

“But God meant it for good:” Inter-personal conflict in an African Caribbean Pentecostal
congregation – A Pastoral study

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines conflict within a UK Black Majority Church. It uses personal observation and journals, with the work of academic historians of the Black churches, to establish that Black Majority Churches have a tendency to conflict that is usually unacknowledged yet often pervasive and damaging. The thesis locates this within a Black cultural history (almost entirely untold in the academy until after the present author's schooling ended) that involves deep-seated past causes for present conflict among post-colonial Christians.

The thesis then proposes a model for the pastoral analysis, practical management, and spiritual resolution of conflict. The key methods for this (drawing on psychology and counselling as well as theology) are autoethnography, transpersonal analysis and pastoral journal records. The final stage of the pastoral model is resolution by scriptural teaching and active faith in the Holy Spirit; key passages of scripture show that conflict has been crucible for making Christianity, and has often been integral to the discovery and transmission of God's word. Finally, the thesis offers a training plan for Pastors in the CoGoP – a plan combining the practicalities of work in that church with the historical and theological conclusions drawn from the present academic research.

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“I can no other answer make but thanks and thanks and ever thanks,” as one author writes. I have been pre-warned by my wife, Paulette, and my twin daughters, Saffron and Jordan, that they do not want their names to appear at the end of the acknowledgements page.

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My final thanks are to the Creator who made heaven and earth. What has been accomplished began as a question in my mind as a twelve year old boy sitting in a boring history lesson. My mind had drifted from the drone of the teacher's voice and the irrelevance of the topic and wandered to the emptiness of the school playground. I looked up to the sky and posed this question: "God, if you have made Black and White people equal, haven't Black people made any positive contribution to the development of the earth?" I now know we have.

But God meant it for Good: Inter-personal conflict in an African Caribbean Pentecostal church – A Pastoral Study

Contents page

Chapter 1 - Introduction	1
Conflict, a characteristic of democratic life	2
Conflict: Initial observations and understanding	4
Defining conflict - Initial considerations	9
The nature of conflict	11
Understanding conflict from different perspectives	13
The emergence of Womanist Theology	16
Womanist Theology in the Caribbean and the UK	18
A considered perspective on the effects of internalised conflict	22
Defining of Terms	26
The Black Majority Church in Britain – A historical overview	26
African Caribbean Identity, a constant state of flux	28
Diaspora and diaspora communities	34
Outline of the thesis	39
Conclusion	44
 CHAPTER 2 – Methodology	 46
Introduction	46
The purpose of methodology	47

The problem of objectivity	49
The validity of multiple methodologies	50
Autoethnography as a methodology	52
What is autoethnography?	53
The process of autoethnography	55
Collecting data	56
Managing Data	58
The need of writing and rewriting for self-discovery	61
The nature of reflexivity	63
Personal context	66
Race and identity matters	68
Autoethnography and writing typologies	70
Criticisms of autoethnography	72
The role of ethics	77
Representation of the other	79
Journals as a means of collecting data and proving a source of understanding	86
The history of journals	86
Logs, diaries and journals	87
Journal and their purposes	88
Reflection and its critiques	90
Model of theological reflection	91
Pastoral Cycle: The Doing Theology Spiral	93
Conclusion	96

Chapter 3 - Resources for a Black British Pastoral Theology	99
Introduction	99
Very early writings - Making Contact 1960 – 1970	100
Early Writers – 1970 -1990	101
The early emergence of Black Christian voices	106
Later Writings - 1990 – 2000	113
The meaning of church for African Caribbean people	113
Emerging voices for a Black theology	120
Black theology through a Black Christology	109
Contemporary writings - 2000 and beyond	125
Contemporary critiques of Black theology	133
Further critiques and developments in Black theology	
in the twenty first century	136
Black Pastoral Theology across the Atlantic	138
Conclusion	144
 Chapter 4 - Context of conflict in the Caribbean and in Britain	 147
Introduction	147
Slavery in Jamaica	148
The Transatlantic Slave Trade	148
The Middle Passage	150
The quest for freedom	152

The Windrush generation: Social and religious conflict	154
The meaning of colour	156
Welcoming the stranger	161
The origins of the Church of God of Prophecy	164
The Caribbean – The Church of God of Prophecy's mission exploits	166
The Church of God of Prophecy in England and Black Pentecostalism	167
The Church of God of Prophecy in East London- A space for worship and a crucible of conflict	172
Interpersonal conflict and its visible consequences	174
The quest for new knowledge as a source of conflict	180
The pastor and performance as a source of conflict	184
Conclusion	188
 Chapter 5 – Conflict in Ministry	 191
Introduction	191
Personal context and method of writing my autoethnographical narrative	192
Conflict in pastoral ministry	194
Fear and intimidation	195
Attack on authority	198
Conflict in the deacons meetings	201
What have I learned?	216
Conclusion	219

Chapter 6 - Theological Reflection-	
Healing begins where the wound was made	221
Introduction	221
Towards a new paradigm of theological reflection	222
Being Chosen by God	224
Bread as the body of Christ and symbolising human existence	229
The Blessing	231
The Blessing: Words of nourishment	235
The Blessing and its complications	237
The deliberate breaking of the bread	239
Sharing	246
Sharing: The new possibilities of community	248
Sharing: A paradigm for pastoral ministry-The Wounded Healer	252
The blessedness of sharing one's brokenness	254
Eucharistic Reconsiderations	257
Anamnesis as counter memory for Black liberation	258
Conclusion	264
 Chapter 7 – Recommendations for renewed pastoral praxis	 267
Introduction	267
Summary of the thesis	267
The Pastoral Cycle	268
Recommendations for renewed pastoral praxis	271

Understanding power	272
Self-reflection and spiritual formation	273
Developing an understanding of conflict	273
Learning from the context of the local church	274
Rereading of the biblical text	276
Theological Reflections: Wider implications	277
Areas for further development	278
Conclusion	280
Bibliography	283

Chapter 1 - Conflict and its manifestations

Introduction

One of the most frequent but unpleasant experiences in human interaction and pastoral ministry is interpersonal conflict. This thesis investigates conflict in an African Caribbean diaspora Pentecostal church in Britain and asks how can it be understood and resolved theologically. Furthermore, the context of the diaspora church in the United Kingdom provides the opportunity to also examine the causes of socio-historical and psycho-social conflict. Although this study focuses on a single congregation, the conclusion has wide application and implications for many church organisations.

The initial musing of this research began shortly after I was appointed as the senior pastor in the Church of God of Prophecy, now (CoGoP) Kingdom Ministries, East London in 1996. I observed and experienced the emergence of conflict within the congregation and saw the consequences of protracted episodes of congregational tension. Black Majority Churches, (BMC's) are often seen as "happy clappy," giving the notion of a simplistic, non-intellectual, quasi-religious organisation driven by its emotions. This description relates to broader cultural perception of Black people and their culture as being child-like. Furthermore, I wanted to explore some of the causes behind congregational strife and develop strategies in helping African Caribbean pastors and Christians live more fulfilling lives. Robert Beckford notes the prevalence of conflict at interpersonal and social levels in the BMC's and describes this as "the grotesque of BMC life."¹

¹Robert Beckford, "Towards Post-Colonial, Post-Modern, Black Churches in Britain." In *Report of the Proceedings of the Consultation between the World Council of Churches* (Office of Church and Ecumenical Relations at the General Secretariat) and African and African – Caribbean Leaders in Britain, at the New

Conflict: a characteristic of democratic life

We may note that the non-conformist churches have been historically organised about "dissent" in the theological sense and that this dissent from orthodoxy at the level of the established church has been linked to political dissent, radicalism and conflict of various kinds among churches with working class roots and congregants. For example, the early Labour party, founded in Methodism and Marxism was seen as violent and aggressive. The history of this in England has been vividly and persuasively documented - and advocated as a model for political work by Christopher Hill. Moreover, the churches have prided themselves on democracy and debate - and with debate there is conflict. So as we noted initially the Black protestant churches possess this "grotesque" tendency toward conflict. We should also acknowledge that a relish for conflict, debate, and the assertion of beliefs and of rights, is a key part of the positive historical mission and calling of the Black churches that have always been striving for human liberty and justice on earth as central to their mission without in any way diminishing that mission's theological calling and commitment.

Conflict in BMC's must be seen in some ways as a necessary and endemic element of the historical mission of dissenting Protestantism and its democratic aspirations within and without the physical boundaries of the church. Having said this, we return to and acknowledge Beckford's point. My question is: How is this conflict linked to the history and sociology of churches that a part of the African Caribbean diaspora? To say conflict is linked to Black culture is the very opposite of any reifying or "essentialist" point of view that would see Black people as more conflict-driven than

their white counterparts. My case is that Black experience has so often been one of conflict and that the conflicts within the churches can be seen to have roots that belong neither to Black churches nor to Black people alone but to the complex culture, history and continuing legacy of colonialism, slavery, and diasporic life, all of which, historians now acknowledge, are White-driven.

A further aspect of my rationale was my awareness of personal and collective concerns over the causes of the self-harming operation of conflict within the local congregation. I noticed how relationships between church members and with me impeded the work of the church. Speaking from an African American perspective James Harris advances:

Conflict in the Black church is exacerbated by social conflict in the structure of society. Pastor and church members do not always have the same vision, expectations or understanding of issues...if there is no consensus or resolve, a situation is ripe for conflict.²

Harris' point regarding the disjuncture between clergy and laity was evident in Kingdom Ministries. For example, the majority of the congregation desired a stereotypical Black preacher- one who has an expressive emotional and animated pulpit ministry-and my failure to meet their expectations evoked dissatisfaction among them. E K. Bailey comments on the notion of the stereotypical “emotionalism of Black preachers.” Bailey states:

²James Harris, *Pastoral Theology: A Black Church Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 86.

We must be careful about stereotypes because the only exposure many whites have to Black preaching is from what they hear on the radio and what they see on television. But the best Black preaching may not be heard on the radio and seen on television.³

From my own experience as a preacher, I think Bailey's point about clichéd white perceptions of Black preachers may be extended to Black congregations. In fact, it is Black and White viewers and listeners alike who are exposed to stereotypical images of Black preachers and gospel worship on the television, usually through drama or popular entertainment. Thus, it can be argued that even Black congregants, who once took their knowledge of the Black church from actual devotional practice now come to that practice with pre-determined ideas about their own culture that have been given to them by a culture industry that is most emphatically not their own and this of course influences people's perceptions of how people behave within the congregation.

Conflict: Initial observations and understanding

The frequency of conflict I observed within the congregation seemed irrational and I gradually sensed deeper problems and a collective dimension within personal conflict. Trained as a psychodynamic counsellor, I was aware how the 'presenting problem,' that is, the issue which clients bring to their counselling session, is not the real problem.⁴ The real problem, the trouble causing the client distress, is not always obvious. I used counselling insights to interpret the manifestations of latent issues, but I was unsure whether this surface conflict was symptomatic of a deeper

³ E K. Bailey and Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White: What Can We Learn from Each Other* (Michigan: Zondervan, 2003), 34.

⁴ Michael Jacobs, *The Presenting Problem: The Core of Psychodynamic Counselling and Therapy* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2006), 1-2.

unacknowledged trauma. In an attempt to understand the nature of conflict I was initially drawn to psycho-social/counselling approaches, but as a pastor interested in interdisciplinary insights impinging on human beings, I would need to comprehend and respond to conflict theologically. Emmanuel Larney argues cogently the need for pastoral theologians to be interdisciplinary, but warns “They must make their contribution on the basis of and from the perspectives of their primary activity as theologians.”⁵

I am aware that conflict-free relationships are impossible, but I wondered whether such a negatively perceived phenomenon could be used by the church in a constructive manner as it is sometimes seen in the business world.⁶ It would not harm the African Caribbean Pentecostal church in Britain to draw insights from the business world, as in the business world there tends to be an openness and acknowledgement of the nature, occurrence and the economic cost of conflict.⁷ Clive Lewis, straddling both the business world and the church writes, “We all pay a price for unresolved conflict. The price includes not only emotional aggravation, but physical pain and illness.”⁸ With conflict being unavoidable in human interaction, one wonders if it is possible to be understood and dealt with.

⁵Emmanuel Larney, *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2006), 40.

⁶Clive Lewis, *The Definitive Guide to Workplace Mediation and Managing Conflict at Work* (Surrey: Roperpenberthy Publishing, Limited: 2009), 4. See also pages 34-36 where Lewis proposes three essential components in a conflict scenario. First, the physical entity of human beings, is, two or more people needs to be involved. Second, the mental dimension of humanity where there exists a different point of view. Third, the emotional aspect of conflict is often omitted where anger, fear, shame and other uncomfortable feelings are present. Lewis' workplace model can be employed in other settings; however, he does not include the role of identity, ethnicity or culture, within his paradigm.

⁷Lewis, *The Definitive Guide*, 21-22.

⁸Lewis, *The Definitive Guide*, 35.

There are various models of conflict analysis and Gary T. Furlong's conceptualisation suggests eight ways for consideration. He provides three reasons for his selection. First, there is a range of models indicating simple and complex perspectives in analysing conflict. Second, each model offers a diagnostic approach and suggests "how it works and why." Third, each model offers a distinct approach in dealing with conflict.⁹ Furlong claims:

The Circle of Conflict examines causes of conflict...The Triangle of Satisfaction looks at different types of interests, and takes assessment to a significantly deeper and more functional level...The Boundary model looks at conflict from a unique perspective, giving insight into the almost invisible world of boundaries, a daily occurrence for all of us...The Interests/Rights/Trust model is foundational to the field of negotiation and conflict resolution...categorises the various processes we use to manage conflict along with the consequences of each of those types...The Dynamic Trust model tackles the critical issue of how trust is created, how trust is eroded, and how the lack of trust impacts the resolution process...The Dimensions model looks broadly at three different "layers" or areas we can focus our work, and these three areas affect the resolution and occurrence of conflict...The Social Style model looks at conflict through the ubiquitous personality lens, and brings clear direction on managing and resolving communication and interpersonal "style" issues...The Moving Beyond model

⁹Gary T. Furlong, *The Conflict Resolution Toolbox: Models and Maps for Diagnosing, Analysing and Resolving Conflict* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 19.

looks at the emotional process people go through when trying to let go of conflict and move on, a critical process for achieving resolution.¹⁰

From Furlong's description, it is observed that conflict, while emerging from human interaction, is complex in understanding. From the world of psychotherapy another diagnostic and treatment model of conflict exists. *Time Limited Dynamic Psychotherapy* uses introspection of the life of the patient as a means of growth. This method of care "Maximises the time during and between sessions."¹¹ After the initial assessment the patient's problem is categorised into one of four interpersonal themes as devised by Hannah Levenson.¹² Levenson states:

What am I hearing about the redundancies in the way he acts in the world: what are his thoughts, his feelings, his wishes, his behaviours, chiefly of an interpersonal sort, since this is an interpersonal model. Second, what are his expectations about how others will behave? Third, what is the behaviour of others? Of course, as seen through the eyes of a patient, we don't have the others there, except for the therapist. How do they respond? And then fourth, how does that leave the person feeling about themselves? What does the person introject? How does he treat himself? And then, in turn, what causes them to act, think, feel, etc, so we really have described a story about the person interpersonally.¹³

¹⁰ Furlong, *The Conflict Resolution Toolbox*, 19-20.

¹¹ Brett N. Steenbarger, "Brief Therapy," in *Handbook of Clinical Psychology, Vols 1-2*. eds. Michael Hershen and Alan M. Gros. (New Jersey: John Wiley and Son, 2008), 763-764.

¹² Hanna Levenson, "Time Limited Dynamic Psychotherapy," <http://www.psychotherapy.net/interview/hanna-levenson> (accessed 16 January, 2011).

¹³ Levenson, "Time Limited Dynamic Psychotherapy," <http://www.psychotherapy.net/interview/hanna-levenson> (accessed 1 March, 2012).

Levenson emphasises that once the instance of conflict has been categorised, the therapist evokes a re-enactment for the patient so he/she has a new experience of an old situation. Levenson engages with the client by listening to how he/she has interacted with the environment around him/her. She is also cognisant of how she is behaving with the person and attempts to reconstruct a new way of being for the person. Levenson theorises that people may have developed a way of being in the world from their earlier years, but she does not believe that change is impossible. Thus, she argues not for insight and explanation, but rather that the person should have a new experience.¹⁴ In doing so she posits, "You have to get down into the trenches with the client. You can't stay up here in a lofty position, and it's dirtier down there. It's messier down there, and you don't know exactly what's going to happen down there."¹⁵ It appears that conflict cannot be dealt with at arms-length, but that which is feared must be entered into for a new and healthier perspective.

Attempting to understand the nature of conflict using Levenson's framework as an inner disjuncture, Frederic Jameson, contending from a literary position, constructs the notion of a political unconscious. Jameson evinces:

The political unconscious accordingly turns on the dynamics of the act of interpretation and presupposes, as its organisational fiction, that we never confront a text immediately, in all its freshness as a thing in itself. Rather,

¹⁴Levenson, *Time Limited Dynamic Psychotherapy*.

¹⁵Levenson, *Time Limited Dynamic Psychotherapy*. Levenson's model in a similar manner represents the nature of pastoral ministry in the BMC and my own way of ministry. I recognise my experience in her description of being "down and dirty work in the trenches."

texts come before us as the always-already-read: we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous interpretations.¹⁶

Using Jameson's paradigm to reinterpret conflict within the Kingdom Ministries congregation as a multi-layered narrative on analysis incorporates new concepts that are enmeshed with my personal perspective on conflict. Moreover, Jameson sees culture through the intellectual tradition of dialectical materialism which sees all social phenomena, including the human self as a cognitive process, as being structured and defined by conflict and dialogue-from the economic level through all aspects of the social "superstructure." Ways of treating conflict have been discussed, but it is one of those human experiences where we use the word or phrase casually often without an adequate understanding.

Defining conflict - Initial considerations

Conflict within Christian settings is an integral and inevitable aspect of my work. Ken Norris states, "Conflict is one of those peculiar concepts people cannot define without a dictionary, but most people know it when they see it."¹⁷ Norris emphasises its unavailability by changing Jesus' words from, "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I with them," to, "where two or three are gathered together, there is bound to be a difference of opinion."¹⁸

Places of worship are where people ought to experience peace and everyone is pleasant, but it is this perceived environment of niceness that makes conflict

¹⁶Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 2002), ix-x.

¹⁷Kenneth R. Norris, *A Tale of Two Perspectives: Dynamics of Interpersonal Conflict from a Christian Point of View* (Indiana: Authorhouse, 2010), 2.

¹⁸Norris, *A Tale of Two Perspectives*, xi. The biblical quotation is taken from St Matthew 18: 20.

unmentionable and resolution complicated. Application of the previously mentioned models may make churches more naturally peaceful, but conflict cannot be eradicated because of human flaws. Moreover, being a pastor does not absolve me from similar tendencies as my journal entries will later demonstrate, because psychologically and psycho-historically, human beings are made for conflict. This has long been acknowledged not only by psychoanalysts and dialectical historians but also by the church that talks of faith as "fighting the good fight."

The church is devoted to peace but also to "fighting the good fight." Like the idea of being human and the idea of goodness, the peace of the church is in a perpetual state of becoming. Fraser N. Watts, Rebecca Nye, and Sara B. Savage contend that in order to resolve conflict in churches the first obstacle to overcome is to acknowledge that conflict itself is considered a taboo subject in many church circles. It is not uncommon for there to be an expectation that the church should always be a perfect and conflict-free environment or that everyone should be 'nice.' In practice, however, conflict is normal.¹⁹

One definition of conflict is offered by Dean Tjosvold's who argues that the interaction of two human beings or more creates the potential for conflict.²⁰ Ken Norris describes conflict as "the experience of individual or groups who are trying to achieve goals or objectives which are or appear to be incompatible."²¹ M. Afzalur Rahim defines conflict as, "an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance within or between social entities, that is, individual, group,

¹⁹ Fraser N. Watts, Rebecca Nye, Sara B. Savage, *Psychology for Christian Ministry* (Oxon: Routledge, 2002), 232.

²⁰ Dean Tjosvold, "The Conflict Positive Organisation: It Depends on Us," *Journal of Organisational Behaviour* 29 (2008): 19.

²¹ Norris, *A Tale of Two Perspectives*, 3.

organization, etc.)."²² William Wilmot and Joyce Hocker define conflict as an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals.²³ Wilmot's and Hocker's definition of conflict could be perceived as the pursuit of material goods, but it could be utilised within a church setting as the collision between church members and the clash between themselves and the pastor. I am drawn to Wilmot's and Hocker's theorisation as a working definition because their categories delineate the areas of conflict emerging in the context of the church in East London.

The nature of conflict

Wilmot and Hocker characterise conflict in several ways. First, it is an expressed struggle where those involved in the tension have perceptions about their own thoughts and feelings and perception of the others thoughts and feelings. The intra-personal perception that each has is the bedrock of inter-personal conflict, but it only becomes evident as the individuals encounter a dialogical exchange. Second, a state of inter-dependence exists but where there is no dependence - that is, where no special interest lies in each other, no conflict occurs. Third, perceived incompatible goals exist because each party views their goals as being important to them. Fourth, there is a sense of perceived shortage of resources, where 'perceived' is sometimes the key word. Fifth, the four previous conditions combine together to create the arena for conflict, but the manifestation of the dispute does not have centre stage until there is the presence of another person who interferes with another person's desired goals.²⁴

²² M. Afzalur Rahim, *Managing Conflict in Organisations* (New Jersey: McGraw-Hill, 2011), 16.

²³ William Wilmot and Joyce Hocker, *Interpersonal Conflict* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011), 11.

²⁴ Wilmot and Hocker, *Interpersonal Conflict*, 12-19.

Wilmot's and Hocker's characteristics of conflict can be used to clarify and categorise conflict in African Caribbean Pentecostal communities. Drawing on the entries in my pastoral journals, Wilmot's and Hocker's first point that each person in a conflict scenario has a perception of the other's thoughts and feelings, is evidenced by my reflecting on desiring to excel as a leader in the local church, but feeling impeded by individuals whom I felt had been stagnated in their faith walk. "I hate the criticism of older men. I hate being challenged by those whom I feel have lost it and have passed the point of being changed."²⁵ Part of the reason of the emergence of conflict was that the older ministers and myself had sat together to have formal discussions regarding the future of the local church, but they were looking to me to provide the vision for the local church.²⁶

Wilmot's and Hocker's second point posits that where there is the existence of interdependency, but where non dependence exists, there is no engagement in conflict. This is evidenced in my journal entries where I was employed external to the local church. In all the entries where I estimated the days I would be working and how much I might be earning never produced any moments of conflict.

The authors' third point is a classic occurrence within many churches where the vision of the pastor clashes with the vision of the maintenance mode of the membership.²⁷ My pastoral journal is replete with an on-going struggle with me desiring the church to progress in its evangelistic missionary endeavours with the inclusion of people who do not fit easily into conventional notions of how a Christians ought to be. The

²⁵ Journal entry: 17- 21 September, 1999.

²⁶ CoGoP, *Ministry Policy for the CoGoP* (Tennessee: White Wing Publishing House and Press, 1990), 17.

²⁷ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches: Planting a Church's Biblically Sound and Reaching People in Culture* (Tennessee: Broadman & Holdman Publishers, 2006), 298.

tension in vision and my feelings towards the membership are expressed in the following entry. “Even as a minister I have been, and possibly still take too much notice of ‘negative, going nowhere type of people. Jesus simply did not pay them too much mind. In fact, they were religious people blocked off from the truth. They wouldn’t recognise truth if it smacked them in the face.”²⁸

Wilmot's and Hocker's fourth point of the ‘perceived’ lack of resources is indicated by my ‘perceived’ notion with the lack of time. With long days and being in a pastor-centred church, I struggled to keep a disciplined devotional/prayer life. The daily practice of journal writing acted as a measure to ensure against over-busyness. However, many of my journal entries begin with themes relating to the perceived lack of time. For example, “Time waits for no one. I have missed my journal entries. Obviously, I have become too busy again and have fallen down in my discipline...To be missing so much journal entries means I am living an unbalanced life.”²⁹ “Days are zipping by so quickly I can hardly believe it.”³⁰ “Time is going.”³¹ “As you can see, I have been too busy in getting the most important things done. Too busy, too addicted to hurry, too engaged in other things, too ill disciplined to do what is right and good for me.”³² The final point Wilmot and Hocker argue is the converging of the four pointers which provide the grounds for conflict.

Understanding conflict from different perspectives

The involvement of other perspectives or a *bricolage* develops a creative tension but this conversation must take place. Struggling to understand conflict need not produce

²⁸ Journal entry: 2 November – 14 November, 2005.

²⁹ Journal entry: 10 February – 28 February, 2006.

³⁰ Journal entry: 9 May – 20 May, 2006.

³¹ Journal entry: 3 October – 5 October, 2006.

³² Journal entry: 30 May – 23 September 2006.

a negative outcome. The development of a meaningful narrative for the benefit of the person or group experiencing conflict is part of the pastor's work. According to Ann Peggy Way, "pastors are interpreters of existence and refusal to engage in such life matters simply places it elsewhere."³³ Way states that "pastoral theology is a combination of applied systems theory, conflict management, Third Force psychology, Jungian analysis, Erikson Development theory and spiritual direction."³⁴ For Way, to understand human behaviour, its various sensibilities, and to interpret the existence of meaning depends on the creativity produced by the conglomeration of human insights.

From a feminist perspective, Margaret L Anderson and Howard Francis Taylor argue: "conflict emphasises the role of coercion and power, which is the ability of a person or group to exercise influence and control over others, in producing social order, therefore, the emphasis of conflict is strife and friction."³⁵ Walter Feinberg and Jonas F. Soltis advance the notion of feminism as a form of conflict theory.³⁶ According to Margaret Walters, the term itself has had a problematic history beginning in 1890s.³⁷ Walters simplifies the term by stating that "over the centuries and in many different countries women have spoken out for their sex, and articulated, in different ways, their complaints, their needs and their hopes."³⁸ Furthermore, "the articulation of women's experiences had religious beginnings as they were forced to assert themselves against a backdrop of dominant church men and the negative scriptural images of women."³⁹

³³Peggy Ann Way, "Pastoral Excellence and Pastoral Theology: A Slight Shift of Paradigm and a Modest Polemic," *Pastoral Psychology* 29, no. 1 (1980): 46.

³⁴ Way, "Pastoral Excellence," 48.

³⁵ Margaret L Anderson and Howard Francis Taylor, *Sociology: Understanding a Diverse Society* (London: Thompson Learning, 2005), 21.

³⁶ Walter Feinberg and Jonas F. Soltis, *School and Society* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2004), 74.

³⁷ Margaret Walters, *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-4.

³⁸ Walters, *Feminism*, 2.

³⁹ Walters, *Feminism*, 6-9.

Heather Walton, bringing together feminist literature and theology as a united voice highlights the existing tension:

Theology is placed on spirit, reason, light, truth, and order – the masculine virtues. Literature is associated with the body, desire, darkness, mystery – the feminine. Theology is the place where God and ‘man’ meet. Literature, like Lilith excluded from the garden endlessly seduces and gives birth. This binary hierarchical and gendered division has been the unstated supposition behind classical formulations of the relations between the disciplines.⁴⁰

Walton demonstrates the occurrence of conflict finding its way in literary and theological discourses and the unexplored structural props ensuring a white male hegemony. To develop her conceptualisation, Walton incorporates the work of Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow who advocate the necessity of woman's experience as vital to feminist theological development, albeit they agree woman's experience is difficult to define because feminists fall into two camps; the women's *feminist* experience and second, women's *traditional* experience.⁴¹ The publication by Christ and Plaskow holds an inherent weakness though, the omission of “women of colour and the invisibility of lesbians.”⁴² However, in their sequel, Christ reflects on this deficiency and acknowledges its limitation due to the universalising and normative understanding of women's experience.⁴³ In this regard, they respond:

⁴⁰ Heather Walton, *Literature, Theology and Feminism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 15.

⁴¹ Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, Introduction to *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, eds. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 8-9.

⁴² Christ and Plaskow, *Womanspirit Rising*, ix

⁴³ Carol Christ, *Womanspirit Rising*, viii - ix, preface to the 1992 edition.

In the ten years since we wrote the introduction to *Womanspirit Rising*, feminist theology and thealogy have grown by leaps and bounds...we recognise the term 'woman's experience,' too often means "white, middle-class women's experience," in just the same way "human" too means "male." The work of women of colour and other minority women both criticises the dominant feminine discourse and names their own experience has made facile generalisations impossible.⁴⁴

Christ's and Plaskow's comments acknowledging the lack of non-dominant voices overlapped the already burgeoning field of Black women and Womanist theology giving voice to their experiences.

The emergence of Womanist theology

Responding to Christ's and Plaskow's comment, Jacqueline Grant claims that with the protracted history of subjugation, Black women felt they too needed to enunciate how they saw the world.⁴⁵ Black women had a unique narrative and an innate desire to articulate their wants, needs, pains and existence in their own language and earthed in their experience.

Black feminist studies flourished in the 1970s, but in 1983 Alice Walker coined the phrase 'womanist' which was quickly adopted by African American Women who had previously called themselves 'Black feminist' or 'Black women ethicists.'⁴⁶ To begin

⁴⁴ Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality* (New York: HarperCollins Publication, 1989), 3.

⁴⁵ Jacqueline Grant, *White Woman's Christ and Black Woman's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1989), 2-3.

⁴⁶ Karen Baker Fletcher, "Passing on the Spark: A Womanist Perspective on Theology and Culture," in *Changing Conversations: Religious Reflection and Cultural Analysis* Dwight Hopkins and Shelia Greeve

critical sociological or theological reflection for Black women meant their starting point of interrogation was from lived experience.⁴⁷ As Carol A. Watkins Ali claims:

As Black theology has evolved over the years, two distinctive systematic approaches for doing theology have become prevalent in the African American context: Black liberation theology and womanist theology. The methodology of both approaches asserts the distinctive experiences of African Americans as the point of departure for doing theology.⁴⁸

However, it is not only lived experienced that can be utilised as a source of theological reflection. In 1988 Katie Cannon's seminal work argues that "the Black women's literary tradition documents the "living space" carved out of the intricate web of racism, sexism and poverty."⁴⁹ Furthermore, Jacqueline Grant's tripartite conflict struggle of racism, sexism and classism warrants her making the following comments, "that they have lives and no one form of oppression is eliminated with the destruction of any another."⁵⁰

The Womanist approach in understanding their position in the world is not to advance abstract ideas but to be involved in the process of human transformation. To bring change means bringing healing to the individual or community groups but also to the

Davenay, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 145. Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Garden*, xi. The first woman to re-appropriate the term Womanist for Black feminist theology was Katie Cannon in *Black Womanist Ethics* (Georgia: Scholars Press, 1988).

⁴⁷ Baker Fletcher, *Passing on the Spark*, 145.

⁴⁸ Carroll A. Watkins Ali, *Survival and Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 1999), 45.

⁴⁹ Katie G. Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 7.

⁵⁰ Grant, *White Woman's Christ*, 221.

structures engineering inequality.⁵¹ For womanist orientation, it is not a case of one group being more oppressed by social conflict than another, but as pointed out by Evelyn Parker:

Womanist approaches are concerned with ministry that brings wholeness and flourishing to Black women and girls. But womanist in all fields view themselves as theoreticians committed to ministry in the community of faith and the broader community beyond the academy.⁵²

Womanist theology in the Caribbean and the U.K

In the Caribbean and the United Kingdom, Black Women of African descent are expressing their concerns about societal and ecclesial inequalities. One of the leading voices from the Caribbean is Dianne Stewart who draws on her African heritage as the starting point of reflection. She comments:

Given the rich African religious heritage of the Caribbean and the role women play in its preservation, it is unfortunate that, even in the twenty-first century, Caribbean women of African descent have yet to partake in this wellspring of womanist/feminist theological reflection.⁵³

⁵¹ "True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it comes to see an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring." Martin Luther King, Jnr (accessed 1 December, 2011).

<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/show/19814>

⁵² Evelyn Parker, "Womanist Theory," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller McLemore (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Limited, 2012), 206.

⁵³ Dianne Stewart, "Womanist Theology in the Caribbean Context: Critiquing Culture, Rethinking Doctrine, and Expanding Boundaries," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (2004).

<http://www.accessmylibrary.com/article-1G1-139172137/womanist-theology-caribbean-context.html> (accessed 1 December, 2011).

Whilst Stewart draws on African sources for reflection and interpretation, her work is problematic for evangelical, pentecostal and charismatic Christians because she utilises African derived religions such as Kumina which does not have its roots in Christianity.⁵⁴

Joining Stewart in a Caribbean womanist construction is Marjorie Lewis Cooper who utilises Hyacinth Boothe's Balm-yard theology.⁵⁵ Lewis writes:

Balm-yard is a place where, for many generations, African inspired rituals have been conducted mainly by women seeking healing from physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual trauma...it is a communal and inclusive space, where even children and the mentally disturbed were included. It is an egalitarian space in which all roles were valued. It is also a place of deep spirituality, where there was no separation of sacred and secular, and in which spirit possession occurred, giving power to face the challenges of daily life.⁵⁶

Lewis has constructed a Nannyish t'eology based on the Jamaican matriarchal heroine, Nanny.⁵⁷ "Nanny, a renowned Maroon guerrilla leader, represents women who are empowered to safeguard the freedom of the community."⁵⁸ Developing a Nannyish

⁵⁴ Stewart, "Womanist Theology,"

⁵⁵ Marjorie Lewis, "A Caribbean Womanist Perspective on the Accra Confession," *Reformed World* 56 no.1 (2006): 107- 115. http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/news_file/refworld56N1bApr5.pdf#page=108 (accessed 1 December, 2011).

⁵⁶ Lewis, *A Caribbean Womanist Perspective*.

⁵⁷ Nannyish t'eology is a contextualized, interfaith and multi-faith womanist theology based on a consensus in Jamaican society about the significance of their national heroine.

⁵⁸ Lewis, *A Caribbean Womanist Perspective*.

t'eology, Lewis employs the use of Black Theology and Feminist Theology, Black Women's Experiences and the Bible as interdisciplinary interlocutors.⁵⁹

Whilst Womanist theology and its Caribbean equivalent were developing, similar expressions were also occurring in England. One of the earliest Black Caribbean female voices discussing the unequal positioning of women within the church was Elaine Foster. To illustrate her analysis, Foster uses two pyramids superimposed on each other. She records:

The first pyramid is inverted and represents the 'female' church. In this pyramid lies the spirituality, the life-giving and life-sustaining nature of the church. The second is the upright pyramid and represents the Church in all its patriarchal and hierarchical glory, and contains all leadership, juridical and priestly roles. The first pyramid is inverted to represent the vast number of women actively involved in the spiritual life and upkeep of the churches. Regardless of how the men consider their own positions in the organisations, there is a sense in which they hold their positions only on the approval of the women.⁶⁰

Foster refers to this visible authority and background influence as 'silent collusion,' an example of the tension and conflict in the Caribbean male-female relationship.⁶¹ Since her seminal work, other Black British women writers have critiqued the power imbalance in society and the BMC. Kate Coleman, articulating the tension of being a

⁵⁹ Marjorie Lewis, "Dispora Dialogue: Womanist Theology in Engagement with Aspects of the Black British and Jamaican Experience," in *Black Theology: An International Journal* 2, no. 1 (2004): 89-90.

⁶⁰ Elaine Foster, "Women and the Inverted Pyramid of the Black Churches in Britain," in *Refusing Holy Orders: Women Fundamentalism in Britain*, eds. Gita Sahgal and Nira Yuval-Davis (London: Virago Press, 1992), 47.

⁶¹ Foster, *Women and the Inverted Pyramid*, 47.

Black woman and experiencing ministerial training within British institutions, employed Womanist theology to help her conceptualise her experience.⁶² Coleman insists:

As Black British Women we cannot simply rely depend upon our insights of our African American cousins...thus we require that we dispense with an essentialised concept of Black Womanhood with the idea of monolithic Black identity and instead recognise that there are many and varied models of Black womanhood.⁶³

Coleman's comments dispel the myth of a homogenous Black identity and emphasises the diversity contained within Black humanity. Another voice contributing to Black British womanist theology discourse is Lorraine Dixon. Dixon establishes the fact that "many Black Christian women have had to reflect on what it means to be Black and a woman before God in alternative areas of expression, for example in music and storytelling."⁶⁴ In addition, Maxine Howell-Baker employs the womanist nomenclature in her proposal of a *Pneumatological Pedagogy*. Howell argues for the centrality of experience, an autoethnographical position, as a valid starting point for constructing and representing meaning for Black women.⁶⁵

⁶² Kate Coleman, "Black Theology and Black Liberation: A Womanist Perspective," *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Theological Praxis* 1, no. 1 (1998): 65.

⁶³ Coleman, *Black Theology and Black Liberation*, 68

⁶⁴ Lorraine Dixon, "Teach it, Sister!": "Mahalia Jackson as Theologian in Song," in *Black Theology in Britain* 2 (1999): 73.

⁶⁵ Maxine Howell-Baker, "Towards a Womanist Pedagogy: An Investigation into the Development and Implementation of a Theological Pedagogy by and for the Marginalised," in *Black Theology: An International Journal* 3 no. 1 (2005): 34.

However, Womanist theology, whilst useful has weaknesses. It has been transported into the Caribbean and the United Kingdom, via the United States, but it is a context specific concept. Within the three locations there are strands, such as struggle, marginalisation and disadvantage which are commonplace to all Black women. Yet, the context of where Black women are located influences the loci of focus. For example, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, writing from an African perspective states, "their context is oppression, poverty and impoverishment, marginalisation from global technological culture, exploitation that results from unjust global trade and economic arrangements."⁶⁶ However, she does not use the term womanist, but uses the term feminism because it is known globally even though it is still problematic in the ears of some Africans.⁶⁷

The discussion so far has focused on the external stimulus of conflict. However, various writers have commented on the importance of the inner world in understanding interpersonal conflict. Time will now be given to explore the internalised effects of oppression and the manifestation of horizontal conflict.⁶⁸

A considered perspective on the effects of internalised conflict

The effect of inter personal conflict has been theorised as oppression sickness within the gay, bisexual and transgendered community. It describes the level of self-hatred,

⁶⁶ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Feminist Theology in an African Perspective," in *Paths of African Theology*, ed. Rosino Gibellini (London: SCM Press, 1994), 167.

⁶⁷ Amba Oduyoye, "Feminist Theology," 167.

⁶⁸ M. Afzalur, Rahim, *Managing Conflict in Organisations*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: New Brunswick, 2011), 21. See also Sandra D. Collins and James O'Rourke, *Managing Conflict and workplace Relationships* (Ohio: South Western Cengage Learning, 2008), 12. The idea of horizontal conflict relates to the incident of difference between people within the same level within an organisation.

depression, self-abuse, horizontal hostility and group conflict.⁶⁹ Penny Hanley-Hackenbruc examining the gay community from a sociological perspective contends that, "Within the gay community there seems to be a high consumption of drugs and alcohol linked with a high intensity of self-destructive behaviour identified with the aggressor oppressor type."⁷⁰ Such behavioural expressions are underscored by Myra Ferree and Patricia Yancy Martin, who, citing the work of Robin Stevens, contend that "the amount of pain women bring to the feminist movement, it is not surprising they suffer with oppression sickness leading feminists to turn on one another."⁷¹ Similarly, Torie Osborn describes the gay movement as "self-cannibalising, consuming its own leadership out of a fear of power and low esteem. Leaders are toppled with vicious regularity by bickering faction's rank and file activists."⁷² She describes "oppression sickness like a smog in our air, unseen, but lethal and has generated negativity (worse, she declares, than in non-gay organisations)."⁷³ One of the main reasons for negative behaviour that is inflicted on one's own is linked to the internalisation of the insults, name calling and treatment of being devalued as a member of a minority group. Leanne M. Tigert comments regarding intra personal/intra group conflict and writes the following, "It is not only about power and control within an intimate relationship, but it is about homophobia/hetereosexism, and the re-enactment of and response to cultural traumatisation."⁷⁴ The insidious nature of

⁶⁹ Leanne M Tigert, "The Power of Shame: Lesbian Battering as a form of Homophobia," in *Women and Therapy* 23, no. 3. (2001): 75.

⁷⁰ Penny Hanley- Hackenbruck, "Working with Lesbians in Psychotherapy," in *American Psychiatric Review of Psychiatry* 12, eds. John M. Oldham, Michelle B. Riba, Allan Tasman, (Washington: American Psychiatric Press Inc, 1993). 74.

⁷¹ Myra Ferree and Patricia Yancy Martin, *Feminist Organisations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 232. Citing Robin Stevens 'Eating Our Own' in *Advocate* 13 August 1992. (accessed 26 November, 2010).

⁷² Leroy Aarons, "Welcome Home," Review of *Coming Home to America: A Roadmap to Gay and Lesbian Empowerment* by Torie Osborn, *The Advocate*, October 15, 1996, book review.

⁷³ Aarons, "Welcome Home,"

⁷⁴ Tigert, "The Power of Shame," 75.

oppression sickness is further exemplified in a sermon by Elizabeth Kaeton. She writes:

Deep, deep within the depths of the complicated maze of prejudice and bigotry is the disease known as oppression sickness. It is the result of a spirit which has been broken by human degradation; a heart fractured by cruelty; a mind which has been tormented by unrelenting injustice.⁷⁵

The psychically distorted Black humanity is expounded by Frantz Fanon who theorises that in every person who has been colonised, or as he describes it, "whose soul has an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality."⁷⁶ Furthermore, "the Black man has two dimensions, one with his fellows, and the other with the White man. That this self-division is direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question."⁷⁷ The internalisation of inferiority if unleashed can be a frightening matter and in the presence of one who mirrors the individual, there is a form of crucifying, eliminating and annihilating of the other person. Kaeton, in discussing oppression sickness refers to Dana Rose, an African American gay priest who describes it in this manner. "When someone has got their foot on your neck, keeping you down, there is a real human temptation to put your foot on 'someone else's neck so they do not get any higher than you.'"⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Elizabeth Kaeton, 'Is you da one?' *A Sermon for the Season of Reconciliation at the Church of the Redeemer* (Morristown, N.J., 2/11/01). <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/joyanyway/joy139.html> (accessed 23 November, 2010).

⁷⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 4.

⁷⁷ Fanon, *Black Skin*, 17.

⁷⁸ Kaeton, 'Is you da one?'

Within the DNA of oppression there is, it seems, a characteristic of destroying leadership. On this matter, Osborn highlights this disturbing and dysfunctional behaviour as leadership bashing.⁷⁹ Oppression sickness' main characteristics are a form of self-harming, the attempt to destroy the other and attacking leadership/authority. The attacking of authority must not be dismissed because it is an indicator of the psychological well-being of a group. With the attack on the leader what is generally forgotten is the fact that the leader is an integral part of the congregation or group, and despite his/her role, he/she too is part of the legacy of oppression. In regards to the attacking of authority figures, Lloyd Rediger mitigates against such behaviour. He writes:

The growing abuse is also a significant commentary on the mental and spiritual health of the church for how it treats its leaders reveal even more about the church than about its leaders. Only a sick or dying church batters its pastors (The tribe that kills its shaman loses its soul).⁸⁰

Rediger's observations may indeed be true, but perhaps the conflictive actions in an oppressive environment are in essence a cathartic expression from within the human being. When this occurs, often times it indicates a need for release of pent up emotion and the pastor can be both the cause and receptacle of the projections whilst simultaneously act as the catalyst for healing. With various perspectives of conflict being considered, I will now focus on the definition of terms and how they will be used for further discussion on the central point of this thesis.

⁷⁹ Torrie Osborn, "Reweaving Community's Fabric: The Deprivation of Meaning in America," *Tikkun*, July/August, 1996 http://www.tikkun.org/article.php/jul1996_osborn (accessed 23 November, 2010).

⁸⁰ G. Lloyd Rediger, *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregation under Attack* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 2.

Definitions of Terms

The Black Majority Church in Britain – An historical overview

The first Caribbean post-war migrants to Britain met a wide range of experiences, both positive and negative, and Yasmin Alibhai-Brown writes that when the first Caribbean migrants arrived in Britain much effort was exerted by local and central government to make them feel welcome.⁸¹ Within the church setting, Heather Walton, in her seminal work, shows evidence of the Methodist church's concern for its African Caribbean members in its fellowship.⁸² However, many African Caribbean Christians were met with hostility which led to one of three responses: depart from the Christian church altogether; second, persevere and remain in the White led churches despite the hostility, with the understanding that no one had a monopoly on Christianity; third, establish churches which catered to their physical and spiritual needs.⁸³ Alternatively, Joe Aldred argues that the formation of BMC's was not caused by indigenous exclusion alone; rather, African Caribbeans brought their church with them. He refers to the traditional story of exclusion based on racism as "people being ill-informed whilst insisting on the notions of rejection."⁸⁴

The term BMC was not a self-ascribed marker for churches created and maintained by Caribbean people. Patrick Kalilombe comments that "BMC leaders resented this imposition." Furthermore, he argues, "Black leaders encouraged Black people not to

⁸¹ Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, *Imagining the New Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 56. See the edited publication by Anthony Reddie, "Politics of Entry into Britain: Reflections of a Black British Person returning to the UK," in *Black Theology, Slavery and Contemporary Christianity*, ed. Anthony Reddie (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 211.

⁸² Heather Walton with Robin Ward and Mark Johnson, *A Tree God Planted: Black People in British Methodism* (London: Ethnic Minorities in Methodism Working Group, 1985), 14 & 24.

⁸³ Patrick Kalilombe, "Black Christianity in Britain," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 20, no. 2 (1997): 313. Here, Kalilombe demonstrates how some Christians who remained in the Catholic, Anglican and Methodist tradition developed a group called "*Claiming the Inheritance*" signifying no one had a monopoly on the Christian faith.

⁸⁴ Joe Aldred, *Respect: Understanding Caribbean British Christianity* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2005), 91- 92.

assume the intention behind these names as being positive or favourable.”⁸⁵ This point of inferiority of the BMC as seen by the dominant population is corroborated by Arlington Trotman.⁸⁶ Despite the problematic nature of the term, Kalilombe argues that it makes a convenient starting place for discussion.⁸⁷ Trotman, contributing to the discussion on identity, emphasises a “range of labels employed to describe the so called BMC phenomenon.”⁸⁸ Despite its perceived inferiority Robert Beckford counters the undesirable categorisation, as do African American theologians, and articulates that it was one of the only safe places for Black people during the early days of settling in Britain and it was a location of empowerment.⁸⁹ However in his influential work he fails to define this sacred Black space, but his second publication describes it as:

A venue where the leadership and members of the congregation are predominantly African or African Caribbean whilst incorporating the multifarious mix of ‘Black’ people gathered from Africa, the Caribbean and Asia, and even the presence of a minority White membership.⁹⁰

One might assume the term BMC would encapsulate churches where the membership and its leadership were of African or Asiatic descent. However, the term Black evokes a response of disassociation, dissuading Africans and other non-White groups to own this unhelpful label. Trotman offers a counter-argument to Beckford’s definition and

⁸⁵ Kalilombe, “Black Christianity in Britain,” 306-307.

⁸⁶ Arlington Trotman “Black, Black-led or What?” in *Look What the Lord has Done: An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain*, ed. Mark Sturge (Bletchley: Scripture Union, 2005), 225-226.

⁸⁷ Kalilombe, *Black Christianity*, 306-307.

⁸⁸ Trotman, “Black, Black-led or What?” 229.

⁸⁹ Robert Beckford, *Jesus is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998), 26.

⁹⁰ Robert Beckford, *Dread and Pentecostal: A Political Theology for the BMC in Britain* (London: SPCK, 2000), 2-3.

picks up the disdain by other ethnic groups in embracing the Black description.

Trotman contends that the term “BMC, has encountered much resistance and repulsion because of its separatist and discriminatory overtones against other races.”⁹¹

In the BMC discourse, Mark Sturge argues that the term, “BMC has superseded the terms of ‘Black Church’ and Black-led church”⁹² He defines the BMC as “a Christian worshipping community whose composition is made up of more than 50 per cent of people from an African or Caribbean heritage.”⁹³ Sturge does not state in his analysis whether the composition of the worshipping community includes an African

Caribbean leadership. However, more recent literature suggests another perspective.

Joe Aldred and Keno Ogbo pose the notion that the term BMC has the “potential for much controversy. Moreover, suffixes like ‘led’ and ‘majority’ after Black permits certain clarity in identity.”⁹⁴ The authors state that the idea of the BMC now “includes people from the Caribbean and Africa that draws support from those communities in Britain.”⁹⁵ Throughout this thesis the term BMC will refer to Beckford’s definition.

Leaving this particular discussion, I will focus on the issues of identity regarding African Caribbean people in an effort to show how enslavement and colonialism have played in identity formation and the implications for identity formation for this thesis.

African Caribbean Identity, a constant state of flux

The discourse on identity is a fascinating and complicated issue, but for Caribbean people, the debate has long existed. Claims for their identity begun when their ancestors were captured, enslaved and negatively described and inscribed by the

⁹¹ Trotman, “Black, Black-led or what?”, 232.

⁹² Mark Sturge, *Look What the Lord has Done: An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain* (Bletchley: Scripture Union, 2005), 29.

⁹³ Sturge, *Look What the Lord has Done*, 31.

⁹⁴ Joe Aldred and Keno Ogbo, eds. *The BMC in the 21st Century* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2010), 1.

⁹⁵ Aldred and Ogbo, *The BMC*, 1.

human sciences of the West. European travellers, returning from their exotic travels, embellished their stories of the natives' and diminished Black humanity to subhuman categories.⁹⁶

With the abolition of slavery in the Caribbean came the imposition of colonial rule. Darrel Kozlowski defines colonialism as "the extension of a country's rule to lands beyond its own border and describes these 'new lands' as colonies."⁹⁷ Kozlowski's portrayal is helpful, but it operates within an American context. George Lamming, from a Caribbean perspective offers an alternative commentary where his analysis underscores the particularity and peculiarity of Caribbean identity. Lamming writes:

Colonialism to the West Indian is different from the African whose experience is largely a lack of privilege. For the West Indian, he has been wholly severed from the cradle of a continuous nature and tradition. It is the brevity of the West Indian history and fragmentary nature of the different cultures which have fused to make something new; it is the absolute dependence on the values in the language of the coloniser which have given him a special relationship to the word, colonialism...colonialism is the very base and structure of the West Indian cultural awareness. His reluctance in asking for complete, political freedom... is due to the fear that he has never had to stand. A foreign or absent Mother Culture has always cradled his judgement. Moreover, the freedom from physical fear has created complacency in the

⁹⁶ Arlington Trotman, "Black, Black-led or What?" 226-227.

⁹⁷ Darrel J. Kozlowaki and Jennifer L. Weber, *Colonialism* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 1.

West Indian awareness. And the higher up he moves in the social scale, the more crippled his mind and impulses become by the resultant complacency.⁹⁸

Lamming's account suggests that when Caribbean migrants arrived in the United Kingdom as British subjects they inevitably clamoured for 'Britishness,' but it masked an undetected fractured identity unknown to the Caribbean and the English population. Paul Du Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman insist that identity takes on different connotations depending on the context within which it is deployed.⁹⁹ Furthermore, they argue:

Identity has achieved its contemporary centrality both theoretically and substantively, and in one sense, the debates about identity makes it marginal, contingent, fragile and incomplete and thus, more amenable to reconstitution than was previously thought.¹⁰⁰

It is impossible to give a definitive understanding of identity because of its complexity and fluidity and its influence by the various changes in society. However, Stuart Hall defines cultural identity as "the collective or true self hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves' which people's shared history and ancestry hold in common."¹⁰¹ Similarly, Paul Du Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman argue along similar lines and express it like this:

⁹⁸George Lamming, "The Occasion to Speak," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin (Oxford: Routledge, 1995), 17.

⁹⁹ Paul Du Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman, *Identity: A Reader* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 1-2.

¹⁰⁰ Du Gay, Evans and Redman, *Identity: A Reader*, 2.

¹⁰¹ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (Oxford: Routledge, 1995), 435.

Identities are never be unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singularly but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicisation, and constantly in the process of change and transformation.¹⁰²

This explanation of identity demonstrates its multifarious nature, but it is not the full picture. For example, it does not acknowledge the internal impact on individuals while the process of change is occurring, and it fails to recognise the existential disfiguration which exacerbates the invisible fragmentation of those who are on a quest for wholeness of their identity. In the hunt for transformation, Stuart Hall heralds a new dispensation called *New Ethnicities*. Hall's theorisation utilises the term 'Black' as a reference point and claims:

Common experience of racism and marginalisation in Britain came to provide the organising category of a new politics of resistance, among groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities.¹⁰³

The marginalisation of certain groups was not a case of misfortune or due to their ineptitude. It was politically and economically engineered. Inviting migrant workers to perform low level tasks for low wages restricted the potential of any social mobility. Hall attests that such social engineering was an “intentional location of Blacks to the periphery by specific political and cultural practices which regulated,

¹⁰² Gay, Evans and Redman, *Identity*, 17.

¹⁰³ Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities," in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, eds. Houston A. Baker, Jr., Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 163.

governed and 'normalised' the representational and discursive places of English society.”¹⁰⁴

In these allocated spaces Black people were the objects of representation and rarely, if ever, the subjects. The rise of the term "Black" as an affirmative term in British academic and political culture is described by Stuart Hall in his important article "The Whites of Their Eyes." Here Hall discusses how the term "Black" having been in the 1960s and into the 1970s one of the most derogatory and illiberal terms used against non-white Britons was appropriated as a marker of collective cultural consciousness and political purpose by a wide diaspora of non-white Britons including Asian, African-Caribbean, African and other groups.

Within the underground movement of the fledgling BMC it transcended its imposed description and in the presence of each other they were re humanised. Within the public sphere however, there was a long struggle for representation, but this cultural and discursive fight back was mediated through the expressive arts. The struggle for subjective representation continues, but Hall offers a glimmer of hope. Despite its danger of *New Ethnicities* through the politics of representation Hall comments:

The awareness of the Black experience as a *diaspora experience*, and the consequences which this carries for the process of unsettling, recombination, hybridization, and "cut and mix" - in short, the process of cultural diasporization (to coin an ugly term) which it implies.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴Hall, "New Ethnicities," 164.

¹⁰⁵Hall, "New Ethnicities," 170.

In other words, “a new ethnicity is a refusal to represent the Black experience in Britain as a monolithic, self-contained, sexually stabilised and always "right on" - stereotypically, always and only positive.”¹⁰⁶ This thesis acts as a point of departure from the generalised perception of African Caribbean Christians as being "happy clappy" by examining the underbelly of BMC life “in order that we take into consideration the complexity, diversity and problematic nature of identity relating to Black lives in Britain as earlier commented on by Robert Beckford.”¹⁰⁷ In his final analysis, Hall cites the work of Hanif Kureishi who offers his own interpretation of Hall's *diasporic experiences* as "cheering fictions" and continues Hall's refusal to depict Black life in Britain as homogeneous. Kureishi sees the writer as public relations personnel, “a hired liar.” He explains:

If there is to be a serious attempt to understand Britain today, with its mix of races and colours, its hysteria and despair, then, writing about it has to be complex. It can't apologise or idealise. It can't sentimentalise and it can't represent only one group as having the monopoly on virtue.¹⁰⁸

Identity then, is a multifaceted non-vacuous issue and is shaped by a myriad of converging, diverging and conflicting variables. One of the major problems in defining identity is whether it is from a dominant source or from the periphery with each location offering differing descriptions. The argument on identity leads to the next point of discussion, the notion of diaspora and its meaning for African Caribbean people in Britain.

¹⁰⁶Hall, "New Ethnicities," 171.

¹⁰⁷Robert Beckford, "Towards Post-Colonial, Post-Modern," 48.

¹⁰⁸Hanif Kureishi, "Dirty Washing," *Time Out*, 795, 14-20 November 1985, 26.

Diaspora and diaspora communities

The concept of diaspora is a complex phenomenon. Tiffany Patterson and Robin Kelley emphasise the dual understanding of the term. First, it was used in scholarly debates to describe African unifying experiences. Second, it was employed as an analytical term to discuss Black communities across national boundaries.¹⁰⁹ Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur show that diaspora means dia - "across" and sperien "to sow or scatter seed."¹¹⁰ They develop their point by stating that diaspora can be seen as a "naming of the other which historically referred to displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movement of migration, immigration or exile."¹¹¹ Patterson and Kelley expand the description from a Black /White/European normative and include Indian Ocean societies, Asia, the Islamic world and the events of the seventeenth to the twentieth century in U.S history.¹¹²

Edwin Larkin argues that from its inception diaspora theory has been intertwined with the development of minority cultures; however, to his mind diaspora means "the strategies dispersed people employed to retain and/or reproduce their cultural heritage in their new situation as a minority population in the host nation."¹¹³ Strategies of survival are analysed by John Thornton who considers the survival of African culture to the present day an important issue. Speaking from an American context and reflecting on the arrival of enslaved Africans to the Americas he states, "the culture

¹⁰⁹ Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D. G Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World," *African Studies Review* 43, no.1 (2000): 14.

¹¹⁰ Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, "Nations, Migration, Globalisation: Points of Contention in Diaspora Studies," in *Theorising Diaspora: A Reader*, eds. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 1.

¹¹¹ Braziel, and Mannur, "Nations, Migration, Globalisation," 1.

¹¹² Patterson and Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations," 14.

¹¹³ Edward Larkin, "Diaspora and Empire: Towards a New Synthesis," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006): 167 - 168.

was not surviving: It was arriving.”¹¹⁴ Whatever the brutalities of the Middle Passage or of slave life, it was not going to cause the African to disregard their mother language, culture, religion or ethics, not in 'America, not ever in their lives.¹¹⁵ However, this was not the original case of African Caribbeans arriving during the Windrush epoch.

Caribbean migrants arriving in Britain did not begin by holding on to their own culture as they often rushed to ape domestic British culture. For example, think of the iconic tweed jacket and tie sported by the first generation Caribbean immigrants in contrast to the Rastafarian attire of their teenage sons in the 1970s and we can see how the hopes and expectations of a warm welcome in Britain were turned to attitudes and modes of culture that embraced another set of values in search of solace, identity, and a valid political credo.

The notion of diaspora and its sole attachment to minority groups is challenged by Leonard Tennenhouse. Tennenhouse champions the thoughts that, "Diasporic communities were made up of homogenous people who had fled war, hunger, religious persecution or economic hardship in the mother country and so exist as distinct minority groups in the adopted homeland.”¹¹⁶ Tennenhouse explains that the term diaspora was applied to four great dispersions of this kind: Jewish, Greek, Armenian and African. However, as many as eighty diasporic groups are referred to by sociologists.¹¹⁷ Differing from the general understanding of diaspora excluding European groups of people, Tennenhouse's theorisation includes non-White and

¹¹⁴John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World 1400 - 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 320.

¹¹⁵Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 320.

¹¹⁶Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 3

¹¹⁷Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English*, 3.

White majority people groups. He illustrates his meaning by charting the journey of authors who acted upon British materials to make them address specific American concerns and refers to the group arriving in America as “the British diaspora.”¹¹⁸ For Tennenhouse, the British diaspora in America was made up of “large number of partial families, transplanted second sons, as well as disproportionately large ratio of single men, unmarried women who immigrated to America under a variety of contracts and conditions.”¹¹⁹

The mass movement of people from their homeland into a new land is often an unromantic journey. Tennenhouse's alternative description of diaspora does not avoid the pain, human fragmentation and disruption. The sojourner begins the journey with dreams and aspirations of a better life, but after the initial encounter in their new location, shock, horror, and shattered dreams become inseparable travelling companions, leaving the sojourner reeling from the unexpected collision of hope in the face of reality. This unforeseen introduction to life in a new habitation poses fresh challenges to the now traumatised arrivals. With the unexpected encounter there is the dual challenge of maintaining significant relationships and keeping families together. In such circumstances displaced people need to preserve a strand of hope. In this regard, Clive Harris and Winston James concur that “diasporic groups often experience displacement and rupture, and their stories are often subverted by those who have perceived them through ideological prisms, most commonly that of the politics of race.”¹²⁰ If diaspora people are to create meaning for themselves, they must lay hold or possess their own stories. Tennenhouse points out that “members of a

¹¹⁸Tennenhouse. *The Importance of Feeling English*, 43.

¹¹⁹Tennenhouse. *The Importance of Feeling English*, 44.

¹²⁰Winston James and Clive Harris, *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain* (London; Verso, 1993), 1.

diaspora share collective memory of the mother land as the diasporic group is scattered across more than one geographical location where the memory affords a continuous link to the country of origin.”¹²¹ For African Caribbean people, twice removed from their homeland, the idea of linking to the country of origin has been obliterated, as Lamming commented earlier on.¹²² Tennenhouse continues, "There are several reasons why a site of national origin might vanish." The problem of successive disruptions as in the case of the African diaspora, is that for four hundred years "they had little opportunity to develop commemorative institutions, hence "with successive generations, the memory of Africa was displaced by cultural practices designed at first to commemorate the place of origin," but soon devolved into the recall of "subsequent displacements - Brazil, the Caribbean, the rural American South, Northern urban ghettos, and so forth." ¹²³

As a counter response to one's history being eradicated Tennenhouse cites the transition of the Jews from Israel to Babylon, Assyria, then Persia, then the Roman Empire, and, later, to the Abbasid and Ottoman Empires. As they sojourned, "they developed centres of learning dedicated to remembering their homeland.”¹²⁴ There is biblical support for the continuation of Jewish worship wherever they self-located or were exiled.¹²⁵ Contained within the continuation of worship were vital cultural norms needed for their nation's survival.

Diaspora is more than a movement of people because it encapsulates their historical past, and the disruption and the effect of relocation on their sense of self and identity.

¹²¹Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English*, 3.

¹²² Lamming, *The Occasion to Speak*, 19.

¹²³Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English*, 5.

¹²⁴Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English*, 5.

¹²⁵ For example see Joshua 4.

They enter the new domain with ambition and aspirations for a better life that are projected on the host community. As often is the case, migratory hopes are soon shattered on their arrival to a new land. This was the case for African Caribbean people entering England, but for the African Caribbean Christian in particular there is a nuanced and profound difference which remains undetected by marginalised Christian people. The Bible focuses on a diaspora and exiled community as the centre for its teachings and principles. In the Old Testament, Israel was an exiled community struggling to maintain its identity as well as attempting to live out divine principles on earth. What must not be forgotten is that the Ten Commandments were entrusted to a displaced community. Similarly, in the New Testament, the birth of the church was founded on a diasporic community of faith, and in “its early centuries lived in conflict with the Roman Empire.”¹²⁶

The African Caribbean BMC is often seen as a marginal entity within British Christianity. However, it is not on the edge of faith, but central to the message of the gospel. In this regard, Howard Thurman writes the following:

The basic fact is that Christianity as it was born in the mind of this Jewish teacher and thinker appears as a technique of survival of the oppressed. That it became through the intervening years, a religion of the powerful and the dominant, sometimes used as an instrument of oppression, must not tempt us into believing it was thus in the mind of Jesus. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” Wherever his spirit appears, the oppressed gather fresh courage; for he announced the good news that fear, hypocrisy and hatred, the

¹²⁶ Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment Resistance in the World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1992), 149.

three hounds of hell that tracked the trail of the disinherited, need have no dominion over them.¹²⁷

Thurman emphasises the original nature and intention of the Christian message. It was never designed to be a weapon of oppression. However, the task of the marginalised believer is to have a clear understanding of who Jesus is and not be distracted by the later distorted development of his liberating news. With this in mind I will now sketch the layout of the thesis where the marginalised Christian can understand their place in the kingdom of God and how conflict, despite its often unpleasant and uncomfortable experience can be used in a positive manner to aid the personal and communal development.

Outline of the thesis

Chapter one acts as the first stage of the pastoral model which focuses on the situation that is being researched. This model will be explained in more detail in chapter two. I have highlighted the situation, rationale, context and nature of interpersonal conflict. Furthermore, different perspectives of interpersonal conflict have been discussed. A brief overview of the BMC has been given. The nature and the complex discourse surrounding identity, diaspora and its various understandings and how they will be employed throughout this thesis have been discussed. These concepts provide the bedrock on which this research will be conducted and ideas explored.

Chapter two to chapter five comprise the second stage of the pastoral model which interprets the situation via the social sciences. In this chapter I demonstrate the

¹²⁷Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Boston Press Books, 1996), 29.

necessity of a systematic process of analysing data and conducting qualitative research. I decided not to pursue congregational studies because in its remit, it does seem to investigate historical notions of how a church or congregation came into being, and for the African Caribbean community, understanding their history is imperative in order to understand how the BMC is presently shaped. Studying Kingdom Ministries in East London serves as a template in the shared experience of being a displaced and marginalised people, a common feature amongst the remaining congregations for the CoGoP and other similar diasporan Christian groups in the United Kingdom. In their seminal work Matthew Guest, Karin Tusting and Linda Woodhead highlight that in the United Kingdom, "congregational studies is less recognised, less resourced and less institutionally embedded and less prolific."¹²⁸ Yet, in spite of there being minimum research and reflection it "contains some surprising riches."¹²⁹ Guest, Tusting and Woodhead locate their work in the United Kingdom, but have as dialogue partners their counterparts in North America which is a different context but a wider audience.¹³⁰ A case in point is the recent publication on *Black Church Studies* by Stacey Floyd-Thomas et al. The authors chart an historical path from the 1960s to the present day arguing that "the Black church is unrivalled in its historical influence in Black culture and among Black people. As the only coherent institutional area to emerge from slavery, it still carries burdens and performs functions far beyond its spiritual ones."¹³¹ On a final note, I decided not to study the phenomenon of interpersonal conflict through the lens of the sociology of religion. My rationale was that for Caribbean people the transcendent would be missing from

¹²⁸ Matthew Guest, Karin Tusting and Linda Woodhead, *Congregational Studies in the UK: Christianity in a Post-Christian Context* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), xi.

¹²⁹ Guest, Tusting and Woodhead, *Congregational Studies in the UK*, xi.

¹³⁰ Guest, Tusting and Woodhead, *Congregational Studies in the UK*, xvi.

¹³¹ Stacey Floyd-Thomas and Juan Floyd-Thomas, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), xiii.

this approach. Admittedly, the sociology of religion would make a valid contribution, but it would not have provided a model of faith based on the Bible to bring about transformation for a traumatised and existentially bruised people.

As such, for this research I have chosen autoethnography as my primary qualitative research methodology. My reason for doing so is because it complements the use of evidence extrapolated from my pastoral journals. Subsequently, a history of journals and their uses in field work will be described. Moreover, the inclusion of subjective data not only makes the project autoethnographical, but I also simultaneously become an active participant in the findings and conclusion of this analysis. Also, it has been a method, which I will show in the literature review that has been used by other pastors to assist them in understanding the nature of pastoral ministry. Furthermore, as pointed out by Carolyn Ellis, autoethnography "gives attention to physical feelings, thoughts, and emotions."¹³² In other words, autoethnography allows suffering and human grief to speak.

Moreover, to capture a wide breadth of human experience I employed transpersonal research methods which take seriously autoethnographical and phenomenological experience. As I observed scenes of conflict, I sensed there were other factors at play that influenced conflictive episodes. The final section delineates the pastoral cycle and how the various stages of the cycle will be used through the chapters of the thesis to understand, theorise and present a solution for interpersonal conflict.

¹³² Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yolanda S. Lincoln (California: Sage Publications, Inc. 2000), 737.

Chapter three presents the development of scholarly literature on pastoral theological issues within the United Kingdom and its failure to take into consideration the experiences of African Caribbean Christians as a resource for theological reflection. This neglect is addressed with the emergence of Black theology and its commitment to provide a space for the expression of Black Christian voices on the periphery of British Christianity, but even within the scope of Black theology conflict within congregations is not addressed.

Chapter four is divided into two sections. First, it investigates Caribbean history and examines how conflict and violence were used as forms of control during the period of enslavement. There is a focus on Jamaica because it the island from which most of the Windrush African Caribbean migrants originated.¹³³ Second, it is the country of my ethnic heritage. The historical overview continues by exploring the experiences of the migrants' arrival to Britain and their subsequent shock as they embarked on British soil as integrationists but encountered unexpected forms of hostility.

Part two of chapter four maps the history of the CoGoP with its American roots, and its unexpected African Caribbean mission field in England. Each stage of missionary evolution incorporated a dimension of conflict either on institutional, doctrinal, ethnic or racial matters. The final section contextualises the local church where I was the pastor and explores how conflict was experienced and managed in the past.

Chapter five analyses my autoethnographical journal entries as a resource for recording the incidents of conflict within pastoral ministry. The journal entries will be

¹³³ Alex Glennie and Laura Chappell, *Jamaica: From Diverse Beginning to Diaspora in the Developed World* (Institute for Public Policy Research, 2010). <http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=787> (accessed 12 July, 2013).

interrogated, analysed and interpreted to draw out the themes which emerge from the investigation of interpersonal conflict. The findings of the research will not only inform my ministerial practice, but will be used in the final chapter as recommendations for pastoral training for the CoGoP in the United Kingdom and for the wider Christian community where the training of its ministers does not currently exist.

Chapter six is the third stage of the pastoral cycle and introduces a model of theological reflection. Here, I will use the Eucharist to serve a dual function by radically diffusing conflict in the first instance, and then acting as model for a renewed paradigm of pastoral praxis. The reinterpretation of the Holy Communion confronts inter-personal conflict, suffering and dehumanisation of African Caribbean people and all people who are marginalised. The Eucharist serves as a continual means of Christological evaluative self- reflection and challenges each believer, through a process of introspection, whether he/she is treating himself/herself appropriately, given the sacred knowledge that every human being is created in the image of God.

Chapter seven is the final stage of the pastoral cycle used in this thesis. Here I will make recommendations for the CoGoP in training its pastors. The findings of the research will be used to develop its training policy to ensure pastors are suitably trained for effective ministry. By effective, I mean ministry which develops its members and confronts issues of injustice, inequality or oppression. Effective ministry also makes the case for the Christian faith as a means as liberation through

human development, having both human and divine intervention within the life of a community of believers.

Conclusion

I have argued that conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction. My argument, opposing the traditional negative view of interpersonal conflict, strives towards the possibility of a positive outcome. My detailed study of the BMC acknowledges there is both a high prevalence of interpersonal conflict, and at the same time, an apparent reflex of denial or repression. From a psychological perspective we know that this is impractical. Repressed conflict will continue to cause tension, and until its causes are properly addressed the effects will continue to harm or hinder progress. My overview of the history of the BMC's in Britain has shown that they are rooted in a history of conflict between the British mainland and its overseas colonies. Moreover, these economic, military and colonial conflicts, invasions and exploitations, have been accompanied, as Stuart Hall and others have explored at length, by a range of cultural and political discourses that have sought to define Black people and Black culture as worthy of exploitation and oppression. Thus, the BMC, founded in a maelstrom of conflict, could hardly be expected to be peaceful. But beyond this I have seen that the conflicts of identity, validity in the culture melded with the turbulent history of African Caribbean people have often been internalized into feelings of anxiety, alienation and conflicted self-esteem that are guaranteed at some level to cause conflict within a church.

The act of resolution is often compounded within the life of African Caribbean Pentecostalism as there is a reticence and reluctance in using outside agencies or

worldly epistemological insights to resolve church/spiritual matters. If conflict is understood as the pursuit of goals, the methods of diffusion are relatively simple. However, when one includes the dynamics of intercultural norms, intergenerational diversity, notions of identity, ethnicity, historical legacy, power or powerlessness and religion, the manner in which resolution takes place is problematised.

Within this back drop of powerlessness, the BMC provided a space where Black people were re-humanised by being reminded they were created in the image of a loving God. This safe haven harboured the residual impact of the harsh and fragmentary experience of Black life in Britain. On one hand, the church acted as a sanctuary in keeping one's sanity, but on the other hand, it acted as a cauldron for the cathartic expression of disappointment, anger, rage and dissatisfaction of its members living in a strange land.

The issue of identity is inextricably bound up in the manifestations of conflict within the African Caribbean faith community, but given the complexity and the stratified components that add to the rich conglomeration of human diversity, it is difficult to separate what belongs where. It is likely that to disentangle each layer of human complexity is impossible, and one must see all the various aspects of African Caribbean humanity as a whole and offer a solution that heals the person holistically. At present, the appointed pastor in the CoGoP is left to figure out and deal with the dynamics of conflict. With appropriate training, it is envisaged he/she will be equipped to draw on numerous disciplines and theological insights to interpret the meaning of conflict and offer solutions bringing relief, healing, and spiritual advancement to his/her congregation.

Chapter 2 - Methodology - Approaches to understanding and solving the problem

Introduction

The previous chapter provided the initial groundwork for delineating how interpersonal conflict can be understood. This chapter focuses on methodology and how it is used to further develop an understanding of interpersonal conflict. Furthermore, this chapter will sketch out the means by which I intend to analyse interpersonal conflict within an African Caribbean congregation experiencing conflict.

I will begin by explaining the purpose of methodology, and why it is used to ensure a rigorous strategy in analysing information. The next area to which I will give attention is the problem of objectivity. Following this area of concern, I explain how bodily sensations experienced in a given moment can be used as data. The capturing of these feelings and emotions provide evidence that can be used for autoethnography, a means by which the researcher's experience acts as the prime source of data.

The process of data management is important, but the act of writing and rewriting cannot be overestimated. Writing is more intricate than pen and ink on paper or using keys on the personal computer. It is a medium through which one can be surprised by what unfolds as one writes. The section on writing concludes with my personal context where I locate myself in the thesis and highlight aspects of my humanity which I bring to the field of study. The autoethnographical approach is resumed when I consider the writing typologies used in this systematic method of analysis, and which I will be using in this thesis.

Given that autoethnography is a new and emerging methodology, there are numerous criticisms to its usefulness and the debate continues as to whether it is a science, following scientific principles of research, or whether it is an arts-based discipline. Following the polemic, I then enter into a discussion concerning the importance of ethics in autoethnographical research.

In the latter stages of this chapter, I give attention to the use of journals, the medium I used to record my observations, intuitions, feelings and internal musings of what was happening during these conflictive episodes. Journals are not simply a means of recording people's experiences, but can also be used for academic research.

The final section of the chapter looks at how I attempt to resolve the intensity of interpersonal conflict. For a model to be acceptable, or at least be given serious consideration in the BMC it must emerge from Holy writ. Therefore, in an attempt to understand and manage interpersonal conflict, I use the narrative of the Holy Communion to confront the impact of marginalisation, but I emphasise the participation of the sacred meal as a means of humanisation and healing.

The purpose of methodology

The purpose of a systematic approach is to ensure the correct examination of the evidence, to prevent the dissemination of spurious claims, to avoid obfuscation, and to provide the means of the process being repeated by other researchers. The notion of repetition is expounded by Edit H. Kontra, who argues that, "the 'craft' is the method of teaching passed on to trainees so they can apply it with sufficient confidence, and to ensure instead of emulating their masters techniques there is a deep integration of

ideas taking place.”¹³⁴ With deep integration taking place the researcher also needs to develop the skills of analysis.

The system of analysing information ensures uniformity whilst making the way possible for further development of knowledge in a given discipline. Rajendar Kumar contends that “the purpose of research is to find out the truth which is hidden and which has not been discovered so far.”¹³⁵ Jeffrey A Gliner, George A. Morgan and Nancy L. Leech maintain there are many purposes for carrying out research and offer two broad categories. The first purpose is to “increase the knowledge base of the discipline and enhance your self-knowledge as a professional consumer of research to understand new developments within the branch of learning.”¹³⁶ To examine a situation or data and arrive at a satisfactory conclusion requires various tools for gathering, extrapolating, analysing and interpreting material with a degree of objectivity. In the human sciences, and in philosophy and theology, the terms under which scientific "objectivity" is understood to operate in medicine and the natural sciences cannot be fully applied. As the anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss observed, “The anthropologist, sadly, can never observe the tribe because all he can observe is the behaviour of the tribe when the anthropologist is present.” For the purpose of this thesis, that point is acutely relevant. As a theologian and a student of conflict I initially found myself attempting to observe and analyse conflictive situations objectively, but the more I wrote and investigated interpersonal conflict, I realised and acknowledged I was an active participant in the process. The purpose of methodologies then is to critically assess, evaluate and arrive at new findings leading

¹³⁴ Edit H. Kontra, "The Purpose of the Reflection of Methodology Training," *English Language Teaching Journal* 51, no. 3 (1996): 248.

¹³⁵ Rajendra Kumar, *Research Methodology* (New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation, 2008), 3.

¹³⁶ Jeffrey A. Gliner, George A. Morgan and Nancy L. Leech, *Research Methods in Applied Settings: An Integrated Approach to Design and Analysis*, 2nd ed. (East Sussex: Routledge, 2009), 4-5.

to an enhanced and developing understanding of the observed event. However, with being an active participant it raises ethical issues.

The problem of objectivity

There remains a fundamental problem of objectivity, or rather, not a problem, but a philosophical paradox of liberalism. If we seek to analyse consensually and by reference to external data, rather than from fixed "truths" of the kind handed down by absolutist religious and political theology, then always we accept that truth is something to be discovered and debated by humans. In this way it is unfixed and "subjective." The process of information gathering aligned with the context of the researcher cannot be ignored because it has contributed to shaping the researcher's identity and worldview. Absolute cultural neutrality is impossible, as one's cultural context influences not only the analysis but the selection and ranking of data. Having said this, I would maintain that some degree of objectivity remains possible, and the present thesis works from this principle. An absence of absolute objectivity is very different from a complete submission to relativism, where all "interpretations" and views are deemed the same. Relative objectivity and neutrality are, I believe, demonstrably possible in human situations. My attitude here is similar to Christian theology and the fallen state of humanity: fallen as we are, humans are incapable of absolute freedom from sin; however, this is far from saying that we should all therefore behave without any ethical or moral consideration for others. As it can be seen with such complexities, there cannot be only one approach to understanding information.

The validity of multiple methodologies

The imposition of one's context on another can mute or convolute the emerging voices arising from the captured thoughts and ideas from field work. Such voices must be given space for authentic articulation and their experiences validated if one is going to be true to post-colonial thinking.¹³⁷ Material for examination can exist in other forms other than the commonly observed physicality of evidence. During my observations of, and involvement with conflict within the local congregation, what I experienced did not make sense. The intensity of conflict seemed disproportionate to the simple matter of changing activities in church. I sensed there was more at play and was continually asking myself, "What is going on?" What I did not realise at the time was that all observations and infractions was data. Thus, data can include the inner stirrings, "dreams, intuitions," an "inner knowing" of an individual, indicating there is more to discover than meets the eye.¹³⁸ Rosemarie Anderson refers to this acknowledgement as honouring human experience and she emphasises the following:

Honouring the full measure and depth of human experience is essential to conducting consequential transpersonal research and to scientific inquiry more generally. Honouring human experience asks the researcher to incorporate, advocate and verify the full and expansive measure of any human experience studied, however it presents itself to awareness.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ John McLeod, *Beginning Post Colonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 31 – 35.

McLeod offers a review of the development of post colonialism from colonialism to decolonialism, commonwealth and post colonialism. He argues that one sentence definitions are impossible and not wise. He further suggests that in attempting to understand post colonialism one must have a degree of suspicion. Post colonialism does not mean the values of colonialism have vanished, but it recognises historicity, and new possibilities as change continues to take place.

¹³⁸ William Braud and Rosemarie Anderson, *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 16 and 119.

¹³⁹ Rosmarie Anderson, *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), xxvi.

In the use of the self as the receptacle of data and other ways of knowing, the autoethnographer receives information and learns other ways of knowing through an idea developed by K Bhattacharya called tacit data. Here, Bhattacharya refers to this as a "category that includes information and experiences that constitute alternative ways of knowing that cannot be textually articulated, but nonetheless inform the study."¹⁴⁰

With the complex array and sources of information, there is not a 'one size fits all' methodical approach. Therefore, to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, combinations of methodologies are sometimes utilised.¹⁴¹ Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie and Nancy Leech argue for a mixed approach of quantitative and qualitative methodologies and they encourage the development of *pragmatic researchers*, that is, researchers skilled in both qualitative and quantitative research methods.¹⁴² Whilst transpersonal research methods, tacit data and autoethnography are not quantitative research methods, it is evident there are other ways of gaining access to information beyond rationalistic modalities. Nevertheless, each methodology brings its peculiarity and particularity to a specific field of study, and with this in mind I will turn my focus to the procedure of autoethnography.

¹⁴⁰ Kakali Bhattacharya, "Othering Research, Researching the Other: De/Colonising Approaches to Qualitative Inquiry," in *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, vol 24, ed. John C. Smart (New York: Springer Science and Business Media BV, 2009), 133.

¹⁴¹ Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie and Nancy Leech, "On Becoming a Pragmatic Researcher: The Importance of Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methodologies," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 8, no. 5 (2005): 381.

¹⁴² Onwuegbuzie and Leech, "On Becoming a Pragmatic Researcher," 376.

Autoethnography as a methodology

In social networks, everything is connected.¹⁴³ That is one of the underlying principles of autoethnography which emerged out of a context of crisis in the social sciences. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln emphasise, "A profound rupture occurred in the mid-1980s."¹⁴⁴ They argued that probing questions of "gender, class and race" were being asked as the writing of social research was becoming more "reflexive."¹⁴⁵ Denzin and Lincoln cite Clifford Geertz who had discerned an emerging "blurred genres" of social research. Here, Geertz argued that "there had been an enormous amount of genre mixing in intellectual life in recent years."¹⁴⁶ By "blurred genres" he was referring to a "borrowing" from a wide range of disciplines, which assists the researcher in developing and finding new ways to express their findings.¹⁴⁷

Denzin and Lincoln continue the discussion of the crisis of representation by highlighting that fixed parameters of research were now under scrutiny. They elucidate the notion that, "Critical theory, feminist theory, and epistemologies of colour now competed for attention in this arena. Issues such as validity, reliability, and objectivity, previously believed settled, are once more problematic."¹⁴⁸ With the constants of research now becoming new with noticeable variables "the crisis of representation" was to move qualitative research into new and critical directions.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler, *Connected: The Amazing Power of Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives* (London: HarperPress, 2010), 30.

¹⁴⁴ Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, "The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research," in, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2005), 18.

¹⁴⁵ Denzin and Lincoln, "The Discipline and Practice," 18.

¹⁴⁶ Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 19.

¹⁴⁷ Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, 8.

¹⁴⁸ Denzin and Lincoln, "The Discipline and Practice," 18.

¹⁴⁹ Denzin and Lincoln, "The Discipline and Practice," 19.

What is autoethnography?

Autoethnography is the process of research where the experience of the researcher takes centre stage. The autoethnographer occupies a unique position where he/she is writer, actor, director, editor, observer and interpreter of the data and its interaction with external entities, and finally, the producer of the finished results.

Heewon Chang argues that autoethnography is "a research method that utilises the researchers' autobiographical data to analyse and interpret their cultural assumptions."¹⁵⁰ To develop an understanding of a concept it is beneficial to have more than one definition. Carolyn Ellis also comments, "In autoethnography we're usually writing epiphanies in our lives and in doing so, we open up ourselves to criticism about how we have lived."¹⁵¹ Furthermore, in the world of ethnography Collette Granger argues:

In ethnography, there is a recognising of the nebulousness of boundaries between researcher and subject, its offshoot autoethnography makes this recognition explicit by embracing and acting upon the notion of the researcher as both subject and object of the research.¹⁵²

Patricia Leavy contends that autoethnography "combines autobiographical writing with the convention of narrative writing and at times incorporates fiction. Traditional

¹⁵⁰ Heewon Chang, *Autoethnography as Method* (California: Left Coast Press, 2008), 9.

¹⁵¹ Carolyn Ellis, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel About Autoethnography* (California: AltaMira Press, 2004), 33-34.

¹⁵² Collette Granger, *Silent Moments in Education: An Autoethnography of Learning, Teaching and Learning to Teach* (Canada: University of Canada Press, 2011), 31. See also Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography, "Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman. K. Denzin & Yvonna. S. Lincoln (California: Sage Publications, 2000), 733-768.

ethnographic observations may also inform autoethnographic writing."¹⁵³ Considering other definitions of autoethnography Leavy suggests one of the leading proponents of autoethnography is Carolyn Ellis.¹⁵⁴ Carolyn Ellis' conceptualisation of autoethnography is worth writing in full. She writes:

Autoethnography refers to writing about the personal and culture. It is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness... back and forth autoethnographers gaze: first they look through an ethnographical wide angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their experience: then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract and resist cultural interpretations...as they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition. Usually written in first person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms - short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, scripts, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing and social science prose. They showcase concrete action, dialogue, emotions, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness. These feature and appear as relational and institutional stories affected by history and social structure which themselves are dialectically revealed through actions, feelings, thoughts and language.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Patricia Leavy, "Performance Based Method," in *Handbook of Emergent Methods*, eds. Sharlene Nagy Hesse Biber and Patricia Leavy (New York: The Guildford Press, 2008), 349.

¹⁵⁴ Leavy, "Performance Based Method," 349.

¹⁵⁵ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, 38.

Autoethnography is a complex means of developing the researcher's sense of self and the world in which they exist. It is an appropriate model of analysis for the subject matter I am studying because it employs my subjectivity as the central reference point in conversation with an external entity, the congregation and its complicated collective and personal histories. The congregation is not a homogenous body, but a diverse group of people acting at various moments in tension and solidarity with each other and the pastor. With the definition of autoethnography established, attention is now turned to the process of autoethnography.

The process of autoethnography

Taking the definitions of autoethnography as a cue to its complicated nature, Heewon records that "Autoethnographic research, like any other research, takes careful planning."¹⁵⁶ The first stage is concerned with data collection which is not an easy feat. The challenge facing the researcher is what does one include or omit when collecting the data?¹⁵⁷ Data is collected from the researcher's range of experiences in order to develop a dynamic self-narrative comprising a "situated, fluid, and emotionally charged *engagement* of self and other (performer and witness)."¹⁵⁸ The evidence gathered is momentarily fixed because one of the features of autoethnography is that the act of writing is encouraged from the outset of research and throughout the material gathering process.¹⁵⁹ The on-going process of writing and rewriting illuminates multiple layers of insights. Leigh Berger emphasises, "Thinking, writing

¹⁵⁶ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, 61.

¹⁵⁷ Stacy Holman Jones, "Autoethnography: Making the Personal Political," in *The Sage handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (California: Sage Publications, 2005), 764-765.

¹⁵⁸ Jones, "Autoethnograph," 773.

¹⁵⁹ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, 130.

and rewriting all lead me to a new understanding of my experiences.”¹⁶⁰ The importance of writing will be discussed later, but the medium in which incidences of conflict was captured were on the pages of my journal.

There is documented evidence for the use of personal stories and journals as an appropriate means of data collection.¹⁶¹ More will be said about journals later, but two examples will suffice here. Clifford Hill reflects on his ministry, and though it was not officially written as an autoethnographical study it includes his subjectivities as he tried to include Caribbean migrants into his congregation which he admits he "failed in accomplishing."¹⁶² Second, John Pridmore's *The Inner City of God: The Diary of an East End Parson* serves as another prime example of autoethnographical research.¹⁶³

Collecting data

Autoethnographic research does not stand alone, but it is a dynamic conversation with the self and external sources. This important connectivity between the inner and the outer world is what is called "A balancing act." Jones clarifies:

Autoethnography works to hold self and culture together, albeit not in equilibrium or stasis. Autoethnography writes a world in a state of flux and

¹⁶⁰ Leigh Berger, "Inside Out: Narrative Autoethnography as a Path towards Rapport," *Qualitative Inquiry* 7. no. 4 (2001): 507.

¹⁶¹ Margot Duncan, "Autoethnography: Critical Appreciation of an Emerging Art," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 3, no. 2. (2005): 1-14. See also the work of Andrew C. Sparkes, "The Fatal Flaw: A Narrative of the Fragile Body-Self," *Qualitative Inquiry* 2, no. 4 (1996): 463-494. See Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher - Using Our Selves in Research* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2004).

¹⁶² Clifford Hill, *Black and White in Harmony: The Drama of West Indians in the Big City from a London Minister's Notebook* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969). 97.

¹⁶³ John Pridmore, *The Inner City of God: The Diary of an East End Parson* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008).

movement-between story and context, writer and reader, crisis and denouement. It creates charged moments of clarity, connection, and change.¹⁶⁴

Using Ellis' definition of autoethnography, it is evident that if the researcher is able to draw on a wide scope of personal experiences to cultivate his/her sense of self and others, he/she must be able to draw from a wide range of human experiences external to his/her inner reality. Illustrating this fact Heewon provides an extensive list of external data sources that can be used ranging from interviews, to textual visual artefacts, and literature.¹⁶⁵

In the case of this thesis the external research participants were my pastoral journals, the local congregation, the recorded history of the local church and literature regarding African American, African Caribbean history, starting with the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism and the arrival of the Windrush generation in British in 1949.¹⁶⁶

The dual role of the researcher who is also a participant within the same organisation and the potential for tension is highlighted by Kay Fielden. Fielden states that "As the ways in which action research can be performed have proliferated, so the ethical dilemmas faced by action researchers have multiplied."¹⁶⁷ The subject matter of research ethics will be examined later in this section.

¹⁶⁴ Jones, "Autoethnography," 764.

¹⁶⁵ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, 103-112.

¹⁶⁶ These subjects are covered in chapter four - six.

¹⁶⁷ Kay Fielden. "System Boundary Issues for Informed Consent in Action Research: A Birdseye View," http://www.anzsys.org/anzsys03/yen3000073_2.pdf (accessed 19 February, 2013).

Managing Data

With the wide range of sources for collecting data, its management, if left until the end of the gathering process could create an uncontrollable mass of information which makes labelling and categorising difficult. Heewon Chang acknowledges this dilemma and states there are two elements which the researcher must harness. First, "periodical organisation of data steers the subsequent collection process effectively towards your research goal." Second, "clearly labelled and classified data will be readily accessible and identifiable in the later stage of analysis and interpretation."¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, she advises that data is managed as it is collected.¹⁶⁹ Attention given to the management of data is important because "it precedes analysis and interpretation."¹⁷⁰ It is easy to skip this stage and move immediately onto analysis and interpretation, but there is another aspect that needs some consideration. John Smart writes about the benefits of NVivo, computer software for managing data, but warns that like other management software it is not value neutral.¹⁷¹ Similarly, the process of choosing which piece of data to go where is not without influence of bias of personal value. Ellis confirms Chang's assertion emphasising that one should be honest and state clearly that one has "contaminated the data and there is something to be gained by saturating your observations with your own subjectivity."¹⁷² In acknowledging that no system is neutral free and the volume of data needs to be managed, consideration must be given as to how this will occur.

¹⁶⁸ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, 115.

¹⁶⁹ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, 115

¹⁷⁰ Heewon Chang, Faith Ngunjiri, Kathy-Ann C Hernandez, *Collaborative Autoethnography* (California: Left Coast Press, Inc., 2013), 96.

¹⁷¹ Bhattacharya, "Othering Research," 135. NVivo is software that supports qualitative and mixed methods research. It lets you collect, organise and analyse content from interviews, focus groups, discussions, surveys and audios. With NVivo you can deeply analyse your data using powerful search, query and visualization tools. You can uncover subtle connections, add your insights and ideas as you work, rigorously justify findings, and effortlessly share your work. For further information see http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo.aspx (accessed 20 February, 2013).

¹⁷² Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, 89.

Heewon Chang makes a potentially complicated process simple by advocating two elements of data management. First, data must be labelled, but this process is subdivided into primary and secondary stages where the primary stages concentrates on how the data was collected: "collection time/date, recorder/collector, collection technique, and data source."¹⁷³ The secondary stage focuses on the content of the data giving attention to the themes, the actors and geographical information of the data.¹⁷⁴ For further simplification Chang uses four questions that elucidate the information required, namely, "when, who what, where."¹⁷⁵ Second, she advocates classifying where the data has been labelled and put into groups of similar type material.¹⁷⁶ Yet to write about these two tasks of data management as two distinct entities is misleading. With the process of writing starting at the beginning of research, data collection and analysis are almost two inseparable elements of research. This omission of a lack of a rigid system in autoethnographical research is borne out by Carolyn Elliss and Arthur Bochner. After presenting a paper at an *Interdisciplinary Colloquium Series on Interpretive Research*, Arthur Bochner was asked a question related to critics of narrative inquiry. After Bochner addresses the question, Carolyn Ellis, a conference delegate, in conferring with a student retorts, "Notice how Art dodges questions that try to get him to stipulate categories. He always wants to balance rigor and imagination. He thinks if you're too bound up with rules you probably won't do anything interesting."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, 116.

¹⁷⁴ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, 116.

¹⁷⁵ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, 116-117.

¹⁷⁶ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, 118-119.

¹⁷⁷ Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner, "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity," in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (California: Sage Publications, 2003), 226.

Autoethnography provides the space for a continual inner and outer dialectic conversation where one's sense of self can be enhanced, but due to the unpredictable nature of humanity one can never say one has reached a definitive conclusion because it is a temporary conclusion which alters with subsequent rewritings.¹⁷⁸ Each rewriting can reveal an unsuspected subtlety of the presented data, adding a deeper richness to the conversation that occurs between self and the other. Moreover, autoethnography allows multiple readings and therefore, multiple interpretations of the same data.¹⁷⁹ The shifting nuanced findings are not to suggest a distorted or a fault in the process, but it implies the rich and variable nature of outcomes as data is researched. The continual investigative going backwards and forwards, "zooming in and zooming out" over the material allows for an intentional, detailed and several reconsiderations of the apparent isolated fragmentary shards of data, which under continual review yields further insights that are missed on a cursory inspection. The notion of "zooming in and zooming out" relates to the act of looking in at the self, a micro inspection of the self and then looking out to the wider context.¹⁸⁰ Thus, a continual exchange occurs, broadening and deepening the data but more importantly developing the sense of self and understanding of the other. For Ellis, the order of research "will evolve during the research process."¹⁸¹ With the blurred tasks of data collection and data management, attention is now given to the importance of writing.

¹⁷⁸ Gillie Bolton, *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development*, 3rd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2010), 106.

¹⁷⁹ Berger, "Inside Out," 506.

¹⁸⁰ Chang, *Autoethnography*, 129, 136.

¹⁸¹ Ellis and Bochner, "Autoethnography," 239.

The need of writing and rewriting for self-discovery

Writing from the outset of research is crucial. Gillie Bolton refers to writing as an ancient power.¹⁸² She also states it is a mode of learning.¹⁸³ Focusing on its usefulness Laurel Richardson considers writing as:

A method of inquiry, a way of finding out about yourself and your topic. It is not a mopping up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is a way of "knowing" a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable.¹⁸⁴

Writing about the self, contrary to the assumed belief that it leads to self-indulgence and self-obsession, actually reveals aspects of the self sometimes to the surprise or dismay of the author.¹⁸⁵ In other words, autoethnography can utilise those seemingly momentary mistakes as written Freudian slips which yield much if probed.¹⁸⁶

Richards argues that "writing as a method of inquiry departs from the standard social science practices and advances the notion of "qualitative researchers being more fully present, more honest and more engaged in their work."¹⁸⁷ In her academic work, she found the standard texts "boring," suffering from "acute and chronic passivity: passive-voiced author, passive subjects."¹⁸⁸ In acknowledging a postmodern climate and a variety of world perspectives, she evinces:

¹⁸² Bolton, *Reflective Practice*, 98.

¹⁸³ Bolton, *Reflective Practice*, 6.

¹⁸⁴ Laurel Richardson, "Writing: A Method of Inquiry," in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. (California: Sage Publications, 2003), 499.

¹⁸⁵ Bochner, "Autoethnography," 207.

¹⁸⁶ Christopher N. Poulos, *Accidental Ethnography: An Inquiry into Family Secrecy* (California: Left Coast Press, 2009), Blurb.

¹⁸⁷ Richardson, "Writing," 500.

¹⁸⁸ Richardson, "Writing," 500-501.

There are a multitude of approaches to knowing and telling existing side by side. The core of postmodernism is the *doubt* that any method of theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the "right" or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge.¹⁸⁹

The idea of self-discovery through the act of writing is developed by Derek Steinberg who stresses:

The vitality of words may have something to do with the nature of language and the magic of storytelling and poetry in a way that reaches well beyond psychological theories into the fundamental qualities of being human, and which may underpin or short-circuit treatments.¹⁹⁰

There is a form of curiosity which occurs when words are committed to the page.¹⁹¹ This was certainly the case when I began to journal. The act and process of writing caused me to view my interactions from a different perspective. For example, when an incident occurred I might have seen myself as being blameless in the conflictive episode, but I soon discovered at the moment of writing another perspective appeared to conjure itself into my consciousness, causing me to re-examine my involvement in the conflictive episode.

With writing being encouraged from the outset within autoethnography, I am left wondering whether autoethnography is a form of spiritual writing wrapped in secular

¹⁸⁹ Richardson, "Writing," 508.

¹⁹⁰ Derek Steinberg, "From Archetypes to Impressions: The Magic of Words," in *Writing Cures: Introductory Handbook of Writing in Counselling and Psychotherapy*, eds. Gillie Bolton et al (East Sussex: Brunner-Routledge, 2004), 44.

¹⁹¹ Steinberg, "From Archetypes to Impressions," 48.

clothes.¹⁹² People have been writing for centuries as a form of spiritual cathartic experience, and for so long it has not been taken seriously other than a form of non-scientific writing. Given the postmodern argument of truth not being the domain of one entity, it is clear that scientific writing is not the only form of writing that can be taken seriously and used to develop the understanding of human beings. The self-revelatory writings of the early church Fathers are classic examples of autoethnographical expressions, but given the secularisation of the West the exploration of religious and spiritual experiences within the social sciences are understood as nothing more than "social constructions."¹⁹³ Chang cites numerous works of the early church fathers and beyond where they wrote self-narratives dealing with their spiritual encounters, but she makes it clear that self-narratives are "hardly a one-sided activity that results only in understanding others."¹⁹⁴ The practice of self-revelatory writing leads to the notion of reflexivity.

The nature of reflexivity

In regards to the practice of reflexivity Gillie Bolton contends that "reflexive practice involves the entire being and the whole person has vulnerabilities, and in spite of these weaknesses, effective reflexivity does not shy away from emotional realisations of ethical problems."¹⁹⁵ Linda Finlay and Brendan Gough offer the following as a description of reflexivity. They state:

¹⁹² Dawn Johnston, "Reconciling Voices in Writing an Autoethnographic Thesis," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 7, no. 3 (2008): 49.

¹⁹³ Leigh Berger, "Inside Out: Narrative Autoethnography as a Path toward Rapport," *Qualitative Inquiry* 7, no. 4. (2001): 511.

¹⁹⁴ Chang, *Autoethnography*, 33-36.

¹⁹⁵ Gillie Bolton, *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development* (London: Sage, 2005), 73.

Reflexivity emerges out of the etymological root of the word *reflexive* which means to bend back upon oneself. In research terms this can be translated as thoughtful self-awareness analysis of intersubjective dynamic between researcher and the researched. Reflexivity requires critical self-reflection of the ways in which the researcher's social background, assumptions, positioning and behaviour impact on the research process.¹⁹⁶

Reflexivity is further nuanced by the variety of people involved in the process of deeper reflection: the researcher, and his/her particular context and ideology, leading to reflexivity taking on a life of its own. Karen O'Reilly, commenting on reflexivity from the standpoint of postmodern ethnographers, emphasise they celebrate the complex, ambiguous, messy nature of the social world and of ethnographic research; they self-consciously leave attempts to write a neat and structured narrative account.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, reflexivity sees the intrusive self of the researcher as a resource; one constrains the temptation to generalise and simplify other people's lives. What is needed argues O'Reilly is that "We are able to locate ourselves in our studies honestly and openly, in an admission that observations are filtered through our own experiences, rather than seeking to provide the detached voice of authority."¹⁹⁸

Offering another perspective Jennifer Moon posits that reflexivity is interchangeable with critical reflection or perspective transformation and is understood as the deepest level of reflection. Additionally, there is a sense that deeper reflection yields better quality outcomes in learning, however, new knowledge

¹⁹⁶ Linda Finlay, Brendan Gough, eds. *Reflexivity: A Practical Guide for researchers in Health and Social Sciences* (Oxford: Blackwell Science Ltd, 2003), ix.

¹⁹⁷ Karen O'Reilly, *Key Concepts in Ethnography* (London: Sage Publication, 2009), 187-193.

¹⁹⁸ O'Reilly, *Key Concepts in Ethnography*, 191.

creates conflicts.¹⁹⁹ Reflexivity can take the researcher out from his/her ideological familiarity and transport him/her into an existential new terrain leaving him/her initially feeling vulnerable, exposed with tension but indicating new challenges and understanding. For Bolton, reflexivity is making aspects of the self-strange by paying close attention upon one's own actions, thoughts, feelings, values, identity and their effect upon others, situations, professional and social structures.²⁰⁰ Bolton describes the function or role of the reflexive practitioner as follows:

The reflexive thinker has to stand back from beliefs and values systems, habitual ways of thinking and relating to others, structures of understanding themselves and their relationship to the world, and their assumptions about the way the world impinges on them."²⁰¹

Reflexivity offers penetrating subjective analysis and interpretation. Here, Moon states that the idea of critical reflection could continue examining issues in a wider and wider context and at different points of time from the event to infinity.²⁰² Despite the rich potential of reflexivity, some authors are sceptical. Matt Alvesson, Cynthia Hardy and Bill Harley critique reflexivity's potential. They note:

Reflexivity cannot be revered as superior over other research methodologies. Second, questions are raised concerning the relationship between the author and the other, and the possibility for the researcher to speak authentically of the research subject. Third, the reflexive researcher is perceived as a trouble

¹⁹⁹ Moon, *Learning Journals*, 40.

²⁰⁰ Bolton, *Reflective Practice*, 10.

²⁰¹ Bolton, *Reflective Practice*, 19.

²⁰² Moon, *Learning Journals*, 42.

maker because they have the potential to unsettle accepted research in the academic community.²⁰³

These observations raise concerns, especially the third point, not so much as the researcher causing problems, but rather the nature of reflexivity which creates the emergence of new knowledge which one cannot ignore. With the dilemmas of reflexivity, Etherington states there must be a balance. She insists:

There is a danger that we report voices of participants, either as powerless victims, incapable of acts of resistance, or as heroic stories of the innocents who have overcome powerful destructive forces. The difficulty might be we are all capable of being victims and perpetrators and these are not positions to be judged, but rather to be seen as adaptive to circumstances evoke those roles and behaviours.²⁰⁴

Thus, as the researcher, I approach the subject matter of interpersonal conflict bringing my prejudices, biases, fears and anxieties. My reactions and observations can be measured to a point by personal reflection, but engagement with academic literature and the wider external context adds deeper perspectives. Leading on from reflexivity, it is prudent to locate myself in the thesis.

Personal context

My parents were part of the post Second World War migration from Jamaica to England in the 1950s. They met each other in Newark, Nottinghamshire and were

²⁰³ Matt Alvesson, Cynthia Hardy and Bill Harley, "Reflecting on Reflexivity: Reflexive Textual Practices in Organisations in Management," *Journal of Management Studies* 45, no. 3 (2008): 488.

²⁰⁴ Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher*, 210.

married in August 1957. Their meeting and marital union in Britain circumvented the well-known but under researched tragedy of countless families who married in the Caribbean, but due to migration, one spouse came to England leaving the other spouse and siblings in the West Indies.²⁰⁵

With enough money saved, the parent in England would send for his/her spouse, thus leaving the children with the extended family in the Caribbean. The children were eventually 'sent for,' but on arrival in Britain and a few years having past, the newly arrived children were met by their now estranged parents and new siblings that had been born in England. In many homes these new brothers and sisters were the source of major family conflict due to a belief that the children born in England were more privileged than those who were left in the Caribbean.

I was born in Nottingham and lived in Newark, Nottinghamshire, until I was nine years old. In 1969 we relocated to Leicester. My father reasoned that Newark had nothing for young people so he left and arrived in Leicester, a city which possessed more amenities for young people and was more racially diverse.

²⁰⁵ Karen Fog Olwig, "Narratives of the Children left behind: Home and Identity in Globalised Caribbean Families," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 25, no.2 (1999): 267-284. See also Stephanie Davis, "Serial Migration and Forgetting: Some Caribbean Stories of Interrupted Attachments," *Attachment: New Directions in Psychotherapy and Relational Psychoanalysis* 4, no. 1 (2010): 26-36.

Race and identity matters

The issues of race and identity bothered me from an early age. I cannot remember when it began, but I do recall a significant moment in a history lesson when I was 12 years old. I recollect skimming through a book and seeing an artist's aerial view of the slave ship.²⁰⁶ Gazing out of the classroom window, disconnected from the lesson being taught, I had a silent existential discussion with God. I asked, "God, if you have made Black and White people equal, haven't Black people contributed positively to the development of the earth?" That vexed question emerged out of my consciousness as I saw my own kind being repeatedly portrayed negatively in the media, leading to my being ashamed and humiliated that I was Black. The experience was so paralysing that I saw myself as Black and did not consider myself a person. The scarcity of seeing my own in positions of prominence was so damaging, that on seeing a Black newsreader I questioned how he had arrived in that position. I concluded that he must have separated himself from his people because in no way could a Black man ever gain such a prestigious position.

Leaving school in 1975, I was still unaware of the valid contribution Black people had made on the earth until I started training as a counsellor when I was twenty eight years old. The ending of one lesson spoke volumes to me as the tutor, possibly a feminist, spoke to the class and brought to our attention that the books recommended on the course were predominantly written by White men. Thus she maintained, they would have a particular bias. It had never occurred to me that books were written from a particular perspective which exalted one group of people, whilst demonising or isolating others.

²⁰⁶ <http://africanhistory.about.com/od/slaveryimages/ig/Slavery-Images-Gallery/SlaveShipBrookes002.htm> (accessed Thursday 28 July, 2011).

My views of Blackness always raised questions of doubts, disdain and suspicion. The conflict of who I was as a Black man in Britain and the scarcity of positive Black images were constant sources of inner conflict.²⁰⁷ My relationship with conflict has never been easy, and like most people, conflict is something I avoided as much as possible because any sign of conflict evoked powerful nauseating emotions in my stomach which invariably evoked intense negative emotions about whom or what I was as a Black person. With such depth of feelings I would do anything to avoid experiencing the inner turbulent eruptions, whenever the perceived potential threat of conflict would occur. These feelings of vulnerability were inseparably connected to my Black personhood. It was not until later years, while pursuing a psychotherapy qualification and having to undergo personal therapy for the purpose of the course, I discovered a possible cause for my unexplained floating anxiety that had kept me imprisoned in its grip of paralysis for thirty four years.²⁰⁸ This unknown emotional dilemma fed into feelings of racial inferiority and difficulty in dealing with conflict.

Having discussed the subject matter of reflexivity and aspects of my personhood, I will elaborate on how autoethnographic accounts can be written.

²⁰⁷ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Michigan: Grove Press, 1968), 250. Fanon argues vehemently that due the pressure and effects of colonialism stripping the foreigner of his humanity “it forces the people who it dominates to continually ask, “Who am I?”

²⁰⁸ Over fifty years ago the advances of medical knowledge were not as advanced as today. My mother, on being pregnant with her first child, could not eat any food without being sick. Thus, for the full term of pregnancy she was unable to consume anything substantial. My sister was born, but died four days later of a brain haemorrhage. The following year, my mother was pregnant with me and she told me the same problem with food occurred as before, except on this occasion the only food which did not produce any vomiting was fruit. Thus, for nine months that remained her diet. Prior to the days of ultrasound for testing the actions of embryos, it was a matter of faith and prayer especially in times of uncertainty. I was born and subsequently survived.

She recalls for the nine months of pregnancy she was an anxious mother, and when I was born she was unsure whether she could have any more children. For a further three years I lived in an environment of anxiety. In a complex way I am interested in the inner life of people and how such inner turmoil is expressed during times of stress. Therefore, the expression of intrapersonal conflict whilst it may have external stimuli has, to my mind inner predispositions created by pre natal or early life experiences. Thus, for me, anxiety and race issues provide an exciting and dynamic matter for analysis.

Autoethnography and writing typologies

Returning to the theme of autoethnography, it must be noted that there are different styles of writing autoethnographical research, but one of the dominant features of the researcher is to write in a manner that causes the reader to experience the event as though it was happening to him/her.²⁰⁹ In narrative form Carolyn Ellis lists a range of writing typologies used in autoethnographical writings. First, *indigenous or ethnic ethnography* concentrates on the researcher's shared history of "colonialism or economic subjugation" with the researched group "including subjugation of ethnographers who have made them subjects of their work."²¹⁰ Second, *reflexive or narrative ethnography* focuses on a "culture or subculture and authors use their story in that culture to look more deeply at self-other interactions."²¹¹ This approach exhibits "how the researcher changed as a result of observing others."²¹² Third, there is *Confessional ethnography* where the researcher details the events occurring behind the scenes in the research project.²¹³ Finally, Ellis describes *Contingent autoethnography* where the researcher does not intend to write about his/her experiences in the research project, but during the process of research "he/she sees a connection to the material and the world studied."²¹⁴

Other writing typologies in autoethnography are mentioned by Norman K Denzin where he discusses the on-going debates between analytical or evocative styles within the research methodology.²¹⁵ As is demonstrated by Sarah Wall, who claims, "It

²⁰⁹ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, 30.

²¹⁰ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, 46.

²¹¹ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, 46.

²¹² Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, 46.

²¹³ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, 50.

²¹⁴ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, 51.

²¹⁵ Norman K. Denzin, "Analytic Autoethnography, or Déjà Vu all Over Again," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35, no. 4 (2006): 420-421.

varies widely, from the highly introspective, through more familiar approaches connected to qualitative research, to somewhat experimental literary methods, experimental, at least, in terms of thinking of writing as research.”²¹⁶ The variety of writing typologies allows the expression of marginalised voices. In this regard, Jane Thompkins notes the following:

The problem is that you can't talk about your private life in the course of doing your professional work. You have to pretend that epistemology, or whatever you're writing about, has nothing to do with your life, that it's more exalted, more important, because it (supposedly) transcends the merely personal... The public-private dichotomy, which is to say the public-private hierarchy, is a founding condition of female oppression... The reason I feel embarrassed at my own attempts to speak personally in a professional context is that I have been conditioned to feel that way. That's all there is to it.²¹⁷

Further modalities of writing are expounded by Chang, who believes that writing in autoethnography follows a *Constructive Interpretive* mode. By this Chang means that it is interpretive because “personal perspectives are added in all steps of research” and it is simultaneously constructive due to the fact that the “researcher is transformed during the self-analytical process.”²¹⁸ Other methods delineated by Chang are as follows. First, she introduces readers to the *Descriptive-Realistic Writing*. Here, there is rich description of “people, places and events” and little reference to “character judgement and evaluation.” Second, is the *Confessional-Emotive Writing* where the

²¹⁶ Sarah Wall, “An Autoethnography on Learning about Autoethnography,” *International Journal for Qualitative Research* 5, no. 2 (2006): 152.

²¹⁷ Jane Thompkins, “Me and My Shadow,” *Feminist Directions* 19, no.1 (1987): 169.

²¹⁸ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, 140.

autoethnographer is “free to expose his/her confusion, problems, and dilemmas in life. Personal agonies, usually hidden from public view, are often subjects of confessional and emotive writing.” She cites the work of Augustine’s *Confessions* as an example of such writing typology.²¹⁹ Third, is the *Analytical-Interpretive Writing* where it employs the work of Harry F. Walcott who argues that there is a distinction between data description, analysis and interpretation. For Walcott, data description is a “literal sorting,” and to develop his understanding of analysis he advances a more stringent definition. He joins the word analysis with data to emphasise a clear demarcation of how the term is used in everyday language.²²⁰ For this thesis the mode of writing will be Analytical-Interpretive because I will be making links between the data and interpreting what I make of the evidence presented before me. Chang demonstrates the various mode of writing, but then states, that no one style is “inherently superior.”²²¹ It can be seen that as writing takes place the work/findings can take on a life of its own. With the fluidity of autoethnography, Chang emphasises the “importance of developing a style” that plays to one's strength. She concludes, “After all, self-matters in autoethnography.”²²²

Criticisms of autoethnography

With the researcher being the centre of autoethnography, one of the biggest drawbacks is the potential threat of a self-obsession, or a self-indulgent form of “navel gazing.”²²³ D. Soyini Madison argues that where the researcher’s “rootedness and

²¹⁹ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, 139-145.

²²⁰ Harry F. Wolcott, *Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis, and Interpretation* (California: Sage Publications, Inc, 1994), 23-24.

²²¹ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, 148.

²²² Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, 149.

²²³ D. Soyini Madison, “The Dialogic Performative in Critical Ethnography,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (2006): 321.

embellishments is in the self it diminishes the thickness and the complexities of the encompassing terrain.”²²⁴

Given that the researcher is confronted with self-related issues at every turn, the potential for self-absorption can loom large.”²²⁵ In other words, a major critique of autoethnography is the belief that it encourages narcissism in the researcher. Other researchers have concurred with Madison stating that autoethnography is too preoccupied with self and lacks sufficient objectivity, and thus is rendered insufficient for qualitative research. In many respects autoethnography is still a marginalised form of qualitative research, and anything that is new and potentially threatens to expose or disrupt traditionally laid down convention is open to criticism.²²⁶ However, this position is not embraced by all autoethnographers. Wariri Muhungi describes herself “as a woman embodying the intersectionality of being African (Kenyan) Black, a so called immigrant, a community activist, a popular educator, and a graduate student in the academy.”²²⁷ Muhungi counteracts the narcissistic argument by the following statement. She points out, how she knows the power of knowledge founded on lived experience, especially its significance on indigenous communities, African communities (from the continent and/or Diaspora), as well as many other oppressed populations worldwide.²²⁸ However, Muhungi does not dismiss the critiques of autoethnography, but sees the dismal of lived experience as a corollary with societies that elevate capital over spiritual growth. In buttressing her argument

²²⁴ Madison, “The Dialogic Performative,” 321.

²²⁵ Leon Anderson, “Analytical Autoethnography,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35. no. 4 (2006): 385.

²²⁶ Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, *Key Themes in Qualitative Research: Continuities and Changes* (California: AltaMira Press, 2003), 69.

²²⁷ Wariri Muhungi, “The Loss of my Indigenous Languages: As I Lose, I Struggle to Find,” in *Spirituality Education and Society: An Integrated Approach*, eds. Njoki N. Wane, Energy L. Manyimo, Eric J. Ritskes (Rotherdam: Sense Publishers, 2011), 193-203.

²²⁸ Muhungi, “The Loss of my Indigenous Languages,” 195.

she employs the work of Leela Fernandes who emphasises the need for spirituality but not as a private endeavour. She acknowledges:

Spirituality is mistaken for a kind of privatized safe space that should not be contaminated by the muddy realms of politics and power. Yet it is precisely this assumption that has allowed spirituality to become hijacked by conservative, repressive movements across the world.²²⁹

Fernandes is advocating that spirituality is relational, and thereby indirectly affirms the power of lived experience. Muhungi uses Fenandes' notion of relationality to demonstrate the importance of lived experienced, but inadvertently she makes the possible connection of autoethnography and spirituality as earlier mentioned.

Another critique of autoethnography is the question of whether it is science or art. Carolyn Ellis contends that autoethnography is criticised for either being "too artful and not scientific, or too scientific and not sufficiently artful."²³⁰ One of the interesting aspects of autoethnography is its similarity to storytelling. Whilst social scientists argue whether autoethnography is scientific or not, one cannot escape the fact that one of the most enduring features of most, if not all cultures, is the use of storytelling as a way of keeping culture alive and transmitting values essential for a society or community. Hence, in ensuring the validity of storytelling and autoethnography, Muncey asks whether the text invokes in the reader feelings that are

²²⁹ Leela Fernandes, *Transforming Feminist Practice: Non Violence, Social Justice and the Possibilities of a Spiritualized Feminism* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2003), 111.

²³⁰ Tony E. Adams and Carolyn Ellis, "Trekking Through Autoethnography," in *Qualitative Research: An Introduction to Methods and Design*, eds. Stephen D. Lapan, Marylyn T Quarteroli, and Frances J Reimer (California: John Wiley and Sons, 2012), 208.

“lifelike, believable, and possible.”²³¹ In other instances, stories with hidden meanings, *hidden transcripts*, have long been used as a form of resistance by oppressed groups.²³²

Underpinning the criticism of autoethnography is related to what is considered scientific, traditional or sociological inquiry. Autoethnography, enables the voice of the marginalised and oppressed to create its own space and to express itself in a manner which does not mute its pain and anguish. As an example, Rose Richards reveals:

The disability movement has been central in reminding us that there is a long history of people living with illness or disability—already othered by society—being othered further through the writings and research of outsiders in general, and health professionals in particular. ““Othering” means turning a person into an object of some sort, such as a stereotype or even an object of study. Those whom we study are never quite on the same level as we are. And they are always “not us.”²³³

The cathartic utterance of autoethnography challenges Eurocentric male dominated power structures and the propagation of what is the correct and the right way of conducting legitimate research.²³⁴ For some social scientists, the inclusion of

²³¹ Tessa Muncey, *Creating Autoethnographies* (London: Sage Publications Limited, 2010), 127.

²³² James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 4. Scott uses the term *hidden transcript* to characterise discourse that takes place “off stage” beyond the direct observation of power holders.

²³³ Rose Richards, “Writing the Othered Self: Autoethnography and the Problem of Objectification in Writing about Illness and Disability,” *Qualitative Health Research* 18, no. 12 (2008): 1717.

²³⁴ Calanit Tsalach, “Between Silence and Speech: Autoethnography as an Otherness-Resisting Practice,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 19, no. 2. (2013): 77-78.

emotions in research is not considered proper, and to include thoughts, feelings and observations of the researcher, contaminates the evidence.²³⁵ However, to disregard human subjectivities is challenged by Alison Liebling who observes that:

Human agents think with the body as well as the mind. A glance may be seen as well as felt. We "know" on walking into a room, there has been an argument. We recognise-at a barely conscious level-pasts, similarities and understandings, in each other.²³⁶

Developing her theory, Liebling utilises the work of Jeff Ferrell and Mark Hamm who cogently argue that researchers "Draw on a body of knowledge that lies beyond the orbit of traditional academic discourse."²³⁷ This alternative approach to epistemological acquisition is also an underpinning assumption of transpersonal research methodology, the other method I employed for gaining data.²³⁸ Furthermore, autoethnography underlines the fact that as human beings we are in continual relationship with ourselves, others, and outside ourselves.²³⁹ Autoethnography promotes the notion of connectivity in everyday life, and as human beings we do not function in isolation. This acknowledgment concurs with African and Asian cosmologies that believe that human beings are interdependent social beings, and

²³⁵ Alison Liebling, "Whose Side are we on? Theory, Practice and Allegiances in Prisons Research," *British Journal of Criminology* 41 (2001): 472.

²³⁶ Liebling, "Whose Side are we on?" 474.

²³⁷ Jeff Ferrell and Mark Hamm, "Confessions of Danger and Humanity," in *Ethnography at the Edge: Crime, Deviance, and Field Research*, eds. Jeff Ferrell and Mark Hamm (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 257.

²³⁸ William Braud, Rosemarie Anderson, *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences: Honoring Human Experience* (California: Sage Publications, 1998), xxi-xxii. The range of human activities incorporated within the widening field of transpersonal research methods includes "Anthropology; sociology; medicine; and especially immunology, parapsychology, consciousness studies, philosophy, yoga, the creative arts, and a variety of bodyworks and healing practices."

²³⁹ Sarah J. Tracy, *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crating Analysis, Communicating Impact* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013). 30.

there is no separation between the sacred or the secular.²⁴⁰ With interdependent functioning it follows the African belief that we only receive our significance when we are in relationship with others.²⁴¹ Another criticism of autoethnography is due to the accentuating of one's subjectivity whilst in conversation with others, the researcher must ensure that the participants are offered protection. The protection of the other inevitably protects the researcher, and this leads to the final part of this section which considers autoethnographical research ethics.

The role of ethics

One of the areas within autoethnography the researcher must take seriously is ethics. By ethics, I mean the measures that research will be conducted in a manner that honours the data, and respect is paid to the individuals involved in the research project. They must be kept informed throughout the research process and their permission is sought in acquiring data. The end result written by the researcher should accurately reflect their contribution to the data. In other words, the researcher should make a contribution to knowledge that is "believable and trustworthy."²⁴² In the case of autoethnography, I would stress greater care and attention is needed given the nature and display of the researcher's subjectivity and the involvement with the research. Carolyn Ellis' work reminds researchers that much of the material used by autoethnography is personal, highly sensitive and subject to the critique of others.²⁴³ This display of material that exposes aspects of the researcher's self and others can

²⁴⁰ Emmanuel Lartey, *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers (2003). 146.

²⁴¹ Chigor Chike, *Voices from Slavery: The Life and Beliefs of African Slaves in Britain* (Milton Keynes: AuthorHouse, 2007), 139.

²⁴² Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (California: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 234.

²⁴³ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, 19.

make them vulnerable. Citing one of her students Ellis insists that as researchers, "I still think we should be responsible about those we write about."²⁴⁴

I have to embrace the idea of being responsible about those I write about while reflecting on my journal entries. In one particular instance, I became angry and described a church member as a "*serpent*."²⁴⁵ Regardless of the condition that evoked such a response, I still must exercise responsibility, care, protection, and anonymity of the participants in the conflictive moment. Given the nature of being too close to the data, it is easy for the researcher to condemn or demonise the actors in the field of study. Ethics does not only consider confidentiality, that is, creating anonymity and protecting the actors within the area of research, it also ensures that the research will be conducted with a high degree of integrity. In this regard, Amanda Coffey writes the following, "Discussions and debates around the ethical dimension of ethnography span a number of key issues including informed consent; distinction between public and private: the status of privacy; harm and exploitation; and risk."²⁴⁶

In the current climate of increasing litigation, the researcher must ensure all the actors in the narrative are protected. Whilst autoethnography secures the evidence, it endeavours to be respectful to the participants in the narrative. Scholarship is not meant to be seen as a form of academic paparazzi, neither must it be considered as a legitimised form of voyeurism.²⁴⁷ Whilst research is concerned with investigating the

²⁴⁴ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, 145.

²⁴⁵ Journal entry: 1- 4 March 2000.

²⁴⁶ Amanda Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 74.

²⁴⁷ The idea of voyeurism is put forward by Martin Tolich, "A Critique of Current Practice: Ten Foundational Guidelines for Autoethnographers," *Qualitative Health Research* 20, no. 12 (2010): 1601. Tolich comments that whilst reading through an autoethnographic article, Barbara Jago's *Chronicling an Academic Depression*, he felt he was reading through two lenses. Through the first lens he "recognised the eloquence of the text" and how

observed, unobserved, spoken and the unspoken, there is still a need for anonymity. In fact, if anonymity is not provided, it can hinder the subsequent functioning of the researched group once the research is completed. On this subject I draw attention to my continued ministerial involvement with the congregation as the pastor after the analysis of my journal entries. Carolyn Ellis, Tony E Adams and Arthur P. Bochner comment on the dynamic of the continued relationship after research. They record that "autoethnographers often maintain and value interpersonal ties with their participants, thus making relational ethics more complicated. Participants often begin as or become friends through the research process."²⁴⁸ If, what the authors suggest is correct, then there is a matter for serious consideration in how the other is represented in the written text that will be read in due course by the researched group.

Representation of the Other

The nature of autoethnographic work involves interaction with others, and attention must be given to how the other, the one being researched, is represented in the data, analysis and interpretation. Representing the other is different from anonymising or protecting the subject. It wrestles with doing research ethically and maintaining the dignity of the subjects whilst not idolising them, but viewing them with dignity and honour. How the other is characterised in the written text evokes issues of hierarchy of power, superiority and inferiority, exclusion and inclusion and creates a 'them and us' category.

"the piece was gripping." Through the second lens he felt he was like a "voyeur watching reality T.V" because the edges between the researcher and those being researched began to blur.

²⁴⁸ Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams & Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography: An Overview," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12, no.1 (2011). <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589/3096> (accessed 13 February, 2013).

The matter of representing others is given considerable attention in other areas of the human disciplines with language playing a powerful role. Ruth Lister, focusing on poverty has much to contribute about how others are represented. She claims that there is a process of 'Othering' by the use of "language and images."²⁴⁹ Furthermore, there is a "discourse they articulate to label and stigmatize marginalised social groups, with fundamental implications for how members of those groups are treated."²⁵⁰ She emphasises that the capital O denotes its symbolic weight.²⁵¹ Othering is a process of separation where a 'them and us' category is established and maintained. The notion of othering is not a neutral typology, but is laden with negative value comments which are projected and distorts the identity of the other. The power of language is further illustrated by Tami Spry. Spry notes, "We construct categories of race, gender, religion, etc. through the language we use. That language reflects cultural values and hierarchies that perpetuate or deconstruct and install or interrupt systems of power."²⁵² One of the common features of 'othering' is that the other is blamed and held responsible for things that go wrong.

In a similar vein, but writing about the experience of shame, Stephen Pattison expresses the notion of how the other is represented. Pattison contends that "If others 'outside' can be accused of internally felt shortcomings, then the shamed person can be relieved of responsibility, blame and stain."²⁵³ Describing shame and its various expressions in labelling others, Pattison employs the work of Donald Nathanson where a misrepresenting of the other is seen as a form of attack. The words used in

²⁴⁹ Ruth Lister, *Poverty* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 100.

²⁵⁰ Lister, *Poverty*, 100.

²⁵¹ Lister, *Poverty*, 101.

²⁵² Tami Spry, *Body, Paper, Stage: Writing and Performing Autoethnography* (California: Left Coast Press, Inc. 2011), 61.

²⁵³ Stephen Pattison, *Shame: Theory, Therapy and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 115.

representing others sets up a power hierarchy where the one who is name calling is seen as the powerful in conflict with the inferior. Nathan describes the attack in this manner:

Words by which you describe these attacks is bully, Blackmail, slander, put-down, ridicule, disdain, sarcasm, scorn derision, mockery, satire... venom , virulence, viciousness, spite, petulance, cynicism, scathing, harsh, malevolent, malignant, hateful, insulting, excoriating, abusive, corroding, surly and contemptuous.²⁵⁴

Nathanson's description refers to personal shame which is projected onto the other, and in this manner, the other is represented in a negative way. Moreover, Nathanson continues his conceptualisation by claiming the following, "Each of these terms describe a process by which some aspect of another person is reduced, abraded, diminished or abased, destroyed, bashed, hurt, or depreciated."²⁵⁵ As an example, Nathanson's analysis illustrates the demeaning nature of some of my comments pertaining to the ministers in chapter five of my journal entries. Whilst I never uttered any belittling terminology in their presence, writing such words in the privacy of my study nevertheless had the power to influence how I understand and interact with them within pastoral ministry.

Writing about the other can be fraught with tension, especially if the relationship or certain relationships are fractious prior to the official start of the research. To illustrate the fact that we should be wary of how the other is portrayed, I want to

²⁵⁴ Donald Nathanson, *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 367.

²⁵⁵ Nathanson, *Shame and Pride*, 367.

briefly draw a concept from the field of psychoanalysis to demonstrate my point. The idea I wish to examine is unconscious contamination, the unacknowledged transmission of negativity onto another. In a stark description Jacquelyn Small comments that "Unconscious contamination causes toxic responses."²⁵⁶ Small speaks in reference to the therapeutic dyad, but her contributions highlights the danger that any human in a helping situation can fall into when he/she is observing the other. "Toxic relating refers to when a listener acts out his or her own unmet needs and confuses them with those of the person seeking help. This lack of clarity will throw the "helper" into a role that can harm the person seeking help."²⁵⁷ In response to Small's comments, suffice it to say, that regardless of my personal feelings I am ethically responsible as a researcher to exercise due care and attention in how I describe others, especially in the case of relationships that are newly created or on-going, and in particular in my continuing role as the pastor of Kingdom Ministries.

As earlier stated, autoethnographers Ellis, Adams and Bochner record that in some cases the researcher becomes friends with the ones being researched, but Martin Manalansan makes other observations. He notes the following:

In other instances the "researchers" are natives or members of the community in which they are researching. This situation complicates relationships in the field and transforms the ethnographic enterprise. Ethnographers are no longer the distant omniscient strangers that they have traditionally constructed to be. They have acquired a new role in viewing and representing communities and peoples. Subjects of ethnographies are no longer the ignorant natives who

²⁵⁶ Jacquelyn Small, *Becoming Naturally Therapeutic: A Return to the True Essence of Helping* (London: Bantam Books, 1990), 12.

²⁵⁷ Small, *Becoming Naturally Therapeutic*, 13.

passively accept intrusion but are continuously asking "Why?" and "What for?" These subjects are now apprehended as producers as well as products of history, and shapers and builders of culture."²⁵⁸

In light of Malansan's comments the representation of the other must be seen as fair and equal. The researcher must hold in the forefront of his/her mind that the researched are not inert and inanimate objects that are studied with little or no consideration given to how they are described in the written text. Following the authors comments, the position I hold as a pastor, researcher and an 'in-group member is therefore fraught with complications.

My experience substantiates Malansan's comments: I am a first generation, British born Caribbean, who was not old enough to understand the struggles and formation of the BMC in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. Simply put, I was not there as an adult to witness the difficulties encountered by the new migrants, and in my development and socialisation, I failed to comprehend the Windrush generation as "producers as well as products of history, and shapers and builders of culture."²⁵⁹ In some way, unknowingly, I had succumbed to the notion that they were people who were not important and had not achieved much. Drawing on Korean American reflections for support, Miliann Kang discusses the problematic venture of "*Researching One's Own*." She cogently posits:

²⁵⁸ Martin V. Malansan IV, "The Ethnography of Asian America: Notes toward a Thick Description," in *Cultural Compass: Ethnographic Explorations of Asian America*, ed. Martin V. Malansan IV (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 3.

²⁵⁹ Malansan IV, "The Ethnography of Asian America," 3.

The identification with co-ethnic scholars with their subjects, their ties to these communities, and the investment with their issues they are investigating challenge traditional views of social science research as objective, distant and dispassionate. On the one hand, such an "insider" position can nurture a privileged access to insights and particular participants, but on the other hand, it can "prove to be an ambivalent experience for both researcher and the research subjects."²⁶⁰

In this regard, my position of being a pastor, researcher and an actor in the community, plays a creative role in depicting the vicissitudes and complexities of life, challenging how I construct the other whilst developing an enhanced understanding of myself. In turn, a transformation of self will influence how I will see, label, accept and interact with the other. The change in how the other is represented and perceived will assist in developing new concepts and praxis for pastoral care. Here, Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln add further insights. They contend that "New epistemologies from previously silenced groups emerge to offer solutions to problems and specific situations."²⁶¹

New epistemologies contributing to the development of renewed praxis facilitates the need for representing the other in a manner that draws on their contribution to existence rather than in the negative responses minority groups are generally described. The value free notion of researching and describing others is challenged by Tanice Foltz and Wendy Griffin. They emphasise that "All knowledge is socially

²⁶⁰ Miliann Kanag, "Researching One's Own: Negotiating Co-Ethnicity in the Field," in *Cultural Compass: Ethnographic Explorations of Asian America*, ed. Martin V. Malansan IV (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 38-39.

²⁶¹ Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, "Entering the Field of Qualitative Research," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (California: Sage Publications, 1994), 11.

constructed. The researcher, as the instrument of data collection and interpretation, plays a central role in creating this knowledge."²⁶² With this in mind, it is imperative that the researcher takes extreme care in how others are represented.

On a final note, in attempting to represent others in a manner which elevates their humanity, one must develop the ability for empathic understanding of the other. This understanding is called '*verstehen*,' coined by German sociologist-philosopher Max Weber.²⁶³ It is by cultivating the heart and mind to understand the other that a negative representation of the other can be minimised. In other words, as with any form of empathic enterprise, the researcher must try to place to one side his/her assumptions, judgements, biases and prejudices about the people or situation being researched. In attempting to understand the world of the other, it invariably impinges on one's own self. Heewon Chang's observation in this regard is important if autoethnographers desire to represent the other in order that their voice is heard clearly. Chang argues:

Self learns values, norms, and customs from others to become a proper member of the community. Self contributes to the continuity of the community as well. In this give-and-take process, self is invariably bound with others within the cultural group. Consequently, self becomes mirrored in others, and others become an extension of the self.²⁶⁴

²⁶² Tanice G Foltz and Wendy Griffin, "She Changes Everything She Touches: Ethnographic Journeys of Self-Discovery" in *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing*, eds. Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (California: AltaMira Press, 1996), 302.

²⁶³ <http://www.sociologyindex.com/verstehen.htm> (accessed 27 June, 2013).

²⁶⁴ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, 27.

Using the comments of Chang as a template for representing the other, one can surmise that for the researcher to depict the other in a negative manner may in fact be saying much more about the researcher than the researched group itself.

Concluding this examination of autoethnography as a research methodology and considering its strengths and weaknesses, I will now turn my attention to exploring the medium of journals as a means of data collection appropriate for conducting autoethnographical research.

Journals as a means of collecting data and proving a source of understanding

The history of journals

The use of journals has a long history. Kathleen Adams states that the use of the journal, or dairy, to facilitate holistic mental health and self-reliance - can trace its roots back to 10th century Japan, when ladies of the Heian court wrote reflections on life and love in "pillow books."²⁶⁵ Tristine Rainer concurring with Adams notes:

Keeping a diary is an active, purposeful communication with the self. People write, sketch, doodle and play with their imaginations. Later they re-read what has accumulated from the simple act of satisfying the needs and desires of the moment. And all find in their hands a book containing - in form, content, and style - a unique, unrepeatable story of self.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Kathleen Adams, *Journal to the Self: Twenty Two Paths to Personal Growth* (New York: Warner Books, Inc, 1990), xiii.

²⁶⁶ Tristine Rainer, *The New Diary: How to Use of Journal for Self-guidance and Expanded Creativity* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc, 1978), 16-17.

Logs, diaries and journals

Logs, diaries, and journals are distinctive methods of recording data. Mary Holly provides clarity on the three types of documentation. First, “a log was an unshaped piece of lumber used to measure the ship’s speed through the water.”²⁶⁷ With time, “log books became official records of ship's voyages, speed and distances, wind speed, direction travelled, fuel used, weather and other navigational facts.” Later they became articles of evidence used in the law courts.²⁶⁸ Diaries were less structured, and open-ended, interpretive, descriptive and multi-dimensional, making them difficult to analyse.²⁶⁹ Holly limits the use of the diary for rigorous research, but Marlene Morrison offers another perspective by describing the diary as “a collection of documentary evidence useable for a range of purposes including research work.”²⁷⁰ Max Van Manen defends the use of journals, diaries and logs for educational and research functions and argues that journal keeping, “provides a record of insights and provides the possibility of reflecting on previous reflections. Such recordings are kept for phenomenological reflection.”²⁷¹ Holly describes the journal as a sophisticated and inclusive variation of the log and the diary and is more “complex and more demanding” to keep providing “objective and subjective” properties thus making it an indispensable tool for research.²⁷²

²⁶⁷ Mary Holly, *Keeping a Professional Journal*, 2nd ed. (Australia: Deakin University Press, 1995), 5.

²⁶⁸ Holly, *Keeping a Professional Journal*, 5-6.

²⁶⁹ Holly, *Keeping a Professional Journal*, 6.

²⁷⁰ Marlene Morrison, “Using Diaries in Research,” in *Research Methods in Educational Leaders*, eds. Ann R J Briggs, Marianne Coleman, Marlene Morrison (London: Sage, 2002), 214-215.

²⁷¹ Max Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experiences: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (Canada: The University of Western Ontario, 1990), 73.

²⁷² Holly, *Keeping a Professional Journal*, 7.

Journal and their purposes

“Why write a journal?” asks Kathleen Adams. Her answer is that journals allow the writer to do a range of things:

Discover the writer within you, keep a record for the future as your life unfolds, get to know the different parts of yourself, take advantage of a "friend in need," and a valuable tool in the therapeutic process, heal your relationships, access information stored in the unconscious mind... explore your dreams, recognise the symbology of your life, develop your intuition, maximise time and business efficiency, explore your creativity and track the cycles, patterns and trends of your life.²⁷³

Another voice espousing journaling is Ira Progoff who echoes these revealing aspects of the self through his *Intensive Journal*, a complex form of journaling. He comments:

One of the most significant realisations that has come to me personally in the course of this work has been the observation of the *extra increment* of meaning that is added to an individual's awareness as the *Intensive Journal* procedures reopen the possibilities of his life.²⁷⁴

For ministerial development, Frances Ward asserts journaling can be used

"dialogically to reflect the life and practice of ministry."²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Kathleen Adams, *Journal to the Self*, 14 - 26.

²⁷⁴ Ira Progoff, *At a Journal Workshop: The Basic Text and Guide for using the Intensive Journal Process* (New York: Dialogue House Library, 1975), 11.

²⁷⁵ Frances Ward, *Life Long Learning: Theological Education and Supervision* (London: SCM, 2005), 130.

Jennifer Moon, building on Adam's perspective, argues for an academic stance.

Though often seen as entirely personal, Moon insists that journals may have much of the validity of good academic work:

Journals are used to record experiences, facilitate learning from experience, to support understanding and the representation of the understanding, to develop critical thinking, to increase active involvement and the ownership of learning, to increase the ability to reflect, to encourage meta cognition, improve writing and self-expression.²⁷⁶

Moon highlights the flexibility of journals, including their latent power in the holistic development of people. Kim Etherington demonstrates how journals are used in counselling and psychotherapy courses where students use them as a tool for monitoring self-growth, developing their own internal supervisor, extending and maintaining awareness of self and others.²⁷⁷ The nature of the information recorded in the journal raises important questions in an age of privacy and laws surrounding data protection and has been covered in matters relating to research ethics.

²⁷⁶ Jennifer Moon, *Learning Journals: A Handbook for Reflective Practice and Professional Development* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 50.

²⁷⁷ Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher: Using Our Selves in Research* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2004), 127. There is now much evidence in how 'therapeutic writing' is benefiting patients/clients suffering with various neuroses. See the work of Celia Hunt, *The Self on the Page* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishing, 1998); Celia Hunt, *The Therapeutic Dimension of Autobiography in Creative Writing* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishing, 2000); Sandra L Bertram, "Expressive Arts and Thanatology: An Image a Day" in *The Quarterly Publication of the Association of Death Education and Counselling*, 37, no.1 (2011): 1-4. http://www.sandrabertram.com/files/Expressive%20Arts_ADECForum.pdf (accessed Friday 29 April, 2011). Possibly the individual who has created the greatest inroads into therapeutic writing is James Pennebaker. See <http://weststudyc creativewriting.wordpress.com/2013/04/13/bbc-radio-4-mind-changers-james-pennebaker-and-expressive-writing/> (accessed 15 July, 2013).

Reflection and its critiques

Journaling is more than depositing words/images on paper. It engages the whole person with the potential of gaining insights by the process, practice and discipline of reflection. Reflection, argues Moon, is more than common-sense thinking, it is a "cognitive process we apply to complex issues where we want to achieve an outcome."²⁷⁸ Reflection involves giving uninterrupted time and extended consideration to an event, object, context, encounter, relationship or situation that on analysis yields more than is initially seen.

Reflection for theological advancement is espoused by Ward who argues for the process of writing as "a means of reflecting upon practice."²⁷⁹ Whilst the process of reflection is encouraged, it can create points of conflict. Despite their educational context, Neville Hatton and David Smith critique the applicability in a variety of settings with students who resist reflective practice. The authors name four barriers hindering the reflective process. First, "reflection is not generally associated with working as a teacher because some teachers see reflection as esoteric and a distraction from mastering teaching skills." Second, "to foster effective reflection, time is needed and opportunity for its development."²⁸⁰ Third, "reactions to the demands of reflection require attention, that is, the feelings of vulnerability students' experience, due to the exposure of their beliefs and thoughts to others."²⁸¹ Finally, "a critically reflective approach can be seen as a departure from the traditional epistemology which usually involves models of "best practice" emphasised on competences, and

²⁷⁸ Moon, *Learning Journals*, 36.

²⁷⁹ Ward, *Life Long Learning*, 13.

²⁸⁰ Neville Hatton and David Smith, "Reflection in Teacher Education: Towards Definition and Implementation," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 11, no. 1 (1995): 36.

²⁸¹ Hatton and Smith, "Reflection in Teaching Education," 37.

unrecognised conflicts of institutional ideals and workplace socialisation."²⁸² The purpose and benefits of writing in research have been explained earlier.

Model of theological reflection

Models of theological reflection are in abundance, and given the complex and unpredictable nature of what one might discover during the process of theological reflection, no definitive model exists.²⁸³ Theological reflection paradigms exist to facilitate fresh insights about the situation, deepen one's faith and understanding about God. For the African Caribbean Pentecostal Church in the United Kingdom, theological reflection is not an aspect of church life. Thus an accessible, 'bottom up' contextual model allowing the voices to speak from the ashes of experience is desirable.²⁸⁴ A model ideal for hearing the expression of the voices is the pastoral cycle.²⁸⁵ This paradigm of pastoral engagement begins with the incident or situation and endorses a bottom up or grass roots approach to theological analysis. In other words, it takes the voices of the marginalised seriously.

Pentecostal culture is oral and aural. Speech and listening are central to the praxis of the church, and the very name of the church emphasises the centrality of speech to the coming of the Spirit to the apostles and disciples. In this, Pentecostal theology is a diaspora theology scattered amongst persecuted peoples, most famously the Jews.

They have always placed a premium on oral and aural culture if only because grim

²⁸² Hatton and Smith, "Reflection in Teacher Education," 38.

²⁸³ James Deotis Roberts, *Black Theology in Dialogue* (Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1987), 11. Recent scholarship indicates an array of models see Elaine Graham, Heather Walton and Frances Ward, *Theological Reflections: Methods* (London: SCM Press, 2005).

²⁸⁴ The term is taken from 'From the Ashes of Experience: Reflections on Madness, Survival and Growth', eds. Phil Barker, Peter Campbell and Ben Davidson (London: Whurr, 1999). This publication illustrates how people have survived the episode and stigma of mental health and the complexities of the British psychiatric system. I have re-appropriated the title to express the survival of many African Caribbean people whilst living in Britain.

²⁸⁵ Paul Ballard and John Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action: Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society* (London: SPCK, 2006), 89.

experience taught them the money to buy books has always been the privilege of rulers, and the literature of the oppressed is always, through human history, liable to be one of the first things destroyed by oppressors. Once again awareness of history can be used to counteract the colonial and racist discourse that would make an easy link between Pentecostal theology and essentialist or notions of Black "spontaneity." Moreover, as a student of conflict in the church, I am aware that a church with a highly verbal culture must expect a high degree of verbal expressions of conflict, as well as of togetherness.

In reference to the importance of theological reflection, James Deotis Roberts reasons "That time has come for all who participate in theological reflection-whether in Europe or the Americas, Black, feminist and Hispanic-to allow theologians, Africans and Asians to do their own theological reflection."²⁸⁶ Roberts, speaking from an African American context in the late 1980s and from a more developed position of Black theology than in Britain, mirrors a similar situation in twenty first century Britain delineating the dearth of much needed theological reflection in the Black church. He considers:

There needs to be a closer relationship between theology and ministry. After some twenty years of the development of Black theology, Black denominations, pastors and congregations are not greatly moved by the insights of Black theology or Black theologians. A way needs to be found to change this. There is no way fully to estimate the value of Black theological

²⁸⁶ Roberts, *Black Theology in Dialogue*, 16.

reflection to the life of Black Christians, to the ministry and life of Black churches.²⁸⁷

Therefore, a contextual model sensitive to the needs of African Caribbean diaspora people must be employed. The pastoral cycle is a relevant starting point for the Black majority Pentecostal church in Britain because it begins with the experience of an African Caribbean Christian pastor and is the first time, as far as the author is aware, that conflict is being examined within the context of the congregation or indeed the organisation.

Pastoral Cycle: The Doing Theology Spiral

The pastoral cycle is a process of reflecting on life or societal situations and making an intelligent judgement after a period of careful and deep consideration. The process continues as a process of evaluation occurs after a time of applied renewed praxis.

The method devised by Laurie Green describes the four phases of the pastoral cycle.²⁸⁸ First, is the experience where there is "the need to get into the experience as this immersion of the event provides the required data that develops the second stage of the cycle." Phase two is one of exploration where the "reflector of the group engaged in reflection analyses the situation." Green proposes the following areas for inclusion when probing a situation: historical, geographical, social, economic, cultural and religious.²⁸⁹ The collection of voices is labelled as interdisciplinary, but Emmanuel Lartey refers to the cacophony of voices as multiperspectival.²⁹⁰ Another

²⁸⁷ Roberts, *Black Theology in Dialogue*, 115.

²⁸⁸ Laurie Green, *Let's do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009), 17-23.

²⁸⁹ Green, *Let's do Theology*, 63.

²⁹⁰ Emmanuel Lartey, *In Living Colour: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counselling* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2003), 132.

perspective of this important stage is offered by Judith Thompson, Stephen Pattinson and Ross Thompson, who, borrowing the term from Gilbert Ryle argue for a 'thick description' around the issue where "sociological and psychological factors" are engaged with to interpret the experience through other lenses.²⁹¹

In stage two Green asks, "How do we make sense of the data?" Responding to this question he claims, "We must look for connections, values and causes of the experience."²⁹² From in-depth analysis it leads to the next stage. Stage three is one of reflection, but Green offers a word of warning for theological reflectors who get so immersed in reflection that they ignore the world. The other extreme is that one gets so caught up in experiential immersion that there is a failure to reflect upon it adequately.²⁹³ This phase offers a rich analysis of the event by delving beneath the tip of the iceberg of human experience and by building on the findings of the explorative stage. Green argues that reflection draws upon a multitude of resources and demonstrates such by recommending an array of biblical approaches. He employs the use of art materials and other perspectives of Christianity, namely major doctrines of the church. For example, he points to the Trinity, Creation, the Fall, the Spirit, the parables, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and the Ascension to name but a few.²⁹⁴ The BMC in Britain and throughout much of the African Christian diaspora is biblicentric; therefore, a model emanating from the scriptures is well received.²⁹⁵

However, many Christians within the Black Pentecostal church would struggle with

²⁹¹ Judith Thompson with Stephen Pattinson and Ross Thompson, *SCM Study Guide to Theological Reflection* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 55. Although Clifford Geertz is credited with the formulation of this terminology he extrapolated it from Gilbert Ryle, *Collected Papers: Collected Essays 1929-1968* (Oxon: Routledge, 1971), 476.

²⁹² Green, *Let's do Theology*, 73-75.

²⁹³ Green, *Let's do Theology*, 77.

²⁹⁴ Green, *Let's do Theology*, 91-95.

²⁹⁵ Lee N. June, *Yet, with a Steady Beat: The Black Church through a Biblical and Psychological Lens* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 120.

using art as a resource for theological reflection as well as lyrics taken from secular artists as employed by Robert Beckford in his development of a British Black theology.²⁹⁶

The final stage moves from reflection to responding, thus making the process of the action–reflection relationship complete.²⁹⁷ This final stage is not a one *size fits all* solution, but as articulated by Lartey, "there is a group of *response* options that the participants are allowed to explore."²⁹⁸ The range of options implies an assortment of possibilities that may not have been present or known prior to the process of reflection. This wide selection supports the notion that far from being a rigid form of engagement, theology is a dynamic activity which challenges previously held Christians notions and beliefs. The process of challenging one's assumptions is articulated by Stephen Pattison. He writes:

Theological reflection deepens our experience of the world and of our own assumptions and so stops us from making unwarranted assumptions which may be false. It also has the effect that our faith and religious ideas do not become encapsulated and cut off from our experience of everyday life.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Robin Dowling, Book Review of *Jesus is Dread: Black Theology & Black Culture in Britain* by Robert Beckford. *Evangelicals Now*, July 1998, <http://www.e-n.org.uk/p-607-Jesus-is-Dread.htm> (accessed 19 November, 2011).

²⁹⁷ Green, *Let's do Theology*, 108

²⁹⁸ Lartey, *In Living Color*, 133.

²⁹⁹ Stephen Pattison, "Some Straws for the Bricks: A Basic Introduction to Theological Reflection," in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, eds. James Woodward and Stephen Pattison (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 138.

In selecting the most appropriate response, Green supplies a broad category of criteria for consideration which includes knowing what needs to be done coupled with the acknowledgement that theology is contemplative, instructive and transformative.³⁰⁰

This last section is subdivided to include probing the importance and viability of the exercise: who will benefit, what are the causes of the incident in the first place, who is and will be involved, who are affected by the outcome of the project, and how will the response be implemented? With any new venture there is a level of anxiety and Green asserts, "it is this section that challenges people the most," but suggests as a way of "engaging people is to undertake small manageable responses which eventually leads to undertaking larger more significant actions."³⁰¹ When all the processes has been worked through and implemented there is the important process of evaluation to ensure growth and maturity in the Christian faith and theological understanding. Green's model serves well as a preparatory model for reflection.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the methods of data collection through "knowing," discerning, observing, analysing, interpreting and formulating new concepts from the data emerging out of my pastoral experience.

For this research project, I will be employing autoethnography with an emphasis on the Analytical Interpretive mode of writing to discover what might be occurring beneath the written text of my journal entries, within me as the researcher, and the congregation. There are other factors to take into consideration when conducting

³⁰⁰ Green, *Let's do Theology*, 113.

³⁰¹ Green, *Let's do Theology*, 109-122.

research. It is a complicated process which considers the much contested issue of objectivity. I unashamedly and unapologetically bring my peculiarities and particularities to the field of study. With that said, total objectivity is impossible. After being the pastor at the local congregation for four years, there were times I was so exasperated by the intensity of conflict I wrote the following: [Date: Saturday 1 Jan 2000]. *I cannot believe that Kingdom Ministries is beyond divine help. It is my duty to seek the face of God to find his mind in the progress, development and growth of the church.*

Building on my sense of not understanding what was taking place and feeling that there were other issues underpinning conflictive episodes, I developed the discipline of keeping a pastoral reflective journal. This was to provide a starting point for my research. Yet it must be emphasised that my journal keeping was not originally intended for academic research. Before being cognisant of ethnographic/autoethnographic methods of research, the act and process of writing caused me to discover latent aspects of the episodes of conflict. Journaling provided a basic level of insight, but recording incidences, intuitive feelings and other means of knowing were insufficient to arrive at a substantial conclusion that would enhance my self-awareness and develop my understanding of the constituents who made up the congregation. They had a particular history that to all intents and purposes, I had assumed and did not believe mattered or played any significant role in their present existence.

One of the advantages of keeping a journal is that one is able to return to it at a later date and to stand back, or reflect after the incident has occurred in order to gain a

perspective that was not apparent at the time of the event. When returning to one's original journal entries at a much later date, the researcher is able to re-examine the data with a mature self. This re-examination of the same evidence is one of the characteristics of autoethnography where multiple re-readings of the same material can uncover new aspects of the data leading to a heightened self-understanding with a greater appreciation and respect of the other.

The next chapter uses phase two of the pastoral cycle by reviewing the academic literature of British pastoral theology to discover whether African Caribbean Christian experiences have been included in the on-going dialogue and development of pastoral theology in Britain.

Chapter 3 - Resources for a Black British Pastoral Theology

Introduction

In this chapter I will explore the development of pastoral theology in Britain and in particular its neglect of African Caribbean experiences within its pages of scholarly reflection. Many African Caribbean Christians were part of white main stream churches from the 1950s and their dilemmas would have been shared with the minister for support and counsel, and one would have thought their experiences would have made interesting cases for intellectual musing. However, this was not the case. Whilst searching for resources for the development of a Black British Christian pastoral theology, I was also looking for evidence that dealt with the interpersonal conflict in the BMC.

I begin my discussion by examining *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* which was the leading academic literature at the time on pastoral concerns. Academic journals present current thinking within their specific disciplines. Along these lines, I wanted to interrogate how the issues of race and ethnicity were being investigated and understood.

During the early 1970s Black Christians began to articulate their experiences of living in Britain. These reflections took place outside the perimeter of *Contact*; however, within the journal the term 'other' was frequently used referring to humanity outside of the normative framework of white hegemony. Closely following the articulation of Black experience, some white academics and clergy people expressed the vital need of a theology relevant to the spiritual and existential needs of Black diasporan people.

The new proposed theological expression included the meaning and nature of church for the new migrants.

Following hegemonic utterances of white scholars endorsing the necessity for Black people to develop a theology appropriate for themselves, and minority voices from the 1960s and the early 1970s uttering their experiences of being Black, it heralded the publication of a Black theology journal in Britain in 1998 where Black Christians created a space where they could express how they understood God without the need of being legitimised by the mainstream churches. The birthing of a Black theology has continued since that time, but it is not without its critics. Moreover, it cannot remain a static treatise if it is to remain a source of hope for Black people in Britain. Thus, with the continual migration of Black people to Britain, a changing society and the impact of globalisation, a Black British theology must be a continually shifting paradigm, taking the context of people's lives seriously whilst embracing the transcendence. Finally, I examine the literature pertaining to African American pastoral theology and pastoral theology from a Caribbean context.

Very early writings - Making Contact 1960 - 1970

In 1959, the Scottish Pastoral Association came into being 'to promote an exchange of ideas and basis of co-operation among all who regarded themselves as exercising a pastoral function.'³⁰² The result of this exchange was the publication in 1960 of *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies*. The journal served two purposes. First, "it provided 'contact' with all who regarded themselves as fulfilling a kind of pastoral function, such as doctors, clergy, social workers and even non-

³⁰² <http://sapcc.org.uk/> (accessed 21 November, 2011).

professionally trained people who try to understand and help the ills and troubles of their friends.”³⁰³ Second, “it attempted to develop an understanding of both patients and practitioner.”³⁰⁴

From its inception, *Contact* covered a range of issues, but racial and ethnic concerns were not considered.³⁰⁵ In the late 1960s, non-White concerns were addressed by David Eversley who offers perspicacious observations about British population studies but does not specify a particular group he may have had in mind. Eversley comments, “It is difficult to be precise about the welter of prejudice of ‘population controllers.’ Part of it, is of course, fear of coloured immigrants, supported by “the desire to keep Britain White.”³⁰⁶ Eversley acknowledges the unspoken fear evident in the lives of many European people which would invariably influence how the other is treated. The very early writers largely ignored the issue of ethnicity, but further investigation shows how later writers within the field of pastoral theology began to explore the notion of the other.

Early Writers – 1970 -1990

One of the major concerns within British society was one of acceptance. In this regard, Una Armour defines acceptance as the “active function on the part of the

³⁰³ Editor, *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* 1 (1960): 1.

³⁰⁴ Editor, *Contact*, 1

³⁰⁵ The topics covered by *Contact* are as follows, “Alcoholism,” *Contact: Journal of the Scottish Pastoral Association* (Feb 1961); “Sexuality,” *Contact: Journal of the Scottish Pastoral Association*, no. 5 (June 1962); “Sex and Ethics,” *Contact: Journal of the Scottish Pastoral Association*, no.6 (Dec 1962). “The Waiting Room for Death: Studies and Discussion on Terminal Illness,” 1, no. 18 (1966).

The June 1963 edition of *Contact* saw the “formal cooperation” of the Scottish Pastoral Association with the Clinical Theology Association. Both groups had different aims and methods but they had common concerns. *Contact: Journal of the Scottish Pastoral Association and the Clinical Theology Association*, editorial. (1964): 1. There were further developments of *Contact* with the inclusion of Institute of Religion and Medicine in England.

³⁰⁶ David Eversley, “British Population in the 1970’s: An Ethical Issue,” *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* 2, no. 23 (1968): 20.

worker involving his perception of the client and the knowledge of him as he is."³⁰⁷

Armour, acknowledging difference emphasises "how people can be, and are, colour prejudiced even though they know they should not be."³⁰⁸ Armour encourages introspection to examine one's prejudice and personal belief system rather than it being 'out there.' Armour's contribution provides developmental opportunities for the social worker and the religious minister alike.

The lack of ethnic or African Caribbean presence in scholarly thought is further demonstrated by Michael Duke. Duke assumes White male hegemony as the fulcrum of universal existence. Employing the writing of Plato's *Republic*, Duke illustrates how privileged people were "educated in maths and music, and after their education, would be actively involved in the life of politics."³⁰⁹ Exalting western achievements, Duke elevates colonialism and describes it as "the high-water mark of human achievement which the 'lesser breeds' without law might do well to emulate."³¹⁰ Duke's statement causes some concern because his remark initially dismisses the destructive nature of colonialism on the colonised. However, Duke confesses the following:

We have learned to critique ourselves that we and our political institutions are not exemplars for the world. Many people are inclined to ask whether we are on

³⁰⁷ Una Armour, "The Meaning of Acceptance," *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* 1, no. 30 (1970): 24.

³⁰⁸ Armour, "The Meaning of Acceptance," 25-26.

³⁰⁹ Michael Duke, "Man in the Making," *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* 1, no. 33 (1970): 17.

³¹⁰ Duke, "Man in the Making," 17.

the edge of a breakdown in the traditional democratic processes as we have learnt them in the West.³¹¹

Nevertheless, Duke's introspective analysis excludes other racial groups as discussion partners.

In 1971, David Jenkins, examining the nature of humanity embraces a broader picture than the normative lens of White hegemony. He points out, "If we are to discover and develop resources for being human then we must be able to develop effective ways of coping with differing layers of truth and differing ways of understanding situations that ought constantly to be interacting on one another."³¹²

Jenkins challenges the professional by asking, "how do we find resources for living ourselves with our identities always requiring to be changed so that we may be a creative part of this overall human problem?"³¹³ He argues "human beings have a sense of who they are through their relationships."³¹⁴ The process of becoming is perpetual and in referring to professionals, Jenkins contends, "could we not at least sustain or encourage one another in a steady policy of taking the *risk* to extend the resources for being human further than we yet see or know?"³¹⁵ He opens the problematic debate on diversity because concerns regarding power, dominance, control and human existence need discussing. Furthermore, challenging the Eurocentric conceptualisation of what it means to be a human being disturbs its

³¹¹ Duke, "Man in the Making," 18

³¹² David Jenkins, "Resources for Being Human," *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* 1, no. 36, (1971): 6.

³¹³ Jenkins, "Resources for Being Human," 8-9.

³¹⁴ Jenkins, "Resources for Being Human," 14.

³¹⁵ Jenkins, "Resources for Being Human," 19.

epistemological framework. Again, Jenkins does not specify any group of people, but his theological anthropological analysis opens up new possibilities giving all non-White human beings a chance of co-equal parity with their white counterparts. Jenkins describes it like this:

Our present ways of doing things are not sufficient for, or suitably adapted to, human possibilities, or potentials...in developing a new understanding of being human, opens up the possibilities that attack the old. Once we see that existing arrangements have ceased to promote human development and begin to suppress it, we must look for new ones. And this we must do whatever the search does to the old ones. In the end, you cannot plan human living you can only discover it.³¹⁶

Jenkins interprets the elitism of pastoral carers and describes their power base as “mass delusion.”³¹⁷ By this he desires to see experts and professionalisms much more broken up and vulnerable to the life of the community. Jenkins, pushing at the boundaries of normative assumptions forces a re-examination of the complex understanding of self and humanity. Furthermore, he challenges the experts to be open to “sources of information and the types of people not usually taken into the centre of professional operations,” and he encourages practitioners to develop greater awareness in understanding what it means to be a human being.³¹⁸

Adding to the developing discourse in understanding humanity, Alistair Campbell focuses his analysis on the human foetus within the abortion argument, and the

³¹⁶ Jenkins, “Resources for Being Human,” 19.

³¹⁷ Jenkins, “Resources for Being Human,” 13.

³¹⁸ Jenkins, “Resources for Being Human,” 13.

meaning of persons within the goals of psychotherapy.³¹⁹ Campbell fuses the work of Carl Jung and Paul Tournier and defines the meaning of person or personhood, as "the search for identity, authenticity and wholeness in adult life."³²⁰ Jung and Tournier value humanity and the sense of individuality, but the fusion creates a tension. Campbell's analysis perpetuates Western individualism, yet Tournier describes a cosmology held by many non-European cultures where the "value of humanity is seen and understood by being in relationship with other human beings."³²¹ Tournier's thoughts are echoed by Robin Gill who argues that "until recent times "Pastoral care" in the context of the church has been individualistic."³²²

Since *Contact's* inception, its focus has been on the issues surrounding white hegemony with the noticeable neglect of racial or ethnic concerns; however, the term 'other,' has had an easier reception. The reticence of Western theologians regarding the discussion of race coincided with the violent manifestations of societal inequality experienced by the Windrush offspring, who, having been born and educated in Britain, expected equal treatment. During this time, one of the few voices challenging the issues of racism, social injustice and inequality within the Church of England was Kenneth Leech. Leech, reflecting on British society wrote, "We join in the struggle for the liberation of oppressed people (the poor, the third world, racial minorities, women, and youth) from exploitation and racism at home and from imperialism

³¹⁹ Alastair Campbell, "The Meaning of Persons," *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* 1, no. 40 (1972): 2.

³²⁰ Campbell, "The Meaning of Persons," 5.

³²¹ Paul Tournier, *The Meaning of Persons* (London: SCM Press, 1957), 232.

³²² Robin Gill, "Pastoral Care and the Sociology of Deviance," *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* no. 42 (1973), 2.

abroad."³²³ By voicing his concern, Leech indicated the need for discussion on these issues.

The early emergence of Black Christian voices

Experiencing the pain of marginalisation, Black people began to publish literature articulating their experience in Britain. One of the earliest voices was Venetia Newall who records the Caribbean migratory experiences as one of "withdrawal and cultural retention."³²⁴ Cultural retention created stability providing tangible and physical comfort and vital links to the past whilst living in a strange and hostile environment.³²⁵ By cultural retention I mean the practice of sharing and helping each other in the community. For example, it would be rare for Caribbean people when cooking to prepare enough for their family only. There was an expectation that somebody else would come for dinner. To push the point further, many mothers would cook food and send some of what they had prepared to their next door neighbour or someone in the neighbourhood. Such experiences caused Caribbean migrants to become autonomous, a contributing factor to the dignity and pride of a people. Autonomy was a point raised by one of the five Black pastors interviewed by Anita Jackson. Pastor Robbie Milwood stated, "West Indians in England need to get off their backside and do something and stop expecting things to come into their lap."³²⁶ Ira Brooks, another of Jackson's interviewee, argued for a contextual theology reflecting the life of Black people because the theology used by many BMC's ignored

³²³ Kenneth Leech, *Youthquake: The Growth of a Counter Culture through Two Decades* (London: Sheldon Press, 1973), 174. See also Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: A Study of Spirituality* (London: Sheldon, 1977), 27.

³²⁴ Venetia Newall, "Black Britain: The Jamaicans and their Folklore," *Folklore* 106, no.1 (1975), 28-29.

³²⁵ Newall "Black Britain," 29. Newall's publication, albeit important, seems to reflect how the church can lag behind secular society. Sam Selvon's, *Lonely Londoners* (London: Penguin Books, 1956), 135. This was not a theological interpretation of life in Britain, yet it contains theological themes such as Sunday morning gatherings in someone's home for mutual support.

³²⁶ Anita Jackson, *Catching Both Sides of the Wind: Conversations with Five Black Pastor's* (London: British Council of Churches, 1985), 58.

the history from where Black experience originated.³²⁷ Brooks, while not advocating a Black theology, was mindful of the church offering a comprehensive and effective ministry for its people. He explains:

More churches should deal with education first...In the New Testament Church of God's college we are embarking on an educational programme which is not just theology but serves other areas as well. Most of our ministers will be qualified in other subjects... and so equipped to play a fuller role in society.³²⁸

In 1976, the Church of England commissioned a study to examine what its response had been to Caribbean migrants in Britain.³²⁹ It transpired that the church's failure to acknowledge Caribbean Christians as their brothers and sisters and their vital contributions made the church more impoverished. The study showed how "Black people's presence evoked a sense of 'dis-ease' within British society, but it highlighted fissures existing prior to Caribbean migration."³³⁰ With their exclusion from the centre of life in Britain the report states:

Black people cannot allow White society to dictate the terms of analysis of their situation in Britain, nor give the prescriptions. As Black people continue to adhere to White society for antidotes for their deliverance it continues to

³²⁷ Jackson, *Catching Both Sides of the Wind*, 14.

³²⁸ Jackson, *Catching Both Sides of the Wind*, 16.

³²⁹ The Assembly of the British Council of Churches, *The New Black Presence in Britain: A Christian Scrutiny* (London: Community and Race Relations Unit of the British Council of churches, 1976). 7. The New Black Presence is defined as communities of African, Asian Caribbean origin.

³³⁰ *The New Black Presence in Britain*, 7.

enhance their destruction, yet for effective change to occur the marginalised and the poor must make changes for themselves."³³¹

The study does not advocate integration because "being a part of system where one is alienated is madness, and attempting to join such a system and to bring about change from within when your humanity is ignored and not accepted, is double madness."³³²

The report further highlighted a parallel duality operating within all caring institutions; where there is the greatest potential for care giving and healing, there also exists the greatest potential for harm. The study reports how the church has been "the source of great inspiration and social reform, but the same church has contributed to oppressive conditions where people need liberation."³³³

In the 1980s John Austin Baker examined racism within the boundaries of Christianity and Judaism, and evaluated biblical language and scripture to support its notion.³³⁴ John and Renate Wilkinson with James H. Evans Jnr conducted a study on race with Black Anglicans that explored Caribbean experiences, from their arrival in Britain carrying British passports and having British citizenship, yet having to re-purchase their status and endure the "inequality of their rights, privileges and security" being seldom honoured.³³⁵ Carrying British documents, accompanied by church papers authenticating their church membership in the Caribbean, counted for

³³¹ *The New Black Presence in Britain*, 17.

³³² *The New Black Presence in Britain*, 16.

³³³ *The New Black Presence in Britain*, 28.

³³⁴ John Austin Baker, "Racism and the Bible," in *Theology and Racism 1: The Bible, Racism and Anti-Semitism*, ed. Kenneth Leech (London: Race, Pluralism and Community Group of the Board for Social Responsibility of the Church of England, 1985), 8.

³³⁵ John Wilkinson, "Inheritors Together: A Study of Black Anglicans in Relation to White from Slavery Times to Contemporary Birmingham," in *Theology and Racism 2: Black People in the Church of England*, eds. John Wilkinson, Renate Wilkinson and James H. Evans Jnr. (London : Race Pluralism and Community Group, 1985), 5.

nothing.³³⁶ Wilkinson, charting the development of Black Christianity in England discovers two themes, survival and liberation.³³⁷ Furthermore, Wilkinson in her study observes that Black Christians and White Christians “cannot be treated the same given their different cultural histories and experiences.”³³⁸ James Evans Jnr, reflecting on racism considers the future trajectories for Black people in Britain, critiques the Church of England for its lack of theological reflection on racism and advocates a Black theology for Britain. He lays out a framework for a theology designed to meet the spiritual needs of Black Anglicans. Such a theology would begin with dialogue between the “Church of England, Rastafarians and ‘Black-led’ Pentecostal churches, and working class White people who feel as alienated as Black people in the church.”³³⁹ Moreover, they should build and nurture a Black base worshipping community interwoven with life, as an ungrounded theology is just rhetoric. A liturgy relevant to concrete experiences was crucial because liturgy and life are inseparable. Finally, the Church of England needs renewal for Black people. To embark and develop such a “theological project would be an affirmation of the vitality for the Christian faith seen through Black eyes, and perhaps, in the process, call the whole church back to its prophetic mandate.”³⁴⁰ In the following year, the Church of England commissioned an evaluation on the 1980 race consultation. Kenneth Leech’s directive was to examine the progress the church had made in confronting racism. Leech “located the field of study as the Church of England itself; its synods, boards,

³³⁶ Wilkinson, “Inheritors Together,” 5

³³⁷ Wilkinson, “Inheritors Together,” 10.

³³⁸ Renate Wilkinson, “A Chance to Change: A Sociological Study of the relationship between Black Anglicans and the Church of England in the Diocese of Birmingham in 1983,” in *Theology and Racism 2: Black People in the Church of England* (London: Race, Pluralism and Community Group of the Board for Social Responsibility of the Church of England, 1985), 33.

³³⁹ James H. Evans Jnr, “The Struggle for Identity: Black People in the Church of England,” in *Theology and Racism 2: Black People in the Church of England* (London: Race, Pluralism and Community Group of the Board for Social Responsibility of the Church of England, 1985), 69

³⁴⁰ Evans Jnr, “The Struggle for Identity,” 69.

hierarchy, seminaries and other structures."³⁴¹ He discovered little progress had occurred and he acknowledged the failure of the church in raising the stakes of confronting racism in all fronts of society and in the church.³⁴²

In 1980, the Balsall Heath Consultation reflected on the same issue of racism and Anglicans and suggested alternative approaches for resolution. Sandra Wilson arguing against the notion of a homogenous Black experience states: "We know that there is diversity within unity and it is important to allow that diversity to inform all of our theological reflections. If we don't allow that diversity, then we stand to be destructive rather than constructive." ³⁴³ Wilson emphasises that Black theology "is first and foremost a theology in the making, and only the Lord knows where it will finally end."³⁴⁴ Building on the tenets of the Black Power movement Wilson notes:

The enduring message of Black power has nothing to do with hate. Rather, it teaches love. But it teaches that love must begin at home. It must begin with ourselves, our beautiful selves. Lack of knowledge of one's past, inevitably leads to self-hate, and self-hate leads to love of the oppressors values, and thus to act against one's own freedom. Malcolm X recognised and expounded this truth far more clearly than anyone else in our history. That was one of the reasons why he was so severely criticised in his own life time and is seldom remembered today.³⁴⁵

³⁴¹ Kenneth Leech, *The Fields of Charity and Sin: Reflections on Combating Racism in the Church of England* (London: Race, Pluralism and Community Group of the Board for Social Responsibility of the Church of England, 1986), 2.

³⁴² Leech, *The Fields of Charity and Sin*, 12.

³⁴³ Sandra Wilson, *Towards a Black Theology of Liberation* (London: Race, Pluralism and Community Group of the Board for Social Responsibility of the Church of England, 1986), 5-6.

³⁴⁴ Wilson, "Towards a Black Theology," 6.

³⁴⁵ Wilson, "Towards a Black Theology," 13.

Wilson concludes, "as we move towards a Black theology of liberation it will be liberation of both the oppressed and oppressor."³⁴⁶

Considering the lack of African Caribbean Christian experience in British pastoral theology the thoughts of Ira Brooks are worth considering. He expressed frustration at the lack of forward thinking as his church slept through various societal revolutions in the 1960s and 1970s.³⁴⁷ Examining the history of his own people led him to discover that African civilisations prior to European missionaries had taken the gospel to the Caribbean. This caused him to reconsider his views on English culture.³⁴⁸ His analysis highlighted the dearth of African Caribbean presence within British theological scholarship. Armed with such evidence he challenged the silence of his denomination in the face of racism, and provoked them in "acknowledging, discussing, and tackling the monstrosity of racism and its increasing problem within the church."³⁴⁹ Brook proposed the necessity of researching a cultural and theological dialectic in the face of developing circumstances.³⁵⁰ The emigrant theological expression, he argued, would represent their identity and create a contextual theology expressing their unique views of God.³⁵¹

Taking one's context seriously is explored in the 1989 edition of *Contact*. Jeanette Renouf describes the themes for an inclusive pastoral theology and begins by asking, what is the gospel, and what is culture? What is unchristian and what is simply a different culture? Renouf argues for a pastoral model committed to the development

³⁴⁶ Wilson, "Towards a Black Theology," 15.

³⁴⁷ Ira Brooks, *Another Gentleman to the Ministry* (Birmingham: Compeer Press, 1988), 38.

³⁴⁸ Brooks, *Another Gentleman*, 47.

³⁴⁹ Brooks, *Another Gentleman*, 50.

³⁵⁰ Brooks, *Another Gentleman*, 51.

³⁵¹ Brooks, *Another Gentleman*, 50 – 51.

of people. In her exposition for effective ministry, she considers ethnic identity and writes:

Ethnicity is equated with sex and death as a subject touching deep unconscious feelings in people...increasing evidence demonstrates the longevity of ethnic values and identification are retained for many generations after immigration whether voluntary or enforced.³⁵²

Both participants in a caring context have values and this unacknowledgement of one's cultural normative perspective, argues Renouf, can lead to "endless misunderstandings in doing cross cultural pastoral care." To avoid this, Renouf emphasises "deep self-awareness" and encourages "restraint on the pastoral carer in not judging a situation from one's own position."³⁵³

Renouf does not romanticise 'being all things to all people' because she acknowledges the difficulty in understanding another person. Stepping outside of one's area of familiarity is seldom easy, and for those in the seat of power, or in the position of the 'all knowing expert,' it is even riskier. Renouf's observations on this matter are worth expressing in full. She states:

It is hard for us to remain open to a wide range of cultural possibilities. Ambiguities and difference are threatening and we tend to close down emotionally when confronted with too many of them. Understanding the relativity of our own ethnic bias is the best insurance against such rigidity. Yet

³⁵² Jeanette Renouf, "Reflection on Theological Issues in Cross- Cultural Pastoral Care," *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* 98, no. 1 (1989): 15.

³⁵³ Renouf, "Reflection on Theological Issues," 15.

this insight is hard to gain...by exploring our own ethnic assumptions, we are led to question our primary pastoral technique; it is no wonder we are threatened.³⁵⁴

Renouf's observation echoes Armour's earlier comment relating to introspection for personal growth. She concludes by presenting the framework for an inclusive pastoral theology. She records:

As the science of the church moves forward in the process of becoming, it penetrates every level of human existence and helps its members to achieve a deeper union in the spirit, and nourishes and celebrates this growth in the sacramental life.³⁵⁵

Renouf's conceptualisation confronts the static view of culture and the assumed homogeneity of African Caribbeans or any other people. A task of pastoral ministry she concedes is to facilitate understanding and love for those created in the image of God.³⁵⁶

Later Writings - 1990 – 2000

The meaning of church for African Caribbean people

For African Caribbean Christians the church possesses major significance. It was not only a place for worship and preaching, but a place of refuge where rejected and broken humanity met, and provided care and healing for each other. The church acted as a psychological buffer against the ravages of a perceived brutal society.

³⁵⁴ Renouf, "Reflection on Theological Issues," 16.

³⁵⁵ Renouf, "Reflection on Theological Issues," 17.

³⁵⁶ Renouf, "Reflection on Theological Issues," 18.

Highlighting some of the positive aspects of the church Io Smith refers to being involved in the church like "a tiger in her tank. It was a community and everyone helped each other." As an example, Smith records how "she brought her baby to church and never saw her child again until near the end of the service."³⁵⁷ She comments, "It was more than just going to church. It was more than just preaching. They acted out the gospel. There was visitation of the sick, and if there was a realisation you could do something well there were chances of development."³⁵⁸ Smith emphasises the role of mothers in the church who gave her physical and mental support which she had missed from her family in the Caribbean, "we hurt," she says, "because we are human."³⁵⁹

The acknowledgement of being human within the BMC occurred through alternative modes of pastoral care. James Timothy uses acceptance, understanding, housing and employment, the Black family and worship as aspects of pastoral concerns.³⁶⁰ Timothy defines acceptance as "self-expression about participation in singing, preaching and reading the scriptures where such participation enhances the individual's self-worth and validates them as human beings."³⁶¹ Using caring aspects of the BMC, Timothy reaches beyond the walls of the church to interrogate and develop its sense of caring. His external scrutiny focused on areas causing disadvantage and misery to people facing poor housing and unemployment and he

³⁵⁷ Io Smith with Wendy Green *An Ebony Cross: Being a Black Christian in Britain* (London: Marshall Morgan, 1990), 44. This practice is still carried out today in the twenty first century. A young mother will bring her child to church and the baby will be cared for by other mothers in the church community until the church service is over.

³⁵⁸ Smith and Green, *An Ebony Cross*, 45.

³⁵⁹ Smith and Green, *An Ebony Cross*, 103. The term, 'mothers,' is a generic use of the word referring to the senior females of the church who were considered mature Christians by the congregation. Here, mature does not only mean age although it plays a significant role, but the development in the Christian faith whilst showing signs of wisdom.

³⁶⁰ James Timothy *Pastoral Care and Counselling in the BMC's in Britain: with Special References to those in Leeds* (Unpublished Thesis, University of Leeds: 1990), abstract.

³⁶¹ Timothy, *Pastoral Care and Counselling*, 19.

used a Rogerian model of analysis to critique the church's effectiveness. Timothy, highlighting the positives of the BMC asks whether its manner of operation is a "form of escapism."³⁶² Furthermore, Timothy argues, "the BMC was the only place in Britain where Black people could claim a level of dignity and human self-worth."³⁶³ Dignity and self-worth, essential for normal human functioning was realised, but overlooked in society.³⁶⁴ Timothy's appraisal of the BMC life exposes its limitations, especially when people have deviated from the values of the community and for those who have questions dealing with abstract and theoretical aspects of prayer, preaching, faith and doctrine.³⁶⁵ He concludes by emphasising how the future church will need to engage with matters affecting the lives of its people more effectively.³⁶⁶

The early 1990s saw a proliferation of publications wrestling with the issue of racism, inclusion and the Christian faith. Paul Grant and Raj Patel argued for Black people to "take responsibility for their faith journey, their development and the creation of a theology for Black people by Black people."³⁶⁷ Confirming Grant's and Patel's attestation, Roswith Gerloff produced a voluminous tome on the BMC in Britain. Her work demonstrates the struggle for survival for Black Christians in Britain and

³⁶² Timothy, *Pastoral Care*, 34

³⁶³ Timothy, *Pastoral Care*, 39-40.

³⁶⁴ Timothy, *Pastoral Care*, 342.

³⁶⁵ Timothy, *Pastoral Care*, 347.

³⁶⁶ Timothy, *Pastoral Care*, 347-349. Timothy suggests some points that need reflection and acting on for the BMC, namely, the acceptance of outsiders, especially those who differ in perspective. Second, the church will have to deal with the frustration of inquiry by the younger generation, and finally, the BMC must find the ability to engage with political, social and economic concerns affecting the lives of Black people.

³⁶⁷ Paul Grant and Raj Patel. *A Time to Speak: Perspectives of Black Christians in Britain* (Birmingham: Racial Justice and Black Theology Working Group, 1990), 1. Here, Grant and Patel resist the spiritual colonisation Black people have been subjected to by White researchers. They believed it was time for Black Christians to articulate their experiences for themselves. See within the same publication David Moore's article on "Through a Black Lens: Telling our History and Understanding its Significance;" Ronald Nathan, "Issues for the Black Minister," and Clarice Nelson, "The Churches, Racism and the Inner Cities."

reiterates the need of a theology relevant for Black people.³⁶⁸ Similar to *The New Black Presence* study, Gerloff does not propose a segregationist Black theology, but a theological expression of a continuous journey towards the kingdom of God.³⁶⁹ She refers to the BMC in Britain as a non-essentialist movement being part and parcel of Black history in interaction with White European cultures demonstrating the reality of the 'African diaspora' on both sides of the Atlantic.³⁷⁰

Following Gerloff's contribution, Emmanuel Lartey, reflecting on pastoral theology from an African perspective acts as a point of departure from the normative gaze of *Contact's* Eurocentric epistemology. Lartey emphasises pastoral theology as being committed to enhancing the life of human beings and offers three points for consideration in broadening the remit of the discipline.³⁷¹ He reflects:

First, African life and thought offer a wider perspective on life and may, on reflection, offer a more comprehensive view of life. Second, African contextual realities offer different ways of construing the world. Third, Third World experiences may offer important theological models in the necessary critique of capitalist individualism and atomism after the demise of socialist totalitarianism.³⁷²

³⁶⁸ Gerloff, *A Plea for Black British Theologies: The BMC Movement in Britain in its Transatlantic Cultural and Theological Interaction with special reference to the Pentecostal Oneness (Apostolic) and Sabbatarian Movements, Part 1* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992), 49.

³⁶⁹ Gerloff, *A Plea for Black British Theologies*, 12

³⁷⁰ Roswith Gerloff, "A Plea for Black British Theologies: The Black Church Movement in Britain in its Transatlantic, Cultural and Theological Interaction," in *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, ed. David Barrett, Second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 142-144.

³⁷¹ Emmanuel Lartey, "African Perspectives on Pastoral Theology: A Contribution to the Quest for more encompassing Models of Pastoral Care," *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* 112 (1993), 3.

³⁷² Lartey, "African Perspectives," 4-5.

African epistemology emphasises the importance of relationships and acknowledges the 'transcendent in the midst' of human experience.³⁷³ Lartey's interpretation of pastoral theology does not operate only within the "person's inner, intra-psychic, personal or private lives" but has universal human applicability.³⁷⁴

In 1995, an edition of *Contact* devoted itself to intercultural pastoral issues and included two articles germane to the African Caribbean community. The first article focused on bereavement counselling among the African Caribbean community. The second, concentrated on the complex and controversial matter of Black sexual representations, and how the BMC should manage it.³⁷⁵ In the first article George Mulrain discusses bereavement and how it brings the African Caribbean community together contrasting with most Eurocentric communities who exhibit a stoic manifestation during such times.³⁷⁶ Mulrain encourages non-African Caribbean counsellors to "listen deeply, be aware of other realities and address the issue of whether Caribbeans will return to their homeland or not."³⁷⁷ In the second article Robert Beckford wrestles with the thorny issue of Black sexual representation. Providing an historical overview of the Black male stereotyping Beckford describes the origins of such views and highlights how the use of the biblical Curse of Ham has been a contributor to the demonisation of Black people's sexuality.³⁷⁸ The curse of Ham is discussed by Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd who locate its emergence after the 'discovery' of new lands by the Europeans. They comment:

³⁷³ Lartey, "African Perspectives," 6.

³⁷⁴ Lartey, "African Perspectives," 10.

³⁷⁵ George Mulrain, "Bereavement among African Caribbean people," *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* 118 (1995): 9-14. Robert Beckford, "Black Sexual Representations and Pastoral Care" *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* 118, (1995): 15-22.

³⁷⁶ Mulrain, "Bereavement among African Caribbean People," 11.

³⁷⁷ Mulrain, "Bereavement among African Caribbean People," 12-13.

³⁷⁸ Beckford, "Black Sexual Representations and Pastoral Care," 16-18.

Europeans then focussed on the obvious expressions of physical and cultural difference between themselves and Africans. The nature of dress, housing, family structure, domestic culture, colour, education, religion, and language were identified as significant. Blacks, they agreed among themselves, were physically, culturally and intellectually inferior on account of these differences. The Black skin, they said, was already identified in the Bible in terms of the children of Ham being cursed with Blackness. As inferior people, they could be justly enslaved as no moral or political crime was involved. Their villages and towns could be raided and plundered, and inhabitants hunted, because they were more animal than human.³⁷⁹

Beckford's response to the stereotyping of Black sexuality, challenges "pastors and ministers in correcting historical distortions of Black sexuality," and in doing so, he delineates new contours of pastoral care. First, Beckford stresses ending the silence over negative representations of Black sexuality. Second, there must be a reconnecting of Black sexuality with Black spirituality. Third, there must be a re-establishing of wholeness where the stereotypes emanating from White supremacist thought are deconstructed and the internalisation of such views by Black people are dispelled.³⁸⁰

Adding to the list of African Caribbean contributors to *Contact* and echoing earlier pleas for a Black theology is Jeffery Brown. Brown conceptualises the need for bilingualism. Here, Brown argues for a form of "double consciousness" where he challenges the BMC "never to forget the voice of the oppressed," and provokes White

³⁷⁹ Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd, *Trading Souls: Europe's Transatlantic Trade in Africans* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2007), 7.

³⁸⁰ Beckford, "Black Sexual Representations and Pastoral Care," 19-20.

churches to "learn the language of BMC's, not the speech of rhetoric, but the language of marginalisation and exclusion."³⁸¹ Thus, with the issues raised, a positive course can be made.

In my reading of *Contact*, I believe we can identify an agenda and a historical trajectory for Black theology in Britain. The key points are: First, an emerging awareness of Blackness, racial politics and culture as a central feature of British life and history. And within this a clear recognition that the Black churches have played a pivotal role in the career of Black British culture from the Windrush onward. Black churches have been among the most visible and distinctive forms of Black culture. They have also been central to Black civic life in a way that the majority white churches had to some degree lost in that period. I say this, not to point to any failing in the white churches, but to observe that in the Black churches, the pastor and the church were often called on to fill gaps where congregants felt ill-treated or alienated from many bodies in civic life and social services. First, a working Black pastor from the 1950s onwards in Britain would be dealing with problems of accommodation, schooling, medical care and emotional and psychological issues - all of which would for white congregants possibly be treated by social services and a range of institutions from which Black Britons felt alienated. Second, *Contact* places this experience of alienation in Britain into a historical context of Black history over centuries, something that was never taught to Black Britons in school. However, they were

³⁸¹ Jeffery Brown, "Young, Gifted and Black," *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies*, 122 (1997): 11-16. The term double consciousness now has various meanings but it was originally coined by W.E.B. Dubois in *The Souls of Black Folks* (Maryland: Arc manor Publications, 2008), 133. Dubois' conceptualisation describes the double life every American negro must live, as a negro and as an American, as swept by the current of the nineteenth century while struggling in the eddies of the fifteenth century- from this must arise a painful self-consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence...this must produce a peculiar wrenching of the soul, a peculiar sense of doubt and bewilderment. Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to the double words, and tempt the mind for pretence or revolt, to hypocrisy or radicalism.

nevertheless encouraged to think that the names of Henry VIII's wives and mistresses somehow helped the children of African Caribbean parents know where they had come from. Third, *Contact* recognises (see above) that the church in Black culture has been central to much more than theology or weekly worship. Fourth, *Contact* has also come to acknowledge one of those "hidden grotesques" that Beckford names: that the churches at least might have had negative as well as positive effects on the nature and the perception of Black culture. In particular, the church was involved in generational conflict mirrored by some pastors' contempt of younger Black modes of behaviour and values. Moreover, the church as a whole was involved to such a high degree of "normative whiteness" that the church also became contaminated with unhelpful and reductive negative perceptions of itself and its own people. Fifth, *Contact*, for me, has made it clear that an awareness of Black culture and marginalization must affect pastoral care. My congregants are individuals, but they are individuals formed and shaped by history and culture. The high level of anger and protest in Black congregants; the conflicts over ideas of sexuality and gender; the liability of congregants to feel persecuted and blame each other; all may be linked. Sixth, *Contact* highlights the legitimate experiences that are the daily realities of life lived in a diasporic community.

Emerging voices for a Black theology

With the above pointers and embracing the challenge by Paul Grant and Raj Patel, Black people began articulating their experiences. This quest for self-assertion led to the publication of *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Praxis* in 1998 coinciding with Robert Beckford's *Jesus is Dread*. The journal had two functions. First, it was a non-denominational publication for expressing Black people's

experience of God. Second, it was a medium seeking self-representation without validation and legitimisation from others. Emmanuel Lartey, the editor at the launch of the journal asked, "What is this about colours in theology? Surely there is only one true theology – revealed by God in the Bible! And why on earth would you want a Black theology anyway?"³⁸² Lartey understands theology as "what is articulated about God," but the "journal is seeking to make known what Black people in Britain is thinking, feeling, saying and expressing about their experience of God."³⁸³

In the inaugural edition, five articles featured an array of issues pertaining to Black life in Britain. Valentina Alexander argues for a dialogue between Africentricism and Black Christian consciousness.³⁸⁴ She highlights how in the midst of Christian celebration and Kwanzaa she feels visible and valued, but in the forum of discussion between the two parties she witnesses "a pernicious and counterproductive mistrust of the other. Both it seems pour scorn on each other's ideological standpoint."³⁸⁵ The way forward, Alexander argues, is "through dialogue."³⁸⁶ The second article, by Ronald Nathan analyses the conflict between Black youths living in an environment of racism and discrimination in British society, and within the church. Nathan, echoing the voices of Black youth asks for the "need of a pan African theology

³⁸² Emmanuel Lartey, Editor's note in *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Praxis* no. 1 (1998), 7.

³⁸³ Lartey, Editor's note, 7.

³⁸⁴ Africentrism is a complex term and does not lend itself to a single definition. However, its major principles are that it promotes African self-determination, unity, a racial solidarity amongst all Black people, and it attempts to get past pre-slavery history and enriches the self-worth of Black people via their African roots. See the work of Gary J Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony, and Postmodernity* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 172.

³⁸⁵ Valentina Alexander, "Afrocentric and Black Christian Consciousness: Towards an Honest Intersection," *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Practice* 1, no. 1 (1998), 14. Kwanzaa was created to introduce and reinforce seven basic values of African culture which contribute to building and reinforcing family, community and culture among African American people as well as Africans throughout the world African community. <http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org/7principles.shtml> (accessed 18 March, 2013).

³⁸⁶ Alexander, "Afrocentric and Black Christian Consciousness," 18.

occurring from the underbelly of British life."³⁸⁷ The next article by George Mulrain reflects on music being a vehicle for theology and argues that scholars from the so-called 'Third World' have helped to promote the theories related to this new approach to theology.³⁸⁸ His musings are as follows:

They have simultaneously awakened people from the West to realise the universality of Eurocentric theology was the sum total reflections about God by White, male, middle class academics. God might be universal in the sense of being the one and only true God, but God talk certainly was not.³⁸⁹

The third article, examines the subject of Christian education and its importance for children. Anthony Reddie's methodological approach focuses on influencing the lives of Black people, but he points out the methodology and its findings are applicable to all children.³⁹⁰ Reddie grounds Christian education for Black people on the founding scholars of Black theology, namely, James Cone, Gayraud Wilmore, Jacqueline Grant, Randall Bailey, Cain Hope Felder and Renita Weems.³⁹¹ In Reddie's view, to exclude such theorists will have "failed to link the practice of theology with the faith, traditions, cultures, history and experience of Black people, and hence, will tend towards the abstract, with irrelevancy following not far behind."³⁹² The theme of excluding Black contribution to theological development is taken up by the final contributor.

³⁸⁷ Ronald Nathan, "Caribbean Youth Identity in the United Kingdom: A Call for a Pan-African Theology," *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Practice* 1, no. 1 (1998), 26.

³⁸⁸ George Mulrain, "The Music of African Caribbean Theology," *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Praxis* 1, no.1 (1998), 35.

³⁸⁹ Mulrain, "The Music of African Caribbean Theology," 35-38.

³⁹⁰ Anthony Reddie, "Towards a Christian Education of Liberation: The Christian Education of Black children in Britain," *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Praxis* 1, no.1 (1998): 46-58.

³⁹¹ These scholars are considered the founding voices and contributors of Black theology and its various interpretations.

³⁹² Reddie, "Towards a Christian Education," 53.

Kate Coleman describes her personal journey into Black liberation theology by citing two pivotal moments. First, she experienced a crisis of validity in which being female in a leadership/pastoral role led to fierce debate. Second, there was a predicament of invisibility where Coleman, reflecting on her theological training was "submerged in a sea of White male dominance considered the only contributors to theological advancement."³⁹³

In this initial edition there is the constant engagement with identity disguised in a myriad of expressions. The focus on identity is not a psychological fixation but an assertion for the recognition of one's humanity in an environment where difference is often made real, but unwanted. In the same year as the launch of the journal, Robert Beckford published *Jesus is Dread*. Beckford's conceptualisation endorsed the claims of previously acknowledged authors who espoused the benefits of the development for a Black theology in Britain whilst articulating the "inadequacy of western theological models in speaking for Black Christians experience in Britain."³⁹⁴

Beckford's articulation for a Black humanity as an important existential concern conveys the positive nature of the BMC for Black people when he states how "worshipping in a BMC kept me sane as a Black person of African Caribbean descent in Britain."³⁹⁵ He states, "experiencing the love, fellowship and nurture of my local church ensured my opportunity to become an educated servant, rather than an endangered species, in a context of racial oppression."³⁹⁶ He juxtaposes his rationale by commenting on the situation of Black people remaining within the confines of the

³⁹³ Kate Coleman, "Black Theology and Black Liberation: A Womanist Perspective," *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Practice* 1, (1998), 61.

³⁹⁴ Robert Beckford, *Jesus is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998), 4-5.

³⁹⁵ Beckford, *Jesus is Dread*, 26.

³⁹⁶ Beckford, *Jesus is Dread*, 41.

White traditional churches and admits his difficulty in understanding how "Black people could be members of the same organisation who were complicit in the propagation of enslavement." He adds:

There seem to be a sort of split occurring for many of the Black adherents of the traditional churches. They would worship within their own tradition in the morning and then attend the Pentecostal church in the evening. If this is so, what were they looking for? Many of the Black folk in the traditional churches found it hard going."³⁹⁷

Some Black people remaining within White churches are linked to the sense of having 'made it.' This notion of having 'made it' refers to the rise of the Black middle class but also for many of the Windrush epoch who originally came to Britain as integrationists, a concept which Clifford Hill acknowledges.³⁹⁸

In the Caribbean, Pentecostal churches, comprised mainly of uneducated people attracted a level of stigmatisation.³⁹⁹ However, in England, the religious prejudice was dispensed with as BMC's became repositories for validating, affirming and humanising Black life. In contrast to the experience in BMC's, Black people in mainstream churches had to assert themselves for acceptance as people.⁴⁰⁰ However, Beckford does not paint a romanticised picture of BMC's because he articulates examples of inequality in disability, sexism, class and sexuality and such areas are in

³⁹⁷ Beckford, *Jesus is Dread*, 43.

³⁹⁸ Clifford Hill, *How Colour Prejudiced is Britain?* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1965). 150.

³⁹⁹ Mozella G. Mitchell, *Crucial Issues in Caribbean Religion* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2006), 154.

⁴⁰⁰ Beckford, *Jesus is Dread*, 48.

need of theological reflection.⁴⁰¹ Beckford sees church as a political entity and it must aspire to political engagement if change is to occur. However, at the beginning of the twenty first century, the BMC is not forthcoming in embracing Beckford's theological ideology or his other concepts contained within his further publications.⁴⁰²

Contemporary writings - 2000 and beyond

From the early 1970s, two voices reflected on the pastoral needs of Christians in Britain. First, the dominant voice of White hegemony occupied the centre stage in academic discourse. Second, the concerns and experiences of marginalised people are muted. The discourse between abstract notions and experience seldom finds a level playing field for theological conversation.⁴⁰³ This uncomfortable discourse is articulated by Lorraine Dixon.

In the 2000 edition of *Contact* Dixon re-images the BMC from a Womanist perspective.⁴⁰⁴ Dixon is an Anglican priest and is of Jamaican heritage.⁴⁰⁵ She elevates the significant role Black women had played in her life by providing care and spirituality in the church. Her experience and observations are not only personal, but they demonstrate that "traditions of care originating within Africa and had travelled

⁴⁰¹ Beckford, *Jesus is Dread*, 27-30.

⁴⁰² Robert Beckford, *Dread and Pentecostal: A Political Theology for the Black Church in Britain* (London: SPCK, 2000). See his more recent publication *Jesus Dub: Culture: Faith and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁴⁰³ It is important to add here the observations of African American psychiatrist Carl Bell. Bell articulates that in conversations on race Black people and White people are having two conversations which never meet. The White person will talk about policies and the abstract and their agreement of equality, but the Black person's starting position is not abstract but located in the reality of their experience. They too believe in the policy, but their lived experience dictates to them the harshness of injustice. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHwVyFzCiJs> (accessed 10 February, 2011).

⁴⁰⁴ Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Garden: Womanist Prose* (London: The Woman's Press Limited, 1984), xi. Walker defines womanist as a Black feminist or a feminist of color. From the Black folks expression of mothers to female children, "You are acting Womanish," i.e. like a woman, wanting to know grown up things. This also refers to women who love other women sexually or non-sexually, appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility and women's strength.

⁴⁰⁵ Lorraine Dixon. "A Reflection on Black Identity and Belonging in the Context of the Anglican Church in England: A Way Forward," *Black Theology in Britain* 4 (2000): 22-23.

across the seas and generations to play an active part in stabilising people during times of distress and ‘dis-ease.’”⁴⁰⁶

Dixon’s world comprised her being the minority in school, work and church.⁴⁰⁷ She joins the millions of people of African descent who are caught in a binary mode of existence. Mixing with her White peers whose worldview was considered normative, Dixon found herself on many occasions attempting to ‘fit in’ so as not to feel excluded. ‘Fitting in’ evoked the familiar comments of, ‘I don’t see colour,’ or, ‘I don’t see you as Black,’ or, ‘there is no Jew or Gentile, we are all one in the Lord.’⁴⁰⁸ To use such scriptures, argues Dixon, in light of oppression, increased her invisibility as a Black woman, and those who use scripture to ameliorate an uncomfortable subject show little sign of behavioural change although espousing the biblical belief of equality.⁴⁰⁹ The only place she felt comfortable was at home, with her Black peers, listening to music, and hearing stories of the Caribbean from her parents’ generation.⁴¹⁰

Dixon has remained an Anglican, but has experienced a sense of disconnection with regards to its worship and music. Despite this disconnection, there were moments when Caribbean culture came to the fore. For example, preparing funeral services, selecting hymns and leading the worship led to rare moments of self-expression validating their humanity by reconnecting with their spiritual heritage.⁴¹¹ Dixon

⁴⁰⁶ Lorraine Dixon, "Reflections on Pastoral Care from a Womanist Perspective," *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies*, 132 (2000): 6.

⁴⁰⁷ Dixon, "A Reflection on Black Identity," 23.

⁴⁰⁸ Romans 10:12 and Galatians 3:28.

⁴⁰⁹ The argument of Carl Bell earlier cited serves a purpose as it can be used with equal potency within Christian circles. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHwVyFzCiJs> (accessed 10 February, 2011).

⁴¹⁰ Dixon, "A Reflection on Black Identity," 24.

⁴¹¹ Dixon, "A Reflection on Black Identity," 28.

quotes fellow Anglican Eve Pitts' mantra to other African Caribbean people 'Hold on to your spiritual heritage.'⁴¹² Dixon, acknowledging the importance of context quotes Randall Bailey who emphasises "the danger of ignoring one's cultural bias when interpreting scripture."⁴¹³ For Dixon, Bailey's comments are enacted when the dominant group uses scripture in an oppressive manner, especially when talking about race.⁴¹⁴

In Dixon's final analysis, she asks, "What does it mean being Black and in a main stream church?" She answers, "Speaking the 'truth in love' whilst dropping the mask."⁴¹⁵ The mask indicates how much falsehood we hide behind when we are speaking to each other. There is the mask of denial where "White people deny Blackness, and Black and Asians deny Blackness."⁴¹⁶ Her reasons are levelled at both sides of the denial fence; "no one wants to rock the theological boat or scratch the brittle veneer of 'acceptance' in multicultural congregations and neither group wants to wrestle with the awkwardness and difficulty the discussions of race evokes."⁴¹⁷ The task facing Black people is, coming to grips with who they are, but that is a constantly changing and convoluted endeavour. So many African Caribbeans are oblivious of their connection to a rich history and a civilisation prior to the transatlantic slave trade in the midst of struggling for full acceptance in Britain. African Caribbean people must transcend the position of living under the cloud of oppression and arise to accept their position of godly entitlement on the earth. Dixon notes:

⁴¹² Dixon, "A Reflection on Black Identity," 28.

⁴¹³ Randall Bailey, "The Danger of Ignoring One's Cultural Bias in Interpreting the Text," in *The Postcolonial Bible*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 68-90.

⁴¹⁴ Dixon, "A Reflection on Black Identity," 35.

⁴¹⁵ Dixon, "A Reflection on Black Identity," 35-36.

⁴¹⁶ Dixon, "A Reflection on Black Identity," 35.

⁴¹⁷ Dixon, "A Reflection on Black Identity," 35.

We need to revisit our faith stories as African Caribbeans; a story of both survival strategies and radical action in the face of hostility and racism in our churches...The sacrament of Black presence has sought to herald a realised vision of freedom, equality and real change for all...we are not poor wretches who need scraps of sympathy thrown down to us but full participating members who demand the right to be treated on an equal footing.⁴¹⁸

Dixon's reflections challenges African Caribbeans to intentionally engage with their history not simply as by-products of colonial rule, but people who are created in the image of God and equal to all other human beings on earth.

Another African Caribbean voice adding to the development of a Black British theology is Mark Sturge. Sturge claims the Black church "Expend[s] more energies and credence to praxis than to reflection."⁴¹⁹ Providing an historical overview of Black Christianity in Britain, Sturge, comments on events prior to the Windrush epoch. He stresses, "They were not only slaves, but preachers involved with social justice and acting as agents of social and religious change."⁴²⁰ Sturge heralds the church's community initiatives, but criticises it for its myopic view of pastoral care, praxis and dealing with issues of unity and reconciliation largely due to the BMC having division amongst itself.⁴²¹ Sturge does not elaborate on this point, but the internal conflict is characteristic of a body either in the earlier stages of development, or is not at ease

⁴¹⁸ Dixon, "A Reflection on Black Identity", 37.

⁴¹⁹ Mark Sturge, *Look What the Lord has Done! An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain* (Bletchley: Scripture Union, 2005), 88.

⁴²⁰ Sturge, *Look What the Lord has Done!*, 62 – 79. See the work of Chike Chigor, *Voices from Slavery: The Life and Beliefs of African Slaves in Britain* (Milton Keynes: AuthorHouse, 2007).

⁴²¹ Sturge, *Look What the Lord has Done!*, 145.

with itself. Where infighting takes places and is not curtailed or dealt with, it will stymie the development of a local congregation or any group for that matter.

Similar to Timothy James, Sturge understands pastoral care as not only dealing with congregational affairs but includes engaging in social issues impacting the lives of Black people. Furthermore, he calls into question the BMC's reticence and lack of leadership on such matters.⁴²² For example, on racial concerns, the BMC is silent and continues as if racism and marginalisation do not exist.⁴²³ Offering assistance to others is commendable, but it could be a mask in not having to deal with themselves and wider issues affecting the life of its people. Sturge's comment revisits Timothy's deliberations who asked whether the BMC's activities were a form of escapism.⁴²⁴ Space does not permit an in-depth analysis of psychological defences to discover whether the BMC's activities are indeed a form of denial, but such a study, given its ramifications, would be a fruitful endeavour. Emmanuel Lartey has emphasised one of the unexplored challenges facing the development of Black theology in Britain is "the effects of Black existence in Britain upon Black people."⁴²⁵

The perplexing construct of identity for African Caribbean people is explored by Joseph Aldred who proposes a Caribbean British Christianity. First, Caribbean identity does not seek permission to be. Second, it seeks understanding. Third, for a multicultural and multi-faith society to flourish, its different component parts need to understand each other.⁴²⁶ Aldred, reflecting on the lives of Caribbean diasporan

⁴²² Sturge, *Look What the Lord has Done!*, 145.

⁴²³ Sturge, *Look What the Lord has Done!*, 146.

⁴²⁴ Timothy, *Pastoral Care and Counselling*, 34.

⁴²⁵ Emmanuel Lartey, "After Stephen Lawrence: Characteristics and Agenda for Black Theology," *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Praxis* 3 (1999): 90.

⁴²⁶ Joseph Aldred, *Respect: Understanding Caribbean British Christianity* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2005), vii.

people comments, “While Caribbean British Christians have suffered oppression in social, political, economic and other spheres, they do not appear to have imbibed the ideology that ‘the oppressed’ is their defining identity.”⁴²⁷ In, Aldred’s development of a British Caribbean theology he dispenses with the well-used Exodus narrative of liberation and employs the incarnation as a model of realised liberty.⁴²⁸ Aldred’s realised liberty is a theology of respect which means listening to varying voices coupled with the equal sharing of power from the dominant group.⁴²⁹ Giving or sharing power is not a popular practice among dominant groups. The accepting of power by marginalised groups in order to make life changes for themselves is an unfamiliar experience too. Therefore, in Aldred’s paradigm it is unclear who symbolises the incarnation. It could be Black diaspora people whose starting position is one of disadvantage, but they are still called to reach out to other marginalised people. It could include the task of the dominant group to release their grip on power in order to allow a more egalitarian community.

Following Aldred’s considerations, Anthony Reddie promotes the possibility of a transatlantic dialogue.⁴³⁰ However, his work consistently utilises African American sources as primary data for discourse and reflection. It is only in recent times African American scholars have engaged with the African Caribbean Diaspora in Britain.⁴³¹ Reddie’s over- reliance on African American sources is noted by Delroy Reid-Salmon. Reid-Salmon praises Reddie’s contribution but critiques Black British

⁴²⁷ Aldred, *Respect*, 164.

⁴²⁸ Aldred, *Respect*, 164.

⁴²⁹ Aldred, *Respect*, 206.

⁴³⁰ Anthony Reddie, *Black Theology in Transatlantic Dialogue* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 2.

⁴³¹ Kate Coleman, "Black Theology and Black Liberation: A Womanist Perspective," *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal for Contextual Praxis* 1 (1998): 68.

theology as “an African-American voice in a British body.”⁴³² Reid-Salmon argues that a closer relationship with their Caribbean siblings rather than the African American cousins would be more beneficial.⁴³³ Reid-Salmon does not advance his argument any further because the reference of over reliance on African American literature can also be applied to Anglo American and European literature. Reid-Salmon, critiquing Reddie's work, argues that a distinct Black British theology is still to emerge.⁴³⁴ By nature, theology is dialogical, and given the experiences of the African Caribbean diaspora, a theology for its people must emerge from within the British context, that is, ‘from the ashes of experience.’ However, this is problematic because the link with the Caribbean is seemingly less important for the third and fourth generations of African Caribbean offspring born in Britain.

Similar to Dixon's plea, the clarion call in acknowledging one's context is reaffirmed by Lartey's conceptualisation of pastoral theology.⁴³⁵ Drawing from his heritage he emphasises the inseparability of life.⁴³⁶ Lartey further insists how contexts must not be trivialised as they add to our understanding of the person who seeks ministerial guidance.⁴³⁷ Lartey maintains:

Contextual analysis can be understood as a way of discerning and seeking to hear what God may be saying out of the different exigencies of the human condition as experienced in different contexts. It is also a means of

⁴³² Delroy Reid Salmon, "Book review of *Black Theology in Transatlantic Dialogue*," by Anthony Reddie. *Black Theology in Britain: An International for Contextual Praxis* 6, no.1 (2008): 135.

⁴³³ Reid Salmon, "Book review," 132-137.

⁴³⁴ Reid Salmon, Book review, 135. See Delroy Reid Salmon, “A Sin of Black Theology: The Omission of the Caribbean Diasporan Experience from Black Theological Discourse,” *Black Theology: An International Journal* 6 no. 2 (2008): 154-173.

⁴³⁵ Emmanuel Lartey, *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2006), 42.

⁴³⁶ Lartey, *Pastoral Theology*, 5.

⁴³⁷ Lartey, *Pastoral Theology*, 42.

understanding the reality of the human experience that pastoral theologians seek to care for. Careful attention to historical, socio-economic, cultural and political circumstances is crucial for theological discernment....subjugated and marginalised people are increasingly being recognised as sources of authentic and crucial knowledge. It is time for us all to listen to and learn from ‘the least of these’ (economically speaking), whose traditions most often are both ancient and rich in wisdom for living.⁴³⁸

Lartey’s response highlights how context is crucial in understanding the other. No one exists in a vacuum, therefore, the influences of one’s external reality shapes them and cannot be ignored if they are to be understood in a way that avoids defaulting to well worn stereotypes about the people being researched.

In 2008 two significant events took place. First, *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* changed its name to *Practical Theology*, and *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal for Contextual Praxis*, celebrating its tenth year of publication changed its name to *Black Theology: An International Journal*. The tenth anniversary gave opportunity to reflect on the advances and failures of the journal. It has mainly featured Black Christian life in Britain, but it is in need of further development. For example, Joe Aldred argues there is little evidence of biblical scholarship within its pages and this omission contributes to the limitation of the journal.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁸ Lartey, *Pastoral Theology*, 42.

⁴³⁹ Joe Aldred, “Paradigms for a Black Theology in Britain,” *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Praxis* 2 (1999): 9. In the *Black Theology Journal* very few articles have engaged with biblical themes such as The Holy Spirit, Love, Easter, Holy Saturday, compassion, globalisation, disability, sexuality and so on.

In considering the journal's limitations Lartey attests how an African cosmology construes the interconnectedness of the world, but as the world increases in complexity, a Black British theology must engage in the breath of existential concerns, because there are no experiences or temptations common to humanity where people of the African Caribbean diaspora are exempt. Earlier, Beckford commented on the BMC's reticence on issues of disability, sexism and sexuality. This includes the taboo and difficult subject of homosexuality. Responding to the difficult subject of homosexuality, Caroline Redfearn engages with the issue.⁴⁴⁰ Redfearn's provides an historical overview and analysis of the written records pertaining to sexual behaviour on the slave plantations in Jamaica and produces essential material for conducting a theological reflection in understanding homosexuality, its development and occurrence within Caribbean society during enslavement.⁴⁴¹ Redfearn delineates that there are many instances of male rape and homosexuality that occurred on the plantations in Jamaica, but one has to read in between the lines for the evidence because it is largely hidden. Whilst Black theology in Britain is an emerging and fledgling discipline, it is not without its weaknesses or its critics.

Contemporary critiques of Black theology

The development of a Black British theology is not without its critics. Alistair Kee is critical of the current state of Black theology in America more so than in the United Kingdom and contends that the American dilemma of being stuck with the mantras of old could happen in Britain if there is no progression with the various shifts in society. Kee illustrates his point this way, "how many theologies describe themselves as contextual, but some are not contextual enough; contexts change, but some theologies

⁴⁴⁰ Caroline Redfearn, *The Nature of Homophobia in the BMC in Postcolonial Black British Theology: New Textures and Themes* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2007), 102.

⁴⁴¹ Redfearn, *The Nature of Homophobia*, xxvi, & 102 -123.

keep repeating the same mantras.”⁴⁴² Kee stresses that “Black theology in America from the 1960s and 1970s was creative, but it has failed to keep in step with the changing context of the 1990s.”⁴⁴³ He exemplifies his point by referring to the “increasing number of poor people in America whilst a burgeoning Black middle class exists.” Nevertheless, Kee seems to have more hope for Black theology within the British context.⁴⁴⁴

To demonstrate this hope, Kee uses Robert Beckford as his main interlocutor in praising him as one who “critiques the BMC for its strengths and achievements, but exposes its social and governmental passivity as he examines it through a political theological lens.”⁴⁴⁵ He finds Beckford’s work engaging but “fears his isolation because he tackles topics which the church is either reluctant to consider, or is unable to engage with in matters which it feels is alien to it.”⁴⁴⁶ Lacking dialogue partners within the church, Beckford has had to resort to external sources. To my mind however, Beckford’s engagement with artists and musicians is a reconnection and retrieval of cultural practices characteristic of African life, prior to the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Christianisation of the enslaved.⁴⁴⁷

Further academic scholarship contributing to the development of a British Black theology occurred in 2007 with *Black Theology in Britain: A Reader*.⁴⁴⁸ The *Reader* expresses a wide range of experiences of Black Christians rooted in the British

⁴⁴² Alistair Kee, *The Rise and Demise of Black Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), vii.

⁴⁴³ Kee, *The Rise and Demise*, vii.

⁴⁴⁴ Kee, *The Rise and Demise*, xii.

⁴⁴⁵ Kee, *The Rise and Demise*, 153.

⁴⁴⁶ Kee, *The Rise and Demise*, 153.

⁴⁴⁷ See the work of Venetia Newall, “Black Britain: The Jamaicans and their Folklore,” *Folklore* 106, no.1(1975).

⁴⁴⁸ Michael Jagessar and Anthony Reddie, eds., *Black Theology in Britain: A Reader* (Peterborough: Equinox, 2007).

context, but it still has some distance to travel. Black theology has still not been taken seriously by some because it has not stood the test of time and has not enjoyed the privilege or longevity as European theology. Thus, the on-going plea from the periphery of society, and those from the centre who join ranks with the dispossessed continue to press for a theology which speaks, affirms, listens and empowers God's people. This plea can be achieved following the agenda for a Black theology in Britain as sketched out by Lartey. His points are as follows. First, there is a biblical task because "Black people love the Bible." This links to Aldred's point about Black churches being biblio-centric and the need for biblical models if its people are going to engage in praxis. Second, a historical task needs undertaking to instil in many African Caribbean people the significant role people of African descent have made in the Bible, Britain and in the world. Third, there is a need for contextual education, or as Lartey describes it, "philosophical and cultural education."⁴⁴⁹ Fourth, there is a need of broadening and deepening the understanding of salvation, not only someone coming to faith in Jesus, but an understanding of sociology which encompasses the entirety of one's humanity. Fifth, there is a need for political engagement which "takes the contemporary scene seriously." Sixth, as earlier stated, "The effects of Black existence in Britain upon Black people have yet to be fully worked out." Lartey's analysis reinforces John Henrik Clarke's observation who states, "Black people must remember that Western civilisation was not created with them in mind."⁴⁵⁰ Seventh, the transatlantic slave trade and the Christianisation of the enslaved African have divorced them from vital aspects of their culture. Here, Lartey cogently argues that "Black theologians have largely ignored Black music, drama,

⁴⁴⁹ Emmanuel Lartey, "After Stephen Lawrence," *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Praxis* 3 (1999): 79.

⁴⁵⁰ John Henrik Clarke, *A Great and Mighty Walk*, DVD, (African Images, 1998).

dance, film and the arts” but “there is a need for the “reclamation of our heritage in all its varied dimension, in the arts.”⁴⁵¹

Further critiques and development of Black British Theology in the twenty-first century

Contributing to the development of a fledging contextual theology means that matters of inclusivity, diversity, and broadening the understanding of the term ‘Black,’ requires further analysis and this is conducted by two British based African scholars, William Ackah and Chigor Chike. Ackah explores the usefulness of the term Black as developed by the founder of a systematic Black theology, James Cone.⁴⁵² Ackah extrapolates Cone’s conceptualisations and argues the following:

Should the development of Black theology include the mass migration of Africans throughout the world who have carried their brand of Christianity with them and which invariably has changed, and is changing the contours of African diasporic understanding.⁴⁵³

In proposing a new perspective, Ackah asks pertinent questions challenging the present construction of Black theology in Britain. He expresses the following:

Do we bring the old diasporas with the new? Or should we? Do we go back to Black, using the tools of Black power and Black consciousness and the lens of racialised oppression to embrace the new diaspora, or do we need some new

⁴⁵¹ Lartey, “After Stephen Lawrence,” 87-91.

⁴⁵² Black theology existed in oral form prior to James Cone. Lartey suggests Cone systemised it.

⁴⁵³ William Ackah, “Back to Black or Diversity in the Diaspora? Re-imagining Pan-Africa Christian Identity in the Twenty –First Century,” *Black Theology: An International Journal* 8, no. 3 (2010): 342.

tools; a refined framework to account for the impact and potential future encounters these Africans will have on the Black experience? Do we need diversity in the diaspora?⁴⁵⁴

Ackah resurrects Beckford's comment regarding the non-homogeneity of the Black community, thus, the assumption of homogeneity is misplaced if one attempts to meld Caribbean, African and Asians together.⁴⁵⁵ Ackah's conceptualisation is expanded by Chike Chigor who employs Christology to reinforce one of the central tenets of Black theology of who Jesus Christ is for Black people. Moreover, he points out how the 'Black' in Black theology proves objectionable to some people.⁴⁵⁶ Chigor notes that Africans may not align themselves to the terminology, yet they experience racism which has led to a heightened awareness of socio-political predicaments.⁴⁵⁷

Chigor concurs with Ackah's notion for the necessity of new developments in Black theology, but proposes "an expanding of Black theological theorisation from its andocentric African American paradigm, to include African encounters with Jesus; a Dalit conceptualisation of Jesus and a theological discourse with the often muted voices of Black women."⁴⁵⁸ Here, Chigor uses James Cone and Emmanuel Lartey as his two dialogue partners in constructing his argument. Chigor views Cone as "the prophetic voice which heralded the clarion call from the Civil Rights era when the fight was for justice and liberation, a struggle which continues today," and he builds

⁴⁵⁴ Ackah, "*Back to Black*," 343.

⁴⁵⁵ Promoting the development of a Black British theology from an Asian perspective located in Britain is Mukti Barton's *Rejection, Resistance and Resurrection: Speaking out on Racism in the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005), 116. Barton emphasises how Black theology "had nourished her."

⁴⁵⁶ Chigor Chike, "Black Christology for the Twenty-First Century," *Black Theology: An International Journal* 8, no. 3 (2010): 369.

⁴⁵⁷ Chike, "Black Christology," 369.

⁴⁵⁸ Chike, "Black Christology," 366- 376.

on Lartey's configuration of Black, not only meaning African-American folks, but "integrating the voices of African, Caribbean and Asian people as well as those who identify with 'the Black experience' in terms of heritage, oppression and domination."⁴⁵⁹ It is clear from Chigor's analysis that Black theology is not only for Black people but also for all periphery people.

I now want to leave the British shores and head towards North America and the Caribbean to consider their contribution to the discipline of pastoral theology.

Black Pastoral Theology across the Atlantic

In America, the leading exponent of African American pastoral theology is Edward Wimberly. His work attempts to recapture humanity and dignity for African Americans through a process of healing, sustaining and fulfilling. Wimberly stresses that one of the most effective means of "pastoral care in the Black church is through narrative. A truly narrative style of pastoral care in the Black church draws upon personal stories from the pastor's life, stories from the practice of ministry, and stories from the Bible."⁴⁶⁰ Wimberly points out the dangers of the pastor using his/her story as a model of gaining relief from personal dilemmas because it could be seen as a prescriptive paradigm to sort out one's problems.⁴⁶¹ Wimberly tackles the often unspoken experience of shame within the Black community, and using the insights of psychology, sociology and the Bible stories, he intricately weaves a methodology

⁴⁵⁹ Lartey, "After Stephen Lawrence," 81.

⁴⁶⁰ Edward Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care: A Revised Edition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), 1. It is important to stress that Wimberly first published this work in 1979. Twenty years later, he was more convinced that a narrative style of pastoral care was relevant not just for African Americans.

⁴⁶¹ Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care*, 1.

enabling the relief for people of their dilemmas through telling stories.⁴⁶² Despite promoting a narrative methodology of ministry, he acknowledges that telling stories alone is insufficient to help people through their difficulties. He explains how people "bring well-formed personal narratives fashioned and shaped by their experiences of shame."⁴⁶³ These personal stories he suggests are *secular scriptures*, an idea developed by Merle Jordan. Jordan refers to them as "ideas, values and beliefs held by an individual. It is as though these tenets of faith have descended from Mount Sinai."⁴⁶⁴ Such scriptures are not easily dispelled, argues Wimberly, and what is required is "divine and human intervention."⁴⁶⁵ The theme of narrative is constant and consistent in his conceptualisation of pastoral ministry. A further example of Wimberly's emphasis on narrative for pastoral ministry is found in his construct of relational refugees. He defines relational refugees as "people disconnected from significant relationships."⁴⁶⁶ Furthermore, he acknowledges that "social conflicts are rooted in the breakdown of community."⁴⁶⁷ For the reconciliation and healing of such relationships he advocates a mentoring relationship for the transmission of love, care and building a bridge back into the human community.⁴⁶⁸ Wimberly's African American location has relevance for BMC's in England. There is an assumption that all Christians should all 'get along.' We often fail to remember that Jesus' disciples did not always act in harmony. Wimberly's latest edition to the field of pastoral theology finds him persuasively arguing that given the changes of society, pastoral theology must "re-appropriate our heritage of faith in ways that speak to the present in new and

⁴⁶² Edward Wimberly, *Moving from Shame to Self-Worth: Preaching and Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 18.

⁴⁶³ Wimberly, *Moving from Shame*, 17.

⁴⁶⁴ Merle Jordan, *Taking on the Gods: The Task of Pastoral Counselling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 34.

⁴⁶⁵ Wimberly, *Moving from Shame*, 17.

⁴⁶⁶ Edward Wimberly, *Relational Refugees: Alienation and Re-Incorporation in African American Churches and African Communities* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 31

⁴⁶⁷ Wimberly, *Relational Refugees*, 27.

⁴⁶⁸ Wimberly, *Relational Refugees*, 32.

different ways.” He excavates John Wesley's theology to make a case and insists that it holds vital elements for a twenty-first pastoral theology.⁴⁶⁹ Again, Wimberly's concerns could equally be applied for the developing of a Black theology in Britain if it is to be a viable means of interpreting existence and matters of faith for Black people and a purveyor of hope.

Another African American voice contributing to the field of pastoral theology is Lee Butler who focuses on the family in his earlier publication but gives attention to identity, wrestling with the question, "Who am I?"⁴⁷⁰ This disconcerting pondering is not a fixed state of being, but it changes given the context where one is located. In this regard, the question of "Who am I," argues Butler, takes on a new life when one "ventures into the larger world, the identity takes on new dimensions with more depth and a range of expressions."⁴⁷¹ In developing his understanding of identity, Butler begins his deliberations with an exploration of his African past.⁴⁷² Joining Butler from the African American discursive space is Dale Andrews who records how "a faith identity of Black ecclesiology emerged historically as the churches interpreted their own formation and life."⁴⁷³ Moreover, he reasons that ministry within the Black church needs reshaping "aimed at social action" and a restructuring of pastoral theology.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁶⁹ Edward Wimberly, *No Shame in Wesley's Gospel: A Twenty-First Century Pastoral Theology* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), xiii.

⁴⁷⁰ Lee Butler, *Liberating our Dignity, Saving our Souls* (Missouri: Chalice Press, 2006), 3.

⁴⁷¹ Butler, *Liberating our Dignity*, 3.

⁴⁷² Butler, *Liberating our Dignity*, 5.

⁴⁷³ Dale Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 84.

⁴⁷⁴ Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 83.

With the need of restructuring, the African American androcentric perspective of pastoral theology is critiqued by Carol Watkins Ali who brings to bear the “issues of race, sexism and classism that poor African American women have to contend with in their daily lives.”⁴⁷⁵ Whilst agreeing that the male perspective is a partial valid contribution to pastoral theology, she elevates the voices of women who are missing from the pastoral theological debate.⁴⁷⁶ She claims that “it is the voice of the poor Black woman in America that states the survival and liberation of African Americans is an urgent pastoral theological concern at this time.”⁴⁷⁷ Watkins Ali sketches out theological and psychological resources for a new pastoral theology for Black America, but her starting position like Wimberly, Butler and Andrews, charts African American history from the point of slavery and the uprooting of the enslaved from their habitat and their transshipment to America.⁴⁷⁸

What is evident from African American pastoral theologians is the thorny issue concerning Black identity, community, and the quest for human expression. Without exception their starting point of analysis is history and the slavery epoch which they vehemently stress is still having its effect on people. In their starting point of understanding, interpreting and formulating a new paradigm for Black existence in America, the words of Homer Ashby encapsulates the nature of Black pastoral theology when he declares that “A Black pastoral theology cannot help but be conditioned by the historical events of the Black past.”⁴⁷⁹ Moreover, his analysis of the quest for Black pastoral theology is a commitment to “achieve a full humanity”

⁴⁷⁵ Carol Watkins Ali, *Survival & Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context* (Missouri: Chalice Press, 1999), 2.

⁴⁷⁶ Watkins Ali, *Survival & Liberation*, 3.

⁴⁷⁷ Watkins Ali, *Survival & Liberation*, 3.

⁴⁷⁸ Watkins Ali, *Survival & Liberation*, 17-25.

⁴⁷⁹ Homer Ashby, *Our Home is Over Jordan: A Black Pastoral Theology* (Missouri: Chalice Press, 2003), 87.

and the “appropriation for Black people of a culture which allows them to thrive and flourish, as well as survive.”⁴⁸⁰ Leaving the American shores, I will now examine literature on African Caribbean pastoral theology.

What is quickly discovered is that Caribbean theology is a relatively new discipline. According to Theresa Lowe-Ching, Caribbean theology seeks to espouse the cause of oppressed and the marginalised, aimed at transforming persons and the structure of society, decidedly contextual but open to other influences as long as it does not compromise its integrity and affirms the Bible as a theological source.⁴⁸¹ If Caribbean theology is a new endeavour, pastoral theology has yet to feature within the halls of the academy, albeit pastoral care is taking place but it is not a widely written discipline; however, Ashly Smith refers to Romney Moseley, a pastoral theologian, who conceptualised the “significance of inhibited self-affirmation.”⁴⁸² Moseley, using the discipline of psychology with theology as dialogue partners later developed the inhibited self-affirmation concept into the notion of becoming a self before God. In his re-visioning of faith, Moseley suggests the necessity for the "art of dialogue between conflicting arenas of experience heightens the significance of defining faith

⁴⁸⁰ Ashby, *Our Home is Over Jordan*, 88 & 86. See also the work of James Harris, *Pastoral Theology: A Black Church Perspective* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1991), 38. Here, Harris makes reference to slavery and its impact on the present, but articulates that Black church remains quiet about continued injustices and poverty in their community.

⁴⁸¹ Theresa Lowe-Ching, “Method in Caribbean Theology,” in *Caribbean Theology: Preparing for the Challenges Ahead*, ed. Howard Gregory (Kingston: Canoe Press, 1995), 26 & 32. In her article Lowe-Ching acknowledges that the features of Caribbean theology are similar to the other liberation theologies, but Caribbean theology is attempting for balance as opposed to Latin American liberation’s preoccupation with economics and Black theology’s focal point on race. Other publications contributing to the development of a Caribbean theology are Noel Erskine, *Decolonising Theology: A Caribbean Perspective* (New York: Orbis Books, 1981). Kortwright Davis, *Emancipation Still Comin’: Explorations in Emancipatory Caribbean Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1990).

⁴⁸² Ashly Smith, “In Response to Adolpho Ham (2),” in *Caribbean Theology: Preparing for the Challenges Ahead*, ed. Howard Gregory (Kingston: Canoe Press, 1995), 14.

as a composing of meaning."⁴⁸³ Furthermore, Moseley underscores the need to consider the significance of another human being. In this regard, he upholds the claim of, "The recognition of the other as my neighbour-one who is engaged in authenticating selfhood, the same as I am and whose liberation from oppression is the condition of my own liberation."⁴⁸⁴ Romney's perspective on the importance of humanity links with the earlier comments of the African cosmological philosophy which ascertains that as human beings our lives are insignificant until there is engagement with other human beings.

A more recent voice adding to the development of pastoral care from the shores of the Caribbean is S. St John Redwood who writes about the harsh and severe effect of capitalism in the Caribbean since the 1980s.⁴⁸⁵ Redwood refers to pastoral theology, but he does offer a detailed analysis of the Caribbean context. However, he advances the following definition of pastoral theology which runs parallel with African American perspectives but could be employed by the African Caribbean diaspora in Britain. He observes:

Pastoral theology in the developing world must speak to the kaleidoscope and chequered heritages of people who are striving to arrive at cultural norms and the achievement of national unity. In these countries the pastor has to come

⁴⁸³ Romney Moseley, "Forms of Logic in Development Theory," in *Christian Perspectives of Faith Development: A Reader*, eds. Jeff Astley and Leslie Francis (Leominster: Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, 1992), 169.

⁴⁸⁴ Romney Moseley, *Becoming a Self before God: Critical Transformations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 110-111.

⁴⁸⁵ S. St John Redwood, *Pastoral Care in a Market Economy: A Caribbean Perspective* (Kingston: Canoe Press, 1999), 2.

face to face with the image of the human being who is struggling with harsh economic conditions and volatile and ethnic situations.⁴⁸⁶

From Redwood's perspective, pastoral theology for marginalised people is not simply a hand holding exercise, neither is it about telling people to have "A little talk with Jesus and everything will be alright." It is grappling with existential issues and discerning where the hand of God might be in their personal dilemmas and then figuring out how is one to live as a person of faith in such tense situations.

Conclusion

The resources for developing a Black British pastoral theology are both paradoxically plenty and scarce. By plenty, I refer to the abundance of academic literature available. By scarce, I mean that despite the abundance of literature, very little pertains to the African Caribbean diaspora in the United Kingdom. To reveal the wealth of academic literature, I surveyed the literary landscape of British pastoral theology in *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* from its inception in 1960 until recent times during which in the early years of the *Contact* journal, there is no evidence of the pastoral concerns of African Caribbeans being considered for scholarly or theological reflection. However, the nebulous term 'Other' was employed to designate the non-dominant human being.

With ethnic and racial concerns being left unexplored in *Contact*, Black Christians from the Windrush epoch began to write about their experiences of being Black Christians and living in Britain. There was a huge emphasis placed on the nature and

⁴⁸⁶ Redwood, *Pastoral Care*, 1-2.

importance of church which served not only as a place of worship, but a located and created space where Black people were re-humanised, acknowledged as human beings created in the image of God and their experiences were venerated.

In 1995, thirty five years after the first publication of *Contact*, a full edition was given to articulating the concerns of intercultural pastoral issues featuring two articles dealing specifically with matters relating to cultural identity and Black sexual representation of African Caribbean people. Three years later, an edition called *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal for Contextual Praxis* was launched coinciding with Robert Beckford's *Jesus is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain*.

Supporting this initiative were white scholars who maintained that Black Christians should develop a theology resonating with their existential and spiritual needs in the diaspora. Since that time, though still in its infancy, Black theology has gained momentum with various publications investigating a wide range of subjects but never ignoring the important issue of identity. Despite its scholastic appeal, it is not without its critics. Nevertheless, Black theology has not found its way into the life of the Black church and thus is rendered unimportant or divisive by the church.

Furthermore, there is on-going debate that Black theology in Britain is still largely a Black British voice intellectually wrapped in African American garb and has yet to fully employ continental African or Caribbean resources. In addition to the removal of the African American mask, a Black British theology must engage with the burgeoning African diaspora in Britain if it is to appeal to the broad and diverse heterogeneous population.

In the closing stages of the chapter I surveyed the African American and Caribbean landscape of Black pastoral theology. Though it is true there needs to be less reliance on African American resources, undoubtedly there has been a proliferation of

intellectual scholarship which is fruitful for developing a Black British equivalent focusing on its particular and unique context. However, the generation of academic resources does not currently exist in the Caribbean. Yet common concerns exist which unite the tripartite strands of the African diaspora and contribute to a transatlantic conversation, namely, the issues of identity, the quest to experience full humanity and cultural fulfilment. Nevertheless, despite the abundance of theoretical analysis pertaining to British and African American pastoral theology and the dearth of its Caribbean and Black British pastoral theological counterparts, there remains, without doubt, the scope for developing a Black British pastoral theology which connects with Black Christians in Britain, in other parts of the world, and also other marginalised groups within British society.

With the literature review highlighting the gap of intellectual thought regarding African Caribbean Christian experience of living in Britain and the scarcity of Black British pastoral theological reflection, the next chapter adds to the rich discursive tapestry and provides the context for a relevant pastoral theology by focusing on the episodes of conflict in Jamaica and Britain.

Chapter 4 - Context of conflict in the Caribbean and in Britain

Introduction

Conflict has been a dominant feature in the birthing and developing of Caribbean society with Jamaica being the chief example. I have chosen Jamaica because it forms part of my cultural and ethnic heritage. It is the island from which most African Caribbeans migrated to Great Britain.⁴⁸⁷ Additionally, Jamaicans are the majority group in the African Caribbean diaspora Pentecostal church membership in the United Kingdom; the New Testament Church of God and the CoGoP.⁴⁸⁸

This chapter has three sections. The first section considers the birthing of Jamaican slave society amidst the context of conflict and violence used as a form of social control. The context of the slave trade via the Middle Passage is examined amidst the on-going innate quest by the enslaved for freedom. On the island of Jamaica, slave abolition finally arrived in 1832, but it was a costly endeavour for the oppressed and the oppressor alike. With the ending of enslavement came colonialism, another form of subjugation.

Part two of this chapter investigates the arrival of Caribbean migrants to Britain and the experience of rejection within British society and the church. I nuance the rejection not in terms of racism but the understanding of colour. With the other being different from the indigenous population, there were successes within some British churches.

⁴⁸⁷ <http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/countrydata.cfm?ID=461> (accessed 21 May, 2012).

⁴⁸⁸ Nancy Foner, *Jamaica Farewell: Jamaican migrants in London* (California: University of California Press, 1978), 13.

Part three considers the beginning of CoGoP in America and the mission field in England. Unexpectedly, the CoGoP in England became a BM C. I also pay specific attention to the church where I was the pastor. I chart the conflict history of the church prior to my arrival and look at one aspect of pastoral ministry that severely collided with the expectations of the senior members of the church.

Slavery in Jamaica

Understanding slavery and its derivative, racism, Eric Williams, the former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago states “slavery in the Caribbean was given a racial twist, but was an economic phenomenon. Unfree labour in the New World was brown, white, Black, and yellow; Catholic, Protestant and pagan.”⁴⁸⁹ Williams records how the first to work in the Caribbean were native Indians, closely followed by white people who were both unsuited for rigours of the climate.⁴⁹⁰ From indentured servitude to enslavement Williams writes the following:

Here, then, is the origin of Negro slavery. The reason was economic, not racial: it had not to do with the colour of the labourer, but the cheapness of the labour. As compared with the Indian and the white labour, Negro slavery was eminently superior.⁴⁹¹

The Transatlantic Slave Trade

From Williams’s observations, the first English slave-trading expedition arrived in 1562 and operated in a haphazard manner until the end of the civil war in Jamaica in 1660. This period ended with "England being ready to fully embrace a branch of

⁴⁸⁹ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London: André Deutsch, 1993), 7.

⁴⁹⁰ Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 9-19.

⁴⁹¹ Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 19.

commerce whose importance to her sugar and tobacco colonies in the New World was beginning to be fully appreciated."⁴⁹² According to Orlando Patterson, "the one clearly defined goal of slavery was of making money through the production of sugar."⁴⁹³ Patterson later redefined slavery as natal alienation and wrote the following:

I prefer the term "natal alienation," because it goes directly to the heart of what is critical in the slave's enforced alienation, the loss of ties of birth in ascending and descending generations. It also has the nuance of a loss of native status, of deracination. It was this alienation of the slave from all formal, legally enforceable ties of "blood," and from any attachment to groups or localities other than those chosen for him by the master, that gave the relation of slavery its peculiar value to the master. The slave was the ultimate human tool, as imprintable and as disposable as the master wished.⁴⁹⁴

What was established was a continual experience of conflict between the enslaved and the enslaver on various levels. First, a tension experienced in human existence. Second, one group of human beings felt justified in subjugating other human beings. Third, in theological anthropological terms, Black human beings were no longer seen or treated as people created in the image of God. The slave masters were the progenitors of violence and conflict, and the enslaved were the objects of their inhumane imposition.

⁴⁹² Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 30.

⁴⁹³ Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery* (London: Associated Presses, 1967), 9.

⁴⁹⁴ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1982), 7.

The Middle Passage

The moment of capture changed the social relations between the newly enslaved and their captors.⁴⁹⁵ Anthony Pinn gives a graphic portrayal of how the Africans were treated as captives in Africa, and their treatment on the slave ships and on arrival in the Americas. Furthermore, their humanity was negatively re-defined as they stepped up to the auction block to be bought as chattel.⁴⁹⁶ In light of this barbarism, it is impossible to talk of the transatlantic slave trade without reference to the Middle Passage, the journey from the Africa to the Americas. Herbert Klein describes the Middle passage like this:

The manner in which the enslaved was carried and the mortality they suffered have been one of the most notorious issues in the study of the Atlantic slave trade. A popular literature has painted this part of the slave experience as uniquely evil and inherently more inhuman than any other horrors of the slave life....To put the so called Middle passage into context, it should be recalled the water crossing on average took a month from Africa to Brazil and two months from the West African Coast to the Caribbean and North America. But most slaves spent a minimum from six months to a year from capture until they boarded the European ships, with time waiting on the coast to board the ship alone being on average three months.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁵ Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd, *Saving Souls: The Struggles to end the Transatlantic Trade in Africans* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2007), 4.

⁴⁹⁶ Anthony Pinn, *Terror and Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 2003), 27-37.

⁴⁹⁷ Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: New Approaches to the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 132. Further examples of the length of time of transshipment and the horrendous conditions are recorded in James Walvin's *The Zong*. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/books/article-2030135/Massacre-slaves-did-die-vain-THE-ZONG-BY-JAMES-WALVIN.html>.

In my earlier work, I reflect on the nature of the Middle Passage as existential crucifixion, focusing in particular on the journey on the ships. I described it in this manner:

Many Africans who had come from sophisticated civilisations spanning centuries either became food for marine life in the Atlantic Ocean by way of disposal, suicide or burial in the silt of the Atlantic seabed. If they did not physically die, they died existentially, residing in pitiless degradation onboard the slave ships.⁴⁹⁸

Within this environment of gross inhumanity there was conflict of existence and how life should be lived. Michael Gomez contributes to the description of the stark reality of life for the enslaved. He comments:

The transatlantic transport of all these various African to the Americas qualifies as the quintessential moment of transfiguration, the height of human alienation and disorientation. It is a phenomenon unlike any other, with millions forcibly removed from family and friends and deposited in foreign lands, foreign and hostile. It cannot be compared to the millions of Europeans who voluntarily crossed the Atlantic, a journey which for all their troubles was their collective choice. Words will never convey the agony, despair, and bewilderment of these innocents, the depth of their suffering, the pain of separation. The transatlantic voyage...was an unspeakable horror.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁸ Delroy Hall, "The Middle Passage as Existential Crucifixion," *Black Theology: An International Journal* 7, no. 1 (2009): 48.

⁴⁹⁹ Michael Gomez, *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 71-72.

Kamau Braithwaite offers another view of the Middle Passage experience and construes that it was “misunderstood.” He notes that the journey “was more than ‘merely’ a traumatic destructive experience that led to Africans being separated from their homelands, history and traditions.”⁵⁰⁰ Braithwaite viewed the Middle Passage as “a channel, or pathway, between the old tradition and what was being evolved on new soil in the Caribbean.”⁵⁰¹ Braithwaite’s claims are in bleak contrast to Gomez’s earlier comments. Africans arrived in the Caribbean by design for their entrepreneurial slave masters and not for mutual benefit. The ignoring of such calamitous events of the enslavement institution is substantiated by Hillary Beckles. He claims:

The continual denial and silence means the true nature of this human tragedy has not been scientifically evaluated and assessed. Despite the silence, and because of the denial, its impact continues to be felt in all corners of the world and still continues to haunt human relations.”⁵⁰²

The “haunting of human relations,” combines with Lartey’s earlier reflections regarding the effect of Black existence in Britain having “not been fully worked through,” suggests there exists a long standing psychological wound for African Caribbean people.

The quest for freedom

After the tortuous Middle Passage, the arrival of the enslaved on the plantation was no less brutal. The enslaved lived in obedience to the slave master but within an unstable

⁵⁰⁰ Kamau Braithwaite. *Folk Cultures of Slaves in Jamaica* (London: New Beacon Books, 1981). 7.

⁵⁰¹ Braithwaite. *Folk Cultures of Slaves*, 7.

⁵⁰² Beckles and Shepherd, *Trading Souls: Europe’s Transatlantic Trade in Africans* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2007), xvi.

society due to a level of oppression keeping them as units of production in opposition to their innate desire to express their humanity. The quest for freedom was accomplished through violent and non-violent resistance. Richard D. E. Burton comments on the exploits, such as non-violent resistance, of the enslaved in their desire for freedom. He reports:

All these actions had, it is argued, two objectives and effects. First, they enabled slaves, usually without great risk to themselves, concretely to impede and impair the smooth functioning of the plantation and so hit Massa where it hurt him most: in his pocketbook. Second, they permitted slaves to assert, in a concealed and roundabout way, their subjectivity in the face of the uniquely objectifying character of slavery.⁵⁰³

This concept of subjectivity is elaborated on by Anthony Pinn who states:

Complex subjectivity is a seeking for full humanity, a push for status as a subject of history as opposed to the racist manner in which those of African descent have been projected as objects of history. It is a quest for better utilisation of human potential and creativity.⁵⁰⁴

Following the most famous Baptist War of 1831 led by Baptist deacon Samuel Sharpe, slavery was abolished a year later. However, after the Baptist War the island

⁵⁰³ Richard D. E. Burton: *Power, Opposition and Play in the Caribbean*. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 47- 49.

⁵⁰⁴ Anthony Pinn, "Peoples Temple as Black Religion: Re-imagining the Contours of Black Religious Studies," in *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America*, eds. Rebecca Moore, Anthony Pinn and Mary R. Sawyer (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), 6

was subjected to colonialism.⁵⁰⁵ British colonialism finally ended in Jamaica in 6 August 1962.⁵⁰⁶ The official ending of colonialism did not end before another call for cheap Black labour was requested for the rebuilding of the infrastructure in England after the Second World War.

The Windrush generation: Social and religious conflict

In June 1948, The Empire Windrush sailed into Tilbury dock with 492 Jamaicans arriving as British subjects.⁵⁰⁷ They arrived carrying a latent, violent, painful and dehumanising legacy coupled with an identity still in the process of development. Yet contained within their Black human frame was a defiant and resilient spirit. They arrived with a sense of enterprise and ambition, seeking a better life cloaked with a desire of assimilation into British life, but their desire was un-reciprocated. Their eagerness to embrace the ‘great Christian mother country’ had been inculcated from the Caribbean.⁵⁰⁸ Michael Banton asserts:

The African Caribbeans entered Britain expecting full social equality and accepted in advance many British cultural values. Only after reacting against the reception accorded them by the public and after seeing what life is like in the imperial country do they come to realise there is something individual in their own culture which they wish to preserve.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁵ Devon Dick, *The Cross and the Machete: Native Baptists of Jamaica Identity, Ministry and Legacy* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2009), 47-48.

⁵⁰⁶ John C. Knechtel, “Jamaica,” in *Encyclopedia of World Constitutions* ed. Gerhard Robbers (New York: Facts on File, 2007), 451.

⁵⁰⁷ Winston James, “The Black Experience in Britain,” in *Black Experience and the Empire*, eds. Philip D Morgan and Sean Atkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 369.

⁵⁰⁸ Angelia Poon, *Enacting Englishness in the Victorian Period: Colonialism and the Politics of Performance* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 70.

⁵⁰⁹ Michael Banton, “Recent Migration from West Africa and the West Indies to the United Kingdom,” *Population Studies* 7, no. 1 (1953): 13.

Ten years after the landing of the Empire Windrush, Clifford Hill wrote, “They arrived as creative, skilful, industrious and religious people.” Hill reports that “Ninety five percent of Caribbeans attended church on Sundays when in the Caribbean.”⁵¹⁰ However, there was one major problem missed by the host church. These people were created in the image of God, with an array of gifts and abilities, but wrapped in Black skin. Hill, articulating the lifestyle of the newcomers states that they were a people who had “music and religion deep down in their nature. He adds:

Such is their religiousness that one of the first acts carried out on arrival in Britain is to immediately find a place of worship...by the time the Caribbean is ready to go to church, they have seen enough that has shaken the foundation of their faith as they witnessed first-hand the irreverence displayed by many of the British people.”⁵¹¹

Having gained an intimate knowledge of the African Caribbean people Hill concluded, “Black and White people would not mix due to cultural and social differences.”⁵¹² Given the fact of cultural dissimilarity and the early experiences of rejection, it was inevitable that in order to survive, they needed to carve out a mode of existence where they could sing the Lord’s Song in a strange land.⁵¹³ In attempting to integrate two different cultural religious expressions, Hill admits, he failed.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹⁰ Clifford Hill, *Black and White in Harmony: The Drama of West Indians in the Big City from a London Minister’s Notebook* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958), 19.

⁵¹¹ Hill, *Black and White*, 21-22.

⁵¹² Hill, *Black and White*, 49.

⁵¹³ See Psalm 137:4.

⁵¹⁴ Hill, *Black and White*, 97.

The meaning of colour

Analysing the Caribbean migration experience, Michael Banton reflected on the type of tense relationship existing between the two groups of people in Britain. He surmised two dominant features: employment, the principle reason for migrants being in England, and colour. About skin colour, Banton declares:

One of the major barriers was skin colour and its significance. Skin colour has a definite significance for many English people... A darker skin complexion making a person less acceptable...the coloured person, due to lack of education and social status, were categorised by their Blackness, the former label of a slave and its other associations.”⁵¹⁵

The colour categorisation, according to Banton, placed them on the bottom rung of the social ladder.⁵¹⁶ The bottom rung rendered the Black person as a ‘non person,’ an idea borrowed from George Orwell’s publication *Nineteen Eighty Four*.⁵¹⁷ Banton argues, “A non-person does not know the rules of the society in which he lives in, thus, the inhabitants can do whatever they like to such an individual.”⁵¹⁸

The concepts surrounding pigmentation are not new, but it does not necessarily mean overt racism but may carry racial overtones. The theory around pigmentation I would suggest emerges out of a fear of darkness or the colour Black. Winthrop Jordan writes that on initial contact with “the African, Englishmen saw them as another sort

⁵¹⁵ Michael Banton, *White and Coloured: The Behaviour of British People towards Coloured Immigrants* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1960), 48.

⁵¹⁶ Banton, *White and Coloured*, 48.

⁵¹⁷ Banton, *White and Coloured*, 179. See the work of George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty Four* (Idaho: First World Library, 2004).

⁵¹⁸ Banton, *White and Coloured*, 130.

of man.” However, “for the Englishmen, the African’s most striking feature was their colour which they made constant reference to before moving onto their clothing.”⁵¹⁹

Furthermore, Jordan comments:

Englishmen actually referred to Negroes as *Black*-an exaggerated term which in itself suggests that the Negro’s complexion had a powerful impact on their perceptions. Even the peoples of northern Africa seemed so dark that Englishmen tended to call them “Black” and let further refinements go by the board.⁵²⁰

The encounter between the Englishman and Africans was to produce a clash ending in painful struggle. It is not possible to fully comprehend how the power of belief influences how one perceives the other. On this, Jordan writes:

In England, perhaps more than in Southern Europe, the concept of Blackness was loaded with intense meaning. Long before they found that some men were Black, Englishmen found in the idea of Blackness a way of expressing some of their most ingrained values... As described in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the meaning of *Black* before the sixteenth century included, Deeply stained with dirt; soiled, dirty, foul...Having dark or deadly purposes, malignant; pertaining to or involving death, deadly, baneful, disastrous, sinister...Foul, iniquitous, horrible, wicked...Black was an emotional partisan

⁵¹⁹ Winthrop Jordan, *The White Man’s Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 4.

⁵²⁰ Jordan, *The White Man’s Burden*, 4-5.

colour, the handmaid and symbol of baseness and evil, a sign of danger and repulsion.⁵²¹

Following Jordan's reasoning, it is not difficult to imagine the labelling and reaction to the Black body. The fear of Blackness had sociological and religious roots. Jeffery Burton Russell writes, "The origin of the devil's Blackness is of great importance not only for religious symbolism, but also as a partial explanation of the fear of the Black man that disturbs race relations today."⁵²² Russell conceptualises that:

There is a deep psychological terror associated with death and night, and in Jungian thought, the Black man is an archetype of the brute or of the lower nature or drives and is found in this capacity long before any considerable contact between Europeans and with the Black African.⁵²³

The fear of Blackness is possibly one of the latent drivers stimulating conflict in social relations. The fear of Blackness, and the assumption for the rejection of the Other if they are non-white, requires further examination. One must investigate the ideology that categorises Black as being inferior and the veracity in which the Black Other can be marginalised. Reflecting on this periphery experience, Cornel West articulates:

The idea of Black equality in beauty, culture, and intellectual capacity remains problematic and controversial within prestigious halls of learning and sophisticated intellectual circles. The Afro-American encounter with the

⁵²¹ Jordan, *The White Man's Burden*, 5-6.

⁵²² Jeffery Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle-Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1972), 113.

⁵²³ Russell, *Witchcraft*, 114.

modern world has been shaped first and foremost by the doctrine of White supremacy, which is embodied in institutional practices and enacted in everyday folkways under varying circumstances and evolving conditions.⁵²⁴

West's comments, albeit from an African American context, carries equal weight in England, but here, the matter of race and Blackness are difficult and uncomfortable conversations to have. It is as though the language to discuss such matters is still in need of developing.

At this point I want to offer an alternative perspective, and in so doing, suggest that conflict or Blackness need not be a phenomenon to be feared. Robin Hawley Gorsline claims:

Fear of the dark undermines our efforts to understand and change the world. This fear is based on viewing darkness as a negative and even a frightening part of life – whether darkness refers to dark people: dark thoughts and impulses (for example, about sex or death); dark continents (Africa, and to a lesser extent parts of Asia) and regions (for example jungles); or dark times (any time seen as backward).⁵²⁵

Gorsline embraces darkness as a rich resource for theological reflection and to ignore it neglects the totality of God's world which contains darkness.⁵²⁶ Linking to earlier

⁵²⁴ Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 47.

⁵²⁵ Robin Hawley Gorsline, "James Baldwin and Andre Lorde as Theological Resources for the Celebration of Darkness," *Theology and Sexuality* 10, no.1 (2003): 58.

⁵²⁶ Gorsline, "James Baldwin," 59.

comments to the negative comprehension of the dark, Gorsline critiques the default position of racism and argues that:

As we examine this fear, it becomes clearer it has a racial component; that is not to say that racism, what I call white supremacy, is the sole cause of this fear, but rather that our fear is inextricably linked to this supremacy.⁵²⁷

Implementing Gorsline's perspective of entering into that which is most feared can be an enlightening experience for those who attempt to do so, because it can reveal new aspects of human behaviour and can then enhance social relations. He reflects:

In the hidden, dark places of our social fabric, the parts which are normally covered up so most people will not talk about them-or, if they do talk, do so dishonestly – are generous resources to contribute not only to the struggles for liberation of particular groups of people but also the large struggle for the wholeness of the entire planet.⁵²⁸

Gorsline theorises that “undermining the light over darkness construct and the psychosocial supports for it can assist in unleashing the creative energies of Black theology and Womanist theology as anti-white-supremacist feminist and queer theologies.”⁵²⁹

The preceding discussion demonstrates factors contributing to the rejection of Caribbean migrants other than racism, and like most human phenomena, there are

⁵²⁷ Gorsline, “James Baldwin,” 59.

⁵²⁸ Gorsline, “James Baldwin,” 59

⁵²⁹ Gorsline, “James Baldwin,” 61.

various elements occurring simultaneously during any event. This struggle with the Other who is dissimilar to us encapsulates the notion of welcoming the stranger.

Welcoming the stranger

With the experience of being invited by the guest and subsequent rejection, many African Caribbean Christians formed their own churches as a psycho-spiritual refuge. Those who were not affiliated to any religious denomination created their own spaces. Sam Selvon refers to gatherings on Sundays, not for church, but for mutual support and encouragement.⁵³⁰ Other spaces, such as the dance hall, an export from Jamaica, was established for people who were not affiliated to any Christian denomination, but needed a place for cathartic release and political articulation. Robert Beckford identifies these locations as a type of 'resistance' to a hostile social climate.⁵³¹

With the emergence of African Caribbean Pentecostal congregations, the Church of England, as earlier stated, commissioned a study in 1976 to discover the reasons why such churches existed, when so many Caribbean Christians arrived in England and should have been welcomed into British churches. Later research by the Methodist church challenged the Church of England's *New Black Presence* study by arguing that “five per cent of multi-racial Methodist churches had Black members” before the Windrush epoch.⁵³² Within Methodism, Heather Walton describes how some Black Methodists “found a home within Methodism”- some did not. Some stayed, but found life uneasy.”⁵³³ Where the Church of England missed out in welcoming the stranger, Methodism was able to capture, in part, the enthusiasm, missionary zeal and financial

⁵³⁰ Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* (London: Penguin Books, 1979).

⁵³¹ Robert Beckford, *Jesus Dub: Theology, Music and Social Change* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 46.

⁵³² Heather Walton with Robin Ward and Mark Johnson, *A Tree God Planted: Black People in British Methodism* (London: Ethnic Minorities in Methodism Working Group, 1985), 24.

⁵³³ Walton, Ward and Johnson, *A Tree God Planted*, 26.

giving of the African Caribbean believers.⁵³⁴ It was said, “West Indians joined the congregation and saved a dying cause. The church would be lost without them.”⁵³⁵

In referring to the stranger, Joseph Telushink contends if one is to ask people about the scriptures pertaining to love in the Bible, they will more often than not list the two most commonly quoted scriptures, “First, Love the Lord thy God (Deuteronomy 6:5). Second, love thy neighbour as thyself (Leviticus 19:18).” But the one most omitted is “the stranger who resides with you shall be to you one of your citizens; you shall love as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:34).⁵³⁶ Loving the stranger is a biblical instruction, but it is both a challenge and threat to who we are.

Welcoming the stranger within Methodism had its conflicts, but the churches grew when African Caribbean Christians were involved in the life of the church. However, a major area of opposition occurred amongst the indigenous church population when Black Methodists were recommended for leadership positions.⁵³⁷ Another area of conflict for many of the African Caribbean Methodists was the type of preaching they were accustomed to from the Caribbean. Many felt Caucasian preachers were less 'spiritual,' meaning there was “less emphasis placed on biblical teaching.”⁵³⁸ A typical response was that “the ministers back home preached the Bible heavier. More people come into the church because of the doctrine they preach. It's more sincere.”⁵³⁹ In this regard welcoming the stranger involved more than a smile and a handshake.

⁵³⁴ Walton, Ward and Johnson, *A Tree God Planted*, 26.

⁵³⁵ Walton, Ward and Johnson, *A Tree God Planted*, 21.

⁵³⁶ Joseph Telushkin, *Biblical Literacy: The Most Important People, Events, and ideas of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1997), 467.

⁵³⁷ Walton, Ward and Johnson, *A Tree God Planted*, 7 & 39-41.

⁵³⁸ Walton, Ward and Johnson, *A Tree God Planted*, 28.

⁵³⁹ Walton, Ward and Johnson, *A Tree God Planted*, 13 & 28.

Welcoming the stranger means reaching beyond one's border of safety, certainty and familiarity and stepping into a human unknown, and in this case, a dark unknown. The notion of reaching out is explicated by Henri Nouwen who offers a tripartite movement of reaching out, where one reaches inwards, then out to our fellow human beings and finally, reaching out to God. His second movement of reaching out is encapsulated within the term of hospitality, "not a soft sweet kindness, tea parties, bland conversations and a general atmosphere of cosiness."⁵⁴⁰ Within biblical times hospitality was a sacred duty. It was important to receive, feed, lodge and protect any traveller who might stop at one's door. The spirit of hospitality was also taught in the New Testament.⁵⁴¹ Whilst the examples are of a practical nature Nouwen emphasises that hospitality is attitudinal.⁵⁴² Within Methodism then, they were able, in part, to capture both the physicality and attitudinal dimension of hospitality. Nouwen's consideration on this matter captures the dynamic potential of both host and guest. He writes:

When hostility is converted to hospitality then the fearful strangers can become guests revealing to their hosts the promise they are carrying with them. Then, in fact, the distinction between host and guest proves to be artificial and evaporates in the recognition of the new found unity...guest and host can reveal their most precious gift and bring new life to each other.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴⁰ Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (Glasgow: Fount Paperbacks, 1980), 64.

⁵⁴¹ Luke 14 verse 12-14. See also Merrill F. Unger, Roland Kenneth Harrison, R. K. Harrison, Howard F. Vos, Cyril J. Barber, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2006), no page numbers are given.

⁵⁴² Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 65.

⁵⁴³ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 64-65.

With the issue of conflict within British church life and welcoming the stranger being considered, attention is now given to part three of this chapter which illustrates the other end of welcoming and hospitality. I show how the CoGoP, a part of the Wesleyan Holiness tradition, emerged out of conflict, and later, the local church, Kingdom Ministries, a sacred space, created as a receptacle for worship, welcome and welfare for its members, inadvertently became a cauldron of inter-personal conflict.

The origins of CoGoP

At the turn of the twentieth century the predominant church tradition in America was Methodism.⁵⁴⁴ As is common throughout Christianity, allies and unions begin well, but eventually the adherents are distracted from their agreed central focus. Within Methodism new thinking was emerging, but the fresh ideology led to conflict and an eventual split.⁵⁴⁵ The main bone of contention was criticisms about holiness being considered a modern novelty, and a dispute over the teaching of sanctification, the second blessing.⁵⁴⁶ The moment of disruption occurred in 1894 at the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church when the holiness adherents were asked to make a decision, whether to stay with the old church or join the new church.⁵⁴⁷ Lynn Bridgers points out that this conflict led to a split to over twenty different holiness groups displaying new expressions of Christianity in the United States.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁴ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the twentieth Century* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdsman Publishing Co, 1997), 3.

⁵⁴⁵ Synan, *The Holiness- Pentecostal Tradition*, 37-38.

⁵⁴⁶ Synan, *The Holiness- Pentecostal Tradition*, 5.

⁵⁴⁷ Lynn Bridgers, *The American Religious Experience: A Concise History* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2006), 173.

⁵⁴⁸ Bridgers, *The American Religious Experience*, 173-174.

With the fallout, a holiness church was formed at Camp Creek in North Carolina where itinerant preacher, Ambrose. J. Tomlinson, restless with Quakerism, had a divine encounter transforming his life that led him in making a significant contribution to global Pentecostalism.

After praying with a group of men, Tomlinson left them and went to the base of Burger Mountain for further prayer. During this time of intercession he received a vision from the Lord concerning the last day's church.⁵⁴⁹ Following this occurrence he returned to the group of men, and after discussion they accepted his vision and the Church of God was born on June 1903 with A.J. Tomlinson acting as the General Overseer in Cleveland Tennessee.⁵⁵⁰ Due to his preaching and organisational abilities he mobilised the church and it was not too long before other congregations were planted.⁵⁵¹ Various biblical prophecies were used to substantiate the birth of this church and to develop a doctrine of exclusivity; however, this doctrine was later officially abandoned.⁵⁵²

It is important to reflect on the socio-political climate during the church's inception as its members attempted to live out the call of God under the constraints of human law and prejudice. Racial segregation characterised American society, but Tomlinson seeing the need for missionary exploits released Edmond Barr in 1915, the first Black

⁵⁴⁹ Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: One Hundred years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Books, 2001), 115.

⁵⁵⁰ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 54.

⁵⁵¹ B. A. Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 18-19.

⁵⁵² Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 43-44.. Miles comments on the Church of God believing itself to be the continuation of the church Jesus organised when he called the twelve disciples in Mark 3: 13-19 and ordained them as apostles. The CoGoP officially rejected its exclusivity teaching in the early 1990's. See C T. Davison, *Upon This Rock* (Cleveland: White Wing Publishing House and Press, 1973), 444.

person appointed as the overseer to Florida.⁵⁵³ Tomlinson, despite his critics, believed it was appropriate to send missionaries who were part of the indigenous population than to send outsiders.⁵⁵⁴ B. A. Miles asserts, “It was under the leadership of Tomlinson where the Church of God was the most racially mixed in the south.”⁵⁵⁵ Harold Hunter describes Tomlinson's affirmation of universal humanity as an attack on racial segregation in his 1919 address.⁵⁵⁶ Tomlinson stood up against racism, but with such an ingrained ideology within American society it was unlikely that one sermon would have made any significant impact. One of the reasons Tomlinson spoke against racism was possible linked to his Quaker roots where they were opposed to the evils of the slave trade. In his sermon Tomlinson states, “Our dark skinned brothers and sisters have received the Holy Ghost as well as we, and we have learned long ago that God is no respecter of person.”⁵⁵⁷

The Caribbean – CoGoP's mission exploits

Fervent missionary initiatives began in the Caribbean for the Church of God of Prophecy and the New Testament Church of God in 1924 and they made the most significant inroads on the islands.⁵⁵⁸ Tomlinson, being motivated by missionary endeavours sent a couple called the Kinders to Jamaica who established a relationship with Rudolph Smith. Smith, a reluctant leader was nonetheless productive. In twenty

⁵⁵³ Harold Hunter, *A. J. Tomlinson's Journey Towards Racial Reconciliation* (Church of God History and Heritage Winter/Spring 2003. ([http://faculty.leeu.edu/Black ministry exhibition/Tomlinson article](http://faculty.leeu.edu/Black%20ministry%20exhibition/Tomlinson%20article)). See Allan A Anderson, *An Introduction to Global Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 80.

⁵⁵⁴ Perry E. Gillum, comp., *Historical Annual Addresses: A J. Tomlinson*, (Tennessee: White Wing Publishing House, 1970), 109, 196-197.

⁵⁵⁵ Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 20.

⁵⁵⁶ Hunter, *A. J. Tomlinson's Journey Towards Racial Reconciliation* (Church of God History and Heritage Winter/Spring 2003([http://faculty.leeu.edu/Black ministry exhibition/Tomlinson article](http://faculty.leeu.edu/Black%20ministry%20exhibition/Tomlinson%20article) (accessed 3 August, 2009).

⁵⁵⁷ Hunter, *A. J. Tomlinson's Journey* (Church of God History and Heritage Winter/Spring 2003. ([http://faculty.leeu.edu/Black Ministry exhibition/Tomlinson article](http://faculty.leeu.edu/Black%20Ministry%20exhibition/Tomlinson%20article)), (accessed 3 August, 2009).

⁵⁵⁸ Diane J. Austin Broos, *Jamaica Genesis: Religion and the Politics of Moral Orders* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 20.

five years of ministry, he established 96 churches.⁵⁵⁹ Through his endeavours he founded the Bible Church of God and became its National Overseer.⁵⁶⁰ There was prolific church growth in the islands through his visionary insights and tireless labour. With an invitation to America from Tomlinson in the 1930's, Smith arrived in Tennessee where he faced racism and vowed never to return.⁵⁶¹ Reluctantly he did in 1935 to attend the General Assembly in Tennessee, but he arrived after it had finished.⁵⁶² Despite his late arrival and the organisation he founded still operating under the original name, Tomlinson ordained him a Bishop and appointed him as the Jamaican National Overseer for the Church of God of Prophecy.⁵⁶³ It is clear from history that Smith influenced the development of Church of God of Prophecy and more widely, Pentecostalism in Jamaica.⁵⁶⁴ The notion of leaving a legacy is recorded by Miles as he writes, "Smith's influence spread right across Jamaica and to many other countries, including England, through the efforts of Jamaican migrants who transported the message with them in their socio-economic pursuit."⁵⁶⁵

The CoGoP in England and Black Pentecostalism

Faith or belief in God for African Caribbean people was an inseparable dynamic of their humanity and their arrival in Britain met Christianity on the decline.⁵⁶⁶ In 1952, Tomlinson sent his son Homer with his wife to start a missionary initiative in England. After holding revival meetings the couple met with Herbert England and his

⁵⁵⁹ Austin Broos, *Jamaica Genesis*, 108-109.

⁵⁶⁰ Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 27.

⁵⁶¹ Austin Broos, *Jamaica Genesis*, 115.

⁵⁶² Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 28.

⁵⁶³ Austin Broos, *Jamaica Genesis*, 108.

⁵⁶⁴ Austin Broos, Politics and the Redeemer: State and Religion as Ways of Being in Jamaica (<http://www.kitlv-journals.nl/index.php/nwig/article/viewFile/3435/4196>). (accessed Thursday 9 June, 2011).

⁵⁶⁵ Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 29.

⁵⁶⁶ British Council of Churches, *The New Black Presence in Britain: A Christian Scrutiny* (London: Community and Race Relations Unit of the British Council of churches, 1976), 7. See John Wilkinson, *Church in Black and White: The Black Christian Tradition in "Mainstream" Churches in England: A White Response and Testimony* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrews Press, 1993), 78.

family. Their meeting led to the organising of the first CoGoP congregation on 22 April 1953 with England being appointed as pastor and the first National Overseer. The all-White congregation continued but after England's retirement it declined in membership.⁵⁶⁷ According to Joseph Aldred, England established three congregations in Bedford comprising all White people.⁵⁶⁸ With the fledgling church being all White, one wonders what occurred for its change in racial hue.

On this matter, when England was interviewed he commented that the change occurred when coloured people started coming in, "they chased away the White people because they, (the White people) would not take off their wedding rings."⁵⁶⁹ In addition to not taking off their wedding rings England did not subscribe to the exclusivity doctrine which was embraced by his Caribbean brothers and sisters.⁵⁷⁰ In conjunction with his doctrinal resistance, his unfamiliarity with Caribbean culture and the distinctiveness of the church, as new congregations were planted he was only contacted for administrative purposes. His deficit in cultural awareness and church governance led to an appeal for an overseer who would be able to cater to the congregants' particular needs. This request led to the appointment of Charles G. Hawkins, the first White American National Overseer.⁵⁷¹ Difficulties in adjusting to British society and British churches encountered by the newcomers was a determining factor in Caribbean people using their faith as a method of coping.

⁵⁶⁷ Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 56.

⁵⁶⁸ Joseph Aldred, *A BMC's Future* (Unpublished M.A Thesis: University of East London, 1994), 15.

⁵⁶⁹ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*, 15. One of the doctrines of the CoGoP was against wearing of any form of jewellery, including the wedding band or cosmetics.

⁵⁷⁰ One of the early doctrines of the CoGoP was "Against Wearing of Gold for Ornament." See M.A Tomlinson, General Overseer's Address in 1964. <http://www.keepandshare.com/doc/393547/addr-1964-pdf-february-9-2008-10-38-pm-274k?dn=y> (accessed 21 May, 2012).

⁵⁷¹ Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 57.

With the early experiences of rejection, an entity was needed to transcend their existential angst. From the Caribbean, Jamaicans accepted Pentecostalism because they already lived in a spirit filled world. Jamaicans were primarily of West African descent and had retained aspects of the culture, especially the religious dimension. In this regard Diane Broos contends that the whole world of the Jamaican was busy with spirits, so the message of the Holy Spirit was welcomed.⁵⁷² A re-examination of Caribbean history will show the involvement of the spiritual world during enslavement. Leonard Barrett, responding to the claims of revolts on the plantations comments how opposition to enslavement was "fought not only physically, but spiritually."⁵⁷³

With the formation of BMC's, one wonders whether the Eurocentric Christianity they embraced was adequate in meeting their needs. This is a similar thought pondered as the enslaved on the plantations facing oppressive forces embraced a Christianity that did not address their existential context.⁵⁷⁴ A further point for reflection, albeit speculative, considers whether the BMC in Britain failed by forming African Caribbean spiritual refuges and retreating, thereby colluding with racism as opposed to confronting it.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷² Diane J. Austin Broos, *Jamaican Genesis: Religion and the Politics of Moral Order* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 115.

⁵⁷³ Leonard Barrett, *Soul Force: African Heritage in Afro- American Religion* (New York: A Doubleday Anchor Book, 1974), 59. For a more detailed discussion on the African Spirituality see Dianne Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey: African Dimensions of the Jamaican Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁷⁴ Lewin Williams, *Caribbean Theology* (New York: Peter Lang Publishers Inc, 2002), 210. For more recent scholarship see the work of Delroy Reid Salmon, *Burning for Freedom: A Theology of the Black Atlantic Struggle for Freedom* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2012).

⁵⁷⁵ Personal conversation with Denis Pain – Date Sunday 23 August 2009. Pain, a social anthropologist and Social Development Adviser for DFID – (Department for International Development), suggested that by forming their own churches the BMC's colluded with racism. This is a disturbing notion which cannot be easily ignored and requires further reflection, but whatever the outcome might be in one's reflection it is purely conjecture. See the narrative of Sam Sharpe and his confrontation of the institution of slavery.

The Black Pentecostal church in Britain was seen as a place of refuge, small and powerful, characterised as a place for spiritual, emotional and psychological care where an African Caribbean brand of Christianity could be practised without fear of condemnation or having their cultural norms pathologised.⁵⁷⁶ Despite its failings, the space ‘mopped’ up the leakages, spillages, fractures and ruptures of the Black self. As the church soaked up the external expressions of internalised inferiority and emotional injury it also acted as a place for cathartic release, through the various gathering/meetings of its membership, as well as the acts of expressive worship, music, participation in the sacrament and practising its own form of liturgy.

The space created for the weary traveller in a perceived dry and thirsty land could also harbour immense tension. Whilst there are positive attributes of the church, consideration must be given to the effects when one is away from home and living in an environment where one's existence is threatened.⁵⁷⁷ The conflict occurring within the walls of the BMC's was a hidden matter evidenced internally by its members and externally by its numerous divisions and splits. Malcom Calley posits that “Pentecostal churches everywhere are beset by schisms.”⁵⁷⁸ Moreover, in recent times, Joseph Roberts offers an explanation for the numerous splits. He records:

The reason for the establishment of many independent bodies is the lack of discipline. In scriptural terms, obvious signs of disagreement are seen...that lead people detaching themselves from the fellowship that have their best interest at heart. Many people are not disciplined enough to argue, debate,

⁵⁷⁶ Numbers 35: 13 – 34. See also Joshua 20: 1-9. The cities of refuge were locations in the land of Canaan and were used as a safe place to accommodate people who had killed someone by accident.

⁵⁷⁷ Anthony Reddie, *Is God Colour-Blind? Insights from Black Theology for Christian Ministry* (London: SPCK, 2009), 24-25.

⁵⁷⁸ Malcolm Calley, “Pentecostal Sects Among West Indian Migrants,” *Race and Class* 3, (1962): 60-62.

discuss, agree to disagree on a point or points and still remain in the fellowship.⁵⁷⁹

The Black Majority Caribbean church in England then, was a non-violent subversive group practising a brand of Christianity appealing to their sensibilities and meeting their existential needs of being Black and living in Britain, yet the under belly of the sacred space displayed periodic explosions of confusion, scenes of conflict, trauma and rage. The BMC satisfied a great need for the Windrush generation; however, the tide was about to turn when British born Caribbean offspring came of age in recognising and experiencing a level of disadvantage in society which the church continued to ignore.

In the 1970s and 1980s, British born Black youths, feeling the pains of injustice, frustration and marginalisation similar to the Windrush generation began rioting.⁵⁸⁰ They experienced disappointment within the education system. They faced the lack of employment and many Black youths felt the church was silent and had let them down in addressing the needs they faced in society. The church, a bedrock for the Windrush generation, began to experience a period of intense questioning. This level of questioning, previously unknown within the Church was spearheaded by a young enquiring generation. The skilfully carved out psycho-social spiritual community preserving and protecting the migrants' religious convictions, culture, humanity, and identity was about to face disruption by probing questions on the nature, polity, governance and doctrine by a generation of Christians who had imbibed their parents'

⁵⁷⁹ Joseph Roberts, *The Philosophical nature of the Church and Pentecostalism* (D. Th Diss., European Seminary, Birmingham, 1998), 414-415.

⁵⁸⁰ Len Garrison, *Black Youth, Rastarianism, and the Identity Crisis in Britain* (London: An ACER Publication Project, 1983). See the work of Sushel Ohri and Shaista Faruqi, "Racism, Employment and Unemployment" in Ashok Bhat, Roy Carr-Hill, Sushel Ohri, eds. *Britain's Black Population* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1993), 71.

faith. The uncritical acceptance of their parents and the environment in which they grew up was going to act as the catalyst for scenes of conflict within the religious safe haven.

The CoGoP in East London- A space for worship and a crucible of conflict

The Kingdom Ministries congregation in East London comprising people from Jamaica was organised in 1953 by Herbert England with Sinclair Taylor as the pastor. In the 1960s and under Sinclair Taylor's ministry there was substantial growth, a common experience amongst many of the Caribbean churches in Britain during that time.⁵⁸¹ This adherence to religion can be traced back to an African cosmology where it permeated both culture and history.⁵⁸² An example of the seriousness given to worship by African Caribbean people is demonstrated in Joseph Aldred.⁵⁸³ In an interview with members from Kingdom Ministries they agreed that on numerous occasions they have showed up to church only to see that the halls they had rented for worship had not been cleaned after Saturday night functions. The members would enter the buildings on Sunday mornings and be met with the stench of stale vomit, nicotine and alcohol. As one member reports, “We had to clean up as best we could before starting service.”⁵⁸⁴ Such experiences demonstrate a committed devotion to God.

⁵⁸¹ Roswith Gerloff, *A Plea for Black British Theologies: The BMC Movement in its Transatlantic Cultural and Theological Interaction with Special Reference to the Pentecostal Oneness (Apostolic) and Sabbatarian Movements* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992), 57.

⁵⁸² John Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 11.

⁵⁸³ Joseph Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*. (Unpublished thesis: University of Sheffield). Aldred's thesis focussed on whether the congregation had a viable future or not. At this time of writing, Kingdom Ministries is a well-established congregation with some of the founding members still alive and active in the life of the church, albeit many are now senior in years and are not as mobile as recorded in Aldred's thesis.

⁵⁸⁴ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*, 21-22.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Kingdom Ministries congregation diminished significantly, leading to the appointment of Bishop Joseph Aldred in 1989. One of the reasons for the sharp decline was that many of the young people who had attended the local church as children had now grown up. In response to the membership's decline Aldred writes that the local church bore resonance with the biblical record that “the walls of Jerusalem are broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire, and the city lies in ruin.”⁵⁸⁵

During Aldred’s tenure he pursued a Master's degree in Ministry and Theology. He gathered a cross section of members from the congregation which he labelled as a *site team* and focused on the life of the local congregation and questioned whether the church had a viable future or not.⁵⁸⁶

I am the third pastor at Kingdom Ministries and was appointed in August 1996. The first pastor, Bishop Sinclair Taylor was the pastor at Kingdom Ministries for thirty years and provided outstanding and courageous leadership during the 1950s, 1960s and the early 1970s.⁵⁸⁷ Despite Taylor's charisma he was unable to answer the array of questions fielded by the young adults who were now exposed to alternative thinking through their education at British schools, colleges and universities. The second pastor, Joseph Aldred was in office for 6 years, and left when he "felt he had taken the

⁵⁸⁵ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*, Nehemiah 1: 3 and verse 8.

⁵⁸⁶ Joe Aldred's M.A thesis investigated 'A Black Majority's Church's Future,' 33. Aldred selected a group of people to act as a site team. The site team had two objectives. First, they were to be “a group that would work effectively together.” Second, balance was needed “with regards to age, gender, length of church membership, positions in the church, professional and personal skills.” In total, eleven members were selected. Their role was to help him analyse the past and present of the church, and contemplate the future of the CoGoP in East London, 33-36.

⁵⁸⁷ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*, 8.

church as spiritually far as he could do."⁵⁸⁸ During his tenure at Kingdom Ministries, the International headquarters in the United States of America began looking at some of its doctrines and decided to change its position on 'against wearing gold for ornament.'⁵⁸⁹ As a result of this doctrinal shift the church, internationally and locally, encountered an unsettling period. Many of the senior female members who had adopted the teaching had faced great difficulties from their non-Christian husbands now felt insulted, betrayed and abandoned by the church. Nevertheless, some of the seniors were grateful for the modification. For many of the young people, this shift was a welcomed change. However, the painful irony was that in America the teaching had been unofficially abandoned many years prior to the official change.

Interpersonal conflict and its visible consequences

Since its organisation, Kingdom Ministries had become a safe haven and a visible expression of the achievements of the migrant generation. Safety, acceptance and security had been founded by the pioneering generations in the church and its leader.⁵⁹⁰ In a personal conversation with a former member shortly after my arrival he informed me "we were learning new things at university and when we tried to ask questions in church relating to these new ideas we were shot down in flames."⁵⁹¹

Continuing the discussion for the sharp decline in membership, some of the young people had relocated as they felt better employment prospects were attainable elsewhere. Other factors were that those who remained in East London left the church

⁵⁸⁸ Personal conversation between the outgoing pastor and myself prior to taking up the post in August 1996 at Kingdom Ministries.

⁵⁸⁹ Against the wearing of gold for adornment was officially accepted by the church in 1967. However, the teaching was abandoned during the 1990 General Assembly of the CoGoP.

<http://www.thegreatspeckledbird.org/29importantbibletruths/adornment.html> (accessed 16 June, 2011).

⁵⁹⁰ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*, 38-42.

⁵⁹¹ A personal conversation with a former member of the Kingdom Ministries congregation.

as they were unable to reconcile the church's teaching and the rigorous demands of a personal lifestyle whilst attempting to fit into a world which they had been previously taught to shun. Many still had a personal faith but felt unable to live it out in what they considered a harsh church environment. As earlier stated, there was almost a parallel unrest with Black youth within society and the media's portrayal of violence by Black youth in the 1970s and 1980s was not the total picture. In response to injustice and cultural struggles experienced by Black children, Black parents rallied together to form the Black Parents movement, and the youth followed in kind to establish a Black Youth movement.⁵⁹²

The world would have to take care of its situation, but the church struggled to regain control over the young people it believed it once had. The previously unheard voices of the youth reflecting a form of societal barometer was misread, misinterpreted or ignored by society at large, and in the case of the church, they too misunderstood the signs of their youth; not that they wanted to ask questions to literally destroy their place of worship, but they were not prepared to believe and practice Christianity uncritically. In short, they were attempting to forge their own religious identity, distinct and separate from their parents. They were met, as Aldred describes, with an "uncompromising stonewall; the unstoppable force encountered the immovable object."⁵⁹³ As is generally the case, when people do not conform or question the regulations of the institution they subscribe to, they are "branded as rebels."⁵⁹⁴ Aldred labels this period as the '*troubled years 1982 – 1989*' and describes it as a period of questioning.⁵⁹⁵ This new culture of probing led to intense inter-personal conflictive

⁵⁹² Brian. W. Alleyne, *Radicals against Race: Black Activism and Cultural Politics* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 51-57.

⁵⁹³ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*, 41.

⁵⁹⁴ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*, 42.

⁵⁹⁵ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*, 43.

flash points and the ‘peaceful haven’ was now perceived by the founding fathers as being under threat.’⁵⁹⁶ It was unforeseen, but inevitable, that a time of interrogation would occur given the ethos of reason in the British education system and its shaping the minds of the Windrush offspring. Thus, by challenging the blindly accepted ‘truths’ of their parents it was soon discovered that such teachings could not withstand robust examination. Aldred explains the new thirst for new knowledge like this:

A number of ministers and members had begun to seek for a deeper revelation of God and to take theology seriously. They began to look at resources outside of the Church of God of Prophecy for their theological learning experiences. They discovered irreconcilable differences in the knowledge they were gaining and much of what the church were teaching.⁵⁹⁷

Aldred records that the pioneering generation was "showing signs of old age and the entire congregation now stood in need of assurance and direction regarding the future."⁵⁹⁸ On analysis, the quest for knowledge and the emerging conflict could have been the catalyst for a liberating experience for the whole church, but it evoked feelings of fear, uncertainty, and unsettled many of the founding parents as the previously laid foundation seemed in the throes of being dismantled. An interpretation of the church’s reaction to the doctrinal shift highlighted its infantile state, dependency on a patriarchal system, and its insularity. Aldred explicates how the

⁵⁹⁶ A Shelter in the time of Storm – a song written by Ira D. Sankey in 1885 captured the meaning of Jesus for people who had left a sinful life and had now become Christians, and secondly, it was a song many of the Pentecostal Christians of the Windrush generation sung as a song bringing them hope in a time of suffering. http://biblestudycharts.com/SH_A_Shelter_in_the_Time_of_Storm.html (accessed 30 May, 2012).

⁵⁹⁷ Aldred *A Black Majority Church’s Future*, 43.

⁵⁹⁸ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church’s Future*, 31.

church became stagnant when they joined with the operations and governance of the international church.⁵⁹⁹ Furthermore, he adds:

Whilst legalism keeps marginalised people subjugated, easily managed by the powers that be, and offers a degree of safety for the subdued, it will fail to meet the needs of a newer, and more enlightened generation unfamiliar with their parents' first hand experiences of migration and blind compliance in matters of faith.”

When once muted voices begin to ask questions relating to their existence and wanting to exercise their own autonomy, conflict is inevitable. During Aldred's research he posits two reasons why situations became so fractious. First, it was stated there was an under-developed spiritual faculty of the church. Second, the International offices prescribed an operational system for all local churches throughout the world. This hindered the development of its people and kept them stuck in an infantile existence.⁶⁰⁰ Aldred is referring to the previous practice of the church where the theme for each year was set by the International Offices and cascaded throughout all CoGoP's in the world with the expectation that each local congregation would act on the vision. Such a proposition ignored the cultural context of each congregation outside of America. This mode of operation ended during the tenure of Billy Murray, the General Overseer for the Church of God of Prophecy. Murray advocated that each church should be given more autonomy and should decide upon the direction it needed to take given its particular context.⁶⁰¹ Thus, a breaking away from legalism

⁵⁹⁹ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*, 45.

⁶⁰⁰ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*, 45.

⁶⁰¹ Billy D Murray, “Turning to the Harvest with Grace and Truth,” (Sermon Preached at the Assembly for the CoGoP, Kentucky Fair and Exposition Centre, Louisville Kentucky, 11 July 1994), 16.

and a time of searching for deeper revelation of God amongst clergy and lay members affected the whole country with “Kingdom Ministries being the worst affected.”⁶⁰²

Aldred’s rationale for Kingdom Ministries dilemma was due to the core problem that the pastor was no longer ‘king of all he surveyed.’⁶⁰³ Aldred’s comments epitomises the characteristic of most African Caribbean Pentecostal churches; that is, they are pastor-centred and by default wield much power over the lives of the congregation.

From across the Black Atlantic, Dale Andrews attests to the significance of the pastor by stating that the pastor becomes the agent of God’s concerns for the person and the community.⁶⁰⁴ Supporting Andrews’ analysis, George Barna and Harry Jackson highlight the contrast in pastoral leadership in White churches in that the pastor is only given leadership of the church when he/she shows the ability to lead, but not so in the BMC. They report:

In the Black Majority Church the pastor is given the reigns from day one and expected to perform in concert with his people, losing confidence only if the early returns indicate he is incapable of fostering congregational unity and positive change in lives and society.⁶⁰⁵

During the "troubled years" the founding pastor, Sinclair Taylor, viewed the period as a ‘wicked campaign’ waged against him by a few members. The seeds of which had been sown over the previous three years in what appeared to him as a ‘personal

⁶⁰² Aldred, *A Black Majority Church’s Future*, 44.

⁶⁰³ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church’s Future*, 44.

⁶⁰⁴ Dale Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Majority Church’s: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Kentucky, John Westminster Knox Press, 2002), 28.

⁶⁰⁵ George Barna and Harry Jackson, *High Impact African American Churches: Leadership Concepts from some of Today’s most Effective Churches* (California: Regal Books, 2004), 48-49.

vendetta.’⁶⁰⁶ Aldred makes no reference to the previous three years, but one is left to assume that what occurred was an unpleasant experience for Taylor. The pastor being “no longer king of all he surveyed,” and Aldred’s subsequent comments, cannot be ignored because previously accepted authority and power was now being questioned. Religious power mediated through the General Assembly to the pastor was now being challenged from within a complex multilayered interwoven stratum of a search for identity, significance, and a desire for self-determination and enlightenment. The interrogation by this enquiring generation was either spiritualised or demonised. Thus, the role of the ‘all knowing’ pastor was now contested and the response of enquiry was interpreted as a ‘wicked campaign.’

The pastor-centred paradigm has little credence if a church intends to fulfil the understanding of the inclusion of every member being a valuable contributor to the local fellowship. This dependency on a solitary individual is challenged by S. Haslam, Stephen Reicher and Michael J. Platow. They do not dismiss the great work such individualistic leaders have achieved, but on analysis they offer a more inclusive approach. They write:

Rather than seeing leadership as something that derives from leaders’ psychological uniqueness, we argue the very opposite: effective leadership is grounded in leaders’ capacity to embody and promote a psychology they *share* with others. Stated most boldly, we argue for a *new psychology* that sees

⁶⁰⁶ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church’s Future*, 44.

leadership as the product of an individual's "we-ness" rather than of his or her "I-ness."⁶⁰⁷

With Aldred analysing the past, present and contemplating the future of the church, issues related to conflict were not specifically explored. For example, the clash between the younger, 'more questioning' constituency of the church, versus the unquestioning and compliant Windrush generation is not mentioned, but rather assurance of one's future is sought. There is a notion of the unquestioning generation symbolising a "slave mentality." If not a slave mentality, then a colonised mind having utmost dependence on the group or people that subjugates it. This is an area of discussion theorised by Frantz Fanon, Barbara Fletchman Smith, Naim Akbar, Angela Nelson and Albert Memmi.⁶⁰⁸ The search for answers is desire to know and an attempt to break from the compliant past.

The quest for new knowledge as a source of conflict

From Aldred's description, the acquisition of new knowledge is mistrusted, interpreted as disrespectful to the church's authority, its security and threatens the peace the pioneering generations had developed. Aldred records:

Ministers who conformed to the doctrine of the church saw themselves as defenders of the faith and they joined forces against those who were, in their

⁶⁰⁷ S. Alaxander Haslam, Stephen D. Reicher and Michael J. Platow, *The New Psychology of Leadership: Identity, Influence and Power* (East Sussex: Psychology Press, 2011), 2-3.

⁶⁰⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* (London: Pluto, 1986). Barbara Fletchman Smith, *Mental Health Slavery: Psychoanalytical Studies of African Caribbean people* (London: Rebus Press, 2000), 9. Naim Akbar, *Breaking the Chains of Psychological Slavery* (Tennessee: Mind Productions and Associates, 1996), 41, 46. See also Angela M. Nelson, "God's Smiling on you and He's Frowning Too" in *Calling Me the Seeker: Listening to Religion in Pop Music*, ed. Michael Gilmour (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005), 180-181. See also Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (London: Earthscan Publications Limited, 2003), 5.

view, deliberately attempting to destabilise the people and undermine the church's authority. Pastors became defensive of church polity and governance; protective over their positions which they saw as being threatened by the "rebellion."⁶⁰⁹

As a result, a split ensued leaving both the laity and clergy fearful over the future. This dichotomy caused some people to become more entrenched in their beliefs. To accept new truth could prove too difficult for a few reasons. First, they would have to make theological adjustments in how they previously thought about their faith. Second, the acceptance of new truth could mean expulsion or being ostracised from a group they had been associated with for years. Third, the acceptance of new belief would mean a change in praxis.

The purpose of Aldred's study was to help the congregation reconsider its present perception of church and become responsible for its function and destiny.⁶¹⁰ Given the problematic past, a way forward might have been to start where the people were and educate and guide them to a new horizon. Another approach which would have benefited the local congregation was to have carried out a process of theological reflection; however, the practice of formal theological reflection is not currently an integral aspect of the CoGoP pastoral practice.

Aldred's thesis, prophetic in nature, points to a future with increased autonomy within the membership rather than the current top down dependency model.⁶¹¹ Moreover, his thesis interlocks with scholarship contained within the literature review in chapter two

⁶⁰⁹ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*, 44.

⁶¹⁰ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*, 49.

⁶¹¹ Murray, "Turning to the Harvest,"

where Wilfred Milwood, Gus John, John Wilkinson, Roswith Gerloff and Lorraine Dixon emphasise the need for the BMC to develop a theology relevant to their life experiences as Black Christians living in a diaspora.

The idea of increased autonomy initially sounds like an excellent idea, but it is fraught with difficulties. If congregations have been subjected to a patriarchal system of governance since their inception, they will, by default, have been kept in an infantilised state. To hand responsibility over to unprepared people is problematic because it leads to conflict within the group between those who welcome the challenge and those who do not; a sort of battle between the mature self and immature self of a congregation and its parent organisation with the pastor caught in the middle of the potential crossfire. Reflecting on the period of enslavement gives an example of what can happen to people when they have been controlled for a protracted period of time. When abolition occurred and the enslaved were granted freedom, many, having received their liberty faced homelessness, unemployment and further discrimination, making life difficult.⁶¹² This new found state of freedom brought unsuspected fears which resulted in many being “compelled” to remain with their former masters as apprentices.⁶¹³

The dependency model of the church serves two purposes. First, it satisfied a need by providing the Windrush generation a framework where they felt loved, appreciated and protected from a – perceived or actual–hostile environment. In satisfying a need it

⁶¹² Anthony Pinn, *Terror and Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 2003), 53-55.

⁶¹³ Richard Bulliet, et al, *The Earth and its People: Volume 2* (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010), 585.

resonated with the colonial mentality of being rendered powerless and impaired.

Ronald Nathan makes a valid point. He surmises:

Those who migrated from the Caribbean territories in the late 1940s and 1950s were shaped by a colonial mentality and viewed the mother country as their own. They did not want to cause any trouble, and therefore, was considered conservative in nature. The churches they started in their front rooms reflected this conservatism... Many had heeded the thought of keeping 'politics and religion separate' and 'they were saved' from worldly endeavour.⁶¹⁴

Caribbean religious conservatism is reinforced by Nathan's analysis of a colonial mentality when coupled with the fact of the new migrants arriving in Britain wanting to embrace English values. The desire to belong can put people in a powerless position where the mistreatment of their being can continue.

In Aldred's observation he reports that the church taught a principle of theocracy. In reality, ordinary members were located at the bottom of an escalating authoritarian structure which assumes God is at the top.⁶¹⁵ If this is so, one wonders how theocracy is mediated. As far as is discernible, theocracy is mediated through the General Assembly, which at the time of writing is still held in the United States of America, but therein lies a thorny issue. If there is the accepted notion of theocratic rule, it should not matter where the General Assembly is convened.⁶¹⁶ The General Assembly, as it was in the early days, saw itself as the highest authority in the

⁶¹⁴ Ronald Nathan, "The Black Majority Church in the New Millennium," in *Faith in the Millennium*, eds. Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes & David Tombs (East London: East London Academic Press, 2001), 186.

⁶¹⁵ Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*, 52.

⁶¹⁶ The General Assembly is the CoGoP's international gathering of its membership held bi-annually within the United States of America.

church.⁶¹⁷ Being the chief decision maker for executing doctrine, polity and governance for the CoGoP, it has, in the past, imposed its North American thinking without consideration of the consequences of its implementation in other cultural contexts. There is in one sense a similarity in the administration of the General Assembly in relation to European missionaries who entered into different cultures, nations and people and did not consider how the imposition of their understanding of the gospel would affect local communities. Such imposition inadvertently causes much conflict. However, it is not only the imposition of teaching or practices onto another context that causes conflict but one's pastoral and preaching style can be the cause of much tension within a congregational setting.

The pastor and performance as a source of conflict

My arrival at Kingdom Ministries in 1996 was, unbeknown to me the dawning of a new day. Whilst fulfilling a replacement function I unwittingly symbolised a continuation of Aldred's ministry. That is, it was seen as a break from the past and the embracing of a new church which many of the seniors did not initially desire. By a new church I mean there was a continual re-examination of how the Bible was interpreted and where members were allowed a wider remit for self-expression and autonomy. Autobiographical matter will be reflected upon later, but my presence and ministerial style impacted on the life of the church. Whilst conflict featured heavily in the local church due to historical antecedents, my being the pastor and an integral component in the life of the congregation contributed to the continuing conflict.

⁶¹⁷ CoGoP, *These Necessary Things: The Doctrines and Practices of the CoGoP as set forth by the General Assembly* 11th edn (Tennessee: White wing Publishing House, 1985), 5.

I was unwittingly caught in a multi-faced cultural vice. First, there are the cultural expectations of the Black pastor as being all seeing, all knowing and all powerful. Such attributes are not verbally expressed, but they culminate in an unrealistic notion of a 'super pastor.' The imagined 'super pastor' ultimately leads to disappointment when he or she does not have sufficient insight into the cultural history, nature and context of the local congregation. Reflecting on Haslam's, Reicher's and Platow's earlier hypothesis they advocate four principles crucial for effective leadership. First, the leader must be seen as "one of us," an *in-group prototype*. Second, the leader must advance the interests of the group. Third, the leader must be able to craft a good sense of the character of the congregation. This is achieved by representing themselves within the norms, values and priorities of the group. Fourth, the leader "must make us matter." This is accomplished by embedding the values, norms and priorities in reality.⁶¹⁸ Second, given my first point, there is a greater demand and expectation of the pastor from the congregation. Third, the vision of the local church must come from the pastor, and in many Caribbean churches the membership might not be considered as major contributors to the vision of the local church. From these three points, it is evident how the role of the pastor in a BMC is demanding and the role is more exacting if the pastor, like myself, has not been socialised in the culture of the church despite having Caribbean parents. Sandra Barnes demonstrates the high expectations of the congregation especially in the pulpit. Barnes notes:

So by default, pastors who know how "to preach the word" have a unique position in BMC's – regardless of size...each aspect of the liturgical worship service sets the stage for the climax – the sermon. And often members take

⁶¹⁸Haslam, Reicher and Platow, *The New Psychology of Leadership*, xxii – xxiii.

great pride in bragging about their pastor's singular speaking skills, so much so remarks such as, "pastor Smith said this or " are just as frequently heard as "the Bible states this or that."⁶¹⁹

Considering the 'performance' of the pastor in the BMC, Ashton Crawley advances the view of performance theory. Performance theory comes out of the world of theatre studies where display is performed on the stage with a captive audience. Within the BMC the pulpit is the centre stage and the climactic moment of the service.⁶²⁰ How one operates in front of the congregation is considered a performance in Crawley's eyes. However, within the BMC, to speak of preaching as a performance is unacceptable, yet there is an expectation of how the preacher will act in the pulpit. Crawley continues by saying that when preaching, "the performer is not confined to the lectern but can preach from anywhere in the church."⁶²¹ Crawley's description is from an African American context but such descriptions are not dissimilar to Caribbean congregations within the Caribbean or British context. Thus, preaching becomes an art form, a display of oral excellence, drama and storytelling. The preacher in such a congregation is considered to be a great preacher by how he/she is able to 'move' the audience. "Moving" the audience generally means stirring the emotions of listeners and getting people to a point of making a decision to serve Christ or making a decision to make a deeper commitment to follow Christ.⁶²² This

⁶¹⁹ Sandra Barnes, *Black Mega Church Culture: Models of Education and Empowerment* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2010), 43.

⁶²⁰ Carol Tomlin, *Black Language Style Sacred and Secular Texts* (New York: Caribbean Diaspora Press, Inc, 1999), 108.

⁶²¹ Ashton T. Crawley, "Let's Get it On!" Performance Theory and Black Pentecostalism," in *Black Theology: An International Journal* 6 no. 3 (2008): 308-329.

⁶²² Following Christ is the term used in Black congregations to emphasise the nature of the Christian life. We are following Christ, or attempting to pattern our lives on him.

‘moving’ of the congregation in one sense corroborates with the principles advocated by Haslam, Reicher and Platow's identification of the leader with the congregation.

Performance is an integral dimension of BMC life in Britain and failure on the part of the preacher to live up to the congregation's expectation ultimately leads to conflict, as some people feel the preacher has not successfully meet their needs, or the congregation's needs. Crawley argues:

All performances are “excessive” in that there are multiple ways to read a performance. But not only multiple reads for a performance but each has the propensity to fail, each character may lack the capacity to produce the right behaviours or the location of the performance may be incorrect.”⁶²³

A lack lustre performance indicates the preacher has not fully represented the congregation. A continuation of this perceived lack of representation leads to increasing friction within the congregation or individuals not being ‘ministered to.’ This increasing conflict can culminate in personal attacks and an array of critical remarks towards the minister's style of sermonising and ultimately his/her suitability for public/pastoral ministry.

The congregation has the latent power to mould a minister into its own likeness, especially if the minister is young in years and lacks pastoral experience. This latent power to shape the minister can negate the particular gifts of the pastor. Besides, the squeezing of the pastor into the church's cultural shape can lead to a build-up of

⁶²³ Crawley “Let's Get It On!,” 312

tension and inner frustration within the minister as he/she attempts to be him/herself, carry out his/her pastoral duties and serve the local church. What must not be forgotten is that the pastor is an inclusive member of the church community negotiating, like his/her members, the difficulties of living in a diasporan community in a place that is not home.

Conclusion

Regardless where human beings interact, there is always the potential for interpersonal conflict. The initial contact with Africans by Europeans seemed trouble free, but within the English psyche anything Black or dark was inferior. Whilst this was not initially attributed to human beings, it exemplified an age old human characteristic, that is, one has a proclivity to believe perception more than reality. The ideological clash occurred when Britain required cheap labour for economic profit. Africans were enslaved and deposited in the Americas as units of production. The Caribbean became a crucible for violence and conflict, with Jamaica faring the worst in the creation of a new and brutal society. With the process of dehumanisation, it established a peculiar interdependent relationship between master and the enslaved. Despite the peculiarity of the relationship, the pursuit for recognition and acknowledgment of their humanity was at the forefront of the enslaved mind. This quest for freedom was realised in part in the 1831 Baptist War led by Sam Sharpe. Nevertheless, the experience of subjugation continued in Jamaica through the political machinery of colonialism. Colonialism affected Caribbean people to the point that when they arrived in Britain they were ready to jettison their cultural uniqueness and embrace Englishness. The imagined dream of belonging to Britain was soon shattered after their arrival as they tried to join British churches and

integrate in British society. The Methodist church was one of the mainstream organisations who were able to welcome the stranger, but there were still complications. However, other Caribbean newcomers created an environment which acted as a psycho social and religious buffer in order to maintain their well-being.

In sum, I charted the American beginnings of the CoGoP and its missionary exploits in Jamaica. The founder of CoGoP, Ambrose J. Tomlison sent his son and his wife to start a mission in England. Soon after their arrival they met Herbert England and his wife who joined the church and planted three congregations. Whilst expulsion from the mainstream churches was a cause for the development of BMC, there were members of the church in Jamaica who brought their religious convictions and established the church on their arrival in Britain.

After a discussion on the early years of the CoGoP and Black Pentecostalism in England I focused on the church where I was the pastor. In so doing, I describe its conflictive history prior to my arrival due to an enquiring younger generation, a patriarchal system of church governance, major doctrinal shifts occurring in synchronicity inevitably destabilised a legalistic system that was too inflexible to accommodate new wine of thought and Christian praxis. The unexpected tear caused a haemorrhaging of many young people from of the church. All the events converging produced immense episodes of conflict within the created safe space by the pioneer generation. However, regardless of the nature and causes of conflict, all the members both young and senior required assurance that there would be a future for them and a future for the church.

Leaving the context of conflict within the church, the next chapter considers conflict in my pastoral ministry and interrogates some of these conflictive moments in order to understand the effects of interpersonal conflict on the pastor and how it can influence the nature of ministry.

Chapter 5 - Conflict in ministry

Introduction

This chapter uses autoethnography as a methodology to understand my relationship with interpersonal conflict, its effects on the congregation and the "pastoral ministry God has entrusted to me."⁶²⁴ In doing so, I concur with Carolyn Ellis that I "risk divulging personal details about my life that shows my flaws and disappointments."⁶²⁵ There is another aspect of choosing autoethnography which did not occur to me until reading Andrew Sparkes, *The Fatal Flaw: A Narrative of the Fragile Body Self*. He makes a comment which resonated with a forgotten part of myself. After detailing the nature of his back injury he found himself "reading literature in a big way."⁶²⁶ In developing a breadth of reading which appeared strange to his colleagues, he states, "Perhaps I was already attempting to redefine myself toward a more intellectual me, a "forgotten" me, a me that was not predominantly defined by a performing body."⁶²⁷ I am left wondering whether my proclivity for journaling, reflection and choosing autoethnography as a way of understanding myself and the world has resurrected my love of story writing. I recall writing stories for the secondary school monthly newsletter when I was a teenager, and I remember my love of composition and my numerous attempts in writing a novel in my late teens and in my early twenties, but I gave up because I did not know how to. I had no one to guide me. I did not know who to ask, and I did not know that Black people wrote books, so I concluded that I was chasing an elusive dream. Who did I think I was anyway?

⁶²⁴ Andrew Purves, *Crucifixion of the Ministry: Surrendering our Ambitions to the Service of Christ* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 11. Purves argues that saying that it is "our ministry" is the root of the problem in ministry today. He considers that God is always at work and we must know what God is up to and draw alongside what he is doing.

⁶²⁵ Carolyn Ellis, *Final Negotiations: A Story of Love, Loss and Chronic Illness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 3.

⁶²⁶ Andrew Sparkes, "The Fatal Flaw: A Narrative of the Fragile Body-Self," *Qualitative Inquiry* 2, no. 4 (1996): 481.

⁶²⁷ Sparkes, "The Fatal Flaw," 481.

Furthermore, I would add that within the BMC tradition, it is rare that a pastor would ever bare his/her soul in revealing his/her shortcomings, anger, rage and weaknesses experienced within pastoral ministry. There is an underbelly of reality behind the dynamism of the pulpit which many church members would rather not see. As I experienced the force and regularity of conflict in the congregation, I sensed that the conflictive manifestation seemed disproportionate to the causation. What sense was I to make of all this? Was the outburst of conflictive episodes in the congregation my entire fault? How could I understand what was taking place beyond blaming the congregation and devaluing my competence and self-worth? I was not used to this level of conflict before and I was unsure if it could ever be understood. I had previously used journaling as a method for personal devotions, and I had found writing helpful in understanding what was taking place and assisting me in making necessary decisions.⁶²⁸

Personal context and method of writing my autoethnographical narrative

Here I was in 1999, five years into the ministry, two years in Rugby, and three years at Kingdom Ministries in East London. Due to the nonexistence of mandatory pastoral training within CoGoP, I lacked the required skills to deal with pastoral ministry in general and interpersonal conflict in particular. Moreover, I felt woefully inadequate in pastoral experience to serve an established congregation which had been organised since 1953.

For this study I have selected seven journal entries which illustrate key conflictive moments. I also need to point out a few things. First, the journal writings were written

⁶²⁸ Gordon Macdonald, *Ordering Your Private World: Setting Priorities* (Surrey: Highland Books, 1992), 140-147.

with my immature self, the early years of pastoral ministry, but now I will be revisiting them with my mature self, a self that has read extensively, completed a Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies and now nearing the end of doctoral research in pastoral theology. Second, Tracy Muncey notes that the "narrative is layered on a number of levels."⁶²⁹ She notes "the external layer as the lived experience." The next level is "a layer beneath the first, exposing the vulnerabilities of the voices" in the narrative. The layer beneath the previous two exposes the internal and external complexities of personal experiences. Third, to highlight the journal entries they will be printed here in italics. Muncey encourages the use of different fonts in autoethnographic work to elucidate various experiences.⁶³⁰ Furthermore, in Muncey's exemplar of writing an autoethnographical narrative, not only does she cite her comments in italics, but she also delineates the comments and thoughts of others in bold lettering.⁶³¹ This is the model I have chosen as it makes clear which sections are my journal entries and narrative and which are the contributions of others. Fourth, during this narrative I have included other literatures where appropriate. This follows a received practice followed by most autoethnographers. For example, Andrew Sparkes makes the case for theory, but at times notes that it can prove to be "symptomatic of a lack of trust I had in my own story in relation to my own lived experience," and wanting to "create a sanitised neat conclusion/resolution to the problems raised in the fragmented narrative of self."⁶³² Fifth, I have written the entries as they appear in my journal. The journals were originally intended for my private reflections and not for academic research. Keeping them in their original form demonstrates the rawness and originality of the work. In other words, to improve the

⁶²⁹ Muncey, *Creating Autoethnographies*, 115.

⁶³⁰ Muncey, *Creating Autoethnographies*, 115-116. See Margo Ely et al, *On Writing Qualitative Research: Living by Words* (London, The Falmer Press, 1997), 93.

⁶³¹ Muncey, *Creating Autoethnographies*, 112-124.

⁶³² Sparkes, "The Fatal Flaw," 486.

grammar and omit the negative comments would detract from the earthiness, rage and anger I felt in those early years of ministry and diminish the authenticity of the narrative. In sketching out my process, I have already begun to share my story about my relationship, experience, discoveries and approaches surrounding interpersonal conflict.

Conflict in pastoral ministry

Not too long after beginning my pastoral journals I wrote about an incident in the local church. A former member had married and had immigrated to Europe and still had family connections within the local church. There was a social gathering at my home which she attended and during a conversation she made some unsavoury comments about my competence as a minister. Being unprepared for the comments and subsequently offended by what she said, I later wrote the following: *I really hate the feeling of words being spoken behind my back; however, I still want to be a phenomenal leader. How can I achieve this?*⁶³³ In hindsight, I am unsure what a phenomenal leader was, but I think I meant that I wanted to be a leader that would bring about growth and change in the local church. I was still taken up with aspirations of being a good leader but knowing information about me was being taken out of the local church without my side of any story being heard left me angry and bewildered. I was uncertain of what was being said, but all it did was increase my paranoia and erode my capacity to think that I was at least a competent leader.

⁶³³ Journal entry 1: Date - 7 August, 1999.

Fear and intimidation

These feelings of fear, anxiety and paranoia have become my unwelcome sojourners as I desire to make plans for developing the local church. My plan is to involve the membership, or at least the key leaders in the development of church growth.

However, being a pastor in a pastor-centred church, the belief is that I preach the sermons, do the discipling, and a growing church would be indicative of my competence as a pastor. However, trying to move forward as a church is fraught with complexities. Some of the difficulties are my own doing as the critical environment of Kingdom Ministries begins to make me feel unsettled and unsure. My fear and increasing indecisiveness is echoed in this extract from my journal. *I feel gripped by timidity and fear when I want to bring about change in the local church. My desire was to lead/develop a church that was relevant to the modern age, but I am gripped by my feelings of inadequacy and maybe I am not too clear about my thoughts. I have inherited a team of deacons who have little or no idea in how to make a church relevant for the 21st century.*⁶³⁴ *They are good Christian men and this is all.*⁶³⁵

My timidity is not only about my perceived lack of competence, but it was fuelled by having a Caribbean upbringing that presupposes the authority of all senior adults. That is, there is an insistence or assumption that adults are always right. In this context, even as a forty year old I am still called a young man. Such is the power of socialisation that it has hampered me from challenging the actions of my seniors. Further unseen obstacles were due to my lack of awareness of what the Windrush generation had experience on their entry into Britain. On reflection, it was not so

⁶³⁴ Deacons are ordained ministers who help to serve the church and have traditionally assisted the pastor in pastoral care of the church and been involved in the administrative side of church life; in addition, they are the church officials who serve the Holy Communion.

⁶³⁵ Journal entry 2: Date -7 August, 1999.

much a lack of awareness, but I had failed to fully grasp the depth of attachment to the church and what it meant for the folks who had built a refuge and a fortress in a strange land.

After three years of being the pastor of the church and experiencing unrecorded incidences of conflict I felt imprisoned, trapped almost, and unable to move by how the environment had temporarily stifled me. I had inherited a team of deacons who have been in their post for many years. The unspoken rule of the day was that when appointed or ordained into church ministerial posts, one stayed in office until one dies. There were no retirements, no sabbaticals, no stepping down from office. They were there forever. In my team of senior deacons, the youngest of four deacons was 57 years old and the oldest, 66. The deacons were Jamaican born, and they represented the church of the past. They exemplified a conformist, patriarchal church where doctrines, governance and polity were accepted without question. These men were the gatekeepers of the church and nothing occurred within the church without their permission. By gatekeepers, I mean these men allowed or vetoed projects within the church. Such a “leadership role” can result in tension and conflict in the congregation.

I was clear about what a church relevant for the twenty-first century might look like. I imagined a church which was less formulaic, and not bound by an inoperable form of legalism. I was frustrated because I failed in getting my vision across. When I spoke to the deacons about how they saw the church, there was a clear indication that church for them was an imagined church from the Caribbean and a place of certainty and familiarity as earlier indicated in Joseph Aldred's *A Black Church's Future*. There was always talk of the future and growth, but I suspected that growth was desired as long

as the church did not change. The paradox was that my own feelings of inadequacy ran alongside the knowledge that I could see needs for the church that were not clear to my deacons. Nevertheless, in other ways the deacons were exemplary men. They worked hard and were reliable, faithful and diligent, and to all intents and purposes they were the pioneers and pillars of the church. Such actions were characterised as belonging to *good Christian men and that is all they are*.

For the time leading up to the twenty-first century “*Good Christian Men*” was not enough. In my work to modernise the church and ensure its survival, I was aware that some of the deep-seated values of “good Christians” would have to be changed – changed because they were entrenched in backward-looking (to young and progressive people) social and cultural values that were not necessarily a part of the spiritual calling of the CoGoP, but were inbred in Caribbean culture. For a pastor then to challenge such “good Christian men” would be foolhardy and traumatic.

At this stage of pastoral ministry I had not grasped that any change was perceived as a potential threat to the stability of the church, more so in a BMC because of its historical antecedents. I was unaware that prior to my arrival the congregation had passed through a stormy conflictive period and embers of the fallout were still simmering under a seemingly calm surface.⁶³⁶ Ironically, the CoGoP's culture of venerating pastors became a problem for me: the pastor is expected to know without being told, and to act without negotiation. In my mind, and in readiness of a twenty-first century church, a healthy congregation will participate in a conversation with the

⁶³⁶ Joseph Aldred, *A Black Majority Church's Future*, 43.

pastor in the direction of the church. A culture of blind obedience in the modern age can lead to unspoken resentment.

At the time of my journaling the CoGoP did not have any ecclesiastical documentation on pastors retiring and returning to the church where they were once pastors. I was soon to face a mountain that would add more fuel to my already uncomfortable relationship with conflict.

Attack on authority

The founding Bishop of Kingdom Ministries, Sinclair Taylor, who had been involuntarily relocated to the Midlands in 1990 had now been forcibly retired in 1998 returned home to East London. He had served as the pastor for thirty years and still had a formidable following even though he had left eight years previously. With some of his former alliances, and his displeasure at my style of leadership, he, with a small core of members, attempted to regain his former leadership position. One of his strategies was to hold early morning prayer meetings in the local church in an attempt to 'pray' me out.

Using the sanctuary for such types of prayer increased my level of anxiety and paranoia. As I began to confront the behaviour I was left with feelings of nausea, with my heart pounding and racing at a pace I only knew when I have been running fast as a former athlete. I felt intimidated by people who had been in the church for decades, and I felt isolated in the congregation where I was allegedly the senior pastor. Sitting at my desk to reflect on this bizarre episode I noted the following (some of which

surprised me): *With all the difficulties there is still the rebellion of the former minister that is still evident in the church. That serpent must be broken, but how?*⁶³⁷

I felt emotionally pummelled by the return of the former bishop. It was a difficult time where I felt my authority as a leader was under attack, and I was left to struggle on my own. His quest for dominance and power caused disruption in the life of the church especially in business meetings.⁶³⁸ His behaviour and his characteristic booming voice, a form of intimidation, contributed to my frustration, fear and feelings of inadequacy. Feeling overwhelmed with emotion and wondering what had I let myself in for, I authored, *That serpent must be broken, but how?* What had possessed me to call the bishop, a serpent? I was shocked as those words flowed out of me through my pen and onto the pages of my journal. A space created for religious worship now contained toxic behaviours: envy, aggression, images of warfare and negative labelling. I was feeling ashamed and felt guilty about calling this man a serpent. I take consolation from Kathleen Adams as she personalises her journal:

The 79 cents therapist is on call 24 hours a day and is a place where I can tell the therapist absolutely anything. My therapist listens silently to my most sinister darkness, my most bizarre fantasy, my most cherished dream. I can scream, whimper, thrash, wail, rage, exult, foam and celebrate. I can be funny ...cruel...profound...cruel...caustic or vulgar. My therapist accepts all of this and more without comment, judgement, or reprisal.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁷ Journal entry 3: Date- 1- 4 March, 2000.

⁶³⁸ Church of God of Prophecy 89th General Assembly Minutes, *Vibrant Churches Engaged in the Harvest* (Cleveland: White Wing Publishers, 1996), 163-164.

⁶³⁹ Kathleen Adams, *Journal to the Self: Twenty Two Paths to Personal Growth* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1990), 5-6.

Although I take some comfort from Adams, it does not detract from the fact that I still felt guilty for calling a fellow Christian and ministerial colleague *a serpent*. The serpent has connotation to the devil in the Bible. Was I referring to him as a representation of Satan, or was my description of him, in some way unknown to me, referring to some devilish or dark part of myself? Dare I push the point further, and entertain the notion that I was in fact talking about undiscovered and underdeveloped parts of myself which became evidenced during these conflictive moments. This area of unexplored matter cannot be delved into too deeply at this point, but I can offer some rudimentary thoughts.

Who in reality possessed the serpent-like qualities? Was it the Bishop, or me? My mind returns to the Stephen Pattison quote and my feelings of inadequacy as a pastor. I had felt as though I was "perpetually in the balance and found wanting."⁶⁴⁰ Those feelings of inadequacy coupled with being in an environment where it was believed that the pastor is the one who knows it all, or is all knowing, fuelled my incapacity to contain the intensity of painful and uncomfortable emotions; therefore, the overwhelming feelings surfaced as a deluge and were projected onto the Bishop so he became the reason for my perceived failure as a pastor and he "became the object of contempt."⁶⁴¹

Nevertheless, within Kingdom Ministries, there were moments of respite when church life seemed to run reasonably smoothly; however, a regular moment in church life where conflictive moments featured was in the monthly deacons meetings.

⁶⁴⁰ Pattison, *Shame*, 241.

⁶⁴¹ Pattison, *Shame*, 115.

Conflict in the deacons meetings

Each month I met with deacons to discuss the well-being of the local congregation, its progress, and to ascertain whether my pastoral intervention was needed. During the meeting I had put forward the idea for the young people to use one of the dis-used rooms in the church as their space. The ministers objected, and I was left struggling and asking myself “there must be a way around this awkwardness.” In my continual consternation I later entered in my journal the following, *I had a leaders’ [on this occasion I mean a deacons’ meeting] meeting today. It was not good. The ministers I see as difficult men. The word I want to use is ignorant. I want to be careful how I address them. I do not want to say anything negative about them to anyone else again. I want to call them ignorant men, but God has not placed me over them to abuse or mistreat them. They frustrate me. It seems they are content on allowing things to die around them, and they appear not to be bothered. I am at the end of my tether with them. I have concluded that I will have to be here for the long haul...*⁶⁴²

Meeting with the deacons was galling and this, like on many other occasions, was not a good meeting. My suggestion was yet again rebuffed even though the church did not use the room in question. There must a way of getting around them so the young people could use the room, but I ask myself “is it worth fighting with them, yet again?” I could not understand why they were being so difficult. It was five years later and it felt as though we had not moved on one bit. I recall Paul Beasley Murray saying that it takes five years for a congregation to get used to the pastor.⁶⁴³ But this

⁶⁴² Journal 4: Date - 12 February, 2001.

⁶⁴³ Paul Beasley Murray, “The Long-Term Pastorate,” in *Ministry Today* 10: June 1997. http://paulbeasleymurray.com/static/uploads/pdfs/2011/01/The_long-term_pastorate_June_1997.pdf (accessed 23 April, 2013).

seems ridiculous. It felt like five years of pure drudgery. I get the feeling that this was some undisclosed form of rites of passage into the ministry.

Again I found myself angry with what I saw as resistance. I was angry with them, and I wanted to devalue who they were and what they have achieved, but I could not do that. I was called to shepherd them, but they frustrated me. However, having the privilege of hindsight, I now wonder how much of their resistance was important feedback, I missed. I was caught up in my own angst and dilemma in trying to lead 'these' men and 'this' congregation and wanting to be a "phenomenal leader." Maybe my earlier comment about the level of conflict maybe a reflection of my internal world. Another point to consider relates to Aldred's previous observations about the patriarchal nature of CoGoP and the idea of a church relevant of the twenty-first century was too much for people who were used to being controlled. What underpinned their anxiety was the fear of being in control or at least having a greater input into how church developed. Some of the key deacons had been in post for more than thirty years and were accustomed to being told what to do and not consulted on how the church should progress. I struggled with their actions because it felt as though they wanted things to die around them, but then I recognised that if something appeared to threaten the stability of their foundation, then letting it die negates its potential potency. This presents a major but unspoken conflict. We want the church to grow; we want new people, but we don't want the church that we have created to change. Despite all that it felt like, I was at the point of giving up on them. Also, I think that organisationally, we do not take into consideration the potential for conflict occurring with pastoral transfers. The previous pastor was aware of the tensions within the congregation, but I was not aware until I read about the history of the

church in his thesis. Ironically, even with circumstances being difficult, I did not get a sense of leaving or of God telling me to leave the church. I sense oddly enough, I am in the right place.

I recall transpersonal research methods recognise intuitive sensibilities and embrace such inner promptings as genuine human experiences. Rosemarie Anderson and William Braud record:

Intuition seems a capacity of the human heart and psyche to experience the wholeness, goodness and rightness of things in any situation-whether the situation is good or bad in a conventional sense. Intuitions seem to see beneath the surface of things and experience directly the force of love in everything.⁶⁴⁴

What must be stated is that intuition or discernment is a crucial aspect of pastoral ministry. There are times within many pastoral moments that the pastor discerns that all does not seem as it appears. In line with the on-going conflict I was facing at the local church, I had a brief conversation with the National Overseer for the CoGoP at a national meeting.⁶⁴⁵ When he asked me about how the local church was progressing, I informed him of my struggles with conflict and the apparent impenetrable deacons' team. His comment is written beneath followed by my response. He said, **The ministers are not supporting you and you need to ask the question 'How, or in what way can I best use my time at Kingdom Ministries as I develop a new**

⁶⁴⁴ Rosemarie Anderson, William Braud, *Transforming Self and Others through Research: Transpersonal Research Methods and Skills for the Human Sciences and Humanities* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2011), 21-22.

⁶⁴⁵ The National Overseer is the person who is appointed by the nation of England to oversee the church operation, governance and development in the United Kingdom.

leadership team at Kingdom Ministries?” *This is a good question, but not one that will happen overnight.*⁶⁴⁶

I continued to keep a journal and I wrestled with how to enlist the support of the deacons in planning to move the church forward. Two years had passed, and it seemed like I had accomplished nothing other than being involved in skirmishes within the congregation. After much agonising, painful consideration, prayer and conversations with fellow ministers in other church organisations, and making the decision not to leave the local congregation, I decided to do the unthinkable. The action I was about to take was an unprecedented move within the CoGoP. Worst still, it was carried out by a junior man.

In 2003, I gathered the deacons together with my regional overseer and suggested to my two senior deacons to consider retirement. One, on the grounds of failing health, and the other, on the grounds that he was one of the main instigators of conflict in the local congregation. The deacon, who was not well, flatly refused, stating he would finish when he was ready. The other deacon immediately accepted the proposal. However, on the Tuesday and Wednesday night prior to meeting with my first line manager and the deacons, I had two dreams. Transpersonal research methods make a case for the inclusion of dreams as an integral part of “the analysis process and they must be linked clearly to the process of data collection/analysis so that the reader can share in their significance.”⁶⁴⁷ The two dreams are annotated as follows:

⁶⁴⁶ Journal entry 5: Date-15 September, 2003.

⁶⁴⁷ Emma Therese Lewis, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Participatory View* MA Transpersonal Counselling and Psychotherapy (Warwick: University of Warwick, 2012), 3. See the publication of Rosemarie Anderson, William Braud, *Transforming Self and Others through Research: Transpersonal Research methods and Skills for the Human Sciences and Humanities* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2011), 72 and 92.

*I dreamt I was at a funeral being held in a lecture hall. I was asked to read the eulogy/tribute which I did sitting down and with a baby girl on my lap. It may have been one of my daughters. I was not being heard, so for the last part of the talk I stood up. I am unsure whether people were leaving or if it was the end of the funeral. I think I was surprised to begin with, but then we left the lecture hall. The next scene in the dream pictured me going down a large step at a seaside. I had been appointed as the pastor at a local church located there. The feeling in the dream was good. I remembered feeling good and saying to myself "This is the life." As I write this entry I recall that although it was a funeral, there was no coffin."*⁶⁴⁸

The second dream occurred on the following night:

*An unknown pastor had been moved from the United States of America because the church where he previously pastored had dwindled in attendance. He was sent to Ireland where the church he was to preside over had recently experienced a split. I remembered talking to someone in the dream about the split that came to England. They said that the church later became Kingdom Ministries in East London. In both dreams, there was an overriding feeling of peace.*⁶⁴⁹

The dreams were disturbing and confusing in one sense but paradoxically refreshing. They contained numerous issues which are beyond the scope of this thesis, yet they provided some meaningful insights. First, there is a contradiction in terms of the

⁶⁴⁸ Journal entry 6: Date - 15 October, 2003.

⁶⁴⁹ Journal entry 7: Date - 16 October, 2003.

"good" feelings in the presence of a funeral in a place of learning and people walking out as I was giving a tribute about an unknown person or was I delivering my own tribute. And in so doing, was the child on my lap a tension between me as an adult and my immature self, needing cradling and protecting as I made this enormous decision. What is strange is that there was no coffin in sight. The dream may signify that although what I was about to do, in asking the two deacons to consider retirement, was precarious, I did not die but lived to tell the tale. The second dream featured the idea of a split and the attendance having dwindled in a local church. At this point I was unaware of the conflict that had taken place in the life of the church, and I was similarly unaware of how the history of a congregation can impact its present functioning. What I intuitively sensed was that the decision I was about to make evoked deeper levels of anxiety, fear of the unknown, and exposed the vulnerable aspect of my humanity. Being vulnerable is a critical and inevitable component of autoethnography. The importance of vulnerability as being a cogent component is written about by Ruth Behar as she articulates that "fieldwork is nothing more than primitive confronting, with our contemporaries, our own mortality."⁶⁵⁰ In like manner, later scholarship by Carolyn Ellis attests to the case for, and affirms the necessity of self-exposure. Ellis asserts:

Autoethnography, as a mode of inquiry, was designed to be unruly, dangerous, vulnerable, rebellious, and creative... Autoethnography shows struggle, passion, embodied life, and the collaborative creation of sense-making in situations in which people have to cope with dire circumstances and loss of meaning. Autoethnography wants the reader to care, to feel, to empathize, and

⁶⁵⁰ Edith Turner, "Review of *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart* by Ruth Behar," *American Anthropologist* 99, no.4 (1997): 862.

to do something, to act. It needs the researcher to be vulnerable and intimate.⁶⁵¹

Behar's and Ellis' comments cry out for vulnerability and for authenticity, but dare I, a pastor of a BMC, admit to weakness and susceptibility when by default according to Dale Andrews, the Black pastor "becomes the agent of God's concern for the person and the community".⁶⁵² To conclude this matter William G. Tierney endorses the notion of vulnerability and retorts, "Vulnerability is not a position of weakness, but from which to attempt change and social fellowship."⁶⁵³ Vulnerability and self-admission of the pastor is a crucial dynamic of his/her role. My inner conflicting feelings of making the heart wrenching decision of suggesting to the founding fathers and pillars of the local congregation, to consider retirement, and wondering whether I was doing the right thing or not, caused me to question my authority as a leader. Moreover, what right did I have in treating these two pioneers, appointed as deacons in the local church during the 1960s, in such a manner? My entry prior to making the decision captures my self-doubt, anguish, and whether I was acting with compassion or not. *I will be asking the two senior deacons to consider retirement because I will not be using them again. The ministerial team as indicated by the National Overseer was not working with me. I recognise I could be at fault, and I acknowledge I have made huge mistakes, but I also admit I am not perfect, and I do acknowledge my*

⁶⁵¹ Carolyn S. Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, "Analysing Analytical Autoethnography: An Autopsy," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35, no. 4 (2006): 433.

⁶⁵² Dale Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 24.

⁶⁵³ William G. Tierney, "Undaunted Courage: Life History and the Postmodern Challenge," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (California: Thousand Oaks, 2000), 551.

*errors but the team cannot move another millimetre as it stands. Lord, help me to be humane despite knowing how difficult it will be.*⁶⁵⁴

My journal entry signifies how scared I was in making this decision. Believing I was making the right decision nevertheless caused me to unearth my past mistakes and amplify them to the point of paralysis. I was plunged into a swirl of self-doubt, and all that I perceive is not right about me comes to haunt me. I was overwhelmed with the assailing and conflicting thoughts of the consequences of making decisions, but I recognised and acknowledged that despite the extraordinary action I was about to take, it was better for the team and it was right for the life and growth of the local church.

The decision was made. The deed was done. There was a huge reaction in the local church. I called a members' meeting to inform the church officially of what had taken place.⁶⁵⁵ It was a difficult moment as some were critical of me for taking such unparalleled action. Yet some people were honest and were critical of the national organisation for not taking the training of its ministers seriously. They questioned why we only considered replacing someone when he/she had died, retired to the Caribbean, or was too ill to function.

As a consequence of my actions, the church did not split. No members left, albeit some were disgruntled at my deeds and interpreted what I had done as being disrespectful of the two senior deacons in the church. I did not die, but I felt freer to

⁶⁵⁴ Journal entry 8: Date - 13 October, 2003.

⁶⁵⁵ Members' meetings are official church meetings where matters needing immediate attention are discussed. On these occasions, some members who do not ordinarily frequent the local congregation attend, quite often acting as agitators. Approximately 80 people attended the meeting that evening.

function as a pastor in the local church. Finally, 2003 had come to an end. I sat at my desk on the morning of Friday 2 January 2004 in silence and paused to reflect on the previous year.

As I looked through my journal entries for 2003, I had not realised that it was the start of the year when decisive actions on my part were inevitable if I was to remain the pastor of the local congregation. Was that the seven year hitch in pastoral ministry that some talk about?⁶⁵⁶ One of the poignant conflictive moments occurred during a local church business conference. I wrote, "*It had been quite a strenuous week. The business conference was not too bad apart from a moment of confrontation with one of my deacons. I have begun to take measures for him to be disciplined. We had arranged a meeting for Friday 7 February 2003, but he said he would not be attending any meeting with me.*"⁶⁵⁷

The meeting that the deacon refused to attend eventually occurred when the National Overseer and Regional Overseer were invited to the local church for the disciplinary meeting. The deacon was duly disciplined for insubordination by the two senior church officials; however, his disruptive behaviour did not abate with the disciplinary. Needless to say, it was the same person who I asked several months later to consider retirement.

As I read through the remaining entries I concluded it had been a torrid year. As I penned the reflection of 2003, I felt as though there was nothing positive about the year. However, a remark from one of the deacons who had witnessed the events of

⁶⁵⁶ Victoria Weinstein, "The Seven Year Itch: Reflections on a "Sabbatical" Year in the Ministry," <http://www.firstparishnorwell.org/sermons/7year.html> (accessed 19 April, 2013).

⁶⁵⁷ Journal entry 9: Date - 29 January, 2003 – 8 February, 2003.

2003 offered an alternative interpretation to my perspective, causing me to reconsider my thoughts. Here are my thoughts: *I feel that the last year was a waste of time, but on reflection it is not so. Deacon Forsythe commented whilst in conversation in reference to the outgoing year “If you are able to fight through all you did last year you could fight through anything.” I think last year was not a waste, I needed to do it. For too long I have allowed nonsense to continue unchecked and unchallenged. If the spirit of the king is in the kingdom I must begin to assert my spirit within the kingdom of Kingdom Ministries. I want to be there for a long time. It’s the only way things are going to be achieved.*⁶⁵⁸ 2003 was a vital year if I was going to mature as a pastor.

Finding myself spiralling into an abyss of negativity, I needed something that would give me hope. Where would I get the strength to continue? Prayer was good, but I needed a human word to help me. Deacon Forsythe's remark was what I needed. In all honesty, I did not enter the ministry to fight, but I guess I was being naïve due to a lack of ministerial experience and not realising what some pastors go through. Furthermore, I was unaware of the powerful dynamics of human behaviour within groups.

Deacon Forsythe's comments "**If you are able to fight through all you did last year you could fight through anything,**" was not what I wanted to hear, but I wondered whether I had passed the incognito rites of passage, and had now won the respects of the congregation. With all the battles, I pondered whether I was now someone who they could trust. Maybe, in a strange sort of way, I now, according to John C. Turner,

⁶⁵⁸ Journal entry 9.

S. Alexander Haslam, Stephen Reicher and Michael Platow, represented the people I was called to serve and lead.⁶⁵⁹

Taking on board Forsythe's observation, I reflected on the nature of church life. The sanctuary of God doubled as a crucible of conflict. It is as though it is the norm at this local fellowship for some people to be in constant conflict. 2003 was a difficult year, but with the deacon's comment maybe 2003 was not a waste, after all and I needed to do it. I had no other choice but to confront those long-standing issues of conflict in the church.

I had been the pastor for nearly eight years and though feeling intimidated and under-estimating the power of friendship formed since the 1950s, I recognised *I had allowed nonsense to continue unchecked and unchallenged*. Not having challenged the powerful voices, the stronghold had continued. After this length of time I needed to be bolder. Despite my national appointment as the pastor of the local church my presence appeared to have little effect on the congregation. With a few painful victories, I recalled a phrase from one of the senior members, **If the Spirit of the King is in the Kingdom, I must begin to assert my spirit within the kingdom of Kingdom Ministries**. I never inquired what she meant by this, but my mind returned to Aldred's thesis when he wrote about his predecessor Bishop Sinclair and how the king no longer reigned over the kingdom. I do not want to rule over the church, but I need to assert my authority if I am going to lead the congregation into a more modern way of being the church.

⁶⁵⁹ S. Alexander Haslam et al., *The New Psychology of Leadership: Identity, Influence and Power* (East Sussex: Psychology Press, 2011), 106.

The mood of the church was changing for the better, but it had been a costly venture. Further change meant further costs, but I still did not sense it was time to leave the local fellowship. I felt convicted that effective change would only be possible the longer I remained the pastor of the local fellowship. As I thought *I want to be there for a long time. It is the only way things are going to be achieved.* It seems to follow the research and was supported by several authorities who suggest that pastoral longevity and church growth go hand in hand.⁶⁶⁰ Concluding with this deliberation, at the beginning of 2004, I move towards the end of the same year to consider another important point.

I attended a youth camp from 10-17 August 2004 and during the time away I was able to glean a few quiet moments to consider my personal life and ministry. To assist me in my reflection, I used a question employed by Ira Progroff to help me think through the many facets of my life. His question, “Where are you in your life right now?” provided the much needed gentle yet provocative stimulation.⁶⁶¹ I wrote many pages, but the ideas relating to pastoral ministry are encapsulated in the next two sentences. *I am aware, and I am in the context and process of living within a church undergoing extreme transitions. In the process, people who have held firm and fixed views are feeling very insecure and anxious, and in the process of feeling threatened they can become aggressive.*⁶⁶²

The local congregation was growing, not in great numbers, but slowly and steadily. This increase in numbers began to shift the stability of the congregation. Some of the extreme

⁶⁶⁰ <http://wesleyconnectonline.com/pastoral-longevity-and-church-growth-charles-arn/> (accessed 19 April, 2013). http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200101/0101_106_longevity.cfm (accessed 19 April, 2013).

⁶⁶¹ Robert Blair Kaiser, “The Way of the Journal,” *Psychology Today* (1981). http://www.intensivejournal.org/about/article_wayof.php (accessed 18 April, 2012).

⁶⁶² Journal entry 10: Date-14 August, 2004.

changes began to occur when I took a different view from the CoGoP official doctrinal position concerning divorce and remarriage.⁶⁶³

With new people beginning to attend the local fellowship many had not come from a background where church had been central to their lives or in their formative years. These new people reinforced my view on the church as a place to embrace the complexities of a modern world. As a church, there was an emphasis on evangelistic initiatives, and there was a genuine desire for new Christians, but there was a noticeable intolerance as well if they did not conform to the prescribed framework of how the church operated. With my conceptualisation of a church for the twenty-first century coupled with the international offices re-examining its doctrinal position on divorce and remarriage, it was inevitable it would affect the local fellowship. At this point in pastoral ministry, although finishing my Master's in 2001 and embarking on a doctoral course of study, I had not yet comprehended the significance of the cultural, ecclesial and historical aspects of church membership. I observed, and partially understood the pain of conflict that the doctrinal shift taking place within the international offices was having on the local church. I was caught in the crossfire due to occupying a multivalent space where I was a representative of the international organisation and its changing policies whilst being the appointed shepherd trying to care for the flock. Being caught in the jaws of a doctrinal, ecclesiastical, cultural and generational vice, I notice how some people

⁶⁶³ Church of God of Prophecy International General Assembly 93rd Minutes and Ministry Policy Manual (Cleveland: International Offices) Kentucky Fair and Exposition Centre, Louisville, 2004), 52-54. The position on divorce and remarriage the church held for decades was that if a person divorced he/she were forbidden to remarry under any circumstances. However, since that time, that view had been rescinded. Although there has been a shift in doctrinal understanding it has left an indelible imprint on the mind of many of its members. Needless to say, the adoption of this new doctrinal practice has been the source of much conflict within the CoGoP worldwide. For the church's current standpoint see <http://cogop.org/about/doctrine/marriage-divorce-and-remarriage.html> (accessed 19 April, 2013).

could be verbally aggressive towards me while others were willing to take a fresh look at how we understood our doctrines.

In light of this doctrinal shift during 2004, the CoGoP published a fifty page document on supporting biblical marriage. Most of the congregation were unable to work their way through such an article, so I condensed it to fifteen pages. This was distributed to the entire membership for their perusal. In conjunction with the official document, the Bible, and a publication dealing with marriage, divorce and remarriage, I began a series of weekly Bible study on the matter lasting for approximately five months. The younger generation rarely engaged in the discussion due to two main reasons. First, many had made up their minds that CoGoP had got it wrong and second, many did not care to lock horns, so to speak, with the senior membership. The Bible study at times was boisterous but engaging, with various positions being taken by the fifteen mainly senior members attending the study. Our understanding of the scriptures would soon be tested in the following year as the church continued to increase in attendance, worship, and people who wanted to become official members of the fellowship.

My journal entry for the period of March, 2005 was written during the month of April, 2005. I noted these words: *On Saturday 12 March 2005 we had an excellent baptism service with ten candidates. It was a good evening, but I was not able to enjoy it at all.* One of the reasons for the excellent baptismal service was that there was a family of eight who were being baptised. This was the first in the church's history that an entire family was being baptised at the same time.

Leading up to this point, the local fellowship had a new visitor, Mary Smith, someone who had grown up in Kingdom Ministries but had left the church many years previously in her teenage years. She had now returned many years later with her husband who was a divorcee and her three young children. She loved singing and asked if she could be a part of the worship team.⁶⁶⁴ I said yes, and the worship team was in favour of her inclusion. However, her presence on the worship team caused difficulties for a small contingent within the congregation whose visible objection of not participating in the morning service became evident as they sat pole faced during the time of cooperate worship. The next few sentences convey my dilemma, my response, and the reason for being unable to enjoy the baptismal service. *Mary has become a part of the worship team which I thought was okay. For certain of the congregation it was not. When I say certain, it was simply a handful of people who still have big voices and who need to be silenced. In reaction to the pressure I asked her to step down from the worship team. It was one of the worst things I could have done. I realised I had done wrong. On Saturday, the day of the baptism I simply could not enjoy it because I was full of sadness and remorse.*⁶⁶⁵ However, it was great to see this young woman and her family become active in the local church. The disapprovers believed they were more spiritual than others.⁶⁶⁶

With the issue of divorce and remarriage being a difficult doctrine to deal with within the CoGoP there was no room for any exceptions. Remarriage was wrong regardless of the circumstances. With the unabated strain from the dissenting group and numerous phone calls from them to the National Overseer I buckled under the weight of conflict and a felt

⁶⁶⁴ The worship team is a group of people within church who lead the congregation in the act of worship with singing, Bible readings and so on.

⁶⁶⁵ Journal entry 11: Date - 7 March – 30 March 2005.

⁶⁶⁶ Being more spiritual is somewhat of a vague term which is used in many Pentecostal church groups. It refers to individuals within the church setting who feel the Lord talks to them more than others. This claim is often characterised by a sense of arrogance and superiority of those who claim or imply they hear from God more than others and they publically declared they no longer tolerate sin.

tension in the congregation. I went to her home to speak with her and gave her my conclusion of the matter. The following day was the baptismal service where traditionally people attend church in great numbers as they watch family and friends make public declarations of their new found faith in Jesus. But on this Saturday, I stood in the baptismal pool with another baptiser with my heart feeling as though it was resting on the floor of the baptism pool, feeling near to tears but having to hide them, deeply heartbroken, sad and remorseful. That night I baptised ten people and what should have been a celebratory occasion in turn became like my own living death. I had emotionally and psychologically collapsed under the weight of pressure while the International Offices were still reviewing their policy on divorce and remarriage. I intuitively knew I should have protected this woman more than I did. Pondering on this situation I am not convinced the church is ready to face a diverse and fragmented modern world marginalised by painful experiences.

The consequence of protracted episodes of conflict creates fear, anxiety and can crush one's dreams and desires to embrace new people. The scenes of conflict may pass, but the emotional, spiritual and psychological effects can last for some time after the event.

What have I learned?

I am writing as a British born Caribbean male whose church tradition at this time of writing does not accommodate this sort of analysis and reflection. I write from a position of double consciousness, a Black man living in a White world, but working as a pastor in a Caribbean diasporic congregation. I write from a context where I have the combination and complexities of an increasingly modern and diverse world compounded with an inherited legacy of a complex church history and traumatic culture. In order to help the

church become a fellowship embracing a changing world, I must make sense in some way of the history and current context of the local church I am called to pastor.

Considering this narrative Norman Denzin reminds the reader that:

No self or personal experience story is ever an individual production. It derives from larger group, cultural, ideological, and historical contexts...to understand a life, the epiphanies and the personal-experience and the self stories that represent and shape that life, one must understand and penetrate these larger structures.⁶⁶⁷

From Denzin's theorisation it is clear that nothing is as it seems. Regardless of how things initially appear, there is always a connection to another entity which is often unseen, but on probing, one discovers a new and undetected world which motivates the observed behaviour but equally needs understanding.

As I begin to approach the completion of this narrative, I am tempted to write a nice neat conclusion. There is the appeal to end on a good note where the loose ends are tidied, everything is resolved, conflict is successfully diffused, but that would not be real life. Life within most diasporic communities within Britain, whether within church or not, have numerous jagged edges. Moreover, being neat and tidy was not how my journal reflections were written. It is not how Caribbean existence is lived in Britain, at the margins of life and at the seat of pain. In this regard, I have not hidden the pain, anguish, rage, anger, frustration and mistrust experienced within the African Caribbean community. After all, I have wanted to examine and understand the

⁶⁶⁷ Norman K. Denzin, *Interpretive Biography* (California: Sage Publications, 1989), 73.

underbelly of the BMC in Britain. I now have a tentative grasp of interpersonal conflict as a language of survival. In addition, the more one is attached to what constitutes one's identity the more likely the intensity and ferocity of conflict. Furthermore, my lack of training did not help matters in that I was not prepared to aid this congregation in beginning the process of changing for the future.

I concur with Sparkes, who as he wraps up the closing comments on his seminal work, admits, "I have resisted a final authoritative interpretation."⁶⁶⁸ As I tell my story as a pastor attempting to lead a congregation into a new understanding of church, I was initially unaware of their historical and cultural experience of dislocation, disconnectedness and rejection. Equally, plucking up the courage to narrate my story, I am made aware of my connection with their shared history and to the undiscovered and unacknowledged areas of my life. This probing in order to find out what is there is an on-going journey, an intricate mixture which does not reach a final neat conclusion. In accordance with the conglomeration of life's vicissitudes, I embrace the thoughts of Janet Ellerby who, in talking about the so-called "authenticity" of life as a mirage, comments, "All I can do is persevere in the journey of the examined life, acknowledging the interplay of blindness and insights as I strive for reflexivity, perhaps even wisdom-the most genuine subjectivity I can construct."⁶⁶⁹

Ellerby's reflection calls for the author's honesty during the autoethnographic process. It seems to me that one cannot change the world without being honest and changing oneself first. It is indeed a journey of perseverance within a marriage of paradoxes. These contradictions reveal an aspect in each autoethnographer, and in this case, the

⁶⁶⁸ Sparkes, "The Fatal Flaw," 483.

⁶⁶⁹ Janet Mason Ellerby, *Intimate Reading: The Contemporary Women's Memoir* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 44.

pastor. Arthur Frank writes the following, "Sooner or later, everyone is a wounded story teller. In postmodern times that identity is our promise and responsibility, calamity and dignity."⁶⁷⁰

Conclusion

Frank's comment reminds me of our common equality regardless of our roles in life. We are equal because we are all flawed human beings and with our stories there are dimensions of vulnerabilities more often than not closely guarded by each one of us. Yet our perceived weakness, the aspect of the self, hidden and guarded, can prove to be an unassuming nexus of our life and pastoral ministry. I will explore this notion in the following chapter; however, there are several themes occurring within this chapter. First, in intergenerational conflict, where the conflict emanates from a lack of understanding from both sides of the generational wall, it is unfair to blame solely on the senior members or the younger generation. Second, the flashpoint of conflict occurs when the pastor has little idea of the history of the congregation prior to his/her arrival and makes uninformed decisions that neglect the intricate nuances of the congregation. Third, there is clearly a need for training in transition of change management for both the pastor and congregation. This matter I will consider in the final chapter. Fourth, undeniably, changes in doctrine from the International Headquarters have had major consequences in the local congregation. What must be said is that doctrine relating to marriage and divorce is not related to Kingdom Ministries alone. Fifth, human vulnerabilities and fear are heightened when anything is perceived as having the potential to de-stable the created homeostasis of church or anywhere that acts as a place of safety and refuge. In addition, if the level of conflict

⁶⁷⁰ Arthur W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010), xiii.

becomes a protracted affair it can lead to aggression. What is clear is that conflict, often seen as an enemy in human relationships, can, if viewed through another lens, be seen as a language communicating a cry for survival. If it is construed as a language it must be listened to, deciphered and responded to accordingly. How interpersonal conflict can be used in a positive manner will be the focus in the following chapter as I conduct a theological reflection on my findings.

Chapter 6 – Theological Reflection - Healing begins where the wound was made.⁶⁷¹

Introduction

Up to this point, the thesis has followed three stages of the four phase pastoral cycle model in developing an understanding and suggesting a new praxis for interpersonal conflict within an African Caribbean faith community. The problem and nature of interpersonal conflict were discussed in chapter one. However, according to John Colwell, starting with the incident when conducting theological reflection has its shortcomings. Colwell emphasises that starting with the concrete experience “ultimately fails.”⁶⁷² He reasons that the “pastoral and ethical goal, after all, is not that we should find ways of responding to problems but that we should be shaped as faithful men and women.”⁶⁷³ His point is that any situation or circumstance has a history, a context and events leading to the present. We come, or arrive at any situation “with our baggage, history and stories that contributes to who we are.”⁶⁷⁴ In terms of theological reflection he evinces:

The proper theological question is not how scripture and the Christian tradition might aid me. Rather it is how I, as someone being shaped within the church through its traditions and scriptural stories, respond to the particular dilemma in a manner that is coherent and consistent, trustful and faithful. The Bible functions properly within the Church as a means through which we are

⁶⁷¹ Alice Walker, *The Way Forward is with a Broken Heart* (New York: Ballentine Books, 2001), 200.

⁶⁷² John Colwell, “The Church as Ethical Community,” in *The Bible in Pastoral Practice: Readings in the Place and Function of Scripture in the Church*, eds. Paul Ballard and Stephen Holmes (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 215.

⁶⁷³ Colwell, “The Church as Ethical Community,” 215.

⁶⁷⁴ Colwell, “The Church as Ethical Community,” 215.

shaped and formed as a people who can live trustfully, faithfully, lovingly, hopefully, thankfully and worshipfully.⁶⁷⁵

Colwell's point is poignant, as it reminds us that the incident under analysis did not occur arbitrarily, but events seen and unseen, recent and distant have culminated in what we understand as the present. Colwell's line of reasoning is even more crucial for people who are unclear as to why they have been ejected to the edges of society by the fact of his/her colour, ethnicity, disability, class or sexuality. Finally, Colwell's view is taken on board in the development of this thesis as it pertains to the context of the congregation under analysis.

Towards a new paradigm of theological reflection

Phase two of the pastoral cycle includes the literature review in chapter two of this thesis. Chapter two exposed the gaps in scholarly research pertaining to BMC's in Britain in general, and the episodes of interpersonal conflict in particular. Phase two also included chapter three, four and five. These chapters utilised the tools of sociology, psychology, Caribbean and British history, ethnography, transpersonal research and autoethnography to provide a social analysis of interpersonal conflict within an African Caribbean diasporic faith community. This chapter commits to understanding the foregoing chapters within a theological reflection framework in order to create a new paradigm that understands and deals with interpersonal conflict, and encourages Christian maturity where marginalised people can positively accept themselves. Moreover, this model seeks to cultivate a fresh understanding of God, and therefore enhances one's Christian witness and finally, within Christendom, one tends

⁶⁷⁵ Colwell, "The Church as Ethical Community," 216.

not to talk of antidotes or solutions, but rather of healing, deliverance or transformation.⁶⁷⁶

Models of theological reflection abound, but for this thesis I have chosen the Eucharist as the biblical lens in which to interpret the episodes and themes of interpersonal conflict. My rationale for choosing this motif is because the Eucharist encapsulates and honours the uniqueness and sacredness of humanity and acknowledges human catastrophe and despair. Moreover, the ritual offers the potential for the healing of human suffering and experiencing a new wholeness here on earth and not having to wait until the afterlife. For the BMC, there is still a love of the Bible; anything that attempts to deal with matters pertaining to the church from secular sources is viewed with suspicion. In addition, the Eucharist is not an end in itself by leaving the participants in a continual state of impotence or powerlessness. It is a community meal in which diverse people participate and a place where those who are different find acceptance. This acceptance is easier said than done when one leaves the comfort and solace of the Eucharistic community and ventures into the wider world.

For a detailed examination of the Eucharist and its various movements, the work of Dom Gregory Dix is invaluable. Dix charts the historical development of the Eucharist and its original seven action schemes.⁶⁷⁷ Eventually, the seven action scheme was refined to four phases. First, ‘*took bread*’; second, ‘*gave thanks*’; third,

⁶⁷⁶ Stephen Pattison and James Woodward, “An Introduction to Pastoral and Practical Theology,” in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, eds. James Woodward and Stephen Pattison (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 10-12.

⁶⁷⁷ Dom Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Continuum, 2005), 48. Dix’s seven action schemes are 1, ‘took bread,’ 2; ‘gave thanks’ over it; 3. Broke it; 4. Distributed it saying certain words; 5, took a cup; 6, gave thanks over the cup; 7, handed it to the disciples.

‘*the fraction*’; the bread is broken; four, ‘*the Eucharist*,’ the bread and wine are shared.⁶⁷⁸

Being Chosen by God

The Eucharist is a call to remember that one has been chosen. It is a sacred meal shared by those called by God into a relationship with God and one another. Every human being has a desire, an instinctive need to belong, to be significant, and to feel needed and loved. However, the word ‘chosen’ can be problematic and evoke negative emotions by those labelled as disadvantaged. First, why have I been chosen to suffer in this way? Second, if one is being chosen, what is the agenda for the one doing the choosing? Third, if one from the dominant group has oppressed me, what is his/her agenda in choosing me? Fourth, being in a position of marginalisation reinforces the reality of one ‘not being chosen.’ Fifth, being chosen can develop an air of suspicion in the one being chosen even amongst one’s equals. Thus, being chosen is a multivalent dimension of existence comprising numerous contradictions as discussed by the following writer.

Patti King commenting about her earlier experiences states, “the word *chosen* felt more like not being chosen,” but as she matured as an adult she saw “chosen in a new light; a sacred light, when chosen by God!”⁶⁷⁹ Being chosen carries with it an ‘in and out’ group mentality; who is selected, who is special and why are such people selected and by whom? For African Caribbean people, or any socially excluded group, reading the gospel narrative shines new light on one's existence. However, this is not always the case. It depends on who is reading the scripture, how it is being read or the reading

⁶⁷⁸ Dix, *The Shape*, 48.

⁶⁷⁹ Patti King, *Acorns from God: God's Word for Personal Growth and Encouragement* (Indiana: Author House, 2010), 45.

strategy employed to read and understand the written text. For example, a Eurocentric approach, liberation, feminist or a womanist theological perspective will all have a particular way in reading the biblical text. All methods will be nuanced given his/her ideological presupposition and his/her context. From reading the gospel narratives, it is evident Jesus sided with the ordinary. Those whom society has disregarded - women, lepers, children, the physical and mentally disabled, the 'demon possessed' man in Mark chapter five, alienated by his community and confused with his identity – all serve as exemplars of people for whom Jesus cared.⁶⁸⁰ As Jesus sided with the ordinary his ministry caused conflict amongst the religious and political body of the day, and illustrates the biblical example of the problem encountered when new wine is poured in old wineskins, a clash of new values, perspectives clashing with pre-existing and well established laws.⁶⁸¹ In a similar manner there was the clash of values and ways of understanding church which caused unrest and tension within Kingdom Ministries.

For dehumanised people, being chosen by God is of immense importance because it contrasts with the reality of his/her daily isolating and alienating existence. Marie-France Becker writes, "Jesus' incarnation remains the way chosen by God to tell us the value that we have in his eyes and thus, to reveal to us our own grandeur."⁶⁸² This 'grandeur' is not about self-sufficiency, narcissism, or arrogance, but rather, a sense of

⁶⁸⁰ St Mark chapter verse 5. This story is interesting as traditionally it is used as an evangelistic sermon in Pentecostal services, yet when the demoniac is asked his name he does not know who he is. The common sermon theme would be to refer to him as being demon possessed, but could not his words mean, when he is asked of Jesus who he is, that his confusion is a result of his lack of identity?

Similarly, for many African Caribbean people born in Britain there is a dilemma in terms of identity. For example, if one is Black British, from what country has one originated?

⁶⁸¹ The story of the new wine in old wineskins is told in Mark 2verse 22. "Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

⁶⁸² Marie-France Becker, *15 Days of Prayer with Saint Marie Clare of Assisi* (New York: New York City press, 2009), 63.

value, worth and mystery as one created in the image of God. France Becker continues, “From the crib to the cross, the *Most High* espouses our fragile humanity and re-joins it beyond its capacity to love.”⁶⁸³

Being chosen by God has further significance for excluded individuals called into union with Him because there is recognition but no competition with another.

Illustrating this point from a Womanist position Diana Hayes attests, “all the people of God, all Christians, see themselves as anointed, chosen by God to serve all of God’s creation.”⁶⁸⁴ Yet the idea of being chosen amidst the harsh brutality of human existence can seem surreal. This disbelief is echoed by Thomas Keating who observes the following:

We are favoured people. Paul’s reading, ‘we have been chosen by God for the praise of his glory...’ There must be some mistake. It can’t be me that God has chosen. It can’t be me for whom God’s son has died. It can’t be me whose sins are all forgiven through the blood of Christ. It can’t be me who has eternal life. It cannot be me who has been given divine sonship, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, victory over sin, and union with all the persons of goodwill.⁶⁸⁵

Keating talks about an apparent impossibility being made possible in a miraculous way. This miracle transcends the immediacy of degradation and being dismissed as being unimportant. It is this impossibility that is forgotten in the heat of a conflictive episode during congregation interaction. Within the congregation of Kingdom

⁶⁸³ France Becker, *15 Days of Prayer*, 63.

⁶⁸⁴ Diana L. Hayes, *Standing in the Shoes my Mother Made Me: A Womanist Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2011), 77.

⁶⁸⁵ Thomas Keating, *And the Word Was Made Flesh* (New York: Lantern Books, 2011), 15.

ministries, members hold an ardent belief that we are all created in the image of God, and therefore, we are all chosen by God, but during a conflictive moment this firmly held communal belief disappears from one's consciousness of the one who is in pursuit of his/her goal and the one who perceives or feels he/she is under threat.

Keating's explanation of this surreal experience can be further marred even within a marginalised group setting. Within Caribbean culture there remains a legacy of enslavement and colonialism labelled shadeism.⁶⁸⁶ This prejudice propagates the belief that the lighter one's shade of skin, the more superior one is. This mindset is the lived experience in the Caribbean where one may feel one is more chosen than the other because of a lighter hue.⁶⁸⁷ The importance of believing in one's 'chosen-ness' where there is no competition with the other is paramount for the marginalised to be relieved of his/her socially imposed labelling. Moreover, in a conflictive episode there is competition at play, but being conscious of our chosenness in such a tense moment reminds us of our equality and chosenness before God. Despite the damaging effect of this intrusive distraction, it is the identification with Jesus that gives African Caribbean Christians hope beyond the immediate. In an astute observation by Emmanuel Lartey, he surmises that, "Every human person is in certain respects, like all others, like some others and like no other."⁶⁸⁸ Lartey's concept of human uniqueness existed within Kingdom ministries, but was largely neglected when human

⁶⁸⁶ Mary J. Maher, Ian Parker, *Racial and Cultural Diversity: Cultivation Racial Harmony Through Group Analysis, and Psychotherapy* (London: Karnac Books, 2012), 219. See also the work of Paul Grant, *Niggers, Negroes, Black People and Africans: The Human Dimension of Building Effective Organisations - An Afrikan Centred Perspective* (Nottingham: Navig8or, 2004), 89. Grant makes reference to shade-ism as legacy of enslavement and other 'isms' that must be jettisoned if Black people are to be healed. Lisa Maria Anderson-Levy, *Hiding in the Open: Whiteness and Citizenship in the (re) production of difference in Jamaica* (Michigan: Proquest, 2008), 75.

⁶⁸⁷ Caroline Redfearn, "A Legacy of Slavery: Black with the Slaves or Mulatto with the Slavers? An English Jamaican Theological Reflection on the Trajectories of 'Mixed Race Categories,'" in *Black Theology, Slavery and Contemporary Christianity*, ed. Anthony Reddie (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 137-138.

⁶⁸⁸ Emmanuel Lartey, *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counselling* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd, 2003), 34.

need for preserving the safe haven of the church was circumvented, thus, making harmonious relationship difficult. What is true to say is that contrary to the outburst of interpersonal conflict within the congregation it does not negate being chosen by God. To grasp the notion of being chosen leads to the consideration of human life having the possibility of reaching one's potential, an idea explored by Beverley Smith.

Beverley Smith asks whether the Eucharist could "serve as a liberation motif in accommodating a system for observation, analysis and provision of strategies for addressing racism, classism and sexism."⁶⁸⁹ Smith comments:

The Eucharist symbolises and can actualise the destruction of oppressive superstructures which serve to alienate, disenfranchise and segregate people who are 'imago dei,' and therefore born with certain inalienable rights."⁶⁹⁰

In light of Smith's observation and the gathering of the disciples around the table, a disparate group of individuals, it symbolises those who can be permitted to sit at the table. Smith's understanding of Christ's last meal "celebrated with his disciples" was a representation of committed friendship sharing the meal with "certain memory" and "certain experiences."⁶⁹¹ Similarly, she argues, within the African traditions the sharing of "the meal is significantly primarily because community is an important theme."⁶⁹² If there is an absence of community and the Eucharist is a personal, private and personal affair, it serves as a distraction from the issues of injustice and inequality. Smith is making a case for the Eucharist to develop an alternative

⁶⁸⁹ Beverley P. Smith, "The Eucharist as a Liberative Praxis," *Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Practice*, 2 (1999): 57.

⁶⁹⁰ Smith, "The Eucharist," 57.

⁶⁹¹ Smith, "The Eucharist," 62.

⁶⁹² Smith, "The Eucharist," 62.

trajectory by using conflict, racism, sexism and classism as elements for engaging in “libertive activity.”⁶⁹³ Using Smith’s analysis, conflict can be the catalyst of a mode of learning and the continual development of community. The growth and development of a community is based on the education, enlightenment and application of new learning of its people. Smith’s observations will be used to develop the Eucharist into a ritual for human relational development and not only as a reminder of the salvific work of Jesus Christ. From being chosen there is further recognition of human sacredness.

Bread as the body of Christ and symbolising human existence

One of the ways that Jesus chose the church to foster an intimate relationship with himself is by breaking bread in remembrance of his life, his ministry and his sacrifice. Jesus’ pedagogical style often involved him employing ordinary objects to demonstrate spiritual truths. Bread is a basic food item and forms part of a staple diet in many societies, and as pointed out by Jessica Harren, “bread comes in many forms and shapes: dark, light, coarse, smooth, flat, fluffy, dense, with air bubbles and without, and in many different flavours.”⁶⁹⁴ Accompanying the varying shape of bread is an array of textures, smells and preparations required in its making. Thus, the use of bread and its vast assortment depicts the complex range of human diversity and whom God chooses in participating in his meal with him. This includes the privileged and the disadvantaged, those who agree with each other and those who do not. This full acceptance is portrayed as Jesus gathered the twelve disciples to celebrate the Passover meal. During his time on earth there were numerous disputes among the disciples yet it was one of the chief ways in which Jesus’ disciples developed as

⁶⁹³ Smith, “The Eucharist,” 64.

⁶⁹⁴ Jessica Harren, “Bread and Bones: Knowing God through the Eucharist Table,” *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health* 13, no. 3 & 4 (2009): 288.

human beings. Joel Comiskey argues cogently that “God used conflict to transform his disciples.”⁶⁹⁵ Comiskey comments connect with some aspects of the previous chapter on autoethnography. Whilst I acknowledge I could have thought through and consulted more comprehensively on certain matters, some of the conflictive episodes were due to latent aspects of my being which would not be revealed until I was in relationship with other people within a congregation and in a leadership role. Here Comiskey posits:

Conflict often arises as we clash with different personalities and character deficiencies-often the very character deficiencies that annoy us are ones that we share, but sometimes do not recognise.⁶⁹⁶

The themes of vulnerability, different worldviews, doctrinal differences and intergenerational tensions as stated in the previous chapter confirm Comiskey’s observations and the comments of Lartey who highlights our similarity, dissimilarity and individuality with each other regardless of our age and other categories which are used to define us. This complex tripartite puzzle of humanity is brought into deeper relationship and confrontation of each other as we gather around the table to participate in the sacred meal. Thus, in gathering around the table for the sacred meal, one cannot ignore the difficulties and sacredness of the other. Harren comments “the bread of Eucharist that carried Jesus’ body gives us a visible symbol of who can be in church.”⁶⁹⁷ Bread symbolises the physicality of the Eucharist and makes it a multisensory experience but the use of a uniform commercially produced wafer in

⁶⁹⁵ Joel Comiskey, *The Relational Disciple: How God Uses Community to Shape Followers of Jesus* (California: CCS Publishing, 2010), 76.

⁶⁹⁶ Comiskey, *The Relational Disciple*, 76.

⁶⁹⁷ Harren, “Bread and Bones,” 288

some church traditions contributes to symbolically erasing human difference whilst simultaneously sanitising the horrors of the Lord's body and thereby overlooks the ache, anguish and vicissitudes of life that human beings encounter.

The CoGoP holds the position that the bread and wine symbolises the body and blood of Jesus, as opposed to believing in, 'transubstantiation,' - material transformation into body and blood.⁶⁹⁸ Whilst the CoGoP believes in consubstantiation, that is the bread and wine symbolises the body and blood of Christ, there is, I think, space to contemplate the belief of the elements turning into the body and blood of Jesus to register, acknowledge and not to forget the trauma and terror of the brutality of the crucifixion which heightens the multisensory experience of the service. It is granted that as human beings we are indeed complex, but nevertheless we are God's crowning glory and therefore, regardless of our inadequacies and idiosyncrasies, we are special as the next stage of Dom Dix's model continues to affirm.

The Blessing

Excluded people seldom feel blessed, but Jesus' action of taking the ordinary and offering a blessing is significant. The Eucharistic scene represents 'so called' ordinary people created in the image of God being chosen and blessed by him. Gaddy states, "Jesus took bread and blessed it. Ah, the blessing! How every one of us needs a blessing!"⁶⁹⁹ Dix develops C. Weldon Gaddy's understanding by saying that "to bless a thing, or to give thanks to God for a thing was synonymous in Jewish thought, because in Jewish practice one only blessed a thing *by* giving thanks to God for it

⁶⁹⁸ Raymond Pruitt, *Fundamentals of the Faith* (Tennessee: White Wing Publishing House, 1981), 366-369. It is commonly known that transubstantiation is the position of the Roman Catholic Church.

⁶⁹⁹ C. Weldon Gaddy, *Transformation* April 10, 2005. <http://dcommon.bu.edu/xmlui/handle/2144/151> (accessed 17 March, 2011).

before using it.”⁷⁰⁰ Furthermore, being blessed means ‘to speak well of, to invoke a benediction upon, to prosper.’⁷⁰¹ But it depends on who is doing the speaking and what is taking place in the life of the person being blessed. While an inanimate object such as bread is being prayed for, being blessed often has a positive note, but when one is living in the crucible of suffering it is initially difficult, if not impossible to comprehend such existence as being blessed. In trying to understand the paradox of being blessed and suffering Anthony Pinn grapples with the real yet slippery issue of theodicy. Pinn observes:

I worked as a youth minister in various AME churches and saw firsthand the efforts of Black Christians to make sense of his/her daily struggles in light of Christian theology and doctrinal structure. I will never forget hearing “church mothers” give testimonies regarding the hardships of life and God’s mysterious ability to “make a way out of no way.” The words of Sunday morning prayers have stayed with me: “Lord, you never said it would be easy... and so, if I’m going to wear a crown, I must bear my cross.”⁷⁰²

Pinn’s struggle with theodicy occurred within an African American context and the cries of the church mothers psychically etched itself within his being. His observations, though, are equally fitting for many parts of the African Caribbean diasporic Christian community in Britain.

⁷⁰⁰ Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Continuum, 2005), 79.

⁷⁰¹ Vine’s *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (New Jersey: Barbour and Company, Inc., 1952), 132-133.

⁷⁰² Anthony Pinn, *Why, Lord? Suffering and Evil in Black Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 9.

I personally remember the prayers of the church mothers who often loudly exclaimed their utterings to God during prayer meetings. Being a new Christian and hearing and feeling these prayers of pain and despair by the Windrush generation, I asked my mother “why do some of the mothers express themselves in such a deep gut wrenching and groaning manner?” She exclaimed, “They were pressure shouts.” Her response needed no explanation. These were women, created in the image of God who were encountering fierce struggle in trying to make ends meet, raising large families and husbands working long unsocial hours, enduring the hardness of British society whilst living thousands of miles away from home. To quote one of the church mothers who was asked to share a sermonette one Sunday morning, “In Jamaica we were happy and poor, but in England we suffered.” Her comments caused a stir in the congregation as the Windrush generations groaned in agreement, and the rest of the younger, mainly British born congregation, gasped at the pain and felt the emotion the comment evoked within them. In a lecture by Matthew V. Johnson, he makes reference to the noise of such expressions as being a crucial aspect of the effects of dehumanisation and trauma.⁷⁰³ In my estimation, church was a place of refuge where the blest could utter the unutterable without fear of being ridiculed, silenced or considered psychologically unwell or unstable.

Whilst discussing this view of being blessed, this researcher distances himself from the clichéd and well worn popularised phrase of “too blessed to be stressed,” or “blessed and highly favoured,” uttered in some church circles and the often associated false notion of a feel-good factor.⁷⁰⁴ Such terms are used indiscriminately by some

⁷⁰³ Matthew Johnson, Annual Multicultural Lectures (2011). www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRKaVIg-zrY (accessed 10 January, 2013).

⁷⁰⁴ Suzan Denise Johnson Cook, *Too Blessed to be Stressed: Women on the Move* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 4.

Christians and clergy alike as if these words are the magician's magic words that will mysteriously anaesthetise the pains of reality and transport them to a place outside of this world. Such terms, in my mind, are a denial of reality. Examining the life of Jesus as being blessed in light of common understanding is a far cry from his life seen within the scope of scripture. In fact, investigating his life demonstrates how being blessed attracts stress. However, Cook utters a word of warning. She intimates that, "Blessings are gifts from God that allow us to align our bodies with our minds and souls. If we learn to walk in those blessings, to make them a way of life, then we will be too blessed to be stressed."⁷⁰⁵ Again, a close examination on the life of Jesus and the apostles continue to challenge Cook's estimation of being too blessed to be stressed.

The blessing then is conveyed through words, a visible act belonging to the "invisible and spiritual realm" allied with spiritual and supernatural power.⁷⁰⁶ The blessing is of such magnitude that Johannes Emminghaus comments "Jesus spoke a blessing-the praise of God-over the gifts given to human beings by God, and in this praise and thanksgiving he gave them their new meaning and reality."⁷⁰⁷ For dehumanised people the blessing transcends degradation and humiliation and elevates them to the state of the self-recognition of their God-given humanity. In other words, they recognise they are chosen by God and accept their acceptance. If people are oppressed for too long, at some point, sooner or later, an inner quest in being treated with equality and justice will surface.

⁷⁰⁵ Johnson Cook, *Too Blessed*, 4.

⁷⁰⁶ Derek Prince, *Blessing or Curse: You can Choose* (Michigan: Chosen Books, 2006), 36.

⁷⁰⁷ Johannes H. Emminghaus, *The Eucharist: Essence, Form and Celebration* (Minnesota: The Order of Saint Benedict, Inc, 1997), 170.

The Blessing: Words of nourishment

Negative labelling, actions and the utterance of negative words are the major contributor in shunting certain people groups into uncomfortable social locations. Nourishing words or words that feed the depths of humanity must be used whilst calling on the power of the transcendent to elevate the psychically wounded person to a place of self-acceptance. The Eucharist has far reaching consequences when observed by oppressed and oppressor alike. For the oppressed, the blessing is a form of healing, but for the oppressor it can continue to affirm his/her sense of power with a distorted notion of having a divine right and legitimacy in his/her subjugation of others.

In this new pastoral model, the blessing is not only for the elements of the Eucharist but for the individuals who exist and struggle daily with ontological conflicts. Such words, when internalised, can heal and act as a positive inner voice within the person fostering the promise of hope and offering consolation during times of personal disappointments, interpersonal conflicts, difficulties and moments of despair. In an almost mysterious manner such words attach themselves to the human self, forming a symbiotic relationship with its host, revitalising one's sense of identity. These words of life enable periphery people to "keep on keeping on."

Words of blessing may be uttered by anyone, but within a African Caribbean religious context such sentences carry authority when emanated by the officially appointed pastor who demonstrates he has the hearers best interest at heart, and considers them as human beings wounded by injurious words, shunted and disturbed by societal

attitudes and misunderstandings, marred by the consequences of sin, but still, undeniably, created in the image of God. Matthew Johnson's keen observation from an African American perspective conveys a similar existence which finds resonance within African Caribbean diasporic Christians British landscape. He claims:

This context provides us with the advantage of a magnified view of the deep structure of African American religious and cultural consciousness and the titanic struggle going on beneath the surface to maintain psychic equilibrium and spiritual integrity in the face of intense and deeply conflicted intersubjective reality.⁷⁰⁸

Responding to Johnson's plea, it is crucial that the importance of the role and authority of the pastor cannot be dismissed during this sacred moment for people who seem to continually exist in a permanent state of powerlessness. Having a human being who identifies with them, or at least acknowledges his/her suffering, to pronounce a blessing adds to the healing effect of the words.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁸ Matthew V. "Johnson, Lord of the Crucified," in *The Passion of the Lord: African American Reflections*, eds. James A. Noel and Matthew V. Johnson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 2005), 10.

⁷⁰⁹ This scenario is not without its problems within the Black Majority Church. The minister in such a setting, although rarely stated can be seen almost like a godlike figure who has somehow transcended the daily drudgery of his/her congregants. See Thomas. J Pugh, "Interdenominational Theological Centre: Curriculum Responses to Gerontology" in *Gerontology in Theological Education*, eds. Barbara Payne and Earl D.C Brewer (New York: Haworth Press, 1989), 42-43. To date very little analysis has been conducted in regards Black clergy stress in the UK. However, there has been a study conducted by Lerleen Willis, *The Working Lives of Black Majority Church Pastors: The Role of Internal and External Coping Resources in Buffering the Impact on Ministry Demands* (East London, University of East London, MSc diss, 2005).

The Blessing and its complications

On the surface, the blessing appears a simple matter, but further reflection reveals an array of complications. The problem relates to those gathered at the Lord's Table wanting a blessing. The blessing is for all who desire to receive the Eucharist, but even amongst marginalised groups there exists levels of hierarchy where other marginalised groups are seen as less by the 'higher' oppressed groups. For example, see the point I made earlier on shadeism. Darker skinned people are pushed to the lowest levels of human strata, but the variety of bread being blessed which symbolises the complex and multifarious nature of humanity indicates no one is excluded from the table. The blessing therefore, is needed by all, and in God's eyes is granted to all, especially to those whose humanity is seen as suspect in a world of apparent tolerance, yet beneath the veneer elements of prejudice and intolerance remain. Looking within the four walls of Kingdom Ministries, both sides of the conflictive divides are blessed by God. That is, the Windrush generation, the British born generations, and myself as the pastor. Jesus blesses the bread which leads to total acceptability and therefore, we are all blessed with no one being blessed more than any other.

The issue of acceptability was a point of concern within the local church setting of Kingdom Ministries, but it has wider ramifications in the world at large. Diane L. Hayes reflects on preaching the "good news as the bread and wine of life to all those who hunger and thirst for it." She suggests:

As the church, the people of God, we are a Eucharistic community, one that gathers to live out again and again the sacrifice of Jesus Christ...If the Eucharistic celebration is not a reflection of all of us – old and young, Black, white, and every colour and every language under the sun, as various in its celebration as the sands of the sea-shore and the stars in the sky-then all else that flows from there will be of little value.⁷¹⁰

As the pastor who presides over the Eucharist service, I have to face Bishop Sinclair whom I castigated as a “*serpent*,” and “*the ministers who I see as difficult men*.”⁷¹¹ In a mode of reflexivity we have both shared in conflictive episodes in the life of the church and both bring our brokenness in the form of unresolved inter-personal conflicts to the Lord’s Table, but we are both created in the image of God, chosen by God and in need of a blessing in spite of our weaknesses, shortcomings and idiosyncrasies. As we all present ourselves to observe the Eucharist, we cannot forget our differences, and it would not be right to place our variances to one side only to consciously retrieve them after the Supper has ended and continue with our congregational and interpersonal skirmishes.

On this matter of tension during the course of the meal is an interesting point to bear in mind. It be must remembered that Peter who would later deny Jesus, and Judas who would betray him were participants of this new institution. Clearly Jesus was making no mistake by including these two individuals when remembering the Passover and

⁷¹⁰ Hayes, *Standing in the Shoes*, 36-37.

⁷¹¹ Journal entry: Date – 1-4 March, 2000 and 12 January 2001.

ushering in a new type of celebration that would transform the life of Christendom forever. Samuel Fountain elaborates on this matter. He notes:

Although Jesus talks about the betrayal, in John's Gospel Jesus passed the bread and wine before sending Judas on his way of betrayal. Judas was not excluded from the meal of friendship. Friend or foe, the faithful and the betrayer shared the fellowship meal. The meal was not exclusive for the eleven faithful disciples but included the betrayer.⁷¹²

This ground-breaking meal encapsulated all of the disciples, and in the reality of everyday life we will have those gathered to participate in the Eucharist who may be at enmity with others and other people groups.

The second stage of the Eucharist with its complex double edged meaning of being blessed and its associated complications leads to the bread being broken by Jesus. This act, in my view, is a physically violent action destroying the shape of the bread, and thus symbolising the brokenness of the body of Christ during the crucifixion and brokenness of humanity. Here, there is a soteriological tension: the bread cannot be distributed without being broken.

The deliberate breaking of the bread

At this stage of the sacrament Jesus takes the bread and breaks it and responds by saying, 'Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance

⁷¹² Samuel Fountain, *A Man for All Time* (New York: Eloquent Books. 2008), 70.

of me.’⁷¹³ Brokenness means pain, suffering, loss, depression, self-hatred, loss of sense of self and identity all contributing to human beings’ descent into a state of powerlessness, worthlessness and insignificance. Brokenness is not easily summed up in a word or two when one’s existence is marred from one’s history and current context. Needless to say, most people want to skip over the notion of brokenness and head to the place where there is no pain. In a similar fashion many Christians want to escape the crucifixion and skip over to the resurrection without giving much thought to the horror and trauma of the crucifixion or the Holy Saturday of the Easter narrative. I am not suggesting one dwells on pain and suffering, but to ignore, neglect or to trivialise it means that the gospel and redemption is sanitised, and the violence inflicted on Jesus, as argued by Matthew Johnson, is erased from one’s consciousness.⁷¹⁴ With the human proclivity for avoiding discomfort, brokenness is not easily accepted nor understood as a potential for growth.⁷¹⁵ No one desires being broken, but items must be broken to release the contents contained within.⁷¹⁶ For example, the story of the woman who dried Jesus’ feet with her hair had to break the alabaster box allowing the expensive perfume to spill onto his head whilst releasing its beautiful fragrance.⁷¹⁷ At this juncture, I want to advocate the notion presented by Andrew Purves. He asks “Who is Jesus Christ for us today and what is Jesus doing here and now, in this hospital room, during this committee meeting, in this service of worship, in this counselling session and so on?”⁷¹⁸ I would add further as I wrestle to

⁷¹³ 1 Corinthians 11:24. King James Version.

⁷¹⁴ Matthew Johnson, "The Passion of the Lord, Violence and Black Pain," posted 27 March 2013. <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/truthworks/2013/03/28/soul-afire-with-dr-matthew-v-johnson-l-spirit-matters-talk> (accessed 9 May, 2013).

⁷¹⁵ C. Welton Gaddy, *A Soul Under Siege: Surviving Clergy Depression* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 59.

⁷¹⁶ Frances Young, *Brokenness and Blessing: Towards a Biblical Spirituality* (Michigan: Baker Academy, 2007), 76 and 99.

⁷¹⁷ Luke 7: 37-38.

⁷¹⁸ Andrew Purves, *The Crucifixion of Ministry: Surrendering Our Ambitions to the Service of Christ* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2007), 53.

understand and deal with the pastoral situation of interpersonal conflict within Kingdom Ministries, my life and ministry, I must discern what it is Jesus might be doing for the benefit of the congregation and me, and then draw alongside to what he is doing.

I have highlighted my own impairment related to my prenatal experience and early years after birth, the experience of the Windrush migrants and subsequent generations born in Britain and the tensions occurring in the life of the church. In doing so, I am not forgetting the fact of human sinfulness. However, consideration must be given to how the negative effects of interpersonal conflict can be diminished and a newer way of working with difference achieved. In other words, redemption of the situation must be sought. Here, Henri Nouwen illuminates the argument by stating, “Hospitality is the central attitude of the minister who wants to make his own wounded condition available to others as a source of healing.”⁷¹⁹ I will develop this notion of hospitality later.

Breaking bread symbolises three movements. First, in some cultures bread is sacred and this perspective must not be overlooked in our analysis of the Eucharist. In cultures which hold this view bread becomes a symbol of divine reality and life.⁷²⁰ Furthermore, Gary Staats elaborates by emphasising that bread was deemed so sacred that, “The idea of cutting bread with a knife was rejected by the Jewish family.”⁷²¹ Likewise, human life in connection with earlier comments regarding being chosen and being blessed is also sacred, but this is problematic. David P. Gushee contends that

⁷¹⁹ Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Double Day, 1979), 99.

⁷²⁰ Gary Staats, *Jewish Domestic Customs and Life in Interpreting the Gospels* (Self-Publishing: 2008), 72.

⁷²¹ Staats, *Jewish Domestic Customs*, 72.

human life is sacred but it does not follow a straightforward and natural path. He indicates there is a form of binary co-existence of how humans are understood. He declares:

It seems fairly natural for human beings to designate a royal class, or a beloved mother, or one's fellow citizen, or one's coreligionists, as sacred. But it is not natural, and certainly not routine in human life, to ascribe sacredness to each and every other human being. In fact, indifference toward most members of our fellow species, with special hatred for a few and special reverence for a different few, seems the common human experience.⁷²²

In response to Gushee's observation, the sacredness of another human being seems at times to be far from one's consciousness and is especially revealed when one is making the attempt to assert one's sense of self over another in pursuit of one's desire.

Second, the breaking of bread symbolises the pain and horror that must be endured.

Third, there is the necessity of being broken to release a blessing. Frances Young argues, "As the Spirit of the Living God breaks and moulds each one of us, so the church has to suffer the pain of brokenness so as to be humbled and recognise difference."⁷²³ Brokenness, as a precursor to being a blessing to others is not easily acceptable or acknowledged. In this regard, Craig Barnes indicates "the role of the pastor is to find the truth behind the reality."⁷²⁴ If Barnes is correct, perceiving the truth behind a conflictive episode is no easy feat as the players in the scene are

⁷²² David P. Gushee, *The Sacredness of Human Life: Why an Ancient Biblical Vision is Key to the World's Future* (Michigan: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2013), 24-25.

⁷²³ Frances Young, *Brokenness and Blessing*, 99.

⁷²⁴ Craig Barnes, *The Pastor as Minor Poet: Texts and Subtexts in the Ministerial Life* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 22.

initially subsumed by the emotionality and enormity of their experience. To find the truth behind the reality, the actors, at some point, must admit and surrender to their dilemma, but by doing so, they are made vulnerable and exposed, yet in the moment of such susceptibility the process of healing begins. Such healing is not easily attained nor understood by the victor, vanquished or the observer in a conflictive scene. The observer is in a unique position and can offer hope while the person is in crisis. The paradox of brokenness is this: in the process of deconstruction and reconstruction one may discover an enrichment of self, others and God which could not have been attained in any other way.⁷²⁵ Such lessons are only learnt through deep reflection, the wise word of an elder, or by a thorough introspection of conflictive moments. This reflection can occur through the medium of personal journaling as in my case, but for the congregation, a deeper understanding can occur through theological reflections or contextual Bible studies. Alternatively, the appropriate wording of the one who leads the Eucharist can help the participants reconsider their actions around the sacred immediacy of the Lord's Table.

The capacity for being valued and having a sense of belonging is an innate human feature and is referred to as a theology of vulnerability. It is at the Eucharist table where the celebrants are invisibly vulnerable in the company of each other. It is critical for the wording of the pastor during the service to accurately reflect the diverse people gathered to receive of the Lord's body and blood. According to Thomas Reynolds, "to exist as a finite being is to be contingent and vulnerable."⁷²⁶ In commenting about weakness Reynolds remarks:

⁷²⁵ Hugh. J Harmon, *Broken, Just to be made New* (Columbia: Kingdom Book and Gift LLP, 2007), 5-6.

⁷²⁶ Thomas Reynolds, *Vulnerable Eucharist: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Michigan: Brazos Press, 2008), 18.

Redemption then is a welcoming, and empowering act of divine hospitality. It does not render human beings "weak" in the sense of passivity, neither does it negate vulnerability by making human beings invulnerable and perfectly whole... so instead of doing away with impairments and the capacity to suffer, redemption transforms vulnerability into Eucharist with God. An entire "theology of vulnerability" opens up, wherein the marginal and heretofore neglected (i.e., disability) becomes central.⁷²⁷

Reynolds observations shifts the meaning of bad things happening to people not in a sense of having a positive attitude, but by re-examining the narrative of one's existence through a lens which has as its core the belief that human beings are special, created in the image of God, and thus, despite being shunted to the edges of society and made impotent, the reconfiguring of their existence from marginal to significant is made prominent and cannot be ignored. The theology of vulnerability proposes "there is strength in weakness as demonstrated by the Suffering Servant in Isaiah chapter 52."⁷²⁸ But vulnerability is seldom sought for. Brené Brown argues that "As humans we avoid vulnerability, we numb it, but it is at that point we experience joy and fulfilment."⁷²⁹

Vulnerability is avoided but necessary. It is this feeling of vulnerability that the Windrush generation were fearful of and so they guarded against it. I, too, shared in

⁷²⁷ Reynolds, *Vulnerable Eucharist*, 19.

⁷²⁸ L. Juliana Classens, "Isaiah," in *Theological Bible Commentary*, eds. Gail R. O' Day and David L. Petersen (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 221.

⁷²⁹ Brené Brown, "A Gospel World Wide - Part 5: A Theology of Vulnerability," <http://www.thisischurch.net/self-reflection/a-gospel-worldview-part-5-a-theology-of-vulnerability/> (accessed 6 December, 2011).

the common experience of vulnerability but for different reasons. Their vulnerability was heightened as the church they had created against difficult circumstances was now perceived to be under threat. The religious boundaries they had constructed for their safety were being pushed into new territory. I felt vulnerable because I was appointed to a church where many of the members were much older than me, and I had been socialised to respect all my elders. My vulnerability was further enhanced because I was not prepared by the organisation to understand the process of change management and the likely repercussions that change can bring. I was, at that point, unaware of the local church history and the history of the Caribbean people. There was then an unspoken and unacknowledged vulnerability which caused both sides of the congregational fence, laity and clergy, to view each other with suspicion and susceptibility.

What can be envisaged is that this painful human existence is often kept hidden within the self, but is expressed negatively when relationships collide. It is a well-known expression and phenomenon that "hurt people hurt people."⁷³⁰ Explaining this phrase Chester Woods notes:

We encounter people daily who act and react in ways not readily understood. Often the person does not even understand why he or she responds the way they do... understanding does not mean excusing; we

⁷³⁰ Chester W. Wood, *Hurt People, Hurt People: Getting a Grip on Anger* (Florida: Xulon Press, Incorporated, 2008), 16.

are still accountable for our actions, the hurt we cause others, the hurt we inflict on ourselves, the pain Jesus feels every time we fail.⁷³¹

Woods offers a poignant comment about people now knowing why they react in some of the ways they do. It was this lack of understanding on my part that led me to begin the process of keeping a pastoral journal, and even as I reflected on my actions and contribution in the numerous conflictive episodes within Kingdom Ministries I sensed there were other factors at play. Hence my continued research to discover what may lie beneath the tip of the human iceberg of observed behaviour.

With human brokenness being manifested through interpersonal conflict and as a Christian pastor called to shepherd this congregation, the thought that challenged me the most related to the necessity for resolution of this dilemma with the hope for a brighter and sustained future. Given the reality and pain of human brokenness, African Caribbean Christians, other marginalised people, and in fact, all people regardless of age, social class, culture and doctrinal position are to share with each other their fragmented human existence.

Sharing

Jesus broke bread and shared it amongst his disciples.⁷³² Sharing is the antecedent to brokenness, where one is open to the possibility of sharing the fruits of one's brokenness. Jessica Harren attests, "at the Eucharist table, Jesus touches us when his body is broken open for us—broken open to heal us, broken open to bind us to one

⁷³¹ Wood, *Hurt People, Hurt People*, 16.

⁷³² 1 Corinthians 11:24.

another, broken open as our churches should be.”⁷³³ ‘Do this in remembrance of me’ is a reminder how Jesus’ suffering coexisted with his sharing. Sharing then is not a pain free altruistic endeavour, but rather the result of a willingness to share one’s brokenness as a gift to others as exemplified by Jesus.

The relationship between the Eucharist and the *diakônia* is *sharing*, argues Albert Collver.⁷³⁴ But Martin Robra confronts jargonistic language and adds:

The language of sharing is even more basic than any of our theological or ecclesiological concepts, for it is the people’s language in an elementary sense. All people know what sharing means... and they know that fullness of life is only found in sharing life with one another. ‘Sharing’ is thus a fundamental symbol of life.⁷³⁵

Sharing epitomises the ministry of Jesus. The incarnation is more than sharing in terms of money and material gifts. Such giving can be accomplished at an emotional and safe distance. Eucharistic sharing involves revealing and imparting of our weakest selves or at least our weak self to the other which also acts as a reminder of the needs of others.

Working through inter-personal conflict leads individuals to a new understanding of existence and interdependency. In sharing the gift of his broken body, Jesus demonstrates an anti-thesis to self-gratification. One receives from Jesus, and then in

⁷³³ Harren, “Bones and Bread,” 285.

⁷³⁴ Albert Collver III, “Works of the Flesh and Church Unity: Does Service Unify and Doctrine Divide?” *Concordia Journal* 36, no. 4 (2010): 346.

⁷³⁵ Martin Robra, “Theological and Biblical Reflection” *The Ecumenical Review* 46, no. 3 (July 1994): 285.

turn, shares with humanity as an act of honour of being a beneficiary of his gift. The sharing of the bread reconnects with the divine command found in Genesis four verse nine where Cain, after killing Abel, is confronted by God who asks, "where is Abel?" Cain responds, "Am I my brother's keeper?"⁷³⁶ Cain's rhetorical question revealed a universal interdependent responsibility of humanity. Hence, sharing involves the inclusion of the oppressor and serves to eradicate self-centeredness whilst embracing wider humanity as beneficiaries of Christ's body. In response to the idea of humanity as beneficiaries, Sylvester Steffen comments, "The Eucharist is the sacrament of mindfulness, the centrepiece of purpose by which people can live consciously, harmoniously – by being daily bread for each other."⁷³⁷ Thus, human brokenness is confronted by the act of sharing which leads one from the place of self-pity and victimhood, powerlessness and hopelessness to a new location of human connectedness with another. It would be incorrect to suggest that the Eucharist eliminates the consequences of interpersonal conflict forever. What it demonstrates is the possibilities of wholeness available to human beings when they acknowledge and attempt to deal with his/her brokenness. Needless to say, sharing is not a one hit ritual which covers a multitude of sins in an instance leaving us never having to revisit our weakness again.

Sharing: The new possibilities of community

Sharing one's brokenness includes the formation of new relationships in an alienating and Good Friday world.⁷³⁸ The formation of new relationships is referred to as *lex-*

⁷³⁶ Genesis 4: 9.

⁷³⁷ Sylvester Steffen, *What is Self Donation: Kenosis, Eucharistic and Green Religion: Book 2 of the Justified Living Trilogy* (Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2010), back cover.

⁷³⁸ Good Friday world, a term used by Rev. Myre Blyte in early morning devotion to describe the pain and chaos in the modern world in *Sam Sharpe and the Quest of Liberation, Theology and Legacy for Today Conference*. Regents Park College, University of Oxford. 13-16 April, 2010.

vivendi –“the way we live our lives in relation to the centrepiece of our liturgical prayers and life-the enactment of the Eucharist.”⁷³⁹ With the possibility of new relationships, Inderjit Bhogal poses a challenging question ‘Can God provide a table in the wilderness?’ He writes:

Yes, God can provide a table even in a place of oppression and in the presence of ‘enemies’ and treat you like an honoured guest. But will only prepare a table in order to celebrate where there is freedom from oppression, even if it means providing a table in the wilderness...where is the wilderness for us, for you, for the church in which you worship and serve? What is the place you dread? The place you avoid? The place you would choose not to visit or live in? Is it that dull, monotonous, boring relationship which you feel oppressive and which is exhausting? Is it that place of work in which you feel unfulfilled, or a new direction you are being pushed into?... God wants to celebrate with you there.⁷⁴⁰

In light of Bhogal’s reflection, the Eucharist is to be shared where we are. It is important to recall the time of the Passover and the institution of the Eucharist as both occurred when the Israelites were under oppression and persecution. Thus the Eucharist is to be enjoyed and celebrated not in palatial or opulent surroundings only, but in the seat of pain.

God not only wants to celebrate with us in the world we inhabit but also to challenge the participants of the Eucharist with mystery. It is a timely reminder of the

⁷³⁹ Kevin. W. Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2005), 299.

⁷⁴⁰ Inderjit Bhogal, “A Table in the Wilderness (Psalms 78:9)” in *Black Theology in Britain: A Reader*, eds. Michael Jagessar and Anthony Reddie (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2007), 224.

complexity of the spiritual life, and that God is with us in difficult life-threatening situations. Bhogal responds to this:

The Lord's Table is prepared in the midst of context and realities that threaten life, in contexts we may prefer to avoid. It challenges greed and seeks an end to hunger in a world of plenty. It challenges the scandal of church disunity. It calls for an end to economic structures that create hunger and famine... It is in the wilderness God teaches much, woos people, calls, affirms, tests, feeds...a foretaste of the heavenly banquet prepared for all.⁷⁴¹

Bhogal's comment causes the observant of the Eucharist to take his/her eyes off his/her personal dilemmas and gaze upon the world in which he/she lives. The unseen focus of conflict, the assertion of self can be abated as we take our eyes off our personal needs and consider the needs and humanity of others. In this regard, to participate in the Eucharist is a solemn call to action in the world.

In light of the Eucharist, sharing can be understood in various ways. First, one of the greatest gifts is to give oneself to another. Second, the act of sharing is how humanity shares its brokenness as Jesus, not in a 'like for like' manner, but for self-identification. Third, Christians in the gathered community acknowledge and share the fruits of his/her brokenness whilst bearing each other's burdens.⁷⁴² Fourth, sharing oneself with others increases the possibilities of others being beneficiaries of the gift of Christ for their liberation, freedom, resurrection, ascension and empowerment of the Spirit in the kingdom of God. Fifth, sharing acts as a potent healer. The violent

⁷⁴¹ Bhogal, "A Table in the Wilderness," 246.

⁷⁴² Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2005), 304.

and conflicting past of African Caribbean people manifested in existential impairment, a form of human fragmentation, can be ameliorated through Eucharistic encounters if one acknowledges one's own brokenness and seeks healing. Yet the act of sharing opens oneself to face rejection, even at the table.

Miroslav Volf, speaking as one who had experienced the horrors of wars in the former Yugoslavia and the devastation of ethnic cleansing contributes to a deepening understanding of conflict. He refers to exclusion as not simply keeping someone or an entity 'out' from the main circle, but states "it occurs when the violence of expulsion, assimilation and the indifference of abandonment replaces the dynamics of taking in and keeping out as well as the mutuality of giving and receiving."⁷⁴³ Volf, developing a way forward refuses to use the terms oppressed and oppressor because he considers them as ill-suited to bring about reconciliation and sustain peace between people and people groups. Using the work of Gustavo Gutiérrez he responds, "The ultimate goal for human beings is love."⁷⁴⁴ Building further on Gutiérrez's thoughts Volf develops, in contrast to exclusion, a theology of embrace comprising the rubric of "repentance," and "forgiveness," "making space in one-self for the other," and "healing memory" as pivotal moments in the movement from exclusion to embrace.⁷⁴⁵ There is a challenging point for further consideration. Volf's exclusion and embrace and the expression of sharing involve an element of risk. Alica Batten, citing the work of one of her students who was working in an AIDS hospice became frustrated as her student's work was unacknowledged by the residents of the hospice and wrote, "To truly serve, one must reach out when the response is uncertain because as Jesus said,

⁷⁴³ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 67

⁷⁴⁴ Gustavo Gutiérrez, trans., *A Liberation of Theology: History, Politics and Salvation*. 2nd ed. Translated by Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), xxxviii.

⁷⁴⁵ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 100.

'if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you.'⁷⁴⁶ The Eucharistic sharing is not straightforward and even in the act of trying to find resolution, one's offering can be rejected.

Building on the thoughts of Bhogal and Volf, I want to suggest that sharing in the Eucharist lends itself to a reinforcing of the incarnational ministry of Christ and can act to provide a new paradigm for pastoral ministry.

Sharing: A paradigm for pastoral ministry-The Wounded Healer

To further develop this aspect of sharing within this Eucharistic model of pastoral praxis, I will employ Henri Nouwen's sharing component in the *Wounded Healer*. His publication in 1979 was revolutionary for its time and has much relevance for guiding the development of ministry in the twenty first century.

In *The Wounded Healer* Nouwen asks, "What does it mean to be a minister in our contemporary society?"⁷⁴⁷ Space does not afford an in-depth analysis of Nouwen's ministerial paradigm but they are as follows; "the condition of a suffering world," "the condition of a suffering generation," "the conditions of a suffering man," "the conditions of a suffering minister."⁷⁴⁸ On all counts, Nouwen's model, speaks to the heart of the concerns of interpersonal conflict within Kingdom Ministries. The congregation is a microcosm of the world and within the assembly all the conditions as highlighted by Nouwen exists. Before expounding on Nouwen's model, I want to add a brief comment on the first three points. First, the conditions of a suffering world

⁷⁴⁶ Alicia Batten, "Studying the Historical Jesus through Service," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 8, no. 2. (2005): 110.

⁷⁴⁷ Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1994), xv.

⁷⁴⁸ Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, xv.

relate to a world that is dislocated and the boundaries between “humanity and his/her milieu, between fantasy and reality, between what to do and what to avoid” have all become blurred, disjointed and has left humanity clamouring for a new sense of meaning.⁷⁴⁹ Second, the conditions of a suffering generation refers to behaviour observed mainly among the youth revealing “there is something terribly wrong with the world in which they live and that cooperation with existing models of living would constitute a betrayal of themselves.”⁷⁵⁰ Third, the conditions of a suffering man denotes ministry to a hopeless man. Here, Nouwen is concerned with leadership, and I would suggest pastoral ministry, that engages with the marginality of life. He is not referring to the “stand-offish, arm's length” type leadership, but a leadership which embraces the pain and suffering of another.⁷⁵¹ Moreover, Nouwen’s insights are invaluable:

It seems necessary to re-establish the basic principle that no one can help anyone without becoming involved, without entering with his whole person into the painful situation, without taking the risk of becoming hurt, wounded or even destroyed in the process.⁷⁵²

Nouwen is claiming that as a pastor, the effectiveness of ministry is not so much technique and method, but in the immersion with the people one is called to shepherd. To stand at a distance, attempting to avoid the pain and angst of the congregation will not minister to his/her needs, and in the BMC context as earlier stated, will not work.

⁷⁴⁹ Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 4.

⁷⁵⁰ Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 34.

⁷⁵¹ Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 72.

⁷⁵² Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 72.

I now want to consider Nouwen's final position of the condition of the suffering minister and how it links to the sharing stage of the Eucharist. Henri Nouwen asserts:

The minister is called to recognise the sufferings of his time in his own heart and make that recognition the starting point of his service. Whether he tried to enter into a dislocated world, relate to a convulsive generation, or speak to a dying man, his service will not be perceived as authentic unless it comes from a heart wounded by the suffering about which he speaks.⁷⁵³

Ministry as portrayed by Nouwen emanates from the raw, unsanitised, concretised dimension of reality, and it seems that despite the illusion of the elevated role of the pastor they are called as exemplars in dealing with and working with the pain from their own existence. It seems then that learning from and sharing one's pain is crucial for connection with the other. It is drawing from one's well of inter-personal conflict and understanding the hard learnt lessons of self that a pastor can use to enhance his/her ministerial effectiveness.

The blessedness of sharing one's brokenness

In answer to the conditions of the suffering minister, Nouwen pens the following words:

In the middle of our convulsive world, men and women raise their voices time and again to announce with incredible boldness that we are waiting for a

⁷⁵³ Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, xvi.

Liberator. We are waiting, they announce, for a messiah who will free us from hatred and oppression, from racism and war - a Messiah who will let peace and justice take his/her rightful place.⁷⁵⁴

Within an interpersonal conflictive episode there can be the tendency to go into a form of retreat in order to lick one's wounds, but in many instances the one considered as an opponent or adversary is in need of compassion and mercy. The blessedness of sharing one's brokenness is an unromanticised oxymoron, and it would be fair to ask the question, where does this Messiah come from? The liberator is both the "wounded minister and the healing minister"⁷⁵⁵ Moreover, Nouwen, using the life of Jesus as a ministerial liberative paradigm writes:

Jesus has given this story a new fullness by making his own broken body the way to health, to liberation and new life. Thus, like Jesus, he who proclaims liberation is called not only to care for his own wounds and the wounds of others, but also to make his wounds into a major source of his healing power. But what are our wounds?... "alienation," "separation," "isolation," and "loneliness."⁷⁵⁶

The wounds as Nouwen elucidates are found in Kingdom Ministries church member and pastor alike, but often are unacknowledged and not shared. That is simply too risky. Yet, it is within an acknowledgement of one's fears, weaknesses and frailties, that the ability to share emerges. On this matter Nouwen observes:

⁷⁵⁴ Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 81.

⁷⁵⁵ Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 82.

⁷⁵⁶ Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 82-83.

No minister can save anyone. He can only offer himself as a guide to fearful people. Yet, paradoxically, it is precisely in this guidance that the first signs of hope become visible. This is because a shared pain is no longer paralysing but mobilising, when understood as a way to liberation. When we become aware that we do not have to escape our pains, but that we can mobilise them into a common search for life, those very pains are transformed from expressions of despair into signs of hope.⁷⁵⁷

Despite the perceived illusion of the leader there is an unspoken aspect where one must make oneself vulnerable for the people one is trying to develop. In response to this necessary vulnerability Nouwen refers to this openness of wanting to help others as hospitality. He explains it like this:

Man suffers and that sharing of suffering can make us move forward. The minister is called to make this forward thrust credible to his many guests, so that they do not stay but having a growing desire to move on, in the conviction that full liberation of man and his world is still to come.⁷⁵⁸

As Jesus shared the bread with his disciples he called them to follow him. In a similar fashion within the congregation at Kingdom Ministries the lead in being vulnerable has to occur within the pastor. If the pastor takes the lead and risk in showing his/her frailties, a mutual acknowledgement of sharing each other's brokenness, fear and vulnerabilities can nurture trust and understanding. A new environment of reciprocity is created which enables people to move forward together to a new place of liberation,

⁷⁵⁷ Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 93.

⁷⁵⁸ Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 100.

better working relationships and Christian maturity. In this regard, Louise Lawrence emphasises a significant point, "In early Christianity the church is purposively modelled on the 'household of God' and 'the body of Christ' to promote an economy of equality and interdependence."⁷⁵⁹

In light of Lawrence's comments she is promoting a situation where human relationships within the church are not adversarial but collaborative, wholesome, nurturing for the benefit and development of the other.

As I come to the end of elaborating on the healing but risky venture of sharing, I am reminded that Jesus uttered a poignant phrase that has transformed the environment of Christian service throughout the world. It is a phrase that acts as a constant reminder to the participants that there is more to the Eucharist than eating bread, drinking wine and remembering the Lord's death until he comes.

Eucharistic Reconsiderations

This mysterious meal was not a one time or an annual event commemorating the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus uttered these sobering words before he left the disparate community of the disciples and gave his life willingly on a wooden cross. "Do this in remembrance of me." Those words are repeated throughout the world when Christians gather around the Lord's Table to partake in his body and blood. Remembering happens at an unconscious level but becomes conscious when we have forgotten something. Frederic Bartlett conceptualised remembering, not as an

⁷⁵⁹ Louise Lawrence, *The Word In Place: Reading the New Testament in Contemporary Contexts* (London: SPCK, 2005), 30-31.

independent function distinct from perceiving, imaging, or from constructive thinking, but as “an intimate relations with them all.”⁷⁶⁰ Endel Tulving articulates remembering as a type of experience which the subject judges as ‘remembering,’ referring to those items from which they have a vivid memory, a subjective feeling of having seen the item during an event and having made a conscious recollection of it.⁷⁶¹

In recent times, remembering has become more complicated since much remembering occurs outside the human body. Edward Cassey asserts “human memory has now become self-externalized: projected outside themselves into non-human machines.”⁷⁶² Computers can “only store items” but in the end human memories can only be stored by human beings, but for the “most part, we have increasingly disclaimed responsibilities for them.”⁷⁶³ Remembering is complex, and despite the distancing from one’s personal responsibility ‘Do this in remembrance of me’ draws the participant into a multi- sensory experience whilst engaging the memory.

Anamnesis as counter memory for Black liberation

The phrase, “Do this in remembrance of me,” invites the participants of the Eucharist to remember the life, work, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Acknowledging the context of the Eucharist, the celebration and observance of the Passover amidst persecution and oppression of the Jewish diaspora adds personal relevance of the sacrament for marginalised people. *Anamnesis* describes a special remembering

⁷⁶⁰ Frederic Bartlett, *Remembering: An Experiment in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 13.

⁷⁶¹ Endel Tulving, “Memory and Consciousness,” *Canadian Psychologist* 26 (1985): 1.

⁷⁶² Edward Cassey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000), 2.

⁷⁶³ Cassey, *Remembering*, 2.

“intended to move a sacred person or event from the past into the present.”⁷⁶⁴ Helen Blier argues “the function of *anamnesis* is to draw the congregation back into the primal story of Christianity.”⁷⁶⁵ Another writer, Julie Gittoes acknowledges *Anamnesis* and describes it as, “The integration of historical sacramental and ecclesial embodiment of Christ.” She evinces:

The Eucharist looks back at the saving event of Christ’s life, death and resurrection. Through it, the church is nourished with the body of Christ; participating in the anticipation of the eschatological fulfilment of God’s kingdom.⁷⁶⁶

Gittoes offers a generic understanding of *anamnesis*, relating to the salvific work of Jesus, but Dale Andrews, commenting from an African-American perspective asserts:

In creating churches that will connect with its Christian eschatological identity the Black Majority church faces a complicated task. Any construction in the West risks the exclusion of the particular life and faith struggles of African-Americans... the Black Majority church and Black theology has to turn to his/her historical and cultural experiences with Christianity.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶⁴ John S. McClure, *The Four Codes of Preaching: Rhetorical Strategies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 16-17.

⁷⁶⁵ Helen Blier, *Remembering not to Forget: Anamnesis and the Persistence of Vocation* www.religiouseducation.net/members/02_papers/blier.pdf (accessed January, 2011).

⁷⁶⁶ Julie Gittoes, *Anamnesis and the Eucharist: Contemporary Anglican Approaches* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), front flap.

⁷⁶⁷ Dale Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Majority Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 98.

Andrews is concerned with and affirms the deliberation of earlier British writers mentioned in chapter two of the pressing need for a theology that is relevant and reflects the experience of Black diasporan Christians.

Returning to the historical experiences is the point of *anamnesis*; the memory or recovery of past experiences to bring them into the present. *Anamnesis* attempts to represent meaning that remains open to new meaning.⁷⁶⁸ Andrews' Black perspective on Christianity is applicable for the development of BMC's in the United Kingdom. Andrews' notion of Black experience being a substantial ground for pastoral reflection and pastoral theology is supported by the work of Charles Taylor.⁷⁶⁹ Taylor attests:

Black experience can be a source for pastoral theology because it is outside the Euro-American liberal protestant ghetto – yet has ties to it.” Second, African-American has unique resources for this dialogue because of our “double consciousness.”⁷⁷⁰

Taylor's remarks reinforce the focus of this thesis, interpersonal conflict which underscores the underbelly of a worshipping African Caribbean community. This research is not only to feature an unpleasant aspect of a church community as an end in itself but rather to explore the nether regions of a marginalised group to bring about empowerment and a new sense of wholeness.

⁷⁶⁸ Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 99.

⁷⁶⁹ Charles Taylor, “Black Experience as a Resource for Pastoral Theology,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 2 (1992): 27-34.

⁷⁷⁰ Taylor, “*Black Experience*,” 28. Double Consciousness was a term employed by W. E. B. Du Bois who theorised Black folks had to operate in two worlds in order to exist in America, the world of the White man and his/her own world. Although the American context is different, the same can be said for Black people living in the United Kingdom.

Another writer explaining the significance of anamnesis is Luke Timothy Johnson. He describes the existential importance of anamnesis as *a* recollection of the past enlivening and empowering the present.⁷⁷¹ His analysis of the Eucharist is more than eating bread and drinking wine. It is bound up in identity, a crucial element in the lives of the church members at Kingdom Ministries and other exilic communities. He confirms:

Memory such as this is intimately bound up with the identity of both individuals and communities. An individual's story defines one as a person. The myth of a people defines it as a community. Individual or communal amnesia is a terrifying phenomenon precisely because anamnesis is identity. Without a past, we have no present and little hope for a future. The early church's identity was bound up with the memory of Jesus. It sought an understanding of its present in his past, just as it was motivated to search out his past by the experience of his presence.⁷⁷²

This presents a tension for many African Caribbean church group settings with the Pentecostals possibly being the most disadvantaged; the rejection of self due to being unaware of his/her own history. This lack of one's sense of self and the complex journey of one's people group to the present leads and leaves people at the edge of a precipice of cultural identity and cultural oblivion.

⁷⁷¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Jesus Memory of the Early Church*, (<http://payingattentiontothesky.com/2010/04/20/jesus-in-the-memory-of-the-church-luke-timothy-johnson/>) (accessed January, 2011).

⁷⁷² Johnson, "The Jesus Memory,"

Developing the importance of the Eucharist, Dom Gregory Dix, emphasises that Jesus was not introducing anything new at a social level. Small gatherings for meals or *chabûrah* were an established part of Jewish culture, but Jesus' last few words "This is my Body which is for you. Do this for the re-calling of me" (1 Corinthians 11.24) was to reshape the meal and have future implications for its participants.⁷⁷³ An important assertion about *anamnesis* is not only for members of the BMC but for the invisible Black members in White Majority congregations whose life of depersonalisation is private, but nonetheless, real.⁷⁷⁴ In response to the reality of one's life, Helen Blier comments, "*anamnesis* creates a space for people to draw wisdom from their stories in a way that reminds them who they are and what they are to do."⁷⁷⁵ In conjunction with Blier's comments Archie Smith, speaking from an African American context expresses that:

Anamnesis means remembrance of things past. It is to recollect the forgotten past and to participate in a common memory of hope...*Anamnesis* is a way of keeping alive the dangerous memory of those who lost his/her lives while struggling for the freedom of others.⁷⁷⁶

Smith's comment stresses Black people becoming conscious of their history of suffering and pseudo-speciation. However, a significant dimension of history that must not be omitted in remembering the forgotten past is the richness of history, culture and sophisticated African civilisations that existed prior to European

⁷⁷³ Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Continuum, 2005), 50 & 55.

⁷⁷⁴ Lorraine Dixon, "Tenth Anniversary Reflections on Robert Beckford's Jesus is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain," *Black Theology: An International Journal* 6, no. 3 (2008): 302-303.

⁷⁷⁵ Helen Blier, Remembering not to Forget and the Persistence of Vocation, http://old.religiouseducation.net/member/02_papers/blier.pdf (accessed Jan 21, 2011), 7.

⁷⁷⁶ Archie Smith, "The Relational Self in the Black Majority Church: From Bondage to Challenge" in *Changing Views of the Human Condition*, ed. Paul W Pruyser (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1987), 146.

enslavement. In this regard, it is imperative that the Eucharist serves more than one purpose for displaced people. The act of remembering is complex, and for periphery and dislocated people remembering from their personal and collective past is crucial if they are to receive their healing from existential crucifixion.

Remembering one's suffering is not an opportunity for self-pity, generating blame, hating the oppressor or the one you are in conflict with, but rather, not to forget where one has come from, based on the life and work of Christ, and the efforts and the lives lost by African ancestors which have made it possible for the life African Caribbeans and other Black people presently occupy. Remembering also helps those who are enjoying the spiritual benefits of salvation not to forget others who could benefit from experiencing Christ and his love. What makes *anamnesis* problematic for the BMC, apart from its lack of historical knowledge, is the irregularity of which the Eucharist is observed. Here Sturge comments:

From a theological standpoint it should be pivotal in the church because it deals with issues of holiness, personal renewal and the proclamation of the Lord's death. However, it is one of the most neglected areas in the worship and praxis of the BMCs. It is ironic that one of the most fundamental rites celebrating the death and suffering of Christ has become marginalised to the point of being peripheral to his/her church life.⁷⁷⁷

From Sturge's observations and insights, it is imperative that Kingdom Ministries and BMC's must become more theologically and contextually adept in the functioning and

⁷⁷⁷ Sturge, *Look What the Lord has Done!* 125.

administration of church life and in particular observing the Eucharist. Failure to do so has rendered many congregations powerless in dealing with their internal issues and makes them impotent in a world where they and other Christians are called to be the salt and light of the world.

Conclusion

Conflict is an inescapable human experience of opposition which operates on a continuum and the benefits of theological reflection in developing one's understanding of conflictive situations cannot be over emphasised. Whatever happens in human affairs is the tip of the ontological iceberg, or the symptoms of a situation. Through prayerful consideration, personal reflection and academic rigour, a new paradigm, a renewed orthodoxy and praxis can emerge for developing a new model of pastoral theology for marginalised people.

To ensure a continual process of growth and looking forward, the Eucharist must become a focal point for introspection leading to a new sense of self, being, and action. We are encouraged by Jesus words, "As often as you do this, do this in remembrance of me." Similarly, the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11 about observing the Eucharist, "But so let a man examine himself." The participant of the Eucharist is further reminded, "If we judge ourselves, we would not be judged."⁷⁷⁸

Eucharistic reconsideration therefore, is a sacred moment that speaks to the heart and mind of all who participate. With this in mind, the gathering at the Lord's Table cannot be simply eating bread and drinking of wine for the congregation and me in

⁷⁷⁸ 1 Corinthians 11 verses 28 and 31.

remembrance of the salvific work of Jesus alone. No, it must incorporate the remembrance of our past, both personal and collective. Furthermore, it must not neglect the potency of our present and its potential of hindering our own human progression. In one sense observing the Eucharist serves as an educator in our own development for the benefit of others. For the congregation at Kingdom Ministries the Eucharist must be utilised as a means of remembrance, Christian interpersonal development and a means of Christian witness to the wider community. Tissa Balasuriya's comment is a reminder of the grave nature of the Eucharist:

We may ask ourselves how is it possible that societies calling themselves Christians can offer the Eucharist weekly, for years without improving the relationships among persons in it. What would be the meaning of fifty two masses offered during a year in a city if as a result of it there is no effort at bridging the immense gulf separating the rich in his/her mansions and the poor in the shanties.⁷⁷⁹

In a culture that avoids pain, discomfort and suffering, but delights in pleasure-seeking activities, the Eucharist is a reminder that one cannot have the fullness of life without a dimension of suffering. Therefore, to have greater relevance for the African Caribbean faith community a reinterpretation of the Eucharistic narrative must be concretised in the daily lived experiences of its participants. The Eucharist connects with human despair, not to affirm, sacralise or justify human misery, but to acknowledge its existence and attempt to nullify it by the participation and empowerment of those who eat the body of Christ and drink his blood. With this said,

⁷⁷⁹ Tissa Balasuriya, *The Eucharist and Human Liberation* (Sri Lanka: Centre for Society and Religion Publication, 1977), 21.

if it is a meal for all, then no one should be excluded from the gathering at the table.

In reflecting on the horror and trauma of Black existence and the legacy of enslavement and colonialism it takes some entity transcending human agency to foster a sense of wholeness that might not be achieved in any other way. By participating in the Eucharist and reflecting on the body which was broken for the pastor and member alike, a new future is possible now and is yet to come.

Chapter 7 - Recommendations for renewed pastoral praxis

Introduction

This research project investigated inter-personal conflict within an African Caribbean diasporan Pentecostal church in Britain and this chapter coincides with the fourth stage of the pastoral cycle where the results from the theological reflection are evaluated. The study used data from personal journal entries, autoethnography as its primary methodological approach, and transpersonal research methods as a means of theorising and legitimising the acquisition of tacit knowledge, a means of obtaining evidence in ways other than intellectual means.⁷⁸⁰ Conflict in most CoGoP congregations is rarely addressed in a manner which brings about healing and spiritual maturity.

Moreover, the findings of this study will be incorporated into a national training policy for pastors in the CoGoP in the United Kingdom. The result of this study could have wider implications and applications for para-church groups or marginalised Christian faith communities where there does not currently exist established methods of training for their clergy.

Summary of the thesis

In order to understand my pastoral experiences of conflict I began journaling my experiences from 1999 onwards. The journals were initially intended for personal reference and reflection on my pastoral work only. I discovered that trying to implement a vision for the church met with great resistance from an important section of the congregation. It is natural that a pastor or any leader will face resistance to

⁷⁸⁰ William Braud and Rosemarie Anderson, *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences: Honouring Human Experience* (California: Sage Publications, 1998), 16.

some changes; however, my own analysis of these journals entries led me to suspect there were deeper sources of conflict in the congregation.

The rationale for this study is as follows. First, as a counsellor I was trained to understand that the problems people bring to counselling are symptomatic of underlying concerns. In one sense I was acting as a pastor-therapist to the congregation who could be perceived as a client and the numerous members of the church symbolised various aspects of the congregation's personality. Second, I sensed that the over-reaction to ideas for church development indicated other elements at work in the collective mind of the assembly. Third, as the pastor, I was concerned that my actions may have been fuelling conflictive episodes within the congregation. Fourth, if conflict was a feature of the fellowship I wondered how its impact could be reduced. Fifth, non-religious models of conflict management exist, but due to CoGoP's Bible-centric nature, a scriptural model addressing conflict was crucial if parishioners were going to engage in a methodology which brings personal and communal transformation.

The Pastoral Cycle

In dealing with conflict, I have employed the use of a four-stage pastoral cycle model and shaped the thesis accordingly. Chapter one corresponds to the first phase on the pastoral cycle in describing the situation, that is, identifying examples, sources and various understanding of interpersonal conflict. Chapter two to five comprised the second phase of the pastoral cycle which examined the social analysis of interpersonal conflict.

Chapter two focused on the literature which neglected the life and underbelly of the BMC in England in relation to pastoral theology. Without a doubt, there remains insufficient scholarly reflection on pastoral theology pertaining to the African Caribbean diaspora faith community in England, not only due to “normative whiteness” in the theological academy, but also related to the oral and aural culture still present within BMC’s. From the early 1970s, African Caribbean people began to write about how they experienced God, but it was not until 1998 that African Caribbean and African scholars began to articulate these understandings in scholarly and systematic ways. This theological expression gave birth to a still nascent indigenous Black British theology. Analysis of the journal *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies* and the lack of Caribbean encounters allowed me to identify key features for Black British theological concerns – features that can be used to account for and understand the prevalence and nature of conflict.

Chapter three sketched the methodological approach of journaling for collecting data and autoethnography as the tool I employed to assist me in analysing and interpreting the episodes of conflict within the congregation. In the process of writing my journal entries, I became intuitively aware that my conscious findings did not fully grasp the issues that were at play. With this in mind, I discovered and used transpersonal research methods which honours human intuition, frustration, anguish and other emotions, and acknowledges alternative access to information other than cognitive processes and means.

Chapter four highlighted the history of Jamaica as a site of European domination with enslavement, conflict and violence as endemic to colonial life and the impact that this

oppressive environment made on the inhabitants of the Island. The second section of the chapter embarked on a socio-historical study of the experiences of the new Caribbean migration phenomenon to England, and their subsequent encounter of racism, societal conflict, exclusion and the colliding with a psyche that had an unseen predisposition of rejection to anything that was Black in colour.

In light of the social experience of the migrants in British society, I conducted an historical overview of the CoGoP in the United States of America, culminating with the unexpected Caribbean mission field located in the UK. The history of Kingdom Ministries, the centre of the conflictive episodes in this study, was a case study of a previous research project. This case study provided valuable insights, shedding light on previous intense episodes of protracted conflict that occurred within the congregation prior to my arrival in 1996.

Chapter five used the journal entries covering a six year period, from 1999 to 2005, to write an autoethnographic analysis of interpersonal conflict within Kingdom Ministries. The reason for this form of analysis allowed the emergence of themes not initially seen or discerned during the conflictive moment. In other words, autoethnographic approach to research allowed the voice of suffering to speak, both mine and the congregation's. This chapter ended the third phase of the pastoral cycle and led to conducting a theological reflection of the scenes of conflict in Kingdom Ministries.

In this chapter I used the Eucharist as a lens to reinterpret the nature of interpersonal conflict and present a model of healing and transformation of the participants and the

diffusion of the intensity of healing. In doing so, I used Dom Dix's four stages of being chosen, blessed, broken and sharing, to interpret the emergent themes from the previous chapter. By using the four stage framework of the Eucharist I want to develop a new model of pastoral theological praxis for the CoGoP in the UK. This new paradigm, I suggest, can also be used by any marginalised group that observes the Eucharist. With the outline of the chapters being elucidated, I will now turn my attention to the recommendations that have emerged from the process of analysing interpersonal conflict.

Recommendations for renewed pastoral praxis

New insights derived from this study can be fed into the local congregation, the academy, and the training and policy making of the national administration for the CoGoP in the United Kingdom. Whilst intellectual knowledge is important, a renewed praxis that facilitates human transformation is crucial. I would assert that such depth of change is required for peripheral people if they are to function at levels of equality within society and operate as people created in the image of God. The findings from this research can aid pastors and leaders who serve in marginalised communities, equipping them for relevant and compassionate ministry in the twenty-first century which takes the Christian scriptures seriously as characterised by the biblio-centric tradition of the CoGoP.

My rationale for these recommendations is anchored on the response given by the Lord Jesus when he was challenged by one of the teachers of the law. When asked, "Which is the greatest commandment?" Jesus responded, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your

strength."⁷⁸¹ Thus, a training programme must ask the pastor to fully engage with his/her intellect, his/her strength that is building and working in the congregants' real world, as well as their soul, their spirit, and their theology.

African-Caribbean pastors working in Britain, where congregants face racism and marginalisation, may draw on the work and context of Jesus Christ who ministered in the face of Roman political oppression, theological skepticism and hostility towards the Jewish people. Similarly, as Jesus faced opposition, the BMC in Britain and other marginalised religious groups in the UK face cultural, ethnic and religious opposition. At present, few CoGoP pastors are full-time and the opportunity for full-time educational and scholarly advancement is not present. Yet, the CoGoP must begin from a position by making the training of its pastors mandatory. What follows are several areas requiring serious consideration for developing pastors.

Understanding power

One of the areas of ministry that pastors within the BMC have to contend with is power. Quite often there is a lack of understanding of the nature and character of power. This is seen, more often than not, where a pastor believes that being appointed to a congregation gives him/her absolute power. The notion of power is further problematised when one has power in an environment where there is either very little power given to the constituents of a marginalised community, or people are unaware of the power they do possess. Apart from being taught about aspects of power, a pastor must be made aware of how he/she deals with power in light of the hidden

⁷⁸¹ Mark 12:30, *New International Version*.

aspects of his/her humanity. The ability to become aware of one's sense of self occurs from the process of self reflection.

Self-reflection and spiritual formation

Towards the end of this chapter, I make reference to the need of a spiritual director for pastors. Pastors need to be taught how to develop the discipline of spiritual formation not for the purposes of meeting a spiritual director only but for their personal development. Pastors are human beings who have originated from a range of social backgrounds. They must be made aware of how they react to certain life situations. Spiritual formation is not simply developing a relationship with God but it is an ideal opportunity for introspection. In this matter, journaling or spiritual writing provided me with space to observe my interactions with others. It was not so much the recording of events in my journals but it was the process of re-writing that caused me to reflect deeply on my inner impulses and reactions to certain situations. Furthermore, with reference to this thesis, it is imperative that pastors and ministers in the widest sense of the office develop various ways to develop spiritual formation and learn to understand their relationship with conflict.

Developing an understanding of conflict

One of the primary areas of development is for the pastor in training to reflect on and develop his/her own understanding and relationship with conflict. Critical self-reflection on one's understanding of conflict will enable one to manage one's own responses in situations of conflict either with congregants or between them. The appropriate skills will enable the pastor to lead the congregation into developing healthier inter-personal relationships and disempower those who have historically

used conflict as a form of control and gaining power over others. In addition to conflict management, attention must be given to the origins and causes of conflict, as causes as well as the symptoms that must be addressed. A key element of this is the psychoanalytic maxim that rage is an ill-expressed or frustrated positive wish. In these terms, conflict can be understood as having its own grammar, a language of inner yearning striving to be fulfilled. With self-control, adequate training and an analytic perspective on human beings, the pastor can see conflict as the groaning of a community striving for balance and wholeness. Some of the unresolved yearnings of the community can be gleaned by the pastor through gaining an understanding of the history of the congregation.

Learning from the context of the local church

A pastor in training, or one newly installed into a pastorate, should always review the minutes of the last year's business conference to the church to which he/she is appointed. This, however, fails to capture the total history of any congregation. In the early days of his/her appointment, the pastor should meet with the new congregation in an informal setting and ask about the origins and history of the church. The pastor might ask questions relating to the inner spiritual/group dynamics of the local assembly and how disputes have been managed in times past. Here intuition, tacit knowledge and sensing the mood of the discussions can provide valuable insights in the history, context, and the lives of the parishioners. The pastor should journal the contents of these early conversations, and the first impressions, some of which may initially appear as being unimportant, should be recorded. Such early impulses may be informative at a later date during the course of one's ministry. In addition to knowing

all that can be known about the congregation's institutional life, it would be advantageous for the pastor to have a working knowledge of group dynamics.

What occurs in the inner lives of faith communities is the development, interactions and collision of deep relationships. The health of these relationships has either a positive or adverse effect on the inner life of the community. As a pastor enters a new pastorate he/she must be mindful when dealing with parishioners and their descendants whose history includes the legacy of enslavement and colonialism due to the levels of trauma visited upon them, both in their homeland and upon their arrival in Great Britain. To have remained as a cohesive community during such difficult times the new pastor must not ignore the formation, alliance and solidarity of these relationships. On the one hand, the formulation of such relationships can be beneficial because it demonstrates an inner resilience of the congregation. On the other hand, such alliances can prove to be impenetrable, a major hindrance for the pastor and for the development of the local church, especially when new initiatives are introduced in the church with which certain group members are not in agreement. A much needed skill therefore, is the concept of vision casting. This is necessary when a church desires to move from a position of religious conservatism to a broader and deeper understanding of its faith, ministry and the Word of God. However, I need to issue a word of caution. Many of the current literature espousing various models of church administration and church growth emanate from the North American context, and they should not be uncritically transported, without careful re-appropriation, into the UK or diasporic contexts.

In order to better understand the context of the local church and develop relevant ways of leading the church into a broader and deeper understanding of its faith, the BMC (especially because of its biblio-centric ethos) must develop strategies that resonate with the biblical text. The medium for new thinking can be transmitted through a contextual reading of the Bible, Christian Education and preaching which can facilitate group learning and enables members to grasp fresh ideas of faith and Christian living in the twenty-first century.

Re reading of the Biblical text

The pulpit still remains the central focus of African Caribbean Pentecostal worship and the oratory skills of the Black preacher are still central to BMC life. What is imperative for effective ministry in contemporary Britain is a broadened and deeper reading of the scriptures with the members of the community of faith. There must be a conscious movement from a literalist engagement of scripture to a more interrogatory hermeneutic – one that acknowledges a range of contexts and intentions in the writing of scripture. The Bible is a book of faith immersed in social and existential concerns. The pastor must delve beneath the visible story line of the scriptures to unearth the inconspicuous drama and hidden meaning. The biblical text demands that the Christian has a reading response that is active and imaginative. In this regard, the pastors in CoGoP must learn to recognise that the Bible offers not only instruction for living through words, but there are lessons to be learned that are commonly expressed in the arts, politics, creativity, psychology and history. The Bible is far more than narrative, poetry and instruction – it is song, metaphor, mystery, riddle, humour, sorrow, lamentation, yearning, struggle and joy. As a Christian minister, the analytic and exegetic skills I have learned from a range of the human sciences have not lured

me away from the Bible to modern alternatives; they have sent me back to the scriptures with renewed and dynamic understanding, humility and wonder. Modern human sciences do not consign the Bible to history – rather they can be used so that we can hear the Bible speaking as it always has done to humanity in the present. Critical exegesis and effective communication of biblical texts can enhance the ministry for new pastoral leaders, but a renewed reading of the Bible enhances the pastor's development in the invaluable but complex skill of theological reflection.

Theological reflection: Wider implications

If the CoGoP is to have a vital and relevant ministry for its future in Britain, it must deepen and broaden its clergy's theological understanding. At present, when crises arise, seldom, if ever, are these episodes placed or understood within any theological interpretative framework. More often than not, pastors or leaders react in an ad hoc fashion or posit a spiritualised or demonising position. Developing the skills of theological reflection will enhance the lives of the clergy and the church as a whole as they collectively discern their lives of faith together and sense where the hand of God might be leading them. Theological reflection as a model for church growth and people development would take into account the existential experiences of the participants and congregation in the reflection process.

Furthermore, ecclesiology is a key area where theological reflection is needed. At present, the CoGoP denomination finds itself in an identity crisis represented by a nationwide predicament. Within its founding vision lies the principle vocation of the care and cure of souls along with the fostering of the flourishing of Black life, but now its vocation is under threat. Much of the leadership has been seduced and

titillated by market mentalities engendering market ecclesiology, thus, the quality of ministry has been compromised for quantity. This market ecclesiology finds its fullest expression in the church growth movement where pastors are encouraged to find ever bigger buildings to grow congregations at any cost. This thesis seeks to participate in calling the church back to its centre: participation in the Eucharist, as one of the crucial Christian fundamentals for the care and cure of souls. Theological reflection which incorporates the worshippers of the church, and seeks God's direction for the fellowship, is a more organic approach to church growth which includes the feelings, particularity and peculiarity of the church's context. Theological reflection is a much slower process than the sought after ready-made imposition of external models because it affirms and values the worth of all the membership's humanity. Affirming, valuing, and giving significance to marginalised people creates an environment for the development of healthier relationships. In addition, it embodies the first two stages of the Eucharist of being chosen and blessed as earlier discussed.

Areas for further development

One of the future areas for development is the pastor and self care. African Caribbean Pentecostalism has traditionally venerated the pastor, or perhaps one should say it has venerated an idea of what the pastor should be. However, the pastor is human, frail and vulnerable like any other mortal, and in many cases he/she has to battle with additional social and existential conflicts. Pastors can be caught in a conflictive vortex where competing forces vie for their attention, and often they fail due to lack of ministerial preparation and the often unrealistic high expectations of the congregation. The self-care I want to suggest is as follows. First, there is a need for ministerial supervision and accountability. At present, there are no provisions for pastors to

receive supervision and the existence of loose boundaries in the pastoral remit adds to the potential for interpersonal conflict. This thesis has focused on conflict and the amount of energy expended in dealing with it. It can be seen that without adequate training, managing these scenes in pastoral ministry is emotionally and psychologically exhausting. The rigours of ministry demand an allocated and safe space for cathartic release. When pastors are unable to evaluate their pastoral effectiveness, the help of an objective but empathic individual offering critical feedback can be of immense value to their ministerial practice. Without supervision, there can be certain dangers. For example, in chapter three and five I expressed my frustration at the deacons and the founding bishop of the church. If such a situation continues, there is the possibility of an emotional outburst outside and beyond the pages of a journal. Such comments can prove injurious to the pastor and congregation alike. Second, the benefits of supervision can act as a guide to the continuing development of the pastor and the congregation. Third, in the current climate of litigation, the role of a supervisor can provide a space for reflection on ministerial ethics and practice. Needless to say, the ministerial supervisor is not present when the practitioner is in action but to assist in his/her supervision, a method of recording noteworthy moments is crucial. It is envisaged that the development of the discipline of keeping a pastoral journal would become an invaluable resource for the pastor for re-reading and recounting significant moments in his/her ministry. With the request of a supervisor, other forms of support are necessary.

There is also a need for a spiritual director. Again, there has never been a formal practice of spiritual direction within the CoGoP for its pastors, but there is a need of accountability in the spiritual formation of the pastor. In BMC's with a pastor-centred

focus, it is assumed by the assembly that the pastor is spending time in prayer and is disciplined about his/her spiritual development. Other than an occasional enquiry by a ministerial board member or a senior member of the church, the pastor is seldom asked about his/her spiritual well-being.

Conclusion

In concluding this academic research, I wish to draw on the biblical narrative of Joseph in the book of Genesis in order to convey that what appeared initially as unpleasant or distasteful can, through the process of time and reflection, yield far more than originally considered. The story is told of Joseph who, from the start of his life, is favoured by his father. This love of his father is demonstrated by the coat of many colours he made for Joseph. One night Joseph dreams of bales of wheat bowing down before another bale of wheat. Joseph shares the dream with his brothers and interprets it by suggesting the dream means they will one day be bowing down to him. On hearing this interpretation from their younger brother the brothers become angry. When the opportunity arose, they capture and violently assault him and throw him into a pit, leaving him for dead. Joseph is discovered and sold into slavery but through a series of events, Joseph rises to power in Egypt and makes invaluable contributions to the economy and survival in Egypt. Despite his good business mind he is innocently accused of sexual harassment and spends some time in jail. Sometime later he is released.

Many years after his capture a famine takes place in Canaan where Joseph's estranged family live. The only place where food is in abundance is Egypt, so they make their way to buy urgently needed provisions. On their initial visit to Egypt the brothers did

not recognise Joseph, but after a period of time and numerous visits he revealed himself to them. When they recognised him, their minds returned to the day of his attempted murder, and they feared retribution. But Joseph realising their fear says: “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”⁷⁸² This point of God's providence is driven home as he mentions it on two occasions to his brothers.

In summing up, I want to emphasise that the nature, pain, rage, isolation and discomfort I experienced in interpersonal conflict in the earlier days of pastoral ministry have yielded much more than I ever considered it possible. God indeed meant it for good. If the CoGoP desires to have a viable and profitable future it must take the training of its pastors seriously and make the appropriate investments accordingly. In fact, for any church denomination if it envisions a productive future, relevant training, taking the needs of people seriously is a non-negotiable matter.

Conflict is an often uncomfortable and unpleasant experience as the current study shows, but it can be understood as a grammar expressing a complex need within the human psyche. It is a form of communication which evokes the negative within the self and another. Yet the behaviour that is observed is only the tip of the ontological iceberg symptomatic of a deeper unrest and ‘dis-ease.’ The current study, while resisting the temptation to either spiritualise or demonise conflict, supports the assertion that with time, spiritual maturity, introspection and reflection, conflict can be redeemed for the healing and transformation of the emotional scars and psychic

⁷⁸² Genesis 50: 19-20, *New International Version* 1984.

bruises prevalent in African Caribbean diasporan faith communities. These insights, while drawn from a case study of a BMC in Britain, has far reaching implications for our understanding of both conflict and the politics of healing in other Christian communities throughout the world.

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