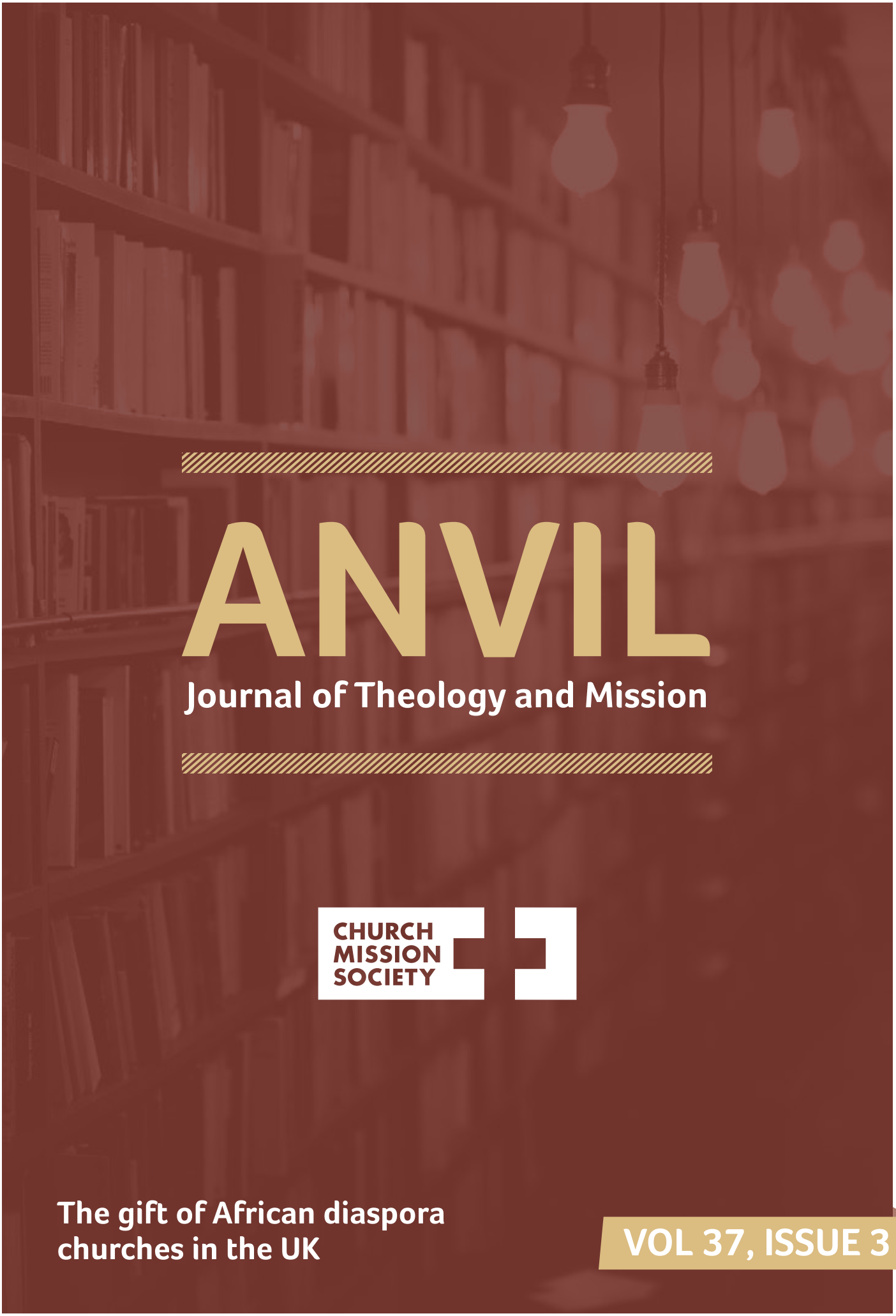

ANVIL

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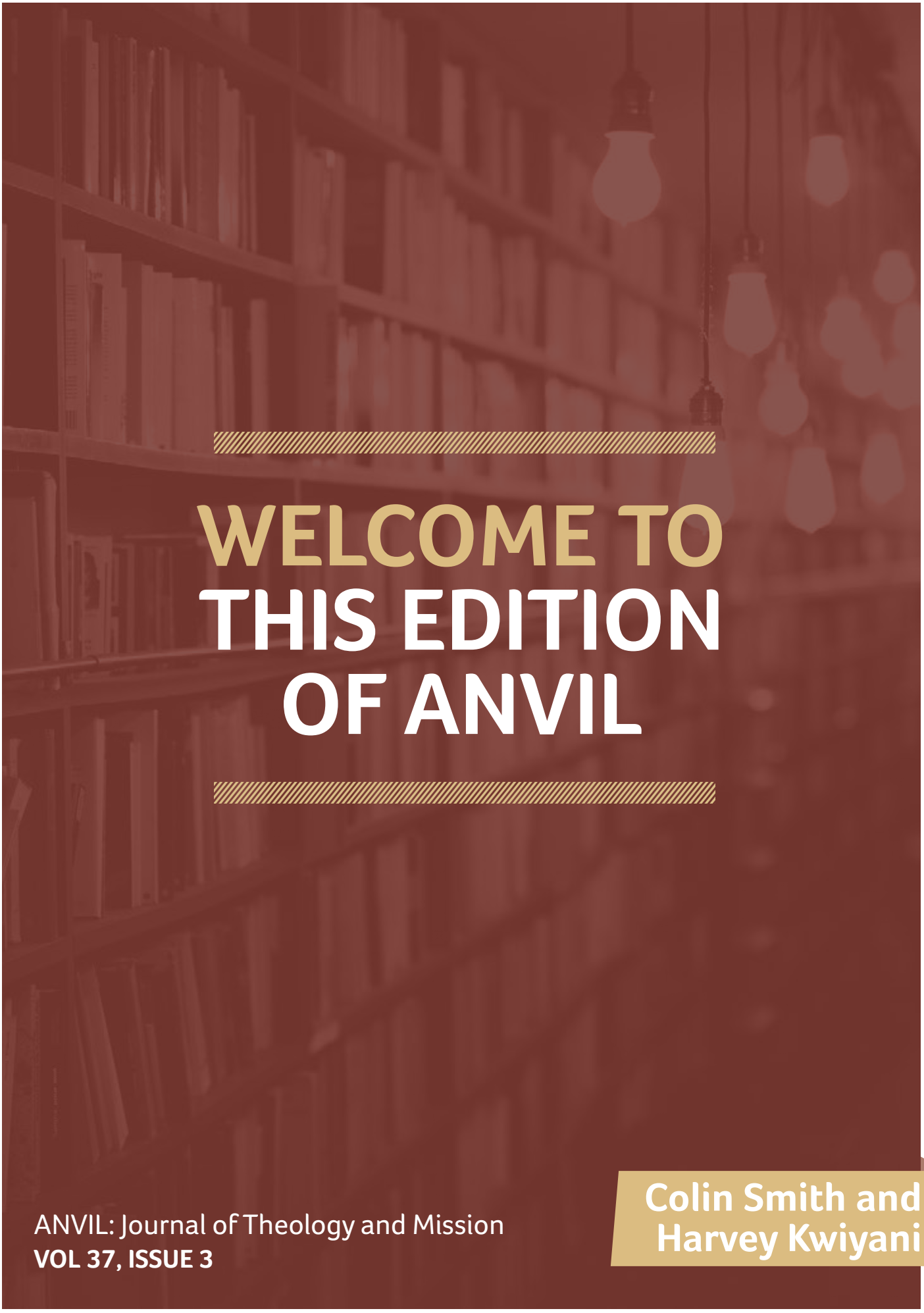
The gift of African diaspora churches in the UK

VOL 37, ISSUE 3



WELCOME TO THIS EDITION OF ANVIL

ANVIL: Journal of Theology and Mission
VOL 37, ISSUE 3

Colin Smith and Harvey Kwiyani

THE EDITORIAL

***Christians in Britain prayed for many years for revival, and when it came they did not recognise it because it was black.* – Walter Hollenweger**[1]

This latest edition of *ANVIL* explores the contribution of African diaspora churches to the realities of church and mission in Britain. It is particularly timely for CMS, following on, as it does, from the highly successful launch of an MA programme in African Christianity. It also comes on the heels of Black History Month. Those combined themes of interrogating history and learning from the distinct experience, insights, wisdom and gifts of African Christianity are evident in the articles that follow.

One wonders how Black History Month was marked in theological colleges, programmes and churches up and down the country. Was there a Black Church History Month with a serious exploration and appreciation of gifts of African theologians to the world church, from Clement and Origen to the present day? Where do the pioneers of Black and African Pentecostal churches in Britain figure in considerations of the historical development of contemporary church life in Britain? Is it just possible that there were Christians across Europe and North America who embraced or voiced support for a Black History Month while simultaneously failing to recognise and appreciate the fundamental importance of Black and brown theologians, religious leaders, prophets and martyrs in the history and development of Christianity right up to the present day?

> "Christians in Britain prayed for many years for revival, and when it came they did not recognise it because it was black."

Since the early part of the last century, African Christianity has been profoundly influencing and shaping the landscape of church and mission in Britain. Large-scale migration from Africa into Europe in the past 50 years has been the driving force behind that change. In his case study of the Apostolic Pastoral Congress in Britain, Israel Olofinjana notes the tendency to overlook the sheer diversity of African Christianity in Britain. Such diversity is unsurprising given that contemporary Africa not only has the world's largest Christian population but also its most diverse. African diaspora churches bring to Britain a diversity in theologies, ecclesiologies, mission and cultures that is often overlooked in favour of more homogenising narratives.

That diversity is also expressed in the intergenerational nature of many African churches. In his article, Joseph Ola explores the experience of African millennials in the diaspora and the ways in which culture and identity shape and influence faith and worship. He considers the way a younger generation of African Christians in Britain face the challenges of a sense of dual identity, but also powerfully points to the importance of younger African Christians retaining an unashamedly *African* Christian identity, seeing that Africanness as a gift both to themselves and the wider church.

It is this gift of African Christianity to the church in the West that Sheila Akomiah-Conteh points to – identifying the missional contributions of African churches to urban life, drawing particularly on her own doctoral research on churches in Glasgow. She argues that African Christianity is a revitalising force in British Christianity, resacralising the sacred spaces of abandoned church buildings and sacralising urban spaces as churches are planted and develop in what she identifies as secular spaces.

The distinctive gifts and the challenges faced by African Christians in Britain is taken up by Harvey Kwiyani and Paul Ayokunle. Their research into the way health workers from African Pentecostal churches responded to the COVID-19 pandemic offers insights into the ways in which African Christians, their churches and local communities were so deeply affected by it and how they responded to its

[1] Walter J. Hollenweger, "Foreword" to Roswith I. H. Gerloff, *A Plea for British Black Theologies: The Black Church Movement in Britain in its transatlantic cultural and theological Interaction with special reference to the Pentecostal Oneness (Apostolic) and Sabbatarian Movements* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang., 1992), ix.

impact. The article identifies the distinct way in which the pandemic was understood and confronted as both a spiritual and medical battleground. It goes on to explore the theological and existential questions raised by a virus that disproportionately disrupted the community life and worship of African diaspora churches in Britain and served only to emphasise the inequality and discrimination in British society.

The theme of inequality and discrimination is taken up in the video interview with Dupe Adefala, a pastor, church planter, prison chaplain and former student at CMS. The interview explores the research process and some of the findings from her MA dissertation on the legacies of five Nigerian women pioneer ministers in London. Here she seeks to break some of the silence around women's voices and women's experience, highlighting a largely untold story of the distinctive and pioneering contribution of African women to mission and church planting in London.

In our other video, entitled If we kept silent the stones would cry out, Gospel artist and praise and worship minister Ahmed Conteh reflects on the way that the distinctive gifts that African Christians bring to church life in Britain is particularly evident in the spirituality and vibrancy of worship and music.

The final article is written by Rosie Hopley, an MA student studying African Christianity with CMS. As the founder and former CEO of a Bristol-based charity, Beloved, she is mindful of the contribution of African diaspora churches to her community, but also aware that so much of that is hidden or overlooked. The inspiration to dig deeper into African Christianity came from the questions of women working in brothels and massage parlours across the city, who asked her, "Isn't Christianity the white man's religion?" The quest to respond to that question by unearthing a broader, wider and more global narrative about Christian faith in Britain is illustrated throughout this edition of *ANVIL*.

Harvey Kwiyani is a Malawian missiologist and theologian who has lived, worked and studied in Europe and North America for the past 20 years. He has researched African Christianity and African theology for his PhD, and taught African theology at Liverpool Hope University. Harvey is CEO of Global Connections, programme leader for the Africa Christian Diaspora route of the CMS Pioneer MA, and founder and executive director of Missio Africanus, a mission organisation established in 2014 as a learning community focused on releasing the missional potential of African and other minority ethnic Christians living in the UK.

Colin Smith is dean of mission education at Church Mission Society. He teaches on the Pioneer Mission Leadership Training programme and also oversees training for CMS people in mission, including the mission partner pathway. He is author, with Cathy Ross, of Missional Conversations.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN BRITAIN:

A case study of the Apostolic Pastoral Congress

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Israel Olofinjana

INTRODUCTION[1]

One of the relatively new phenomena in European Christianity and on the religious landscape is the emergence and development of Black Pentecostal churches. A century ago the face of European Christianity could have been labelled as white in terms of colour, but now it is increasingly becoming multicoloured, if one can call it that. This change in European Christianity is part of a larger shift taking place in world Christianity. Europe used to be the centre of world Christianity and as such was sending missionaries to Africa, Asia, South America and other parts of the world. Part of the current trend in global mission is that these former mission fields have developed their Christianities to the extent that they now see Europe as a mission field. In response to this new thinking, Africa, Asia and South America are now sending pastors and missionaries to Europe. An example is the 2014 South Korean mission to Britain, which saw the Kwangmyung Presbyterian Church in Korea sending about 450 South Korean missionaries on a one-week short-term mission to Britain. This intentional sending was in recognition of and gratitude for the fact that South Korea traces its Christian roots to the ministry of a Welsh missionary, Robert Jermain Thomas (1839–66). The one-week mission saw the 450 South Koreans participating in ministry, prayer-walking and praying for revival in the UK at 30 different locations all over Britain.[2]

Pentecostal Christianity is currently one of the fastest-growing expressions of Christianity in the world. David Barrett estimated that Pentecostalism is likely to rise to 1,140 million or 44 per cent of the total number of Christians by the middle of this decade.[3] Allan Anderson, a Pentecostal historian and theologian, adds that Pentecostalism is fast becoming the dominant expression of Christianity and one of the most extraordinary religious phenomena in the world today.[4]

Pentecostalism as a global movement has large numbers of adherents in the Majority World. It is the expression of Christianity that is growing fastest in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is Pentecostal missionaries and pastors from the Majority World who are taking the lead in planting churches in Europe. The continent of Europe, which used to have white classic Pentecostals and, later, the Charismatic movements of the 1960s as the major players within that expression, now have Black Pentecostals adding to the diversity, to the extent that the history of European Pentecostals will not be complete without paying attention to the emerging Black Pentecostals. How then did Black Pentecostalism in Europe begin? Is Black Pentecostalism a homogeneous group? What contributions does it make? These are some of the questions this article seeks to address, profiling the history and work of the Apostolic Pastoral Congress (APC) as a case study.

> "It is Pentecostal missionaries and pastors from the Majority World who are taking the lead in planting churches in Europe."

There has been a considerable amount of research and attention given to Black Pentecostals in Britain, such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)[5] and Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC).[6] While this is good, it is important to begin to document the stories of other Black Pentecostals and draw attention to their contributions.

In proceeding with this task, some clarification of terms is needed. What is meant by Pentecostals?

[1] This article first appeared in Missio Africanus Journal of African Missiology Volume1 Issue 2 (January 2016): 59–71 https://missioafricanus.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Missio-Africanus-Journal-Vol-1.-Iss-2.pdf

[2] The church that I used to pastor (2014 to February 2021), Woolwich Central Baptist Church, and 12 other churches in south-east London hosted 20 South Koreans.

[3] David B. Barrett, "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1997," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21, no. 1 (1997): 24–25.

[4] Allan Anderson and Walter Hollenweger, eds., *Pentecostals After a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 19.

[5] See Richard Burgess, "African Pentecostal Growth: The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Britain," in *Church Growth in Britain: From 1980 to the Present*, ed. David Goodhew (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 127–44; Richard Burgess, "African Pentecostal Churches in Britain: The Case of the Redeemed Christian Church of God," in *The African Christian Presence in the West: New Immigrant Congregations and Transnational Networks in North America and Europe*, eds. Frieder Ludwig and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2011), 253–72; Richard Burgess, Kim Knibbe and Anna Quaas, "Nigerian-initiated Pentecostal Churches as a Social Force in Europe: The Case of the Redeemed Christian Church of God," *PentecoStudies* 9, no. 1 (2010): 97–121; and Richard Burgess, "African Pentecostal spirituality and civic engagement: the case of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Britain," *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 30, no. 3 (2009): 255–73.

[6] Israel Olofinjana, *Reverse in Ministry and Missions: Africans in the Dark Continent of Europe* (Milton Keynes: AuthorHouse, 2010) and Hugh Osgood, "African neo-Pentecostal churches and British Evangelicalism 1985–2005: balancing principles and practicalities" (PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2006).

There is no general agreement among Pentecostal theologians as to a universal definition of Pentecostals because it depends on who is defining the word and what their theological persuasions are. For example, as an African who was born and raised in an African-instituted Church (AIC), I define some of the AICs as Pentecostals because of their emphasis on prayer, the use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, prophetic visions, healing, miracles, Spirit-led experiences and Spirit-filled experiences.[7] However, I am equally aware of the scholarly debate that questions whether AICs can be regarded as Pentecostals, as some of them are regarded as syncretistic – making them appear more as a cult than a church.[8] In this article, I have classified AICs as Pentecostals. For the purposes of a working definition, I have defined Pentecostals in this article as an expression of Christianity that has its origin in Acts 2:1–13 when the disciples of our Lord were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. It is a modern church movement that is characterised by glossolalia (speaking in tongues), use of the gifts of the Spirit, Spirit-filled experiences, belief in miracles and healing, and free and ecstatic worship.

ORIGINS OF THE PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN

The year 1906 is very significant in modern Pentecostal history, as it was the year that the Pentecostal revival of Azusa Street in Los Angeles started, led by William J. Seymour. Some scholars and commentators see this event as the beginning of the Pentecostal movement, while others will argue that it was in 1900–01 at Topeka, Kansas with Charles Parham that modern Pentecostalism originated.[9] A further debate associated with the history of Pentecostalism is whether Charles Parham (1873–1929) or William J. Seymour (1870–1922) is the founder of the movement. Those who prefer Parham do so on the basis that he formulated the Pentecostal theology of speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, others prefer Seymour on the understanding that the Pentecostal missionary movement and ecumenical vision that transcends race started with Seymour's movement in Azusa Street in 1906.

It is a historical error to assume that modern Pentecostalism originated in the United States with the events of 1906. The Azusa Street revival is very significant in the history of modern Pentecostalism partly because it later gave birth to classic Pentecostal churches such as the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), Apostolic Faith Church, the Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Assemblies of God, the Foursquare Gospel Church and many more.[10] However, there were other streams of Pentecostals that emerged separately in other parts of the world, such as the Jamaican revival of 1860–61, the Mukti Mission in India from 1905–07, the Korean renewal movement from 1903 (Pyongyang 1907), and the AICs at the beginning of the twentieth century.[11] However, the origins of Pentecostalism in Britain are closely linked to the event in Azusa Street.

The Welsh revival, led by Evan Roberts in 1904, was the catalyst for the Pentecostal movement in Britain as it sowed the seeds and laid the foundation for the emergence of classic Pentecostal churches in Britain, such as the Elim Pentecostal Church, the Apostolic Church of Great Britain and the Assemblies of God Great Britain. The Welsh revival also inspired what later followed at the Azusa Street revival, as Frank Bartleman, the official historian of the Los Angeles revival, corresponded with Evan Roberts inquiring about the principles of revival and also asked Roberts to pray for revival in California.[12] However, it was the influence of the Azusa Street revival on T. B. Barratt from Norway, Cecil Polhill, Alexander Boddy and others like them that led to the start of Pentecostalism in Britain. Boddy and Polhill were the founders of the first Pentecostal missionary movement in Britain, known as the Pentecostal Missionary Union.

Alexander Boddy (1854–1930), an Anglican priest at All Saints in Monkwearmouth, Sunderland, is considered the father of Pentecostalism in Britain because his church was a meeting point where different people came to experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit,

[7] Israel Olofinjana, *20 Pentecostal Pioneers in Nigeria* (Milton Keynes: Xlibris Publishers, 2011).

[8] See Mark Sturge, *Look What the Lord Has Done! An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain* (London: Scripture Union Publishing, 2005), 57–58. Also Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 68–69.

[9] Anderson and Hollenweger, *Pentecostals After a Century*, 41–42.

[10] Some of these churches started before 1906 but the events of the revival shaped their theology, ecclesiology and mission.

[11] Some of the AICs developed as a result of praying for healing during the influenza that took place after the First World War and as a reaction against the colonial Christianity that the mission churches introduced into Africa. See Roswith Gerloff, "Churches of the Spirit: The Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement and Africa's Contribution to the Renewal of Christianity," in *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora: The Appropriation of a Scattered Heritage*, ed. Afe Adogame, Roswith Gerloff and Klaus Hock (London: Continuum, 2008), 209.

[12] Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street: The Roots of Modern-Day Pentecost* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1980), 13–15; and Roberts Liardon, *God's Generals: Why They Succeeded and Why Some Failed* (Tulsa, OK, Albury Publishing, 1998), 89–93.

beginning in 1907.[13] One of the people who was baptised in the Spirit through Boddy's ministry was Smith Wigglesworth (1859–1947), a true pioneer of the faith.[14] Another person who was baptised in the Spirit at one of the revival meetings in Sunderland was the Revd Thomas Kwame Brem-Wilson, a Ghanaian businessman and schoolmaster.[15]

Brem-Wilson was born in Dixcove, Ghana in 1855 and came to Britain in 1901. In 1906, Brem-Wilson started Sumner Road Chapel in Peckham, south-east London. As a result of his attendance and contribution at the revival meetings in Sunderland in 1907, Brem-Wilson developed relationships with the founders of the Apostolic Church of Great Britain, D. P. Williams and W. J. Williams, as he hosted an Apostolic Church conference in London in 1923. These interracial relationships were very rare at that time when it was generally not socially acceptable among white Christians to associate with Black people. It reveals the Pentecostal significance of breaking down church traditions and racial barriers. In addition, it also demonstrates the ecumenical inclinations of early Pentecostalism in Britain. For instance, I find the relationship between Boddy, an Anglican minister, and Brem-Wilson, a Black Pentecostal, notable. This early relationship is quite significant and foreshadows some of the more recent Anglican–Pentecostal relationships that have been emerging – for example, that between Jesus House, led by Pastor Agu Irukwu, and Holy Trinity Brompton, led by Nicky Gumbel; the Anglican–Pentecostal Theological Consultations; the recent instalment of Bishop Tedroy Powell of the Church of God of Prophecy as the third Pentecostal President of Churches Together in England (CTE); and the partnership that exists between the Church of England and the APC. The latter example will be considered later under the ecumenical contributions of the APC.

THE ORIGINS AND DIVERSITY OF BLACK PENTECOSTALS IN BRITAIN

Thomas Kwame Brem-Wilson may be regarded as a pioneer of Black Pentecostalism in Britain, but the development of the full movement did not occur until the arrival of Caribbean migrants after 1948. In tracing the next phase in the development of Black Pentecostal churches in Britain, it is worth highlighting that Black Pentecostalism in Britain is not a homogeneous movement but is rather heterogeneous in culture, ethnicity, ecclesiology, mission and theology. For example, some of these churches are Unitarian (Oneness Pentecostals) while others are Trinitarian; some have embraced Black liberation theology while others preach a prosperity gospel; some have grown to become church denominations, such as the New Testament Church of God, the Church of God of Prophecy, the RCCG and the Church of Pentecost; while others are still independent churches, such as the New Wine Church in Woolwich, the Tab Church in Lewisham, Christian Life City and Ruach Ministries (now Ruach City Church). Some are church plants from their denominational churches back in the Caribbean or Africa, such as New Testament Assembly, the Church of the Lord (Aladura), the International Central Gospel Church and Forward in Faith Ministries International. Others are churches that have started here in Britain and have planted churches in other parts of the world, such as KICC, Christ Faith Tabernacle and Praise Christian Centre. It is within this latter group that we can locate and situate the history of the APC, although the APC is a congress of churches that broadly retain their independence and distinctiveness while adhering to the wider ethical, ecclesiological and theological framework of the congress.

The second thing to note is that Black Pentecostal churches in Britain are part of what is usually regarded as Black Majority Churches (BMCs), a term of which many Black church leaders are growing wary of. BMCs are independent Pentecostal and charismatic churches that have originated within the Black community and have a Black majority congregation and leadership. These are churches that have emerged from the African and Caribbean diaspora.[16]

When used in this sense, BMCs do not include those congregations that have emerged within historic Churches such as Catholics, Baptists, Anglicans and Methodists. Two problems arise with this definition. Firstly, not all BMCs or Black Pentecostal churches can be described as such since group identities are usually too complex to generalise; secondly many BMCs or Black Pentecostal churches are actually increasingly multicultural, multi-ethnic and intergenerational churches, so that while they appear Black to an outsider, to an insider they are truly many nations! This is why I have proposed that we understand the initialism

[13] Peter Hocken, *Streams of Renewal: The Origins and Early Development of the Charismatic Movement in Great Britain* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1986), 145.
[14] Lester Sumrall, *Pioneers of Faith* (South Bend IN: LeSEA Publishing, 1995), 171.
[15] Babatunde Adedibu, *Coat of Many Colours* (London: Wisdom Summit, 2012), 26.
[16] Israel Olofinjana, "Nigerian Pentecostals in Britain: Towards Prosperity or Consumerism?" in *The Public Face of African New Religious Movements in Diaspora*, ed. Afe Adogame (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 234.

BMC as Black Multicultural Churches.[17]

CARIBBEAN PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

The 1940s and 1950s saw the influx of Caribbean families into the UK due to the invitation of the British government to come and help rebuild the country after the devastation of the Second World War. Many people from the Caribbean responded to this call but to their surprise and dismay, they were rejected by society and the church. This period is usually referred to as the Windrush generation, as the ship SS *Empire Windrush* brought about 493 people from the Caribbean on 22 June 1948 to Tilbury, London. The majority of the people from the Caribbean saw and regarded themselves as British citizens, being part of the Commonwealth, and therefore expected to be treated as such. Instead, they were faced with posters saying, "No Irish, No Blacks and No Dogs." They soon realised that the idea of a commonwealth was an illusion; the wealth was not common and they were second-class citizens. Walter Hollenweger, in an introduction to a seminal book on the Black church in Britain written by Roswith Gerloff, comments that "Christians in Britain prayed for many years for revival, and when it came they did not recognise it because it was black".[18] This rejection, coupled with other factors, such as loyalty to church brands and the formality of British Christianity, led to the formation of Caribbean Pentecostal and Holiness Churches. The first Caribbean Pentecostal church founded in the UK was the Calvary Church of God in Christ, which started in London in 1948. The church became affiliated with the Church of God in Christ International in 1957, and they now have about 21 congregations in the UK. Others soon followed, such as the New Testament Church of God (1953), the Church of God of Prophecy (1953), the Wesleyan Holiness Church (1958) and the New Testament Assembly (1961),[19] now with about 18 congregations in Britain.

> "They soon realised that the idea of a commonwealth was an illusion; the wealth was not common and they were second-class citizens."

Since the 1990s, a new generation Caribbean Pentecostal churches have emerged in Britain. These churches have a wider appeal to Caribbean British Christians who are second- and third-generation descendants of the original immigrants. Many of the leaders are second- or third-generation Caribbean British Christians as well. These churches are Pentecostal and as such have dynamic worship and worship teams; they make use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and have creative preaching styles. These churches are very proactive in terms of community and social engagement, providing services such as food banks, debt counselling, soup kitchens, prison ministries and many more. Examples of these churches are Ruach City Church (formerly Ruach Ministries), led by Bishop John Francis (1994); Rhema Christian Ministries, formerly known as Rhema Fellowship (1990), founded by Pastor Mark Goodridge and now led by Marva Scott; iCan Community Church, formerly Christian Life City (1996), led by Bishop Wayne Malcolm; Micah Community Church (1998), led by Pastor Denis Wade; the Tab Church (formerly called the Bible Way Church of the Lord Jesus Christ Apostolic), led by Pastor Michael White; Greater Faith Ministries, led by Bishop Lennox Hamilton, and host of other churches.[20]

AFRICAN PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

The independence of sub-Saharan African countries from 1957 onwards led to increasing numbers of African diplomats, students and tourists coming to Britain. When they discovered, as had those coming from the Caribbean before them, that they were rejected by the British churches and society at large, this led to the founding of African Instituted Churches (AICs) in London. The first of these churches to be planted was the Church of the Lord (Aladura), planted in 1964 by the late Apostle Oluwole Adejobi in South London. This church has its headquarters in Nigeria. Others soon followed, such as the Cherubim and Seraphim Church in 1965, the Celestial Church of Christ

[17] Israel Olofinjana, *Partnership in Mission: A Black Majority Church Perspective on Mission and Church Unity* (Watford: Instant Apostle, 2015).

[18] Walter J. Hollenweger, "Foreword" to Roswith I. H. Gerloff, *A Plea for British Black Theologies: The Black Church Movement in Britain in its transatlantic cultural and theological Interaction with special reference to the Pentecostal Oneness (Apostolic) and Sabbatarian Movements* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang., 1992), ix.

[19] Rev. Israel Oluwole Olofinjana, "The History of Black Majority Churches in London," *The Open University* (2010), https://www.open.ac.uk/arts/research/religion-in-london/resource-guides/black-majority-church.

[20] Olofinjana, *Reverse in Ministry and Missions*, 41.

in 1968 and Aladura International Church in 1970. Others include Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) Mount Bethel, founded by Apostle Ayo Omideyi in 1974; Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) of Great Britain in 1976; and Born Again Christ Healing Church, founded by Bishop Fidelia Onyuku-Opukiri in 1979. All these churches were led from their headquarters in Nigeria. The first of the Ghanaian churches to arrive in England was the Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) in London in 1980.[21]

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the rise of New Pentecostal Churches (NPC) from West Africa. For example, one of the largest churches in Western Europe is KICC, founded in 1992 by Matthew Ashimolowo (a Nigerian). Another of the fastest-growing churches in the UK is the RCCG, which was started in Nigeria in 1952 by the prophet Josiah Akindayomi. This church began in the UK in 1988–89 through the efforts of David Okunade and Ade Okerende and they now have more than 850 churches in the UK. They also have churches in Germany, Norway, Spain, Holland, Italy, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Poland, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Greece, Portugal, Luxemburg and the Czech Republic. The current General Overseer is Pastor Enoch Adeboye, and the UK National Overseer is Pastor Leke Sanusi, senior pastor of RCCG Victory House in South London. Victory House is known as a house of prayer due to their love of prayer and their hosting of several prayer conferences and gatherings. RCCG UK also organises a Christian Festival called "Festival of Life" at the Docklands Excel Centre, which, before the pandemic, attracted around 40,000 people every year.[22]

APOSTOLIC PASTORAL CONGRESS

The historical development of the APC starts with its presiding archbishop, Doyé Teido Agama. Archbishop Agama was born in 1956 to Anglican Nigerian parents in Shirley in Southampton, England. His parents came to England in 1953 for further studies.[23] Agama was, however, fostered by a white family as a baby for some time to allow his parents time to complete their studies. This was fairly common in those days due to the lack of an African diaspora community to provide support to such student families. He later joined his biological parents in Nigeria in the 1960s. Agama became a Christian in 1968 at a Scripture Union event in Nigeria. In 1973, while still in Nigeria, Agama started work as a teaching assistant and from around 1975 was involved in community development projects as part of the efforts led by the Council of Churches to repair the damage of the Nigerian Civil War.

Agama had a spiritual experience in 1991 that transformed his life. He became a pastoral assistant in the RCCG, serving later as the regional secretary for evangelism in the east of Nigeria under Pastor Dave Okunade in 1992. He left to start an independent work, Strongtower Christian Ministries, in 1994, which later became the Christian Way of Life Churches. He also served in Elim Churches International and later joined the Apostolic Congress of Great Britain, led by the then Bishop Henry Kontor. As a result of these roles, he became further involved in the oversight and mentoring of other Christian ministers from around 1992. He was ordained in 1994 by the Apostolic Congress of Great Britain and was consecrated a bishop ten years later in 2004. In 2013, at an event held at Southwark Cathedral, Agama was consecrated archbishop.

Archbishop Agama began to wrestle with the issue of *limitation* in emerging Black Pentecostal churches. He saw part of this limitation as churches being confined to the four walls of their building and therefore having little or no recognition or relevance in the wider community. He also felt that there was a gap in ministerial training, licensing, representation and ecumenical relations of the BMCs. This led to a period of praying and seeking God for vision and direction. What became the APC began in an informal process of mentoring a number of church leaders to discover the areas of challenge in their ministry and to find adequate solutions. Most of these early mentees were members of the Upper-Room Ministers Forum in Manchester. There was also an earlier attempt to form a Black and Minority Ethnic Christian Association (BMECA), which, like many other groupings, did not last long. This vision and passion to reach the wider community beyond the walls of the church led to the formal beginnings of the APC in 2007 with the cooperation and encouragement of the Greater Manchester Churches Together and the Minority Ethnic Christian Affairs section of Churches Together in England (now known as Pentecostal, Charismatic and Multicultural Relations). The vision of the APC is to help close the gap in the provision of personal and professional development for independent (mainly Black Pentecostal) church ministers by encouraging and providing access to pathways for continuous

[21] *Ibid.*, 37.

[22] *Keep the Faith* 47 (2009): 12.

[23] His father was a prince who later became His Royal Highness Chief Frederick Abiye Agama, the Ogbotom Edede of the Epie-Atissa Clan in Bayelsa State of Nigeria. His maternal grandfather, Chief Nelson Kemeninabokide Porbeni, was the Etonkepua of Kabowei Kingdom, and the Ododomedo of Asideni in the Delta State of Nigeria. Bishop Agama's mother was Her Royal Highness Chief Beatrice Agama (neé Porbeni). "Bishop Doyé Agama," *The Apostolic Pastoral Congress*, https://apostolicpastors.info/bishop-doye-agama

improvement. This is through training and providing members with forms of certification, recognition and accountability. Part of the APC's vision is also to enable networking among these ministers and also to assist them in networking with leaders of other churches and civic and community leaders. In addition, the APC also provides a measure of advocacy and representation on behalf of members at several levels. The APC also works to close the gap between the Pentecostals and the established denominations. In addition to being Pentecostal, the APC understands itself to be episcopal, historic, liturgical and sacramental. They have a general rule that sacraments should be accompanied by some liturgical form and function, but all other meetings and aspects of the church can be freely Pentecostal.[24] This fusion of historic church liturgy and Pentecostal elements such as glossolalia is one of the unique features of the APC. However, the APC is unique in seeking and finding a measure of acceptance among the Church of England and other established historic churches, including some Orthodox.

Today, the APC has roughly about 100 members representing congregations and community projects in 20 towns and cities across England, with a very small number of other affiliates. They also have members in the Americas, the Caribbean, Africa and India. In England, APC churches are engaged with the community in a variety of ways, from prison chaplaincy to enhancing trans-generational community cohesion through cottage industry skills in Manchester. The level of community engagement by member churches varies from one church to another. One of the differences between the APC and other Black Pentecostal churches or denominations is that they are not based in London; the APC is based in Manchester. This was a deliberate move as Archbishop Agama saw the need for Black Christian leadership outside London and the south-east of England, and a need to then link with existing southern leadership for more national leverage. He also intended to reach beyond mono-ethnic church lines in areas outside the south-east with its large Black and Asian populations. It must, however, be mentioned that the APC is not the only Black Pentecostal church or denomination outside London. Other examples are the New Testament Church of God, the Church of God of Prophecy and the Wesleyan Holiness Church, all of which have their headquarters in the Midlands. Nevertheless, this vision to intentionally not reside in London is commendable; it points to the important changes in the self-understanding of some Black Pentecostal churches' identity and mission. In terms of identity, the APC argues that they are not an African organisation but a grouping of British churches.[25] One can understand this argument, given the fact that Archbishop Agama was born in the UK. Thus, he identifies with both Black British and African. This self-understanding reveals that we should not always look for clear-cut blanket solutions to the issues of identity. The APC training courses also place a great emphasis on cross-cultural missions and the contextualisation of ministry. As such, they strive to enable Christian ministers born outside the European or western context to reorient their ministry focus into the new environment.

This intentionality to do church in northern England also has implications for mission. The APC has the vision to be a church where Black and Asian British feel welcomed and are reached. In an interview with Archbishop Agama, he said, "The church [APC] is geared towards the needs of mainly Black and Asian British Christians, but also some white and other mixed-heritage church leaders who are committed to going beyond the existing stereotypes of ethnicity in expressions of church, both in terms of worship, but also in engaging with the community."[26] The articulation of this vision for ethnic minorities who are British is, in my estimation, very significant, as it recognises that there are second- and third-generation migrants who were born in this country and who would firmly identify themselves as British. Many immigrant churches are struggling to reach these British of African, Caribbean or Asian heritage.

Another area to which the APC is contributing to mission is through the professional ministerial training that takes place at their St Hadrian's College. This college offers internal certificate courses to ministers who seek to translate their experience of ministry in the southern hemisphere into a European urban setting. St Hadrian's offers Pentecostal ministers training, accreditation and licensing. The training at St Hadrian's College also enables African Pentecostal ministers to play a better role in community cohesion and development both in the West and in their nations of origin. In addition, the college equips Black and Asian Christian leaders to play a better part in the wider community, and also to enable their congregations

[24] I had the privilege of observing a combination of Pentecostal dynamics with historic church liturgy at one of the APCs ordination services where there was the sacrament of the Eucharist, as bishops and priests were ordained into ministry accompanied by speaking in tongues. I attended an Apostolic Pastoral Congress ordination service at Manchester Cathedral as a participant observer.

[25] Questionnaire interview with Bishop Doyé Agama.

[26] *Ibid.*

to do so. The college encourages all the above in the context of sound biblical management and leadership principles, as well as supporting healthy homes and married life.

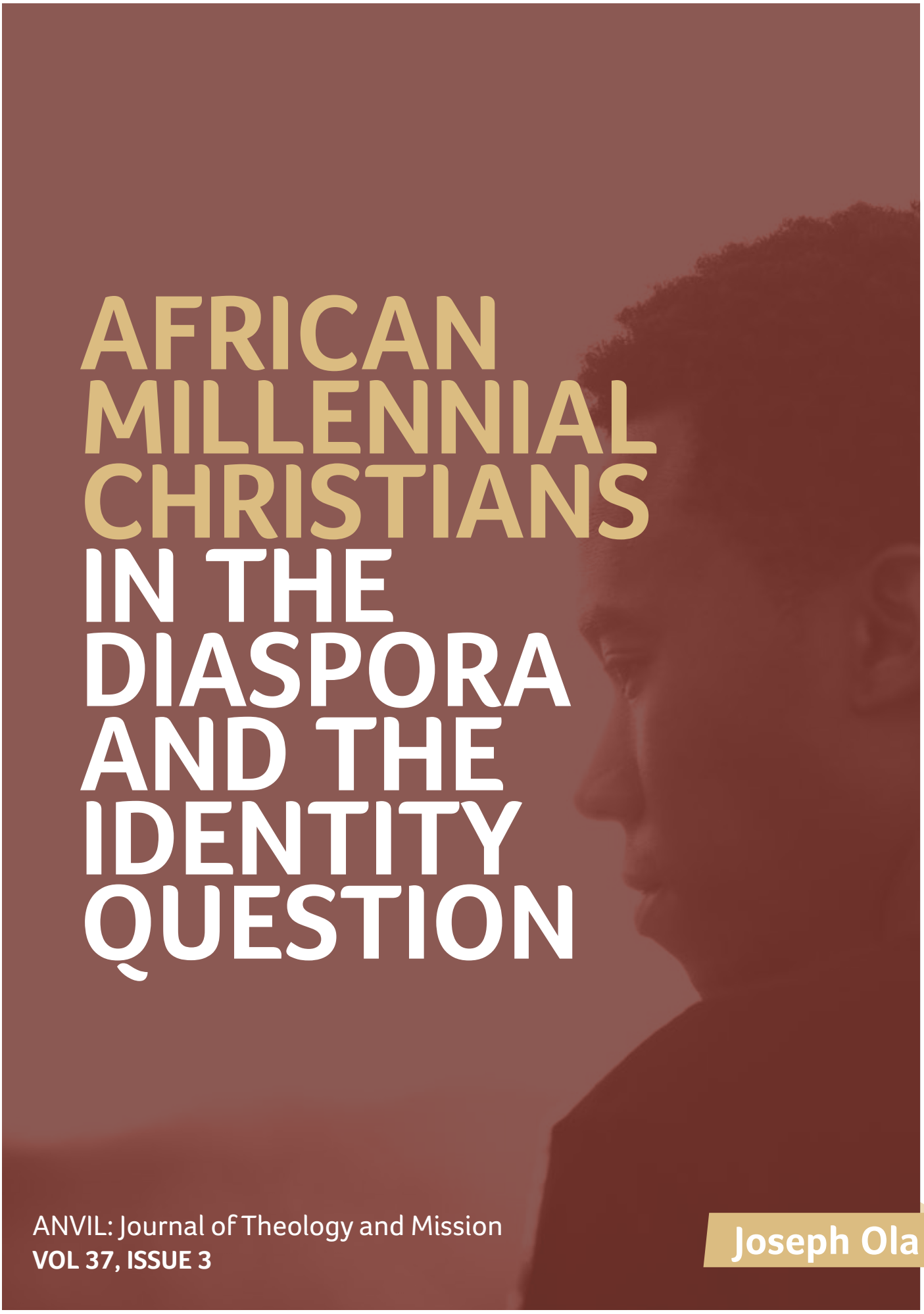
Another area in which the APC is contributing is through the development of ecumenical relationships between Black Pentecostal churches and historic churches. The APC is working towards increasing the unity of the global church by educating emerging Pentecostal leaders about aspects of the historic church and vice versa. In addition, the APC is also working to increase the unity between different branches of the Black Majority Christian diaspora. This ecumenical vision is being achieved through the relationships Archbishop Agama has built with the Church of England, the Coptic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Through some of its presiding bishops, APC is actively involved in the ecumenical scene through Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the Evangelical Alliance and Churches Together in England. Bishop Moses Owusu-Sekyere, co-founder of Faith Forum and co-chair of Churches Together in England Racial Justice Working Group, is actively involved in the ecumenical scene, seeking to provide theological education to Black Pentecostals. He is now the presiding bishop of the APC. Another is Bishop Mike Royal, co-chair of Cinnamon Network UK, who is also actively involved in various ecumenical initiatives to tackle racial justice concerns. Mike Royal has recently become General Secretary of Churches Together in England. The APC has done very well in its ecumenical collaborations with the Church of England and, in spite of some fundamental differences, they have continued to use their cathedrals for ordinations and consecrations of Pentecostal ministers.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this article has traced the historical development of Black Pentecostals in Britain by looking at the various phases in their formation at different periods. It has shown that Black Pentecostalism in Britain has its roots at the beginning of the Pentecostal movement in Britain and did not develop later as an offshoot of this. This significant beginning is important as it broke down the barriers of race and racism that were prevalent at the time. Black Pentecostalism in Britain is also far from being a homogeneous movement – it is rather a movement that encompasses different theologies, ecclesiologies, mission and cultural diversity. This leads to caution regarding terms such as BMC, which do not necessarily demonstrate the diversity that exists. Black Pentecostals are contributing to the church scene in Britain and this was argued by looking at the APC as a case study. The APC, as one of the Black Pentecostal church groups situated in Manchester, identifies itself as a British church agency and therefore sees part of its mission and identity as reaching out to Black and Asian British people. The APC also contributes through the professional and ministerial development of Pentecostal ministers; this is done through their college, St Hadrian's. Lastly, through Archbishop Agama's relationship with some of the historic church leaders and that of some of APC's significant work in terms of ecumenical theological education and racial justice, the APC is able to negotiate the terrain of ecumenical relationships in Britain.

The Revd Dr Israel Oluwole Olofinjana is the director of the One People Commission of the Evangelical Alliance. He is an ordained and accredited Baptist minister and has led two multi-ethnic Baptist churches and an independent charismatic church. He is the founding director of the Centre for Missionaries from the Majority World, a mission network initiative that provides cross-cultural training to reverse missionaries in Britain. Israel is an honorary research fellow at the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education in Birmingham and on the advisory group on race and theology of society for the Society for the Study of Theology (SST). He is a consultant to the executive team of Lausanne Europe, advising them on matters related to diaspora ministries in Europe. He is on the Christian Aid working group of Black Majority Church leaders, exploring the intersection of climate justice and racial justice.

AFRICAN MILLENNIAL CHRISTIANS IN THE DIASPORA AND THE IDENTITY QUESTION



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Joseph Ola

INTRODUCTION

This research-based article reflects on the implications of Christian young adults of African heritage – in the diaspora and on the continent – engaging with the question of their identity as they grow up in their multicultural contexts in an age when African Christianity is slowly taking the centre stage in world Christianity.

As an African living in the diaspora, a millennial and a Christian, the interplay of my experience of African life (growing up in Nigeria, the so-called "giant of Africa"), the unique world view I share with other (African) millennials and my core identity as a Christian has set the adventurous course of my journeys both in my migration to the UK, my exploration of pastoral ministry and my academic studies. The research upon which this article reflects, therefore, is a natural intersection of these convergent paths. Growing up in a Christian family in a semi-urban city in south-western Nigeria, I was exposed to African Christianity from a young age. By the time I was in my late teens, I began to take Christianity more personally (as opposed to it being "our family's religion"). I was privileged to serve in various leadership positions in the Christian fellowship I was a part of while studying at Obafemi Awolowo University (between 2005 and 2010). I was a "hostel pastor" in my second year, the "Bible study coordinator" in my third year and the "fellowship pastor" in my final year. As a student who was saddled with pastoral responsibilities to fellow students, I had to stay spiritually nourished by reading Christian literature often recommended by senior colleagues to whom we looked up in the fellowship. Books by Kenneth E. Hagin, A. W. Tozer, John C. Maxwell, T. D. Jakes and Max Lucado were favourites in my growing library. By the time I began to pursue my pastoral calling more fully in the oldest classical Pentecostal denomination in Nigeria, the Apostolic Church, in 2012, the seminary of the said denomination no longer felt adequate to equip me for ministry to the younger generation I felt called to. I was convinced that an international exposure in my pastoral training would enable me to be more relevant in my ministry to the younger generation in Africa. This was the genesis of my migration to Europe in 2015 to study Pastoral Ministry in a Bible college in West Yorkshire.

My first disappointment was the realisation that the western world was not as "Christian" as I had imagined while reading books authored by westerners. (It suddenly made sense why my church in Nigeria refers to the UK as a *mission field*, when, in fact, the Apostolic Church itself originated in the UK in 1916.) Besides, after my one-year programme at the Bible college, I was no longer sure where I fitted in God's mission. Indeed, I was no longer sure how to think of my identity. I had more questions than answers. I was co-opted into a new church plant that is a branch of my Nigerian church in the "UK Mission Field". I found myself moving from a white-majority church in West Yorkshire to a Black-majority African-pioneered congregation in the north-west and began to pursue a master's degree in Biblical and Pastoral Theology, which only seemed to amplify my identity crisis. It took a second master's degree – this time, in African Christianity – to begin to find myself, embrace my heritage and appreciate the potential I hold to make a unique contribution to God's mission.

IDENTITY CRISIS IN AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

I began with my story to highlight an identity crisis that is not unique to me but rather intrinsic with the recent history of African Christianity. While the history of Christianity in Africa is almost as old as Christianity itself,[1] it was not until the nineteenth century that intentional missionary activity from the West to the rest of the world as well as evangelical revivals marked a new beginning for African Christianity as it is known today. Less than 250 years later, Africa prides itself as the continent with the highest number of Christians – about 685 million[2] – and arguably the continent with the most diverse expressions of Christianity.[3] However, the efforts of the western missionaries that laboured on African soil in the nineteenth century became so intertwined with colonialism that describing them as

[1] Scholars and historians like Andrew Walls and Thomas Oden have, in various works, chronicled the spread and impact of Christianity in Northern Africa in the first few centuries before the Islamic revolution. See Andrew F. Walls, "Africa in Christian History: Retrospect and Prospect," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 1, no. 1 (1998): 2–15; Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002); Andrew F. Walls, *Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006); Thomas C. Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007); Andrew F. Walls, *Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity*, ed. Mark R. Gornik (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017).

[2] The official figure as of January 2021 is 684,931,000. See Gina A. Zurlo, Todd M. Johnson and Peter F. Crossing, "World Christianity and Mission 2021: Questions about the Future," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 45, no. 1 (2020): 23, doi. org/10.1177/2396939320966220.

[3] See John S. Mbiti, "Main Features of Twenty-First Century Christianity in Africa," *Missio Africanus Journal of African Missiology* 1, no. 2 (2016):72–88.

"pathfinders for colonial boots"[4] – as E. A. Ayandele did – became plausible. This jeopardised the preservation of the cultural identity of the Africans to whom they brought the gospel.[5] The language used in describing the primal religions by the western missionaries (animism, heathenism, paganism, satanism, fetishism and so on) basically normalised the inferiority and primitiveness of the pre-Christian religious experience on the continent.[6] This means that the growth and spread of Christianity in Africa in the last 120 years happened largely in the context of some "cultural disorientation" precipitated by the combination of western missionary efforts and colonialism, as many African theologians had inveighed against.[7] Besides a colonial heritage, the advent of technology and globalisation continues to complicate the seeming cultural disorientation – more so for millennials who are coming to age in a world that is more connected than ever before. Globalisation continues to blur cultural lines as cross-pollination of ideas, world views and experiences continues to happen on the wheels of migration and the internet. The impact of the significant space occupied by African Christianity today, as the late British historian Andrew Walls had predicted, could be more than that of Martin Luther's Reformation of the sixteenth century.[8] It becomes important, therefore, to reassess the impact of the identity crisis that had trailed the growth and development of African Christianity in the past century, more so as it applies to millennials and the subsequent generations who will be the key players in the future of African Christianity. The research here presented attempts this.

RESEARCH OVERVIEW: QUESTIONS, AIM, METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPANTS

Primarily, the research sought to explore the question of identity among young Nigerian Christians in the twenty-first century by asking, "How do young Christians of Nigerian heritage (home and abroad) self-identify in light of their Christian faith and cultural heritage and what are the implications of this?" I wanted to know to what extent they stay in touch with their cultural heritage. What factors influence their Christian faith the most? To what extent is their Christian faith being influenced by western thought? How do they identify themselves with reference to their Christian faith? Do they see themselves as "African Christians" or describe themselves in other terms? I was persuaded that this line of enquiry would help me understand the peculiarities of their Christian experience both with respect to their *cultural* and *religious* heritage.

The research employed digital ethnography (using an online questionnaire) within the dual framework of both qualitative and quantitative research. The research recruited participants through an initial purposive sampling (from an online Christian mentorship platform made up predominantly of Nigerian young adults and led by the researcher), which then led to a snowballing (by asking interested participants to share the research announcement and survey link to those in their social media network who fitted the research population criteria).[9]

In total, 218 respondents gave consent to participate in the research,[10] mostly females (64.2 per cent) with over a quarter of the 218 (26.6 per cent) living in the diaspora.[11] Of these, 62.1 per cent reside in Europe, 29.3 per cent in North America, 8.6 per cent in Asia and one elsewhere. The average age of participants is 28 and they represent

[4] E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842–1914: A Political and Social Analysis* (London: Longmans, 1966); cited in Ogbu U. Kalu, "Introduction: The Shape and Flow of African Church Historiography," in *African Christianity: An African Story*, ed. Ogbu U. Kalu (Pretoria, South Africa: Dept. of Church History, University of Pretoria, 2005), 3.

[5] Adiele Eberechukwu Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture* (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1981), 384.

[6] Hence Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator's satirical subtitle to his book *Religion and Faith in Africa: Confessions of an Animist* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018).

[7] For example, in the Nigerian context, see Luke Mbefo, "Theology and Inculturation: The Nigerian Experience," *CrossCurrents* 37, no. 4 (1987): 395, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24459367.

[8] Harvey Kwiyani, "Moya Chronicles and the Storying of African Christianity," *CMS Pioneer Mission*, 10 May 2021, https://pioneer.churchmissionsociety.org/2021/05/moya-chronicles-and-the-storying-of-african-christianity/.

[9] No identifying information was asked of participants who completed the survey online except for general demographic questions, neither were they given any incentives for their participation.

[10] 200 was chosen as the benchmark for the sample size in agreement with the research supervisor as a reasonable size for the current research. While power analysis had been proposed as the statistical means of determining an appropriate sample size for research, it is an unrealistic calculation for this current research especially because there is no previous similar research that can inform the statistical variables needed to calculate the sample size. See Kjell Erik Rudestam and Rae R. Newton, *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2015), 119–20.

[11] Diaspora respondents are from 14 countries: Canada, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Northern Cyprus, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey, the UK, the USA and the UAE.

16 ethnicities,[12] live across 15 countries and represent at least 62 named church denominations. A typical participant is a Nigerian lady in her twenties who grew up in a religious family, currently lives in an urban town/city and is part of a Pentecostal church.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

1. Findings on the African identity of the participants

In order to understand the extent to which the participants stay in touch with their cultural heritage, the questionnaire asks a few questions regarding **language** (fluency in *spoken* and *written* mother tongue), familiarity with **indigenous proverbs** and with what is considered a **taboo** in the respondent's cultural background.

Table 1: Can you **fluently** speak your mother tongue?

Age group	No	Yes	Grand total
18–20	37.5%	62.5%	100.0%
21–25	33.9%	66.1%	100.0%
26–30	17.1%	82.9%	100.0%
31–35	5.5%	94.5%	100.0%
Entire sample size	**18.3%**	**81.7%**	**100.0%**

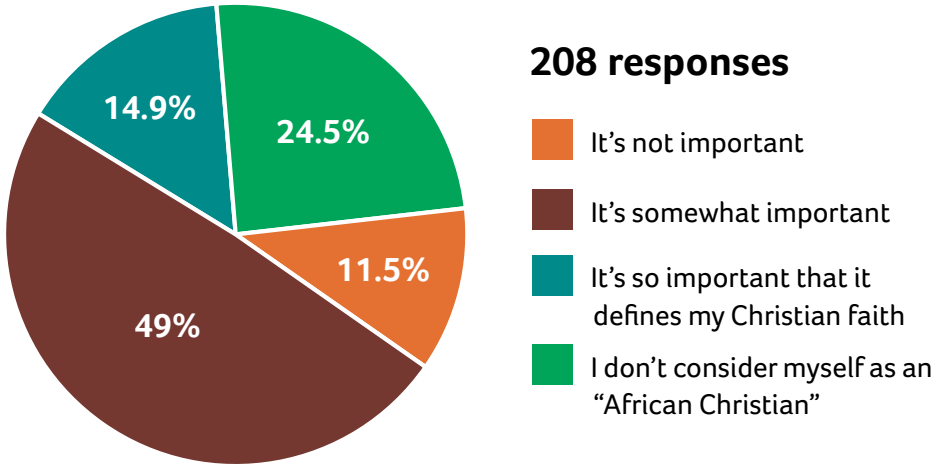
Table 2: On a scale of 0 to 5, how well can you read works of literature written in your native language? (Showing results for 0 and 1 only)

Age group	0	1	Grand total
18–20	25.00%	0.00%	25.00%
21–25	6.30%	6.30%	12.60%
26–30	0.00%	8.60%	8.60%
31–35	1.40%	1.40%	2.80%
Grand Total	**32.70%**	**16.30%**	**49.00%**
Home or diaspora	**0**	**1**	**Grand total**
Diaspora	**0.00%**	**8.80%**	**8.80%**
Home	**0.00%**	**3.80%**	**3.80%**
Grand Total	**0.00%**	**12.60%**	**12.60%**

From Tables 1 and 2 above, it is clear that **the younger the participant, the less likely they will be fluent in their indigenous language.** While only 5.5 per cent of participants aged 31–35 admit to not being fluent in their indigenous language, it rose to almost 4 in 10 (37.5 per cent) among participants aged 18–20. Likewise, while only 2.8 per cent of participants aged 31–35 could not read works of literature written in their native language, it rose to 1 in 4 participants (25 per cent) among those aged 18–20. Furthermore, as the last three rows of Table 2 show, **the challenge of fluency and proficiency in native language is greatly increased for participants in the diaspora**. The same trend was seen with familiarity with proverbs and with what is considered a taboo in the cultural heritage of each participant.

[12] Yorubas, Igbos and Edos constitute the majority (90.4 per cent). Others include: Hausa, Efik, Ijaw, Utugwang, Gbari, Idoma, Urhobo, Andoni, Oworo, Tiv, Ebira, Eleme, Itsekiri and Igala ethnicities.

Figure 1: As an African Christian, how important is the **"African identity"** in your faith?



Moreover, as Figure 1 reveals, while 36 per cent of all participants either do not consider themselves as an "African Christian" (24.5 per cent) or do not think their "African identity" is important to their Christian faith (11.5 per cent), the tendency is significantly higher among younger participants (57.1 per cent of 18 to 20-year-olds) as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: As an **African Christian**, how important is the **"African identity"** in your in your faith?

Age group	"It's not important" or "I don't consider myself as an "African Christian"	"It's somewhat important" or "It's so important that it defines my Christian faith"	Grand total
18–20	57.10%	42.90%	100.00%
21–25	39.30%	60.70%	100.00%
26–30	38.60%	61.40%	100.00%
31–35	29.20%	70.80%	100.00%

Furthermore, to probe the understanding of the participants on what "African identity" means, the questionnaire asks, "In what ways is your church 'African', if any?" to which a wide range of responses were received. The broad categories identified in the responses include **mode of worship** (the jubilant singing and dancing), **leadership** (the domination of male leaders), **doctrine** (beliefs and practices that are adaptations of African traditional religion), **prayer style** (loud and spirited), **language** (evidenced by the need for interpreters in certain denominations), **dressing** (especially regarding what is considered inappropriate – especially for women) and conformity to **African culture and traditions** (e.g. upholding the values of respect for elders, togetherness and honour for spiritual leaders as representatives of God). Generally, the tone with which many of the participants described what they considered *African* practices or beliefs in their church is with disdain. For example, R8, a 26-year-old male, says that in his church, their "dressing, type of songs sang, and our doctrine in the last 20 [years] has been skewed and infested" while R127, a 20-year-old female, says her church is *African* simply because the church is "too rigid and primitive". Adding to the denunciations against African identity, R172 (a 21-year-old female in the diaspora) says of her African majority church:

> My church denomination was founded by an African and has its headquarters in Africa. Traditions like respecting and obeying elders even when they are wrong, inability to explain myself because I am younger, [and how the pastor's] personal conviction automatically becomes a doctrine are the African things about my church.

Such responses are not without exception, of course. Speaking proudly of her home church's *Africanness,* R107 (a 35-year-old female in the diaspora) writes,

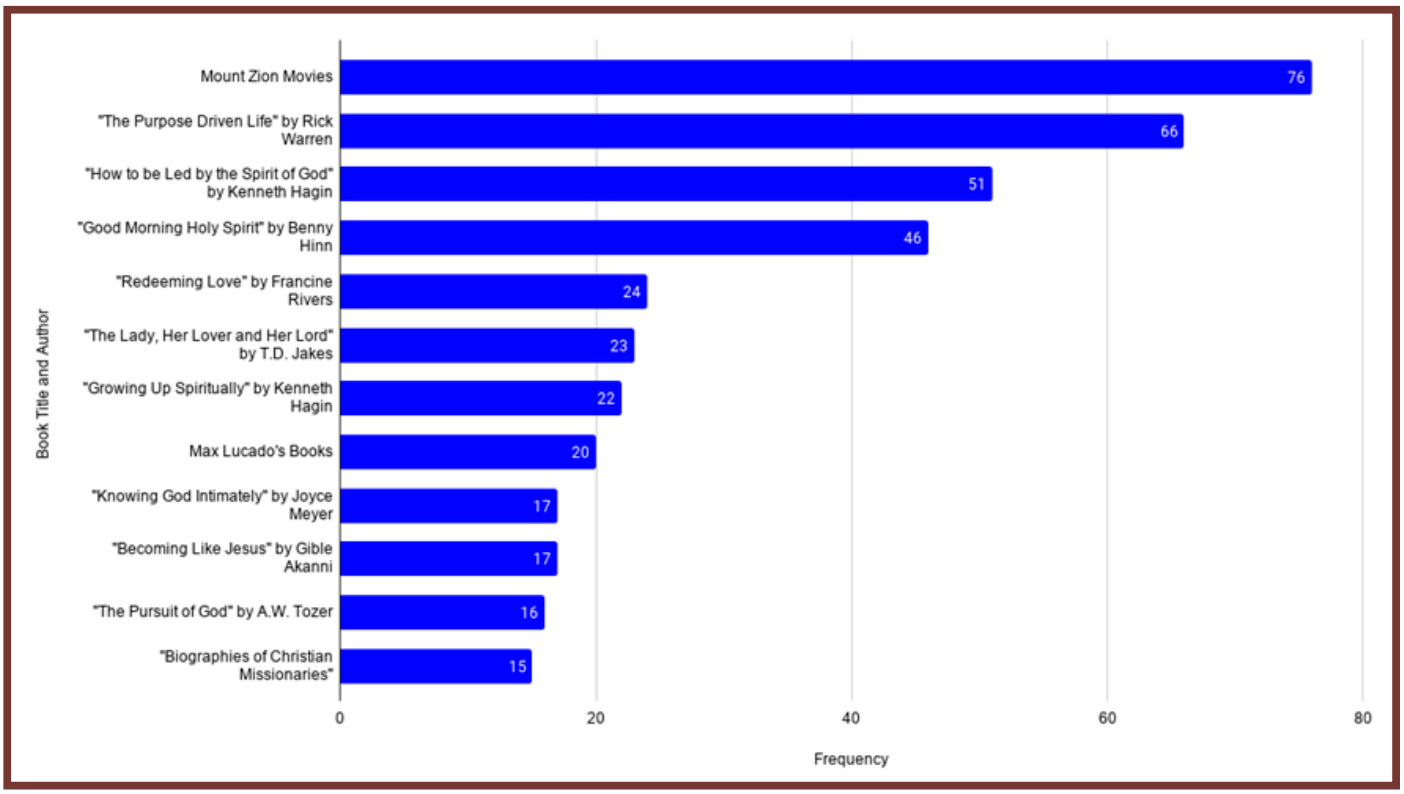
> I would say my church back in Nigeria is very African in its mode of worship and leadership... [T]here are parts of the Yoruba culture reflected in the doctrines of the church [and] I do not consider this to be a disadvantage, rather, I consider it to be an expression of the diversity of the church of Christ.

In summary, while older African Millennial Christians (AMCs) can be said to be more in touch with their African heritage, younger AMCs in Nigeria are less likely and **those in the diaspora even more less likely**. Likewise, older AMCs significantly consider *African identity* as being at least somewhat important to their Christian faith while younger AMCs are less likely to do so. Finally, most AMCs are less likely to view their sense of African identity with pride; on the contrary, they are more likely to see it as being restrictive – more so for the females.

2. Findings on factors influencing the faith development of participants

It was found that the top three factors influencing the faith development of the participants are: their parents (47.5 per cent); a Christian fellowship in a school, college or tertiary institution (35 per cent); and a Christian mentor (20.7 per cent). It was interesting to find out that the aforementioned factors have more influence on these millennials than their church pastors or the pastors they follow online (17.5 per cent and 17.1 per cent respectively). "Christian literature" also appears to be a top influence (12.9 per cent), especially among those in the diaspora. Talking more about the books that had influenced their faith development (Figure 2), the first striking thing to note is that the highest ranking "book" (supposedly) on the chart is, in fact, not a book but a Christian movie ministry based in Nigeria called "The Mount Zion Faith Ministries International" (MZFMI). The fact that the question that generated these responses in the questionnaire was open-ended led to this finding,[13] as many of the respondents believed that MZFMI deserved to be mentioned as a major influence on their faith development and, as an insider to the research population, I could not agree more. MZFMI is the most successful Christian movie industry in Africa and a worthy contender on the global stage. Within the last 20 years, the ministry has partnered with drama ministries in Canada, USA, Australia the UK and other western countries to shoot movies that were intended to reach out to diaspora African Christian communities as well as their ready audience in Africa. Indeed, the story of the impact of MZFMI is a research project waiting to be investigated.

Figure 2: The top 12 most influential books and their authors



[13] The question says, "Apart from the Bible, what book has influenced your Christian faith the most?"

Another striking finding in this top-12 resources list is that out of the 11 authors on that list, only one is an African (and Nigerian) – Gbile Akanni. All the others, apart from Benny Hinn, are American authors and all the books specifically mentioned were published between 1946 and 2003. My insider insight suggests that these books were often recommended reading from the older generation of adults or older "young adults" who are mentoring this generation of millennial Christians.

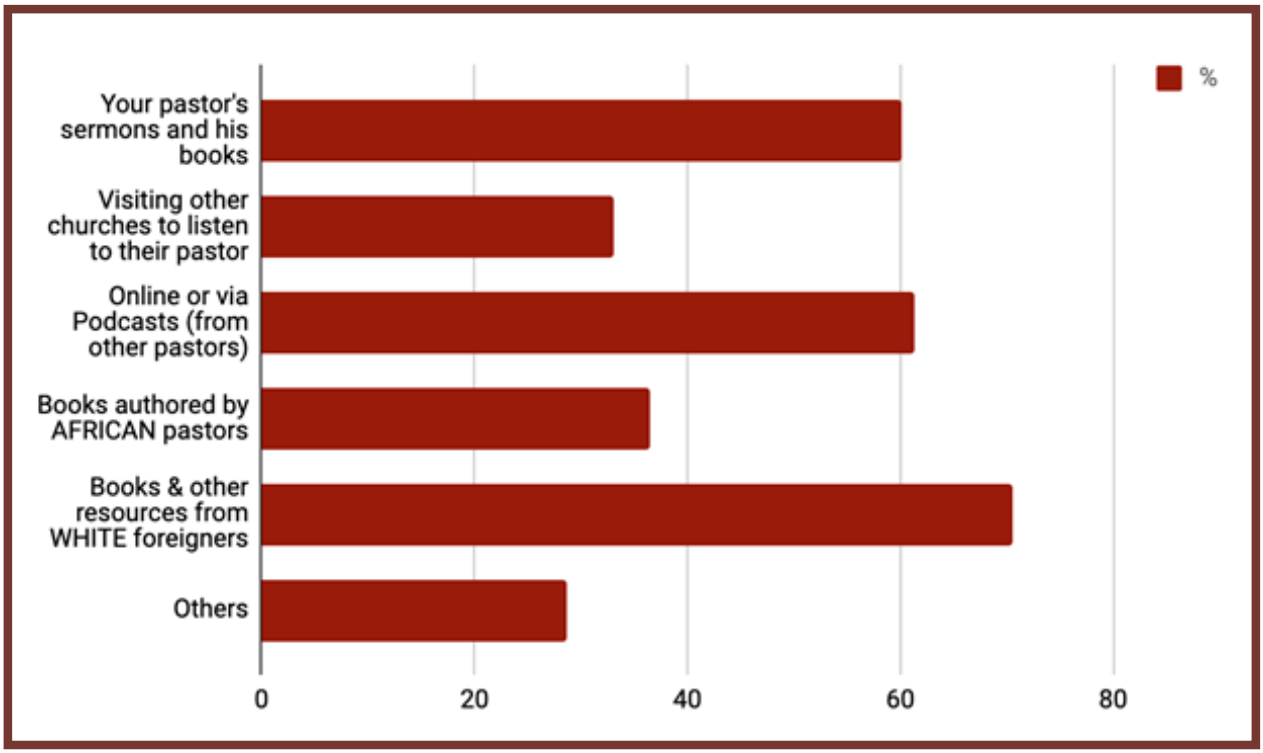
3. Findings on the impact of western thought on the participants

Besides the diminishing proficiency in indigenous languages alongside an increasing early mastery of English language and the dominance of western Christian authors in the faith formation of the population represented by the respondents, further findings confirm the high impact of western thought on the population. For example, participants were found to be impacted more by movies and podcasts from "whites/westerners/foreigners" than by the same resources produced by "Africans/Nigerians". This confirms my findings in an independent research study I carried out in 2018 involving 100 African Christian youths from different church traditions between the ages of 18 and 25. I asked a few questions aimed at discovering the source of their spiritual nourishment among other variables. I found that:

> Much more youths claimed to get their spiritual nourishment from engaging with books or other resources from "white foreigners" (70.5 per cent) and from online podcasts or videos (61.4 per cent) than from other African ministers (36.4 per cent) or from their pastor's sermons or books (60.2 per cent).[14]

Moreover, some of the participants made remarks with undertones of the inferiority of African cultural heritage to the western world view. For example, R23 (a 26-year-old female) says, "I believe we took religion and aligned it with our culture – which is not so in the western world – and this has reduced our thinking faculty..." To R23, Africans, by virtue of their inherent religiosity, have a reasoning deficit, which, in her presumption, "is not so in the [superior] western world". The same inclination is found in the remarks of R48 (a 22-year-old female), who says that in her church, they "pray aloud and fight against [spiritual] enemy [more] than they do abroad" – in which case, what "they do abroad" is supposed to be better – or worse, the standard. In summary, the West continues to have a dominant influence on the world view of AMCs, often to the detriment of the cultural heritage of the AMCs.

Figure 3: Where do you get your spiritual nourishment from?



[14] Joseph Ola, "A Missiology for a Youthful Continent," in *Africa Bears Witness: Mission Theology and Praxis in the 21st Century*, ed. Harvey Kwiyani (Nairobi, Kenya: African Theological Network Press, 2021).

REFLECTION ON RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

In a nutshell, the findings of this study are like a two-page letter with bad news on one page and good news on the other. The bad news is that African identity is gradually being eroded among AMCs, **less gradually among those in the diaspora**, and predictably more so among the upcoming generations after them. With the prevalence of the tendency to overvalue and embrace foreign (western) culture at the detriment of African traditional values, younger AMCs are further away from owning their *Africanness* than the older AMCs are. As AMCs are becoming parents, and soon, grandparents, one wonders how long before African identity becomes merely a label for those living in the continent so-named or a prefix to a new identity for those in the diaspora. The good news, however, is that AMCs are still very involved and interested in Christianity – unlike millennials in the West! In their research on American millennials, Thom and Jess Rainer found them to be "the least religious of any generation in modern American history".[15] Only a small portion of their over 1,000 respondents are Christians while a majority represented a post-Christian mindset – and their research is now 10 years old! By contrast, the research population for this study comprised of more than 200 *Christian* millennials, all of whom had committed to taking the Christian faith seriously – most of them beginning in their teenage years. The primary implication of this research finding, therefore, is a need to figure out a way to foster the discovery of a healthy self-awareness for these young Africans – a self-awareness that is rooted in their culture and heritage. An African proverb says, "If you do not know where you came from, you will not know where you are going." In other words, as Harvey Kwiyani articulates it (quoting Marcus Garvey), "Any people who are not aware of their history and culture are like a tree that has no roots."[16] The exploration of creative means to reconnect AMCs to their heritage, thus fostering a healthy self-awareness and reclamation of their *Africanness*, will have implications for those influencing them, for their Christian faith and ultimately for *missio Dei*.

1. Implications for older AMCs

The research finding already points to a group of culturally intelligent AMCs (most of them between ages 31 and 35) who are still proficiently in touch with their African heritage and values both in Africa and in the diaspora. For example, R45 (a 31-year-old diaspora female) says:

> We need to be "African Christians" not an African who is a Christian but trying to fit their Christianity into a western mould, thereby making our culture second place to our religion. One body. One flock. God placed us in our families for good reasons so we should not discard who we are in order to be who God is calling us to be.

Three out of every 10 participants in this study are in that 31–35 category. Those among them who are living in the African diaspora are already grappling with the challenges of living in the tensions of multiple cultures – me, too! This affords us more critical reflection that can potentially yield even more adeptness in our cultural intelligence and make us more suitable to pass on the legacy of a healthy self-awareness and rootedness in our African identity. Those in this category are the people with the greatest potential of ameliorating the slow death of African heritage among younger AMCs and Gen Z *screenagers*.[17] This is so for a few reasons.

First, many of us are becoming parents and are coming to terms with the full weight of the parental responsibility coming upon us. We are in a vantage position to see the need to claim our cultural identities with their full riches so as to be able to pass them on. The finding in this research of our parents being the most influential faith development factor in our lives is striking (and consistent with the finding in similar studies).[18] However, while it is almost too late for our parents to make any more significant contribution in orientating us towards a development of a healthy African identity, *we* now have that opportunity. In doing this, however, we must avoid making a common mistake our parents made. As an insider to the research population, I believe that part of the errors of the generation of our parents is in teaching us cultural values merely as *tradition* without making us see the "why". When the true value of a cultural value is unknown, the motivation to pass it on is lost. As such, those of us who are culturally aware millennials will do well to pass on the baton with the willingness and

[15] Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 47.

[16] Harvey C. Kwiyani, *Our Children Need Roots and Wings: Equipping and Empowering Young Diaspora Africans for Life and Mission* (Liverpool: Missio Africanus, 2019).

[17] A term often used in reference to younger millennials or Gen Z kids because of their "affinity for electronic communication via computer, phone, television, etc. screens". See Marie L. Radford and Lynn Silipigni Connaway, "'Screenagers' and Live Chat Reference: Living Up to the Promise," *Scan* 26, no. 1 (2007): 31–39.

[18] Thom and Jess Rainer found that "[m]ore than one-half (51 per cent) of the [American Millennial] generation says that their parents have a strongly positive influence on their lives." See Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*.

readiness to answer the barrage of questions that our children will ask us.

Second, that millennials are looking for mentors is a known fact. "Three out of four Millennials would like a leader to come beside them and teach them leadership skills" because they "value a leader who is willing to take his or her time to teach skills that otherwise may not be learned".[19] In light of this, older AMCs – many of whom have benefitted from mentoring themselves – will do well to be more intentional in mentoring younger millennials and those coming behind them. As the pioneer of an online mentoring platform with a membership of over 3,000 AMCs located across over 60 countries, I have witnessed first-hand how desperately younger AMCs are looking for mentors and how mutually impactful, effective and transformative the experience can be for older AMCs who will be willing to take up this responsibility. Since AMCs are being influenced more by their mentors than their pastors, older AMCs will be perpetuating a good legacy by making themselves available, accessible and teachable in order for younger AMCs to learn from them in life-on-life contexts. To be effective at doing this, they will need to equip themselves with resources from around the world and, more intentionally, go after resources that can help them understand their Christian faith through the lens of their African heritage. For starters, in addition to the Kenneth Hagin books and Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life,* they should have the *Africa Study Bible* and *Africa Bible Commentary* on their shelves or smartphones.[20] [21]

> "With 70 per cent of Africans being under the age of 30 and the median age of African Christians being 19.5, there is tremendous potential locked up in the youthfulness of African Christianity."

Third, those among the older AMCs who have (or will have) a call into pastoral ministry have a tremendous opportunity to make a difference in giving both *roots* and *wings* to the next generation of African youth. (After all, making a difference is the major definition of "success" and "achievement" among millennials.)[22] They will need to pursue pastoral and theological training that will help them minister effectively in a way that prospers an *African* contribution to the mission of God through their ministries. One way to do this will be for them to develop proficiency in the understanding and use of African proverbs in their sermons and everyday speech. Indeed, one could ask, what will be *African* about the preaching of an African preacher who is neither familiar with nor appreciative of African proverbs? For the African, without proverbs, "speech flounders and falls short of its mark, whereas aided by them, communication is fleet and unerring".[23] This necessarily calls for paying attention to the personality and wisdom of the elderly in their lives. These elderly people show the AMCs images of who they will also become in some years' time, according to their time of life. Those among the older AMCs without a specific pastoral call will do well, in any case, to plug themselves into serving in their respective churches as ambassadors of Christ and role models of *proper* humanness (as conceptualised in *Ubuntu* or *Ọmọlúàbí* African philosophies).[24] [25] An example of what this could look like is the *Ọmọlúàbí Podcast* I launched in 2021, co-hosted with my wife. The focus of the podcast is to highlight the convergence between African proverbs and Biblical wisdom and its dual aim is both to showcase a rich collection of African proverbs and offer such indigenous wisdom to young adults of African

[19] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 41.
[20] Oasis International Limited, *Africa Study Bible: New Living Translation*, ed. Dr John Jusu (Tyndale House Publishers, 2016).
[21] *Africa Bible Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary Written by 70 African Scholars*, ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Nairobi, Kenya: HippoBooks, 2010).
[22] Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*.
[23] Oyekan Owomoyela, *Yoruba Proverbs* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 12.
[24] *Ubuntu* is a philosophical concept of identity among the Ngunis of Southern Africa. It is often articulated through the dictum, "I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am" – highlighting interdependence as a common reality for all humans, such that one discovers the full import of one's humanness through one's interactions with others. See Barbara Nussbaum, "African Culture and Ubuntu: Reflections of a South African in America," *World Business Academy: Perspectives* 17, no. 1 (2003): 2.
[25] *Ọmọlúàbí* is to the Yorubas of West Africa what *Ubuntu* is to the Ngunis of Southern Africa – a conceptualisation of (noble) personhood and useful exemplification of African identity. See Olusola Victor Olanipekun, "Omoluabi: Re-thinking the Concept of Virtue in Yoruba Culture and Moral System," *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* 10, no. 9 (2017): 219.

descent on demand – and, indeed, to anyone.[26]

2. Missiological implications for African churches in the diaspora and in Africa

With 70 per cent of Africans being under the age of 30 and the median age of African Christians being 19.5, there is tremendous potential locked up in the youthfulness of African Christianity.[27] However, unleashing this potential depends upon a mutual involvement of the *young* and the *old* coming side-by-side in God's mission. Joel's prophecy about God pouring out his Spirit "upon all flesh"[28] in the last days is already upon us – indeed since the day of Pentecost! – and it continues to have more pressing relevance with the passage of time. Andrew Walls's submission of this current era of Christian history pointing to a justifiable "hope for greater things"[29] is arguably truer in Africa than elsewhere. (Indeed, the shift in missiological discourses from "Kingdom" to "Spirit" seems more "at home" in Africa's enchanted cosmology than elsewhere.)[30] So while mission today excitedly looks like "finding out where the Holy Spirit is at work and joining in",[31] it is even more exciting that this Spirit is available to *all flesh* – young and old, male and female alike. The "spiritual experience and expertise of every member," as Father Koshy reminded us at Edinburgh 2010 conference, "must be recognised and drawn into the common spirituality of the local congregations".[32]

The Yorubas (West Africa) have a couple of helpful sayings that put this in perspective. They say, "An elder cannot be in the market and permit a child's head to rest askew (at the back of his mother)." In other words, to be an elder is to be capable of looking out for children and covering the oversights and blind spots that threaten their safety. In some other contexts, they will say, "The youth's hand cannot reach the rafters, and the elder's hand cannot enter the gourd" – that is, both the young and the old have unique contributions to make if only they will work together. These two sayings find definite intersection in a third saying: "A youth is wise, and the elder is wise: that is the principle by which people go about at Ifẹ̀" (Ifẹ̀ being the cradle of all Yorubas and, in this proverb, symbolising "all of life"). The wisdom in these sayings is that both the young and the old – and indeed, male and female – have something to offer in every area of life. The youths need the mentorship of those older than them and the older generation need the creativity and fresh expressions of the youths. African Christianity needs such mutuality that recognises the relevance of both the young and the old and makes both feel welcome in a church.

Specifically among diaspora African Christians, parents need to be more intentional in deepening the heritage consciousness of their children. They can do this, as Paul Ayokunle suggests, by "demonstrating genuine appreciation and regard for the beauty of their own culture".[33] Besides, older millennials (especially those deepened their roots in Africa and are now flapping their wings in the multicultural West, having migrated there more recently) need to model their appreciation for their cultural heritage to younger folks. Likewise, African diaspora pastors will need to embrace and learn how to do church multiculturally and intergenerationally so that the younger generation will find their churches more relatable and the opportunity for expressing their heritage without inferiority will flourish. It is high time young people in their twenties were incorporated into the leadership of our churches – which, according to the research findings, must be *multi-ethnic* and *multicultural* for AMCs to belong therein. Moreover, in discipling AMCs and those coming behind them, African churches – on the continent and beyond – will need to figure out how to redeem the traditional rites of passage – especially initiation – that used to prepare young men and young women for

[26] Joseph Ola and Anu Ola, "001 – Introduction to Ọmọlúàbí Podcast", podcast audio, *Omoluabi Podcast*, 25 January 2021, https://www.josephkolawole.org/omoluabi.

[27] See Africa Study Bible, "Why We Should Value our Youth," *TGC Africa*, 13 March 2020, https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/article/value-our-youth-africa-study-bible/; David E. Kiwuwa, "Africa is young. Why are its leaders so old?" *CNN*, 29 October 2015, https://edition.cnn.com/2015/10/15/africa/africas-old-mens-club-op-ed-david-e-kiwuwa/index.html.

[28] Acts 2:17, NRSV.

[29] Faith & Leadership, "Andrew Walls: An exciting period in Christian history," *Faith and Leadership*, 11 June 2011, https://www.faithandleadership.com/andrew-walls-exciting-period-christian-history.

[30] For example, Edinburgh 1910 conference was tagged "Advancing the Kingdom of Christ" while Edinburgh 2010 conference was tagged "Joining in with the Spirit".

[31] Kirsteen Kim, "Edinburgh 1910 to 2010: From Kingdom to Spirit," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 30, no. 2 (2010): 16.

[32] Fr Vineeth Koshy, *Youth Envisioning Ecumenical Mission: Shifting Ecumenical Mission Paradigms for Witnessing Christ Today* (Edinburgh, 2010): 1, http://www.wcc2006.info/fileadmin/files/edinburgh2010/files/conference_docs/Parallel1_Koshy_youth.pdf.

[33] Paul Ayokunle, "African Christian Parents and the Task of Parenting in the West," *Moya Chronicles* 2, no. 10 (2021): 2, https://missioafricanus.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Moya-Chronicles-13_compressed.pdf.

adulthood in different African communities.[34] Western education cannot suffice for such preparation. The fact that there were unchristian practices in some of these traditional rites is not sufficient ground to throw the baby out with the bath water. If there is a message that can be translated into any context, it is the Christian message. In any case, the African (diaspora) church needs both the Bible and helpful cultural values to ready her youth for what lies ahead.

CONCLUSION

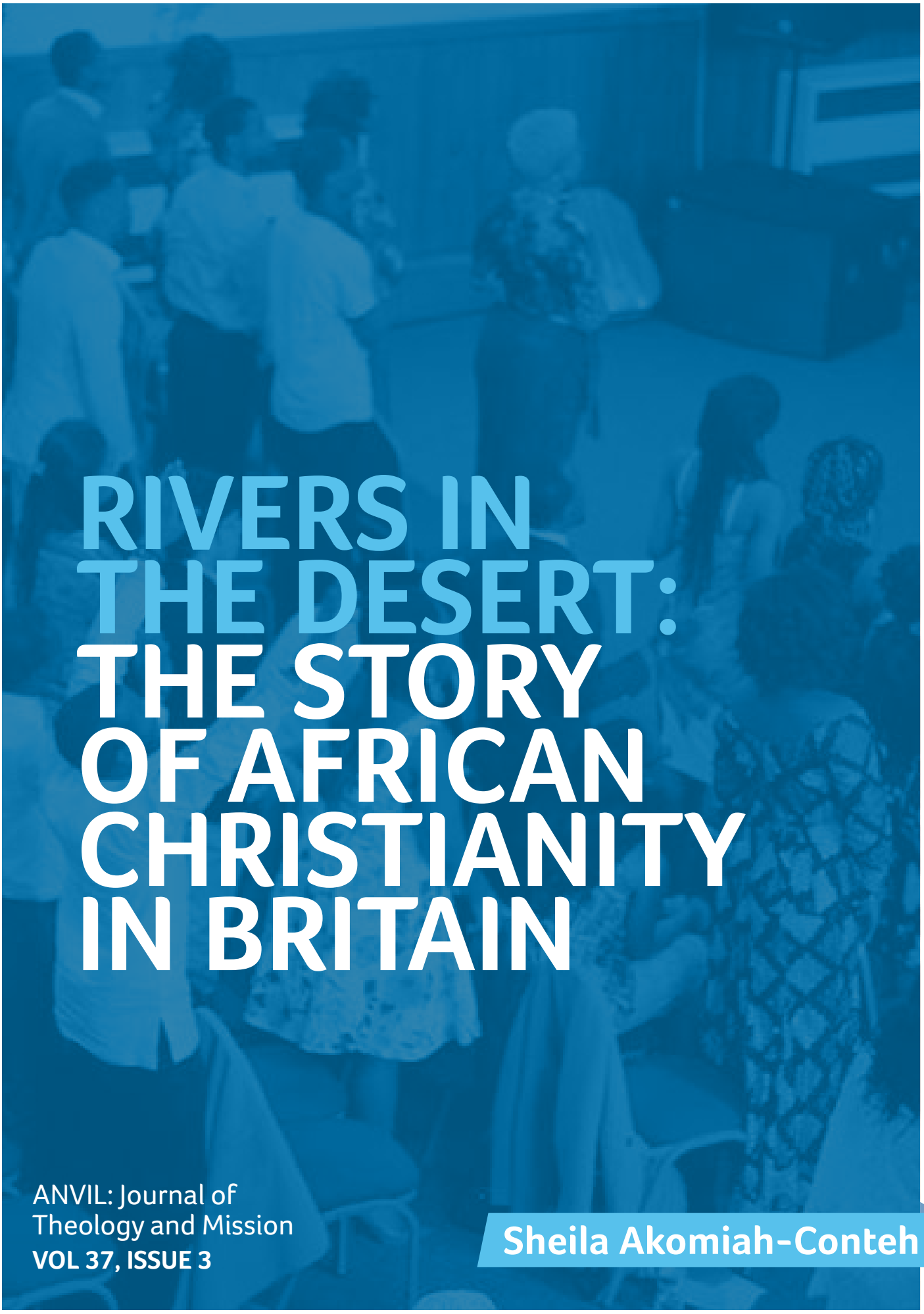
As the team at the Center for the Study of Global Christianity tells us, "A typical Christian today is a non-white woman living in the global South, with lower-than-average levels of societal safety and proper health care."[35] With Africa being home to most Christians across the world, that "non-white woman living in the global South" could very well be an African, and given Africa's median age (18),[36] she would likely be a young adult. The obvious likelihood is that sooner than later, the leaders of world Christianity will be today's AMCs. However, one cannot but wonder, when the time comes for Africa's youth to take the lead in global Christianity, whether they will be faithful enough to deliver a uniquely *African* contribution that will advance the mission of God. As Andrew Walls has occasionally reiterated, the fullness of Christ – which is our Christian goal – can only be realised by bringing together the totality of cross-cultural translations of the gospel and the totality of the experiences of different generations of Christians. Consequently, the necessity for African Christians to be both *African* and *Christian* without apology or feeling of inferiority wherever they find themselves is underscored by the supreme weightiness of *missio Dei*. Anything short of this withdraws from the beauty of the mosaic of God's unique revelation in Christ to different groups of people in different places at different eras. Indeed, Christians who give up their cultural identity in exchange for that of *another* sell themselves short on partaking of the true flavours of the fruit of Christianity among them – and worse, those who make them do so are standing in the way of the Light of the World. May a fire of intentionality come upon the church in Africa and its diaspora and birth deliberateness in her efforts to acknowledge the great gifts God has given to her youth and see to it that these gifts be delivered to the world at large for the sake of God's mission. Amen.

Joseph Ola holds master's degrees in African Christianity and in Biblical and Pastoral Theology from Liverpool Hope University. He is a pastor in the Apostolic Church Liverpool, a youth mentor, and the founder of Alive Mentorship Group – an online mentoring platform for thousands of young adults across over 60 nations. An alumnus of London Pioneer School, Joseph is the author of over 10 books and a trustee of Missio Africanus. He is happily married to Anu, with whom he co-hosts *Not Alone Today Podcast* and *Omolúàbí Podcast*. They are blessed with two boys.

[34] Some Christian communities in East Africa are already doing this. For example, see Godfrey Katumba, *Solemn Communion: A Critical Examination of the Current Practices Surrounding the Completion of Christian Initiation in Masaka Diocese (Uganda, East Africa)*, African Theological Studies 15 (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2019).

[35] Dr Gina A. Zurlo, "The World as 100 Christians," *Gordon–Conwell Theological Seminary*, 29 January 2020, https://www.gordonconwell.edu/blog/100christians/.

[36] Jeff Desjardins, "Mapped: The Median Age of the Population on Every Continent," *Visual Capitalist*, 15 February 2019, https://www.visualcapitalist.com/mapped-the-median-age-of-every-continent/.



RIVERS IN THE DESERT: THE STORY OF AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY IN BRITAIN

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Sheila Akomiah-Conteh

Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. (Isa. 43:18–19, KJV)

INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that the landscape of Christianity in Britain has changed drastically in the last 60 years. The predominant drivers of these changes have been secularisation and migration. British Christianity has seen steep numerical decline because of secularisation, and great diversity and some numerical growth at the same time, as a result of international migration.

The disintegration of Christendom from the twentieth century can be seen in the drastic decline in the power and popularity of the church. This "social process of religion losing power, popularity and plausibility" is what is widely referred to as secularisation.[1] While various commentators may disagree about the timing, causes and measurement of secularisation, it is generally acknowledged and accepted as the most prominent cause of the demise of Christianity in Britain in the post-Christendom era.[2]

Britain's era of Christendom with its widespread social appeal and church attendance was premised on certain structural and ideological social conditions that are no longer in place. We now live in a radically transformed sociocultural and political era and must therefore begin to consider the available agencies of our age that promote or can potentially restimulate Christian growth. The former archetype of Christian Britain may be slipping away, but as Isaiah 43:18–19 highlights, to comprehend and embrace the new thing God is doing, it is sometimes necessary to let go of the past and forget the former things. Such renewal and refocusing of the mind can lead to clarity and appreciation of the new move of God. In this regard, Stuart Murray notes, in *Church After Christendom*, "Christendom is fading. We may grieve or celebrate its passing, but we cannot revive, restore or recover it."[3] A paradigm shift regarding the extant and future British church is already underway. It is time to stop talking about historic decline and start thinking about what is new in contemporary British Christianity.

In this article, I trace the development of one of the most significant contributors to numerical growth and ethnic and theological diversity to British Christianity in recent times. I highlight some of the distinct contributions and ongoing impact of African and other Black Majority Churches on Christianity in contemporary Britain.

THE PHENOMENON OF BLACK CHURCH GROWTH IN BRITAIN

The prospects for the church in Britain have been defined by an enduring narrative of decline for many decades but something new is happening. The presence and influence of old and established institutions is undoubtedly waning, but many new and innovative groups are emerging. New forms of Christian growth are occurring all over the country amid the general climate of decline. These pockets of growth are like ways in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. One of the most significant contributors to these pockets of church growth in contemporary Britain is immigration, with a consequent rise of new churches, especially those from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ethnic minority as "a group within a community which has different national or cultural traditions from the main population".[4] This includes Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and "Other White" communities. According to the Institute of Race Relations, BME is the terminology normally used in the UK to describe all people of non-white descent.[5] The term "Other White", on the other hand, is a classification of ethnicity in the United Kingdom, referring to persons who consider themselves "white" but are neither British nor Irish.[6] There has been an explosion of BME and Other White churches in all the major regions of the UK in the last 40 years.[7]

One of the most recent regional investigations into the phenomenon of new churches was undertaken

[1] Steve Bruce, "The Secularisation of Scotland," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 14, no. 2 (2014): 193, doi.org/10.1080/1474225X.2014.931183.

[2] Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800–2000* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001); Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

[3] Stuart Murray, *Church After Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012), 7.

[4] "Meaning of ethnic minority in English," *Oxford Dictionaries*, accessed 6 August 2021, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ethnic_minority.

[5] "Definitions," *Institute of Race Relations*, accessed 6 August 2021, http://www.irr.org.uk/research/statistics/definitions/.

[6] Office for National Statistics, "Ethnic group, national identity and religion: Measuring equality: A guide for the collection and classification of ethnic group, national identity and religion data in the UK" (London: Office for National Statistics, 2013): 22.

[7] David Goodhew, ed., *Church Growth in Britain: 1980 to the Present* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

in Scotland in 2019.[8] Here, it was discovered that 65 per cent of all new churches planted in the city of Glasgow in the years 2000–16 were ethnic minority or BME churches. In the BME church category, those that are led and primarily attended by Black or Black British Christians of Caribbean and sub-Saharan African heritage are often known as Black Majority Churches (BMCs). Some Black church leaders resent this designation due to the fact that it is not they themselves who have called their churches "Black churches" or their version of the Christian faith "Black Christianity". These names have been created and imposed to a large extent, by white commentators and observers. Black church leaders feel therefore that Black people should not assume that the intention behind these names is positive or favourable.[9] Although this assigned description is controversial and has been widely challenged by several Black church leaders and advocates in the past and present,[10] I will maintain it for the sake of clarity, and to serve as the provisional starting point for our discussion.

BMCs are currently some of the fastest growing churches in Britain. They also have some of the biggest congregations in many urban centres in the UK. For instance, the 2012 London church census reported a 16 per cent increase in church attendance in the city since the last count in 2005. This growth was mainly attributed to the proliferation of new BMCs in the capital. BMCs were responsible for 28 per cent of overall church attendance in London, and nearly half (48 per cent) of all church attendance in inner London. Overall, it is estimated that one in five (19 per cent) Black Londoners go to church every week.[11]

Another detailed study in the London borough of Southwark found that at least 240 new BMC congregations had been founded in the borough.[12] In her report in *The Guardian* in 2016, Harriet Sherwood highlighted that the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), a West African-originated denomination, is now thought to be the fastest growing church in Britain, with over 700 branches nationwide.[13] In the same report, British church statistician Dr Peter Brierley also observed that RCCG has now overtaken longer-established Pentecostal churches in the UK such as the Assemblies of God and Elim.[14]

In the Scottish region, new research shows that 79 per cent of the new ethnic minority churches founded in the city of Glasgow in 2000–16 were African Churches.[15] Modern-day discussions of mission and Christianity in the UK will therefore be incomplete, unbalanced and even misleading without the mention, inclusion and acknowledgement of the growing presence, prominence and contribution of new churches, and Black Majority Churches in particular, to the contemporary historiography of British Christianity.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ORIGINS

The rise of Black Majority Christianity in Britain is usually traced to the late 1940s mass migration of Caribbean peoples to the UK and, later, the arrival of other Black Christians from various countries in Africa. The rejection and difficulties faced by these new migrants as they sought to integrate themselves into the local culture and into existing Christian congregations subsequently resulted in the foundation of various independent, Black-led churches. These new groups also arose to serve the distinctive spiritual and social needs of the new Black Christians, hitherto unfulfilled by the existing British churches. The inability or unwillingness of British churches to meet the distinct spiritual and social needs of Black migrant Christian communities remains one of the core reasons for the continued existence and massive growth of Black Majority Christianity in contemporary Britain.

The origins of Black Majority Churches in Britain, however, date further back to the beginning of the twentieth century when one of the first Pentecostal churches in Britain was established by an African

[8] Sheila Akomiah-Conteh, "The changing landscape of the church in post-Christendom Britain: new churches in Glasgow, 2000–2016" (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 2019).

[9] Patrick Kalilombe, "Black Christianity in Britain," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 20, no. 2 (1997): 306–24, doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1997.9993963.

[10] Joel Edwards, ed., *'Let's Praise Him Again': An African–Caribbean Perspective on Worship* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 1992), 12–35.

[11] Peter Brierley, *Capital Growth: What the 2012 London Church Census Reveals* (London: ADBC Publishers, 2014).

[12] Andrew Rogers, "Being Built Together: A Story of New Black Majority Churches in the London Borough of Southwark" (University of Roehampton, 2013), https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/globalassets/documents/humanities/being20built20togethersb203-7-13.pdf.

[13] Harriet Sherwood, "Pentecostal church looks to white Britons to boost congregations," *The Guardian* 30 December 2016, accessed 10 August 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/30/pentecostal-church-looks-to-white-britons-to-boost-congregations.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Akomiah-Conteh, "The changing landscape of the church in post-Christendom Britain".

businessman in Peckham in 1906.[16] Thomas Kwame Brem-Wilson was born into an affluent family of merchants in Dixcove, in Ghana, West Africa, in 1855. He served as the schoolmaster of a missionary school before his migration to Britain in 1901. The Revd Brem-Wilson was one of the first people to be baptised in the Holy Spirit during the inception of Pentecostalism in Britain.[17] In response to the Pentecostal revival, he founded the first Black-led Pentecostal church in Britain, then known as Sumner Road Chapel, in 1906, leading it until his death in 1929.

After the death of Brem-Wilson, the church's leadership dynamics changed as several white ministers took over its management because of its affiliation to the Apostolic Church and Assemblies of God denominations. This may have blurred the historical origins of the church as the first Black-led Pentecostal Church in Britain. Now rebranded as Sureway International Christian Ministries, the church is still active and is now led by the Revd Dr Steve Armah, another Ghanaian missionary.

Unlike its successors, therefore, the first Black church in Britain did not develop as a response to social struggle but primarily from a missiological initiative. That is not to say that the development of the later Black churches was not missional, but it highlights the primary impetus behind the rise of the Black churches in the UK at different points in history. Additionally, although it was colloquially referred to as the "Black man's church" in those days (mainly because it was Black-led), Brem-Wilson's church was a very multicultural church with a diverse ethnic mix.[18] Apart from Brem-Wilson, the academic Roswith Gerloff also notes that there were traces of indigenous African Christian faith in Hornsey in the 1930s.[19]

The re-emergence of Black Majority Churches in Britain from the Windrush era in the late 1940s was therefore a radical expansion of the Black church movement on a much larger scale and under a different set of circumstances. As previously highlighted, this development was largely the result of Black Christians feeling alienated and marginalised in British society, both secular and religious. It was also in response to the desire to maintain a sense of cultural identity and support in an unfamiliar world. BMCs served and still serve as places of refuge for many new migrants to Britain.

In summary, two main types of Black churches have developed in Britain: those established through purely (largely?) missional imperatives in the 1900s like Brem-Wilson's church, where issues like racism were not an underlying cause for their foundation, and those born out of social struggle, identity and need, as well as mission, from the 1940s. The latter include those formed through migration from the Caribbean and the many Black African churches that formed from the 1980s onwards. In more recent times, several new, independent and mainly African-led churches have been founded here in Britain with distinctly missional agendas, such as "reverse mission", in a bid to re-Christianise Britain. However, the main driver of all of these movements has been migration.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BLACK MAJORITY CHURCHES IN BRITAIN

Having considered the origins of BMCs in Britain and the migratory trends in their formation, it is important to ask to what extent and in what ways they are transforming the landscape of Christianity in Britain.

The earnestness of Black Christianity's missionary outreach both to Black people and to others is an area of British Christian life not often well acknowledged but one that has been a great success story. The religious associations of minority groups are usually treated as marginal and as having little impact on the religious establishment of the dominant society,[20] but this has not been the case with Black Christianity in Britain. Black Caribbean and African Christian migration has brought many dynamic, unique and enduring changes to British Christian life and British Society in general. I will highlight a few of these distinctive qualities and contributions.

RESACRALISING SACRED PLACES

The physicality of churches and chapels play a powerful role in popular perceptions of religion in Britain. As such, empty churches are frequently cited by critics and the media as evidence of large-scale religious decline in the United Kingdom. The conversion of places of worship into places of secular use such as houses, offices and entertainment venues is now a common occurrence in Britain, but some new churches are reversing this trend. One of the most significant but rarely known

[16] Babatunde Adedibu, "Brem-Wilson, Thomas Kawa," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* (2018), accessed 16 August 2021, https://dacb.org/stories/ghana/brem-wilson/.
[17] Thomas Ball Barratt, *When the Fire Fell: An Outline of My Life* (Oslo: Alfons Hansen & Sønner), 1927), 150.
[18] Adedibu, "Brem-Wilson".
[19] Roswith I. H. Gerloff, *A Plea for British Black Theologies: The Black Church Movement in Britain in its transatlantic cultural and theological Interaction with special reference to the Pentecostal Oneness (Apostolic) and Sabbatarian Movements* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang., 1992), 44.
[20] Steve Bruce, "Secularization and Church Growth in the United Kingdom," *Journal of Religion in Europe* 6, no. 3 (2013): 277.

contributions of Black Majority Churches to Britain's Christian heritage is the acquisition of historic and closed or out-of-use church buildings. Because they are newcomers, one of the challenges frequently faced by new churches in Britain is obtaining suitable places for worship. Many resort to renting public spaces or sharing church buildings with other existing congregations. Increasingly, however, many BMCs in particular are procuring spaces for themselves on the Christian landscape by buying church buildings from dwindling, historic congregations. Although creating their own worship space is the foremost motivation, another key reason for this is to prevent historic church buildings from being lost or sold for secular uses.

Therefore, in their bid to create spaces for themselves, BMCs are also helping to preserve the heritage of British Christianity. There are numerous examples of this in parts of the country where BMCs have a strong presence. Here in Scotland, almost all the major West African Pentecostal Church denominations, such as the Church of Pentecost, Deeper Christian Life Ministry, the Redeemed Christian Church of God and Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, own and worship in buildings acquired from historic church groups. The Church of Pentecost, a denomination that has its origins in Ghana and over 20,000 members in the UK, raises annual funds ("Project Offerings") to support the acquisition or refurbishment of such buildings for worship. In this regard, BMCs are resacralising or restoring sacred spaces in Britain as places of divine worship.

Furthermore, by buying historic church buildings, BMCs are establishing themselves as permanent members of the British Christian community. They are sending out the message that they exist for serious mission and are here to stay. They are also integrating and establishing themselves as authentic members of local communities. The designation of "immigrant" churches commonly assigned to BMCs and other ethnic minority churches in Britain can give the erroneous impression that they are merely exclusive cultural groups, not authentically British and do not do authentic mission. An overwhelming majority of the members of these churches are, however, legal British citizens, including their second-generation members, many of whom are British-born. In this vein, the difficulties, harshness and rejections faced by the Windrush Christian generation may not be as acute in this era. Nonetheless, contemporary Black British Christians still struggle for acceptance as authentic members of the British Christian community and, most importantly, as authentic partners in mission. Hence, the Swiss theologian Hollenweger wrote, "Christians in Britain prayed for many years for revival, and when it came they did not recognise it because it was black."[21]

One of the criticisms often levelled against BMCs in Britain is that they have not been successful in attracting or proselytising white populations. Their congregations are usually Black and may also be mono-national. Admittedly, many BMCs have had little success in this area although it is their ultimate missional goal to "win" white British souls for Christ – and there are many reasons for this deficiency. Nevertheless, it is of equal importance to note that they are still reaching and meeting the spiritual and social needs of a distinct and authentic British Christian community – one that the traditional British churches have also so far been wildly unsuccessful in attracting or catering for. Therefore, a Congolese church discipling and reaching out to other British Congolese Christians and non-Christians alike in their community is still doing mission in Britain. Some critics shun the growth and success of BMCs in Britain with comments such as "they are only reaching their

Photos: BMCs are resacralising or restoring sacred spaces in Britain as places of divine worship.

[21] Walter J. Hollenweger, "Foreword" to Gerloff, *A Plea for British Black Theologies*, ix.

own people" – as if mission in Britain is only valid if it is targeted at white Britons. God's mission is to everyone, everywhere, and people are of equal worth in terms of salvation, regardless of where they are "fished". The missional accomplishments of BMCs in Britain therefore deserve equal recognition and celebration.

SACRALISING SECULAR SPACES

The increasing presence and activity of BMCs is making Christianity more physically visible in contemporary British society. Latest figures from the city of London show that Black Christians attend church more than any other group on a given Sunday.[22] Although they make up just 14 per cent of the population, they account for at least 48 per cent of all church attendance in the city. It is not an uncommon sight to see smartly dressed African families or individuals commuting to church on a Sunday in many urban cities in the UK.

In his project *Being Built Together*, Andrew Rogers of Roehampton University counted a minimum of 240 BMCs in Southwark, South London. These churches were predominantly African majority, especially West African. The area is now believed to have the greatest concentration of African Christianity outside of Africa, not only in Europe but in the world. Signs of this dramatic development are clearly evident walking down the Old Kent Road, a major artery of the borough, where one can locate at least 25 African churches in just a 1.5-mile radius. Black Christianity is therefore not only making Christianity more visible in Britain but also transforming the geographies of local communities.

BMCs in Britain also hold church services in some of the most unlikely locations. Due to space constraints, BMCs will worship anywhere they can find accommodation. This may include public or community halls, schools and even hotels. African churches are particularly adept at adapting unusual spaces for worship purposes. In my research on new churches in Glasgow, I came across several African churches that worshipped in unusual places such as converted warehouses, industrial offices, transformed garages, adapted residential homes and in shops on the high street. The most interesting example I found of this phenomenon was a Nigerian church that worshipped in a converted shop sandwiched between a butcher's and an off-licence on a busy street. Members of local communities are therefore encountering Christian worship in places where they least expect it. In this way, BMCs are creating a visible Christian presence (sacralising secular spaces) in the community.

The lack of suitable premises to use as places of worship also gives BMCs high mobility. It is not unlikely for an African church to worship on multiple sites before finally settling down in a permanent location. This is also one of the key reasons why they are easily missed and consequently, undercounted in large-scale surveys. Multiple and at times no known addresses can make them hard to locate and verify. Many BMCs, especially less established first-generation ones, may also have minimal official presence on the internet or in other parachurch statistics. Such undercounting is therefore difficult to avoid without researchers taking to the streets on a Sunday and conducting small-scale, grass root-level research. The high mobility of BMCs similarly promotes the visibility of Christianity. However, it may also hinder churches from building strong ties and lasting relationships in local communities because they are not always there for long.

In conclusion, BMCs are not detached groups or "holy huddles" isolated from the rest of society. They are interactive, dynamic and recognisable communities in many societies. Their growing presence and activities in the public arena are also helping to make visible the continued presence and practice of Christianity in post-

Photo: Some churches meet in unusual locations, such as this Nigerian church between an off-licence and a butcher's

[22] Peter Brierley, *Capital Growth*.

Christendom Britain, challenging the usual prevailing narrative of regression and the disappearance of faith communities from public life.

REVITALISING BRITISH CHRISTIANITY

One unique feature of BMC Christianity is its vibrancy and liveliness. African Christian expression is particularly bold, bright and loud. Church meetings are happy gatherings, the dress code is bold and beautiful, praise and worship is a passionate whole-body exercise, preaching is interactive and dynamic, offering is generous, and prayer is serious and involves all. Almost all the duties performed in African churches are also voluntary including, at times, the ministry of pastors and other key leaders. For example, more than 90 per cent of the African churches investigated in Glasgow during my research had pastors who were also full-time workers, ranging from nurses to professional bankers.

The liveliness of African churches has sometimes earned

Photos: One unique feature of BMC Christianity is its vibrancy and liveliness.

them the description "happy clappy churches", although this is at times used in a derogatory sense. Nonetheless, African Christian worship services are gatherings of upliftment, inspiration and joy. Their members do not go to church just to fulfil some burdensome religious duty. They choose to go because they find church fellowship and theology practically useful and enjoyable. This enthusiasm and general excitement about faith brings vibrancy to local communities and also has the potential to invigorate other churches and Christians. For instance, the minister of a neighbouring church used to attend the service at my church (an African Pentecostal church) every Sunday morning particularly during praise and worship time because it made him feel spiritually and physically energised. He then hoped to transmit this energy into his own church service and to his congregation.

The vibrancy and enthusiasm of African churches is further conveyed into evangelism and missional activity. African Christians in particular have a natural missional imperative. For most of them, evangelism is second nature. In fact, many African churches in the diaspora are started by ordinary individuals who feel a sense of duty to share the gospel wherever they are. The evangelistic strategies employed by African churches are therefore bold, confident and people-centred. Traditional styles such as tract distribution, door-to-door, open-air street evangelism and personal interaction are commonly used.

Evangelism is also usually targeted at white British people. This is where a mismatch between methodology and goal may be affecting success. The traditional evangelistic approaches used by most African churches are tried and tested methods that are usually very successful in the African context – but not so much in a postmodern, post-Christian, privacy-cherishing society like contemporary Britain. African churches therefore need to learn, create and adapt appropriate evangelistic approaches for reaching people in the British context.

DIVERSIFYING BRITISH THEOLOGY

BMCs have brought not only cultural but also theological diversity to British Christianity. Specifically, they have brought Pentecostal theology to the forefront of contemporary British Christianity. The majority of new African churches in Britain are Pentecostal churches. Consequently, Britain is now home to hundreds more Pentecostal denominations and thousands more Pentecostal churches than it had 50 years ago. The 2016 Scottish Church Census also found that the number of Pentecostals in Scotland has tripled since 1984, growing at a rate of 3.8 per cent per annum.[23]

Pentecostal denominations are also leading church

[23] Peter Brierley, "The Fourth Scottish Church Census: The Results Unveiled" (Brierley Consultancy: 2017): 20, https://www.dropbox.com/s/4tb7ehkxtt6yjwv/The%20Fourth%20Scottish%20Church%20Census%202016.pdf?dl=0

planting across the UK. The RCCG, a Pentecostal denomination from Nigeria, is now the fastest-growing church in Britain. Started in Britain in 1988, they have now planted around 760 churches all over the country. The traditional British church denominations are in general planting less.

In Scotland, only 6 per cent of the 110 new churches started in Glasgow in 2000–16 were planted by the established denominations.[24] Specifically, seven of the new churches belonged to four established or historic denominations in Scotland. These were the Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland, the Reformed Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Union of Scotland. The Church of Scotland established one new congregation in the Whiteinch area of Glasgow in 2000. It was the only new church plant by the denomination in 16 years. Pentecostalism is generally the fastest-growing expression of Christianity globally and particularly in Africa. British Christianity must generally embrace more closely and learn from the attributes that make Pentecostalism such a successful global trend. African Pentecostalism and African Christianity in general have many practical and theological lessons to teach the British church about faith and about living in faith in a post-Christian context. The concept of embodied faith – faith that is tangible, practised and worked out through our lived experiences – will be one such lesson. Many Africans understand faith and religion not as merely abstract but as lived experience. Religion must therefore have real-life implications like meeting real needs – be it rain during a drought or healing when one is sick. Such an outlook breeds constant expectancy, excitement, reverence for God and vibrant faith.

CONCLUSION

The proliferation of Black Majority Churches, and African churches in particular, is undoubtedly one of the most notable developments in contemporary British Christian history. Whereas all the older and traditional Christian denominations in Britain are in serious decline, there is little evidence that BMCs are slowing in their growth. The concentrations of BMCs in British urban centres may well have an impact beyond their numbers in terms of stimulating the wider church. Their continued growth also points to a rather more nuanced picture of church growth and decline in the UK, where urban religious landscapes have now changed dramatically over recent decades due to rapid BMC expansion. No space is out of bounds for the Black Christianity movement in Britain. Like rivers in a desert, African churches in Britain continue to be key sources of hope for the future of British Christianity, and refreshment for dry and thirsty souls.

Sheila Akomiah-Conteh is a Ghanaian scholar based in Scotland. Her doctorate thesis explored the changing landscape of the church in Scotland with a specific focus on new and emerging churches in the city of Glasgow. She is a researcher and tutor in religious studies and philosophy.

[24] Akomiah-Conteh, "The changing landscape of the church in post-Christendom Britain".

AFRICAN CONGREGATIONS ADAPTING TO COVID-19: CONVERSATIONS WITH AFRICAN CHRISTIAN NURSES IN BRITAIN

Harvey C. Kwiyani and Paul Ayokunle

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This article is about COVID-19 and the African diaspora churches. It discusses the impact of COVID-19 on some African congregations in Britain, with a particular focus on the ways in which those congregations have adjusted to the scary reality of the coronavirus pandemic that started in the UK during the early months of 2020.

The research that informs the article started out as informal conversations with African health workers in north-west England, most of them Malawian, Zimbabwean and Nigerian. Later, a two-phase formal research project was carried out in six congregations in Liverpool, using semi-structured interviews and participant observation as tools for data collection. The first phase explored the general adaptive changes that the congregations were making in response to the pandemic, especially when it became evident that Black and brown people were disproportionately affected by the virus. The second phase focused on the theological disruption caused by the virus among African Pentecostals, for whom God is believed to be Jehovah Rapha – "God, our Healer". We spoke to seven African hospital nurses and their pastors to hear about how they reflected on God in their preaching in the context of the virus. The choice to speak to nurses was very intentional – they lived at the intersection between the Pentecostal faith of an African Christian (which places a great emphasis on God's healing power) and the frontlines of the fight against COVID-19 in hospitals where they see first-hand the havoc that was caused by the virus. This article is about the first phase – the shifting posturing of the African churches in the UK towards the pandemic. It is about the changes that African congregations made in response to the virus. For this reason, this article is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the general theory of adaptive leadership as a basis for our discourse on the changes that the congregations have made to adjust themselves to the threat of the virus. The second section discusses the changes made by the congregations – reorganising themselves to meet online, silent prayer meetings in family bubbles, using face masks and hand sanitisers during their services – plus many more and how they have justified these among their members. The third section discusses the ongoing implications of these changes in African diaspora ecclesiology.

THE DISRUPTIVE CHALLENGE OF COVID-19

Coronavirus has been the greatest disruptive challenge of the century so far. It has touched the entire world and has fundamentally changed the way we live. When COVID-19 started out in China in 2019, long before it reached the shores of Britain, its implications on our Christian ecclesiology were clear. By the time Britain entered its first lockdown in March 2020, the challenge of not only the virus itself but also the threat of countless deaths among congregational members, and the challenge lockdown (with the subsequent limitations on fellowship) posed to African churches, were immense. The sense of despair was beyond anything we could imagine. Many of them feared for their congregations here in the UK while also trying to stay strong for their communities back in Africa. It was a scary time. Among their many concerns, they wondered how they could continue to *be* church during the lockdown. Would their fellowships survive the weeks or months of no physical meetings? How many of their members would still be there when the pandemic came to an end? Most importantly, how would their members continue to support their churches financially? In many ways, most of these concerns remain unresolved at the end of 2021. With the benefit of hindsight, we know that when the lockdowns lifted, the government discouraged congregants from singing. How could we have a singing and dancing congregation of the Church of Pentecost, for example, without music? How could they worship in a strange land without singing the songs of the Lord? For the African churches in general, prayer times are quite vocal, usually just as loud as singing, and therefore they needed to find new ways of praying. In addition, social distancing meant neither handshakes nor hugs were allowed and for Africans used to a communal culture, that was not a small challenge.

> "Between the first lockdown and the last one, it became extremely evident that COVID-19 affected Black and brown people more adversely than white people."

Between the first lockdown (March 2020) and the last one (May–June 2021), it became extremely evident that COVID-19 affected Black and brown people more adversely than white people across the country. Research upon research proved that African and Asian communities were often at the frontline of the battle against the virus, and many of them lost their lives in the process. The Government reports:

> During the first wave of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (24 January 2020 to 11 September

> 2020), people from all ethnic minority groups (except for women in the Chinese or "White Other" ethnic groups) had higher rates of death involving the coronavirus compared with the White British population. The rate of death involving COVID-19 was highest for the Black African group (3.7 times greater than for the White British group for males, and 2.6 greater for females), followed by the Bangladeshi (3.0 for males, 1.9 for females), Black Caribbean (2.7 for males, 1.8 for females) and Pakistani (2.2 for males, 2.0 for females) ethnic groups.[1]

For Africans, most of those deaths disrupted congregational lives. Churches lost many leaders, pastors, mothers and fathers – most of whom were frontline workers like doctors, care workers, shop assistants and many others. For a community far away from home, all those deaths had massive implications. Each death, often buried in seclusion as it were, left unimaginable pain in congregations and communities and, for many of those, no possibility to find closure. Yes, coronavirus has affected everyone in the UK, having killed more than 130,000 people in 18 months,[2] but the African community has suffered the worst, and the African congregation in the UK has both taken the beating and been the mainstay of the African community, and, in a sense, has literally weathered the storm.

As we write this article in the summer of 2021, Britain has been on and off in lockdowns for more than one year. The social climate of the country seems to be changing, with the economy opening up again, and congregational life in all churches slowly returning. The true image of the African church in Britain after COVID-19 is yet to emerge. Summer holidays affect church attendance; many pastors are not sure who is coming back and who is not. As will be argued later in the article, it appears to us that the pandemic has left the African church, in general, feeling isolated and vulnerable. This is also the general feeling among Black people, especially those of middle age and older. In addition, there is a wider-spread pandemic fatigue among African church leaders and their members in Britain. Our interviewees were clear on this, and that they needed to find new ways to energise their congregations for life after COVID-19.

ENGAGING ADAPTIVE CHALLENGES

One of us (Harvey) has argued elsewhere that migration itself is a form of adaptive challenge that many African pastors leading churches in Britain never get to process well.[3] Adaptive leadership theory understands problems to be either *technical* or *adaptive challenges* though, of course, sometimes, problems can be both technical and adaptive.[4] Technical challenges are complex problems, but which are easily diagnosed and addressed through an organisation's existing repertoire of skills. They are those problems that the leader's authoritative expertise or the routine operating procedures of the organisation can handle.[5] Adaptive challenges are often complex multilayered problems with no clear-cut definitions or easy identification. Unlike technical challenges, adaptive challenges lack straightforward solutions. Organisations facing them have to look beyond their structures, procedures or resources. In fact, the task of dealing with such problems lies beyond the leader alone; they must be shared with whomever they are leading. Adaptive challenges, by definition, have no known solution readily available and, thus, demand experimental behavioural or core value changes in an organisation, often leading to new discoveries. As Richard Pascale et al. put it,

> [Adaptive] challenges often demand a leap in capability, and solutions are unproven or unknown.... Facing such an adaptive challenge, we must throw out... familiar organizational principles and processes and adopt strange and unfamiliar ones.[6]

They are different from *technical* challenges for which leaders already possess the skills needed to find an

[1] Office for National Statistics, "Updating ethnic contrasts in deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19), England: 24 January 2020 to 31 March 2021," *Office for National Statistics,* 26 May 2021, https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/updatingethniccontrastsindeathsinvolvingthecoronaviruscovid19englandandwales/24january2020to31march2021. Also see Sala Abdalla, "A reflection on the plight of black, Asian and minority ethnic communities during the COVID-19 pandemic," *Royal College of Surgeons of England*, 20 August 2020, https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/news-and-events/blog/a-reflection-on-the-plight-of-the-bame-community-during-the-pandemic/.

[2] 138,852 as of 19 October 2021 according to https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/deaths.

[3] William Doe Kugbeadjor and Harvey C. Kwiyani, "Exploring Adaptive Challenges Faced by African Missionaries in Britain: The Case of the Church of Pentecost," *Missio Africanus Journal of African Missiology* 1, no. 2 (2016): 4–15.

[4] Sharon Daloz Parks, *Leadership Can Be Taught: A Bold Approach for a Complex World* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2005), 10.

[5] Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2009), 19.

[6] Richard T. Pascale, Mark Milleman and Linda Gioja, *Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business* (New York: Crown, 2000), 13–14.

applicable solution.[7] Rather, they reveal the weaknesses of an organisation's once-effective values, practices and survival strategies, which are now rendered ineffective in the organisation's current context.[8] They require organisations to reimagine themselves into new being – new knowledge, new habits and new practices – from both the leader and their staff. They are not easy to tackle. In fact, resistance often arises due to the sacrifices, trade-offs and changes in people's beliefs, values, priorities and roles that these challenges require.[9] This process of directly confronting difficult issues leads the people to make critical and uneasy adjustments that are often "value laden and stir up people's emotions".[10] For instance, the changes may involve the preservation of some organisational heritage while trading off certain legacy practices, traditional values or professional identities. As such, adaptive changes are tough and require sacrifices.[11]

Tackling adaptive challenges is a major rationale behind the development of adaptive leadership. This kind of challenge is not easy to spot and defies solutions within current organisational structure, knowledge or resources.[12] Although Ronald Heifetz's *Leadership Without Easy Answers* was the foremost literature to express the basic idea of adaptive leadership ,[13] and his theory was to a considerable extent informed by Margaret Wheatley's *Leadership and the New Science*,[14] it was in *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* that the scholar and colleagues developed a framework for the concept.[15] Drawing from systems and service orientations, and biology, Ronald Heifetz and colleagues speak of adaptive leadership as the "practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive".[16] Thriving, here, comes from evolutionary biology, in which an effective adaptation involves three processes: preservation of essential DNA for a species' survival, doing away with non-essential DNA for the current needs of the species, and development of DNA arrangements that best serve the species' present realities. Successful adaptation – *thriving* – would involve taking the best from history (whether living systems or organisations) into the future.[17] Again, adaptive leadership is never an individual adventure. By implication, the leader is never solely responsible for providing solutions to challenges. Indeed, responses to challenges are jointly discerned by both the leader and the people.

Treating adaptive challenges as technical problems remain the most common cause of failure in leadership.[18] In other words, *nothing fails like success*, for when organisations leverage on past successes, failing to sustain invention and creativity in responding to newly emerging challenges of different nature, doom is most certain.[19] Hence, adaptive leadership must be meticulous enough to differentiate between technical problems and adaptive challenges when addressing tough situations. Of course, more often than not, a blend of the two kinds of challenges could occur. In this case, problem definition is clear but no direct solution is available from the existing repertoire of resources and skills.[20]

[7] Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 13–14.

[8] Kugbeadjor and Kwiyani, "Exploring Adaptive Challenges Faced by African Missionaries in Britain," 7.

[9] Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory & Practice*, 7th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2016), 262.

[10] *Ibid.*, 264.

[11] Gabrielle Ka Wai Wong and Diana L. H. Chan, "Adaptive Leadership in Academic Libraries," *Library Management* 39, no. 1/2 (2018): 108, doi.org/10.1108/LM-06-2017-0060.

[12] Glenda Campbell-Evans, Jan Gray and Bridget Leggett, "Adaptive leadership in school boards in Australia: an emergent model," *School Leadership & Management* 34, no. 5 (2014): 546, http://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2014.938038.

[13] Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994). The concept of adaptive leadership would later be expounded by Pascale et. al. in *Surfing the Edge of Chaos*.

[14] Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Learning About Organization from an Orderly Universe* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 1992).

[15] Heifetz et al., *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, 9. Some of the works which immediately evolved to build on the subject are Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2017); Dean Williams, *Real Leadership: Helping People and Organizations Face their Toughest Challenges*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2005); Parks, *Leadership Can Be Taught*.

[16] Heifetz et al., *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, 14.

[17] John Roberto, "Becoming an Adaptive Leader: Based on the Work of Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky," *Lifelong Faith* 5, no. 1 (2011): 26, https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/becoming_an_adaptive_leader.pdf.

[18] Heifetz et al., *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership,* 19.

[19] Kerry Patterson et al., *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012), ix.

[20] Campbell-Evans et al., "Adaptive Leadership in School Boards in Australia," 546.

Again, leadership failures often occur when adaptive problems are treated as technical in nature.[21] Of course, adaptive challenges require new learnings from both the leader and the people; hence, tackling this sort of problem becomes difficult.[22] Additionally, as the forms of changes needed in adaptive leadership process are often "value-laden, and stir up people's emotions",[23] the changes could involve sacrificing legacy practices or traditional values around which people have developed strong connections. Nonetheless, if these new learnings are permitted by both leader and the people, *adaptive work* is achieved. This is the goal of adaptive leadership. The leader mobilises the people to define and directly confront adaptive challenges towards this end.[24]

COVID-19 AS AN ADAPTIVE CHALLENGE

The pandemic is an excellent example of an adaptive challenge. To begin with, it has radically changed the way congregations behave, forcing them to shift some aspects of their worship services to online platforms. For instance, many African congregations in Britain have continued to do their Bible study or conduct their prayer meetings online or, where possible, using a hybrid platform. When they meet for worship, many are still practising social distancing in church – the members sit in family bubbles with minimal contact with other families. Family visits are yet to resume for most pastors and, when pastors visit their members, extreme care is taken to make sure everyone is safe. Thus, COVID-19 is not a technical challenge. By all means, it has been an adaptive one and the African church's response in the UK has comprised letting go of what used to be and learning new skills, habits and practices for the new context. Our research brought to our attention many surprising themes related to African congregations' response to COVID-19 in the UK. For the remainder of this article, we will focus on three key issues:

1. theology (and this includes their sermons and their talk about mission and evangelism);
2. aspects of their communal life as a fellowship; and
3. their response to government guidance on the pandemic.

THEOLOGY

We learned about the theological convictions of our research participants largely from the members of the churches themselves, in addition to the pastors' sermons (which we sampled mostly from their websites and by attending their online services (via Zoom or Facebook Live). Right from the start, these theological convictions were very evident to us as we heard congregational chatter about the virus. Most African pastors and church members did what they best do when helpless – turn to prayer and spiritual warfare. They were not flippant about it; they knew it was real. Unlike others who believed COVID-19 to be a conspiracy, and that it was simply about population control,[25] our participants did not think of the virus as a hoax. They took it rather seriously, but they believed it to be a spiritual problem that could be resolved through prayer (that includes fasting and binding of the demon of coronavirus). Our participants reported hearing both from their own pastors and from many other African leaders a theological thought that said all that was needed to defeat coronavirus was spiritual warfare. For example, Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo of the Kingsway International Christian Centre (in London), one of the most popular African preachers in the UK, posted several statements on the pandemic during the first lockdown (March–April 2020) that indicated that COVID-19 is not only a *medical* challenge but essentially a *spiritual* challenge of eschatological significance. Using images on Facebook, Ashimolowo added that COVID-19 was inferred in the reference to the "evil one" mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 3:3 and as being part of the eschatological "birth pangs" of Matthew 24. As soon as the first lockdown was imposed, Ashimolowo established a daily prayer meeting with his church members and social media followers from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. every Monday to Friday. His wife, Yemisi, also began an online gathering for women once every week tagged "When Women Wait" (WWW). Other churches, like the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and the Church of Pentecost (COP-UK), responded in a similar manner. The RCCG's Central Office hosted a series of conversations to explore various implications of COVID-19 to church life. In addition to prayers, the COP encouraged its members to adhere to the government's policies, celebrate the NHS and frontline workers,

[21] Heifetz et al., *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, 19.

[22] Northouse, *Leadership Theory & Practice*, 262.

[23] *Ibid.*, 264.

[24] *Ibid.*, 271.

[25] For instance, see André Gagné, "The 'Spiritual Warfare' Worldview of Trump's Conspiracy Doctor is Part of a Transnational Movement," *Religion Dispatches*, 14 August 2020, https://religiondispatches.org/the-spiritual-warfare-worldview-of-trumps-conspiracy-doctor-is-part-of-a-transnational-movement/.

and publicised how they had been helping various communities in the pandemic crisis. They encouraged people to pray for George Floyd's family, for the prime minister and for those who are sick or lonely.

This belief in waging spiritual warfare against coronavirus was, for our participants, based on two theological convictions that, we believe, are characteristic of African Christianity. There was the belief that God has power over all things, including viruses and that, therefore, through the prayers and supplication of God's children, God could break through into the world to stop the pandemic. This belief is rather common in African Pentecostalism and is used against all types of problems. Several nurses repeated a dictum that was a mantra in some churches in the north-west, saying, "Jesus defeated death, what can 'corona' do?" They were all quick to acknowledge that while they were singing "What can the ''rona' do?" at church, they were witnessing what it actually did in the hospitals, and that it did not discriminate according to religious beliefs. It affected Christians and non-Christians alike. They all admitted to being unsettled though when they realised that, as suggested earlier, the virus was significantly discriminating against Black and brown people.

As weeks of the pandemic piled up into months, and it became clear that the pandemic would keep devastating the world, our African congregations did not stop praying. However, the theological implications of God seemingly not answering their prayers to stop the virus were immense. They all knew of preachers, prayer warriors and healing prophets who died of COVID-19 in Africa. How could this be? How could God not heal? How could God let millions of people die simply because of a virus? Most importantly, many wondered how God could let this *small* virus close churches and disrupt worship. Nevertheless, their general response shifted from "What can corona do?" to following all government guidelines, and some more, in order to stay safe. Many of them realised the threat of loss of life, either theirs or that of their friends, was real and serious. As such, they all became protective of their own – several nurses said they forced their families, especially husbands, to stay in isolation for most of 2020. In addition to being as cautious as possible, many of them used herbal concoctions, both to ingest and inhale, as a preventive measure.

FELLOWSHIP

Africans are notoriously communal. Social distancing and isolation are strange concepts that would make even the most selfish African feel lonely. Yet, the virus made it necessary that people, including Africans, in the UK avoid physical contact with others. The implications of social distancing went against what is African about these African churches. How could they come together without shaking hands and hugging? How could they worship without singing? Pray without shouting? Fellowship without sharing meals? The chaos that followed the start of the first lockdown was extremely disorienting to even the most experienced African pastor. They all had to find ways to stay connected to their members during the lockdown – YouTube, Facebook Live and Zoom provided a temporary way out. Many ran their services just as they had done before, with little regard to the change of medium. This time around though, their members could choose from thousands of other services being streamed online and, before long, congregational engagement dwindled for many. Of course, a bad sermon preached online is still a bad sermon. A bad sermon delivered online with bad audio needs a special anointing for it not to chase listeners away. The same goes for worship music. In this age of Hillsong, Bethel and Maverick City dominating Christian worship on YouTube, it was rather a surprise to us how many African churches were unprepared for online delivery of their services.

Some congregations found a way and played to their strengths. Many of those churches used their online time more for connecting, catching up and praying, not singing or preaching. They also added onto their online fellowship an open access platform for constant communication, especially on WhatsApp and Facebook. Our nurses were confident that WhatsApp was their congregation's best surviving strategy during the pandemic. One called it their congregational lifeline. They were in constant touch with their leaders and were all kept abreast and involved in caring for the vulnerable – those who were old, sick or needy – among them. Their congregations continued to share meals online, and for those in need, meals were delivered to their doorsteps with no contact at all.

One nurse in a Nigerian congregation in Liverpool talked about how her congregation grew during the pandemic. In her words, her pastor realised early in the lockdown that what the congregation needed was not an online version of their usual church service but a fellowship space where they could get together to *see* one another. They did not need online sermons. They could get better sermons from many other platforms. They did not need worship music either. YouTube has numerous worship videos. As a result, they shaped their online fellowship primarily as a place where they could attend to each other's well-being. They cared very little for the normal churchy stuff like sermons and worship. Because of this, the fellowship attracted many new members to the church, most of whom are not in Liverpool at all. It doubled in size in the 12 months between March 2020 and March 2021. When we asked her for her explanation of this miracle, she said this was most likely because many Africans felt isolated and lonely and, therefore, needed an online place to connect. Some who joined their fellowship were of other faiths – Muslims, Baha'is

and many others. This was the only congregation in our research that grew during the pandemic.

GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES

African churches in Britain have an ambivalent relationship with the government. On the one hand, they have to live with the need to constantly negotiate their *immigrant-hood* and everything that the status of being an immigrant entails. As they are immigrants, the government has a lot of power on their livelihood. Many members of African churches have issues with the Home Office. Some live with the fear of being deported. Others live with the threat of racial profiling by the police. All of them have to make a living in the context of constant systemic racism. The lingering damage caused by the Windrush Scandal and Theresa May's *hostile environment* policies made Black people even more suspicious of the government. We still had almost all COVID-19 restrictions at the end of May when George Floyd was killed in Minnesota, sparking a worldwide protest movement against racism. Thus, Black Lives Matter shaped a great deal of African perception of the government in the UK in 2020. Overarching all this is the story of the brutality of British slavery and colonialism in Africa and Central America as well as the racist anti-immigrant rhetoric that forms the backdrop to Brexit. As such, there is always a general suspicion that the government does not have the interests of its Black subjects in mind when making policies and issuing guidelines. Thus, it took a long time for African churches to trust that the government cared for the struggles they went through in the pandemic. The most difficult concern was the fact that most of the key workers who needed to continue working in the pandemic were Black and brown people. Thus, generally speaking, it did appear for a while like white people were able to shelter in while Black and brown people kept on working, serving others (the white people who were sheltering) and putting their own lives and families at risk. Our nurses testified that it did seem, at times, to them that Black and brown people had been thrown to the frontlines and left there while white people withdrew to the safety of their homes. Across the Atlantic, Trumpian politics seemed to confirm the conspiracy theories of intentionally sacrificing Black and brown people (and the old) for the sake of the economy.

Overall, the African church in Britain remained wary of the government's motives. A Malawian nurse stated that her church found its own ways of dealing with the virus largely by listening to Black and brown doctors and scientists in their own communities. They took the virus seriously not because of the government's directives, but because of the advice of fellow Africans in the medical profession. Another, a Zimbabwean male nurse, talked about the potential dangers of the vaccines on Black people – either to be used for population control in Africa by donating malicious doses to Africa in abundance (for instance, to make people impotent to slow down population growth in the continent) or withholding it, as we are witnessing now, to let the Africans die.[26]

> "Overall, the African church in Britain remained wary of the government's motives... They took the virus seriously not because of the government's directives, but because of the advice of fellow Africans in the medical profession."

As African researchers, we understood the trepidation. History makes it difficult for Black and brown people to trust the British government. However, we expected that the suspicion would subside as the situation with the pandemic changed. We were surprised to see that even as the vaccines reduced the number of COVID-19 deaths in the UK, Black and brown people continued to distrust the government. We perceived that the Black Lives Matter protests increased their awareness of the implications of their status as Black immigrants in Britain and the Windrush Scandal made them realise that they could never be completely at home in UK. While we did not agree with everything that was said in this regard, we found the discourse quite informing. This state of unsettledness not only has great implications on how Africans establish their churches and participate in God's mission in Britain, but also how they respond to COVID-19.

[26] As of 1 October 2021 only 4.4 per cent of the population of Africa are fully vaccinated https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/56100076.

IMPLICATIONS

All in all, it appears to us that African churches in the UK have adjusted themselves significantly to the pandemic. They have figured out that the pandemic means that their worship services have to change. It may have been a difficult transition, but they all found ways to stream their services. They have understood that as streaming online means stiff competition, both the message and medium need to be on point. Their members have an endless pool of sermons and worship music to choose from. Some are yet to learn that relationships are key – that strong relationships will offset any shortcomings in the online delivery of their services and, to the contrary, that good delivery will not make up for weak or bad relationships. This is exactly why only one congregation in our study grew during the pandemic and the remaining five are still in decline.

Reflecting on the research, one of the key issues that stood out to us is that, overall, the pandemic has made the African church in the UK more African. We understand the social need for this – they had to dig deep within themselves in order to survive the pandemic. In situations like the pandemic where migrant communities find themselves feeling more marginalised than normal, they tend to huddle closer together. Our nurses said that their churches felt so much more isolated during the pandemic than before. In fact, one lamented, "Only God cares for us, the world is trying to throw us down the abyss." A Nigerian nurse suggested in an interview that her congregation felt like they are all alone in the world. Their intra-congregational talk reflected a sense of liminality. They believed *only* God could help them because everyone else is out to get them. While we understand the social need to huddle, we wonder how this cultural and social isolation will affect the African churches' sense of mission across the UK. Even more, we wonder whether their feelings of abandonment (not only by the British government but also by some British Christian circles) would also affect how they talk about evangelising in Britain. How do they evangelise those whom they believe abandoned them in the pandemic? We are yet to see how they will turn this around. God's love compels them to love, especially in situations like these.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we are confident that we have seen a great deal of adapting among African churches. A huge proportion of that adapting happened naturally, in a reactionary manner. Most of it was done in a haphazard manner. As such, there is still need for many of these churches to adapt intentionally for the mission that God has for them in the UK. Strategic adapting will ensure that whatever positive changes have emerged during the pandemic will be sustained. There is a real danger of them returning to pre-COVID-19 normal in a society that has forgotten how they lived before 2020. In this sense, we realise that adaptive leadership theory is helpful to African churches in the UK. Intentional forward-looking adapting is needed to help them thrive wherever God has planted them. That said, we also trust that the plight of migrant communities in the world during the pandemic moves Christian communities to compassion. Followers of Jesus have a call to be hospitable to strangers, and that hospitality is critical in times like 2020. God help us all.

Harvey Kwiyani is a Malawian missiologist and theologian who has lived, worked and studied in Europe and North America for the past 20 years. He has researched African Christianity and African theology for his PhD, and taught African theology at Liverpool Hope University. Harvey is CEO of Global Connections, programme leader for the Africa Christian Diaspora route of the CMS Pioneer MA, and founder and executive director of Missio Africanus, a mission organisation established in 2014 as a learning community focused on releasing the missional potential of African and other minority ethnic Christians living in the UK.

Paul Ayokunle is a doctoral student at Liverpool Hope University currently undertaking his research on church growth in African diaspora Christianity. Paul's other research interests include African perspectives on leadership and mission. In addition, he enjoys working with second generation diaspora Africans on issues of their religious lives. He currently serves as the teenagers' pastor at Pentecost Baptist Church, Liverpool.

FINDING MY PLACE

ANVIL: Journal of Theology and Mission
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Rosie Hopley

In this article, I'm going to explore why I have chosen to return to formal study, after being in the world of work, volunteering and pioneering mission for the last 30 years. I'll point to some of the opportunities and challenges likely to emerge, as well as what makes me hopeful.

At the end of September 2021, I started my MA in Theology with CMS, following the African Christianity track. Standing on the threshold of academic learning, finding my place within the African Christian diaspora in Britain and wanting to broaden the voices I'm hearing in the church, I'm excited to be here.

It's a privilege to be able to pivot at this stage of life, and yet there are three challenges I'm grappling with that my recent journey into learning seeks in part to address:

- Discerning the opportunities in the midst of rapid change
- Identifying missing theological voices and perspectives
- Being willing to be repositioned.

WHY I CHOSE TO APPLY FOR THE CMS MA: AFRICAN CHRISTIAN DIASPORA ROUTE

For several years, I've been observing the impact of racial division in British society. Until the end of January 2021, I was CEO of a Christian charity I founded called Beloved,[1] which works with women in prostitution in Bristol. While on outreach visits to women working in brothels and massage parlours across the city, I'd be asked the question: "Isn't Christianity the white man's religion?"

I don't believe it is, but I understand why someone might ask this question. There is a need to be able to come up with a compelling response for those who are curious, as well as those in the church who are also grappling with this nagging doubt. I want to get a broader, wider and more global understanding of Christianity through the eyes and ears of non-western teachers.

Seeing the context of mission in Bristol, with the city's historic links to the transatlantic slave trade and legacy, it seems all the more pressing to have a better insight into global theological teachings. This will help me, and I hope others like me, to speak into these doubts and to offer a compelling, authoritative answer.

DISCERNING OPPORTUNITIES IN TIMES OF RAPID CHANGE

It is an exciting and challenging time to be embarking on study, at an important juncture for the church. With the movement of people globally, and increasing diversity in the UK, our teaching, theology and witness would do well to reflect these changes. In Bristol, the largest city in the south-west, where I'm based, a growing number of our nearly 470,000 residents belong to a Black or minority ethnic group.[2] For many years, as a church we have asked for the Lord to send us to the nations. Well, the nations are here! According to local data:

> The population of Bristol has become increasingly diverse. The proportion of the population who are not "White British" has increased from [12]% to [22]% of the total population. In Bristol, there are now at least [45] religions, at least [187] countries of birth represented and at least [91] main languages spoken.[3]

So what does this mean for us as believers in the city? And further afield in cities and towns across the UK? Surely, this represents a massive opportunity. To welcome the stranger, to clothe the needy, to be places of hope and transformation. Yet we'd be making a mistake to stop here.

I believe there are hidden gifts – treasure, you might say – among us, whether it's long-term neighbours, or new arrivals to the city. I'm convinced there are hidden talents among the body of Christ, which we need to unearth and make the most of. The African diaspora in Britain has many gifts to offer to churches, as well as to our wider communities. Indeed, churches founded by those from the African diaspora have been serving, reaching the lost, preaching the gospel and reinvigorating the UK's Christian witness. I'm looking forward to exploring and discovering more from fellow believers and being blessed by their giftings. For years, we have been praying, "Lord, send the workers." Praise God – he's been sending workers to us from many places, including African nations.

[1] Beloved is a ministry that supports women working in prostitution, in particular those in commercial massage parlours and brothels. Outreach teams are recruited from local churches, trained and equipped to share the gospel, support women to exit the sex trade, and provide support and comfort. For more information see https://beloved.org.uk.

[2] "The Population of Bristol – September 2021," *Bristol City Council,* 4, https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33904/Population+of+Bristol+September+2021.pdf/e6cb7ac8-278c-c351-9dcc-07a83fb4fe23?t=1632843439676.

[3] *Ibid.*

WHAT'S MISSING?

For over 30 years, my learning and teaching has been western and European-/US-focused. Not necessarily a bad thing, per se, as I can truly say I have flourished under the teachers I've had over the decades, and I thank God for them. They have been wonderful.

But given the statistics quoted earlier, I need to hear more Black, African and Middle Eastern voices, to allow them to shape my theological learning too.

Last year, due to the opening up of events through Zoom – a necessity in the first year of the COVID pandemic – I was able to be part of Meachum School of Haymanot's inaugural gathering of the Society of Gospel Haymanot (SGH).[4] With teaching from some of the leading Black US theologians and scholars, I felt I had stumbled into a banquet, and I emerged so well nourished! It was a joyful and worshipful gathering, and I'm excited to be joining the Society of Gospel Haymanot again this October presenting a Practical Theology paper on Isaiah 61 and God's mission call.[5]

I also recognise my own part in this challenge – to take responsibility for broadening my diet of spiritual nourishment. Which churches am I visiting? For example, there are plenty of majority Black churches in the city. Which books am I reading? Which lectures am I tuning in to? Which conferences am I attending? I have agency and choice in this, and it's up to me to exercise it, and wisely broaden my diet.

> "When I hear reports of church leaders and church congregations coming together to share what they have to bless communities around them, seeing the work of Christ as he builds his church, it makes me hopeful."

Taking steps into this vast globalised pool of theological voices, there's the challenge of being overwhelmed by the myriad of choices! I look forward to being guided by people like Harvey Kwiyani and Cathy Ross, as well as local church leaders who have been serving faithfully on the ground in Bristol for decades.

I'm particularly excited to be joining my fellow CMS students on the MA course, several of them joining from a variety of nations via Zoom. It feels like a whole host of vistas has suddenly opened up before me, and there are nuggets and treasures of learning and wisdom to discover.

BEING WILLING TO BE REPOSITIONED

Last year was a tumultuous time for millions as the pandemic began to grip the world. It was also a time of protest and lament, following the shocking murder of George Floyd. Many people were horrified by the scenes of a man's life taken at the hands of a police officer, all caught on camera.

A personal challenge for me was that while I was leading a pioneering work among women in Bristol massage parlours and brothels, I also grappled with the wider societal conversations, or the silence as people were scared to step into awkward conversations around race, racism and whether we truly are a post-racial society.

Over a period of time, I had a sense that God was calling me to pass on the baton of leadership of the charity to others, and that handover was completed at the start of this year. At times it was an uncomfortable process, but being obedient is always better than being comfortable!

I'm immensely grateful for the other seasoned and wise leaders who gathered around me and helped me to discern the Lord's leading. It's a delight to see Beloved continue to flourish in its mission among the precious women in the parlours, seeing them come to know Christ's transforming love and freedom.

As that door of leading has closed, other doors of learning and writing have opened up. Being out of my comfort zone is something I can see I'll need to get used

[4] Meachum School of Haymanot's inaugural gathering of the Society of Gospel Haymanot (SGH). Meachum School of Haymanot (Ge'ez word meaning faith, or theology) exists to "bring biblical, graduate-level theological education to African-American, ethnic minority and low-income communities in a contextualized and affordable manner." While the centre of teaching resides in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, all classes and programmes are available online.

[5] Find out more about the Society of Gospel Haymanot, and their conference, which took place on Friday 22 October and Saturday 23 October 2021, at https://meachum.org/annual-meeting.

to, and that's not a bad thing.

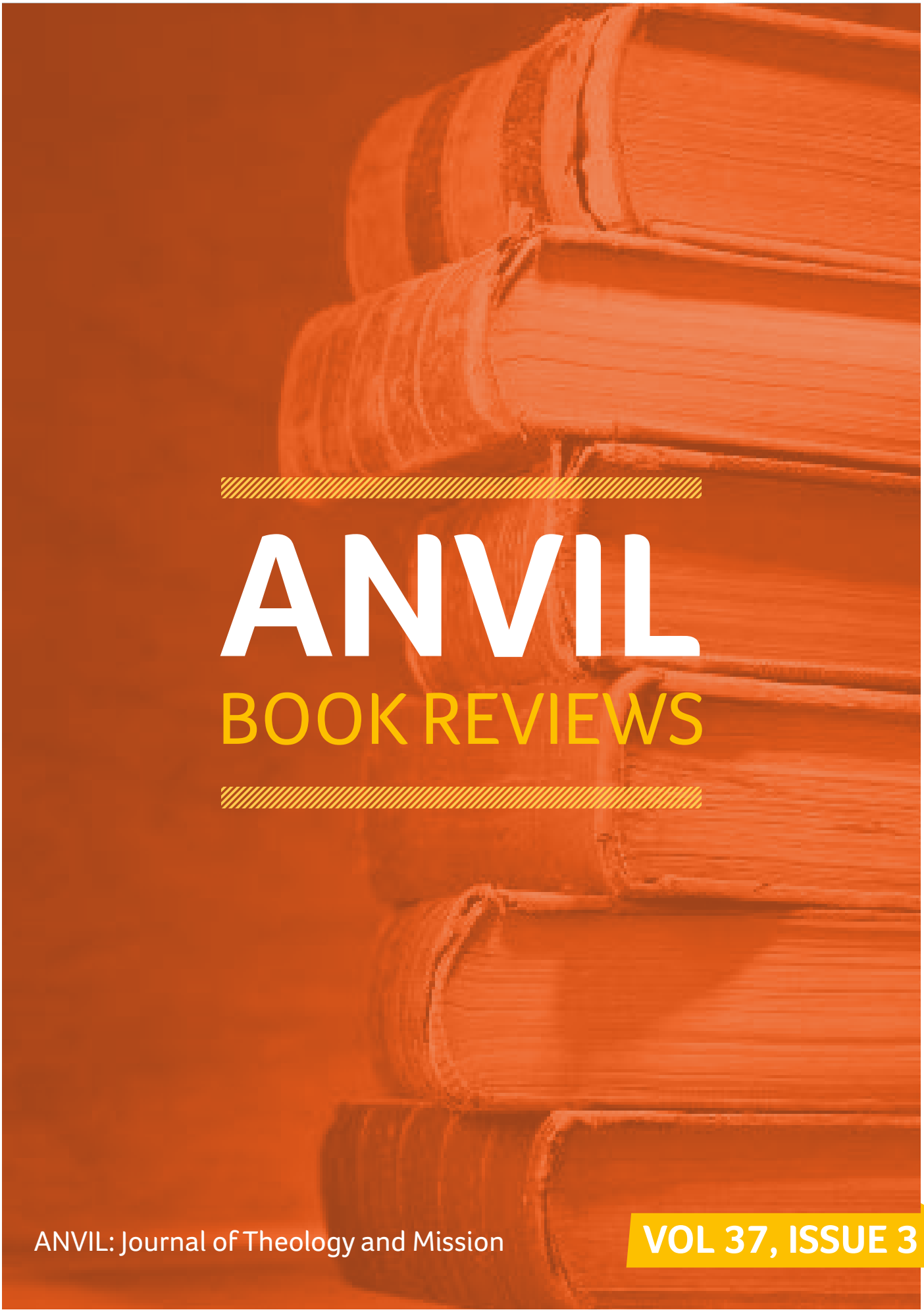
HUMILITY TO WORK TOGETHER

When I hear reports of church leaders and church congregations coming together to share what they have to bless communities around them, seeing the work of Christ as he builds his church, it makes me hopeful. Whether it's two long-standing leaders from different cultural backgrounds joining together in missions into prison work, or churches opening up the pulpit or preaching platform to leaders from other nations, it causes me to rejoice. Or people from churches in one area of the city, praying faithfully together for years for their community – what blessing there is.

The Lord in his infinite wisdom has caused us to need one another, to bring gifts that we will find through each other and alongside each other. Is it going to be hard, and will we make mistakes along the way? Yes, there will be challenges; as God disturbs our comfort, it will be hard at times, and of course we're bound to make mistakes. But what joy there is to be found as we seek the kingdom of God together, preferring one another, listening to one another in love and humility.

I'm excited that from what I can see, the Lord has been sending in his reinforcements for the local church in the guise of those who we mistakenly think are the least, the lost or "not like us". It's my prayer that God will open our eyes to what he is doing, that we will discern the opportunities around us and listen to a more diverse range of Christian voices. May we be humble, rejoice and be obedient to join in with the work of the Holy Spirit.

Rosie Hopley is the founder and former CEO of the charity Beloved, co-founder of a social enterprise, LoveWell, and co-founder of Bristol city prayer gathering Vision for the Vulnerable. Prior to Beloved, she ran her own communications, PR and research business, mainly working with government bodies, the NHS and private healthcare organisations, and universities.


ANVIL
BOOK REVIEWS
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Steve Bell, *Mountains Move* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2021)

In 2019, Steve Bell dreamed of the seven peaks in the Central Himalayas, the twin-peaked Everest and five lesser peaks, which he saw as a metaphor for the "invisible social mountain range in western societies today that is a blockage to healthy interaction between non-Muslims and Muslims" (p.19). In *Mountains Move,* he discusses each peak in turn before concluding we must travel via "Grace Pass" towards better social cohesion and more meaningful interaction between Christians and Muslims.

He begins with the twin central peaks of Mount Imperial and Mount Hegemony, by which he means the psychological legacy of empire and the unconscious bias of white male superiority together with hegemony, the by-product of present neo-colonial era, where old paternal patterns are perpetuated via military, economic and cultural power. The five remaining peaks are discussed in turn. Mount Ethnos explores how racism is produced from hegemony, examining both personal and systemic forms of racism. Mount Correct distinguishes positive and negative aspects of political correctness, advocating the former as responsibility for the common good, which is enshrined in Judaeo-Christian values, while rejecting the more strident "thought police" aspects of political correctness. The next logical point of discussion is Mount Strident, focusing on negative discourse about Muslims together with the diatribes of the tiny minority of Islamists who give Islam such a bad name.

Mount Occlusion refers to the stricture within both Christianity and Islam as many, notably the young, are abandoning formal expressions of faith as irrelevant and unable to cope with criticism and questioning. The final mountain, Mount Mission, examines four modes of engagement: conversation, dialogue, apologetics and confrontation, pointing out strengths and weaknesses of each approach, and making a case that all have biblical precedent and an appropriate time to be deployed. In his final chapter, Bell advocates bypassing the mountains via "Grace Pass," embodying the grace and truth we see in Jesus Christ, living out a holistic engagement with others that begins with work (practical service), moves through wonder (supernatural encounters, prayer etc) to words (explaining the gospel).

Mountains Move is written to help evangelical Protestant Christians make sense of the society they currently live in, and to think about how best to engage with Muslims in twenty-first century Britain in particular. (There are also some points made about the US context, but they appeared to me to primarily be asides rather than the main focus of Bell's argument). Bell does a good job of covering the main points in a clear and accessible way, and as he himself admits, while he applies his analysis to Christian–Muslim relations, it could equally be applied to some of the other current "hot potato" topics, such as human sexuality.

In a sense, one of the most interesting aspects of *Mountains Move* is that it reflects Bell's own change of emphasis and focus; if one were to read through *Grace for Muslims* (2006), then *Gospel for Muslims* (2012), then *Mountains Move* (2021), the increasing sophistication of Bell's thought and nuancing of his position becomes evident. If the reader has gone on a similar journey, then *Mountains Move* would be a welcome next step. For others, who are still engaging with Muslims from a place of fear or resistance, then the earlier works are probably more suitable. *Mountains Move* is a useful primer (and possibly house group resource, although questions for discussion would have aided this type of "book club" approach) for those wanting to think about the state of society and the place of Christian life and witness within in. It will doubtless be read by those who are actively involved in Christian–Muslim relations, but also deserves to reach a wider audience.

Tom Wilson
St Philip's Centre, Leicester

Graham Russell Smith, *The Church Militant: Spiritual Warfare in the Anglican Charismatic Renewal* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016)

In this edited version of his doctoral thesis, Graham Smith presents a wide-ranging survey of the concept and understanding of spiritual warfare. For the vast majority of people reading this, I am sure that it will come as a surprise that the term "spiritual warfare" is one that emerged in the context of Anglican Charismatic Renewal in the 1960s. Smith explores the emergence and definition of this term, from the earlier ideas of spiritual battle presented as a picture in Scripture and the Book of Common Prayer, through the early days of the Pentecostal movement and to various forms of practice in the early 2000s. Crucially, Smith was able to directly interview many of the pioneers of the Anglican Renewal movements from the 1960s and 70s. Due to the time delay between interviews and publication, such a survey may now sadly no longer be possible.

In addition to these valuable interviews, and analysis of the understanding of these pioneers both of their ministry and the longer-term emergence and maturity of the movement, Smith engages in a case study of one church which is highly invested in a very distinctive understanding of spiritual warfare. His engagement integrates the theological with the sociological, examining the understanding of people involved in both giving and receiving prayer ministry as well as the principles and theologies underlying the decisions of those involved in the leadership of this church.

The second half of his thesis is principally concerned with a comparative study of various charismatic and Pentecostal theologians writing on related subjects (the ontology of evil, the nature of the demonic and angelic, etc.), together with a wider nod to the impact of these understandings on other points of doctrine (the atonement, sin and salvation among them). It is here that his work feels the most like a doctoral thesis in book form and drifts away from a focus on a strictly Anglican context. The wider context is helpful, however, in correctly identifying that the Anglican Charismatic Renewal is very much a cross-pollination from a number of different movements and traditions.

This is a highly engaging and fascinating read with an unusual historical perspective on a subject more usually treated either by biography or as somewhat of a curiosity. It does have the disadvantage of having been written some time before the more high-profile current practices and influences came to prominence, so the case study feels decidedly fringe in comparison. That said, it's a valuable read for those both in pastoral ministry as well as those who would wish to develop a more detailed understanding of the various influences and trajectories of the Anglican Renewal movements.

Kate Seagrave
Mission Priest, Community of St Frideswide

Emma Nash, *A Pastoral Theology of Childlessness* (London: SCM Press, 2021)

Emma Nash is an officer in the Methodist Church's Evangelism and Growth Team. She writes both as a pastoral theologian and as someone who has personally experienced infertility and childlessness. However, that last sentence does not do justice to the reality of the experience. She addresses it honestly, in all its raw pain, acknowledging the difficult emotions and the impact on faith. This book emerges from her wrestling with God and a desire to create the book she wished she could have found for herself at the time. Despite the wide prevalence of involuntary childlessness, there is little Christian writing on the topic. This book is aimed at both those who have fertility issues and to ministers and pastoral theologians.

To begin with, Nash discusses the loneliness of infertility and the associated sense of shame. Too often others respond, in their own discomfort, with advice or stories that minimise or deny the pain. Exhortations of God's timing, being in control, to have faith and stories of "miracle babies" do not help, particularly when evoked from biblical stories. Nash encourages the church to think more widely than the default nuclear family, and to come alongside people in their pain.

Theologically, Nash discovers solidarity with trauma theologians, reflecting on Holy Saturday. Again, the sense of loneliness and abandonment are evoked. She sagely notes that the complexity of pain, shame, guilt and notions of "fault" can mean infertility can isolate couples from each other, rather than bring them together. She wisely encourages couples not to rush to the resurrection, avoiding their feelings. The tension of recognising the loss while gradually discovering a new future, she suggests, might be found in how Christ at the resurrection still bears his scars.

Nonetheless, the sense of powerlessness remains. Unanswered prayer is tough, and her biblical explorations of the topic yield no easy answers. For Nash, some consolation regarding the unfathomableness of life is found in Ecclesiastes. She challenges simplistic readings of Genesis and the presumption that fruitfulness need be physical children and affirms Jesus' focus on the spiritual family.

The fifth chapter focuses on infertility treatment. Nash weaves her own personal experience and journey of understanding with a clear exposition of the different theological views on its ethics. Her approach is considered, carefully laying out the different positions in a non-judgemental fashion, though, for some, the more absolutist views on IVF may be painful to read. Nash emerges, recognising the messiness and fragility of all life and the compassion for pain needed.

The final chapter is practical, offering guidance on pastoral care for people struggling with childlessness, advice on worship, liturgy and preaching, and resources to which people can be signposted. This, and the whole work, is a rich repository of information, theology and pastoral sensitivity, commendable for its articulation of the pain of infertility and a more widely applicable practical theology for addressing suffering.

Jo Winn-Smith
Assistant Curate and part-time PhD student

Gerrit Noort, Kyriaki Avtzi and Stefan Paas, eds., *Sharing Good News: Handbook on Evangelism in Europe* (Geneva: World Council of Churches publications, 2016)

This excellent handbook owes its origins to the renewed interest in evangelism within the ecumenical movement. In 2012 the World Council of Churches launched a consultation on the place of evangelism within Europe involving a variety of different denominations. One of the consultation's recommendations was for rich theological resources on evangelism which span the breadth of traditions. *Sharing Good News* provides precisely that – and more. It is a very timely book which recognises that the notion of evangelism has been damaged by its associations with colonialism outside of Europe and Christendom culture within. Both factors have contributed to what many church goers are experiencing as a loss of confidence in the concept of evangelism. *Sharing Good News* offers potential ways that the church in Europe might learn to engage in evangelism not from "a position of power, but from a position of weakness that is joyfully embraced" (p.xviii).

Theologically rigorous and unashamedly practical, this handbook is divided into four sections. Part one provides a suitably detailed biblical basis for the concept of evangelism and then goes on to offer an astute diagnosis of the history of evangelism within European history, culminating in a judicious appraisal of the current challenges facing the church in this increasingly secularised continent. Part two offers a consideration of current theological perspectives on evangelism ranging from an illuminating presentation of evangelism as the "liturgy after the liturgy" within Greek orthodoxy to the New Evangelisation within Roman Catholicism and culminating in a fascinating chapter on "reverse evangelism" from an African Pentecostal perspective. Part three offers seven case studies from a breadth of contexts varying from Street Pastors in East London, to a Dutch online expression of church, to the Taizé community in France. These case studies offer intriguing yet different approaches to evangelism and practitioners will relish this chapter especially. I cannot think of another work which offers such a plethora of examples of evangelism as this. Part three ends with an excellent theological discussion on the themes of conversion, ecclesiology and spirituality which the case studies approach in significantly different ways. Part four more briefly presents the case for a rich theological education at the heart of missionary practice, suggesting that current evangelistic endeavour "has increasingly been hijacked by marketers, sales managers and church-growth gurus" (p.322). *Sharing Good News* is arguably successful in offering a theologically robust alternative.

Sharing Good News is not a book one would sit down and read from start to finish but it is in my opinion poised to become the key textbook on evangelism for theological students and practitioners alike. This is a handbook that is broad and ambitious in scope. However, for readers who are purely interested in evaluating their own tribe, it may appear fragmented. Yet it is the conversational interplay across the traditions which makes this book such a rich source of learning and insight. In addition, this book's distinctive appeal is in its diagnosis of post-Christian culture within Europe which has its own particular secularising trends. This diagnosis is offered astutely and relevantly, suggesting a collaborative and generous shape of Christian witness which stands a chance of flourishing in such turbulent times.

This collection is impressive in the variety of voices it brings together, which each offer a worthwhile contribution. However, the one who stands out is Stefan Paas, whose current writings on the shape and pattern of mission and evangelism in post-Christian Europe seem to surpass anything else I am reading at the moment. His and the other voices within this handbook are welcome companions along the road for all of us passionate about sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ in Europe today.

Hannah Steele
St Mellitus College

Amanda D. Quantz, *Radical Hospitality for a Prophetic Church* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2020)

This is not your usual book on hospitality. Amanda introduces us to other worlds where hospitality abounds and flourishes in places that may be new to many of us. She is writing for millennials and describing their own spiritual and lived experience. She visits them in their places and spaces, listening to and learning from them. She interviews a wide range of millennials including artists, educators, computer technicians, social workers, ministers, ordinands, lobbyists and one bartender-model-reality television contestant. Some use recreational drugs. Some have considered priesthood or the religious life. Some have spent time in prison. She tries to understand their interests and concerns, their context, their life and passions.

The first chapter considers courage, curiosity and generosity and we are introduced to Sauma, a Chinese Christian monk who visited Europe in the 13th century. We also meet St Francis and learn about his respectful dialogue with the Sultan. Her second chapter tries to recontextualise Jesus for what we might call SNR (Spiritual not Religious) by engaging with multireligious teachings on gospel themes such as: humility, non-judgement, faith, friendship and wisdom.

The rest of the book consists of a series of fascinating case studies where these themes are worked out. She visits the Burning Man Festival in Nevada which attracts 70,000 people every year. "Whatever your freak is you can get it on at Burning Man." Here she visits an Episcopal priest who has a full-time ministry there for those who find church unwelcoming. Key principles of the festival are a universal welcome and an absence of judgement. This is what millennials are seeking.

The location of the next chapter is San Francisco, where she visits two churches that provide sanctuary and shelter for the poorest in the city. These ministries pay attention to the guest and are committed to inclusivity. She explains how these ministries model the example of Jesus – moving towards those on the margins, extending mercy and compassion with no strings attached: grace freely given. Her final chapter considers hospitality, contemplative prayer and time with some intriguing insights on Taizé worship in particular.

This is a book of stories, and they are stories that illumine much about how our faith could be, how our discipleship could be lived and our way of being in the world. It is a book that resonates with the suffragette cry of "deeds not words". Each of her stories shows us people who are doing something. They are enacting and living out hospitality in ways that are attractive, sacrificial and life-giving. She concludes with the striking analogy of a circus and reminds us that, like a circus, the church is an ongoing human performance. It is embodied – it is mind and heart and requires audience participation and engagement. The book is written mainly in a Roman Catholic context and draws on insights from Roman Catholic theology and social teaching. I found it a fascinating and compelling read with so many rich ideas around hospitality and how to it live out. It is a book for the whole church but will resonate especially with millennials.

Cathy Ross
Head of Pioneer Mission Leadership Oxford, CMS

Debbie, David and Jamie Hawker, *Changing the Climate* (Abingdon: The Bible Reading Fellowship, 2021)

Climate change is one of the most important issues facing our world. Already, the impact of human activities on temperatures and extreme weather events is being experienced across the globe. But while the focus of the news is on what will be discussed and decided at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, the fate of our planet is not just in the hands of world leaders. God is looking to each of us to play our part in caring for his beautiful creation. And this book excellently demonstrates that we can each make changes in our daily lives that will help sustain life on earth for generations to come.

The Hawkers have created a book that can be used by churches wishing to make climate one of their missional priorities. It takes you on a journey across the breadth of the problem, why we need to act now without delay, and what we can do in our daily lives to make a difference. It is rooted and grounded in what God is saying to us through the Bible, and in the reality of how human living is messing up the planet. It has the right level of scientific information to make you think and take notice, together with many links to other resources.

Each of the twelve chapters include thought provoking questions (green boxes), examples of what is happening around the world to effect change and tips from Jamie. He asks, "Which of these do you already do?" and "Which will you attempt to do this month?" The Hawkers are committed to caring for creation in their daily lives, but I particularly like the way he recognises that some or all his readers will also have made a start with adopting a greener lifestyle.

It may be helpful to read through the entire book to gain an overall understanding of the issue. But if you do this, you will then need to go back and work through it, chapter by chapter. One option would be to use the book over one year reading one chapter each month to give time to work on embedding the actions. You may find that by the time you get to the final three chapters you will already have adopted many of the suggested actions. Ideally, by living and breathing this book, your lifestyle and approach to life will have changed for ever.

One key passage used in the book which spoke to me especially powerfully is Philippians 4:11–13. Those of us who live in the richer countries of the world need to take a fresh look at how we live and to reset our agenda. If we can learn to be content with what we have and not be constantly wanting to do, see or possess more, our planet benefits. Simplicity of living can also get us closer to God and to the life that he desires for us.

This book will open your eyes to the possibilities even if you feel daunted by the scale of the problem. It stresses that you are not too small to make a difference. The God who can take a boy's picnic and turn it into a satisfying meal for over five thousand can take our individual actions, add them together and make them more than enough to bless life on earth for generations to come.

Katrina Hutchins
Vicar of Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone

David P. Gushee, *After Evangelicalism – The Path to a New Christianity* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 2020)

Born into a Catholic family in northern Virginia, USA, the author of this book experienced a dramatic conversion to evangelical faith in his teens and was ordained a Southern Baptist minister before embarking on an academic career.

Today David Gushee is a distinguished Christian ethicist and Holocaust scholar, but his developing moral and ethical ideas have put him at serious odds with the US evangelical constituency as it has become increasingly aligned with right-wing politics and ideology.

After Evangelicalism is addressed to American Christians who find themselves alienated from the mainstream US evangelical tradition. Gushee sets out to offer a way forward for "post-evangelicals" who do not want to jettison their faith, but to grow in a dynamic relationship with Jesus. It is a pastoral book with much to say, even in a UK context.

The book falls into three parts. The first, *Authorities: Listening and Learning,* opens with a chapter charting the history of evangelicalism in the USA, thus establishing the book's context. Two further chapters discuss the nature and role of Scripture and the importance of other resources in discerning God's will. In his discussion of issues such as inerrancy, infallibility and interpretation, and the need to listen to reason, experience and the arts and sciences, I found little that would be new or controversial to a UK audience.

Part two, *Theology: Believing and Belonging,* considers OT and NT narratives, reassessing what they tell us of what to believe and do about God, Jesus and the Church. Gushee helpfully outlines the theological–ethical influences which have informed his own thinking. About God, he concludes that having taken the risk of entrusting us with freedom, God himself suffers from the choices we make. He then contrasts "Jesus according to American White Evangelicalism" with what he believes is a more authentic assessment based on the Synoptics, arguing the need to rebalance the "Pauline-magisterial Reformation gospel" with Jesus and his kingdom ministry. Finally, he considers the "Evangelical Church Crisis" and seeks to address the question of where post-evangelicals might find a receptive home among Christ's people.

In part three, *Ethics: Being and Behaving,* Gushee considers what post-evangelicalism says regarding sex, politics and race. Of these, sex is sadly the most controversial issue, especially in relation to LGBTQ people. But I found this chapter stimulating and believe Gushee's call for a recovery of the concept of covenant and a renewal of marriage among Jesus' disciples to be central in this discussion. The chapters on politics and race relate specifically to the USA context, but still contain useful material for UK readers.

I am uneasy about reference in the book's sub-title to a *new* Christianity, but in the UK the term "evangelical", both in common parlance and the church, carries many layers of meaning which often require qualification. I sometimes hesitate to identify myself as "evangelical" because it can so easily be misunderstood. And therein is a warning. Labels are convenient as a shorthand, but they can change their meaning, sometimes fundamentally, and in ways over which we have little control. Abandoning "evangelicalism" the author has embraced the even more vague "post-evangelicalism". Maybe it would be better to avoid becoming attached too closely to any label – be it Paul, Apollos or Cephas.

I enjoyed this book, and that surprised me. It could valuably be read by anyone seeking to understand better the relationship between church and politics in the USA. And while I do not agree with all Gushee's conclusions, the book certainly offers fresh avenues for thought, especially in the more contentious areas of contemporary ethical debate.

Allan Lacey
Anvil book reviews editor

Miranda Threlfall-Holmes, *How to Eat Bread: 21 Nourishing Ways to Read the Bible* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2021)

"Use your loaf" and consider buying this book. Reading the Bible is "bread for the journey" and how we bake and eat it is very important. The author's 21 cameo chapters (164 pages) on reading the Bible in different

ways is born out of her desire to encourage people to find fresh nourishment and interest in the style, habit and pattern of Bible reading for individuals and groups. It helps meet the need to redress the largely unimaginative way in which the Bible is read in homes and churches. It takes seriously the need to read the Bible, the reader's own disposition and context, and practical ways to improve our Bible reading skills. The book is divided into three sections of similar length with each containing seven discrete chapters.

Section 1 is described as "From the store cupboard" of Scripture itself and looks at how the Bible expresses different ways of engaging with both its texts and its God. From the start biblical endorsement is given to argue with God, to wrestle with God, to read stories that grab our attention, to meditate on texts and to become aware of the misuse of Bible texts, for instance, in the temptations of Jesus.

Section 2, "Grandma's recipe book", looks at how church tradition can illuminate our reading patterns from the Lectio Divina to reading the Bible in a literal or allegorical sense or for the development of our inner life. The chapters on employing Augustine's rule of love and on cultivating an Ignatian imagination further strengthen the case for how we can learn from tradition.

The final section, "Molecular gastronomy", continues the light-touch culinary metaphor and describes how reason can aid us in Bible reading. The use of a variety of more technical approaches can bring fresh insights for the reader such as being aware of the genre and form of the literature being read, or by adopting a liberationist or feminist perspective. The chapter on developing a hermeneutic of suspicion (not just to the Bible but to all texts) can lead to seeing whose interests are being served, which worldviews pre-dominate, etc. This can lead to lively discussions and new insights, as can dramatic readings or exploratory ecological readings or experimental play. These can all be done both reverently and enjoyably.

All the chapters have suggestions for honing your skill and technique in a particular type of reading for individuals and groups. There is also an appendix on Bible translations and another on how to use this book in groups and online. I would have liked chapters on reading the Bible cross-culturally and visually and more examples from non-Western sources. I appreciated Paula Gooder's afterword indicating the richness of reading the Bible with people from diverse backgrounds – a practice well worth following.

Overall, I found the book to be accessible, relatively jargon-free, practical and well-laid out. As a theological educator Threlfall-Holmes is aware of many of the more complex hermeneutical and other technical issues related to the biblical texts, but as a priest she wants people to be nourished by eating bread for themselves. She seems to be one beggar telling other beggars where to find bread and how to eat it. So why not develop your Bible reading repertoire?

Paul Thaxter
Former director of international mission at CMS

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