

**Elements Sustaining Public Worship among  
Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool since 1900**

**Thesis Submitted in Accordance  
with the Requirements of the University of Liverpool  
for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy by**

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## **DEDICATION**

**Dedicated to my family and my Church,  
Orita Basorun Baptist Church, Ibadan  
and my family**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Public worship activities have been on the increase among the Diaspora African Christians in Britain, and specifically in Liverpool, in recent times. This in all probability is due to the increase in the number of Diaspora African Christians in this city in recent years. African Christians living in Liverpool however face the problem of how to maintain their faith, and their public worship, in a city where churchgoing is in decline. This study investigates how these Diaspora communities sustain their faith commitment, especially their public worship, against the context of a non-churchgoing environment. It also investigates the affective role of their public worship on the community and how and to what extent the community enhances or militates against their public worship.

The study adopted primarily the ethnographic method of participant observation. Face-to-face interviews were undertaken in three churches established by Diaspora Africans. A model of religious behaviour analysis was devised to categorise and analyse the elements responsible for and sustaining public worship among these communities. This is a three-source triangle. In each angle of this triangle is one of the three principal sources of their religious behaviour, namely: their holistic African religious worldview, the nature of Diaspora African worship, and the conditions experienced by Diaspora African Christians in the host society. All the elements sustaining their public worship can be located in these three sources of religious behaviour.

The study discovered that these three principal religious behaviour sources have interacted together to give Diaspora African Christians the opportunity of accomplishing the holistic life fulfilment motif of worship. Their worship takes their background into consideration, their sermons are relevant to their daily life encounters, and their music is liberating. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are employed to minister holistically to Church members, their prayers are problem solving, and their worship is a means of establishing a network of relationships for members. Their religion thus serves as a coping tool, enabling them to cope in a host society characterised by individualism. The Church thus becomes a family or community where needs are met.

The study enhances a better understanding of the holistic fulfilment role which worship performs through its various elements of ritual to the sustenance of public worship among African Christians in Liverpool. The African Diaspora Churches need more time to operate before a proper assessment of their impact on the host society can be made. However, it is obvious that the churches have created awareness of their presence through their worship even if they have not done much in terms of winning into their worship and membership many people from the host society.

## Chapter One

### General Introduction

#### 1. Identifying the Research Questions

The British society in a way does not encourage the worship of God. What it encourages is the caricature of the worship of God. But we Christian pastors and Africans in particular believe that if we train our people and focus their gaze properly on our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the society will not be able to squeeze them into its mode.<sup>1</sup>

The above statement is symptomatic of the problem that Diaspora African Christians assume is posed for their own spirituality and, in particular, their public worship by the decline in the popularity of religion in British society.<sup>2</sup> The statement also suggests that Diaspora African Christians perceive that direct and purposeful Christian teaching with emphasis upon discipleship is a panacea for halting the influence of secularization on the faith of their members in Britain.

This study takes off from these presuppositions/hypotheses to explore how today's Diaspora African Christians in the city of Liverpool sustain their faith commitment, especially through their participation in public worship. This research has not limited the provision of an answer to the exploration of the elements of worship alone, although that is the primary focus. Worship takes place not in a vacuum, but in a society. The study, therefore, explores the manner in which Liverpool's Diaspora Africans Christians relate their public worship to broader personal and social goals. The answer to the research question was also sought through a consideration of

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<sup>1</sup> Pastor Eucharistic Charismatic Assembly Church, Interview, November 2005. The short form of referencing of responses is explained in Chapter Two.

<sup>2</sup> A number of scholars have described British society as becoming increasingly secular with an apparent decline in Church membership. Notable examples are Steve Bruce, *Religion in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 32-35; Alan D. Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain* (London: Longman, 1980), p. 94, Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 1

conditions within the host society. This is done by exploring those factors within the community of Liverpool that either enable or stand in the way of the worship of Diaspora African Christians. This necessarily involves the location of today's Diaspora African Christian community against the background of a historical overview of their migration and settlement in the UK and particularly in the city of Liverpool. This migratory movement has resulted in the creation of a dynamic African Diaspora community in the city. Consequently, the study explores the religious consciousness and activities of the communities, especially focusing upon the elements of their public worship as an effective part of community life and social identity.

The study further explores how Diaspora African Christians have been able to navigate successfully the various dilemmas they face as they come to Britain and Liverpool. These dilemmas include the increasingly secular nature of their new society, which appears to be in direct contrast to their very religious African society.<sup>3</sup> This dilemma is heightened by the rejection some say they faced from the white churches when they attempted to worship with them, the racial hostility some have encountered in society, and the loneliness that most of them experienced in Liverpool. The apparent lack of openness to the adaptation of mainstream worship and, indeed, of theological expression to African sensibilities, is equally part of their dilemmas. These factors have not only led them to establish their own churches but have helped to reinforce their attitudes towards public worship. Hence the act of public worship does not for them stand apart from their wider cultural expression, but rather it

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<sup>3</sup> The response of virtually all interviewees that they came from a very religious African background is corroborated by similar views expressed by many scholars on African Christianity such as John S. Mbiti., *Introduction to African Religion* (London, Ibadan, Nairobi, Lusaka: Heinemann, 1978), p. 3; Gibreel M. Kamara, 'Regaining our African Aesthetics and Essence through our African Traditional Religion' in *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4, March 2000, p. 504



functions as an *adequate* coping tool for Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool. It also gives them the opportunity of experiencing holistic life fulfilment within an enabling social group.<sup>4</sup> . The African churches thus serve the fulfillment of socio-cultural and spiritual yearnings of Africans in the diaspora. Sturge refers to these functional assemblies as ‘the Community Church’<sup>5</sup>, which I would prefer to term as the Holistic Church. It is holistic in terms of its determination to minister to the spirit, soul and body of every member.

The thesis approaches the research question by identifying the background religious worldview of Diaspora Africans, the nature of their worship, and the conditions in the host society, as the three principal sources of religious behaviour of these immigrants. This is brought together as the interpretative triangle of religious behaviour.

The impact of Diaspora African Christians’ worship on the Liverpool community is examined alongside a critique of those factors in the host society that enable or inhibit the people’s worship. It is my hope that the findings from the research will be of benefit to Christian churches all over the world, but especially to the African immigrant churches and other Christian churches in Liverpool. This research does not investigate the future of public worship among the future generation of Diaspora Africans Christians; this is however an interesting area for further research. Taken as a whole, the thesis offers a comprehensive response to questions relating to the role of public worship among Liverpool Diaspora African Christians and to the manner in which that public worship is sustained.

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<sup>4</sup> See the meaning of holistic fulfilment below under the operational definition of concepts.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Sturge, *Look what the Lord has Done: An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain* (London: Scripture Union, 2005), p. 91

## 2. The Structure of Chapter One

This chapter discusses the necessity and distinctiveness of this research, gives a brief orientation for the ethnography of the three Diaspora African churches studied, and sets out the three-source triangle I have devised to interpret the data collected and identify the goal of African religiosity, which in this thesis is taken to be holistic fulfilment because the motif of their background religion is holistic fulfilment, and their services are organized to cater for their spirits, souls and bodies. In addition to the data analysis which affirms this claim, the goal of their religious activities appears to be holistic fulfilment from the submissions in most of the literature reviewed in this thesis. It also covers the operational definition of some concepts that feature prominently in this thesis. These concepts are holistic fulfilment, Pentecostalism, and liturgical shape. The last section of this chapter is the overview of the findings of the thesis in general.

## 3. Rationale for the Research

This research is necessary because relatively little has been written on the religious contributions of African immigrants to the spiritual life of Britain in general and Liverpool in particular.<sup>6</sup> Most of the available published works on the religious activities of the black races in Britain focus on West Indians rather than on those who have come directly to Britain from Africa.<sup>7</sup> This research therefore contributes to the

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<sup>6</sup> Some of the notable works available are; Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission* (London: The Savannah Press, 1994), Clifford Hill, *Black Churches: West Indian and African Sects in Britain* (London: Community and Race Relations Unit of The British Council of Churches, 1971), Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998) and Stephen Hunt and Nicola Lightly, 'The British black Pentecostal "revival": Identity and Belief in the "new" Nigerian Churches' in *Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 24, No.1, 2001; Afe Adogame, 'Betwixt Identity and Security: African New Religious Movements (ANRMs) and the Politics of Religious Networking in Europe'. *Nova Religio*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2003, pp. 24-41

<sup>7</sup> Some of the works available on the religious activities of West Indians in Britain are: Malcolm J. Calley, *God's People: West Indian Pentecostal Sects in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

academic body of knowledge on the worship activities of Diaspora African Christians. Among other things, I took up the challenge to undertake this task after studying the secularization debate during my Masters studies at Liverpool Hope University. Engagement with that debate prompted me to think of researching into how and whether public worship can be sustained among the Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool against the broader backdrop of secularization. The manner in which the Diaspora African churches have sprung up during the past four years has equally contributed to my curiosity to explore the factors responsible for this growth. In addition to the above reasons, this research became necessary as a result of the dilemmas stated above which African Christians encounter on their arrival in the British society, especially in Liverpool and the function of their religion at resolving these dilemmas.

The research is the first to investigate through ethnography the elements that sustain public worship among the Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool. My background training in Sociology on the one hand and Theology on the other places me at a vantage position to do this investigation. Being a pastor, and a worshipper in one of the Diaspora African churches, gives me a clearer understanding of the dynamics at work on the subject of investigation..

#### **4. The Fieldwork Component**

When this research began in 2004, the number of Diaspora African churches in Liverpool was eleven or twelve. By the time of writing, the number had risen to

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1965), Jackson Anita, *Catching Both Sides of the Wind: Conversations with Five Black Pastors* (London: British Council of Churches, 1985), Dave Saunders, *The West Indians in Britain* (London: Batsford Academic & Educational, 1984), and Hill Clifford, *Black Churches: West Indian and African Sects in Britain* (London: Community and Race Relations, British Council of Churches, 1971)

between fifteen and twenty. It is difficult to give the precise number of the Diaspora African churches in Liverpool because new ones keep springing up.

I initially approached the pastors of the two biggest Diaspora churches in the city to invite them to participate in the project. They declined the request, offering various reasons. One simply stated in a written reply that 'at this time, it is not feasible to conduct the research in our church'. No detailed explanation was given. Another said that since my research focus was on the worship of Diaspora African Christians and their church was not established for a particular group of people, it therefore fell outside my area of investigation. I then approached a further six and found three churches that agreed to open their doors to me. As the research proceeded, it became evident that the degree of my access varied from church to church. Details of the churches studied are given at section 4.1 in Chapter Two.

I have employed an ethnographic method of investigation with emphasis on participant observation as the principal method of data gathering. This is because of its overriding benefits over many other methods of data collection in social research.<sup>8</sup> The period of participant observation in each of the churches was at least three months. Apart from participant observation, other supplementary tools were used such as in-depth interviews which involved at least three people in each of the churches. The pastor was included in each church as the key informant. The difficulties I encountered in broadening the interview base in each church, and the strategies I adopted for dealing with this, are discussed at section 2.3 in Chapter Two.

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<sup>8</sup> Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Self and Others* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 4-5

In comparison to churches in Nigeria, most of the churches here are relatively small. The largest has a little over three hundred members, while in some, membership could be as few as between ten and twenty. In the churches studied in-depth the smallest has at least twenty five people worshipping every Sunday while the largest has a little over hundred worshippers. All three churches studied are Pentecostal/Charismatic in theology and practice – though, to varying degrees.

The theoretical framework upon which the research is based is functionalism.<sup>9</sup> I review in Chapter Two a range of literature on the subject with a view to identifying the functions religion performs in the lives of the Diaspora African Christians and how these have reinforced their attitude to public worship. The discussions of the fieldwork report in chapters Six to Eight are done under a uniform outline to enable balanced comparative analysis of data. Nonetheless, in order to give room for discussions on a wide range of elements, some of the elements of worship discussed in depth in one chapter may not be discussed in another. This is especially so where ritual elements are practised almost in the same way.

### **5. The Three-Source Triangle of African Christians' Religious Behaviour.**

I have devised a three-source triangle to locate the elements responsible for the religious behaviour of Diaspora African Christians. This triangle helps in analysing the substantive elements of the religious behaviour of the studied groups, especially the aspects of their religious worldviews which the functional tool of interpretation

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<sup>9</sup> Major exponents of this school of thought are Emile Durkheim, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Bronislaw Malinowski and Talcott Parsons among others. See Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Form of Religious Life* trans. by Karen E. Fields, (New York, London: The Free Press, 1995), Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), and Charles Townley & Mike Middleton, 'Sociological Perspectives' in *Fundamentals of Sociology* ed. by Patrick McNeil & Charles Townley (London: Stanley Thornes [Publishers] Ltd, 1986) and Stephen P. Savage, *The Theories of Talcott Parsons* (London & Basingstoke, The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1981)

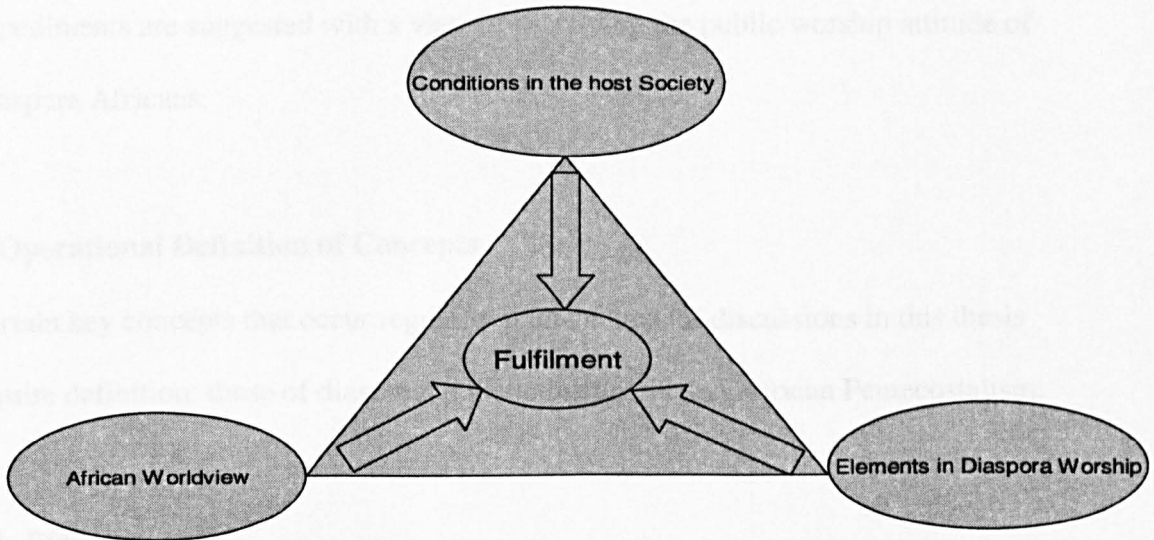
may not adequately account for. The triangle in addition is a graphic representation of the interaction between the three principal sources of their religious behaviour. The triangle is therefore a summary of the way the three sources of religious behaviour interact to produce holistic fulfilment for the worshippers. The angles of this triangle comprise three principal sources for Diaspora African Christians' religious behaviour. The first of these relates to the background worldview (both religious and otherwise) which they brought from Africa to Liverpool and which influences their attitude towards public worship. The second angle relates to the nature of their worship, embracing its dynamism, its music, prayer and preaching, among others. This takes into context their worldview and helps to sustain their positive attitude towards public worship. The third hinges on the socio-religious factors that feed into and account for the various dilemmas which Diaspora African Christians experience in Britain. Each of the three sources of religious behaviour in the triangle is related to the others. For example, the worldview of Diaspora African Christians affects both the nature of worship in their churches and their religious behaviour in the host society. In the same way, the conditions in the host society are partly responsible for the establishment of their churches. As the sources of the religious behaviour interact, no source is taken to be more important than the others.

When all three angles are brought into play, it becomes evident that the religious behaviour of Diaspora Africans is geared towards the attainment of a holistic life. That religion plays a crucial holistic life fulfilment role in the lives of Diaspora Africans is implied in the observations of Afe Adogame and Ezra Chitando:

Religious beliefs and institutions play a central role among diasporic communities and thus occupy a conspicuous place in processes of religious transnationalization. They serve as a source of security and a bastion of cultural, ethnic and religious identity. Apart from religious needs, religious

institutions and communities also evince socio-cultural and civic benefits largely for new immigrants. The paradoxical stance of religion therefore has over-arching implications both for the diasporic community, their homeland and other hosts contexts.<sup>10</sup>

The view that religion plays a holistic role in the lives of Diaspora African Christians is taken further in our interpretative triangle and referred to as holistic fulfilment.



**Figure 1: The Three-source Triangle of Elements Responsible for the Public Worship Attitude of Diaspora Africans.**

The data gathered from the fieldwork are analysed in the following manner. First, I compare the elements identified as sustaining public worship in one church with those in the other two churches studied with the intention of identifying general and particular elements sustaining public worship in each of the churches. Second, I examine how Diaspora African Christians have been able to impact the host society through their worship. Third, I identify those elements of their worship that could be

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<sup>10</sup> Afe Adogame and Ezra Chitando, 'Moving among those Moved by the Spirit: Conducting Fieldwork within the New African Religious Diaspora', *Fieldwork in Religion*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2005, p. 254

reinforced in order to sustain public worship and experience holistic life fulfilment. In the three sources of religious behaviour in the triangle, the holistic fulfilment role of religious practice appeared to be significant. This is done without prejudice to the substantive (sacred) role of religion among the Diaspora African Christians. Finally, I focus on the factors militating against public worship of Diaspora Africans within the society and their worship. The possible ways of removing or reducing such impediments are suggested with a view of sustaining the public worship attitude of Diaspora Africans.

## **6. Operational Definition of Concepts**

Certain key concepts that occur regularly in the course of discussions in this thesis require definition: those of diaspora, holistic fulfilment and African Pentecostalism.

### **6.1. Diaspora**

The Greek word *diaspora* could be translated into English as “dispersion”. As a technical term it was originally most generally employed with reference to the community of the Jews outside Palestine from about 100 B.C. to around A.D. 100.<sup>11</sup> The dispersion of the Jews started during the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities of c. 721 and c. 597. This dispersion was first limited to regions of Asia, around Iran and Armenia but it later spread to virtually the whole of the Roman Empire, Egypt, Greece and Italy, among others.<sup>12</sup> The Diaspora community held on to the Jewish

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<sup>11</sup> W. Ward Gasque, ‘Diaspora’ *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1978 ed., p. 296 (See also Colin A Palmer for some general characteristics of Diaspora in Colin A Palmer, ‘Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora’ *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 85, No. ½, Winter – Spring 2000, p. 29)

<sup>12</sup> ‘Diaspora, Jewish’, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1997 ed., p. 477



religion in all the places of dispersion. However, more broadly, the term has also been applied to members of other faiths living outside their spiritual homeland.<sup>13</sup>

The African Diaspora resembles that of the Jews because its history, too, includes initial and substantial element of forced migration/dispersion. It is different from that of the Jews, however, because it is more comprehensive and the historical circumstances are different. Palmer identifies five streams of diaspora out of Africa. The first three date from a hundred thousand years ago up to about five centuries BCE. The fourth stream was the 'Atlantic trade in African slaves of the fifteenth century which led to the traffic of Africans to various European societies and ... to the Americas'. The fifth stream started in the nineteenth century after the abolition of slavery, and is 'characterised by the movement of peoples among, and settlement in, various societies'<sup>14</sup> It is streams four and five and other sub-streams that we may refer to as the modern African Diaspora.

Arriving at an exact definition of the term 'African Diaspora' is far from easy. Ibrahim A. Sundiata sees the concept of diaspora as very porous and varied, and does not offer a single clear definition of the term.<sup>15</sup> Gerrie ter Haar also argues that the way in which the concept of an African diaspora is used today is problematic because it is 'largely shaped by the American experience and it is not clear what precisely it means in the context of Europe'.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 'Diaspora', *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, 1997 ed., p. 280

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Ibrahim K. Sundiata, 'Africanity, Identity and Culture' *A Journal of Opinion*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1996, p. 13

<sup>16</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998), p. 77

The most useful definition of the concept, and that which forms the basis of my own approach, is provided by Palmer:

The modern African diaspora, at its core, consists of the millions of peoples of African descent living in various societies who are united by a past based significantly but not exclusively upon “racial” oppression and the struggles against it and who, despite the cultural variations and political and other divisions among them, share an emotional bond with one another and with their ancestral continent and who also regardless of their location face broadly similar problems in constructing and realizing themselves.<sup>17</sup>

This definition appears to be more inclusive and comprehensive; it pays attention to the historical accounts of the migration of Africans to different societies of the world, both remote and recent. Most significantly, the definition also incorporates the emotional bond African diaspora have with one another and with their ancestral homes, and the cultural and political variations among them. This accords with Ter Haar’s in the sense that members of the diaspora community ‘are commonly believed to wish to identify with their “own” people at home...and thus retain what is believed to be their “own” identity, rather than to connect themselves with the majority in their new homelands’.<sup>18</sup> While I agree with Ter Haar that members of the Diaspora community maintain links with their people at home, I disagree with her position that they may not be willing to connect themselves with the majority in their land of sojourn. In terms of my own study, such connection can be seen in the history of the settlement of the Diaspora Africans in Liverpool.<sup>19</sup> This is evidenced by the fact that some of the Africans interviewed had acquired British citizenship. Unfortunately, in a Liverpool context, this has given rise to further racial prejudice from the majority white population against the black immigrants.<sup>20</sup> The Diaspora community therefore

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<sup>17</sup> Colin A. Palmer, ‘Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora’, p. 30

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 77-78

<sup>19</sup> Mark Christian, *Multiracial Identity: An International Perspective* (London: Palgrave, 2000), p. 22

<sup>20</sup> *The Racial Politics of Militant in Liverpool* (Liverpool: Merseyside Area Profile Group, Department of Sociology, University of Liverpool & The Runnymede Trust, 1986), p. 14

provides evidence of maintaining links with their places of origins, of struggle to retain their own identity, and also of endeavouring to identify with the host society. Thus, some members of the Diaspora community negotiate a double identity, although this may still be skewed towards the ancestral home.

## **6.2. Holistic Fulfilment**

I have undertaken to explain this concept because it is central to the interpretation of the three-source triangle of religious behaviour that I use across the thesis to interpret the religious activities of Diaspora African Christians. In short, holistic life fulfilment is taken to be the goal of Diaspora African worship.

The term 'holistic' comes from the noun 'holism.' The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as a 'Philosophy characterized by the belief that the parts of something are explicable only by reference to the whole'.<sup>21</sup> With reference to the field of medicine, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia* says that an holistic approach 'insists not on the study of individual disease but also on the study of the response of people to their disease physically, psychologically, and socially'. Hence, every aspect of the sickness is taken into consideration. Such things include 'the effect of the illness on personal relations, the family, work, and the patient's emotional well-being'.<sup>22</sup>

'Fulfilment' derives from the verb 'to fulfil'. According to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, to fulfil is to 'achieve or realize (something desired, promised, or predicted)'. It could therefore be interpreted as meaning to 'gain happiness or

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<sup>21</sup> 'Holistic', *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 1989 ed. 20 August 2007. Oxford University Press. 2007. [http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.liv.ac.uk/cgi/entry/50107167?query\\_type=word&q](http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.liv.ac.uk/cgi/entry/50107167?query_type=word&q), p. 1 of 2; *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* ed. by Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2004, p. 680

<sup>22</sup> 'Holistic Medicine', *The Cambridge Encyclopedia*, 1991 ed, p. 573

satisfaction by fully achieving one's potential'.<sup>23</sup> Combining the two, holistic fulfilment will be taken in this thesis to mean the satisfaction, the benefits, and the accomplishments a worshipper derives from public worship, physically, psychologically, spiritually and socially towards the realization of his/her potential in life. So, any practice of the church that the worshipper derives satisfaction from or finds beneficial could contribute to the holistic fulfilment of the worshipper. Such elements will be examined with regard to their potential for contributing to the sustenance of a positive attitude towards public worship among the Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool. Some of such elements identified in this study are dynamic and enthusiastic worship experiences, life engaging music, preaching and prayer, and the community spirit in the church. All these contribute to the Diaspora African Christians' experience of holistic fulfilment.

### ***6.3. African Pentecostalism***

The pervasive influence of Pentecostalism on the ritual shape of all the Diaspora African churches studied requires an explanation of the concept, and an examination of the history of Pentecostalism in Africa. Many scholars are of the opinion that the religion of black immigrants in Europe, especially Africans and Caribbean, has been greatly influenced by Pentecostalism.<sup>24</sup> This clearly relates to the popularity of Pentecostalism today in African Christianity. P. Johnstone and J. Mandryck estimated that in the year 2000 the number of Pentecostals made up about eleven percent of the

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<sup>23</sup> 'Fulfil', *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 573

<sup>24</sup> Mark Sturge, *Look what the Lord has Done: An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain*, p.134; Amele Adamavi-Aho Ekue, '...And how can I sing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land? A Reinterpretation of the Religious Experience of Women of the African Diaspora in Europe with Special Reference to Germany' in *Strangers and Sojourners: Religious Communities in the Diaspora* ed. by Gerrie ter Haar (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), pp. 226-227; Rijk A. Van Dijk, 'Encompassment: Discourses of Transsubjectivity in the Ghanaian Pentecostal Diaspora', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 27, No. 2, May 1997, p. 139; Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998), p. 6

entire population of the continent.<sup>25</sup> Allan Anderson defines African Pentecostalism as ‘African churches that emphasise the working of the Spirit in the church, particularly with ecstatic phenomena such as prophecy and speaking in tongues, healing and exorcism’.<sup>26</sup> Scholars agree that Pentecostalism in Africa is not limited to the so called Pentecostal churches alone, but has gained in-roads into other churches.<sup>27</sup>

Pentecostal churches in Africa fall into different groupings. One of the groups is those described as the ‘spiritual churches,’ also known as the African Initiated churches or Indigenous Churches (AICs). The opinions of scholars differ on whether the ‘spiritual’ and the AICs should be described as Pentecostals. Many scholars, especially those who belong to these churches themselves often refer to them as Pentecostals.<sup>28</sup> For convenience in this thesis therefore, the ‘spiritual churches’ such as the *Aladura* of Nigeria and other AICs shall be referred to as Pentecostals.

The AICs emerged from the Mission-Churches, from the 1920s, specifically to cater for African Christians by Africans. They represent the struggles of African Christians

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<sup>25</sup> P. Johnstone and J. Mandryck, *Operation World* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), p. 21

<sup>26</sup> Allan Anderson, ‘Pentecostalism in Africa: An Overview’, *Orita, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 36, Nos. 1-2, June & December 2004, pp. 38-39

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*; Matthews A. Ojo, ‘The Nigerian Baptist Convention and the Pentecostal Resurgence, 1970-2000: Critical Issues for Ecclesiastical Dynamics’ in *Ecclesiastes: The Preacher, the Church and the Contemporary Society* ed. by Ademola Ishola and Deji Ayegboyin (Ibadan: Baptist Press, 2006), p. 328; Afe Adogame, ‘East African Revival’, *Encyclopaedia of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity*, 2006 ed., p. 1

<sup>28</sup> See C. O. Oshun, ‘The Pentecostal Perspective of the Christ Apostolic Church’, *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 15/2, December, 1983, p. 105; Philomena Njeri Mwaura, ‘A Spirituality of Resistance and Hope: African Instituted Churches’ Response to Poverty’, *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 37, June & December, 2005, p. 68; S. A. Fatokun, ‘The Apostolic Church Nigeria: The ‘Metamorphosis’ of an African Indigenous Prophetic-Healing Movement into a Classical Pentecostal Denomination’, *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 38, June & December, 2006, p. 49; Deji Ayegboyin & F. K. Asonzeh Ukah, ‘Taxonomy of Churches in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective’, *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 34/1-2, June & December, 2002, p. 76

for 'self determination in the religious sphere.'<sup>29</sup> These are churches that 'give spiritual interpretation to virtually all happenings, especially misfortunes and failures in life such as barrenness, poverty, illnesses, unemployment, prolonged pregnancy, disappointment and so on'.<sup>30</sup> According to Deji Ayegboyin and S. Ademola Ishola, 'the underlying belief in spiritual causation explains why spirit-induced services, faith healing, and exorcism feature prominently in their deliverance services'. In the services of these churches, prominence is given to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit 'through visions, interpretation of dreams, ecstatic behaviour and prophetic utterances'.<sup>31</sup> The spiritual churches exist in various names and groups all over the continent. Some of them, such as the *Roho* Movements (the Holy Spirit Movements) in the Luo and Kikuyu lands of Uganda and Kenya, and the *Aladura* among the Yoruba in Nigeria came out of the historic mission churches (as the above definition of AICs informs) for various reasons. Some scholars argue that they seceded out of the internal and external stresses of the Anglican Church, a claim which many church historians regard as uncharitable and 'jaundiced, and clearly unsubstantiated by historical evidence and empirical data'.<sup>32</sup> Other historians claim that the AIC's came out because the historic mission churches failed to take theological account of an African worldview.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Allan Anderson, 'Pentecostalism in Africa: An Overview', p. 19; Afe Adogame, 'Roho Movements', *Encyclopaedia of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity*, p. 1

<sup>30</sup> Deji Ayegboyin & S. Ademola Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches* (Lagos: Greater Heights Publications, 1999), p. 28

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p. 29

<sup>32</sup> E. A Ayandele, 'Aladura Churches: Legitimate Branch of the Church Universal' in *Ecclesiastes: The Preacher, the Church and the Contemporary Society* ed. by Ademola Ishola & Deji Ayegboyin (Ibadan: Baptist Press, 2006), p. 384

<sup>33</sup> George E. Simpson, 'Religious Changes in Southwestern Nigeria', *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 2, April 1970, p. 85; J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Uction to Function: Reinventing the Oil of Influence in African Pentecostalism', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2005, p. 232

A second group comprises the classical Pentecostals. These churches have been in existence since the early part of the twentieth century and are western in origin. They include the Assemblies of God Church, The Faith Tabernacle, The Apostolic Church and The Apostolic Faith.<sup>34</sup> The classical Pentecostals emphasize instant salvation made possible by the finished work of Christ at Calvary, baptism with and in the Holy Spirit, tongue-speaking as evidence of the Holy Spirit baptism, and the manifestation and validity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Church. They lay emphasis also on believers growing unto perfection and strict moral codes such as abstinence from alcohol, smoking and the use of cosmetics.<sup>35</sup>

A third group is made up of the Indigenous Pentecostal churches. These differ from the classical Pentecostals in being home-grown that is, their emergence was due to purely African initiatives without the involvement of the overseas Pentecostal Missions.<sup>36</sup> Yet, their theology of the Holy Spirit and their ritual shape are close to those of the classical Pentecostals. They too stress the importance of the Holy Spirit Baptism, speaking in tongues, deliverance from the powers of darkness and lively worship.<sup>37</sup> In Nigeria, where the pastors of the churches studied originated, such churches include The Redeemed Christian Church of God, The Victory Gospel Church in Lagos, the Gospel Pentecostal Assembly and the Evangel Faith Mission.<sup>38</sup> The spiritual or AICs differ from the classical and the indigenous Pentecostals in various regards. The spiritual or AICs place considerable emphasis on the use of ritual

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<sup>34</sup> Deji Ayegboyin & F. K. Asonzeh Ukah, 'Taxonomy of Churches in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective', *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 34, Nos. 1-2, June & December 2002, pp. 78-79

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* p. 81

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise*, p. 19

<sup>38</sup> Deji Ayegboyin & F.K.A. Ukah, 'Taxonomy of Churches in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective', pp. 81-82

symbols. They are very much interested in the 'cultural adaptation of a universal religion to a local context'.<sup>39</sup>

In Nigeria, to which the three diaspora churches studied in this thesis relate, the latest explosion of Pentecostalism in many of the churches, especially from 1970, has been attributed to the evangelical witness that was already present in the educational institutions in Nigeria since the 1950s. These evangelical movements include such interdenominational bodies as the Christian Union, The Scripture Union, the Student Christian Movement and The Nigerian Fellowship of Evangelical Students. Matthews Ojo traces how the contact of these groups with Pentecostal literature led to the outbreak of a revival among university students.<sup>40</sup> This revival entered into the mainline denominations as the students went back to their churches during holidays or after graduation from their schools.<sup>41</sup> The word 'church' in this thesis shall stand for a local congregation or the entire body of Christ.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, denomination shall be used in two contexts. As an aspect of Protestantism, denomination will not be mistaken for sectarianism but as 'a neutral and non-judgemental term that implied that the group referred to was one member, denominated by a particular name, of a larger group to which other Protestant denomination belonged'.<sup>43</sup> In social context, church denomination is used here as the 'existing ecclesiastical groupings that have provided 'family tone' and clusters of memories and symbols that can still be invoked to sustain Christians in their daily lives'.<sup>44</sup> Church denomination in this thesis shall

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<sup>39</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise*, p. 19

<sup>40</sup> Matthews A. Ojo, 'The Nigerian Baptist Convention and the Pentecostal Resurgence', p. 329; Matthews A. Ojo, 'The Contextual Significance of the Charismatic Movements in Independent Nigeria', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 58, No. 2, 1988, pp. 175-176

<sup>41</sup> Matthews A. Ojo, 'The Nigerian Baptist Convention and the Pentecostal Resurgence', p. 329

<sup>42</sup> Winthrop S. Hudson, 'Denominationalism,' *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2005, p. 2290

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2286

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2290



therefore refer to Christian denominations from which the Diaspora African Churches studied in this thesis come from.

It should be noted that Ojo's differentiation above of the Pentecostals from the Charismatics on the basis that the former movement is denominational while the latter is trans-denominational is no longer tenable.<sup>45</sup> This is because some of the charismatic organizations, especially in Nigeria today have become church denominations. Such charismatic groups that have become denominations include the Deeper Life Christian Fellowship, which is now the Deeper Life Bible Church, The Sword of the Spirit Ministries, now Christ Life Church and Living Faith Ministries Worldwide which is now Living Faith Church Worldwide (Winners' Chapel).

Scholars have identified many factors responsible for the growth and popularity of Pentecostalism in Africa. One undoubtedly is the ability of the Pentecostals to contextualize Christian theology. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu states this as follows:

In Africa, Pentecostal religion is popular because it takes indigenous worldviews of mystical causalities seriously, democratizes access to the sacred, and purveys an interventionist piety that helps the ordinary people to cope with the fears and insecurities of life...the underlying worldviews help to extend the appeal of Pentecostal spirituality in a context where religion is expected to serve very practical ends through the conquest of evil and restorations of health and wholeness.<sup>46</sup>

The democratization of the access to sacred and culturally relevant theology mentioned by Asamoah-Gyadu is reflected in the manner in which the African and Caribbean churches in UK have operated. Tracing the development and growth of the Black Majority Churches (BMCs), Sturge argues that as African and Caribbean

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<sup>45</sup> Matthews A. Ojo, 'The Contextual Significance of the Charismatic Movements in Independent Nigeria', p. 176

<sup>46</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Unction to Function: Reinventing the Oil of Influence in African Pentecostalism', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2005, p. 232

Christians came to Britain, they often quickly identified in worship with the historic churches to which their churches at home belonged. They soon discovered however that the worship styles, preaching and patterns of community cohesion and so on in the British historic churches were not relevant to them.<sup>47</sup> This sense of alienation from the established churches was one of the factors that led to the establishment of more culturally relevant Diaspora black churches in Britain, where the black immigrants could worship God and feel at home.<sup>48</sup> This fact further underscores the appropriateness of including in our interpretative triangle, as a strong source of religious behaviour, the conditions Diaspora Africans encounter in the host society.

Relating to the question of Pentecostalism, and also relevant to this study's exploration of the success of the Diaspora African churches, is the theology of wholeness which Asamoah-Gyadu mentions. The wholeness, as we will see, relates to the emphasis placed by the churches studied on meeting the spiritual and physical problems of their members. Though to varying degrees, all preached the necessity of salvation through Christ. They equally stressed healings, practised prophecies, and intervened in the personal problems of members. This stress on wholeness feeds into my position that the goal of African religious activities is holistic fulfilment. As I shall discuss, it is because the Pentecostals are able to gear their worship towards this all important African motif that they have been endeared to Diaspora African Christians all over Britain. The Pentecostals offer a theology directly relevant to the experiences that the Diaspora African Christians are passing through, and are ready to intervene in the affairs of their members by proffering hope or solutions.

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<sup>47</sup> Mark Sturge, *Look What the Lord has Done: An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain*, p. 55

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, p. 87

Apart from the warmth, freedom and spontaneity which as part of Pentecostal worship has drawn many people,<sup>49</sup> these churches also appear to hold their members by involving many of them in the ministry of the church. In the churches studied lay people were used in preaching and other assignments and we shall see how this enhanced their commitment to the church's worship. Stephen Hunt stresses the role of the Pentecostal churches in the lives of their parishioners as follows:

It has provided the means by which those of a low social position could come to terms with their plight...and provided the moral code and community environment which supported them in alien surroundings.<sup>50</sup>

In a nutshell, the prevalence of Pentecostal theology in the Diaspora African churches in Britain and the city of Liverpool is on one hand due to the fact that it is closely related to their background religious worldview. On the other hand, it is a theology that addresses the experiences the Diaspora African Christians are passing through. By so doing, it gives them the opportunity of experiencing holistic fulfilment through worship. Part of Alan Anderson's definition of African Pentecostalism will be adopted and merged with my own idea of it as the definition for the brand of Pentecostalism I encountered in the Diaspora African churches during fieldwork. Pentecostalism in the Diaspora African churches therefore refers to the emphasis on the working of the Spirit in the Church particularly with ecstatic phenomena like prophecy and speaking in tongues, healing and exorcism with a view of giving the worshippers holistic fulfilment in worship.

## **7. The Ritual Shape of the Churches**

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<sup>49</sup> Matthews A. Ojo, 'The Contextual Significance of the Charismatic Movements in Independent Nigeria', p. 176; Queen Booker, 'Congregational Music in a Pentecostal Church', *The Black Perspective in Music*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 1988, pp. 29, 30

<sup>50</sup> Stephen Hunt, 'Neither Here nor There': The Construction of Identities and Boundary Maintenance of West African Pentecostals', *Sociology*, Vol. 36, No. 1, February 2002, p. 150

In this section, I am not attempting to give a detailed history of Christian worship. I am aware that there are different types of ritual structures in different denominations as each denomination responds to its history, its context and theology. Rather, I wish to identify some of the elements of ritual present at different stages of worship of most of the churches studied in relation to the Last Supper and the events addressed in Paul's letters to the church in Corinth. This is with a view to identifying the parallels in the ritual described by Paul and that of the churches studied. Some aspects which we shall come across in this chapter and in the following two chapters are the Holy Communion, praise, prayer, preaching, and love feast. I do not here offer an account of everything that happened in the worship of the churches studied. Rather, I am identifying some of the elements that occurred regularly in their worship that have a direct bearing on the subject matter of this research. My argument is that if these elements of ritual satisfy the holistic needs of the worshippers, they will bring them fulfilment which in turn would sustain them in public worship.

Worship and ritual are used in similar but slightly different ways in this thesis. In strict terms, 'ritual is a generally recognised form of performing certain ceremonies growing out of the past experiences of a people of which they are commemorative'.<sup>51</sup> In this thesis, it is used as the manner in which religious services are performed in the churches studied. Worship in the Old Testament comes from the Hebrew word '*sāhâh* or *šāhâh*', which means bowing down or prostrating out of respect for another person.<sup>52</sup> In the New Testament, a number of words are translated as worship. Some of the words are *latreuō*, *āsab*, *sebomai*. However, the most used word for worship in the NT is *proskyneō* and it can be translated as "to worship," or "to bow down to". In

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<sup>51</sup> 'Rite and Ritual' *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol.23, 1956, p. 538

<sup>52</sup> 'Worship', *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words*, 1999 ed., p. 639

view of the foregoing, worship is taken in this thesis to mean the Christians' religious service of God 'in heart and by life', whether privately or corporately in the public, including the adoration, profound admiration and affection, glorification, exaltation, idolization and reference of God through Jesus Christ.<sup>53</sup> The relationship between worship and ritual here lies in the fact that rituals are the regular patterns of behaviour or acts of the believers in worship.

Opinions are divided about the source or sources of New Testament worship and its structure. Some scholars are of the opinion that the story of the ritual of the Christian church cannot be told without also telling of its historic connection with Jewish worship. This is because the first Christians were converted from Judaism and as such they were used to worshipping in their homes, in the Temple and in the synagogues. Ritual at home was important because 'family meals were often an experience of prayer and praise as well as of eating and drinking, and at the great feasts there would be elaborate rites in which the family would share'.<sup>54</sup> The Passover is the most important of all these rites as it retells the story of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage under Moses.<sup>55</sup> Richard Jones recalls that the early Christians also worshipped in the Jewish Temples whose rites included the following:

Seven readings from the Scriptures...preceded by very brief introductory prayers, then maybe the singing of some psalms, then the sermon expounding one of the previous readings, then the final prayers'. There were no special clergy to conduct the service, but a presiding elder who sorted out who was to do what, an attendant to handle the scrolls, the readers, preacher and someone to lead the prayers.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, (See also 'Worship', *The Chambers Dictionary*, 1999 ed, p. 1929

<sup>54</sup> Richard G. Jones, *Groundwork of Worship and Preaching* (London: Epworth Press, 1980), p. 25

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27. See also Adrien Nocent, *A Rereading of the Renewed Liturgy* Trans. by Mary M. Misrahi (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1994), p.1

The above was the shape of ritual practice in the synagogues which the first Christians took part in before they came to the conclusion that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ did not require that they worship according to the old sacrificial system. Other scholars maintain that 'the Christian faith necessarily involved a radical transformation or even rejection of the former religion'.<sup>57</sup> They therefore see no connection between synagogue worship and Christian worship. In another development, other scholars see Christians' theology of lack of altars as source of persecution from the Jewish community of the time. This is because Christians argued that 'God's temple was the whole world and could hardly be enclosed in an edifice made by human hands'.<sup>58</sup> This theology not only led to the expulsion of Christians from the synagogues, it also led to persecution (Acts 6: 9-14; 8: 1) to the extent that 'there was the obvious security concern of celebrating Christian worship discreetly'.<sup>59</sup> This incidence of persecution and expulsion appears to mark the beginning of separation between Christian and Jewish worship.

Other scholars have attempted a harmonization of the 'scraps' of worship in the New Testament to identify a structure of the liturgy of the Christian church because of their assumption that there was unity of liturgical practice during the apostolic era. Paul Bradshaw agrees with Raymond E. Brown that harmony of liturgical practice was unlikely because of the pluriform nature of primitive Christianity. He is of the opinion

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<sup>57</sup> Paul Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship* (London: SPCK, 1992), p. 33

<sup>58</sup> Keith F. Pecklers, S. J., *Worship: New Century Theology* (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 35

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*; James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), p. 114; Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1984), pp. 20-22; Stephen Tomkins, *A Short History of Christianity* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), pp. 13-14

that it is more reliable to tell of 'what went on in one tradition within the early Church...than assuming that it was necessarily typical of all the rest'.<sup>60</sup>

Joseph Ratzinger opines that Christian liturgy is not 'a Christianized form of the synagogue service, however much its actual development owes to the synagogue service'.<sup>61</sup> This is because 'the synagogue was always ordered toward the Temple and remained so, even after the Temple's destruction'. Thus the synagogue service was incomplete without the Temple, and became an interim and transitional service awaiting the restoration of the Temple.<sup>62</sup> In Christian worship, the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem was taken as a necessity and final and this has been replaced by 'the universal Temple of the risen Christ'. So Ratzinger describes as disastrous the modern theological discussion which takes the synagogue liturgical model as the exclusive model of liturgy for the New Covenant. This is because, on the one hand, this theological understanding posits that 'priesthood and sacrifice are no longer intelligible'. On the other hand, Ratzinger maintains that 'the comprehensive "fulfilment" of pre-Christian salvation history and the inner unity of the two Testaments disappear from view'. He therefore concludes that deeper understanding of the shape of Christian liturgy 'is bound to recognize that the Temple, as well as the synagogue, entered into Christian liturgy'.<sup>63</sup>

These observations of Ratzinger give room for more insight into some of the ritual practices of the Church today which may not be fully traceable to the synagogue

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<sup>60</sup> Paul Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, p. 38

<sup>61</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2000), p. 48

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49

model. Nonetheless, Ratzinger does not deny that today's shape of Christian liturgy necessarily borrowed from the synagogue shape.

Though there may be no specific formula or shape of Christian worship we can refer to in the New Testament, the constituents of the synagogue ritual identified above contain some of the elements of ritual seen in Christian churches today. Some of these rites are evident in virtually all Christian churches: communal prayer, reading of the Scriptures, singing and preaching. In the churches studied, these elements of worship featured in varying proportions, as did the use of lay people in the performance of ritual. According to James F. White, because of the interim nature of synagogue worship, priests were not needed, 'it was a type of worship that lay people could lead; anywhere ten Jewish men could gather, a synagogue could be formed'.<sup>64</sup>

In my research I found that the involvement of lay people in the ministry of the church made them more committed to the worship of the churches. David Kimbrough argued, from his research among the Appalachian Mountain people, that the use of lay people by the Methodists and the Baptists as preachers made their message simple enough for the locals to understand. It also created a contextual theology: 'a theology that reflected the environment'.<sup>65</sup>

On the basis of the resemblance of the ritual shape of the churches studied to that of the synagogue above, this research aligns more with the school of thought that links some of the Christian acts of worship today with the procedure Jesus followed while observing the Last Supper with his disciples. I shall follow the accounts of the

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<sup>64</sup> James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, p. 113

<sup>65</sup> David Kimbrough, *Taking Up Serpents* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2002), p. 65



synoptic gospels in doing this, especially the Markan tradition (Mk. 14: 22-25). There are also common ritual elements between the churches studied and that in the Corinthian Christian community in I Corinthians chapters 11 and 14. I shall follow Martin Stringer's analysis in order to analyse the ritual shape of the churches under study.<sup>66</sup>

Stringer argues that the account of I Corinthians 11 has to do with the Lord's Supper while that of I Corinthians 14: 26-40 has to do with an informal gathering of believers. In this gathering, each individual brings his/her 'gifts: prophecies, hymns, revelations etc'. Nonetheless, because of the elements of praise and readings from the Scriptures present in later Eucharistic worship, Stringer agrees with other scholars that these two accounts are of different parts of the same gathering of Christians.<sup>67</sup> What is crucial is that, whether these are different worship events or one, Christians gathered to worship. Furthermore, certain elements of their ritual or rituals such as hymns, prophecies and reading of Scriptures could still be found in our contemporary churches today, especially the churches studied.

In terms of form, Christian liturgy became more formalized by the Church leaders from the second half of the fourth century and this period coincided with the 'enrichment and development of Christian worship'. The fixed or formal liturgy was developed by the Church leaders and it spells out almost every aspect of ritual and the mode in which it should be performed in an elaborate and artistic setting.<sup>68</sup> Examples are the celebration of the Roman Catholic missal whose official text has been

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<sup>66</sup> Martin D. Stringer, *A Sociological History of Christian Worship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 29-30

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>68</sup> Franklin M. Segler, *A Theology of Church and Ministry* (Broadman Press: Nashville, 1960), pp. 196-197

approved before its use by the Roman Catholic Church authorities and The Book of Common Prayer which was approved for use by the authorities of the Church of England.

In terms of form, Christian liturgy became more formalized from the second half of the fourth century and this period coincided with the 'enrichment and development of Christian worship'. It was the time the language of liturgy also changed in Rome from Greek to Latin<sup>69</sup>. Since then, there had been further developments and reformation or renewal of the Christian liturgy. There are those liturgical forms that are more formalised in terms of ritual process and those with unwritten written liturgy. The language of liturgy has also changed not only from Greek to Latin but also to English, French, Yoruba and other languages where the gospel was preached and received worldwide.

With regards to the Diaspora African churches studied, there is none that could be categorized as having a formal or determined liturgy. On the other hand, they cannot be described as having an unwritten liturgy because certain aspects of their services were written in the worship bulletins, and there were recurring patterns. For example, the African Baptist Church, (one of the churches studied) does not have any lectionary which contains the shape of liturgy. I am well aware of this being a Baptist clergy myself, and having done participant observation in the church for over six months. In virtually all Baptist churches where I have worshipped the service usually opens with the procession of the officiating ministers. This may be followed by the call to

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<sup>69</sup> *A History of Early Roman Liturgy* (London: The Boydell Press, 1994), p. 2

worship, a hymn or a chorus of praise or thanksgiving, prayer of thanksgiving, etc. In no particular order, some of these ritual elements take place in many Baptist churches.

From participant observation in the services of all the churches studied, I will therefore describe their ritual process as semi-formal. For example, two of the churches made use of hymns from hymn books, but also used unwritten choruses which their members knew. The order of service in all the churches was also written, in the order of worship in the worship bulletins. In line with Protestant doctrine, the way each leader performs a ritual act is believed to be guided by the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This double-edged approach to liturgy allows these churches the advantages of both written and unwritten liturgies.

The churches studied differ in terms of the use they make of priestly garments.<sup>70</sup> While the pastor of the Believers' Church did not use vestments at all, the pastor of the Eucharist-centred Charismatic Assembly and his co-pastors always used priestly garments or at least wore clerical collars. The pastor of the African Baptist Church and the other pastors in the church sometimes wore priestly garments. The two churches using priestly garments explain that it is biblical to do so. The pastor of the African Baptist Church said that their mother denomination had taken a decision to allow the Holy Spirit to direct any of the pastor whether to use clerical garments or not. This is an example of the variation observed in the ritual shape of these churches, influenced by their Protestant/Pentecostal backgrounds, their denominational policies and the theological positions/power of the pastors of the churches.

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<sup>70</sup> Vestments or priestly garments are used here to indicate the special robes priests wear especially in the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches as they perform their priestly duties. This derives from the Old Testament instruction on robing the priests set out with regard to the office and ministry of Aaron and his children. (Exodus 28: 1-4). In contemporary usage, vestments include long robes, gowns, stoles; priestly garments also include clerical shirts (sometimes with collar).

## **8. The Overall Format of the Thesis**

Chapter Two contains a review of literature about the methodologies employed for data collection, and about functionalism, the tool used to analyse the ethnographic data on the worship of the churches. There is also a review of archival material. The chapter briefly summarises the fieldwork and highlights some of the problems encountered.

Chapter Three examines in some detail one of the important sources of Diaspora African Christians religious behaviour; namely, their socio-religious worldview. It is thus crucial to the interpretation of the three-source triangle of religious behaviour. Included in the discussions are concepts such as communal religion, belief in spirit beings and an holistic view of human beings. An overview of these will help to clarify why the motif of holistic fulfilment is so dominant in African religious activities.

Chapter Four identifies and analyzes the problems connected with the history of settlement of Africans in Britain, with special reference to Liverpool. This is another important source of religious behaviour on our interpretative triangle. The history of the settlement of the Kru ethnic group is used as a case study because they were the most homogenous group of Africans to settle in Liverpool. This will help us understand what the Diaspora African Christians encountered in the process of settlement that led to the planting of their own churches.

Chapter Five focuses on the genesis and growth of the Diaspora African churches in Liverpool. This is divided into two parts. The first covers the activities of the African

churches in Britain, drawing attention to where they have excelled in mission and where they have lagged behind. The African Churches Mission established in Liverpool in 1922, probably the first of its kind in Britain, is used as a case study in appraising the activities of the Diaspora African churches in the city and the role of public worship in their lives. The second part explores the factors that have impeded church growth and public worship among Diaspora African Christians. Among such issues are a lack of adequate finance, and how racial hostility may be a barrier to the establishment of an enabling society, which I will argue is necessary before Diaspora African Christians can experience holistic fulfilment through public worship.

Chapters Six to Eight contain the reports of my ethnographic findings. These chapters focus upon public worship, another aspect of our interpretative key, the three-source triangle of religious behaviour. One chapter is devoted to each of the three churches studied – the churches which I have called the Believers' Church (Chapter Six), the Eucharistic Charismatic Assembly (Chapter Seven), and the African Baptist Church (Chapter Eight). Different but overlapping aspects of worship in the three churches will be examined. Power issues impact on public worship in all the churches studied and the dynamics of this are discussed.

Chapter Nine is a concluding chapter which draws together the findings.





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## **Chapter Two**

### **Methodological and Theoretical Underpinnings**

#### **1. Introduction**

This chapter falls into two broad parts. The first part aims to establish the suitability of ethnography as an adequate methodology for the study of public worship among the target population. To do this, it reviews the available literature in order to assess the suitability of this approach. Special attention is paid to the appropriateness of participant observation, and to how such issues as the choice of topic, the place of study, the choice of research sample and the issues of reflexivity should be handled. Functionalism is the theoretical framework for the analysis of the data, and is used in our interpretative triangle of religious behaviour to understand the functions performed by each religious behaviour source with regard to the desired experience of holistic fulfillment through worship. In view of this, there is a literature review section devoted to how the theory is employed. The chapter also briefly considers the appropriateness of the use of photographs in ethnographic research. This has not been a major investigative tool, but photographs have been employed on occasions to underscore some aspects. The chapter also reviews literature on interviewing, and on archival/historical methods because of its employment in some chapters.

The second part of the chapter lays the foundation for the application of the various investigative tools. This includes outlining my approach to the selection of the Churches to be studied and the time spent in conducting participant observation in each of the Churches. The issues of accessibility, Church composition, sample size and the difficulties encountered in the field are also discussed.



## 2. Methodological Framework: Ethnography

My interest is not only to explore a range of definitions of ethnography but also to examine how comprehensive and effective such an approach is and to analyze its appropriateness to this particular study. The literature review here focuses on various features of ethnography, in the attempt to lay a proper methodological approach for the fieldwork of the later chapters.

### 2.1. Participant Observation

One of the principal methods of investigation employed is participant observation. It is a major means in social research of establishing the researcher's actual experience of the subjects under study.<sup>1</sup> According to Charlotte Davies, ethnography is 'a research process based on fieldwork using a variety of research techniques' but including researcher's participant observation and 'engagement in the lives of those being studied over an extended period of time'.<sup>2</sup> The report produced by an ethnographic study is usually descriptive, taking a qualitative rather than quantitative form. Hammersley comments that 'there is often disagreement about what count and do not count as examples of ethnography'.<sup>3</sup> However, he enumerates its features as follows:

People's behaviour is studied in every context, rather than under conditions created by the researcher, such as in experiments. Data are gathered from a range of sources, but observation/or relatively informal conversations are usually the main ones. The approach to data collection is 'unstructured', in the sense that it does not involve following through a detailed plan set up at the beginning, nor are the categories used for interpreting what people say and do entirely pre-given or fixed...The focus is usually a small number of cases, perhaps a single setting or a group of people, of relatively small scale...The analysis of the data involves interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions and mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and

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<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 68

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 4-5

<sup>3</sup> Martyn Hammersley, *Reading Ethnographic Research* (London and New York, Longman, 1998), p. 1

explanations, with quantification and statistical analysis playing a subordinate role at most.<sup>4</sup>

Steve Herbert describes ethnography as a research approach resting upon 'participant observation, a methodology whereby the researcher spends considerable time observing and interacting with a social group'.<sup>5</sup> The observation and interaction 'enables the ethnographer to understand how the group develops a skein of relations and cultural constructions that tie it together'.<sup>6</sup> Herbert understands participant observation to be a method of gaining more accurate knowledge of the deeper meanings of the various networks of relationships within the group being studied. These meanings may only be discovered through close participation in the day to day life of the group over a period of time. Thus, one might not be able to understand the meanings of public worship among the African immigrants until one has worshipped with them and so experienced its significance to the people. This is the goal of my research.

I have found the analysis of Martin D. Stringer on the appropriateness of ethnography to the study of worship<sup>7</sup> particularly relevant to my aims. Stringer argues that ethnography is probably the most suitable method to adopt in analyzing worship.<sup>8</sup> He traces its roots to anthropology, but argues that (as in other disciplines such as sociology, social psychology, media, and other culture-based studies) the ethnography of worship calls for a more nuanced approach than is found in classical anthropology. He identifies some ethnographic assumptions traditionally made by anthropologists:

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2

<sup>5</sup> Steve Herbert, 'For Ethnography' *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol. 24, No. 4, December 2000, p. 551

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>7</sup> Martin D. Stringer, *On the Perception of Worship* (Birmingham: The University of Birmingham Press, 1999)

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p. 42

that ethnography must take an extended period of time in the field, and must take account of all that is happening in the social context being studied in order to provide a report which offers a holistic comprehension of that context. Furthermore, anthropologists assume that the ethnographer must understand the situation under investigation from the point of view of the people being studied. Considering the constraint of time coupled with the fact that ethnography within anthropology attempts the provision of holistic reporting of small-scale societies, Stringer contends that ethnographic discussion within anthropology offers little scope for the understanding of the ethnography of worship. He argues that the ethnography of worship is a more limited context than the anthropologist is interested in. Therefore, sociological and psychological approaches which have a more limited focus are better suited for the ethnographic study of worship.<sup>9</sup>

Stringer's views notwithstanding, my own position is that there cannot be a total abandonment of the anthropologist's approach to ethnographic investigation in the study of worship. The need for breadth in the area selected for study is essential, although the wholesale application of the anthropological approach to ethnographic study may not be necessary. I agree with Stringer that social space, that is, 'a specific social group', is very important in ethnographic study,<sup>10</sup> especially with reference to my research focus. The social space under study here is the Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool.

Apart from underscoring the view that ethnographic study should have its specific focus, Stringer further maintains that ethnography studies what people say they

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 42-43

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 48

should do, what the observer perceives they are doing, and what they are doing in real life. The ethnographer proffers an analysis that links these three together. While what people say they are doing can be discovered through surveys, it is only through participant observation that what people actually do can be discovered. In worship, therefore, what people actually do is better observed through participant observation.<sup>11</sup> Thus, ethnography gives us the opportunity to compare theory with practice. It gives us the room to see the difference between the ideal state and the reality on the ground.

While a survey of the public worship attitude of Diaspora African Christians can only identify what the people studied say is their attitude towards worship, I strongly believe that my participation in their worship as a researcher reveals the elements of their worship sustaining it in reality. I agree with James H. S. Steven that the qualitative research methods of participant observation and interviews are the most suitable for the study of worship. The reason is their 'suitability for uncovering the relatively subtle and complex social processes of liturgical action'.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the approaches are suitable for 'studying groups and individuals in their natural setting, where behaviour and "common-sense" meanings are generated in social (and in this case, ritual) interaction'.<sup>13</sup> This gives the qualitative method a distinct advantage over the quantitative method of enquiry.<sup>14</sup>

## **2.2. Interviews**

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 50

<sup>12</sup> James H. S. Steven, *Worship in the Spirit: Charismatic Worship in the Church of England* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), p. 39

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*

In preparation for the face-to-face interviews I prepared an interview pro-forma. This was semi-structured, and I found that the use of 'open-ended questioning' elicited further information which had not been part of my original framework. This is of course a key factor with semi-structured technique.

In two of the Churches studied I found difficulties in conducting as many interviews as I wished. One Church was mainly difficult for practical reasons, but in the other it was largely because the pastor blocked my direct access to the research sample. I therefore drew information from other members of the Churches through a questionnaire based on the already prepared interview questions, and expanded to include questions on the area where additional information had emerged as stated above. The use of this questionnaire created a base of more responses and hence made the research findings more representative.

Data drawn from the two sources are distinguished in Chapters Six to Eight, the fieldwork reports, by reserving the reference 'interviewee' for those interviewed face-to-face and using 'respondent' for those who completed the questionnaire. This distinction is reflected also in the referencing of the responses, with 'nnn' representing the abbreviated form of the pseudonym of the Church where the respondent/interviewee comes from and 'x' representing the number allocated to the person replying. (E.g. BC Respondent 3, etc.) The one exception to this is where the person replying is the pastor of the Church, where the designation pastor is used in the reference. This is to enable easy location of these interviews, particularly because my research has identified significant issues around the power exercised by pastors and its impact on the Church members. The method of data interpretation was qualitative

because of my engagement in participant observation as the major method of investigation and because statistical inferences have not been drawn.

Apart from the interpretative key above, the face-to-face interview method used along with the questionnaire was intended to unearth some hidden elements influencing public worship activities. This is because the interview gave me the opportunity of asking follow-up questions in the course of the interview. It also gave the interviewees the opportunity to comment in full on the questions I asked. The combination of the above approaches afforded me the opportunity to explain how all the seen factors (nature of worship), and the unseen ones (the African background worldview and the conditions in the host society) in our interpretative triangle interact together in order to provide holistic life fulfillment through worship for the target group.

### ***2.3. The Choice of Topic and Site***

In choosing a topic for ethnographic research, the background of the researcher such as his or her academic/socio-cultural backgrounds matters considerably.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the choice of topic may be affected by the socio - economic climate, and political circumstances.<sup>16</sup> Adrian Holliday observes that the selection of the topic can relate to a number of factors such as ‘previous interests or concerns or elements deep in the biography of the researcher’.<sup>17</sup> According to him, what turns these interests into research is the opportunity either to write a dissertation or to add to one’s academic publication.<sup>18</sup> However, in the choice of topic, there must be a consideration of the interplay of everyday life and the intellectual tradition of the researcher.<sup>19</sup> My interest in ethnographic methods of research began when I was an undergraduate in the Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Subsequent training as a theologian influenced my choice of the present topic of research. Furthermore, my ethnic origin as a West African Black immigrant ultimately informed my decision to investigate the worship attitudes of the target group.

Another important issue which may influence the choice of topic is the location of site. In classical anthropology, the people to be studied were those regarded as ‘primitive’ people. The classic example is the Australian aborigines which Emile Durkheim as an armchair scholar referred to as ‘primitive’.<sup>20</sup> Today, anthropologists

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<sup>15</sup> Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*, p. 5

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 27

<sup>17</sup> Adrian Holliday, *Doing and Writing Qualitative Research* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2002) p, 28

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 29

<sup>19</sup> Charlotte Aull Davie, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Self and Others*, p. 28

<sup>20</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* trans. by Joseph Ward Swain (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, n.d), p. 95

generally study 'exotic' people.<sup>21</sup> These include 'those with cultural distance from the West and the exotic at home such as the deviant groups, street gangs or the drug addicts'. It could also be 'populations that are circumscribed and distinctive such as the study of urban ghetto, asylum seekers or peasant communities in industrial societies'.<sup>22</sup> The Diaspora African Christians' worship with which this research is concerned is that of a group of immigrants different in race and life style from the host community. A study of their public worship would therefore offer the opportunity to give appropriate interpretations of their religious behaviour, of how they have sustained it, and of how their public worship has impacted upon the host community. One of the Churches studied, the Believers' Church, targets the drug addicts and prostitutes for its primary mission. This further underscores the appropriateness of ethnography as the right methodological tool to be employed for this study.

#### ***2.4. Reflexivity***

Another primary concern of ethnography that makes its employment the most appropriate for this investigation is the issue of reflexivity. Reflexivity is the awareness of the researcher that one has a necessary connection to the research context and hence one's effects upon it.<sup>23</sup> In this research, one of the Churches studied had been my place of worship since I came to England and housed the denomination in which I was ordained as a minister. My close acquaintance with the Church and the denomination could not but be reflected consciously or unconsciously in my handling

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<sup>21</sup> 'Exotic People' In the early part of the twentieth century when anthropology was established as an academic discipline, anthropologists were criticised for calling the people they studied 'primitive'. Anthropologists then started studying 'exotic people', that is those with a distinct cultural distance from the West. See Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*, pp. 32-33

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 33

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7



and interpretation of the data collected. That having been said, however, there is an important difference between leading a congregation in worship and participating as an ethnographer – though the complexities in the situation (not least in terms of my negotiation of the inherent power structures within my ordained status) must be acknowledged. This calls for a radical self-history. No wonder Michael Humphrey and others assert that ethnography is a means of ‘self-discovery and creative self-authorship for the ethnographer’.<sup>24</sup> They further liken an ethnographer to a jazz musician who brokers the ‘conflicting demands of a performance in which the identity of the self as well as the “other” are jointly explored’.<sup>25</sup> Recognizing the fears that may come from reflexivity, they suggest:

While the invitation to be reflexive embraced by this approach poses dangers (in the form of narcissistic self-absorption), it also opens up the possibility for mutual and symbiotic exploration of the self and other. Indeed, while we concur with Bruner (1993; 6) and Lincoln and Denzin (1998: 413) that egotistical ‘ethnographic self-indulgence’ is to be eschewed, we believe that it is less likely to be a problem once the identity-constitutive nature of ethnography is explicitly recognized. In short, it is the fantasy that authors are able to write themselves out of the texts they produce that currently gives them license to impose their personalities on their texts so obtrusively. It is lack of reflexivity, not profound reflexivity that leads to unchecked narcissism.<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, Michael Burawoy argues that the ethnographic researcher ought to differentiate ‘the arenas of participant observation from what lies beyond that arena...Ethnographers are part of the world they study’.<sup>27</sup> He sees fieldwork as ‘a running interaction between ethnographer and participant ... [which] involves a self-conscious recognition of the way embodiment, location, and habits affect the

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Humphreys and others, ‘Is Ethnography Jazz?’ *Organization*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2003, p. 7

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 10-11

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11

<sup>27</sup> Michael Burawoy, ‘Revisits: An Outline of a Theory of Reflexive Ethnography’. *University of California, Berkeley*. 16 July 2005.

[http://sociology.berkeley.edu/faculty/BURAWOY/burawoy\\_pdf/Revisits.ASR.pdf](http://sociology.berkeley.edu/faculty/BURAWOY/burawoy_pdf/Revisits.ASR.pdf), pp. 24

ethnographer's relations to the people studied' and how these relations influence both what is observed and the data that are collected.<sup>28</sup>

As a consequence, the experience of the fieldwork has an affective impact on the researcher. The process of interaction with his/her subjects affects him/her just as it affects them too. The way the researcher and the subjects affect one another is reflected in the report of the ethnographer without necessarily affecting the validity and reliability of the report. Adogame and Chitando agree with Ranger that as fieldwork is done using participant observation techniques especially among the Diaspora African communities, the researcher must avoid becoming a 'precipitant-observer'.<sup>29</sup> The participant - observer does not attempt to guide activities, the precipitant-observer does.<sup>30</sup> They are therefore of the opinion that the researcher must be aware of the ethical challenges guiding his/her undertaking and strive for excellence in order to make the findings of the research reliable.<sup>31</sup>

From the fieldwork experience I had in the Church where I worship, I believe that their perception of me as a preacher before the research began there changed to their perceiving me as a student-researcher who needed their help. Before the research began, I was more respected as one of the pastors in the Church, but during the research, I was seen as a student seeking their favour to secure an opportunity to interview them. Because this change of status divested me of some of the authority I previously had in the Church, I realized that the work of an ethnographer requires humility, courage and self adjustment for goal attainment. A fuller analysis of how I

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 24-25

<sup>29</sup> Afe Adogame & Ezra Chitando, 'Moving among those Moved by the Spirit: Conducting Fieldwork within the New African Religious Diaspora', p. 259

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*

negotiated this issue of reflexivity in the field is discussed in the second part of this chapter, dealing with my insider/outsider position as a researcher.

### ***2.5. The Use of Photographs***

The use of photography was another approach I explored during the course of this research. Using photography in research is one of the approaches defined as projective technique in ethnography.<sup>32</sup> According to Martin Bulmer, it has the advantage of helping in eliciting richer and more detailed responses from the research sample. Photography has also been established as adding enjoyment to the interview for those involved.<sup>33</sup> It can also 'provide a method of accounting for differing perceptions of the same event'.<sup>34</sup> However, the use of photographs in ethnographic research has problems, among them are 'authenticity, availability, sampling (which may have to do with the choice of the picture to be taken), interpretation of the picture taken and presentation'.<sup>35</sup> There is no research technique without its own problem. The adequacy of a research technique in measuring what it is expected to measure depends on the faithfulness of the researcher in handling the procedure. Despite some of the limitations of photography in ethnographic research, it was used sparingly where I judged it to be appropriate, exploiting its visual advantage and authenticating the fact that the researcher was physically present in the research setting.<sup>36</sup> In order to abide

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<sup>32</sup> Martin Bulmer, *Field Research: a Source Book and Field Manual* ed. by Robert G. Burgess (London and New York: Unwin Hyman Ltd & Routledge, 1991, 1994), p. 119

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>34</sup> Krzysztof Kosela, 'The Photograph as a Tool of the Sociology of Religion: a Polish Case Study' in *Religion and Power Decline and Growth: A Sociological Analyses of Religion in Britain, Poland and the Americas* ed. by Peter Gee and John Fulton (London: British Sociological Association, Sociology of Religion Study Group, 1991), p. 81 (See also M. Brinton Lykes, 'Creative Arts and Photography in Participatory Action Research in Guatemala' in *Handbook of Action Research* edited by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (London: Sage Publications, 2006), pp. 272-274

<sup>35</sup> Martin Bulmer, *In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research* ed. by Robert G. Burgess (London & New York: Routledge, 1991, 1997), p. 140

<sup>36</sup> Charlotte Aull Davie, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*, p. 119

by the pledge of anonymity for the research sample, permission was obtained from those concerned before using their photographs.

### ***2.6. The Difficulties in Using an Ethnographic Research Technique.***

One difficulty of ethnographic research is the ‘messiness’ of the approach. It is at times difficult to obtain the consent of the intended study population, which on some occasions has led researchers to abandon their original proposals. It may also be difficult to secure the consent of the population to be studied in terms of the time to commence the study just as it was in my case on this research.<sup>37</sup>

The ethnographic approach is also ‘messy’ in terms of the personal sacrifices the researcher needs to make in adapting to the culture or situation of the people he has to study. It may also be ‘messy’ in terms of obtaining reliable information from the interviewees. Follow up questions during interviews may help in solving this problem. The ‘messiness’ of my own project was experienced above all in terms of the power exercised by the pastors of the Churches I studied, which made the collection of data at times very difficult. The suspicion sometimes associated with my status as both researcher and pastor was another problem I encountered. One of the pastors of the Churches studied acknowledged that he was suspicious of me before the commencement of the research. He thought that I came to familiarize myself with the members of the Church in order to carry them away to establish my own Church. This underscores the fact that what is happening may be different from the way people perceive it. Whilst I had the genuine motive of carrying out research, some of the pastors of the Churches studied perceived me as a spy and an intruder.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p.7

Added to the above difficulties of ethnography is that of the interpretation or analysis of the data collected. There are three ways in which ethnographic data can be handled. Stringer calls the first method of data analysis 'translation/description.' This to him means imagining that one is the person being studied or part of the group under investigation. The researcher tries to interpret the data from the point of view of the people studied. This is with the understanding that the reader of the research findings may not necessarily be part of the group studied and it is the researcher's translation that will help him/her understand the report of the research.<sup>38</sup> This is why participant observation has been chosen for translation/description of the elements seen as sustaining public worship of the target group. I became involved in the worship of the people, not only as a minister of religion but as a researcher experiencing what the worshippers were experiencing.

The second method of analysis is 'interpretation/explanation'. This is a method commonly used in the social sciences where 'emphasis is placed primarily on meaning, and explanation is associated with the natural sciences with the emphasis on laws and predictability'. To Stringer, there seems to be an overlap between translation and interpretation. In interpretation and explanation, 'the data under review is no longer accepted on its own terms; some other element is assumed to be needed to help the reader to understand the issue at stake'. The aim of both interpretation and explanation is to 'get behind the surface reality of the situation being described'. While interpretation provides a 'context of meaning for the event', explanation 'explores the situation through questions of "causes" and underlying patterns'. Both

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<sup>38</sup> Martin Stringer, *On the Perception of Worship*, p. 54

therefore assume that there is something else before the observable situation can really make sense. This is where the issue of theory building to explain a phenomenon comes in.<sup>39</sup> Models of explanation are thus useful for the interpretation and explanation of the data collected on worship. In my opinion, interpretation and explanation make description more apt, vivid, and understandable. They serve to a large extent as roadmaps to the things being described. Therefore in a sense, interpretation, explanation and description, all belong together and assist the social researcher in having an holistic picture of the issue at stake. Logically, the functions or roles which worship performs remain with the meanings the worshippers attach to it. Even where the ethnographer sees the role of worship as dysfunctional, that may not mean an end to such worship in that social setting. The worshippers may not see what the ethnographer sees.

Stringer's third method of data analysis is the building of theory or generalizing. He argues that theory is the foundation that makes the explanation work. This theory building is carried out with the assumption of an 'external reality out there' which can be assessed through observation and careful listening to the discourses that relate to that reality. The work of an ethnographer becomes crucial because 'ethnography has the potential to lead us to a theory of the mind' - a theory of how humans function at a practical level of social interaction, and not in isolation. The study of worship rightly belongs here because in worship, 'we can see more clearly how individual minds are working and interacting with different kinds of reality.'<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 55

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 57-58

The ethnographic study of worship is a nebulous task: nebulous because the meaning the ethnographer may attach to the data may, at times, be different from the meaning the worshipper attaches to it. Theory building will help the way data are analyzed and help us to see more clearly 'how individual minds are working and interacting with different kinds of reality in worship.'<sup>41</sup> It may enable us to answer some crucial questions: what do the people think is happening in their worship? What is actually happening? How could I, as an ethnographer, reconcile what the worshippers think is happening with what is actually happening? It was in order to provide a structured framework within which these questions could be addressed that I devised my three-source triangle of religious behaviour as the interpretative key through which the public worship activities of the target group could be understood. This would allow us to see whether there are other hidden factors that influence public worship attitudes.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*

## **2.7. Archival/Historical Study**

My focus here is not to discuss what archival study is but to indicate how this research method has assisted me to obtain some relevant documents that are no longer commonly available in the bookshops or open shelves of the libraries.

At the beginning of this research, I received training in archive retrieval methods at the Liverpool City Library from their Records Office. This helped me tremendously in obtaining information from the archives. I was able to access micro films of old newspapers, and some historical books that are no longer in circulation. It was through the archives of the Liverpool City Library that I was able to discover probably the only monograph written on the African Churches Mission, established by a Nigerian pastor in Liverpool - Marika Sherwood's *Pastor Daniels Ekarte*. I also accessed *The Liverpool Review*, a publication of the Anglican Communion with some articles on the African Churches Mission in Liverpool. Letters and minutes of meetings in relation to the religious activities of Diaspora Africans in Liverpool since 1900 were also obtained from the Record Office.

## **3. Theoretical Framework: Functionalism**

The three-source triangle of religious behaviour makes certain assumptions. These are that: the target group's background worldview, the nature of their worship and the conditions they are living under in Liverpool are all functional. The function these aspects perform as they interact together is the provision of the opportunity to experience holistic life fulfilment. Because of the centrality of function to the focus of this research, I now turn to assess its suitability for this undertaking.



It is necessary first to give a brief historical account of the work of social thinkers around the issue of the functions of the social system, especially that of religion in bringing order to the state of disorderliness in society. The French Revolution, with its attendant social and political disorder in the West, especially in France, led many social thinkers to be concerned with how to maintain social integration in the society. This was what led to the 'emphasis of the moral and social significance of religion in bringing integration to society.'<sup>42</sup> The argument of the social thinkers was that there is significance for 'a religious basis of society' because it has 'a governing and domesticating function'. Their belief was that 'everything that is capable of maintaining the society is necessary'. To maintain 'a free and reasonable society, people would need a common reference which is represented in God, thus God's existence is a requirement for the society, and religion is the societal condition'.<sup>43</sup>

Commenting further, Krech observes:

This 'functional' definition of religion does not mean that society invents the existence of God. The idea of God rather proves its evidence by means of its impact on society. The presence of God is necessary for the maintenance of human society. At the same time, God's presence cannot be realized by itself, but requires the society. It has to be understood as a continuous process in which society constitutes itself.<sup>44</sup>

It is the moral teaching of religion that makes it suitable to maintain integration.. The moral dimension is identified as the heart of religion. Religion is seen as an affair of the community to which the unity of humankind is connected. Durkeim further affirms the indispensable function of religion in bringing about unity in the society through its moral teachings:

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<sup>42</sup> Volkhard Krech, 'From Historicism to Functionalism: The Rise of Scientific Approaches to Religions around 1900 and their Socio- Cultural Context' in *NUMEN-International Review for the History of Religion*, vol. 47, 2000, p. 250

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 251

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*

There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and its personality. Now this moral remaking cannot be achieved except by the means of reunions, assemblies and meetings where the individuals, being closely united to one another, reaffirm in common their sentiments...<sup>45</sup>

It was on the above idea that Durkheim built when he was preoccupied with how anthropology/sociology could proffer solutions to the problem of social disorder of his time, by assuming a functional role of unity for religion in the society

The functionalists posit that sociology is a science and that the society or social world has regular features and objectives like those of the natural sciences. As the natural world has laws governing it, the social world or society has also. The purpose of sociology is to discover those laws by the use of methods that are close to those of the natural sciences in the analysis of social events or institutions.<sup>46</sup> Durkheim is particularly concerned with the organic unity of society. He argues that certain needs must be met for a social system to exist and be in equilibrium or state of homeostasis. An institution such as religion therefore exists to meet the need of solidarity in society. He asserts that every society would need religion 'because religious institutions have certain functions which contribute to the survival of the social system as a whole. This is similar to the way the organs of the body do for the body's survival'.<sup>47</sup> In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* Durkheim demonstrates the integrative role of religion as a social institution. He is of the opinion that the task of the social investigator is to discover 'the efficient causes of any social phenomenon

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<sup>45</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* trans. by Joseph Ward Swain (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, n.d), p. 427; See also W.S. F. Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion: Themes and Theories* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 170-172

<sup>46</sup> Morison Murray, *Sociology in Focus: Methods in Sociology* (London and New York: Longman, 1986), p. 26

<sup>47</sup> Kent McClelland, 'Functionalism' 24 February 2000. *Sociology Department, Grinnell College*. 19 July 2005. [http://web.grinnell.edu/courses/soc/s00/soc111-01/Intro\\_Theories/Functionalism.html](http://web.grinnell.edu/courses/soc/s00/soc111-01/Intro_Theories/Functionalism.html), p. 1 of 3

and [trace] its history'. The investigator must then make 'an attempt to determine the function of the phenomenon in the system or order of which it was a part'.<sup>48</sup>

Durkheim demonstrates this approach in his work on suicide. He tries to establish a 'causal relationship' between suicide and the degree of integration in the society. To him, a causal explanation should be supported with a functional explanation because 'social utility could make intelligible some of the intervening links that might explain why the phenomenon persists'.<sup>49</sup> Durkheim sees religion as performing the paramount function of allowing individual members of the society to imagine the society of which they are a part. He therefore maintains:

Acts of worship, whatever they may be, are something other than paralyzed force, gesture without motion. By the very act of serving the manifest purpose of strengthening the ties between the faithful and their god-the god being only a figurative representation of the society-they at the same time strengthen the ties between the individual and the society of which he is a member. We can even understand how the fundamental truth that religion thus contained might have been enough to offset the secondary errors that it almost necessarily entailed and therefore how, despite the unpleasant surprises those errors caused, the faithful were prevented from setting religion aside.<sup>50</sup>

Durkheim further observes 'the believer who has communicated with his god is not merely a man who sees new truths of which the unbeliever is ignorant; he is a man who is stronger'.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, an adherent 'feels within him more force, either to endure the trials of existence or to conquer them'. He has further feelings that he 'was raised from the miseries of the world because he is raised above his condition as a mere man; he believes that he is saved from evil, under whatever form he may conceive this evil'.

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<sup>48</sup> Kenneth Thompson, *Key Sociologists: Emile Durkheim* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 49

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105

<sup>50</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Form of Religious Life* trans. by Fields Karen E., (New York, London: The Free Press, 1995), p. 227

<sup>51</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Form of Religious Life: A Study in Religious Sociology*. Translated from French by Swain Joseph Ward (London, New York: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd, n.d), p. 416

Durkheim extends his views on the function of religion to its being used as a tool for coping with the exigencies of life. Adogame and Chitando appear to echo this opinion by arguing that Diaspora African communities in the West use the Church as a place where they can share similar sentiments with one another and at the same time 'feel at home'.<sup>52</sup> Durkheim's quest for a causal relationship here is relevant to our interpretative key. The three sources of religious behaviour of Diaspora Africans on the triangle enable one to answer the question of what is responsible for their public worship behaviour. What functions does worship perform for them in Liverpool? What elements sustain their public worship activities in a society where public worship is declining? Through functionalism we are able to attempt the provision of answers to these questions, and this will be done in the data analysis sections in chapters Six to Eight.

Durkheim's analysis of function is quite flexible. He recognises that there may be functional alternatives to the roles performed by a social institution, and that a social institution may have multiple functions in society. Also, the function performed by the same institution may vary from social setting to social setting.<sup>53</sup>

Seeking further explanations for the existence of religion, Durkheim affirms that 'religion serves the function of social integration by linking individuals to persons and things outside themselves'. It achieves the integration of individuals into various aspects of social life 'by placing restrictions on individual autonomy and self-

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<sup>52</sup> Afe Adogame & Ezra Chitando, 'Moving among those Moved by the Spirit: Conducting Fieldwork within the New African Religious Diaspora', p.260

<sup>53</sup> Kenneth Thompson, *Key Sociologists: Emile Durkheim*, p. 105

reflection'.<sup>54</sup> He finds in his study of suicide that Protestants are more prone to committing suicide than Catholics. This he attributes to religious doctrine and teaching, in spite of the fact that both of them condemn suicide. While the authority of religious leaders and Scriptures is questioned in Protestant Churches, Catholics hardly do the same but 'accept religious demands more readily than their Protestant counterparts'. Besides, the Catholics left intact 'the roles played by traditional sacraments such as confession and communion and the role played by ritual in the Church and in the religious lives of Catholics'.<sup>55</sup> Because of change which the Protestants encourage, they develop a more critical attitude to issues, even religious injunctions, and this has the tendency of undermining discipline within the fold. In a similar way, the self-reflection and consciousness encouraged by Protestantism also allow room for 'withdrawal from the religious community'. Finally, Protestants tend to free themselves from the impact religious beliefs place on them more than Catholics, this makes Protestants better able to accept situations in the world as they are. These reasons also make them more prone to committing suicide when they become frustrated by life issues or fail to find explanations for some life issues.<sup>56</sup>

There are other scholars who pursued the idea of functionalism further. Among them are the two British anthropologists, Bronislaw Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. Their basic idea is the likening of society to an organism with various parts where

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<sup>54</sup> Ken Morrison, *Marx, Durkheim, Weber: Formations of Modern Social Thought* (London, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 168. Citing Emile Durkheim, *Suicide*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*; See David Torevell's critique of the *Vatican II Reform*, especially on its removal of the sense of sacredness and transcendence from liturgy by envisaging that worship should be 'more in tune with the secular world'. David Torevell, *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity and Liturgical Reform* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), p. 159

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p. 169

each part functions to sustain the organism. While Malinowski advocates biocultural or psychological functionalism, Radcliffe-Brown advocates structural functionalism.<sup>57</sup> Radcliffe-Brown's structural-functionalism was based on 'the structural analogy between social life and organisms'<sup>58</sup>. He sees the life of an organism as dependent on the way its structures function. He articulates that 'it is through and by the continuity of the functioning of an organism that the continuity of the structure is preserved'. He sees some recurrent life processes such as respiration and digestion as contributing their own quotas to the life of the organism as a whole.

Talcott Parsons builds further on the theory of functionalism by identifying certain structures that must exist in every social system and function in various capacities for the survival of the society. He could be classified as a 'structural functionalist'.

Parsons is of the view that two basic things must be resolved by a society or social system for it to survive. These are the 'instrumental action-orientation' which has to do with achievement of societal or individual ends such as survival, and the 'expressive orientation' which relates to how the individual members of the society would relate to one another in the most desirable or positively functional way.<sup>59</sup> He defines this relation as 'a system of roles' and 'role-pattern types' played by individuals in the social system.<sup>60</sup>

Parsons identifies four basic functional imperatives society must meet in order to experience equilibrium. These 'functional prerequisites are the functional problems

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<sup>57</sup> M. D. Murphy, 'Functionalism'. *Department of Anthropology, The University of Alabama*. 30 March 2005. <http://www.as.ua.edu/Faculty/murphy/function.htm>, p. 1 of 14

<sup>58</sup> Charles Townley & Mike Middleton 'Sociological Perspectives' in *Fundamentals of Sociology* ed by Patrick McNeill & Charles Townley (London: Stanley Thorne (Publishers) Ltd, 1986), p. 26.

Citing A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, , *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*

<sup>59</sup> Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), pp79-100

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p.80

which all societies face without exception'.<sup>61</sup> They are: adaptation, goal-attainment, integration and pattern-maintenance. He attaches to the economic institution the function of adaptation for the creation of resources for the society. The polity or government institution he sees as responsible for goal maintenance, especially at the collective level.<sup>62</sup> He is aware that a subsystem might serve more than one function and that more than one subsystem might serve the same purpose. For example, in our common human experience, the socialization of a child begins at home. It is the family that begins to teach the child what is acceptable and unacceptable practice in the society. This same role of educating the child is also provided by religious and educational institutions. At the same time, the family also performs the role of procreation. The main specialty of the family which no other institution is better suited for is procreation. This is not to deny the services of the medical institution in assisting the family institution in regard to procreation.

Parsons' theory is an elaboration of the functional approach to the analysis of the social system. It is also a brilliant attempt at assigning roles to an increasingly complex western society. The critics of Parsons' theory see him as a mere theorist, but considering the applicability of his theory in assigning roles to institutions; Parsons' structural functionalism could be classed as a practical theory.<sup>63</sup> This theory assumes that every institution in the society would justify its existence by performing the functions it is best suited for. Our concern here with Parsons' theory is to ask whether public worship can justify its existence today in the lives of the Diaspora African Christians under study. We will be able to do this later through the analysis of data.

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p.177

<sup>62</sup> Stephen P. Savage, *The Theories of Talcott Parsons* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1981), p.151

<sup>63</sup> Roland Robertson & Bryan S. Turner, 'How to Read Parsons' in *Talcott Parsons: Theorist of Modernity* ed. by Roland Robertson & Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage Publications, 1991), p. 254

Robert K. Merton identifies some flaws in certain claims of the functionalists. The functionalists postulate that 'standardized social activities or cultural items are functional for the entire social or cultural system'.<sup>64</sup> According to Merton, we cannot talk of all societies as having the high degree of integration 'where every culturally standardized activity or belief is functional for the society as a whole and uniformly functional for the inhabitants of the society'. Even accepting the unity of the biological organisms, which functionalists often refer to as working together to form a unity, Merton maintains that there are variations in individual biological organisms' degree of integration, and that this is a fact of life. He justifies his position with the research findings on 'lower organisms which are more loosely correlated'<sup>65</sup>. The loss of a major part of these organisms' bodies causes temporary inconvenience only with replacement tissues being quickly regenerated. Furthermore, 'the assumption of the complete functional unity of human society' is seen as contrary to fact as 'social usages or sentiments may be functional for some groups and dysfunctional for others in the same society'.<sup>66</sup> There are other criticisms of functionalism which I shall not examine here because it is outside the main focus of my research, but nevertheless I argue that it is a realistic tool to use in my interpretations.

The above criticisms notwithstanding, the fact that certain institutions in the social system perform certain roles cannot be ignored. The functions performed by public worship among the target group remain crucial. Does African religiosity have a motive? What is the motive? How is the motive sustained? These are what this thesis investigates.

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<sup>64</sup> Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1964), p. 25

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 25-26

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p.27



## **4. My Work in the Field**

This final section explains how I conducted my fieldwork and handled the problems that arose in the course of it. This section demonstrates the differences that may arise between the theoretical aspects of methodology and the ways such methodology is practically employed in the field.

### ***4.1. Choice of Churches and respondents***

The three Churches I studied are referred to by pseudonyms as each preferred anonymity. Their request for anonymity may be partly due to their suspicion of my (the researcher's) religious background/positioning in contrast to that of at least two of the churches. It may also be due to the insider outsider enigma discussed further in section 4.4 below. The Believers' Church (BC) is situated in Kirkdale, Liverpool; the Eucharistic Charismatic Assembly (ECA), an independent Pentecostal Church, is located in the Granby district in Toxteth, and the African Baptist Church (ABC) is situated in Kensington, Liverpool. It is an affiliate of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. I did not intentionally choose these from the larger range of Diaspora African Churches in Liverpool; the pastors of these Churches were the ones who consented to the conduct of the research. My access to two of the Churches was also facilitated by the contact I earlier had with some of the members of those Churches who introduced me to their pastors. I sought to interview their pastors as fully as I could.

### ***4.2. Interview process***

Some of the interviews took more than one session. Each interview was determined by the time the interviewees could spare at a time. Each session took not less than forty-five minutes. The semi-structured face-to-face interviews, with open questions,

were aimed at giving the interviewees the freedom to comment in full on the questions asked, and to give me flexibility in the way questions are asked.

Purposive sampling is a sampling method whereby the researcher uses his/her professionalism to select the research samples so that the data gathered might be able to measure what the researcher sets out to measure.<sup>67</sup> In the Churches studied, the pastors who were the key informants were selected through purposive sampling. They were interviewed as fully as could be managed because of the leading roles they played in their Churches. I also purposely included white members of the congregation, if available, in my sample so as to elicit their responses, especially on how they are coping with worshipping in black majority Churches. (More details on the number of people interviewed in each Church are given below under each Church studied).

At least three people in addition to the pastor were interviewed face-to-face in each Church. Some of those interviewed occupied central positions in the Churches such as the personal assistant to the pastor, a co-pastor or the pastor's wife. The rest respondents were other members of the Church. This was to make the responses obtained representative of the entire members of the Church. I gave the respondents the right to choose the time of the interview and I was prepared also for the cancellation of appointments. A number of interviews were indeed postponed for various reasons, including the interviewees' inability to leave their workplace as expected, or sickness. All cancelled interviews were successfully rescheduled.

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<sup>67</sup> Louis M. Rea and Richard A. Parker, *Designing and Conducting Survey Research: A Comprehensive Guide*, Third Edition (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), p. 173

Participant observation in the worship of each of the Churches lasted for a minimum of three months, although I kept going back to clarify one issue or another thereafter.

### *4.3. Summary of fieldwork*

I started participant observation at the Believers' Church (BC) on 1 May 2005, and completed it on 31 July. Seventeen people were involved in the interview/questionnaire process. The pastor and six other members were interviewed face-to-face, while I received written responses to the questionnaire from a further ten respondents. In all, eight of the research sample were males and nine were females. This sample made up about one-third of the entire Church membership. All were Africans; although there were also a few (about four) white members they were very much in the minority, and were elusive for interview.<sup>68</sup>

I began participant observation at the Eucharistic Charismatic Assembly on 2 October, 2005 and concluded on 8 January, 2006. I returned a number of times until June, 2006 to seek clarification of the opinions expressed during the initial fieldwork. Unlike the first Church studied, at times e-mail was used to elicit responses from the pastor of the Church, because of the difficulties encountered in conducting face-face interview with him as a result of his frequent travels. In all, twenty five people were involved. Only four of these could be by face-to-face interviews, while the rest were done through the supplementary questionnaire approach. This included two white respondents out of up to ten who were worshipping at ECA at the time of my research. The total research sample was about one quarter of the population of the Church. Males were thirteen while females were twelve.

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<sup>68</sup> See the report in Chapter Six on the issues about the white worshippers in the Church.

The major problem encountered in the course of this fieldwork tranche was a lack of direct access to the research sample because the pastor did not allow me that direct access. This attitude of his raised the question of the power that the pastor exercised in the Church. I have included a brief discussion of the use of ecclesiastical power in the analysis in all the fieldwork chapters.

In addition, I also employed telephone interviews to elicit more responses, especially from the key informants that I had to call more often. For example, at the Eucharistic Charismatic Assembly where it was difficult for me to see the pastor, I had to speak with him on some occasions on the phone. This has its advantages, not least in that it allowed me to maintain some personal contact. It gave room also for the completion of interviews through phone calls in the evenings when most people were back from work. It afforded the opportunity of avoiding the difficulty that might be involved in the evenings when as others have noted, it 'might be less safe for an interviewer to conduct doorstep interviews and when elderly informants might be unwilling to open their doors.'<sup>69</sup> I employed the use of photographs where necessary in order to concretize the point I was making.

The third Church studied was the African Baptist Church, where I have been a member since my arrival in Liverpool. Negotiating access to study this Church was relatively easy. My participant observation of the worship there lasted from 15 January, 2006 to 31 December, 2006. I had more access to people in this Church

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<sup>69</sup> David Hall and Irene Hall, *Practical Social Research* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), p. 102 (For more on telephone interview, see Sheila Payne, 'Interview in Qualitative Research' in *Handbook of the Psychology of Interviewing* edited by Amina Memon and Ray Bull (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1999, p. 91)

which enabled me to conduct more face-to-face interviews than in the other Churches. Interviews were conducted with the pastor of the Church, and with ten others, of whom three were pastors currently worshipping and ministering there. The two white members remaining from the merger with a white church were included in the interviews. Each interview took not less than forty-five minutes per session, and some were interviewed more than once. The opinions of a further thirty respondents were obtained through the supplementary questionnaire. In all two-fifths of the Church membership provided information. Fourteen of the research sample were males while the rest were females. Though they were randomly selected (apart from the pastor and the few white worshippers), there was almost gender balance in the responses obtained which reflected the almost balanced gender composition of the Church, as was noted also by my research colleague Alan Smith in his report.<sup>70</sup> (See below under 4.4 for the role of Alan Smith) Although I had no difficulty in gaining access to the pastor as I had in the last Church discussed, there were some difficulties in getting the members of the Church to agree on when I could conduct interviews with them, as they complained of lack of time. Nonetheless, gaining access to them for interview was much easier than with the other two. This experience illustrates the 'messiness' of the ethnographic research approach as discussed earlier.

This Church is one of the biggest Diaspora African Churches in Liverpool and therefore, its omission from this study would have left a significant gap in the findings. However, it was this Church that raised the insider/outsider issue most sharply, and this will now be discussed.

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<sup>70</sup> Alan Smith, 'Report of our Visit to Teaching-centred African Baptist Church, Kensington,' Liverpool, 5 March 2006, p. 1

#### ***4.4. Insider/Outsider Issues at the African Baptist Church***

By choosing to study the Church where I belong, I knew I was researching my own reality as an insider in the Church. This has its advantages in terms of the richness of the report that could be produced. It also has its disadvantages. One of these was that, as another researcher judged, 'it may be impossible for me to claim an objective stance during my research'.<sup>71</sup> The Church was barely six months old when I joined it. As an ordained minister of the Baptist denomination to which the Church belongs, I was part of the pastoral team responsible for preaching there. Furthermore, whilst I had not founded it, I was, nonetheless, one of the three pastors who had laboured for the Church's initial growth and development.

In negotiating these tensions, the issue of reflexivity became paramount. The conceptual tools ethnographers use to study cultures or events are not, and can never be, neutral and passive tools of research. The language of the report and the meanings attached to issues are often influenced by the researcher's culture, social background and his/her experiences. Therefore, the interpretation of research data to a certain extent depends on what the researcher has already known and believed, 'it is not a voyage of discovery which starts with a clean sheet'.<sup>72</sup> I struggled to consider the issues I encountered in as critical and objective a manner as possible. This type of struggle was expressed by other researchers in similar studies. For example, Peter McGrail, studying the celebration of first Holy Communion in Roman Catholic

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<sup>71</sup> Peter McGrail, *First Communion: Ritual, Church and Popular Religious Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 89

<sup>72</sup> Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003), p. 88; For more on how to resolve the insider/outsider dilemma in ethnographic research, especially among African diaspora communities, see Afe Adogame & Ezra Chitando, 'Moving among Those Moved by the Spirit: Conducting Fieldwork within the New African Religious Diaspora', pp. 263-266

parishes in Liverpool as a Roman Catholic priest, wrote of his inner struggles as an insider/outsider researcher:

A fundamental element was my identity as a Catholic, with a personal investment in the Church's future. I had myself taken part as a child in the ritual under study, and for several years I had been responsible for its celebration...The priests were members of my own peer group...The priests in the first and second parishes expressed a hope that my result would in some way feed into archdiocesan policy on first communion. My relationship with them as ethnographer was therefore quite complex.<sup>73</sup>

To deal with the dilemma of my insider/outsider status, I employed the technique of introducing another, outsider, researcher to investigate the same realities I was investigating and to write his own report. This methodological approach had earlier been employed by James Steven in his study of charismatic worship in the Church of England, because of his position as an insider in the Church he studied.<sup>74</sup> Alan Smith, a fellow Ph D student at my University, agreed to do this. He worshipped with ABC twice before writing a report on the elements of worship I was also investigating. We compared our reports to provide a balanced view of my own accuracy. This was to give the research findings added reliability. In all factual matters his observations confirmed mine, as already indicated with regard to the gender balance above. In Alan Smith's report is used in Chapter Eight at appropriate places.

#### ***4.5. Church Composition***

The Churches studied were not of the same sizes. The Eucharistic Charismatic Assembly and the African Baptist Church were the biggest with between eighty to one hundred regular worshippers. The Believers' Church was the smallest, with about fifty members, and an average attendance of between twenty five and thirty five.

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<sup>73</sup> Peter McGrail, 'The Celebration of First Communion in Liverpool: A Lens to View the Structural Decline of the Roman Catholic Parish' (PhD. Thesis, Birmingham: The University of Birmingham, 2003), pp. 20-21; *ibid.*, *First Communion: Ritual, Church and Popular Religious Identity*, p. 89

<sup>74</sup> James H. S. Steven, *Worship in the Spirit: Charismatic Worship in the Church of England*, p. 41

One quarter or more of the membership of each Church was either interviewed or provided a written response to my questions. This large sample has contributed to the reliability of the research findings because it yielded different opinions of members on issues. In all the Churches, the majority of the members were middle-aged. They were virtually all drawn from the active working population and were all educated beyond secondary school level. Although two of the Churches had merged with white majority Churches by the time of the fieldwork, the majority of the members of these Churches were African; at the time of the mergers the white Churches had lost most of their original members. However, all the Churches had white worshippers in attendance. In addition to these and to the Nigerians who made up the majority of the worshippers, nationals of other countries were also worshipping. These included people from Egypt, Ghana, Malawi, Poland, West Indies, and Zimbabwe.

#### **4.6. Accessibility**

According to Penny E. Becker, the issue of accessibility is an important one in any fieldwork-based research.<sup>75</sup> Without it, in my own view, the materials collected will not be rich enough for meaningful analysis. Becker states that factors affecting accessibility could be physical or social. The social aspect may include such things as education, race and socioeconomic factors while physical accessibility may include such things as accessibility of the research site to the researcher.<sup>76</sup> In my situation, there was no problem of accessibility in terms of distance of the Churches to my

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<sup>75</sup> Penny Edgell Becker, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 237

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*



residence, because of my access to a car. This also enhanced my ability to get in touch with the interviewees wherever they lived to meet interview appointments.

The location of the Believers' Church was remote from the homes of most of its members. This raises the question of whether the distance travelled to Church can affect Church members' attendance at worship. This will be further explored in the analysis of the ethnographic data. With regard to social access, one would expect that being of the same race, being a pastor, and having a socioeconomic status similar to that of the leaders and members of the Churches I studied would give me easier access to the Churches studied. Yet, in some instances, this was not the case.

There was a major problem of accessibility at ECA because the pastor of the Church did not permit me to have unrestricted access to the Church members except those he hand-picked for interview. I also encountered some wariness at BC. Among the reasons given by the pastors at both Churches for the restrictions was that, being an African and a pastor, I might be gathering data from these Churches in order to establish my own Church. They also both thought that easy access to the members of the Churches might facilitate my luring them away from their Churches. One of the pastors (at the Eucharistic Charismatic Assembly) also said that he was skeptical of 'the critical way' those in the academy make use of the information they gathered from Churches. This he said might not help their emerging Churches to grow. This was despite the fact that he himself had a PhD.

## **5. Conclusions**

This chapter has argued the suitability of the ethnographic approach using participant observation in the study of public worship. Use of participant observation combined with face-to-face interviews and supplementary written responses enabled me to do two things. First, it enabled me to experience the dynamics of religious activities of this group of immigrants as the people themselves experienced them. Second, it gave me the opportunity to elicit appropriate responses from the research sample on the significance they attached to their religious activities. These opportunities are likely to give more reliability to the findings of the research.



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## Chapter Three

### The Worldview of Diaspora African Christians

#### 1. Introduction

The character of worship is always decided by the worshipper's conception of God and his relation to God: that is to say, whatever its ritual expression may be, it always has a theological basis. Though the cultus may not tally at every point with the creed, since it often carries along many traditional even primitive elements which have long ceased to bear their original meaning, in general the relation between the two is close; and only the believer, acting from within the cultus and conforming to its ritual pattern, can truly appreciate the meaning or the spiritual value of those devotional words and acts by means of which his worship is expressed.<sup>1</sup>

Underhill's perception reflects the rationale for this chapter, although I would argue that the worshipper's conception of God or his/her theology of God may not of itself decide the character of worship of the worshipper, it may only influence it, or partly decide it. In our interpretative triangle, many factors such as the ritual shape, the worldview of Diaspora African Christians, and the conditions they are facing in Liverpool, jointly determine the character of their worship.

This chapter addresses a number of questions with regard to the attitudes towards religion among African Diaspora Christians. These questions include, how can we interpret their present religious attitude and activities with regard to public worship? What are the underlying factors or conditions responsible for their present attitude? How are they sustaining the background factors that affect their religious behaviour in Liverpool, where Church attendance is declining? The worldview of the target group occupies a crucial position in our three-source triangle of religious behaviour.

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<sup>1</sup> Evelyn Underhill, *Worship* (London: Collins, 1962), p. 69.

The primary position of the background worldview of the target group could be attributed to the fact that ‘most grass-root Africans are psychologically and perceptively oriented to the African “traditional” religious worldview’.<sup>2</sup> The Diaspora Africans in Liverpool, especially those who came to Liverpool as adults having been brought up in Africa, are African in their worldview. This chapter therefore examines the almost overwhelming impact the background worldview of Diaspora Africans has on their Christianity and on their present worship. The quest for holistic life fulfillment through worship in our triangle would be seen from the way Africans see humankind and the spirit world, nature itself, the function of religion, the nature of worship and so on.

Three religions played formative roles in the worldview of Diaspora Africans; African Traditional Religion (ATR), Christianity and Islam. Since the majority of the research sample in this study had African Christian backgrounds, I will limit my consideration to Christianity and ATR. Some themes in ATR which can be seen in African Christian worship will be evaluated to ascertain the levels of their influence and effect. This is necessary for two reasons; the acceptance of Christian teachings in the first instance by some ethnic groups in Africa, especially the Yoruba people (my own ethnic group), was due to ‘their compatibility with the strong traditional religious base of Yoruba religion’, thus making it possible to be a Christian and still be a Yoruba.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, a comparison of the manner in which themes from ATR and culture are adapted in African Christianity will help us to understand the reasons behind the religious attitudes to public worship of the target group.

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<sup>2</sup> Pius O. Abioje, ‘African Traditional Religion under a Christian Scrutiny’, *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 32, Nos. 1-2, June & December 2000, p. 41

<sup>3</sup> Frank A Salamone., ‘Ethnic Identities and Religion’ in *Religion and Society in Nigeria: Historical and Sociological Perspectives* ed. by Jacob K. Olupona and Toyin Falola (Ibadan, Owerri and Kaduna: Spectrum Books Ltd, 1991), p. 59

This chapter will discuss themes such as pragmatic religion or functional Christology, the communal nature of religious life in Africa, belief in the spirits, prayer, music in worship, and the authority of the Bible.

## **2. The Relationship between the African Worldview and African Traditional Religion**

I begin by throwing light on the part played by ATR in the worldview of African Christians. This chapter demonstrates how the holistic worldview of African religion comes through in African Christianity and how both underpin the religious practices of Diaspora Africans.

It is inappropriate to speak either of a single African worldview or of a single ATR. The continent is vast and houses people of many cultures, within which religion exercises great influence.<sup>4</sup> However, because some basic common themes run through all African societies, some scholars like E. Bolaji Idowu argue that there are good reasons to talk of one African worldview and ATR. Idowu argues that the word *negritude* is a common factor of African-ness in African beliefs and cultures (worldview). This commonness he says may be attributed to common racial origin, customs and beliefs.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Gerhardus Cornelius Oosthuizen, 'The Place of Traditional Religion in Contemporary South Africa' in *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society* ed. by Jacob K. Olupona (Minnesota: Paragon House, 1991), p. 35

<sup>5</sup> E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: SCM Press, 1973), p. 103

With regard to ATR, Idowu identifies five common features that can help us to speak of one religion. These are: belief in God, belief in divinities, belief in spirits, belief in ancestors, and the practice of magic and medicine.<sup>6</sup> John S. Mbiti contends that ‘while African religion can be discerned in terms of beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and religious officiants, African philosophy [worldview] is not so easily distinguishable’<sup>7</sup> and to a large extent, the African worldview can be detected in ATR. One implication is that it may not be possible to speak of an African worldview without speaking of ATR because of the impact. Religion is central to all aspects of African life. Mbiti observes, on the dominance of religion in the life of Africans:

It has dominated the thinking of African peoples to such an extent that it has shaped their cultures, their social life, their political organizations and economic activities. We can say, therefore, that religion is closely bound up with the traditional way of African life, while at the same time, this way of life has shaped religion as well.<sup>8</sup>

Robert G. Armstrong observes that Africans are ‘firmly and deeply religious in their many, diverse ways. For better or worse, religion is very important in Africa’.<sup>9</sup>

Religion to an African is a normal way of seeing the world and understanding life experiences. It is so pervasive in African experience that most African languages do not have a word for religion in the abstract sense, but only for correct religious ideas, practices, objects and places of worship.<sup>10</sup> Mbiti observes that Africans are not only religious but also ‘notoriously religious’. Each people, he asserts ‘have their own religious systems with a set of beliefs and practices’. Religion therefore permeates all aspects of life of Africans to the extent that it cannot be separated from them.

Therefore an understanding of an African’s religious worldview is a key to

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 140-189

<sup>7</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Oxford: Heinemann, 1979), p. 1

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9

<sup>9</sup> Robert G. Armstrong, ‘African Religion and Cultural Renewal’, *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, December, 1975, p. 112

<sup>10</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, (London: Heinemann, 1978), p. 12

appreciating the African 'in all the complexities of traditional and modern life.'<sup>11</sup> The above discussions underscore the thought that the African worldview is a religious worldview and that it is very difficult to separate the two. Therefore in this chapter, the African worldview and African Traditional Religious worldview will be used to mean the same thing except where a differentiation is necessary.

### **3. Africans' Holistic Worldview and Holistic Religion**

In considering this topic I have found useful the contribution of G. C. Oosthuizen.<sup>12</sup> He argues that the African worldview is an open worldview, incomplete and changing. It is a worldview that is substantive and that possesses great depth. In this worldview, 'action, event, and change are emphasized more than substance and fixity'.<sup>13</sup> This worldview, Oosthuizen argues, is completely the opposite of the western closed, complete and unchanging worldview. This open ended worldview introduces the notion of the 'holistic disposition' with which Africans view the environment.

The holistic view of the world is very crucial in understanding African religiosity and may be a clue to understanding the goal of public worship among African Christians. In Africans' holistic worldview, human beings become the centre of the world and human action, and the spiritual forces are the sustainers. The Supreme Deity, that is God, is the supreme power over all, who along with the spiritual forces has a relationship with human beings.<sup>14</sup> The view of humanity as the centre of the world and the involvement of the spiritual beings in that centrality not only introduces

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<sup>11</sup> John S.Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p. 1

<sup>12</sup> Gerhardus Cornelius Oosthuizen, 'The Place of Traditional Religion in Contemporary South Africa' in *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39



religion into the African worldview, in my own observation, it has introduced a joint action between humans (physical), and the divine (spiritual). There appears to be no dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual.

This view is to a large extent reflected in African Christianity also. Echoing the validity of an holistic view of life in the African worldview, Caleb Oladipo says that the fact that Christianity has a place for the holistic view of the world has made it a familiar terrain for many Africans.<sup>15</sup> Commenting further, Oladipo argues:

The inherent values of holistic life, which has now found fulfilment in Christianity, are distant echoes of the belief that religious values in Africa predates the arrival of missionaries and that Africans have not been given what they did not possess. They internalize the truths that are now fully expressed within Christianity.<sup>16</sup>

Oladipo appears to be asserting here that the holistic worldview has always been the worldview of Africans, and that this includes their religious worldview as well. This is logical because of the way their religious and cultural worldviews permeate each other. If the African worldview is holistic, their religious worldview is holistic as well.

It will not be possible for me to compare all the themes in ATR and the African worldview with Christianity because of the vastness of the subject. I will however discuss a few of the themes considering how each theme exists in African religious beliefs and worldview, and it will be compared with the way it is adapted in African Christianity.

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<sup>15</sup> Caleb Oladipo, 'African Theological and Political Themes' in *Ecclesiastes: The Preacher, the Church and the Contemporary Society* ed. by Ademola Ishola & Deji Ayegboyin (Ibadan: Baptist Press, 2006), p. 437

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 439

#### **4. Pragmatic Traditional Religion and Functional Christology**

It is my view that ATR could be described as pragmatic while African Christianity could be said to be based on 'functional Christology'. The first question to answer is – what is Christology? I cannot enter into a major discussion of Christology here.

However, a brief definition of it will help us to understand what functional Christology is. Christology is concerned with the Nature, the Person and the deeds of Christ. It is centred 'around how the being of God is related to the humanity of Jesus in such a way that both are truly contained and present in one person'.<sup>17</sup> Christological discussion is based on whether Jesus Christ is truly man or truly God, or both. It is also concerned with the works of Christ and whether he should be seen more as a prophet or a healer, a priest, and so on.

Functional Christology derives its motivation from both the Old and the New Testament. The book of Exodus, with the figure of Moses as the liberator of God's people from Egyptian oppression, and the position played by Nehemiah as a reformer and builder because of his role in re-building the fallen Jerusalem have been part of its biblical foundations in the Old Testament. Christians are called upon to play such roles in contemporary society. In the New Testament, the pictures of Jesus as the healer, Saviour, deliverer, sanctifier of the temple and authority figure have been the basis for this theology.<sup>18</sup> Functional Christology therefore 'emphasizes the role of Jesus Christ as the true mediator between God and man, the true liberator from all

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<sup>17</sup> 'Christology', *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, 1997 ed., p. 219

<sup>18</sup> Chris Ukachukwu Manus, 'Reconstruction Christology for Africa of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: (A Re-reading of Mark 11: 15-19 and Parallels)', *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2002, pp. 1, 3

forms of human and demonic oppressions, and the true healer from all forms of sicknesses'<sup>19</sup>.

The African religious worldview appears to be a pragmatic one from the foregoing discussions and 'the theological model that would appeal to them must be functional'.

<sup>20</sup> That is, the Christ of Africa must be interested in human affairs. He must be interested not in the salvation of their souls alone but also in that of their bodies, and in their sufferings. The use of religion as a problem solving tool is a reflection of the holistic concept of salvation held by the Africans. S. O. Abogunrin is of the opinion that the concept of salvation preached by the colonial mission Churches, limited to the salvation of the soul alone, is not adequate for Africans, because the physical needs faced by many of them were neglected. Africans, he says, are at home with an holistic salvation which includes 'health for their bodies, victory over demonic oppression... and total care for man's well-being'.<sup>21</sup> This view further implies that the African religious worldview, from which the Diaspora Africans in Liverpool came, is holistic. Abogunrin's view suggests that the biblical concept of divine healing and deliverance will be at home in African culture and Christianity. In the African worldview and ATR, an African leader is both a mediator and medium for his/her people and in that respect, he/she is 'the sum and substance of the whole community'. He/she acts on behalf of the people as their priest at the shrine, and 'has a sense of responsibility not only for the material well-being of humans but also for their livestock.'<sup>22</sup> John Taylor

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<sup>19</sup> G. O. Folarin, 'Functional Christology in the Fourth Gospel: Implications for African Christianity' *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, October 2002, p. 27

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 32

<sup>21</sup> S.O. Abogunrin, 'The Total Adequacy of Christ in African Context' *Ogbomosho Journal of Theology*, January 1986, p. 14

<sup>22</sup> John V. Taylor, *Christian Presence amid African Religion* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2001), pp. 89-91

demonstrates how the functional Christology that Africans advocate must show up in the responsibilities of the pastors and Christian leaders:

There is need also for the man set apart by gifts and training to be the spiritual director and healer – the Christian ‘medium’...More often he will be the trained professional, and it is such a professional that the theological colleges of Africa should be training. He must know how to interpret the Bible as a guide for the decisions of daily life; and he must know how to interpret man and counsel him with as clear insight as the traditional diviners. For until Christians can bring to their own ministers their sicknesses and their feuds, the sterility of their wives and the rebellions of their sons with a sure expectation of enlightenment and healing, they will continue to look elsewhere for help.<sup>23</sup>

The above discussion seems to suggest that it is only an holistically functional Christology that could make Christianity relevant to Africans.

Chris Ukachukwu Manus appears to suggest another name for this functional Christology, which he calls ‘Reconstruction Christology’. He uses the example of Jesus’ cleansing of the temple from merchandise in Mark 11: 15-19 as the foundation for his view. According to him, as Jesus cleanses the temple, he demonstrates that he is ‘the constructor of the religious poverty in Jewish Palestine of his time. He is the constructor of the cherished non- profanation tradition of his people concerning the Holy Place’.<sup>24</sup> He therefore urges Christians and Church leaders to be alive to their vocation of reconstructing ‘the spiritual well being’ of African people and to cooperate with African leaders ‘to revitalize the social, political and economic doldrums into which most, if not all, African nations have fallen’.<sup>25</sup> Manus’ suggestion implies social, political, economic and spiritual action from the Church in order to impact on the continent of Africa. This not only assigns functions to religion,

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 101-102

<sup>24</sup> Chris Ukachukwu Manus, ‘Reconstruction Christology for Africa of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: (A Re-reading of Mark 11: 15-19 and Parallels)’, *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, pp. 16-17

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 17-18

but sees religious action in Africa not as spiritual alone, but as holistic. In my view, one of the problems of Manus' proposal is that he fails to suggest ways by which the Christian Church can get involved politically in supporting the reconstruction efforts of African leaders. Is it going to be through prayer or by Christians getting involved in politics directly? The above criticism notwithstanding, one obvious lesson from Manus' submission is the need for Christians to make their faith impact upon the society beyond the four walls of the Church. Christianity is called upon to make an holistic impact on the believers, who will in turn make an holistic impact on the community.

Another aspect of the functional worldview of ATR which ought to have a place in African Christianity is its ethical values. Emphasizing the ethical values of ATR, Pius O. Abioje remarks that there are 'good Samaritans' among the adherents of ATR and that among the Yoruba, their traditional religious songs have a strong sense of moral emphasis. A clear example is the song which includes the phrase '*Ogun rinu, bi mo ba seke o, bi mo ba jale, Ogun rinu*', 'Ogun sees my mind, whether I tell lies or I steal, Ogun sees my mind'<sup>26</sup>. This implies that to Africans, if a religion is to be worth considering, it must be able to build a morally acceptable character in its adherents. It must be functional. This high moral stance however does raise the question as to whether the Africans of today are exhibiting this functional virtue in their practice of religion? The answer is most likely to be 'No' in view of the corruption that is widespread in many African nations today and the apparent inability of political leaders to take concrete action to develop their societies. Deji Ayegboyin describes the corruption in Nigeria as 'a deadly virus that has assaulted all the vital structures of

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<sup>26</sup> P. O. Abioje, 'African Traditional Religion under a Christian Scrutiny', *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 32, Nos. 1-2, June & December 2000, pp. 26-27

the Nigerian society and is in fact on the verge of strangulating the nation'.<sup>27</sup>

Kamara's response to this situation is to argue for a return to ATR.

It is high time we understood that the locus of our African humanity, civility, decorum, peace, good government, economic viability, aesthetics, compassion, and freedom resides in African Traditional Religion. It is the religion with a Creator who speaks our languages, speaks to our minds, and hears and listens and understands our ancestors as they intercede on our behalf. It is the religion that privileges the community over the individual and teaches us to cherish human life. Above all, this religion is the only religion that addresses the sum total of our African-ness.<sup>28</sup>

Not a few African scholars argue that Christianity needs to dialogue with ATR for it to fully take root in Africa. Nonetheless, I do not believe that it is by going back to the practice of ATR that Africans can cultivate the right values needed for the development of our society and our humanness. This is because the contemporary religions which Africans practise do not teach them to lose their humanity or practice corruption. For example, Paul admonishes Titus and of course all Christians to live lives of good examples because that is not only acceptable to God but also profitable to all people. (Titus 2: 7-8; 3: 8).

Another function of religion in the African worldview is the provision of a sense of security in life for its adherents. It is to enable them to know who they are and how they should behave in different situations and circumstances. Mbiti remarks that despite the encroaching influence of other religions on Africans and the effect of western secularization, they still look for security in religion.<sup>29</sup> This is provided from two major angles, the use of diviners to solve life problems and the existence of the community to cater for one another. I will discuss the role of diviners first and defer

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<sup>27</sup> Deji Ayegboyin, 'Corruption, an Obstacle to National Rebirth: The Religious Experience', *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 33, Nos. 1-2, June & December 2001, p. 99

<sup>28</sup> Gibreel M. Kamara, 'Regaining our African Aesthetics and Essence through our African Traditional Religion', *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4, March 2000, p. 510

<sup>29</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p. 256

my discussions on provision of communal assistance to the section on communal religion later.

The need to provide security and guidance would lead an African to consult a diviner in order to know the appropriate step to take when problems come or a decision is to be made. According to Osadolor Imasogie, an African 'sees life as a mystery to be lived out on a mysterious planet ruled by spiritual forces'<sup>30</sup> and as such life is full of uncertainties. It then becomes the duty of a human being to 'avail himself of the divinely ordained provisions for solving the riddles of life and ensuring a measure of certainty'. This brings the concept of divination to the core in ATR. In the area of sickness and the provision of healing, the diviners may be consulted in traditional African society. The traditional healers are believed to work in conjunction with the ancestors and the spirit beings to provide healing for the sick if consulted. According to Oosthuizen:

The traditional healer operates within the specific pattern of the people and so within the context of their religious awareness, which gives him/her a priestly role, consulting the ancestors and discovering their wishes or their diagnosis of the problems...The traditional healer /diviner has a wider role than just healing, but acts also as a consultant on family and other relationships, as priest, and as one taking a great interest in ecological issues. In other words, he/she has the daily needs of people at heart.<sup>31</sup>

This conveys to us the idea of the multiple roles a diviner, who is here also called a priest, plays in African society. He exercises here also the role of a counselor. Consequently, in African Churches, especially the African Independent Churches (AIC) and the Pentecostal assemblies, the role of the prophet is of primary

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<sup>30</sup> Osadolor Imasogie, *African Traditional Religion* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1985), p. 67

<sup>31</sup> Gerhardus Cornelius Oosthuizen, 'The Place of Traditional Religion in Contemporary South Africa' in *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, p. 46

importance, as he is seen as someone who receives guidance from God and directs the people on the right steps to take on any issue involving decision making.

He is a healer as well as a counselor. Among the Zulus of South Africa, the king 'carried out the most important religious actions. He healed the sick, and when he could not heal someone, that person as it were is believed to be incurable'.<sup>32</sup> The Zulus believe that the picture of that king who is healer and counselor 'lives in the prophets and priests of the independent Pentecostal Churches.

As mentioned earlier, an African pastor or Church leader is expected to be a visionary and a healer because this is the worldview African Christians are coming from.

Quoting Mbiti, Caleb Oladipo relates the disappointment a Christian community met in one of their sons who was educated abroad to be their pastor and priest but failed to function appropriately as a leader/priest. The main problem of the western graduate was that he treated as fantasy the worldview of his people, a world that the people perceived as real. He superimposed his acquired western worldview on the African worldview, and failed to recognize the multiple roles his position conferred on him as a theologian, priest and prophet to his people. For any Christian Church to succeed in Africa, it must take into consideration the worldview of the people, and perform holistic ministry to the people.

The contextualization of theology in accordance with biblical principles is one of the major reasons for the success and importance of AICs in Africa.<sup>33</sup> It was this

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<sup>32</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (London: SCM Press, 1972), pp. 157-158

<sup>33</sup> E. A. Ayandele, 'Aladura Churches: Legitimate Branch of the Church Universal' in *Ecclesiastes: The Preacher, the Church and the Contemporary Society* ed. by Ademola Ishola and Deji Ayegboyin (Ibadan: Baptist Press, 2006), pp. 394, 399



advantage they seized and was one of the factors responsible for their growth. Clifford Hill emphasizes that the success of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, and the Church of the Lord, *Aladura* in Nigeria in comparison with the progress made by the 'Europeanizing Protestants may be accounted for by their totally different attitudes towards African culture.'<sup>34</sup> He maintains:

The African sects adhere to the African world-view which is basically one of immanence in which the whole spirit-world is a present reality. Their practice of the Christian faith enables members to overcome the evil forces that surround them. It does not require them to practise a particular form of morality or to change social customs that are indigenous to African way of life.

This view is affirmed by Matthews A. Ojo who maintains that the Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria are experiencing growth because they have been able to contextualize their theology in the way most acceptable to Nigerians: 'Africans must be able to express their Christian faith in a way in which the faith has much more meaning and understanding for them within their socio-cultural background or within their contemporary situation'.<sup>35</sup>

## 5. Belief in the Spirits

One of the strata of the African religious worldview that can be found in all African societies is the belief in spirit beings. Western societies dichotomize the natural and the supernatural, the sacred and the secular. In African societies, there is no such distinction because they are fused. Africans believe that even in the natural order,

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<sup>34</sup> Clifford Hill, *Black Churches: West Indian and African Sects in Britain*, p. 12

<sup>35</sup> Matthews A. Ojo, 'The Contextual Significance of the Charismatic Movements in Independent Nigeria' in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 58, No. 2, 1988, p. 175; Deji Ayegboyin, 'Li Oruko Jesu: Aladura Grass-roots Christology', *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 8, No. 1, June 2005, pp. 11-12

spiritual influence cannot be ruled out. Things happening in the physical realm may have a spiritual cause.<sup>36</sup> As Dickson states:

To the African, disease and death are caused ultimately by spirit powers; the universe is full of spirits which for one reason or the other may act for or against man. In other words, the African interprets his world theologically, rather than in scientific terms, in terms of final rather than material causes.<sup>37</sup>

To an African, there is a constant interaction between the physical and spiritual world. This is not to deny the natural causes of some events. What is happening in the natural phenomenon may be seen by an African 'as part of spiritual reality ... there is no question of one world being real and the other not'.<sup>38</sup> This is why the diviners may be consulted when people fall sick or face physical disasters. These are believed to occur because of spiritual causes which may not be obvious to the scientific eye. The diviner usually prescribes steps for intervention. Aylward Shorter gives a similar opinion, observing that the closeness to nature of Africans is 'accompanied by their belief in divine power at work even in secondary causes'.<sup>39</sup> This may relate to the childhood experiences of Africans in rural settings where they stay closer to nature and inhabit a larger world than the town dweller. Rural life is therefore a life of faith that is 'passionate and powerful.'<sup>40</sup> Africans' spiritual worldview is one in which 'all created things have symbolic quality and everything speaks'. Consequently, 'the African soul cries out for prodigies, refuses to believe that life consists merely in what can be seen at a glance.'

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<sup>36</sup> Kwesi A. Dickson, *Theology in Africa* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984), pp. 49-50

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p.50

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p.51

<sup>39</sup> Aylward Shorter, 'A World of the Spirit' in *African Christian Spirituality* ed. by Aylward Shorter (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1978), p.10

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, pp.11-12

Osadolor Imasogie maintains that Africans believe in a world that is 'inhabited by spirits and ghosts'.<sup>41</sup> These spirits could be employed by humans through the occult. Furthermore, the spirits are understood as not being all-powerful like God, hence, 'man can be protected against their machinations.'<sup>42</sup> This protection could be bought from the medicine man, who will use the ransom paid by the affected person to appease or manipulate the vital force. This is partly responsible for the African Churches' strong belief in the Bible teachings on the supernatural, angels, visions and revelation and miracles. They believe that the spiritual world relates to the physical world, and that the constant interaction of the two has to be recognized and appropriated for the benefit of mankind. So, while the western interpretation of events may be uni-dimensional, African interpretation is multidimensional. Religious practice that underplays the existence of the spiritual beings and the supernatural is congruent with neither ATR belief nor African Christianity.

It is no surprise to discover that in the Indigenous Churches, the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal Churches in Africa, belief in dreams, visions and revelations are very strong. These beliefs are not excluded from the worship activities of the historic /mainline Churches in Africa either. Hollenweger claims that the first appearance of visions and dreams was not in the Pentecostal Church among the Zulus, but in a Lutheran Church.<sup>43</sup> This belief in prophecy, dreams and visions is really strong in the worldview of Africans and is one of the themes in African Christianity which is the background of many of the Diaspora African Christians. The extent to which the worship of Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool is functional and related to the

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<sup>41</sup> Osadolor Imasogie , *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* (Ibadan: The University Press Limited, 1983), p. 55

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*,

<sup>43</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, p. 158

African religious worldview will be interesting to consider in the ethnographic data analysis, because of the impact the worldview of the host society is likely to have on them.

## **6. The Communal and Public Nature of African Cultural and Religious Life**

It is customary in Africa for a person to be born into the religion of his people and be a practitioner of that religion. It is observed that a person from one tribe 'cannot automatically adopt the religious life of other peoples in a different setting.'<sup>44</sup> Since each ethnic group or collectivity has its own variety of African religion, when Africans travel out of their countries to other parts of the globe, they usually take their religions with them. Even when converted to Christianity, they still want to worship in a context congruent to their traditional religious backgrounds. This explains why Diaspora African Christians seek out African Churches, if possible from their countries of origin, in Britain and worship there. To them, religion is never just a thing of the heart or a privatized social institution. It must express itself in corporate worship. Unlike in western societies where it is possible to 'believe without belonging',<sup>45</sup> in Africa, if you believe, then you must belong. To belong means to be personally linked to a religious group.

Religion in Africa covers the whole life of Africans, beginning with birth, through puberty, till death. Socialization of an African into the intricacies of the religion may

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<sup>44</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, p. 13 T. M. Ilesanmi points out that among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria, history and research do not support a homogenous or universal religion because various Yoruba subgroups have their own religion. Thomas Makanjuola Ilesanmi, 'The Traditional Theologians and the Practice of Orisa Religion in Yorubaland' *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. XXI, No. 3, 1991, p. 217

<sup>45</sup> Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 107

be long and protracted. It is caught informally through riddles, tales, stories, proverbs, conversations, myths and through practical initiation of the young ones. The close inter-relation between the life course and religio-ethnic identity can be illustrated with reference to the rituals that surround birth.

Writing on the naming ceremony of a new born child among the Igbos of Nigeria, Robert Hood observed that twenty five days after a child had been born, the naming ceremony of the child would begin. The elders of the clan would bless the mother first and ask for the blessings of the ancestors and their hospitality in welcoming the child to the family. After this, the baby would be lifted up by the people selected to do so and the baby would be prayed for, with water being poured over the child as a symbol of blessings.<sup>46</sup> Hood notes the force of socialization in the attempts of the AICs to contextualize this practice in their child naming liturgy. In the Church Hood mentions, the baby is brought to the Church on the eighth day for naming. The child is presented in front of the elders before God. Then the pastor will use such symbolic elements as water, salt and honey while praying for the child.<sup>47</sup> He will charge him/her to carry his/her cross and follow the Lord in whatever situation he /she may be.<sup>48</sup> It is believed among Africans that the first stage of a child's rite of passage must be handled with care. An instance of child naming which I observed at the African Baptist Church during my fieldwork illustrates the point and will be discussed in Chapter Eight, under the factors supporting worship (section 6).

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<sup>46</sup> Robert E. Hood, *Must God Remain Greek? Afro Cultures and God-Talk* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 35-36

<sup>47</sup> Water is an element which all living things need and which no one regards as an enemy. The pastor then prays that the baby will be useful to humanity and that all will love him/her. Honey is sweet, the pastor would pray that the life of the child will be sweet.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36

In another development, Mbiti underscores the public nature of African worship and the inseparability of an African from his/her religious background:

Since African Religion belongs to the people, no individual member of the society concerned can stand apart and reject the whole of his people's religion. To do so would mean to cut off from the total life of his people. Even if the individual is converted to another religion, this should not mean abandoning his African culture altogether.<sup>49</sup>

Africans' awareness of their dependence on others for fulfilment in life is the basis of their understanding of humanity and community and of their core sense that 'a person cannot affirm himself or herself without affirming others'. It is 'only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of being, duties, privileges and responsibilities towards oneself and towards others'.<sup>50</sup> There are, indeed, many things in life, which individuals cannot do on their own without involving the family or community. Cutting oneself off from the cultural and religious life of the community would make these very difficult. Consequently, not only is religious ritual done in the company of others, its fruit is also of benefit to the community. Commenting on the role of religion in ATR and the African worldview, Gibreel Kamara maintains that 'to be religious is to work toward the enhancement of the community to please the Supreme Creator'.<sup>51</sup> Being religious is the means by which the individual contributes to the development of the society where he or she lives.

Communal living was part of the cultural background of the majority of African immigrants now in Britain. It was a mutual society organized to meet the basic needs of its members without emphasis on individualism. Meeting human needs was the

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14

<sup>50</sup> Dan J. Antwi, 'Koinonia in African Culture: Community, Communitality and African Self-Identity' *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*, Vol. VI, No. 2, July 1996, p. 68

<sup>51</sup> Gibreel M. Kamara, 'Regaining our African Aesthetics and Essence through our African Traditional Religion' in *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, March 2000, p. 504

basis of behaviour, and social harmony a precondition for such a society where everything was done by teamwork.<sup>52</sup> Here, everybody becomes 'his brother's keeper', and efforts are made in the community or the extended family to see that those in need are jointly catered for. Concurring with B. Okegbue's earlier submission on the early practice of the Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria, J. Enuwosa observes that there is a sense of community in the Churches as in the early Church in Jerusalem where they pooled their resources together.<sup>53</sup> The way the Church functions as a community of faith makes it important to Africans because the same communal life that they had experienced in the traditional African setting continues there. Therefore, the membership of a Church might be more than a spiritual matter to an African. It also places him/her within a network of relationships. Corroborating this while writing on the popularity of Pentecostalism and the growth of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria, Stephen Hunt asserts:

In simple terms, they mark a reaction to the ever-changing difficulties, demands and constraints of everyday existence – not only those brought about by the political state but the broader economic and social conditions. Hence it has been argued that one of the primary explanations for their rise was in offering a Church community where members find shelter, psychological security and solidarity.<sup>54</sup>

Hunt further notes that the African Pentecostal Churches in Britain provide 'a sense of community and ethnic cohesion that makes provision for individuals to seek help from one another'. This leads to solidarity 'within a Church of co-culturalists, taking refuge from surroundings which may be hostile and demanding'.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Kenneth Kaunda, 'Humanism and Community in Africa' in *African Christian Spirituality* ed. by Aylward Shorter (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1978), p. 137

<sup>53</sup> J. Enuwosa, 'The Origin of Poverty in Biblical Israel in the Context of Pentecostal Christians in Nigeria'. *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, Vol. 13, Nos. 1 & 2, April and October, 1998, pp. 24-25

<sup>54</sup> Stephen Hunt, 'Neither Here nor There': The Construction of Identities and Boundary Maintenance of West African Pentecostals', p. 152

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 'Neither Here nor There', p. 164

## 7. Sacrifice and Prayer in African worldview and African Traditional Religion

African worship is expressed in ritual forms such as sacrifices and offerings, prayers and the use of shrines and such places for public worship.<sup>56</sup> Sacrifice is a theme in ATR that is practised all over the continent, with a strong holistic motif because 'the act marks the point where the visible and the invisible worlds meet'.<sup>57</sup> Underscoring the holistic concept of sacrifice among the Dinka people of Sudan, John V. Taylor recalls that the sharing of the parts of an animal used for sacrifice is by both the members of the family or community making the sacrifice and the ancestral divinities. According to him, parts of the animal sacrificed will be given to different members of the family, and part to the divinities.<sup>58</sup> According to Anthony Joseph Barrett the blood of the object of sacrifice 'received by the god and the sacrificer creates a life-giving union'.<sup>59</sup>

Sacrifice in Africa usually involves the shedding of blood. This could be the blood of humans, animals or birds.<sup>60</sup> This is an important affinity that sacrifices in ATR share with biblical sacrifice. Sacrifices are offered by Africans for various reasons, but the goal of all the sacrifices appears to be holistic preservation. Some of the reasons could be: to stop a disaster, sickness, or death. It could be offered to the ancestors to solicit their assistance on behalf of the community, or 'to those who practise that form of witchcraft which is based on a replica of the personality-soul'.<sup>61</sup> Sacrifice is used to cover various aspects of life of Africans. Its function is holistic as it could be done for

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<sup>56</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa* (London: S. P. C. K, 1970), pp. 178-239

<sup>57</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (London: Heinemann, 1978), p. 57

<sup>58</sup> John V. Taylor, *Christian Presence amid African Religion* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2001), p. 70

<sup>59</sup> Anthony Joseph Barrett, *Sacrifice and Prophecy in Turkana Cosmology* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 1998), p. 35

<sup>60</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, p. 59

<sup>61</sup> Harry Sawyerr, 'Sacrifice' in *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* ed. by Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth (New York: Orbis Books, 1969), p. 64



fame, could be offered to the nature divinities, especially for land fertility and good harvest, ample rain and so on.<sup>62</sup>

Sacrifices are always accompanied with prayer in ATR. Mbiti summarizes the position and concept of prayer to Africans as follows:

Prayers are the commonest acts of worship, some of which may be long and formal, but most of them are short, extempore, and to the point. Most of the prayers are addressed to God, and some of the living dead, divinities, or other beings, many of whom serve as intermediaries.<sup>63</sup>

Although Africans worship God anywhere, there are designated places of worship such as shrines, altars, groves and other sacred places where formal public sacrifices and prayers are held.<sup>64</sup> In ATR practice as well as in African Christianity, there is a strong belief in the power of prayer as the key to blessings and 'breakthroughs', by which is meant the ability to overcome one's problem or to be delivered from the limiting forces. Among the *Aladura* Churches in Yorubaland of Western Nigeria, there is a strong belief that 'prayer is the mother of other blessings and gifts'.<sup>65</sup> The Yoruba say: *adura nii gba, agbara kii gba* (it is prayer that makes things happen more than might). Elaborating further, Olayiwola argues that it was a belief in the power and the authority of prayer that the *Aladura* Church used for the conversion of many people from Islam and the Mission Churches in the 1930s and 1940s. By providing the opportunity for their audience to witness the real practical power of prayer, 'the *Aladura* prophets and leaders have been able to convince their followers that prayer-power and authority solve problems'.<sup>66</sup> They believe that through prayer, the forces

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 65

<sup>63</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*, p.194

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 239-240

<sup>65</sup> David O. Olayiwola, 'The *Aladura*: Its Strategies for Mission and Conversion in Yorubaland, Nigeria' *Orita, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. XIX/1, June 1987, p. 41

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p. 42

that are opposed to the well-being of humans such as witches, wizards and other familiar spirits can be overcome. Olayiwola concludes 'that the Aladura Movement in using the power of and authority of prayer has been able to get more converts than the fossilized mission-related Churches'.<sup>67</sup>

The act of praying in the name of Jesus as an intermediary through which God answers prayer is an aspect of Christian theology consistent with the above ATR worldview on prayer. It is not strange to see African Christians whether at home and abroad praying in the name of Jesus. In the AIC's, some even pray in the names of intermediaries such as angels or some saints, with the use of symbols such as candles and holy water.<sup>68</sup> Oshitelu opines that 'the only adequate way of speaking about God is through symbols, appealing to man's religious experience'.<sup>69</sup> He argues that 'the Scripture, theology and liturgy also employ symbols'. As Hood alluded to the importance of water in the dedication of a child among the Igbo Christians of Nigeria, Oosthuizen further notes that water is important not only in baptism but also in the rites of purification among some AICs.<sup>70</sup> This practice is claimed by the Zionist Church to be parallel to the 'Bethesda-pool or Jordan-stream in the Bible.' The water that has been prayed over becomes holy with the ability to heal the sick. This sanctified water may be drunk instantly by the sick or carried home to be drunk whenever one is feeling unwell.<sup>71</sup> The *Aladura* Church among the Yoruba of western Nigeria not only use symbols such as water for prayer, they also practise the idea of going to the mountain for prayer. At the apex of the mountain are placed bottles of

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 43

<sup>68</sup> G. C. Oosthuizen, *Post-Christianity in Africa: A Theological and Anthropological Study* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1968), p. 185

<sup>69</sup> G. A. Oshitelu, 'The Trends and Development of Orthodox and Pentecostal Churches in Yorubaland' *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. XXII/1-2, June & December 2000, p.112

<sup>70</sup> G. C. Oosthuizen, *Post-Christianity in Africa*, p. 185

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*

water which people have brought for the prophet to pray over to make it 'holy or life giving water'. This, according to Olayiwola, 'adds colour to the prayer activity on the mountain'.<sup>72</sup>

The belief of African Christians in the efficacy of prayer, at times, could be described as being naive. The Christ Apostolic Church had earlier had an alliance with a Church in Bradford. On the discovery by its leaders that these Bradford brethren were taking quinine for the prevention of malaria, they accused them of not totally depending on healing by prayer, and this led to the breaking of their alliance.<sup>73</sup>

The African practice whereby all the worshippers of a particular god offer sacrifice at the shrine was part of the religious background the Diaspora Africans Christians carried over to Liverpool. The way this practice influenced public worship among the Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool will be seen in chapters Six to Eight. Chapter Seven also examines how one of the Churches studied used symbols during prayer and the dedication of people for new offices.

## **8. Music in Worship**

Another key component of African religious worship is music. The nature of the divinity worshipped and the occasion the worship is marking will determine the type of music to be played. Singing and clapping, and whatever is done at the shrine during

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<sup>72</sup> David O. Olayiwola, 'The Aladura: Its Strategy for Mission and Conversion in Yorubaland, Nigeria' *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, pp. 44-45

<sup>73</sup> Deji Ayegboyin and S. Ademola Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches: An Historical Perspective* (Lagos: Greater Heights Publications, 1999), pp. 75-77 For more details on what led to the alliance between the Churches, see pp. 74-77)

the period of the worship, is to demonstrate that the worshippers are full of a sense of awe before the divinities.<sup>74</sup>

Music is an integral part of life in Africa and 'is linked with the worldview of the society in which it is produced'.<sup>75</sup> Traditional art forms 'including music are rooted in mythology, legends, and folklore, and are associated with gods, ancestors and heroes'. Furthermore, 'musical activities are ritualized and are intended to link the visible world with the invisible'. Dancing, which is a product or reaction to music and drumming, is 'often an important part of the ritual and spiritual aspect of music.'<sup>76</sup> At the shrine in a typical African act of traditional religious worship, the priest may shout and somersault to emphasize his power. He may jump high, move around and speak in a tongue that nobody understands. He and his associates may dance around or dance forward and backward until the whole audience is possessed almost to the point of frenzy.<sup>77</sup> Music in ATR has an holistic motive at heart. From my own experience, the role music plays in the daily lives of Africans is such that even the nursing mother employs music and dancing in appealing to a crying baby to keep quiet. Music is employed by farmers in the farm, by the blacksmith, the traditional weavers, and many other professions.

Certain questions come to mind concerning the worship of the target group. What position does singing and dancing occupy in their ritual experience? Do the Churches attach the same degree of importance to participatory worship? To what extent is the

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>75</sup> C. K. Ladzekpo, 'African Music'. 1996. *Sounds of Africa*. 19 November 2005. [http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/cultural/music/african\\_music.shtml](http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/cultural/music/african_music.shtml), p. 1 of 2

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>77</sup> Peter Eric Adotey Addo, 'The Origin of African American Spiritualism'. 28 January 2004. *The Yale Journal of Humanities in Medicine*, 19 November 2005. <http://info.med.yale.edu/intmed/hummed/yjhm/regular/paddoprint.htm>, p. 1 of 3.

white population coping with African ways of singing, clapping and dancing in worship, especially in the Churches where African and English Churches merged? What part does this type of exuberant worship play in attracting people to public worship? This shall be discussed later.

## 9. The Authority of the Bible

In most of the African Churches, the authority of the Bible is supreme. According to Neil Lettinga, 'most of the AICs share the Protestant stress on the authority of the Bible with an African cultural background rather than a western cultural background...'<sup>78</sup> Protestants in Africa 'stress the authority of the Bible and the need for an individual relationship with Jesus Christ as a personal saviour'.<sup>79</sup> The African and Asian Churches are far 'more conservative than their (mostly very liberal) Western counterparts' on the interpretation and authority of the Bible. One of the reasons for this conservative attitude could be found in the nature of traditional cultures. Traditional cultures seem to be closed with regard to the acceptance of 'alternatives to the established body of theoretical tenets'<sup>80</sup>. In scientifically oriented western cultures alternatives to the established tenets are seen as a possibility, leaving the culture more open, whereas in traditional cultures, any challenge to the established tenets is seen as an invitation to chaos. The conservatism of traditional cultures seems to be especially applicable to the area of religious tenets.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Neil Lettinga, 'Christianity in Africa South of the Sahara: AICs'. 7 June 2000. *African Christianity*. 17 May 2006.

<http://www.bethel.edu/~letnie/AfricanChristianity/SSAAICs.html>, p. 1 of 3

<sup>79</sup> Neil Lettinga, 'Sub-Saharan Christianity: A History of the Christian Church in Sub-Saharan Africa'. 7 June 2000. *African Christianity*. 17 May 2006.

<http://www.bethel.edu/~letnie/AfricanChristianity/Sub-SaharaHomepage.html>, p. 2 of 5

<sup>80</sup> Robin Horton, 'African Traditional Thought and Western Science' in *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation* ed. by Roy Richard Grinker and Christopher B. Steiner (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 327-328

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*

The emphasis of the African Churches on the Bible appears to be common to evangelical Christians everywhere. It is however useful for black theology among the Diaspora Africans in Europe, who 'aspire to come to grip with the social realities of the world in which they live through biblical inspiration'.<sup>82</sup> African Christians are very conservative about the injunctions of the Bible and the extent to which this is reflected in the doctrines and practices of the Churches studied will be considered later, as will the role that belief in the injunctions of the Bible plays in the sustenance of public worship in the Churches.

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<sup>82</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: Africans Christians in Europe*, p. 47

## 10. A Brief Critique of Africans' Holistic Worldview

The holistic worldview emphasizes the inseparability of the physical and the spiritual in secular and religious matters. As important as an holistic theology of religious practice may be, especially to the AICs, one of its main weaknesses is its reduced emphasis on the theology of the cross. Deji Ayegboyin sees some truth in the view of Daneel that the cross was rejected in some AICs while there had been more of 'self-glorification and self-deification of the leaders'<sup>83</sup> instead. He gave the example of the *Aladura* who place more emphasis on high Christology than on low: 'the all-powerful Son of God who is in touch with the mundane infirmities of his followers – fears, anxieties, diseases and death – shines out more in their theology'.

The tendency for African traditional spirituality, as Ayegboyin argues, to see pain as an 'aberration to be expunged from persons and communities' appears in my observation not to be congruent with the New Testament's Christological teachings. The Son of God himself was a suffering Messiah. This is however not to deny that the AICs and the *Aladura* in particular teach their members about the cross of Christ. The cross is usually emphasized during the observation of Holy Communion and Baptism. The physical crosses they give to their members during special services are to constantly remind them of the significance of the cross of Jesus Christ.<sup>84</sup>

Related to the above criticism is the criticism that some of the AICs lay more emphasis on physical salvation than spiritual salvation. Their emphasis on evil and

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<sup>83</sup> Deji Ayegboyin, 'Li Oruko Jesu: Aladura Grass-roots Christology', p. 19

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*

how to deal with it, (which I think includes emphasis on the physical healing of the body also), appears to underplay the salvation of the soul.<sup>85</sup>

## **11. Conclusions**

This chapter has established that Africans are very religious and that it is very difficult to separate their general worldview from their religious worldview. It was from this background that most of the Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool came. This forms a strong basis for including the cultural and religious worldview of Diaspora Africans in our interpretative triangle.

This chapter has also established that although, there are many African traditional religions with their nuances, yet it is possible to speak of one ATR because of significant common elements in traditional African religions across the continent. I have discussed some of the themes in ATR in order to reflect on the background the Diaspora African Christians came from. Furthermore, the discussion of the themes has enabled me to demonstrate that the religious worldview of both ATR and African Christianity is holistic. The holistic nature of the African religious worldview supports the inclusion of the holistic fulfillment motif in the interpretative triangle.

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*





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## Chapter Four

### The History of the African Presence in Liverpool

#### 1. Introduction

With this chapter we turn to a different angle on our interpretative triangle, namely the role of the host society in reinforcing the attitudes of Diaspora Africans towards public worship. Have the social, psychological and religious rejection that Diaspora Africans are facing in Liverpool made them to turn to religion as a source for holistic fulfillment? In order to respond to this question, a historic perspective is needed. So this chapter explores how Africans came to Liverpool, how they were received, their social status in the city, and the social, economic and religious dynamics which their experiences of settlement created.

This historical overview will focus on a number of issues. First, it discusses how Africans came to Britain before and during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The settlement in Liverpool of the most homogenous group of Africans, the Kru, will be examined in some detail because of their homogeneity. Particular focus will be placed upon the relational and discriminatory problems they encountered from the host community. Moving to twentieth century developments, the chapter then examines migration from Commonwealth countries.<sup>1</sup> It also considers the more recent labour migration from Africa to Britain. The chapter finally evaluates the efforts of the

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<sup>1</sup> In the 1948 British Nationality Act, British subjects of any race were given the opportunity of migrating to the UK either to work or live there. This particularly included Commonwealth and UK and colonies nationals. The 1962 Immigration Act came in to stem the flow of migrants from commonwealth countries because of ethnic tensions in British society and the rise in the numbers of economic migrants. The law on migration for commonwealth citizens has, since 1962 to date, been making migration more difficult for commonwealth citizens. See Tom Steinberg, 'Reforming British Migration Policy'. *Institute of Economic Affairs, Westminster, London*. 14 September 2007. <http://www.iea.org.uk/record.jsp?ID=370&type=book>, p. 1 of 12

British government to eliminate the racial discrimination that immigrants continue to face in Britain.

## 2. The African Presence in Britain and Liverpool

Hakim Adi traces the history of Africans in Britain to the Roman period but states that current documentary evidence suggests that West Africans only visited Britain regularly or settled in Britain from the sixteenth century onwards.<sup>2</sup> James Walvin and David Killingray trace the history of African presence in England to 1555. However, Walvin and Killingray's account differs from that of Adi; they viewed the first group of Africans as 'African slaves' rather than visitors.<sup>3</sup> Peter Fryer collapses the distinction, maintaining that the document the two groups of writers used portrayed the Africans both as visitors and also as slaves.<sup>4</sup>

Across the next two centuries, black people gradually entered into white households. Frank Field and Patricia Haikin observe that it was fashionable by the eighteenth century to have blacks as domestic servants. Consequently the Negro population increased, particularly in London and the seaport towns, to the extent that by 1764, London alone had a black population of around 20,000.<sup>5</sup> The most powerful impetus to the establishment of an enduring black presence in England resulted from the use of black people to crew the ships which were transporting slaves to work in the

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<sup>2</sup> Hakim Adi, , *West Africans in Britain: 1900-1960* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998), p. 2

<sup>3</sup> James Walvin, *The Black Presence: A Documentary History of the Negro in England, 1555-1860* (London: Orbach & Chambers, 1971), p. 61 and James Walvin, *Passage to Britain* (Suffolk: Penguin Books, 1984), p.33 See also David Killingray, 'Africans in the United Kingdom: An Introduction' in *Africans in Britain* ed. by David Killingray, (Essex: Frank Cass, 1994), p. 3. Here, Killingray argues that the maritime trade of Europe, expanding in the sixteenth century, 'brought Africans to Britain in a variety of servile roles, as seamen, manual labourers and also children as "pets" to aristocrats'.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1991), p. 5

<sup>5</sup> James Walvin, *Passage to Britain* (Suffolk: Penguin Books, 1984), p. 33; Frank Field and Patricia Haikin, 'Background to Coloured Immigration' in *Black Britons* ed. by Frank Field and Patricia Haikin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 3.

plantations in the North American colonies. It was this that fuelled the settlement of the West Indian islands and the expansion of the triangular trade, which had slavery at its heart.<sup>6</sup>

Scholars differ on the exact number of Africans carried as slaves to Europe and America, but all agree that it was several millions.<sup>7</sup> According to Colin Palmer the number of Africans brought to various European cities through this trade was about 200,000 and about 12,000,000 were taken to the Americas.<sup>8</sup> Fryer states that about 2.5 million Africans were bought and sold by British slave merchants between 1630 and 1807.<sup>9</sup> The city of Liverpool played a major role in the slave trade. Between 1700 and 1807; ships from Liverpool alone 'carried about 1.5 million Africans across the Atlantic in conditions of great cruelty'.<sup>10</sup> The trade operated in a triangular form:

Merchants fitted out and supplied their ships in Liverpool. The ships carried goods to West Africa including textiles, firearms, alcohol, beads and cowries shells. On arrival at the coast, captains bartered and sold these goods for Africans... When the captains had sold their captives, the ships returned to Liverpool, generally with goods such as sugar, coffee, cocoa, cotton, tobacco and wood... By 1750, Liverpool had overtaken Bristol and London, and the town's ships dominated the trade until abolition in 1807.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> James Walvin, *The Black Presence: A Documentary History of the Negro in England, 1555-1860*, p. 62

<sup>7</sup> The then British Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, Fiona MacTaggart, in her address to Parliament on October 14, 2004 on 'The Struggle against Slavery' observed that millions of African people were taken by force from their houses and communities and were carried away 'in the most inhuman conditions to work as slaves on cotton, sugar and tobacco plantations', this being mainly motivated by economic gains. See Fiona MacTaggart, 'Struggle against Slavery'. 14 October 2004. *The United Kingdom Parliament, Westminster Hall*. 22 September 2006. In the same paper, Gary Streeter states that in the 100 years from 1860 onwards and in a world that had a population much smaller than the world of today, 'some 2.1 million slaves were imported for the British colonies in the Americas' and that between '1650 and 1900, some 10.2 million slaves were shipped to the Americas from Africa'. <http://64.233.183.104/search?q=cache:231k-TVpDqYJ:www.publications.parliament.....>, p. 2 and 6 of 29. For more on the number of Africans carried away from Africa as slaves between the year 1780 and 1807 when the Abolition of Slavery Act was passed in Britain, see Stephen D. Behrendt, 'The Annual Volume of and Regional Distribution of the British Slave Trade, 1780-1807' *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 38, No 2, 1997, pp.189-205

<sup>8</sup> Colin A. Palmer, 'Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora' *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 85, No. 1/2, Winter-Spring, 2000, p. 28

<sup>9</sup> Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, p. 36

<sup>10</sup> 'Liverpool and the Atlantic Slave Trade'. *Maritime Archives & Library*. Liverpool, Sheet No. 3

<sup>11</sup> David Killingray, 'Africans in the United Kingdom: An Introduction' in *Africans in Britain*, p. 3

In the eighteenth century, the coastal regions where English slave trade took place in Africa were first, the Senegambia, comprising today's Senegal and Gambia; then Sierra Leone; the east-west coast from Cape Mount to Assini, comprising today's Ivory Coast and Liberia; the Gold Coast region; the Bight of Benin,<sup>12</sup> the Bight of Biafra, Central Africa or Angola; and southeastern Africa. Ships from Liverpool transported over three hundred thousand slaves across the Atlantic between 1783 and 1793.<sup>13</sup> The shipment of these people abroad created a massive depopulation of West and Central Africa and the loss of generations of able-bodied men and women, many of whom never returned home.

The majority of the black people carried from Africa by merchants from Liverpool were taken to the Americas, but some stayed in Liverpool as domestic servants.<sup>14</sup> According to Howard Channon 'there are several documented sales of Blacks in Liverpool – the largest, a sale of 11 Africans at the Exchange Coffee House in 1766'.<sup>15</sup> In addition, he says, 'a few local Black people today can trace their family back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and many others are descended from Africans who came to Liverpool as a result of the trade between West Africa and Liverpool in the 19<sup>th</sup> century'. If the largest sale of Africans in Liverpool was that of eleven people out of the millions recorded, then very few were sold directly in Liverpool (and most of the black population of Liverpool today are not descendants of slaves.)<sup>16</sup> Their arrival and settlement must be attributed to other factors, among which was the need for more

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<sup>12</sup> See Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), pp. 128, 130

<sup>13</sup> Howard Channon, *Portrait of Liverpool* (London: Robert Hale and Company, 1970 & 1972), p. 61

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid* (For more on the sale of some Africans in Liverpool, see Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, p. 59. It is unclear how the Africans sold in Liverpool got there and this may require further investigation by historians.)

<sup>16</sup> See more on the status of the Liverpool-born blacks in Mark Christian, *Multiracial Identity: An International Perspective* (London: Palgrave, 2000), p. 22

seamen to help on board the slave ships.<sup>17</sup> This is why the settlement of the Kru seamen from Liberia and Sierra-Leone will be considered later.

In 1772 Lord Mansfield declared slavery illegal in England.<sup>18</sup> Even after the abolition of the slave trade by the British parliament in 1807, the trade still continued; the 1807 bill made it unlawful to import slaves to Britain, but it did not include the rest of the British empire. The passing of the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act included all British territories.<sup>19</sup> The heavy involvement of the merchants of Liverpool in the slave trade was such that after its abolition, 'some of the Liverpool merchants who had been engaged in the slave trade continued to operate illegally by trading with the colonies of other countries which had not abolished the trade'.<sup>20</sup> Scholars differ in their opinion as to the true contribution of the slave trade to the wealth of Liverpool. Mark Christian asserts that if we are to reflect on the boom in Liverpool's economy during the era of the slave trade, 'the majority of the city's distinguished bankers, merchants, and lord mayors had their hands stained with the profits of the British slave trade'. At least 26 of the mayors of Liverpool who held office between 1700 to 1820 were slave merchants or the close relatives of them.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Frost says that it was the needs of the British shipping industry that brought many Kru to Liverpool and other port cities of Britain. Shipping dominated 'the work and home lives of Kru seamen and their families in Liverpool and Freetown'. See Diane Frost, *Work and Community among West African Migrant Workers since the Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), pp. 17-18.

<sup>18</sup> Though the slave trade was declared illegal in England in 1772, the abolition only came in the 1807 Act of British Parliament. See Roger Anstey and P. E. H. Hair, 'Introduction' in *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade, and Abolition* ed. by Roger Anstey and P. E. H. Hair (Chippenham: Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1989), p. 9

<sup>19</sup> Gary Streeter, 'Struggle against Slavery'. 14 October 2004. *The United Kingdom Parliament, Westminster Hall*, p. 7 of 29

<sup>20</sup> Sheila Marriner, *The Economic and Social Development of Merseyside* (London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1982), p. 38

<sup>21</sup> Mark Christian, 'An African-Centered Approach to the Black British Experience with Special Reference to Liverpool' *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 28, No. 3, January 1998, p. 294

The slave trade in Liverpool was connected with other trading activities such as ship-owning, manufacturing, banking and wholesaling.<sup>22</sup> The slave trade helped the whole of the Liverpool region to maintain trading contacts with Africa, the West Indies and America. It was 'Merseyside's best known trade'.<sup>23</sup> Whilst, therefore, it may not be possible to measure the exact profit of Liverpool from slave trade, it is evident 'that the city's slave merchants surpassed those of any other port in the United Kingdom or elsewhere'.<sup>24</sup>

### 3. Africans in Liverpool: The Kru

The Kru were not the only ethnic group from Africa that had contact with Liverpool through the slave trade.<sup>25</sup> However, I have chosen them for a more in-depth study because they were the 'most widely employed by the Europeans on land and sea in the nineteenth century'<sup>26</sup> on board slave ships. Hence, they played a major role on board slave ships and, most significantly for this study, founded a substantial settlement in Liverpool as a homogenous group of seamen. Those referred to as the Kru by the Europeans were from Eastern Liberia and the present day Ivory Coast. The Kru African migrants came to Liverpool in the late nineteenth century in the wake of migration from their original home in Liberia to Sierra Leone. As they were expert seafarers, the British encouraged them to migrate to Sierra Leone so that they could be used to man British ships. They came to Liverpool, therefore, as immigrant

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<sup>22</sup> Hyde Francis E., Parkinson Bradbury B., and Marriner Sheila, 'The Nature and Profitability of Liverpool Slave Trade' in *The Economic History Review*, p. 369

<sup>23</sup> Fryer Peter, *Staying Power*, pp 36- 37 and Marriner Sheila, *The Economic and Social Development of Merseyside*, p 37

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 480-481

<sup>25</sup> Other groups such as the 'Lebou, Fanti, Cabinda-men and other peoples served aboard European and American trading vessels and men-of-war as sailors, boat-pullers, coopers, carpenters, cooks, interpreters, and gold-takers...shipyard artisans of every skill'. See George E. Brooks Jr., 'The Kru Mariner in the Nineteenth Century: An Historical Compendium' in *Liberian Studies Monograph Series*, No. 1, 1972, p. 1

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*

seafarers, not as slaves. Indeed, they oscillated between Freetown and Liverpool.

Some however settled in Liverpool.<sup>27</sup> Brooks comments on their role that 'Europeans increasingly found it to their advantage to employ Africans commanding special skills and proven reputations for loyalty and dependability' and that the 'Kru possessed both attributes...'<sup>28</sup> Esu Biyi suggests that none of the Kru men or women served as slaves because there was an understanding between their chiefs and the European slave hunters not to enslave them; none possessing the tribal mark of the Kru, running from the forehead to the nose and from the eye to the ear, would be captured as a slave.<sup>29</sup> The study of the Kru is one of the strongest reasons for arguing that most of the early black African settlers in Liverpool were not slaves.

The Kru were useful to the British during the era of slave trade, and made inroads into intruding on other African societies also. In Nigeria and Ghana, they were the agents of the British in aiding and abetting slavery. This was why other ethnic groups vented their anger on them whenever they had the opportunity to do so. The safety of the Kru within West Africa during the era of the slave trade therefore depended on their British masters.<sup>30</sup>

After the abolition of slave trade, a new commercial trade boomed and palm oil became the most lucrative trading article. This was because oil was widely used,

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<sup>27</sup> Diane Frost, 'Ethnic Identity, Transience and Settlement: The Kru in Liverpool since the Late Nineteenth Century' in *Africans in Britain* ed by David Killingray, p.88 See also *ibid. Work and Community among West African Migrant Workers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), pp. 18-20 Though Mark Christian does not mention a particular ethnic group such as the Kru, he alludes to the fact that 'due to Liverpool's seafaring links with West Africa and the Caribbean during the era of the Atlantic slave trade and beyond...many black seamen, soldiers' came to settle in the town. See Mark Christian, *Multiracial Identity: An International Perspective* pp. 22 and 90

<sup>28</sup> George E. Brooks, 'The Kru Mariner in the Nineteenth Century', pp. 2-3

<sup>29</sup> Esu Biyi, 'The Kru and Related Peoples in West Africa'. *Journal of the Royal African Society*, p. 72

<sup>30</sup> Jane Martin, 'Kru "Down the Coast" Liberian Migrants on the West African Coast in the 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries' in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, pp. 404-405 (See also Esu Biyi, 'The Kru and Related Peoples in West Africa' *Journal of the Royal African Society*, p. 72)



including in the manufacture of margarine, candles and soap. Thus, West Africa was providing raw materials for the industries in Europe and Britain while Europe was finding a market for manufactured goods in Africa. West African seamen continued to be a great asset to the Europeans in this direction. The initial reason behind the engagement of the Kru on ships was to replace white members of the crew who fell sick or died of fever. Fever greatly contributed to the death of many white sailors, to the extent that West Africa was called the 'White Man's Grave.' Later, the Kru were increasingly engaged to accompany ships to Europe and America whenever there was a shortage of their white counterparts. With the arrival of the steamship in the mid-nineteenth century, the Kru were also found to be able to withstand the heat of the engine-room more readily than Europeans.<sup>31</sup> More Kru lived in Liverpool where they were readily available as cheap source of labour.<sup>32</sup> They were employed as firemen and coal trimmers on trips to Liverpool.<sup>33</sup> The employment of more West Africans was also facilitated by the fact that they drank less than their white colleagues and worked harder.<sup>34</sup>

The employment of the Kru by the Liverpool slave merchants, which subsequently led to their settlement in the city, was based on the economic advantages it brought to the slave merchants. The settlement of the Kru, and other West African ethnic groups in Liverpool during the era of the slave trade, could be seen as an unintended

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<sup>31</sup> Diane Frost, *Work and Community among West African Migrant Workers since the Nineteenth Century*, p. 35

<sup>32</sup> Diane Frost, 'Ethnic Identity, Transience and Settlement: The Kru in Liverpool since the Late Nineteenth Century', p. 91 See also for more details Public Record Office, Kew (PRO) HO 45/11897/332187

<sup>33</sup> Kenneth Little, *Negroes in Britain: A Study of Racial Relations in English Society* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1948,1972), p. 89

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 91

consequence of their engagement in facilitating first the slave trade,<sup>35</sup> and then 'legitimate commerce'.<sup>36</sup> There was no record that suggests that the Kru had their distinct religious identity. As earlier noted, they were first of all, a transient group who moved between West Africa and Liverpool on board the slave ships, therefore settling down permanently in Liverpool may not be their primary pre-occupation. They had no Church of their own in Liverpool and therefore could not be studied as a distinct religious group.

#### 4. Twentieth-Century Immigration

The population of immigrants increased between the two World Wars,<sup>37</sup> but it was with the Second World War and its aftermath that the most significant influx of black people into Liverpool began. This new influx, according to Wilson, included the West Indian and black American soldiers stationed in the Northwest of England. He estimates that 'by the end of the war, at least 130,000 black soldiers had spent some time in England'.<sup>38</sup> Some of these engaged in sexual relationships or marriage with white women in and around Liverpool, which resulted in the birth of 'brown babies'.<sup>39</sup> Their birth introduced the question of where responsibility lay with regard

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<sup>35</sup> A. Sivanandan argues that during the era of colonial rule, Britain recruited workers from its colonies based on the economic calculation that they were cheaper. A. Sivanandan, *A Different Hunger: Writings on Black Resistance* (London: Pluto Press, 1991), p. 106

<sup>36</sup> In the nineteenth century, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was declared illegal and subsequently abolished. In West Africa, it was 'surpassed' by non-slave trade especially trade in 'vegetable products such as palm oil and groundnut'. This trade in vegetable products or what is known as 'non-slaving commerce as a viable alternative to the slave trade' is what is referred to as 'legitimate trade'. See Robin Law, ed., 'From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa'. Reviewed by Andrew F. Clark, *H-Net Reviews in the Humanities & Social Sciences, University of North Carolina at Wilmington*, <http://h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showpdf.cgi?path=16503875736810>. p. 1 of 4; Patrick S. Caulker, 'Legitimate Commerce and Statecraft: A Study of the Hinterland Adjacent to Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone', *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 4, June 1981, p. 400

<sup>37</sup> Calton Wilson, 'Liverpool's Black Population during World War II', *Newsletter: Black and Asian Studies Association Journal*, Vol. 20, January 1998, p. 6

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>39</sup> Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission* (London: The Savannah Press, 1994), p. 51

to their care; the official position of the U.S government was unclear on inter-racial marriage.<sup>40</sup>

The effects of the Second World War opened more opportunities for Africans to settle in Liverpool. The expansion in the British economy led to the availability of more jobs, hence more hands were needed. This led to the recruitment of more blacks and the granting of work permit to many of them.. This led to the settlement of many Kru men in Liverpool.<sup>41</sup> Hence Africans began living a more settled life in Liverpool. While some applied for residence permits, others were in Liverpool to make money and return to their countries.<sup>42</sup> Marriages between some of the Kru men and British women was another thing that encouraged their settlement. Those with the intention of settling in Liverpool were most likely to legalize their relationships by marriage.

By the end of the war, the black population in Liverpool was made up of four groups: 'the Liverpool-born blacks, the immigrant West Africans, former black American soldiers and West Indians'.<sup>43</sup> The relationship between the different groups was less than cordial. Those from the West Indies looked down on the black Liverpudlians and the West African blacks because they were less skilled. The Liverpudlian blacks described the blacks from the West Indies as 'smart but arrogant'. The black American soldiers had a more cordial relationship with the black Britons than they did with the Africans.<sup>44</sup> Carlton attributes this to colour identification,<sup>45</sup> but in my view, there may be other reasons that are now unclear to us for the lack of cordial

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 51-53

<sup>41</sup> Diane Frost, *Ethnic Identity, Transience and Settlement: The Kru in Liverpool since the Late Nineteenth Century*, p. 93

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p. 93-94

<sup>43</sup> Carlton Wilson, 'Liverpool's Black Population During World War II' *Newsletter*, p. 9

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*,

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*

relationship between the migrants. Colour identification does not appear convincing enough to fully account for the resentment between the black groups – after all, all black groups in the city had the same black colour.

Mark Sturge suggests some possible reasons for the lack of cordial relationships between the Africans and the Caribbeans. He hinges this on perception – that Caribbeans think Africans are not honest, are fraudulent, prone to violence, and undependable for marriage. They are seen as being proud and as thinking that they are better than others, and perceived as ‘power-drunk’ because many of them want to be referred to as chief. The Africans on the other hand see the Caribbeans as ‘slave babies with slave mentality’,<sup>46</sup> promiscuous, prone to committing crimes, lazy and addicted to drugs. All these give the black people a negative image in the host society. Slavery is an episode and an epoch, it happened at a particular time in history but its consequences still remain with the enslaved, the slave-masters and those who aided and abetted it. One implication this may have for the subject matter of this research is that the strained relationships which slavery created between and within races in Liverpool may also militate against their joint worship. We shall see whether this is so in our ethnographic report.

The years since the end of the Second World War have also seen an increase in the number of overseas students coming to study in Britain. In 1960-61, there were 35,729 students at British institutions from the Commonwealth countries, with the majority coming from Asia and Africa.<sup>47</sup> A desire for a British education increased the immigration of Africans to Britain in the eighties as more countries became

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<sup>46</sup> Mark Sturge, *Look what the Lord has Done: An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain* (Bletchley: Scripture Union, 2005), pp. 170-171

<sup>47</sup> Wilson Carlton, ‘Liverpool’s Black Population during World War II’, p. 4

independent from colonial rule and there was a drive for well educated people to occupy key positions.<sup>48</sup> More recently, another wave of Africans arrived in Britain as political refugees fleeing political persecution from military or civilian dictatorship in some African countries. Others came as economic immigrants as the economies of many African nations are on the decline.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, many trained professionals are lost from Africa to the more buoyant economies of the western world. While some immigrants succeed in getting suitable jobs, other professionals find themselves under-employed as they take up any available appointment; such as a medical doctor driving a taxi.<sup>50</sup>

It must be remembered that Africans are used to a life of migration, and the recent migration of some of them to Europe is a continuation of their normal pattern. Labour is very mobile in Africa because the history of the continent contains different types of mobility 'within national boundaries-promoted by trade, warfare, pastoralism, slaving, natural disasters and evangelization'. A case in point is the nomadic wanderings of herders all over the continent in search of water and pasture for their flock.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, 'Africa has a long tradition of internal labour migration which dates back well into the pre-colonial era' and 'before the establishment of the modern state'.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, the economic and political upheavals in Africa in the 1980s have drastically changed the traditional patterns of migration away from Africa to other nations of the world such as Europe. In Europe, Britain, a former colonial

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<sup>48</sup> Mohan Luthra, *Britain's Black Population* (Aldershot: Arena, 1997), p. 10

<sup>49</sup> David Killingray, 'Africans in the United Kingdom: An Introduction' in *Africans in Britain*, p. 3-4

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>51</sup> John A. Arthur, 'International Labour Migration in West Africa'. *African Studies Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3, December 1991, p. 65 (See also Aderanti Adepoju, 'Migration and Development in Tropical Africa: Some Research Priorities'. *African Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 303, April 1977, p. 213)

<sup>52</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998), p 128

master ranks highest as the major recipient of these African immigrants. The majority of these Africans who have found their way to Europe come from the English-speaking countries of Africa.<sup>53</sup> Britain is perceived as more liberal in receiving migrants because of the mutual advantage derived by both parties.<sup>54</sup> Other factors such as the absence of a language barrier may also be responsible for the larger migration to Britain.

## **5. Racial Discrimination and Equal Opportunities Policy**

I mentioned the lack of cordial relationships between the different groups of Africans and other blacks. It is also necessary to discuss briefly the way black people were received in the city by their white hosts. The experiences of the black immigrants, especially Diaspora Africans, in the host society are a strong behavioural source on our interpretative triangle.

Africans, especially the Kru, maintained their own ethnic identity because they were made to occupy marginal social status in Liverpool. A strong display of racial hostility against them by the host community frequently led to a 'reactive ethnicity' which encouraged the maintenance of Kru identity as a 'defence mechanism' against discrimination and hostility.<sup>55</sup> Commenting on the maintenance of ethnic boundaries among the members of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in London, Stephen Hunt draws a close link between ethnicity and religion in fostering boundary maintenance. He regards the maintenance of ethnic identity as being 'aimed at confirming the integrity and oneness of the ethnic group by firmly demarcating the

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<sup>53</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise*, 129-130

<sup>54</sup> Hakim Adi, 'West Africans and Political Identity in Britain' in *Black Identity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* ed. by Christian Mark (London: Hansib Publications, 2002), pp. 35-36

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p. 97

cultural differences with wider society'.<sup>56</sup> As regards the role of religion, he comments:

The importance of religion is that it brings a clearer delineation of the culture of the community and promotes internal solidarity even where it was not particularly strong beforehand. It increases solidarity and cohesion as part of the process of what Sarna refers to as 'ethnicization'.<sup>57</sup>

Frank A. Salamone maintains that religious identity can be used to strengthen ethnic identity because religion itself is a cultural artifact. Where ethnic and religious identities intersect, it 'offers the prospect of important sociological insight into the meaning of identity and the use of symbolism'.<sup>58</sup> While agreeing that religion is 'central to self-definition', Tariq Modood asserts that ethnic identity can be maintained by means other than religion, depending on the circumstances people are facing, such as occupation, neighbourhood, language, clothes and so on.<sup>59</sup> For example, in the twentieth century, West Africans in Britain adopted political identities in handling problems of racism and colonial imperialism. Political ideologies such as Pan-Africanism, West African nationalism and Communism were engaged to assert their identity.<sup>60</sup>

Modood's cultural perspective as the marker through which identity can be maintained appears to apply to the Liverpool Kru. For them, religion does not seem to have played a significant role in identity maintenance. Indeed, their approach appears to be one of assimilation.

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<sup>56</sup> Stephen Hunt, 'Neither Here nor There': The Construction of Identities and Boundary Maintenance of West African Pentecostals' *Sociology*, Vol. 36, No. 1, February 2002, p. 163

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>58</sup> Frank A. Salamone., 'Ethnic Identities and Religion' in *Religion and Society in Nigeria: Historical and Sociological Perspectives* ed. by Jacob K. Olupona and Toyin Falola (Ibadan, Owerri and Kaduna: Spectrum Books Limited, 1991), p.46

<sup>59</sup> Tariq Modood, 'Culture and Identity' in *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage* ed. by Tariq Modood and others (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1997), pp. 291 and 297

<sup>60</sup> Hakim Adi, 'West Africans and Political Identity in Britain: 1900-1960' in *Black Identity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* ed. by Mark Christian, p. 34

The Kru in Liverpool in the twentieth century numbered not more than 'several hundred'. Though they had their own socio-cultural club, they still associated with other blacks in Liverpool community.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, their marriage to British women suggests that 'Kru cultural expressions were not on the whole perpetuated through the second generation'.<sup>62</sup> However, consequent on the marriage of some of their men to British women, a mixed race of 'half-castes' was born.<sup>63</sup> This group of people has had 'a significant presence in the city'.<sup>64</sup> The marriage of Kru men to British women came out of necessity; there were more Kru men than women because of the circumstances of their migration to Liverpool. Marriage could be seen as a way of overcoming hostility and integrating with the host society. Mohan Luthra comments:

Pre-war settlers from New Commonwealth groups were far more likely to marry local women, being single or simply alone. Consequently, they integrated phenotypically and socially to become part of the communities under assimilationist pressures over a period of time.<sup>65</sup>

The marriage of the blacks in general to British women has often incurred the hostility of the white British community rather than promoting acceptability.<sup>66</sup> Michael Banton had earlier attributed the hostility of the British community to the West Africans and West Indians to colour antipathy and the association of immigrants with European

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<sup>61</sup> Diane Frost, *Work and Community among West African Migrant Workers since the Nineteenth Century*, p. 187

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>63</sup> Mark Christian, *Multiracial Identity: An International Perspective* (London: Palgrave, 2000), p.22

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>65</sup> Mohan Luthra, *Britain's Black Population*, p. 10

<sup>66</sup> *The Racial Politics of Militant in Liverpool* (Liverpool: Merseyside Area Profile Group, Department of Sociology, University of Liverpool & The Runnymede Trust, 1986), p. 14



women.<sup>67</sup> This factor was identified by other scholars as being responsible for hostility.<sup>68</sup>

There were many ways in which the immigrant population experienced hostility and discrimination. In the area of employment, the employment market was closed to them in certain fields as they were treated as an undesirable labour force.<sup>69</sup> Until 1968, 'racial discrimination in employment was lawful. Openly discriminatory advertisements were common, as were "no coloureds" instructions to state and private employment agencies'. This was also true of private and public housing as landlords declined to give people accommodation on the basis of their colour; the government's position was not far from this.<sup>70</sup> Many of the black immigrants had to do manual jobs, irrespective of their professional competence; and a general rise in unemployment in society meant that it would rise more among the minorities.<sup>71</sup> The immigrants were discriminated against in Liverpool in the areas of education, provision of social and health facilities, and the brutalization of blacks by the police.<sup>72</sup> Expatiating on police brutality, Colin Brown comments:

The most immediate form of oppression, however, for very many members of the community for at least a decade before the explosion of 1981...has been the police against whom allegations of verbal abuse, physical assault, continual stopping and searching, arrest and criminalization on trivial or trumped up offences (threatening behaviour, breach of the peace, etc., drug planting) are found throughout the black community. There is no doubt that

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<sup>67</sup> Michael Banton, 'The Social Groupings of some West African Workers in Britain', *Man: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 53, No. 203, September 1953, p. 131

<sup>68</sup> For more on the resentment British society had for the black population as a result of their marriage or cohabitation with white women, see Folarin Shyllon, 'The Black Presence and Experience in Britain: An Analytical Overview' in *Essays on the History of Blacks in Britain* ed. by Jagdish S. Gundara, and Ian Duffield, (Aldershot, Brookfield USA, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sydney: Avebury, 1992), pp. 212-213

<sup>69</sup> Colin Brown, "'Same Difference': The Persistence of Racial Disadvantage in the British Employment Market' in *Racism and Antiracism* ed. by Peter Braham, Ali Rattansi and Richard Skellington (London: The Open University, 1992, 1993), p. 47

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 47-48

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 52-54

<sup>72</sup> *The Racial Politics of Militant in Liverpool*, pp. 16-20

this long standing sense of grievance and injustice with respect to the police (whose patterns of arrest tend to be widely supported by the courts) lay behind the violence of the events in the summer of 1981.<sup>73</sup>

Mark Christian observes that 'Liverpool-born Blacks have been characterized as experiencing major structural racial discrimination that is "uniquely horrific" compared to that faced by other Black communities across the UK'.<sup>74</sup> This accords with a report on racial disadvantage in Liverpool submitted to the Parliamentary Home Affairs Committee in 1980, which observes in its introduction that:

a number of authoritative national reports have, in recent years, pointed to the serious problems of deeply rooted racial discrimination and disadvantage in Liverpool...Any initiatives that have been taken should not blind us to the major gaps that still exist with respect to the special problems faced by racial minorities on Merseyside and that require urgent attention.<sup>75</sup>

The discrimination experienced by the Liverpool-born blacks in my opinion may be a carry over from the hatred the host community had for their progenitors because they intermarried with white women, as already discussed above. Generally, the hostility may be seen as stemming from 'fear, ignorance and myths surrounding immigration and cultural differences' between the immigrants and the receiving community of Liverpool.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20. In 1981, there was a widespread riot in many cities in Britain which was as a result of long standing tensions between the police and black youths because of allegations of 'racist policing'. In 1980, six people died in racist violence and in 1981, at New Cross in the south of London, fire claimed the lives of 13 black youths. This tragedy was seen by the black community in Britain as racist activity directed towards them. This resulted in violence. Since black people lost confidence in the police to defend them, they adopted self defence method of street patrols. This led the Home Office into setting up a working party to look into the issue with the report published few months after on the way forward. For more see Paul Gordon, 'The Police and Racist Violence in Britain' in *Racist Violence in Europe* ed. by Tore Bjorgo and Rob Witte (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1993), p. 168

<sup>74</sup> Mark Christian, *Multiracial Identity*, p. 22

<sup>75</sup> *Racial Disadvantage in Liverpool: An Area Profile* submitted to the Parliamentary Home Affairs Committee, Race Relations Sub Committee, Session 1979-1980 on Racial Disadvantage by the Merseyside Area Profile Group, Department of Sociology, University of Liverpool ed. by Gideon Ben-Tovim and Others (Liverpool: Merseyside Area Profile Group, 1980), p. 7

<sup>76</sup> Barry Williams, 'Trade Union Initiatives in Opposing Racism' in *Equal Opportunities and the Employment of Black People and Ethnic Minorities on Merseyside, Conference Reports and Resources*

This deep-rooted antipathy flows into worship. In a community where people are so divided on racial lines, inter-racial public worship may be very difficult. In the Churches where I conducted ethnography, there is only a limited presence of white worshippers, even in the Churches where white and African Churches merged. Resolving the polarity existing between ethnic groups in order to enable them participate in public worship together may be a main subject of further research.

Black communities and racial minorities in general have used three basic methods of fighting racism, discrimination or marginalization in Britain, and Liverpool in particular. First, there had been spontaneous protest against it. Secondly, pressure groups were formed canvassing for equal access to community resources. Thirdly there were organized political struggles.<sup>77</sup> There have been many efforts at improving race relations in Britain. The foremost has been the application of the concept of multi-culturalism.<sup>78</sup> Multi-culturalism emerged from the realization, first in USA and then in Britain, that 'the melting 'point-pot' doesn't melt, and that ethnic and racial divisions get reproduced from generation to generation'.<sup>79</sup> In a nutshell, what multi-culturalism is meant to do is:

construct society as composed of a hegemonic homogeneous majority, and small unmeltable minorities with their own essentially different communities and cultures which have to be understood, accepted, and

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*Park* ed, by Gideon Ben-Tovim (Liverpool: Merseyside Association for Racial Equality in Employment & Merseyside Area Profile Group, 1983), p. 137

<sup>77</sup> Gideon Ben-Tovim, John Gabriel, Ian Law and others, 'Racism and Equal Opportunities Policy' in *Racism and Antiracism* ed. by Peter Braham, Ali Rattansi and Richard Skellington (London: Sage Publications & Open University, 1992, 1993), p. 209

<sup>78</sup> Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Racialized Boundaries* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992, 1993), p. 158

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* For more on multi-culturalism, see N. Glazer, and D. P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge and Mass: MIT Press, 1965), p.6 and N. Glazer and D. P. Moynihan, *Ethnicity, Theory and Experience* (Cambridge, Mass and London: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 158 and also Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 2-6

basically left alone – since their differences are compatible with the hegemonic culture – in order for the society to have harmonious relations.<sup>80</sup>

The multi-culturalism approach is given concrete legal expansion in the ‘equal opportunity policy’ which is section 71 of the Race Relations Act of 1976. It states that it is the duty of every local council to make appropriate arrangements to secure: (i) ‘elimination of unlawful discrimination and (ii) the promotion of equal opportunity’.<sup>81</sup> The Act states that there should be ‘the removal of artificial, arbitrary and unnecessary barriers to employment when the barriers operate to discriminate on the basis of racial and other impermissible classification’.<sup>82</sup> The Policy and Finance Committee of the Liverpool City Council did not implement this policy when it was first legislated, until the representatives of the black and minority groups in the city wrote a letter to the City Council expressing concern about their reluctance to implement it.<sup>83</sup> The implementation then served as an official acknowledgement of the racial problems being encountered by the minority groups in Liverpool and the need for opportunities to be given to them to lodge their complaints officially and to be heard.<sup>84</sup> However, all these notwithstanding, legislation alone has not resolved racial tension. The racist brutal murder of Anthony Walker, a black teenager, on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2005 in Huyton, Liverpool may be an indication that racial hatred still exists in the city despite the efforts made to eradicate it.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>81</sup> *The Racial Politics of Militant in Liverpool*, p. 28

<sup>82</sup> Gideon Ben-Tovim, John Gabriel, Ian Law and others, ‘Racism and Equal Opportunities Policy’ in *Racism and Antiracism*, p. 197

<sup>83</sup> *The Racial Politics of Militant in Liverpool*, p. 28

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p.27

<sup>85</sup> ‘Youth Guilty of Racist Axe Murder’. 30 November 2005. *BBC NEWS*. 22 May 2006.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/merseyside/4477156.stm>, p. 1 of 3

The concept of multi-culturalism has come under attack in recent times in Britain because of the attacks in July 2005 on London tube and road transport by a group of Muslim youths. This is making some people in government and members of the public think of re-defining the concept and tightening immigration laws. For example, shortly after the 2005 London bombing, the then Shadow Home Secretary, David Davis described the government's policy of multiculturalism as 'outdated' and queried how 'the perverted values of suicide bombers' had been allowed to grow within the nation. He made a demand for 'respect for the British way of life'.<sup>86</sup> Other people did not blame the government solely for the failings of multiculturalism and the events of July 2005, but rather the Muslims who failed to integrate and assimilate.<sup>87</sup> Some however blamed multiculturalism itself for creating a society that was verging on being too diverse, and that in consequence had to some degree diluted British culture. Allen agrees with David Hayes in suggesting that radical multiculturalism is the answer to the threatening religious extremism. He argues:

Instead of allowing an atrocity devised by 'extremists' to destroy who 'we' are and our 'way of life' – where Britishness is undoubtedly multiculturalism and clearly has been for a number of decades – why not then reciprocate this and employ extreme 'radical multiculturalism' to not only defeat the extremists – both Muslim and non – in their desire to drive a wedge between Muslims and everybody else, whilst at the same time undermining those critics – from both the full breadth of the political spectrum – that insist that Muslims and Islam are incompatible with today's society.<sup>88</sup>

If multiculturalism is to be allowed to work in Britain as Allen suggests, there is a need for an understanding of what it is. Concepts that appear ambiguous or undefined in clear terms, such as Britishness, have to be defined. There may also be the need for

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<sup>86</sup> 'How Multicultural is Britain?' 9 August 2005. BBC News 24. 15 September 2007.

[http://nes.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking\\_point/4741753.stm](http://nes.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking_point/4741753.stm), p. 1 of 13

<sup>87</sup> Chris Allen, 'The Death of Multiculturalism: Blaming and Shaming British Muslims'. 2007. *Durham Anthropology Journal*. 15 September 2007.

<http://www.dur.ac.uk/anthropology.journal/vol14/iss1/allen.html>, p. 12 of 22

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20

citizenship training for people coming from other cultures who intend to be British. As things stand, there is no specific definition of what it means to be British. Lessons on patriotism might also be introduced to primary and the secondary schools which would allow children growing to adulthood to put the nation first.

## **6. Conclusions**

In summary some Africans arrived and settled in Britain during the period of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Some came to Liverpool to join their partners who were already here, while others came to study but later decided to settle by obtaining the necessary residence permit. Political upheavals, famine, and declining economies were responsible for other migrations to Europe from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The settlement of Africans in Britain was not easy as they experienced racial discrimination from the host society. Despite the efforts made by the British government in terms of anti-racism legislation, racist hostility still exists in Liverpool today. We shall see the implications of these experiences on the worship of the Diaspora Africans Christians in Liverpool in the subsequent chapters.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Diaspora African Churches in Britain since 1900**

#### **with Special Reference to Liverpool**

##### **1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the establishment of Diaspora African Churches in Britain since 1900, with particular reference to Liverpool. It first explores the conditions in the host society that led to the establishment of these Churches. It then considers the interaction between the worship of these Churches and the other factors found on our interpretative triangle. It thus identifies those social and religious elements that have sustained public worship among the Diaspora African Christians in the midst of a non-Churchgoing community, and asks whether the elements identified will continue to sustain public worship attitude among African Christians today. The chapter also treats the obstacles to Diaspora public worship within British society as a whole, and in Liverpool in particular. The interpretative key used across the Chapter is functionalism, as was discussed in Chapter Two.

The first Diaspora African Church in Liverpool was the African Churches Mission established by Daniel Ekarte from Nigeria in 1922. This will be considered in some detail in the first section, which will assist us in identifying the factors that have historically influenced Diaspora African Christian worship in the city. The second section explores the growth of the Diaspora African Churches in Britain with particular emphasis on the biggest African initiated Church in Britain today, namely, Kingsway International Christian Centre, based in London. This identifies some pertinent elements which have either helped the development and growth of the

Church or impeded it. The chapter goes on to examine the state of the Diaspora African Churches in Liverpool today.

## **2. Churches of Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool in the Early 1900: The African Churches Mission.**

Gerrie ter Haar states that 'Britain has the longest history of African Christian communities, which dates back to the early 1960s'; this is only partly true.<sup>1</sup> It is indeed the case that many African initiated Christian Churches emerged in the 1960s,<sup>2</sup> but recent research findings by Marika Sherwood<sup>3</sup>, confirmed by my own archival research, demonstrate that the presence of the African Christian community, and of African Churches, really began in the early 1900s. The first African mission in Liverpool was founded by Pastor George Daniels Ekarte who came to Britain in 1915. He inaugurated the African Churches Mission (henceforth ACM) in Liverpool in 1922.<sup>4</sup> I will explore briefly what led to the establishment of this Church, the nature of its worship, how it impacted on the community of Liverpool and the problems it encountered in the host community.

### **2.1. The Beginning of the Church and its Social Environment**

The circumstances surrounding the establishment of the ACM illustrate the historic difficulties that African Christians have faced in expressing and living their faith in Liverpool. Consideration of them also raises the question as to whether the same

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<sup>1</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* (Cardiff: Cardiff Academy Press, 1998), p. 90

<sup>2</sup> Mark Sturge, *Look what the Lord has Done: An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain* (London: Scripture Union, 2005), p. 84

<sup>3</sup> Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission*

<sup>4</sup> In his letter of 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1934 to the Secretary of the Welfare of Africans in Europe War Fund (Surplus) in London, Pastor Ekarte affirmed that his Church was established in 1922. Liverpool Record Office: Ekarte, G. Daniels, GB/NNAF/D1643, ref/4910/Sheet No. 2 and Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission* pp.23-25.



difficulties continue to be faced by African immigrant Churches today. This section, therefore, flags up a number of issues that will be picked up in subsequent chapters.

George Daniels Ekarte came to Liverpool around 1915 from Calabar in Nigeria where he had come into contact with two British missionaries, Rev. Wilkie from Liverpool and Mary Slessor from Scotland. Mary Slessor was his teacher and it was the success of her work among the people of Calabar that aroused in him the desire to become a missionary, with the determination to go to England, the 'holy land' of his mother.<sup>5</sup> On arriving in England, Ekarte started preaching, holding services in private rooms and conducting open air evangelistic campaigns. He was arrested by the police twice for causing an obstruction and was imprisoned for some days because he had refused to pay a fine of two pounds.<sup>6</sup>

Ekarte's treatment at the hands of the police is only one of various recorded incidents of police action in Liverpool against black people. Commenting on such incidents, Alfred Zack-Williams remarks that, 'black people tend to receive more severe treatment at the hands of the law enforcing authorities'.<sup>7</sup> With particular reference to Liverpool, Peter Fryer maintains that whenever black people attempted to defend themselves against physical attack, the police have always interpreted it as public disturbance or unlawful.<sup>8</sup> In Liverpool, there is evidence to suggest that some city

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<sup>5</sup> A. L. J. Shields, 'African Churches Mission in Liverpool' in *Liverpool Review: Diocesan Supplement*, Vol. 6, No. 9, September 1931, p. 328. See also Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission*, pp. 23-24

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, pp.25-26

<sup>7</sup> Alfred B. Zack- Williams, 'Africa Diaspora Conditioning: the Case of Liverpool', *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 1997, p. 538

<sup>8</sup> Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), p. 367

policemen have discriminated against the black population.<sup>9</sup> Sherwood underscores the argument of Ivor Cummings that Ekarte's relationship with the police finally broke down because he was committed to obtaining a fair deal for African seamen.<sup>10</sup>

The arrest and detention of Ekarte may also be interpreted as a response to his inability to contextualize his method of evangelism for Liverpool. He had been arrested on more than one occasion for street preaching and singing. A. L. J. Shields remarks that 'it is not easy for an Englishman to see through African eyes'<sup>11</sup> shows the extent to which Ekarte's approach to mission was out of context. It may be right to observe here that the adjustment the Diaspora African Christians and the host society needed to make to each other at the beginning of the ACM had not taken place and this appeared to suggest that the Liverpool community of the time did not easily accommodate effective Diaspora African Christian worship. Whatever the main reason for the incarceration of Ekarte, his refusal to pay the prescribed fine could be interpreted as his belief that what he was doing was right. In the analysis of the ethnographic data in the following three chapters, we shall be able to see whether or not the same uneasy relationship continues between the leaders of AICs and the police in Liverpool.

Ekarte saw the necessity of ministry to the Africans in Liverpool. He therefore started a Church, which he moved from one place to another until he found a place at Dickenson Street. In a couple of months he was evicted – again, the victim of

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<sup>9</sup> For example, the 1934 case of a certain Mr. Isaiah. Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission*, p. 36

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 93

<sup>11</sup> A. L. J. Shields, *African Churches Mission in Liverpool*, p.329

racism.<sup>12</sup> I will explore further the issue of racist attacks on African Churches in Liverpool in the fieldwork reports in the following chapters.

### **2.3. The Shape and Impact of ACM's Worship on Liverpool Society and Members.**

#### ***2.3.1. The Ritual Shape of ACM's Worship***

The worship of ACM could be described as Protestant in nature with, according to Sherwood, 'a strong racialist flavour' but without much emotionalism.<sup>13</sup> Jones however counters that the worship of the Church was not completely devoid of emotion. He maintains that Ekarte had a 'hypnotic effect on his congregation' and that sometimes, during worship, people fell down muttering strange words or speaking in unknown tongues.<sup>14</sup> This is not characteristic of orthodox Protestant worship, and already shows manifestations of the Pentecostalist style.

Allan Anderson maintains that the spontaneous liturgy of Pentecostalism emphasizes direct experience of the divine through the Holy Spirit and allows ordinary people to be lifted to the level of ecstasy, culminating in tongues speaking, hand clapping, joyful singing, 'raising of hands and dancing in the presence of God'. This allows Pentecostal worship to be easily assimilated to different contexts, 'especially where a sense of divine immediacy was taken for granted'. It allows the involvement of the laity to be a central aspect of the liturgy.<sup>15</sup> Since Pentecostal Christianity is popular in African Christianity, and at home with ATR and the African worldview, its manifestation in the worship of ACM further shows its relevance to African

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<sup>12</sup> Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission*, p.26

<sup>13</sup> Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission*, p. 110

<sup>14</sup> Thomas J. Jones, *A Reminiscence on Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission*, p. 13

<sup>15</sup> Allan Anderson, 'Towards a Pentecostal Missiology', *Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, vol. 8, No. 1, 2005, p. 43

Christians in Diaspora in this first African Church in Liverpool. The manifestation of Pentecostalism in the worship of ACM further attests to why the background worldview of African Christians is included on our interpretative triangle as an important source for the religious behaviour of Africans.

Time was also devoted at the AMC to music and hymn singing within worship. Jones remarks that Ekarte led the congregation into singing ‘hymns and Negro spirituals with great feeling, a feeling I’ve never heard or felt on the rare occasions of visiting other English Churches’.<sup>16</sup> This attention to music is another theme in ATR and the African worldview already discussed.

Reminiscing about the ministry of Ekarte, Thomas J. Jones, one of the young men who worshipped in the Church during Ekarte’ time identifies some of the elements of worship of the Church and the personal qualities of the pastor that endeared him and the Church to the people. One is preaching. According to Jones, Ekarte ‘had a natural feeling for preaching [...] He had a subtle way of telling people they were wrong, or they should change their ways’. The pastor ‘preached about things which concerned the lives of people’. He further reminisces:

Near the end of the service, Pastor Daniels would introduce the congregation to one or sometimes two stowaways who had been referred to him from different authorities who refused to help, and would ask if anyone in the congregation would help in providing accommodation until they could get some work. There were always volunteers who would take some one in.<sup>17</sup>

The above approach to ministry could be described as holistic and is in line with the worldview of African Christians earlier discussed. In the following three chapters, the

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12

<sup>17</sup> Thomas J. Jones, ‘A Reminiscence on Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission’ in *Newsletter: Black and Asian Studies Association*, 40, September 2004, pp. 12-13

positive role played by life-related preaching in enlisting people for public worship is discussed more fully. Ekarte taught his members from his sermons they can be their brothers' or sisters' keepers. This further demonstrates the African worldview's holistic sense of a link between worship and other activities of the Church

The pastor believed in the reading of other Bible- inspired books written for the growth of Christians to maturity in Christ. He translated 'the First Book of the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis into the Calabar language' which was printed in 1934 by the Church.<sup>18</sup> This further confirms the pastor's preoccupation with the spiritual development of his parishioners. My position throughout this thesis is that Church members who are taught well about the provisions of the Bible, most especially about the necessity of public worship, as ACM has done, are more likely to be committed to the Church's public worship than those who are not so taught.

The Church's prayer ministry and the pastor's pastoral care in ACM went together. According to Jones, whenever members of the choir were missing from choir practice or on Sunday, the pastor would take the choir round to their places of residence for visit and prayer, singing as they went. This helped sick or absent members to join the choir again. A. L. J. Shields also says that the pastor organized a band of those who pledged to pray for the Mission.<sup>19</sup> Commenting on the influence of religion with reference to prayer, David O. Moberg affirms that prayer has the ability to help religious practitioners 'conquer neurotic attitudes, heal conflicts, overcome loneliness, and renew the sense of belonging to a larger whole'. To him, prayer can also 'result in a mental catharsis, which relieves one of pent-up emotions, or in self-suggestion,

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas J. Jones, 'A Reminiscence on Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission' in *Black and Asian Studies Newsletter*, 42, April 2005, p. 9

<sup>19</sup> A. L. J. Shields, 'African Churches Mission in Liverpool', p. 329

which helps solve problems'. He illustrates this with the observation of Arnold M. Rose that soldiers who prayed during wars, especially the World War II 'when threatened by external danger were less apt to be overcome by psychoneurotic disturbances than those who did not pray.'<sup>20</sup> From the visit and prayer of Ekarte to the absent or sick members of the choir, he was able to restore them to public worship and by so doing, gave them fulfillment through worship.

### ***2.3.2. The Impact of ACM's Worship on Members and the Community***

The figures available suggest that ACM was able to attract many people into its public worship. In 1934, there were 380 men and 86 women on the membership register. The children's wing had a membership of 148. Average attendance at services was 62 and at the Sunday School about 42. In 1936 the membership had risen to 558.<sup>21</sup> Ekarte's own estimation of the number of regular worshippers every Sunday is higher than Sherwood's; he gave it as between 90 and 104.<sup>22</sup> Sherwood differentiates the number of men worshipping from the women, it is possible that the higher average attendance given by Ekarte included both men and women while that of Sherwood may be referring to the average attendance of one of the genders. Alternatively, either Ekarte inflated the average attendance or Sherwood's source under-estimated it.

The fact the Church was recording an average attendance of over fifty people worshipping every Sunday in a non- Churchgoing environment suggests that it was impacting upon the lives of the worshippers. The success the Church made in attracting many people to its public worship is indicated by Sherwood's comment that

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<sup>20</sup> David O. Moderg, *The Church as a Social Institution: The Sociology of American Religion* (New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p.464

<sup>21</sup> Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission*, p. 32

<sup>22</sup> G. Daniels Ekarte, Letter to the Secretary of Welfare of Africans in Europe War Fund (Surplus), Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, 21 April, 1934. Liverpool Record Office: GB/NNAF/D1643/4910

many worshippers used to stand outside for lack of space.<sup>23</sup> The question that may be asked here is what are the ritual activities of the Church responsible for that high Church attendance? I will briefly examine some of these.

One element that was instrumental to the success of the public worship at ACM was age-group organizations. The Church led children into active participation in Liverpool Scouting. A Young Men's Club was also opened.<sup>24</sup> This was directed at a primary objective of Ekarte to get thousands of black men whom he saw at Cardiff playing cards, dice and gambling to become more tangibly engaged in Church activities.<sup>25</sup> A Mothers' Meeting was organized with trips to places such as the seaside. The men were not left out of the activities of the Church. The pastor organized them into spiritual and social groups; these include the 'singing group' and a cricket team, among others. This was the first time the black community in Britain had such activities organized for them, according to Jones.<sup>26</sup> Organizing the members of the congregation into age groups may have had the advantage of catering for group interest and encouraging more face to face interaction, which eventually would enhance more active participation in the life of the Church. Pastor Ekarte's ministry could be described as gender inclusive and all ages embracing.

The ACM was providing welfare services, such as accommodation for homeless people in emergency situations, and for the jobless until they were able to gain employment. Meals were made available free or cheaply for those who could not pay,

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<sup>23</sup> Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission*, p. 32

<sup>24</sup> Gilbert Adams, 'African Churches Mission and Training Home' in *African Torchlight*, No1, 1953, p.

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<sup>25</sup> Liverpool Record Office: Ekarte G. Daniels, *Our Problem*, GB/NNAF/D1643, ref/4910

<sup>26</sup> Thomas J. Jones, 'A Reminiscence on Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission' p.

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Christmas parties were organized for children with the help of local shops who provided food and toys for about 200 children. Merseyside Council for Hospitality was also involved at one time, with a donation of three guineas (£3.15) to the Mission for its Christmas party. The Mission was described as a 'local centre for those in need.'<sup>27</sup> The involvement of the local shops and the government agencies in the activities of the Mission was an indication that the community appreciated the work of the ACM and acknowledged that the Mission had integrated into the life of the community.<sup>28</sup> The ACM therefore provided fulfillment for the worshippers through preaching of the gospel of salvation, not of the soul alone, but of the body also. This was in line with the holistic gospel worldview of Diaspora African Christians considered in Chapter Three. This action of the pastor therefore took the context of the worshippers into consideration.

Another activity of Ekarte that contributed to the large turn out of Africans for public worship was his role as advocate for the exploited. He served as the solicitor and social right activist for the oppressed members of his Church and the black community experiencing various types of discrimination at the time. This discrimination was in the provision of jobs and education, and also in low pay. In a minute dated 7<sup>th</sup> May 1946 and addressed to a Dr. Marshall, the inspector of education for the North West Region of England, R. Whiteway, writes on her discussions with Ekarte:

Pastor Ekarte talked very bitterly about the treatment of the coloured adolescent child and adult population in Liverpool. He stated that the majority of them are now out of work "now the war is over, they are no longer required" and that even when they are in work the wages are so low that a married man is unable to support his family. I mention this

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34

<sup>28</sup> Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission*, p.35



part because of our conversation because I feel that the children of all coloured people are eventually to be part of his plan to establish the coloured population.<sup>29</sup>

The above role of the pastor must have endeared him and his Church to many worshippers. The principle of holistic ministry could be the best way of describing the ministry and worship of the ACM, which we may say was responsible for the large number of worshippers present at public worship.

The various non-conventional methods of Church ministry of Ekarte which got him involved in the life problems of the members of the Church appeared to be a good way of ministering to African Christians. I will treat the factors that militated against the public worship of the Church after I have discussed the activities of the Diaspora African Churches in Britain, because their problems are similar to that of the ACM.

### **3. The Diaspora African Churches in Britain**

Apart from the ACM, there is no record of any other Diaspora African Church planted in Liverpool during the early period of the twentieth century. The records that exist relate to Churches founded by West Indians both in Liverpool and the UK in general. In terms of scholarship, a thorough 'scholarly investigation of the religious communities of those who have come to Europe directly from the continent of Africa over the last 30 years is still in its infancy.'<sup>30</sup> A brief note from the early 1970s on African Churches in Britain can be found in a small book authored by Clifford Hill for the Community and Race Relations Unit of The British Council of Churches.<sup>31</sup> Hill

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<sup>29</sup> Liverpool Record Office: GB/NNAF/D1643/4910

<sup>30</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Diaspora in Europe*, Reviewed by Roswith Gerloff,, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 30, Fasc. 4, Nov., 2000, p. 508

<sup>31</sup> Clifford Hill, *Black Churches: West Indian and African sects in Britain* (London: Community and Race Relations Unit of The British Council of Churches, 1971), p. 4

suggests that there were small congregations of Africans meeting for prayers in the form of house-groups that came together under the umbrella of Church of the Lord or Church of the Cherubim and Seraphim. Most of these Churches are dominated by the Nigerian Yoruba ethnic group.<sup>32</sup> The pastors of the three Churches who consented to the conduct of this research in their Churches were all Nigerians. This Nigerian presence continues - the leaders of most of the African initiated Churches in Liverpool at the time of this research were Nigerians, the exceptions being the French-speaking African Congolese, the English speaking Gilbert Diya Church and the Life Changers Assembly, who came from East Africa.

### ***3.1. Factors Affecting the Growth of Diaspora African Churches in Britain.***

Scholars identify many factors that have led to the establishment and growth of the African initiated Churches in Britain. First among these is the failure on the part of many mainstream British Churches to accommodate African Christians. A number of Africans alleged that when they arrived in Britain and made efforts to worship in the existing (white) Churches they found the doors closed against them. This was especially true of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches.<sup>33</sup> The observations of the participants at a conference organized by the British Council of Churches on coloured workers in Liverpool on the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> of April, 1951 supports the assertion that coloured people in general were discriminated against at both the spiritual and secular levels. One of the participants observed that it was the duty of the Church to combat racial discrimination at all levels against coloured people. He concluded that

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10

<sup>33</sup> Steve Bruce, *Religion in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 177 See also Clifford Hill, *West Indian Migrants and the London Churches* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 29, 34-35; Clifford Hill, *Black Churches: West Indian and African sects in Britain*, pp 13-16; Stephen Hunt, 'Neither Here nor There': The Construction of Identities and Boundary Maintenance of West African Pentecostals', *Sociology*, Vol. 36, No. 1, February 2002, p. 150.

the Church must not only accept coloured people as equals but consider seriously the implications of racial discrimination and colour prejudice.<sup>34</sup> There was, he said, no colour problem but a 'white problem'. He defined this as the discriminatory attitude against coloured people in terms of employment, provision of housing, and marital relationships.<sup>35</sup> Gerrie ter Haar and other scholars state that black people entering British Churches were asked to sit at the back or not to come again to the Church in order not to 'unsettle white Church members. To some, it was suggested that they should try another Church'<sup>36</sup> Even where they were accommodated, they were frequently excluded from Church governance and decision making. African preachers have come to use the biblical image of the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37) to describe the 'unfriendly reception accorded the black immigrants by the established Churches'<sup>37</sup>. This unfriendliness was one of the reasons for the formation of the African and Afro-Caribbean Churches in Britain.

Secondly, the various types of deprivation African Christians continue to experience in British society as well as in the Church have contributed to the genesis and growth of Diaspora African Churches in Britain. Africans have frequently not been accepted on an equal footing with other members of the same congregation - particularly in the areas of service and leadership. This raises a fundamental question as to whether the enlistment of members of the Church to specific tasks could sustain them in the public

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<sup>34</sup> Liverpool Record Office: Ekarte G. Daniels *British Council of Churches Informal Conference on Coloured Workers*, GB/NNAF/D1643/4910, April 2-4, 1951, n.p

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>36</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe*, pp. 92-93 (See George Eaton Simpson, *Black Religions in the New World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p.272; Afe Adogame, 'Betwixt Identity and Security: African New Religious Movements (ANRMs) and the Politics of Religious Networking in Europe'. 2001. *Centre for Studies on New Religions*. 25 March 2007. <http://www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/adogame.htm>, p. 3 of 10

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3

worship of the Church. The data analysis in the following three chapters will help provide an answer.

In recent years British Churches have taken some steps to rectify this situation. They do now recognize the spiritual gifts of the blacks worshipping with them by giving them positions of leadership in the Church and by appointing them to other leadership positions – not least in ecumenical associations. For example, Angela Sarkis from the Afro-Caribbean Church was appointed in 1996 by the Church of England as the Chief Executive of the Church Urban Fund. Later in the same year, Bishop Joe Aldred from the Afro-Caribbean Church of God of Prophecy was appointed Director of the Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership. A year later, Joel Edwards was elected as the General Director of the Evangelical Alliance, and Beverly Thomas from the Afro-Caribbean Church was appointed Director of Evangelical Christians for Racial Justice.<sup>38</sup> Most recently, the Ugandan-born John Sentamu was consecrated as Archbishop of York in 2005.

Thirdly, Africans have found the worship style of most British Churches not culturally relevant to them. They describe the style of worship in British Churches as monotonous and mind-numbing.<sup>39</sup> Africans desire a more dynamic and livelier form of worship that takes into consideration their own cultural milieu. Above all else, they have a preference for participatory worship. The sermon and all aspects of the worship should engage the members of the congregation, address their daily needs, and unite body, soul and spirit. African Churches were established to give room for

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<sup>38</sup> Mark Sturge, *Look what the Lord has Done: An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain*, p. 18

<sup>39</sup> Patrick Kalilombe, 'Black Christianity in Britain' in *Strangers and Sojourners* ed. Gerrie ter Haar (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), p.179; Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise*, p. 93

the internalization of the Christian message and the expression through worship of the culture in the way that Africans understand. At the 1951 conference of the British Council of Churches referred to above, two participants emphasized the desirability of coloured people's Churches, not as a form of racial discrimination but as a way of giving them the opportunity to worship in their own way without interference.<sup>40</sup>

Fourthly, Africans desire a family or community Church, where love is shared and the needs of the members are catered for through teaching, counseling, prayer, healing services, sermons and physical sharing among the members of the congregation.

Africans Christians are opposed to a patronizing attitude of care in which they are regarded as people to be pitied because of their economic disadvantage. The comment of Afe Adogame below partly conveys the reasons for the emergence and growth of the AICs in Britain:

Many African Christians who come to Europe often try, in the first instance, to find out and identify with mainstream Churches or denominations similar or related to theirs back home. No sooner do they discover them, than the feeling of spiritual lukewarmness or the experience of unwelcomeness and rejection stare them in the face. Due to the disappointment and pastoral neglect faced in the Churches by the new arrivals in European Churches, a number of new Churches emerged through African initiatives and under African leadership.<sup>41</sup>

Steve Bruce observes that even if all the above shortcomings were not present in the British Churches, the immigrants would have still founded their Churches because of the age gap between the black worshippers, mainly young adults, and the elderly

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<sup>40</sup> Wang and Richards. Liverpool Record Office: Ekarte G. Daniels *British Council of Churches Informal Conference on Coloured Workers*, GB/NNAF/D1643/4910, April 2-4, 1951, n.p

<sup>41</sup> Afe Adogame, 'Betwixt Identity and Security: African New Religious Movements (ANRMs) and the Politics of Religious Networking in Europe', p. 3 of 10 (See also Clifford S. Hill, *West Indian Migrants and the London Churches* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963, pp. 29, 34-35; Clifford Hill, *Black Churches: West Indian and African Sects in Britain* (London: Community and Race Relations of the British Council of Churches, 1971), pp. 13-16)

majority of whom the British Churches are composed.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the desire of some of the African Church leaders to carry out missionary activities in Britain has also contributed to the growth of the African initiated Churches.<sup>43</sup>

It is possible to summarize all the above reasons for the formation and growth of the AICs in Europe and in Britain under the concept of 'fulfillment' as contained in the interpretative triangle of religious behaviour. In our discussions, all the major sources of religious behaviour come to the fore. The influence of the worldview of Diaspora African Christians on the shape of their rituals and religious behaviour has been seen. The manner in which they are received in Britain and the conditions they face in the host society have been instrumental to the establishment of their own Churches. Africans Christians in the diaspora look to the Church for spiritual, psychological and socio-economic fulfillment. The notion of spiritual fulfillment thus encompasses more than experiences of emotionally engaging worship. Spiritual fulfillment also includes the need for the Church to provide satisfaction for the spiritual yearnings of Africans in terms of a theology that will assure them of the supremacy of the power of the gospel over perceived antagonistic spiritual forces. The theology of the Church should also be able to offer them practical guidance in making life-determining decisions. The notion of fulfillment also includes the expectation that the Church should make available to its members opportunities to serve in various capacities of Church ministry. African Christians want a Church where ministry is shared. The psychological fulfillment which the Church is expected to provide includes the provision of counseling and the use of Bible passages, sermons, music and prayers to proffer solutions to life issues faced daily by the African worshippers.

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<sup>42</sup> Steve Bruce, *Religion in Modern Britain*, pp. 77-78

<sup>43</sup> Mark Sturge, *Look what the Lord has Done: An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain*, p.

Furthermore, socio-economic fulfillment is bound up with the need to ensure freedom from discrimination in the Church, racial or otherwise, and depends upon the ability of the Church to take into cognizance the cultural precedents of the worshippers in order to make Christ culturally relevant. The Church here becomes a loving community of the faithful where love is expressed in concrete terms of mutual giving and receiving, a form of family Church where the needs of a member become the needs of all members of the Church, as in Acts of the Apostles 2: 44-45 and 4: 34-35. The concern of the Church for the socio-economic fulfillment of its members underscores an overlap between the different categories of fulfillment mentioned above. This further attests to the fact that in the worldview of African Christians, there is no dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual world. God is interested in the physical and spiritual state of the worshippers. Consequently, the Church as the people of God must ensure that the needs of the worshippers are met in a holistic manner.

The AICs have also provided solace for the loneliness that many Africans coming to Britain experience on their arrival. They give practical support to the new arrivals in various ways:

When new friends, families or 'countrymen and countrywomen' arrived in Britain, there would be someone and somewhere to greet them – a Church, actively functioning as a welcoming centre, sharing information and offering support, where the weak and discouraged could be strengthened by the testimonies of the victorious and 'the overcomers'.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Mark Sturge, *Look what the Lord has Done: An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain*, p. 88

During the last 25 years, other African Churches have sprung up. Such Churches are more Pentecostal/Charismatic in style than the earlier AICs.<sup>45</sup> In most cases these emerging Diaspora African Churches have mother Churches in their home countries or in North America. According to Ter Haar, these Churches still display an African worldview in their practices, but are more internationally oriented than the earlier arrivals.<sup>46</sup> Two of the Churches studied in this research have affiliations with Churches in Nigeria, while the third one is affiliated to a Church in the USA.

Among the Diaspora African Churches currently active in London alone we find Trinity Baptist Church, Victory Bible Church International, The Lighthouse Chapel International, Divine Grace Baptist Church, Victoryland Baptist Church, many chapters of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, The Gospel Faith Mission International and Gilbert Diya Church. The largest African diaspora Church in the country is probably Kingsway International Christian Centre, London (KICC) pastored by the Nigerian Matthew Ashimolowo. The Church is reputed to be the fastest growing in England, and the largest to be established in the UK since 1861.<sup>47</sup> It opened around 1992 with a membership of about 200 and has now increased in membership to about 10,000. Almost 50 nations are represented in the congregation.<sup>48</sup> Ashimolowo sees what God is doing through him as 'reverse mission'. That is, he understands God to be sending those same peoples who used to receive missionaries as missionaries themselves around the world. He attributes the success of his ministry and that of other growing African Churches in Britain to the preaching of the Word of

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<sup>45</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe*, p. 19

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 95

<sup>47</sup> 'History of KICC.' *Kingsway International Christian Centre*. 26 March 2005.

<http://www.kicc.org.uk/scstore/sitepages/history.html>, p. 1 of 1

<sup>48</sup> Griffith Wendy, 'A Harvest Sown by Generations Past.' 2005. *CBN News*. 25 March 2005.

<http://www.cbn.com/spirituallife/ChurchAndMinistry/ChurchHistory/HarvestSown.asp>, p. 1 of 2



God and the principles of faith, which he considers most Nigerian Christian leaders in Britain learnt during the Nigerian revival of 1970s.

African initiated Churches have been growing in Britain because they are more joyous, progressive and dynamic. Black Churches plan a range of programmes in order to get the youths involved in Church activities. Similarly, Snow claims, while the orthodox British Churches, especially the Church of England, at times appear to be interested more 'in appeasing the right-on lobby attitude'<sup>49</sup> than in evangelizing the community, the black Churches regularly embark on evangelistic outreaches using marketing campaign techniques to attract new worshippers. It is observed of the black Churches that:

They unashamedly apply tried and tested business practice to 'sell' their message- putting advertisements on television, the radio and in the print media....they are not frightened to use money and invest it. From the Church of England you get the impression that no one wants to touch money.<sup>50</sup>

The evangelistic outreach strategy of the Diaspora African Churches appears to be a carry over from the gospel outreach style of African Churches. This further strengthens the influence maintained by the background religious experience of the Diaspora African Christians on their current religious activities in Britain.

Underscoring the success of the African Churches in making use of the print and electronic media especially in Nigeria and Ghana, Rosalind I. J. Hackett notes that the desire of the African Church leaders to be seen as progressive and modern accounts for 'their enchantment with the electronic media'. She agrees with Matthews Ojo that their crusade and revival posters 'entice the needy, promising miracles, healing and

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2 of 2

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*.

financial success'.<sup>51</sup> She further notes on their success in making use of the radio, television and other media for religious propagation as follows:

'With extended viewing audiences ... and the enhancement of the electronic medium, the evangelist who has a powerful message and a good dose of charisma may attract a much larger following. This may in part explain the development of the 'mega-Church' in both Nigeria and Ghana in recent years.'<sup>52</sup>

In terms of the impact of the Diaspora African Churches on worshippers and in their host nations, Roswith Gerloff notes that they have influenced the established denominations in the areas of their 'music, belonging, wholeness, community, grassroots theology, healing and reliance on God's Spirit, because these aspects are biblical; moreover, they are human, and hence not just African vehicles for redeeming people'. She sees this influence as a 'mission' opportunity through migration, though 'not as strategies but as carrying life testimonies, as told in the story of Abraham and Sarah or the call into discipleship by Jesus'.<sup>53</sup>

### ***3.2. The Weaknesses of Diaspora African Churches in Britain***

The above achievements of the African/black Churches notwithstanding, they have their weaknesses. Strong leadership or too much power being exercised by leaders led in some instances to mismanagement and other bad practices.<sup>54</sup> The Charity Commission's report on KICC is a high profile case in point. KICC underwent an inquiry into its activities by the Charity Commission under section 8 of the Charity

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<sup>51</sup> Rosalind I. J. Hackett, 'Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media Technologies in Nigeria and Ghana' in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 28, Fasc. 3, August 1998, pp. 261, 265 See Matthews A. Ojo, 'Material Inscriptions of the Spiritual World among Nigerian Charismatic Movement.' Paper presented at the Institute for the Advanced Study and Research in the African Humanities, Northwestern University, April, 1994

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p. 266

<sup>53</sup> Roswith Gerloff, *The African Christian Diaspora in Europe: Religious and Cultural Aspects*, Paper for the IAMS Conference in Malaysia, 31 July – 7 August, 2004, p. 20

<sup>54</sup> Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this thesis discuss in greater depth the element of 'strong leadership' as it is found in African, Asian and South American Churches by Wes Richards and as I encountered it in the Churches where I did participant observation during the course of this research

Commission's 1993 Act. The Commission ruled that the pastor exercised too much power over the trustees and the finances. It concluded that 'there was serious misconduct and mismanagement in the administration of the Charity and ... that the Charity's property was at risk'. The Commission recommended that a Receiver and Manager should be appointed to take control of the Charity's assets, and if necessary its management and administration.<sup>55</sup>

The above weaknesses of the Diaspora African Churches raise a number of questions that will be answered through the analysis of the fieldwork data later in this thesis. Are the pastors exercising too much power in the Churches studied? Could their exercise of power militate against a holistically fulfilling worship?

#### **4. Ritual Elements among Diaspora African Churches in Britain**

Some consideration is necessary of the ritual elements in the worship of Diaspora African Churches in Britain, because of the position that worship occupies on our interpretative triangle. Starting from the Cherubim and Seraphim Church in London studied by Clifford Hill, I will explore some of the elements of ritual.

##### ***4.1. Ecstatic Worship and Music***

Hill describes the worship of Cherubim and Seraphim Church as ecstatic. All the members dress in long white garments and walk on bare feet in and around the Church. As they walk, they sing congregational hymns and long sequences of choruses, usually accompanied by organ, drums and a standing choir. The singing is usually loud and rhythmical, and as the choruses are repeated over and over again,

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<sup>55</sup>Report of the Inquiry by the Charity Commission into the Governance and Administration of the King's Ministries Trust.' 10 October 2005. *The Charity Commission*. 11 November 2006. <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/investigations/inquiryreports/kmt.asp>, pp. 1- 4 of 7

many may go into ecstasy. It is only the ringing of a bell by the worship leader that can bring the situation under control.<sup>56</sup>

In his discussions on the Black Majority Churches in the United Kingdom, Mark Sturge identifies singing and hand clapping as unique elements of worship used to demonstrate thankfulness and joyfulness of the worshippers before the Lord for good health, strength and other life amenities. He notes further that recently, classical dance and the use of flags have been borrowed from the historical Church and incorporated into the worship of the Black Majority Churches.<sup>57</sup>

#### ***4.2. The Operation of the Spiritual Gifts***

Vanessa Howard asserts that in the Pentecostal black led Churches in Britain, the gifts of tongues, interpretation, prophecy, healing and sometimes words of knowledge are practised.<sup>58</sup> The operation of these gifts, especially prophecy, is usually supervised by the worship leader who is responsible for determining that every revelation is interpreted correctly and that the service is orderly. It appears that this supervision confers some power on the leader of worship. This practice appears to be a carry over from the African Independent Churches in Africa to which some of the Diaspora African Christians earlier belonged. Olayiwola claims that not only do the Aladura believe in and practise prophecy, dreams and visions, but that 'prophets and visioners in the Aladura constitute a special class of people whose inner eyes make them more powerful than ordinary men.'<sup>59</sup> And they see this belief and practice as normal and in

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<sup>56</sup> Clifford Hill, *Black Churches: West Indian and African Sects in Britain*, p. 17

<sup>57</sup> Mark Sturge, *Look what the Lord has Done*, p. 125

<sup>58</sup> Vanessa Howard, A Report on Afro-Caribbean Christianity in Britain for the Community Religions Project in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Leeds, 1987, p. 13

<sup>59</sup> David O. Olayiwola, 'The Aladura: Its Strategies for Mission and Conversion in Yorubaland, Nigeria'. *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. XIX/1, June 1987, p. 47

conformity with the provisions of the Bible. Olayiwola argues that the practice of prophecy, visions and dreams which directly touch upon the lives of the people were elements of the Aladura worship that led many people into joining the Church.

The number of those who prophesy in a service, however, may be pruned if the congregation is large and everybody wants to take part. Key to this pruning is the band of Missioners within the Church. A person may not be allowed to prophesy if he/she has not attended the meeting of this band during the week. This is considered central to the right exercise of spiritual gifts. The act of prophesying and the participation of many members in service usually make their services long.<sup>60</sup> In Diaspora African Churches, the way prophecy is practised and the frequency of occurrence may vary depending on what the pastor believes. In Chapters Six and Seven two very different approaches will be discussed.

#### ***4.3. The Place of the Bible***

Most of the Diaspora African Churches hold as fundamental the teachings of the Bible in all manner of faith and practices. They see it as the inspired Word of God, directly impacting upon their everyday life. They study the Bible meticulously and quote it frequently in discussion, drawing practical lessons from it in order to solve the problems of daily life.<sup>61</sup> This fidelity to the Bible is reflected in their belief in the manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit, and their understanding of water baptism by immersion as being the public declaration of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They also share a belief in atonement through the blood of Jesus, justification by faith, the sanctification of the believer which includes separation for God's exclusive use

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<sup>60</sup> Clifford Hill, *Black Churches: West Indian and African Sects in Britain*, pp. 10-11

<sup>61</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe*, pp. 47-48

and the doctrine of holy living. They believe in the observation of the ordinance of Holy Communion, tithing, prayer and fasting and the priesthood of all believers.<sup>62</sup>

## **5. Factors Militating against Public Worship at AICs**

One of my aims in this thesis is to identify those factors within British society that militate against public worship at AICs. My chief source of data for this is my fieldwork. However, in order to permit my own findings to be related to the longer time frame, I wish at this stage to refer back to the case of Ekarte's ACM in Liverpool, and briefly catalogue those factors that militated against worship there. This will then raise a question that I shall answer through my fieldwork – namely, whether those same factors are still at play today.

### ***5.1. Financial Difficulties***

Sherwood observes that 'the life of Ekarte's Mission was a constant struggle for survival.'<sup>63</sup> The financial difficulty was so severe that the Mission found it difficult to pay for gas, electricity, postage, housekeeping necessities, and other running costs. The pastor had to use his initiative to open a café very close to the docks which provided meals and drinks for the dock workers. This helped the financial situation of the ACM until the whole area was demolished by the Council authorities. Carlton E. Wilson comments on the non-availability of funds to the ACM:

Ekarte articulated a more positive self-help scheme for blacks, and he constantly agitated for racial equality. For these and other reasons, Ekarte and his mission were often viewed with disdain by funding agencies in Liverpool and elsewhere.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Mark Sturge, *Look what the Lord has Done: An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain*, pp. 115-132

<sup>63</sup> Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission*, pp. 98, 102

<sup>64</sup> Carlton E. Wilson, 'Racism and Private Assistance: The Support of West Indian and African Missions in Liverpool, England, during the Interwar Years,' p. 56

There were allegations of self-financial enrichment against the pastor. Although Sherwood described them as unfounded they undoubtedly created hardship for the Mission.<sup>65</sup> The assistance that did come was far from what was needed for effective operation. The Colonial Office made donations on a few occasions but these were considered too small to meet the needs of the Mission.<sup>66</sup>

### ***5.2. Accommodation Difficulties.***

The movement of the ACM from place to place was largely due to lack of money for the purchase of property. The discussion of the ethnographic data shortly in the following chapters will enable us to see whether lack of space and finance are still problems today in Liverpool. Other researchers have established that lack of accommodation for worship is one of the principal problems encountered by the African Church founders in Europe. This has on many occasions led these Churches to use halls, pubs and other temporary accommodations until they are able to raise enough money to purchase their own Church property.<sup>67</sup>

### ***5.3. The Problem of Racial Discrimination***

Church planting efforts and opportunities for public worship among the Diaspora African Christians were hindered by racial hostility during the time of Ekarte. Carlton Wilson maintains that Ekarte was racially discriminated against in terms of the financial assistance needed to take care of war babies and to execute his Christian mission.<sup>68</sup> Ekarte lamented that being a West African did not give him opportunities

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<sup>65</sup> Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission*, p. 105

<sup>66</sup> Marika Sherwood, *Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission*, p. 102

<sup>67</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe*, p. 40

<sup>68</sup> Pastor G. D. Ekarte's Letter to the Secretary of The Welfare of Africans in Europe War Fund (Surplus), London. Liverpool Record Office: Ekarte G. Daniels GB/NNAF/D1643, ref/4910, Sheets 1-

to obtain loans. He was desirous to build an annex so that there might be enough rooms for the activities of the Church, but could not do so because, he said, 'we only have the property on short lease from landlords who are not interested in our spiritual work'.<sup>69</sup> The Church organizations in Liverpool were not outside this discrimination at the time, especially the Liverpool Methodist Mission which 'sanctioned negative imagery in its description of the [Mission's] black congregation'.<sup>70</sup> Thomas J. Jones observes that things were made essentially difficult for ACM because racism existed wholesale in the city of Liverpool at that time. He, however, remarked that despite this, 'there are a lot of wonderful people in Liverpool who will treat you with respect, and I am sure others like me have met and worked with many, but the fight for equality still goes on.'<sup>71</sup>

Mark Christian maintains that the settlement of black people in Liverpool 'gives a contemporary survey of urban social decay and inequality in the Western world' which was 'ingrained within a white supremacy context'.<sup>72</sup> While this may be true of the hostility Ekarte faced in Liverpool, I am of the opinion that it was more due to the lack of contextualization of his mission strategy. He was also not diplomatic enough in fighting for racial equality. Though the ACM started about a century after slavery was abolished in Britain, the racial stereotypes it had created is likely to take longer time to disappear than the pastor thought.

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p.65

<sup>71</sup> Thomas J. Jones, 'A Reminiscence on Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission', p.

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<sup>72</sup> Mark Christian, 'An African-Centred Approach to the Black British Experience with Special Reference to Liverpool'. *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 28, No. 3, January 1998, p. 304



## **6. Conclusions**

The Diaspora African Churches have been increasing in number in the past ten years. Their African worldview, the nature of their worship, and the socio-economic conditions they experienced in the host society have been instrumental to the growth of these Churches. The Churches have impacted on the host society through a more pragmatic evangelism, especially in the use of proven marketing strategies in reaching the public. Their holistic theology has been able to provide fulfillment and solace to their members. The Church has become a community to many of their members. They have enlisted many in the service of the Churches, thus making their members more committed to the life of the Church. Nonetheless, there are also internal weaknesses within AICs, as there have been historic forces within British society that have militated against public worship in the AICs. We now turn to my fieldwork results to examine the extent of the achievement of holistic fulfillment and the nature of the contrary forces within the Diaspora Churches in Liverpool today.

## **Chapter Six**

### **The Believers' Church**

#### **1. Introduction**

With this chapter we now turn to the results of my ethnographic research into African Diaspora Churches in Liverpool. This chapter investigates the elements sustaining public worship in the first of my three fieldwork sites, the Believer's Church (BC). I shall examine the complementary relationship between its ritual practices, the worldview of the members, the conditions in the host society, and how these variables affect the expectations that its members have of their experience of worship.

This chapter is divided into nine sections. The first is this introduction, and the second section lays out the background of the Church studied, including location, history and composition. The next appraises the doctrinal beliefs of the Church with special reference to public worship, and section four focuses on the Church's ritual shape. The next section explores the structures of power and authority in the Church with particular reference to its impact on public worship. Section six assesses the social roles of the Church among its members, especially the community spirit prevalent in the Church. Section seven deals with the relationship of the Church to the broader community (host society). Factors militating against public worship in the host society are reviewed in the next section, and the final section contains the conclusions.

Participant observation started in this Church on May 1 and ended on July 31, 2005. During the research I attended Bible study, Sunday worship and prayer meetings, along with other Church activities such as weddings. My research samples were mainly Africans because although the pastor claimed the Church had some white

members, they rarely remained for long. The pastor thought that it was the rigid stance of the Church against immorality that prevented white members from making a full commitment to the Church. In his own words:

Some of the white members dropped out but we always have new ones. Most of them dropped out when we emphasize that they should not take alcohol, and they should not sleep with women they have not married. We did not drive them away but we continue to preach what the Bible says about living a holy life, but some felt they cannot change.<sup>1</sup>

The pastor further observed that ‘a few are disgusted about the Church’s emphasis on stewardship of giving tithes and offerings’.<sup>2</sup>

The first aim of the Church’s founder had been to reach out to drug addicts and prostitutes, and within the BC context, these were entirely white. Although the Church had also attracted some (not many) other white members, those from its mission target, the drug addicts and prostitutes, were the very ones who were not retained – the very people it sought to bring in. This is underscored by the broader claims of Stephen Hunt and Nicola Lightly that the African Churches are ‘unable to win over white converts’.<sup>3</sup> As we shall see, the other two African Churches studied adopted a different strategy by merging with white Churches. In neither case did this greatly increase the white membership.

## **2. The Church’s Background**

### **2.1. History**

The BC was started by a Nigerian pastor who had run an independent Church ministry in Nigeria before relocating to Britain. He, like many other pastors and Christian

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<sup>1</sup>BC Pastor, Interview, May 3 2005

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid*, Interview

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Hunt and Nicola Lightly, ‘The British black Pentecostal “revival”: identity and belief in the “new” Nigerian churches’ *Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 24, No1, 1 January 2001, p. 109

workers from Africa, interpreted his entry into Europe as signifying divine approval to his plans to evangelize the largely secularized European continent. Other African workers interpret this assignment as 'reverse mission'.<sup>4</sup> Since it is not the focus of this research to consider the reverse mission debate, what is of importance to us here is how the religious activities of these Africans have contributed to their life fulfilment in terms of impacting positively upon the host society.

When the pastor was asked how he was sure God was speaking to him to come to Britain, he said:

There is a way by which I know when God is speaking to me. It may be through dream or vision. This time, God gave me a passage in Micah 2:10 which says 'arise and depart because this is not your rest, because it is defiled, it shall destroy'.<sup>5</sup>

The pastor claimed that God used the above passage to instruct him to leave Nigeria and go elsewhere. According to him, while he was vacillating, some events such as the destruction of the structure of his auditorium by some Muslim fundamentalists and the government's resolve to take over the Church's land after the Church was vandalised convinced him that he must obey the call to be a missionary.

While in Britain, he decided to work for an established Nigerian denomination which had a ministry of rehabilitation of drug addicts. This served his interests because his earlier ministry had been engaged with the rehabilitation of drug addicts and prostitutes in Nigeria. This emphasis on rehabilitation mission is the key feature distinguishing BC from the other Churches studied.

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

After exploratory mission work in Liverpool, the pastor felt convinced that he had received a divine injunction to establish the branch of the Church in Liverpool. This began with an all night prayer meeting December 31 2001.<sup>6</sup> The BC was soon inaugurated in the pastor's house. They moved to the YMCA in the city centre in 2002. Inadequate space and lack of time to execute some of the Church's programmes (as the house was being used for other purposes), led to the movement of the Church out of the YMCA building to Vauxhall Community Centre in 2003. When this space in turn became too small for them, the Church moved to a village hall in Kirkdale where they held the first service on August 1, 2004.

## ***2.2. Location and Composition of the Church***

The BC is presently located at the village hall in Kirkdale to which it moved in 2004.

The pastor observed that this was one of the deprived areas of the city:

No commercial activity is going on in this area. It is regarded as a poor area and there are a lot of violence and criminal acts going on around this area. This property we are using had been broken into before we came and we encountered such incidence also when we were having 'all night prayer meeting'. Some guys came about 1.00am while we were praying, they wanted to come and play but we said we are praying, we can't open the door for you. They went ahead and punctured the tyres of our cars parked outside so I have to keep vigil watching over the rest of the cars. They damaged the door of the building.<sup>7</sup>

Local government statistics confirm the pastor's understanding of the deprived status of the area. In 2001, while the average property price for a detached house in Liverpool was £126,476, that of Kirkdale Ward was £75,331.<sup>8</sup> In 2005, while the same house cost £250,307 in Liverpool, it cost only £182,688 in Kirkdale. With

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<sup>6</sup> BC Pastor, Interview

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> 'Ward Profile, Kirkdale'. October 2005. *Regeneration Portfolio, Liverpool City Council, Policy and Programmes Division*. 10 February 2006.

[http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/economic\\_development/key\\_statistics\\_and\\_data/index.asp](http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/economic_development/key_statistics_and_data/index.asp), section 3.3

regard to employment, while the joblessness rate was 33.9% in the whole of Liverpool in 2004, Kirkdale Ward had 57%. Between 1998 and 2002, while the rate of income support claimants for Liverpool was 17.1%, that of Kirkdale was 29.3%.<sup>9</sup> While mean household income for Liverpool in 2004 was £22,511, it was £18,232 for Kirkdale.<sup>10</sup> When the location of BC is compared to that of the other Churches studied in this research, it becomes clear that all the Churches are planted in the more deprived areas of the city. Yet there are differences between the three locations. From information statistics given in Chapters Seven and Eight, the location of the other two Churches in the areas of Kensington and Granby can largely be explained by the preponderance of Africans in those parts of the city. However, this is not the case for BC, as the statistics outlining the racial composition of the Kirkdale area demonstrate. The major ethnic composition of Kirkdale is White British, 95.8% of the total population. All other ethnic groups form the rest - 4.2%.<sup>11</sup> It may be that the only tenable reason for an African majority Church to be located in this white majority area is the availability there of convenient accommodation for worship.

The Church is located along a main road that is constantly served by buses. This makes it easy for members to gain access to the Church. Nonetheless, many of the members do not live in the immediate vicinity. Some came from outside the city of Liverpool – from Birkenhead, St. Helens and Southport. Although the rest lived in Liverpool, their homes were not within walking distance of the Church. The location of this Church may therefore hinder its growth and public worship attendance. There was no notice to indicate that a Church was meeting regularly for worship in that hall, which could be another factor hindering would-be members from locating the Church.

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, sections 4.1 & 4.2

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, section 5.3

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, section 1.4

The hall consists of two relatively large rooms and two other smaller rooms. The largest of the rooms is used as the Church auditorium. It can accommodate around one hundred and fifty persons. The seats used were steel chairs which the pastor said would be easy to move if they needed to vacate the hall in future.

Most of the members of the Church are black Africans. The average attendance at Sunday service is twenty five, with fewer people attending the week-day services. There is approximate gender balance in membership. The congregation contained a number of professionals such as medical doctors, nurses, para-medics, health care assistants, social workers and students. However, over one quarter of the members who said they were employed were engaged in menial jobs which may not be related to their areas of specialisation. About one third of the women live in the city without husbands while relatively fewer men live alone in Liverpool. This was also the situation in the other two Churches studied.

### **3. The Doctrinal Beliefs**

The major doctrinal beliefs of the BC such as in the Bible, Baptism of the Holy Spirit and divine healing are similar to those held by the Redeemed Christian Church of God to which the BC is affiliated.<sup>12</sup> The doctrinal link is reinforced by the fact that every year literature for Sunday School lessons, evangelism and other programmes is sent to BC from Nigeria. In this section I have chosen to focus on the above stated doctrines for exploration because in one way or another, they touch upon public worship, the principal area of interest of this research.

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<sup>12</sup> There are three African diaspora churches in Liverpool affiliated to this fast-growing Nigerian church.

### 3.1. *The Bible*

The Redeemed Christian Church of God believes that the Bible is the word of God and is inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is inerrant, infallible and absolutely relevant to human needs.<sup>13</sup> The Church affirms her faith in the Bible in *Our Fundamental Belief* which states, inter alia:

We receive the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament as eternal, authoritative, coherent, complete and all sufficient, as the only infallible rule of faith. Its message is intended primarily for the human race. It is expressed in words and in terms, which human beings can understand. Its central theme and purpose is the salvation of man.<sup>14</sup>

A close look at the provisions of the Article of Faith of the Church reveals the centrality of the authority of the Bible. For example, item fourteen of the Statement of Faith says 'we love unity in the body of Christ. We agree with the Scriptures that those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour belong to one body of Christ'. The same thing is in item four under 'Our Priorities' where the Church says 'we want to teach and learn the word of God in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit...'<sup>15</sup> The whole Article of Faith could be referred to as the Article of the Bible because references are made to the Bible in almost every statement of belief. It is therefore not surprising that the injunction of the Bible for believers to fellowship together is one of the elements the members of BC referred to as instrumental to their public worship attendance. The beliefs in the Bible are similar to the beliefs by the other Churches studied. The other two Churches also held to the centrality of the Bible in matters of faith and practice.

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<sup>13</sup> 'Our Fundamental Belief', *RCCG INTERNET OUTREACH*. 03 November 2005.  
[http://main.rccg.org/church\\_ministry/fundamental\\_belief\\_main.htm](http://main.rccg.org/church_ministry/fundamental_belief_main.htm), p. 2 of 10

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p.7 of 10



The role played by the Bible in this Church underscores the assertion made by many scholars that Diaspora African Churches believe in the authority and infallibility of the Bible.<sup>16</sup> The leaders of all the three Churches studied stressed that the chief reason underpinning the importance of public worship was that the Bible enjoins it. They constantly referred to Hebrews 10: 25: 'not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching'. In the same vein, in the course of the research, the research sample said that they came for public worship because the Bible enjoins it, quoting the same Bible passage. The belief in the injunction of the Bible on public worship is therefore instrumental to the sustenance of public worship in BC, and in the other Churches studied in this research.

### ***3.2. The Church's Mission***

This Church believes in the mission of the mother denomination which is 'to proclaim the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ to the lost and to admonish that we live a sanctified life, growing constantly in the faith for the advancement of the kingdom of God and the glory of the Lord'.<sup>17</sup> One of the practical steps of the BC in fulfilling the mission statement of the mother denomination is the intensity of focus on evangelization to drug addicts, prostitutes and other social outcasts. Expatiating on this, the pastor explained:

Primarily, we are sent to come and help in this land. We make all efforts not to even reach out to the blacks and that is our main purpose because we believe that the black people already have the knowledge of God in one way or the other. Because of that we concentrate on the indigenes. We are

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<sup>16</sup> See Mark Sturge, *Look what the Lord has Done* (London: Scripture Union, 2005), p. 132 and Gerrie ter Haar, 'The African Diaspora in Europe: Some Important Themes and Issues' in *Strangers and Sojourners: Religious Communities in the Diaspora* ed. by Gerrie ter Haar (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), p. 54

<sup>17</sup> 'Our Fundamental Belief', RCCG INTERNET OUTREACH, p. 1 of 10

determined to raise the leaders that will influence the indigenes in order to take over Church leadership and continue the good work we want established here.<sup>18</sup>

The pastor elaborated further on his understanding of the *raison d'être* of the Church's mission as being outreach to the social outcasts:

I was ministering to the drug addicts, prostitutes and other social outcasts in Nigeria. I was told when I got to United Kingdom and was staying in London that Liverpool has problem of youths addicted to drugs and those involved in prostitution. I came to Liverpool to see the situation on ground.<sup>19</sup>

Liverpool is one of the cities in England with serious drug misuse and prostitution problems. It was one of the three cities selected for a recent major Home Office study of drug use – not least because it has 'a considerable track record in drug research and monitoring with relevant local expertise'.<sup>20</sup> In the 1980s, Liverpool was referred to as a 'smack city' because of its drug problems.<sup>21</sup> The Liverpool region was estimated to have in that period 20,000 opiate users, with smoking being the most common means of administration.<sup>22</sup> Drug misuse in the city occurs with all age groups and both genders, but men outnumber women 6:1, and with those at ages 21-25 are the most prone group. There is a close link between drug addiction and prostitution in the city.<sup>23</sup> During the 1980s, Merseyside was 'the location for a number of heroin outbreaks or epidemics'; the crime rate recorded was 'one of the highest in the country and has risen faster than the national average since 1979'. Liverpool has 'more crime per head of the population than Wirral', which has exceeded other

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<sup>18</sup> BC Pastor, Interview

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>20</sup> Matthew Hickman and Others, 'Estimating prevalence of problem drug use: multiple methods in Brighton, Liverpool and London'. 2004. *Research Development and Statistics Directorate, Home Office*. 14 February, 2006. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/rdsolr3604.pdf>, p. 6 of 48

<sup>21</sup> Howard Seymour and Gail Eaton, 'The Liverpool Model: A Population based Approach to Harm Reduction'. *Health Care Development, Liverpool, UK*. 19 November 2007.

<http://www.drugtext.org/library/articles/97844.htm>, p. 1 of 8

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 1-3

boroughs of Merseyside since 1979 in terms of increase in the rate of recorded crime.<sup>24</sup> These statistics confirm the view of the pastor of BC that drug misuse and other anti-social behaviours are widespread in Liverpool.

As already stated, the goal of BC is to minister principally to the target group of drug addicts, and this could be described as a step in the right direction of influencing the local community for good. Yet in the process of participant observation and data analysis, it became clear to me that BC has not in fact achieved its goal, as it has failed to retain the participation of drug addicts and prostitutes in its public worship. This raises questions about the genuineness of the change of habits of such addicts, and also leaves open the concern as to whether they will be able to continue living drug-free lives after leaving the Church. This development appears to suggest that the Church under study has not made a sustained fruitful impact upon the host community in terms of enlisting their membership and through the gospel reforming people of their anti-social behaviour.

It is my opinion that the pastor was over-assuming by concluding that all the blacks in the Liverpool community 'have the knowledge of God one way or the other'. How could he draw such a conclusion? Though the Church has the right to choose the people targeted for its ministry, the pastor's submission that they were deliberately not ministering to the blacks, when the blacks are much in the majority in his congregation appeared unreasonable.

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<sup>24</sup> Howard Parker and Russell Newcombe, 'Heroin Use and Acquisitive Crime in an English Community' *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 38, No. 3, September 1987, pp. 332-333

## **4. The Ritual Shape**

### ***4.1. Worship Style as Revealed from the Worship Bulletin***

What informs the worship style of the BC could be quickly identified by first time worshippers because it was stated on the back of the Sunday worship bulletin. Under the heading 'The Way We Worship', the Church affirmed its belief in the fatherhood of God who loves to dialogue with his children.<sup>25</sup> The bulletin further stated 'you'll probably find us praying quite a lot. You'll find us kneeling, lifting our hands and sometimes even shedding a tear'. Besides, 'we love to clap, sing, dance or even jump when we are praising God. Jesus paid a great price on the Cross because he loved us so. We are simply expressing our love too'.<sup>26</sup> The above tells us to some extent that services in this Church tend towards emotional elation and ecstatic expressions, which they claim are scriptural. As Stringer observes, ecstatic worship was 'clearly a central element of the practice of the Christian community in Corinth and clearly something that Paul approved of in principle'.<sup>27</sup> Though in fact the worship I observed was not in general as ecstatic as described in the bulletin, there were occasional outbursts by worshippers in utterances such as 'Hallelujah', 'Amen', 'Praise God' during prayer or when preaching was going on.

### ***4.2. The Opening of the Service and Music Ministry***

The service always opened with music led by members of the choir, which lasted for about twenty minutes. During this time both choruses and classical hymns were sung. Choruses by their nature tend to be easily danceable, but in this Church a deliberate effort was made by the musicians to perform all the hymns, too, in a style for dancing. This was done by adjusting the tempo and making the hymns fit into a four-beat

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<sup>25</sup> 'Guests? Welcome' *Believers' Church Sunday Service Bulletin*, 29 May, 2005, p. 4

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>27</sup> Martin D. Stringer, *A Sociological History of Christian Worship*, p. 31

pattern so that they might be accompanied with tambourines, clapping and the keyboard. A hymn that was treated in such a danceable manner was *Count Your Blessings*.<sup>28</sup>

As I have earlier observed, the singing of praises was part of the events that took place in the Lord's Supper which Jesus had with his disciples. The singing of songs in BC - as well as in other Churches studied in this research - may be said to be an echo of that event (Matthew 26: 30 and Mark 14: 26) and the early Church gathering of 1 Corinthians 11. Though the hymns sung in the BC are not purely psalms, many of the pieces sung included texts from the psalms as well as other passages of the Bible. The theologies underpinning the songs were based upon the Bible - though this might not always be clear at first sight. For example, one of the hymns sung goes thus:

It is raining, all over me. I can feel it, the latter rain,  
Ride on Jesus, give us more rain,  
Until we are wet, and we are soaked,  
With the latter rain.

The biblical root of the hymn, according to a member of the choir, was the Book of Joel 2: 23 which says 'Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.'

When a member of the congregation was asked why he attends the Church regularly, he responded that: 'it was because of "praise worship" which takes us to the spiritual realm'.<sup>29</sup> Another interviewee remarked as follows:

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<sup>28</sup> Music by Edwin Othello Excell, first published in 1897  
<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/c/o/countyou.htm> 15 November 2007

<sup>29</sup> BC Interviewee 1, 12 June, 2005

The praise worship is a means of blessing. Praise worship makes God a 'baby', rejoicing in you when you adore him for who he is. He stretches out his hands to us to give us whatever we need. Praising God like David is what God rejoices at.<sup>30</sup>

Virtually all the research sample referred to music as one of the reasons for their attendance of public worship. Music is one of the elements that gives the members fulfilment in worship. Even the pastor involved himself in music making, as he was one of the people playing keyboard; his wife was an active member of the choir. This underscores the importance of music to the Church as an element of worship. However, this type of lively and exuberant singing is characteristic of most Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches, especially the African Churches. Commenting on this, Harvey Cox remarks:

most Pentecostals gladly welcome any instrument you can blow, pluck, bow, bang, scrape, or rattle in the praise of God. I have heard congregations sing to the beat of salsa, bossa nova, country and western, and a dozen other tempos.<sup>31</sup>

In the same vein, Charles Hummel observes on the common elements of charismatic Churches' worship as follows:

From the beginning, weekly gatherings have usually been labelled "prayer and praise" The new hymnody features biblical psalms set to music as well as modern spiritual songs, often accompanied by a guitar or combination of instruments. Visitors are impressed by the centrality and joy of praise and thanksgiving in song. Far from a warm-up while latecomers straggle in, or preparation for preaching, the singing is central; it provides the context of worship for meditation and reading of Scripture, personal witness and prophecy.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> BC Interviewee 2, 29 June 2005

<sup>31</sup> Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, pp. 142-143

<sup>32</sup> Charles E. Hummel, *Fire in the Fireplace: Charismatic Renewals in the Nineties* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1993), pp. 243-244

Gerard Roelofs affirms that charismatics are ‘overwhelmed by feelings of joyful gratitude and love of God that need to be expressed’<sup>33</sup>, that these emotions are expressed in a spontaneous way to the extent that they were termed religious enthusiasts. Gerard’s view of charismatic joyful praise is totally in line with the way BC interpreted its praise – and, indeed, every gesture or movement in worship. The nature of their praise gave every worshipper the opportunity to be an active participant and this congregational engagement eliminated the risk of boredom from worship. The unity between African life and music especially as it relates to religious experience was earlier examined (Chapter Three). It is not surprising then that the first thing that happened in the worship of this Church was singing.

The singing was carried out with much clapping and dancing. This was in line with what the Church had already identified as one of their ways of worshipping at the back of the bulletin. Members sang and danced joyfully, with rhythmic clapping in the usual Pentecostal and African way of worship in all the Churches studied. Overall more time was allocated to singing at the other two Churches than at BC.

It was noticeable that no drums (a major hallmark of worship in Africa) were used during worship. The synthesized drumbeats of the keyboard were the closest that the Church came to including the sound of real drums. This absence of a particularly African note raises the question whether this Church’s praise had been influenced by a more western idea of praise. When one of the members of the choir was asked why they were not using drums, she said it was because they did not have anybody who

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<sup>33</sup> Gerard Roelofs, ‘Charismatic Christian Thought: Experience, Metonymy, and Routinization’ in *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* ed. by Karla Poewe (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), p. 219

was able to beat African drums properly.<sup>34</sup> However, if this neglect was not deliberate, those who were able to play African drums – even if only in a modest way could be encouraged to do so until they improved in the skill of playing them.

The non-use of African drums was also found in my second fieldwork site, the ECA. It also gave significant importance to singing and even had its own choir. Most of their own songs came from a modern Western Hymn Book, Complete Mission Praise, and the musical instruments they used were western – just as in the BC. At the ECA, however, there may have been a rationale behind this apparent Westernisation. There the pastor did not want the Church to be known as an African Church but an international Church – hence, perhaps, his avoidance of the use of African musical instruments. In the case of both Churches however, the influence of the western society cannot be discounted. At the ECA especially, the fact that a white majority Church and an African initiated Church merged together may be responsible for the use of western instruments alone. On the other hand, if we consider the fact that African drums were used in the third Church studied, which also merged with a white Church, this argument of merger may not be plausible.

**The BC could think of other ways of improving its music ministry in order to bring more people to its public worship.** As at the BC, virtually all interviewees and questionnaire respondents in the other two Churches attested to music as an element attracting them to public worship. One of those interviewed at the BC contended that there is room for improvement in the singing ministry. These she

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<sup>34</sup> BC Interviewee 3, 12 June 2005



enumerated as learning new hymns, making use of drums in worship, and greater harmony in voices and the beats.<sup>35</sup>

#### ***4.3. Welcoming of Visitors and Greetings.***

After singing, members were allowed to welcome one another to the presence of God with 'hand shakes' and embraces. This was followed with the recognition of visitors:

1. You are welcomed in the name of the Lord, (2ce)  
We can see in you, the glory of the Lord,  
You are welcome in the name of the Lord.

2. Yes we love you with the love of the Lord, (2ce)  
We can see in you, the glory of the Lord  
Yes we love you with the love of the Lord.

The theological content of this song revolves around the Lord as the true host in the Church. Members understood themselves to be acting for him in welcoming the visitors. It also suggests that as a person enters the Church, the glory of the Lord covers him/her. Could the experience of this glory be one of the reasons for the attendance of public worship by members? None of the Church members made reference to this in their comments. Nonetheless, it may be a possibility. This theology is biblical in view of the Lord's saying that 'for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matthew: 18: 20).

The importance of a welcoming Church cannot be over-emphasized. Donal Harrington, writing on the importance of this, affirms that 'the theme of welcome goes to the heart of what the parish is and what the parish aspires to be'.<sup>36</sup> To him, welcoming is the essence of the gospel and is the heart of God. He appears to have a

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<sup>35</sup> BC Interviewee 2, 29 June, 2005

<sup>36</sup> Donal Harrington, *The Welcoming Parish* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2005), p. 30

notion of a comprehensive concept of welcome that goes beyond the way the visitors are received, but also includes the caring manner in which the members are treated:

The language that predominates is about people feeling that they belong; about a sense of inclusion that can accommodate each and that embraces all; about people being accepted where they are at, irrespective of their views, no matter who they are; about people feeling at home; about people feeling valued and wanted and cared for; about people feeling equal and important.<sup>37</sup>

I agree with Harrington that an all encompassing welcome is part of the ministry of the Church today. A visitor who is warmly welcomed as in BC may likely continue to be part of the public worship.

A formal act of welcoming took place in the other two Churches as well. The procedures followed were almost the same. Love was expressed visibly to the visitors which in my opinion may make them think they are welcome. Some of the research samples said that they joined the Church because of the way they were welcomed the first day they attended. This was similar to the experience of Penny Edgell Becker at United Methodist Church, who was welcomed by the ushers who handed the worship bulletin with a smile. She maintains further:

It is this kind of activity – having official greeters, following up with a mailing to people who fill out the guest cards – that is mentioned by the one-third of the respondents who feel that their congregation does a good job of welcoming new people.<sup>38</sup>

One member of the BC research sample said that though the Church was introduced to him by a friend, ‘the family atmosphere which I encountered when I came here

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>38</sup> Penny Edgell Becker, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 61

made me to be coming since that first day'.<sup>39</sup> This was similar to the comments received on this element of worship from the respondents in the other Churches too. This suggests that a warm reception was one of the ways of attracting new members to the Church and its worship. This marks the beginning of what a family Church is. This elaborate greeting may not be possible when the population of a Church becomes bigger because it would waste time. It may be a more practical option to allow those sitting near the visitors to greet them in future.

#### ***4.4. The Use or Non-Use of Charismatic Gifts.***

The document on doctrines of the BC makes a good blend of Christology and charismatism. The BC believes and teaches - like its mother denomination - that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour, Redeemer and Ruler of the world. His vicarious sacrifice on the cross has, according to the BC, made possible holistic salvation which includes the *charismata* and especially *cura divina* (divine healing) for believers. The Redeemed Christian Church of God's doctrinal document says:

Redemption not only dealt with sin but also consequences, which includes sickness and diseases. Christ died on the cross; bore not only our sins, but also our sicknesses. Healing for our bodies from God comes to us through the appropriation of the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary by faith in the word of God and manifestation of the gift of healing. Not only do believers receive for our bodies, but also we may minister healing and deliverance to others in the name of Jesus. This can be accomplished by laying on of hands, praying for others in absentia and by getting bible believing Church elders to anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.<sup>40</sup>

The BC's emphasis on holistic salvation is in consonance with the worldview of Africans already considered in Chapter Three. As Allan Anderson observes, 'belief in signs and wonders is most typical of Pentecostal Churches, especially those in

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<sup>39</sup> BC Respondent 1, 28 June, 2005

<sup>40</sup> Our Fundamental Belief, *RCCG INTERNET OUTREACH*, pp. 3-4 of 10

Africa'.<sup>41</sup> The reasons for this are obvious. In the African worldview, the root causes of sickness are not only human or physical. They are also held to be spiritual.

According to Deji Ayegboyin, 'there are strong beliefs in the mystical, spiritual and physical causation of diseases in Africa'.<sup>42</sup> The physical causes can be handled by herbalists through the use of appropriate herbs. If on the other hand, the aetiology and pathogenesis of the illness are obscured and the sick do not get well, the cause of the sickness is held to be spiritual. Perhaps the sick person has violated the sanctity of the law or taboos, and so traditional religious leaders may be called upon to mediate between the sick and the divinities through appropriate sacrifices.<sup>43</sup> Sickness to Africans has to do not only with 'individualistic physical ailments (as in western medical philosophy), though these are not to be overlooked; it has to do with cosmic morality'.<sup>44</sup>

It must be pointed out however that this belief in holistic salvation is not limited to the Pentecostals in Africa. It is a feature of most Pentecostal Churches worldwide. Andre Droogers submits that Pentecostals do not believe in the fragmentation of the soul from the body. They believe that the 'mind soul and body become one through healing, prophecy, dreams, and visions'.<sup>45</sup> He maintains that Pentecostals 'want to unite what others have divided'<sup>46</sup> and consequently they are opposed to the 'Western tendency to emphasize or favour one of a pair of opposites above the other'. Examples

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<sup>41</sup> Allan Anderson, 'Evangelism and the Growth of Pentecostalism in Africa'. 2000. *Artweb*, Birmingham. 05 November 2005.

[http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/Publications/evangelism\\_and\\_the\\_growth\\_of\\_pe...](http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/Publications/evangelism_and_the_growth_of_pe...), p. 2 of 16

<sup>42</sup> Deji Ayegboyin, 'Heal the Sick and Cast Out Demons': The Response of the Aladura', *Studies in World Christianity: The Edinburgh Review of Theology and Religion*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2004, p. 237

<sup>43</sup> Robert E. Hood, *Must God be Greek?* (Augsburg Fortress: Fortress Press, 1990), p. 167

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>45</sup> Andre Droogers, 'The Normalization of Religious Experience: Healing, Prophecy, Dreams, and Visions' in *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* ed. by Karla Poewe (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), p. 33

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34

of such fragmentation are 'reason above emotion, the profane above the secular, the mind above the body, and the society above the individual'.

The belief in the power of Jesus Christ to heal the sick through prayer, without cost, in my opinion does not only make African Christianity holistic as Anderson has said, but could make it appealing and satisfactory to practitioners because the sick person does not have to pay anything for his/her healing.

Yet here we come to a point at which the practice of the BC appears to diverge from its stated beliefs. Although the BC affirmed its belief in divine healing, at no time during my period of participant observation was a healing service organised, nor was there an altar call for the sick to come forward for prayers for healing. This means that there was an obvious incongruence between the denominational statement of belief and what actually happened in practice. In the other two Churches studied, there were occasions when the sick were invited for prayer during worship. There was a greater frequency of this practice at the ECA than at ABC. The implication of the variance between the statement of belief and what happened in practice at BC is that members who may prefer to experience divine healing when they are sick may not have the desired fulfilment in the Church. This may be one of the reasons for the apparent loss of some of members to other Churches where divine healing is practiced. This observation is based on the earlier considered African worldview of holistic worship as discussed in Chapter Three. If worship is not holistic, it may not appeal to Diaspora Africans because it does not bring with it the desired fulfilment.

Another aspect of the charismata which needs to be discussed is the place of prophecy in BC. There was no time in my participation at BC when a member gave a word of prophecy or related any vision or dream. I asked the pastor why this was so. He replied that 'we do not allow it in order to avoid the error of misuse. We must maintain decency and integrity in our worship. This is not to say however that we do not believe in prophecy'.<sup>47</sup> The reasons for the position of the pastor are not clear but it seems to be related to the use or mis-use of power, which I shall explore in the next section. It may also be the way the Church was attempting to contextualize its theology in order to cater for the occasional white worshippers.

### **5. The Power Structure of the Church and its Implications for Public Worship**

It has been observed that the pastor used his privileged position of authority to unilaterally prevent the use of African musical instruments, the use of the gift of prophecy, and refused to give a place to healing in the Church as well. These actions could lead to a lack of fulfilment for worshippers.

There was nothing in the document of faith of the Church to indicate its formal policy with regard to decision making. If the Church had an inclusive decision making polity at all (such as is seen in the congregational system of the ABC in Chapter Eight), it was not seen in operation throughout my period of fieldwork. This is perhaps due to the Pentecostal allegiance of the Church. Among the Pentecostals, especially those of the Diaspora African Churches, 'the head pastor is usually the most influential person in terms of policy and decision-making.'<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> BC Pastor, Interview, 25 September, 2005

<sup>48</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, 'African Christians in the Netherlands' in *Strangers and Sojourners* ed. by Gerrie ter Haar (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 161

I wish to further explore the implications of the power of the pastor in this Church on public worship. According to David D. Winter, the English word 'power' comes from the Latin *potere* which in English means to be able. In social context it could be defined as 'the ability or capacity of O to produce (consciously or unconsciously) intended effects on the behaviour or emotions of another person P'.<sup>49</sup> Max Weber defines power as 'the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests'.<sup>50</sup> Power, according to Helga, is necessary to 'accomplish the simplest tasks' and 'to enable us to retain what is rightfully ours'.<sup>51</sup> Power includes 'both threatened and actual physical assault, verbal abuse, deception and manipulation, or threatened or actual deprivation of another's benefits or privileges'.<sup>52</sup>

From the point of view of Foucault, power could be described as a positive thing because 'power is only power (rather than mere physical force or violence) when addressed to individuals who are free to act in one way or another'.<sup>53</sup> Besides, 'power in a society is never a fixed and closed regime, but rather an endless and open strategic game'. Furthermore, he sees power as something which circulates or 'as something which functions in the form of a chain', something that operates 'through a

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<sup>49</sup> David G. Winter, *The Power Motive* (New York, London: The Free Press and Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1973), pp. 4-5

<sup>50</sup> Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* trans. by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York, London: Free Press and Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1947, 1964), p. 152

<sup>51</sup> Drummond Helga, *Power, Creating it, Using it* (London: Hogan Page, 1991), p. 22

<sup>52</sup> Ian Burkitt, 'Powerful Emotions: Power, Government and Opposition in the 'War on Terror'' in *Sociology*, Vol. 39, No. 4, October 2005, p. 683 (See also Carrie Paechter, 'Power, gender and curriculum' in *Knowledge, Power and Learning* ed. by Carrie Paechter, Margaret Preedy, David Scott and others (London: The Open University, 2001), p. 3

<sup>53</sup> Colin Gordon, 'Governmental Rationality: An Introduction' in *The Foucault Effect* ed. by Colin Burchell Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 5

netlike organisation' where individuals become 'the vehicles of power, not its point of application'.<sup>54</sup>

There are three things I want to bring out of Foucault's analysis of power here. The first is that power is a necessary thing in every organisation and it is my position that the pastor in BC needs some power in order for the Church to achieve its goals. Nonetheless, there is need for a body that would provide checks and balances to the pastor's exercise of power. In this case, there appears to be none. One possibility could be a broader participation in governance in line with the democratic ethos of recent times, without necessarily changing the doctrinal beliefs of the Church or the position of Scripture on issues.<sup>55</sup> Though the BC operates under the RCCG, the mother denomination has no staff on ground in Liverpool to monitor the extent to which the Church complies with its doctrinal beliefs. In addition, there was nothing in the Statements of Faith and Practice of the mother Church that suggests the existence of any supervisory administrative body in each local Church that could put limit on the amount of power the pastor in particular could exercise. This was unlike what obtained at the African Baptist Church where the Church- in- Conference puts limit on the powers of the pastor (See chapter 8).

Secondly, Foucault maintains that people under power have the right of choice or freedom to choose what is most beneficial to their circumstance. In this case, power is held to be a negotiated thing between all stake holders within an organisation. I

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<sup>54</sup> Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 35 (See also Geoff Danaher, Tony Schirato and Jen Webb, *Understanding Foucault* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, 2000), p. 24ff; Simons Jon, *Foucault and the Political* (London and New York; Routledge, 1995), p. 2ff; Michel Foucault, *Power* ed. by James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1994), p. 40ff and Lois McNay, *Foucault: a Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 2ff  
<sup>55</sup> Howlands T. Sanks, 'Globalization, Postmodernity and Governance in the Church' *Louvain Studies*, Vol. 28, 2003, p. 216.



disagree with Foucault on this; in totalitarian regimes where power is concentrated in the hands of the leaders, people are rarely given the opportunity of choice. In the case of the BC however, the members do have a choice. The prevention of prophecy may lead some members to stop coming on the basis of not being spiritually fulfilled in worship and this will be a blow to the public worship of the Church.

Thirdly, Foucault maintains that power is not in a single individual but diffused and shared with others within sovereignty or an organisation where people become the vehicles of the exercise of power. At BC, some members who occupy various positions of responsibilities exercised certain amount of power in the Church. Some unilateral decisions taken by the pastor in preventing the manifestation in worship of prophecy, and the exercise of the healing ministry showed a discrepancy between the written statement of belief and what actually took place. The curtailing of the prophetic charism reduced the level of participation of members in the ritual process and this may lead to a lack of commitment from such members. Previous studies have established a positive correlation between the commitment of members to a Church/organization and the level of their participation or involvement in the ministry and especially the decision making process of the body.<sup>56</sup>

## **6. The Social Roles of the Church and the Community Spirit**

During the period of greetings and announcements in the service, such things as a child's christening, birthdays and weddings were announced and members were usually encouraged by the pastor to go in large numbers to attend the events. This was

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<sup>56</sup> Virginia H. Hine, 'Bridge Burners: Commitment and Participation in a Religious Movement' in *Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 31 (Summer, 1970), p. 65; Charles E. Garrison, 'The Effect of Participation in Congregational Structures on Church Attendance' in *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (Autumn, 1976), pp. 36, 40 and Charles Conrad, 'Identity, Structure and Communicative Action in Church Decision-Making' in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 1988, p. 346

in order to identify with the individuals or families marking such events. I attended one such celebration for the fortieth birthday of a member of the Church. It was a well attended social gathering with eating and drinking, dancing and a lot of sharing. The pastor was in attendance and a mini-service was held before other social events took place. Another event that resembled this was the love feast the Church usually organised once a month. Members were enjoined to contribute money or bring more than enough food to share with others and particularly visitors. During the love feast, members were allowed to share the testimony of what God had done for them in the past month. Such testimonies included how some had succeeded in securing jobs, how the rota had been changed at their places of work to enable them come for service on Sunday, and some on how they escaped from accidents, etc. The pastor claimed that the love feast was patterned after the fellowship meal in Acts. 2: 42-46 though it was not from house to house. As Klauser observed<sup>57</sup>, in the early Church, members of the then Christian community used to bring their gifts to the meal in keeping with the practice of the ancient world. The major development from this meal was the family spirit it engendered among members. It had the tendency to give the members a greater sense of belonging and of having a more face to face interaction among themselves. In the BC, one respondent saw the community life he was enjoying as responsible for his determination not to miss public worship: 'we celebrate together our joys and share our sorrows together'.<sup>58</sup>

This aspect of social care and expression of concern for one another appeared to be a common element in the Churches of Diaspora Africans I studied, but appears also in other places in Europe. Gerrie ter Haar extolled the love-sharing among the African

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<sup>57</sup> Theodore Klauser, *A Short History of the Western Liturgy: An Account and some Reflections* trans. by John Halliburton (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 8

<sup>58</sup> BC Respondent 2, 4 June, 2005

religious community in the Netherlands soon after a plane crash that led to the death of some people in 1992 including many immigrants. According to her, 'the religious communities proved invaluable in taking care of the bereaved and, to a large extent, can be credited with restoring them to psychological stability after this trauma'.<sup>59</sup> Still commenting on community spirit in these Churches, she maintains:

In religious as well as in sociological terms, therefore, the aspect of the community is of prime importance, as this is as much a feature of the structure and organisation of these Churches as it is of their ritual and belief. Those who join the community become part of a supportive network which places a high premium on upward social mobility of self improvement.<sup>60</sup>

She concludes that 'the example of African-initiated Churches proves how religious faith can also constitute a successful social strategy, since the Churches create a sense of belonging which many immigrants otherwise lack'.<sup>61</sup>

I strongly believe that there is tendency for people to be attached to a place where they have received assistance in a time of need and I see this sense of community as one of the elements sustaining the public worship attitude of Diaspora African Christians. One of those interviewed said that he had been a member of a white-majority Church before and the major reason for his exit was that 'when I invited the Church to the christening of my daughter, only two people came and when I left, they never asked of me'.<sup>62</sup> He said that in contrast to his former Church, in the BC, 'we fellowship socially after service, members keep your company during birthdays, naming ceremonies and so on'.<sup>63</sup> Such assistance and sense of community had been one of the things that encouraged him to continue to take part in the worship of the

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<sup>59</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998), p. 42

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p. 43

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p. 45

<sup>62</sup> BC Interview 4, 4 July, 2005

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*

Church. Another respondent underscores the significance of the family-like assistance received from his fellow-worshippers as follows:

The Church asks after my physical well-being, wanting to know how I find it easy to pay my fees. The pastoral team do buy food items for us students to help us on feeding. A member of the Church was given a car to ease his movement; it was the pastor's personal car.<sup>64</sup>

From the above, it appears that the members of BC have been taught to be their brother's keeper and this has led them to commit their lives to coming for worship in the Church. This relates to the holistic understanding of nature and of humanity which is the worldview of Africans as already discussed in Chapter Three. It is the vacuum of social and emotional support which the Diaspora African Churches are filling in the lives of their members in Liverpool which is attracting them to public worship and will continue to do so if upheld.

### **7. The Relationship of the Church to the Broader Community**

BC has been involved in regular Saturday evangelism, principally targeted at the drug addicts and prostitutes in the city. It does not seem to have enjoyed a great deal of success in this mission, because no such people are included in the membership list of the Church. It may need to undertake a re-assessment of the mission approach in order to discover what may be lacking in it with a view of making meaningful impact through its evangelism. The Church organised youth programmes aimed at encouraging age group interaction in a Christian setting, with the opportunity there to discuss Bible stories and apply them to real life situations. The Church has also been engaged in inter-Church community relations. One such event was the 'Merseyfest' - an ecumenical community development event organised in August 2005 by the

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<sup>64</sup> BC Interview 5, 7 June, 2005

Christian Churches in the Merseyside. It was geared towards impacting upon the community through Christian love by voluntarily clearing the gutters, cleaning the streets and helping individuals in their homes if they so desired. Though the pastor said none of the people touched through the programme has come to worship in the Church, it is my conviction that if the Church does not give up on such activities, sooner or later, the fruits of the labour will flourish.

### **8. Factors Militating against Public Worship**

Various things were seen and identified by the research sample as hindrances to public worship. The most commonly mentioned factor was the way work was structured in Liverpool which had almost removed the observance of the law of the Sabbath. One-fifth said that they were placed on duty on Sunday. Others found difficulty in getting a bus quickly on Sunday and saw that as militating against public worship. Another identified Saturday night shift as a hindrance because it made it hard to prepare for Church on Sunday morning. Several identified the location of the Church as hindrance, as it was far from where most of the members lived. This was unlike the more favourable locations of the other two Churches studied, where the proximity of the Church to the residence of the members has helped the growth in membership.

One respondent identified the hostility of the local community to the Church as a factor militating against public worship. The pastor of BC recalled that the first hostility they encountered in the area was from a priest:

When we came, we went round to introduce ourselves to all the organizations around the Church. I went to a neighbour priest and he just shut the door against me. Some people will abuse our people but we never

bothered. Some come round late in the middle of the night to disturb our prayer vigil and vandalise our cars.<sup>65</sup>

I can corroborate this as an eye witness. One evening as we went for Bible Study, we met some young school boys and girls climbing the roof of the building. It took some time before we could persuade them to stop such dangerous acts. The other two Churches studied in this thesis had similar experiences of hostility against them either from white Church leaders or from members of the society in general. We shall see in the next two chapters different accounts of hostility the other Churches faced. I maintain throughout this thesis that a congenial or enabling society is necessary for the Diaspora African Churches in Liverpool to impact positively upon it. This is particularly necessary also for the sustenance of public worship among them.

Accommodation for worship was another problem the BC faced at its inception. Though the problem appears temporarily solved, it is not permanently solved because the place they are using now is a rented hall. Space was a common problem to all the Churches studied, and has been identified as a problem of most of the Diaspora African Churches in Europe.<sup>66</sup> It is one of the factors militating against public worship of Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool.

## **9. Conclusions**

The BC is a growing Diaspora African Church, whose worship has been a medium of holistic life fulfilment to the members. The primary mission target had been to minister to the host community by focusing on the drug addicts and prostitutes. The Church had been involved in regular evangelism and had organised youth

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<sup>65</sup> BC Pastor, Interview, 20 December, 2005

<sup>66</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise*, p. 30

programmes in order to impact positively upon the host society. It had also been involved in inter-Church community development programmes such as the 'Merseyfest'.<sup>67</sup> However, the impact of the Church on the indigenes is not strong as none of the drug addicts and prostitutes were retained in the public worship of the Church. Therefore it may be concluded that the Church has not achieved its goal of ministering to such people in the city of Liverpool. It may have to change its method of evangelism and discipleship in order to win and retain members of the host community. I wish to suggest 'canteen evangelism'. By this I mean the Church could open up African food canteens like the Chinese restaurants all over Liverpool. The success of the Chinese restaurants all over Britain seems to suggest that the British have a relish for foreign food that is well prepared. When this is in operation, the Church can seize the opportunity of placing Christian messages in tracts for prospective customers to read. The luncheon method adopted by a Church in this study had assisted it in retaining its white converts. This may be worth considering by BC also. The Diaspora African Churches could also do research on the best way the host community would like to be witnessed to. The material for such research could also contain a question about features that the white community do not enjoy in African style of worship. This would go a long way to help in designing a style of worship or evangelism that might be elastic enough to attract the whites and retain them in fellowship.

The power structure in the Church has been identified as one of the possible factors militating against public worship in the BC. There appears to be over centralisation of power in the pastor of the BC. This has reduced in some instances, the richness of

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service through the prevention of some practices that could lead to fulfilment for the worshippers. The apparent autocratic system of administration of the BC has been one of the major factors responsible for this. There are no evident checks and balances to the pastor's power in the polity of the Church.

There is a need for concerted effort to focus more attention on the ministry to the black community, because most of the present members of the Church come from that group. A relocation of the Church to where the Africans reside would help tremendously.

The Church has faced a certain level of hostility from the society. An enabling society devoid of racial hostility would be desirable for Diaspora African Churches to positively impact upon the Liverpool society and sustain the public worship attitude of its members. In the same vein the BC may need financial and some technical assistance from Churches in the United Kingdom, well established Churches in Africa and charitable organizations in order to overcome the problem of accommodation they are facing.



## **Chapter Seven**

### **The Eucharistic Charismatic Assembly (ECA)**

#### **1. Introduction**

This chapter is concerned with identifying the elements that are sustaining public worship among the Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool, with special reference to the ECA. The focal points here are the exploration of how and to what extent their worship is influenced by their worldview and the conditions faced in the host society. The three-source triangle of religious behaviour analysis is kept in view throughout this chapter. This will aid us in concluding whether the goal of worship in this Church is holistic fulfilment or not.

The structural outline of this chapter is exactly the same as that used in Chapter Six. More emphasis will be laid here on the greater concentration of power in the hands of the pastor of ECA than was the case with the other Churches studied. The ECA pastor, for example, blocked my direct access to the members of the Church, as he only permitted me to interview the people he himself had picked. It was this development and the practical difficulties experienced in the first Church studied, that necessitated the modification of my data gathering methods in order to obtain the opinions of other Church members.

This Church also differed from the others in the special place that the Eucharist occupied in its worship. This Eucharistic dimension will be particularly studied – together with its role in enriching the ritual experience of worshippers towards the provision of holistic worship. All issues arising from the worship of ECA and its

doctrines are explored in order to compare them with the other Churches. This will allow the reader to further understand the doctrinal and societal underpinnings responsible for the public worship attitude of Diaspora Africans in general and members of the ECA in particular.

## **2. The Background of the Church**

### ***2.1. History***

The history of the ECA is connected with the circumstances surrounding the coming of its senior pastor to Great Britain. This pastor is a co-founder of the Church<sup>1</sup>. Unlike the pastors of the other two Churches studies, who were from the Yoruba people of Western Nigerian, this man and his wife came from eastern Nigeria. Both were well educated<sup>2</sup>, and both were involved in the ministry of the Church; whenever the senior pastor was not around, the wife stood-in for him. The pastor and his wife came to Britain after venturing into Sudan, Kuwait, Abu Dhabi and Bauchi (Nigeria) in their missionary endeavours, though without success because in all these four places they met stiff opposition from Muslim fundamentalists.

During the period of the pastor's mission activities in Nigeria, the Muslim uprising became so life threatening that when a Christian Church on the Wirral heard about it, they arranged for the escape of the pastor and his wife to the UK. The year of this rescue was not mentioned by the pastor. But since the pastor and his wife spent about

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<sup>1</sup> This present Church is the result of the merger between the Church initially started by the pastor and a white majority Church in the Toxteth area of Liverpool. More on this is discussed below in this historical account.

<sup>2</sup> The pastor obtained his doctorate degree in Industrial Chemistry in Britain and was a lecturer before his ordination into a full time gospel ministry. His wife is a medical doctor specialising in paediatrics. Both of them are about fifty years of age. Interview with the ECA Pastor, Nov 2 2005

six years at the Wirral Church before starting his own Church in 1991, one may guess that the pastor and his wife were rescued from Nigeria in the eighties.

When the pastor came to the UK, he started worshipping with the Wirral Church before he felt the urge to start a Church at the Toxteth area of Liverpool. Because of the good relationship that had developed between him and the leadership of the Wirral Church, the pastor said that during the early part of his mission efforts in Toxteth he had intended to plant this Church as a daughter Church of the Wirral Church, so as to make him answerable to the leadership of that Church. However, he said, the leadership of the Wirral Church spurned this gesture because ‘within six months, they severed all forms of serious communication with us’<sup>3</sup>. The reasons for the eventual strained relationship between the African pastor and the leadership of the Wirral Church are not clear. It seems likely that there is more to the causes than the account given by the pastor. As we shall note, his relationship with the pastor of another English Church with which his Church merged was also strained. It may be that his preference for an autocratic style of leadership – which will be discussed in more detail as this chapter unfolds - may have led to friction between him and others who may have preferred a more democratic approach.

Initially, as with the BC discussed in the last chapter, finding a place of worship was a problem. According to the pastor, they met in the houses of people, and then moved into a school before eventually moving into the rented premises of a Reformed Church in the Wavertree area of the city for worship. They later negotiated to

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<sup>3</sup> ECA Pastor, 2 November 2005

purchase the Reformed Church but could not raise enough money to acquire it. The ECA started in 1991. A property for worship was rented in Toxteth from Liverpool Riverside Housing until the pastor got into contact with the pastor of a white majority Church that I shall refer to as English Charismatic Church (ECC). The pastor recalled that when he first made contact with the pastor of ECC, he was not given a warm reception. However, with time, the relationship became more cordial and culminated in the merger of the two congregations.<sup>4</sup> The merger of this Church with a white majority Church is similar to the merger of the African Baptist Church (ABC) with another white Church, as will be discussed in the next chapter. In both cases the majority of the new membership was African. In the merger pact between the ECA and ECC, the two pastors were to have the same privileges, a condition described with the term 'co-equals'. The extent to which this 'co-equal' clause operated was however unclear; the assembly started to experience frictions which threatened the merger until the white pastor retired. According to the pastor of ECA, the friction was due to the fact that the pastor of ECC was trying 'to modify our ways of worship'.<sup>5</sup> It appeared that this was the usual exuberant way of worship of Africans already referred to previously, which may be strange to an English congregation. The pastor of ECA stated that after the merger, 'the worship became more lively'.<sup>6</sup>

The merger, apart from helping the survival of the two Churches, appears to be a step towards the breaking of racial barriers in Christian fellowship, which could lead into making the body of Christ one great family. It has the potential of promoting racial

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<sup>4</sup> The pastor of ECA said that 'the membership of the white Church was not more than a maximum of ten people while we were about fifty. Their Church was on decline. They were however ninety nine percent white' ECA Interview, 2 Nov 2005

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, Interview

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, Interview

harmony in the larger society of Liverpool as well. The friction between the two pastors after the merger however requires that the causes of such rifts be addressed.

## **2.2. The Location, Structure and Composition of the Church**

The ECA is located in the Toxteth area of Liverpool. Toxteth is 'a large area of Liverpool, inhabited by many communities but with the area around Granby Street having the highest proportion of black residents in the city'<sup>7</sup>. The pastor described the place where the Church was located as a downtown zone, or an area of high need. Available statistics on the Toxteth area confirm the views of the pastor. With regard to employment, the 1982 Toxteth Survey revealed that 33.5% of those between the ages of sixteen and sixty-four were unemployed, with those between the ages sixteen to nineteen forming 46% of the unemployed in the Granby area of Toxteth. Furthermore, in one of the areas of Toxteth surveyed the unemployed males of ages sixteen to nineteen were up to 73%.<sup>8</sup> In August 2004, while the rate of income/benefit claimant was 33.9% for Liverpool, it was 60.8% for Princes Park Ward, to which Toxteth belongs<sup>9</sup>. While mean household income was £22, 511 for Liverpool, it was £18, 641 for Princes Park Ward<sup>10</sup>. On crime, while the rate per thousand was 175.2 for Liverpool in 2004-5, it was 193.5 for Princes Park Ward<sup>11</sup>. These statistics confirm that the area where the Church is located could be described as an area of great need.

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<sup>7</sup> Tony Lord Gifford, Wally Brown and Ruth Bunday, *Loosen the Shackles: First Report of the Liverpool 8 Inquiry into Race Relations in Liverpool* (London: Karia Press, 1989), p. 39

<sup>8</sup> Tony Lord Gifford, Wally Brown and Ruth Bunday, p. 40

<sup>9</sup> Princes Park Ward has a coverage area of 242.9 of Liverpool's 11,194 hectares and in the South Central Neighbourhood Management Area. (Source: Regeneration Portfolio, Liverpool City Council, 2006 Issue)

<sup>10</sup> Joanne Flaherty, 'Ward Profile, Princes Park, 2006 Issue' in Regeneration Portfolio, Liverpool City Council, pp. 1- 5

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8 (As reproduced from LCC Citysafe Data Team)

The church building has two floors, the ground floor which serves as the administrative offices, and the first floor which is the worship auditorium. The auditorium can contain about one hundred and fifty people seated. At the front of the auditorium is the podium where announcements are made and sermons are preached. This auditorium may soon become too small for the Church as the membership continues to grow. I observed for the duration of my fieldwork, that during important occasions such as wedding ceremonies the auditorium could not contain the members and guests. The problem of space, as in the first Church studied, is, therefore, not permanently solved, in spite of the merger with a white congregation.

In terms of accessibility, the location is good because it is not far from the city centre and is quite close to the University of Liverpool, which may be one of the reasons foreign students, especially Africans, worship in the Church. The Church is easily accessible by means of transport. About ninety percent of the people worshipping in the Church are Africans. In spite of this observable fact the pastor was fond of insisting that the Church should not be referred to as African majority Church because 'the Church is an international Church', a Church for all nations.<sup>12</sup> This attitude of the pastor confirms Gerrie ter Haar's comment that the new African initiated Churches prefer international status<sup>13</sup>, an observation which my research finding has confirmed.

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<sup>12</sup> ECA Pastor, Interview 2 November 2005

<sup>13</sup> Gerrie ter Haar asserts that the African-pentecostal and Charismatic Churches tend to emphasize the international nature of their assemblies more than the spiritual Churches and this is reflected in the 'international' attachment to their names. Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998), p. 95

Many nationalities are represented in the membership of the Church. These include a few British (both black and white), some Asians, Tanzanians, Ghanaians and a relatively large presence of Nigerians, as the questionnaires I administered revealed. This Church has nationals of other nations in its membership more than the Believers' Church discussed in the previous chapter. The responses showed a larger presence of Nigerians in the Church, similar to both the others.

Many reasons were given by members for joining the Church. These included proximity to their homes, guidance by the Holy Spirit, and invitation by friends. As in BC, there were a few elderly people of over sixty years in the congregation. Most of these were in England on brief visits to see or give assistance to their relatives. The Church had a higher active working population than BC; most of those who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they were working full time or part time. As in BC a number of the members were engaged in menial jobs disparate to their qualifications. Very few declared themselves to be self-employed, and these tended to be those who had been in this country for longer time and had acquired British citizenship. Men and women were of almost equal proportion in the Church. As in BC, about half the respondents were living alone either because they were not married or because they had not come to Britain with their spouses.

### **3. Doctrinal Beliefs**

Two major doctrinal beliefs of the Church are considered below in order to understand the nature of their worship: the Holy Spirit and the Ordinance of Holy Communion.

### ***3.1. The Holy Spirit***

The ECA believes ‘in the deity of the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son, [and that] ... the believer is promised the enduement of power through baptism of the Holy Spirit with signs following’. The ECA is of the view that ‘through this enduement, the believer is empowered for fuller participation in the ministry of the Church, for worship, evangelism and service’.<sup>14</sup>

The ECA believes in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and teaches that a person can speak in tongues when filled with the Holy Spirit. It however does not insist on speaking in tongues as an initial evidence of baptism. The belief of BC as earlier reported differs from this position of the ECA on tongue speaking. The BC holds that the initial evidence of baptism with the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. The beliefs of ECA and BC thus represent two different schools of thought on Holy Spirit baptism. Most Pentecostals do believe that the initial evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. For example, The Four Square Gospel Church, in the USA stipulates as an essential element of doctrine:

The ministry of Jesus Christ as baptizer with the Holy Spirit results in the articulation on the part of the baptized believers of languages they have never learned. The Bible evidence of this experience is invariably speaking in other tongues as the Holy Spirit gives utterance...It is impossible to deny, so far as the cases documented in the Bible are concerned, that speaking in other tongues constituted the initial evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> ‘Welcome Pack’ in *Charismatic Assembly’s Doctrine and Basis of Faith, First Schedule*, n.p.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Jesus Christ the Baptizer’, *The Four Square Gospel Church* compiled by Raymond L. Cox, (California: Heritage Committee, 1969), p. 103



Quoting extensively from the Bible such passages as Acts 2: 4; 10: 44-46 and Acts 19: 6 among others, that Church insists that in all these experiences, what made people aware that they were filled with the Holy Spirit was the fact that they spoke in other tongues. Speaking in tongues is the evidence that puts to rest the argument whether a believer has been filled with the Holy Spirit or not.<sup>16</sup> Today, 'most Pentecostals consider the gift of tongues as only one of the gifts of the Spirit'.<sup>17</sup> Neo-Pentecostals see the baptism with the Holy Spirit as the 'second experience or encounter' with God which enables the Christian to receive supernatural power to live the Christian life and to serve God. They see this being made possible by faith.<sup>18</sup>

The second school of thought on Holy Spirit baptism associates the baptism with new birth. This school of thought holds that as a person becomes a Christian, he/she is baptized into the body of Christ and then receives the privilege of first drinking of the Holy Spirit. Among such Churches are Baptist, and many charismatic renewal groups in the mainline denominations today, such as those in the Anglican Church.<sup>19</sup>

This second school understands conversion as the beginning of a life-long journey in the Holy Spirit, with the Spirit baptism occurring again and again in the Christian journey. 'Baptism in the Spirit' is therefore 'the new birth or initiation, and any subsequent experience or experiences of the Spirit are to be spoken of in terms of fullness'.<sup>20</sup> They refuse to separate the experience of baptism in the Spirit from conversion experience as the Pentecostals do.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 117-118

<sup>17</sup> Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven* (London: Cassell, 1996), p. 88

<sup>18</sup> Charles E. Hummel, *Fire in the Fireplace* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1993), pp. 271-272

<sup>19</sup> James H. S. Stevens, *Worship in the Spirit* (Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 2002), pp. 7-9

<sup>20</sup> William R. Davies, *Spirit without Measure: Charismatic Faith and Practice* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1996), pp. 30-31

The positions of the two schools of thought on the Holy Spirit Baptism are two sides of the same coin. Both believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit for every believer, but the time when the baptism takes place and the evidence for it are the subjects of controversy. One of the respondents in the ECA argued that the positions of the two schools can be harmonised. She said that baptism with the Holy Spirit (of which tongues is one of the physical evidences) can come along with the salvation experience. However, she was of the opinion that it could also come later as the believer's Christian journey progresses. She concluded by asserting that 'if baptism with the Holy Spirit comes with salvation experience, it is a privilege, if it comes later, it is a blessing'.<sup>21</sup> This is a broader view than the Pentecostal view that separates the baptism of the Holy Spirit from the salvation experience.

While neither of the schools of thought underrates the necessity of the Holy Spirit for every believer, I am of the view that it is better to leave the time it is experienced by the individual believer to God, who is the baptizer. Both instantaneous baptism and later baptism (second experience) are recorded in the Bible.<sup>22</sup> What the believer can do after being baptized with the Holy Spirit in my opinion matters more than the placing of emphasis on the nature of the baptism and its timing. The ECA has placed emphasis on what the believer can do through the baptism in the Holy Spirit rather than on the timing of the baptism. Consequently, I will focus on their belief that the Holy Spirit baptism enables the believer to 'participate fully in the ministry of the Church, for worship, evangelism and service'<sup>23</sup> and defer my comments on the

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<sup>21</sup> ECA Interviewee 1, 7 November 2005

<sup>22</sup> See Acts of the Apostles 10: 44-45; 19: 1-6

<sup>23</sup> 'Welcome Pack' in *Charismatic Assembly's Doctrine and Basis of Faith, First Schedule*, as .

second aspect of the baptism they emphasized, that is, the empowerment of the believer and the Church for signs and wonders till the section on the use or non-use of charismatic gifts later in this chapter.

The belief of the Church that the Holy Spirit empowers believers for worship and fuller participation in the ministry of the Church seems to suggest that baptism with the Holy Spirit makes the individual believer willing to be an active member of the Church. This consequently leads him/her to be part of the Church's services or public worship. The implication is that those who are not active worshipping members of the Church could be categorized as not being filled with the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, we can infer that if those believers who do not come to the Church for worship are filled with the Holy Spirit, then, they fail to respond to the biddings of the Holy Spirit urging them to participate in the worship and ministry of the Church. The ability of the believer to function actively in the Church may then be dependent on the power he/she receives through the Holy Spirit baptism. Relating power in the believer to the Holy Spirit baptism, Jurgen Moltmann observes that the outpouring of the power of the Holy Spirit which was promised in the Old Testament was fulfilled in what happened at Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles 2: 14-21. According to him, 'the Spirit of the last days and the eschatological community of the saved belonged together'.<sup>24</sup> The dependent of the Church on the Holy Spirit's power for effective ministry and life in the community of faith is further emphasized by him as follows:

The Spirit calls them into life; the Spirit gives the community the authority for its mission; the Spirit makes its living powers and the ministries that spring from them effective; the Spirit unites, orders and preserves it. It

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<sup>24</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1977), p. 294

therefore sees itself and its powers and tasks as deriving from and existing in the eschatological history of the Spirit.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, in terms of service, the Spirit gives 'every individual his specific share and calling..., and these *charismata* serve to build up the eschatological community'.<sup>26</sup> This is to further affirm the significance of the demonstration of the *charismata* in the worship and life of the Church, as an element holding the Church together in fellowship and importing a life of freshness into the Church. It is my view that a Church lacking the demonstration of the *charismata* may not be able to hold its members together because the building up role cannot be undertaken by any human alternative.

In data-gathering from the members of the ECA on those aspects of the worship of the Church that encourage them to come for worship, one of them stated in the written response that 'it is the experience of His power', referring to the power of God or of the Holy Spirit as demonstrated within worship.<sup>27</sup> Another responded to the same question by saying, 'the worship in the Church is liberating and is beneficial as the worship allows the move of the Holy Spirit to minister into the lives of the individuals'.<sup>28</sup> I will discuss this 'move of the Holy Spirit' later when I explore further the issue of prophecy in the worship of the Church. From the comments of the respondents therefore, the Holy Spirit does not only make members to be willing to be part of the ministry of the Church alone, but it makes public worship fascinating and fulfilling.

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 294-295

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 295-296

<sup>27</sup> ECA Respondent 1, 8 January 2006

<sup>28</sup> ECA Respondent 2, 8 January, 2006

### **3.2. Ordinance: The Eucharist or Holy Communion**

With regard to the ordinances of Baptism and the Holy Communion, the Church states 'we believe baptism in water is an outward sign of new life in Christ and encourage it in obedience to His command. We observe the Lord's Supper as an act of remembering Christ's death - open to all believers until His return'.<sup>29</sup> The Eucharist was celebrated during Sunday worship throughout the period of my participant observation at the Church. Commenting on this, the pastor observed that though he could give no hard and fast rule on when the Communion should be taken, yet the instruction is 'as often as we gather together'.<sup>30</sup>

The ECA believes that the observation and participation in the sacrament of Holy Communion links the Church (which is the body of Christ) to Christ himself. They believe that its observance should continue until Christ who initiated it comes.<sup>31</sup> Paul McPartlan underscores the communal significance and eschatological meaning of the Holy Communion by noting that at its celebration:

Stirred by the Holy Spirit, participants in the earthly liturgy are caught up into this heavenly scene. **Week in and week out** they see what is stored up as the fulfilment of God's purpose...Christians are sure in their hope because they experience its fulfilment in anticipation **every Sunday**, when they do what the Lord commanded them to do in memory of him. That **fulfilment is a gathering and the gathering has a name**. We find it in the Letter to the Hebrews; it is '**the Church**'.<sup>32</sup>(Emphases mine)

Certain words are highlighted here because of their relevance to the issue of public worship with which this research is concerned. These are (1) week in and week out,

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<sup>29</sup> 'Welcome Pack' in *Charismatic Assembly's Doctrine and Basis of Faith, First Schedule*.

<sup>30</sup> ECA Pastor, Interview 2 November 2005

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> McPartlan, Paul. *Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology*. London, Continuum T & T Clark, 1995 p. 5

(2) every Sunday, (3) fulfilment is a gathering, and (4) the gathering has a name...the Church. Week in and week out in the context of this passage and in my understanding is the weekly public gathering of the Church to worship and to celebrate Holy Communion. This is the same meaning that could be attached to the 'every Sunday' phrase. 'The fulfilment is a gathering' means that in fulfilling the command of the Lord to observe the Communion, the Church has to gather together in public worship. It is an earthly gathering of the Church on earth, which is a fore-shadowing of the last day gathering of the Church of the saints in Heaven. Underscoring the corporate nature of Holy Communion, D. G. Dix states that 'all Eucharistic worship is of necessity and by intention a corporate action'.<sup>33</sup> To him, the Eucharist is 'the vital expression towards God of what the Church fundamentally is, a corporate holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'.<sup>34</sup> By its name, it is a communion, with one another and with the Lord Himself.

The implication of the emphasis of the ECA on the taking of Holy Communion during worship goes beyond the gathering of the Church together which depicts the final heavenly gathering that is to take place in the heavenly Jerusalem, as McPartlan has seen it. It is the way whereby directly or indirectly the ECA members are taught about the significance of Jesus' crucifixion and the oneness or solidarity of Christ with his Church. The words of the pastor of ECA 'we get the congregation to draw closer' here means the assembly of the believers in public worship.

The Eucharist was not observed at all during my participant observation at BC, and it was observed just once in two months at ABC. The frequency of the observation of Holy Communion at ECA made it unique to the Church. All my efforts to know the

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<sup>33</sup> Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Glasgow: Dacre Press, 1945), p. 1

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2

pastor's denominational background proved abortive, as he kept saying that 'the background denomination does not matter as much as doing what the Bible says'. However, I guess that his background denomination may have been either Anglican or Catholic. This is not only because of the emphasis on the Lord's Supper, but also the manner it was served in his Church. Round wafer breads were used for the body of Christ. Members walked to the altar and were served the bread from the same plate by the pastor before returning to their seats. The cup (of non-alcoholic wine) for each individual was separate but given to each participant by the pastor as they came forward to the altar.

#### **4. The Ritual Shape of the Church and Elements Sustaining Public Worship**

The ECA may not be classified as a Church with a written liturgy. This is because the order of service as seen in the worship bulletins over some months was highly elastic. According to the pastor, changes were made in response to the dictates of the Holy Spirit. There was no lectionary, and the reading for the sermon was taken directly from the Bible. However, because the order of service is written down each week in a bulletin the structure of worship may also be described as semi-formal, as was the case of the BC.

The prayer time and the sermon were vital elements of worship in ECA, and both call for further evaluation. As we shall see was the case also at ABC, the Church had two distinct Sunday worship services. At ECA the morning worship service began around 10.30am, usually preceded by about twenty minutes of prayer, and the evening worship service was at 5pm. This was the only Church that conducted evening

worship on Sundays. The pastor observed that fewer members attended the evening services, and proposed a number of reasons for this - including the engagement of members in lucrative night duties, evening recreation, travelling and weariness or indolence. He was of the opinion that it was nonetheless better to retain the evening service for the benefit of those who might not be present at the morning worship, and for the few who preferred to attend both services. This suggests that the fulfilment of the worshippers was the most important thing to the Church in the planning of worship. The pastor of ABC, by way of contrast, refused to entertain having evening services because he thought it would 'over-stretch the ministers and worshippers and also because of the predictable poor attendance.'<sup>35</sup> It is interesting to note how the same issue was handled differently by Churches quite close together in the same city. Each was responding to the needs of its members in the way it thought would be most beneficial to them, or allow them to be most fulfilled through worship. In the process it is apparent that each of the pastors wielded power in a way that agreed with their personal principles or organizational abilities. I will discuss more on the structure of power in the ECA in section 5 below.

#### ***4.1. The Prayer Ritual.***

Prayers are said on three principal occasions. These are the prayers that preceded the worship services, as mentioned above; prayers during worship; and the regular prayer meetings of the Church. This does not include prayers organized for special occasions such as the Founder's Week' prayer that was designed to pray for the week-long anniversary celebration of the Church.

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<sup>35</sup> ABC Pastor Interview 10 August 2006



Morning worship services were always preceded by a gathering for extemporaneous prayer. The prayer was customarily geared towards 'seeking the face of God' for the service, for the pastor and his family and for the Church's life. During the worship proper, prayers were also said. The leader of the services sometimes invited people with various types of problems to the front for prayer. The ailing, those in need of visa extensions, those who are victimized in their workplace, etc were entreated to step forward for prayers. As a result, prayer time in the Church took a problem solving approach. This appears to support the hypothesis in the interpretative triangle that the goal of the religious activities of Diaspora African Christians is holistic fulfilment. It is logical that when the needs of the members of the congregation are met through prayers, they would be fulfilled or satisfied and this may enhance their commitment to public worship.

On Wednesday, 19 October 2005, I attended a prayer meeting, which was organised in a different way from the one on Sunday morning. This lasted for about thirty five minutes and was attended by fifteen people. It was planned with fasting and its focal point was the imminent Founder's Day programme of the Church. It was directed by one of the pastors. Prayer points were itemized and each person was given the opportunity to pray over them concurrently. After an interval of about two minutes, another prayer point was mentioned and the same pattern of praying was followed by the members present. Most of the separate prayer sessions of this Church took a more quiet form than the noisy Pentecostal type of prayer.<sup>36</sup> Most of the members

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<sup>36</sup> Andrew Chesnut submits that ecstasy is one of the major ways by which the Pentecostals receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Unlike historic Protestantism which 'engages the psyche more than the soma, the Pentecostal cult aims at the body and soul'. Furthermore he opines that 'the Pentecostal God is not a remote figure to be contemplated in silence but a dynamic force to be experienced by the entire being, both psyche and soma'. So, the idea of saying aloud prayer to a God who should not be

prayed quietly while a few muttered some words. However, prayers said during the regular worship services were a bit noisier.

A number of respondents attributed their attendance at public worship at ECA to the place of prayer in the service. One, commenting on the impact of prayer on his worship experience, stated that 'prayer is the key to opening one's mind to God',<sup>37</sup> another said that 'pastoral prayer literally hands you over into the hands of God',<sup>38</sup> a third explained that prayer 'revamps confidence',<sup>39</sup> and another specifically emphasized that corporate prayer 'grants victory'.<sup>40</sup> These statements suggest that prayer meetings give members an indispensable sense of fulfilment in worship. Generally, the Pentecostals not only use prayers to solve problems but use it as a worship element for attracting people to the public services. Intercessory prayer has thus been used as an instrument of Church growth. Wes Richards affirms this point in drawing the distinction between the way prayer is said in most western nations and in the Pentecostals of southern countries like South Korea, Nigeria and Argentina. These countries see mass attendance at all night prayer vigils and long periods of prayers, in contrast to the scanty attendance of prayer services and short prayers in the western nation Churches.<sup>41</sup> Underscoring how prayer brings people together into corporate public worship in the countries cited, Richards concludes that 'Christians unite in corporate prayer, in contrast to the personal prayer emphasis of the West'.<sup>42</sup>

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contemplated in silence is not so pronounced in the Church under study as it may be in most Pentecostal Churches. See Andrew R. Chesnut., *Born Again in Brazil: The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, London: Rutgers University Press, 1997), p. 93

<sup>37</sup> ECA Respondent 2, 8 January 2006

<sup>38</sup> ECA Respondent 3, 8 January 2006

<sup>39</sup> ECA Respondent 4, 8 January 2006

<sup>40</sup> ECA Respondent 5, 8 January 2006

<sup>41</sup> Wes Richards, 'An Examination of Common Factors in the Growth of Global Pentecostalism: Observed in South Korea, Nigeria and Argentina', p. 97

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*

A further significance of the place of prayer in the ECA is discussed under the use/non-use of charismatic gifts below.

#### **4.2. The Sermon**

Richards' remarks that preaching plays a common and central role in the development of Pentecostalism, quoting cases where 'millions enthusiastically gather to listen and respond'<sup>43</sup> finds confirmation in our study of the ECA. Preaching had a distinctive place in the worship service. Delivering the sermon at the morning service seemed to be the exclusive preserve of the six pastors in the Church, although on one occasion during my period of observation, a lay woman preached during the evening service. The founding pastor had the exclusive right to determine which person preaches in the Church. None of the pastors had any formal theological training. They were professionals who, apparently because of their zeal for the Lord and the ministry, had been ordained by the Church for the Gospel ministry. This is one of the trade marks of most Pentecostals. Vincent Leoh asserts that they emphasize the direct teaching work of the Holy Spirit, in contrast to the emphasis on education or intellectualism as a necessity for Christian service such as preaching.<sup>44</sup> He notes further that 'anti-intellectual disposition easily filters through' the sermon preparation of Pentecostals, to the extent that some of their preachers cultivate the attitude that a little training is enough for sermon delivery. The most important thing to them is allowing the Holy Spirit to have His way. Their constantly quoted Bible passage is that 'the letter kills...' (2Corinthians 3: 6)<sup>45</sup>. In contrast to the ECA some of the

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<sup>43</sup> Wes Richards, *op.cit.* p. 92

<sup>44</sup> Vincent Leoh, 'The Pentecostal Preacher as an Empowered Witness' *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, Vol. 9, 1, 2006, p. 39

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 40

pastors at BC had had some training in the Bible school established by their denomination. The situation of the ABC was different. All the eight pastors in the Church at the time of my research had a first degree in either theology or Church music and were pursuing their postgraduate degrees in the UK.

Despite the fact that the preachers at ECA were not trained theologically, they handled their sermons with confidence, virtually extemporaneously and apparently with deep conviction. However, there appeared to be lack of focus in their sermon delivery. There was also a tendency to multiply themes within the sermon, and digression from the main discussion. For example, one of the pastors was preaching on worry, and he spent about half of the time of the sermon preaching on the necessity of attending Church services.

In most cases, attempts were made at practical application and contextualization of sermons. A sermon on 'Making a Difference', preached by the pastor himself, is a good case in point. Taking as his text 2Corinthians 2:14, he began with an illustration from his trip to Tanzania and his irritation with the practice of witchcraft which he saw there. He identified the tradition of witchcraft and ancestor worship as among the things militating against the development of Africa. With regard to Christians making a difference he observed that 'the spirits disturbing and hindering Africans' progress must be confronted by the Pentecostals and driven out so as to allow Africa to grow'. He then illustrated this principle by telling the congregation how he had refused to participate in the traditional rituals people wanted to do on his behalf when

he was coming to Britain. Returning to the scriptures, he offered further illustration from the story of Daniel and the burning fiery furnace. He concluded by stating:

Wherever God allows you to be, please make a difference. We need to become more and more like him. Jesus got to the wedding and made a difference. Paul made a difference to the Church of the Lord. Philip the evangelist made a difference in Samaria in Acts of the Apostles chapter 8. It is your turn to initiate a difference. The Lord will help you as you do this.<sup>46</sup>

The impact of any sermon on the hearers in my view is dependent on how true it is to life situations. J. I. Packer observes that 'what is being said would not be preaching at all were it not life-centred'.<sup>47</sup> Commenting further he affirms:

Communication from the text is preaching only as it is applied and brought to bear on the listeners with a life- changing thrust. Without this ... it would merely be a lecture – that is, a discourse designed to clear people's heads and stock their minds, but not in any direct way to change their lives.<sup>48</sup>

Responding to question on the things they have found most beneficial in the service, many of those who responded to the questionnaire said it had been the sermon. They affirmed that the sermons preached impacted on their lives to the extent that they would not want to miss it on any Sunday. One of the indices used to determine the impact of sermons is the number of people who respond to altar calls for dedication, baptism, acceptance of Christ as Lord and Saviour, reception of the Holy Spirit and the symbolic action of laying on of hands for healing or to solve any other existential problem.<sup>49</sup> The impact within the congregation of the above-discussed sermon is perhaps to be seen in the large number of people who responded to the altar call to make a positive difference in society.

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<sup>46</sup> ECA Pastor, Sermon, 20 November 2005

<sup>47</sup> J. I. Packer., 'Some Perspectives on Preaching' in *Preaching the Living Word* ( Fearn: Christian Focus, 1999), p. 38

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>49</sup> Cheryl J. Sanders, 'African-American Worship in the Pentecostal and Holiness Movements'. 1993-2006. *Wesley Center Online: Northwest Nazarene University*. 07 September 2006. [http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan\\_theology/theojrn/31-35/32-2-6.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojrn/31-35/32-2-6.htm), p. 4 of 13

The encouragement given by senior pastors to other Church workers to share in preaching is common to all the Churches studied. It appears that the willingness of the Diaspora African Churches to use lay Church workers in ministry is a carry over from African Christianity, where, as was stated in Chapter One, it is especially characteristic of the Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria. This has sustained the multiplicity of Pentecostal Churches, particularly among the Yoruba. G. A. Oshitelu is of the opinion that the use of laymen by the Pentecostal Churches in Yorubaland is an achievement for the Churches because it empowers the members for ministry as against the priesthood oriented ministry of the mainstream Churches.<sup>50</sup>

The involvement of lay people in ministry buttresses my earlier suggestion that the involvement of lay workers in ministry not only develops such people spiritually and creates room for the development of future leaders, it also makes such people more committed to the Church. It also appears to confirm our position on the three-source triangle that the background religious worldview of Diaspora Africans Christians in Liverpool has its influence on their religious practice. One of the respondents who was given the opportunity to serve in the Church said that it was one of the most beneficial things to him and one of the reasons he came to the Church every Sunday 'to work for the Lord and carry out various responsibilities'.<sup>51</sup> Responding to the same issue of serving in the Church, another stated: 'I have come to know God and

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<sup>50</sup> Oshitelu, G. A., 'The Trends and Development of Orthodox and Pentecostal Churches in Yorubaland' in *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, XXXII, nos. 1-2, June & December 2000, pp. 113-114  
<sup>51</sup> ECA Respondent 5, Interview. 8 January 2006

know him more and deeply and intimately, and have been able to train and show myself approved and become ordained'.<sup>52</sup>

The sense of attachment to public worship created in those called to preach or enlisted for one role or the other in the Church was noteworthy. Most were exceptionally faithful in coming to the Church. During the period of my observations, a number of men and women were ordained as elders for the ministry of the Church and the pastor enjoined the congregation to respect them. The injunction that the new elders should be obeyed gave them some power within the Church that in turn strengthened their attachment to its public worship.

An example of the power they could wield was the role played in my research by the personal assistant to the pastor, who was also the pastor's secretary/ administrator. Before I could access the pastor or do anything relating to my research, I had to go through her. So, serving in the Church led to commitment, but also to the enjoyment of power which would be exercised every Sunday. In the three Churches studied, those that were actively involved in the ministry of the Church were active participants in the public worship. It could therefore be suggested on this basis as a principle that as long as members are actively involved in the ministry of the Church, they are likely to be part of the public worship of the Church.

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<sup>52</sup> ECA Respondent 3, Interview 8 January 2006

### 4.3. The Use or Non-Use of Charismatic Gifts

Only one respondent gave prophecy or prophetic worship as the reason for identifying with the Church. This low level of identification contrasts with the pastor's insistence that ECA is a 'New Testament and a prophetic Church'. With regard to his linkage between prophecy and the New Testament Church, prophecy is certainly one of the *charismata* that occupies a special place in the New Testament.<sup>53</sup> Paul mentions it as one of the gifts of the Spirit that could be employed in the public worship of the Church in I Corinthians 14, and describes this gift as greater than the gift of tongue speaking and as the gift of edification (ICor.14: 5). Prophecy 'gives rise to other gifts such as the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, endowment of the power of encouragement, etc'.<sup>54</sup> Though there is a kerygmatic element in prophecy, it may be distinguished from preaching. Prophecy may be as biblical or gospel based as preaching, but 'it also addresses the particular situation of the hearers'.<sup>55</sup> Scholars agree that prophecy is not peculiar to Israel; it appears in other religions and cultures all over the world.<sup>56</sup> The message of the prophet in the Bible tradition included the denunciation of the ills in society, or promises of God for the rulers or for individuals, groups or the nation as a whole.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Chan Simon, 'Prophecy and Discernment'. December 2003.

[http://216.239.59.104/search?q=cache:74mRON\(jLXcJ:www.ttc.edu.sg/csca/CS/2003..., p. 1 of 17](http://216.239.59.104/search?q=cache:74mRON(jLXcJ:www.ttc.edu.sg/csca/CS/2003..., p. 1 of 17)

<sup>54</sup> G. L.Lasebikan, 'Prophetism, Ancient and Modern: A Comparison of Ancient Israelite Prophetic Movements and Some Prophetic Movements in Nigeria' *Religions: A Journal of the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions*, Vol. 5, December 1984, p. 6 (Simon Chan equally submits that Luke's use of the phrase 'filled with the Holy Spirit' in connection with some oracular speech appears to be a way of underscoring the 'charisma dimension of prophecy'). See Simon Chan, 'Prophecy and Discernment', p. 7 of 7

<sup>55</sup> Simon Chan, 'Prophecy and Discernment', p. 8 of 17

<sup>56</sup> G. L.Lasebikan, 'Prophetism, Ancient and Modern: A Comparison of Ancient Israelite Prophetic Movements and Some Prophetic Movements in Nigeria', *Religions: A Journal of the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions*, Vol. 5, December 1984, p. 1

<sup>57</sup> Gary V. Smith, 'Prophets; Prophecy' in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 1986 ed., pp. 997-998



There was evidence of **prophecy** during the period of my observation. For example, a lady prophesied that God would like the Church to organize a music festival to reach out to the community, and that it would lead to the harvest of souls. Other prophecies sometimes told worshippers not to give up faith amidst the challenges of life or to forsake fellowshiping with others. The prophecies took into cognisance the spiritual and physical situations of the worshippers towards the experience of holistic fulfilment in worship. In contrast to BC, there was congruence between the statement of belief and the practice of prophecy in ECA. The Church stated her belief in prophecy, and allowed it to manifest under service. A respondent who had come from Egypt said that the main reason his family attends the ECA is because 'one can always feel God's presence in the worship, because there is, at all times, anointed preaching with clear prophetic message'.<sup>58</sup> Another respondent affirmed that the main reason she attended worship was because of the presence of prophecy in worship.<sup>59</sup> Another, white, respondent said that she joined the public worship of the ECA because 'the worship is liberating and beneficial as it allows the move of the Holy Spirit to minister in the lives of the individuals'.<sup>60</sup> The word 'beneficial' here could be interpreted as fulfilling. Worshippers who are guided through prophecy are likely to have a sense of fulfilment in worship and become attached to the public worship of that Church. The operation of prophecy in ECA therefore is one of the elements sustaining public worship in the Church, because it gives the respondents the opportunity of experiencing holistic fulfilment. Belief in the gifts of the Spirit such as prophecy is congruent with the African religious worldview and is a source of religious behaviour of Diaspora Africans.

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<sup>58</sup> ECA Respondent 6, 8 January 2006

<sup>59</sup> ECA Respondent 7, 8 January 2006

<sup>60</sup> ECA Respondent, 8, 8 January 2006

#### **4.4. Healing Ministry**

It may be recalled from my discussion on the belief of the ECA in Holy Spirit baptism that the Church associates the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the endowment of both believer and the Church with power for Christian ministry. One such manifestation of power emphasized in the Church was healing. The ECA develops this notion by declaring in its commission as follows:

We believe that the Gospel embraces the needs of the whole person and that the Church is therefore commissioned to preach it to the whole world and to fulfil a ministry of healing and deliverance to the physical and spiritual needs of mankind.<sup>61</sup>

This belief is also in keeping with the worldview of Africans as discussed in Chapter Three, and is similar to the belief of the other two Churches studied. They all take the operation of spirit beings as real and tangible. In the ECA, during my participant observation, the pastor invited those who were sick and those who had some difficulties to come to the altar to be prayed for by the pastors. This is in keeping with the Pentecostal nature of the ECA, as Walter Hollenweger argues that ‘Pentecostals have always had a praxis of prayer with the sick; their books and periodicals are full of healing testimonies’<sup>62</sup>. In a similar vein, Cecilia Loreto Mariz says that ‘Pentecostalism is a way of dealing with health problems and illnesses, which are the most personal and frequent expressions of misery’<sup>63</sup>. Using the example of Brazil, she observes that ‘The Brazilian poor need an efficient means to become healthy or, at least to explain disease. Pentecostalism, like Afro-Brazilian religions, has been this means for many people’. Pentecostals, believe that ‘to convert is to heal’ and

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<sup>61</sup> ‘Welcome Pack’ in *Charismatic Assembly’s Doctrine and Basis of Faith, First Schedule*, n.p.

<sup>62</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), p. 229

<sup>63</sup> Cecilia Loreto Mariz, *Pentecostals and Christian Base Communities in Brazil: Coping with Poverty* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), p. 144

therefore use healing as instrument of conversion<sup>64</sup>. Wes Richards observes that ‘supernaturalism is unavoidable in Pentecostalism ... [and] healing and deliverance ministry, closely linked, are outstanding characteristics of Pentecostal ministry’.<sup>65</sup> I have discussed in Chapter Three the primary position occupied by healing and healers in the religious worldview of Africans. The practice of healing in this Church therefore appears to be a reflection of their background religious worldview.

The assurance of healing through Christ, without any cost, may not only serve as an instrument of conversion of new members, but also potentially increases the popularity of public worship in the African led Churches. This is because of its likelihood of bringing holistic fulfilment to worshippers. Members and non-members who are sick are most likely to go to worship in order to receive healing free of charge. Healing becomes easier for them to receive because they would not need to book ahead to see the pastor for prayers of healing as one does in the National Health Service. Yet, during the course of the research, respondents did not directly mention healing as being instrumental to their coming to the Church. They did say that they came for worship because they experienced the power of the Spirit in the service. One respondent said that he saw in the Church ‘how God works in mysterious ways’.<sup>66</sup> We may interpret these ‘mysterious ways’ to include a range of phenomena or attestations to supernatural activities during the service. This may not exclude divine healing or the experience of signs and wonders during public worship.

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>65</sup> Wes Richards, ‘An Examination of Common Factors in the Growth of Global Pentecostalism: Observed in South Korea, Nigeria and Argentina’, pp. 94-95

<sup>66</sup> ECA Respondent 9, 8 January 2006

During the period of my participant observation, one white woman shared a testimony of how God had miraculously provided another job for her after she declined to work constantly on Sunday so she could attend Sunday services. The fact that members of the Church responded positively to the invitation to be healed through prayer attested to the fulfilment members experienced through it. So, seeing the power of God demonstrated either through healing or another miraculous happening may be taken as significant to the worshippers towards the experience of holistic fulfilment in worship and towards regular Church attendance. Unlike the BC, there was practical ministration of healing to the worshippers during public worship at ECA. It could therefore be submitted that unlike BC, there was congruence between belief and practice on the experience of the supernatural at ECA.

## **5. The Structure of Power in the Church.**

The power exercised by the pastor of ECA appeared to be immense and made data collection more difficult for me than in the other Churches. Strong leadership as it was in the ECA, and to some extent in the other Churches, appeared to have a cultural undertone. In his study of Pentecostal Churches, Wes Richards states that a Confucian background in South Korea, 'a tribal background in Nigeria and a background of patrons in Argentina have been linked with strong and clear authority in the Churches in these countries.'<sup>67</sup>

The pastors of the Churches studied are Nigerians and their strong exercise of power may be due to the tribal culture they came from. Although strong pastoral leadership

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<sup>67</sup> Wes Richards, 'Factors in the Growth of Global Pentecostalism Observed in South Korea, Nigeria and Argentina' *Journal of Asian Missions*, Vol. 7, 1, 2005, p. 98

in the Church in some instances could lead to Church growth and the popularity of public worship, as in South Korea,<sup>68</sup> it could also be a hindrance to those elements. This is especially likely to be so if the leader lacks innovation and where members are not pleased with the non-participatory process of decision making. The pastor at the ECA had no limits to the exercise of power over the Church, because he is the founder and leader. As we shall see, the situation was different at ABC because the congregational polity of the Church placed limitations on the exercise of absolute authority on some issues. The ABC pastor is literally forced by the polity to be more democratic than other pastors studied in this research. If the exercise of power is linked to worldview then, it is implied that its exercise in the three Churches studied here as our interpretative triangle suggests is a carry over from the Nigerian worldview of these Church leaders.

## **6. Social Roles of the Church among its Members: The Sense of Community Enjoyed by Members**

Respondents identified the sense of community and fellowship they enjoyed when they came to the Church as one of the reasons for their attendance. It was an element they saw as giving them fulfilment. The pastor observed that the Church responded to the needs of its members whether black or white because, according to him: 'what touches them touches me, and what touches them touches other people...so we have really become a family, it doesn't matter where you come from'.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97

<sup>69</sup> ECA Pastor, Interview 23 March 2006

The above statement reflects the pastor's awareness of the religious worldview of the worshippers which we explored in Chapter Three, where the needs of one member become the needs of all. Wes Richards suggests that Pentecostals experience a sense of community in their services at two basic levels; 'they are part of a "big" community via large public meetings, and part of a "small" community via "cell" groups'.<sup>70</sup> He believes that Pentecostal spirituality emphasizes the quest for community and also that in the Pentecostal Churches 'converts are immediately thrust into a loving and caring community. Dignity, value, personal worth and identity are collectively celebrated'. He concludes by noting that 'globally there are many examples of Pentecostal involvement in communal care and projects'.<sup>71</sup> Though the ECA has no cell system of fellowship, one of the respondents said it is the 'building of relationship with brothers and sisters'<sup>72</sup> in the Church that was instrumental to his decision to attend. Another said that it was 'the encouragement to love and reach out to others',<sup>73</sup> while another said 'when I see other people, I know I am not alone and should not be weary and discouraged'.<sup>74</sup> Oshitelu identifies the brotherly fraternity among the Pentecostal Churches in Yorubaland of Nigeria, which enables them to feel that they are not alone in their life struggles.<sup>75</sup> This is seen that the members use the terms brothers and sisters for one another though they are not related by blood. It is this sense of community and the support received from the Christian community that respondents identified as instrumental to their regularity in

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<sup>70</sup> Wes Richards, 'An Examination of Common Factors in the Growth of Global Pentecostalism: Observed in South Korea, Nigeria and Argentina', p. 90

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 90-91 (See also Eldine Villafane, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 115 and Douglas Petersen, *Not by Might nor by Power: A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern in Latin America* (Oxford: Regnum, 1996), p. 114

<sup>72</sup> ECA Respondent 9, 8 January 2006

<sup>73</sup> ECA Respondent 10, 8 January 2006

<sup>74</sup> ECA Interviewee 3, 8 January 2006

<sup>75</sup> G. A. Oshitelu., 'The Trends and Development of Orthodox and Pentecostal Churches in Yorubaland,' p. 113

attending public worship. It is human nature to be attached to where love is shared and assistance is received. It is a way of building in the members of the Church strong attachment to the goals and ministry of the Church, especially public worship. So, the sense of community is not just built for the sake of assistance in the African initiated Churches, but for the sustenance of the members' public worship attitude and their fulfilment through worship.

### **7. The Church's Relationship to the Broader Community**

One of the ways this Church has related to the broader community has been to merge with a white majority Church. This however may be interpreted as coming out of the need to address the lack of space for worship. Whatever may have been the motivation, it could be described as a positive development, which has the potential of creating inter racial harmony. The merger of the ABC with a white majority Church could be seen in the same way. The merger is one of the ways by which the Diaspora African Churches are responding to the lack of places of worship in the host society.

Another way by which ECA has impacted on the broader community of Liverpool has been through the staging of their music festival, of which the pastor said, 'some found [it] fascinating and came to join us'.<sup>76</sup> Besides, the pastor saw their evangelism, preaching and teaching as helping in building worthy citizens. Five respondents confirmed that they became members of the Church as a result of the invitation by their friends or relatives to come and worship with them. Apart from the

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<sup>76</sup> ECA Pastor, Interview, 23 March 2006

above, there was not much one can refer to as ways by which the Church was impacting upon the broader community. If it can find ways of overcoming its problems, especially financial problems and the racial hostility which all the Churches studied experienced in varying proportions, it may be able to impact more on the Liverpool community.

### **8. Factors Militating against Public Worship**

Certain factors were identified as inhibitions to the public worship by the pastor and members of ECA. Most fell under the conditions in the host society, which is one of the major sources of the religious behaviour of the Diaspora African Christians on our interpretative triangle. The pastor saw the way society is structured as an inhibition not just to public worship but also to religious commitment. His was the statement about Western attitudes towards worship found at the head of Chapter One.<sup>77</sup> He went on to describe the work structure in the United Kingdom as terrible, because people have to keep two or three jobs in order to cope with the cost of living. With regard to the impact of these work-patterns on Church attendance, he said:

People work round the clock, if you work hard enough here, you will be disconnected not only from the Church but from your family too and it is happening in places and is happening within the Church where people are not prepared to say No. They are going for everything and obviously, it is not only weakening their relationship with God and their impact on the fellowship, but it is also weakening their effectiveness in their individual families<sup>78</sup>.

An interviewee identified the work rota system as hindering members from attending the Church's public worship. This according to her was because 'if they put them on rota on Sunday or any other day of the week when the Church is to worship, they will

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*



not be able to attend.’<sup>79</sup> She saw the system of society where people would have to pay a lot of bills and are therefore compelled to work long days and extra shifts in order to make ends meet as responsible for their absence from public worship. One of the respondents identified Satan as the impediment to public worship because Satan could discourage people from coming to the Church for worship.<sup>80</sup> Another respondent saw the decline of Christianity and lack of interest in the things relating to religion in British society as militating against public worship because Africans may be affected by this common behaviour of the British.<sup>81</sup> Other factors identified were: the cold weather during the winter period, weariness on Sunday as a result of working round the clock during the week, and indolence. Others saw religious pluralism as a policy of the government intended to discourage commitment to any religious institution and at the same time restraining believers from sharing their faith at their places of work. Another respondent said that many people in society lack understanding of what Christianity is all about. Other impediments are lack of space for worship, financial problems and the problem of the hostile environment which the pastor said had led to the burning of their Church office once. These impediments to public worship are similar to those identified in the other Churches.

Hindrance such as weariness or indolence is at an individual level and may require individual determination to overcome. Others, such as what are construed to be the machinations of Satan, and lack of knowledge of what Christianity is, would require more teaching efforts of the Church to overcome. If these impediments to worship are

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<sup>79</sup> ECA Interview 2, 7 November, 2005

<sup>80</sup> ECA Respondent 11, 7 November, 2005

<sup>81</sup> ECA Respondent 12, 8 January, 2006

not addressed, they are likely to affect public worship negatively and prevent the holistic fulfilment motif of worship of the target group.

## **9. Conclusions**

In this chapter, we have discussed particularly how the African worldview and the conditions in the host society have influenced the nature of worship at the ECA. This was done through the three-source triangle of religious behaviour. Various elements of worship in this Church have been seen as instrumental to the sustenance of the public worship attitude of worshippers because they are beneficial to them. These beneficial elements are not only sustaining worshippers in worship but also leading to their fulfilment in life. The accessibility of the Church has been identified as one of the factors making it convenient for members to easily participate in the public worship of the Church. In its doctrines and nature of worship, the Church has been able to attract people to its worship through its attachment of the Eucharist. Its liberating spiritual worship has given worshippers sense of fulfilment and commitment.

The nature of worship of ECA is congruent with the background religious expression of many of the Africans in Diaspora who are the majority members of the Church. This appears to confirm our position on the three-source triangle of religious behaviour that background worldview is one of the three major sources of religious behaviour. The ECA has put into practice some of its stated doctrines, such as belief in healing and prophecy unlike the BC. The way the ECA made use of Church members to perform various roles has also led to their commitment to its public

worship. The community spirit enjoyed in the Church has made worshippers see themselves as members of one large family which they did not want to miss every Sunday. In short, the Church's worship activities are geared towards the provision of holistic experience for the worshippers. It has also impacted to some extent on the community of Liverpool through its evangelism and the teaching of members to be law abiding in the society. Its recurring music festival has also attracted some people to the public worship of the Church. The merging of this Church with a white majority Church could be interpreted as a positive development because it is hoped that it would lead to an increase in racial harmony in Liverpool.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Public Worship at the Teaching-centred African Baptist Church**

#### **1. Introduction**

The Church under investigation is designated the 'teaching-centred' African Baptist Church (ABC) because of the special emphasis placed by it on structured teaching and discipleship programmes. Unlike the other Churches studied, which are either completely independent or affiliated to a Pentecostal Church, the ABC is affiliated to a mainline Church in Nigeria, the Baptist Church. One of the implications of this is that the mother Church has a degree of external control over Church policy and polity. For example, the manual for the adult Sunday School that preceded the main worship service every Sunday was prepared by the denomination. Decision making in the Church also had to respect the denomination's general practice, with the Church-in-Conference acting as the final decision making body. This process of decision making exerts some limitations on the amount of power the pastor can wield – unlike in the other two Churches, where there was room for the pastors to exercise far more power in decision-making..

A further particular feature of this Church lies in its links to the English Baptist Union through its partnership with an English Baptist Church (referred to throughout as English Baptist Church, or EBC). During the period of study these two were worshipping together, but had not yet legally merged.

This chapter is divided into eight sections. The first is concerned primarily with the methodology used. The second concentrates on the background of the Church, including its location, history and composition. The third deals with the Church's

doctrine and beliefs, and the fourth discusses its ritual and the worship organization. The fifth explores the structures of power and authority in the Church with particular reference to its impact on public worship. The sixth discusses the factors encouraging continued participation in public worship, and the seventh discusses those militating against it. The eighth is the conclusions.

### **1. Methodological issues**

I am an ordained minister of the mother denomination of this Church and I am currently a member of ABC. I have been part of the planting of the Church in Liverpool from its inception, and have led worship there on several occasions. By choosing to study this Church, I knew I was investigating my own reality as an insider researcher. This creates some advantages in terms of the richness of the report that could be produced. It also has disadvantages. What I need to take care of here is 'reflexivity' which is 'the self-awareness researchers should have developed throughout the study about how they influenced the results'.<sup>1</sup> This includes the way the research sample is picked and the way data is interpreted. The conceptual tools ethnographers use to understand the cultures or events they study 'are not, and can never be, neutral and passive instruments of discovery'.<sup>2</sup> This is because the language used in any report and the meanings attached to issues are influenced by the researcher's culture, social background and personal experiences. Therefore, the interpretation of research data may be influenced by the preconceptions of the researcher, 'it is not a voyage of discovery which starts with a clean sheet'. To assist me in my analysis for this Church only I employed the technique of introducing another outsider researcher to investigate what I was investigating and to write his

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<sup>1</sup> David Hall and Irene Hall, *Practical Social Research* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), p. 42

<sup>2</sup> Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003), p. 88

own report. I compared this with mine to see the similarities and differences in our analysis. This supplementary report is used in this chapter at appropriate places.<sup>3</sup>

## **2. The Background of the Church.**

### **2.1. History**

The ABC was started on Sunday, March 2, 2003 by the present pastor of the Church. He was trained in the Nigerian Baptist Convention and started his pastoral ministry in Nigeria before coming to Britain for postgraduate study in 2002<sup>4</sup>. Before leaving Nigeria, the pastor said he was minded to carry out a Christian mission abroad under the auspices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, his own denomination, because he was aware that 'that the Nigerian Baptist Convention had none or too few Churches in Western Europe'. This he felt had been responsible for the fact that many of the Nigerian Baptist Convention members coming to Western Europe had to look for other Churches in which to worship.<sup>5</sup> Two of the three pastors of the Churches studied had originally come to the UK with a missionary intent, and all three pastors saw their Church planting efforts as mission. This may suggest that the fulfilment of a missionary motive was one of the reasons for the establishment of these Churches.

The pastor of ABC observed that the Nigerian Baptist Convention gave their moral support, but no financial assistance for the take-off of the Church and thereafter. He lamented that lack of financial support, and said that on a personal level the demands of student life upon him had made things difficult when the Church began. This was especially so as regarded the acquisition of property for a place of worship and 'we

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<sup>3</sup> See the second chapter of this thesis where I have elaborated more on my position as insider/outsider in this Church and the role played by the outsider researcher, Alan Smith

<sup>4</sup> ABC Pastor, Interview, August 10, 2006

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*

have to totally depend on God that the Church will become a reality'. The financial problems in this Church, which also led to accommodation problems, echoes those of the other Churches studied. The two Churches affiliated to mother denominations, and the independent Church, are self-supporting. But the question to be asked is, can mission be done effectively without adequate financial support? This is an important question; as already studied in Chapter 5, it had been financial difficulties that militated against the success of the ACM.

ABC started worshipping at the pastor's house in Tuebrook, Liverpool. The Church moved from one place to another for almost two years, using pubs and stores, until they were able to enter into partnership with an English Baptist Church in February 2005. According to the pastor, the EBC had lost most of its members and was on the verge of closing down at the time ABC approached them for the use of their auditorium. Corroborating this, the pastor of EBC said that 'at the time ABC came calling, we had four members out of which two are part of the regular service with ABC now, one is in a nursing home, while the other did not want to join a Nigerian Church'.<sup>6</sup> Commenting further on their contact with ABC, the pastor of the EBC said that when the members of ABC came to her requesting the use of the auditorium, initially she declined. She said that the Congolese community had been using the auditorium and there was no space left for another Church. However, she later reconsidered the request of ABC because 'as a Baptist Church that wanted to join the Baptist Union, they had priority. So I told the Congolese that our ministry has

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<sup>6</sup> EBC Pastor, Interview, 30 August, 2006

expanded and we wouldn't be able to accommodate them any longer'.<sup>7</sup> Commenting on the merger, the pastor of EBC further noted that:

On a practical level, we are one Church but we haven't done the legal aspect of it yet. The Merger Committee needs to sort out the constitution and the membership list and then contact the Charity Commission, the Baptist Union, and work out our finance. We elected a committee and had a couple of meetings; we have been looking at the issues we need to address. [The Nigerian pastor] will definitely be the pastor. The sharing of the position of leadership will have to be spelt out. [The Nigerian pastor] and I need to sit down and sort out things. The finances will have to be merged anyway to keep them in agreement with the charity laws of England.<sup>8</sup>

The fusion of these two Churches has some similarities to the merger of the ECA with the English Charismatic Church reported in the preceding chapter. On the other hand it is different because while there were struggles between the pastors of the ECA and of the English Charismatic Church, no such struggles were at any time mentioned to me, nor observed by me, throughout the period of fieldwork at ABC – though, as has been noted, one member of the EBC had chosen not to continue to worship there.. While the pastor of the English Charismatic Church retired later, the pastors of the two Baptist Churches that merged here are still serving together.

## ***2.2 The Pastors of the Church***

This Church was led by a main pastor, who was the initiator of the Church. From the outset he was supported by another pastor, and presently by six others. All these were senior colleagues in ministry, and were already ordained Baptist pastors when they came to Liverpool from Nigeria.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*



## **2.3. The Location and Structure of the Church.**

### **2.3.1. Location**

The ABC is located in the Kensington district of Liverpool. Kensington is close to the city centre, and is bordered by Edge Hill, Everton and Fairfield. Like Kirkdale and Granby, where the first two Churches are established, Kensington appears to be an economically deprived area. In 2005, while the average property price for Liverpool was £127,430, that of Kensington Ward was £93,716. While the jobless rate for Liverpool in August 2004 was 33.9% that of Kensington Ward was 51.5%. In December of the same year, while job seekers' allowance claimants were 5.2% for the whole of Liverpool, for Kensington the figure was 9.0%.<sup>9</sup> Of all the African Churches studied, the Church located at Kensington was the one that experienced the most frequent vandalism and burglary.

In terms of accessibility, there are many buses passing close to the Church. This makes it easy for members to come for public worship, and may be one of the reasons for the growing membership of the Church. In addition, the Church has a secure (locked) car-park, and this also has been a factor helping in the attendance at public worship. It is more accessible than the Believers' Church. Like the Charismatic Assembly it is located close to the University of Liverpool and John Moores University. This, coupled with the fact that the founding pastor was a graduate of Hope University, may partly account for the presence of university students in the Church.

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<sup>9</sup> 'Ward Profile: Kensington & Fairfield', *Regeneration Portfolio*, Liverpool City Council, Issue 3 – March 2006, pp. 1-8

### **2.3.2. The Church's Composition**

Apart from the presence of some university students in the Church, many nurses or 'adaptation students'<sup>10</sup> also worship there. From my own knowledge and participation in the life and worship of the Church, I am aware that only perhaps three Church members were engaged in private employment; the rest were care assistants, support workers and one medical doctor (as indicated in the 'type of job' enquiry during the interview and in the written responses). The pastor stated that the children there were the children of the worshippers.<sup>11</sup> The presence of children – together with the overall gender balance - was also noted by Alan Smith, the outsider researcher who worshipped in ABC. He reported that:

There were about 70 adults present in the church Hall together with about 40 children in the Little Church. These were made up of 90%-95% Black African and the balance White European. Gender mix was 50% male and 50% female in the Church Hall with the larger part of the congregation (80%) under 60 years of age and with an additional 40, under the age of 15 and all Black African, in the Little Church.<sup>12</sup>

### **2.3.3. The Building and Activities**

The church building is rectangular, and was designed to be a multipurpose building.<sup>13</sup> There is a kitchen and a store at the other side of the auditorium. The kitchen is where tea and other meals are prepared for the worshippers, and for those people in the neighbourhood who come for the regular lunch club and coffee mornings. The lunch club and coffee mornings were established by the EBC before the merger as a way of

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<sup>10</sup> 'Adaptation Students' are overseas nurses undergoing 6 month's supervision or training in British Health Institutions to enable them practice in Britain as registered nurses. See 'Supervised Practice: A guide for Individuals and Institutions'. *Nursing and Midwifery Council*. 4 July 2005. <http://www.nmc-uk.org/nmc/main/Overseas/Overseas11>, pp. 1-2 of 2 and <http://www.ukstudentlife.com/Work/Job/Nurse.htm>, pp. 1-2 of 7

<sup>11</sup> More on the composition of the Church is discussed in Methodology in Chapter Two.

<sup>12</sup> Alan Smith, Report, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> EBC Pastor, Interview 30 October 2006

reaching out to the community by offering low cost meals. Such outreach was regarded by the EBC as an opportunity to communicate the gospel.<sup>14</sup> This type of outreach programme was not available in the other two Churches studied; the closest thing to it that I came across in the course of research was the breakfast and luncheon meals of a different diaspora Church, namely the Divine Revelation Church. This was however not a regular event at Divine Revelation Church as it was at EBC. However, as an outreach method, the meal clubs appeared to have little effect: throughout my participant observation at ABC, no single addition was made to the membership of either the ABC or the EBC through the lunch club. This raises the question of whether this strategy is an effective way of evangelism, although it undoubtedly has a social benefit for the local community.

### **3. Doctrinal Position and Teaching**

#### ***3.1. Belief in the Bible.***

The ABC places strong emphasis on the authority of the Scriptures, insisting that in all matters of faith and practice, the Bible shall be the standard. This emphasis conforms to the position of the Nigerian Baptist Convention on the Bible.<sup>15</sup> Ademola Ishola, the General Secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, has recently drawn the attention of the Nigerian Baptist Convention to its chosen name of 'people of the Book,' interpreting the name to mean that 'we accept the Holy Bible as the authority for faith and practices'.<sup>16</sup> He laments that most of the nomenclatures used for officers of the Convention are not congruent with Bible norms, and therefore calls for restructuring.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>15</sup> 'The Holy Bible' *Statement of Faith and Practice of The Nigerian Baptist Convention as Approved by the Nigerian Baptist Convention-in-Session at Igede-Ekiti on April 29, 1993*, p.2

<sup>16</sup> S. Ademola Ishola (Compiled), *Restructuring and the Nigerian Baptist Convention: An Overview* (Ibadan: Baptist Press, 2006), p. 7

According to the pastor of ABC, the centrality of the Bible to the Church led them to place a copy of the Bible on the pulpit almost all the time.<sup>17</sup> This emphasis on the centrality of scripture – *sola scriptura* - is part of the tradition of the Baptists worldwide. Lawrence B. Davis remarks that Baptists ‘insist that the Bible is the sole norm for faith and practice in the Christian life; thus the Scriptures rather than Church tradition are the source of religious authority’.<sup>18</sup>

A greater emphasis on in-depth teaching of the word of God distinguished this Church from the others studied. This teaching was done through a closely-ordered structure of distinct groups within the congregation. At its heart was the Sunday Bible teaching known as the Sunday School, and the mid-week Bible Study. Devotional material called *Proclaim* was also prepared for the weekly meeting of the Women Missionary Union (otherwise referred to as the Women of Excellence). Similarly, the Men’s Missionary Union (otherwise referred to as Men of Purpose) had its weekly programme of discipleship study called *Mission*. Women of Excellence and Men of Purpose are the additional names the Women Missionary Union and the Men Missionary Union of the Church gave themselves, perhaps in an attempt to distance themselves a little from the tradition. The Convention still knows them as Women Missionary Union and Men Missionary Union. As a leader in our Convention myself,

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<sup>17</sup> ABC Pastor, Interview, 10 August 2006

<sup>18</sup> Lawrence B. Davis, *Immigrants, Baptists, and the Protestant Mind in America* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 3 The Baptists further affirm that the Bible, apart from been the final authority on such matters as Christology and the Atonement, equally provides ‘the final and authoritative teaching for all necessary matters concerned with the true nature and constitution of the Church’ and this is still a major influence on the thinking of the Baptists in the twentieth century. See B. R. White ed., *The English Baptists of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1983), p. 10

I know the groups can give themselves any additional names as long as they continue to use the manuals prepared for them and keep within what Baptists believe.

The ABC also has manuals for teaching young women, who are divided into two distinct groups, in line with the Nigerian Baptist Convention practice. Girls aged between ten and seventeen are members of the Girls' Auxiliary, while the Lydia Group is formed by unmarried young women aged above seventeen years. Literature for these two groups is designed by the Convention to assist them to become more responsible adults and to have good homes.

Finally, the Church has a weekly programme outline for the children who are called 'The Sunbeams'. These types of formally organized age grade teaching programmes were not available in the other Churches studied. Although one of the Churches had its Sunday School, and both emphasized the importance of the Bible, they did not have the same access to printed weekly teaching for all age grades in the Church.

The teaching programmes of ABC may be illustrated with their Sunday School and Bible Study. The Sunday School normally started at 10.30am and lasted for about forty five minutes. The materials used in teaching, entitled *Points for Emphasis*, were prepared in Nigeria. The materials included lessons for every week in the year with Bible passages and commentaries to explain the lessons. This is an important cultural link with African Christianity which is one of the major sources of the religious behaviour of Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool. Yet, there was also recognition that the context was different; the Sunday School Director of the ABC

reviews each lesson before it is taught to better contextualise the material.<sup>19</sup> The aim was that the teaching should take an interactive form, and members were given an opportunity to make their own contributions to the lessons to supplement the explanations given by the Sunday School manual. The context, form and goal of the Sunday School was completely different from that of the sermon. During the delivery of the sermon, nobody was allowed to ask questions or contribute to what the preacher said.

Only about one third of the Church members attended the Sunday School during the period of this research. The Director said ‘some of the people coming for the early service appeared too weak to stay for it as a result of the fatigue of the night shift they had just finished, while some of those attending the last service do come late’<sup>20</sup>. If one or two lessons usually treated at the Sunday School were used to replace sermons on some Sundays, this might further promote the attendance of this programme.

Another broad-based teaching programme aimed at discipling the members was the Wednesday Bible study, which began at six o’clock in the evening and usually lasted for one hour. Again, around a third of the members of the Church usually attended this programme. The pastor generally led the programme, or assigned another minister to handle it.<sup>21</sup> The topics to be discussed were usually chosen by the pastor – rather than being set by the Nigerian Baptist Convention, as was the case with the Sunday school material. Some of the topics treated during my fieldwork included, ‘holiness’, ‘sanctification’, ‘making your marriage work’ and ‘forgiveness’. Members were

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<sup>19</sup> ABC Interviewee 2, October 21, 2006

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> This Church has seven other trained theologians worshipping in the Church. The pastor seizes the opportunity to assign them at different times to lead Bible Study.

encouraged to contribute to discussions on the topic. Emphasis was placed on the application of the lessons taught. There was usually a Bible study outline that was prepared by the pastors assigned for that week or month to lead it. Bible passages were usually included in the outline to affirm the validity of each point. The prepared outline was submitted to the main pastor's desk for approval and printing. According to another of the pastors, this was done in order to avoid heresy.<sup>22</sup> However, of course, this procedure enhanced the power of the main pastor.

In a similar development, unlike the other Churches studied whose pastors do not have formal theological training, each of the eight pastors in the ABC had training in theology or Church music at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary. This in my view is a demonstration of the importance the denomination attaches to effective preparation for mission. George D. Kelsey says that 'while education is the handmaid of the Christian religion in general, it is a special necessity for Baptists'<sup>23</sup> because regeneration of the Church members is their cardinal doctrine. In Nigeria, 'the Baptists, like other Church denominations, hold tenaciously to education as an indispensable tool in the spiritual and social development of the personality'.<sup>24</sup> Equally, discipling of the Church members through different types of religious education has also been their focus. Through the American Baptist Publication Society, 'there was developed an ever-widening program of religious instruction for children, youth, and adults through Sunday schools, and week-day religious

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<sup>22</sup> ABC Interviewee 3, 2 December 2006

<sup>23</sup> George D. Kelsey, *Social Ethics among Southern Baptists* (New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1973), p. 43.

<sup>24</sup> S. Ademola Ajayi, 'Christian Missions and Educational Development in Nigeria: The Baptist Example, 1854-2005' in *Ecclesiastes: The Preacher, the Church and the Contemporary Society* (Ibadan: Baptist Press, 2006), p. 223

instructions...'<sup>25</sup> This is similar to what is practised at the Nigerian Baptist Convention, the mother denomination of ABC. According to the pastor of ABC, the Convention's training of pastors is geared 'towards producing effective leaders who will be able to raise worthy Christians that will impact upon the society spiritually, morally and physically'.<sup>26</sup> The ABC has taken some practical steps towards impacting positively upon Liverpool society through training beyond the spiritual. A government programme called 'Children at Risk'<sup>27</sup> is hosted by the ABC every day from Monday to Friday between 3.30pm to 6 in the evening. The children are taught different life skills including domestic tasks such as preparation of food and house cleaning, etc.

More than half of the research sample identified the teaching of the word of God as one of the elements of ritual motivating their public worship attendance. Sunday School and Bible study were specifically mentioned. One respondent said, 'I need to worship with the other children of God. New things I don't think about, I learn, I learn the word of God more'.<sup>28</sup> Another respondent said 'the teachings guide me on how to behave in the society and always give me something to think about'.<sup>29</sup> Evidently, teaching is one of the elements sustaining public worship in ABC because it impacts positively upon the lives of the attendees thus encouraging them to come for public worship. Yet, the Church also needs to review constantly the effectiveness of its various teaching programmes. A meaningful contextualisation, review of literature and programmes during service may be helpful. The ABC has the capacity to do this

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<sup>25</sup> Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press Limited, 1966), p. 446

<sup>26</sup> ABC Pastor, Interview 10 August 2006

<sup>27</sup> Children at Risk is a government programme geared towards providing life skills training for children from broken homes aged between ages 8 and 12. This is to help make them gainfully employed in the future and make them responsible citizens, according to the EBC pastor.

<sup>28</sup> ABC Respondent 1, 22 October 2006

<sup>29</sup> ABC Respondent 2, 22 October 2006



more than any of the Churches studied in this research because of the availability of theologically trained pastors in the ABC.

### ***3.2. Congregationalism and the Autonomy of the Local Church***

One of the distinctive characteristics of the Baptists is congregationalism. This is the system of Church government where the local Church is seen as ‘competent under Christ to interpret and administer His laws, without higher human authority’.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, ‘the process of arriving at the final decision in the exercise of its final authority by a local Church is called democracy’.<sup>31</sup> Every member of the Church is given the opportunity of being part of the decision making process of the Church through dialogue in business meetings. Each is also given the right to vote and be voted for. This democratic principle may be attributed to the quest of the founding fathers of the denomination for ‘freedom of conscience and religious liberty’.<sup>32</sup> The local congregation therefore possesses the power to elect or dismiss its officers, including the pastor. They possess the power to ‘accept other members into fellowship with them ... [and to] discipline erring members either in doctrine or in conduct’.<sup>33</sup> The Baptists’ emphasis on the autonomy of the local Church has led them to be wary of ‘using credal statements to enforce doctrinal conformity and to be wary of setting up any central convention that would assume the leadership of all phases of denominational activities’.<sup>34</sup> The congregation thus becomes the most important organ for decision making in the Church. This type of Church government is co-extensive

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<sup>30</sup> Keith Clements, ‘Baptist Theology,’ *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 1983 ed., p. 61

<sup>31</sup> Nkem Emerald Osuigwe, *The Quest for a Sound Legacy: Rediscovering and Fostering Baptist Polity and Practice* (Ibadan: Publications Department, Nigerian Baptist Convention, 2003), p. 26

<sup>32</sup> ‘Baptists’, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* edited by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, 1997 ed., p. 154

<sup>33</sup> B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1983), p. 11

<sup>34</sup> Lawrence B. Davis, *Immigrants, Baptists, and the Protestant Mind in America*, pp. 3-4

with the doctrine of the priesthood of believers. This is based on Exodus 19: 6 and I Peter 2: 9, and is explained in the Nigerian Baptist book of doctrines as follows:

By virtue of a relationship with Jesus Christ, priesthood and competency of the soul to approach God directly through Christ is granted every believer. While recognising Christ as the High Priest and only mediator between God and man, the believer is a priest for himself and others.<sup>35</sup>

Consequent upon this principle, the Baptist Church is referred to as 'the Church of the common people' with their congregational policy granting them the advantage of withstanding 'schisms and other crises more successfully than many other religious bodies which are hampered by a greater degree of centralized Church government'.<sup>36</sup> Every member in the Baptist Church has the opportunity to participate in the affairs of the Church thus giving everyone a greater sense of belonging. I have already demonstrated in the last two chapters that there is a positive correlation between the degree of involvement of the members of the Church in her life and their commitment to the Church. It gives room for collective accountability, checks and balances, and majority rule.<sup>37</sup> Extolling the features of the Baptist doctrine of congregationalism, Tammi Reed Ledbetter agrees with the view of Daniel Akin that congregationalism places the Church's authority in the local body of believers. It does not allow any individual or groups of individuals to be over and above the Church apart from the Lord Jesus. Ledbetter sees the congregational system of the Baptists as giving the members of the Church 'equal standing and responsibilities...'<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Statement of Faith and Practice of The Nigerian Baptist Convention as Approved by the Nigerian Baptist Convention-in-Session at Igede-Ekiti on April 29, 1993*, p. 18

<sup>36</sup> Robert G. Tobert, *A History of the Baptists*, p. 488

<sup>37</sup> Nkem Emerald Osuigwe, *The Quest for a Sound Legacy*, pp. 39-40

<sup>38</sup> Tammi Reed Ledbetter, 'Church Governance 1: Governance: Holding the Local Church Together', 23 February, 2005. *Southern Baptists of Texas Convention*. 26 July 2007.

<http://www.sbtexas.com/default.asp?action=article&aid=1343&issue=2/23/2005>, p. 1 of 6 (See also, Bill Pinson, 'Trends in Baptist Polity'. *Mercer University: The Centre for Baptist Studies*. 26 July 2007. <http://www.mercer.edu/baptiststudies/localChurch/heritageseries/polity.htm>, pp. 1-2

At ABC, however, congregationalism and the principle of democracy in decision making was not fully implemented. There were instances during my period of observation when the pastor took unilateral decisions without involving the appropriate organs of the Church. This highlights the fact that the extent to which the polity of a Church operates depends to some extent on the nature of the pastor. In this instance, because the pastor appeared not to be acting democratically, the principle of congregationalism as a doctrine of the Church could not operate fully. He could however be challenged on such occasions by the Church members because of the Church's polity of congregationalism. For example, on one occasion, the Church Council members told the pastor that he had no power to unilaterally nominate those who would represent the ABC at the Nigerian Baptist Convention annual assembly in Nigeria that year. This type of challenge to the pastor's power was not available in the two other Churches studied because of their polity.

The above incidence demonstrates that the Baptist polity of Church government has its own problems. Conrad affirms that there is a dilemma where the doctrine of the priesthood of believers and the legitimacy of the believer's personal testimony are to be considered in making a decision. Claims of divine guidance by members as evidence for their positions at meetings cannot be disputed without undermining the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. 'Visions are not amenable to tests of empirical variability and competing visions cannot be resolved by comparing the relative hierarchical status of the visionaries.'<sup>39</sup> This is a dilemma that Baptist Churches face in their meetings. Majority vote is usually resorted to, in most cases, in

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<sup>39</sup> Charles Conrad, 'Identity, Structure and Communicative Action in Church Decision-Making' in *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 27, No. 3, (September 1988), p. 353

resolving issues. Nonetheless, Conrad maintains that there is ample evidence in the Bible to prove that majority decisions may not always be the best decisions.<sup>40</sup>

A system which operates on the principle of democracy has the tendency of reducing pastoral authority. Members of the Church may misbehave and get away with it without being disciplined once such people can lobby more members of the Church to support them whenever a decision is to be taken over such misbehaviour. The pastor may eventually become a ceremonial leader without any executive authority to enforce discipline. The pew may eventually become higher than the pulpit! This may breed indiscipline and constant rebellion against spiritual leadership in the Church. This may also frustrate the pastor and prevent pastoral visions from being implemented. Nkem Osuigwe observes that democracy under congregationalism, if not properly defined, has the tendency of becoming 'secular democracy'.<sup>41</sup> Conflicts and controversies result from this.<sup>42</sup> In the same vein, Ademola Ishola cautions that democracy in strict political terms as 'people rule' cannot be used to describe what the Baptists practice. This according to him is because 'of our belief in the Lordship of Christ and the authority of the word of God for faith and practice'. He submits that what the Baptists practice could be better described 'as "pneumatocracy" or "theo-democracy" meaning God's rule through all of the people'. That is to say, Church members allow decisions to be taken not simply by majority rule but by the majority allowing the Holy Spirit to guide them.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p. 358

<sup>41</sup> Nkem E. Osuigwe, 'The Quest for a Sound Legacy', p. 26

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>43</sup> S. Ademola Ishola (Compiled), *Restructuring and the Nigerian Baptist Convention: An Overview*, p.

I would describe the Baptist system of Church administration as 'inclusive'. When various sections of an organization are given the opportunity to be part of the decision making bodies, it will help in reducing conflicts within the organization. Various positions will be considered on any issue before decisions are made. At ABC, I did not see this ideal of democracy operating as such, because during the period of my research, the pastor appeared to be exercising much control over Church matters, especially on ritual process. This issue is discussed further under power structure below.

### ***3.3. The Ordinance of Baptism.***

Another Baptist distinctive feature that ABC practices is baptism by immersion.

According to the *Statements of Faith and Practice of the Nigerian Baptist Convention*,

'baptism is the immersion of the believer in water in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit'.<sup>44</sup> The document states further:

It is the symbolic demonstration of the believer's personal faith in the crucified, buried and risen Saviour. By this act, the believer gives evidence of his desire to die to sin and bury his former unbelief and sin and of his resurrection to a new life in the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is an open testimony of the believer's faith in Christ and his own final resurrection from the dead. Baptism precedes Church membership and the partaking of the Lord's Supper.<sup>45</sup>

Other Churches in this study included believer's baptism in their doctrinal belief, but it is only the ABC that has made it one of its cardinal doctrines. This is why I am exploring the extent to which ritual practice in this Church reflects their doctrinal belief in baptism.

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<sup>44</sup> 'Baptism' in *Statements of Faith and Practice of the Nigerian Baptist Convention*, p. 16

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17

Initially, the earliest Anabaptists did not place emphasis on baptism by immersion but all emphasized believer's baptism.<sup>46</sup> Believer's baptism implies that 'baptism is generally performed only upon one who has consciously professed conversion rather than during the period of infancy'. In this sense, the act of baptism is not salvific or sacramental, but rather 'purely as a symbol of spiritual regeneration resulting from faith in Christ'. This makes the Baptists reject infant baptism or Church membership through natural birth.<sup>47</sup> The words 'open testimony' in the Nigerian Baptist Convention's *Statements of Faith and Practice* on baptism quoted above seems to imply that baptism is never to be undertaken secretly but in the public glare.

There is a world of difference between theory and practice. At ABC, throughout the period of my fieldwork, there was no public baptism undertaken. The only time baptism took place, it was done privately for a lady who preferred 'private baptism'. Since the members of the ABC did not know about this private baptism, I think it as another instance of the misuse of pastoral power and the principle of the autonomy of the local Church.

#### **4. The Shape of the Ritual**

In the Protestant and Evangelical pattern, the structure of ritual is semi-formal. Yet, although this Church is a branch of an historic Church, its overall ritual outlook was more Pentecostal than traditional.. This is true of many of the Diaspora African Churches in Britain.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, p. 486

<sup>47</sup> Lawrence B. Davis, *Immigrants, Baptists, and the Protestant Mind*, p. 3

<sup>48</sup> Patrick Kalilombe, 'Black Christianity in Britain' in *Strangers and Sojourners: Religious Communities in the Diaspora* edited by Gerrie ter Haar (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), p. 184 and John Beya, 'The Francophone Presence in Britain Revisited: An Analytical Approach to French-speaking African

#### ***4.1. Ritual Organization: The Two Services***

The services of ABC were two-fold. The first service normally began at 9 o'clock in the morning on Sunday and ended at 10.30am. The second worship service began at 11.15am and ended at about 1 o'clock in the afternoon. The Sunday School came between the two services.

The 9 o'clock service, according to the pastor, was designed to cater for those who are usually on night shift on Saturday and who may have found it convenient to come straight from work, to worship for one hour, participate in the Sunday School for forty-five minutes and then go home to sleep. According to him, 'we designed this service because those on night shifts complained of not finding it easy to come for the 11.15am service we were having because they were often too tired and did sleep off'.<sup>49</sup> When one of the attendees of this service was asked why he preferred to come for the early service, she affirmed the pastor's view, saying that: 'it is more convenient for those doing night shifts and also snappy. It gives those on night shifts on Sunday night enough time to sleep in order to prepare for their shifts later'.<sup>50</sup>

A similar early service was not available in the other two Churches studied. The reasons the other two Churches did not make this provision for the night workers among them are unclear. From my participant observation, making provision for this first service entailed extra work and additional responsibilities for the pastors involved. However, the service has enhanced public worship by making an additional

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Congregations in Greater London' in *Strangers and Sojourners: Religious Communities in the Diaspora* edited by Gerrie ter Haar (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), p. 206

<sup>49</sup> ABC Pastor, Interview 10 August 2006.

<sup>50</sup> ABC Interviewee 4, 2 December, 2006

service available for those who might have been too tired after night shifts to go for public worship.

The process of ritual in both services was the same, and the programme of worship for both was drawn up each week by the main pastor. Therefore, I will use the analysis of the second service for the understanding of the first.

The second service was Pentecostal in nature and engaging. More people attended this worship service than the first. The pastor was of the opinion that 'the time for this service is more convenient for a lot of the members because it starts late enough'.<sup>51</sup> A member interviewed explained why more people attended the second worship service than the first:

The way work is structured in this town and UK in general does not make it convenient for people who want to come to Church to find it easy to do so especially those in health industry. The Saturday night shifts affect many of our Church members on duty on Saturday nights. Besides, Sunday shifts and lack of sufficient buses on the road on Sunday equally affect the movement of people. These coupled with personal preferences of people to choose the service they prefer may be responsible for differences in the number of people attending the two worship programmes in my own opinion.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to the above comments, cold weather was identified by others as being responsible for the low attendance of the first worship service. In my own view, other factors such as the convenience of the time of service (particularly for those with some distance to travel, on Sunday when the bus services are not as frequent or as early as on other days of the week), may also provide explanations for why more people attend the second worship service than the first.

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<sup>51</sup> ABC Pastor, Interview 10 August 2006

<sup>52</sup> ABC Interviewee 3. 22 October, 2006



There was a written bulletin showing the order of worship which every member of the Church was given; worship elements and personnel as determined by the pastor were shown. This indirectly determined what happened in the service. Those leading the service were left to be directed by the Spirit of the Lord to execute every element specified in the ritual process. Though the Church leaders usually claimed they were conscious of time in worship, the service that was supposed to end by around 1.00pm sometimes continued to around 2 o'clock in the afternoon. The main reason for the prolonged services was a lack of time management. The single element which was most usually prolonged was the praise. One of the research sample identified the prolonged service as militating against attendance and suggested early closure.<sup>53</sup>

#### ***4.2. The Music Ministry***

The service opened by welcoming people to the presence of the Lord. This was done in a slightly different way from that of the other two Churches studied. The welcoming at times took the form of a 'call to worship' whereby the person in charge read a portion of the Scriptures which might be a promise, a prayer, thanksgiving for what God has done or an expression of the need to be aware of the presence and awesomeness of God in the midst of the congregation.

The singing of a hymn from *The Baptist Hymnal* usually followed. The texts of hymns to be sung were written in the service bulletin to enable the congregation to participate in the singing. The stanzas of the hymns were also displayed on the board through an overhead projector. This was done by the other two Churches studied also. The pastor selected the hymns which he considered relevant to the sermon to be

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<sup>53</sup> ABC Respondent 3, 22 October 2006

preached.<sup>54</sup> Apart from the singing of the classical hymns from the Baptist Hymnal, the style of singing in the ABC was not different from that of the other Churches studied.

In addition to the singing of hymns, the ABC sang choruses with a blend of African drums and Western ones.<sup>55</sup> This in my view took into consideration the cultures of the two groups of people involved in the merger of this Church. The singing took up to thirty minutes. One woman interviewed on this responded by saying:

Dancing is one of the best ways to show appreciation to God for all the good things he has done for us especially the gift of life. It is also a sign of our submissive worship. David worshipped God like this when he was bringing the Ark of Covenant to Jerusalem from the house of Obed Edom.<sup>56</sup>

The above comments correspond to the opinion expressed by Jerisdan H. Jehu-Appiah while writing on 'Spirituality and Black Culture'. He observes:

Worship in black Churches is basically a celebration of praise and re-dedication. At worship, space is created for individual worshipper to recount their stories which show God's gracious dealings with them in their daily lives...As people worship and consciously abandon themselves to this activity, they transcend themselves, are impressed by the joy of the Lord, are overwhelmed by his presence through his Spirit, and feel completely assumed by the Spirit, often moving into a state which Paul Tillich described as "ecstasy". A more proper description would be 're-conversion'.<sup>57</sup>

Singing in the ABC, as in the other Churches studied, made the worship participatory. This was the observation of Alan Smith. The singing was primarily in the English language as in the other two Churches. This gave all worshippers the opportunity to

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>55</sup> 'Ogido' is a Yoruba people's drum having an elongated wooden body with hole in the centre having its head covered with cow leather. It may be in twin pack, with one having a wider based while the other is having a narrower base. Only one drummer beats the two together.

<sup>56</sup> ABC Interviewee 4, 5 October, 2006 The scripture reference is to II Samuel 6: 14

<sup>57</sup> Jehu-Appiah Jerisdan H., 'Spirituality and Black Culture' in *The Bible in Transmission*, Summer, 1999, p. 1. See also [www.biblesociety.org.uk/exploratory/articles/appiah99.pdf](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/exploratory/articles/appiah99.pdf),

sing along and understand the songs. The music director of ABC has a bachelor's degree in Church Music. This appeared to add technical depth to the songs delivered by the choir; they sang in parts more than the other two Churches. Both black and white members of the research sample attested to the positive impact that singing in worship has on their lives. Over half of the responses identified singing as one of the elements of worship that made them part of the public worship of the Church every Sunday. A white lady responded to the impact of the exuberant singing of the Church by saying, 'I look forward to coming every Sunday to praise His name, enjoy the singing of the choir'.<sup>58</sup> An African respondent observed, 'I believe in praising the Lord, we move the hand of God through praises'.<sup>59</sup> The pastor affirmed that the music ministry has been impacting upon other Churches and organizations in Liverpool community. For example, he said, a pastor of another Church once visited and after seeing the choir performing invited them to his own Church to sing. At another time, the choir was invited to a charity organization to sing and present African dances. The choir has also been invited by the Northwest Baptist Association to sing at their associational meeting.

The misgiving that a visitor to ABC once expressed about the excessive loud noise from musical instruments was underscored by my research colleague. He linked his concerns about the general volume of sound in the Church to the question of whether or not the worship style would appeal to a white English audience:

The music was too loud, especially the drum kit, which seem out of proportion to the size of the Hall. Perhaps the bongo drums would give sufficient rhythm without such high volume. And finally the use of the

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<sup>58</sup> ABC Interviewee 5, 22 October 2006

<sup>59</sup> ABC Respondent 4, 29 October 2006

electric organ, at a volume higher than was necessary, whilst the pastor was talking was both distracting and at times made it impossible to hear what was being said. This is an area that I feel needs some consideration if you are hoping to attract a white English audience.<sup>60</sup>

In view of this, the music arm of the Church may need to reduce the level of noise made with the musical instruments in order to blend it with voice for a better praise and worship time.

### ***4.3. The Sermon***

Preaching was an important element of the ritual. Preaching was done only by theologically trained pastors. Baptists are renowned for giving their pastors careful training.<sup>61</sup> The pastors at the ABC had appropriate titles for the sermons they delivered, unlike what I observed at the ECA. This, I think, was a reflection of the impact of their theological training. Giving a title to a sermon is likely to enlist interest and facilitate comprehension. Most of the sermons I heard in ABC as well as in the other two Churches studied were based on biblical stories and narratives. Apart from the sermons addressing sin and calling for repentance, the attention of the congregation was called also to Jesus Christ as Saviour. For example, on March 19, 2006, the pastor of the Church preached a message entitled 'Church Discipline: Taking it Seriously'. In the message, he enumerated why there must be discipline in the Church. He gave the members the opportunity to pray quietly and renounce all forms of ungodly associations, especially sexual immorality.

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<sup>60</sup> Alan Smith, Report, p.3

<sup>61</sup> 'Baptists', *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* edited by F.L. Cross & E. A. Livingstone, 1997ed., p. 155

Apart from addressing the subject of sin, sermons addressed life problems such as discouragement, loneliness and intimidation. This is understandable for a group of people who were far from their original homes and may have had to grapple with the culture of a society which is different from their home cultures.

Generally, the sermons delivered underscored the fact that the Church expected the members to live lives of integrity in the community. The teachings and the preaching in ABC as in the other Churches studied were directed towards preparing people for holistic living and fulfilment. As they lived their Christian lives for self-fulfilment, they were admonished to make their lives impact upon the community as well. The effects of the sermons the members received would depend upon the ways they made use of them in actual life. One respondent said the sermons had been meeting his needs most of the time. According to him, 'it was as if the pastor had been told by someone what I was passing through'.<sup>62</sup> Over half the research sample made references to sermons which met their needs and gave them the courage to face the vicissitudes of life. Sermon delivery in the Church therefore had a holistic fulfilment outcome for listeners as its goal, because it addressed the spiritual, physical and socio-psychological states of listeners.

All the preachers in ABC evidently had outlines of their sermons in a notebook to which they referred from time to time during sermon delivery, although most of the preaching, as in the other Churches, was extemporaneous. Few pastors in the other Churches had such notebooks. The fact that ABC is an historic mission Church and that the pastors there were trained, unlike the other Churches studied, could be part of

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<sup>62</sup> ABC Respondent 5, 22 October 2006

the factors responsible for this practice. Care should be taken so that the theological education which most of the pastors in this Church had does not become an impediment to their reliance on the Holy Spirit for effective sermon delivery.

The pastor of ABC engaged the congregation in the sermon occasionally by telling them to repeat some words he has just said. For example, he told the congregation to say 'people will celebrate me very soon', and the congregation responded by saying the same.<sup>63</sup> This in my observation helped in sustaining the attention of the congregation throughout the service. The pastor of EBC remarked about the engaging nature of worship at ABC as follows; 'the participatory aspect of African worship is very good, for example, people saying praise the Lord, Hallelujah'. She said that the participatory nature of African worship is better than the English way where people just sit down in worship without much participation.<sup>64</sup>

At times, the pastor of the EBC delivered the sermon. She did not move about from place to place like African preachers. Her sermons were usually shorter, not more than twenty-five minutes, while the African preachers spoke for a minimum of about thirty-five minutes. This suggests that moving from place to place during sermon delivery and long messages may have to do with African Christianity and Pentecostalism, which were common to the African pastors in this research. When the pastor of EBC was asked for the reason for her shorter messages, she said that was the tradition she had been used to and because 'the listening span of an average English

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<sup>63</sup> ABC Pastor, Sermon, Sunday 2 July 2006

<sup>64</sup> EBC Pastor, Interview 30 October 2006

worshipper may not be more than half an hour maximum'.<sup>65</sup> The African pastors may need to learn a lesson of brevity from this white preacher.

Personal style of delivery varied from one preacher to another. The worshippers thus had the advantage of listening to sermons from a variety of styles Sunday after Sunday. This was true of the other Churches studied as well.

With regard to public worship, preaching has been a part of the teaching programmes of the Baptists, and of ABC, which they have used to attract many to their fold. Edwin S. Gaustard comments on the way Baptists used preaching for increase in membership:

After the American Revolution, Baptists also made phenomenal advances among the blacks. Using a persuasive preaching style an accessible theology, an appealing baptismal ritual, and an ecclesiology that granted freedom from white rule, the Baptist message found ready hearers among both enslaved and free blacks. By the mid-twentieth century, approximately two-thirds of America's black Christians were Baptists. Also by that time, one third or more of all America's Baptists were black.<sup>66</sup>

In the light of the above comments and the fact that half the respondents identified preaching as one of the elements motivating them to come for public worship, I maintain that preaching is one of the elements that stimulates Church members to experience holistic fulfilment in worship because it is kept relevant to the people's lives.

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>66</sup> Edwin S. Gaustad, 'Baptist Churches,' *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 2, 1987 ed., pp. 64-65

#### **4.4. The Use or Non-use of Charismatic Gifts**

Charismatic gifts were used in ABC just as in the ECA. I will not elaborate much on the use of *charismata* because the format in which the gifts such as healing and prophecy were used did not differ much from that of the ECA as reported in the preceding chapter. The use of charismatic gifts in both Churches seemed to give evidence of the extent of penetration of Pentecostal doctrines into the historic Churches among African congregations, especially the Baptists.<sup>67</sup> The white pastor of EBC commented on the manifestation of the charismatic gifts, especially prophecy: 'it is very good and we need to encourage it more and more, especially, the English Church needs to learn a lesson from this'.<sup>68</sup> Though other members of the research sample did not mention any charismatic gift in particular as the motivating element for their attendance of public worship, more than half claimed that the liberating spirituality of the services motivated them to come for public worship. In other words, many worshippers in ABC found fulfilment in worship through the operation of spiritual gifts in the worship.

#### **5. The Structure of Power in the Church**

This Church's polity of congregationalism was intended to repose the power of decision making of the Church in the congregation rather than any individual, as I have discussed earlier in this chapter. In practice however, this appeared not to be the case and evidently this is so of Baptist Churches elsewhere. Bill Pinson opines that in some Baptist Churches, congregational polity is being eroded. He cites cases where pastors claim authority over Churches, or where Church elders are usurping the

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<sup>67</sup> Matthews A. Ojo, 'The Nigerian Baptist Convention and the Pentecostal Resurgence, 1970-2000: Critical Issues for Ecclesiastical Dynamics' in *Ecclesiastes: The Preacher, the Church and the Contemporary Society* edited by Ademola Ishola and Deji Ayegboyin (Ibadan: Baptist Press, 2006), pp. 338-339

<sup>68</sup> EBC Pastor, Interview 30 October 2006



authority of the congregation and where only a few people are given the opportunity of being part of the Church's business meetings. These he attributes to apathy on the part of the members of the Church, and the role of 'chief executive officer' that pastors assume, and also lack of maintenance of the 'principle of regenerate Church membership'.<sup>69</sup>

Similarly, Ishola admonishes pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention to operate within the 'job description' the Bible gives them in 1 Timothy 3: 1-13. He warns them against dictatorship and the tendency to lord it over the Church, reminding them that they are never governors of the Church.<sup>70</sup> At ABC during my fieldwork, the pastor occasionally usurped the power of the congregation. For instance, on one Sunday he said he felt that the set of drums in the Church needed to be changed, and bought new ones without consulting with the committee on finance as expected. He decided on the purchase of the Church bus too without recourse to the appropriate committee, although he did submit the receipt and particulars. When I interrogated the pastor on this, he said 'not every decision can wait for the committee to decide on'.<sup>71</sup>

I feel that this is one of the manifestations of the excessive use of power and an abandonment of the Church's democratic principle. There is no central denominational body to call the pastor to order because of the autonomy of the local Church. What the pastor did was what Larry Ingram refers to as 'manipulation'.<sup>72</sup>

Apart from the analysis of Richards on pastoral power which I considered in Chapter Seven above, which is linked with culture in Nigeria, South Korea and Argentina,

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<sup>69</sup> Bill Pinson, 'Trends in Baptist Polity', *Mercer University: The Centre for Baptist Studies*. 26 July 2007. <http://www.mercer.edu/baptiststudies/localChurch/heritageseries/polity.htm>.

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<sup>70</sup> S. Ademola Ishola (Compiled), *Restructuring and the Nigerian Baptist Convention*, p. 11

<sup>71</sup> ABC Pastor 10 August 2006

<sup>72</sup> Larry C. Ingram, 'Leadership, Democracy, and Religion: Role Ambiguity among Pastors in Southern Baptist Churches' in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 20, No. 2, June 1981, p. 125

Larry C. Ingram submits that in the congregationally-organized Churches, 'the pastor is typically the most powerful individual'.<sup>73</sup> This 'power is manifested as rational pragmatic leadership ... a necessary response to the low level of formal organization existing in this kind of Church as well as to the pressures placed on the clergyman by the congregation and by his own self-image'.<sup>74</sup>

A Baptist pastor is 'responsible for the success of the Church as measured in physical growth terms'<sup>75</sup> such as financial stability and membership increase. He is expected to keep the programme of the Church viable; this in turn 'leads the pastor to a pervasive involvement in the Church, and also a greater stake in its welfare'. Secondly, the way the congregation sets the pastor apart on his declaration of divine call to the ministry places him above them 'with at least an implied sense of superiority in religious affairs'. In order to cope with the demands of democratic principles and the need to succeed, pastors may resort to three things, role segregation, abdication and manipulation. In role segregation, the pastor sees preaching as his main prerogative and separates it from Church administration. He uses the pulpit opportunity to say what he likes which may not even be in line with the policy of the Baptist Church. In role abdication, he may decide to resign from his position as the pastor of the Church. Manipulation occurs when the pastor seeks to assert his authority by circumventing the formal process of decision making by manipulating the congregation.<sup>76</sup> This is more likely to occur among Baptist leaders because of 'their refusal to operate without recourse to well-defined lines of rational –legal authority'. Consequently, 'a

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<sup>73</sup> Larry C. Ingram, 'Notes on Pastoral Power in the Congregational Tradition' in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1980, p. 46

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>75</sup> Larry C. Ingram, 'Leadership, Democracy, and Religion: Role Ambiguity among Pastors in Southern Baptist Churches,' p. 120

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 123-125

leadership divested of authority will necessarily seek and gain power in order to meet its responsibilities'.<sup>77</sup> In the Churches studied, whether Baptist or not, traces of all the above leadership failures were evident. Excessive pastoral power is not limited to the Baptist system of Church administration alone but is present in other systems as well in varied proportions. While the pastor has the option of resigning in the Baptist system, the pastor has nothing to fear in Independent Churches such as the ECA because he is the president and founder of the Church with absolute authority. Excessive pastoral sway over the Church may send those who love democratic principles away. So, autocratic leadership structures may hinder rather than sustain public worship.

## **6. Factors Supporting Continued Participation in Worship**

### ***6.1. Members' African Background and Churchgoing.***

The Churchgoing background of the African members of the research sample was a vital element identified by them as motivating them to go to Church and to experience holistic fulfilment in worship. John Beya discovered in his study of the French-speaking Diaspora African Christians in Britain that most members had been converted to Christianity in Britain.<sup>78</sup> In this study, however, virtually all the research sample claimed that they had been Christians in Africa. During fieldwork, about three quarters of the research sample identified their home background of Churchgoing as one factor responsible for their attendance of public worship. I argued in Chapter Two that Africans are very religious and that an African rarely dissociates himself/herself from the religion of the family because religious beliefs are communally held.

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<sup>77</sup> Paul M. Harrison, 'Weber's Categories of Authority and Voluntary Associations'. *American Sociological Review*, vol. 25, No. 2, April 1960. p. 232

<sup>78</sup> John Beya, 'The Francophone Presence in Britain Revisited: An Analytical Approach to French-speaking African Congregations in Greater London' in *Strangers and Sojourners: Religious Communities in the Diaspora* edited by Gerrie ter Haar (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), p. 210

Communal religion does not permit a person to opt out of ritual. Africans coming to Liverpool for various reasons as adults had already formed habits of Churchgoing which they continued in the city. One of the research sample affirmed: 'I was born into a Christian family with a strong tradition of Church going, how can I change from what I know is good for me.'<sup>79</sup> The question that may then be asked is whether the children of these Diaspora Africans, who do not have the same background as their parents, would be committed to public worship like their parents. One wonders whether the influence the non-Churchgoing attitude of the people of Liverpool may impinge on these second generation Africans. The scope of this study will not permit investigation into this, which is an area for further research.

### ***6.2. Social Roles of the Church among Her Members***

The community spirit enjoyed every Sunday was another factor identified by the research sample as being instrumental to their Church attendance. Half of them identified this element. This community spirit was not just for Sundays; I saw a good example of it in action when I attended a child-naming ceremony for one of the members of the Church. This was on a weekday, the day the child was eight days old, as would be the case also in those practising ATR. (This again illustrates the importance of the worldview of Africans in determining their religious behaviour in Diaspora, as discussed in Chapter Three, and as in our three-source triangle.) This ceremony would normally be done at the home, but the parents felt that their rooms were not large enough, and it took place at the Church. More than twenty people were present, and this demonstrated the 'we' concept of responsibility for the well-being of the child. It is not just an individual matter for the parents.

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<sup>79</sup> ABC Respondent 6, 22 October, 2006

Among the other things identified as being part of community spirit in the ABC were face to face interaction in fellowship, the availability of many pastors with readiness to counsel or offer advice any time they were contacted, and the loving welcome in the faces of the worshippers. This last point was underscored by Alan Smith, who wrote:

I attended the church with my wife and my two daughters. From the moment we entered the building we were made to feel welcome, were introduced to others and then shown to our seats by one of the attendants (ushers). During the service we were welcomed by the worship leader (pastor), were invited to the platform (altar) and greeted by the congregation. This process was repeated with others who were present for the first time. Everyone was made to feel most welcome.<sup>80</sup>

As in other Churches earlier studied, the assistance received from other members such as relevant information for job seekers, housing for new arrivals, etc. was also an important factor. The pastor of ABC appeared to be more involved in counselling and personal intervention in the various life problems of the Church members during my fieldwork than the pastors of other Churches studied. During the time I was interviewing him, several phone calls came from members requesting his assistance to get accommodation, visit a relative at the probation centre, and so on. As previous research has demonstrated and as I have maintained elsewhere in this thesis, the social roles played by the Diaspora African Churches for their members has made them to be attached to their Churches with a sense of family bond. This is why it would be difficult for them to dissociate themselves from the Church's worship.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Alan Smith, Report p. 2

<sup>81</sup> See John Beya, 'The Francophone Presence in Britain Revisited' in *Strangers and Sojourners*, pp. 210-211

## **7. Factors Militating against Public Worship**

The factors identified as militating against public worship are not much different from the ones identified by people from the Believers' Church and the Charismatic Assembly. These include lack of adequate finance for the Church, awkward working hours, laziness from the members, cold or harsh weather, lack of government interest in promoting spiritual things. Other factors include lethargy that makes many people use Sunday as day for shopping and drinking, lack of accommodation, and racial discrimination.

A white interviewee said the whites are not coming because they think 'you people will take over'.<sup>82</sup> This suggests that the whites feel that their leadership position in the Church is insecure where Africans are in the majority. An African respondent observed 'people are engrossed with making ends meet than to sufficiently commit themselves to service'. Another interviewee asserted, 'the non-Churchgoing environment impacts upon the people. Sometimes they think it is odd for them to be carrying the Bible, which makes them look like strange people'.<sup>83</sup>

The pastor of EBC, apart from identifying apathy, also identified racism as militating against the activities of ABC and the attendance of public worship by the members. She commented that 'most of the time racism is hidden ... There is a girl I have a lot to do with, she hates having anything to do with foreigners. The letter we got about our worship is nothing less than racist'. She explained further that a letter was addressed to her urging her to stop the Africans from worshipping in that Church because their worship was nothing less than 'the worship of savages'. She added:

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<sup>82</sup> ABC Interviewee 5, 14 May 2006

<sup>83</sup> ABC Interviewee 3, 5 November 2006

The vandalism of this Church was racist because whilst nothing was stolen when they entered, the interior of the Church was turned upside-down. The letters we received about our worship and this second incidence we never had before until the Africans came in. The police have been informed about the two letters and they are working with us to identify those responsible'.<sup>84</sup>

As an illustration of the racist hostility of the neighbours to ABC, *The Weekend Echo* of 23 December 2006 reported another attack on the Church headed 'racist thug gang vandalise Church: Baptist Church ransacked after letting in African congregation'.<sup>85</sup>

In her interview on this issue, the pastor of EBC recalled the letters she had earlier received threatening the African congregation. With regard to the break-in, she comments:

Nothing was taken so this is sheer wanton damage. It makes me feel sad that people in the area think we shouldn't open the door to everyone. I am upset on behalf of the African community. They were looking to make this a special Christmas celebration, but the vandals are not going to stop us.<sup>86</sup>

A Youth Centre uses the premises of the Church to get children aged 8-12 off the streets after school. When its manager Mr. Peter Brennan was interviewed about the incident, he also believed that it was racially motivated. The Centre has 'banks of computers and musical equipment which have not been touched so we know the motive wasn't to rob us. I am in no doubt this was because the Church has recently welcomed the African community'.<sup>87</sup>

I dwell more on the issue of racial discrimination among other factors identified as impeding public worship of the Church because of its potential to hinder racial harmony in the city and because the intensity of its occurrence at ABC appeared more

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<sup>84</sup> EBC Pastor Interview, 20 December 2006

<sup>85</sup> Ben Rossington, 'Racist Thug Gang Vandalise Church: Baptist Church Ransacked after Letting in African Congregation,' *Weekend Echo* (Liverpool), 23 December 2006, p. 6

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*

serious than other Churches studied with similar experiences. The worship environment could then be described as not enabling enough for the public worship of Diaspora Africans to flower and impact upon the host environment positively in this regard.

## **8. Conclusions**

The ABC is a growing African initiated Church with a large presence of Nigerians. Its merger with a British Church appears to solve the accommodation problem which had hitherto been a great hindrance to public worship. The merger has not only enhanced public worship opportunities, it has also been a blessing to the Church in terms of having personnel who understand the financial administration procedures of the Charity Commission and who can be of guidance on such matters.

The worship that will come out of this type of merger offers an opportunity for the interaction of two cultures, Western and African. As the two cultures dialogue together in worship, there would be the possibility for a better understanding between the worshippers from the two cultural blocs. Liverpool City Council took note of this development, and publicized the merger of the two Churches in a banner that was hoisted in neighbouring streets. The wording: 'together we can make a difference, be a good neighbour' accompanied the pictures of the two pastors of the Churches that merged.<sup>88</sup>

The location of ABC enhances public worship because of its accessibility and the preponderance of the African immigrants in Kensington. Its secure packing space

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<sup>88</sup> See the banner in the appendix to this thesis.



equally provides security for the worshippers' property and this has the probability of encouraging many to come for public worship with the belief that their property will be secure.

The creation of different services on Sunday has given more opportunities for members to choose the worship that would be more convenient for them. The involvements of members in various activities of the Church and the various teaching programmes of the Church have enhanced public worship in this Church. Other aspects such as life engaging worship, music, prayer, sermons, community spirit enjoyed in the Church and the Churchgoing backgrounds of the worshippers have also been elements sustaining public worship in this Church. The time spent in worship might need to be reduced in order to encourage the white worshippers who are used to spending less time in worship. The pastor of ABC might need to be more democratic in his leadership style so as not to circumvent the Church polity of democracy and discourage democratic members of the Church from coming for public worship.

All forms of racial hostility against the ABC by some members of the host community need to be addressed by the Council authorities to allow those who wish to worship to do so without fear. This needs attention because it has been a problem common to the three African Churches studied, though in varying proportions.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **Conclusions on Elements Sustaining Public Worship among the Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool**

#### **1. Introduction**

For Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool, public worship is an imperative for strongly functional reasons. The motif running through all their religious activities is the provision of holistic life fulfillment. If the ritual experience does not advance the attainment of this goal, then the worship of that Church will have failed. This failure may be reflected in a loss of membership. From this study, it is possible to draw conclusions on three key questions with regard to the religious activities of the target group. First, are the Churches studied in this research genuinely facilitating the holistic life fulfillment of their members? Second, how do we explain the inability of the Churches studied to attract the white indigenes of Liverpool to their services on a continuing basis? Third, will Diaspora African Christians be able to retain their fervour for public worship in the long term, or will the elements identified here no longer sustain them in the future? In order to provide answers to the above questions we shall review the findings of the thesis against the three-source interpretative triangle of religious behaviour that has functioned across this thesis as the repository for the various elements sustaining public worship among the African Christians in Liverpool

## **2. The Worldview of Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool and the Sustenance of Public Worship.**

### ***2.1. The Impact of the Communal Religious Worldview.***

The African worldview of the target group is a very religious one. Religion permeates every aspect of life for many of the Africans. Their religion is neither individualistic nor privatized<sup>1</sup> as it is in the society where the Churches studied are located. Rather, their religion is fundamentally communal. Caleb Oladipo's comments capture succinctly what my own research has uncovered. He observes:

The emphasis on social intercourse among Africans has been upon personal relationships, realizing that the Christian life does not only depend on the boot we wear but also on the fruits we bear...Therefore personal belongings will be given up in order to strengthen the oneness of the group...This transcendental and centrifugal impetus to give rather than to receive has promoted the growth of Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

Public worship is a familiar practice to virtually all those studied in this research because they settled in Liverpool as adults. It is therefore customary for them to go to the Church for worship on worship days. Their background of communal religion has been highly instrumental in the sustaining of public worship among them in the midst of the secularizing context of broader Liverpool society. Their pastors, who share a similar background, currently take a lead in the provision of ritual experiences that would seek to ensure holistic fulfillment.

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<sup>1</sup> Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 75-76

<sup>2</sup> Caleb Oladipo, 'African Theological and Political Themes' in *Ecclesiastes: The Preacher, the Church and the Contemporary Society* ed. by Ademola Ishola and Deji Ayegboyin (Ibadan: Baptist Press (Nig.) Limited, 2006), pp. 435-436

The question relating to the extent to which the African religious worldview of Africans in Diaspora would continue to sustain them in worship depends on two variables: first, how long each African settles in Liverpool, and second whether new arrivals continue to come from Africa to revitalize the communal religious worship background in England. This is, (all other things being equal), because the longer people stay in Liverpool, the more they are likely to be assimilated into the non-Churchgoing culture of the host society. Virtually all the members of the study population in this research have been in Liverpool for between two to ten years. By and large, the African religious worldview is still very influential in determining their religious behaviour. The far more significant question is whether the second generation of Diaspora Africans who have not had the same, undiluted, background of an African religious worldview will continue in public worship. Or will they abandon the Church? My research cannot provide a definitive answer to this question because most of the children of the Diaspora Africans included in this project are still young and under the tutelage of their parents. When they become adults and can make independent decisions, will they choose to worship regularly with the Church? This is an area for future research. However, we cannot ignore the possibility that as the second generation of Africans become more assimilated into the non-Churchgoing culture of the host society, their interest in Churchgoing will wane.

Another aspect of the influence of the communal nature of the African religious worldview is apparent in the worship of the Churches studied. This is the community spirit enjoyed by the Church members, which has been identified by a number of the research sample as a significant factor aiding their fulfillment in worship. The pastors often reminded worshippers of their God-given responsibility to be part of the joys

and sorrows of their brothers and sisters in Christ. The realization of this responsibility is facilitated by the background worldview of Diaspora African Christians, which is communal. The opportunity to express a strong sense of community in worship not only makes the ritual experience relevant to participants' background worldview, but it also moves them towards the achievement of holistic fulfillment in worship. Through their worship, they were able to identify with one another as friends and kin. They use the opportunity of worship to engage with one another for a network of relationships - connecting those looking for jobs with those who can help them, jointly celebrating the christening of a baby, marriage, and so on. This sense of community appears to be providing a cure for the loneliness the Diaspora African Christians are experiencing in Liverpool due to the individualistic way of life of the hosts. Prayers were said openly for important social events that members of the Church were holding, thus creating in the members a sense of commitment to the Church. All these were geared towards the experience of holistic life fulfillment in worship.

## ***2.2. The African Worldview and the Exercise of Power in the Churches.***

Power was observed to be largely concentrated in the hands of the pastors of all the three Churches studied. This tendency towards strong leadership in the Church appears to be partly due to cultural reasons. In the African worldview, the kings, the chiefs, and the fathers in the families exercise authority, not because they are super humans, but because they have been 'internally enhanced by vital power' raising such people to the level of mediators and 'channels of power' between the ancestors and

their offspring.<sup>3</sup> Leaders thus become a 'synthesis of the ancestors and the living expression of the Supreme Being and of His divine munificence' because the power of God has been deposited into them.<sup>4</sup> The implication of this is that power (even human power) is divine in origin and therefore ought to be obeyed. Moreover, this view of power suggests that power is gender biased, because its chief forms of cultural expression are patriarchal by nature. However, even this traditional perspective does not decree that an individual has no right to decide whether to obey an order or not. For example, if a dispute involves two parties, each of the warring parties has the right to speak his/her mind, and a decision would not be imposed upon them by the mediating elders unless consensus was reached by the warring parties. In the same vein, women have the right to speak out their minds.<sup>5</sup> This approach to power resembles a top-down approach more than a democratic one though it still has its provision for checks and balances.

On the other hand, there is a different form of traditional authority in Africa known as 'group democracy'. This is the situation where people are led by the Council of Elders, with the most elderly man assuming the position of spokesman. Decisions are made in this system by consensus, and membership of the Council is by election or competence rather than inheritance.<sup>6</sup> This alternative traditional leadership approach avoids the risk of concentrating too much power in the hands of one person. It is also closer to the democratic principles in place in the UK. This would, therefore, be a better model for use among the Diaspora Churches because it not only takes the

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<sup>3</sup> Vincent Mulago, 'Traditional African Religion and Christianity' in *African Traditional Religions in the Contemporary Society* ed. by Jacob K. Olupona (Minnesota: Paragon House, 1991), pp. 121-122

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 122

<sup>5</sup> Swailem Sidhom, 'The Theological Estimate of Man' in *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* ed. by Kwesi A. Dickson and Paul Ellingworth (New York: Orbis Books, 1969), p. 110

<sup>6</sup> George Janvier and Bitrus Thaba, *Understanding Leadership* (Bukuru: Baraka Press, 1997), p. 14

context into consideration, but would also enhance the participation of the Church members.

One implication of the excessive exercise of power by the pastors in these Churches is that it may impede the fulfillment goal of worship. The extent to which the pastors exercised their power was also determined by the type of polity practiced by each of the Churches. In the BC and ECA where there appeared to be no apparent administrative processes for decision making in the Churches, there appeared to be no checks and balances to the pastors' exercise of power. This made them more powerful than the pastor of ABC. On the other hand, manipulation of the administrative procedures of the Church by the Church pastor to achieve his own personal ends was more in evidence at the ABC, where such administrative structures were in place. These experiences corroborate the earlier findings of George Janvier and Bitrus Thaba among Nigerian pastors that sometimes, pastors become too powerful and misuse power; they see the Church as 'a chiefdom' (the pastor's kingdom or personal property), and not as a place of worship. They sometimes 'demanded respect where they did not command any'.<sup>7</sup>

### ***2.3. The Position of the Bible in African Christianity***

The belief in the injunctions of the Bible on the necessity of corporate worship contributes to the sustenance of public worship in the Churches studied. This is a carry over from African Christianity. As seen in the data analysis in the last three chapters, all the Churches hold the injunctions of the Bible as supreme in all matters of faith and practice. They teach their members to believe in it, and take seriously the

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15

admonition to hold fellowship together. The Sunday School, Bible Study, preaching and so on, have been employed to increase the faith of their members in order to enable them to cope with the situations they are passing through in the host society. In this way, the Bible was used to provide opportunities for the worshippers to experience holistic fulfillment in worship.

### **3. The Nature of Worship of the Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool since 1900**

#### ***3.1. The Liturgical Shape of the Churches***

The liturgy of the three Churches studied in this thesis tilted more towards the unwritten. However, they all had bulletins at every worship occasion which gave the structural order of the ritual items. The ECA and ABC used both written hymnals and unwritten contemporary choruses. It may be appropriate then to describe the liturgy of these Churches as semi-formal. Their ritual shape resembled that of the early Church, which was itself a carry over from the temple and synagogue worship but with more bias towards synagogue worship. The implication of this for our study was the adaptability of the synagogue ritual style in meeting the spiritual needs of these immigrant African Christians that parallels the way it met the diasporic needs of the Jews. The freedom given to worship leaders to implement the items of worship assigned to them under the leadership of the Holy Spirit made the implementation of ritual elements as contemporary as possible.

The worship style of the Churches studied also resembled Protestant ritual freedom, with far less emphasis on the use of ritual symbols than would be found in Roman Catholic or Orthodox Churches. The non-use of ritual symbols tends to remove any



sense of awe, sacredness and drama from the ritual experience of the worshippers.<sup>8</sup> At the same time it does not allow ritual experience to be internalized. This is because ‘the creative and mnemonic dynamics’<sup>9</sup> which symbols add to ritual celebration was absent. It has been demonstrated that Africans make use of symbols in sacrifices and other aspects of rituals, including child naming but this was not much reflected in the ritual activities of the churches studied.

The doctrinal statements and the dynamic, participatory and spiritual nature of the worship styles of the Churches studied qualified their worship to be referred to as Pentecostal in style. This enthusiastic and participatory nature of worship ought to facilitate the ability of the pastors in these Churches to involve the members of the Church in Church work. Research has shown that the Pentecostals do not over-stress theological training for their members before they can be used.<sup>10</sup> This involvement of members in the ministry of the Church has the tendency to add to their holistic fulfillment because it gives them a stronger sense of belonging and of their usefulness – which once again brings us back to the operational framework of functionality that has run through my thesis.

The Pentecostal nature of the Churches also allows them to attach importance to singing in worship, fervent prayers and the preaching of life related sermons. All these practices are not only congruent with the biblical ethos, they are also in keeping with the African religious worldview. The services are enthusiastic, participatory and utilitarian. Though there was a mainline Church among the Churches studied, the

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<sup>8</sup> David Torevell, *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity and Liturgical Reform*, p. 160

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 177

<sup>10</sup> Vincent Leoh, ‘The Pentecostal Preacher as an Empowered Witness’ *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, Vol. 9, 1, 2006, p. 39

ritual shape of all three was more influenced by a Pentecostal style than by the traditional style of any mother denomination. This again underscores the extent to which the African Christian background has been influenced by Pentecostalism. These Pentecostal-inspired services were referred to by worshippers as life engaging and fulfilling. They not only contribute to the sustenance of the worshippers in regular fellowship, but have enhanced the provision of holistic life fulfillment in worship.

The ritual language in all the Churches studied was English. This appeared to be a positive effort towards contextualizing theology in order to make the worship appeal both to any white English worshippers and to African Christians from English-speaking countries. The use of the hosts' language may be a good model for African Christians from other linguistic blocs also. It gave these Churches an international outlook because it allowed nationals of other nations apart from Africa (such as Poland, China and India) to worship with them too. The holistic fulfillment motif of worship in our three-source triangle is likely to be more enhanced if worshippers are able to worship in the language they can understand.

One of the challenges before the Diaspora African Churches studied is the need for more contextualization of their theology in order to make their churches more appealing to the indigenes. The documents of doctrines of two of the Churches studied were drawn from Nigeria, and demonstrate much cultural affinity with Nigerian Christianity. For example, all the Churches studied affirmed their belief in signs and wonders through the power of the Holy Spirit, in a way that very strongly reflects the traditional Nigerian belief in the potency of the power of spiritual beings. While there may be no controversy about the biblical authenticity of the above stated

belief, the doctrinal statement could be more relevant to the British context if it includes the belief in the cares provided through Western medicine. Similarly, the two Churches that included a Sunday School in their programme used lesson materials created in Nigeria. Although there was evidence that steps had been taken to adapt the lessons to the British context, it is my opinion that it would be better if such literature were drawn up in Britain by Africans in Britain who have first hand knowledge of British theology and society. This would enhance the holistic fulfillment experience of worshippers and sustain them in worship because it would reflect the realities of their daily life.

Similarly, the approach of Diaspora African Churches to ministry and mission needs to take the non-African context far more seriously. Mostly, the worship of these Churches appeared too noisy and too long. A typical British Church worship is usually solemn and quiet, precise and short as well. This does not mean a total abandonment of the enthusiastic African way of worship, but a convenient point of convergence for both the hosts and the Diaspora Africans should be sought. The traditional way of evangelism, such as door-to-door witnessing which most of the Diaspora African Churches embarked upon here, have produced very little of the desired fruit in terms of winning the hosts. There is need for a change of style. For example, the way in which Chinese restaurants have sprung up in the British society suggests that the British have an open mind about foreign food.

Welcoming was one of the elements of worship that respondents said has made them remain part of public worship of their Churches since the day they first worshipped there. Welcoming not only refers to the way visitors are received into the Church, but

also includes the way the Church gives every member of the Church a sense of belonging. All who commented on this said that they felt welcomed by the way they were received - with an understanding that they were, after all, thousands of miles away from their original homes and relatives. Time was given in all the Churches for recognition of visitors and for their entertainment after each service. Thomas R. Whelan sums up the role that the liturgical community can play in the reception of the strangers by affirming that a welcome offered will make such strangers in the service feel valued 'at the deepest level of their being'.<sup>11</sup> The Church can be that friend to the stranger in its service as it meets his/her need, thus aiding the fulfillment of the stranger in worship and thereafter. A warm welcoming of others is part of the African worldview that is practiced in the Churches studied.

The incorporation of the Eucharist into weekly public worship has helped in sustaining public worship among the members of the ECA. Those who attached particular significance to the Eucharist had endeavoured to be part of Sunday worship every week. On the other hand, the BC used a fellowship meal (agape meal), in a similar way to that by which the ECA had used the Eucharist to attract members to their worship. The sense of holistic connection which Christians have with Christ and one another as they participate in the Eucharist is similar to that of the participation in the sacrificial meals in African Traditional Religion. Thus the holistic fulfillment motif is paramount in the observation of the Eucharist at ECA and reflects the Diaspora African Christians' worldview.

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas R. Whelan, 'Racism and Worship in Ireland' in *The Stranger in our Midst: Refugees in Ireland: Causes, Experiences, Responses* ed. by Thomas R. Whelan (Dublin: Kimmage Mission Institute of Theology and Cultures, 2001), p. 56

### ***3.2 The Use or Non-Use of Charismatic Gifts.***

The operation of the gifts of the Spirit was identified by respondents at the ECA and ABC, where it was practiced, as one of the elements of ritual that enhanced their holistic fulfillment and sustained them in fellowship. The operation of the gifts of the Spirit is congruent with the worldview of Diaspora African Christians where the spiritual world is as real as the physical world. This therefore made the service as relevant to worshippers as possible.

### ***3.3 Discrepancies between Stated Belief and Practice***

The use – or otherwise – of the *charismata* raises a further issue that impacts upon holistic fulfillment, namely the discrepancy between formal Church statements and practice. As already stated there was very little scope for the exercise of the *charismata* in the BC. Similarly in the ABC, public baptism did not take place in the Church throughout the period of my fieldwork – despite that Church's declared commitment to it. Such discrepancies between doctrinal beliefs and actual ritual practice in these Churches to a large extent depended on the personal views of the pastor and the extent of his power. This more often than not is to the detriment of the worshippers in terms of the capacity of the worship to meet the holistic fulfillment motif of Diaspora African worship.

## **4. Social and Religious Conditions in the Host Society**

We have seen some areas where the Diaspora African Churches have made efforts to impact positively upon the community of Liverpool. Two of the Churches studied had merged with white majority Churches. These appear to be desirable developments in that they demonstrate that Diaspora African Christians are willing to interact with

existing white Churches. Other things being equal, such mergers have the potential for bringing two different peoples and cultures into dialogue. This consequently would lead to respect and the coming together of abilities to build society together through the Church. This appears to be the way the Liverpool Direct interprets this development in the banner which they made, carrying the pictures of the merging white and African Church pastors. The banner reads: 'together we can build, be a good neighbour' (See appendix). The mergers have also solved the accommodation problem the African Churches were having before the merger took place. On the other hand, not everything is positive. The tussle that appeared to ensue between the pastors of the merging Churches in the ECA is a cause for concern. This was partly due to the lack of proper definition of the way power was to be shared, and partly due to differences over worship style.

On the other hand, a major reason for the lack of success of the Diaspora African Churches among the white community of Liverpool appeared to be racial prejudice. The pastor of the EBC was reported as saying that one of their members opted out of the merger plan because he did not want to worship with Nigerians. In addition to this, there have been vandalism of the ABC and letters have been dropped at the front door of the Church saying that the worship of the Africans was like that of the savages.

The impact of secularization on the people of Liverpool is identified as another reason for the lack of success of Diaspora African Christians among them. The majority of the British people of today are unChurched.<sup>12</sup> The individualistic culture of British

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<sup>12</sup> Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging*, pp. 12-13

society, which makes people keep their distance from others appeared to take its toll on responses to mission efforts of the Diaspora African Christians.

Apart from the merger with white Churches, some of the Churches in my fieldwork used musical concerts to reach out to the community and this has brought some fruits in terms of those who came briefly to worship from the host community. It should be noted however that the trend for the white members of the community to stay briefly in Churches established by Africans or not to come for worship at all is not peculiar to this place of study. I have reported the findings of scholars that this is the trend in other towns in Britain as well. Research would then be desirable to identify what can make the whites respond more to mission activities of the African Christians.

A lack of funding and support from the government are other reasons for the lack of impact of the Diaspora Africans in having holistic ministry to the hosts. There are historical precedents - the ACM of Pastor George Daniel Ekarte set up a Children's Home to cater for about five hundred mixed-race war children born during the Second World War. This project could not succeed because of lack of funds and support from the government. The Home was eventually closed by the government.

Weather is another factor that has been identified as an impediment to public worship. Related to this is the shortage of buses available in the morning on Sundays. Intending Church goers have to wait for longer periods in the cold at the bus stops. Better availability of buses would help the worshippers on Sundays.

The work structure of the host society has prevented other intending worshippers from doing so. Many employers are reported to pay higher wages for Sunday shifts. This has lured many African Christians from public worship on Sundays.

In addition, the government's principle of multiculturalism does not allow parents to have full control over their children in terms of influencing them to be Christians. The principle of multiculturalism has at the same time weakened the power of Christian evangelism. In a sense, Christian activities have been limited to the four walls of the Churches. These conditions in the host society have the tendency to impede the attainment of holistic fulfillment.

It is necessary to note at this juncture that this study cannot state with finality that the Diaspora African Churches are not impacting positively upon the community of Liverpool, in view of the short time of their operation in Liverpool. They need more years to operate before the extent of their impact can be rightly assessed.

## **5. Conclusions**

In looking at the findings of this thesis across the three angles of our interpretative triangle, we can now offer a tentative response to the questions set out at the head of this chapter. The Churches studied in this research are facilitating the holistic life fulfillment of their members, but only to some extent. This qualified response is necessary because the ability to provide a holistic experience in worship was limited by funding and accommodation difficulties, difficulties within the host environment and by the issues raised by the excessive concentration of power in the hands of the pastors – even where a more democratic structure was in place. The Churches studied



were unable to attract the white indigenes of Liverpool to their services on a long-term basis for three chief reasons. Two of these are primarily located in the host society: the problem of secularization and that of racial prejudice. The third reason is more directly the responsibility of the Churches themselves, and is the lack of enough openness to contextualization of both worship and the presentation of doctrinal beliefs. A firm conclusion cannot be drawn at this stage as to the long-term sustainability of African Diaspora public worship because it is a relatively recent phenomenon. However, unless the problems identified above are addressed, there is a risk that while the Churches may continue to be of relevance to transient African visitors to the UK, they could lose their relevance to longer-term residents who need a more assimilated approach.

Finally, therefore, the challenge before the Diaspora African Churches is how to make a holistic impact not only on their ethnic communities but on their context also. Mark Sturge defines the challenge as ‘TTT’:<sup>13</sup> that the spirituality of Diaspora African Christians must be transferable to other people. It must be transportable to wherever they go, and it must be transformational, able to transform institutions, structures and communities.<sup>14</sup> I am of the opinion that the spirituality of the Diaspora African Christians must also be sustainable. It must be a spiritual legacy that can be handed over to the generations after them. Only then will the Diaspora African Churches be able to make an indelible impact in their host society.

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<sup>13</sup> Mark Sturge, *Look what the Lord has Done: An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain* (London: Scripture Union, 2005), p. 219 Emphases are mine.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*



## **IMAGING SERVICES NORTH**

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**APPENDIX 1**

**Questionnaire Handed Out to Some Members of the Church  
Who Could Not Be Reached Directly But Gave Written Responses.**

1. Please tell me about the story of the country you come from.

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2. Please indicate here your gender by ticking the appropriate one: Male  Female

3. Please tell me about your age last birthday.

4.1. What was your religion in your home country?

4.2. Were you going to Church regularly in your home country?

4.3. Why were you going regularly?

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5. When did you come to Britain?

6. Please tell me your educational qualification.

6.2. In what field did you qualify?

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7.1. Please tell me the work you are doing in Britain

7.2. Please let me know your job title? E.g. Medical Doctor, Support Worker etc.

8. Are you on part time or full time employment?

9. Why did you come to Britain?

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10.1. If your children are here with you, please tell me if you come to the Church with them.

10.2. Do you think that your children will be going to Church when they become independent?

10.3. Give reasons for your answer.

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10.4. Tell me if there are, ways by which you teach your young ones to love worshipping with other believers.

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10.5. Enumerate the ways in which the Church teaches the children to love the worship of God in the midst of other believers.

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11. When did you join the membership of this church?

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12. Why did you join the membership of this church?

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13.1. What are the things you gain from coming to worship in this church?

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13.2. Were you going to church to worship regularly when you were in your home country?

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13.3. Please tell me why you go to the Church for worship.

14. Please enumerate the aspects of worship in this church that are fulfilling or beneficial to you and that you may not want to miss every Sunday. Why are they beneficial?

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15. Please arrange the following in order of importance as reasons for your coming to worship on Sunday, writing 1<sup>st</sup> in front of the most important, 2<sup>nd</sup> for the next most important and so on and so forth.

15.1. For the eternal salvation of my soul

15.2. Because the Bible commands it

15.3. Because of the messages I hear which direct my life aright

15.4. Because of the soul lifting hymns

15.5. Because of warm fellowship of brethren and the opportunity to feel at home as I meet my people.

15.6. Because of the help and assistance the church provides in terms of linking one with where to find job, housing and other helps.

15.7. To enable me join hands with others to do missions

16. What do you think are the hindrances to your service attendance?

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17.1. Have you ever attended a 'white' church since you came to UK? Yes No

17.2. If yes, why did you stop attending?

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18.1. Would you consider becoming a member of a 'white' church sometimes in future?

18.2. Give reasons for the above answer.

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19.1. Apart from the spiritual blessing or fulfilment, is there any other benefit or fulfilment you derive by coming to church to worship with other believers?

**19.2. Please tell me those benefits?**

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**20. Do you believe in tithes and offering as biblical methods of financing the Church?**

**21. Tell me which of the following methods of raising fund in the Church you support.**

- 1. Tithes
- 2. Offering.
- 3. Both.
- 4. None.

**22. Has your pastor ever preached on giving of tithes and offering since you joined the membership of this Church?**

**23. If you are required to contribute money or any other resources apart from tithes and offering, will you be willing to do so?**

**24.1. Please tell me other media of financial support for your Church.**



24.2. Does your Church have enough funds for its mission in LiverpoolPlease tell me whether your Church has enough to finance its mission.

24.3. Enumerate other methods you would support for the effective financing of the Church.

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25. Please tell me the present membership of your church?

26.1. Would you support your church getting involved in charity?

26.2. Please tell me the ways your Church can get involved.

27. In what ways do you think your church contributing positively to the development of Liverpool?

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28. Tell me the ways your Church has been reaching out to the community.

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**29. Please enumerate some of the problems confronting your church in Liverpool**

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**30. Please explain how church worship attendance can help the Church fulfil her mission and purpose to the members and the community.**

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## APPENDIX 2

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILES

#### FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE WARDS

#### IN WHICH THE CHURCHES WERE LOCATED

Source: Excerpt from Ward Profile Statistics, Regeneration Portfolio, Liverpool City Council, Policy and Programmes Division, Liverpool. 2005 Issue (Kirkdale) 2006 Issue (Princes Park and Kensington & Fairfield)

#### 1. Kirkdale, the Location of the Believers' Church

Year	Average Property Price for Detached House	
	Liverpool	Kirkdale
2001	£126,476	£75,331
2005	£250,307	£182,688
2004	<b>Employment: The Rate of Worklessness</b>	
	<b>Liverpool</b>	<b>Kirkdale</b>
	33.9%	57%
2004	<b>Mean House Income:</b>	
	<b>Liverpool</b>	<b>Kirkdale</b>
	£22,511	£18,232
1998-2002	<b>Income Support Claimants</b>	
	<b>Liverpool</b>	<b>Kirkdale</b>
	17.1%	29.3%

## 2. Profile for Princes Park, the Location of the Eucharistic Charismatic Assembly.

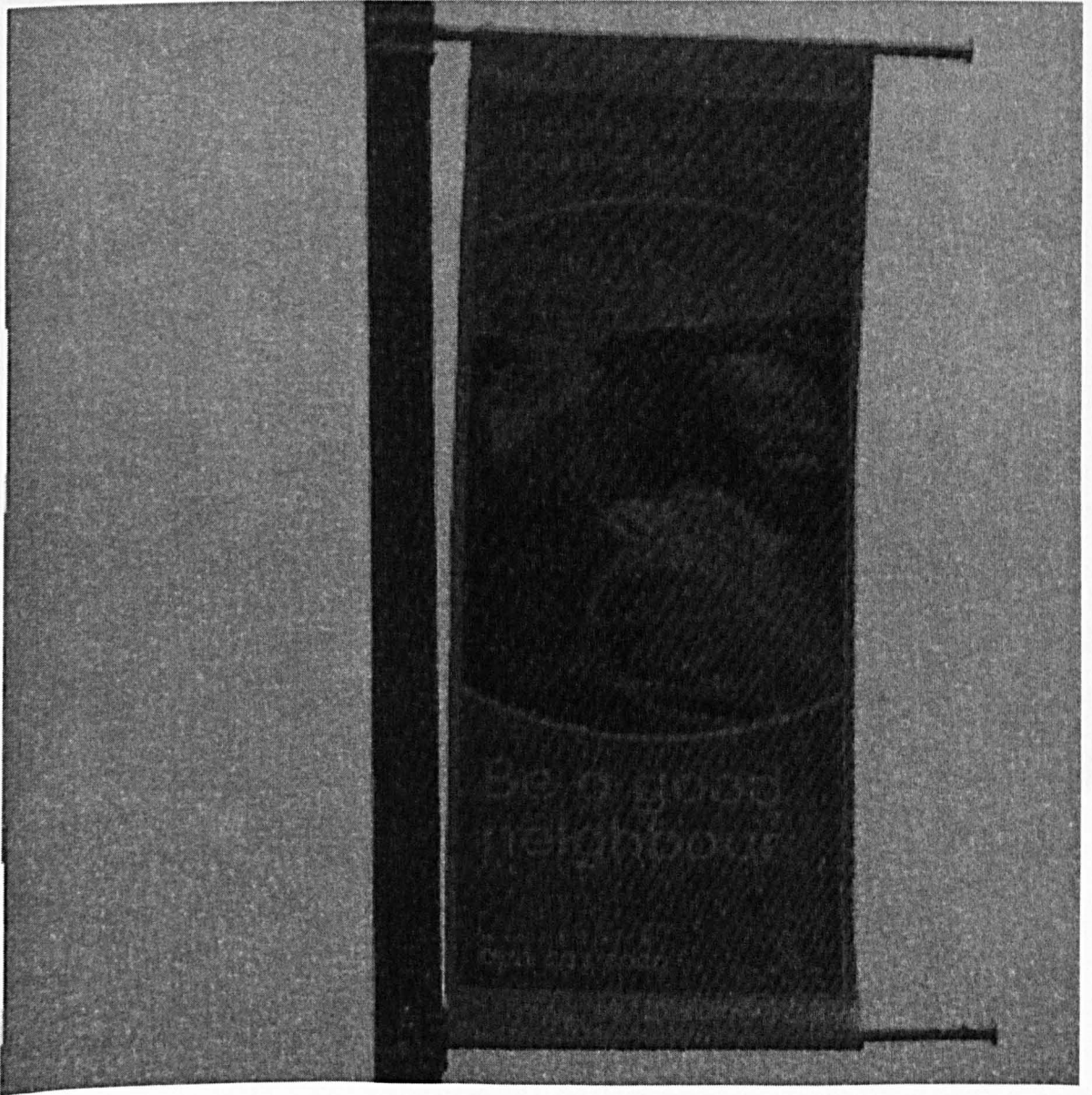
Year	Place
2004	Income Benefit Claimants:
	Liverpool                  Princes Park
	33.9%                          60.8%
	Mean House Income:
	Liverpool                  Princess Park
	£22,511                          £18,641
2004-2005	Crimes Rate per Thousand
	Liverpool                  Princes Park
	175.2                          193.5
2001	Debilitating Long Term Illness
	Liverpool                  Princes Park
	24.5%                          25.7%

## 3. Ward Profile for Kensington & Fairfield, the Location of African Baptist Church

Year	Data and Place
2001	Percentage of Residents with Long Term Illness:
	Liverpool                  Kensington & Fairfield
	24.5%                          26.8%
2004	Employment: Worklessness Rate.
	Liverpool                  Kensington & Fairfield
	33.9%                          51.5%
	Job Seekers Allowance Claimants:
	Liverpool                  Kensington & Fairfield
	5.2%                          9%
2005	Average Property Price:
	Liverpool                  Kensington & Fairfield
	£127,430                          £93,716

**APPENDIX 3**

**LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL'S BANNER:  
HOISTED PICTURES OF THE PASTORS  
OF THE MERGED CHURCHES IN KENSINGTON**



# APPENDIX 4

## WEEKEND ECHO'S COVERAGE OF THE VANDALISATION OF AFRICAN BAPTIST CHURCH, 23 DEC, 2006



## APPENDIX 5

### **The Report of the Visit of Alan Smith to Pentecost Baptist Church, Liverpool**

#### **Report on our visit to the Pentecostal Baptist Church, Tubrook.**

#### **1. Physical Structure of Place of Worship (i.e. convenience for worship)**

The building is in the residential area of Tubrook standing in the midst of terraced housing within the city of Liverpool. It is of smart appearance from the outside with a large sign bearing the names of the two church communities that share the building (the Baptist Congregation to which it has been home from its construction and in the last three years the Pentecostal Baptist Church – an extension of the community to include Black African Pentecostals).

The inside of the building has a reception area with access to the main Church Hall and to a smaller hall, which housed the Little Church (Sunday School) together with other smaller rooms and toilet facilities. These spaces provide comfortable seating for about 150 people in the Church Hall and about 75 in the Little Church. Visibility of the main raised alter (platform) area is excellent from anywhere in the Church Hall.

The auditorium is supplied with public address equipment, which makes to possible for even the hard-of-hearing to participate in the services.

#### **2. Age, Gender and Ethnicity of the Worshipers**

On my visit to the 10.30 a.m. service on Sunday 5 March 2006 there were about 70 adults present in the Church Hall together with about 40 children in the Little Church. These were made up of 90% – 95% Black African and the balance White European. Gender mix was 50% male and 50% female in the Church Hall with the larger part of the congregation (80%) under 60 years of age and with an additional 40, under the age of 15 and nearly all Black African, in the Little Church years.

### **3. Nature of Worship (Pentecostal or Orthodox/interesting or boring)**

Throughout the service was Pentecostal and was delivered total conviction and enthusiasm, which grabbed and held our attention. It began with a time of Bible reading, study, reflection and application and was led by one of the women of the church. Scriptural focus was on Psalm 8 and included the participation of the congregation (reading the Bible and offering answers and comments to questions raised) and was very positive in its message to praise, trust and worship God with our whole heart. It was led with an appropriate level of excitement and enthusiasm.

A time of worship followed (introduced by the worship leader, who later also preached the sermon), which was lead by the Choir; all members of the congregation entered this into with great enthusiasm.

A sermon, which picked up on the theme of the earlier Bible reading from the Gospel: Jesus' healing of the Centurion's son was again delivered with enthusiasm and with direct application to this congregation and the action required by us NOW.

### **4. Prayer: Nature and Content**

Prayer at the service was on the whole appropriate to the emotions affects of the service. For example following the period of Bible study it was reflective of the material that had been studied asking for God to enable us to put this learning into practice. During the service God was asked to move us to receive of his Holy Spirit who was present in our midst, for healing on those who were carrying problems and for God to accompany a member who was leaving the congregation after a period vacation.

### **5. Greeting Visitors (whether enough attention is given and the effect on first time worshipers at the church)**

I attended the church with my wife (Elaine) and my two daughters, Alexandra and Charlotte. From the moment we entered the building we were made to feel welcome, were introduced to others and then shown to our seats by one of the attendants (ushers). During the service we were welcomed by the worship leader (pastor), were invited to the altar (platform) and greeted by the congregation. This process was repeated with others who also were present for the first time. Everyone was made to feel most welcome.



**6. Sermon (relevance to life situations and the needs of the worshipers)**

We did once again find that the pastor was very committed and spoke with great sincerity and enthusiasm directly to each section of the congregation and to specific individuals. One of the difficulties that we all expressed was that it was difficult to hear because the public address sound system was too loud and after a time we just shut out the loudness and stopped listening.

**7. Interaction after the service**

Everyone was very friendly and genuine in their expression of being glad to see us there, they hoped that we had enjoyed the service and would come again. We were offered refreshments and made to feel at home.

**8. Is the service as a whole inviting to any new person - to the extent of them wanting to come again**

Yes we were made to feel very welcome and that people felt interested in us and would like to see us again to become a part of their community.

## **Conclusions**

Overall the experience was one of great enjoyment. We felt genuinely welcomed by everyone we spoke to and were made to feel like one of the congregation. We were inspired and wanted to come again.

The area of concern was that we experienced a feeling of overwhelming noise. Some irritating rather than overly noisy, like people moving about from one part of the Church Hall to other different sections and, during the Bible study period, what appeared to be two meetings taking place simultaneously which was very distracting and created a generally high level of noise. This was further compounded by the almost constant acoustic feedback from the loud speakers when anyone spoke into the microphones. I wonder whether there is a real need

for microphones at all – all of the family said that due to the distortion and very high volume we found it very difficult to tell what was being said. In addition the music was too loud, especially the drum kit, which seem to be out of proportion to the size of the Hall. Perhaps the bongo drums would give sufficient rhythm without such high volume. And finally the use of the electric organ, at a volume higher than was necessary, whilst the pastor was talking was both distracting and at times made it impossible to hear what was being said. This is an area that I feel needs some consideration if you are hoping to attract a white English audience.

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