**Title:** Why is it important that the Church of England today develops more intercultural multi-ethnic church communities as an ecclesiological model to help promote its commitment to greater ethnic diversity and what steps might be taken towards this?

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# **The Abstract**

As a Church of England member and now recently ordained, I have observed that one of its challenges is how to increase its ethnic diversity, particularly in regard to the development of intercultural multi-ethnic church communities. Such communities are just one ecclesiological model to help the Anglican Church in its mission in the UK today, and are not proposed to be a prototype for all Anglican Churches. This dissertation begins with a brief overview of contemporary British society and the Anglican Church with regards to ethnicity. It then moves on to give some theological reflections on ethnocentrism, which is a significant obstacle to embracing ethnic diversity in churches, but which can be counteracted in the gospel. Intercultural multi-ethnic church communities can then offer a visible gospel alternative to a society's natural tendency to ethnocentrism. Next comes a critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP) – a church growth principle that is still prevalent today, and which in many ways stands in contrast to the values and beliefs of intercultural multi-ethnic church communities. This is followed by biblical and theological reflections, which help underpin why a model of intercultural multi-ethnic church communities is important for the church's mission. In the final section, I outline how such communities might be practically nurtured and developed; and then conclude that now is an opportunity for more such communities to be intentionally formed.

# **List of Contents**

# **Introduction**

My own interest in writing about intercultural multi-ethnic churches has largely come from personal experience. I am of Sri Lankan Tamil ethnicity but born and raised in London. During the 1960s and 70s, the UK was not so ethnically diverse as it is now, and as a child I struggled a lot with my identity; was I Sri Lankan or was I British? I distinctly remember wishing I was white at times. It was only in my twenties and thirties, largely due to coming to faith in Christ, that I embraced the fact that I could be both British and Sri Lankan and that my primary identity was as a Christian. Then in 1992, I got married to my wife, who is white British. Further intercultural experiences were to be had at All Nations Christian College, where I did Biblical and Cross-Cultural Studies for two years and related to many different nationalities. This was further enhanced through joining a very multi-ethnic mission organisation called WEC International[1]. Through WEC my family and I worked in Sri Lanka for seven years, where ethnicity has dominated the political landscape in recent years through conflict and tension between the Sinhalese and Tamil people. Throughout all this time, I have worshipped at a number of churches, each with their strengths and weaknesses with regards to affirmation and inclusiveness of ethnic diversity.

Consequently, as a result of my experiences, and my recent ordination into the Church of England, I feel strongly committed and passionate about the development of intercultural multi-ethnic church communities, as another "fresh expression" of church pertinent to contemporary British society. Closely linked with this, also comes a need to increase ethnic diversity within the Church of England, both amongst its clergy and laity.

With regards to terminology, "multi-ethnic" is fairly self-explanatory, meaning many different ethnic groups. I have chosen the word "intercultural" rather than "crosscultural" or "multicultural" because "inter" conveys the dynamic of sharing between cultures and the idea of reciprocity and equality. Indeed it seems that to be an authentic Christian in the world today one has to engage with a rich diversity of intercultural connections and networks.

This test of authenticity and engagement also comes corporately to our churches; and with it a challenge to develop more intercultural multi-ethnic churches – a challenge perhaps, which

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[1] WEC stands for Worldwide Evangelisation for Christ

many British churches shy away from. For some it is seemingly irrelevant for their context; for others it is an unworkable theoretical dream that cannot be fulfilled in practice.

Just as contemporary society speaks of a "political correctness" with regards to race, ethnicity and multiculturalism, so also in the church we can speak in terms of a "theological" or "religious correctness" in this area. The Church might proclaim the theory of being one in Christ and brothers and sisters no matter what our background, and idealise that picture in the book of Revelation of the church being made up of people from every nation, tribe and tongue (Revelation 7:9). However is this reality in the hearts and minds of Christians? Is this reality in the congregational life of our church communities?

The UK today is the most diverse it has ever been in terms of ethnicity and religion. We are very much at a unique point in world history and global Christianity. Never before has there been such a great mixing of cultures and ethnicities due to large scale movement of people groups across borders and progress in information technology amongst other factors. The 2011 UK census revealed the following statistics:  86%  of those surveyed described themselves as White (80.5% being White British), 7.5% Asian/Asian British, 3.3% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, 2.2% Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups and 1.0% Other Ethnic Groups. With almost one in five people not being White British, this brings new challenges to the Church of England as the state church. With a mandate to care for all people under its pastoral umbrella, a significant challenge today for Anglican ministers, lay leaders and members is how to demonstrate the church's relevance to a multi-ethnic society. This is a vital issue for the Anglican Church in all its work in parishes, chaplaincies, schools and elsewhere.

An important report in 2007 was *Celebrating Diversity in the Church of England: National Parish Congregation Diversity Monitoring*[2] . It states that 4.7% of Church of England core adult parish congregations are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and over the whole country, urban Church of England parishes recorded an average of 9% minority ethnic Anglicans in their core adult congregations while suburban and rural parishes recorded 4% and 3.6% respectively. It also noted that only 2.2% of diocesan licensed clergy were from ethnic minorities, and that there was under-representation of ethnic minorities in positions of lay responsibility also.  The report, therefore, urges a priority in recruitment and training of those from ethnic minority backgrounds. However, although no official figures are available,

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[2] https://www.churchofengland.org/media/1032500/celebratingdiversitygsmisc938.pdf

it seems the situation has probably marginally improved. A recent article in *Christianity Today* suggests the number is now 3%.[3]Another recent article in the *Guardian* stated in the UK "between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, the number of black Christians increased by 58% and of Asian Christians by 390%" and that very few of these have come into Anglican Churches. [4]

It seems just as cultural and ethnic diversity within Britain brings challenges, so also it brings opportunities to re-evaluate the church's mission and to re-envision new possibilities of increasing ethnic diversity within the Anglican Church. One of the ways of doing this is to have more intercultural multi-ethnic churches. Reverend John Root (an Anglican minister in northwest London for several years) stated over 20 years ago that "ultimately the credibility of the Church of England's rightful commitment to being a multi-racial church will stand or fall by how effectively it consists of multi-racial parishes." [5] If this is a benchmark, how is the Anglican Church doing and what could be done better? Currently, according to the above statistics, the Anglican Church is not representative of British society in terms of ethnic diversity; and if this is to be rectified, then multi-ethnic churches will go some way towards that.

Bosch when examining historical paradigms of mission, critiques the Eastern Orthodox Church for a greater emphasis on conservation and restoration, rather than taking a journey into the unknown. Key words for Orthodox churches were "tradition", "orthodoxy" and "the Fathers", but a drawback was that they tended to become ingrown, excessively nationalistic and without concern for those outside [6]. The Church of England today faces a similar challenge – it shares similar values with the Eastern Orthodox Church; but the probing question comes as to how can the Anglican Church hold onto these key values of its rich heritage without resulting in a similar predicament?

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[3] http://www.christiantoday.com/article/john.sentamu.why.we.need.more.minority.ethnic.clergy/52749.htm

[4] http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/13/church-of-england-failing-to-promote-minority-ethnic-clergy-says-bishop

[5] John Root, *Building Multi-Racial Churches,* (Oxford: Latimer House 1994) p.4

[6] David Bosch, *Transforming Mission : Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis, 1996) p.212

Michael Nazir-Ali, the former Bishop of Karachi and Rochester, said in relation to multiculturalism, that the secular values of tolerance, mutual respect and opportunity need to be broadened by the Christian ideas of hospitality, engagement, service and friendship.[7]  In 2000, the *Parekh Report* was published following a two year *Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*. The Commission's remit was "to analyse the current state of multi-ethnic Britain and to propose ways of countering racial discrimination and disadvantage and making Britain a confident and vibrant multicultural society at ease with its rich diversity."[8] One of the summary statements of its vision specified "If Britain is to be a successful community of communities it will need to combine the values of equality and diversity, liberty and solidarity."[9] I would suggest the Church in Britain is well placed to help deliver on such a vision of multi-ethnic Britain; and so the ecclesiological challenge remains for the Anglican Church together with other denominations to grow and develop more intercultural multi-ethnic church communities. For such churches will not only enrich all those involved and be attractional to minority ethnic groups and others, but also can be a prophetic witness to society at large of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to bring unity amongst different ethnic groups. As Sivasundaram says "the multi-ethnic church is a tremendous resource for evangelism. By drawing attention to the diversity of its members, the church might present an attractive alternative to the cultural relativism so prevalent today."[10]

It is important to emphasize that the proposal is not that all Anglican Churches become intercultural multi-ethnic church communities, but rather that more such churches are developed to co-exist with other ecclesiological models. On a pragmatic level, this is more relevant for the urban context and churches located in cities and towns; and in such locations it seems having one or two intercultural multi-ethnic churches within a deanery or diocese would be a sensible initial target to aim for.

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[7] Nazir-Ali, Michael, *Triple Jeopardy for The West: Aggressive Secularism, Radical Islamism and Multiculturalism* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012) p.viii

[8] Parekh, Bhiku (Chair), *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: The Parekh Report* (London: Profile Books, 2000) p.viii

[9] Parekh, p.105

[10] Sivasundaram, Sujit, "Unity and diversity: the Church, race and ethnicity" http://www.jubilee-centre.org/unity-and-diversity-the-church-race-and-ethnicity-by-sujit-sivasundaram/

# **Theological Reflections on Ethnocentrism**

An important starting point when considering issues of ethnicity is to acknowledge that prejudice, discrimination and ethnocentrism are part of human sinfulness. As part of the "Fall", we have not only been dislocated from our relationship with God, but also from our relationship with one another, as is manifest within ethnic division. Jesus himself said that in the last days "nation will rise against nation" (Matt.24:7 & parr.), or literally "ethnic group will rise against ethnic group". Currently there are 65 countries in the world involved in armed conflict, and almost all of these have an ethnicity aspect to it.[11]

Furthermore, ethnocentrism seems to be one of the hardest and most difficult areas of personal transformation, even when people are of biblical faith. Below are Old Testament examples of Aaron, Miriam, and Jonah, and a New Testament example of Peter.

In Numbers 12:1 it says "Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite".Cush was an area south of Egypt, where a Black African civilization has flourished for over 2000 years, so it is highly probable that Moses married a Black African woman. From the text, it seems that opposition arises within Moses' family because of the ethnicity of Moses' new wife, and linked to this may have been her skin colour. In fact, Luther translates "Cushite" as "negress"[12], and the darkness of Cushite skin seems to be borne out by Jeremiah's question "Can the Cushite change his skin?" (Jeremiah 13:23)

Miriam and Aaron both played significant roles in the salvific deliverance story of Israel. Miriam was closely involved with Moses' protection at birth and entrusted him into Pharaoh's daughter's care (Exodus 2:1-10). She was also deemed a prophetess and co-leader of worship with Moses following Israel's deliverance across the Red Sea (Exodus 15:19-21). Aaron, on the other hand was Moses' spokesperson (Exodus 4:14-16), and the one through whom the privileged high priestly line would flow (Exodus 28:1). Despite having these privileged positions in the faith community, Miriam and Aaron seem to show prejudice and discrimination, and object to Moses' inter-ethnic marriage; and as the story unfolds (Numbers

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[11] http://www.warsintheworld.com/?page=static1258254223
[12] J.Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A biblical theology of race (Leicester: Apollos, 2003)* p.72

12:1-16), one sees Yahweh's approval of this marriage and His rebuke and judgment of Miriam, as He afflicts her with leprosy.

Some commentators say that because of Miriam's colour prejudice against Moses' black wife, God intentionally afflicted her with white leprous skin. There are also other theological dimensions to Miriam's punishment. Miriam was sent outside the camp – a temporary exclusion from the family and people of God, whereas the Cushite woman becomes part of Moses' family and the people of Israel through marriage.

Another person showing ethnocentrism in the Old Testament was Jonah. Jonah prophesied in the eighth century B.C.E. and Yahweh called him to preach to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, which was the most powerful nation at that time. However Jonah shows reluctance to take up his call (Jonah 1:3), which seems largely due to his ethnocentric prejudice and bigotry. Later Jonah also shows displeasure at God's mercy and relenting judgment upon the Ninevites (Jonah 4:1-3), as well as unconcern for the future of a large populated non-Israelite city. Like many other Israelites of his day and others throughout the Old Testament, Jonah had almost exclusively linked God's love and faithfulness to the Israelite culture and people alone.

Moving on to the New Testament, we see an interesting biblical example of ethnocentrism in the life of the apostle Peter. In Acts 2, at Pentecost, Peter preached a spiritually fruitful message to Jews from many different nations and three thousand people were added to the church that day. Furthermore Peter had seen Jesus crossing cultural and ethnic barriers (eg. John 4), as well as heard Jesus' mandate to make disciples of all nations (literally all ethnic groups).

Yet it seems even for the apostle Peter these truths had not entered his heart, and he still shared the same cultural prejudices of his fellow Jews in his attitude towards Gentiles; and therefore he needed a special vision to teach him otherwise. In Acts 10, Peter has a vision and goes to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile (non-Jew); and there it seems Peter has a spiritual awakening, as he acknowledges "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts people from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (vv.34-35).

Peter had come to a profound new cultural realization about his faith, that shook up his previously held prejudice. Then in Acts 11 when Peter tries to explain himself, he is faced by intense opposition from within the church. Peter's worldview had been changed by his vision but for his Christian contemporaries there was still a prejudicial blockage despite their reading of the Scriptures and faith in God. Acts 10 and 11, then lead directly to Acts 15, where the church has to deal with its innate prejudices and align itself with what God is doing amongst the Gentile people.

In contrast, there are some theological arguments which are supportive of ethnocentrism in some way. Firstly, that God chose Israel as a nation out of all the other nations; and that even Jesus in his earthly ministry was mainly focused on engaging with the Jewish people to the somewhat exclusion of the Gentiles. However both these issues are appropriately addressed later.

The implicit learning from Miriam, Aaron, Jonah and Peter is that neither faith in God, nor holding a significant leadership position within the biblical worshipping community prevents someone being ethnocentric and culturally prejudiced. Similarly for the church today and its leadership, ethnocentrism is probably no less prevalent.

One of the ways that churches can progress in terms of addressing ethnocentrism is to openly name it as a sin that most if not all people struggle with. For the Church of England, this can be done through clear statements in its confessional liturgy or extemporaneous prayers. Such truth telling acknowledges ethnocentrism as a sinful predicament, for which every person needs forgiveness and redemption; and only when there is such transparency, can significant transformational work be done for both individuals and churches. Additionally acknowledgment and confession that the Church is not immune from issues of prejudice and discrimination will help the Church's authenticity in society.

Wider society acknowledges what should and ought to be in terms of multicultural society and advocates mutual respect and tolerance but rarely does it dare to venture into and open up discussion on ethnocentrism or ethnic tension for fear of provoking strongly held emotions and feelings. The Church needs to be courageous in helping to air theological reflections on the so-called "migrant crisis", ISIS (The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and the expansion of Islam, and issues like the Asian paedophile rings in Oxford, Rotherham and Aylesbury. The church should help its members connect with their heartfelt values on these issues but also not leave things there. The gospel of Jesus Christ must be allowed to speak into and challenge

the sins of prejudice, discrimination and ethnocentrism. Caring listening environments should be created by church leaders. This will mean listening to stories ranging from the fear and exclusion of ethnocentric prejudice on the one hand, to the threat and  different fears of national and community identity being significantly changed by immigration on the other. Great wisdom and sensitivity is needed to facilitate such a significant dialogue; however the benefits are greater openness, authenticity, healing and unity amongst the church and wider local community.

# A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle

Next one cannot discuss the forming of intercultural multi-ethnic church communities in the UK without referencing and offering a critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP). This principle was first enunciated in the 1930s by Donald McGavran, a third-generation missionary to India, and further developed by the Church Growth Movement and missiologists such as Peter Wagner.[13] The principle states that "people like to become Christians without crossing racial/linguistic/class/cultural barriers."[14] McGavran made these observations in India, stating the gospel spread fastest across whole people groups when they were evangelized by those from that same community. The HUP purports that people prefer to join churches where its members look, talk and do things like them; and even argues that the numerical decline of Jewish people in the early church was largely due to the admission of Gentiles and the creation of an "unnecessary" racial barrier for Jews to cross.[15]

The HUP has certainly caused controversy from the beginning, but has been proclaimed with good missional intentions and the goal of church growth in mind. Mission organisations such as WEC International and New Tribes Mission have used the principle in reaching out to specific people groups. It seems in cultures that are largely homogeneous and that have had little Christian influence, the tenets of the HUP are more applicable. Indeed it is important that the Christian gospel finds relevance and enculturation in every culture and ethnic group and is not just imposed as a "foreign" import. However note should be made that in every culture and sub-culture, the Christian faith will always be fraught with dangers of syncretism, nominalism and pluralism.

The HUP has also received fairly strong support in the important Anglican book *Mission-shaped church*, which looks at church planting and "Fresh Expressions" of church. This book sees "culture" not just in terms of ethnicity but also as subcultures, such as occupation,

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[13] See Donald A.McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth,* revised and edited by C. Peter Wagner (third edition)

[14] Williams, Rowan (foreword), *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a changing context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004) p.108

[15] McGavran, p.170

common hobbies and interests, and generational commonality. It proposes more network-focused churches, where increasingly in the UK today people's lives are better described by the networks they relate to, rather than just the place where they live. It sees these networks as missional opportunities to connect church and gospel with culture and lifestyles, rather than assuming connection will be always most fruitful through locality and parish.

*Mission-shaped church* upholds the HUP in three ways.[16] Firstly it affirms that God is the creator of specific and diverse cultures, and these are part of his handiwork. Secondly, Jesus himself confined himself to a specific culture and time into which he was born; and therefore the incarnation principle points to church-planting that is culture-specific for those being reached. However it seems a similar argument could also be made for the traditional parish church that is location specific. Thirdly, sociological study shows that when two cultures are together in a social context, a healthy heterogeneous mixture does not result – rather one tends to dominate the other. A response to this would be, firstly God does indeed affirm culture but He also judges it, and all aspects of culture are to submit to His Lordship. Secondly, Jesus was born into a specific culture and at a specific time in history for simple practical reasons. He could not be born into every culture and into every generation. Part of Jesus' "kenosis"[17] was limiting himself to living in first century Palestine, but clearly his missional focus was not just that, for he came to be the eternal Saviour of the world (John 3:16). Thirdly to derive principles of ecclesiology from sociological observation is a dangerous move, for the church is called to stand as an alternative community to society and be transformative, rather than be ruled or limited by it.

Very importantly *Mission-shaped church* has recognised that UK society today has moved a long way from being a homogeneous entity, but now contains a plethora of diverse cultures and sub-cultures; and for the church to remain culturally relevant to these groups, it needs to change its shape and form where appropriate. As it says "the heartbeat of these expressions of church is a passion to engage with a specific social or cultural context across a wide area".[18]

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[16] Williams, p.108

[17] Greek word for "self-emptying" – see Philippians 2.7 relating to Jesus' self-emptying of his will and submission to the divine will

[18] Williams, p.65

However where *Mission-shaped church* seems to fail is that it errs too much on the side of making the gospel convenient and accessible, and emphasizes church growth mainly in terms of numbers. In doing so, it seems too easily to sell out and side-line the gospel principles of crossing social barriers and promoting meaningful unity, which comes at a cost. In a critique of "Fresh Expressions", Andrew Davison and Alison Milbank identify it as a model that builds up "the dividing wall" between people rather than breaking it down.[19] Furthermore, the promotion of church networks due to commonality of outlook tends to diminish the importance of the geographical parish and local community, which has been a long-held and esteemed functional tenet of the Church of England. Certainly, *Mission-shaped church* is correct to propose other ways to connect the church with contemporary British culture, which could be more fruitful than simply through locality and parish.[20]

Nevertheless, "Fresh Expressions" is a move towards homogeneity as church communities; and it tends to promote the notion that the church can be heterogeneous in theory but not in actuality. This sentiment is borne out by Sally Gaze in her book *Mission-shaped and Rural*, where it seems that heterogeneity is impractical, extremely difficult and naively optimistic.[21]

The HUP, of which "Fresh Expressions" is a proponent, seems to elevate the importance of allowing people to stay in their "comfort zone" and thereby jettison the expectation that Christian converts and disciples will have to meet and mix with people who are very different to themselves. In contrast, the early church from its inception took a stand against the segregation and stratification that was so prevalent in the first century world. It sought to break down divisions of economic status, gender, age, race and education (Galatians 3:26-27; Colossians 3:10-11). Admittedly, the early church did not always live up to this ideal, but it nevertheless did generally try to strive for the gospel principles of transcending social barriers. Indeed if one were to apply Gaze's attitude to achieving heterogeneity as being impractical and difficult, one might also wonder why the church should be involved in seeking to bring justice and alleviate suffering, for these are not easy to do either.

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[19] Davison, Andrew and Milbank, Alison, *For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions* (London: SCM Press, 2010) p.65

[20] Williams, p.63

[21] Gaze in Davison and Millbank, p.71

Another critique of the HUP is that it sees people mainly living in discrete cultures and sub-cultures and therefore implies that specific church growth strategies can and should therefore be devised for each homogeneous unit in a manner appropriate to that group. The HUP assumes a rather simplistic and static sociological view of human community, based on structural-functionalism. In reality an individual or people group's social identity is dynamic and fluid and constantly changing. Such social change can be brought about by migration, occupation, and things such as change in marital status or family dynamics. Two major contemporary factors that have reduced the helpfulness of the HUP model are increased urbanization and globalization, both of which have had a significant impact on UK society in recent years. Concerning urbanization, more people than ever before are living in cities, creating an amalgamation of people groups, with a complexity and multiplicity of subcultures. Also concerning globalization, there have been vast improvements in worldwide travel and communication networks, creating an extensive multilateral interaction of ethnicities and people groups. Today, certainly in the UK, very few cultures or subcultures exist in isolation.

In summary, it seems that the HUP is a well-intentioned missional concept, but is becoming increasingly less pertinent to UK society. *The Pasadena Statement*, which was a colloquium on the Homogeneous Unit Principle held through the Lausanne Movement, concludes that the church "is called to anticipate on earth the life of heaven, and thus to develop both cultural richness and heterogeneous fellowship. In particular, we should seek to express and experience these things at the Lord's Supper, which God intends to be a foretaste of the messianic banquet in his kingdom."[22]

Certainly the formation of intercultural multi-ethnic church communities stands in contrast to the basic ideologies of the HUP and its strong endorsement of homogeneity. Nevertheless, this is not to say that both cannot co-exist together, so that for example within a multi-ethnic church there can also be opportunities for people to meet in language groups or interest groups. Also, as already stated, multi-ethnic churches are just one ecclesiological model

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[22] Stott, John, ed., *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement 1974-1989* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996) pp.67-8

which can work alongside more homogeneous models.  Indeed one must balance the realism that some of our strongest social bonds will be with people with whom we share common interest or culture with the gospel mandate of crossing social divisions; nevertheless it seems it should be the latter which is the Church's priority and emphasis.

# Biblical Theological Reflections for Intercultural Multi-ethnic Church Communities

Understandably most of the theological underpinning for multi-ethnic churches lies in the New Testament, nevertheless even within the Old Testament are a number of relevant theological reflections also.

## a)Old Testament

## Genesis

At the beginning of the creation story in Genesis, there is no distinctive or special ethnic group held in higher esteem. Rather when the first human is introduced into the story he is simply called "*adam*", which means "humankind".[23] Adam and Eve are representative of humanity as a whole and are the father and mother of all peoples. Furthermore the dignity of human beings is based on the fact that we have been created in the likeness of God, and this dignity has nothing to do with one's ethnic or cultural background. Although in common parlance, one speaks of humanity being made up of different races, it seems more theologically appropriate to speak of one human race with a common origin, made up of different ethnicities. For the division of humanity into different people groups and ethnicities is not even mentioned until Genesis 10; Adam and Eve, as well as Noah are non-ethnic and non-national, and therefore represent all people, not just some people. In Genesis 10, frequently called the "Table of Nations", there is an account of how the peoples of the world descended from the three sons of Noah spread out over the world. Then in Genesis 11, the Tower of Babel explains further how and why people spread out and filled the earth with different languages; it comes about as a judgment from God against humanity's pride and disobedience.  As Waltke says taken together these two chapters in Genesis 10 and 11 hold in tension two opposing aspects: "the unity of the tribes and nations as one blood under God's blessing and their diversity into many languages under God's wrath".[24]

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[23] Hays, p.47

[24] Waltke in Hays, p.60

God's call of Abraham in Genesis 12 is in direct response to the disastrous human situation described in Genesis 3-11, and out of a heartfelt redemptive concern for those nations described in Genesis 10 and 11. As Hays insightfully points out Genesis 10 describes the division of the world according to family/tribe/clan (*mispahah*), language (*lason*), land/country/territory (*eres*) and nation (*goy*) (Gen 10:5, 20, 31). [25] The call of Abraham picks up of three of these terms: "Go from your country" (*eres*); " I will make you a great nation" (*goy* ); and "in you all the families (*mispahah*) will be blessed v.3".  The term "families" (*mispahah*) in 12:3 provides a close connection back to Gen.10 where the term occurs several times. God's promise to Abraham is the start of an ethnically linked redemptive plan that is ultimately fulfilled in Christ himself. As Brueggemann writes "the call to Sarah and Abraham has to do not simply with the forming of Israel but with the re-forming of creation, the transforming of the nations". [26]

## Israel

Consequently it seems essential that the election, formation and mission of the people of Israel in the Old Testament are seen with the above theological statement by Brueggemann overshadowing it.  Firstly, it seems the forming of Israel as a people was one primarily based on theological grounds and not merely ethnic grounds. The key unifying and identifying feature of this people was their covenant relationship with Yahweh, which started in the book of Exodus and continued after that. In relation to this the Old Testament has a number of examples of how ethnic Israelites could and were cut off from the covenant, and how a true Israelite was one who remained faithful to the covenant. Furthermore, we also read stories of those ethnically outside the covenant community being incorporated into it. Good examples of this are the four women listed in Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1, namely Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba; and all of these women had non-Israelite origins or connections.  Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites, and Ruth a Moabitess. The ethnicity of Bathsheba is unknown but she was married to Uriah the Hittite, and therefore had been united to a Gentile; a fact which the gospel writer Matthew underlines (Matt.1:6).

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[25] Hays, p.61
[26] Brueggemann in Hays, p.61

Another ethnically interesting observation concerning the Israelite community can be seen in Exodus, right at the beginning of their formation following their salvific deliverance from Egypt. In Exodus 12:37-38, it says "the Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. Many other people went up with them…..". Another translation for "many other people" is "mixed crowd"[27]; and the emphasis of the Hebrew word used here (*ereb*) is that these people were non-Israelites. Consequently the significant conclusion to be made is that even earliest Israel was not a mono-ethnic people group but that many non-Israelites were integrated into this community of faith right at its inception.

Also with regards to an Old Testament perspective on ethnicity, one must examine the covenantal mandate of the Israelites with regards to their relationship with aliens and strangers among them, namely those ethnically different from them. For the Israelites, the alien/stranger was a neighbour (Leviticus 19:18; 19:33-34), whom they must love because Yahweh loves them (Deuteronomy 10:19). They were also to show understanding of the situation of an alien/stranger as they themselves were aliens/strangers in Egypt (Exodus 23:9; 22:21).Furthermore the alien/stranger was welcome to take part in the three main festivals in Israel, namely Passover (Exodus 12:19, 48-49; Numbers 9:14), Pentecost (Deut.16:11) and Tabernacles (Deut.16:14); and the covenant that Yahweh made with the Israelites was most definitely open to the alien/stranger (Deut.29:9-11).

Finally to conclude our Old Testament look at different ethnic groups other than Israel, one can also consistently see an eschatological hope that the nations will one day join Israel in praising and worshipping Yahweh. This includes the Psalms (eg. Psalms 86:9-10; 117:1-2) with Psalm 67 being one of the best examples. This psalm envisions the whole earth and all its peoples gladly affirming God's sovereignty; and helps to combat Israelite tendencies to drift into narrow ethnic exclusiveness. Furthermore the prophetic books of Isaiah (14:1; 66:18-20) and Ezekiel (38:14-16; 39:7-8) picture the rebuilding of a new temple and new Jerusalem where strangers and the foreigners worship alongside the Israelites, and have a personal knowledge of Yahweh.

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[27] New Revised Standard Version

**b) New Testament**

**Jesus and Samaritans**

In New Testament times, there was such a great division between Samaritans and Jews, so much so that they would not even drink from the same cup of water and Samaritans were publicly cursed in the Jewish synagogues. Ecclesiasticus 50:25-26[28] states "there are two nations that my soul detests, the third is not a nation at all: the inhabitants of Mount Seir, and the Philistines, and the stupid people living at Shechem (the Samaritans)". Jeremias notes that with regard to social contact that Samaritans were at the very bottom of the Jewish scale.[29] Some biblical evidence upholding this comes from the Gospel of John; in 4:9, there is the parenthesis "for Jews do not associate with Samaritan". Also in 8:48, the Jewish leaders in expressing their feelings of insult towards Jesus say "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?"; and then in 9:54 Jesus' disciples James and John when in conflict with some Samaritans say "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?"

Although Jesus' primary missional focus during his life was the Jewish people, he nevertheless gave his fellow disciples and future followers examples to emulate in terms of crossing ethnic barriers. One observes that Jesus' ministry on the north side of Lake Galilee was amongst Gentiles, such as the healing of Legion (Mark 5:1-17, & parr.) and the feeding of the 4000 (Mark 7:31-8:10). These are examples of Jesus doing for the Gentiles what he had done for the Jews. He also engaged with Romans (Matt.8:5-13) and a Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:25-30). However it was mainly through his encounter with Samaritans that he challenges ethnocentrism and prejudice. In John 4, Jesus boldly encounters a Samaritan woman and crosses the cultural barriers of ethnicity, gender and immorality; and in Luke 17:17, it the Samaritan who is healed of leprosy whom Jesus praises for his gratitude in comparison to those who did not show it. However the Samaritans find their best known hero in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Here the Samaritan is the

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[28] In the Apocrypha – some writings from Old Testament and Inter-testamental times that were accepted into the Roman Catholic Bible in 1546

[29] Jeremias in Hays, p.166

compassionate hero, who takes risks and make sacrifices in showing love to his ethnically different fellow human being, and who becomes the ultimate model for the Jewish expert in the law to follow when it comes to "loving one's neighbour".

## **Matthew's Gospel**

Another important passage concerning intercultural relationships is Matthew 25:31-46, often known as the parable of "the sheep and the goats". Here the nations are to be gathered before Jesus and they will be judged according to certain criteria. The people commended are those who fed the hungry, clothed the naked and cared for the sick and in prison. They also gave hospitality to the stranger. Here the Greek word for "stranger" is *xenos*, from which we derive the word "xenophobic"[30]; and *xenos* could just as easily be translated "foreigner", which undoubtedly gives more of an intercultural challenge to welcome and hospitality as a Christian. Also in the context of this parable, it seems that Jesus' concern here is for the least, the last and the vulnerable of society; and welcome to the foreigner would appear to fit this category.

With regards to the building up of a multi-ethnic church, special mention should be made of Jesus' mandate in Matthew 28, commonly known as the "The Great Commission". Here Jesus commands his twelve Jewish disciples, that because of his universal Lordship, they are go into all the world and make disciples of all nations (Matt.28:18-20). The Greek for "all nations" is *panta ethne*, which literally means all people groups or ethnicities. In these verses, comes a command and a challenge from Jesus, that his church community should have a multi-ethnic missional focus. Here Jesus radically and rather provocatively states his church will very much have Gentile (multi-ethnic) inclusion at the heart of it, and it will be quite different to the Old Testament community of faith, which was largely based around Jewish ethnicity. It was this Gentile inclusiveness, for which the Paul was called to be an apostle and would form the background tension to a number of New Testament letters.

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[30] Definition "deep-rooted, irrational hatred towards foreigners" (Oxford English Dictionary)

## The Early Church in Acts

As we move further into the New Testament and the life of the early church, there are a number of relevant comments that can be made relating to the multi-ethnic church that Jesus envisaged. Firstly in Acts 2 and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, it says in v5 that there were Jews "from every nation under heaven", and Luke emphasizes this by listing the numerous nations that were represented (vv.9-11). It seems that although these people were Jews, they also were representatives of their homelands, including the Gentiles there.

Many scholars link Pentecost in Acts 2 back to Genesis 11, and some kind of reversal of what happened at the Tower of Babel, for at Pentecost there was unity and understanding as other tongues were spoken and not the confusion and discord of Babel. Also at another level, people from all over the Roman Empire were in Jerusalem hearing the good news in their own language, and many of whom would have returned to their native lands after the festival.

Moving on further in the book of Acts, in chapter 8 Philip meets an Ethiopian eunuch, and one sees a Greek-speaking Jew leading a black African to Christ in one of the first cross-cultural evangelistic encounters. Then in Acts 10, we have already had discussion of how a special vision was needed for Peter, a founding apostle of the church, to receive Gentiles into the church. Interestingly one can also see that Paul had to challenge Peter again on this issue in Galatians 2, for Peter had slipped back into dissociating himself from Gentiles because of some pressure from Jewish believers. This highlights an important fact, namely that the commitment of the church to multi-ethnicity will be not be an easy process and will include disagreements, opposition and disinterest.

With regards to biblical foundations of multi-ethnic church, the early church in Antioch is one that is often overlooked.  In Acts 11:19 following, it says that as a result of the persecution following Stephen's death, some Christian believers went from Jerusalem as far as Phoenicia (modern day Lebanon), Cyprus and Antioch (modern day Turkey), but telling the Christian message only to Jews. It then goes on to say that some men from Cyprus and Cyrene (a city in modern day Libya) intentionally went to Antioch telling the message to Greeks also. Mark DeYmaz believes this to be the most pivotal movement in the entire New

Testament church[31], because here were evangelists and church planters of diverse cultural backgrounds who intentionally chose not to return to their homeland nor proclaim the Christian message just to the Jews. They were prepared to go beyond their comfort zone in order to start a multi-ethnic church community. Indeed it seems highly significant that it was at Antioch that the disciples were first called "Christians" (Acts11:26), which may be because here is the first evidence of the early church worshipping as a community across ethnic and cultural divisions. It also seems that the term "Christians" was endorsed by the Roman authorities for followers of Jesus, because they did not fit neatly into the distinct ethnic categories that the Roman Empire set such great weight upon. The multi-ethnic nature of the early church created a terminology challenge.

Another pertinent fact about the church in Antioch is the diversity of its leadership team (Acts 13:1) – Simeon was from sub-Saharan West Africa, Lucius from North Africa, Manaen from Palestine, Barnabas from Cyprus and Saul from Tarsus in Asia minor. It seemed to Luke, the probable author of the book of Acts, that it was important to list these people not only by their gifting and role such as prophets and teachers, but also by their ethnicity. This is a significant issue, that will be discussed more later when we consider leadership in multi-ethnic churches today. Furthermore it is not coincidental that it is this ethnically diverse church that is the first to sacrificially set apart and release two of its best leaders, namely Barnabas and Saul, so that the Christian message could continue to spread to people of other ethnic groups (Acts 13:3); and even today this story is used as a model for releasing and sending out Christians involved in cross-cultural mission work.

Moving on, the Council at Jerusalem in Acts 15 also has relevance to multi-ethnic churches. Here the Jewish Council led by James met to decide how to act in response to the entry of Gentiles into the early church. Firstly they listened to Peter, Barnabas and Paul as to what God was doing amongst the Gentiles, and then James issues a judgment that they "should not make it difficult for the Gentiles turning to God". This shows us that when we have to negotiate different ethnic groups joining the church that dialogue and conversation are essential, and that any decisions made should facilitate and not hinder their journey of faith. Moving on to Acts 17, Paul in Athens gives us a good example of making the gospel relevant and comprehensible to different cultural groups. Paul quotes Epicurean and Stoic

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[31] Mark DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of A Diverse Congregation (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007)* pp.19-24

philosophers, whom the Athenians would have been familiar with, and also makes several cultural connections points as he shares the gospel with them. This incident is a good example of the outworking of Paul's statement to the Corinthian church, where he tells them "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings." (1 Corinthians 9:22-23) This is a reminder that in a multi-ethnic context, flexibility and adaptability are needed on behalf of leaders and preachers to make the gospel connect with peoples' lives; and this will involve teachability, sacrifice, humility and commitment.

A further thing to note is that the revolutionary feature of the *ekklesia*[32] of Christians in the 1st century C.E, was its contrast in composition to the *ekklesia* of the city itself. The former included ethnic minorities, women, slaves and even children; whereas the latter was a gathered assembly in ancient Greek society only open to men. Certainly this would have been a powerful witness to the inclusivity of the Christian faith. .  Similarly today local community demographics ought to be as proportionately representative as possible in our local church congregations. A great test for any church is whether the membership reflects the diversity of the community they are living witnesses to?

To conclude this section on biblical theological reflections on developing intercultural multi-ethnic church communities, there are three further significant passages to look at.

## **John 17**

Firstly, the prayer of Jesus in John 17, which is just before his arrest and crucifixion. This marks the handing over of spiritual responsibility to those initial disciples and the church which follows of continuing the work that Jesus had begun. In the third section of this prayer (John 17:20-26), Jesus prays for all future followers who would take on board his message and mission, and three times within three verses he prays that they may be one. Such biblical repetition stresses its importance and significance, and the last time Jesus prays that his followers would "be brought to complete unity". The Greek word used here *teteleiomenoi* is derived from *teleo* and conveys the idea of perfection, maturity and completion; and so it seems that unity in Christ is one of the ultimate aims and fulfilments of the Christian faith. Jesus goes on to pray that the purpose of this unity is that the world may know God's love

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[32] Greek word for church originating from a word for a Greek secular assembly

and believe in Jesus. Here unity in the church is mandated by Jesus for the sake of the Christian message; and in twenty-first century Britain it is the unity of diverse believers (ethnically and otherwise) that will proclaim the Christian message more powerfully than most other things.

## **Ephesians**

Secondly a look at the whole issue of Gentile inclusion into the community of faith is vital especially as it relates to the apostle Paul's ministry. Paul frequently speaks of his call to be an apostle to the Gentiles (eg. Ephesians 3:1; Romans 1:5), and their incorporation into what was initially a Jewish dominated church was a driving motivational force in his ministry. This is evidenced in a number of New Testament books such as Romans (1:16), Galatians (3:26-29) and Colossians (3:9-11). The book of Romans is a manifesto of Paul's understanding of the gospel – to bring all the nations of the world under the rule of God's chosen king, Jesus; and for Paul the church would be homogeneous in terms of its loyalty to Him but radically diverse in terms of its cultural, social, economic and ethnic make-up.

However it is particularly the book of Ephesians, which is worth examining in more detail with regards to multi-ethnicity. The church in Ephesus was made up of both Jewish and Gentile converts, and was birthed on Paul's third missionary journey when after two years of ministry "all the Jews and Greeks……heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:10), and we learn that amongst both Jews and Greeks, the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honour (Acts 19:17). From its inception, the Ephesian church was multi-ethnic in nature and in his letter Paul argues passionately for it to be a community of inclusion. Paul in Ephesians 2:11ff. wants the Gentile Christians to no longer think of themselves as excluded from the covenant community, but rather through Christ they have been reconciled not only to God but also to their new Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ. In this new multi-ethnic church, Jesus is the chief cornerstone, in whom Jew and Gentile "are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). The apostle Paul wants to see the local church practically living out and fulfilling the unity that Jesus prayed for in John 17; and for Paul this is the mystery of the gospel that has been made known to him by revelation (Eph.3:3), namely "that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Eph.3:6). Furthermore despite Paul being in chains for proclaiming this mystery of the gospel (Eph.6:

19-20), he asks for prayer that he will continue to fearlessly make this known. For Paul, a central theme of his ministry was Gentile inclusion and living out being a multi-ethnic church in which believers from diverse backgrounds find common ground at the Cross and in Christ. Consequently Paul prays that "all the saints" together in Ephesus would grasp "how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" for them (Eph. 3:18), and proclaims that when the church lives out ethnic unity the wisdom of God is revealed both to human society and to heavenly powers also (Eph. 3:10).

The missiologist Andrew Walls speaks of an "Ephesian moment" in his book "The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in Transmission and Appropriation of Faith".[33] The Ephesian Moment was a communion between different cultures where their relationship through Christ was made stronger.  At the "meal table" where Christ was shared, Jew and Gentile were reconciled to God and one another, for Jesus "made the two one and destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility… His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the Cross" (Ephesians 2:14-16). Reflecting on Wall's writings, Tim Chester writes "the very height of Christ's full stature is reached only by the coming together of the different cultural entities into the body of Christ. Only 'together,' not on our own, can we reach his full stature." The biblical reference here is Ephesians 4:13, and links mainly to the different types of leaders God has given the church for its maturity. Nevertheless, in the context of the letter, this maturity of faith and fullness of Christ also comes through learning to live in unity and fellowship with cultural "others".

The challenge for the church in Britain today, of which the Church of England is a significant part, is whether there are enough leaders like the apostle Paul committed to make known to British society the mystery of the gospel – declaring and striving that in Christ people of diverse ethnicities and other differing characteristics can find unity and meaningful community together. Not only that but the British church also needs more leaders who recognize that intercultural relationships and "Ephesian moments" are necessary for the maturing of Christian faith and growth in discipleship.

In many ways the Church of England occupies a similar position to the Jewish people in New Testament times. The Jewish people were the hosts and the channel for Yahwistic faith in the Old Testament, but through the death and resurrection of Christ, a new era had dawned. The

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[33] https://michelledmendoza.wordpress.com/an-ephesian-moment/

Church of England for several hundred years has been the national and state church, and with its parish churches and diocesan cathedrals it has been an institution that has been integral to English culture. Furthermore this culture has been mainly mono-ethnic for most of its time, but in recent years there has come diverse ethnic challenges; and just like the early church, the Anglican Church today needs to embrace the "Ephesian moment" presented to it. As part of this embrace it is important that members of the Anglican Church in the UK and especially its leaders get ecclesiological clarity about their role as a national church. Being a national church, it can be easy to think when people gather together in worship at their parish, that the dominant ethnic group is the host of the worship service and "ethnic outsiders" are the guests invited to join in. More theologically correct is that Christ is the Host and the One who invites us all to His Table (Eucharist) and to worship together in His name; and we are all guests of equal standing invited to feast and celebrate together.

## Revelation

Thirdly in the book of Revelation, the apostle John is given a vision as to the future of the church and its final destiny in heaven; and that vision is very clearly of a multicultural and multi-ethnic church (Revelation 5:9-10 and 7:9-10). These passages tell us that through Christ's sacrifice for us, God has drawn to Himself a great multitude from every tribe (*phyle*) and language (*glossa*) and people (*laos*) and nation (*ethne*). It seems that these verses also connect back to a Messianic prophecy in Daniel 7:13-14, where "the son of man" is led into the presence of the "Ancient of Days" and "given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." This text also clearly had an influence on Jesus' self-understanding and how the gospel writers portrayed his life and ministry.

Furthermore in Revelation chapters 21 and 22, one sees the vision of the New Jerusalem, where John states that God will be the light for the city and in 21:24-26, "the nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it." Linked to this, one sees in 22:2 that "the leaves from the tree of life provide healing for the nations. No longer will there be any curse."

With regards to multi-ethnicity, the book of Revelation brings up many interest points for theological reflection. All that is good and wholesome from every culture and people group in the world will be brought and treasured in the New Jerusalem. The book speaks of the consummation of God's plan for human history, which includes a reversal of the judgmental aspects of Genesis for those who trust in Christ. The curse of Genesis 3 and 11 is removed (22:3). Humanity returns to the garden to enjoy fellowship with God (21:1-3); and the scattered peoples of the earth (from every tribe, language, people and nation), who were once separated from God and each other, are now brought together as the bride of Christ under Christ's Lordship. It is significant that the heavenly church is united but observed to be ethnically distinct. The ethnic and cultural distinctives of humanity are not obliterated in heaven; far from it, rather they are preserved, celebrated and cultural treasures are offered to God in worship. It is interesting that our marital status is probably not preserved in heaven as Jesus told the Sadducees that "when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage" (Mark 12:25); whereas our ethnicity is maintained.

It seems that in relation to ethnicity, there is a theological paradox at work. On the one hand, Christians are to die to ethnocentrism, nationalism, and uncritical loyalty to a nation state, as Backhouse argues for[34]. On the other hand, as Christians we are to affirm and celebrate what is good and wholesome in the cultures and ethnic groups that we are a part of and mix with. For many Christians, the biblical vision of heaven is a prime motivating factor for their faith and ministry. This includes caring for creation, alleviating suffering, seeking justice, and seeking to bring healing amongst other things; and it seems appropriate and not incongruous to add to this, the development and promotion of a unified multi-ethnic church, both globally and locally. In what is colloquially known as the Lord's Prayer, Jesus encouraged Christians to pray to God the Father "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt.5:10-11). This is a prayer that is prayed regularly if not daily by many members of the Church of England as it is part of Daily Prayer[35]. A contemporary challenge for the Church of England that emerges from this is how much is a united multi-ethnic church being sought after as part of pursuing God's kingdom in Britain today?

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[34] Stephen Backhouse, "Patriotism, Nationhood and Neighbourhood" 2012
http://www.academia.edu/1568825/Patriotism_Nationhood_and_Neighbourhood
[35] https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/daily2.aspx

## <u>Growing and Developing Intercultural Multi-ethnic Church Communities</u>

In his seminal book "*Transforming Mission*"[36], Bosch highlights the necessity for paradigm shifts in mission. Bosch points out that paradigm shifts have come about at critical points in the church's history. The first occurred when the early Christian church was challenged to move beyond the confines of its relatively small Jewish world into a wider context; and it was into Hellenistic culture that Christianity was first introduced. Bosch says this Hellenization was equivalent to universalisation and gave the church a more spacious frame of reference.[37]

Although writing in 1991, Bosch's words still carry significant weight today  and he goes on to say that each paradigm shift results in the end of one world and the birth of another, resulting in the redefining of much of what people do and think. Furthermore these paradigm shifts create not only dangers but opportunities, and have had a significant bearing on missionary thought and practice, with a number of imaginative responses.

With this in mind, is it not too bold to propose that the Church in Britain today stands in the midst of a paradigm shift? Not only within the context of globalization, many religious faiths and diverse ethnic groups, but also within the context of living in a postmodern, secular and post-Christian society. Therefore, in response to this paradigm shift, new missional and ecclesiological thoughts and practices are called for; and amongst these I suggest are the development of intercultural multi-ethnic church communities.

However there is no blueprint for such intercultural multi-ethnic church communities either within the Anglican Church or other denominations. Each context is unique and there are no special formulae. That said it seems that there are certain factors that will encourage their growth and these are outlined below:

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[36] Bosch, *Transforming Mission : Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis, 1996)
[37] Bosch, p.211

## <u>Some Multi-ethnic Church Models</u>

In his book "Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church"[38], Mark DeYmaz and his co-writers discuss three different models for building a multi-ethnic church from three different contexts: (1) planting a multi-ethnic church; (2) revitalizing a declining church; and (3) transforming a homogeneous church. It seems these models can speak pertinently to Church of England congregations with their wide variety of ecclesiastical contexts.

It is worth stating that although all of the principles below derive from an American context, they contain wisdom and insights that will help most Anglican Churches in the UK that are seeking to develop a multi-ethnic church community. As America has been an immigrant nation from its beginnings, it has had a far more tried and tested period dealing with ethnic diversity, and in particular the concept and practice of multi-ethnic church seems much more developed there. That said it is important to realise that national, regional and local context can be very different when it comes to multi-ethnicity. For example, the legacy of African slavery is of far more significance in America than it is in the UK. Taking all this into account, there are nevertheless helpful insights to be gleaned. Below are summaries of the three models with salient points as well as some personal reflections. The fuller details of the three models have been referenced.

### <u>Principles for Planting a Multi-Ethnic Church[39]</u>

1. For church-planters, the vision of developing a multi-ethnic church will not be shared by most people around them.

2. The development of multi-ethnic church communities is a hard and sacrificial ministry to engage in, with the necessity for risk-taking and stepping out in faith.

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[38] DeYmaz, pp.135-182
[39] DeYmaz, p.147-8

3. Multi-ethnic churches are quite different from other forms of church, and one cannot rely on previously tried and tested wisdom or methods. Perhaps for the Church of England a new pioneering stream ("Fresh Expressions") of developing multi-ethnic churches is needed.

4. Multi-ethnic church planters must value unity with other church leaders. Just as unity and diversity is to be celebrated and valued within a specific multi-ethnic church, so also that unity and diversity needs to extend to fostering good relationships with neighbouring Anglican Churches and with those of other denominations.

5. It is important that ethnicity is not the be all and end all of multi-ethnic churches, but that diversity is also embraced in other ways.

6. In multi-ethnic churches success is not defined by numbers of people attending but by the collective spirit of the congregation .The multi-ethnic church will stand in opposition to many church growth axioms, and there will probably not be many intercultural multi-ethnic megachurches.

7. Multi-ethnic churches perhaps even more than other ecclesiastical forms will thrive or fall on the effectiveness of their leadership. However it is important not to circumvent or undermine criteria for biblical leadership for the sake of political ethnic expediency.

8. Strong exemplary leadership in terms of intercultural relationships sets the tone for the whole church. Humility, respect, teachability and adaptability in leadership count for much more than knowledge and expertise within a multi-ethnic church.

9. Multi-ethnic church communities proclaim a powerful message, which will not only make the rest of the church take notice but will bring respect and appreciation from those outside the church also.

<u>Principles for Revitalizing a Declining Church</u>[40]

1. When revitalizing a declining church, the congregation need inspiration to adapt to the changing demographics and that missional work will be largely done amongst people different from the majority of those attending. This might be a possible scenario in a number of Anglican Churches and here again good leadership is vital in negotiating such a change.

2. There needs to be setting of a new vision, and patience and careful negotiation must be taken to help others capture and buy into it.

3. Creating a culture of openness and honesty is essential for this process as well as an acknowledgement and affirmation of the cost involved for established members of the church.

4. When revitalizing a church, developing intercultural relationships is more challenging as there are already established social networks. Again exemplary relational leadership is important and promoting the notion that we are all in this together, as progress is made into new territory.

5. Casting the multi-ethnic church vision in such churches will undoubtedly bring opposition and fallout; and it is important that the leadership are mentally and spiritually prepared for this, in order to remain committed to the cause.

6. Through patient commitment to a new vision and missional focus, there will be increased ethnic diversity and transformation of the church.


<u>Principles for Transforming a Homogeneous Church</u>[41]

1. In comparison to revitalizing a declining church, transforming a homogeneous church towards multi-ethnicity requires many similar characteristics in its leaders. There is a necessity to cast a new vision, encourage open honest dialogue, expect opposition, be intentional, value unity and take your congregation with you at an appropriate pace.

2. A good first step is information gathering with regards to the changing demographics of the community. A demographic analysis should be essential for any Anglican parish church,

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[40] Rodney Woo in  DeYmaz, p.162-3
[41] Kim Greenwood in DeYmaz, p.178-9

and provides a factual launchpad for a new missional approach to the various people groups represented in the parish.  Linked to this is how a church might advertise or promote itself; a church's publicity through leaflets and websites should give a clear message about embracing multi-ethnicity if that is what it wants to do.

3. The intentional choice of diverse ethnic leadership is important but without compromising on necessary leadership qualities.

4. Transformational leaders must be exemplary in intercultural relationships, respect and competency, for they set the tone for the new order of things.

As outlined in the three models of building a multi-ethnic church, good intentional and visionary leadership seems an essential pre-requisite. With this in mind some reflections on leadership in the Anglican Church are important.

## **Formational and Theological Training for Ordinands and Lay Leadership**

Understandably the Church of England invests much into the training of ordinands and lay leaders, as current and future leaders of the church.[42]  At a recent Anglican retreat[43], I informally asked a number of fellow ordinands from different training colleges as to whether they felt their training equipped them for intercultural/ crosscultural ministry? Without exception they all felt not. Most ordination training colleges today will have courses on Systematic Theology, Church History and Biblical Studies. It seems with our current sociological context that equal emphasis should also be given to subjects such as Cultural Anthropology, and non-Western contextualized theologies. The church is growing fastest in Africa, Asia and South America, and it seems important and appropriate to hear and learn from their theological reflections. Cartledge and Cheetham inform us that theology needs to be reviewed in the light of globalisation, inculturation and non-Western theologies. They go on to say that because theology is "perceived as a human task of reflection on God, creation, and salvation, the wideness of the human testimony and witness is something that must be

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[42] https://www.churchofengland.org/document-library.aspx?tag=ordination%20training (2015)
[43] Deacon's Ordination Retreat for the Diocese of London July 2015

acknowledged", and with "many voices now being heard around the globe, this feature of Christian thinking about God's relationship with the world and its cultures becomes ever more pertinent."[44] Intercultural theology is a fast-growing academic discipline that is attentive to different cultural expressions of Christianity and seeks to facilitate dialogue and interactions between them. Many courses and institutions are developing that have embraced intercultural studies or theology and it is important that ordination training colleges in the UK also do so. For example in terms of different emphases, Western theology tends to focus more on doctrine and orthodoxy, whereas the theology of the global South gives more prominence to social justice and liberation theology; furthermore the latter has a less individualistic but more familial and community view of faith.

Also with the expansion of Islam in the West, the rise of ISIS and the persecution of Christians in many Islamic countries, it seems a compulsory module on Islam and how to engage with Muslims would not go amiss; as well as learning about other relevant faith beliefs. Cheetham points out that "religion is very much part of the cultures in the world, and a study of religions, and the relationships between them, is a necessary ingredient for constructive intercultural theological thinking."[45]. As a starting point a useful document is *Presence and Engagement: Learning Pathways*, which is a manifesto for ideal patterns of inter-faith training within the Church of England.[46]

Again a greater appreciation of and shared learning with the worldwide Anglican Communion is also important. Today this group consists of 38 autonomous national and regional churches plus six extra provincial churches and dioceses, scattered all over the world. All of these churches are in Communion (in a reciprocal relationship) with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is the Communion's spiritual head. Although birthed from the UK and officially led by the Archbishop Canterbury, it is important for the Anglican Communion that the Church of England does not play an overly paternalistic role of a bygone era, but rather continues to encourage and foster a more reciprocal and mutually appreciative approach with its Communion members.

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[44] Cartledge, Mark J., and Cheetham, David, eds., *Intercultural Theology: Approaches and Themes* (London: SCM Press, 2011) p.1
[45] Cartledge and Cheetham, pp.6-7
[46] http://presenceandengagement.org.uk/presence-and-engagement-learning-pathways

Furthermore, given the ethnic diversity of Britain, and the inevitable intercultural challenges for all Anglican ministers and leaders, even in rural areas, it seems it would be good to send all ordinands on an intercultural/crosscultural placement. This could be in the UK or abroad such as in Eastern Europe or a country that is a member of the Anglican Communion. Albeit for a relatively short time, this would help broaden the mind of future Anglican leaders in terms of their cultural awareness, ecclesiology and missional practice. Other opportunities that ordination and lay leadership training can provide is for students from different ethnic groups to share something of their cultural heritage within the college and training communities that they are a part of.  Equally important to all this is the equipping in intercultural matters for all ministers as part of their ongoing training and development.

All of the above practices will seek to remind church leaders that our individual theologies and practices of the Christian faith are partial and have a cultural and social bias; and as such should never claim to be absolutes. As Bosch reminds us good Christian discipleship calls us to commit to our understanding of revelation but also maintain a critical distance to that understanding;[47] and Hiebert encourages the church to function as an "international hermeneutical community."[48] in which Christians from different contexts challenge each other's cultural, social and ideological biases. Today the Church of England as a sign of its unity and diversity seeks to uphold generous orthodoxy in terms of affirming different worshipping traditions such as Anglo-Catholic, Reformed and Charismatic. It seems appropriate that this generous orthodoxy is also extended to the Anglican Communion and the worldwide church, acknowledging as fellow Christians that all are partners and co-workers in the gospel, even though one may disagree passionately about certain things.

Furthermore if as things progress, the Church of England feels multi-ethnic church communities are important to nurture, it would then seem appropriate to consider developing a pioneering ministry training stream focused around this issue, for people called to leadership in such churches.

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[47] Bosch p.86
[48] Hiebert in Bosch p.187

**<u>Church Leadership</u>**

Just as the early church in Antioch sought after ethnic diversity in leadership, so must any church seeking to develop its ethnic diversity generally. An ethnically diverse leadership is a key building block for an ethnically diverse church.   It is also important that the Church of England prioritizes the nurture and development of leaders from ethnic minorities, as a response to the aforementioned report in 2007  *Celebrating Diversity in the Church of England: National Parish Congregation Diversity Monitoring*[49] .

Again in an aforementioned Guardian article on ethnic minority clergy, the Bishop of Chelmsford Stephen Cottrell says "The number is going up slowly but not reflecting the wider community."[50]  He then continues "Quite simply the leadership and ministry of the Church of England no longer looks like or adequately reflects the diversity and creativity of the communities it serves. This should be a huge concern and directly affect our credibility as a national church and our mission."  It seems that a key factor to increasing the number of ethnic minority Christians joining the Anglican Church would be to increase both clergy and lay leadership in this group.

In relation to this, it is a good to see a timely new booklet on ethnic minority vocations called *Everyday People, God's Gift to the Church of England*.  In the foreword the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu says,

> "We need people who are equipped for cross cultural evangelism and ministry in our increasingly diverse society. This will involve being intentional about encouraging more people from minority ethnic backgrounds to explore their vocation –hence this booklet. Furthermore, as a Church we need to be geared up to identify and develop the leadership potential of minority ethnic clergy. We need minority ethnic clergy as deacons, priests, and bishops. We need ethnic diversity at all levels in the church's ministry. …… The ethnic diversity of the Church and its ministry is a gospel imperative." [51]

In light of all the above, it appears a greater intentionality is needed to identify and train more ethnic minority leaders within the Church of England, both clergy and lay. Possible inhibiting factors to address in trying to do this are reticence in coming forward, a sense of a glass

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[49] https://www.churchofengland.org/media/1032500/celebratingdiversitygsmisc938.pdf
[50] http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/13/church-of-england-failing-to-promote-minority-ethnic-clergy-says-bishop
[51]http://static1.squarespace.com/static/533937b9e4b0baa8f8428f34/t/54f05fcde4b049918b44b475/1425039324144/Everyday+People+%28web%29.pdf

ceiling in leadership, training being too academic, English not being a first language, a sense of inferiority and a sense of cultural disconnection with the Church of England. Therefore more research like that of curate Oliver Robinson is needed. He is soon to publish a paper on "How might Mimetic Theory address the disparity between the ethnic diversity of congregations and the ethnic diversity of vocations to ordained ministry in the Willesden Area of the Church of England?" It is also encouraging to know about organisations such as CMEAC (The Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns) and AMEN CofE (Anglican Ethnic Minority Network).

However with regards to building multi-ethnic church communities, ethnic minority leaders may not necessarily be the right people for this. Some ethnic minority leaders will prefer to minister to their own people group and some might prefer to be involved in a mainstream Anglican Church. Nevertheless for ethnic minority Christians called to leadership, intercultural multi-ethnic church communities may well provide more amenable environments for their leadership gifts to flourish.

Also as previously highlighted, leadership of intercultural multi-ethnic churches requires a specific vison and skill mix. With this regard an often untapped resource pool are missionaries who have worked overseas or in other intercultural settings. Such people often find it difficult returning to the UK, as they suffer reverse culture shock and all kinds of loss of role and significance. Yet they have a lot to offer the UK church in terms of intercultural matters; and it seems that intercultural multi-ethnic churches are good places for returning missionaries to continue in intercultural ministry. These church communities will also benefit from the experience and maturity of such people, who have had to work through many intercultural dilemmas and challenges.

Here again it seems that a greater intentionality is needed by the Church of England, in harnessing the wisdom and experience of Christians associated with Anglican mission societies such as Church Mission Society, Crosslinks and A Rocha; as well as other mission workers it has contact with. Similarly the experience and enthusiasm of short term mission workers can also be utilized, as well as that of anybody with intercultural experience such as diplomats, language teachers, and those working in international settings. Furthermore intercultural multi-ethnic church communities are also good places to serve for mission workers from overseas who come to the UK. Such workers often come with great enthusiasm

and passion but fight it hard to fit into the mainstream UK churches. Multi-ethnic churches can give them a smaller cultural bridge to cross, whilst utilizing their ministerial gifts.

Within the Church of England, a minister has a key role in the way a church develops and as John Root reminds us a church can only be multi-ethnic if the minister is consciously committed to it being that way[52]. With this in mind, it maybe that the Church of England could more intentionally harness such leadership potential as detailed above for the many opportunities for multi-ethnic ministry in the UK today. Added advantages of recruiting people with a proven track-record in intercultural experience are both financial and time-saving in terms of training, as well as maximizing leadership potential. Furthermore, it may be appropriate for the Church of England to start selecting a minimum quota of ordinands who feel that they have such a calling to multi-ethnic ministry and invest fittingly in them. Also although the majority of ordinands may not specifically be called to lead multi-ethnic churches, certainly all current and future leaders of the Church of England will require greater equipping for intercultural ministry; and this should be factored in to ongoing training within ordination colleges and dioceses.

Lastly, as diversity is a hallmark of multi-ethnic churches, this diversity could also be reflected in approaches to leadership. Multi-ethnic churches might best be led by a more collaborative power-sharing team structure as in Acts 13, rather than a single-person authoritative approach.

### **Community and Worship Life of Multi-ethnic Churches**

Whilst multi-ethnic churches are in some way like any other church, there are some things that are more pertinent and need greater emphasis. Firstly, good sincere welcome, early integration and belonging are so important in multi-ethnic churches (Matthew 25 and the welcoming of the stranger). For many non-indigenous people, they can lack a sense of belonging or welcome, so a church community that readily displays this will be a powerful attraction. Good "customer service" from initial points of contact and beyond cannot be

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[52] Root, p.25

overstated. Also eating together, hospitality and invitation into the homes of members of the church send out a powerful message about acceptance and welcome (Acts 2:46-47). The "table fellowship" of Jesus and the people with whom he shared meals and the homes he entered, were defining marks of his ministry. Many of Jesus' contemporaries were very selective about what they ate and with whom they ate; and it is Luke's Gospel in particular that emphasizes the significance of meals in Jesus' ministry. They show his attitude to sinners and outsiders, his treatment of women and his concern for the poor. Furthermore in his teaching, Jesus also emphasized the importance of eating with those who are different to us (Luke 14:12-14; Matt.25:31-46). In some ways, one of the marks of a successful multi-ethnic church could be defined by the amount of "table fellowship" that goes on. Hospitality, the opening of homes and shared meals are great signs of equality, acceptance and life together. Linked with this, the shared community life of an intercultural multi-ethnic church is its heartbeat; these churches will not thrive on people merely turning up for services with little meaningful interaction outside of this. This is especially important for people from certain religious faiths such as Islam who often become Christians with great cost and sacrifice, leaving home, community and support structures behind.

With multi-ethnic churches, mention has already been made of the importance of ethnic diversity of leadership (Acts 13:1-3), but this ethnic diversity must also be visibly seen whenever the church gathers together. Ethnic diversity should ideally be seen and represented in as many areas as possible of the church's public ministry such as welcome team, childrens' ministry, music and worship, and leading and preaching. Although as stated previously leadership is key to a good multi-ethnic church in terms of vision setting and strategy, nevertheless multi-ethnic churches rely on each member for the corporate enactment of the vision and for a church's success and thriving.

The multi-ethnic focus of the church could also be promoted to onlookers in a number of other ways. Some churches have an array of national flags representing those ethnicities that are part of the church community; also other culturally representative artworks could be displayed. Getting the congregation to listen to prayers in another language and singing songs in another language are meaningful activities; similarly is encouraging the congregation to say the Lord's Prayer in their first language or wear their national dress. Also a frequent proclamation and affirmation in multi-ethnic churches should be that Christianity is a global faith and God is calling people from all nations to worship Him. Linked to this, it would help

to have regular sharing of what is going on in the worldwide church especially in areas which have particular connections with members of the congregation.

In terms of worship music, the encouragement of the use of non-Western musical instruments would be good, where there are appropriately gifted musicians in the congregation. Again it is good to see organisations such as WEC International promoting ethnodoxology through groups such as Resonance[53]. On their website, it explains ethnodoxology as

"the study of how different cultures worship God. Ethnodoxology includes arts (such as dance, drama, video, visuals), how people participate in preaching, the Eucharist, the offering and so on. It goes beyond worship as an event because it studies how worship shapes, or is shaped, by life as lived within a cultural or ethnic group."

Ethnodoxology is more than just ethnomusicology. Again this maybe an area that the Anglican Church could explore further. Different parts of the Church of England attach differing significance to the traditional liturgical forms of worship; and indeed there should be an honouring of this consistent with one's churchmanship, but there should also be openness to new and contextually appropriate forms of doxology.

Another thing that multi-ethnic churches are well placed to do is to host international community events that celebrate and affirm various cultures, and this will benefit both the church itself as well as strengthen its impact and presence in the locality. Multi-ethnic churches could benefit from initiatives such as "Near Neighbours" from the Church Urban Fund, which as it says "bring people together who are near neighbours in communities that are religiously and ethnically diverse, so that they can get to know each other better, build relationships of trust and collaborate together on initiatives that improve the local community they live in". "Near Neighbours" also provide small grants for local community projects.[54]

Key values in the corporate worship life of a multi-ethnic church are flexibility, adaptability and a respect for difference and "the other". There needs to be a constant reminder as DeYmaz suggests that " 'my way' is only 'a way' and not necessarily 'the way' things should be done."[55] Here the Apostle Paul's teaching in Romans is pertinent, as he encouraged Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome to accept each other and value difference (Romans 14:1-

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[53] http://wec-usa.org/serve/short-term/resonance/
[54] https://www.cuf.org.uk/how-we-help/near-neighbours
[55] DeYmaz, p.148

15:13). Linked to this is the understanding that sacrifices have to be made in terms of personal preferences and desires when it comes to corporate worship and community living, for the greater goal of unity and gospel witness.

In terms of meeting places for multi-ethnic communities there are various options available. They could form the main congregation with an existing parish set-up if this is what the vicar and the church membership desired. Alternatively it could exist as an additional congregation hosted within a church. Another choice would be to use a neutral community space as a church plant; this would have the advantage of being a less threatening environment to people of other faiths. A disadvantage would be less of a sense of presence within the community. Also a good option for growing multi-ethnic churches would be to initially start as mid-sized missional communities. These then allow room for growth in incremental steps as well as for creativity, experimentation and support networks.[56]

### Intercultural Competence for the Laity

Another foundation block for building a multi-ethnic church is increasing the intercultural competence of its members. It is important that first and foremost church leadership models this but there also other things at one's disposal. Various courses and self-assessment tools could be used, but also more specific knowledge and teaching can be given focused around the main ethnic groups living in the church's locality. It is also good to use any cultural knowledge sources located within the church itself or in neighbouring churches. Church courses are also available for Christians to gain a better understanding of Islam[57] or South Asian culture[58] for example. Linked to this, the regular teaching and preaching in multi-ethnic churches should steadily and consistently reinforce the biblical vision of multi-ethnicity, but care should also be taken not to overemphasize this.

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[56] See Hopkins, Bob, and Breen, Mike, *Clusters: Creative mid-sized missional communities* (ISBN 978-0-9559363-0-2: 3DM Publications, 2007)
[57] Eg. Friendship First http://friendshipfirst.org/
[58] Eg. Discovering Jesus through Asian Eyes http://www.discovering-jesus.com/

## Pitfalls and Hazards of Intercultural Multi-Ethnic Church Communities

To be intercultural and multi-ethnic does not necessarily mean the promotion of inter-faith worship or the pluralistic acceptance of all faiths being equally valid. Indeed it seems fundamental to the Anglican Church's calling that it must preserve and proclaim the uniqueness of the person and work of Jesus Christ and its relevance for people of all ethnicities. Consequently, an important role of the church is to equip its laity to combat the dangers of syncretism, pluralism and relativism amongst other things. Here the Church of England Report in 2010 entitled *Sharing the Gospel of Salvation* is helpful, as it addresses the uniqueness of Christ in multi-faith Britain.[59]

In a multi-ethnic church, there will be a multitude of cultural nuances to work through, and the potential for offence is far greater. For example conflict resolution is managed differently in different cultures. Open disagreement with someone in a group setting for some is perfectly acceptable; German and Dutch people for instance tend to direct, open and frank. However many non-Western cultures are "shame cultures", where to lose face in public is a disgrace. Therefore caution needs to be taken not to affront people unnecessarily, and this can be difficult when bringing challenge and accountability.

Another possible pitfall for multi-ethnic churches is that due to the range of ethnicities present, no single culture is strongly affirmed and all the cultures present are reduced to a colourless uniformity, not truly upholding their unique diversity. Also in affirming and celebrating the different ethnicities and cultures within a multi-ethnic church it is important not to promote withdrawal and distance from mainstream British society. Multi-ethnic Anglican Churches should encourage the various ethnic groups to commitment and integration into national British life; and just as the prophet Jeremiah told the Jewish exiles in Babylon, all people are to "seek the welfare of the city" where they live, and "pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:7-8).[60]

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[59] Williams, Rowan and Sentamu, John (foreword), *Sharing the Gospel of Salvation: A Report commended by the House of Bishops responding to Mr Paul Eddy's Private Members Motion on the Uniqueness of Christ in Multi-Faith Britain* (London: Archbishops' Council, 2010)

[60] English Standard Version

Nazir-Ali, says that the different ethnic communities do bring their own stories as a contribution to the evolving narrative of British society, but there also needs to be creative adjustment and accommodation to their new situation, rather than an excuse for withdrawal and separation.[61] Also seeking to build a multi-ethnic church brings a challenge as to what is normative. Jenkins when looking at an intercultural church in Florida, USA, critiques it because of its expression of being intercultural but holding onto a white normative view of community.[62] Whilst this ought not to be done in a domineering or paternalistic way, in some ways this is inevitable, whenever there is a main ethnic group represented in the church community. However as previously mentioned, recognitions needs to be made that culture is a fluid entity which is constantly changing, such as with national culture and local church culture. Hence the constant tension even more so nowadays between preserving culture and changing culture, and who decides what stays and what goes? This said, within a church community it is nevertheless important to create an openness to change and transition.

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[61] Nazir-Ali, Michael, p.xi
[62] Jenkins, Jacob J., "A 'Community' of Discipline: The Paradox of Diversity Within an Intercultural Church" http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2013.845793 Nov 2015

**<u>Summary</u>**

As was stated in the introduction, currently the Anglican Church is not representative ethnically of British society neither in its leadership nor in its congregations. In Revelation key characteristics of the church portrayed in heaven are its unity in worship and its diversity in multi-ethnicity. A goal for the Anglican Church, as well as that of other denominations is to be a sign of that heavenly kingdom; and one of these signs would be to develop more intercultural multi-ethnic church communities. Not only does this have a strong biblical basis but also profound contemporary missional and sociological relevance. It seems such multi-ethnic church communities would be a poignant contemporary ecclesiological expression of Christianity. In many ways this is unchartered territory with a number of unknowns, and fraught with various hazards and pitfalls. Nevertheless like the apostle Paul who strove to bring Jew and Gentile together in Christ in a meaningful way, so also the journey to see more multi-ethnic churches seems something worth endeavouring for. What is now required is an intentional commitment at all levels of the Church of England to see more such communities coming into being, with resources and training made available to envision and equip both clergy and laity for this purpose .The result being a greater visible prophetic witness of the Anglican Church's commitment to ethnic diversity, and to the inclusivity of the Christian faith.

Word Count : 14,996

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