



Faith and Society Files: 'New-Humanity' Church

Is the 'New-Humanity' Church the way forward for London Baptist churches, theologically and missionally in the twenty-first century? A dissertation submitted to Cliff College by Peter Leveson.

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London Baptist Churches, Theologically and
Missionally in the Twenty First Century?**

A dissertation submitted to Cliff College for the degree of Master of Arts (Leadership, Renewal and Mission) awarded by the University of Manchester in the Faculty of Humanities

No portion of the work referred to in the dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Abstract

This paper will explore the question of whether Baptist churches in London should seek to follow a model of church based around everyone gathering for worship and teaching in one place and one time weekly (the 'new-humanity' model), or if separate cultural or generational groups should form their own homogenous churches.

It will draw on the work of Bruce Milne who focuses on the phrase the 'new-humanity church' to describe an inclusive approach to church life. It will seek to define what this may mean and how this may work, focusing on the issues of church as a multicultural and multigenerational organism, within the complex situation of London.

The second and third chapters will explore the question of multicultural church, drawing on biblical material, and then considering some of the missiological and sociological implications of this.

The fourth chapter will focus in on the area of generations and explore how the Western church has largely separated into generational groupings, especially in regard to children and young people.

Chapters five and six will explore other models for inclusive church, including whether separate homogenous churches networked together, or one church with multiple congregations have anything to offer in this context. The question of whether a new framework, that of transmodernity and notions of 'third space' have anything to offer with also be looked at.

Finally, it will be argued that in a context such as London a number of approaches may well be needed, but it is crucial that the barriers of society are broken down by the church as the church focuses on mission.

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All Biblical quotations are from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated. Quotations marked 'TNIV' are from the Today's New International Version and those marked 'NLT' are from the New Living Translation.

Chapter 1: The New - Humanity Church and the Multi-everything context of London

What is the New Humanity Church?

The phrase 'new-humanity church' is a description used extensively by Bruce Milne in the text 'Dynamic Diversity'.¹ It is based on the book of Ephesians, particularly Ephesians 2:15 which states that:

His [Christ's] purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace (TNIV).

The context of that verse is the breaking of the barriers between Jew and Gentile by the work of Christ on the cross. Other translations speak of making 'one new man' (NIV), or 'one new people' (NLT). Milne comments that the Apostle Paul is writing here, and that 'in his letter to the Ephesians, he claims that Christians are a new kind of people, forming a new community – a new humanity in Christ'.²

For Milne the new-humanity church reflects this overcoming of the divisions between Jew and Gentile by the surmounting of the divisions within contemporary society.

He comments that:

The diversities that are to be transcended include those of gender, generation, ethnicity, race, colour, family unit, social and economic status, educational opportunity, mental and physical health experience, spiritual history, spiritual gifting and personality type.³

¹ B. Milne *Dynamic Diversity* (Nottingham: IVP, 2006)

² Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p15

³ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p16

Milne's vision is of congregations that 'are an expression of this "new humanity"'.⁴ Such congregations would ideally comprise of people from different ages and cultural backgrounds, in fact people drawn across all the divisions outlined above, meeting together for worship and preaching, as one people in one place and time.⁵

Milne is not alone in this vision for a new-humanity church. Mark Deymaz echoes the call for a church where 'men and women of diverse backgrounds walk together as one in Christ'.⁶ Another commentator suggests that: 'All churches should be multicultural. This is not an optional extra'.⁷

The new-humanity church according to Milne, is both biblically based, 'underwritten by New Testament teaching',⁸ as well as being missionally advantageous in the contemporary Western world, offering 'a unique, biblically mandated means of witnessing to God's purpose in history', showing 'a powerful attractiveness in today's and tomorrow's worlds'.⁹

Defining the terms

If the new-humanity church is about a community that models a 'new inclusive form of society',¹⁰ then it is by definition to be multicultural, multi-coloured, multiethnic,

⁴ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p16

⁵ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p106

⁶ M. Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2007), p10

⁷ Christian Aid & Baptist Union of Great Britain *Many Nations, One Church: Becoming a multicultural church* (Didcot: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2005), p4

⁸ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p17

⁹ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p17

¹⁰ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p54

multigenerational, in fact 'multi-everything'.¹¹ These terms, however, are not value neutral and a survey of the literature on these issues, from both within and outside of the Church, reveals a mixture of uses and definitions.¹² From a Roman Catholic perspective, Peter Fleetwood remarks that 'I have always been troubled by concepts like "multi-cultural" and "multi-faith"'.¹³ For Fleetwood and others,¹⁴ there is a recognition that often the agendas of 'political correctness' and secular pluralism lurk behind many uses of these phrases. Manuel Ortiz describes the dangers and goals of such language in this way:

Multiculturalism can promote a confusing outcome...The end or the goal of multiculturalism should not be increased cultural sensitivity or inclusivism so that no one is locked out of the gate (although that is extremely important). Rather it should be to see the church, by way of multiethnicity, inclusivism and sensitivity bring about biblical reconciliation.¹⁵

Sujit Sivasundaram has sought to define race and ethnicity in the following way: 'race as biological difference and ethnicity as biology plus culture'.¹⁶ In terms of churches, much literature from the United States of America speaks of 'multi-ethnic' (or multiethnic) churches rather than multi-racial or multicultural.¹⁷ One commentator suggests that: 'Even the choice of label "multiethnic" rather than

¹¹ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p72

¹² See for example: Arts Council England *Navigating Difference: Cultural Diversity and Audience Development* (London: Arts Council England, 2006) for a discussion of terms from a secular perspective.

¹³ <http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/exploratory/articles/fleetwood02.pdf>, accessed 20 February 2009

¹⁴ <http://www.urbana.org/articles.cfm?RecordId=55>, accessed 05 March 2009

¹⁵ M.Ortiz *One New People: Models for Developing Multiethnic Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996), p60

¹⁶ <http://www.jubilee-centre.org/document.php?id=284>, accessed 15 January 2009

¹⁷ See for example Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*

“multiracial” or “multicultural” requires the church to enter into a larger social debate about how to talk about diversity’.¹⁸ She goes on to note ‘there is a good deal of ambiguity in how church leaders and members talk about these things’.¹⁹ This is perhaps, why Milne prefers to speak of ‘new-humanity’, drawing on a specific biblical image rather than using terms laden with political agendas.

In order to narrow the focus from the multitude of divisions and diversities suggested by Milne,²⁰ the emphasis here will be on the new-humanity church as a multicultural and multigenerational organism. Multicultural inevitably includes multiracial and multiethnic, but places the emphasis on more than different groups living side by side. It has been expressed thus: ‘A multicultural church is not just an ethnically diverse church. A multicultural church is one where power is shared’.²¹ Multigenerational is in many ways a subset of multicultural as the concept of a separate ‘youth culture’ has become common place both in British society at large and in the Church.²²

The multi-everything context of London

In a presentation to London’s Baptist Churches being taken around the City in 2008-2009, the phrase a ‘multi-everything city’ is used to describe the culture of

¹⁸ K. Garces-Foley *Crossing the Ethnic Divide: The Multiethnic Church on a Mission* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p13

¹⁹ Garces-Foley *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, p13

²⁰ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p16

²¹ Christian Aid & Baptist Union of Great Britain *Many Nations, One Church*, p4

²² See J. Gardner *Mend the Gap: Can the Church Reconnect the Generations?* (Nottingham: IVP, 2008), pp23-65

London.²³ Milne uses a similar phrase when he speaks of the 'global reality of a diversified, multi-cultural, multi-everything world'.²⁴

London is a global city. Spencer comments how the 'London region is, by some distance the most ethnically diverse in Britain'.²⁵ In 2005 it was reported that London could claim to be the most diverse city anywhere, ever. The same article goes on to suggest that: 'Never have so many different kinds of people tried living together in the same place before'.²⁶ Another report suggests that more 'than 30% of all London schoolchildren speak a languages other than English at home', and overall more than 300 languages are spoken in the Capital.²⁷ A further survey for the Greater London Authority reveals that:

estimates for 2006 suggest that almost one third (32 per cent) of Londoners were born outside the UK – around 2.3m Londoners. This rises to 39 per cent in Inner London. Outside London, in the rest of the UK, migrants make up around 7 per cent of the population.²⁸

One visitor from Mexico living in London described their experience in this way:

So, here I am having drinks with people from Malaysia, New Zealand, Venezuela, Japan and Hong Kong to mention a few. Gatherings and parties are always full of different nationalities that there is always something interesting and new to learn while chatting. My colleagues

²³ The 'London Baptist Association: Strategy and Vision Tour' is a series of 10 events happening in different parts of London to publicise and promote the work of the London Baptist Association.

²⁴ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p167.

²⁵ L. Spencer *Building a Multi-Ethnic Church* (London: SPCK, 2007), p54

²⁶ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/jan/21/britishidentity1>, accessed 05 March 2009

²⁷ <http://www.battlebridge.com/mlc.html>, accessed 05 March 2009

²⁸ <http://www.london.gov.uk/gla/publications/factsandfigures/dmag-briefing-2008-05.pdf>, accessed 05 March 2009

are from France, Australia, Sri Lanka, Poland, Pakistan, Romania, Bulgaria.²⁹

Alongside the different nationalities and cultures, London also has a vast array of religious groups and practices.³⁰ Although not specifically referring to London, Milne's observation thoroughly applies, when he suggests 'we inhabit a society today where it is increasingly less possible to escape into ghettos of similarity'.³¹

In such a context the question of how church is organised and functions in terms of bringing people together or reaching them in their own groups becomes critical to the churches health and survival. Is the new-humanity model theologically and missionally preferable? Or in such a mixed city, where one observer suggests 'Londoners don't tolerate our city's diversity so much as ignore it',³² is it better to form churches within specific homogenous groupings?

²⁹ <http://www.okinuk.co.uk/184-Multicultural-London-184.html>, accessed 05 March 2009

³⁰ <http://www.london.gov.uk/gla/publications/factsandfigures/DMAG-Briefing-16-2007.pdf>, accessed 05 March 2009

³¹ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p79

³² <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/jan/21/britishidentity1>, accessed 05 March 2009

Chapter 2: The New-Humanity Church as Multicultural Church: Theological and Biblical Issues

what is being contemplated here is vastly more than a racial reconciliation...the 'newness' is vastly wider and deeper, involving a fundamental reconstitution of human relatedness, and hence inclusive of every primary form of alienation.³³

Milne points out that the vision for the new-humanity church is of a church that bridges all divides. Many of those divides can be described as 'cultural'. Of itself that term can be problematic,³⁴ as different people seem to mean different things by it. Culture can be defined in the following way:

a people's mental map or their world. This is not only a map of their physical world, but also a map for determining action.³⁵

It is a particular people's or group's way of life, how they express themselves, their tastes, habits and behaviours, 'like the script an actor follows'.³⁶ Culture is wide ranging and all encompassing, taking in every part of human existence.

Hofstede and others,³⁷ have observed national cultural characteristics shared by people from the same nation state or of the same ethnicity. If as defined above the

³³ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p23

³⁴ See J .Kirk *What is Mission* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2002), pp84 -85

³⁵ P. Hiebert 'Cultural Difference and the Communication of the Gospel' in R. Winter & S. Hawthorne (eds) *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 3rd edn (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), p375

³⁶ C. Kraft 'Culture, Worldview and Contextualization' in R. Winter & S. Hawthorne (eds) *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 3rd edn (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), p385

³⁷ See http://open.ac.uk/file.php/13749/B201_1_Hofstede.pdf, accessed 2 March 2009 and

E. Law *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community* (St Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993)

concept of race is biological, then ethnicity is biology plus culture.³⁸ Therefore to speak of a multicultural church would include multiethnic dimensions.

Theological and Biblical Issues

Those who argue for new-humanity, multicultural churches, suggest that such churches are the most faithful way of being church as outlined in Scripture. Milne, for example, proposes that: 'The new humanity in Christ through the Holy Spirit is the foundational form of Christian relating in the New Testament'.³⁹ Deymaz takes it a stage further by suggesting that the 'pursuit of the multi-ethnic local church is, in my view not optional. It is biblically mandated for all who would aspire to lead local congregations of faith'.⁴⁰

At the same time those who have argued for homogenous churches, especially drawing on the work of Donald McGavran, also claim to be being biblically faithful, as well as strategically savvy.⁴¹

Milne refers to six theological underpinnings for the new-humanity church.

These are:

The Trinity

Creation

³⁸ <http://www.jubilee-centre.org/document.php?id=284>, accessed 15 January 2009

³⁹ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p55

⁴⁰ Deymaz *Building Healthy Multi-Ethnic Churches*, pxxix

⁴¹ See for example D. McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), pp163 – 178
E. Towns (ed) *Evangelism and Church Growth: A Practical Encyclopaedia* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), p270

Incarnation

Atonement

The Church as a body

The Community of glory.⁴²

In using this six elements, he widens the discussion away from being centred around only a few New Testament texts, which is where Deymaz and others seem to begin.⁴³

Here, drawing on Milne's six underpinnings, alongside other discussions,⁴⁴ the theological case for or against the new-humanity, multicultural church will be examined in terms of: the trinity, creation, Christ, Acts, Paul's writings and the eschatological hope.

The Trinity

The Christian understanding of God as trinity: one God in three persons, can be understood as a model for human relatedness. Milne describes it in this way:

God is diversity in unity. Here is *unity*, each person sharing completely in the divine nature, yet also *diversity*, as each nonetheless evinces points of difference and distinctiveness.⁴⁵

Ford echoes this description of the trinity as a basis for diversity in the church adding that 'this is real unity in diversity: diversity beyond our understanding of the world...God's creation is an expression of who he is. God enjoys diversity'.⁴⁶

⁴² Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p56

⁴³ Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, pp 3- 39

⁴⁴ For example <http://www.urbana.org/articles.cfm?RecordId=55>, accessed 05 March 2009

⁴⁵ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p57

This understanding of God as trinity, however, doesn't necessarily equate to a requirement for churches to be communities where everyone has to gather in one place at one time. There may be other ways that the unity in diversity could be expressed outside of a new-humanity, multicultural church model, which still reflect the nature of God and his love of variety.

Bolsinger suggests that the essence of church life, reflecting the trinity, should be community, it should involve relational living.⁴⁷ He suggests: '*As God is so the church should be. As God does, the church should do. With the result being the more the church is like God, the more individual souls will become like Christ.*'⁴⁸ Even this, however, does not prescribe that the only way to fulfil this is through a new-humanity type model. For Milne, though, the trinity is the supreme reason for working for a multicultural church which meets together, lifting the discussion above personal preference to 'the presence of God, the one God, Father, Son and Spirit'.⁴⁹

Creation

A Baptist Union of Great Britain '*Manifesto for Building Culturally Inclusive Communities*' states:

All people are created in God's image in whose eyes we are all equal.

⁴⁶ <http://www.urbana.org/articles.cfm?RecordId=55>, accessed 05 March 2009

⁴⁷ T. Bolsinger *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), pp73 - 76

⁴⁸ Bolsinger *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian*, p11

⁴⁹ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p58

This is the corner-stone to building culturally inclusive community. There are no different races; we are all members of the one race, the human race.⁵⁰

Linking to the above discussion on the trinity, Milne suggests that part of being made in the image of God is being made for relationship, that being a 'person' as God is three 'persons' is about the need and capacity for love and relationship.⁵¹ In this way, he argues, 'the God who is triune, diversity in unity, creates in his image a being whose essence is also diversity in unity'.⁵²

This argument of diversity in creation, and the creation of people in God's image for relationship is convincing in so far as it serves to negate prejudice and racism and promote a dignity and equality for all people. It shows that 'it is not for one group to prosper at the expense of others or even to claim that others are "less than human"'.⁵³ How it applies to the make up and organisation of the church is a different question. For Milne this is very much linked to the call for new-humanity, inclusive, multicultural churches. He states that

the form of congregational life in the churches for which we are pleading has a further major undergirding at this point. The model of a diversity realized in unique, divinely mediated community is in fact a

⁵⁰ Baptist Union of Great Britain *Mission Files: Embracing the World, A Manifesto for Building Culturally Inclusive Communities* (Didcot: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2008), p9

⁵¹ Milne, *Dynamic Diversity*, p59

⁵² Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p59

⁵³ Baptist Union of Great Britain *Mission Files: Embracing the World*, p9

repossession of the fundamental, God-given form of humanity that was experience by first parents before the fall.⁵⁴

Christ

Milne's focus on Christ as the basis for the new-humanity church centres on the incarnation and the atonement.⁵⁵ Others base their arguments for monocultural churches or multicultural churches on the teaching and commands of Jesus.⁵⁶

Incarnation

The incarnation can be seen as a model for fleshing out the gospel within a localised culture.⁵⁷ Jesus entered fully into the culture when he took on flesh, and those who seek to follow him must also seek to follow that example, embodying the message.⁵⁸ Such an approach may mean that the churches that arise reflect the life of the surrounding culture, becoming part of that particular culture, rather than multicultural or mixed culture churches.

Milne, on the other hand, sees the incarnation as a basis for new-humanity churches. He suggests that the incarnation is the supreme example of 'embracing the other' and 'transcending difference'.⁵⁹ In this way the incarnation becomes a model for relationships that cross boundaries.

⁵⁴ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p59

⁵⁵ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, pp61-66

⁵⁶ For example Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, pp 3-12
McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, pp260-261

⁵⁷ S. Hawthorne 'Acts of Obedience' R. Winter & S. Hawthorne (eds) *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 3rd edn (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), p125

⁵⁸ E. Gibbs & R. Bolger *Emerging Churches* (London: SPCK, 2006), p16

⁵⁹ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, pp62-63

Crossing boundaries in relationship and 'inculturation' of the gospel can in essence be seen as part of the same whole. Neither strongly suggests that churches must be either new-humanity or monocultural, although the logical outcome of incarnating the gospel in one culture would be a church for that culture, whereby 'Christ incarnate through every church in every culture' is 'the aim of mission'.⁶⁰

Teaching

In terms of the teaching of Jesus, Deymaz focuses on the prayer of Jesus in John 17. In this text Jesus prays for his disciples and 'for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one' (John 17:20-21). Deymaz comments that 'Christ intends for us (believers) to become mature in our faith, completely united as one and one with the Father'.⁶¹ He goes on to add that the purpose of this unity is 'so *that* the world would know God's love and believe'.⁶²

In what way is the unity that Jesus prays for to be expressed? For Deymaz the answer is through a new-humanity, multiethnic local church. He comments

in the twenty-first century it will be the unity of diverse believers walking as one in and through the local church that will proclaim the fact of God's love for all people.⁶³

Milne too,⁶⁴ picks up on the theme of Jesus prayer in John 17, and also suggests that its fulfilment can be seen in the new-humanity church.

⁶⁰ D. Burnett *The Healing of the Nations* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996), p176

⁶¹ Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, p8

⁶² Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, p9

⁶³ Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, p11

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) is another key text used to underpin and justify both multicultural and monocultural approaches to church. Deymaz suggests that it is the 'the integration of the local church' that 'will lead to the fulfilment of the Great Commission, to people of every nation, tribe, people and tongue coming to know him'.⁶⁵ McGavran suggests almost exactly the opposite by stating: 'Requiring converts to join conglomerate congregations will hinder the church from rapidly spreading to *panta ta ethne*'.⁶⁶ It is interesting to observe how Deymaz, who is arguing for multicultural churches, sees them as 'integrated', implying a positive coming together, whereas McGavran chooses to use the word 'conglomerate' with connotations of a less holistic coming together. For McGavran fulfilling the Great Commission is primarily about evangelism and the spread of the gospel, which he suggests is best done in homogenous groups.⁶⁷ Others, however are unconvinced by this reduction of the Great Commission. Bosch suggests that 'it is unjustifiable to regard the "Great Commission" as being primarily concerned with evangelism' and that for Matthew 'being a Disciple means living out the teachings of Jesus'.⁶⁸ Ford adds that as well as being a message of salvation to all nations, the Great Commission's gospel message should be 'simultaneously recognizing and transcending ethnicity, embracing diversity'.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p65

⁶⁵ Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, p11

⁶⁶ McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, p261

⁶⁷ McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, p40

⁶⁸ D. Bosch *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), p81

⁶⁹ <http://www.urbana.org/articles.cfm?RecordId=55>, accessed 05 March 2009

Atonement

A further underpinning of the new-humanity church for Milne is the atonement.⁷⁰

He advocates the notion that 'the forming of such churches honours Christ's sacrifice',⁷¹ presumably in a way that monocultural churches cannot. Most of his argument, however, centres around the Pauline understanding of the cross in the epistles, especially Ephesians, so further discussion will be left until later.

Acts

The story of the growth of the church in Acts shows the gospel message moving out from the Jews to the Gentiles. As Sivasundaram describes it: 'Acts underscores from the start the gathering of nations. Pentecost can be seen as a recasting of the Tower of Babel'.⁷² Before Pentecost Jesus had promised his followers that the Holy Spirit would come upon them so they could be witnesses 'in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8). At Pentecost the message of Jesus would be proclaimed to a multitude from many nations in a way that all who heard it could understand (Acts 2:11). Eric Law comments that

Pentecost, which marked the beginning of the church, provided the ideal image of how people from different cultural background should be able to live together.⁷³

Law goes on to ask, drawing on the work of Walter Wink, whether the communication miracle of Pentecost was really about the tongue, or more fully

⁷⁰ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, pp64 - 66

⁷¹ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p66

⁷² <http://www.jubilee-centre.org/document.php?id=284>, accessed 15 January 2009

⁷³ Law *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, p46

about the ear?⁷⁴ Whatever the case, it is clear that 'the church was born in diversity',⁷⁵ even if the crowd was of people who were Jewish by faith (Acts 2:5).

As the church grew questions of culture and the organisation of the church came to the fore. Acts 6 seems to suggest a racial tension between the Hellenists and the Hebrews centred on the distribution of money to widows, but by implication they were at least part of the same church, rather than forming separate groups.

Deymaz and Milne both highlight the church at Antioch in Acts 13 as a model for a new-humanity, multicultural church.⁷⁶ The description of the leadership of the church in Acts 13 implies it was very much a multicultural group (Acts 13:1).

Deymaz proposes that rather than just being a historical detail, the inclusion of some detail of the ethnic make up of the leadership of the Antioch church, 'should not be dismissed merely as descriptive' but rather: 'Such indirect prescription is informative for the church of today'.⁷⁷

Orville Jenkins sees the situation of the church in Acts and of Antioch rather differently. Rather than being a model for inclusive new-humanity churches, he suggests that Acts serves to provide a model for homogenous outreach leading to homogenous churches, at least initially. He comments

⁷⁴ Law *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, pp46 - 51

⁷⁵ E. Bryant *Peppermint Filled Piñatas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), p124

⁷⁶ Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, pp19 – 25

Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, pp48 - 49

⁷⁷ Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, p24

In the book of Acts, we see the movement of the gospel from one ethnic group to another, illustrating the way a group with the same cultural identity respond as a group, then grows to understand the need to go across boundaries to other ethnic groups.

This is illustrated classically in the church at Antioch.⁷⁸

Paul's Writings

The majority of the theological justifications for new-humanity heterogeneous churches centre around the Pauline epistles. Anderson bases his arguments for 'gracist' inclusive churches on 1 Corinthians 12.⁷⁹ As intimated earlier, Milne focuses on Ephesians,⁸⁰ as does Deymaz,⁸¹ and to some degree Ortiz (who's book takes it's name from a rendering of Ephesians 2:14).⁸²

Ephesians

The letter to the Ephesians places a great emphasis on the unity of the church. To what extent that translates into a mixed, multicultural gathering of people in one place to worship together is another question.

Max Turner suggests that Ephesians does favour a new-humanity model rather than any notion of a homogenous church. Speaking of a homogenous approach to mission and church, he suggests that:

⁷⁸ <http://strategyleader.org/articles/homogenousunit.html>, accessed 24 February 2009

⁷⁹ D. Anderson *Gracism: The Art of Inclusion* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), especially pp30 - 45

⁸⁰ Milne *Dynamic Diveristy*, pp17-26

⁸¹ Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, pp27 - 39

⁸² Ortiz *One New People*

this runs clean contrary to the vision of Ephesians 2, where the church mirrors eschatological and cosmic reconciliation of Jew and Gentile, thus demolishing what was then the most intractable racial barrier of them all.⁸³

Ortiz echoes this sentiment commenting that in Ephesians chapters 2-4: 'The Lord has broken down the barriers that separate us. The church is fleshing out the gospel of reconciliation both vertically and horizontally'.⁸⁴ Deymaz takes it further by suggesting that Ephesians is a 'mandate for the multi-ethnic church'.⁸⁵

In arguing for a homogenous approach to mission, McGavran also comments on Ephesians 2:14-15. Whilst acknowledging the breaking of barriers through the cross, he comments 'it must be noted that Jesus creates one new man in place of two "*in himself*" ...Jews and Gentiles – or other classes and races who scorn and hate one another - must be brought to Christ before they can be made one'.⁸⁶ In essence he is suggesting that the barriers can only be broken after conversion to Christ, and not by multicultural churches reaching out to everyone at once.

The notion of unity as a secondary issue to the gospel or conversion is refuted by Deymaz. He suggests that the 'mystery of Christ' is the bringing together of Jews

⁸³ M. Turner 'Mission and Meaning in terms of Unity in Ephesians' in A. Billingham, T. Lane & M. Turner (eds) *Mission and Meaning* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), p163

⁸⁴ Ortiz *One New People*, p52

⁸⁵ Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, p28

⁸⁶ McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, p175

and Gentiles and the breaking down of walls that divide.⁸⁷ To separate that from the gospel of reconciliation to God is to mistreat Paul's writings. He comments 'that failure to understand the central theme of Paul's ministry results in an impoverished understanding of the nature of the local church'.⁸⁸

Focusing on Ephesians 2:11 – 22 Milne summarises the argument from the epistle for new-humanity churches in this way:

the union of Jew and Gentile, the theme of Ephesians 2:11-22, must be understood only as a paradigm expression of something much larger and more comprehensive – the body of Christ on earth, a unique God – created reality, a new humanity, in which not only racial diversity but every other human diversity is both confronted and overcome.⁸⁹

The other letters

The argument for multicultural, new-humanity churches is also made from other New Testament letters. For example, Galatians 3:26-28 is cited by Simon Bell, who comments that this passage asserts that 'our unity in Christ transcends all other forms of identity'.⁹⁰ Commenting on that same passage, Milne adds that 'a vastly more comprehensive unity' is indicated in Galatians, than even in Ephesians.⁹¹ McGavran, however, contrasts these views by suggesting that the breaking of

⁸⁷ Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, pp 30 -37

⁸⁸ Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, p32

⁸⁹ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p25

⁹⁰ S. Bell 'Mission and Ecclesiology', in S. Bell (ed) *Happy in My Skin* (Birmingham: Christian Education, 2006), p54

⁹¹ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p38

distinctions 'in Christ' mentioned in Galatians 3, does not mean 'that to become a Christian, one must act as if class and race differences do not exist'.⁹²

The 'body' metaphor of 1 Corinthians 12 is also used to argue to inclusive, new-humanity churches. Anderson's whole approach to inclusive churches is built on seven phrases from that chapter.⁹³

The Eschatological Hope

The picture of a multitude worshipping God 'from every nation, tribe, people and language' in Revelation 7:9 is an image that inspires those who are looking for churches in the cities of the twenty first century Western world to be multicultural, new-humanity churches. Anderson describes it thus:

The population of the redeemed in heaven are racially, ethnically and nationally diverse. How beautiful...The will of God is that all of the redeemed would be one on earth as it is, and will be, in heaven.⁹⁴

This notion that the unity of heaven should be seen on earth is a compelling image. Chad Brennan speaks of 'biblical multi-ethnic community' as 'what we were designed to be and do for eternity'.⁹⁵ Others, however are more realistic in their expectation of how the ultimate goal of unity is played out within the church on earth. Barro comments:

From the beginning we have unity, during our time of peregrination we have plurality within unity, but when with our precious Lord on the New

⁹² McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, p169

⁹³ See Anderson, *Gracism*, pp31-45

⁹⁴ Anderson *Gracism*, p 106

⁹⁵ <http://thenewculture.org/online/part-1-multi-ethnic-future/>, accessed 3 March 2009

Heavens and New Earth we will have the perfect unity he planned from the beginning.⁹⁶

A vision of ultimate unity in Christ may help churches to work for justice and reconciliation, but doesn't necessarily lead to a new-humanity church of people from different cultures and background gathering for worship in one time and place in the present time. As Garces-Foley observes, 'the multiethnic church might be the biblical ideal, the eschatological fulfilment of God's work, but can it really work in the here and now'?⁹⁷

The Hub of the Issue

As examined above, it is hard to make a conclusive case one way or the other from Scripture for a multicultural, new-humanity church. Clearly there are impulses in the New Testament towards justice and reconciliation of people from different races, cultures and classes, yet how this plays out in terms of church structure, organisation, worship and mission is still somewhat unclear.

Anderson may well be right in observing that he has 'never read a text of Scripture that outlines God's design for a one-race church'.⁹⁸ Others, however, are less convinced suggesting

It seems probable that although there were mixed Jewish-Gentile congregations, there were also homogenous Jewish congregations (who

⁹⁶ http://www.ediaspora.net/ACB_article3.html, accessed 16 February 2009

⁹⁷ Graces-Foley *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, p28

⁹⁸ Anderson *Gracism*, p41

still observed Jewish customs) and homogenous Gentile congregations (who observed no Jewish customs).⁹⁹

But, as the writers of the Lausanne paper for the 1978 Pasadena Consultation go on to add: 'Nevertheless, Paul clearly taught that they belonged to each other in Christ, that they must welcome each other as Christ had welcomed them'.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ <http://www.lausanne.org/pasadena-1977/lop-1.html>, accessed 9 October 2008

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.lausanne.org/pasadena-1977/lop-1.html>, accessed 9 October 2008

Chapter 3: The 'New-Humanity' Church as Multicultural Church:

Missiological and Sociological Issues

If the New Testament is clear on the breaking down of the barriers of difference in Christ, yet presents a multifaceted approach as to how that takes shape in the church, how does the chosen way of doing church influence mission, and find expression in the specific context of twenty first century London?

Milne is clear that in the contemporary context of a city such as London the new-humanity church is the most appropriate. He offers the suggestion that 'this new-humanity model of church is massively endorsed by the global realities that surround us everyday'.¹⁰¹

The Homogenous Unit Principle and Monocultural Church

As intimated above, McGavran and others have argued that for the sake of mission and especially completing the task of evangelisation 'to every people', a homogenous approach to mission, one culture or 'people group' at a time is preferable.¹⁰² McGavran describes the world as a 'marvellous mosaic',¹⁰³ and the goal of evangelism is to plant churches in each piece of the mosaic, each segment of society and each '*ethnos*'.¹⁰⁴

At the heart of McGavran's thinking is this phrase:

¹⁰¹ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p75

¹⁰² See McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, pp163-178

¹⁰³ McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, pp43-53

¹⁰⁴ See McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, pp258-264

People like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers.¹⁰⁵

In essence McGavran is arguing for an inculturation of the gospel message that allows people to hear and respond to the message without extra issues or barriers getting in the way. The observation is that 'barriers to the acceptance of the gospel are more often sociological than theological; people reject the gospel not because they think it is false but because it strikes them as alien'.¹⁰⁶

If, as Kraft agrees the 'way of Jesus, however, is to honor a people's culture and its incorporated world view, to wrest them from it',¹⁰⁷ then perhaps McGavran is correct in attempting to articulate the need for each people group to have to cross as few barriers to the gospel as possible. As he observes: 'Nothing in the Bible, for instance requires that *in becoming a Christian* a believer must cross linguistic, racial and class barriers'.¹⁰⁸

The result of a homogenous approach to mission will inevitably be a monocultural, one group church, a 'homogenous unit church'.¹⁰⁹ For McGavran, that in itself is a blessing rather than a problem. He asserts:

Must we, therefore, conclude that multiplying congregations largely of one kind of people in Boston university campuses, or Burma is a step backward? Must we resist and declare that we want real Christians who

¹⁰⁵ McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, p163

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.lausanne.org/pasadena-1977/lop-1.html>, accessed 9 October 2008

¹⁰⁷ C. Kraft 'Culture, Worldview and Contextualization', p386

¹⁰⁸ McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, p169

¹⁰⁹ E. Towns (ed) *Evangelism and Church Growth: A Practical Encyclopaedia* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), p268

feel brotherly love to all peoples, and who in their congregational structures and worship demonstrate that the two peoples concerned have actually become one in Christ Jesus? The answers to these questions must be a firm, though qualified, No.¹¹⁰

Evangelism and Discipleship

McGavran positions the question of reconciliation and cultural diversity as a question that comes after conversion and discipleship as part of the ongoing work of sanctification (although confusingly he speaks of evangelism as ‘discipling’ and the ongoing work of discipleship as ‘perfecting’).¹¹¹ When churches are established in each part of the mosaic, then the question of unity and ‘brotherliness’ can be met.¹¹² Orville Jenkins echoes this, suggesting that many who object to the ‘homogenous unit principle’ and the resulting monocultural churches do so through ‘a confusion of two stages of spiritual development’.¹¹³

Milne, in contrast sees the repentance that is part of conversion, as being the place for beginning to overcome division, and to move towards a sense of new-humanity connectedness. He suggests that the homogenous approach rather than being Christ-centred is a ‘sociologically determined formula of minimum social discomfort for entry into the church’, and the result is ‘there are certain areas of the individual’s life and relationships which are exempted from the call to repentance,

¹¹⁰ McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, p261

¹¹¹ See McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, pp123-127

¹¹² McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, pp177-178, pp260-261

¹¹³ <http://strategyleader.org/articles/homogenousunit.html>, accessed 24 February 2009

which is the prelude to commitment'.¹¹⁴ In a similar way, Turner sees the 'very essence of redemption' as being about reconciliation with God and neighbour,¹¹⁵ thus negating any sense that there can be a separation of these issues between evangelism and 'perfecting'.

Where the overcoming of cultural differences, racial tensions or ethnic divides is seen as part of the gospel, of part of the process of coming to Christ, to build churches where such divides are evident would seem to be to deny the gospel. If that is the case the way forward must be new-humanity churches. If, on the other hand, these are issues that come into play later, as part of the ongoing journey of being a follower of Christ, then monocultural, homogenous churches are not an issue to be dealt with, but a benefit. The danger for some observers, however, of the homogenous approach is that attitudes of racism and segregation remain unchecked and unchallenged.¹¹⁶

A question of context

Originally writing in 1970, out of a context of mission outside of the Western world, McGavran describes a situation where

The world's population is a mosaic, and each piece has a separate life of its own that seems strange and often unlovely to men and women of other pieces.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p153

¹¹⁵ Turner 'Mission and Meaning in terms of Unity in Ephesians', p162

¹¹⁶ Ortiz *One New People*, p45

¹¹⁷ McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, p163

It is in that context that he argues for a people-group approach to mission, and a homogenous church. It is doubtful that in today's globalised, networked world whether such a statement would hold much validity. As Bryant observes, we now live in 'a time in history when "the nations" live together in the same cities'.¹¹⁸ The idea of people living as separate 'pieces of the mosaic', somehow untouched and isolated from the rest of the world seems somewhat antiquated. Milne expresses it in this way: 'diversity has become the stuff of human civilisation all over the globe'.¹¹⁹

In a city such as London, diversity is a fact of everyday life. People who are 'not like us' are part of the landscape. In such a context could it be that what is needed is 'the power and potential of the multi-ethnic church to advance the Gospel in remarkable ways'?¹²⁰ McGavran himself admits that in such situations forming multicultural 'conglomerate congregations' maybe a useful approach. He concedes that

Only in true social melting pots is it a significant option. The old segments of society are breaking down. Many mixed marriages are taking place. Children growing up together in school regard each other as essentially one people. There conglomerate congregations are both desirable and possible There the best opportunity for growth may truly

¹¹⁸ Bryant *Peppermint Filled Piñatas*, p124

¹¹⁹ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p80

¹²⁰ Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, pxxvii

be that of brining into one congregation converts of the new people being formed.¹²¹

What is happening ‘on the ground’

While the new-humanity multicultural churches may be poised to ‘be a blessing to the city’,¹²² the situation in reality has been of the exceptional growth of monocultural congregations. Murray has observed the growth of ethnically distinct congregations in British cities, and especially London, and comments that ‘growth in these churches has been rapid, even spectacular’.¹²³ He goes on to suggest that ‘what was once regarded as “white man’s religion” may soon be regarded as the preserve of African and Caribbean Communities’.¹²⁴

Mark Sturge, in observing the same trend in London, suggests that Black Majority Churches (which he calls BMC’s) ‘are now on course to become the largest Christian presence in the city’.¹²⁵ Another report comments that:

Worshippers from black communities now outnumber white churchgoers in London. Many black Christians have formed their own churches while African communities have been introducing their own particular institutions into the UK.¹²⁶

¹²¹ McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, p261

¹²² Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, p120

¹²³ S. Murray *Church Planting: Laying Foundation* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), p17

¹²⁴ Murray *Church Planting*, p17

¹²⁵ M. Sturge *Look What the Lord has Done!* (Bletchley: Scripture Union, 2007), p177

¹²⁶ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/5349132.stml, accessed 10 March 2009

This growth, described above, has been within what appears to be monocultural homogenous churches, from groups other than the dominant group of the host culture. Sturge comments that the reason for homogenous churches emerging needs to be considered before any kind of value judgment can be made about such churches.¹²⁷ In practice such churches may not have emerged out of a deliberate mission strategy or church planting programme, but out of situations of at worst, racial abuse, and at best, an unwillingness to give up power and control from those within the dominant cultural groupings.¹²⁸ Sturge describes such churches as 'open homogeneous churches', which 'are often born out of specific needs or circumstances'.¹²⁹

Within London Baptist churches, the growth of ethnically distinct congregations is also a reality. The largest churches fit the descriptions above, being primarily made up of people from the African diaspora,¹³⁰ and these churches are also planting new congregations across the City. The former General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance, Joel Edwards, commenting on the rise of Black Majority Churches, suggests that 'Black churches came into being to fulfil spiritual, social and cultural needs which would otherwise have gone unmet'.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Sturge *Look What the Lord has Done!*, p41

¹²⁸ See Sturge *Look What the Lord has Done!*, pp39-52

¹²⁹ Sturge *Look What the Lord has Done!*, p43

¹³⁰ The two largest London Baptist Association member churches are Trinity Baptist in Norwood, and Calvary Charismatic Baptist, currently meeting in Poplar.

¹³¹ Quoted in Sturge *Look What the Lord has Done!*, p87

The picture nationally also indicates that homogenous churches are doing better numerically than multicultural churches. Statistics from the 2005 English Church Census show that

Congregations which are mixed tend to be smaller than average – 54 people against the overall average of 84. All white congregations average 106 people, and all ethnic average 128 people.¹³²

Some who argue for new-humanity churches rather than homogenous churches seem to suggest that just because an approach results in numerical growth that does not make a justifiable enough reason to adopt it. For example Ken Fong asserts:

Just because it's much easier to get people to come to Christ and each other without having to tear down barriers, that doesn't mean Jesus wants to build his church that way. Jesus doesn't want to see country clubs with religious overtones.¹³³

Some multicultural churches have seen rapid growth. Garces-Foley cites the example of Mosaic Church in Los Angeles.¹³⁴ Mosaic is described as having a 'membership that is one-third Asian, one-third Latino, and one-third Anglo'.¹³⁵ One of the church's leaders remarks that: 'Between our eldership and our leadership

¹³² P. Brierley *Pulling Out of the Nosedive* (London: Christian Research, 2006), p105

¹³³ Quoted in Garces-Foley *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, p27

¹³⁴ Garces-Foley *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, pp96-99

¹³⁵ Garces-Foley *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, p96

team meetings, we'll account for a large chunk of the world'.¹³⁶ Drawing on the work of Gerardo Marti, Garces-Foley suggests that the approach to being multiethnic used by Mosaic differs from other such churches, because rather than attempting to face ethnic difference and seek reconciliation, it has pursued an approach that can be described as 'ethnic transcendence'.¹³⁷ The result is 'a very successful multiethnic church' but one which 'is predicated on a framework that denies the social and spiritual significance of ethnic identity'.¹³⁸

Within London Baptist churches there are also examples of numerical growth in new-humanity multicultural churches (even if they wouldn't identify themselves in that way). For example North Hanwell Baptist Church in West London has quadrupled in attendance over the last five years, and yet describes its make up as '35% White British; 25% Caribbean; 20% Black African; 7% Asian; 5% White (Other) 3% Chinese'.¹³⁹ Similarly, High Road Baptist in Ilford is described as having 'in excess of 20 nationalities from all parts of the world. 50% Afro-Caribbean, 30% white (British and E European), 20% S Asian', and records approximately thirty percent growth in the last five years.¹⁴⁰

In practice is the new-humanity church, in terms of being a multicultural church an idea 'whose hour has come', as Milne would suggest?¹⁴¹ Perhaps in a city as

¹³⁶ A. McManus 'Is the Church Still Relevant?' in J. Ashley (ed) *The Relevant Church* (Lake Mary, FL: Relevant Books, 2004), p16

¹³⁷ Garces-Foley *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, p97

¹³⁸ Garces-Foley *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, p98

¹³⁹ From questionnaire to ministers (see Appendix 1)

¹⁴⁰ From questionnaire to ministers (see Appendix 1)

¹⁴¹ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, pp74-85

complex as London, there is missional validity in both homogenous and heterogeneous approaches.

Chapter 4: The New-Humanity Church as Multigenerational Church

New-humanity churches should consciously set out to include all generations and enable them to relate meaningfully.¹⁴²

As well as being racially and ethnically diverse, Milne proposes that among the other diversities to be faced and overcome is that of age and generation.¹⁴³ Jason Gardner observes that: 'The church is experiencing segregation: we do have instances where young people are being drained from existing churches into youth churches'.¹⁴⁴

How we got here

How did the church in United Kingdom (and elsewhere in the West) end up with a generational divide? Gardner cites the issue as being a result of 'the rise of youth culture through the latter half of the twentieth century' which in turn 'led to the inevitable distancing of the generations – the proverbial generation gap'.¹⁴⁵ That is definitely a contributing factor, as part of a wider cultural shift.¹⁴⁶

For the church, however, the separation of the generations into age groups started before that. The rise of the Sunday School movement in the nineteenth century, initially as an outreach, ended up as a way of separating younger people from the main body of the church. Pete Ward notes that:

¹⁴² Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p137

¹⁴³ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p16

¹⁴⁴ Gardner *Mend the Gap*, p18

¹⁴⁵ Gardner *Mend the Gap*, p12

¹⁴⁶ See G. Cray *Youth Congregations and the Emerging Church* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2002), pp7-9

The Sunday School was an influence upon the development of youth fellowship work because it set the pattern for a separate gathering for children to receive religious instruction.¹⁴⁷

Since that time the church's work with children and young people has followed an 'inherited educational' approach to youth ministry. Growing from the Sunday School movement of the late nineteenth century it is formed around the idea of 'classes' which are age specific. It mirrors the school system; often to the extent that people move groups ('go up') in September when they change school class.¹⁴⁸ This system continues to separate young people and children into separate groups, apart from the adult congregation.

The separate Sunday school system, alongside the post-war separation of generations 'into age "niches"',¹⁴⁹ has meant that for many churches Milne's ideal of a new-humanity church where generations worship together and relate meaningfully has gone unmet. Mark DeVries sees the issue in this way

During the last century, church and parachurch youth ministries alike have increasingly (and often unwittingly), held to a single strategy...the isolation of teenagers from the adult world and particularly from their own parents.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ P. Ward *Growing up Evangelical: Youthwork and the Making of a Subculture* (London: SPCK, 1996), p24

¹⁴⁸ This paragraph and other elements of this chapter draw on P. Leveson *Beyond the Youth Group: Youth Ministry and the Whole Church*, a paper written for the London Baptist Association. <http://uk.geocities.com/peteandsuzie@btinternet.com/beyond.pdf>

¹⁴⁹ Gardner *Mend the Gap*, p83

¹⁵⁰ M. DeVries *Family Based Youth Ministry* 2nd Edn (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), p21

The notion of the new-humanity church being a place for all generations is clearly about more than teenagers, children and young people, but as noted above, they have been at the forefront of both deliberate and unwitting isolation from the wider body of the church. David Ishoro, however, is concerned that for some churches the tide has turned too far, and it is in fact now older people who are being disempowered and left out.¹⁵¹

Separate Youth Ministry

In light of the churches being impacted by the ‘post-war trends of age segregation’, Dean has observed ‘young people’s estrangement from congregational life’.¹⁵² At the same time there has been a decline in the number of young people in church in the UK.¹⁵³ Graham Cray links these two things together by suggesting that there has arisen ‘a huge distance between the culture and presuppositions of the church and the majority of young people’.¹⁵⁴

The response of the churches, however, has largely been not to address the issue of how the generations can reconnect and bridge the gaps, but to ‘appoint someone else to do it on their behalf’.¹⁵⁵ Gardner sees this as a ‘short-term solution for what’s really a long-term problem’.¹⁵⁶ In essence what has arisen is a generational version of the homogenous approach to mission and church.

¹⁵¹ <http://rps.gn.apc.org/leveson/resources/study-isiiorho.htm>, accessed 11 March 2009

¹⁵² K. Dean *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), p37

¹⁵³ See Brierly *Pulling out of the Nosedive*, p111-125

¹⁵⁴ Cray *Youth Congregations and the Emerging Church*, p6

¹⁵⁵ Gardner *Mend the Gap*, p149

¹⁵⁶ Gardner *Mend the Gap*, p149

For some, such as Moynagh, this separation is a good thing, an acknowledgement of cultural change and the fragmentation of postmodern society. He argues that: 'We can't expect teenagers to worship regularly with adults when they are separating from parents and reacting against adult life'.¹⁵⁷ In fact he goes further in suggesting that

We need to acknowledge the different cultures that exist, for example between eight-to-eleven year olds, teenagers and adults. From time to time we may want to bring all the generations together, but it will not be true reconciliation unless the various age groups are also allowed – at other times – to express their distinct cultures, in, perhaps, their own particular worship styles.¹⁵⁸

For Moynagh, the different ages and stages are no longer just generationally distinct, but culturally distinct too. This demands giving each group separate cultural 'space'.

While the argument about youth culture as a separate culture may seem convincing, there is also a suggestion that youth culture has in fact become mainstream culture. Steve Collins asserts

the thing we still call 'youth culture' is no longer just for the young. It was a youth culture when it began with the first teenagers back in the 1950s. Now it is the culture of 50-year-olds too. The teenagers of the 1960s still live in the 'youth culture' they created - still produce it - even though they are now in middle age. Everyone under 45 has grown up

¹⁵⁷ M. Moynagh *Changing World, Changing Church* (London: Monarch Books, 2001), p110

¹⁵⁸ Moynagh *Changing World, Changing Church*, p143

entirely inside it. It is not a thing you grow out of anymore - there is nowhere to grow out to. Even if you wanted to.¹⁵⁹

However it is viewed, it is clear that the world of the teenager is often at odds with the world of the 'inherited' church (to borrow Murray's phrase).¹⁶⁰ As one youth worker expressed it, having worked with a group of young people for some time: 'we love them too much to try and make them come to church'.¹⁶¹

This homogenous approach is taken a stage further, beyond one church with separate age-specific groups or ministries in the concept of the 'youth church'. Moynagh observes that 'teenage and youth congregations of various kinds can now be spotted all over Britain'.¹⁶² Murray sees a kind of inevitability about such youth churches, claiming that many times 'the real choice is between encouraging youth churches or losing teenagers from the church'.¹⁶³

Reasons for and against generational separation

Many of the arguments for and against generationally distinct groups and churches, follow the same lines as for multicultural, multiethnic churches above. If young people represent a separate cultural grouping, a homogenous unit, then why not allow them to form churches where they can worship and come to faith without having to cross other barriers?

¹⁵⁹ http://www.btinternet.com/~smallritual/section6/theory_steve_pomo.html, accessed 11 March 2009

¹⁶⁰ See S. Murray *Post-Christendom* (Carlisle: Authentic/Paternoster Press, 2004), pp260 -264

¹⁶¹ N. David 'Youth Shaped Church', *Youthwork*, January 2007, p13

¹⁶² Moynagh *Changing World, Changing Church*, p110

¹⁶³ Murray *Church Planting*, p147

The image of the church as family, however, would seem to counteract this generational separation. Gardner remarks that it 'is the passion of the Father, Son and Spirit to see the church grow together as family'.¹⁶⁴ DeVries suggests that it is only in the context of generations together that young people can come to mature faith.¹⁶⁵ Dean echoes this adding that youth ministry is not just about youth.¹⁶⁶ She goes on to suggest that the church's involvement with young people 'is about the *church* in which God calls young people to play an irreplaceable and irrepensible part.'¹⁶⁷ Separating young people from the wider church not only prevents young people from coming to maturity in faith, but leaves a passionless church.¹⁶⁸

There is concern, however, that a purely new-humanity, blended approach to work across generations without any separate space would fail to take seriously the developmental needs of different age groups. Chap Clark suggests that adolescence is 'the only stage of life that is *transitional* in essence'.¹⁶⁹ He further suggests that

¹⁶⁴ Gardner *Mend the Gap*, p199

¹⁶⁵ DeVries, *Family Based Youth Ministry*, p37

¹⁶⁶ Dean *Practicing Passion*, pp1-26

¹⁶⁷ Dean *Practicing Passion*, p1

¹⁶⁸ See Dean *Practicing Passion*, especially pp1-26

¹⁶⁹ C. Clark 'Response to the Preparatory Approach from a Missional Perspective' in M. Senter (ed) *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/Youth Specialities Academic, 2001), p64

to simply include youths at all levels of ministry without the slightest nod given to embracing the developmental needs of a disenfranchised subculture - could backfire badly.¹⁷⁰

Taking seriously the needs of different age groups seems to echo Paul's teaching in passages such as Titus 2, which acknowledged that different groups at times need to be told different things. How that is done, however remains unclear from the text.

Milne argues that Peter's 'citation of Joel's prophecy concerning the era of the outpoured Spirit',¹⁷¹ is a reason for multigenerational community. He goes on to trace other passages which imply a generational connectedness in Scripture.¹⁷² There is also a suggestion that the nature of the early church as a 'household' church inevitably meant it was an intergenerational gathering.¹⁷³ How such a concept of church translates to twenty first century London is another question, although some would argue that such house churches have a lot to offer in a post-Christendom setting.¹⁷⁴ Whatever the case, it is unlikely that today's separated Sunday schools and youth groups existed. Commenting on Paul's instruction to different groups in the letter to the Ephesians, Hendricksen notes

The apostle assumes that among those who will be listening when this letter is read to the various congregations the children will not be lacking. They are included in God's Covenant..., and Jesus loves

¹⁷⁰ C. Clark 'Response to the Inclusive Congregational Approach from a Missional Perspective' in M. Senter (ed) *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/Youth Specialities Academic, 2001), p29

¹⁷¹ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p44

¹⁷² Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p44

¹⁷³ See R. Banks *Paul's Idea of Community*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994) pp26-26

¹⁷⁴ For example W. Simpson *Houses that Change the World* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998)

them.... Were Paul to be present with us today he would be shocked at the spectacle of children attending the Sunday School and then going home just before the regular worship service. He has a word addressed directly and specifically to the children.¹⁷⁵

The tricky issue of all-age worship

If the way forward is the new-humanity church, the reality of how worship is done across the ages needs to be addressed. Milne argues that worship should be for all, where no one is disenfranchised, a principle which 'is obviously violated where the needs of a particular generation are permitted a dominant role'.¹⁷⁶

But is such a utopian ideal really possible or is it an eschatological day dream? Commenting on many people's attempts at getting mixed age groups to worship together in an all age service, one church leader remarked that you ended up with 'worship with something to offend everyone'.¹⁷⁷ It is clear that any attempt at such an expression of worship requires not only careful planning, but a desire to see others grow and express themselves, a 'love for neighbour'.¹⁷⁸ The stereotypes of young people liking their music loud and older congregants preferring organs can be hard to overcome. But as one commentator remarks

given that the gospel has healed the rift between God and humanity, it must be asked what power resides in a church which proclaims that

¹⁷⁵ W. Hendricksen, *Galatians and Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979) , p258

¹⁷⁶ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p107

¹⁷⁷ Quoted in P. Mountstephen & K. Martin *Body Beautiful: Recapturing a Vision for All-age Church* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2004), p3

¹⁷⁸ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p108

gospel while failing to overcome difference of musical taste and worship
'style'.¹⁷⁹

Perhaps one the reasons some current attempts at all age worship fail is that they are not born out of genuine intergenerational relationships, or an authentic 'all-age culture' but rather the worship 'service' is the only time everyone gets together in one space to do anything all together. Mountstephen and Martin comment that: 'If all age worship does not flow naturally from the integrated life of the community it is a sham'.¹⁸⁰ Rather than focusing on the worship service, they suggest the new-humanity church needs to prioritise relationships and community in other ways, focusing on becoming an 'all age church' rather than simply a church with an all-age service.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ M. Bird & D. Hilborn (ed) *God and the Generations* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), p189

¹⁸⁰ Mountstephen & Martin *Body Beautiful*, p22

¹⁸¹ Mountstephen & Martin *Body Beautiful*, pp3-4

Chapter 5: Together or Separate? Beyond Polarization

Some proponents of the new-humanity church are insistent that it is the only way to 'be church' and that anything else is substandard, or unbiblical. The workbook 'Many Nations, One Church' suggests that: 'All churches should be multicultural. This is not an optional extra. This is God's plan'.¹⁸² Anderson proposes that this approach must be worked out in existing churches and not just be left for new churches.¹⁸³ Milne, despite his vision of a new-humanity church worshipping together in one place and time as its primary expression,¹⁸⁴ does concede that some separate spaces and times for different groups can be necessary and even helpful. He admits that

a generally integrated form for the whole congregation together need not exclude more focused forms around its periphery.¹⁸⁵

Must heterogeneity and homogeneity be held up as opposing poles around which to organise church life and mission? Or does Milne's admission that some things can be done separately allow for a different kind of unity within diversity? Murray puts forward the suggestion that even a mission strategy based on the homogenous unit principle need not result in only homogenous churches.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, a mixed church may at times focus on a specific group for a specific project or initiative.

¹⁸² Christian Aid & Baptist Union of Great Britain *Many Nations, One Church*, p4

¹⁸³ Anderson *Gracism*, p42

¹⁸⁴ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p106

¹⁸⁵ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p108

¹⁸⁶ Murray *Church Planting*, p145

Unity at what level?

If Ephesians 2:14-15 speaks of the breaking of dividing walls and the making of a new humanity in Christ, are there other ways that can be demonstrated other than one church meeting in one place on a weekly pattern? Moynagh thinks that there is, and that the New Testament pattern was of a church 'both fragmented and connected'.¹⁸⁷ Here unity was expressed through networks and the relationship between churches, rather than through meeting together as one congregation on a regular basis.¹⁸⁸

Different homogenous churches in partnership

If there are other ways to express the unity out of diversity for the church, then perhaps the model of separate churches in relationship, expressing unity in creative ways is a helpful one for churches in global city such as London. For some who are open to a homogenous approach, this seems to be a useful way forward. Murray proposes that the main issue is not whether a strategy is pursued based on homogeneous or heterogeneous churches, 'but the way in which homogenous units relate to other groups and the wider church community'.¹⁸⁹

Deymaz, proposing a more integrated new-humanity model counteracts the approach of different churches in unity by suggesting that the model of unity espoused in Ephesians is not just to be worked out in the universal church, but in

¹⁸⁷ Moynagh *Changing World, Changing Church*, p105

¹⁸⁸ Moynagh *Changing World, Changing Church*, p140

¹⁸⁹ Murray *Church Planting*, p147

each local congregation.¹⁹⁰ As intimated above, Moynagh sees the New Testament pattern differently, indicating a unity based on 'different churches communicating with each other and collaborating when necessary'.¹⁹¹

The practical question is whether homogenous churches would seek any degree of unity in networking, working together and learning from each other. McGavran writes optimistically about such a move towards relationship and unity suggesting that the 'Christian in whose heart Christ dwells inclines toward brotherhood as water runs down a valley'.¹⁹² While it may be true that 'all of us have much to learn from Christians of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds',¹⁹³ experience shows that getting churches to work together, especially across cultural boundaries is not always an easy or straight forward task. Notional, denominational or geographical connectedness may not be a sufficient basis for churches and the disciples within those churches to make the effort to cross the boundaries and demonstrate the unity of the Body of Christ. The networked approach that Moynagh favours,¹⁹⁴ of churches working together, would need to be fleshed out relationally in order to work in a diverse context such as London.

One church, many groups

If the notion of separate homogenous churches networked together is somehow deficient then perhaps the model of one church with different groups or even

¹⁹⁰ Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, pp29-30

¹⁹¹ Moynagh *Changing World, Changing Church*, p144

¹⁹² McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, p176

¹⁹³ M. Goldsmith *Get a Grip on Mission* (Leicester: IVP, 2006), p107

¹⁹⁴ Moynagh *Changing World, Changing Church*, p140

different congregations is a useful alternative to a 'pure' version of the new-humanity approach, extending Milne's concession for different groups to meet different needs.¹⁹⁵

Multicongregational Approach

While many churches have different groups for specific ages or cultural groupings, some churches take this a stage further by having separate functioning congregations. Ortiz describes this multicongregational approach as 'very effective in urban areas where many different minority groups live in geographical proximity to each other.'¹⁹⁶ This would certainly be a valid description of many parts of London. He acknowledges that the practice of this model will look different in different places, observing that:

Some multicongregational churches simply share facilities with ethnic congregations that maintain their own autonomy, while others go so far as to share the entire church administration equitably.¹⁹⁷

The extent to which sharing (or in reality renting out) a building is an expression of any desire for unity in the body of Christ remains questionable. Many London Baptist churches have other congregations who use their premises, but this does not often lead to partnerships or any sense of shared mission and worship.¹⁹⁸

Perhaps a more 'new-humanity' approach is represented by the second part of Ortiz's observation, with the sharing of resources. Ken Davis makes this the

¹⁹⁵ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p108

¹⁹⁶ Ortiz *One New People*, p64

¹⁹⁷ Ortiz *One New People*, p64

¹⁹⁸ From personal experience, Clapham Baptist Church has two other congregations that use its facility on a Sunday, but they maintain separate identities, values and missions. Westbourne Park Baptist is an exception whereby the Pastors of the various fellowships that use the facilities meet regularly for prayer and sharing.

definition of a multicultural multicongregational model, looking for a situation where all of 'the congregations are expected to work together in a continuing fellowship to build unity'.¹⁹⁹

The multicongregational approach may well be suited to a city such as London. Sturge cites the example of Kensington Temple (KT) as an example of this model at work in the Capital.²⁰⁰ In 1993 KT re-imagined itself as London City Church (LCC), a networked church with multiple congregations. According to its own website LCC

is probably one of the most ethnically diverse and racially integrated network of churches that you can come across anywhere in the world. It encapsulates the uniqueness, unity and diversity of a fusion of the world's cultures and ethnicity.²⁰¹

The LCC network is a large network, growing since the mid 1980's. By their own description, this network churches 'grew until it encompassed around 10 000 – 12 000 people in 130 satellite churches as well as five congregations meeting in the Kensington Temple building'.²⁰² In recent years alongside the congregations a cell-based structure based around groups of twelve has become a core component of their vision.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ K. Davis 'Multicultural Church Planting Models', *Baptist Bible Seminary: Journal of Ministry and Theology*, Spring 2003

²⁰⁰ Sturge *Look what the Lord has Done!*, pp44-46

²⁰¹ <http://www.ktlcc.net/web/default.aspx>, accessed March 18 2009

²⁰² <http://www.ktlcc.net/web/lcc.aspx>, accessed March 18 2009

²⁰³ <http://www.ktlcc.net/web/model12.aspx>, accessed March 18 2009

The churches of LCC are a mix of geographical and more heterogeneous congregations, alongside language or culturally specific groupings, yet functioning as part of a network with a strong sense of 'apostolic' oversight and a shared vision.²⁰⁴ Sturge describes this as 'a true model of inclusive diversity'.²⁰⁵ He goes on to comment that

What KT has succeeded in doing is to provide an opportunity for the various streams can meet separately to worship, support each other and be disciplined in the appropriate way; they can then come together to celebrate their faith and worship God with boldness, confidence and trust, knowing they belong to the whole family of God.²⁰⁶

In many ways LCC is an extreme example of a multicongregational approach, on a scale bigger than any other in the UK. Some London Baptist churches are pursuing a multicongregational model on a smaller scale, with multiple services, with different focuses and languages,²⁰⁷ but a sharing of buildings still remains a far more common approach.

Other multi-group approaches

While few churches are truly multicongregational, many churches are multi-group. Gardner calls this 'website church', where 'there's homepage with various sections that correlate and overlap'.²⁰⁸ This approach may be worked out through different

²⁰⁴ See <http://www.ktlcc.net/web/sm-al.aspx>, accessed March 18 2009

²⁰⁵ Sturge *Look What the Lord has Done!*, p46

²⁰⁶ Sturge *Look What the Lord has Done!*, p46

²⁰⁷ See for example, <http://www.ccbc.org.uk/home.html>, accessed March 18 2009

²⁰⁸ Gardner *Mend the Gap*, p159

styles of worship service (not distinct enough to warrant the label 'multicongregational'), homogenous small groups coming together to worship as part of the whole, or activities for different ages. In essence such an approach is about seeking to provide distinct spaces for distinct groups, whilst retaining a sense of being a whole church. The danger with such a methodology is that groups get marginalised and separated. DeVries comments on how this separation frequently happens with younger people in church life, creating a kind of gap between 'youth ministry' and 'real church',²⁰⁹ as discussed above.²¹⁰

What should be done together and what can be done separately?

If a mixed model is the way forward, recognising the call for unity that the new-humanity church brings, alongside the recognition of cultural difference that a homogenous approach affords, then working out what can legitimately be done together and what needs to be done separately will be of great importance.

Mountstephen and Martin suggest that question needs to be 'what can we not do together', rather than what can we do.²¹¹

Ortiz's research in to multicongregational churches discovered that 'language, more than anything else, seems to be what keeps congregations separated'.²¹²

This observation raises issues about how preaching and teaching and how that functions in a multicultural group. Could this be one area that is best done in separate groupings, to overcome such language barriers, and also to ensure

²⁰⁹ DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, pp41-43

²¹⁰ See Chapter 4

²¹¹ Mountstephen & Martin *Body Beautiful*, p26

²¹² Ortiz *One New People*, p65

culturally appropriate application of the text? For churches committed to a new-humanity approach, this area is overcome not by separation, but by translation. Deymaz describes how their church has invested in simultaneous translation equipment, and also ensures all key documents are available in multiple languages.²¹³ Such facilities may be viable for some churches, but it needs to be considered that Deymaz is writing out a context based in the USA, with a church on a scale vastly different from the majority of London Baptist churches.

If teaching is difficult to do together, unless it is done in the host culture's language, then perhaps worship is more possible. Reference has already been made to some of the difficulties of all-age worship. Milne acknowledges that finding an authentic expression of worship for a group of people from different cultures can be difficult, but suggests that rather than using that as a basis for separation it becomes a basis for witness to the world. He advocates that 'Christian worship needs to be sociologically *inexplicable* not sociologically conformist'.²¹⁴

For most church communities, the primary expression of corporate worship is through music and song. In this arena cultural preference and sub-cultural taste can easily dominate. Missiologists also speak of 'ethnodoxology', and the importance of being able to express musical worship through a person's 'heart music', this being

²¹³ Deymaz *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, pp174-176

²¹⁴ Mine *Dynamic Diversity*, p110

the musical systems that a person learns as a child or youth and that most fully express his or her emotions. A person's heart music may be rural, urban, or include several different music systems.²¹⁵

Arturo Lucero suggests three possible options for churches seeking to worship together (apart from separating into separate preference or cultural groups): use the existing dominant worship style of the church (an 'assimilationist' approach), rotate styles week by week, vary styles in each gathering (a 'blended' approach).²¹⁶ While this third option may seem a viable suggestion, it places a large burden on the worship leader and musicians to be able to deliver a culturally diverse array of music. Churches such as or New Song Church,²¹⁷ with a multiethnic membership, often go for a universal popular music style as a way of worshipping together, reflecting that this has become the 'heart music' for many of the younger generations.

While worship and teaching are clearly not without their difficulties if attempted to be done multiculturally and multigenerationally, perhaps community or fellowship is more straight forward. The difficulty with this area of church life, however, is that it inevitably involves food.²¹⁸ While eating together is a New Testament practice and issues of cross cultural eating are covered in both the narrative of the early church (for example Acts 10) and the teaching of Paul (for example 1 Corinthians 8), it remains a source of both joy and difficulty for churches today. Food choice can be

²¹⁵ <http://www.worldofworship.org/heartmusic.php>, accessed 19 March 2009

²¹⁶ <http://healthydiversity.com/2008/10/23/worship-in-a-multi-ethnic-church-part-1-the-heart-of-worship/>, accessed 19 March 2009

²¹⁷ <http://global.newsong.net/>, accessed 19 March 2009

²¹⁸ See Garces-Foley *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, pp106-109

a source of inclusion and exclusion, 'because of the strong link between ethnicity and food'.²¹⁹

Partying in Different Rooms

The underlying theme for the new-humanity church is that of coming together, all in one large space, at one time, preferably for worship, teaching and fellowship.

Sturge suggests a different model, where 'we may be one in Christ, yet live in separate rooms'.²²⁰ Such a model may be expressed through a

multicongregational approach or by a many churches working together method.

Steve Collins, however, takes that suggestion a stage further by suggestion that churches should not seek to bring everyone together in one place, but instead allow people to interact in different spaces, like rooms at a party.²²¹

Collins suggests that rather than churches meeting in buildings with large auditoriums, the physical space should actually be designed to prevent everyone congregating in one place. Instead 'the church should be built around conversations and small groups', so that 'different pieces of the church are in different spaces at the same time as well as different times in the same space'.²²²

He adds that

You can't stay in one place to get the whole story.

You have to move around

Every one gets a different story

²¹⁹ Garces-Foley *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, p106

²²⁰ Sturge *Look What the Lord has Done!*, p51

²²¹ <http://www.btinternet.com/~smallritual/section4/justbecause.html>, accessed 19 March 2009

²²² <http://www.btinternet.com/~smallritual/section4/justbecause.html>, accessed 19 March 2009

Everyone makes their own story

You'll have to compare notes.²²³

For Collins the unity is being 'at the same party', but everyone's experience of it is unique. As a model for church in a multi-everything city such as London, this personalised approach has some appeal, and potential to provide a way of being that crosses cultural and generational boundaries. It is not, however without its weaknesses, as it provides little guarantee that what emerges will be a true reflection of the cultures of the participants rather than simply that of the dominant culture. It also seems to pander, for good or bad to the consumerist mindset of Western postmodernity. It does, though, provide a challenge to inherited notions of church having to take the form of a meeting with as many people in it as possible. The reality, however, for most London Baptist churches, is that church life is still centred around the gathered Sunday service (the notion of a gathered church being very much part of Baptist DNA),²²⁴ and as Garces-Foley suggests it is the Sunday service that remains 'the most important arena for churches to make their commitment to inclusion visible'.²²⁵

²²³ <http://www.btinternet.com/~smallritual/section4/justbecause.html>, accessed 19 March 2009

²²⁴ See N. Wright *Free Church, Free State: The Positive Baptist Vision* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), pp49-69

²²⁵ Garces-Foley *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, p93

Chapter 6: Finding a Pathway Forward

For most London Baptist churches the reality is that they are not starting from nowhere. Starting a new outreach or planting a new church would enable a clear decision to be made as to whether to adopt a new-humanity model or attempt to reach out along homogenous unit lines, but for most churches there is already some blurring of the lines. Murray suggests that what is needed are 'different kinds of homogenous churches from those which already dominate the ecclesiastical landscape'.²²⁶ For the majority of London Baptist Association churches, however, that landscape is constantly evolving and changing and is already a 'mixed bag'. Few older, inherited churches remain the homogeneous white enclaves they may have been even a decade ago. As one minister comments:

I've pastored the church now getting on for 16 years and it has grown steadily more mixed with the African proportion growing steadily... We have encountered some fairly massive cultural differences and we have had to learn to live with a lot of 'contradictions'...and all of this is stark, *stark* contrast to my experience of 9 years pastoring an exclusively white and overwhelmingly middle-class church elsewhere in the country. It is hard work here, but I have never been happier or felt more secure in ministry.²²⁷

What path is the best path forward? And are there other issues for consideration in deciding which paths to pursue?

²²⁶ Murray *Church Planting*, p146

²²⁷ Revd John Taylor, Stoke Newington Baptist Church, from questionnaire to ministers (see Appendix 1)

Power, Dominance and Control

One of the issues to be faced for new-humanity churches is that of power. Eric Law states it bluntly when he comments that whenever 'two or three culturally diverse groups come together, the white English-speaking group most likely sets the agenda'.²²⁸ For Law the way round this is to firmly address issues of justice, which means 'equal power and privilege among all people'.²²⁹ This is a call echoed by Ortiz, who suggests that a true new-humanity multiethnic church must be about more than the numbers of diverse people who are part of the church. Instead there must be a 'qualitative aspect' which 'has to do with matters of justice and reconciliation'.²³⁰

For some the best way to address issues of power and control is to form separate churches. Sturge suggests that far from being divisive, from the point of view of the minority groups 'homogenous units are in fact a way to preserve the unity of the church'.²³¹ Forming separate groups is perhaps a less painful option for some that attempting to break into the existing established power structures of the dominant culture. Moynagh sees that forming of homogenous groups as positive in this light too. It allows freedom and authenticity without power struggle. He notes that in 'our fallen world, fusing cultures allows the more fortunate to stifle other people'.²³²

²²⁸ Law *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, p2

²²⁹ Law *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, p13

²³⁰ Ortiz *One New People*, p89

²³¹ Sturge *Look What the Lord has Done*, p49

²³² M. Moynagh *Emergingchurch.intro* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2004), p51

Linked to issues of power and dominance, is the question of whether a mixed, new-humanity church can truly meet the needs of all its constituent groups and individual members in a suitable and appropriate way. One African pastor suggests 'homogeneous, one culture, churches are necessary in the UK because the pastoral needs of black people are neglected in the white churches that only claim to be multicultural'.²³³ Proponents of a new-humanity model acknowledge that there are difficulties in holding together different cultural expectations and meeting different needs together in one church. Anderson, for example sees such churches as needing to be grace filled, where people become 'gracists' who 'reach across ethnic lines to lend assistance and "extra grace" to those who are different'.²³⁴

There is, perhaps, a greater justification for homogenous groups formed from those outside of the dominant culture than for such groups from within. While this may seem contradictory, perhaps it is harder for those within the dominant culture (in the case of London, white British) to genuinely give up power, and be inclusive, creating a need for minority groups to find ways to express their faith elsewhere. There is a real danger that in appearing to be inclusive what is really happening is that those on the outside are being asked to change and become like those on the inside, not in a way that reflects Christ's love, but that curtails to the dominant cultural grouping. As Moynagh points out, 'there can be not real unity when you ask people to give up their cultures and be the same as everyone else'.²³⁵ The

²³³ C. Nonhebel 'Church of Many Colours', *Christianity*, December 2008, p32

²³⁴ Anderson *Gracism*, p29

²³⁵ Moynagh *Changing World, Changing Church*, p142

Baptist Union and Christian Aid report into multicultural churches puts the argument this way:

It is hard to see an argument for all-white congregations without being reminded of racism and empire. There is, however, a positive role for ethnic-minority churches that brings confidence and empowerment in a hostile society.²³⁶

Consumerism and Choice

Graham Cray has suggested that 'consumerism is the social water in which we now all swim'.²³⁷ How does this aspect of life in twenty first century London affect the way churches are formed? Is there a danger that homogeneous churches simply become churches 'that do things my way, with people I like', and avoid facing the cultural clashes and difficulties that new-humanity churches inevitably have to face, and in doing so miss out of the biblical call to break divides?

Moynagh suggests that moving away from a 'standardised' model of church in a world of 'personalisation' is not a bad thing.²³⁸ He further adds that in the consumerism 'it-must-fit-me world, Planet Church will be in outer orbit if it continues to treat everyone the same'.²³⁹ In a similar vein, Pete Ward advises that

²³⁶ Christian Aid & Baptist Union of Great Britain *Many Nations, One Church*, p5

²³⁷ G. Cray *Postmodern Culture and Youth Discipleship* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 1998), p6

²³⁸ Moynagh *Changing World, Changing Church*, pp31-43

²³⁹ Moynagh *Emergingchurch.intro*, p17

rather than seeking to fight the consumer culture churches should embrace it.²⁴⁰

He comments that: 'Choice must be basic to the new shape of church'.²⁴¹

The suggestion that church must embrace the niches of a fragmented postmodern culture rather than seek to flatten them out and constantly try to bring people together is not uncontroversial. Moynagh himself admits this, remarking how

Naysayers go into overdrive at the idea of "catalogue church" – you flip through the pages and pick what you fancy. Doesn't that baptise choice at the expense of commitment to Christ's body?²⁴²

He argues, however, that biblical unity is not at the expense of diversity, but embraces it.²⁴³ The reality is, too, that many churches already operate this kind of model even if they do not admit it. Speaking of the separation of the generations, once commentator remarks 'where specific church rolls show a significant generation mix, the different age-grouping may in fact rarely, if ever meet on another'.²⁴⁴

An ideal based on Western Modernity

Linked to both the idea of power and cultural dominance, and of consumerism and the growth of the 'choice' culture within the postmodern West, is the suggestion that the very analysis of people into 'people groups' and 'homogenous units', as well attempts at multiculturalism are actually flawed in themselves. They are the

²⁴⁰ P. Ward *Liquid Church* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), pp56-64

²⁴¹ Ward *Liquid Church*, p76

²⁴² Moynagh *Changing World, Changing Church*, p53

²⁴³ Moynagh *Changing World, Changing Church*, p53

²⁴⁴ Hilborn & Bird (eds) *God and the Generations*, p180

product of a worldview which is passing, a way of thinking about church and mission which remains 'trapped in the colonial mode'.²⁴⁵ In a situation where 'the emerging Christian world will be anchored in the Southern continents',²⁴⁶ perhaps it is time for a reimagining of church for a postcolonial world.²⁴⁷

Jonathan Ingelby proposes that

Too many of our mission strategies are based on the 'people group' pattern. This clearly had its value...but it is an inadequate model for today's world. It owes too much to the idea of cultural purity.²⁴⁸

What is needed instead is a realisation that in an increasingly mobile and globalised world, identities are negotiated and formed around more than simply race, ethnicity or even age grouping, becoming a 'perpetual task, for individuals orphaned of intractable legacies'.²⁴⁹ The reality is that for many in a city such as London, lives are lived in 'multiple cultural contexts'.²⁵⁰

Writing in the context of multiculturalism and the arts, Ziuddin Sardar suggests that 'all our perceptions of ethnic minorities' are coloured by modernity', which has a tendency to 'frame ethnic identity as an unchanging monolith'.²⁵¹ Instead Sardar

²⁴⁵ http://www.redcliffe.org/uploads/documents/hybridity_11.pdf, accessed 11 November 2007

²⁴⁶ P. Jenkins *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p17

²⁴⁷ http://www.redcliffe.org/uploads/documents/hybridity_11.pdf, accessed 11 November 2007

²⁴⁸ http://www.redcliffe.org/uploads/documents/globalisation3_01.pdf, accessed 31st July 2007

²⁴⁹ Z. Bauman 'Identity for Identity's Sake is a Bit Dodgy' in S. Davidson & J. Rutherford (eds) *Race, Identity and Belonging* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2008), p96

²⁵⁰ <http://archives.allelon.org/articles/print.cfm?id=80>, accessed 10 March 2009

²⁵¹ Z. Sardar 'Transmodernity: Art Beyond Modernity and Multiculturalism', in Arts Council England *Navigating Difference: Cultural Diversity and Audience Development* (London: Arts Council England, 2006), p37

calls for an embracing not of the fragmentations of postmodernity, but of 'transmodernity'.²⁵² Transmodernity reframes our worldview. As Sardar defines it:

transmodernity sees identities, ethnicities, traditions, cultures, faiths, communities and groups as complex and dynamic, constantly and continually changing.²⁵³

The result of transmodernity is not a pulling of other cultures and outlooks into the dominant modernising force of the Western worldview, but a fluid interplay, where by 'ethnic communities can (trans)modernise Britain as much as the dominant culture can modernise ethnic communities'.²⁵⁴

In the light of this, perhaps the new-humanity church needs to redefine itself not as a multicultural or multiethnic church but as a transmodern community, and rather than see people in fixed 'people groups', instead view them as belonging in different 'spaces' in different ways (which means they may in practice 'church' in more than one culture, for example by belonging to a Korean church and a 'mainstream' church). Such an approach may also need to realise that for some people ethnicity may not be the primary determinant of their cultural identity. This may be especially true for those who are the second generation of immigrant groups, as they negotiate identity from within the host culture. As Graces-Foley comments in regard to Mosaic Church in Los Angeles, a church largely populated

²⁵² Sardar 'Transmodernity: Art Beyond Modernity & Multiculturalism', p40

²⁵³ Sardar 'Transmodernity: Art Beyond Modernity & Multiculturalism', p40

²⁵⁴ Sardar 'Transmodernity: Art Beyond Modernity & Multiculturalism', p 40

by younger creatives, it is possible for a church to appear multiethnic, and yet in many ways be monocultural.²⁵⁵

Hybridity and ‘Third Culture’ Churches

The idea of transmodern churches is a realisation that ‘multicultural situations are not that simple’.²⁵⁶ Dan Bachens calls for churches be places of ‘transethnicity’, where ethnicity and culture are not ignored but are transcended.²⁵⁷ In a similar vein, Dave Gibbons speaks of third culture churches where distinctions are not dismantled or consumed into a ‘melting pot’, but rather are embraced and affirmed even if it causes discomfort.²⁵⁸

Gibbons calls for a church who’s home ‘is wherever Jesus is’, this ‘third culture’ church, where:

Third culture is the mindset and will to love, learn and serve in any culture, even in the midst of pain and discomfort.²⁵⁹

Such an approach argues Gibbons, goes deeper than the cosmetic appearance of being multicultural that marks some churches.²⁶⁰ It is also an approach which seems to have resonance in a globalised, mobile world and in the light of the blurring of boundaries of identity and culture described above.

²⁵⁵ Garces-Foley *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, pp96-99

²⁵⁶ <http://mattstone.blogs.com/globalchristianity/2009/01/multicultural-mission-a-graphical-illustration.html>, accessed 2 March 2009

²⁵⁷ http://www.transethnictransitions.com/podcast/TTC_S3_Dan_Backens_The_Value_of_Transethnicity.mp3, accessed 9 March 2009

²⁵⁸ D. Gibbons *The Monkey and the Fish: Liquid Leadership for a Third Culture Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), p40

²⁵⁹ Gibbons *The Monkey and the Fish*, p38

²⁶⁰ Gibbons *The Monkey and the Fish*, p40

There is a similarity here with notions of 'hybridity' and the 'third space', which Ingelby cites as helpful ways of thinking about the Kingdom of God in a complex, postcolonial world.²⁶¹ Drawing on the work of Homi Bhabha, Ingelby draws attention to the increasingly 'mixed' situation for mission, which is played out in a city such as London, 'characterised by hybridity and confusion of identities'. In such a situation he suggests the Christian community 'needs to be seen as an in-between space – a place of translation and negotiation'.²⁶² According to Bhabha, such an interstitial place is a liminal space where there can be 'a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy'.²⁶³ Such an approach to church would mean moving beyond inherited categories of people into simple groupings, to a fluid focus on relating and belonging.

Bauman points out that such a hybridity is not simply 'assimilation', whereby one culture absorbs another, because it is a new era, a 'liquid modern, post-hierarchical era'.²⁶⁴ This hybridity seems to be at the heart of Gibbon's notion of third culture churches. He says 'it doesn't eradicate color lines but embraces and affirms who we are'.²⁶⁵ This takes the church to a place where the primary belonging and focus of identity becomes those who are 'in Christ', above and beyond, but not regardless of cultural, generational or other issues.

²⁶¹ http://www.redcliffe.org/uploads/documents/hybridity_11.pdf, accessed 11 November 2007

²⁶² http://www.redcliffe.org/uploads/documents/hybridity_11.pdf, accessed 11 November 2007

²⁶³ H. Bhabha *The Location of Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994), p5

²⁶⁴ Bauman 'Identity for Identity's Sake is a Bit Dodgy', p94

²⁶⁵ Gibbons *The Monkey and the Fish*, p40

Gibbons notion that such a church needs to consciously embrace discomfort is a challenging one. Garces-Foley makes a similar observation from her study of multiethnic churches. She comments 'I am sceptical of the claim that any multiethnic church is free of tension'.²⁶⁶ Being a place of hybridity, a place to belong in a mixed up world seems to not do away with such tensions, but as Ingelby points out the way of Jesus is about 'knowing ourselves by knowing and loving God *through* the experience of *loving the neighbour* who images God'.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ Garces-Foley *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, p131

²⁶⁷ http://www.redcliffe.org/uploads/documents/hybridity_11.pdf , accessed 11 November 2007

Conclusion: Is the New-Humanity Church the Way Forward?

Is the best future for London's Baptist churches in forming churches from homogenous groups or in seeking to form new-humanity churches which seek to bring people together?

London is a unique, complex city with a population from all corners of the globe. The reality of such a mixed setting is that a variety of approaches is needed. Moynagh refers to this as a 'mixed economy' of churches.²⁶⁸ For many churches remaining as they are is not an option as the population shifts bring fresh challenges, both in terms of those attending the church and for mission.

Milne's notion of a church bringing people together has much that is appealing, but whether a weekly pattern of church life and worship that is multicultural and multigenerational is truly sustainable remains unclear. At the same time the notion of endless narrowing and focusing on specific target groups also seems to miss the biblical call for unity and reconciliation.

The answer perhaps, lies in notions of hybridity and the third culture church. A church which is open to embrace the 'other' even at its own pain. A church where mission leads people to focus beyond their 'own' and engage with the world around them. As Bryant points out, a church with a mission 'to love and serve its city becomes diverse through the natural connections of relationships'.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ Moynagh *Emerging church.intro*, p16

²⁶⁹ Bryant *Peppermint Filled Piñatas*, p78

Mission must inevitably involve contextualisation. The message of the gospel needs to be seen and heard in a way that can be understood, without unnecessary barriers. Bell calls for the church to become 'culturally specific in our mission, but seeking unity in diversity in our life together'.²⁷⁰ Graham Cray echoes that, reminding that 'missiology takes priority over ecclesiology, because the gospel creates the church!'²⁷¹ Perhaps in such a missionary situation there may be a place for homogenous churches as a provisional form, with the goal of barrier-breaking relationships clearly in mind.

Whichever approach is taken, in the multi-everything context of London the world needs to see a church which transcends rather than re-enforces the barriers and divisions that are present in society. In such a world the church can only be relevant in its catholicity.²⁷² Milne sums it up well:

the call to new humanity is a call to the defiance of faith...that God is, that Jesus reigns, and that a radically new *divine* world order is on its way, in which the people of the triune God will be transformed into a single, new, glorified and everlasting family.²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Bell 'Mission and Ecclesiology', p55

²⁷¹ Gray *Youth Congregations and the Emerging Church*, p15

²⁷² C. Rashke *GloboChrist: The Great Commission Takes a Postmodern Turn* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), p168

²⁷³ Milne *Dynamic Diversity*, p171

Appendix 1

Questionnaire to Ministers

The following questionnaire was sent to a small selection of ministers in London Baptist Association churches, known through personal and professional contact. The churches who responded were churches known to have a culturally mixed congregation. It was also sent to some ministers of homogenous churches, but they failed to respond.

Peter Leveson:
Research on the “New Humanity Church”: March 2009

Church Size & Make up:

Church name: **High Road Ilford**

Number of members: 170

Average congregation size (main service): 250

Briefly describe the cultural make up of your congregation: We have in excess of 20 nationalities from all parts of the world. 50% Afro-Caribbean, 30% white (British and E European), 20% S Asian.

Briefly describe the age make up of your congregation: A good spread of ages but not many 20-30's or 70+

Does this reflect the geographical area in which your church is situated? No. There should be a higher % of S Asians who make up 60+% of the population. In spite of significant investment, the evangelistic challenge remains huge.

Has there been numerical growth over the past 5 years (an estimated percentage would be helpful): Yes. 30%?

How does it work?

Do you have “all age” services or parts of services? If so how often? We do all age services occasionally throughout the year and in a block in the summer and at Christmas/ New Year. We have not done children's talks for 15 years.

Is your leadership team:

Mixed ethnically Yes

Mixed Gender Yes

Anyone aged under 30 Yes

30 – 45 Yes

45-60 Yes

60+ No

Peter Leveson:
Research on the “New Humanity Church”: March 2009

Church Size & Make up:

Church name: **North Hanwell**

Number of members: 32

Average congregation size (main service): 70

Briefly describe the cultural make up of your congregation:

35% White British; 25% Caribbean; 20% Black African; 7% Asian; 5% White (Other)

3% Chinese

Briefly describe the age make up of your congregation:

Taking the average of 70: 28 = under 16; 10 = 17-30; 11 = 31-45; 7 = 45-60; 14 = over 60

Does this reflect the geographical area in which your church is situated?

We're 0.05% 'out' within our postcode both ethnically and age wise

Has there been numerical growth over the past 5 years (an estimated percentage would be helpful):

We've just over quadrupled numerically

How does it work?

Do you have “all age” services or parts of services? If so how often?

1st half of service each week is all age

(always have with toys/books at front so don't have to take an active part)

Once a month all age.

During Summer Hols all age.

Baptisms / dedications / commissioning services/ all age

Everyone takes part in communion

Is your leadership team: 6 on team

Mixed ethnically yes

Mixed Gender yes

Anyone aged under 30 1

30 – 45 1

45-60 3

60+ 1

Peter Leveson:
Research on the “New Humanity Church”: March 2009

Church Size & Make up:

Church name: **Stoke Newington B.C.**

Number of members: **78**

Average congregation size (main service): **100** (including children)

Briefly describe the cultural make up of your congregation:

We are approximately 50% African (groups of Nigerian, Ghanaian, Congolese, Angolan + various other individuals/couples), a little under 20% Caribbean, a little over 20% white UK (& Ireland) and 10% other...

Briefly describe the age make up of your congregation:

Fairly mixed with a reasonable spread through most age ranges... probably slightly weighted towards older rather than younger.

Does this reflect the geographical area in which your church is situated?

No – we are in an area fairly heavily dominated by Turkish/Kurdish Muslims!

Has there been numerical growth over the past 5 years (an estimated percentage would be helpful):

No – we are about the same – maybe a little down on numbers (probably by a bit under 5%)

How does it work?

Do you have “all age” services or parts of services? If so how often?

Yes we have a monthly ‘all-age’ + the first part of every service (the first hour and a half [including coffee break]) is all-in.

Is your leadership team:

Mixed ethnically **Yes**

Mixed Gender **Yes**

(but weighted toward male at the moment)

Anyone aged under 30 **No**

30 – 45 **Yes**

45-60 **Yes**

60+ Yes

I've pastored the church now getting on for 16 years and it has grown steadily more mixed with the African proportion growing steadily. For 9 of those years I had an Angolan associate pastor working with me (*or not – as the case may be!*). There was a big surge in central Africans (DR Congo & Angola) during the early years of his ministry.

Multi-ethnic church is not easy; multi-cultural church is sometimes almost impossible! We have encountered some fairly massive cultural differences and we have had to learn to live with a lot of 'contradictions' (? – not sure if that's really the right word, but...) There are major points of disagreement between sections of the church over issues such as: Communion (especially the place of children in communion); relationships in marriage; teaching children in Sunday School/Junior Church; care of the fabric of the building; Child-Protection issues, etc., etc. Also, with my co-pastor, there were occasionally issues of theology and doctrine! (How much would have been there anyway, and how much arose from different cultural traditions, I don't know.)

However, despite all the problems, it is tremendously interesting to contemplate the general 'happiness' of the church and the way in which everyone does, more/less, seek to accommodate everyone else (*or nearly everyone else!*) – and all of this is stark, *stark* contrast to my experience of 9 years pastoring an exclusively white and overwhelmingly middle-class church elsewhere in the country.

It is hard work here, but I have never been happier or felt more secure in ministry.

Peter Leveson:
Research on the “New Humanity Church”: March 2009

Church Size & Make up:

Church name: **Greenleaf Road Baptist Church**

Number of members: 81

Average congregation size (main service): 90

Briefly describe the cultural make up of your congregation:

We are mixed racially: British 50%, Afro-Caribbean 40%, remaining 10% African, Asian, Chinese and American

Briefly describe the age make up of your congregation:

Approximately –

15 children,
10 teenagers,
15 people aged 20-40,
15 people aged 40-60
20 people aged 60-70
20 people over 70

Does this reflect the geographical area in which your church is situated?

Culturally we do not reflect the amount of Asians in our local area and I would think the average age of congregation is higher than local area.

Has there been numerical growth over the past 5 years (an estimated percentage would be helpful):

3 years interregnum saw a decline in numbers
last 2 years saw estimated 2% growth in congregation

How does it work?

Do you have “all age” services or parts of services? If so how often?

Yes, as arranged, on average quarterly

Is your leadership team:

Mixed ethnically yes

Mixed Gender yes

Anyone aged under 30 30 – 45 2 leaders 45-60 2 leaders 60+ 2 leaders

New Humanity Church”: March 2009

Church Size & Make up: 260 members, multicultural.

Church name: **Rayners Lane BC**

Number of members: 260

Average congregation size (main service): 200 (three services)

Briefly describe the cultural make up of your congregation:

Approx 30 different nationalities

Briefly describe the age make up of your congregation:

0-90, well spread across the generations

Does this reflect the geographical area in which your church is situated?

Yes

Has there been numerical growth over the past 5 years (an estimated percentage would be helpful):

Yes, estimate 10-15%

How does it work?

Do you have “all age” services or parts of services? If so how often?

About six “all age” services during the year. Children / youth present for first part of two of our three services, then they have their own activities running parallel with the service.

Is your leadership team: **(pastoral staff / diaconate)**

Mixed ethnically yes / yes

Mixed Gender no /

yes

Anyone aged under 30 no / no 30 – 45 yes / yes

45-60 yes / yes 60+ no / yes

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