

Religious transnationalism: the case of Zimbabwean Catholics in Britain

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Abstract

The paper, examines the ways in which mainstream churches engender migrants' maintenance of transnational ties and improve their integration into the Britain society. It used the Zimbabwean Catholic congregation in Birmingham as a case study. A key hypothesis of the paper is that mainstream churches ease the integration of migrants, thus enabling diaspora members and ethnic minorities to gain a sense of acceptance and belonging to the host country while continuing to retain attachment to their cultural and religious heritage. The central thrust of this paper is that African diaspora congregations emerged as public spaces to construct transnational identities and provide alternative forms of belonging, and it is only later that the congregations re-invented themselves as agents of re-evangelization to the host society. In contrast to other transnational ties, for example, remittances and hometown associations whose activities are orientated towards 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, which gives African Christian migrants the agency to participate in other aspects of British society, providing an alternative path to integration.