

# African Diaspora Pentecostals Deliverance Practices and the Lived Reality in the United Kingdom



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## ABSTRACT

In African diaspora Pentecostalism, spiritual warfare theology configures 'spiritual deliverance' as an integral aspect of healing, prosperity, and wellbeing. In the United Kingdom, deliverance practices, including exorcisms, are booming in immigrant communities, particularly the Pentecostal churches. African diaspora Pentecostals believe in a spirit-filled world consisting of the Holy Spirit, ancestors' spirits, evil spirits, demons, and Satan. African diaspora deliverance practices proffer existential solutions in a spirit-filled world. This study used the desktop research approach to explore the lived tensions of African diaspora Pentecostal deliverance practices in the United Kingdom, where such practices are not generally part of the cultural and social worldview. The study findings were that African diaspora Pentecostal deliverance practices clash with scientific mental health approaches, and overtly can be abusive, especially around consent, ethical concerns and post-deliverance trauma. This article concluded that African diaspora Pentecostals' spiritual deliverance therapy practices create tensions with the lived reality in the United Kingdom and recommended the need to negotiate questions about psychological well-being, dignity, and abuse on the part of the deliverance candidate. This study contributes to knowledge by highlighting the potential benefits and challenges of deliverance practices in a more scientifically grounded multicultural context of the United Kingdom.

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### Publication History

Received:  
11<sup>th</sup> September, 2024  
Accepted:  
28<sup>th</sup> November, 2024  
Published online:  
24<sup>th</sup> December, 2024

**Keywords:** *African Diaspora Pentecostalism, Migration, Spiritual Abuses, Spiritual Deliverance, Spiritual Warfare Theology, African Traditional Religion.*

## INTRODUCTION

The increase in migration in the UK (United Kingdom) significantly alters the religious landscape. While there is a more remarkable resemblance in most Christian liturgy, African Diaspora Pentecostals (clear definitions see section below), deliverance practices are increasing in the UK. According to Rowan and Dwyer, “experiences of demonic possession are on the increase in the UK.”<sup>1</sup> According to Mzondi and Harrison, “healing and deliverance from demonic possession formed part of the ministry of Jesus Christ and the early church and continue to play a crucial role in sub-Saharan African Christianity.”<sup>2</sup> Spiritual deliverance is central to dealing with evil spirits in African Diaspora Pentecostal Christians.

<sup>1</sup> Kirsty Rowan and Karen Dwyer, “Demonic Possession and Deliverance in the Diaspora: Phenomenological Descriptions from Pentecostal Deliverers,” *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 18, no. 6 (2015): 440–55, 440.

<sup>2</sup> Abraham Modisa Mkhondo Mzondi and Gordon Harrison, “Achieving a Christocentric Deliverance Praxis in the Churches of Matatiele and Maluti, South Africa,” *African Theological Journal for Church and Society* 3, no. 2 (2022): 39–58, 39.

Although deliverance practices are celebrated within most African Diaspora Pentecostals, the problem is that it has already attracted a lot of abuses and tendencies towards syncretism. In a diasporic context like the UK, where human rights are valued, there is a gap in understanding how African diaspora Pentecostal deliverance practices are understood from ethical and even legal perspectives. For instance, it is not an overstatement to assume that Pentecostalism in Western Europe or the British Pentecostals differs in some way(s), particularly regarding spiritual deliverance practices. There may be some points of convergence and divergence in spiritual deliverance; however, this study does not focus on comparisons but on why African diaspora Pentecostal deliverance practices are gaining attention in the United Kingdom. According to Rowan and Dwyer, “experiences of demonic possession are on the increase in the UK.”<sup>3</sup> African diaspora Pentecostals should be aware of tensions and concerns about carrying out their ministries in the UK. Being aware of cultural differences in practices would be a helpful discussion for practitioners in all Pentecostal settings in the UK.

Accordingly, this study argues for the need for understanding and acceptance of differences in religious practices. To achieve this, this study uses desktop research to explore the lived tensions of African diaspora Pentecostal deliverance practices in the United Kingdom, where such practices are not generally part of the cultural and social worldview. First, this study attempts to represent an overall picture of African Pentecostal beliefs and practices with a bias toward deliverance practices. Second, the study reconstructs the theology of deliverance practices and weaves selective Scriptures that sustain these practices. Third, this study explores tensions of deliverance practice in the sociocultural context of the UK.

### **African Diaspora Pentecostals UK- A Minefield**

Defining African Diaspora Pentecostals in the UK is critical to avoid generalisation. Establishing who the African Diaspora Pentecostals are is a minefield full of complexities and challenges. This study loosely uses the term 'African diaspora Pentecostals' to refer to Pentecostal Christians whose social constructs, culture, ethnicity, and national identity are or have 'Africanness' in the UK. It has been observed that Africans who migrate to Europe carry their culture and religious backgrounds.<sup>4</sup> In the UK, African Pentecostals are not homogeneous and should not be understood as one movement.<sup>5</sup> To a greater extent, African diaspora Pentecostals are most heterogeneous in church governance, mission, culture, ethnicity and practices. However, their resemblance in ecclesiology and theology is still intact.

There is a growing body of literature about African Diaspora Pentecostals in the UK, including but not limited to groups from Ghana, Nigeria, and Southern Africa. Most of the researchers in the UK and Europe concentrated on how Pentecostal churches establish themselves in Europe Burgess, and there is not much work to show how the practices of African Pentecostals create with the lived reality in the UK.<sup>6</sup> It is this gap that this article seeks to cover.

A further look at the emergence and establishment of African Pentecostal churches has caused an ongoing debate about whether African Pentecostal churches have an agenda of reviving Christianity in Europe. The 'Reverse missions in Europe' has become a vicious cycle mantra amongst scholars to explain this phenomenon.<sup>7</sup> Sande highlights that most African diaspora Pentecostal churches can be identified

<sup>3</sup> Rowan and Dwyer, “Demonic Possession and Deliverance in the Diaspora: Phenomenological Descriptions from Pentecostal Deliverers,” 440.

<sup>4</sup> Jörg Haustein, “Embodying the Spirit (s): Pentecostal Demonology and Deliverance Discourse in Ethiopia,” *Ethnos* 76, no. 4 (2011): 534–52.

<sup>5</sup> Israel Oluwole Olofinjana, “Historical Development of Black Pentecostal Churches in Britain: A Case Study of Apostolic Pastoral Congress (APC),” *Missio Africanus Journal of African Missiology* 1, no. 2 (2016): 59–79.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Burgess, *African Pentecostal Spirituality and Civic Engagement: The Case of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Britain*, *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, vol. 30 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2009); Babatunde Aderemi Adedibu, “Reverse Mission or Migrant Sanctuaries? Migration, Symbolic Mapping, and Missionary Challenges of Britain’s Black Majority Churches,” *Pneuma* 35, no. 3 (2013): 405–23; A. Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora: New Currents and Emerging Trends in World Christianity* (London: A & C Black, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Israel Oluwole Olofinjana, “Reverse Missiology: Mission Approaches and Practices of African Christians within the Baptist Union of Great Britain,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 42, no. 4 (2018); Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora: New Currents and Emerging Trends in World Christianity*; Paul Freston, “Reverse Mission: A Discourse in Search of Reality?,” *PentecoStudies* 9, no. 2 (2010): 153–74.

with their culture or ethnicity rather than the context of the United Kingdom to which they now belong.<sup>8</sup> Despite globalisation and intense migrations, African diaspora Pentecostals move and carry their Pentecostal heritage fused with indigenous cultural traits. According to Zeleza, the diaspora rewires "Africanness" to the dispersed populace and globalises Africans.<sup>9</sup> African diaspora Pentecostals are critical wellsprings of social, cultural, and spiritual resources.<sup>10</sup>

African immigrants are partly responsible for the booming exorcisms in the UK. For instance, a Nigerian Church (Mountain of Fire and Miracles (MFM)) used deliverance practices for 'gay cure conversion therapy' and was condemned by members of the British parliament as "disturbing and dangerous... and have no place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain."<sup>11</sup> Such a response by the British parliament shows the need to explore further the lived tensions of African Diaspora Pentecostal deliverance practices in the United Kingdom.

### **Constructions of the Theology of Deliverance Practices**

African diaspora deliverance practices should be understood from a cultural background. While Pentecostals believe in deliverance practices, culture and context are the primary factors that construct their nature. Chiefly, in Africa, the dominant belief is that the spiritual realm controls everything in the natural. The reality of the spirit realm is a consistent phenomenon for Africans.<sup>12</sup> Essentially, the spiritual realm manifests in people's daily lives—one unitary experience. To an African, the spiritual world is vivid, can be experienced and is not abstract. The Biblical notions of evil spirits and the devil make vivid sense to Africans. According to Richman, "machinations of demonic power are grounded in specific understandings of evil and its manifestations".<sup>13</sup> Satan is viewed as active and using demons and evil spirits to oppress people and, therefore, must be cast out. The term 'demons' is the generic term for all unholy immaterial beings working in cohorts with Satan, the chief demon, while the evil spirit is more of a descriptive term that underscores their functions. The terms demons, evil spirits and familiar spirits are used interchangeably. Both evil spirits and the Holy Spirit affect believers.<sup>14</sup> Demons can influence Christians, although not possessed, but non-Christians are the ones who are possessed. However, there is no scholarly support for this claim, except for African diasporic Pentecostal sermonic material. In some way, African diaspora Pentecostals prepare their congregations to guard against demons.

African diaspora Pentecostals' deliverance practices provide soteriological insights—salvation is complete when free from evil demonic powers. Theologically, African diaspora Pentecostals believe that demons do not possess born-again Christians, but they can be influenced, frustrated, and hindered by demonic activities. African diaspora Pentecostal deliverance practices promote healing, well-being, and prosperity. Prophecies and deliverance are vital aspects of African diaspora Pentecostal ministries.<sup>15</sup> Excelling in the prophetic and deliverance practices is assumed to be easy because Africans are believed to have active hostile forces sent by diverse religious shrines, spaces, and practitioners—like prophets, diviners, and witches.

Matthew 12:30, after the narrative of the deliverance of a demon-possessed boy, Jesus acknowledges that there is another kingdom whose agenda does not stand with him but is always against him. Also, in the Lord's prayer in Mathew 6:9-13, Jesus teaches his disciples that the Lord must deliver them from evil. According to Asamoah-Gyadu, the evil mentioned in the Lord's Prayer includes all witchcraft in Africa.<sup>16</sup> The ministry of Jesus demonstrated power over nature, diseases, and even evil

<sup>8</sup> Nomatter Sande, "Greening Faith and Herbology in Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 49, no. 1 (2020): 59–72.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Gender Biases in African Historiography," in *African Gender Studies: A Reader* (New York: Springer, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Nomatter Sande and Daniel Manyanga, "Youth Identity Crisis in the Diaspora: Christian Zimbabweans in the United Kingdom," *Alternation Special Edition* 33 (2020): 57–75.

<sup>11</sup> Naomi Richman, "Homosexuality, Created Bodies, and Queer Fantasies in a Nigerian Deliverance Church," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 50, no. 3–4 (2021): 250.

<sup>12</sup> Christian Tsekpo, "Contemporary Prophetic and Deliverance Ministry Challenges in Africa," *Transformation* 36, no. 4 (2019): 280–91; Mzondi and Harrison, "Achieving a Christocentric Deliverance Praxis in the Churches of Matatiele and Maluti, South Africa."

<sup>13</sup> Richman, "Homosexuality, Created Bodies, and Queer Fantasies in a Nigerian Deliverance Church." 254.

<sup>14</sup> Haustein, "Embodying the Spirit (s): Pentecostal Demonology and Deliverance Discourse in Ethiopia."

<sup>15</sup> J Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Witchcraft Accusations and Christianity in Africa," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39, no. 1 (2015): 23–27.

<sup>16</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu, "Witchcraft Accusations and Christianity in Africa."

spirits. Kraft asserts that “when people are encountered with the claims of Christ and respond positively, the most important spiritual battle is won.”<sup>17</sup> In Luke 4:6, Jesus presents Satan as the one in charge of the whole world, and it is only proper for African diaspora Pentecostals to deal with his shenanigans. The success of African diaspora Pentecostal deliverance practices manifests in victory, dominion, and prosperity theology. While deliverance issues are in the New Testament, possessions and deliverance practices are widely attested, varying from one culture to another.

Spiritual warfare theology is one solution to deal with demons and evil spirits. There are various definitions and debates about spiritual warfare. In this article, spiritual warfare is interchanged with spiritual battle and encounter. The spiritual warfare theology claims a 'total break from the past' and victory overpower the kingdom of darkness. Accordingly, African diaspora Pentecostals strive to break anything that associates them with their past—anything that has to do with life before converting to Pentecostal Christianity. Victorious living, dominion, and prosperous life show domination over demons and evil spirits. Baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues galvanises victory over evil spirits. Therefore, African Pentecostals emphasise baptism in the Holy Spirit to deal with such a 'spirit-filled world'. The Spirit confronts evil and protects believers from the powers that fight for wellness and progress.<sup>18</sup> African diaspora Pentecostals efficiently appreciate the doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit because African culture has open practices concerning the spiritual realm.

African diaspora Pentecostals interpret biblical passages literally for spiritual deliverance practices. African diaspora Pentecostals biblical interpretations are embedded in the charismatic experiential presuppositions and spirit-led pneumatic genres.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the African diaspora Pentecostal biblical interpretation is a literal interpretation. African diaspora Pentecostals use Ephesians 6:12 as propelling believers to enter spiritual and demonic warfare. The battle is not physical but spiritual, which needs discernment: “for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places”. The battle is against principalities, powers, and evil powers. The Pauline theology in Ephesians 6:10-12 suggests spiritual warfare—African diaspora Pentecostals cement this because spiritual battles are not strange in an African context.

### **African Diaspora Pentecostals Deliverance Practices and Tension with Lived Reality**

Predicated on the above beliefs about African diaspora Pentecostals constructions of deliverance practices, the predominant question raised in this study is what potential tensions with the lived realities in the United Kingdom multicultural context are since such practices are not generally part of the cultural and social worldview. It is not as if Western Christianity has never practised deliverance and exorcisms. There is a record that the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England formulated the traditions of exorcisms in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; however, the practice is not widespread nowadays. It needs to be clarified why they are no longer practising exorcisms.<sup>20</sup> Hiebert used the flaws of the excluded middle concept—to explain that Westerners use religion to deal with the ultimate question of origin, purpose and destiny and science to answer questions about the nature of the world that is directly experienced.<sup>21</sup> However, they are blinded to the middle, the world of spirits, ancestors, and astrology. If Hiebert's assertion is anything to go by, Westerners are no longer enthusiastic about religion and deliverance practices because of increased scientific knowledge and technology. According to Ansberry and Hays, science and technology do not give room to supernatural interventions.<sup>22</sup>

Despite various interpretations assigned to the African diaspora Pentecostals' deliverance practices, some practices are likely to cause tensions in the United Kingdom since such practices are not generally part of the cultural and social worldview. Deliverance for patients with mental health conditions

<sup>17</sup> Charles H Kraft, *Power Encounter in Spiritual Warfare* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 96.

<sup>18</sup> Allan Heaton Anderson, *Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism* (Springer, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> Nomatter Sande and Hartness M Samushonga, “African Pentecostal Ecclesiastical Practices and Cultural Adaption in a Changing World,” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 40, no. 1 (2020): 17–31.

<sup>20</sup> Linda Malia, “A Fresh Look at a Remarkable Document: Exorcism: The Report of a Commission Convened by the Bishop of Exeter,” *Anglican Theological Review* 83, no. 1 (2001): 65.

<sup>21</sup> Paul G Hiebert, “The Flaw of the Excluded Middle,” *Missiology* 10, no. 1 (1982): 35–47.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher M Hays and Christopher B Ansberry, *Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism* (Baker Academic, 2013).

creates tension in the United Kingdom. African diaspora Pentecostals have a predominant belief that demons and evil spirits cause mental health conditions. From an African indigenous worldview, 'mental health' conditions are caused by vengeful spirits or can be an act of witchcraft. Over-spiritualising mental health issues can lead to abusing a deliverance candidate who is suffering from mental health issues. According to Rowan and Dwyer, "experiences of demonic possession are on the increase in the UK."<sup>23</sup> Although mental health issues are difficult to distinguish in spiritual deliverance practice, at least African diaspora Pentecostals can learn that not all mental health issues are caused by demonic or evil spirits. Finding space for other disciplines like medicine and social sciences is essential. The challenge is balancing neurophysiological issues and issues of the African diaspora Pentecostal faith. The different approaches to mental health between Africans and the West are premises used for understanding the illness. It is easier for African diaspora Pentecostals to accept mental health issues as a spiritual challenge rather than mental pathological.

Forms of possession, behaviour, and beliefs are broad and perhaps depend on culture, even from what is seen in the New Testament. Demons and evil spirits manifest diversely, which include but are not limited to vomiting, falling, rolling on the floor, screaming, and various forms of physical violence. Other signs of demonic manifestations are bad dreams and spiritual husbands. Spiritual husbands and spiritual wives are believed to be demons that attack marriages. These demons attack marriage in different forms. For instance, some molest and torment individuals during sleep and even induce lust stimulations. Other symptoms include feeling heavy on the shoulders, yawning and groaning, and dreaming of being in a graveyard. This calls for means of physical restraining. Physical restraint during a manifestation prevents the deliverance candidates from hurting themselves and those around them and disturbing the worship service.

In some cases, the Pentecostal deliverance team consists of both men and women who will restrain people of the same sex as themselves.<sup>24</sup> It is difficult to explain why some demons manifest differently, but it might be related to the nature of the evil spirits. The Bible records self-destructive behaviours displayed by those who were possessed by evil spirits. According to Mark 5:5, "Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones". Also, Mark 9:22 "and it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us". Diverse interpretations can be offered for these violent behaviours. Theologians today should offer a holistic interpretation of possession behaviour's negative and positive aspects. Although there is no account of physical restraining in the Bible, this practice has some merits for the deliverance candidates.

Health and safety issues are topical in the United Kingdom. Thus, some evil spirits and demonic manifestations are violent and have the potential to put deliverance candidates in danger. There is no training offered by African diaspora Pentecostals about how to restrain the candidate besides pointing and casting in the name of Jesus. Restraining is not unique to spiritual deliverance candidates but is practised on mental health candidates. In the United Kingdom, mental health professionals undergo the Management of Actual or Potential Aggression (MAPA) training. This training helps to teach professionals how to cope with escalating behaviour professionally and safely. Therefore, such connections likely exist between the work of the Holy Spirit and personal professional skills. Thus, the African Pentecostal spiritual deliverance team should be trained to restrain people. Hence, African Pentecostal churches can copy the Roman Catholics and the Church of England. The Roman Catholic Church, in May 2019, held the "exorcist training convention" because of the demand for knowledge on how to handle demonic possession in the world.<sup>25</sup> Over centuries, exorcisms in the Roman Catholic Church follow a tradition and a rigid series of regulations. As early as the 17th Century, the Roman Catholics standardised a 'Catholic rite of exorcism'.<sup>26</sup> The problem is that Pentecostal churches influence

<sup>23</sup> Rowan and Dwyer, "Demonic Possession and Deliverance in the Diaspora: Phenomenological Descriptions from Pentecostal Deliverers," 440.

<sup>24</sup> M. W. Cuneo, *American Exorcism: Expelling Demons in the Land of Plenty* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> F. Garcia, "Inside the Global Exorcism 'Boom,'" *Paranormal*, 2019, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_United Kingdom/article/xwnmza/exorcisms-rise-2019-pentecostalism-catholicism](https://www.vice.com/en_United Kingdom/article/xwnmza/exorcisms-rise-2019-pentecostalism-catholicism).

<sup>26</sup> Garcia, "Inside the Global Exorcism 'Boom.'"

each other and ignore other mainstream religious positions; they adopted "an eschatological position that feared ecumenical contact."<sup>27</sup>

Spiritual deliverance practices trigger issues of abuse and violation of individual rights. One of the issues that raise abuse and violation of human rights is the issue of 'consent'. Given how (s) demons and evil spirits manifest, as stated earlier in the discussion, the question is how consent is obtained during the African Pentecostal deliverance practices. In most cases, consent to perform deliverance on the candidate is implied, mainly when a minister is dealing with people known to them. Some examples of implied consent are when the deliverance candidates know that spiritual deliverance is the work of the Holy Spirit and can happen at any time during a worship service. There is a diversity of consent. As such, there is no guarantee that one will end up participating in spiritual deliverance because what may start as a prayer or blessing for someone may end up in spiritual deliverance as the safe thing to do. Therefore, much spiritual deliverance is 'opportunistic when God is at work'; expressed consent does not always take place during spiritual deliverance. In these cases, it is only sometimes possible to obtain prior consent before spiritual deliverance because demonic manifestations are mainly spontaneous. There are cases where abuse is possible within African Pentecostal spiritual deliverance practices. Deliverance practitioners are not open to ethical criticism because their practices are based on biblical authority and Spiritual gifts (word of knowledge and discernment of spirits).<sup>28</sup> Correct interpretation advocates that the 'word of knowledge and discernment of spirits', like all spiritual gifts, should be judged or assessed.

Considering the ethical considerations, African diaspora Pentecostal's deliverance practices should take intentional steps to teach issues of consent and the implications of not having consent. As advised by Doris M. Wagner, deliverance practitioners use a consent document that does not explain the risk or alternative treatment to the conditions.<sup>29</sup> The ministers should be knowledgeable and ensure they seek consent when there is an opportunity to do so. Advertising spiritual deliverance and healings by African Pentecostals can be a proactive call. Deliverance practitioners should explain and teach people what happens in spiritual deliverance. In another similar example from the United States, Helen advertised her planned 2012 'marathon deliverance' where her expertise included delivering people attacked with 'mermaid spirits'.<sup>30</sup>

Various grids for interpreting African Pentecostal deliverance practices exist, especially for onlookers. Regardless of how the candidate can agree and understand what is happening during the spiritual deliverance sessions, it is onlookers who feel that they are being abused. Währisch-Oblau has suggested that the beliefs in demons, spirits, witchcraft, and sorcery should "no longer be understood as backward superstitions to be shamefully hidden in international exchanges, but as a topic worthy of research, reflection, and pastoral action."<sup>31</sup> In cases where it is difficult to obtain consent, deliverance practitioners can be put in the same category as any other healthcare professionals who should apply the 'best interest of the individual'. This can be debatable, but on one hand, if one does not act, they have neglected their duty of care. Moreover, to reassure those who consider spiritual deliverance as abuse, there should be more dialogue and research to show that spiritual deliverance is not uncommon in the church. Nevertheless, irreligious people consider spiritual deliverance as an exploitation of the vulnerable.

Most people in different cultures experience diverse consciousness. Post-spiritual deliverance psychological trauma is inevitable in most spiritual deliverance practices. Sometimes, candidates do not know what happened during the spiritual deliverance process. Deliverance candidates find themselves on the floor, restrained, covered in clothes, or surrounded by many people praying for them. Such a scenario can be confusing, and it often results in individuals struggling to make sense of what will have happened; therefore, they resort to saying they feel abused and violated. In addition, some deliverance candidates are told by others or find out on social media, which can affect the candidates morally. Spiritual

<sup>27</sup> World Council of Churches, "Pentecostal Churches," 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Jean Mercer, "Deliverance, Demonic Possession, and Mental Illness: Some Considerations for Mental Health Professionals," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 16, no. 6 (2013): 595–611.

<sup>29</sup> D. Wagner, *How to Cast out Demons: A Guide to the Basics* (Ventura, CA: Renew Books, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries, "Marathon Deliverance," 2012, <http://libertyfoundationgospelministries.org/images/U.S.jpg>.

<sup>31</sup> C. Währisch-Oblau, "Meeting a Charismatic Challenge: The Development of Deliverance Ministries within the Protestant Member Churches of the United Evangelical Mission," in *African Pentecostal Mission Maturing*, ed. L.E. Donkor and C.R. Clarke (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2018), 176–95, 178.

deliverance practitioners can make deliverance candidates feel embarrassed when they discover the actions, they were engaged in during the spiritual deliverance therapy session when they regain consciousness or learn it through a spiritual deliverance practitioner or other people.

On the contrary, “the fact that someone has sought deliverance is not kept private but is instead a matter of congratulation and celebration within the congregation.<sup>32</sup> Since church worship is public engagement, openness and discussions concerning deliverance practices reduce issues of abuse and violations of human rights. On some occasions, there are instances that candidates are delivered several times without getting well. There is a possibility that if demons are part of the causes of bad things happening in the lives of people, and spiritual deliverance happens, failure for things to change in those instances is a source of psychological trauma. Therefore, believing that one has failed to overcome the demon becomes a form of spiritual abuse. For example, one can have a feeling of being unworthy in the eyes of God. Persons who have been subjected to Satanic Ritual Abuse should visit a therapist for the treatment of dissociative identity disorder.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the American Psychological Association argued that ‘*Theophostic*’ is a psychological treatment that expels demons to remove “lie-based thinking”. These preliminary findings suggest that African Pentecostals can learn and benefit from the ethical principles already in existence and developed by related social sciences such as the American Psychological Association.<sup>34</sup> Spiritual deliverance poses the risk of psychological abuse inflicted upon the victim, which is sustained by a religious community.

While the Bible stories of spiritual deliverance do not show any negative aftermath related to the process, the psychosocial theories can give further information for interpretation. Since African Pentecostals believe that nothing happens in life, approaching the deliverance practices from an interdisciplinary perspective is helpful. There is a growing acceptance of medical treatment within Pentecostal traditions as opposed to earlier practices during the formative stages.<sup>35</sup> Pentecostals cannot afford to ignore scientific discourse. Therefore, knowledge from neuroscience may contribute to understanding issues of visions and healing. However, the dominant ‘diagnostic tool’ used by African Pentecostals is the ‘gift of discernment’. The problem with this tool is that it is a by-product of the Holy Spirit. Given the ‘gift of discernment’ as a diagnostic tool, the problem is measuring accuracy and professional boundaries as done in the scientific models. More information about divine guidance needs to be provided. However, Stephen E. Parker suggested that divided guidance should be guided by psychology and Paul Tillich's theology.<sup>36</sup> Following the leading of the Holy Spirit during spiritual deliverance, Pentecostal traditions can be both valid and reliable. Thus, there is no need for empirical evidence for assessments and codes of conduct.

The United Kingdom policy is failing to uphold multiculturalism or build community cohesion because of continued racism.<sup>37</sup> The emergence of the African diaspora Pentecostal is widening the gap between inclusion, multiculturalism, cultural sensitivity and accommodation. The ever-present spirit world with evil spirits and how they may affect people's lives differs from the factors that challenge people in the West. People in the United Kingdom believe that what affects people is a poor vision of goods and services in all sectors, including but not limited to health, welfare, and education. Thus, deliverance practices with unfamiliar beliefs have the potential not only to be unaccepted, confronted and seen as needing to make more sense.

Rationalism does not take centre stage within the African diaspora Pentecostal traditions, but experience and revelations inform practice. Therefore, African diaspora Pentecostal deliverance practices do not consider the psychological and psychiatric aspects as essential tools for spiritual deliverance. Excelling in deliverance practices concerns how the Holy Spirit uses one. In addition, there is a firm conviction that anyone can cast out devils and perform deliverance. Some ministers have coined the

<sup>32</sup> Mercer, “Deliverance, Demonic Possession, and Mental Illness: Some Considerations for Mental Health Professionals.”

<sup>33</sup> T.J. Euteneuer, “Seven Degrees of Demonic Persecution,” *New Oxford Review* 77, no. 5 (2010): 37–39.

<sup>34</sup> American Psychological Association, “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct,” 2020, [www.apa.org/ethics/code/imndex.aspx#](http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/imndex.aspx#).

<sup>35</sup> Sande, “Greening Faith and Herbology in Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe.”

<sup>36</sup> Stephen Eugene Parker, *Led by the Spirit: Toward a Practical Theology of Pentecostal Discernment and Decision Making*, vol. 7 (A&C Black, 1996).

<sup>37</sup> Bhikhu C Parekh, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (Profile Books, 2000).

phrase 'ministry of deliverance', whereas the Bible is silent about it. Therefore, African diaspora Pentecostal churches use spiritual deliverance as one of their distinctive hallmarks for demonstrating power and the presence of the Holy Spirit, including in diasporic contexts. Deliverance ministries include but are not limited to casting, binding, losing spiritual powers, dealing with witchcraft, and confronting territorial spirits.<sup>38</sup> Thus, Westerners can see deliverance ministries as indistinct and questionable. One implication of the above is that developing ethical principles and guidelines towards spiritual deliverance practices is challenging. The Roman Catholics and Anglicans were correct to suggest that spiritual deliverance is the profession of ordained spiritual deliverance practitioners, and psychology and psychiatric concepts are considered before embarking on supernatural exorcisms.<sup>39</sup>

It will take African Pentecostals decades or generations to fully engage in cross-cultural ministry in the West.<sup>40</sup> The dilemma for African diaspora Pentecostals in the United Kingdom is not only about discerning demons and evil spirits but also about how to balance liberal Christian attitudes. The United Kingdom takes a hybrid complex, accounting for science, technology, and a multicultural context seriously enough. Even though African diaspora Pentecostals notions of answering existential situations by teaching that evil spirits have the potential to prevent Africans from being granted visas, allowing them to become economically prosperous and even fight institutionalised racism, such claims may be viewed as misguided. There may be a need to accord African diaspora Pentecostals and all minority ethnic communities space to express all aspects of cultural authority and be accepted.

In the context of globalisation, migration and transnationalism, African Pentecostal deliverance practices endorse beliefs of 'Africanness'. Accordingly, deliverance practices can be interpreted from an anthropological approach, showing human experiences instead of merely focusing on Biblical beliefs on how demons and evil spirits manifest. Thus, it is essential to note that deliverance practices or expressions vary from one culture to another. This is also true for possession patterns, which are likely to conform to cultures. Those in the United Kingdom seeking to understand the African diaspora Pentecostals should first pay attention to transcultural lenses to interpret spirit possession. For instance, African Pentecostals adapted and transformed their African spirituality with respect for the spiritual in the new environment.

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It is overstressing to assume that African diaspora Pentecostal deliverance practices are entirely wrong, but the West struggles to accept other theologies. Historically, when Irish Catholics arrived in England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the English were provoked by their theology.<sup>42</sup> In the West, scientific development and technologies inform the reality of life; therefore, they feel threatened to be reminded of their former allegiance to Christianity. The white Christian churches have been declining for a long time.<sup>43</sup> According to Martin, the arrival of African diaspora Pentecostalism to the declining mainstream churches is a significant force in the United Kingdom.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, deliverance practices are only a part of the tensions. However, many competing factors continue to hinder the adaptation of African Pentecostals in the United Kingdom. Leavey et al. opine that "the vibrant expansion of Black, predominantly African and Pentecostal communities in the United Kingdom whose beliefs and practices ... seem to provoke a degree of anxiety among clergy from the established churches and perhaps more widely in public discourse, a degree of "moral panic" concerning aspects of multiculturalism."<sup>45</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that good practices for spiritual deliverance among African diaspora Pentecostals help to develop public engagement and appreciation of their unique Christian dispositions. For future research, more empirical analysis or in-depth ethnographic studies bring more insights into religious

<sup>38</sup> G.A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (InterVarsity Press, 2014).

<sup>39</sup> Garcia, "Inside the Global Exorcism 'Boom.'"

<sup>40</sup> Sande and Samushonga, "African Pentecostal Ecclesiastical Practices and Cultural Adaption in a Changing World."

<sup>41</sup> A.H. Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>42</sup> R. Swift, *Irish Migrants in Britain, 1815–1914: A Documentary History* (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2002).

<sup>43</sup> Steve Bruce, "God Is Dead: Secularization in the West" (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

<sup>44</sup> D. Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> Gerard Leavey, Kate Loewenthal, and Michael King, "Pastoral Care of Mental Illness and the Accommodation of African Christian Beliefs and Practices by UK Clergy," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 54, no. 1 (2017): 86–106, 89.



perceptions and tensions. The study may include broader inter-denominations and other religious traditions to synchronise spiritual deliverance or exorcism guidelines.

## CONCLUSION

This study has explored lived tensions of African diaspora Pentecostal deliverance practices in the United Kingdom, where such practices are not generally part of the cultural and social worldview. Given the diasporic context, the African diaspora Pentecostals deliverance practices create some tensions with the lived reality in the United Kingdom. For instance, deliverance practice therapy for candidates with mental health issues is frowned upon because of the lack of scientific interpretations and diagnosis. While the African diaspora Pentecostal deliverance practices are helpful to the church in providing answers to existential challenges in the United Kingdom, the nature of spiritual deliverance processes is complex, resulting in most cases being rendered abusive. Notable abusive practices include the notion that obtaining consent from the candidate is difficult because some demons manifest at times. Further, there are ethical issues of social media publicity and post-psychological spiritual deliverance trauma. While the emergence of African diaspora Pentecostals in the United Kingdom has the potential to revive Christianity because of their unique expression, the lack of spiritual deliverance guidelines and practices cannot only hinder that agenda but also increase the gap of assimilation, adaptation, and acceptance into the multicultural context of the United Kingdom.

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