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Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York

‘This is a rare blend of sound academic excellence and robust practical experience in very insightful reflections on the ministry of black-majority churches (BMCs) in the UK. BMCs’ leadership must engage in rigorous ministerial training and theological partnership initiatives for cross-cultural effectiveness.’

Dr Daniel Akhazemea, Principal, Christ the Redeemer College, and Chairman, RCCGUK National Advisory Board on Education and Training

‘Simultaneously challenging and encouraging, informative and stretching, this series of lectures will do much to strengthen the mission of black Pentecostal churches. While stimulating them to continue to be anchored to the Rock, yet geared to twenty-first century times here in the UK, it also offers scope for working with others in the development of church leaders. A must-read!’

Dr Steve Brady, Principal, Moorlands College, and Chair, Association of Bible College Principals

‘The New Testament Church of God and its Oliver Lyseight Annual Lectures have played a vital part in inspiring, encouraging and challenging the Pentecostal tradition within the UK over the years. The wisdom provided by the lectures and the important lessons learned from the past will help shape the future of the Church in this country.’

Steve Clifford, General Director, Evangelical Alliance

‘Over the last 60 years, the New Testament Church of God (NTCG) has become a major anchor institution and a beacon of hope in our local communities. While the NTCG has made major contributions to British society, the challenges of leadership addressed in this book call for congregational renewal and faithful action as the church fulfils its mission in the twenty-first century.’

Neil Jameson, Director, Citizens UK

‘A timely, thought-provoking book rightly challenging the black Pentecostal Church in the UK to become theologically literate in the way it approaches leadership and engages in mission and ministry in contemporary society. A must-read for any church leader serious about radicalizing his or her Christian ministry.’

The Revd Lynnette Mullings, Ministry Development Officer for
Black Majority Churches, Centre for Black Ministries and
Leadership, The Queen’s Foundation for Ecumenical
Theological Education, Birmingham

CHALLENGES OF
BLACK PENTECOSTAL
LEADERSHIP IN THE
TWENTY-FIRST
CENTURY

Edited by
PHYLLIS THOMPSON



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*To the pioneers of the New Testament Church of God
in the UK: those who served at the forefront and
those who served behind the scenes*

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Contributors

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Revd Carver Anderson has been active within church life locally and regionally, and occupied the role of National Director of Youth and Christian Education for the New Testament Church of God from 1997 to 2003. He has over 30 years' experience in the fields of social, community and youth work, counselling and training, at practitioner, operational and management levels within the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. He is co-founder of Shalom Consultancy and Counselling Practice, and the Bringing Hope Charity. Carver is presently involved in completing a PhD in theology, researching issues associated with Pentecostal spirituality, including the capacity of the Holy Spirit to influence the desistance and rehabilitation of young people impacted by antisocial behaviour and gang-affiliated lifestyles.

Foreword

This book has been five years in the making. It is the result of lectures given by five eminent academics and theologians.

The lectures were delivered in memory of the founder of the New Testament Church of God (NTCG) in the United Kingdom, the late Bishop Dr Oliver A. Lyseight, who led the NTCG for the first 25 years of its existence.

Oliver Lyseight was a man of humble beginnings. He travelled from the island of Jamaica to England in the mid-1950s and set about mobilizing a disparate group of evangelical–Pentecostal believers to plant churches. Today these churches have grown to 125 congregations representing a wide cross section of UK society. There is no doubt that this is directly related to his sense of calling, leadership, vision, missionary zeal, investment in young leaders and commitment to ecumenism. If the current generation of leaders can capture some of his qualities, then the Church in general will be well on the way to fulfilling the Great Commission.

‘Building Confident, Committed Leaders’ is not only the first pillar of the NTCG’s Big Move Programme, which is designed to equip our Church for ministry in the twenty-first century, but also the strapline of our Leadership Training Centre under whose auspices these lectures were given.

We are grateful to all our lecturers for their scholarly and masterful presentations. They each prod, provoke, stimulate and challenge us to examine our leadership inclinations and how we do ministry with reference to postmodernism and, some would argue, a post-Christian society. Their presentations, while not exhaustive, are sufficiently deep to be of interest to those dealing with contemporary issues from our Christian perspective and mission.

Pastors, Christian leaders, theologians, academics, students, researchers and those with an interest in the establishment and

Foreword

growth of these black-majority churches, and in particular the New Testament Church of God in the United Kingdom, should find this compendium to be a useful point of reference for the effectiveness of their ministry and work.

*Eric A. Brown
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Last but not least, thanks are due to everyone who attended the lectures in 2008 through to 2012, from far and near, sometimes in the midst of adverse weather. Without your presence, questions and comments, the lectures would have been purely an academic exercise.

Introduction

PHYLLIS THOMPSON

From 2008 to 2012 the New Testament Church of God hosted a series of lectures entitled ‘Challenges of black Pentecostal leadership in the UK in the twenty-first century’. They were held in memory of our founding leader in the UK, Oliver A. Lyseight, as well as to assist us at this critical stage in our growth and development. In common with many other black-majority churches here in the UK, we are now looking back on 60 formative years and wanting to build on this for the future.

At the heart of the lectures is the recognition that churches like the New Testament Church of God, established mainly in the inner cities, have shaped and framed the thinking and worldview of many of the African–Caribbean diaspora and black British people and, in more recent times, a growing number of Asian and white people. So, with pastoral sensitivity, the Oliver Lyseight lectures were hosted to provide the space for those interested in engaging in conversations about our Pentecostal heritage and the added dimension of our black British experience and how this informs our theology and mission as part of the wider Church in the UK. The lectures gave us the opportunity to examine our journey in the mode of ‘pilgrims of faith seeking understanding’.

‘Black Pentecostal leadership’, with reference to the black Pentecostal churches, and ‘black-majority churches’ are terms which in their own ways denote a particular conundrum within the general Church world in the UK. What is black Pentecostalism? How does black Pentecostalism inform black theology and Christian hermeneutics, and present itself in applied theology? What do we mean by black-majority churches?

This compendium, based on the lecture series, invites the wider Church community, particularly those interested in

interdenominational partnerships and the education and training of church leaders, to connect with us, to look at church leadership from our perspective, to examine together with us how the challenges we encounter in contemporary Britain interface with the legacy and the ways in which black Pentecostalism is emerging as a wing of the wider Church in contemporary Britain, and to identify key themes for leadership training and development for the benefit of our mutual witness.

All the lecturers draw from the richness of their lived experience and theological expertise to provide a candid, provocative and educative perspective on the themes they address and explore. They not only probe the issues, informing and sharpening understanding of the way the black Pentecostal churches have come to do church here in the UK, but they also challenge whether the vision is to maintain the status quo or be a prophetic Church.

The lectures have attracted an overall audience of over 500 experienced and emerging church leaders, pastors and academics, men and women, black and white Christians from across the wider Church world in England and Wales.

‘The challenges of black Pentecostal leadership in the UK in the twenty-first century’ by Joe Aldred

In the inaugural lecture, Joe Aldred offers a considered reflection on the theme, ‘The challenges of black Pentecostal leadership in the UK in the twenty-first century’, and unearths some matters pertinent to the black-majority churches, which he presents as seven key challenges. The importance of theological rigour and responsible leadership, underpinned with quality training and development, cannot be overestimated if we are to maintain and extend our credibility in the public sphere.

It may be time, he hints, for us to examine what the benefits might be for greater unity among us and those we seek to serve, in contrast to the consequences of the disparity and fragmentation of our denominational trajectories and histories. Does it seem like

ecclesiological discipline, he asks, that there are so many independent Pentecostal churches operating, often in isolation from each other and the rest of the body of Christ? Conservative estimates suggest that there are well over 300 differently named churches in the UK servicing the small black constituency of approximately 2 per cent of the UK population, and approximately 6 per cent of the worshipping community.

Rather than being mere consumers of theology, Joe urges the leadership to cultivate the skills to tell their stories in their own voice and become catalysts in the educative and transformative mission and ministry in their particular context and that of the wider Church. He makes the observation that the most authoritative theologians in the world on Pentecostalism are not themselves Pentecostals. Leaders who are confident in their theological position will have a profound effect on how their congregations grow and become vibrant witnesses of the incarnate Christ in their communities. The Church without ethnic borders may well be a marker of the prophetic Church.

**‘From maintenance to mission: resisting the
bewitchment of colonial Christianity’
by Robert Beckford**

Robert Beckford, in his provocative style, lays down the gauntlet for deliberation and action around the future of black Pentecostal education and makes a plea for radical commitment to serious theological education with a political nuance: a theology, he argues, that will equip the leadership and members to offer a prophetic alternative to the local and global world. He outlines his views about the Church’s role as a living critique of society in solidarity with the Christian Bible. At the heart of his critique is the question of ‘how the black Pentecostal church tradition in Britain might better represent God’s reign on earth’, and he presents a passionate argument for re-visioning the mission of the Church and discovering the transforming power of the message we proclaim. A mission

he specifies is to overcome ‘the institutionalization of ignorance’. An important task for contemporary leaders within the black-majority churches is one that induces people to make a deep abiding commitment to a brand of Christianity rooted in a theology that is liberating rather than oppressive, critically engaging rather than restraining, and mission-driven rather than maintenance-ridden. He discusses four stages in the quest for a prophetic alternative to passive church life. First, what he means by ‘bewitchment’ – the practice of witchcraft; second, what bewitchment is in relation to the act of enslavement and missionary theology’s legitimation of this terror; third, the bicentennial of the abolition of the slave trade in Britain as an example of continued mass bewitchment; and finally, how theological education, or the lack of it, continues to be influenced by bewitchment tropes (themes). He asks, ‘Do we black Pentecostals live with the continued impact of a missionary bewitchment?’ And, ‘How does this continued bewitchment impact on our value of theological education?’

‘Pentecostal hermeneutics’ by Ruthlyn Bradshaw

Ruthlyn Bradshaw makes a plea for credible and experienced leaders who can inspire the next generation. Pentecostals are often criticized for their unwillingness or inability to engage intentionally with the meaning of Scripture to develop their theology. The focus on the priority of Spirit baptism inadvertently belittles substantial engagement in the formation of Pentecostal hermeneutics. The challenge to us is to have clarity about how our mission to reach out to the marginalized with the gospel will inevitably cause us to give due recognition to the voices in the margins and seek to hear the biblical response to their context. With this mindset, we will raise the level of our enquiry into Scripture about what it means to uphold our belief that ‘Jesus is coming soon’ and at the same time clarify our understanding of how we ‘do church’ until he comes. Some practice of ministry is informed by inadequate hermeneutics due to the credence given to the unreliable notion,

‘God said it, I believe it and that settles it.’ She asserts that much work needs to be done to develop a leadership that is thoroughly trained, equipped and confident to defend the Christian faith, and she appeals to those engaged in church leadership to provide opportunities for members to examine what informs their faith and practice of ministry.

‘Women in leadership’ by Elaine Storkey

In the fourth lecture Elaine Storkey tackles the matter of women in leadership and applies her well-rehearsed thesis to the black-majority churches. She salutes those women who have exemplified leadership qualities and the practice of ministry against the barriers of sexism and racism. While women in leadership might be a very straightforward and uncomplicated subject, she asserts, unfortunately this is not evidenced in many of our churches. Women fill some of the highest posts in all the professions in the UK, she states, yet in the majority of our churches this is not the expectation. Women are excluded from the higher ranks of credentialled ministry, and, inadvertently, the models of leadership we present contribute to the construction of gender identity and models of leadership which are contradictory to the liberation of women into their prophetic roles in kingdom work. She sees a direct link between this reality and how we choose to read and interpret the Christian Bible and, ultimately, our view of God. She challenges us to think specifically and generally about who sets the agenda, what agenda is being set, and where we should look for endorsement for our position on women in leadership. She quite rightly asserts that ‘Hermeneutics gleaned from personal emotion, psychology, culture and politics could well lead us astray’.

The key question for us, she emphasizes, is not whether the Church must catch up on the progress made for women in the rest of our culture, but what biblical theology has to say about leadership in the Church and society. Is the leadership of women endorsed by faithful Christian exegesis and is the opening up of higher offices

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in the UK. She is the senior pastor for two branches of the New Life Assembly Fellowship of Churches, a visiting lecturer at Spurgeon's College, a lecturer at the Institute of Theology and Christian Counselling, as well as a faculty member and lecturer at the New Life Assembly Purpose-Driven School. Ruthlyn is presently completing her DMin. She is developing a pastoral response to the needs of black men struggling to reconcile their personal sexuality with their Christian contexts in black-majority churches in the UK.

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