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## **Religious Transnationalism: The case of Zimbabwean Catholics in Britain**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the ways in which mainstream churches engender migrants' maintenance of transnational ties and improve their integration into British society. It uses the Zimbabwean Catholic congregation in Birmingham as a case study. The central thrust of this article is that African diaspora congregations have emerged as public spaces to construct transnational identities and provide alternative forms of belonging, and have reinvented themselves as agents of re-evangelization to the host society. In contrast to other transnational ties such as remittances and hometown associations whose activities are orientated toward the homeland, reverse evangelization embodies the giving out of something to the host society. It is the awareness and ability to influence and shape the face of Christianity in Britain that gives African Christian migrants the agency to participate in other aspects of British society, providing an alternative path to integration. As the article argues, religious identities among Zimbabwean migrants should be seen not just as a religious phenomenon but also as markers of cultural difference from the host society, which constructs them as 'other'.

**Keywords:** religious transnationalism, reverse evangelization, Zimbabwean Catholics, Britain, secularism, integration

## **African Christians in Europe**

Social anthropologists suggest that we have entered a new phase in the religious history of Europe characterized by ‘reverse evangelization’ of the continent by African migrants (Kalu 2008; Ter Haar 1998). More recently, there has been an increase in empirical literature on transnational Pentecostalism in Western societies (Adogame 2008; Hunt 2002; Ter Haar 1998; Ter Haar 2008; van Dijk 1997). Examining the emergence of African Christians in Europe and focussing in particular on Ghanaian Pentecostals in the Netherlands, Ter Haar (1998; 2008) uses the biblical metaphor of the valley of dry bones to depict not only the spiritual condition of Europe but also the hostile reception that African migrants encounter in their everyday lives in Europe. For Ter Haar, ‘many African Christians in Europe have come to see themselves as charged with a divine mission to re-evangelise a continent that they consider to have lost its Christians faith’ (2008, 241). Van Dijk’s (1997) work also highlights the role of Ghanaian Pentecostalism in the forming of their identity as strangers in Dutch society. In another study Hunt (2002) brings to light the importance of Pentecostalism in aiding the construction of identities among the young, largely affluent West African migrants in Britain. Responding to hostile conditions in Britain, Hunt suggests that the rise of Pentecostalism among African migrants had as much to do with identity building as with ‘providing a sectarian form of religious compensation for alienated black minority groups’ (2002, 148).

Building on the author’s empirical study and a review of literature on African Christian congregations in Europe, reverse evangelization can be described as a process in which individual and institutional actors engage in enduring and durable occupations or activities that give rise to the flow of Christianity<sup>1</sup> from previously peripheral<sup>2</sup> societies to the original centres of mission. Not all Christian migrants from the south and residing in Western societies engage in reverse evangelization, only those whose religious activities maintain a sustained regularity across space and time. Hence there has to be some broader sociological project (either conscious

or unconscious) involved rather than simply an individual pursuing his or her own faith in the old colonial motherland. Thus far, the pattern that has emerged from studies of African Christian congregations in Europe is that a few individuals initiated them, then the fellowships began to grow significantly (see, for example, Ter Haar 2008; van Dijk 1997). Similarly, the Zimbabwean Catholic congregation in Birmingham was started by asylum seekers, refugees, students, and work-permit holders. Further examples are reported by Adogame who, when examining the historical development and belief patterns of Aladura churches in the diaspora, explains that ‘branches were established through individual or group initiatives of students, entrepreneurs and diplomatic staff who did not at that point intend to reside abroad permanently’ (2004, 496). Reverse evangelization also pertains to institutional and structured responses by churches in Africa in order to spread Christianity to Europe. Yet it is important to note that the conscious strategy is prompted by the spontaneous emergence of African Christian congregations in Europe, such as the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference sending Father Munyongani to provide pastoral care to Zimbabwean Catholics in Britain. As Ter Haar observes, ‘Just as European missionaries once believed in their divine task of bringing the gospel to Africa, African church leaders in Europe are today convinced of their mission to bring the gospel back to those who originally provided them with it’ (2008, 245).

So far, scholars who have studied this ‘reverse flow’ have concentrated on the religious experiences of Pentecostals without paying attention to African migrants who belong to mainstream churches. Hence the role of mainstream churches such as Anglican, Methodist or Catholic in migrants’ maintenance of transnational ties and integration in the host societies is a strangely neglected topic of research. Building on this emerging scholarship, this article explains how the experiences of mainline church members provide an alternative perspective on ‘reverse flows’. To provide context, it is important to first examine the history and development of Christianity in Europe with a particular focus on Britain.

## **Christian ‘Recession’ in Europe and the Recentering of Christianity**

The dramatic growth of Christianity in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and other parts of the developing world contrast sharply with its decline in Western Europe in terms of membership (Jenkins 2002). One of the hallmarks of modernity, as conceived by the founding fathers of sociology, is the ‘disenchantment of the Western world’, as Weber (2002) put it. Sociologists of religion refer to theories of secularization and modernization as explanation for the decline of religion in advanced societies (Brown 2001; Bruce 1995). In his study of religion in contemporary Britain, Brown observes that

In 1900, most people presumed that Britain was a Christian nation. It appeared to be leading the world economically, morally and religiously, exporting Christianity through the Empire and church missionaries to those regarded as the ‘heathen people’ of Africa and Asia. In 2000, most people presumed that Britain was secular and had lost its Christian faith, practice and culture. (2006, 1)

A decade earlier Bruce (1995) had already observed the decline in the popularity of religious beliefs and practices, both at the institutional and the individual levels, in Britain’s main Christian churches after the war. The theories of secularization and modernization are cited as plausible explanations for this decline. In his earlier work and contributing to this debate, Brown argues that ‘it took several centuries ... to convert Britain to Christianity, but it has taken less than forty years for the country to forsake it’ (2001, 1). Although the Christian faith had started to decline since the Industrial Revolution, it accelerated in the 1960s due to social, cultural, and sexual transformations in the country (Brown 2001).

While acknowledging the decline of institutional religion in Britain, Davie (1994) argues against the secularization thesis and describes the practice of religion in modern Britain as that of ‘believing without belonging.’ In spite of the decline in churchgoing statistics among the British, people’s religious beliefs are still strong, exemplified during times of national disaster or tragedy such as the Hillsborough Disaster<sup>3</sup> or the death of Princess Diana (Davie 1994). However, a recent study that used data from the British Household Panel Survey and the British Social

Attitudes surveys described the country as ‘neither believing nor belonging’ (Voas and Crockett 2005).

Putting the discussion about the decline of Christianity in Britain within a global context, Jenkins argues that ‘the era of Western Christianity has passed within our lifetimes, and the day of Southern Christianity is dawning. The fact of change itself is undeniable: it has happened, and will continue to happen’ (2002, 3). The same point is central to Walls, who predicted ‘a complete change in the centre of gravity of Christianity, so that the heart lands of the church are no longer in Europe, decreasingly in North America, but in Latin America ... and in Africa’ (1976, 180 cited by Maxwell 2006a, 5). The rapid growth and development of Pentecostal Christianity in Africa and Latin America from the 1970s is widely regarded as a parallel development to the renewal of Islam (Gerloff 2004; Martin 2002). Scholars describe the phenomenon of Pentecostalism in the developing world as ‘a kind of a New Reformation of the twentieth century because it projects a new vision of the world, responding in particular to processes and promises of “modernity” and “modernisation”’ (Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001, 1).

However, the anticipated disappearance of religion or its relegation to the private sphere predicated by secularization theorists (see, for example, Brown 2001; Bruce 1995) has not been realised, and in some cases its significance seems to have increased. Beckford et al. (2006), citing several sources, provide a succinct summary of how the discourse on ‘racialised minorities’ in Britain has been transformed over the last fifty years. It has shifted from ‘colour’ in the 1950s and 1960s to ‘race’ in the 1960s, ’70s and ’80s to ‘ethnicity’ in the ’90s and to ‘religion’ in the present time. Major international events, such as the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York and the London bombings of 7 July, and the growing interest from academics and policy makers both in Britain and elsewhere, have brought religion to the fore from the confines of the private sphere. In Europe, however, questions have been raised about

the place and role of religion in modern secular societies (Delanty 2008; Habermas 2006), in particular, the role of Islam in shaping and sustaining understandings of cultural difference.

### **Islam in Europe**

It can be argued that most discussions on Islam in Europe are framed ‘around the incompatibility between so-called Western values and Islam’ (Jensen 2008, 389; see also Salih 2009; Salvatore 2009). Women and religious symbols are often at the core of conflicts over the public expression of religious and cultural identities. Salvatore, for example, notes that the ‘tension between the predominantly secular outlook of European societies and the recent resurfacing of religious symbols in their public spheres coincides with new patterns of othering and exclusion of migrant groups, notably of Muslim background, which are considered alien to the cultural-linguistic majorities of Europe’ (2009, 286). Examining contemporary controversies in France and the United Kingdom over the rights of Muslim women to wear various forms of the veil, Bhandar argues that ‘despite their apparent differences as political ideologies, both multiculturalism and secularism are deployed as techniques to govern difference’ (2009, 301). Yet, as Asad reminds us, secularism is ‘an enactment by which a *political medium* (representation of citizenship) redefines and transcends particular and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender and religion’ (2003, 5, emphasis in original). Hence for Asad, ‘representations of “the secular” and “the religious” in modern and modernizing states mediate people’s identities, help shape their sensibilities, and guarantee their experiences’ (2003, 14). Mahmood emphasises the same point: ‘The political solution offered by the doctrine of secularism resides not so much in the separation of state and religion or in the granting of religious freedoms, but in the kind of subjectivity that a secular culture authorizes’ (2006, 328). Asad takes the view that ‘the “religious” and the “secular” are not essentially fixed categories’

(2003, 25). In fact, the secular and the religious interpenetrate and permeate people's lives and are significant in the construction of a modern nation-state. As Asad puts it:

In a contemporary world of 'multiple belongings' and 'porous boundaries', secularism as a political doctrine of the state 'devised for the purpose of dealing with state unity' faces problems in acknowledging the fact that people may identify with victims in other countries as 'their own'. And it is of course Islam which in contemporary Europe has become 'the stranger within'. (cited by Bangstad 2009, 191)

Thus Asad makes a useful contribution by alerting us to the role of human agency, culture, and contestations of interest in the production and reproduction of the secular.

In Britain just as in Europe, the wearing of the veil by Muslim women in public spaces serves as an illustration of how Islam threatens British secular modernity (Bhandar 2009). Citing the hostile media coverage of the events surrounding the political mobilizations provoked by the Rushdie affair as an example, Solomos argues that 'the Rushdie affair also served to reinforce the view that minorities who do not share the dominant political values of British society pose a threat to social stability and cohesion' (1998, 59). These series of events, including the 2001 incidents of racial unrest<sup>4</sup> in northern England, the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York, and the London bombings of 7 July 2005 'served as "proof" that multiculturalism had failed to integrate minorities and that national societies needed to reassert liberal principles (such as freedom of expression and gender equality) and core national values' (Nagel and Hopkins 2010, 5). More recently, the British prime minister, David Cameron, declared that multiculturalism has failed in Britain (BBC 2011). In fact, many countries in Western Europe are abandoning multiculturalism in favour of 'integration' and 'cohesion' policies (see Joppke 2004). For instance, Vasta's (2007) work shows the shift from multiculturalism to assimilationism in the Netherlands.

In the words of Alexander, Muslims have become 'the ultimate "Other", transfixed through the racialization of religious identity to stand at the margins: undesired, irredeemable'



(2002, 564). Yet as Casanova and Zolberg argue, ‘the politicisation of Islam in Britain challenges the view that religion mediates the peaceful integration of immigrants into western democracies as they strive to achieve equality in the public sphere’ (cited by Webner 2004, 907). Entangled in the debates about Islam are questions about the role of religion in ethnic communities, in particular the ways in which religious projects create and maintain religious and cultural difference. Writing about the intersection of religion and European secular identities, Casanova argues that ‘the immigrant, the religious, the racial, and the socio-economic disprivileged “other” all tend to coincide’ (2004, 9). By focussing on Zimbabwean diaspora congregations in Britain, this article extends these debates and develops some propositions about the role of mainstream churches in shaping diasporic identities and transnational connections, as well as in creating and maintaining cultural differences.

### **Research Methodology**

The study discussed in this article was based on three months of fieldwork among Zimbabwean Catholics at St Ignatius in Birmingham, generating data from in-depth interviews and participant observation. It was designed to examine the ways in which mainstream churches engender migrants’ maintenance of transnational ties and improve their integration into British society. I also wanted to investigate the ways in which migrants’ everyday struggles are reflected in and shaped by gender, ethnicity, class, and immigration status. From July 2009 to September 2009, I conducted 28 in-depth interviews with informants, including three priests.<sup>5</sup> I attended weekly masses on Sunday afternoons. My own position as a Catholic helped me gain the necessary trust and confidence of respondents since I was able to participate actively in church activities. I participated in meetings of men’s and women’s associations, and attended numerous church-organised social events, for instance, a Family Day out in Leicester. My fieldwork also involved attending the annual Zimbabwean Catholic Community in Britain Congress. The interviews

covered themes ranging from respondents' personal religious history, the church and the migration process, reasons for forming or joining the congregation, the impact of migration on respondents' religious beliefs, transnational ties, men's and women's associations, to difference and diversity. The article also builds on the author's previous research that used diaspora congregations as part of a multi-sited methodology of Zimbabweans in Britain. This multi-sited ethnographic methodology provided important niches within which to capture the lived realities of the Zimbabwean diaspora. Although the generation of primary data in Britain took place in Birmingham, my own observations of Zimbabwean Catholic congregations in other cities across the country, as well as those of my respondents, suggest common patterns.

### **Zimbabwean Churches in Britain**

The establishment of African migrant churches in Britain dates to the early 1920s and accelerated from the 1960s (Adogame 2004; Hanciles 2004). Yet it was not until the 1980s that a significant population of African Christians migrated to Europe because of escalating conflicts and crises on the continent, and due to forces of globalisation (Hanciles 2004). As Ter Haar (1998) has noted, people from West Africa, predominantly from Nigeria and Ghana, form the majority of African Christian congregations in Britain. Ter Haar (1998) also refers to the sprouting up of French-speaking churches with people coming from the Democratic republic of Congo (formerly Zaire). Maxwell (2006a) describes how Forward in Faith Mission International (ZAOGA), a Zimbabwean Pentecostal church, initiated isolated assemblies in Britain from the 1970s. Yet it was not until early 2000 that church assemblies began to grow significantly.

The migration of Zimbabweans to Britain in the late 1990s, responding to political and economic crises in the homeland as well as opportunities abroad, is the context in which diasporic associations started to emerge (McGregor 2009). The Zimbabwean population in Britain increased from 47,158 in 2001 to an estimated 200,000 in 2008 (Pasura 2012). Home

Office (2008; 2009) statistics show that between 1998 and 2009 a total of 25,045 Zimbabweans applied for asylum in Britain. Within the same period, a significant number of Zimbabweans migrated to the country as visitors, students, work-permit holders, and on dual nationality or ancestral visas, becoming one of the fastest-growing ethnic minority groups in the country (Pasura 2012). A mapping exercise of the geographical spread of Zimbabweans in Britain shows that they are dispersed across Britain, notably in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Luton, Slough, Coventry, Edinburgh, Leicester, Sheffield, Doncaster, Bournemouth, Oxford and Bristol (Pasura 2006). The dispersal of asylum seekers to areas outside London and the southeast as part of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act may have contributed to this spread. However, people also moved out of London to smaller cities in search of work and to follow social and family networks. Providing an overview of the nature of associations formed in Britain by Zimbabweans, McGregor points to the ‘predominantly national frame of reference for diaspora associations (even if constituencies are in practice sectional in some way) [as] evident not only in the extension of Zimbabwean opposition politics and church fellowships, but also in civics operating in the diaspora’ (2009, 192). The scattering of Zimbabweans across Britain also resulted in the spontaneous growth of diaspora congregations that are extensions of Christian churches in Zimbabwe.

There are three main classifications of Zimbabwean churches in Britain. The first group relates to congregations of mainstream churches such as the Roman Catholic, the Methodist, the Dutch Reformed, and the Anglican. The second group includes local branches of Pentecostal churches, such as Forward in Faith Mission International, Apostolic Faith Mission, Family of God, and Zion Christian Church. The third group comprises churches formed by the Zimbabwean migrants in the diaspora, such as Agape for All Nations Ministries International. Although this article focuses on the Zimbabwean Catholic congregation in Birmingham, in many

ways the findings constitute a microcosm of religious developments occurring in other British cities as well.

Providing an overview of the nature of British Catholicism, Archer points out that ‘in the period after Vatican II, the internal culture of the church shifted from being predominantly Irish, working class and northern to being more acculturated, bourgeois and southern’ (cited by Egan 2008, 796). The recent migration of Catholic migrants from Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Asia to Britain is further altering the profile and social composition of the church. Davis et al. (2007), using a survey of 1000 migrants in London’s Roman Catholic community, reveals that the church ‘is undergoing a shift in its ethnic make up and social diversity, as many Catholics migrate to the UK’, and describes the changes as both the church’s ‘greatest opportunity’ and ‘its greatest threat’.

#### *The Zimbabwe Catholic community*

Father Munyongani is a Zimbabwean-born priest sent by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference to work as a chaplain for Zimbabwean Catholics in Britain. Prior to his appointment in 2008, Father Dzagagu, a Zimbabwean priest, had served the acting chaplain for the community since 2002. I asked Fr Dzagagu to describe how the community started:

We started in London, and as time went on people in Slough started congregating together, then Birmingham, followed by Leicester, and then Bolton, Luton. Now there are new congregations in Leeds, Sheffield, Northampton, Bristol, Huntingdon and Southend. As we speak, I am hearing that people in Manchester and Liverpool are also planning to start their own congregations as well.

The Zimbabwean Catholic community does not have its own ethnic parishes but is embedded within local Catholic parishes. Usually the community attends local British masses and holds a Zimbabwean mass once a month. It has a constitution and an elected National Executive Committee that facilitates and coordinates the community’s activities and programmes. The Catholic community publishes a monthly newsletter and conducts yearly music courses. One of the key characteristics of the Zimbabwe Catholic community in Britain is that it is dominated by women. Perhaps this is not surprising since many churches in Zimbabwe have the same gender

balance. The diaspora has also seen the formation of different women's guilds: St Anne, Mary Queen of Heaven, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and the Sodality of our Lady.

The Zimbabwean Catholic congregation at St Ignatius, from which this article draws its evidence, is located in Birmingham, Britain's second-largest city. Birmingham is a multicultural city, with ethnic minority groups composing 32.2 percent of the population.<sup>6</sup> Henry et al. describes the city as positioned within 'specific transnational and diasporic networks – products both of British imperialism and particular migratory paths' (2002, 119). The city is home to many people from former British colonies, for example, black Caribbeans, Pakistanis, Indians, and, recently, Zimbabweans. Birmingham also has a long history of migration from China as well as Catholic countries such as Ireland, Italy, and Poland. The postcolonial history of Birmingham and its diverse population make it 'a meeting place of global diaspora(s)' (Henry et al. 2002, 124). A study conducted by the University of Manchester suggests that in 2024 Birmingham will become Britain's second plural city, after Leicester, due to global migration and the natural increase of young migrant populations (Simpson and Finney 2007). A plural city is defined as a town where no racial or ethnic group holds the majority of the population.

St Ignatius is an inner-city parish situated in an African and Asian neighbourhood. The Zimbabwean Catholic community joined the parish in 2004 with fifteen members; its membership now numbers over 170. Father Patrick, an Irish parish priest, told me that a few years before the Zimbabwean community arrived in the parish a review of the parish was conducted to consider closing it because of declining church membership. St Ignatius celebrates weekly Sunday mass in Shona. Although some parishioners refer to the Shona mass, the majority of people are conscious that the label is misleading since it should be called the Zimbabwean mass to include the Ndebele ethnic group. The parish has a cosmopolitan population, with people from Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ireland, Poland, and 'indigenous' British people. During

special occasions and church feasts such as Christmas and Easter, the Zimbabwean community celebrates mass with the parish in a mixed 'cosmopolitan' congregation. The celebration of the Shona mass in the parish has led to other nationalities asking for mass to be said in their own language. Father Patrick explains:

One of the difficulties that I see is that if the Shona, like they do here, have their own thing, then a Nigerian group wants their own thing, the Cameroonians want their own thing, the Ghanaians want their own thing. So far I have gone to the Ghanaians' group and said, 'Find me thirty people and I will find you a priest'. Maybe they thought I was being negative, but if you want to have mass (in your language), you must have a community, a sufficient number of people to say mass. Just as if a group of people comes to me and say they want to have mass in Latin, I would say the same thing. It must be within the possibilities of what I can do.

What is significant about Father Patrick's quotation is that it points to the role of the Catholic Church in forging solidarity and buttressing identities. It highlights the importance of religion in defining identity and community, particularly among migrant ethnic minorities.

### **The Zimbabwean Catholic Congregation: A Transnational Extended Family**

The Zimbabwean Catholic congregation at St Ignatius can be described as the centre of a religious and cultural creation, a kind of a modern-day transnational extended family. It provides members with a sense of community solidarity, resources, and spiritual comfort. More importantly, it serves as some form of insurance against social exclusion, deportation, and eventualities such as death. What differentiates the transnational extended family from other social networks or migrant institutions is not only the spiritual well-being it gives to its members, but also the way in which it embeds its members in Britain, giving them a greater sense of security and belonging.

As Hirschman (2004) points out, migrants join or find religious organisations as expressions of their historical identity as well as their commitment to building a local community in their new country. Tofa, a refugee in his forties, put it this way: 'When you attend mass [Zimbabwean], you will only know that you are in the UK when you are outside the church, it's truly Zimbabwean'. Andrew concurs, 'If you don't look around in that church you would have

the feeling that you are in Zimbabwe, as if you are back home'. As these quotations show, the diaspora congregation is a space for belonging by maintaining a distinct Zimbabwean identity insofar as they use Shona and Ndebele languages in their church service.

The following description by Nicholas illustrates some of the reasons for conducting mass in Shona and Ndebele: 'You understand the service better if it is done in your language. ... Language brings meanings to things. If somebody prays in Shona now, the words and the meanings can go deep into my heart and inject a certain feeling that may not be conveyed by the English words'. Tatenda provides another example: 'I feel I am at prayer when I pray in my language. There is a difference when I pronounce *Mwari Baba* in my language and when I say Lord. When I say *Mwari Baba* I feel much closer to God than when I say Lord'. These quotations highlight how conversing in the mother tongue and having a sense of belonging draws coethnics into the congregation.

Most importantly, diaspora congregations provide migrants with spaces to escape exclusion, racism, and discrimination in the host land, and consequently help in forging group solidarity. Nyarai is a member of the guild of St Anne who feels ostracised from the community where she lives. Nyarai explains:

Where I live, it was hard to see black people walking around. If you saw one, most often they were Jamaicans and they wouldn't stop and talk to you. Most Jamaicans don't like Africans, so it was very hard for me. When I heard about this church [Zimbabwean], I was so happy because I was feeling so lonely. You go to school to pick up your kids and the [white] mothers won't speak to you. They speak to your kids but not to you. That is quite sad.

Nyarai's quotation highlights the experiences of marginality and social exclusion encountered by migrants in their new places of settlement. Further, it underlines how the rejection of 'new' migrants comes not only from some white members of the community but also from 'older' migrants, in this story Jamaicans. Hence the creation of diaspora congregations compensates for the lack of family ties in places of settlement and ameliorates the exclusion, racism, and discrimination that migrants face.

Diaspora congregations are also spaces where feelings of solidarity are exemplified in pragmatic ways, such as helping undocumented migrants participate in the labour market, find accommodations, and engage in civic campaigns to regularise their immigration status.

Sibongile, an entrepreneur in his fifties, explains: ‘People found some refuge in church as it binds them, it gives them hope and addresses some of our problems. I give you the example of ‘papers’; it is a problem that is distinct from those experienced by the English people’. The issue of immigration status featured prominently in my interviews with respondents. Tofa provides another example, explaining the difficulties faced by undocumented migrants in the country:

There are so many people living in this country under pseudonyms, working under pseudonyms because of fear. ... It’s like driving a car without an MOT<sup>7</sup> or insurance. If you see a police car driving past, even without coming after you, you panic. You always think the police are going to arrest you and deport you. This is why people live under different names. Today one is Peter, tomorrow he is James, depending on one’s circumstances.

Similarly, a study of London’s Catholic community made the following observations: ‘It is also of critical importance for the Cardinal, Archbishops and Bishops to appreciate the extent to which they are ministering to a Church whose baptised members live in fear, and at grave risk, because of their “irregular” status’ (Davis et al. 2007). As part of the Zimbabwean Catholic Community in England and Wales, Tofa and other members of the congregation participated in the Strangers into Citizens campaign, a coalition of civic groups advocating amnesty for long-term undocumented migrants.<sup>8</sup> The position of the Catholic bishops in England and Wales is that ‘the Church will continue to advocate compassion to allow the “undocumented” an opportunity to acquire proper status, so that they can continue to contribute to the common good without the constant fear of discovery and removal’ (Lynch 2008, 4). The solidarity expressed by the church gives undocumented migrants a symbolic sense of protection and the hope that the government will listen.

The absence of proximate extended family and friends in the diaspora means that diaspora congregations are not only sources of spiritual solace, but provide social, material, and



financial support to its members in times of need. One of the most important social functions of the congregation is providing members with a way of coping with bereavement in the diaspora. I chose an interview with Nicholas to illustrate this:

We became a community, stable because we extended some of the activities which we used to do at home like visiting the sick; when there is death amongst us we would go there and share our condolences by praying, singing, and so on, emotional support. So we became stronger and stronger and started spreading out just like that.

Chipso, a divorced mother of three children, gives another example: 'People turn to the church as the only salvation they had, like this small fund for bereavement we have if somebody lost his father or mother or relative, that is social support that will alleviate the suffering of the colleague'. During my fieldwork a member of the congregation passed away and church members spent the entire week providing emotional, spiritual, and financial support to the relatives of the deceased. The level of support went beyond what social networks or other migrant organizations could give.

One of the key findings here relates to the ways in which the congregation plays an important role in the upbringing of children. Apart from its spiritual functions, the congregation has also become a centre of cultural creation, a space to explain the benefits of maintaining African values in contrast to those of the host society, especially to children. Sibongile is married and has two children. Like most of the respondents, he is concerned about the dangers of bringing up children in this country: 'It is good that we are going to church as migrants, it's good for our children that they are removed from dangers that are inherent with the young of this society, the drug life, knife crime. The church is a sanctuary for them'. Sibongile's quotation illustrates the fear, and in some senses a feeling of helplessness and resignation, in protecting his children from the wider British society that he considers dangerous. Exploring how Zimbabwean professionals reconfigure family life in Britain, McGregor argues that 'despite the attraction of educational opportunities for children in Britain, encounters with norms of behaviour in British

schools, childrights, controls on parental discipline, and teenage/youth culture have furthered a sense of difference on the part of Zimbabwean parents' (2008, 612).

Most of the parents I interviewed complained that the government has usurped their role and authority in disciplining their children. Nyarai, the mother of two children, observes:

The education in this country is good but I am worried about the discipline. Children back home are more disciplined than those who are here. If my child misbehaves in school, the teacher or head teacher calls me and I always tell them to discipline them instead of calling me.

Similarly, Francis provides an interesting story: 'When I was washing my car, some police officers were passing by and my ten-year-old son said, "Daddy, daddy, if you smack me I will call them". I said to him, "What do you mean?" and he replied, "Just smack me and I will call them"'. The above quotations highlight the dilemma faced by Zimbabwean parents in bringing up their children in the host land.

During my fieldwork I attended a workshop organised by Men's Forum, a Catholic association that discusses issues affecting men and their faith. One of the themes of the workshop was bringing up children in the diaspora, 'the dos and don'ts' if men wanted to remain in the host society. The Zimbabwean congregation has started the guild of St Agnes and Alois for youth, which conducts weekly meetings and holds their own Congress, an occasion where they learn more about 'African values' than about their Catholic faith. The *Sekuru* (grandfather) and *Tete* (aunt) coordinate and monitor all youth activities. According to Zimbabwean cultural traditions, the roles of *Sekuru* and *Tete* are to give guidance and advice to the young in the family. Hence it can be argued that parents have relinquished the task of teaching children about African cultural values and placed it in the hands of diaspora congregations. Similarly, as McGregor observes, 'for parents, churches provided not only a sense of community and means of coping themselves, but also provided a means of passing [African] values onto children' (2008, 609).

The congregation's solidarity and togetherness is also expressed by transforming members' private functions such as birthday parties and baby showers into occasions for community celebration. As Chipó puts it, 'At first people were just interested in coming for mass, interacting, and returning home, but as time went on, people started helping each other in things like baby showers, weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, and graduation ceremonies, supported by members of the parish, and this brought the community together'. Similarly, Zimbabwean Catholics in the UK organised a Family Day in August 2009 to celebrate the community's togetherness.

As can be seen from these examples, the congregation provides social, spiritual, material, and emotional support to its members in ways that differentiate it from other migrants' social networks. The transnational extended family, fortified by migrants' collective narratives of the Catholic faith and homeland connections, is an example of an institution created and sustained by a desire to belong as well as a response to challenges in the host land. It can be argued that the idea of a transnational extended family mirrors the concept of a social network. What differentiates it from a social network is that the transnational extended family provides its members with a greater sense of security and belonging. Thus in the diaspora we not only witness the dislocation of the traditional family (Pasura 2008), but also the reconfiguration of new forms of social relations, relations that are not based on blood or kinship ties but are fortified by faith and national narratives.

Although the congregation started as a space to construct new transnational identities and provide alternative forms of belonging it has reinvented itself, acquiring a new status and function—the re-evangelization of Britain. Just as the London Missionary Society seized the opportunities provided by European imperial expansion to spread Christianity to Africa, Asia, and Latin America, for many African Christians 'migration to Europe is not just an economic

necessity, but also seen as a God-given opportunity to evangelise among those whom they believe to have gone astray' (Ter Haar 2008, 245).

### **Reverse Evangelization**

Building on the author's empirical study and a review of literature on African Christian congregations in Europe, the following sections examine how the experiences of mainline church members provide an alternative perspective on 'reverse flows'. In a study of West African migrants in Britain, Hunt observes that

it is evident that these churches have engendered a "revival" in Britain, but not among the white indigenous congregation as envisaged by the mother churches in Nigeria. The picture that has emerged from this study is of a cluster of fast growing congregations constituted by a largely isolated black ethnic group of Nigerian migrants. (2002, 165)

Similarly, in her study of Ghanaian Adventists in Amsterdam, Koning observes that

African churches in diaspora frequently use mission discourses in which they seek to reach out not only to Africans but to "native" populations as well. However, though such discourses are sometimes followed up by praxis and incidental "success," there often appears a gap between so-called "reversed mission" discourse and its accompanying praxis. (2009, 203)

This explains why Maxwell asks the question: 'To what extent have diasporic churches managed to extend beyond their ethnic communities and make converts from within the host population?' (2006b, 392).

### *Transforming Britain's Religious Landscape*

The central thrust of this article is that diaspora congregations emerged as public spaces to construct transnational identities and provide alternative forms of belonging, and have reinvented themselves as agents of re-evangelization to the host society. The majority of respondents in this study condemned British secularism; many explicitly made parallels between their role in postcolonial Britain and early missionaries in Africa. Ephraim, in his forties and married with three children, explains the parallel:

People in this country are Godless people. Look at how the British people live their lives, their culture, gay marriages, divorces, the collapse of the family. There are no Christian values in this country; they are now dead. It's now a pagan society that needs to be preached to again for it to regain its Christian past.

Father Munyongani uses a metaphor:

When we say the traffic has been diverted we mean it has been moved from the normal route. Now re-evangelization means redirecting the traffic back to the original good road. We are making repair work; once the repair work of the main road is good we return the traffic to the normal route. We must repair certain things in the life and pattern of this society; make those repairs that have damaged society.

What Father Munyongani meant by the 'normal route' or the 'original good road' are Christian values. By contrast, Christina observed what appears to her as a paradox within British society:

Churches are becoming pubs, preschools, and some of them are being closed down. But you know what, look at the soldiers being killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, before they are buried they pass through the church. My question is, "Over 200 soldiers who have died so far; are they all Christians?" Why is it then that when they die they receive a Christian burial? Were these Christians participating in the church? When they were living, they said there is no God but when they die, they receive a Christian burial.

Christina's observations mirrors Davie's (1994) understanding of the practice of Christianity in Britain as 'believing without belonging', epitomized during times of national disasters or the loss of loved ones. What is significant from the above quotations is the respondents' view that this is a godless society; this gives them the moral imperative to re-evangelize it. Let us consider the story shared by Tofa:

We went to Stoke and Trent; the local parish priest was happy. He told us to come again and sing with the local white community, that way it will help a lot of people. The local priest himself said that missionaries went to Africa but you are here to evangelize us.

Similarly, when the congregation attended an ordination anniversary of a Zimbabwean priest at St Phillip in Central London, a Jesuit newsletter described Zimbabwean Catholics as providing a 'magnificent Alleluia that shook Farm Street (and its normal patrons) to their very foundations'.<sup>9</sup>

As Gerloff (2004) argues, the distinctiveness of African Christianity relates to a number of factors: the role of women; the concept of Spirit, or the Holy Spirit, power-in-participation, not just in church but also in the world; the centrality of music and rhythms in the liberation of people and growth of assemblies; and the shaping of community identity. By the 'role of

women', I refer to their overwhelming participation in church activities and their role as educators. In addition, the visibility of women's uniforms makes them an embodiment of African Christianity. The Zimbabwean Catholics' enthusiasm in singing and dancing, accompanied by African drums, has transformed the liturgy and religious rituals in the parish in Birmingham.

Father Patrick feels the Shona community provides encouragement to the local people in the parish:

I think you have identified something, that a group of worshipping people, like the Shona community that has been meeting here for five years, can be an encouragement to the people who are already here. But, culturally different, so some people love Shona mass and some people don't. That does not necessarily have to do with evangelization but has something to do with culture.

Similarly, Levitt argues that 'transnational migrants bring particular incarnations of global religion with them, create new forms by combining what they bring with what they encounter, and then reintroduce these ideas, practices, identities, and social capital' (2003, 849). Yet as Father Patrick's quotation implies, combining rules, rituals, and routines from more than one cultural background can cause tension. This issue is revisited in the next section.

In one of his sermons Father Munyongani urged Zimbabweans to be missionaries in their everyday lives:

We are not going to knock at people's doors and say convert to Christianity, that would be understood negatively as fanaticism, but it's through our everyday life. Now we are saying we are not ashamed to defend our faith, be it at work, in day-to-day work with the British people with whom we mix.

Similarly, Francis agrees that 'the only way to change life in the world is through the example of life, this how the first Christians were recognised in the pagan world, not by saying "I am a Christian, I am a Christian" but by the way they were living their lives'. The significant increase in the population of African Christians in Britain's cities should thus provide the springboard for evangelization, epitomised in living lives in accord with the Christian calling.

Father Munyongani describes how the religious uniforms worn by Zimbabwean women and men who belong to different guilds has transformed local Catholic parishes, with the women becoming literally the face of reverse evangelization:

On an ordinary Sunday, a religious man who belongs to the guild of St Joseph would wear his religious uniform and at the same time go and mix. So people would ask, "What does this mean?" and this gives him an opportunity to explain what he stands for. Similarly, a religious woman who belongs to the guild of St Anne, the guild of Mary Queen of Heaven ... would also be asked, "What does this religious uniform you are wearing stand for?" In that way she will also defend her faith and explain what it stands for. In that way it will be like a pulpit where they are preaching what they believe in.

By contrast, Chipso is sceptical about the success of reverse evangelization because 'I seem to see an entrenched attitude toward the secular culture within the population where football is on the top of their agenda and pub is a major thing and nightlife is popularised'. Nicholas, a qualified teacher who has lived in Britain for the last nine years, echoes these remarks:

One thing I noticed when I go into these schools which is the missing thing (pause), you can hardly refer to God or anything like and get somebody to understand what you are talking about. Yet in Zimbabwe it is the exact opposite; nothing is done without beginning with a prayer, be it political meeting or a village meeting, school assembly or whatever.

What is significant about the above quotations is that for respondents the term 'secularism' has come to index British culture, highlighting how ideas of the secular are cast in opposition to universalised notions of Britishness. As Asad reminds us, 'The secular is neither singular in origin nor stable in its historical identity, although it works through a series of particular opposition' (2003, 25). These binary oppositions include, among other things, the dichotomies between the public and private, the political and the religious, the British and the 'other'. For Zimbabwean Christians in Britain, religious identities should therefore be seen not just as a religious phenomenon but also as markers of cultural difference from the host society that constructs them as 'other'. Hence for Zimbabwean migrants, Britain is the country in which they have decided to settle but from which they want to remain different, insulating themselves from its secular norms and values. In a study comparing Ghanaian Christians and Senegalese Muslims living and working in Italy, Riccio suggests that in both transnational communities 'one finds a

critique of the foreign, Western context in which immorality in terms of lack of faith, sexual permissiveness, racism and ignorance seems to abound' (2008, 229).

*An Alternative Pathway to Integration*

Reverse evangelization opens up new integration possibilities. In contrast to other transnational ties such as remittances and hometown associations whose activities are orientated toward the homeland, reverse evangelization embodies the giving-out of something to the host society. Reverse evangelization goes beyond simply being a transnational extended family, a space for sociability and belonging, but also connects its members to a religious institution in the host land. Further, it is the awareness and ability to influence and shape the face of Christianity in Britain that gives African Christian migrants the agency to participate in other aspects of British society. It represents one way in which migrants 'give back Christianity' to a 'secular' culture in contrast to discourses of taking away jobs, overcrowding schools, and depending on state benefits. The giving back of Christianity is exemplified in going on pilgrimage trips, the wearing of [African] religious garb, enthusiastic singing accompanied by African drums, and being embedded in local Catholic parishes. Yet as I illustrate in paragraphs below, these religious activities are perceived and framed differently by migrants and nonmigrants. This resonates with the work of Halvorson (2010), who wrote about the reverse missionization of an American community by Malagasy Christians. Halvorson draws on a series of healing services conducted by one Malagasy pastor to examine continuities and disconnections between colonial and postcolonial Christian interactions. Whereas Malagasy Lutheran pastors construct themselves as engaged in the revival of Christianity in Minneapolis/St. Paul, in contrast, American Lutherans frame healing services as cultural exchanges, which Halvorson (2010) describes as a proxy for racial and ethnic difference.

As part of the church's integration strategy, the Zimbabwean congregation participated in pilgrimage trips to Harvington<sup>10</sup> and the Intercultural Mass, introducing the group to the wider



British society and bringing some level of attachment to the host land. Shonhiwa describes the first pilgrimage the congregation made to a local shrine:

In our first year we had a pilgrimage to Harvington. By then we had ordered our [African] drums from the late Father Gwindi. We took our drums to Harvington, which is in Kidderminster, and the bishop was very impressed and blessed our drums. When we started singing the white community would join us and was so excited and enthusiastic about the whole thing.

Similarly, Andrew describes the reception they received in Harvington as ‘overwhelming; many people came to us and wanted to know more about us and so on’. In addition, the congregation has been participating in the yearly Intercultural Mass at St Catherine in Birmingham, an event that brings together people from different countries. As Shonhiwa observed:

The whole mass is sung in different languages. Zimbabweans have their part to sing, Irish, Filipinos, Ugandans, Ghanaians, West Indians. After the mass we go to the Hall and share traditional foods. We have been going with *sadza* (hard porridge) from *rapoko* (millet meal), vegetables mixed with peanut butter. People come in and mingle, and our dishes have been the favourite. It’s one event that brings integration.

Cosmopolitan or mixed congregations provide spaces to explore social relations between migrants and nonmigrants, ‘one way in which the impact of transnational ties extends beyond immigrant communities into the wider society’ (Wuthnow and Offutt 2008, 216). However, the different practices of liturgy and prayer in cosmopolitan congregations are common sources of anxiety. As Lynch correctly observes:

Dancing, for example, is an essential part of prayer and praise in Africa. In Asia there is a deep awareness of the sacred place or space, so altars, shrines and statues become an important focus for prayer. In Orthodox traditions icons have a special place in Christian spirituality. In Spain, Portugal and South America, processions are a very important part of communal prayer and popular faith. Add to this the fact that the deeper the sentiment the more difficult it is to express it in another language, we see how creating a community of prayer poses huge challenges. (2008, 10)

Hence it is not surprising that not everyone liked the singing and drumming by Zimbabwean Catholics, as Andrew noted: ‘When we sing by nature we are loud and vibrant and the drums, and you could see that some people, especially some old white ladies, would try to close their ears to indicate that you are making noise’. As Christina put it,

Some whites like us but others don't appreciate what we do, saying we make a lot of noise. They say your songs are very long. I still remember one white person saying, 'What is the time, what is the time; those guys are in again, they are noisy!' He wanted to go home early; in fact he wanted to change the church as well.

As can be seen, interaction between migrants and nonmigrants within mixed congregations cannot be assumed since it is often fraught with racial and cultural trepidation.

Father Patrick narrated a story that illustrates this point:

I am not being negative to you but I have been here for a bit; somebody said to me, 'Lots of dark faces in the church, father' and I just said, 'Yes, and they are all Catholics' (laugh). We are not having it; in the parish next door, this sounds bad, two families came to the priest and said, 'We are not coming to the church because there are too many dark faces and we are going to so and so because they don't have any dark faces there'. And the priest said, and I wouldn't have said that, 'Don't ever come here again,' which is bad. He was rejecting them because they were rejecting others. You should never reject people like that; you should always encourage them, whatever community of race or wherever people come from.

Tofa shared a similar story:

Father Patrick told me one day one of the white parishioners at the church came and made the comment, 'Father why are there many black faces in the church?' and his response was, 'Oh, yes, they are all Catholics'. So to me what he really said was, irrespective of colour we are all the same; what is important is the faith we believe in, white, yellow, black, we are Catholics, and that is the common denominator.

Emphasising the universality of the Catholic Church, Father Patrick explains: 'We are not an Irish Catholic Church, we are not an Italian Catholic Church, we are not a Shona Catholic church, we are a Catholic church. Polish, [the] same thing, [and] all these national groups'. These quotations highlight how the parish priest and respondents invoke the universality of the Catholic Church to bridge not only cultural or racial differences between migrants and nonmigrants, but also between migrants themselves.

The issue of ethnic chaplaincies such as Polish, Zimbabwean, and Nigerian has caused debates and controversy within the Catholic Church in England and Wales. It is feared that, in some instances, ethnic chaplaincies will isolate themselves from the rest of the Catholic community, thus failing to integrate into local parishes. For example, the large-scale presence of

Polish migrants in Britain, predominantly Catholics, has led to disagreements between Catholic leaders in the UK and the Polish church over how best to provide pastoral care to Polish migrants. The former leader of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, was concerned that the Polish migrants were 'creating a separate church in Britain' (Luxmoore 2008). Casanova (cited by Menjivar 1999, 590), in exploring the tensions between the Catholic Church's national and global character, its universality and particularity, argues that 'the most transnational institution may be the least conducive to sustain individual immigrants' transnational identities within the church because the unifying bond for transnational action is located in the hierarchy, not in the individual members.' Thus it is instructive to examine the ways in which belonging to a mainstream church shape Zimbabwean migrants' transnational religious connection to their homeland.

### **Transnational Religious Flows**

Scholars have generally delineated the different types of transnational activities into economic, social, cultural and political (Al-Ali et al. 2001; Portes 1999), although Portes (1999) combined the social and cultural activities into socio-cultural. Based on evidence from a survey of 500 Zimbabweans living in the UK, Bloch's (2008) study shows that Zimbabweans in Britain participate in transnational social, economic, cultural, and political exchanges with those in the homeland as well as those in the wider Zimbabwean diaspora.

The appointment of Fr Munyongani as chaplain has strengthened the transnational religious ties between Zimbabwean Catholics in Britain and those in the homeland. The chaplain provides a link between the community and the Catholic bishops in the homeland and those in the host land. No one has expressed this connection more clearly than Sibongile:

There is a direct link between the Zimbabwean Catholics here and those back home. You will see that in the way we conduct mass here. The bishops in Zimbabwe still believe they are responsible for shepherding us, they haven't weaned us, that's why they saw fit to send someone to shepherd us and give periodical reports on the flock in the diaspora.

In 2008 two Zimbabwean bishops, Archbishop Robert Ndlovu and Bishop Martin Munyanyi, attended a plenary conference organised by the Catholic Church in England and Wales in Leeds. The bishops thanked the local church for the welcome they had extended to Zimbabweans in the UK.<sup>11</sup> Andrew, one of the respondents, emphasised the strong relationship that exists between Zimbabwean Catholics in the diaspora and the church's structure in both the host land and the homeland:

We are under Westminster, which is England and Wales, but because of our special needs which relates to diaspora migrant communities, we still have roots in Zimbabwe. When I talk of 'we' I refer to elders; we still buy properties in Zimbabwe, we still bury ourselves in Zimbabwe, until such a time we stop going to bury ourselves there, we can say we might just ignore the Zimbabwean directives. So we remain an extension, under the auspices of Westminster.

The transnational relationship is typified in the periodical financial contributions the congregation make to the training of priests in the homeland. Similarly, the establishment of men's and women's guilds, which have strong connections to the homeland, help in maintaining transnational ties. As Andrew explains, 'People have made contributions for the training of priests and building of churches as a way of maintaining those ties. As for the training of priests there is consensus, but when it comes to the building of churches that's where you have division. I come from Masvingo, and if you talk of building a church in Mufakose (Harare) I would say it won't benefit me, so people raise those concerns.' Similarly, Ephraim told me that last year they sent 'a consignment of duvets and pillows to the seminary'. When Father Augustine Chigodora, a Zimbabwean priest studying in London, was found dead of stab wounds in December 2008, the Zimbabwean Catholic community contributed money to repatriate his body to the homeland.<sup>12</sup> As I have shown, these transnational religious connections are expressed differently, such as by celebrating mass in vernacular languages, wearing religious uniforms, and playing African drums.

## **Conclusion**

The central thesis of this article has been that Zimbabwean diaspora congregations emerged as spaces to construct transnational identities and provide alternative forms of belonging rooted in the material, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of the migrant group. In the diaspora we are not only witnessing the dislocation of the traditional family (Pasura 2008) but also the reconfiguration of new forms of social relations; relations that are not based on blood or kinship ties but are fortified by faith and national narratives. I have shown how diaspora congregations have reinvented themselves as agents of reverse evangelization to the host society. Reverse evangelization is conceptualised in terms of being Christ's witnesses, typified in the wearing of [African] religious garb, enthusiastic singing accompanied by African drums, and being embedded in local parishes. By affirming their African Christianity, Zimbabwean Christians in Britain offer something that the host society does not have, yet the danger of affirming ethnic labels is that this can reinstate stigma and exclusion of African religious practices. However, it is the particularity of African Christianity that emphasises the role of women, power of participation, centrality of music and rhythm, and community identity (Gerloff 2004) that gives something the host society does have. On the one hand, transnational Pentecostals insist on relinquishing ethnic labels, considering themselves as Christians tasked with a mission to re-evangelize the host society (Ter Haar 2008). On the other, evidence from this article has shown that Zimbabwean Catholics in Britain emphasise the distinctive characteristics of their African Christianity.

This is significant in the context of debates about the role of religion in the public sphere, in particular the accommodation of religious and cultural differences (Casanova 1994; Habermas 2006). Secularism, it has been argued forcefully, is not just a political doctrine about the separation of religious and secular institutions but 'a conceptual environment that presupposes certain ways of defining how religion, ethics, the nation, and politics relate to each other' (see also Asad 2003; see also Connolly 2006; Wilson 2006, 180). As we have seen in Britain, the

secularization of society has succeeded in marginalizing ethnic minorities, yet, as Ivanescu points out, ‘the differentiation of the secular sphere from religious institutions and ideas and the marginalisation of religion to the private sphere are both contested by the presence of migrants/minorities with a strong and visible religious identity’ (2010, 312). For Zimbabwean Christians in Britain, religious identities should therefore be seen not just as a religious phenomenon but also as markers of cultural difference from the host society, which constructs them as ‘other’. Although ethnic diasporic identities are based on primordial cultural sentiments, subjective leanings, and instrumental consideration (Sheffer 2003), the feeling of ethnicity among Zimbabwean migrants is reinforced by experiences of alienation, racism and hostility in the host land. Diaspora congregations are sites for consuming and celebrating distinctive cultural and religious identities, and shielding migrants from racism and multiple forms of social exclusion in the host land. As Stolz noted, ‘Religiosity and religion become strong where they can be used as resources, in order to conserve and defend ethnic and cultural identities’ (2009, 354). The challenge for Europe, Delanty argues, is to articulate cosmopolitanism, and ‘this involves moving from a secular understanding of the polity to a post-secular society,’ that is, a society in which ‘religion maintains a public influence and relevance’ (2008, 95; see also Habermas 2008).

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## Notes

1. Although as it stands the definition refers only to Christianity, it can be appropriated in the study of other global religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and Sikhism.

2. 'Peripheral' is used here in relation to Europe and North America, considered the original centre(s) of the Christian missions and responsible for the eighteenth- to twentieth-century evangelization of the developing world.

3. On 15 April 1989 96 Liverpool fans were crushed to death and many injured at Hillsborough football stadium in Sheffield. It is considered Britain's worst sporting disaster.

4. In 2001 racial tensions between white and Asian communities led to widespread riots in the cities of Bradford, Burnley, Leeds, and Oldham.

5. This research was funded by the ESRC, grant number PTA-026-27-2212. Most of the names of respondents, priests, and places have been changed to protect participants' anonymity.

6. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_Birmingham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Birmingham) (accessed 14 October 2009).

7. The acronym MOT (Ministry of Transport) stands for an annual roadworthiness test of vehicles in Britain.

8. See the campaign's Web site <http://www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk/>.

9. See the Zimbabwe Catholic Community Newsletter, April 2009, vol. 35.

10. Harvington is a pilgrimage shrine in Kidderminster and part of the Catholic diocese of Birmingham. It is an Elizabethan manorhouse with seven priest holes at a time 'when it was high treason for a Catholic priest to be in England'. <http://www.harvingtonhall.com/>.

11. <http://www.catholicchurch.org.uk/ccb/content/pdf/4047>, (accessed 14 November 2009).

12. The archbishop of Harare, Robert Ndlovu, wrote a letter to the chaplain, Father Xavier Munyongani, asking him to thank the Zimbabwean Catholic Community in the UK for contributing £4,800 on the tragic death of Father Chigodora. The letter was read to the congregation at an annual Catholic Congress in Walsall on 12 September 2009.