the partnership have to declare their theological stance and must prove to be full Gospel churches. It is rather unfortunate that some Bible scholars and missiologists are caught up with the "everything goes syndrome," yet, the approach that sees all other religions and in some cases cults as being missions equivalent to the mission given to the Church does not do justice to Jesus' claims to uniqueness, nor the Trinitarian nature of God. Mission is, primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world according to Bosch (Bosch, 2014: 391). Bosch's contention is similar to what Jesus said in John 20:21. In John 20:21 (NKJV), Jesus commissioned his disciples by saying: 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I also send you.' This commissioning affirms the sending out of Jesus' disciples with a mission to fulfil. The empowerment for this type of mission today comes through the Holy Spirit and that explains the divine nature of the Church's tasks, which is specific and divinely mandated.

Therefore, responsibilities of both the White majority churches and the African immigrant churches should include sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people of all backgrounds by recognizing where God is at work and discerning where they

must participate and encourage. The incarnation of Christ, therefore, lies at the heart of God's mission and this provides the content and the inspiration for all meaningful mission endeavours (John 20:21). As Christ sent his Spirit to empower his church for mission (Acts 1:8), it is imperative for them to be reliant on the Holy Spirit both for their own activities in mission and for the effect of their work. There should be no place for engaging in mission endeavours that exclude the role of the Holy Spirit<sup>147</sup> as rightly stated by Newbigin who said:

Mission is not something that the church does; it is something that is done by the Spirit, who is himself the witness, who changes both the world and the church, who always goes before the church in its missionary journey (Newbigin 1995:56).

Both the White majority churches and the African immigrant churches have a mission to fulfil in Britain but they must analyse their theology and get a proper understanding of their missiology, which will in turn shape their ecclesiology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century context of mission in the UK. What the Christian world needs today is the type of church that makes sense of both the Bible and conventional wisdom and Christ's people now needs theology, culture and the application of one to the other (Chalke, 2006:16-17).<sup>148</sup> Chalke, (2006:13) again, underscores the need to build Christ's church anew in Britain in order that Christ's people will bring genuinely good news to God's world. He said:

The challenge of the ages is set before us all...What will be our epitaph? Will we be the generation that began to rebuild the church in the West, or will we simply preside over its further demise?

The above view was also shared by the four churches during the fieldwork (see Chapter 4). They all suggested that Christ's people in the UK should seek to understand the Christian faith in a contemporary context, which has developed as

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<sup>147</sup> Together Towards Life offers cogent advice on the Christian's dependence on the Holy Spirit for mission endeavours: "...authentic Christian witness is not in what we do in mission but how we live our mission. The church in mission can only be sustained by spiritualities deeply rooted in the Trinity's communion of love..." ([www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/TogethertowardsLife](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/TogethertowardsLife) accessed 25.05.18).

<sup>148</sup> Cited Chalke, S. (2006:16-17), *Intelligent Church, A Journey Towards Christ-Centred Community*, Zondervan, MI, USA

a result of mass migration into Britain in the past few decades. They all felt that the future of the UK church will depend on the next generation, hence local churches should make it their priority to address the existential concerns of the next generation in their congregations in areas of theology and ecclesiology.

The research carried out in the four churches has revealed areas where the White majority churches and the African immigrant churches can work together. One example is in the area of evangelism. The multicultural evangelism team reaching out to a diverse community would possibly have a good outcome. This is supported by Guder (2000:49) who affirmed that the core of *missio Dei* is evangelism, which is the communication of the Gospel, but he thinks that evangelism does not mean that Christ's people can turn their backs on the world and its needs. He also believes that the call to conversion is a call to be witnesses to Christ by demonstrating his love and concern for the world (Guder, 2000:120).

*Missio Dei* provides a theological key for mission in a post-modern age and could also provide a motivational factor in the White British church, which struggles internally with the challenges of post-modernism, pluralism and globalization. In part, the struggles of the White British church seem to be due to the impact of the British government rules that make all human narratives and beliefs as being of equal value and importance. In this context, Christians become reluctant to share their views with others, because all beliefs and non-beliefs are given equal treatment in society (as there is absolute freedom of worship). *Missio Dei* elevates mission from the level of human activities, rightly showing mission as being participation in something that God is already doing. There is a clear divine sanction for mission and evangelism and *Missio Dei* encompasses the Biblical grand narrative, thereby challenging popular mission theology that simply embraces the Great Commission with the Great Commandment as the basis of mission. Christ's people can equally accept that God is the originator of all mission and he has a mission for his church or he has a church that has been given a mission. It is therefore right to say that both the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches have been given a mission by God in the multicultural context of the UK.



Chalke (2006:13) perceives that even though the church (universal) has been emerging for the past two thousand years, the church, he believes, is still in transition. He thinks that each generation is called to reinvent or rediscover what it is to model accessible and authentic church within its surrounding culture. However, he also thinks that of late more churches in Britain are closing than ever before hence the urgent need for a Biblical response to the culture that has emerged in recent decades.

### **5.3. *Missio Dei* as a basis for Unity in Diversity between the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches**

During the interview with the four pastors, all stated that they believed in the unity of Christ's people but they do not think that unity should necessarily result in uniformity. What it does mean to them is that unity in the most important sense should be about matters concerning the things that really matter. They believe that the healing of broken relationships is an essential message of the Kingdom of God, hence the prejudice and racism that divide Christ's people from different ethnic backgrounds has no place in their churches. Unity, as understood by the pastors, is an embodiment of the *missio Dei* that creates the church and God's works in the world and (unity) should always be the hallmark of the Christian faith. One of the defining characteristics of the theological concept of *missio Dei* is its understanding of God's mission as being Trinitarian. Verstraelen et al. (1995:244) emphasized that the propagation of the Gospel must be brought in accordance with the mandate of Matthew 28 based on a Trinitarian foundation of mission.<sup>149</sup> Jesus Christ is the meritorious means making possible the participation of all persons in the *missio Dei*. Christ's people therefore, participate in the *missio Dei* as those transformed by God's love and those through whom love embraces and transforms the world.

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<sup>149</sup> God the Father, the Creator, has a just claim on all and uses his power to make all *de facto* his own. God the Son is King Christ, for whom the world must be conquered...God the Holy Spirit converts individuals, nations, and their cultures and guarantees the success of mission (copied from Verstraelen et al. (1995:244) *Missiology, An Ecumenical Introduction*, Eerdmans Publishing, Michigan).

God's plan is to raise up a people from every kindred, tribe and language of the earth for his praise. The goal of missions therefore is the glory of God (Newbigin, 1989:180). The Bible tells the story of a missional God with a clear plan and intention for his creation; the redemption of humankind after the fall of man. The Bible as a grand narrative explicitly identifies Trinitarian activity and still serves as the primary source for Christians from all backgrounds. In other words, all perspectives indicate action on the part of the missional God who calls for a response from all people in spite of their background, nationality, race or ethnicity. Christ's people in Britain must proclaim, from a Christian perspective, a mission which embraces the practice of ministry and social action in the context of how God is moving providentially in a new missional context of the United Kingdom, which has been brought about as a result of the mass migration of people from diverse backgrounds in the past few decades.

Verstraelen et al. (1995:120) help to illustrate this point and they had this to say:

Therefore, it is no longer possible to formulate an overall perspective on "mission" naively from one perspective, and certainly not from a Western perspective. It will only be possible to formulate such an understanding of "mission" on the basis of theological reflection on the unity that arises in, behind, and above contextual diversity. This unity will then have to be defined "missionarily." It will have to be defined on the basis of an understanding of the journey of Christianity in the world as a journey with a starting point (Jerusalem) and a point of reference (the Kingdom of God). And it will have to be defined in terms of the "real presence" of the starting point and focus, on the common point of reference becoming visible in all the (contextual) ramifications of the journey.

In the same vein, Newbigin (1989:158) makes a point while writing about how the Gospel can be propagated effectively in a pluralist society when he said:

The Christian points to Jesus as the master-clue in the common search of humanity for salvation and invites others

to follow. It is true that this invitation, when it is given by Christians who are in positions of power and privilege, may be radically corrupted into a kind of spiritual imperialism which is oppressive rather than liberating. Missions have been guilty of this distortion and we have to acknowledge it. But it is also worth noting that most of the vigorous evangelism in our contemporary world is being done by the churches of the Third World which have no such power or privilege.

Understandably, the *missio Dei* in the contemporary world is being carried out in contexts. Therefore, it is not necessary to formulate an overall perspective from only the Western context as remarked by Verstraelen et al (1995:120) and echoed by Newbigin (1989:158). Newbigin (1989:158) suggests that Westerners have a long held attitude that is perceived as burdensome encumbrances, and this baggage, according to him stands in their way of presenting the Gospel effectively. However, he acknowledges that evangelism in the contemporary world is being carried out effectively by people of the 'Third World' including Christians from the sub-Saharan Africa. Migration of people from different parts of the world into Britain in the past few decades has resulted in forming African communities of faith in Britain. It is amazing to note that many of the host Christians do not come to this same place of faith as Newbigin's. It is fair to say that if these Africans are able to do effective evangelism as admitted by Newbigin, then they can likewise be used in reaching out to the whole British communities.

However, it is sad to think of the tragedy and the cost of unbelief that keeps Christ's people from partaking in his Kingdom goals, even when God has provided abundantly for his work. It seems clear that the time has come for the professing church to take advantage of this present trend of migration into Britain, see it as God working out his providential plan to re-evangelize Britain again. In this case, there will be a need for a meaningful partnering which will take into consideration the 21<sup>st</sup> Century context of mission in Britain. However, any attempt of cross-cultural ministry in the multicultural Britain will prove to be a complicated context if it is going to involve all the diverse communities. The reasons being that contexts

can change over time and frankly, the British context has changed over the decades especially in the urban centres, yet God, as the Bible explains, is unchanging and is behind the unity in all contexts. Therefore, for cross-cultural mission to be successful, the focus on communal responsibilities should be increased and Christ's people should do ministry based on the demographic makeup of their communities. In this case, Christians from all backgrounds in a particular community could come together to share the Gospel, in both word and deed.

This is very worrying as at the moment it appears that the White majority churches and the African immigrant churches are following their own agenda and have not made much strides in coming together for any meaningful cross-cultural ministry. It will be appropriate if both sides come to self-realization that they have a God-given mandate to fulfil in the UK communities. This self-realization will then bring them together in faith, love and submission, which will result in a powerful witness that will impact British communities. Christians in Britain must realize that the church in the UK is invited to respond to God's ongoing mission in Britain, which has come about as result of a mass migration into the UK in the past few decades. Just as the Son was obedient in being sent by the Father, so must the UK church respond with obedience and act in accordance with God's mission to the country. In this mission of God, God is both the sender and the one being sent. This accounts for the Trinitarian structure of the *missio Dei*. The highest mystery of the mission out of which it grows and lives is God sends his Son and the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit (Vicedom, 1965:11).<sup>150</sup>

Trinity, therefore, is communion and serves as the basis for what it means for the church (universal) to be in relationship with the triune God and humankind. God works best with a team, even though he works with individuals too but there is a fuller expression of his will in team working because part of what Christians communicate is that God is a relational God and that the Christian faith is, by definition, one of fellowship. Partnering therefore, will lead the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches to create a platform that will be

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<sup>150</sup> Vicedom, F Georg (1965:11), *The Mission of God. An Introduction to a Theology of Mission*, Concordia Publishing House

tremendous in sharing the Gospel, leading Christ's people, making disciples and modelling the love of Christ, with a greater impact in British communities. Thus, international mission teams with members from diverse backgrounds, cultures and generations are able to speak powerfully about changes effected by God's Kingdom in the UK communities. If in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Christian denominations (blacks, Whites and others) start working together as Christ's people with a mission to reach out to UK communities, the impact would be extraordinary powerful. Because God's people, from diverse backgrounds, working together for a common goal, reflect the unity of the Triune God and also demonstrate the New Testament principle of *koinonia* as seen in the lives and ministries of Jesus and the first century Christians.

Both the host Christians and the African Christians must work together to remove any stigma, stereotypes, discrimination, superiority complex and any perception that stands in their way of carrying the Gospel to the next level. If mission is understood as originating with and done for the purpose of God, then all Christ's people, whether Africans or Whites, are part of the *missio Dei*. They must therefore, shelve their differences in order not to hinder the work of God in a particular context. *Missio Dei* makes us to understand that a theology of participation has the potential of embracing diverse communities of Christ's people. That is to say, if the *missio Dei* is to reconcile, restore and renew all Christ's people into God's divine love with the Triune God and with others then the need is not so much of the question of ecclesiology but it is on the source of the triune God, yet, Christ's people still have their portions of responsibility. The African immigrant churches and the White majority churches must identify themselves as community of faith. Identification of the church as the community of faith, participating in *missio Dei* takes the church to a new level as its very nature and activity is grounded in the nature and activity of the Triune God.

The fieldwork has revealed that the teachings of John 17 is the model that seeks to disciple and educate believers about the implications of their faith. The study expounds how Jesus rejoiced his relationship with the Father (God) by stressing the oneness he has with the Father. Jesus stressed on the unity between him and his Father and prayed that his followers would mirror this relationship. The context

and intensity of Jesus' prayers in John 17, therefore shows the priority Christ places on the unity of Christians as his main and repeated request in this prayer was their unity (see Chapter 4). The unity of Christ's people, therefore is dependent on sharing the priority of seeking and doing his *missio Dei*, especially his desire to reach the unsaved and in this case the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches, mounting a programme to reach out to Britain's diverse communities.

#### **5.4. Summary**

Mission flows from the nature of God alone and that the church (universal) has no mission of their own. That is to say, the mission to which Christ calls Christians into, is his own mission, hence the mission of the African immigrant churches in the UK is God's mission. Vicedom (1965:5) was right when he said that mission is work that belongs to God and that God is the one who gives the orders and he is also the one who takes care of things. He is the one championing the cause in mission as such the church is just an instrument in his hands in that the church itself is only an outcome of his activity.

What then does it mean for Christ's people to participate in the activity of God? Undoubtedly, for Christ's people to reach out, in spite of their background, there should be the need for a strong Biblical grounding and theological understanding of their mission. The fundamental truths of God and the divine principles of the Bible will give them a proper Biblical and missiological bases and the theological framework of their mission in any context.

There is therefore, a broad consensus that it is right to attribute all missionary initiative to God, who is Triune. Others, both within or in some cases without the Church, may be privileged to participate in God's ongoing mission to redeem and restore the world; the Church also has a unique position as a participant. In other words, the Church is invited to respond to God's ongoing mission, and just as the Son was obedient in being sent by the Father, so must the Church respond with obedience and act in accordance with God's mission to the world. If the purpose of mission is salvation as argued by Vicedom (1965:11), then the African immigrant

churches must concern themselves about the wider community of Britain, which arguably has become a mission field.

Clearly, the one area the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches can work together is in evangelism. It is true to say that both believe in the Great Commission as such they can work out a strategy of reaching out cross –culturally to the communities which have become multicultural as a result of mass migration to the UK in recent decades. Therefore, these churches, in spite of their background, must recognize the central importance of mission hence their initiatives should be characterized by Christians from different backgrounds living and working in Spirit-led unity.

The understanding that mission begins with God must inform all Christians, as they seek to share the Gospel in the UK afresh for a new generation which is more globalized and diverse. When Christ's people recall that mission is God's mission and that he has called his people into it, their endeavours and efforts are, at best, mirrored what God has already started because all that Christ's people are doing is just responding to his calling into ministry. As Jesus attributed his work to the Father, so must all Christ's people: "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of himself; but what he sees the Father do; for whatever he does, the Son also does in like manner" (John 5:19 NKJV).

The task of the church (universal) then is to see God's mission in the church as part of his total mission to humankind. Theologians and missiologists in Britain need to grapple with the question of a theology of mission that is open to the work of God, while at the same time confessing and proclaiming the unique *missio Dei* in which God the Father is the only source of all mission, Jesus Christ the only Lord and Saviour and the Holy Spirit the only divine life-giver and power (Engelsviken, 2003).<sup>151</sup> Christ's people must realize that the church (universal) is sent into the world to call people and nations to repentance, to announce forgiveness of sin and a new beginning in relations with God and with neighbours through Jesus Christ.

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<sup>151</sup> Cited Engelsviken, *Missio Dei: The Understanding and Misunderstanding of a Theological Concept in European Churches and Missiology*, *International Review of Mission*, 92 (367):481-497

Inadvertently, the mission endeavours of which Christ's people are involved in, in Britain should have its source in the Triune God. That is to say, out of the depths of God's love for humankind, he has sent forth his beloved Son to reconcile all things to himself that all might through the Spirit, be made one in him with the Father, in that perfect love which is the very nature of God. It is this Trinitarian basis of mission that forms the basis of the Christian's understanding of *missio Dei*. However, both the church and the mission of the church are tools used by God; they are the instruments through which God carries out his mission. If the church is the instrument of *missio Dei*, the African immigrant churches must understand their mission in Britain in line with the pattern of Acts 1:8.

*Missio Dei* is the reflection on what some Bible scholars and missiologists see as the key verse for Trinitarian mission is John 20:21. Jesus said to his followers: "Peace be to you! As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (NKJV). This verse provides a good reference point for *missio Dei* and serves to illustrate the validity of Scripture as a starting point and a legitimate source of authority for discussions regarding *missio Dei*. The Trinitarian sending in John 20:21-22, where the mission of the followers of Christ is modelled on the mission of the Son must be taken into consideration in any meaningful partnering between the White majority churches and the African immigrant churches for the work of the ministry in Britain.

The content of *missio Dei* will be for the gift of salvation, the justification of sinners, and reconciliation with God, and the new sanctified life in fellowship with Christ under his lordship. Mission confronts people with a decision to accept or reject salvation in Christ Jesus and ideally, every person should be given the opportunity to either receive or reject the Saviour. Therefore, any missional organization or a church that does not seek to integrate people into the local church would be disobedience to the *missio Dei*.

Certainly, there is a real need to discover ways in which the truths of Christianity can be explored in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century context of mission in Britain. Britain, which once took the Gospel to 'all parts of the world' has now, arguably become a mission field. It has become a society that rejects claims of absolute truth and now sees all religious opinions as being equally valid. There is therefore, a need for both the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches to respond to the new



realities that have arisen as a result of the mass migration of people from different cultural backgrounds into Britain in recent years. Certainly, this will necessitate the development of a type of theology, which is suitable to the new emerging contexts.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6. CROSSING THE RACIAL BOUNDARY TO REACH NON-AFRICANS

#### 6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter has argued that God is the originator of missions, and for that matter, it would be right to say that the African immigrant churches are participants of his mission in Britain. This chapter, on the other hand, seeks to look for ways in which the African immigrant churches can cross the racial boundary in order to reach out to the wider community and build bridges across the diverse cultures that make up the UK urban communities.

The study has proved in the previous chapters that the African immigrant churches have now been established in the UK, but their congregations are mainly “black” Africans, yet, ideally churches should not seek to be organized primarily in terms of ethnicity as this distracts from the Biblical principles of unity in diversity (Galatians 3:28). However, there is also the argument that for some categories of people – such as recently arrived migrants – ethnic churches are vital to aid their integration into their new communities (see Chapter 1).

The fieldwork in Chapter 4 was an attempt to discover ways in which the African immigrant churches could partner with the mainline UK churches for a more effective delivery of the Gospel in the UK. The study has argued in Chapter 1 that for the African immigrant churches to fulfil their God-given mandate in the UK there was the need for them to work with the White majority churches. However, all the four pastors in the study admitted that there existed cultural differences between the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches. They were of the view that the first step to take in order to resolve these differences was for both sides to commit themselves to building the spiritual relationships of mutual love and trust, working together as people Christ has called and commissioned for Kingdom goals.

In two of the churches that the fieldwork was carried out (ANC and HBC), the author discovered how insensitivity to cultural realities could result in hindering ministry efforts in multi-ethnic churches. ANC and HBC (both of these churches are multi-

ethnic churches) have discovered in their ministry practices the challenges involved in assessing the need to assimilate people from diverse backgrounds into a common theology practice in multi-ethnic churches because of the differences in the worldview people from different backgrounds bring to the fore. In view of this, they suggested that Christ's people would need to learn how to wallow in the potential tensions and misunderstandings that people from different cultural backgrounds bring into the fore. However, they also think that churches should be aware that their concerns to be relevant with diverse cultures should not be based on their emotions, rather it should be in line with Scripture.

All the participant pastors agreed that there were also theological issues that needed to be addressed if Christians from diverse backgrounds desired to work together to impact their communities. They believed that if differing views (in the fundamental doctrines) existed in any Christian relationship, it would bring genuine divisions of Biblical teachings.

They therefore, thought that it would be more appropriate if Christ's people from diverse backgrounds could at least agree on matters of importance, such as partnering in the areas of evangelism and nation-wide prayer crusade. These, according to them, were some of the issues that could deepen their relationship with fellow Christians and result in a healthy Christian unity.

Certainly, for any meaningful cross-cultural ministry initiative, the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches, would first have to deal with the aspect of their cultural biases. They would have to realize that the need for working together as Christ's people, was a call of God, so achieving the highest goals of the Kingdom should be their ultimate goal as people of God with a mission.

The major challenges facing cross-cultural missions and for that matter all contemporary missions are the cultural and theological issues involved. This chapter therefore examines ways through which both sides could set aside their cultural biases in order to embrace and appreciate the good in each other's culture. It is also about how both sides could come together to formulate the type of

theology (see Chapter 3)<sup>152</sup> which defines the current contexts that have emerged as a result of mass migration into Britain in the past few decades.

## **6.2. Causes of Disagreement among Christians**

In the interview with the four pastors (see Chapter 4), all admitted that disagreement among Christians is a negative reflection on the character of God. They also believe that the Bible gives Christ's people the divine principles essential to meet the challenges of interpersonal conflicts, disagreements and misunderstandings that may arise when Christ's people working together find themselves with conflicting and diverse views.

The pastors share the view that disagreement among Christ's people is more prevalent when working together as a multicultural team. The areas of disagreement, they say, are always about core values and theological differences that emerge as a result of the different cultural backgrounds of the team. The pastors understand that, apart from the social and cultural factors that have emerged in the UK as a result of migration of people from different ethnic backgrounds, there have also been ecclesiastical developments within Christian circles over these past few decades.

It was also revealed in the fieldwork (see Chapter 4) that some of the host Christians approach cross-cultural relationships, wearing their own cultural spectacles to interpret a given situation. This, in the author's view is ethnocentrism. Consequently, ethnocentrism has in many cases resulted in doubts, a superiority complex and a weakening of relationship, which often results in misunderstandings and conflicts among Christ's people. Disagreement also occurs when Christ's people are working together but not necessarily as a team in a supportive framework. This denies Christ's people the ability to develop and realize their potential in order to fulfil their God-given vision. Ideally, it would be incumbent upon the host Christians to create an environment that welcomes the ideas and contributions that Christians from other backgrounds bring to the fore of who they are and what they can do to advance the Kingdom of God in Britain. After all, the British churches appear to be short of ideas on how the Gospel should be

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<sup>152</sup> The author has made an attempt to give a theological analysis of the African immigrant church in Chapter 3.

propagated in the current context. Hardy and Yarnell (2015:95) inform the author's understanding by rightly suggesting the need for Christ's people from diverse backgrounds, intentionally, to come together to share their missional challenges in the current context as part of their multicultural missional conversation.

The study has revealed (see Chapter 4) that ministering to people from a diverse British context will require an awareness and understanding of the culture that informs the local mission as one interviewee responded:

...It is true that we (Whites) also have our weaknesses. We are very individualistic, as such we overlook the needs of people from other cultures. We need to improve on how we relate to people who are not like us but the problem is that we instead try to impose our ways on other people because we think that our ways are better than theirs. We need to improve upon the way we relate to others.<sup>153</sup>

The above comment from a respondent is very concerning because it is a true reflection on some of the challenges facing the African immigrant churches in their bid to partner with the White majority churches. It seems clear that Christ's people from the minority background are always offended when the host Christians set themselves up as right, having superior power of judgement. The host Christians in most cases create an atmosphere for migrant Christians to feel as if they 'are only there to listen to their superiors.' They make them think as if being a migrant Christian in this current context means you have no ideas and worthy insights as well as the ability to make wise choices in your new environment. In a similar vein, Elmer (1993:147)<sup>154</sup>, feels that power, control and winning can create potential tensions between the host Christians and the migrant Christians. And when Christ's people feel offended, they respond in one of two ways. He had this to say:

Perhaps we actually conclude that we are average at best, or worthless at worst; our self-esteem is damaged, and we resign

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<sup>153</sup> A respondent from the Harborne Baptist Church in a recorded interview.

<sup>154</sup> Elmer, (1993), *Cross Cultural Conflict, Building Relations for Effective Ministry*, Inter-Varsity Press, Illinois, USA.

ourselves to tedious mediocrity and low expectations for ourselves. Or we become angry at the way our self-esteem is being challenged and questioned. The anger may turn into resentment or even open rebellion. We may rebel by adopting values and activities exactly opposite to those of the “always right” authority figure.

Elmer understands that most Western Christians do not intentionally seek power in order to control because they understand the concept of empowerment, team working and relational leadership. However, despite their understanding of authentic leadership, they find it difficult to give up power when working with people from other backgrounds. Quite frequently, they slip into a controlling mode unless they consciously understand, manage and share power that comes with their cultural baggage.

### **6.2.1. Doctrinal differences dividing the Body of Christ**

All the four pastors believe that divisions and factions among Christ’s people are at times over petty issues of what is regarded as ‘secondary doctrines’ which have in fact, caused many divisions to the Body of Christ. These divisions and factions have hindered the evangelization of the world. It is also true to say that the muddle of disunity among the many expressions of the Christian faith occurs when the authority of God’s mission is infringed upon by ecclesiastical polity claiming authority for mission, however, the minor doctrinal differences that separate Christ’s people, should not be the source of their problems at all. Adogame (2013:207),<sup>155</sup> suggests that some African Christians perceive Western churches as dead, spiritually bankrupt and filled with carnal inclinations, while some Westerners see African churches as ‘too African,’ ‘mixed with African tradition and Gospel,’ and not epistemologically viable. The pastors think that such perceptions as above and other matters make the task ahead difficult but not impossible. Because they do not think that such perceptions should bring about divisions within the Body of Christ. However, they also share the view that when Christ’s people disagree about deeper values and essential doctrines such as those regarding the

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<sup>155</sup> Adogame, (2013), *The African Christian Diaspora, New Currents and Emerging Trends in World Christianity*, Bloomsbury Academic, London

Christian's relationship with God, they assume that such differences in the fundamental doctrines will always make working together with any individual, group and more so involvement in any cross-cultural ministry initiative impossible.

There is a perception in the UK that the "Black churches" have a different theology. The African immigrant churches therefore have to re-define themselves in relation to the White majority churches; they also have to clarify their theology because their new environment would definitely have an influence on their theological emphases (see Chapter 3). All the pastors support the view shared by the author that there should be the need for a new way of theologizing among the various churches that occupy the UK Christian landscape in line with the current contexts. Certainly, for the African immigrant churches to do any meaningful cross-cultural ministry, they would have to develop a contextual approach to ministry, which is suitable to their Western environment (see Chapter 3). Both the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches would have to enter into dialogue and sincerely challenge the aspects of their culture and cultural influences on theology that are not in line with Biblical principles.

The author contends that, because of its importance, theology should be taken into consideration in any ministry efforts of Christ's people. In all mission endeavours of Christ's people, there should be the need for a strong Biblical grounding and theological understanding of the mission. Christ's people would need the fundamental truths of God and the divine principles of the Bible would give them a thorough Biblical understanding and missiological basis, as well as the theological framework for their mission (see Chapter 3). However, Verstraelen et al. (1995:120)<sup>156</sup> warn against any attempt of Christ's people formulating an overall perspective of theology from the Western perspective (see Chapter 5). There is therefore, the need for the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches to enter into dialogue on a level playing field in order to arrive at what works theologically in their various contexts. There should be mutual respect between the two sides in all aspects. The White believers should welcome the African Christians as God's people with a vision and a testimony, as well as

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<sup>156</sup> Verstraelen et al. (1995), *Missiology, An Ecumenical Introduction, Texts and Contents of Global Christianity*, Eerdmans Publishing Company, MI, USA.

experiences to share to the Body of Christ in Britain and also see them as God's people who are in the country providentially to contribute to Christianity in Britain, which is rapidly declining.

The author thinks that theologizing can increase their dialogue and move the conversation forward to other important issues such as their being sensitive to each other's culture and agreeing on matters that can deepen their relationships and result in unity. For example, matters such as conducting nation-wide prayer meetings and coming together as a multicultural team to build relationships of mutual trust necessary to reaching out to communities together. It is clear to say that effectiveness in evangelism will increase with Christian initiatives such as Christ's people coming together from diverse backgrounds to reach out to diverse communities. However, Christ's people coming together in unity do not necessarily mean they are seeking uniformity. God has made available a variety of gifts and talents in his children, so coming together would mean God's people coming together with different gifts and talents as well as different ministry experiences (1 Corinthians 12).

More importantly, the goal of interdependence in any fellowship of Christ's people is a reflection of the unity of the Body of Christ in the midst of diversity. The most exciting thing therefore, is that the differences in personalities, appearances and gifts among the multicultural team of Christ's people will make up the diverse Body of Christ. It is also clear that interdependency among Christ's people is difficult to develop in individualistic societies such as Britain. Therefore, deliberate efforts must be initiated by Christ's people to learn the lessons of interdependence as illustrated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12. There should always be the need to appreciate the uniqueness of what the other side is bringing to the fore. In 2 Corinthians 8:12-14, the reciprocity in Christian living as described by Paul is very unique in Christian fellowships today because one's abundance supplies what the other lacks, leading to a mutual benefiting of each other. Therefore, the interdependency of Christ's people from diverse backgrounds will bring with it the



supply of different needs, be it spiritual gift, experiences in ministry, and many others but to mention a few and this will result in balancing the whole.<sup>157</sup>

Chike (2007:37) points out the perceived difficulty in any attempt of cross-cultural ministry initiative by both sides in the areas of ecclesiology and hermeneutics. He thinks that there are differences in the ecclesiological and hermeneutical understanding of the African Christian and the host Christian. He further states that in the African theology, the place of the Holy Spirit and his empowerment is very significant. As such, African Christians place much emphasis on the power encounters with demonic forces, which are confronted and overpowered by the power of God (Chike, 2007:37).<sup>158</sup>

Mbiti (1986:32)<sup>159</sup> was making a point when he said that African Christians' understanding and use of Scripture liberates them from the ready-made and imported Christianity of the West as they theologize the kind of Christianity, which more fully embraces the totality of their existence. That is to say, the African theology models theology and contextualizes it in their African context, and the outcome is different from Western theology, which arguably, has problems understanding the spirit and the spirit world.

Certainly, there exist differences in the theology of African Christians and their host Christians, but these differences are not in the fundamental doctrines, as such are issues which can be addressed by both sides. Therefore, the first step to take in order to resolve these differences is for both sides to commit themselves to building the spiritual relationships of mutual love and trust, working together as people Christ has called and commissioned for Kingdom goals.

### **6.3. Sensitivity to each other's culture**

The fieldwork (see Chapter 4) has revealed that any attempt of unity between Christ's people from diverse backgrounds and the host Christians would prove to be very challenging. For example, when Christ's people do exactly what they think is good in their default cultures instead of learning about each other's culture, it will

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<sup>157</sup> Bible. 2002. *New Spirit Filled Life Bible*. Thomas Nelson.

<sup>158</sup> Chike (2007), *African Christianity in Britain, Diaspora, Doctrines and Dialogue*, Author House, IN, USA.

<sup>159</sup> Mbiti (1986), *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, Oxford University Press.

be impossible for them to build bridges. The study has proved that for any meaningful cross-cultural missions between the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches, both sides would have to learn to appreciate the differences of each other's culture. Also, the perceived arrogance of the host Christians reflects in their relationship with other Christians 'who are not like them' would have to be addressed. Lingenfelter (2008:48-49) <sup>160</sup> echoes similar sentiments when he suggests that both the African Christian and the host Christian blame each other. He had this to say:

The Africans see the Westerners as harsh, unbending, and uncaring, the Westerners see the Africans as undisciplined, careless about time, and having low goals with regard to productivity.

Certainly, Lingenfelter (2008:49) has explained some of the perceptions that make relationship between both sides difficult but not impossible. However, he is not saying that Westerners cannot criticize the African Christians or vice versa. Rather, the issue here is the motive behind such criticism, which in his own words could be an *act from positions of dominion and resistance or from positions of service*. It is time therefore, for Christ's people to realize that there is no such thing as a perfect culture rather there are good things in cultures that have universal values.

The above contention was in line with the assertion of Newbigin (1989:186) <sup>161</sup> when he stated that all believers judge some elements of culture to be good and bad but the motive behind the judgement must be clear. Whether these judgements are in line with Scripture or from the cultural presuppositions of the one making the judgement matters a lot. Newbigin (1989:186) felt that history proves that Western missionaries have made judgements on other cultures, not being aware of the extent to which their judgements were not in line with Scripture but rather dictated by their own default cultures.

It is true to say that some host Christians have little understanding of cultural values of people from diverse backgrounds other than their own default culture. Or,

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<sup>160</sup> Lingenfelter (2008), *Leading Cross-Culturally, Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership*, Baker Academic, MI, USA.

<sup>161</sup> Newbigin (1989), *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, London.

perhaps, they may be rather ignorant and not necessarily, biased in interpreting other people's actions. Nevertheless, the problem occurs in a situation where there is an intentional diminished view of Christ's people from diverse backgrounds by host Christians having an inflated view of themselves. This emergence of superiority will in most cases result in lack of trust in any authentic fellowship with Christ's people (Elmer, 1993:21).

Wan (2014:282)<sup>162</sup> suggests that sacrificial relationship building is paramount for any meaningful cross-cultural ministry. He admonishes that a clear understanding of word, deed and relationship must not be done without reciprocity. Wan feels that there must be a contextualization, which he thinks is essential if Christians of the host country have a desire to communicate effectively compassion, hospitality, and love towards their migrant neighbours. He believes for example, that contextualization values cultural diversity and the unique gifts of each people (Ephesians 4:7; Revelations 21:26). He had this to say:

Contextualization promotes an integration that preserves cultural distinctiveness, not an assimilation that obscures it. In so doing it allows for host Christians to be greatly enriched by their correspondence with Christ followers from other nations who are encouraged to bring with them their own culturally-contextualized expressions of discipleship and their own "local theologies" (Wan, 2014:282).

It is worth noting that most migrant Christians crave for partnering with their host Christians on things which really matter for the Kingdom of God but in most cases their approaches have been misconstrued as 'people stretching out their hands to their White colleagues.' Wan (2014:282) advises that migrant Christians should be encouraged by the host Christians to come out with their own culturally contextualized expression of faith:

The contextualization sees the migrant Christian as a 'hallowed person' who is not a mere recipient of charitable acts, but

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<sup>162</sup> Wan ed. (2014), *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice*, IDS-USA

someone with a story, value, and gifts and experiences to share (Wan, 2014:282).

He thinks that at its heart, contextualization is about illumination of Biblical truth and becoming all things to all people so as to reach as many as possible (John 1:9; 1 Cor. 9:22).

It is clear to say that proper understanding and expression of cultural values from both sides is necessary and would be a step towards any meaningful partnering. Understandably, different cultures play by different rules, yet Christ's people should not ignore cultures unless they violate Scripture. The vision essential for cross-cultural ministry therefore, should be based on an understanding of what the Scriptures teach about the Kingdom of God with a vision empowered by the Holy Spirit for the engagement in mission endeavours. Hardy and Yarnell (2015:93)<sup>163</sup> were therefore right to suggest among other things, the vital importance of both the African Christian and the host Christian entering into dialogue with those who are involved in multicultural initiatives to learn from their experiences. The above suggestion by Hardy and Yarnell is in line with the author's understanding of selecting the four case study churches in this research.

The perspective of all the four churches is that the unity among Christ's people can become a powerful witness tool to the UK communities (especially the urban communities) in regards to reaching out with the Gospel to the UK diverse communities. The pastors believe that the healing of broken relationships among Christ's people is an essential and urgent message of the Kingdom of God. They think that the prejudice and racism that divide Christ's people from different ethnic backgrounds has no place in God's Kingdom rather unity among believers should always be a hallmark of the Christian faith.

The above views of the participants are proof that racism has become a stigma that affects Christians from different backgrounds. Clearly, this may explain some of the reasons why most African migrants choose African immigrant churches as their acceptable places of worship. Nonetheless, there are also cultural reasons that in

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<sup>163</sup> Hardy, A & Yarnell, D (2015), *Forming Multicultural Partnerships, Church planting in a divided society*, Instant Apostle, Watford, UK.

part inform their choice because cultural norms are very unique to migrants, especially the newly arrived migrants who may be very conscious of people from the wider community and/or have the English language barrier. Cultural identity, though serves to strengthen the solidarity of the migrant community, nevertheless, this also makes them become glued to their 'comfort zone' and in a way hinders any attempt of their integration into the wider community.

It was also observed during the fieldwork (see Chapter 4) that some of these migrants (from the British former colonies) consciously seek to integrate with the UK society, but they do it in a way that allows for the preservation of their cultural identities. The ECFC, on the other hand, prefers instead intentionally to organize themselves around their own cultural allegiances and values. This is because Ethiopians, unlike migrants from the former British colonies such as Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Malawi, were not colonized by the Western 'powers.' Migrants from the former British colonies, start their integration from their home countries before arriving on the UK shores because their lingua franca is English and their socio-economic and political structures are also modelled on the Westminster system.

At the ECFC, where the first generation migrants mostly lack the English language skills necessary to integrate into the existing local churches, these migrants find that the host Christians' model of church does not in any way reflect their cultural expression of worship. These migrants also do not fit into other African-led churches either, because of language difficulties, as such they see the need for an independent mono-ethnic church that best suits the needs of their Ethiopian/Eritrean community as one of their pastors indicated in the interview:

We are a first generation migrants; we speak a different language, and so we are comfortable in our own culture and way of worship.<sup>164</sup>

This response reveals that the ECFC was not planted out of animosity towards the White majority churches or other cultures. Instead, the Ethiopians feel that unlike migrants from the former British colonies whose lingua franca is English, most of them (Ethiopians/Eritreans) have to start learning English as beginners. As such,

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<sup>164</sup> The Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church pastor in a recorded interview.

they can best connect with God with the people who speak their language, who have the same history, culture and the social needs. They can best use their native language in worship because of their limited English skills so they go back to their native culture as the necessary reference point for their values in worship. They are also careful not to lose the importance of their social and cultural values. Consequently, the preservation of their culture and identity in a foreign land is of utmost importance to them. They therefore, find it appropriate to come together for mutual support, encouragement and protection in their newly found country. In this sense, the ECFC's way of excluding outsiders in their worship is not intentional, since there are cultural and language issues as motivating factors.

It was noted that though, the ECFC is a mono-ethnic church (and this is for cultural reasons) yet, their pastors believe in Christ's people from different denominations and backgrounds working together for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. For example, some of the pastors of the ECFC attend cross-cultural meetings such as those organized by the Missio Africanus and the Centre for Missionaries for the Majority World; the author has witnessed the immense contributions of the ECFC pastors to these meetings which promote cross-cultural initiatives.

#### **6.4. Mission-minded leadership**

During the author's encounters with the case study churches (see Chapter 4), he observed that in dealing with characteristics of leadership, HBC and the ANC<sup>165</sup> place emphasis on character qualities that focus on efforts and work values. That is to say, their emphasis is on reliability, humility and commitments. HBC gives a higher priority to the formation of a community of believers where there is trust rather than giving priority to attaining vision and meeting goals. The COP and the ECFC<sup>166</sup> on the other hand, emphasize spiritual and social values. They want to work with born-again Christians who manifest the calling of God, sanctified for the work of God. They also expect their adherents to show love for fellow Christians and the unsaved and have compassion for all people.

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<sup>165</sup> Both the ANC and HBC are White majority churches.

<sup>166</sup> The COP and the ECFC are both African immigrant churches.

Clearly, creating a leadership structure that mirrors all the decision-making and leadership styles of the various ethnicities in any multi-ethnic church is a complex task that perhaps only a few Christian ministries can organize properly. In their discipleship roles, it was observed that the four pastors see a clear distinction between 'leading and following.' They believe that leading Christ's people is much more than having them follow you. They think that leading Christ's people is about mentoring them in such a way that they can be empowered and released to do the same thing on their own that their pastors have done for them. This, to them is how effective discipleship should be carried out in any effective ministry.

The fieldwork revealed that the ANC (see Chapter 4) hold diversity in very high esteem. They think diversity recognizes that God gave Christians different skills, abilities and gifts for a divine purpose and that the purpose of the church (universal) should be to train, equip and release all within the Body of Christ for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16). However, they also recognize the complexity of leading cross-culturally as one of their pastors admonished during the interview:

At the All Nations, we recognize the complexity of leading our church cross-culturally lies in the challenge of building a church community of faith with trust among Christians who come from different cultures, different nationalities and a diverse background. These people, because of their diverse backgrounds come to us with different cultural identities, traditions and diverse worldviews. But we believe that what the Lord is looking for is a church which is united in fellowship and diverse in ministry, a church which is multi-ethnic with a multicultural identity. So, here in the All Nations our goal, therefore, is to create a congregation with a multicultural identity and this is given all serious attention in everything we do as a church: in our worship service, teachings, preaching, discipleship ministries, and leadership structure.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> The All Nations Church pastor in a recorded interview.

Lingenfelter (2008:26) warns that any church or Christian movement that aspires to build multicultural team must invest time and resources to study the backgrounds of the people that comprises the new team and must also acknowledge the possible expectations of misunderstandings and differences in their opinions. Lingenfelter feels that, when Christ's people are in distress situations, they resort to finding solutions or arguing out their case by regressing to their default culture<sup>168</sup> and this can happen in ministries, despite one's experiences in cross-cultural ministries. Leaders therefore, are advised against yielding to any short-sighted attempt to control in order to influence decisions; all Christ's people in cross-cultural ministries must therefore, listen to one another because each cultural community has its socially defined views on how issues of resources and power should be managed including matters of accountability (Lingenfelter, 2008:20-24).

Gibbs (2005:128)<sup>169</sup> notes that leaders in most churches may walk away when they face disagreements within their team, unless there is a proper structural accountability that can enable them to work through their differences. The type of leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century context of mission therefore, should be caring leaders. Leaders who are caring are the ones who are accountable to their own actions. Such leaders would not act recklessly because they always weigh the consequences of their actions before making decisions, especially decisions that affect other people's lives.

The model of leadership of the ANC as revealed in the research (see Chapter 4), is ideal. The ANC seek to recruit into their leadership, members that reflect the multiple background of people from different ethnicities. This model is good for cross-cultural ministries. Evidentially, natural and gifted leaders from diverse backgrounds have emerged in the ANC and these leaders have credibility and respect from their (ethnic) community networks. For example, there are ethnic minority leaders who are in charge of different nationalities and ethnicities such as Zimbabweans and Punjabis.

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<sup>168</sup> Lingenfelter (2008:26) explains default cultures as habits, values, and patterns of interaction one acquires in childhood.

<sup>169</sup> Gibbs, E (2005), *Leadership Next, Changing in a Changing Culture*, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester.



It was also revealed in the study that the Christian enterprise would have to find a balance between the unity of the Gospel and how God calls Christians as people from different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities. They must understand that the secret to a diverse mission strategy is to ensure that they identify and understand the needs and aspirations of their diverse communities before seeking to engage them. This understanding was manifested repeatedly in a variety of forms throughout the research. For example, there is the proper understanding that Christ's people from diverse backgrounds can come together to win their communities for Christ but this places greater responsibilities on local church pastors who are expected to be mission-minded so that they can pass this vision on to their congregations.

Ideally, pastors must shape up their congregations, equip them for cross-cultural ministries and release them to work co-operatively with Christ's people from other backgrounds. The four pastors believe that the unity of believers with Christ is a gracious work of the Holy Spirit and that the set-up of every local church should be like the triune God: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, even though are different persons, yet, are completely united. The Scriptures make Christians to understand that God chooses to reveal his glory through the solidarity of his people, which occurs when Christ's people are united towards a common purpose.

Local church leaders therefore, have the responsibility of sharing the vision of their church with their congregation, with the understanding that the Body of Christ is not divided and that the church is a community which seeks to serve people from diverse backgrounds and as followers of Christ, they exist as a church with a mission of service to all people. Obviously, there exist cultural differences among Christ's people from diverse backgrounds but these differences, if properly addressed would result in a new vision, a new vigour and a new aspiration for all involved in these cross-cultural initiatives.

This study has proved that the ECFC have no intention to get involved in intentional diversification of their congregation (see Chapter 4). Their place of worship is the centre of their community and cultural identity. A conducive atmosphere is created in their place of worship where they meet with people like themselves and have a give and take relationship with them. Their service, for example is conducted in the

Amharic language, which is widely spoken by the Ethiopian and Eritrean ethnicities. As such, their adherents are mainly Ethiopians/Eritreans. Nonetheless, the ECFC leadership co-operates with other non-Ethiopian churches in different ways. For example, their leadership is actively involved in cross-cultural initiatives that bring Christians from diverse backgrounds together by building bridges and involving in other initiatives such as reaching out to diverse communities. It is therefore, true to say that, the ECFC leadership is mission-minded but these leaders have not been able to translate this into any meaningful cross-cultural initiative among their congregation.

It is worth noting that the ECFC have been intentional in making their second generation replicate their cultural heritage and maintaining their identity. For example, they have designed their ecclesiology in such a way that it would continue to maintain their cultural identity to the next generation. It is for this reason that many of the Ethiopian/Eritrean youth interviewed, expressed a strong preference for an Ethiopian/Eritrean pastor whom they thought could lead them to replicate their cultural heritage and maintain identity. They also think that having a pastor from the same background would mean the desire to empathize with their spiritual, emotional and social needs. Because the ECFC offers its members a sense of community, their youth and most of them, British citizens, still think they are Ethiopians and Eritreans, first of all, before being British. In other words, they identify themselves as British but retain the lifestyle of their first generation parents. Their young people demonstrate allegiance to their cultural identity and this in part has been encouraged by their first generation.

The fieldwork has also revealed that the HBC understand the challenges in leadership and believe that the godly leader should be concerned about how power can easily be abused so it is their practice to use power biblically. They are of the view that Christ's people should reflect on their thoughts, words and actions in the areas of diversity. Rather than denying that in some cases, Christ's people intentionally or in some cases ignorantly stereotype people on the basis of ethnicity and insidiously disassociate themselves from people of other ethnicities, Christians need to be positive to appreciate the wonderful diversity that is in the Body of Christ.

More than that, the HBC realizes that they cannot accomplish the work of the Kingdom of God unless they are willing to work together in the fellowship of a loving community so they welcome Christ's people from different backgrounds who seek to fellowship with them. They believe that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century context of mission in Britain, having people from a diverse background brings with it stronger and more creative ideas and this produces more solutions to problems that are likely to result from the best efforts of just one ethnicity.

Clearly, all the four case study churches have different types of leadership but it is interesting to note that Christian leaders who build strong relationships and expand their networks are those who relate well to one another. Such leaders command respect and influence within their network. After all, commitments to the mission endeavours of Christ's people would be strong as a result of the inspiration they receive from their leadership. Robinson and Smith (2005:141)<sup>170</sup>, affirm that true leadership is first and foremost relational and influential, and suggest that it is strategically important for Christian leaders to empower their adherents for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century context of mission. They believe that discipling, equipping and releasing Christ's people who have been partakers of God's grace have to be the priority of the current context (Robinson & Smith, 2005:121).

Understandably, mission-minded pastors should themselves be equipped to shape the culture and the identity of their congregations by reminding their adherents of God's purposes concerning them as Christ's people who are involved in cross-cultural ministry initiatives. Local church pastors therefore have the responsibility to communicate to their adherents the core values of Christianity that give definition to their cross-cultural vision of their various churches and how they can work cross-culturally with others in the emerging context.

## **6.5. The Church of Pentecost's experience in cross-cultural ministry**

The study has revealed that (see Chapter 4) in the 1980s, many African migrants in London (mainly from the COP in Ghana background) who became members of

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<sup>170</sup> Robinson, M. & Smith, D. 2005, *Invading Secular Space, Strategies for Tomorrow's Church*, Monarch Books, Michigan

Christian associations such as PAUKE, GCF and ACF<sup>171</sup> saw the Kensington Temple (Elim Pentecostal Church) and other Elim Pentecostal churches in London as their established places of worship. Meanwhile, the COP in Ghana and the Elim Pentecostal Church, had then entered into a cross-cultural ministry understanding that the two denominations would not plant churches in the same communities. Because of this understanding, the African members of the COP in Ghana, who migrated to Britain joined the Elim Pentecostal Church upon their arrival in the UK.

The idea of starting a COP Britain was devised through the arrangement of some Ghanaian migrant Christians who were members of the abovementioned associations and were also worshipping in the local churches of the Elim Pentecostal Church in the 1980s. Even though, these Ghanaians were welcomed into their local Elim Pentecostal Church, they still thought that in order to have a unique Ghanaian/African identity in worship in the UK, they would need a separate fellowship based on their Ghanaian culture. In 1986, they gathered together in a home fellowship. Much progress had been made by 1989, when the fellowship, which began as an informal meeting, gained the attention of the COP headquarters in Ghana who then arranged for a minister from Ghana to migrate to the UK to take care of the newly planted church.<sup>172</sup>

The COP had gained a Christian landscape in Britain in the past few years but their local assemblies conducted their services mainly in the Ghanaian Akan language and their ecclesiastical style was modelled on the Ghanaian culture. However, the COP has been intentionally and strategically led with clear goals, objectives and outcomes. For example, they had been aware that most of their congregations had a natural inclination of worshipping in their Ghanaian culture and had created the Akan service for them. They also realized the needs of their second-generation adherents who would want their worship in a contemporary worship style. Recently there has been the establishment of The Pentecost International Worship (PIWCs) which run concurrently with the Akan services. The PIWCs provide a well-organized, cross-cultural church, primarily for people of non-Ghanaian cultural background and other Ghanaians who desire to worship in the English language

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<sup>171</sup> See the full names in the “Abbreviations page.”

<sup>172</sup> Copied from the Church of Pentecost’s website: [www.copuk.org/core-values](http://www.copuk.org/core-values) (accessed 15.12.2016). This was also mentioned in a recorded interview with one of their ministers.

with a contemporary worship style. This is also opened to all Christ's people, especially the second-generation Ghanaian members in the UK and elsewhere, who want to worship in the English language or in a multicultural setting. The praise and worship in the PIWCs is contemporary and is designed to serve the needs of a multi-ethnic gathering.<sup>173</sup> The COP has the desire to reach out to the wider community but they believe that their PIWCs members' ability to participate in multi-ethnic gatherings will increase as they develop confidence in their own ability to navigate the social spaces of the new host culture.

They think that several factors come together to create different forms of multi-ethnic churches. For example, their claim of being a multi-ethnic church is based on the premise that their congregation comprises of people from a diverse African background, is very significant. However, they have not, yet, had breakthroughs reaching out to the wider UK community, nevertheless, their move towards inclusive mono-ethnicity has become more accepting of their first generation African members. Subsequently, they are working a strategy to reach out to the wider community, which hopefully would be accomplished by their second-generation migrants. For example, their PIWCs service, which is conducted in the English language and has a contemporary worship style attracts people from diverse backgrounds, not necessarily from the wider community but from the various African ethnicities. Yet, they are aware and convinced that the future of their diaspora church depends on the young generation catching the vision of the first generation migrants. Therefore, several measures have been initiated to mentor the youth to know Christ in a personal way and also to know the distinctiveness of their church. They allow the youth to ask questions on issues they do not understand and the youth are encouraged to bring forth their ideas for discussion on how to move the church forward. The leadership identifies the giftedness of the youth, train and encourage them to preach during services on weekdays as well as some Sunday services. Their local assemblies are encouraged to establish youth centres where counselling, recreation and reading facilities will be provided for the youth. These youth centres should also provide career counselling and guidance as well as mentoring. The COP has recently

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<sup>173</sup> This was observed during the author's fieldtrips to the Church of Pentecost branch in Birmingham.

added to the other initiatives, a programme called *welfare of church members and other social obligations*.<sup>174</sup> With this programme, they expect every local assembly to devise special welfare schemes for the less privileged among them. The local churches are also tasked to identify the economic situation of church members and a conducive environment is created to enable members to share their economic, educational and other social needs with the church.

The COP leadership has discovered how valuable the next generation is for the future of the church. They view the second generation migrants as valuable 'assets' for reaching out to the wider community but there are existential concerns about the youth because they naturally negotiate between their parents' cultures and the host (UK) culture so proper care should be taken to nurture them for future ministry initiatives. It is on these next generation migrants that new cross-cultural ministry initiatives can be constructed. The challenge, however, is how these second-generation immigrants can maintain their family's culture, identity and their Christian faith, while at the same time adapting to the culture of the host country that has so much influence on them.

## **6.6. Summary**

The author is of the view that, theologizing in the emerging context, though, may be successful, would not in itself alone bring about the desired outcome of Christ's people working together cross-culturally. However, the author thinks that theologizing can increase their dialogue and move their conversation forward to other important issues such as their being sensitive to each other's culture and agreeing on matters that can deepen their relationships and result in unity. It would be very appropriate if Christ's people from diverse backgrounds could at least agree on matters of the greatest importance, for example, partnering in the areas of evangelism and nation-wide prayer crusade. These, the research has revealed, are some of the issues that could deepen their relationship with fellow Christians and result in a healthy Christian unity.

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<sup>174</sup> See the Church of Pentecost Vision 2018, Five-Year Vision for the Church of Pentecost, Covering the period 2013 -2018.

All the four pastors in the case study churches believe that divisions and factions among Christ's people are at times over petty issues of what is regarded as 'secondary doctrines' which have in fact, caused many divisions to the Body of Christ and this has hindered the evangelization of the world. The muddle of disunity among the many expressions of the Christian faith occurs when the authority of God's mission is infringed upon by ecclesiastical polity claiming authority for mission. This study has proved that the minor doctrinal differences that separate Christ's people should not be the source of their problems.

Nonetheless, the pastors share the view that when Christ's people disagree about deeper values and essential doctrines such as those regarding the Christian's relationship with God, they think that such differences in the fundamental doctrines will always make working together with any individual, group and more so any cross-cultural ministry initiative impossible.

The theology of both sides should be a type of theology that is keen to eliminate the harmful effects of an over-emphasized expression of the Christian faith. Certainly, there exist differences in the theology of African Christians and their host Christians, but these differences are not in the fundamental doctrines and these are issues that can be addressed by both sides. The first step to take in order to resolve these differences is for both sides to commit themselves to building the spiritual relationships of mutual love and trust, working together as people Christ has called and commissioned for Kingdom goals.

It seems clear that Christ's people from the minority background are always offended when the host Christians set themselves up as right, having superior power of judgement. The perception is that the host Christians in most cases create an atmosphere for migrant Christians to feel as if they 'are only there to listen to their superiors.' They make them think as if being a migrant Christian in this current context means you have no ideas or worthy insights as well as the ability to make wise choices in your new environment.

The views of the participants in this study indicate that for any meaningful cross-cultural initiatives between the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches, both sides would have to learn to appreciate the differences of each

other's culture. Having an intentional diminished view of Christ's people from diverse backgrounds by host Christians who in most cases have an inflated view of themselves will not bring about the desired unity among Christ's people. This emergence of superiority will in most cases result in lack of trust in any authentic fellowship with Christ's people (Elmer, 1993:21). There is therefore, the need for a proper understanding and expression of cultural values from both sides, which will be a necessary step forward in any meaningful partnering.

Understandably, different cultures play by different rules, yet Christ's people should not ignore cultures unless they violate Scripture. The vision essential for cross-cultural ministry therefore, should be based on an understanding of what the Scriptures teach about the Kingdom of God and it should be a vision empowered by the Holy Spirit for the engagement in mission endeavours.

Only as we are motivated by the Holy Spirit and through the living Word of God can we relate to one another within the structures of human society to accomplish the purpose of God (Lingenfelter, 2008:110). The perceived difficulty in any attempt of such cross-cultural ministry initiative is the differences in the ecclesiological and hermeneutical understanding of the African Christian and the host Christian. In the African theology, the place of the Holy Spirit and his empowerment is very significant. As such, the African believers place much emphasis on the power encounters with demonic forces, which are confronted and overpowered by the power of God (Chike, 2007:37).

But it would be fair to say that one of the most striking differences between the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches is the emphasis African immigrant churches place on the spirit and power of the Holy Spirit and their use of Scripture which have been missing in most White majority churches, even though very prominent in the Bible. In this way, it is rather understandable that there is indeed a difference in the way African Christians read and interpret Scripture from that of the host Christians.

It is the grace and focus on the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit and the transforming power of Jesus and the Word of God that enables Christians to shift from power seeking control leadership to authentic power giving leadership.



Christian leaders have the responsibility of using their power and skills in producing leaders who are also followers of Christ by creating opportunities for them to lead in cross-cultural ministries (Lingenfelter, 2008:111&122). Understandably, mission-minded pastors should be equipped to shape the culture and the identity of their congregations by reminding their adherents of God's purposes concerning them as Christians and communicating to them the core values of Christianity which give definition to the vision of their various churches in areas of cross-cultural ministries.

This chapter has discussed that the HBC leaders have a clear understanding of the challenges in leadership so they believe that the godly leader should be concerned about how power can easily be abused. It is therefore, their practice to make sure that power is used biblically. They are of the view that Christ's people should reflect on their thoughts, words and actions in the areas of diversity. Rather than denying that in some cases, Christ's people intentionally or unintentionally stereotype people based on ethnicity, Christians need to take positive steps to appreciate the wonderful diversity that is in the Body of Christ. This will in a way motivate them to include people from the different cultural backgrounds who are in their congregation in their leadership role.

It was noted in Chapter 4 that all participants were aware that creating a leadership structure that mirrors all the decision-making and leadership styles of the various ethnicities in their churches is a complex task that perhaps only a few Christian ministries can manage. However, the pastors believe that leading people is much more than having people follow you. They also accept that leading Christ's people is about mentoring them in such a way that they can be empowered and released to do the same thing on their own that their leaders have done for them.

The COP has been intentionally and strategically led with clear goals, objectives and outcomes. For example, they are aware that most of their congregations have a natural inclination for worshipping in their Ghanaian cultural style and have since created the Akan service for them. They also realized the needs of their second-generation congregations who would want their worship in a contemporary worship style. Recently there has been the establishment of PIWCs that run concurrently with the Akan services. The PIWCs provide a well-organized, cross-cultural church, primarily for people of non-Ghanaian cultural background and other Ghanaians

such as the second generation, who desire to worship in the English language with a contemporary worship style. This is also opened to all Christ's people who desire to worship in the English language or in a multicultural setting. The praise and worship style in the PIWCs is contemporary and is designed to serve the needs of a multi-ethnic gathering.

The study has revealed that all the four churches have different styles of leadership. De Pree (2008:140)<sup>175</sup> thinks that an effective leadership must be authentic. This affirms the need for a relational authority instead of positional authority exercised by advocates of the hierarchical structures. He understands authority as more of a moral issue and pragmatic influence based on a good give and take relationship between leaders and those being led. Christ's people must therefore live within their lines of responsibilities. This will also involve showing respect to all people and accepting their differences.

It has been argued in this chapter that, ideally churches in the UK should be involved in cross-cultural ministries due to Britain's urban multi-ethnic communities and also churches should not seek to be organized primarily in terms of ethnicity as this distracts from the Biblical principles of unity in diversity (Galatians 3:28). However, the study has shown that the ECFC will remain a mono-ethnic church for the foreseeable future. The ECFC is the place where the issue of identity for the Ethiopian/Eritrean believer is one in which their Christian faith and cultural loyalty is connected. Their service is conducted in the Amharic language, which is widely spoken by Ethiopian and Eritrean ethnicities. As such, they make up of the Ethiopian/Eritrean congregation. Clearly, the ECFC's ecclesiology justifies McGavran's 'Homogeneous Unit Principle' because in this context, the Ethiopian/Eritrean Christians in Britain prefer not to cross-cultural barriers in order to understand and accept the Gospel (McIntosh & McMahan, 2012:88)<sup>176</sup>. This supports the argument that for some categories of people – such as the recently arrived migrants and people with a high people-consciousness, the mono-ethnic church is their acceptable place of worship.

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<sup>175</sup> De Pree, Max, 2008, *Leadership Jazz*, Crown Publishing Group, USA.

<sup>176</sup> McIntosh & McMahan, 2012, *Being the Church in a Multi-ethnic community, why it matters and how it works*, Wesleyan Publishing House, Indiana, USA.

The ECFC leadership, on the other hand, co-operates with other non-Ethiopian/Eritrean churches in different ways. For example, their leadership is actually involved in cross-cultural initiatives that bring Christians from diverse backgrounds together by building bridges and other initiatives such as reaching out to communities. It is therefore, true to say that, the ECFC leadership is mission-minded but they have not been able to translate this into any meaningful cross-cultural initiative among their congregation.

Overall, the study has proved that establishing a mono-ethnic church in the multicultural context of the UK is a valid strategy for some migrants who feel best connected with God in their own culture (see Chapter 4). The vision for the multi-ethnic church, on the other hand, is to attempt to model unity in the midst of diversity. Mission-minded pastors who apply the vision of modelling unity in the midst of diversity to the discipleship functions of their local churches will see their members getting involved in cross-cultural ministries. Ideally, pastors must see it as their responsibility to shape up their congregation, equip them for cross-cultural ministries and release them to work co-operatively with Christ's people from other backgrounds. The research has revealed that the unity of believers with Christ is a gracious work of the Holy Spirit (see Chapter 4). The set-up of every local church should therefore, be like the triune God: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, even though are different persons, yet, are completely united. The Bible makes us understand that God chooses to reveal his glory through the solidarity of his people, which occurs when Christ's people are united towards a common purpose. For example, the Book of Acts serves as a model of unity in diversity among the first century Christians, the unity that was brought about as a result of the Gospel being ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **7. A MODEL OF CHRISTIAN MISSION**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter has attempted to find ways in which the African immigrant churches could cross-racial boundaries to impact the wider British community. The fieldwork in Chapter 4 has revealed that the main programme of all the four case study churches is to proclaim the salvation message of Christ and the forgiveness it offers by sharing God's own mission of love. Their aim is to bring all humanity into a communion with God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. They proclaim from a Christian perspective, a mission that embraces the practice of ministry and social action in the context of how God is moving providentially in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century context of mission in the United Kingdom. They understand that there is, and always will be, only one Gospel. That is to say, the definition of the Gospel is the same in all backgrounds in which it is being preached. However, the demonstration of it (the Gospel) will always differ from one cultural background to another. At the same time, it has become obvious that each new generation, in spite of their backgrounds, will need to find fresh, relevant ways to communicate and celebrate their Christian faith. The church (universal) therefore needs to be born anew in each new context, culture and generation.

It was discovered during the fieldwork in the case study churches that God reveals diversity. The study has also revealed that the African immigrant churches have gained a Christian landscape in the UK. They have created spiritual awakening in their host country resulting in a tremendous awareness of spirituality spreading through their mission endeavours to revive British Christianity which had hitherto experienced significant decline in many places. Notwithstanding this, it is still not certain how these churches would reach out to the wider British community.

The research (see Chapter 4) has revealed that all the case study churches have similar objectives in their mission endeavours. They have all revealed similarities in their models. They have their main components and elements in common. However, it is also interesting to note that they all have different approaches to

achieving their objectives. However, it is fair to say that the models identified in the research were all mission-driven models.

There is clearly a healthy expression of a mission-driven model in each of the four case study churches for Christian living and evangelism, and this has something to offer Christ's people from all backgrounds. Mission was not just part of their church's reality, but it was its very essence. Even though, there are different approaches in the way they model, what is becoming increasingly clear is that healthy, growing churches can be found in all their approaches. It is worth noting that, no one ministry model will supplant the way the others model. All the perspectives of the various churches indicate action on the part of the missional God who calls for a response from all people, in spite of their racial background, nationality or ethnicity.

This chapter will examine a Biblical foundation that shapes how the African immigrant churches can develop a model of Christian mission that inspires and transforms life in spite of one's background.

## **7.2. Creating a mission rooted in God's divine initiative**

The study (see Chapter 4) has revealed that the COP, the ECFC and the ANC do not believe that their churches can properly accomplish their God-given task without the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They have made an attempt to model on the book of Acts. These churches understand that as the baptism in the Holy Spirit was not optional for the first century church, neither should it be optional for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century church. They believe that the Lord wants to empower believers for ministry and the gifts of the Spirit are to empower Christ's people for the work of the ministry. They therefore, encourage the exercise of these gifts and give their congregations the opportunity to use them.

For example, these churches believe in the presence and leadings of the Holy Spirit in their worship, their daily lives and mission endeavours. They think that the new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit and that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is for power to do God's work. In addition, the gifts of the Spirit are for the building of the Body of Christ and the fruits of the Spirit, to them, help Christians to develop Christ-like characters.

It became obvious during the fieldwork that each new generation, in spite of their backgrounds, would need to find fresh, relevant ways to communicate and celebrate their Christian faith. The church (universal), therefore, needs to be born anew in each new context, culture and generation. Smith (2001:12)<sup>177</sup> argues that the things that were revealed to John in the book of Revelation Chapters 2 and 3, just 60 years after the church was founded, are the things that he (God) could very well say to the church (universal) today. He believes that it has over the years become difficult to look at church history and find a good model for the church (universal) today. However, he thinks that the divine ideal for the church is found in the book of Acts. The church (the Jerusalem church as well as the Antioch church) in the book of Acts to him, was a dynamic church, a church led by the Holy Spirit and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The first believers, according to him, experienced a church that was effective in bringing the Gospel to the world (Smith, 2001:13).

Smith's assertion of the divine ideal of the church was right because the Bible says in Acts 2:42 that, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (NKJV). These four foundations must clearly be instituted when developing a fellowship of believers. The church today, must lead people to continue steadfastly in the Word of God by teaching them the apostles' doctrine, bringing them into fellowship in the Body of Christ, participating in the breaking of bread, and being people of prayer (Acts 2:47). The first century church (in the book of Acts) was a church led by the Holy Spirit; it was teaching the Word of God, and developing oneness (fellowship and koinonia). The early Christians' love, order, unity, and mission were evident to the world around them, and through this witness, the Lord added to their number daily. The book of Acts therefore, gives Christ's people, today an insight on how the early Christians connected with the world; how they gradually and eventually contextualized the Gospel for each people group they encountered.

Chalke (2006:161)<sup>178</sup> was right to suggest that local churches must see it as their responsibilities to offer and demonstrate the message of Christ as a genuinely life

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<sup>177</sup> Smith, C (2001) *Calvary Chapel Distinctives*, The Word for Today Publishers

<sup>178</sup> Chalke, S 2006, *Intelligent Church, A Journey Towards a Christ-centred Community*, Zondervan, MI. USA

changing and by extension community and world changing. He also stated that God is love and calls his church to demonstrate the same love, else they would be robbed of their DNA. Chalke (2006:173) argues that the church today should be a church whose Christology drives its missiology, which in turn shapes its ecclesiology. He thinks that it is time for Christ's people to do church differently. He does not think that the shape of the way church services is conducted today, for example, the church's liturgies and traditions should be allowed to determine the shape and style of its mission because this will limit what communities and society as a whole can know of Christ.

He made it abundantly clear when he said:

All that we believe about God as revealed in Christ (his nature and style) must shape all that we believe about our mission (its nature and style), and the way that we do church should simply be the best way to encapsulate, express and achieve that goal (Chalke, 2006:173).

All the four pastors want their churches to reflect God's triune nature because they believe churches must strive to proclaim a type of ministry that reflects the eternal love, order, unity and mission of the Trinity. In order to accomplish this, they have created a healthy Biblical community in their local churches. Trinity, as revealed in the Bible, is the foundational reality from which all mission strategies derive. God is three distinct persons (Father, Son and the Holy Spirit) with differing functions.<sup>179</sup> Concerning the inner relationship of the eternal Godhead, it is important to first point out that the divine community is a community of sacrificial love. This love is evident in John 17:24 when Jesus, praying for his disciples says, "Father, I desire that they also whom you gave me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which you have given me..." (NKJV). In this verse, Jesus emphasizes the same oneness for his disciples that he has with the Father.

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<sup>179</sup> God acts as the Father in administration; he is seen as the Son in revelation; but he moves as the Spirit in operation (CF Coleman, 1992:79). The Trinity is a mystery, yet, a proper understanding of Scripture reveals how the Father, Son and the Spirit function in one essence.

Clearly, he and the Father share the same purpose, plan, and power. Likewise, Christian unity is dependent on sharing the priority of seeking and doing his will.<sup>180</sup> Christ must therefore, be the centre of every congregation and all missionary efforts. Everything done in the Church and all the mission endeavours of Christ's people must reflect Christ, his nature and character. God has created and redeemed humanity so that his children might participate in the loving intimacy of the triune community for all eternity. This knowledge and participation, John says earlier in Chapter 17, is the essence of all missionary initiatives that finally lead to eternal life.<sup>181</sup>

### **7.3. Servant Leadership**

One of the most important factors in determining whether or not a mission or ministry is going to be successful has to do with the issues of leadership. The fieldwork (see Chapter 4) has revealed the model of leadership of all the four case study churches. For example, the leadership development of the ANC is based on the apostolic foundation, and so their appointment and calling into ministry are also based on the character and charisma, and the directions of the Holy Spirit. Clergy and lay ministries are equally encouraged.

The ANC is intentional about raising leaders. They equip Christ's people to maximize their potential through practical hands-on experience, discipleship and leadership development. They seek to recruit into their leadership, members that reflect the multiple background of people from different ethnicities and this model is good for cross-cultural ministries. Evidentially, natural and gifted leaders from diverse backgrounds have emerged in the ANC and these leaders have credibility and respect from their (ethnic) community networks. For example, there are ethnic

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<sup>180</sup> Bible. 2002. New Spirit Filled Life Bible: New King James Version. Thomas Nelson, Inc. USA.

<sup>181</sup> Kostenberger (cited in Hesselgrave, 2005:144-150), distinguishes between two different models of mission's ministry, an incarnational model and a representational model. He points out that the entire missiological paradigms have been built around the scriptural interpretation of John 17:18 and John 20:21. According to him, the incarnational model is based on the continuity of the incarnate mission and ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, today. The representative model, on the other hand, is about the uniqueness of the person and work of Jesus on earth but it also includes the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-9). Here, the primary task of his disciples is about witnessing to Jesus. The emphasis here is also about making the post-Passion gospel complete which in a sense is also the completed work of Christ.



minority leaders who are in charge of different nationalities and ethnicities such as Zimbabweans and Punjabis.

The leadership development of COP is also based on the apostolic foundation, hence their appointment and calling into ministry are also based on the character and charisma, and the directions of the Holy Spirit. Clergy and lay ministries are equally encouraged. The COP believes in communal living with members supporting one another, participating in communal work. They believe that the reason for their continued existence is their involvement in missions because missions are the heartbeat of God. Therefore, at COP, they see missions as a great responsibility of making significant contributions to global mission. They are of the view that their success in this direction will depend on their ability to rise up and meet the challenges of the contemporary world. And so, at the COP, evangelism is the responsibility of every member. They believe in 'power evangelism' and think that members have a duty to share their faith after conversion. They maintain high standard of excellence in all ministries by seeking to honour God who gave humankind the Saviour.

In his fieldtrips, the author discovered the simplicity of the ECFC leadership. They believe that the church (universal) is divinely ordained organism rather than a man-made organization such as a club or association as such their leadership ministry is not based solely on academic achievements but by the calling of God. They have the pastoral staff as well as deacons and elders. These men and women must always possess certain personal qualifications (see 1 Timothy 3). They think that Christian leadership should be supernaturally chosen and ordained by God and that these men and women should be gifted leaders who Christ has provided for the church.

The HBC have a vision to be a community of believers who seek to use their gifts to propagate the good news. The HBC practise congregational church government. In this type of church government, the congregations exercise the ultimate authority in the local church but they assume to do this under the divine authority of Christ. They do not recognize the positions of, for example, bishop, general overseer and many others over their local church. They believe that everyone who attends the HBC has a role to play and can use their God-given skills and talents for the good

of the church and the community. These gifts include teaching, evangelism, social action, pastoral care, prayer and healing, taking part in worship, administration or hospitality.

At HBC when a person is baptized (through immersion), they normally become a church member. Church members are called to discern prayerfully God's will for their shared life. Final authority does not rest with the ministers, deacons or any other local, national or international body, but with the members meeting together under God's guidance. Church members, during church meetings make significant appointments including ministers, and agree financial policy and mission. Clearly, HBC is outwards focused as it is linked regionally, nationally and internationally with other churches for support and fellowship.

There is clearly a healthy expression of a mission-driven model in each of the above four case study churches for Christian living and evangelism, and this has something to offer Christ's people from all backgrounds. Even though, there are different approaches in the way the four churches model, what is becoming increasingly clear is that healthy, growing churches can be found in all their approaches. It is also fair to say that, all perspectives of the various churches indicate action on the part of the missional God who calls for a response from all people, in spite of their background, nationality, race or ethnicity. What then is God's model of mission?

The church (universal) is a divine institution rather than a man-made organization, as such must have a "divinely-gifted" leadership as observed in the ECFC. However, the church seems to ignore the importance of the Ephesians 4 ministry functions, and this negligence limits its effectiveness. Roxburg and Romanuk (2006:118) are right to articulate the challenges church leadership faces in these terms:

When we borrow from other arenas such as business or corporate governance, we actually form a character and identity as a leader that, though it may be successful by any number of measures, leads away from formation as God's person. It also gives the

church that is involved a distorted understanding of itself and its own purposes.

Roxburg and Romanuk (2006:118)<sup>182</sup> further stated that some church leadership models derive from measuring effectiveness in terms of numerical growth. This practice, according to Roxburg and Romanuk (2006:118) are not necessarily the only measures of a life with God. For example, growth can also be measured in terms of the spiritual maturity<sup>183</sup> of any given congregation. It is fair to say that today, so many Christian leadership positions are solely based on academic achievements, human calling and appointment and many churches have become too “expert” or leader-centred and in many congregations virtually all the praying, preaching and teaching is done by only the pastors. However, this is not Biblical and healthy, for God gives gifts to every Christian, not simply those who have been installed in certain offices and ministry.

The leadership of the first century church understood leadership differently from how it is generally understood today. For example, the congregation of the early church was a visible community of God’s people existing and operating together under a sense of God’s love and the Holy Spirit administration through gifted leaders in their midst. God’s paradigm (or model) is in the mission endeavours of the first century Christians. For instance, this paradigm was embraced by the church at Antioch. The church at Antioch was a missionary enterprise that welcomed and involved the participation of all members (Acts 11:21-24).

The early church was committed to equipping Christ’s people for the work of the ministry and it is clear to say that the first century church’s model was that of plurality and mutuality. The early Christians acted on consensus of one voice to their adherents.

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<sup>182</sup> Roxburg, A & Romanuk, F 2006, *The Missional Leader, equipping your church to reach a changing world*, Jossey-Bass, CA USA.

<sup>183</sup> The followers of Christ grow in Christ’s character, and by the same virtue, they develop in his life style and ministry to the world (CF Coleman, 1992:53). Coleman (1992:64), suggested that having the quality supply of Christian labour would lead to reproduction of life in the harvest of souls: *“The Key to the final harvest is found in the quality and the supply of labourers obeying the mandate of Christ. It does not matter how few their numbers are in the beginning, provided that they reproduce and teach their disciples in turn to do the same. As simple as it may seem, this is the way his church will ultimately triumph. He has no other plans.”*

The book of Acts reveals how Christ's people were committed to the whole counsel of God and to the preaching and teaching of the Gospel that imparts vision, understanding and motivation for their followers. Robinson and Smith (2005:85)<sup>184</sup> echo the concerns that many Christians feel about the traditional dispensationalist argument that the gifts of the apostle, prophet, and evangelist disappeared at the end of the apostolic period. They think that this assumption is questionable, because there is evidence in recent renewal movements that these ministry gifts had been in operation in people's lives. Robinson (2001:147)<sup>185</sup> also describes the situation where the church in the West has been concentrating only on the pastoral and teaching ministries to the neglect of the apostle, prophet and evangelist ministries. According to him, the apostle, prophet and evangelist ministry gifts stand together with those of the pastor and teacher in order to constitute a missionary church.

It is true to say that the best kind of leadership is the type of leadership that grows up in the midst of Christians and enters into the ministry at some level, either as deacons, overseers and elders as in 1 Timothy 3 or Ephesians 4:11 ministry gifts of equipping Christ's people for the work of the ministry. God's programme for the church (universal), as revealed in the Bible, involves equipping all Christ's people so they become ministering members. What is written in Ephesians 4:11-16, therefore opens the Christian's understanding to God's design for all ministry within the local church. This New Testament pattern provides for a supernaturally chosen and divinely equipped ministry for the church. The Bible reveals that, 'God has to do a work in us before he can do a work through us' and this informs his reasons for giving gifts to his people. Ephesians 4:11-16 shows a clear picture of how the local church ministry should affect the spiritual growth and maturity of church members. These gifts operating in any local church are supposed to complement one another and lead to the edification and unity in the Body of Christ. If Christ's people can all find their proper calling and functions as in the ways of the early church, and move according to ways of the Kingdom of God then the Holy Spirit will be able to work unhindered in the local church or mission.

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<sup>184</sup> Robinson, M & Smith, D (2005) *Invading Secular Space*, Monarch Books

<sup>185</sup> Robinson, M (2001) *The Faith of the Unbeliever*, Monarch Books.

It is right to say that Ephesians 4:11-16 shows the way that God intended his church (universal) to be run and not by copying what someone else is doing and so following their mistakes. God's intended purpose in placing ministers in the local church is to turn sinners to saints (Matthew 4:19; Acts 26:16-18), restore, mould and perfect the saints (Galatians 4:19) and prepare every member for ministry and purposeful service. Local church ministers are to equip fully their congregation and make them fit to take their place in the fellowship of the local church. When Christ's people aim at reaching the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, they come into unity in the church. As they progress towards maturity, they avoid cunning crafty teachers of false and strange doctrines. This is what keeps the individual Christian solid in the faith and secured against all seductions. Matured believers will always speak the truth in love and serve all believers they come into contact with, in spite of their backgrounds.

#### **7.4. The African immigrant churches regarding the wider community as another stage in their mission to Britain.**

The study has revealed that the African immigrant churches have now been established in the UK Christian landscape. They have enabled their members (mainly African migrants) to find a refuge from discrimination and discover a sense of identity, respect and belonging. They have also created spiritual awakening in their host country and a tremendous awareness of spirituality is spreading through their mission endeavours in Britain. However, they need to work harder and in more creative ways in partnerships with the host Christians to create a society that models the values of the Kingdom of God.

The author is of the view that if the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), is to be fulfilled effectively in Britain, cultural and ethnic barriers would have to be crossed. Scripture reveals that the church at Jerusalem was always held in high esteem as the original centre from which the Gospel came. There was Antioch too, the city church that sponsored their pioneering tour (Mahoney, 1993:234-236).<sup>186</sup> The pattern the Lord intended Christians to follow is to establish more house churches and energetically pursue a programme of evangelism and soul winning. The church

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<sup>186</sup> Mahoney, R (1993), *The Shepherd's Staff*, World Map, CA. USA.

at Antioch was a blending of races and cultures. The first century Christians, at first, preached the Gospel to no one but the Jews. The early church successfully overcame the mono-ethnic concentration on 'Jewish people only'<sup>187</sup>. Some of the early Christians began to preach the Lord Jesus to the Greek-Hellenists. By the time a church leadership nucleus was eventually formed, the congregation had clearly become multicultural. The congregation emerged with an inclusive vision and exhibited diversity of the various ethnicities and cultures. For example, the leadership that emerged included those from Cyprus in the present day Mediterranean, Cyrene in Northern Africa, Hellenists, and the Jewish people. The Antioch community began by reaching out to people in their geopolitical region, so should the 21<sup>st</sup> Century church in the UK.

The Bible reveals that there were devout Jewish people in all the cities of the Roman Empire and Paul went to many of these cities with the Gospel. The pattern was that Paul would go into the synagogues and preach the Gospel to his fellow Jews who had gathered for teachings of the Old Testament and other religious rituals (Acts 13:5). Like Jesus before him, Paul would go into the synagogues and preach Jesus to the Jewish people (Matt. 4:23; Acts 13:5). This usually resulted in many Jewish converts, who were already well taught in the Scriptures (the Old Testament). From these, with a minimal amount of training and teaching, elders for the churches could be appointed (Mahoney, 1995:131). Even though, the mission endeavours of the first century Christians had already expanded to the point of leaving Palestine, the main recipients of their missionary efforts were Jewish people only (Acts 11:19). However, the mission extension went further when *some men from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus* (Acts 11:20). This missionary effort was successful, because the Greeks responded in great numbers as they *believed and turned to the Lord* (Acts 11:20).

The African immigrant churches are now ministering to their own kind just as Paul's strategy was first of all, to minister to fellow Jewish people in their synagogues.

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<sup>187</sup> *But as Acts progresses, the community slowly and even painfully begins to realize that something else is going on as the Spirit "drives or "leads" it to include "half Jews" (Samaritans), individual Gentile proselytes or "God-fearers" (the Ethiopian official), worthy Gentile (Cornelius and his household) and finally, Gentiles (in Antioch)* (CF Bevans, S.B. & Schroeder, R.P.2004:10)

Ideally, in their missionary efforts to Britain, the African immigrant churches must work out a strategy to reach out to the wider community. Their outreach must be in line with the Biblical pattern of Acts 1:8. They can also adopt Paul's strategy of first reaching out to their own kind and then expanding their outreaches to 'all others.' The book of Acts provides Christ's people with the understanding that the first century Christians began fulfilling the Great Commission when the disciples started reaching out in Jerusalem which was the centre of Judaism, and then Judea and Galilee, where others of their own kind lived, and also in Samaria, where members of a different but familiar people lived and finally within the unreached peoples of other parts of the world.

It is clear to say that the Gospel spread quickly from Jerusalem to other parts of the world because Jerusalem, arguably, was like the modern cities of Britain that experienced migration of people from different parts of the world. It is worth noting that the Hellenized Jewish Christians, who were scattered in foreign lands, preached the Gospel wherever they went. For example, Acts 8:1 tells us how the first official persecution of the early church drove the Christians out of Jerusalem, and how they preached the Gospel everywhere they went. Philip, on his part, went to Samaria and preached the Gospel there (Acts 8:5). As a result of his preaching and miraculous signs, people listened and many believed and were baptized (Acts 8:12). In its wider context, the persecution of Acts 8:1 and the subsequent mission endeavours of Philip in Acts 8:4 resulted in the planting of churches throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria.

This study has revealed how migrants from different parts of the world have migrated to the UK in the past few decades. Today, migration has changed the demography of Britain's urban cities, for example, London, Birmingham and Glasgow, which have now become multicultural. This migration of people from different ethnicities and nationalities presents opportunities and challenges to the society and the Christian mission. For most parts, what we are seeing today in Britain is the development of micro-melting pots in which the migrant ethnic minority populations have established a presence in the major cities of Britain (see Chapter 2).

Olupona and Gemignani, (2007:3) argue that the Western world has understood African immigrants according to a “melting pot” model of immigration (see Chapter 2). Mass migration to the UK cities has resulted in different races, cultures and people from diverse backgrounds coming to live together in the cities and sharing social and economic benefits together. There are problems encountered by people from diverse backgrounds trying to assimilate into a cohesive whole. Despite the challenges migration poses to the UK urban communities, it could also be an amazing opportunity to present the Gospel to people from unreached people groups. For example, there are people from countries like Libya, Saudi Arabia and North Korea in the UK universities and communities today. Reaching out to these people means they would in turn reach out to their people when they return to their countries of origin.

The research has revealed a healthy expression of a mission-driven model in each of the four case study churches for Christian living and evangelism, and this has something to offer Christ’s people from all backgrounds. Even though, there are different approaches in the way the four churches model, what is becoming increasingly clear is that healthy, growing churches can be found in all their approaches. In which ways therefore, can the African immigrant churches model these churches?

The reader is warned not to assume that models are a representation of what some churches do, rather models should be seen as just symbols of reality. Models are guides that can be applied to ministry expressions because they help to label and give description to certain practices in different contexts. It is assumed therefore, that all Christian models should be leading people to mission.<sup>188</sup> The mission of God dominated the life and teachings of Jesus; it also includes his crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-9). Therefore, Christ’s people, in spite of their backgrounds and no matter what part of the world they find themselves, are called to embrace this lifestyle modelled by Jesus Christ. His people are asked to live by the same rule that governed his time here on earth. However, adaptations

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<sup>188</sup> Bevans, S & Schroeder, R (2004:285), defines mission as: “... *preaching, serving and witnessing to the work of God in our world; it is about living and working as partners with God in the patient yet unwearied work of inviting and persuading women and men to enter into relationship with the world, with one another and with Godself. Mission is a dialogue. It takes people where they are...*”



to his approach to ministry must be made to suit the situational context in which they find themselves. For example, the strategy Christ adopted in the Mediterranean culture over two thousand years ago would not be the same techniques he would use today, yet the core message would remain the same. Bevans and Schroeder (2004:31)<sup>189</sup> suggest that Christ's people have to develop an understanding of the universal significance of Christ. They share this point of view:

.... if to be church is to be in mission, to be in mission is to be responsive to the demands of the Gospel in particular contexts, to be continually "reinventing" itself as it struggles with the approaches of new situations, new peoples, new cultures and new questions. The existence of Christianity seems to be linked to its expansion beyond itself, across generational and cultural boundaries.

Similarly, Moltman (1999:360), says,

The historical church will ask about continuity and strive for continuity. But where the future its apostolate serves is concerned it will be open to leap forward to what is new and surprising. Here the most characteristic thing is not the old things that are preserved but the new ones that take place and come into being.

Certainly, changing contexts comes with the awareness of the church which recognizes itself as missionary. Coleman (1992:54),<sup>190</sup> understands that the urgency of mission is linked to the urgency of change and adaptation. He argues that methods are variable, conditioned by the time and circumstances, which are constantly changing. However, he also thinks that the principles, inherent in Christ's way of life would never change. These principles, therefore, are the ones that can be adopted by churches trying to model other successful ministries.

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<sup>189</sup> Bevans, S & Schroeder, R (2004), *Constants in Context, A Theology of Mission for Today*, Orbis Books, NY, USA.

<sup>190</sup> Cited Coleman, R (1992:54), *The Great Commission Lifestyle*, Baker Book House, MI, USA

The study has revealed that the ANC and the COP have been strategic in their mission endeavours. For example, the senior pastor of the ANC (the ANC is a White majority church) is a third generation Punjabi; he was born and raised in Wolverhampton. He was equipped to lead the youth wing of the ANC and when the senior pastor's role became vacant, he was asked to take over the responsibility of the church as a senior pastor. He has since brought changes that have been successful. The success of this third generation Punjabi pastor in a White majority church is an indication that, if nurtured properly by the first generation, the next generation of African migrants would be the ones to negotiate successful partnering with the host Christians and lead multi-ethnic churches. It is true to say that the ANC presents the best kind of leadership that grows up in the midst of Christians and enters into the ministry at some level, either as deacons, overseers and elders as in 1 Timothy 3 or Ephesians 4:11 ministry gifts of equipping Christ's people for the work of the ministry.

In their mission endeavours to Britain, the COP mirrors the missionary efforts of the first century Christians. They understand that just as the early church's missionary effort was first to their fellow Jewish people in Jerusalem and then to Jews in Samaria and subsequently, to the Gentiles, who belonged to the ends of the earth so the equivalent pattern would be found in their outreach to Britain. Clearly, the COP has the desire to reach out to the wider community. They believe that their PIWCs<sup>191</sup> members' ability to participate in multi-ethnic gatherings will increase as they develop confidence in their own ability to navigate the social spaces of the new host culture. They are therefore, working out a strategy to reach out to the wider community, which they believe would be accomplished by their next generation migrants.

It is fair to say that, the African immigrant churches can follow the patterns of both the ANC and the COP in their leadership development and mission endeavours to Britain. At this stage in their outreach activities, the African immigrant churches have been successful in ministering to their fellow Africans (their Jerusalem), some of them have been successful to reach out to other African ethnicities (Judea).

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<sup>191</sup> The Pentecost International Worship Centre, unlike their mother church, The Church of Pentecost, conduct services in the English language and they have also adopted a contemporary worship style to meet the needs of the second generation migrants and the wider community.

Where the challenge is, is how they can work harder in more creative ways to reach out to the wider community (across cultural and racial barrier) and to all people.

### **7.5. Practical Reflection on a model of Christian mission**

Mission is the essence of all the four case study churches. These churches have different approaches in the way they model, yet, healthy, growing churches can be found in all their approaches. In this regard, the author lists the following practical pointers as how this chapter could function in reality:

1. To be successful in mission endeavours, the issues of leadership should be taken seriously. The church (universal) is a divinely ordained organism rather than a man-made organization as such its leadership ministry should not be based on academic achievements alone but also by the calling of God. The church must take into consideration the importance of the Ephesians 4 ministry functions and I Timothy 3. The model of mission should be that of plurality and mutuality.
2. The Ephesians 4:11 and the 1 Timothy 3 type of leadership is the best kind of Christian leadership because this type of leadership grows up in the midst of Christians and enters into ministry at some level, either as deacons, overseers and elders for the equipping of Christ's people for the work of ministry. An example of this type of leadership in the study is the ANC senior pastor. This pastor is a third generation Punjabi, born and raised in Wolverhampton. He joined the ANC (a White majority church) and was equipped to lead their youth wing. When the senior pastor's role became vacant he was asked to take over the responsibility of the church as a senior pastor. He has since brought changes which have been successful.
3. The ANC realized that their type of leadership must be the one that is shared to all in spite of one's background. They believe that if it is not shared, it runs the risks of occasioning divisions. The success of the third generation Punjabi pastor in ANC is an indication that, the second generation migrants are properly placed in the UK society to propagate the Gospel with the host Christians because they are bicultural. (They understand their parents' cultures and the host culture as well). They also speak with a perfect British accent.

4. All the perspectives of churches must indicate action on the part of the missional God who calls for a response from all people, in spite of their racial background, nationality or ethnicity. The four case study churches have different approaches to achieving their objectives but what is increasingly clear is that they are all mission-driven churches. There was a healthy expression of a mission-driven model in each of these churches for Christian living and evangelism.
5. The church (universal) needs to be born anew in each new context, culture and generation. In each new generation, the church would need to find fresh, relevant ways to communicate and celebrate the Christian faith. It is evident that Christ is the centre of all the four case study churches. They all believe that all their practices must reflect Christ, his nature and character. This knowledge and participation, John says in Chapter 17, is the essence of all missionary initiatives which finally lead to eternal life.
6. The ANC and HBC have learnt that liturgies and traditions of churches should not be allowed to determine the shape and style of their ecclesiology because this will limit what communities and society as a whole can know of Christ. Instead Christ's love, order, unity, and mission should be evident to the world around them, and through this witness the Lord would add to the church.

## **7.6. Summary**

This chapter has attempted to discover how the African immigrant churches could develop a model of Christian mission that inspires and transforms life in spite of one's background. The African immigrant churches in their bid to reach out to the wider community could model their leadership development on the ANC and their outreach initiatives on the COP. However, models are only guides that can be applied to ministry expressions because they only help to label and give a description to certain practices in different contexts.

The COP, mirror the missionary effort of the first century Christians in their mission endeavours to Britain. They understand that just as the early church's missionary effort was first to their fellow Jewish people in Jerusalem and then to Jews in Samaria and subsequently, to the Gentiles, who belonged to the ends of the earth so the same pattern would be found in their outreach to Britain. Clearly, the COP

has the desire to reach out to the wider community. They believe that their PIWCs<sup>192</sup> members' ability to participate in multi-ethnic gatherings will increase as they develop confidence in their own ability to navigate the social spaces of the new host culture. They are therefore, working on a strategy to reach out to the wider community, which they believe would be accomplished by their next generation migrants. The African immigrant churches can mirror the pattern of the COP in their mission endeavours to Britain. It is scriptural to start outreach with their own kind and then end up ministering to the wider community.

The senior pastor of the ANC is a third generation Punjabi. He was appointed to lead the ANC, which is a White majority church, with the realization that his talents and spiritual gifts as well as his ministry preparation and character could best be used in a diverse community of believers. It is obvious that his leadership skill has matched his own integrity. This decision by the ANC leadership was a stroke of genius, from which the church has benefited, as it seems, it has flourished and experienced growth. It is fair to say that this can serve as a paradigm for other White majority churches preparing church members for leadership positions. In a similar vein, the African immigrant churches can mirror the ANC as they prepare their next generation migrants to reach out to the wider community.

The model in the book of Acts was the community of faith in which people became born-again and made an impact in their communities. The Lord added to the church daily as Christ's people praised and worshipped God and enjoyed the favour of the people in their communities. Clearly, the early church did not only rescue souls from hell, but it also affected communities, making a difference in them and whetting their appetite for Christ. This model appears to be good for today's church.<sup>193</sup>

For a proper understanding of missions, the universal significance of Christ has to be taken into consideration in mission endeavours. Mission work is linked to the

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<sup>192</sup> The Pentecost International Worship Centre, unlike their mother church, The Church of Pentecost, conduct services in the English language and they have also adopted a contemporary worship style to meet the needs of the second generation migrants and the wider community.

<sup>193</sup> This analogy appears to oversimplify missionary efforts in today's world. As stated above, missions are linked to the urgency of change and adaptation. But Christ's people can rightly adopt the principles inherent in the message of the book of Acts.

urgency of change and adaptation but the principles inherent in Christ's message will not change. These principles, and not the strategy, must guide all outreach activities. The early church recognized itself as a 'missionary' church in the changing contexts as the church moved from Jerusalem to Samaria and eventually to the uttermost part of the world (Acts 1:8). It is worth noting that churches must be sensitive to the urgency of change and adaptation in their mission endeavours.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### 8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 8.1 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis has been to explore how the African immigrant churches could partner with the White majority churches for a more effective sharing of the Gospel in the multicultural context of the UK. The central theoretical argument was that the African immigrant churches in Britain have enabled their adherents to find a refuge from discrimination and discover a sense of identity, respect and belonging. They, however, needed to work harder and in more creative ways in partnership with the White majority churches in the UK to create a society that models the values of the Kingdom of God.

The research has posed the questions: How may the African immigrant churches effectively partner with the White majority churches for a more effective sharing of the Gospel in the UK? Why is it that in spite of the fact that African immigrant churches profess and desire to be truly international and integrationist in their vision they, yet, do not have many non-Africans among their congregations? How can the African immigrant churches, on a small scale, give hope to the wider population in the United Kingdom through offering a model of a transformed, fulfilled and purposeful approach to living, in an increasingly secular social context?

The study has attempted to answer these questions in the following ways:

In Chapter 1, the author has raised the main reasons why he chose the topic. Thus, having observed situations in the African immigrant churches in the UK, that raised questions in relation to the relevance of these churches in the UK landscape, the author initially carried out a literature review into these areas by reviewing the works of previous scholars and key thinkers that support and provide a context of this study. The author believed that the African migrant churches' inability to reach out to the wider community was partly due to their lack of vision in realizing the need of working in more creative ways in partnership with the UK White majority churches to create a society that models the values of the Kingdom of God. The author therefore, felt that there was a strong case of research into areas in which

the African immigrant churches could partner with the White majority churches. He was of the view that a meaningful partnering between the two sides could lead into creating a platform that would be tremendous in sharing the Gospel, leading Christ's people, making disciples and modelling the love of Christ, with a greater impact in the British communities.

Having learnt more about what was already known about the subject matter and what gaps needed to be filled, the author started the primary process by choosing to investigate four churches (from four different denominations), using a participant observation in qualitative methodology; he believed in the advantages of an in-depth study of four churches rather than much wider sampling of denominations or churches. He based the foundation of the methodology on the main research question: "How may the African immigrant churches effectively work with the White majority churches for a more effective sharing of the gospel?" This research question provided the general methodological framework for the study.

Chapter 2 has focused on the effect human migration has had on the historical development of the African immigrant churches in Britain. The past few decades experienced a big increase in the cross-border migration of people from all over the world as a result of globalization and other factors such as wars. This recent trend of increased migration has particularly affected Britain, even though migration of people is a reality that has been part of British experience over the centuries. The past few decades, however, have witnessed the unprecedented movement of people from the global South to destinations often associated with former colonial links, for example, migrants from Ghana or Nigeria coming to the United Kingdom. It has revealed how upon arrival on the UK shores, the African migrants first made an attempt to join the UK mainline and evangelical churches but most of the churches the migrants came into contact with were churches whose practices and ecclesiastical style were different from those practised in most churches in sub-Saharan Africa. Most of them left the mainline and evangelical churches and started or joined new ones that they thought would serve their spiritual and emotional needs. Racial exclusion also was part of the reasons why the migrants left the mainline and evangelical churches to form their own. Although, it must be



mentioned that was not a usual experience as some of the UK churches such as the ones associated with the Baptist Union of Great Britain were very welcoming.

In Chapter 3, the author undertook a theological analysis of the African immigrant churches to find out their theological relevance and epistemological validity. The author was aware that in Britain, there was the perception that the 'Black Churches' have a different theology. The author therefore, saw the necessity of the African immigrant churches re-defining themselves in relation to the professing church by clarifying their theology. An attempt was made to construct a theological praxis model. The key elements of the theology of the African immigrant churches were explored in a broader framework of Biblical theological basis. The author's argument was that, in order for the African immigrant churches to become relevant in the UK Christian landscape, there was the need for them to change their theology in line with Scripture, to suit the British context. In his theological construction on what could generally be accepted as a Biblical theological basis, the author therefore used the tools of Biblical criticism and hermeneutics to consider texts particularly favoured by Bible scholars, for example, David Hesselgrave. This, the author thought would result in at least, a tentative conclusion concerning theology while constructing a model for a theological praxis for the African immigrant churches in the UK.

The author carried out an empirical study in Chapter 4. The fieldwork carried out in Chapter 4, was to investigate the four case study churches to find ways in which the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches could work together to advance the Gospel in Britain. The fieldwork revealed among many other things, how the African immigrant church, though, a Christian community, has become a place of refuge for Africans, especially the newly arrived immigrants. Most of them have been faced with difficulties related to immigration together with discrimination when seeking to engage with the wider society. It was also noted that Africans have the tendency to congregate because the social, spiritual and other factors motivating them to come together have cultural significance. Also, these migrant churches operate in a non-threatening and conducive environment that meets the migrants' aspirations. There was also a clear indication that the African Christians have been struggling to re-define themselves in their newly

chosen country, create a distinct identity and express their cultural values. In this case, their African Christian tiers serve as a way of developing a voice and a presence.

Chapters 5 to 7 presented a systematic analysis of the result of the findings and discussed how the results were related to the research questions. The study has revealed that the disagreements among the African Christians and the host Christians are not disagreements about deeper values and essential doctrines such as those regarding the Christian's relationship with God. Such differences would otherwise have made working together with any individual, group and more so any cross-cultural ministry initiative, impossible. Rather the disagreements were over petty issues of what is regarded as 'secondary doctrines' which have in fact, caused many divisions to the Body of Christ. However, the minor doctrinal differences that separate Christ's people should not be the source of their problems. There are also cultural differences that can be resolved with a proper approach. This gives the hope that both the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches can shelve their differences and work together for Kingdom goals.

For example, through partnering with African immigrant churches, the White majority churches can help to alleviate some of the misunderstandings in British communities about the migrant Christians. In this case, the British communities would accept the African Christians with ease. The host Christians can also help to reduce the isolation of the African Christians and help in their integration.

Both sides could explore equality and respect, differences and commonalities. They could promote an understanding of the different cultures and can promote greater participation and inclusiveness. They could also enter into a dialogue for a proper understanding of the different cultures of the diverse communities within the UK urban communities. By so doing, they could identify barriers, divisions and other issues that stop people from getting more involved in their communities. They could aim to become more active participants in community initiatives by looking for better ways of working together, which should be a continuous process. Overall, they could find ways of becoming churches that can strategize to be the vanguard of spiritual, emotional, economic and social liberation in the United Kingdom by

consistently addressing the crucial areas of people's lives and focusing their time and resources to transforming lives.

The study has revealed the necessity of both sides theologizing in the emerging context; theologizing could increase their dialogue and move the conversation forward to other important issues such as their being sensitive to each other's culture and agreeing on matters that can deepen their relationships and result in unity. For example, matters such as conducting nation-wide prayer meetings and coming together as a multicultural team to build relationships of mutual trust necessary to reaching out to communities together. It is clear to say that effectiveness in evangelism would increase with Christian initiatives such as Christ's people coming together from diverse backgrounds to reach out to diverse communities. However, Christ's people coming together in unity does not necessarily mean they are seeking uniformity. God has made available a variety of gifts and talents in his children, so coming together would mean God's people coming together with different gifts and talents as well as different ministry experiences (1 Corinthians 12).

The understanding that mission begins with God must inform both the migrant Christian and the host Christian, as they seek to share the Gospel in the UK afresh for a new generation which is more globalized and diverse. When Christ's people recall that mission is God's mission and that he has called his people into it, their endeavours and efforts are, at best, mirrored what God has already started because all that Christ's people are doing is just responding to his calling into ministry. As Jesus attributed his work to the Father, so must all Christ's people: "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of himself; but what he sees the Father do; for whatever he does, the Son also does in like manner" (John 5:19 NKJV).

It has been argued in this study that, ideally, churches in the UK should be involved in cross-cultural ministries due to Britain's urban multi-ethnic communities. However, any church modelling diversity must find a way of mirroring Britain's diverse community in a way of demography and not the practices of the community, which is divided by factors such as race and class. It is right to say that churches should not seek to be organized primarily in terms of ethnicity as this distracts from

the Biblical principles of unity in diversity (Galatians 3:28). However, the study has revealed that the ECFC for example, would remain a mono-ethnic church for the foreseeable future. The place of worship of ECFC is one in which their Christian faith and cultural loyalty is connected. That is to say, the ECFC prefer instead intentionally to organize themselves around their own cultural allegiances and values. However, the ECFC was not planted out of animosity towards the White majority churches or other cultures. Instead, the Ethiopians feel that unlike migrants from the former British colonies whose lingua franca is English, most of them (Ethiopians/Eritreans) have to start learning English as beginners, as such they can best connect with God with the people who speak their language, who have the same history, culture and the social needs. They can best use their native language in worship because of their limited English skills so they go back to their native culture as the necessary reference point for their values in worship.

Clearly, the ECFC's ecclesiology justifies McGavran's 'Homogeneous Unit Principle' because in this context, the Ethiopian/Eritrean Christians in Britain prefer not to cross-cultural barriers in order to understand and accept the Gospel (McIntosh & McMahan, 2012:88)<sup>194</sup>. This supports the argument that for some categories of people – such as the recently arrived migrants and people with a high people-consciousness, the mono-ethnic church is their acceptable place of worship. Many African immigrant churches will be in this category for the foreseeable future due to language problems and cultural issues.

The study has revealed how important it is for local church pastors to equip their youth for cross-cultural ministries and release them to work co-operatively with Christ's people from other backgrounds. The model of mission in HBC is to help young people to grow to a strong and mature faith so that they would take responsibilities not just in their local church and communities but also worldwide. They emission and guide their young people in an adventurous, outgoing and pioneering ministries. For example, during an observation, the Sunday worship service was devoted to some of the youth (18-23 years) who just returned from their missionary trip to Uganda. In their message to the congregation, they shared

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<sup>194</sup> McIntosh & McMahan, 2012, *Being the Church in a Multi-ethnic community, why it matters and how it works*, Wesleyan Publishing House, Indiana, USA.

their missional experiences and the motivations they had received from their mission endeavours in Africa. Local church leaders have responsibilities to share the vision of their church with their congregation, with the understanding that the Body of Christ is not divided and that the church is a community which seeks to serve people from diverse backgrounds and as followers of Christ, they exist as a church with a mission of service to all people.

In their mission endeavours to Britain, the COP mirrors the missionary efforts of the first century Christians. They understand that just as the early church's missionary effort was first, to their fellow Jewish people in Jerusalem and then to Jews in Samaria and subsequently, to the Gentiles, who belonged to the ends of the earth so the pattern would be in their outreach to Britain. Clearly, the COP has the desire to reach out to the wider community. But they believe that their PIWCs<sup>195</sup> members' ability to participate in multi-ethnic gatherings will increase as they develop confidence in their own ability to navigate the social spaces of the new host culture. They are therefore, working out a strategy to reach out to the wider community, which they believe would be accomplished by their next generation migrants.

The research has revealed that the first generation of African migrants worship God in their own ecclesiastical style but the influence of the wider society has caused many migrants, especially children<sup>196</sup> born in Britain to their African immigrant parents, to lose faith in God, which has been the source of strength for 'black' people over the years. The African immigrant churches are faced with an existential concern with respect to their next generation who, in many cases are experiencing a process termed acculturation. That is to say, these young people acknowledge their ethnic heritage, but place a greater premium on adapting their lives and values to the culture and values of the wider community, which is living in an increasingly secular social context. This is concerning because the survival of the African

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<sup>195</sup> The Pentecost International Worship Centre, unlike their mother church, The Church of Pentecost, conduct services in the English language and they have also adopted a contemporary worship style to meet the needs of the second generation migrants and the wider community.

<sup>196</sup> The next generation of children born in the UK to African migrant parents are going through *acculturation*. That is to say, they acknowledge their ethnic heritage but place a great premium on adapting their lives to the culture and values of the majority of the population. This is a serious problem when an increasing proportion of the wider society does not adhere to the Christian faith.

immigrant churches hinges on the success of raising and equipping the next generation of children born to the African migrants who are better placed to reach out to the wider community.

Nonetheless, these second generation young Africans' ability to adapt to the lifestyle of the culture of the wider community and communicate clearly with the accent of the host country should not be underestimated. If nurtured properly, these traits of the second-generation migrants can be useful in ministering to their fellow young people in the wider community. One such example is the senior pastor of the ANC<sup>197</sup> who runs a multi-ethnic church with a multicultural identity. Pastor Steve Uppal is a third generation Punjabi who speaks the English language with a British accent and understands the host culture. He has no problem relating to and communicating with his congregation who are mainly from the wider community and also other backgrounds.

It is worth noting that the ANC have presented the best kind of leadership that grows up in the midst of Christians and enters into the ministry at some level, either as deacons, overseers and elders as in 1 Timothy 3 or Ephesians 4:11 ministry gifts of equipping Christ's people for the work of the ministry. They have also realized the importance of the bicultural people in the congregation.<sup>198</sup> The success of this third generation Punjabi pastor in a White majority church is an indication that, if nurtured properly by the first generation, the next generation of African migrants would be the ones to negotiate successful partnering with the host Christians and lead multi-ethnic churches in the process. Any meaningful cross-cultural initiative between the African Christians and the host Christians, would hinge on how well the next generation migrants are equipped and how they respond to the Gospel. A Biblical example is the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:15) who understood both the Jewish and Greek cultures as such was better positioned to preach the Gospel to the Jewish world as well as the Gentile world.

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<sup>197</sup> The All Nations Church was a White majority church when Pastor Steve Uppal took over as a senior pastor in 2001. It has now become a multi-ethnic church with a multicultural identity.

<sup>198</sup> The next generation migrants are mainly bicultural because they lay premium with the culture of their first generation migrant parents and at the same time understand the culture of the host country. They have the inherent nature of traversing with cultural gaps.

## 8.2. Recommendations

The author is of the view that his recommendations would lead to further research in diasporic studies. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century demographic trend of Britain requires a new missiological paradigm from which new mission strategies can emerge. The White majority churches and the African immigrant churches must seek to understand the Christian faith in a contemporary context, which has developed as a result of mass migration. There are two areas that the author thinks would need to be addressed:

First, the research has revealed that if nurtured properly by the first generation, the next generation of African migrants would be the ones to negotiate successful partnering with the host Christians. Therefore, any meaningful cross-cultural initiative between the African Christians and the host Christians would depend on how well the next generation migrants are equipped. Therefore, the emphasis of the African immigrant churches should be on equipping their next generation for the work of the ministry in Britain.<sup>199</sup>

Secondly, the past few decades of migration of people into the UK cities has created an opportunity to present the Gospel to people from unreached people groups. For example, there are people from countries like Libya, Saudi Arabia and North Korea in the UK universities and communities today; reaching out to these people means they would in turn reach out to their people when they return to their countries of origin.

The author suggests that, because of its importance, theology should be taken into consideration in any ministry efforts of Christ's people. There should be a new missiological paradigm for the above recent phenomena. Both the migrant Christian and the host Christian should come together with a strong Biblical grounding and theological understanding of their mission in this emerging context. They would need the fundamental truths of God and the divine principles of the

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<sup>199</sup> Local church pastors are expected to be mission-minded so that they can pass the vision on to their congregations. The One People Commission (a body of the Evangelical Alliance), Centre for Missionaries from the Majority World and Missio Africanus are already involved in cross-cultural ministry initiatives but they will need a new framework which prioritizes the running of cross-cultural training workshops mainly for local church pastors. These pastors will in turn shape-up their congregations, equip them for cross-cultural ministries and release them to work co-operatively with Christ's people from other backgrounds. The training should be done on regular basis so that actions can be adjusted in the light of experience.

Bible that would give them a thorough Biblical understanding and missiological bases to develop a theological framework for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century context of mission in the UK.



## Annexure A: Graph showing migration trends of sub-Saharan Africans

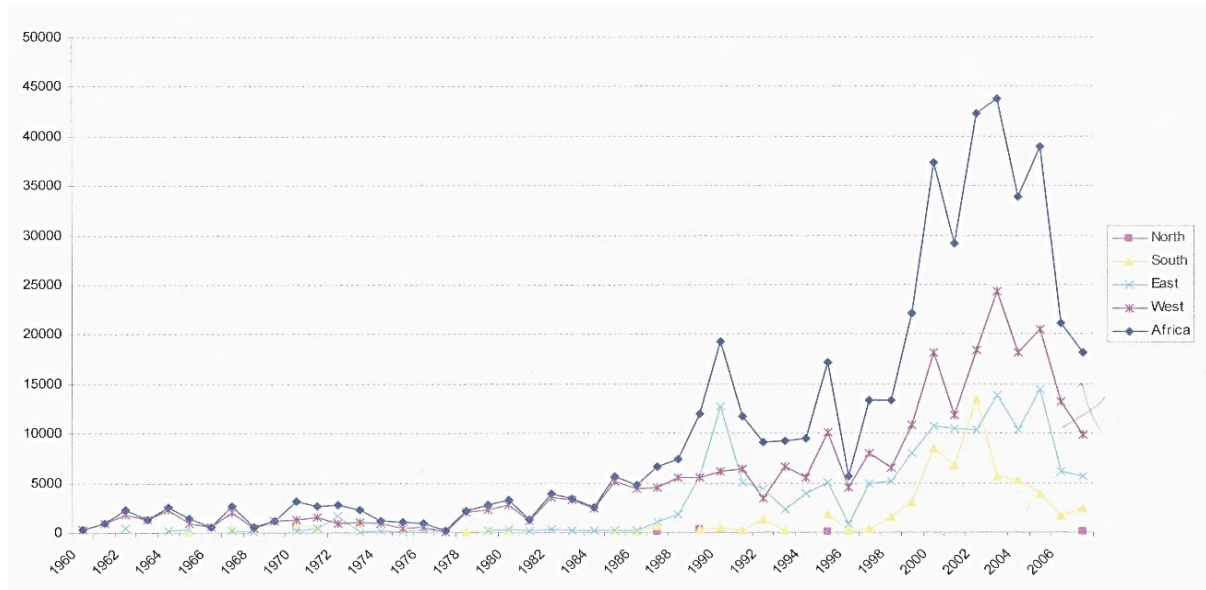


Figure 1: Migration trends of sub-Saharan Africa immigrants to Britain between 1960 and 2007 (Source: Owen, 2008).

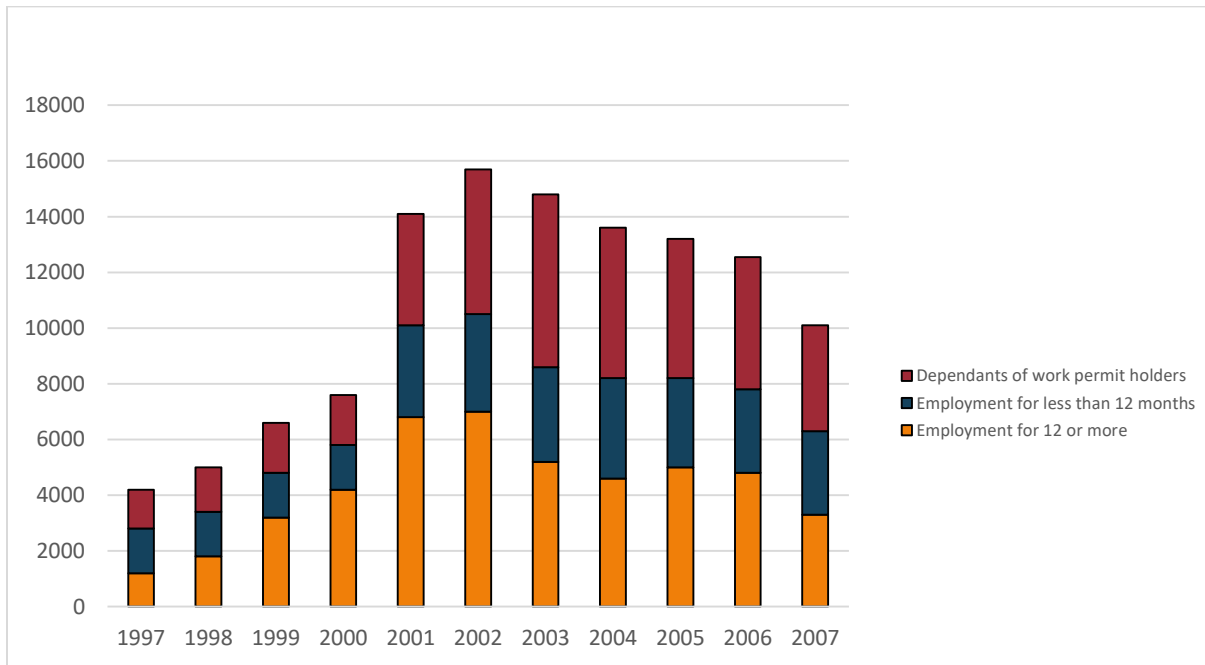
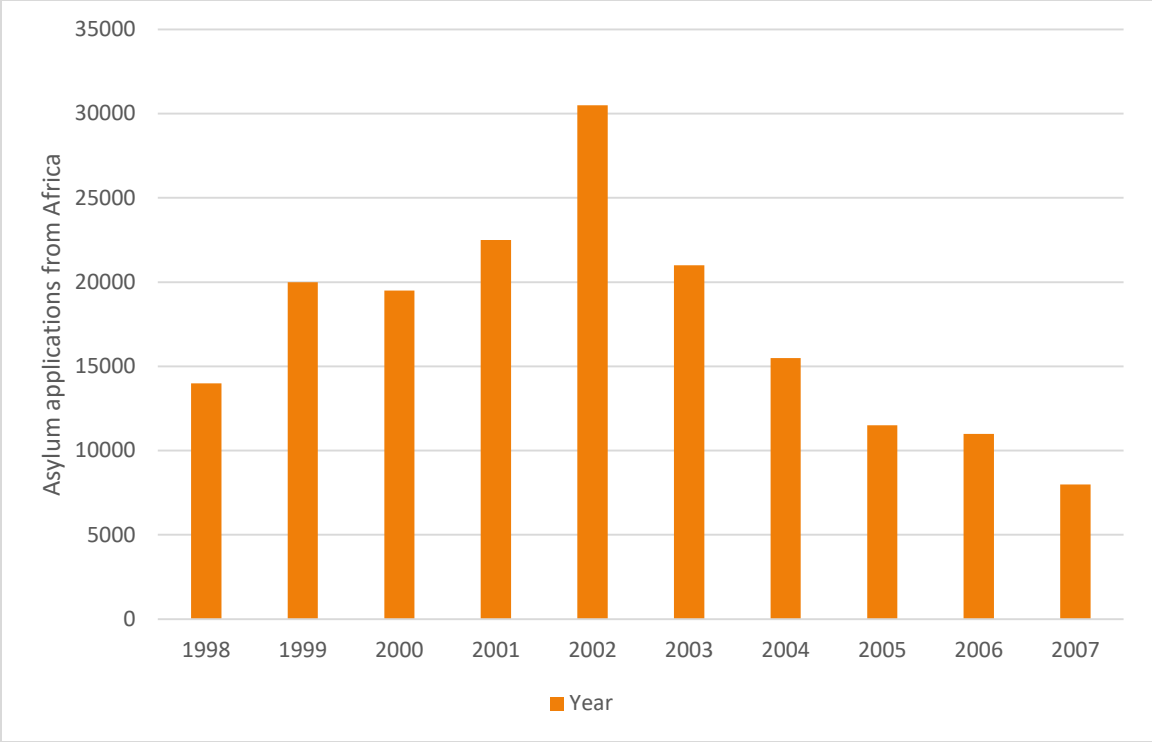


Figure 2: Economic migrants from sub-Saharan Africa to Britain between 1997 and 2007 (Source: Owen, 2008).



*Figure 3: Asylum applications in Britain from sub-Saharan Africa immigrants between 1998 and 2007 (Source: Owen, 2008).*

## Annexure B: Sample Letters- The All Nations Church

12th August 2014

4 Leighton Road  
Bilston  
West Midlands  
WV14 8LQ

All Nations Christian Centre  
Temple Street  
Wolverhampton  
WV2 4AQ

Dear Pastors Steve & Esther Uppal/ The team

I am writing to request permission to conduct an observer based research on your church as per the discussion I had with Chris during your July 2014 Fuel the Fire Leaders Day.

I am a church minister with the Freedom Christian Church in Moxley near Bilston; I have also enrolled to undertake a Ph.D. research programme at the Greenwich School of Theology in cooperation with North-West University on how the African immigrant churches can engage the non-African churches for a more effective sharing of the gospel in the UK.

I have enclosed a copy of my research proposal for your attention and your approval for me to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at this time. My contact number is 01902681890 or 07804280390 and my email address is: [twumajohnson@yahoo.com](mailto:twumajohnson@yahoo.com).

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours in Christ's service



Rev. Johnson Ambrose Afrane-Twum

Subject: Research

From: MTC@allnations.org.uk

To: twumajohnson@yahoo.com

Date: Wednesday, September 10, 2014, 10:01:12 AM GMT+1

Dear Johnson

I am sorry it has taken a little while to get back to you due to holidays, but thank you for your letter and research proposal.

I enjoyed our conversation at the Fuel the Fire day and I think we share a passion for unity in the Body of Christ. I can confirm we would be happy to assist your research into how African immigrant churches can engage with non-African churches for effective sharing of the gospel in the UK.

I am not quite sure how many interviews you would like to undertake and with what sort of range of people but I am sure we can arrange something with a range of people engaged in All Nations Church of different ethnic backgrounds. I doubt that your research calls for interviewees to disclose any confidential information but we will, of course, need to have a suitable confidentiality and data protection agreement in place. We can talk about that and the scope of the research questions when we make arrangements - it is probably easiest by phone so feel free to call on 07425 148184 when you are ready.

Blessings

Chris

Chris Horton

Leadership Team - Discipleship and Training

M: +44 (0)7425 148184

E: [mtc@allnations.org.uk](mailto:mtc@allnations.org.uk)

W: [www.allnations.org.uk](http://www.allnations.org.uk)

Twitter@chorton1959

All Nations Christian Centre

## **Annexure C: Sample Letters-The Church of Pentecost**

Subject: Carrying out research at Church of Pentecost

From:twumajohnson@yahoo.com

To:lorddonkor@copuk.org

Date: Thursday, September 11, 2014, 1:07:27 AM GMT+1

Dear Dr Elorm- Donkor

I am writing to request permission to conduct an observer based research on your church- Church of Pentecost, Birmingham City Assembly- as per my recent discussion with you.

I am a church minister with the Freedom Christian Church in Moxley near Bilston; I have also enrolled to undertake a Ph.D. research programme at the Greenwich School of Theology in cooperation with North-West University on how the African immigrant churches can engage the non-African churches for a more effective sharing of the gospel in the UK.

I have attached a copy of my research proposal for your attention and your approval for me to conduct this study would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours in Christ's service

Rev Johnson Ambrose Afrane-Twum

Subject: Re: Carrying out research at Church of Pentecost

From: lorddonkor@copuk.org

To: twumajohnson@yahoo.com

Date: Thursday, September 11, 2014, 7:50:23 AM GMT+1

Dear Rev Afrane Twum,

Thanks for your request. I am glad to inform you that you have our support to conduct your research at the congregation you have stated. Please, would you let me have your dates or period when this research will cover?

I wish you all the best with your research.

Sincerely,

Lord

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Lord Elorm-Donkor PhD

Birmingham District Pastor

The Church of Pentecost

4 Norton Gate, Birmingham B38 8DQ

Tel: 0121 6799223/ 07863360854

## **Annexure D: Sample Letters-The Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church**

On Wed, Apr 8, 2015 at 7:28 PM, johnson twum <[twumajohnson@yahoo.com](mailto:twumajohnson@yahoo.com)> wrote:

Dear Pastor Girma

I hope this email finds you in good health!

This is a follow up to the discussions Rev. Olofinjana had with you on my behalf re: carrying out a research at the Ethiopian Church in London.

Actually, I had wanted to discuss this with you at the 'Highs and Lows of Growing a Multi-ethnic Church' conference which you were a part of but I did not see you after the conference.

I have attached the proposal of this research for you to go through.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours in Christ's service

Rev. Johnson A. Afrane-Twum



**From:** [girmabishaw@gmail.com](mailto:girmabishaw@gmail.com)

**Sent:** Thursday, 9 April 2015 17:20

**To:** [Johnson Afrane-Twum](#)

Dear Pastor Johnson,

Thank you so much for connecting. Sure, I will read it and get back to you and arrange a meeting over coffee when possible for you.

Every blessings

On Thursday, April 9, 2015 6:31 PM, "twumajohnson@yahoo.com" <twumajohnson@yahoo.com> wrote:

Hi Pastor Girma

Many thanks for your quick response to my correspondence.

I look forward most eagerly to hearing from you again shortly.

Blessings

Johnson

Sent from Window.

## **Annexure E: Sample Letters-Harborne Baptist Church, Birmingham**

**From:** johnson twum <twumajohnson@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** 19 March 2017 20:16

**To:** davidbird106@msn.com

**Subject:** Appreciation

Dear Rev Dave

Good evening! This is to thank you and Pete for meeting with me on Friday for the interview.

Again, many thanks for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you again.

Yours in Christ's service

Johnson

**Subject:** Re: Appreciation

**From:** davidbird106@msn.com

**To:** twumajohnson@yahoo.com

**Date:** Monday, March 20, 2017, 10:36:20 AM GMT

Dear Johnson,

You are most welcome. It was a pleasure to share fellowship with you and to learn a little more about your story and your studies.

I am mindful of your request for three further names to add to your questionnaire panel; I will get back to you *asap* on this.

I did pass on the list of questions to my colleague Pete - and hopefully he will offer you his own responses in due course.

With warm Christian greetings to you and your family,

*David*

[www.harbornebaptistchurch.org](http://www.harbornebaptistchurch.org)

## **Annexure F: The All Nations Church Minister's Interview Checklists**

The All Nations Church, Wolverhampton

Church Minister's In-depth Interview

1. How long has the All Nations Centre occupied the British landscape?
2. What is your vision and what are your values?
3. How is your leadership structure?
4. Does the ethnic variation in your church reflect your church leadership?
5. How do you seek to understand the Christian faith in a contemporary context which has developed as a result of mass migration?
6. How do you as a church break through cultural barriers to reach out to other communities?
7. How can the All Nations effectively work with the African immigrant churches for a more effective sharing of the gospel in the UK?
8. In which ways do you share the gospel intentionally along the existing UK networks in order to attract new memberships from other UK communities?
9. How do you as a church challenge the aspect of your culture and cultural influences on theology that are not in line with biblical principles?
10. What are some of the reasons of having a multi-ethnic congregation as an alternative to the cultural relativism seen today?
11. How multicultural is the All Nations Centre?
12. What do you think are some of the causes of disagreement among Christians?
13. What do you think can bring about diversity among Christ's people?

14. How does the vision of God's glory in Revelation 7 inspire you as a church to a greater resolve and confidence in the Great Commission?
15. Do you as a church have an attitude of accepting people of all ethnic, class and national origins as equal? How do you do this?
16. Are people from other ethnic backgrounds fully participating members and ministers in fellowship of your church?
17. How do you share the gospel in a way that is suitable to your cultural context without compromising the core message of the Bible?
18. Can you explain briefly the emphasis All Nations places on the Spirit and power of the Holy Spirit?
19. In which way do you see the All Nations as a participant of *missio Dei* (God is the originator of missions) or otherwise?
20. In which ways do you think multi-ethnic congregation like the All Nations can serve as an alternative to the cultural relativism seen today?
21. How do you as a church address the existential concerns of the next generation of your congregation in areas of (i) theology and (ii) Ecclesiastical style?
22. In view of the multicultural nature of Britain, don't you think that cultural and ethnic barriers would have to be crossed if the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) is to be fulfilled effectively?
23. How do you as a church respond to the realities that have arisen as a result of mass migration of people from different cultural backgrounds into Britain in recent years?

## **Annexure G: The Ethiopian Christian Church Minister's Interview Checklist**

The Ethiopian Church, Kings Cross, London

Church Minister's In-depth Interview

1. How long has the Ethiopian Church occupied the UK Christian landscape?
2. What is your vision and what are your values?
3. How is your leadership structure?
4. Does the ethnic variation in your church reflect your church leadership?
5. How do you seek to understand the Christian faith in a contemporary context which has developed as a result of mass migration?
6. Are the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches a subject of cultural change?
7. How can the Ethiopian Church break cultural barriers in order to reach out to the wider communities?
8. How is the existing relationship between the Ethiopian Church and the White majority churches?
9. How can the Ethiopian Church effectively work with the White majority churches for a more effective sharing of the gospel?
10. In which ways do you as a church share the gospel intentionally along existing UK networks in order to attract new memberships from the wider communities?
11. How do you as a church challenge the aspect of your culture and cultural influences on theology that are not in line with biblical principles?
12. Ideally churches should not seek to be organised primarily in terms of ethnicity as this distracts from the biblical principles of unity in diversity (Galatians 3:28); what

do you think are some of the factors that make some African immigrant churches remain mono-ethnic?

13. Don't you think that mono-ethnic churches are vital to aid the integration of recently arrived immigrants into their new communities?

14. In which ways have you as a migrant church enabled your congregations find a refuge from discrimination and discover a sense of identity, respect and belonging?

15. What are the reasons for having a multi-ethnic congregation as an alternative to the cultural relativism seen today?

16. How multi-cultural is the Ethiopian Church?

17. What do you think are some of the causes of disagreement among Christians?

18. What do you think can bring about diversity among Christ's people?

19. How does the vision of God's glory in Revelation 7 inspire you as a church to a greater resolve and confidence in the Great Commission?

20. Do you as migrant church regard the whole British society as another stage in your mission endeavours to the UK in line with Acts 1:8?

21. Do you as church have an attitude of accepting people of all ethnic, class and national origins as equal? How do you do it?

22. Are people from other ethnic backgrounds fully participating members and ministers in the fellowship of your church?

23. In which way is the Ethiopian Church different in its theology from the White majority churches in their particular form of worship and liturgy?

24. Is the Christianity of the African lived in a spiritually awakened context?

25. In what way is the ecclesiological understanding of the African Christian different from the Western Christian?

26. How do you share the gospel in a way that is suitable to your new cultural context without compromising the core message of the Bible?
27. Can you explain briefly the emphasis your church places on the Spirit and power of the Holy Spirit?
28. In which way do you see your church as participant of *missio Dei*?
29. How can the Ethiopian Church on a small scale, give hope to the wider communities in the UK?
30. In which do you think a multi-ethnic congregation can serve as an alternative to the cultural relativism seen today?
31. How do you as a church respond to the new realities that have arisen as a result of the mass migration of people from different cultural backgrounds into Britain in recent years?
32. How do you as a church address the existential concerns of the next generation of your congregation in areas of: (i) theology and (ii) ecclesiological style?
33. Is the African Christian's emphasis on deliverance from evil forces and being blessed materially their understanding of salvation?
34. In view of the multi-cultural nature of the UK, do you believe that cultural and ethnic barriers would have to be crossed, if the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) is to be fulfilled effectively?



## **Annexure H: The Church of Pentecost Minister's Interview Checklist**

### The Church of Pentecost of Ghana in UK

#### Church Minister's In-depth Interview

1. How long has the Church of Pentecost of Ghana occupied the UK Christian landscape?
2. What is your vision and what are your values?
3. How is your leadership structure?
4. Does the ethnic variation in your church reflect your church leadership?
5. How do you seek to understand the Christian faith in a contemporary context which has developed as a result of mass migration?
6. Are the African immigrant churches and the White majority churches a subject of cultural change?
7. How can the Church of Pentecost break cultural barriers in order to reach out to the wider communities?
8. How is the existing relationship between the Church of Pentecost and the White majority churches?
9. How can the Church of Pentecost effectively work with the White majority churches for a more effective sharing of the gospel in the UK?
10. In which ways do you share the gospel intentionally along the existing UK networks in order to attract new memberships from the wider communities?
11. How do you as a church challenge the aspect of your culture and cultural influences on theology that are not in line with biblical principles?

12. Ideally churches should not seek to be organised primarily in terms of ethnicity as this distracts from the biblical principles of unity in diversity (Galatians 3:28); what do you think are some of factors that make some African immigrant churches remain mono-ethnic?
13. Don't you think that mono-ethnic churches are vital to aid the integration of recently arrived immigrants into their new communities?
14. In which ways have you as a migrant church enabled your congregations find a refuge from discrimination and discover a sense of identity, respect and belonging?
15. What are the reasons for having a multi-ethnic congregation as an alternative to the cultural relativism seen today?
16. How multicultural is the Church of Pentecost?
17. What do think are some of the causes of disagreement among Christians?
18. What do you think can bring about diversity among Christ's people?
19. How does the vision of God's glory in Revelation 7 inspire you as a church to a greater resolve and confidence in the Great Commission?
20. Do you as a migrant church regard the whole British society as another stage in your mission endeavours to the UK in line with Acts 1:8?
21. Do you as church have an attitude of accepting people of all ethnic, class and national origins as equal? How do you do it?
22. Are people from other ethnic backgrounds fully participating members and ministers in the fellowship of your church?
23. Are the African immigrant churches different in their theology from the White majority churches because of their particular forms of worship and liturgy?
24. Is the Christianity of the African lived in a spiritually awakened context?

25. In what way is the ecclesiological understanding of the African Christian different from the Western Christian?
26. How do you share the gospel in a way that is suitable to your new cultural context without compromising the core message of the Bible?
27. Can you explain briefly the emphasis your church places on the Spirit and power of the Holy Spirit?
28. In which way do you see your church as a participant of *missio Dei*?
29. Why is it that in spite of the fact that the Church of Pentecost professes and desires to be truly international and integrationist yet, does not have many non-Africans among your congregations?
30. How can the Church of Pentecost on a small scale, give hope to the wider communities in the UK?
31. In which ways do you think a multi-ethnic congregation can serve as an alternative to the cultural relativism seen today?
32. How do you as a church address the existential concerns of the next generation of your congregations in areas of: (i) theology (ii) Ecclesiastical style?
33. Is the African Christian's emphasis on deliverance from evil forces and being blessed materially their understanding of salvation?
34. In view of the multi-cultural nature of the UK, do you believe that cultural and ethnic barriers would have to be crossed, if the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) is to be fulfilled effectively?
35. How do you as a church respond to the new realities that have arisen as a result of the mass migration of people from different cultural backgrounds into Britain in recent years?

36. How do you develop a type of theology which is suitable to the new emerging contexts?

## **Annexure I: Harborne Baptist Church Minister's Interview Checklist**

The Harborne Baptist Church, Birmingham

Church Minister's In-depth Interview.

1. How long has this Harborne Baptist Church occupied the British Christian landscape?
2. What is your vision and what are your values?
3. How is your church leadership structure?
4. Does the ethnic variation of your church reflect your church leadership?
5. How do you seek to understand the Christian faith in a contemporary context which has developed as a result of mass migration?
6. How did you as a church break cultural barriers to reach out to people from diverse backgrounds?
7. How can your church effectively work with the African immigrant churches for a more effective sharing of the gospel in the UK?
8. In which ways do you share the gospel intentionally along the existing UK networks in order to attract new memberships from other UK communities?
9. How do you as a church challenge the aspect of your culture and cultural influences on theology that are not in line with biblical principles?
10. What are some of the reasons for having a multi-ethnic congregation as an alternative to the cultural relativism seen today?
11. How multicultural is your church?
12. What do you think are some of the causes of disagreement among Christians?

13. What do you think can bring about diversity among Christ's people?
14. How does the vision of God's glory in Revelation 7 inspire you as a church to a greater resolve and confidence in the Great Commission?
15. Do you as church have an attitude of accepting people of all ethnic, class and national origins as equal? How do you do it?
16. Are people from other ethnic backgrounds fully participating members and ministers in the fellowship of your church?
17. How do you share the gospel in a way that is suitable to your cultural context without compromising the core message of the Bible?
18. Can you explain briefly the emphasis your church places on the Spirit and power of the Holy Spirit?
19. In which ways do you see your church as a participant of *missio Dei*?
20. In which ways do you think a multi-ethnic congregation can serve as an alternative to the cultural relativism seen today?
21. How do you as a church address the existential concerns of the next generation of your congregations in areas of (i) theology and (ii) ecclesiastical style?
22. Due to the multi-cultural nature of the UK, don't you think that cultural and ethnic barriers would have to be crossed, if the Great Commission is to be fulfilled effectively? How?
23. How do you as a church respond to the new realities that have arisen as a result of mass migration of people from different cultural backgrounds into Britain in recent years?
24. How do you develop a type of theology which is suitable to the new emerging contexts?

## **Annexure J: The Church of Pentecost Members' Interview Checklist**

The Church of Pentecost of Ghana in UK

Church Members' In-depth Interview

1. How long have you been a member of this church?
2. Were you a member of another church before joining this church?
3. Where were you born?
4. If you were born in Britain, where were your parents also born?
5. Do you have a culture which is different from the British culture?
6. Do you think the Church of Pentecost is too much aligned to the Ghanaian cultural practices? If yes, what do you think should be done?
7. What do you think are the problems facing the second generation members of the Church of Pentecost?
8. Have you invited people from other backgrounds to your church?
9. What do you think is the difference between the Church of Pentecost and the British mainline churches?
10. What do you think are the advantages of having a Ghanaian minister as you senior pastor?
11. Would it make any difference if your senior pastor was from any other ethnic background?
12. What makes you happy worshipping in a mono-ethnic church like the Church of Pentecost?

13. In what way do you think the Church of Pentecost could work with the White majority churches for the advancement of the gospel in Britain?

14. Do you have any other suggestions to make?



## **Annexure K: The Ethiopian Fellowship Members' Interview Checklist**

The Ethiopian Church, Kings Cross, London

Church Members' In-depth interview

1. How long have you been a member of this church?
2. Were you a member of another church before joining this church?
3. Where were you born?
4. If you were born in Britain, where were your parents also born?
5. Do you have a culture which is different from the British culture?
6. Do you think the Ethiopian Church is too much aligned to Ethiopian cultural practices? If yes, what do you think should be done?
7. What do you think are the problems facing the second generation members of the Ethiopian Church in the UK?
8. Have you ever invited people from other ethnic backgrounds to your church?
9. What do you think is the difference between the Ethiopian Church and the British mainline churches?
10. What do you think are the advantages of having an Ethiopian minister as your senior pastor?
11. Would it make any difference if your senior pastor was from any other ethnic background?
12. What makes you happy worshipping in a mono-ethnic church like the Ethiopian Church?

13. In what way do you think the Ethiopian Church could work with the White majority churches for the advancement of the gospel in Britain?

14. Do you have any other suggestions to make?

## **Annexure L: Harborne Baptist Church Members' Interview Checklist**

Harborne Baptist Church, Birmingham

Church members' in-depth interview

1. How long have you been a member of this church?
2. Were you a member of another church before joining this one?
3. What attracted you to this church?
4. Where were you born?
5. If you were born in Britain, where were your parents also born?
6. Do you have a culture which is different from the British culture?
7. What do think is the difference between the Harborne Baptist Church and other Pentecostal/charismatic churches?
8. What do you think are the advantages of having a White man as your senior minister?
9. Would it make any difference if your senior pastor was from the ethnic minority background?
10. What makes you happy worshipping in a multi-ethnic church like the Harborne Baptist Church?
11. How do you think, if any, are the differences in the way believers from the diverse backgrounds and the White members of your church express their faith?
12. In what way do you think the Harborne Baptist Church could work with the African immigrant churches to advance the gospel in the UK?

## **Annexure M: The All Nations Church Members' Interview Checklist**

The All Nations Church

Church Members' in-depth interview

1. How long have you been a member of this church?
2. Were you a member of another church before joining this one?
3. Where were you born?
4. If you were born in Britain, where were your parents also born?
5. Do you have a culture which is different from the British culture?
6. What do you think is the difference between the All Nations Centre and the British mainline churches?
7. What do you think are the advantages of having a third generation Punjabi as your Senior Minister?
8. Would it make any difference if your senior pastor was from any other ethnic background?
9. What makes you happy worshipping in a multi-ethnic church like the All Nations?
10. How do you think, if any, are the differences in the way believers from the diverse background and the White members of your church express their faith?
11. In what way do you think the All Nations Centre could work with the African immigrant churches to advance the gospel in the UK?
12. Do you have any other suggestions to make?

## **Annexure N: List of Interviewees**

### **Selected lists of Church Ministers interviewed**

#### **The All Nations Church, Wolverhampton**

<b>Real Name</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Country of Origin/Ethnicity</b>
Pastor Chris Horton	40-60 years	Male	Britain/English
Jagdish Uppal	40-65 years	Male	India/Punjabi

#### **Harborne Baptist Church, Birmingham**

Rev David P. Bird	50-65 years	Male	Britain/English
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#### **The Church of Pentecost of Ghana in UK, Birmingham**

Rev. Dr Lord-Elorm Donkor	40-60 years	Male	Ghana/Akan
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#### **The Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church, Kings Cross, London**

Rev Girma Bishaw	40-50 years	Male	Ethiopia/Amhara
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### **Selected lists of Church Members interviewed**

#### **The All Nations Church, Wolverhampton**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Country of Origin/Ethnicity</b>
Robert Lawson	18-35 years	Male	Britain/English
Gully Mandeep	40-60 years	Female	India/Punjabi
Felicia Edwards	35-50 years	Female	Jamaica/Caribbean
Andrew Tabiri	35-50 years	Male	Ghana/Akan
James Lee	35-50 years	Male	China/Uyghurs

### **Harborne Baptist Church, Birmingham**

Mary Peterson	40-65 years	Female	Britain/English
Peter Williams	35-60 years	Male	Jamaica/Caribbean
Stephen Gasaba	35-50 years	Male	Rwanda/Tutsi
Martha Michael	40-60 years	Female	Jamaica/Caribbean

### **The Church of Pentecost of Ghana in UK, Birmingham**

Dominic Asumah	40-60 years	Male	Ghana/Akan
David Asare	18-35 years	Male	Ghana/Akan
Agnes Asantewaa	18-35 years	Female	Ghana/Akan
Mary Simba	35-50 years	Female	South Africa/Bantu
Kofi Mensah	35-50 years	Male	Ghana/Ewe

### **The Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church, Kings Cross, London**

Abeba Adanech	18-35 years	Female	Ethiopian/Gamo
Sebhat Efrem	18-35 years	Male	Ethiopia/Dawro
Umar Hasen	18-35 years	Male	Eritrea/Kunama
Abdala Musa	35-50 years	Female	Eritrea/Tigre

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