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MISSION FROM AFRICA: A CALL TO RE-IMAGINE MISSION IN AFRICAN-LED PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN BRITAIN

LEADERSHIP TRAITS AND PRACTICES: INSIGHTS FROM AFRICAN CHRISTOLOGIES

LOVING THE BRITISH FOR THE SAKE OF MISSION

CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF BISHOP AJAYI CROWTHER

MISSIO DEI: AN AFRICAN APPROPRIATION

EDITOR: HARVEY C. KWIYANI

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Editorial

The mission of God, or *missio Dei*, has a long and complex relationship with the continent of Africa. For instance, we see Africans engaging in mission in the New Testament in people like Simeon, the Niger, of Acts 13 and Apollos of Acts 18 and 19 and 1 Corinthians 3 (he was from Alexandria in Egypt). We also see many African Christians in missionary work around the Mediterranean region in the first five hundred years of Christianity. Outstanding examples include people like Tertullian and Augustine. However, for several centuries since the 1400's, Africa has been on the receiving end of mission from Europe and North America. Apart from the Coptic Church in Egypt and Orthodox Church in Ethiopia, the rest of contemporary African Christianity is a result of European and American missionary work in Africa.

Right now, in our day and age, we see the rise of an African missionary movement—serving in mission both in Africa and around the world. Of course, behind this phenomenon are two factors: (1) the continuing explosion of African Christianity that started after the fall of colonialism, and (2) Africa is the most mobile continent in the world in this generation.

The African missionary movement is still in its early stages. Most of their diaspora missions only cater for other African immigrants, generally of similar nationality. It is still not yet clear how the second generation African immigrant Christians will handle their missionary responsibility as they are only partly African in both culture and identity.

This journal anticipates the growing field of missiology within African Christianity. It anticipates a missiology that is shaped by the African context through the work of African and non-African agents. Such a missiology must reflect the African understanding of God, mission, and the world. It must engage other African disciplines in its quest to understand the *missio Dei* in Africa such as philosophy, leadership, history, sociology, anthropology, and others.

The journal intends to create space for and facilitate conversations that have to do with *missio Dei* and the African peoples. It hopes to do this in two ways: (1) by engaging the voices and perspectives of Africans involved in mission both in Africa and in the African Diaspora and (2) by listening to and learning from the many non-Africans who do their missionary work among Africans, and this too, both in Africa and in the African Diaspora.

Thus, welcome to *Missio Africanus: The Journal of African Missiology.*

EDITORIAL

It is a great delight to get this maiden issue of our journal into your hands. As is usually the case, the first issue is both exhilarating and daunting at the same time. We are exhilarated because, finally, we have the journal out. We are also daunted because we are hoping you will find it a great resource for your work … something we are only hoping for at the moment.

Missio Africanus publishes peer-reviewed articles on matters to do with Christian mission and Africa, and these fall in different disciplines such as missiology, theology, history, philosophy, leadership, and many others. All the articles represent the scholarship and opinions of the author, and do not assume the endorsement of the organisation.

This maiden issue contains five essays. The first essay, written by Israel Olofinjana, celebrates the legacy of Bishop Ajayi Crowther, who was the first African Bishop in the Church of England. The second essay is written by Philip Lutterodt. It discusses the subject of leadership in African Christology. It seeks to answer the question: "What does the images of Christ in Africa mean for leadership?" The third essay comes from Nigel Rooms, and it seeks to help African and other foreign missionaries to begin to understand British culture, and thus, be able to love the British for the sake of mission. Babatunde Adedibu gives us the fourth essay in which he writes on "reverse mission"—African missionary work in Britain. He argues for a major paradigm shift in the understanding and practice of mission in African immigrant churches in Britain since most of what they call missional, in his understanding, leaves a lot to be desired. The final essay is written by Harvey Kwiyani and it discusses how the theology of *missio Dei* can be appropriated in Africa through the Malawian philosophy of *umunthu*.

Harvey Kwiyani
Editor, Missio Africanus.

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Celebrating the Life and Legacy of Bishop Ajayi Crowther

Israel Olofinjana

Israel Olofinjana is Director of the Centre for Mission from Majority World. He is also pastor of the Woolwich Baptist Church. He has authored several books on African Christianity in Britain.
Email: isreal2us@yahoo.com

Abstract

It has been 150 years since the consecration of the first African Bishop in the Church of England, Samuel Ajayi Crowther. This momentous occasion deserves celebration, but much more than that, a review in order that we can access some new insights for the mission of African Christians in Britain. The mission of African Christians in Britain is an indirect product of the pioneer missionary work of Ajayi Crowther. This is because modern African Christianity in Africa and in the Diaspora owes its development to the work of Ajayi Crowther. This essay explores what African Christianity in Britain can learn from the missionary work of Ajayi Crowther. It suggests that, in learning from Crowther, African Christians in Britain need to (1) develop a strong theology of mission relevant in the secular British context and (2) intentionally disciple second and third generations of Africans for the sake of mission in their generations.

Keywords: Samuel Ajayi Crowther, Church Mission Society, Nigeria, postcolonial.

Introduction

Sunday, 29th of June 2014 marked 150 years since Samuel Ajayi Crowther was ordained as the first African bishop in the Church of England in the Canterbury Cathedral. As we celebrate this historic occasion, we must take time to understand Samuel Ajayi Crowther's life and learn from his pioneering role. Crowther can be regarded as one of the fathers of modern African Christianity as his Bible translation work on the continent set the stage for the flowering of African indigenous Christianity and by extension African theology. A lot has been written about him and his legacy. This explores two implications of Crowther's legacy for African Christianity in Britain.

Life of Ajayi Crowther in Context

Samuel Ajayi was born in a small town called Osogun, now in Oyo State, Nigeria, in 1810. His parents gave him the name Ajayi as a symbol of importance. They also consulted the *Ifa* (Oracle of Divinity) to find out which of the four hundred Yoruba traditional deities he would grow to worship. The *Ifa* priest warned them not to dedicate him to any idol, foreseeing that he would worship the Almighty God.[1]

On one sunny bright afternoon in 1821 when Ajayi was 12, his town was raided by 2,000 strong men on horses who were slave traders. His father was probably killed during the raid as the young Ajayi never saw him again after that. Ajayi, himself, was captured together with his mother and siblings. His family with thousands of other enslaved people were taken to a nearby town called Iseyin. Here, Ajayi was exchanged for a horse and was separated from his family. He tried to commit suicide after constant mistreatment in the hands of slave owners and traders. Later, Ajayi was exchanged again for tobacco leaves and English wine. He was finally sold off to the Portuguese slave traders at the Lagos slave market. As the Portuguese prepared to leave the coast of Africa, their ship was intersected by a British anti-slavery warship. The Portuguese ship was attacked and destroyed, leaving 102 people alive out of about 189.[2]

Ajayi was one of the people rescued, and they were taken to Sierra Leone in 1822.[3] He was treated very well and was placed in a Church Missionary Society (CMS) school where he learned to read and write.[4] Ajayi had a great passion for learning and applied himself to learn everything that he could. Within six months of his arrival in Sierra Leone he became a teacher in a local school.

Ajayi also began to learn about God and believed God had won his freedom for him, therefore he decided to devote himself to God's service. Ajayi believed that he was not only saved from slavery but also from sin. On the 11th of December 1825, Rev J.C. Raban baptised and named Ajayi after the vicar of Christ Church, Newgate, London (Reverend Samuel Crowther who was one of the pioneers of CMS).[5]

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1 Joseph Akinyele Omoyajowo, Makers of the Church in Nigeria (1842-1947), (Lagos, Nigeria: CSS Bookshop Ltd, 1995), 30.
2 Omoyajowo, Makers, 31.
3 David Killingary and Joel Edwards (eds), Black Voices: The Shaping of our Christian Experience, (Nottingham, England, Inter-Varsity Press, 2007), 47.
4 Omoyajowo, Makers, 31.
5 Jacob Festus Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite, (Evanston, IL.: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 26.

Ajayi made his first visit to London in 1826. This trip left a strong impression on him. He attended St Mary's School on Liverpool Street in Islington before returning to Sierra Leone in 1827. When he returned to Sierra Leone, he was appointed by the government as a schoolmaster. He married another freed ex-slave girl called Asano. She was an educated African who could read and write. She was baptised with the name Susan Thompson after conversion from Islam. They got married and lived together for about 50 years. They were blessed with six children; three sons and three daughters. One of their sons, Dandeson Crowther, became an Archdeacon in the Niger-delta mission while one of his grandsons, Herbert Macaulay, was a nationalist and politician who was involved in the struggle to emancipate Nigeria from colonial rule.

Following his return, Ajayi also enrolled as one of the first set of students at Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone in 1827. Fourah Bay College was founded in 1827 and was the first higher institution and Bible College started by CMS in West Africa. Ajayi later taught Greek and Latin at the same college.

1841 marks the beginning of what is popularly known as the Niger Expedition. CMS was interested in expanding its mission work in the Niger-delta region in Nigeria, and so Reverend James Frederick Schon a CMS missionary was sent with Ajayi and a company of other missionaries. The mission did not succeed due to malaria disease which affected many of white missionaries. In addition, was the lack of trust and rejection of white missionaries by the local people. Reverend Schon recommended to CMS that Africans should be used in evangelising their own people. To this end Ajayi, was invited to London in 1843 and was trained at the Anglican College in Islington as a Church of England minister, and was ordained by the Bishop of London in 1844.[6]

Ajayi went back to Sierra Leone and was given a rousing welcome. He preached his first sermon in English and another in Yoruba.[7] He went to Abeokuta in Nigeria with Rev Henry Townsend and began missionary work among the Ijebu people. Ajayi developed interest in African languages and became a linguist. He evolved the orthography of the Yoruba language and embarked on the translation of the Bible into Yoruba. He was assisted by Thomas King, another African scholar and a product of Fourah Bay College. In 1852, Ajayi published and revised his version of Yoruba grammar and vocabulary and the translation of four books of the New Testament: Luke, Acts of the Apostles, James and Peter. Ajayi won the moral confidence of the locals through his gentle character and wisdom. This led

6 Ajayi, *Christian Missions*, 33.
7 Omoyajowo, *Makers*, 32.

to the evangelisation of the people in Abeokuta and the surrounding areas. Crowther became the main catalyst used in evangelism by the CMS as he was accepted by his fellow countrymen.

In 1845, Crowther learnt that his mother and sisters were living in a nearby village in Abeokuta. He sent for them and with lots of tears was reunited with his family after almost thirty years of separation.[8] During another visit to England in 1851, he was invited by the British Prime Minister, John Henry Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston, who learnt a lot about West Africa from him. Queen Victoria and her husband also invited Crowther to Windsor Castle where he explained the situation of things in West Africa by using maps. At their pleasure he was also asked to recite the Lord's Prayer in Yoruba.[9] Ajayi seems to have defied the then-popular view that black people were not intelligent, as the majority of the time people were shocked by his wisdom and learning. He later addressed the students at Cambridge University, encouraging them to come and serve in Africa.[10]

The work that Ajayi and others started in the Niger-Delta area in 1841, although a failure due to malaria, sceptism and rejection of white missionaries by the locals and other factors, nevertheless continued and now needed the supervision of a Bishop. Henry Venn, CMS Secretary, expressed that Ajayi would be a good man for the job. Venn's peers such as Henry Townsend who worked with Ajayi in Abeokuta countered that African clergies should never be made bishops because they are inferior and would not be up to the task. However Venn recommended Ajayi be consecrated as Bishop of the Western Equatorial Africa. Ajayi himself refused, arguing that he was not seeking any honour and only wanted to serve Christ. After lots of appeal and persuasion from Venn, Ajayi accepted and was consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury as the first African Bishop on the 29th of June 1864 at Canterbury Cathedral.[11] The same year, in recognition of his immense contribution to missionary work in West Africa, the University of Oxford conferred on him an honorary doctorate degree.[12]

Ajayi, now working in Nigeria's Delta region as a bishop, faced racism from some white colleagues who would not submit to his bishopric. Other problems he faced included tackling the customs and practices of some of the natives such as human sacrifices, killing of twins and idolatry.[13] He preached against these practices, demonstrating the light of the

8 Adotey Bing, Jonathan Derrick and Godwin Matau (eds) *Makers of Modern Africa: Profiles in History*, (London: Africa Books, 1991), 169.
9 Omoyajowo, *Makers*, 33.
10 Omoyajoyo, *Makers*, 33.
11 Bing, Derrick and Matau (eds), *Makers*, 169 and Omoyajowo, *Makers*, p. 37.
12 Bing, Derrick and Matau (eds), *Makers*, 169, Killingray and Edwards, *Black*, p. 47, and Omoyajowo, *Makers*, 35.
13 Ajayi, *Christian*, 215-216.

Gospel. His missionary endeavours were so successful that the chief of Bonny, one of the towns in the region, renounced idolatry and put an end to the worship of the local reptiles. Bishop Ajayi also helped start self-supporting schools in the region, in Lagos and in Freetown, Sierra Leone to educate Africans. He believed that education was very important for the freedom of Africans from religious superstition and to enlighten future generations.

Towards the end of Ajayi's life, he faced more difficulties. Firstly, he lost three important people in his life; his wife (1880), his mother (1883) and his old friend and colleague, Rev Schon (1889). Secondly, from around 1880, mission-educated Africans within Bishop Ajayi's Niger mission and in Lagos and Freetown were discredited by European missionaries.[14] Misconduct of all kind such as drunkenness and embezzlement of funds were reported to the CMS in England. This led to an intense investigation which sidelined the authority of Bishop Ajayi, while his fellow Africans whom he had trained were either suspended or dismissed. Twelve out of fifteen native agents he had trained were dismissed by the commission that was set up.[15] The conclusion of the investigation was that, although the Bishop was a man of integrity and character, the Niger mission was a failure due to his lack of administrative skill and management.[16]

To the Africans, putting the Bishop on trial was putting all of Africa on trial, and to pronounce the great work of Bishop Ajayi in the Niger mission a failure was to insult African intelligence.[17] This led to schism in the Church in Nigeria and other parts of Africa, which gave rise to the Ethiopian Churches or the African Church Movement in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Bishop Ajayi was broken and disheartened by the whole episode and died after a brief illness on 31st December 1891 at the age of 81. However, before his death, in May 1891, Bishop Ajayi set up a scheme to train native pastors. This was called the Niger Delta Pastorate Scheme and was meant to be self-supported by native agencies from Lagos and Sierra Leone.

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14 Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, (Maryknoll, NY.: Orbis Books, 2009), 176.
15 Sanneh, *Translating*, 176.
16 Ajayi, *Christian*, 245-249.
17 Emmanuel Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914*, (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1966), 216-217. Gabriel Oshitelu, *Expansion of Christianity in West Africa*, (Abeokuta: Nigeria, Visual Resource Publishers, 2002), 108.

Implications of the Life and Legacy of Ajayi Crowther for the African Churches in Diaspora

Having considered the life and ministry of Bishop Ajayi Crowther, what implications can we draw from his pioneering work? I want to focus on two areas of his legacy. Firstly, his Bible translation work not only led to the development of African missionary agents, which in turn led to the evangelisation of Africans by Africans, but a wider implication of was the birth of African Christianity detached from the influences or bewitchment of colonial Christianity.[1] As Africans began to read the Bible in their own mother languages they began to see that the confusion of the three C's (Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation) which had shaped European missions in Africa was not biblical or Christian. For example, they read that when believers were baptised in the New Testament they did not have to change their names to a foreign name. It was part of this understanding that led David Vincent, a Nigerian Baptist minister, to change his name to Mojola Agbebi as a sign of a cultural reform.[2] Bishop Ajayi's translation work therefore started decolonisation in African minds. This what Bob Marley in the *Song of Freedom* referred to as "emancipate yourself from mental slavery." Fela Kuti, a true pioneer of Afro-beat, termed the colonial mentality as "colo-mentality". As African Christians began to question some of the European church traditions, the more they were decolonised. This process eventually led to the independence of many African nations in the middle of the twentieth century.

To continue this task of deconstruction, African Churches in the diaspora today must engage with post-colonial theologies. These are theologies that seek to address the effects of colonialism on the colonised, and the continual struggle against neo-colonialism. A starting point for African Churches in the diaspora is to engage with theology. This will mean more African pastors studying theology at Bible Colleges and universities. Gone should be the days when an African pastor anointed with the Holy Spirit thinks that is sufficient for ministry. While we want to encourage pneumatic experiences and transformation, we must also encourage people to reflect theologically on their church doctrines and practices. This will result in moving from 'inherited theology' to developing an authentic African Theology in Britain.

Bishop Joe Aldred, a Black theologian in the UK has this to say about hand-me-down theology: "Black Church doctrine tends to rely upon prescriptions agreed upon by people

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1 Robert Beckford, *From Maintenance to Mission: Resisting the Bewitchment of Colonial Christianity* in Phyllis Thompson (ed) "Challenges of Black Pentecostal Leadership in the 21st Century" (London: SPCK, 2013), 32-48.

2 Ayandele, *The Missionary*, 206-207.

so long enough ago that present day leaders have not had to have to think them through."[3] The result of this is that we often end up with inherited church traditions and doctrines that are not relevant to the present context of ministry. If theology is meant to be answering our questions about God, then inherited church traditions which have answered the past generations' questions will not necessarily be sufficient to deal with the existential realities of the present. I fear that some of our inherited church traditions and doctrines were actually answering questions posed during the enlightenment period of which our ancestors were not a part. In essence, some of our inherited church traditions were answers to other people's questions. When are we going to ask our own questions and find our own answers? This is why it is imperative for the African Churches in Britain to develop an African Theology in the UK context.

Secondly, Bishop Ajayi's consecration as the first African Bishop and his emphasis on education inspired a whole new generation of African clergy and elites. It was some of these clergy who led the first wave of African Churches or Ethiopian Churches that seceded when Bishop Ajayi's work in the Niger-Delta was pronounced a failure. The secession happened in West Africa, particularly in Ghana and Nigeria; in East Africa, especially in Kenya and Uganda; and in South Africa. The African Churches separated from Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptists and Congregational churches. For example, the following churches seceded from the Mission Churches in Nigeria:

1. The Native Baptist Church separated from the Lagos Baptist Church, which belonged to the American Southern Baptists, in 1888.
2. The United Native African Church (UNA) was formed by members of Anglican and Methodist Churches in 1891.
3. The Bethel African Church seceded from CMS St Paul's Church, Breadfruit, Lagos in 1901.
4. The United African Methodist Church, Eleja, Lagos also seceded from the Methodist Church in 1917.[4]

The task of the above churches was the struggle to indigenise Christianity among their people, and they did this through the encouragement of local dialects in services, wearing of native dress to churches and reading the Bible and preaching in local languages.

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[3] Joe Aldred and Keno Ogbo, (eds), *The Black Church in the 21st Century*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2010), 226.

[4] James Webster, *The African Churches Among the Yoruba (1888-1922),* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 61-90 and Israel Olofinjana, *Reverse in Ministry and Missions: Africans in the Dark Continent of Europe*, (Milton Keynes: Author House, 2010), 21.

However, despite the secession of these churches from the Mission Churches, their organisational structures, styles of leadership, doctrinal positions, rites and rituals remained identical with that of the Mission Churches. It took another wave of African Churches, known as African Indigenous Churches (AICs), to complete the task of indigenisation of Christianity in Africa.

For African Churches in the diaspora today, how do we model the relevance of African Christianity to second and third generation Africans who are British and often do not want to have anything to do with the faith of their fathers? In order for this to happen, we have to contextualise African Christianity in Britain. Exporting African Christianity from Africa to the UK without contextualising and making it relevant to the British culture will cause second and third generation Africans born in the UK to seek and attend churches such as Hillsong Church in London or New Frontier Churches. There is nothing wrong with these churches, but in essence what I am articulating is, how can African Churches move from being mono-ethnic churches to multicultural churches that are relevant to people in the UK today?

In conclusion, Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther remains an iconic church leader in Africa and beyond due to his pioneering role as the first African bishop. He operated at a time when black people were seen as inferior based on the pseudo sciences of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. He challenged this perception and ideology by his literature, Bible translation work and character. He was a humble man who saw the goodness of God in redeeming him twice from slavery. While he believed that Africans needed African clergy to evangelise, he always respected and spoke highly of European missionary efforts to Africa.

He was the bridge between Africans and Europeans and was, for most of the time, misunderstood by both. His lifelong goal was to serve God and that he did. Part of his legacy was the emergence of the African Church Movement in the nineteenth century and the development of an African Theology in the middle of the twentieth century. It is in memory of his pioneering of African Christianity and mission that the Church of Pentecost, Centre for Missionary from the Majority World, Birmingham Christian College, Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) collaborated with *Missio Africanus* on a on the 27th of June 2014 at Crowther Hall, Birmingham Christian College in Selly Oak to celebrate his consecration as the first African Anglican bishop.

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Leadership Traits and Practices: Insights from African Christologies

Philip Lutterodt

Philip Lutterodt is the pastor of Mitcham Baptist Church in London. He is visiting lecturer in Theological Studies and Leadership Studies at several colleges in London.
Email: leadershipministry@hotmail.com

Abstract

A good leader is God's servant who helps people realise their God given potential in life. Such a leader opts for leadership traits and practices that ensure good leadership methods and outcomes. This essay attempts to find out the significance of African Christological images for leadership. It argues that African Christological images may enhance leadership by providing leadership notions that may well shape a leader's traits and practices in a productive fashion. The African Christological images of Jesus Christ as healer, chief, ancestor and liberator are examined. These images are then applied to leadership traits and leadership practices to derive the concepts of the leader as a compassionate enabler, competent achiever, credible mediator and courageous reformer. This essay postulates that with the insights of African Christologies, a leader in the family, church, workplace, community and society may be better able to lead people in God's will and ways.

Keywords: leadership, African Christology, transformational leadership."

Introduction

What is the significance of African Christological images for leadership? This essay reasons that Christological images in African perspectives may enrich leadership theory by providing concepts that can shape a leader's traits and practices in a fruitful manner. I will begin with a brief look at the meaning of leadership traits and practices. After this, I will survey the methodological background to African Christology. This will be followed by an examination of the African Christological images of Jesus Christ as healer, chief, ancestor and liberator. I will argue that the application of these images to leaders and leadership may reveal the leadership traits and leadership

practices of the leader as compassionate enabler, competent achiever, credible mediator and courageous reformer.

1. Leadership Traits and Practices

Oswald Sanders says that leadership 'is influence, the ability of one person to influence others to follow his or her lead.'[1] Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby give leadership a theocentric foundation by defining it as 'moving people on to God's agenda.'[2] In my view, a good leader is God's servant who helps people realise their God-given potential in life. I believe that a leader is a person who influences people to follow God's revelation for their lives so that they may find fulfilment in life. A good leader opts for traits and practices that make her or his leadership efficient and effective. Leadership traits refer to who a leader is or the character of a leader, while leadership practices designate what a leader does or the functions of a leader. Both ethical leadership theory and transformational leadership theory focus on leadership traits and practice. However, ethical leadership places a great deal of emphasis on leadership traits (character), while transformational leadership puts more weight on leadership practices (functions). My contention is that both leadership traits and practices are important for leaders and leadership, and furthermore, since the kingdom of God covers every sphere of life, God seeks leaders with ethical and transformational traits and practices in every area of life – in the family, church, workplace, community and society.

Larry Spears, an expert on leadership studies, affirms the importance of leadership traits in the development of leaders. He remarks: 'Our fundamental understanding of character has much to do with the essential traits exhibited by a person. In recent years there has been a growing interest in the nature of character and character education, based upon a belief that positive character traits can be both taught and learned.'[3] Justin Irving insists that leadership practice should be both biblically based and demonstrably effective.[4] He observes that 'it is powerful when leadership practices that are ethically good and biblically consistent are also found to be effective.'[5] With reference to leadership traits, Philip Lewis says that leaders should 'focus on values, morals, and ethics.'[6] In connection with leadership

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1 Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 27.
2 Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, (Nashville, Broadman and Holman, 2001), 20.
3 Larry Spears, 'Character and Servant Leadership: Ten Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders' in *The Journal of Virtues and Leadership*, Vol.1 Iss. 1, 2010, 25
4 Justin Irving, 'A Model for Effective Servant Leadership Practice: A Biblically-Consistent and Research-Based Approach to Leadership' in *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership,* vol. 3, no. 2, Summer 2011, 118-128.
5 Ibid, 120.
6 Philip Lewis, *Transformational Leadership: A New Model for Total Church Involvement*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 6.
7 Ibid, 6.

practice, Lewis notes that leaders 'change reality… They are proactive and encourage human potential.'[7] Tokunboh Adeyemo contends for Christ-like leaders with character and competence in the African church and society and states that such leadership has the traits of 'purity of heart … passion for people'[8] and the practices of 'power to serve through prayer … practical wisdom to solve problems.'[9]

The preceding scholars point out that leadership traits and leadership practices are interrelated. In my view good leadership uses ethical means to achieve transformational ends. Thus, in leadership the means and the end must cohere. Leadership is not only a matter of getting results; the method by which the results are arrived at is just as important as the results. My outlook is affirmed in Psalm 78:72 (NIV): 'And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skilful hands he led them.' King David led Israel with the leadership trait (character) of integrity and the leadership practice (function) of skilful hands. I am of the opinion that with the insights of African Christologies, a leader in the family, church, workplace, community and society may be better able to lead people in God's will and ways.

2. The Methodological Background to African Christology

In Matthew 16:13-17 (NIV), Jesus Christ asked his disciples two Christological questions with regard to who he is: "'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' … 'Who do you say I am?'" The first Christological question relates to who the crowd thought Jesus was and the second relates to who Jesus' disciples thought he was. The former question deals with the "outsider's" perception of Jesus Christ and the latter question with the "insider's" perception of Jesus Christ. This means that for Jesus Christ both the community's view of him and the church's view of him are important. In addition from the answers given to the two questions, there appears to be a hermeneutical gap between the outsider (the community) and the insider (the church) with regard to their understanding of the person of Jesus. In my estimation, the community's view might be discerned in the footprints of Jesus Christ found in human culture, while the church's view is disclosed in the revelation of Jesus Christ found in the Bible. On this basis, it is theologically legitimate to look for images of Jesus Christ in culture and bring these images into dialogue with the Bible's revelation of Jesus Christ. By so doing, a gospel-and-culture interface takes place which results in an understanding of Jesus Christ that is on the one hand faithful to Scripture and on the other relevant to culture.

[8] Tokunboh Adeyemo, 'Leadership' in Tokunboh Adeyemo (ed.) *African Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 546.
[9] Adeyemo, 'Leadership" 546.

Nevertheless, in my opinion, the gospel's encounter with culture requires two words of caution. First, care must be taken not to dissolve Jesus Christ into culture through an overemphasis on culture. Second, care must be taken not to freeze Jesus Christ in the past through an overemphasis on Scripture. The former warning helps theology to avoid the danger of assimilation and the latter warning helps theology to avoid the danger of fossilisation. The Gospel of Jesus Christ must critique the demonic elements of culture as much as it affirms the biblical elements of culture. The Christological discourse on the biblical revelation of the identity of Jesus Christ should be held in tandem with the cultural inquiry of Jesus Christ with a procedural priority being given to biblical revelation. In my observation, when Christology and Christopraxis court each other the product is a fruitful marriage in which the portrait of the nature and of Jesus Christ is both biblically authentic and culturally appropriate as well as one in which the universal Gospel encounters cultural particularities in a healthy conversation.

Diane Stinton, in her comprehensive survey of African Christologies, posits: "A widespread methodological presupposition is that genuine Christological reflection cannot be separated from Africa's socio-political, religio-cultural and economic contexts—this is the real and concrete everyday experience within which we christologize."[10] In addition, Clifton Clarke, in his study of Akan African Indigenous Churches in Ghana, asks the question: 'How are Africans in post-missionary Africa to speak of Christ in a way that is truly meaningful to the African, and through the worldview that is their own?'[11] He advances the position that orality, a grassroots theology, personal experience and cultural environment are keys to the construction of a Christology which has the Christian faith and African culture as its grounding.[12] However, Victor Ezigbo queries the presupposition that Jesus Christ fills the gaps in African Traditional Religions and that Christ fulfils the religious aspirations of Africans which they cannot fulfil through African Traditional Religions.[13] He asks whether the fulfilment by Jesus Christ is to be understood as a change of the philosophy and practice of African Traditional Religions or an addition to it.[14] Ezigbo postulates that African Christologies should avoid the mistake of academic theologians who express Jesus in African metaphors, as well as the mistake of lay Christians who see Jesus simply as a solution to their existential problems. [15]

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10 Diane Stinton, *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology*. (Marynoll: Orbis, 2004), 16.
11 Clifton Clarke, *African Christology: Jesus in a Post-Missionary African Christianity* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 3-5.
12 Ibid.
13 Victor Ezigbo, *Re-Imagining African Christologies: Conversing with the Interpretations and Appropriations of Jesus Christ in African Christianity* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 303-305.
14 Ezigbo, 303.
15 Ezigbo, 303.

I concur with the observations of these theologians because theology is not done in a vacuum, in isolation, or in an ivory tower. Theology is done in the real life experience of everyday people facing both the challenges and opportunities of human life. At the same time, as I have argued above, Jesus Christ must not be domesticated or assimilated into culture and thereby robbed of his genuine nature. The images of culture used to understand Jesus Christ should not overshadow the person of Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture. Steven Bevans warns: 'A real danger in contextualisation is that one could mix Christianity and culture in a way that does not enhance but compromises and betrays Christianity'[16] It is with the recognition of the possibilities and problems in constructing contextual Christologies that the following discussion on African Christologies takes place.

3. Jesus Christ as Healer: The Leader as a Compassionate Enabler

For Cece Kolie, the image of Jesus as healer is one that resonates with African Christians.[17] In traditional Africa, the role of healing is carried out by traditional healers who deal with both natural and supernatural causes of sicknesses and diseases. Kolie studied the traditional healers from the Kpele and Logoma ethnic groups of Guinea in order to derive an ethos of healing which might have ramifications for understanding Jesus Christ as healer. He says that the position of traditional healer in Africa is one of prominence due to the fact that, in general, Africans see life as a quest for blessings both in this world and in the next.[18] Hence, Kolie observes that 'soothsayers and healers, medicine persons of all kinds, are the pillars of social life.'[19] He points out that for traditional healers the cause and meaning of sickness and disease are more important than the symptoms of the illness. He states:

> For the African, disease and death always have another cause from the one indicated by clinical symptoms. Unlike the procedure of the Western physician, who has inherited an essentially analytical tradition of autopsy, that of the African healer is more synthetic and comprehensive. What is of supreme interest to the latter is the human being taken in his or her totality, including environment and social relationships. By utterance, the healer will attempt to bring it about that the patient contributes to being delivered from the disease by confessing to sorcery or by describing his or her dreams in order to submit them to interpretation.[20]

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16 Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992), 17.
17 Cece Kolie, "Jesus as Healer' in Robert Schreiter, *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Marynoll: Orbis, 1991), 128-150.
18 Kolie, "Jesus as Healer," 133-134.
19 Kolie, "Jesus as Healer," 132.
20 Kolie, "Jesus as Healer," 138.

African traditional healers not only diagnose disease but they also seek to address the conflict in relationships that underlie the disease. Kolie describes this healing practice as relational and symbolic with a connection to the environment of the person in need of healing.[21] It is a holistic approach to health and healing. The invocation of divine blessings is a feature of African living.[22] God's blessings for health, fertility, peace and prosperity are invoked at places of worship, festivals, birth rites and funeral rites. When sickness and disease occur the African seeks the assistance of God and the traditional healer for health and wellbeing for the sick person as well as for the community.

In Kolie's view, Jesus' healing work is performed in the vein of holistic healing as practised by traditional African healers. Jesus' healing ministry addresses the whole person – spirit, soul, body and social context. His healing actions reconfigure social relationships for the betterment of society.[23] Kolie points out that in performing his healing ministry Jesus acts in solidarity with the sick and diseased by giving a part of his humanity to those he heals. Jesus usually heals by his word and his deeds, except in a case when he used the intermediary of water. [24] Jesus cures the diseased, expels demons tormenting people, and rehabilitates the outcast of society. Kolie notes that Jesus' healing ministry is linked with his proclamation of the kingdom of God: 'His cures constitute firstfruits, and his death and resurrectionare *the* firstfruits.'[25] He adds that the unity of humanity and divinity in Jesus Christ is what makes the name of Jesus potent in healing sicknesses and diseases.[26] Kolie emphasises the necessity of Jesus' healing work by posing the question: 'What courage can be asked of those who have known only the face of the Crucified One, and never that of the Risen One?'[27] By means of the image of Jesus Christ as healer people who are sick in spirit or soul or body may find healing and health in Jesus. The Crucified Jesus empathises with the sick and diseased and the risen Christ frees them of their sicknesses and diseases.

In my opinion, Jesus Christ as healer, when applied to leadership, portrays a leader as a 'compassionate enabler' – the leader's trait is compassion and the leadership practice is enablement. Jesus Christ as healer was compassionate. Compassion, love in action, was the motivation for his healing ministry. He was people-centred and not selfish. Also Jesus Christ as healer was an enabler. Christ's healing ministry enabled people to overcome their

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21 Kolie, "Jesus as Healer," 130-132.
22 Kolie, "Jesus as Healer," 133.
23 Ibid, pp. 130-131, 146-147.
24 Ibid, p. 129.
25 Ibid, p. 129
26 Ibid, p147.
27 Ibid, 142.

sicknesses and diseases so as to experience health and wholeness. Likewise, leaders should have compassion for people they lead. The leader's compassion helps the leader to be concerned about, to empathise with, to be kind towards and to show practical care for the led. In addition, leaders ought to be enablers who 'heal' followers by giving them the resources they need for assigned tasks, by creating the opportunity for them to use their knowledge and skills and by helping them to overcome the challenges they face in carrying out a task.

Larry Spears, observes that healing is a characteristic of effective leaders:

> The healing of relationships is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant leadership is the potential for healing one's self and one's relationship to others. Many people have broken spirits and have suffered from a variety of emotional hurts. Although this is a part of being human, servant leaders recognize that they have an opportunity to help make whole those with whom they come in contact.[28]

In the steps of Jesus Christ the healer, the leader as a 'compassionate enabler, is to show compassion and care for those led by recognising that people are an institution's most valuable resource.[29] As an enabler the leader empowers people by developing individuals and building teams. The leader as a compassionate enabler seeks to establish a relational holism which, as Emmanuel Lartey puts it, is a 'restoration to wholeness of relations within, between and transcending human persons'.[30] Like Jesus Christ the healer, a leader can be used by God to be a compassionate enabler.

4. Jesus Christ as Chief: The Leader as a Competent Achiever

François Kabasele uses the image of Jesus Christ as Chief to express a Christology which reverberates with Africans.[31] In some parts of traditional Africa, the role of governance is carried out by chiefs. Kabasele investigated the chieftaincy practices of the Bantu people in the Democratic Republic of Congo to develop tenets of chieftaincy which might have a corollary for understanding Jesus Christ as chief. The Bantu chief is conferred with authority and power to rule his subjects. He is regarded as a hero, a great emissary, strong, generous

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28 Larry Spears, 'Character and Servant Leadership', 27.
29 See Myron Rush, *Management: A Biblical Approach*, (Colorado Springs, 1983), 22.
30 Emmanuel Lartey, 'Two Healing Communities in Africa' in Emmanuel Lartey, Daisy Nwachuku, Kasonga Wa Kasonga (eds.) *The Church and Healing: echoes from Africa.* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994), 47.
31 Francois Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief' in Robert Schreiter, *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Marynoll: Orbis, 1991), 103 - 115.

and a reconciler.[32] The Bantu chief is revered not only for his political, economic and social role, but also for his religious role as the spiritual leader of his people.

For Kabasele, the chieftaincy philosophy and practices of the Bantu parallels that of Jesus Christ's life and ministry. Jesus Christ is chief by virtue of the fact that he has authority and he governs a kingdom.[33] Kabasele claims that Jesus Christ is chief because he is the hero who conquered Satan.[34] As the hero of Christians, Jesus defends and protects his people, confronts the enemy and drives him away to be a pillar of support for his people. He is the courageous, mighty, victorious, and majestic hero. Next, Kabasele says that Jesus Christ is chief since he is God the Father's emissary.[35] Jesus Christ is the revelation of God to humanity – he is God the Son. As God's emissary Jesus Christ represents God to the people of God. Kabasele also points out that Jesus Christ is chief due to his strength.[36] As the strong one, Jesus gives strength to his people in their time of need. The strength of Jesus enables him to overcome both spiritual and physical forces of destruction, to nurture the social cohesion of the people of God so as to bring about community living, to perform miracles and to sustain both the spiritual and physical life of his people. In addition, Kabasele notes that Jesus Christ is chief because of his generosity.[37] Jesus' generosity is shown by the accessibility of his presence, his blessing of people, and the giving his life for the benefit of humanity. Furthermore, Kabasele states that Jesus Christ is Chief as he reconciles people with God and each other.[38] Hence for Kabasele, Jesus Christ is God's authoritative and anointed chief.[39] The reign of Jesus Christ as Chief takes place within the eschatological context of the 'already' and the 'not yet'- Christ is the chief of the present world but the fullness of his chieftaincy will be realised at his second coming when all people and all things will be subjected to his rule.[40]

In my judgment, Jesus Christ as chief, when related to leadership, depicts the leader as a 'competent achiever' – the leader's trait is competence and the leadership practice is achievement. Jesus Christ as chief was competent. He competently lived a sinless life, endured death by crucifixion and rose from the dead to establish God's salvation plan. Also Christ as chief was an achiever. He achieved for humanity redemption from sin, deliverance from evil and transformation for a life of pleasing God. He was competent in achieving

32 Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief," 106-112.
33 Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief," 104.
34 Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief," 106-108.
35 Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief," 108-109.
36 Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief," 109-111.
37 Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief," 111-112.
38 Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief," 112.
39 Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief," 112-114.
40 Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief," 105.

God's will of salvation for humankind. Similarly, leaders should be competent in their leadership by possessing the right knowledge, attitudes, aptitudes, skills and experience requisite for their leadership role. Furthermore, leaders ought to be achievers who empower followers, enhance the wellbeing of their followers and successfully accomplish set organisational tasks.

Larry Spears notes that conceptualising and accomplishing dreams, that is competent achievement, is a characteristic of effective leaders:

> Servant leaders seek to nurture their abilities to dream great dreams. The ability to look at a problem or an organization from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. For many leaders, this is a characteristic that requires discipline and practice. The traditional leader is consumed by the need to achieve short-term operational goals. The leader who wishes to also be a servant leader must stretch his or her thinking to encompass broader-based conceptual thinking. Within organizations, conceptualization is, by its very nature, a key role of boards of trustees or directors. Unfortunately, boards can sometimes become involved in the day-to-day operations—something that should be discouraged—and, thus, fail to provide the visionary concept for an institution. Trustees need to be mostly conceptual in their orientation, staffs need to be mostly operational in their perspective, and the most effective executive leaders probably need to develop both perspectives within themselves. Servant leaders are called to seek a delicate balance between conceptual thinking and a day-to-day operational approach.[41]

Following the example of Jesus Christ the chief, the leader as a competent achiever is to demonstrate competence in leadership by communicating a creative vision and mission for those who are led.[42] As an achiever, the leader implements the vision and mission by motivating and mobilising people to perform productive tasks. Brock Brown notes that transformational leaders focus on vision, values, and relationships to involve followers and form change leaders, who in turn build change leaders.[43] Analogous to Jesus Christ the chief, a leader can be used by God to be a competent achiever.

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41 Larry Spears, 'Character and Servant Leadership,' 28
42 See Myron Rush, *Management*, 22.
43 Brock Brown, 'The Building of a Virtuous Transformational Leader', *The Journal of Virtues and Leadership*, Vol. 2 Iss. 1, Summer 2011, 6-14

5. Jesus Christ as Ancestor: The Leader as a Credible Mediator

Kwame Bediako is of the view that the image of Jesus Christ as ancestor makes Jesus Christ more meaningful to Christians in Africa where the concept of ancestor is part of their culture.[44] Using the Akan ethnic group in Ghana as his point of reference, Bediako says that the Akan spirit world is composed of the Supreme God (*Onyame*), the gods *(abosom*) and the ancestors (*nsamanfo*).[45] The Supreme God is worshipped but he is approached through the intermediaries of the gods and the ancestors. For the Akans, God and the ancestors are the centres of spirituality. The ancestors are human beings who have left this present world and have gone to the next world.[46] They are often referred to as the 'living dead' since they are dead yet are still living in the next world. The qualifications for an ancestor are dying at an old age, living an exemplary lifestyle on earth, and contributing to the prestige of one's earthly family.[47] As clan members living in the next world, ancestors influence the course of events in the lives of their clan members living in this world. Prayer to God using the ancestors as intermediaries brings protection against evil spirits, blessings of good health, fertility for the married and prosperity in educational, professional and business matters.[48]

For Bediako the preceding Akan worldview needs to be taken into consideration if Jesus Christ is to be meaningful to Akans and if the church to avoid syncretism.[49] Whilst recognising the areas of conflict between the biblical and Akan worldviews, Bediako asserts that the image of Jesus Christ as ancestor still has validity if it is reconfigured to faithfully reflect biblical revelation and grounded in genuine Christian experience.[50] This is underscored in Hebrews 1:1-2 (NIV) which portrays Jesus Christ and God's final revelation and ancestor:

> In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

Bediako observes that Jesus Christ as ancestor portrays Christ's role as the only mediator between God the Father and humanity (1 Timothy 2:5-6).[51] As Ancestor, Jesus Christ has lived an exemplary earthly life and empathised with humanity through his earthly sojourn.

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44 Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*. (Accra: Asempa, 1990.), 9-20.
45 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 10-11.
46 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 11.
47 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 11.
48 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 11.
49 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 12-13.
50 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 10.
51 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 18.

Even though he did not die in old age and his death was a violent death, Christ is not disqualified from being an ancestor. His crucifixion was necessary for the salvation of humanity from sin.[52] By his resurrection, God the Son lives with God the Father and serves as the mediator who represents humanity to God. Bediako emphasises that since Jesus is the sole go-between between God and humanity, the role of human ancestors as intermediaries to God is rendered redundant.[53] The supremacy of Jesus Christ as ancestor also disarms all principalities and powers that threaten humanity. Jesus Christ as ancestor who is in the presence of God the Father gives Christians confidence in approaching God and facing life's challenges. Bediako contends that the universality of Jesus Christ's incarnation for all of humanity, rather than his particularity as a Jew, is the basis for the claim Jesus Christ as ancestor.[54] Jesus Christ is regarded as the universal Saviour and Akans are included in Christ's salvation. The Good News of Jesus is read by Akan as their story.[55] Humanity's creation and redemption comes through Jesus Christ the ancestor *par excellence* who the sole mediator and reconciler between God and humanity (Colossians 1:15-23).

In my estimation, Jesus Christ as ancestor, when applied to leadership, describes a leader as a 'credible mediator' – the leader's trait is credibility and the leadership practice is mediation.

Jesus Christ as ancestor was credible. Credibility, inspiring belief, is a feature of Jesus Christ's position as ancestor. Jesus' exemplary life on earth makes him the trustworthy ancestor for Christians to follow his words and deeds. Also Jesus Christ as ancestor was a mediator. Jesus Christ's mediation involved the facilitation of a healthy relationship between sinful humanity and the loving God. This was established by the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and present day intercession of Jesus Christ. The two natures of Jesus Christ, as God and human, make him the singular and credible mediator between God and humanity. Like Jesus, leaders should be credible mediators in the eyes of people they lead. The leader's credibility helps the leader to win the trust of the led. The credibility of a leader is exhibited through a life of integrity, reliability and sincerity. In addition, leaders ought to be mediators who use their credibility to resolve organisational conflicts. To maintain their credibility, conflict resolution by leaders need to be done in a fair and nonpartisan manner.

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52 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 18-19.
53 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 19.
54 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 13-14.
55 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 13-16.

Larry Spears remarks that persuasion, an ingredient of mediation, is a characteristic of effective leaders:

> Another characteristic of servant leaders is reliance on persuasion, rather than on one's positional authority, in making decisions within an organization. The servant leader seeks to convince others, rather than coerce compliance. This particular element offers one of the clearest distinctions between the traditional authoritarian model and that of servant leadership. The servant leader is effective at building consensus within groups.[56]

In the footprints of Jesus Christ the ancestor, the leader as a credible mediator is to display credibility by developing good and honest working relationships with people so as to be trusted and believed.[57] In mediation, Thorsten Grahn observes that serving other associates beyond one's self-interest in the partnership process gives credibility to the mediator.[58] As a mediator the leader manages conflict and works at reconciling people. Analogous to Jesus Christ the ancestor, a leader can be used by God to be a credible mediator.

6. Jesus Christ as Liberator: The Leader as a Courageous Reformer

Mercy Amba Oduyoye contends for the image of Jesus Christ as liberator.[59] She perceives Jesus Christ as the *agenkwa*, a term which for the Akans in Ghana means 'the rescuer' or 'the one who rescues.' Oduyoye maintains that Jesus Christ the *agenkwa*:

> holds your life in safety, takes you out of a life-denying situation and places you in a life-affirming one…. plucks you from a dehumanising ambience and places you in a position where you can grow toward authentic humanity … gives you back your life in all its wholeness and fullness.[60]

In effect, Jesus Christ is the liberator who frees people from bondage for them live life in its fullness. Oduyoye observes that Africans face the challenges of spiritual and material struggles – wrongly worshipping nature; sectionalism; promoting of elitism over people's participation; corruption; patriarchy.[61] The challenges necessitate Jesus Christ the liberator,

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56 Larry Spears, 'Character and Servant Leadership', 28
57 See Myron Rush, *Management*, 61, 193.
58 Thorsten Grahn, "The Three Sisters Garden Analogy for Servant Leadership Based Collaboration, *he Journal of Virtues and Leadership*, Vol. 2 Iss. 1, Summer 2011, 1-5
59 Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa.* (Carlisle: Regnum Africa, 2002), 18-26.
60 Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands,* 18.

the *agenkwa,* who will rescue Africans form this bondage so as to give them a better spiritual and material life. The religious, social, economic and political condition of Africa calls for Jesus Christ the Liberator.[62]

In songs of praise and worship, Akan Christians use cultural appellations to refer to Jesus Christ. These Akan terminologies, Oduyoye says, reveal that for the Akans Jesus Christ is the Liberator:

> *Tufohene* – the one who manages the logistics of the military, both physically and spiritually, and who directs the battles, fighting alongside his people
> *Osagyefo* – the one who saves in the battle
> *Osabarima* – the Great Warrior, the Lord of the Battle… the Man of War
> *DƆmkuyin* – Brave General
> *Admafo Adu* – our Great Friend
> *Okyirtaafo* – Guarantor
> *PƆnfo* – the one who pays back a loan for someone in debt.[63]

Oduyoye notes that the African worldview is holistic worldview, where the spiritual and physical are not separated but united as one whole.[64] Consequently, these Akan expressions show that Jesus Christ liberates people from both spiritual and physical oppression so as to bring them into an experience of God's abundant life. She refers to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt to Canaan by the act of Yahweh Sabaoth as an example of God's liberating action.[65] Likewise, the Gospels portray Jesus Christ as proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom of God which the 'Nazareth Manifesto' in Luke 4:18-22 and Mary's Song of Revolution (the Magnificat) in Luke 1:46-55 testify is a kingdom of freedom, recovery, jubilee, mighty deeds, reversal, benevolence, provision, mercy and grace.[66] Jesus Christ the liberator transforms the life-denying situation of people into a life-giving situation (Isaiah 19:16-25).

In my assessment, Jesus Christ as liberator, when applied to leadership, describes a leader as a 'courageous reformer' – the leader's trait is courage and the leadership practice is reformation. Jesus Christ as liberator was courageous. He courageously proclaimed the

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61 Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands,* 19.
62 Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands,* 19.
63 Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands,* 19-20.
64 Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands,* 21.
65 Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands,* 22.
66 Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*, 24.

kingdom of God, died a violent death by crucifixion and rose from the dead to institute God's church and kingdom. Also Jesus as liberator was a reformer. He changed lives of individuals by redeeming people from, delivering people from demonic spirits and demonic structures, healing people of sicknesses and diseases and helping people to live a holy life. He changed the institutions of family, community and society by taking a stand against sexism, racism, ethnocentrism and classism. He was courageous reformer in fulfilling God's agenda for humanity and creation. Similarly, leaders should be courageous in their leadership by choosing to live ethically, to do things right and to do the right thing. Furthermore, leaders ought to be reformers who facilitate the growth of people and reengineer organisations to attain desirable goals.

Larry Spears identifies commitment to the growth of people, which is reformation, as a characteristic of effective leaders:

> Servant leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. As such, the servant leader is deeply committed to the growth of each and every individual within his or her organization. The servant leader recognizes the tremendous responsibility to do everything in his or her power to nurture the personal and professional growth of employees and colleagues. In practice, this can include (but is not limited to) concrete actions such as making funds available for personal and professional development, taking a personal interest in the ideas and suggestions from everyone, encouraging worker involvement in decision-making, and actively assisting laid-off employees to find other positions.[67]

In line with Jesus Christ the liberator, the leader as a courageous reformer is to display courage by being confident and brave in the face of difficulty, whilst undertaking reforms that will make people more productive and organisations more effective.[68] As a courageous reformer the leader is to be a change agent who stimulates positive and healthy change in individuals and institutions. Bill Hybels asserts that 'courageous, servant-oriented leaders' are leaders who can be agents of change.[69] Similar to Jesus Christ the liberator, a leader can be used by God to be a courageous reformer.

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[67] Spears, 'Character and Servant Leadership,' 29.
[68] See Myron Rush, *Management*, p. 102.
[69] Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*. (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2002), p. 26.

Conclusion

Leadership is the use of influence to promote the wellbeing of individuals, people and institutions. The profitability of the insights of African Christological images for the enrichment of leadership traits and practices has been demonstrated in this essay. A survey of the methodological background to African Christology showed the possibilities and problems associated with the use of African Christological images. The examination of the African Christological images yielded useful leadership concepts that may help leaders in their leadership journey. To conclude, this essay has argued that the application of African Christological images of Jesus Christ as healer, chief, ancestor and liberator yields the leadership traits and leadership practices of the leader as compassionate enabler, competent achiever, credible mediator and courageous reformer respectively. These leadership concepts embrace both the heart (character) of a leader and well as the hands (functions) of a leader. With the insights of African Christological images a leader may be better equipped with the traits and practices that will enable the influencing of people in God's will and ways in the context of the family, church, workplace, community and society.

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Loving the British for the Sake of Mission

Nigel Rooms

Nigel Rooms is the Director of Ministry and Mission in the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham in the Church of England. He is also the facilitator of the Partnership for Missional Church – UK. Email: nigel.rooms@southwell.anglican.org

Abstract

This article addresses a question raised by the phenomenon of what might be termed 'mono-ethnic' or even 'mono-linguistic' Christian congregations in Britain desiring to undertake mission beyond their own boundaries. Such congregations are formed by immigrants to Britain from, first of all, Commonwealth nations once ruled by the British, and also now other countries without those same historical ties. Most of these congregations are finding it difficult to reach British people, and this is partly because they have not fully figured out how to do cross-cultural mission in the context of Britain. This essay intends to begin to explore, for the sake of such immigrant congregations, what it means to be British.

Keywords: *missio Dei*, British-ness, culture, evangelization.

Introduction

There is a plethora of churches attracting Christian immigrants from many African, South Asian and Far Eastern nations. The phenomenon of such 'diaspora' churches, particularly those from Africa, has been well described by Chike [1], an Anglican, and Adedibu[2], a member of a Pentecostal diaspora denomination and describes their development within the overall category of 'black majority' churches which have been present in Britain for at least a century; and Adogame,[3] who researches from within the academy. It is well documented that we now live in the so-called 'global village.' An event on one side of the world can immediately have implications in another country thousands of miles away. Cultures and peoples are now in 'flow' around the world. The missiologist

1 Chigor Chike, *African Christianity in Britain: Diaspora, Doctrines and Dialogue*, (Milton Keynes: AuthorHouse, 2007).
2 Babatunde Adedibu, *Coat of Many Colours: The Origin, Growth, Distinctiveness and Contributions of Black Majority Churches to British Christianity* (London: Wisdom Summit, 2012)
3 Afe Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora,* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013)

and church historian Andrew Walls [4] is on record as saying that migration of peoples is the phenomenon that the Christian church will need to deal with in the next fifty years or so, as he does not see the flow of people abating in any way, despite the occasional efforts of governments to prevent it.

The question is how these immigrant congregations, formed as they are around a people group and sometimes using a language of worship other than English, can begin to take their new 'mission field' seriously and engage with the indigenous population. Curiously enough, the question resonates highly with congregations in the indigenous population amongst the 'mainstream' denominations; these also face a cultural dislocation from the rapidly changing scene that now surrounds them, as will be seen later in the article. These congregations find it difficult to engage in a meaningful way with those who are 'other' in order to form a vibrant and growing Christian community. Thus this question is apposite to every section of the British church.

What qualifies me to write on this subject? At the heart of the question is the ability to cross cultures. Certain people could be classed as 'trans-cultural mediators'; that is, they are able to mediate between cultures, are able to interpret each side to the other, to stand perhaps with a foot in each camp. My vocation and experience has been in crossing cultures as I have worked in the Christian church both in Tanzania and Britain and reflected deeply on the challenges of the gospel in both places. I spent seven years in Tanzania, learning the national language, *Kiswahili,* fluently in order to be effective in my work of theological education there. While never becoming wholly Tanzanian, I was able to speak the language well enough to communicate 'heart to heart' in emotional terms as well as in thinking 'head to head.' Language and culture are intimately related, and I believe knowledge of the language embedded the culture of Tanzania deeply within me.

While there I often found myself trying to interpret ways of being and living which were appropriate to westerners who came on shorter or longer term visits, often to help or support local Christians in some way. After a while I noticed that even moving from Kenya to Tanzania and using the same language could cause cross-cultural confusion. In Kenyan Swahili it was normal to 'want' something when requesting an item in a shop, but to Tanzanians this came across as incredibly blunt and rude, where the preference was to 'request' an item. However, in Kenya, this Tanzanian word had overtones of begging, and therefore implying that the person wanted it free of charge! Both sides were liable to be

[4] Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-cultural Process in Christian History*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002)

thrown out of a shop in their neighbouring country for a cross-cultural *faux-pas*. Becoming aware of such delicate nuances of language and culture is the domain of the trans-cultural mediator.

On returning to the UK, I began to study mission in Britain and to think about the phenomenon of the end of Christendom. The simplest way to think about this is by following George Lings, a researcher in mission for the Church Army. He states that the church in Christendom is like having a congregation at the bottom of a deep cultural valley. People naturally roll down the sides of the cultural valley into the church. To put it in more academic sociological terms, the prevailing 'plausibility structure' of the society and culture enables people to access what is available to them in church. Since the post-Christendom era, however, the situation is entirely reversed. The church is now at the top of a cultural hill, and the cultural gravity caused by the hill drags people away from church. Continuing to wait for people to come into the church will not work. The boundaries of the church have to be breached and people found again where they are in order to start a new work amongst them.

Christendom prevailed in Britain for something over a thousand years. Britain was in fact largely evangelised under the aegis of the then Christian 'holy Roman Empire'.[5] Thus the power of the state allied with the church enabled Christianity to become the national religion of the whole of society. Only in the past fifty years or so has this settlement broken down, as Britain now enters a completely new period of experimentation with a largely secular society. It is true that the Church of England remains established, but the establishment is a 'weak' establishment [6] and it has now only vestigial power to influence major decisions; sometimes it is able to exert influence, while at other times it is ignored.

So for over a thousand years there has been an assumption that to be British is to be Christian; the two have been entirely synonymous. But this is no longer the case. My research in this area questioned the relationship between faith and culture in England. [7] Given the breakdown, or, as some people put it, the 'twilight,' of Christendom, as it fades from us, what is the proper relationship between English Christians and their culture? This is a vital, even a life and death question; it is the question of what theologians and missiologists call *inculturation*. I came to realise that it was a neglected question and one

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5 A reading of Malcolm Lambert (2010) shows that St. Patrick's evangelisation of Ireland in the fifth century was probably the last time any converting mission was undertaken in our islands without the power of the state behind the initiative in some way.

6 Grace Davie, 'Debate' in, *Praying for England: Priestly Presence in Contemporary Culture,* ed. Samuel Wells and Sarah Coakley (London: Continuum, 2008), 147 -169.

7 Nigel Rooms, *The Faith of the English: Integrating Christ and Culture,* (London: SPCK, 2011)

which we ignore at our peril, not least because not answering the question can leave a gap which right-wing nationalists and racists can easily jump in to fill. Unless we can be clear about British culture and values, such notions can be appropriated by those who want to exclude the 'other' in a dangerous game of exclusivity.

This is not the place to rehearse fully the arguments of my book *The Faith of the English* [8] but I do need to summarise some of the material. Readers who wish to delve deeper into the subject would benefit further by reading the full text of the book.

Inculturation addresses the proper relationship of faith (or gospel) and culture. Theologically, inculturation follows the narrative of the 'paschal mystery', or the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of the God-man, Jesus Christ. The incarnation of the Christ as a human being in a particular place and time, and therefore culture, blesses all place, time and culture, such that 'we can never be sure where Christ is not.' The first movement of God is to be found within a culture; only as that culture rejects the Christ and kills him is it judged and converted through the cross and the resurrection. This is therefore the correct sequence for any cross-cultural mission; an incarnational entering into the culture before the right to transform and critique it is earned and taken up. Inculturation then is always a dynamic double movement of both indwelling culture and transforming it for the better at the same time.

Thus the gospel never exists or lives apart from culture; there is no isolatable *a*cultural gospel that can be neatly packaged and inserted into any culture. Andrew Walls is the best exponent of this position in his seminal article which describes the indigenising and pilgrim principles of true inculturation.[9] Along the way he explains how the continuity in Christianity across the ages consists of a minimal number of foundational elements: '… continuity of thought about the final significance of Jesus, continuity of a certain consciousness about history, continuity in the use of the scriptures, of bread, of wine, of water'. [10]

Due to its foundation in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, Christianity has no culturally fixed element. This has important implications for the way in which faith grows and expands, as Walls shows in a later book, claiming that the future of Christianity is always dependent on

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8 Rooms, *The Faith of the English*.

9 Andrew F. Walls, 'The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture' in *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 3: Faith and Culture,* eds. James A Scherer and Stephen B Bevans, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999), 17 – 28.

10 Walls, 'The Gospel as Prisoner,' 21.

its ability to faithfully inhabit and transform the culture in which it finds itself. In contrast, then, with Islam, which is based on the untranslatable fixed text of the Quran, Christianity can die in places where it has lived: [11]

> If the acts of cultural translation by which the Christians of any community make their faith substantial within that community cease – the Word ceases to be made flesh within that community – the Christian group within that community is likely to lose, not just its effectiveness, but its powers of resistance.

So Walls articulates both the dilemma for the mainstream churches and the diaspora congregations in Britain today – how to be 'made flesh' within their whole communities. The negative trajectory offered here is not unfamiliar in Britain since the children of immigrants acculturate at a faster pace than their parents through their schooling; and therefore if the host community is unable to work cross-culturally they quickly lose the following generation to the prevailing culture.

The inculturation question is acute in Africa, where Christianity arrived as a western religion and had to be rediscovered in its non-western nature by Africans returning to study its roots in the first centuries of the church, for example, Bediako.[12] How can I be African and Christian when the Christianity as I receive it comes clothed in western thought forms and patterns? Perhaps as a reader of this article you are originally from Africa and it might be helpful at this point to pause and ask yourself where are the 'pinch points' for you around faith and culture? How well do you recognise these dilemmas and the sharp questions they raise for what is or is not acceptable for Christians living within a culture?

Just as important now, post-Christendom, is the question of how one can be English or British and also Christian. If Walls is right, this is a vital question for the future of the church in Britain.

One outstanding issue to be considered at this point concerns the question of England and the English and Britain and the British. I have also addressed this in my book [13] and summarise it here. Britain is a political construct which enables the four countries of the United Kingdom to live and work together. As I write this, unity is being brought into question with the forthcoming Scottish referendum on Independence. However, what is

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11 Walls, 13
12 Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a non-Western Religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995)
13 Rooms, *The Faith,* 38-40

clear is that the concept of being British is vital for the self-understanding of immigrants and taps into something deeply multi-cultural in the origins of Britain, formed as it was through multiple invasions from Europe. As the left leaning singer-songwriter, Billy Bragg, claims, we are the 'people of the hyphen' [14] – the Anglo-Saxons, a cultural melting pot from the beginning.

It is difficult though to ascribe a cultural identity to Britishness, as it is first and foremost a political construct. I believe we have to approach culture from the standpoint of the values, customs, myths, sayings and proverbs of a people. To lump the British together for a project of this nature seems unfair and this is precisely the reason the anthropologist Kate Fox gives for studying the cultural behaviour of the English, in order to uncover their 'cultural genome' or the cultural characteristics of this people.[15] No doubt she could have continued her studies in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland and may have discovered that the underlying traits of these peoples were much the same as the English. I suspect they are at the very least connected and similar, but the research has not been done to develop the evidence for such a claim. For the purposes of this article, then, we have the results of a long-term research project (over three years) delving into the depths of English culture. It is the results of this work that will show us the culture in which the gospel has to live in England and, with a bit of extrapolation and inference, Britain as well.

Fox finds the number one characteristic of the English is 'social dis-ease.' The English find it very difficult to interact socially, face-to-face, which is why alcohol as a social lubricant is often so important in creating the circumstances where people can make good conversation. There are then three sets of 'reflexes, values and outlooks' that are all related in making up the 'cultural genome' of the English.[16]

The reflexes are humour, moderation and hypocrisy; the values are fair play, courtesy and modesty; the outlooks are empiricism, eeyorishness (moaning in a humorous and mocking way about everything, termed after a character in the children's book *Winnie the Pooh*) and class-consciousness.

In my research, working from this starting point as a definition of English culture, I have studied these ideas and their associated proverbs and sayings in order to put English culture as described here in dialogue with the Christian gospel. What fits and what does not? Not everyone will come up with the same answers but it is in the dialogue that effective

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14 Billy Bragg, The Progressive Patriot: A Search for Belonging (London: Bantam Press, 2006)
15 Fox, Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2004).
16 See Fox, *Watching the English,* 410.

inculturation can take place. My point in this article however is a slightly different one.

The first rule of cross-cultural working is this: "they" won't change; you have to!" Culture shock is the phenomenon of entering a new culture and being initially enthralled by it in the first few weeks; then appalled, as the vast differences impress themselves upon us as we get to know more of it; and then some accommodations are made and things settle down and learning can take place. However the newcomer has to learn that however much they try they will not be able to impact the culture until they have come to understand it, live with it and become part of it.

The Christian missionary has to go one step further. We are all very familiar with John 3:16; 'for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son ....' Somehow God loved humans enough to become one of them, like them in every way. This is despite what was to happen to Jesus, which was rejection, condemnation and death at the hands of humanity. Here is the challenge for the diaspora churches in Britain. Can they love the British? Can they love the British, characterised as they are by social dis-ease, hypocrisy and class-consciousness? Maybe admitting they actually might be quite difficult to love (or even like!) would be a good starting point for the potential missionary in their prayer. The prayer might then be to ask God for the gift of love for these people. I know one such parish priest who was sent to work in a tough working-class area and an even tougher church that had treated the previous priest very badly. He openly says that God gave him the gift of love for the people in his parish and he has stuck with them through thick and thin.

This article can only be an introduction to the issues of doing mission in Britain today from the perspective of African diaspora churches. There are several other issues that I wish to point up here which are worthy of further exploration by readers and possibly further articles in the future.

As well as understanding the underlying inherited culture of the British, which has been developing for centuries and can be described from anthropological research, there is another movement which was alluded to earlier in this article and which has driven a wedge between the prevailing culture and the culture of the church. This is what is known by some as the move from modernity to late modernity or post-modernity or, as Patrick Keifert puts it more positively, the new missional era.[17] The church as we find it today in the

[17] Keifert, Patrick R. *We Are Here Now: A New Missional Era.* (Eagle, ID: Allelon Publishing, 2006).

West has been formed in modernity, which removed the possibility of the presence of God in the *here and now* of the everyday experience of believers. Of course this is what diaspora churches bring to the table in abundance – a belief in the power and presence of God in the present moment. Working together in what has become known as the missional church movement, I can see tremendous possibilities for collaboration in mission if we can together follow the process of becoming missional in all that we are as church. Keifert describes this in his book *We are Here Now* as a three stage, three-year process of: a) listening to God, the congregation, its community and culture (the incarnational move we have been explaining); b) experimenting in forming Christian community in mission around adaptive challenges we set ourselves which will change us and those around us; c) creating a vision for the local church that we can embody and live in our everyday lives, at home in private, at work, and in public in the community.

Such an approach I believe will enable us to create the kind of multi-cultural churches that will anticipate the vision of the *panta ta ethne* (all nations) gathered in heaven, so vividly described in the book of Revelation. The best book I have come across which explicates such a vision for the incorporation of ethnicities in a local congregation is Lau Branson and Martinez's *Churches, Cultures and Leadership*.[18] They pick up Keifert's missional church language and their version of the three-fold movement of the missional church is as follows:

1. Interpretive: shapes the interpretive community and meanings needed for praxis
2. Implemental: guides experiments and practices and forms structures, so the gospel is embodied
3. Relational: connects and nourishes church participants and neighbours toward love and synergism

Finally there are other cultures to be aware of and to be crossed in loving the British. We mentioned class consciousness as a characteristic of the British and this is deeply embedded in the culture. Strangely though, money and class do not wholly overlap; some upper class people are not very wealthy and some working class people, such as footballers, can be very rich.

There are different cultures and outlooks in the north and south of England (and also in Scotland), not least because the money and power resides in the south-east of England centred on London. This means that ministers who are effective in the south can find it

[18] Mark Lau Branson and Juan F Martinez, *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities*, (Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2011), 55

difficult to cross cultures to the north and minister effectively there and vice-versa.

It is also possible to move from the deep rural to the inner-city within 10-15 miles of most cities. Such a journey will cross many cultures too; farming rural, 'escape' rural, commuter rural, market town, suburban, urban, inner city etc. While containing all of Kate Fox's characteristics, each of these areas will have its own added peculiarities, which will mean that what works in one place will fall very flat in another.

In conclusion, then, culture and context are everything when considering mission in Britain; we cannot proceed without taking them utterly seriously. Our gospel is based on the One who came to be Emmanuel, God with us, born into first century Palestine, out of the overwhelming love of God for the world. If this good news is to reach the British again then we have to work very hard to break down the walls of our churches, particularly if those walls are built of fear or even dislike of the 'other.' We are invited to love and inhabit the cultures around us, crossing boundaries in mission, discovering God at work beyond the church, and forming new Christian communities in partnership with the God of mission.

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Mission from Africa: A Call to Re-imagine Mission In African-led Pentecostal Churches in Britain[1]

Babatunde Adedibu

Babatunde Adedibu is a visiting lecturer and honorary research fellow with the University of Roehampton.

Abstract

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

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 Andrew Walls, "Of Ivory Towers and Ashrams: Some Reflections on Theological Scholarship," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 3:1 (2000): 1.

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

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

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

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

social, religious and political sphere.[8]

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

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

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

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

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

10 Harvey Kwiyani, "Pneumatology."

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

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

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

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

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

Mission out of Africa or Diasporic Perpetuation of Africa in

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

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

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

16 Babatunde Adedibu, "Reverse Mission or Migrant Sanctuaries?" 410

Britain?

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

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

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

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

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

21 Some of the recent publications include A. Ukah, "Reverse Mission or Asylum Christianity? A Nigerian Church in Europe," *Africans and Politics of Popular Cultures,* ed. T. Falola, and A. Agwuele, (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 104-32; and A. Adogame, R. Gerloff, and K. Hock, *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora* (London: Continuum, 2009).

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

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

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

Defining Reverse Mission

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

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

26 For further study see Michael Ojo, "Reverse Mission", in *Encyclopedia of Mission and Missionaries*, ed. J. J. Bonk, (London: Routledge, 2007), 380.

27 Freston, "Reverse Mission," 155.

28 For detailed study see Dyron Daughrity, "Ignoring the East: Correcting Serious Flaws in World Christianity Scholarship", in Adogame and Shankar, *Religion on the Move*, 46.

29 Afe Adogame and Shobnar Shankar, "Exploring New Frontiers in Global Religious Dynamics", in Adogame and Shankar, *Religion on the Move*, 1.

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

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

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

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

31 Afe Adogame, "Reverse Mission: Europe - a Prodigal Continent?" www.wcc2006.info/fileadmin/files/edinburgh2010/files/News/Afe_Reverse%20mission.pdf (accessed 28 June 2013).

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

country.[33]

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

Re-imagination of Mission- A Call for Paradigm Shift

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

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

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

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

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

36 Ibid, 42

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

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

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

[37] Richard Burgess, African Pentecostals in Britain: The Case of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, in Ludwig and Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Christian Presence in the* West, 265.
[38] Ibid, 36

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

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

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

[39] Paul Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts, Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI., Baker Academic, 2009), 190.
[40] Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts*, 181.

British soil, their missionary potential might never be realised.

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

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

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

[41] George G. Hunter, III. *Church for the Unchurched* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), 28.

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

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

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

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

[42] Beckford, *Documentary on Exorcism* (Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2013), 194.

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

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

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

Conclusion

[43] Beckford, *Documentary on Exorcism*, 199.
[44] W. R. Ward, *Faith and Faction,* (Epworth: Epsom Press, 1993), 207.
[45] Hugh Osgood, "African Neo-Pentecostal Churches and British Evangelicalism 1985-2005: Balancing Principles and Practicalities." (PhD dissertation, London: University of London. 2006). 237.
[46] Ward, in his essay on the development of the Baptist Union, points to the connection between the emerging revival of the late eighteenth century and a new view of evangelism. Ward posits that "when, in the 1790s, the barriers to evangelism at home and abroad began to collapse, the new panoramic view of history produced spectacular fruit in the movement [known] as Catholic Christianity, and induced in the evangelical Calvinists of England a mood of euphoria at the 'funeral of bigotry.'" For further study, see Ward, *Faith and Faction*, 207.
[47] The poem was originally written for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, but exchanged for "Recessional"; Kipling changed the text of "Burden" to reflect the subject of American colonization of the Philippines, recently won from Spain in the Spanish-American War.

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

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

Missio Dei: An African Appropriation

Harvey C. Kwiyani

Harvey Kwiyani is the Executive Director of Missio Africanus. He teaches mission, leadership, and African studies at Birmingham Christian College and in the Pioneer Leadership Training at Church Mission Society (CMS) in Oxford. Email: harvey@missioafricanus.org

Abstract

The 'discovery' of the concept of *missio Dei* at the 1952 International Missionary Council at Willingen in Germany started a paradigm shift in missiological and theological conversations around the world. It has certainly reinvigorated mission in the West even though most of this missionary work looks very different from that of the twentieth century. Once we begin to understand mission as *missio Dei*, the implications are quite extensive. It is very likely that not even western theology has come to understand it fully. In this essay an attempt is made to situate *missio Dei* in Africa using the Malawian concept of *umunthu*, which means 'personhood', but also connotes 'humanity'. It is argued here that in *umunthu* God is reaching out to humanise the dying world in a way that Africans would understand easily—which potentially makes *umunthu* an African hermeneutical tool for interpreting *missio Dei*.

Keywords: African missiology, *missio Dei*, humanisation, *umunthu*.

Taking Missio Dei to Africa

Missionally speaking, the world today is living in a very exciting age. This is the season of mission, no matter which part of the globe one is in. Indeed, mission is on the verge of finally becoming a truly six-continent affair. Christians have embraced God's calling for them to participate in God's mission in the world, both within their own continents and in other continents as well. The word 'mission' itself has become so extremely popular among Christians worldwide that it is in danger of becoming just another Christian buzzword that means everything and nothing at the same time. However, sixty years after the Willingen 1952 IMC conference where it was first thrust into the world missionary scene, *missio Dei* is still a term that is foreign to many non-western Christians. Few have heard the term '*missio Dei*' while even fewer know its meaning. For those who do know the meaning of *missio Dei*, many wonder about its implications for their lives and ministries. This essay attempts to engage with many questions that have been posed by numerous African pastors: What is *missio Dei*? What does it mean for our ecclesiology?

Missiology? Theology? How do we make sense of it in our African context?

In attempting to explore what *missio Dei* means for Africa, this essay concerns itself with three tasks. The first one is to provide some brief background information on the historical development and the theological significance of '*missio Dei*' in world Christianity. In this regard, the essay will engage some of the key voices that have appropriated *missio Dei* in the West from 1952 to the present. The second task is to explore the theological implications and limitations of *missio Dei* for African theology. It appears to this writer that to faithfully contextualise *missio Dei* in Africa there is a need to find a starting point that is African; and consequently, that starting point will be different from that of the Willingen 1952 conference. Finally, the third task is to propose a new interpretation of *missio Dei* based on the foundations of the Malawian concept of *umunthu*.

Missio Dei at Sixty

The resurgence of mission in *world* Christianity, especially within the last fifty years when Majority World Christians have joined the missionary movements of the world, has serious implications for all things Christian. In all parts of the world the academic disciplines of Christian mission, intercultural studies, missiology, and many others related to mission, are, once again, popular in many colleges and seminaries. Mission schools have appeared, almost overnight, in many countries around the globe. Short-term missions are at an all-time high, while the long-term migration of Christians is on the rise. *Mission* has come back. Even in the West where Christianity is in decline, conversations around the mission of the church (e.g. the emerging church and the missional church) have created new energy on how to convert the West. Indeed, according to Alan Roxburgh of the Missional Network, the word 'missional,' which was made popular by the 'Gospel and Our Culture Network 1998' publication, *Missional Church*,[1] seems to have travelled the remarkable path of going from obscurity to banality in only one decade.[2]

In the eyes of the rest of the world, *missio Dei* has, however, taken an inconspicuous route. Even though it has existed in western theology for sixty years, it is still mysterious and ambiguous to most of the world's Christians. Even at the Willingen conference itself, *missio Dei* did not render itself easy to interpretation —there were already different schools of thought on how to interpret *missio Dei*.[3] Wilhelm Richebacher, a German theologian, once

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1 Darrell Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

2 Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 1.

3 See Tormod Engelsviken, "Missio Dei: The Understanding and Misunderstanding of a Theological Concept in European Churches and Missiology," *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 367 (2003).

observed that "Christian missions [after 1952] found [*missio Dei*] not just new and liberating, but also more and more confusing."[4] Craig Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile observed two strains in the interpretation of *missio Dei* that developed out of the deliberations at Willingen; one is creation focused while the other is redemption focused.[5] Richebacher also mentioned two ways of interpreting *missio Dei*: one prioritising mission as a "sign of the life of a church which is sure of its source in the Spirit of God" and the second one describing mission as a "work of God that is common to all religions."[6] Richebacher further observed that "*missio Dei* can be used to justify the Christocentric definition of all the mission of the church or to propound a deity that bears witness to itself in other religions and thereby counter the absolute claims of Christianity."[7] These different ways of understanding *missio Dei* still exist in the West today.

Thus, sixty years after Willingen 1952, *missio Dei* still remains a concept in need of explanation—not only among Africans. Over the past decades, *missio Dei* has connoted many things to many people. Some have embraced it as one model of mission among many. David Bosch, for example, located *missio Dei* among the thirteen 'elements of an emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm.'[8] Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder mentioned *missio Dei* as one of the four models of a relevant mission for the twenty-first century.[9] On the other hand, other scholars have taken it to be the central identity of mission that provides the foundation for any model of mission. For instance, the works of Lesslie Newbigin,[10] Darell Guder,[11] Craig Van Gelder,[12] and many others place *missio Dei* as the foundational cornerstone of any understanding of *all* mission. For these missiologists, *missio Dei* is not one among many models of mission. It is an all-encompassing concept that informs and shapes all aspects of mission. They embody the theological conviction that the church is missionary by nature and therefore church and mission are not separate entities. All true mission is *missio Dei*. Even though Bosch did not bridge the gap between mission and the church, he helpfully summarised *missio Dei* in this way:

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4 Wilhelm Richebacher, "Willingen 1952 - Willingen 2002: The Origin and Contents of This Edition of IRM," *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 367 (2003): 465.
5 Van Gelder and Zscheile, *Missional Church in Perspective*, 30-31.
6 Wilhelm Richebacher, "Missio Dei: The Basis of Mission Theology or a Wrong Path?" *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 367 (2003): 588.
7 Richebacher, "Willingen 1952 - Willingen 2002, 465.
8 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 368, 389-93.
9 Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, American Society of Missiology Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 286-304.
10 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).
11 Guder, *Missional Church*.
12 Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000).

Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God. It is not that the church has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church. Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is church because there is mission, not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is the fountain of sending love.[13]

Wolfgang Gunther concluded that:

> *[Missio Dei]* offers an umbrella, as it were, under which all the different biblical motives for mission and the corresponding different directions in our churches have their rightful place but are at the same time relativized. God's mission is so all encompassing that all who take part in it can only ever take up one small part of it.[14]

Missio Dei: A Brief Historical Background

The concept of *missio Dei* has been in existence for much longer than the sixty years that inform this essay. Some scholars have pointed out that the idea of the mission of God (not the terminology) appears significantly in Martin Luther's writing.[15] Tormod Engelsviken noted that the idea of *missio Dei* goes as far back as Augustine.[116] However, the term *missio Dei* as it is currently used first appeared in western theology and missiology at the 1952 Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council. The term '*missio Dei*' was coined in 1934 by a German theologian, Karl Hartenstein[17] in response to Karl Barth's 1932 presentation at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference, where Barth envisioned mission as an activity of God—*actio Dei*.[18] Hartenstein agreed with the idea in his 1933 publication, *Die Mission als Theologisches Problem*.[19] However, in 1934 he moved beyond identifying mission as the action of God to understanding it as the mission of God.[20]

At the Willingen conference, where Hartenstein was secretary, mission was discussed in terms similar to *missio Dei*. The term *missio Dei* was never used at the conference at all. It was

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13 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

14 Wolfgang Gunther, "The History and Significance of World Mission Conferences in the 20th Century," *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 367 (2003): 530.

15 See James A. Scherer, *Gospel, Church and Kingdom: Comparative Studies in World Mission Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), 55.

16 Engelsviken, "Missio Dei," 482.

17 Karl Hartenstein, (1894-1952) was the mission director for Basel Mission from 1926 to 1939. He died in 1952 and never lived to see the fruits that would come out of the term that he coined. See John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 125-33.

18 See Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Und Die Mission in Der Gegenwart*, Theologische Fragen Und Antworten (Zollikon: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1957), 100-84.

19 Karl Hartenstein, *Die Mission Als Theologisches Problem: Beiträge Zum Grundsätzlichen Verständnis Der Mission* (Berlin: Furche-verlag, 1933).

20 Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants*, 290.

when he compiled the conference report that Hartenstein used *missio Dei* – the term he had coined almost twenty years earlier. He described mission as "participation in the sending of the Son, in the *missio Dei*, with an inclusive aim of establishing the lordship of Christ over the whole redeemed creation."[21] In the years that followed the Willingen conference the concept of *missio Dei* became a popular theological framework for understanding mission in various Christian traditions, especially in West. Several German theologians such as Georg Vicedom,[22] Johannes Blauw,[23] and Hans Kung,[24] published books that sought to interpret *missio Dei*. For example, in his 1958 book entitled *Missio Dei* (translated into English in 1965 under the title *The Mission of God*), Georg Vicedom provided a report of his reflections on the undertakings of the Willingen conference. He suggested, "The mission, and with it the church, is God's very own work … Mission as the business of God implies that He (*sic*) lays claim to make use of all God's believers exactly as God wishes in order to impart God's love to all men (*sic*) through God's believers."[25] More recent publications on *missio Dei* include Christopher Wright's *The Mission of God*[26] and John Flett's *The Witness of God*.[27]

In Britain, Lesslie Newbigin's theology attempted to appropriate *missio Dei*. In the 1980s Newbigin led a program around the Gospel and Culture in Britain and Ireland. Out of this program, the Gospel and Culture Network (GOCN) was born in North America.[28] While there have been several ways to interpret and apply *missio Dei* to theologies of mission, the gap between the church and mission, or between ecclesiology and mission, continued to exist. It was not until the 1990s when this gap would be bridged to begin what has been called *missional ecclesiology* by the works of the GOCN. In 1998 Darell Guder and several GOCN missiologists published the seminal book, *Missional Church*.[29] Here, Guder and his colleagues tried to articulate a missional ecclesiology that stays grounded in *missio Dei* in order to faithfully embody the conviction that the church is missionary by nature. This book is the first major attempt at engaging the implications of *missio Dei* in ecclesiology without the church-mission dichotomy. Thus, it took nearly half a century for *missio Dei* to be

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21 Cited in Rodger C. Bassham, *Mission Theology, 1948-1975: Years of Worldwide Creative Tension - Ecumenical, Evangelical, and Roman Catholic* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1979), 67. Also see Walter Freytag, *Mission Zwischen Gestern Und Morgen: Vom Gestaltwandel Der Weltmission Der Christenheit Im Licht Der Konferenz Des Internationalen Missionsrats in Willingen* (Stuttgart: Evangelischer Missionsverlag, 1952), 52.

22 Georg F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1965).

23 Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962).

24 Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967).

25 Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, 6.

26 Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).

27 Flett, *The Witness of God*.

28 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983).

29 Guder, *Missional Church*.

interpreted in ways that actually begin to challenge the self-understanding of congregations and western Christians.[30]

Situating the Development of *Missio Dei*

In order to understand what *missio Dei* would entail in an African context, it is important to take a look at the missionary world of the 1950s. Like any other theology in the world, the early theology of *missio Dei* as articulated in western theology was shaped by the contextual circumstances of the mid-twentieth century. To their credit, in their *Missional Church,* Guder and colleagues were intentional about theologising *missio Dei* for North America, even though their missional theology can be contextualised for other parts of the world. For African Christians to make good use of the *missio Dei* concept, they must also understand their own contexts as well. Trying to use it without contextualising it may only lead to further confusion and frustration. Let us now look at the challenges that faced the missionary endeavours of the first half of the twentieth century and which led to the missional paradigm shift of Willingen.

1. Mission Theology

When *missio Dei* came to prominence in mission theology in 1952 there was a major crisis in western Christianity and its missionary work in the world. First, there was a subtle discontent among some mission and theology scholars about the conflicting strands of western theology that had been gradually gaining ground since the late 1800s. On the one hand, there was fundamentalism; on the other, there was the social gospel movement.[31] Both these theological schools led to anthropocentrism and voluntarism in the missionary movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Under these circumstances mission was not regarded as God's very own work but as a purely human endeavour. As such, a very anthropocentric theology emerged, which intentionally severed the strong link between mission and the doctrine of the Trinity. Bosch commented that until the Willingen conference, mission had been conceived in soteriological, ecclesiological, or cultural terms.[32] As such, *missio Dei* was articulated at the Willingen conference in response to these theological issues, to dislocate mission from overdependence on human effort and locate it with God.

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30 It is my suspicion that even though Guder's *Missional Church* makes a great contribution to understanding *missio Dei*, there are still many gaps that are yet to be filled in order for world Christianity to fully come to terms with what *missio Dei* means. I have argued elsewhere that the missional ecclesiology that shapes *Missional Church* is lacking in pneumatology. See Harvey C. Kwiyani, "Pneumatology, Mission, and African Christians in Multicultural Congregations in North America" (Ph.D. diss, Luther Seminary, 2012). Even though *Missional Church* was written for North America, the missional theology that is articulated in it is relevant for mission in all continents. *Missio Dei* is *missio Dei*, no matter what part of the world it engages.

31 See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, ch. 9.

32 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 389.

2. World Politics

Second, the western missionary enterprise of the twentieth century was badly disrupted by the first and second World Wars. To begin with, the missionary zeal that characterised the 1910 World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh crashed only four years after the conference, when the First World War erupted. During the World Wars western missionaries generally sided with their governments. This forced them to distrust missionaries from enemy states. Missionaries who had previously worked together on the mission field were forced to intern other missionaries from opposing countries.[33] This was very disorienting for both the missionaries and their converts. It became apparent to the rest of the world that the Christianity of western civilisation could not prevent engagement in a destructive war against fellow (Christian) Europeans.

Also, in Germany, in the 1930s when *missio Dei* was coined, the Nazi Government ideology was beginning to forcefully demand the church to partner with it in its campaign for nationalism. At the same time, the build-up to the Second World War was in progress. The German church and its leaders were in danger—a danger of compromise in order to maintain a peaceful co-existence with the government by endorsing or turning a blind eye to the hateful nationalistic political rhetoric of the day. Christians who did not support the government were persecuted. Most of them left Germany. Many of the courageous ministers who stayed in Germany, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, were killed. The world missionary sphere, and that of Christianity, looked rather discouraging. There was a need for a new framework—a solid foundation for mission and mission theology.[34]

3. Decolonisation and expulsion of missionaries

The third crisis in the western missiology of the time was the collapse of political colonialism. In the sight of most of the colonised people, mission had become suspect as the bait that was used to pacify them before the colonisers took over their land. The colonial empires crumbled when the colonies, starting with India in 1947, gained independence. When the colonial agents returned to their western countries, missionaries followed along. By 1952 the western church did not think that the 'younger churches' of the mission fields could survive without them. The fight against colonialism left most western missionaries feeling rejected by the indigenous Christians whom they had educated at their mission schools. As such, there was great concern around the future of the "younger churches" in

[33] The internment of German missionaries by British missionaries in Tanzania, for instance, would have major implications for the understanding of mission. See Frieder Ludwig, *Church and State in Tanzania: Aspects of a Changing Relationship, 1961-1994* (Boston: Brill, 1999).

[34] It is possible that the city of Willingen in Germany was chosen for the 1952 conference to restore and encourage the German Christians after the devastating wars.

the postcolonial world starting in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. As seen in the case of China, the rise of communism brought many more challenges to mission as it was understood then. When China expelled western missionaries in 1951-52 it signalled potential trouble for missionary enterprise all around the world.

Consequently, western understanding of *missio Dei* was shaped by these three factors. In between fundamentalism and liberalism in theology, anthropocentrism in mission, the turmoil of the World Wars, and the collapse of colonialism with the missionary work attached to it, there was a great need for a new theological framework that would keep missionary work going. Mission had to be established on a solid base and *missio Dei* proved to be just that. No matter what the world was going through, mission belongs to God. Mission is in the very nature of God. It is also in the very nature of the church to be missionary. In this sense, the end of *missions* had come, and it was time for the age of *mission* to begin.[35] Anthropocentrism (which was coupled with ecclesiocentrism) was replaced by theocentrism. The challenges faced had led to the truth that mission belongs to God, wherever it is carried out, be it in Europe, America, or Africa.

Missio Dei in African Contexts

Any attempt to articulate *missio Dei* in Africa must attend to at least two issues. First, *missio Dei* in Africa will have to connect with African theology in ways that make it truly African. God's missionary faithfulness to the African context can only be seen in God's identifying God-self with the African. As such, the mission of God—*missio Dei*—in Africa must look African. Colonial theology will not do the continent any good. Second, in order to do this, *missio Dei* in Africa will have to start from a different set of premises from those that shaped the Willingen definition of *missio Dei*. Indeed, this is very necessary since *missio Dei* is not reacting to anthropocentrism or a crumbling imperialism in Africa. Nor is it facing any of the challenges that faced the missionary movement in the mid-twentieth century.

Naturally, *missio Dei* in Africa has to start from the premise that mission is God's mission—and not the church's. In the African context, it is not sufficient to simply say *missio Dei* means that mission belongs to God, as most westerners do. In this day and age most Africans do not imagine mission in anthropocentric terms, since, in African cosmology, God (through the spirits) is active in the world. To say mission belongs to God will state the obvious since African Christianity is not anthropocentric. If mission belongs to God who is already at work in Africa, then the missionaries and Christians will have to discern and join in God's

[35] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 391.

already ongoing mission. Certainly, God's missionary presence in Africa precedes that of the church and the missionaries. The church is God's primary agent for mission, but it is not the only agent. As such, to understand what *missio Dei* will look like in Africa, missionaries and Christian leaders ought to ask, "What is God up to here?" The answer to this question will vary according to the context in which it is asked. For instance, *missio Dei* in Africa will look for God's presence and work in the context of poverty, diseases, bad governance, corruption, ethnic conflicts, etc. By asking "What is God doing here?" missionaries and Christians may be able to discern what *missio Dei* will look like in their respective contexts. To situate *missio Dei* properly in Africa, there is a need to locate God's Spirit at work already in the African context. For instance, in the Malawian concept of *umunthu*,[36] this writer sees points of contact where *missio Dei* might actually guide the African church to a missiology that is authentically African but also properly grounded in the Scriptures. *Umunthu*, which means 'personhood', is an expansive philosophical, theological, and spiritual concept that actually puts human beings in a bonded community of life that includes God, spirits, society, and nature.[37] It describes a well-rounded philosophy of life in which to be a person—to have *umunthu*—is to be at peace with oneself, the community around, God, the spirits, and nature. For this reason, when Malawians say '*wakuti ali ndi umunthu/mzimu*' (someone has personhood/is a person/is a human being), they mean that the person is kind, sociable, caring, self-giving, generous, communal, and hospitable, spiritual, understanding, etc. To have *umunthu* is to be someone who *humanises* others through acts of hospitality, inclusivity, and generosity, listening, etc. To humanise another is to share a person's *umunthu* with others—something that may lead to the recipient's spiritual awakening—or regeneration. To dehumanise is to exclude, oppress, and to lack *umunthu* which is equivalent to being a beast—*chirombo*. (This is said of those who terrorise their communities, such as thugs, murderers, etc).[38]

In essence, *missio Dei* is also about humanising. The Triune God, the Great *Munthu*,[39] came to earth in the Person of the Son, Jesus Christ, to restore human beings to their full

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[36] In Chichewa (Malawi's national vernacular), not unlike many other Malawian languages, *munthu* means person. Adding the prefix *U-* to make it *umunthu* transforms it to mean 'personhood.' The Malawian concept of *umunthu* is the same concept that is known as *ubuntu* in South Africa, meaning 'personhood' in South Africa too. *Umunthu* is quite foundational in African life and very significant for understanding African theology. It is known as *utu* in Swahili, *obonto* in Kiisi, *nunhu* in Shona, *bunhu* in Tsonga, *numunhu* in Shangaan, *botho* in Sotho, etc. *Umunthu* is not a Christian concept; *umunthu* is not equivalent to Christianity or *missio Dei*. However, in my opinion, it may serve well as a preparation for the coming of the Gospel (and that of Christianity).

[37] Harvey J. Sindima, "Community of Life: Ecological Theology in African Perspective," in *Liberating Life*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990). Also see John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, Contemporary Greek Theologians (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

[38] For further reading on *umunthu*, see Harvey J. Sindima, "Bondedness, Moyo and Umunthu as the Elements of Achewa Spirituality: Organizing Logic and Principle of Life," *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 14, no. 1 (1991). Also, Gerard Chigona, *Umunthu Theology: Path of Integral Human Liberation Rooted in Jesus of Nazareth* (Balaka: Montfort, 2002). Also see Augustine C. Musopole, *Being Human in Africa: Toward an African Christian Anthropology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

[39] See James H. O. Kombo, *The Doctrine of God in African Christian Thought: The Holy Trinity, Theological Hermeneutics and the African Intellectual Culture* (Boston: Brill, 2007).

humanity—personhood, *umunthu*—and give them life in abundance. The Pauline corpus suggests that the culmination of this humanising begins with regeneration whereby the Spirit (breath, *ruach*,) of God brings the human spirit to life.[40] The apostle Paul testified to this when he said, "we were once dead in our sins … but God made us alive together with Christ" (Eph. 2:1-7, my paraphrase). Peter added that "you were once not a people, but now you are the people of God" (1 Pet. 2:10, NIV). Thus, the real *umunthu* begins with salvation; the secular *umunthu* is only a shadow of the *umunthu* that is made possible by Christ. When everyday acts of *umunthu* are undergirded by prayers and faith, they become anointed avenues through which God's Spirit draws people to God's humanising love. This is what *missio Dei* is about. This humanising principle of *missio Dei* rightly extends the concept of salvation in Africa to include many ways in which life and personhood is shared. Many scholars have shown how salvation in Africa is more than the saving of the soul.[41] Salvation, even in its Greek translation, *sozo*, includes healing, deliverance, blessing, empowerment, liberation, feeding, clothing, etc.[42] All these are humanising acts through which people can have the abundant life that Christ gave to humankind. In all these acts, plus many others, Christian witness is made and the gospel is shared, even sometimes without proclamation.

The implications of this interpretation of *missio Dei* are many and huge. For instance, by suggesting the possibility—or likelihood—of God's mission manifesting itself in *umunthu*, mission easily becomes theocentric, while placing an emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. Every Christian is a missionary whom God can use anywhere, not just in church. In the daily grind of *umunthu*, God can surprise the church by drawing people to the cross of Christ. In addition, in *umunthu*, mission becomes holistic. It pays attention to the whole human being, not just the person's soul. *Missio Dei* becomes rooted in healthy loving and humanising relationships between Christians and the community in which they live. In this sense, *missio Dei* also leads to a Christian identification with the poor and the marginalised. Christian ministers leading by *umunthu* will be generous people who are there for their flock (and not only the tithing members of their churches). Extortion for the sake of personal enrichment is thievery—*patse patse nkulanda*—a sign of lacking *umunthu*. Finally, *missio Dei* understood through *umunthu* encourages good stewardship of God's creation, for to have *umunthu* is to be in harmony with God, the spirits, the community, and nature. The desertification of the land and the exploitation of the lake are contrary to *umunthu*, and therefore also contrary to *missio Dei*.

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40 Gen. 2:7. Among some Malawians, the word *spirit* is also used interchangeably with *umunthu*.

41 See J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Boston: Brill, 2005).

42 For a more detailed treatment of the subject of salvation among African Christians, see ibid. For further reading, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Holy Spirit and Salvation: The Sources of Christian Theology*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 399-416.

Conclusion

Missio Dei is a rather complex concept. In its basic sense, it says mission belongs to God and not to the church. This is not sufficient to help Christians to understand how to carry mission out, especially in contexts where there is no doubt that mission belongs to God. To contextualise it in Africa, there is a need to discern aspects of African life where God is already at work. One such point of contact is the Malawian concept of *umunthu*. Through the Spirit of God Christians have inherited God's personhood and therefore have the real *umunthu*. Through this, they ought to serve God and share it with the world to glorify God's Son. This is *missio Dei*.

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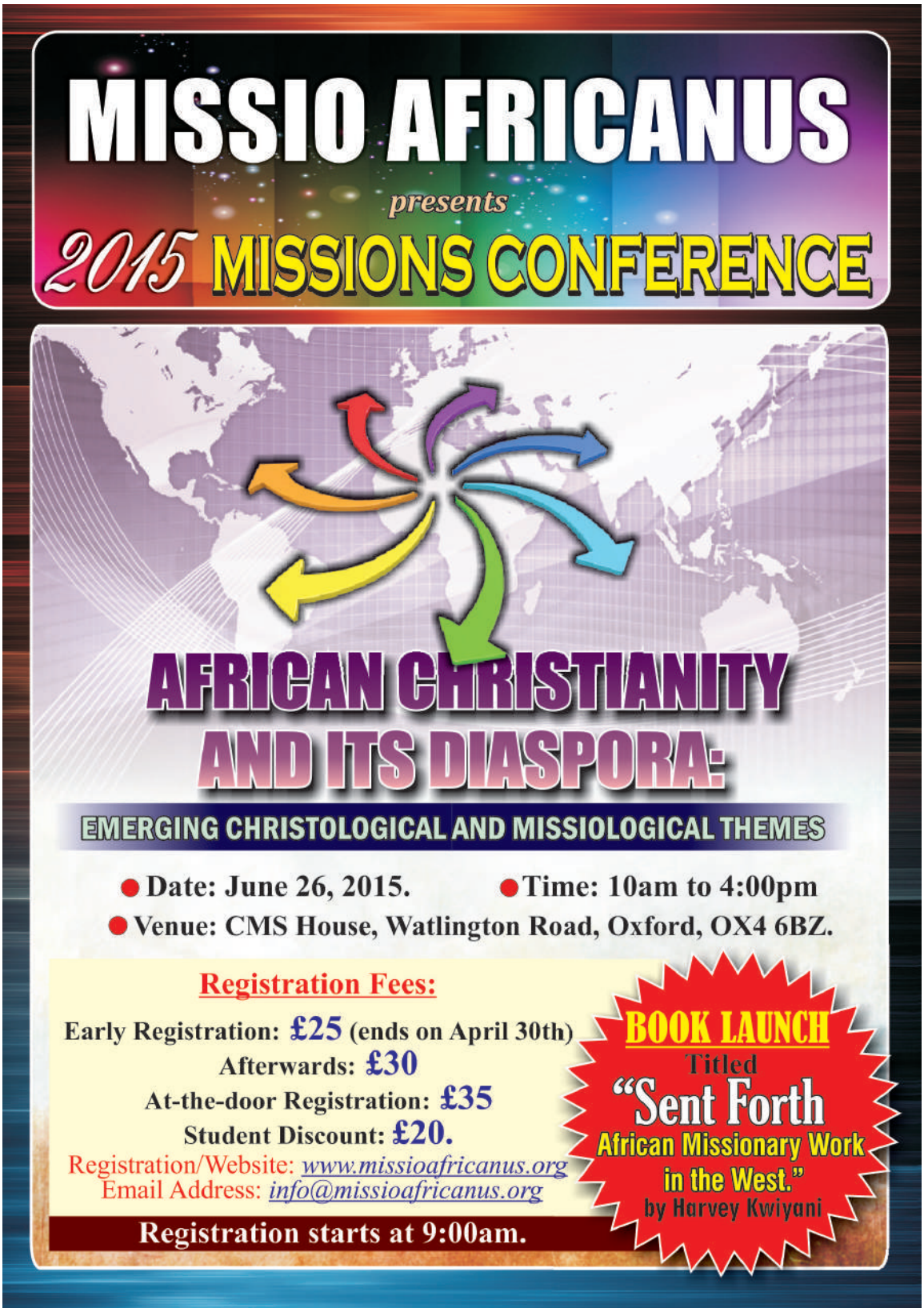
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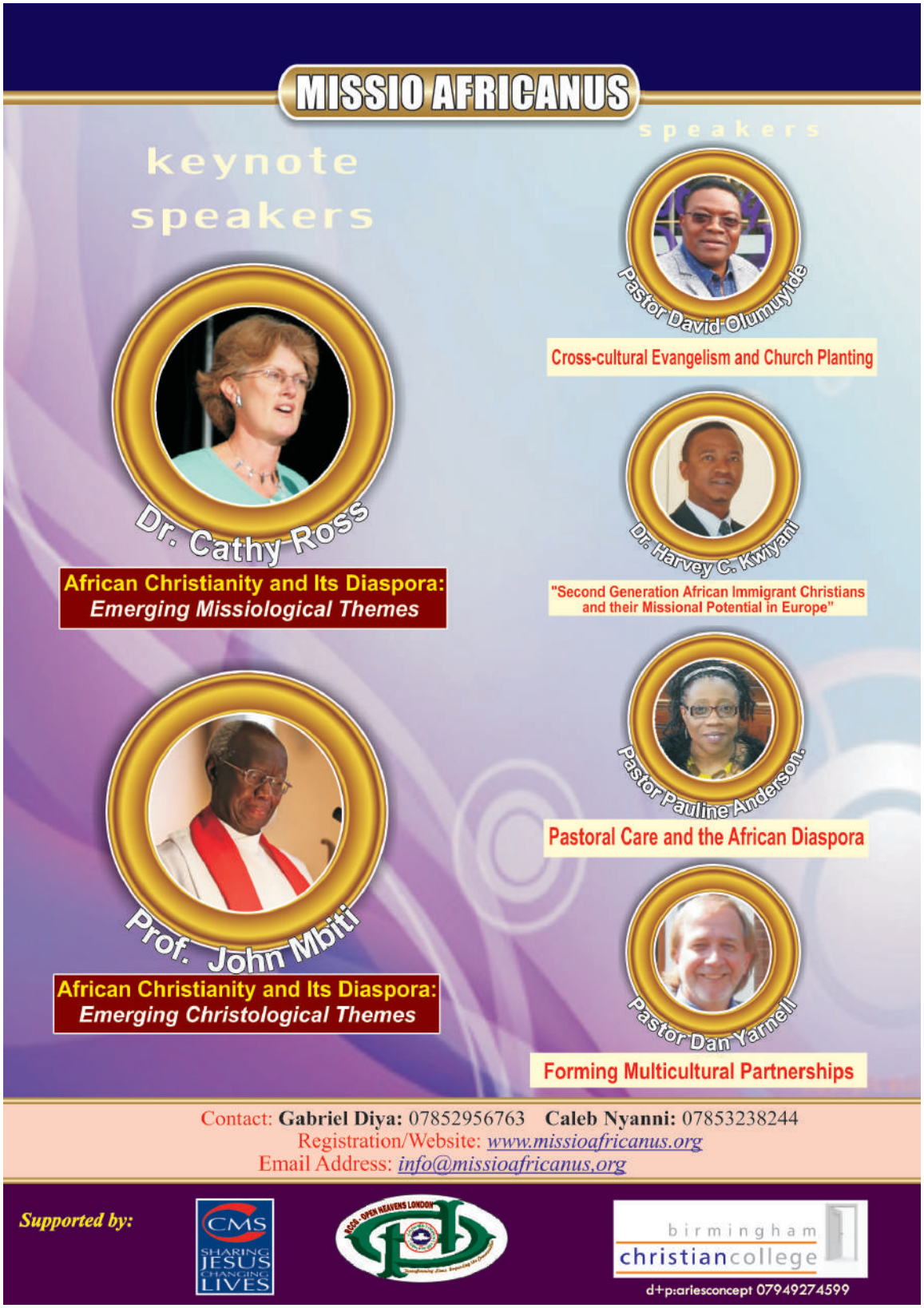
Early Registration: £25 (ends on April 30th)
Afterwards: £30
At-the-door Registration: £35
Student Discount: £20.
Registration/Website: www.missioafricanus.org
Email Address: info@missioafricanus.org
Registration starts at 9:00am.
BOOK LAUNCH
Titled
"Sent Forth
African Missionary Work in the West."
by Harvey Kwiyani


MISSIO AFRICANUS
keynote speakers
speakers
Dr. Cathy Ross
African Christianity and Its Diaspora:
Emerging Missiological Themes
Prof. John Mbiti
African Christianity and Its Diaspora:
Emerging Christological Themes
Pastor David Olumuyide
Cross-cultural Evangelism and Church Planting
Dr. Harvey C. Kwiyani
"Second Generation African Immigrant Christians and their Missional Potential in Europe"
Pastor Pauline Anderson
Pastoral Care and the African Diaspora
Pastor Dan Yarnell
Forming Multicultural Partnerships
Contact: Gabriel Diya: 07852956763 Caleb Nyanni: 07853238244
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