Beyond the Lych-gate; a Strategic Diagnostic of Church Culture and Practices that Marginalise and Disenfranchise Black[1], Asian & Minority Ethnic People in the Church of England

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ABSTRACT

In a fragile, vulnerable world that is experiencing extraordinary and catalyst change, the Church is asking *'what can we do, how can we be better?'* This paper is a pragmatic distillation of the findings of the Minority Anglicanism Project (MAP)[2], and other stake-hold psycho-social research endeavours on 'race[3]', marginalisation, prejudice and unconscious bias in the Church. Formulated in response to those who have written in to ask for practical guidance on strategic measures Churches and Dioceses can take to be more receptive and inclusive, it is framed as a very simple and accessible diagnostic list of recommendations for dioceses, clergy, wardens, PCCs and other ecclesiastical missioners, as it journeys from the lych-gate to the altar. The recommended strategies explore church practices in Invitation, Welcome, Inclusion, Belonging, Embodiment, Generosity and Vocation, spelling out the Cognitive repercussions of subjugation in church, both on those who are reduced, as much as those who hold racialised monological dominance[4].

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[1] It is worth noting that 'Whiteness' and 'Blackness' are pernicious social constructs, and this reframing of complex ethnic identities into exclusive monoliths is itself a prejudicial cognitive economy, rooted in a colonial rapacity and a colourist hegemony. With some consideration given to the nuanced discourse of its ontological parameters discussed in some depth in the MAP academic output, I have adopted these terms of populist discourse, advisedly, with a cognitive instrumentalist agenda.

[2] The Minority Anglicanism Project (MAP) included a large quantitative study which packed a number of research instruments and tools, a small diocesan interview study, a thematic analysis of Black theology and Lamentation literature, and an ecclesiological analysis. The findings of this project are currently being written up for submission to various journal platforms and will be sign-posted on the project twitter account as and when they are published.

[3] As with colourised categorisations, this paper recognises the problematic nature of the concept of 'race' which is a classification often sponsored and reified by nation states, regulated and widely bureaucratised throughout one's life span. For example most institutionalised forms reify this, in tick box self-category options of 'White British', 'White other', 'Black', 'Asian' etc. This research endeavour is merely examining the power dynamics endowed to these popularised and colourised contexts, categories and identities.

[4] Monological Dominance can be described as *'A persistent tendency to turn into an unbending totalizing disdain for the other': 'conjure yourself as the sun, one who 'emanates' generosity without an inextricable receptivity to the gifts of others… developing an awesome and monological sense of superiority.''* Coles, R., 1995, in Barrett, A., (2020) Interrupting the Church's Flow, SCM press; London

Contents

INTRODUCTION

> *"Pain makes Theologians of us all"*
> **-Barbara Brown Taylor**
> ***'An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith'***

A penitent church and a performative allyship

In a year that began with a vulnerable and lamenting synod, in sackcloth and ashes, the Church of England has made extraordinary strides towards acknowledging racism in the last couple of months. Since then, the House of Bishops have led the way; beginning with the Archbishop of Canterbury's statement on the disproportionate number of death from COVID-19 among minority ethnic communities, to bishops around the country 'taking a knee' in support of the BLM protests[5]. But critics from across the Overton spectrum have dismissed or condemned this performative allyship as mere virtue signalling.

Nevertheless, however superficial these actions might be construed as, there has been a tangible change in the mood and attitude in the Church of England. The hitherto, tight-lipped reluctance to discuss the obvious racialised prejudice within the Church of England, had been in itself a kind of abusive 'insidious trauma[6]'. Institutionalised silence is often one of the most acute traumatic agents that engender psychologically damaging organisational cultures. Often the first step towards organisational change, is attention, listening and prioritised focus. Much of what has come to pass in the last couple of months, by design or by providence, signals at the very least, a desire to change.

Despite the enormous significance of this attitude change, it is easy to get caught up in narratives of heroism and valour of the Church's performative allyship, and be satisfied in this seeming progress, measured in hash-tags and a chorus of feel-good Sunday homilies, easily abandoned with the next trending issue. The real question is whether dioceses, congregations, PCCs and clergy are willing to make lasting and significant change to Church culture and strategy, and recognise the cost of introspection, discomfiture and real repentance necessary for a transformational emancipation.

The odds of human fallibility and difficult questions

The behavioural inclinations of a fallen Eden are for power and prosperity to consolidate. In this consolidation, religion, virtue and deontology is often instrumentalised, as history has repeatedly demonstrated. However precious and sacred its traditions and history might be to us, the Church of

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[5] Williams, H (2020) '*Church leaders join the voices against racism'* Church Times; June 20, SCM Press
[6] As conceptualised in psycho-pathology by Maria Root in: Root, M., (1992) "*Reconstructing the Impact of Trauma on Personality."* in Personality and Psychopathology: Feminist Reappraisals (Eds). Laura S Brown and Mary Ballou. New York: Guilford,

England *has* long been a primal motif and symbol for such corruptions and consolidations of power in the nation's landscape.

Many have dismissed the Church of England's recognition of this history, and the bishop's response to the BLM movement, as a pandering to a culture war which has no place in the church. Some have labelled this *'a frantic self-abasement by the white middle class as part of their 'great awokening'*[7] typically misrepresenting the need to problematize racialised dominance, as a call to self-immolate 'Whiteness' and ethnicity. Few have asked what this dominance means to the church and its vocation, from the perspective of the marginalised and disenfranchised; for the heart of the gospel. The painful questions that dioceses, churches, congregations and other ecclesiastical structures need to ask itself from this context are:

(1) Whether church power dynamics are a racialised process:

(2) Whether 'race' alongside other marginalised intersectional demographics is a factor in the way church manifests itself:

(3) Whether the historically colonising patterns and paradigms of manipulating 'race' has become a default norm:

(4) Whether tradition and culture has subtly mutated with these oppressive norms:

(5) And finally, whether this is congruous with gospel values and a Christ centred missiology.

Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza contends that 'all theology, willingly or not, is by definition always engaged for or against the oppressed; intellectual neutrality is not possible in a world of exploitation and oppression.[8]'

Of course, the greatest challenge to recognising the nature of racism in everyday culture, consciously or subconsciously, is the desire to hold on to the privileges that might inequitably benefit us, conflicting with the very human desire to believe that we are part of a just and meritocratic society[9]. To accept that we might be the beneficiaries of a corrupt predatory system creates anxiety, and requires us to either reject or accept this accusation in varying degrees of complexity. Therefore, if we belong[10] to a demographic group that benefit and are empowered by this racialised status quo, a resilient and blinkered defence mechanism often filters judgement on how we perceive and narrate the past and judge the present[11]. This racialised difference in perceptions of racism past and present, among

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[7] Symes, A., (2020) *'Repenting of privilege, signalling virtue, following the crowd'* Anglican Mainstream retrieved 18/06/20

[8] Schussler-Fiorenza, E., (1983) "In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins". New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, p. XV
[9] See *Just World Hypothesis*; Lerner, M. J., & Miller, D. T. (1978). *Just world research and the attribution process*: Looking back and ahead. Psychological Bulletin, 85(5), 1030–1051.
[10] This is also true sometimes when we *do not belong* to the dominant group but are part of a secondary group or benefit from intersectional privileges in a hierarchical taxonomy of power. (Ibid)
[11] See *Marley's Hypothesis*; Nelson, A., Adams, G., & Salter (2012) The Marley Hypothesis: Denial of Racism Reflects Ignorance of History Psychological Science 24(2) 213–218

dominant empowered groups, further lead to a defensive portrayal of racism as a deviant reality that disempowered groups overplay[12]. Cultural theorists locate these discrepancies of perception to identity-defensive ideologies that spring from a sense of being personally attacked when racialised power structures are critiqued.[13]

Meanwhile Psycho-social theories of power predict, that its authoritarian consolidation reduces the attention we afford others, along with our capacity for perspective-taking[14]. That, power leads individuals 'to anchor too heavily on their own vantage point, insufficiently adjusting to others' perspectives'.[15] The very definition of power is the asymmetric control of developmental roles and resources[16] and surrendering this control is counterintuitive to the corrupted nature of human survival. Cognitive and psycho-social models of behavioural economy would predict unfavourable odds against the Church of England's capacity to make significant sustainable change, for all its performative repentance. The structural, cultural and behavioural challenges an establishment steeped in tradition, privilege and power, over-burdened with such a racialised heritage & deontology, seem impossible odds to overcome.

A salvific hope and a transcendent community

Yet, Christian Theology has always countered the odds, and relocated possibility in the transcendence of a salvific hope. Martin Luther King locates this hope at the heart of his liberation campaign. This reoccurring and primal desire that echoes in the endeavours of generations of liberation Theologians, he best expresses as a desire 'to create a beloved community' that 'will require a qualitative change in our souls, as well as a quantitative change in our lives.'[17] James Cone demands the urgent immutability of this claim;

> "If the Church is to remain faithful to its Lord, it must make a decisive break with the structure of this society by launching a vehement attack on the evils of racism in all forms. It must become prophetic, demanding a radical change in the interlocking structures of this society."[18]

While, the means, facets and theology of this transformative revolution vary between theologians, Black and liberation theology seem committed to an extraordinary hope that is rarely shared by other disciplines that investigates this subject matter. It is an extraordinary hope, based beyond human capacity, in a *Divine Dunamis*[19], that has shaped and intervened in the formation of Church in all its

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[12] Wise, T (2006). *What kind of card is race? The absurdity and consistency of White* denial in Nelson, A., Adams, G., & Salter (2012) The Marley Hypothesis: Denial of Racism Reflects Ignorance of History Psychological Science 24(2) 213–218

[13] Adams, G., Tormala, T. T., & O'Brien, L. T. (2006). *The effect of self-affirmation on perception of racism.* Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 42, 616–626.

[14] Lammers, J., Gordijn, E.H., & Otten, S. (2008). *Looking through the eyes of the powerful.* Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 44(5), 1229–1238.

[15] Galinsky, A., Magee, J., Inesi, M., & Gruenfeld, D., (2006) *Power and Perspectives not Taken.* Psychological Science, 7(12), 1068–1074. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2006.01824.x

[16] Magee, J.C., & Galinsky, A.D. (2008). *A social hierarchy: The self-reinforcing nature of power and status.* The Academy of Management Annals, 2(1), 351–398.

[17] King, M.L., *'Birth of a New Age'* August 1956, pp. 339-346

[18] Cone, J.H., *'Black theology and Black power'* The Seabury Press, 1969, p.32

[19] Kearney R (ch. 7) *Paul's Notion of Dunamis; between the possible and the impossible,* in Caputo j. & Alcoff, L., (2009) eds. St. Paul among the Philosophers. Indiana University Press; Ind

errant babel building. So I am encouraged as our bishops take a knee, submitting a crumbling Camelot and a broken stone table, not to a piece of populist political theatre, but at the edges of an unfolding theo-dramatic horizon, to a Lord that commands justice and compassion. The question now is whether the ecclesia will follow through…

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"But the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the beloved community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opposers into friends. It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this Love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men."

-Dr. Martin Luther King
'Facing the Challenge of a New Age'

DIAGNOSTIC AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is not an academic critique of our racialised ecclesiology nor a study in Critical Whiteness, but a simple response to dioceses and congregations that have written to ask for practical guidance on behavioural deficits. These diagnostic strategies have been developed between three overlapping studies on the racialised stake-holds of the Church of England. The thematic narratives shared in this diagnostic is not about a tally of grievances or an adjudication of racialised accusations evidenced in research data. Instead, it is a plea that Churches and ecclesial leaders might consider these issues that make an acute impact on minority ethnic Christians. While I hope it is a very practical list of 'things to consider, to do, or *not do*' that the ecclesia might explore, adopt or adapt, it is by no means exhaustive or even a significant portion of the real anti-racism effort required in churches, dioceses and allied organisations in the country. *It,* is merely a beginning.

Missiology and Invitation

The initial invitation and welcome to a church is perhaps the most significant embodiment of our missiology. Intentional invitation campaigns & church growth strategies should be reconsidered in terms of target audiences. Often when churches 'advertise' an invitation, whether it is using banners outside a church building, or in intentional strategies *(For e.g. some dioceses run 'Bring One Friend' campaigns or 'Back to church Sundays')*, these often overlook marginalised communities and replicate the status-quo. One of the reoccurring comments made by participants in both the qualitative and quantitative studies' of the [Minority Anglicanism Project (MAP)][20], was that when the CoE strategizes '*church growth*', they often mean church growth in a particular able bodied, racialised, middle class, hetero-normativity. Conversely, while census data[21] indicates overall Christian decline in England and Wales, the ethno demography illustrates a contrasting trend, where BAME[22] churches, particularly

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[20] The findings of this project are currently being written up for submission to various journal platforms.
[21] British Social Attitudes; Public Policy, Social Ties - The 18th Report. 2018, Sage.
[22] This is an increasingly populist but problematic term used here mostly because it is the en-vogue terminology in relevant reports and ecclesiological discourse in the absence of better developed nomenclature.

Black majority churches, show a steep growth rate[23]. The fact that much of the fruits of this growth remain outside the Church of England, has much to do with the excluded minority ethnic presence within the tradition. Those minority ethnic Christians who have remained, and even thrived in the Church of England, as the emerging themes from the MAP qualitative interview study indicates, have done this despite the rejection, exclusion and lack of accommodation, and demonstrably, at great personal and psycho-social cost.

The growing and thriving church outside the bounds of the CoE, according to census data, is uncontestably Black[24]. And yet, Church of England Church growth research and findings rarely acknowledge the subtle exclusions, challenges or nuanced cross- cultural conflicts experienced by minority ethnic people. On the very rare occasion church planting strategies take ethnicity into consideration, it is in the context of urban deprivation which often becomes a fetishized missiological aspiration in a monological[25] 'White saviour' expression. While urban ecclesiastical spaces give the impression of multi-culturalism, deeper probing in our interview study illustrated fragmentation and ghettoization, even within progressive dioceses which have comparatively well-developed anti—racist strategies. Participants from Black majority churches often expressed the 'politely neglected' desire to engage in collaborative campaigns and services with their White majority church counterparts. The other deeply troubling phenomenon is the 'White Flight' reported in suburban churches with multi-cultural church growth. Dioceses need to consider what this means for the Church and its ecclesiology, and how they might respond.

Rural Church growth strategies too are sometimes short-sighted, and miss out on a creative opportunity to reimagine rural church growth. For e.g. rural Church strategies have the opportunity to be the threshold of welcome and act as conduit of local community belonging for minority ethnic[26] seasonal migrant workers[27] and refugee settlements. The other cardinal challenge that UK minority ethnic[28] participants often report, is the assumptions made by tight-knit mono-cultural communities on belonging, local autonomy and theology of place, which often translate to a cold, conditional welcome to the 'visibly different'. While this is also evident, in urban contexts, this is a particular issue that needs to be carefully and prayerfully explored in rural ministries, especially when navigating the complex issues around globalisation[29].

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[23] British Social Attitudes; Public Policy, Social Ties - The 18th Report. 2018, Sage.

[24] British Social Attitudes; Public Policy, Social Ties - The 18th Report. 2018, Sage.

[25] Barratt reframes Coles on Nietzsche in examining monological generosity and giving as a blind subjugation in 'A persistent tendency to turn into an unbending totalizing disdain for the other': 'conjure yourself as the sun, one who 'emanates' generosity without an inextricable receptivity to the gifts of others… developing an awesome and monological sense of superiority.' ' Coles, R 1995, in Barrett, A (2020) p.147.

[26] Minority ethnic while in the UK context, often categorised as 'BAME' or 'White other' which are problematic concepts.

[27] 'Many rural areas are learning how to assimilate migrant workers, particularly from the new member countries of European Union. An estimated 60,000 seasonal migrant workers come to Britain each year to carry out a wide of tasks on farms and in pack houses as well as in hotels and restaurants in rural areas.' (In Exon, +M, (2006) 'Seeds in Holy Ground – a Future for the Rural Church? Church of England Publication; A Background Briefing from the Mission and Public Affairs Council.)

[28] The author prefers the term UKME to BAME

[29] Martineau, J.F., Francis, L.J. & Francis, P. (2004) *Changing Rural Life – a Christian response to key rural issues.* Norwich, Canterbury Press.

Therefore, the recommendation of this report is not to replace existing strategies of church growth, but to diagnose and supplement its blind spots and exclusions, and consider the theological and missiological implications of a segregated church. Real antiracism endeavours have to be nourished by good theology, a fearless readiness to dig deep into underlying causes, and a readiness to deal with discomfiting realities. Short term facile solutions will merely inflame racialised tensions.

Receptivity and Welcome

Meanwhile, at a more contextual and micro-strategic level, it is important to consider the shade and texture of church welcome, and diagnose its intentionality and impact. It is particularly important to impress upon 'Sides people', 'Welcome teams' and other personnel who greet visitors at the door that this first impression, particularly in newcomers or first time visitors, will determine[30] how they interact with this particular church, or even church tradition (especially if that was their first impression of the CoE, or even Christian worship) and may have a long lasting impact on the church's calling to missional engagement.

It would be easy to tally indiscretions that may appear to be a harmless faux pas to those who don't experience these marginal violations on a daily basis. But these slights and micro-aggressions often cumulate to create an oppressive and exhausting reality which minority ethnic experience have to navigate daily. And as a church, we, by design, ignorance or insensitivity, create a hostile environment in that journey, between the lych-gate and the altar. To give a very simple example; a reoccurring theme from the qualitative interview studies was, the importance of learning people's name (*and how to pronounce it*[31]) where you can; this is a most basic of human dignities[32]. Learning or remembering someone's name is a primal generosity of cognition. Offering to call someone by an anglicised version or short-form of their name (unless such is offered), is deeply problematic. Theologically[33], as much as sociologically, names have incredible power[34], and the psycho-social impact of diminishing someone by 'othering' or subjugating their name has disquieting repercussions.

Part of the problem is that in our desire to imitate Christ and in operationalising a clichéd caricature of 'what would Jesus do', we appropriate his lordship. As Jennifer Harvey advocates, perhaps we need to relocate ourselves and imitate his receptivity rather than usurp his authority.[35] Al Barrett, in his excellent book 'Interrupting the Church's Flow', deconstructs the nuances of this, engaging Graham

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[30] Gilron, R., & Gutchess, A. H., (2012) *Remembering first impressions: effects of intentionality and diagnosticity on subsequent memory.*' Cognitive, affective & behavioural neuroscience, 12(1), 85–98. doi:10.3758/s13415-011-0074-6

[31] Laham, S. M., Koval, P., & Alter, A. L. (2012). *The name-pronunciation effect: Why people like Mr. Smith more than Mr. Colquhoun.* Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 48, 752–756. http://dx.doi.org/10 .1016/j.jesp.2011.12.002

[32] Himes, Mavis. *The Power of Names: Uncovering the Mystery of What We Are Called* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

[33] When God transforms the calling and context of people in both the OT and NT, he gives them a new name. This is a powerful theological construct.

[34] Charmaz, K., (2006) '*The Power of Names*' Journal of Contemporary Ethnography 35, 4, pp. 396–399 Sage Publications 10.1177/0891241606286983 http://jce.sagepub.com hosted at http://online.sagepub.com

[35] Havervey, J (2012) *What would Zacchaeus do? The case for disidentifying with Jesus* in Yancy G., (Ed.) Christology and Whiteness: What Would Jesus Do? London; Routledge.

Ward and Romand Coles in a radically receptive political theology. He suggests '*What you hear depends on where you listen!*'; re-examining how Church interacts with the 'other', proposing the outward current in church missiology is 'interrupted', that 'listening is not simply a means to voice, just judgment, and power' but based on the assumption that our capacity to listen with humility is integral to our missiology. He contends,

> "The 'radical curiosity' that draws out from us our stories, and the political passions and perceptions that we so often hide, creates the context within which relationships are formed and deepened, and in which a rich complex critical vision of a community develops along with the gradual articulation of alternative possibilities."[36]

In practice, we might imagine, that this generous receptivity is not always withheld merely from those minority ethnic congregants or visitors, or even just from the marginalised. The hustle and bustle of the preamble to a church service often rob us from the rich receptive sensitivity due to a Sabbath communion. But, the nature of cognitive economy is such that when we engage in conversations with those who are perceived to be different[37] and subconsciously categorised[38] as an 'outsider'[39], we limit their capacity to engage with the in-group and minimise their 'social influence'[40] impoverishing the possibility of truly meaningful relationships[41]. This means we *are* less likely to have those truly receptive conversations with those who are structurally marginalised and those who we are particularly called to engage with.

Absorption and Inclusion

To deconstruct another such common micro-aggression reported by minority ethnic participants in church settings, one might consider the psycho-social impact of facial recognition, and acknowledgement; being a 'church family' is about embracing and knowing members of this family. It may not be possible to remember everyone's face short term, but if someone is consistently assumed to be a first time visitor after years of regularly attending the same church, this can be an 'othering' devise, and an often unconsciously wielded and sometimes consciously manipulated, power dynamic[42]. Too many minority ethnic participants in racialised research, including all three of the studies referenced in this paper, report being on the receiving end of this commonly expressed racist trope *'You all look the*

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[36] Barrett, A (2020) *Interrupting the Church's Flow*, SCM press; London

[37] Oakes, P. J., Turner, J. C. & Haslam, S. A. (1991). *Perceiving people as group members: The role of fit in the salience of social categorizations.* British Journal of Social Psychology, 30, 125-144.

[38] Tajfel, H. & Forgas, J. P. (1981). *Social categorization: Cognitions, values and groups.* In J. P. Forgas (Ed.), Social cognition: Perspectives on everyday understanding (pp. 113±140). London: Academic Press.

[39] Tajfel, H. (1981). *Social stereotyping and social groups.* In J. C. Turner & H. Giles (Eds), Intergroup behaviour (pp. 144-167). Oxford: Blackwell.

[40] Brook, M. E. & Ng, S. H. (1986). *Language and social influence in small conversational groups.* Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 5(3), 201-210.

[41] Campbell, D. T. (1958). *Common fate, similarity and other indices of the status of aggregates of persons as social entities.* Behavioural Science, 3, 14-25.

[42] Graham. L., (2011)'*Theology and Science.*' Vol 9, Issue 1, Routledge; Taylor & Francis

same to me[43]'. While there is a cognitive pre-cursor to own race bias in facial recognition[44], expressing this as an opt-out is a different matter and is often understood to be a racial slight and rejection. The othering impact, of this response has deeper psychological roots, and as evidenced in cognitive research, is shaped by intentionality[45], unconscious bias and subconscious categorisation[46]. As diagnosed and discussed at length by a number of participants, these 'othering devises' are based in a theological deficit and an incapacity grasp the multi-national, multi-racial vision of the gospel kingdom. Cognitive research further concludes that a common in-group identity and shared purpose moderates the cross-race facial recognition deficit, where the own-race bias comes to effect only when we have already categorised and encoded the person as other/ out-group[47].

Another reoccurring micro-aggression theme among minority ethnic interview participants was the '*glass door effect*'. This described the experience of being stuck in a continuous loop of the '*visitor experience'*, never being fully absorbed into the heart & hearth of the congregation. Research participants often reported exclusion from invitations to be on reading rotas, music groups, and other aspects of the life of the church that signal belonging and mutuality. 'White' leadership often dismiss this to be a harmless oversight that is not related to race, but the statistics illustrate significant difference of experiences between groups suggesting a racialised discrepancy. The challenge for Church leaders is not to overlook this desire to belong and serve, and not to mistake the marginally committed, with the marginalised. Both groups are a symptom of failure in missional praxis, and the motif of a macro issue facing the wider Church and society, as it disassociates itself from the responsibility of responding to communal fault lines of fragmentation and segregation. This is often particularly painful for minority ethnic Christians, particularly when it becomes obvious to them that these transition differences are ethno-centric, and 'White' new-comers are absorbed into the Church family with little difficulty.

It is this kind of negligent muting, which research participants described as a 'gagging' or 'a binding of gifts', that causes the systemic pain that the MAP quantitative study measured in exploring marginalisation experiences and symptoms cognitive dissonance in indicators of disassociation, detachment, identify distress and compartmentalisation. In this context, invitations to leadership roles was yet another severe disparity of experience reported between those who identified as minority ethnic persons of colour and those who self-identified as 'White' but not British[48] in the UK context.

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[43]Ackerman, J.M., Shapiro, J.R., Neuberg, S.L., Kenrick, D.T., Becker, D.V., Griskevicius, V., et al. *'They all look the same to me (unless they're angry): From out-group homogeneity* to *out-group heterogeneity'* Psychological Science, 17 (2006), pp. 836-840.

[44] Chiroro, J., & Valentine, T. (1996). *An investigation of the contact hypothesis of the own-race bias in face recognition.* Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 48A, 879–894.

[45] Derryberry, D., & Tucker, D.M. (1994). Motivating the focus of attention. In P.M. Niedenthal & S. Kitayama (Eds.), *The heart's eye: Emotional influences in perception and attention* (pp. 167–196). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

[46] Bernstein, S.G. Young, K. Hugenberg, K. *'The cross-category effect: Mere social categorization is sufficient to elicit an own-group bias in face recognition.'* Psychological Science, 18 (2007), pp. 706-712.

[47] Hehman, E., Mania, E.W., Gaertner, S.L., *'Where the division lies: Common in-group identity moderates the cross-race facial-recognition effect.'* Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 46 (2010), pp. 445-448

[48] Categorised as 'White other'.

Good practice strategies recommended by the MAP 'expert[49]' minority ethnic interview candidates, included strategic delegation of responsibility as a means of inclusion. While these findings are in keeping with research on racialised spaces and cognitive dissonance in secular society, this is still a gross violation of our missiology, and our unified identity in Christ, rooted in the gospel.

Accommodation and Embodiment

As identified by numerous ecclesiologists and missiologists, the lack of cultural accommodation is notably one of the most problematic issues in churches[50]; both psycho-socially and theologically. It is also the greatest hindrance to the propagation of the gospel, and one of the most significant factors which inhibit mutual flourishing reported by participants. The contextual fabric, culture and practices of a CoE church, are often among some of the most inflexible spaces to be found in public service. And this often defining idiosyncrasy, has been too often used as a resistance to cultural accommodations. One telling thematic narrative in the qualitative interviews pointed to the reoccurring chorus in the CoE; *"This is the way we have always done things"* could be the motto of many a church.

Andrew Chandler, in diagnosing the slow progress of reform[51] due to organisational culture in the Church of England, claims astutely that this is due to the accumulative factors from institutional pride, to political and economic factors. This could be true of almost any reform issue, from pragmatic changes to estate fabric and organisational praxis. He diagnoses the death knell to church reform as the torturous and glacial bureaucracy innate to its nature. He posits, *"What is inescapable however, is that great and lasting alterations in the life of historic institutions are unavoidably tortuous; they take time."*[52] While this inflexibility impacts all aspects of Church growth and flourishing, it has a particularly acute impact on accommodating diverse cultural practices.

A common theme that emerged in discussing this lack of accommodation made by interview participants was that in the Church of England, we often seem to invite God's people on our own localised terms, to the altar of a cultural superiority, rather than for the sake of the gospel. As one interview participant aptly commented *"they say 'Come as WE are, rather than come as YOU are."* From the subliminal cultural preclusions in our ecclesiological motifs, found in our liturgical cornerstones,[53] to every verve and weft of Church of England culture, is this '*English Exceptionalism'* that prominent

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[49] These participants were 'expert' by virtue of having survived systemic rejection and barriers to progress' to significant responsibility in the church, as clergy or laity, and were invited to identify structural barriers and racialised experience in their journey with the Church of England.

[50] For e.g. Greenway, R., &. Monsma, T., (2013) '*Cities: Missions' New Frontier'* Baker Academic; MI

[51] In this case re; the amalgamation of QAB & Ecclesiastical Commissioners.

[52] Chandler, A., '*The Church of England in the 20th Century; the Church Commissioners and the Politics of Reform, 1948-1998*'. (2006), Boydell Press; Suffolk, pp. 10-11

[53] For E.g. Church of England '*Queen Elizabeth's Prayer Book 1559.*' Edinburgh John Grant, 1559 Rpr. 1911, pp. 17-21

Black Theologians like Reddie[54] examine, in various theological and ecclesiological contexts. As illustrated above, in the emerging interview themes of the MAP qualitative study, this supremacist cultural appropriation of the Church, often overwhelms Minority Ethnic Christians, who feel that this cultural subjugation is a necessity to the salvific gospel preached by the Church of England. While acculturation is often a facet of joining in-groups[55], cultural subjugation and colonisation has disquieting overtones of a cult, when the individual's personal characteristics, alliances and cultural heritage is belittled or debased as a conditional proposition to group belonging[56].

This again may explain some of the cognitive dissonance in indicators of deindividuation, compartmentalisation, and identity distress[57] found in the MAP quantitative study. The invisible and unspoken tensions in theological and ecclesiological foundations of tradition and cultural religiosity is often identified as the root cause of religious racism[58]. Churches are often the last refuge of cultural and national pride, and historically, the fabric of these civic spaces have always been a place to celebrate this pride. Theologically this *only* becomes a heresy, when it contradicts and counteracts gospel tenets and missional vocations, and when used to mute, marginalise or exclude other Christians. Cognitive linguistics, metaphors and conceptual structures are deeply rooted in the cultural embodiment of our theology and experience of the Divine.[59] Therefore, celebrating the embodied characteristics of geography, history, communal ethnic memory and culture of the ecclesia is hardly a heresy. But when this celebration becomes exceptionalist[60], colonising and conditional, our missiology corrupts into a deeply problematic blasphemy.

Belonging and Othering

Belonging is one of the most primal psychological needs[61] in human existence, not unlike other pack-species, and one of the primary messages of the gospel is this salvific belonging that supersedes all other alliances. Church and its liturgy is the very embodiment and narrative of this belonging expressed by the most primitive expression of human kinships and alliance; sharing sustenance. Church,

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[54] Reddie. A., (2008) '*Working Against The Grain: Re-imaging Black Theology in the 21st Century'* London: Equinox, pp.77

[55] Sam, D., & Berry, J. (2010). *Acculturation: When Individuals and Groups of Different Cultural Backgrounds Meet.* Perspectives on Psychological Science, 5(4), 472–481.

[56] Shaw, D (2014) '*Traumatic Narcissism: Relational Systems of Subjugation.*' Routledge; NY

[57] A more comprehensive exploration of these cognitive dissonance indicators can be found in Perera (2021) '*Cognitive Dissonance in Faith Communities; Identity Distress, Deindividuation, Disassociation & Compartmentalisation in Marginalised Church Experiences'.* In preparation for the journal of 'Applied Cognitive Psychology'.

[58] Hall, D., Matz, D. C., & Wood, W. (2010). Why don't we practice what we preach? Social-cognitive motives behind religious racism. Personality and Social Psychology Review, 14, 126-139.

[59] Sanders, J. (2016). *Theology in the Flesh: How Embodiment and Culture Shape the Way We Think about Truth, Morality, and God.* Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress.

[60] Reddie, A (2018) '*The wounded psyche of white privilege. Church Times; SCM press*

[61] Maslow, A.H. (1943). *"A theory of human motivation".* Psychological Review. 50 (4): 370–96

embodies in Communion, the very antithesis of the loss of home and belonging[62]. To imagine that this belonging might be apportioned by human whim or a racialised gate-keeping is extraordinary blasphemy.

And yet, we are shaped by a secular agenda where geography and space continue to be 'ever further enclosed inside the economic and political calculations of nation-states and corporations'.[63] In a country where our wells are poisoned by a racialised Hostile Environment policy, it is no surprise that we have let this seep into our ecclesiology. Despite various efforts to campaign against this[64], the susceptibility of a church that is inherently part of the state apparatus, to be shaped by this hostile culture was inevitable. This legislative endowment makes the communion of this mutilated belonging, particularly precarious, along a racialised fracture, and creates fault-lines of an ecclesiological crisis. Nevertheless, this bruised existence, continuously scarred by reoccurring trauma, creates opportunity for Church spaces to be healing *or* abrasive, to soothe or exacerbate. The growing trend in the Church of England for multi-cultural urban spaces 'to ghettoise', organised by a racialised preference, suggests that we have failed to respond to this theological and ecclesiological crisis. The acute and significant indicators of cognitive dissonance found among MAP minority ethnic participants is merely a symptom of this crisis. In terms of practical and strategic responses to this theological deficit, this diagnostic recommends grappling with hard questions on what this might mean for the minority ethnic constituents of a dioceses or congregation, and how it might shape their church experiences in the local context.

The other recommendation of this diagnostic is for Churches to listen to the minority ethnic experiences and to be considerate of their traumatised sensitivities. Research participants often report institutional defensiveness, rationalisation, diversion or misattribution when framing or responding to racialised experience. Reporting racialised experience requires extraordinary vulnerability and is costly to the victim, to respond to this by defensive, dismissive or rationalist postures add insult to injury. When people's deeply ingrained need for social connection is thwarted by social exclusion, profound psychological consequences ensue[65]. The acute consequences for people's psychological and physiological functioning has been studied in some depth in social psychology[66] For example, threat of

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[62] Brueggemann, W., (1997) *'Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles.* Westminster; John Knox Press. ISBN 978-0-664-25749-1.

[63] Jennings, W. (2010). *'Those Near Belonging'. In The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (pp. 250-288). New Haven: Yale University Press.

[64] Davies, M (2018) *'End Hostile Environment policy, church leaders tell Home Secretary'.* Church Times; SCM press

[65] Mead, N. L., Baumeister, R. F., Stillman, T. F., Rawn, C. D., & Vohs, K. D. (2011). *Social Exclusion Causes People to Spend and Consume Strategically in the Service of Affiliation.* Journal of Consumer Research, 37(5), 902–919

[66] For e.g. Buckley, K., Winkel, R., &. Leary, M., (2004), *"Reactions to Acceptance: and Rejection: Effects of Level and Sequence of Relational Evaluation,"* Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 40 (1), 14-28

DeWall, N., Baumeister, R., & Vohs K., (2008), *"Satiated with Belongingness? Effects of Acceptance, Rejection, and Task Framing on Self-Regulatory Performance,"* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 95 (6), 1367-82.

DeWall, N., Maner, J., & Rouby, A., (2009), *"Social Exclusion and Early-Stage Interpersonal Perception: Selective Attention to Signs of Acceptance,"* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 96 (4), 729-41.

exclusion has an incredibly dehumanising[67] impact. The fear of exclusion and marginalisation also stimulates brain regions designed to detect and manage pain[68] impairs self-regulation[69], frustrates logical reasoning[70], and distorts time perception[71]. These pervasive psycho-social, physical and neuro-cognitive implications are far more acute when the nature of this belonging is primed with religious[72] and deontological connotations[73] and a metaphysical belonging. The consequential psychological damage of racist behaviours in Church spheres[74] have far reaching impacts[75] beyond the primary recipient, and local context, and takes a cancerous hold of the missiology and theology in and beyond these domains.

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[67] Haslam, N. (2006).Dehumanization: An integrative review. Personality and Social Psychology Review, 10 , 252- 264

[68] Eisenberger, N., Lieberman, M., & Williams, K., (2003) *"Does Rejection Hurt? An fMRI Study of Social Exclusion,"* Science, 302 (5643), 290-92

[69] Baumeister, R., De Wall, C., & Ciarrocco, N., (2005) Excluded from humanity: The dehumanizing effects of social ostracism Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 88(4):589-604

[70] Baumeister, R., Twenge, J., and Nuss, C., (2002), Effects of social exclusion on cognitive processes: Anticipated aloneness reduces intelligent thought. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 83(4):817-27

[71] Twenge, J. M., Catanese, K. R., & Baumeister, R. F. (2003). Social Exclusion and the Deconstructed State: Time Perception, Meaninglessness, Lethargy, Lack of Emotion, and Self-Awareness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85*(3), 409–423. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.3.409

[72] Batson, C. D., Schoenrade, P., & Ventis, W. L. (1993). Religion and the individual: A social-psychological perspective. New York: Oxford University Press.

[73] Greenfield, E. A., & Marks, N. F. (2007). Religious social identity as an explanatory factory for associations between more frequent formal religious participation and psychological well-being. International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 17, 245-259

[74] Jacobson, C. K. (1998). Religiosity and prejudice: An update and denominational analysis. Review of Religious Research, 39, 264-272.
[75] Jackson, L. M., & Hunsberger, B. (1999). An intergroup perspective on religion and prejudice. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 38, 509-523.