

# **CHRISTIANITY IN NEWPORT**

**By**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis lays the groundwork for Christian congregations engaged in mission. It emerged from my shared experience and reflections of the Christians in Newport engaged in Mission.

The focal point of exploration of the thesis was how Christians in Newport in South Wales defined their Christian task and how this affected their expression in the Communities where they lived. This thesis seeks to give a voice to the views of the People in Newport.

A detailed overview of the historical and current status is explored and described. This reveals a considerable change and adaptation in missiology, Church expression and new forms of church.

The current experience of some groups of Christians in Newport is described based on extensive fieldwork. Three congregations are presented and analysed.

The thesis concludes by sowing seeds of a new paradigm in contextual Congregational mission studies.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate my thesis to my family and many friends.

A special feeling of gratitude to my grandmother Aileni Lunyolo Pokoto (deceased),  
my loving parents Mikaya Balibali (deceased) and Jessika Khanakwa Balibali

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In particular I would like to thank the late Tim Pratt; members of Nant Coch Church; Father John Kelly; members of St Mary's Roman Catholic Church; and the Pastors and members of The Kings Church.

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For any errors or inadequacies that may remain herein, the responsibility is of course, entirely my own.

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## INTRODUCTION

Christian mission and congregational studies are the central themes of this thesis. From its very beginning the enterprise of Christian mission has been one of the foremost characteristics of the Christian church. In the early stages it was a 'fundamental expression of the life of the Church.'<sup>1</sup> It has been argued that the Church's commitment to mission is the very reason that the Church exists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It was Bruce who once remarked: 'Christianity from the first was a missionary enterprise; otherwise it would not have lasted more than a generation.'<sup>2</sup> Meyer suggests that, 'Christianity had never been more itself, more consistent with Jesus and more evidently en route to its own future, than in the launching of the world mission.'<sup>3</sup>

Christian individuals and congregations alone, and jointly, have always been engaged in mission. The history of mission itself offers a fascinating study, the diverse motivations behind doing mission perhaps being the most interesting aspect; that is trying to understand what happens when mission is being done, what Christian mission itself is, and the ways in which it is being carried on; and why. The ways in which mission is defined influences motivations, means, the goals and the way results are measured and actions of Christians in the community. In terms of my own study, this thesis seeks to add a further dimension to this subject as it explores the nature of mission and issues in mission in the context of the City of Newport. The experience of Newport's congregations engaged in mission is explored with the aim of establishing the models of mission being applied there, and there is also an attempt to make a contribution towards assessing the effectiveness of congregations in mission in a particular context.

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<sup>1</sup> Kasting, H. *Mission*. Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1969, page 127.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce, F.F. *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit*. Exeter, Paternoster Press, 1977, Page 63.

<sup>3</sup> Meyer, B. F. *The Early Christians: Their World Mission and self discovery*. Willington: Michael Glazier, Inc, 1986, Page 206.

The varied manifestations of Christian mission occurring over the centuries have rightly provoked considerable amounts of lively debates and scholarly interest. These have been evidenced for example in the World Mission Conferences. The overarching research questions that provide focus for this study flow from the scholarly debate and its evidences. Thus this research asks a primary question, ‘How do the Christians in Newport define their Christian task?’ And so the prime missiological question becomes: How do these definitions affect these Christians’ expression in the communities where they live? More significantly, ‘where do congregations put their emphases: Are these centred on the individual or on the social orientation?’ More so what biblical texts have been used as foundational to their mission activities? It is questions such as these that this thesis seeks to explore.

The Christian task is envisaged to be the dynamic of the congregations that enables them to move towards those outside their own groups, and into the realms where promulgation of gospel values has been sufficiently taken into consideration. This thesis will argue that congregations in Newport were perceived by me ‘to be driven by a theological mandate for them to be ‘salt and light’ to those around them; preserving, flavouring and enlightening their local communities.’<sup>4</sup> Their strategy appeared to be for them to ‘infiltrate every nook and cranny of secular society.’<sup>5</sup> Mother Teresa once said, ‘we must become holy not because we want to feel holy but because Christ must be able to live his life fully in us.’<sup>6</sup> The task as suggested by Hirsch consists of ‘transposing Christ into the stuff of their daily existence.’<sup>7</sup> This thesis seeks to explore how the Christian congregations in Newport had found ways to translate in this manner the grand themes

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 5:13-16.

<sup>5</sup> Hirsch, A. *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2006, Page 275.

<sup>6</sup> Web site, <http://www.ewtn.com/motherteresa/words.htm> Accessed 28 January 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Hirsch, 2006, Page 114.

of the gospels. It is suggested by Hirsch that ‘such is the journey towards the Kingdom of God bringing redemption, atonement, forgiveness, and love into everyday life in concrete ways; and by means of working to become an embodiment of Jesus that is profoundly relational and which attracts people to new life.’<sup>8</sup>

Something often assumed in both liberal and also in some more conservative circles is that ‘the Church exists to exercise a benign influence on society, adding an extra religious or spiritual dimension to life, seeking to make society more equitable, just or simply, more Christian.’<sup>9</sup> It can be argued further moreover, that because the spiritual manifestations immanent in ordinary everyday chores and business are not apparent to many non-believing people, they cannot see them and so deny their presence, meaning that ‘the spiritual dimension to our ordinary daily lives is not injected by mission work but instead is revealed to them by God to be ever-present in society by his making use of his people as instruments that serve his ‘lost sheep’ for his purposes of redemption and salvation and succour to the outsider and the stranger.’<sup>10</sup>

This way of thinking links to the work of Richard Niebuhr, who having looked at a range of alternatives, advocated a position of ‘Christ transforming Culture’,<sup>11</sup> which is the idea that ‘faith is of necessity critical of secular culture, yet engages such culture by means of its particular context so as to transform and regenerate life.’<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Hirsch 2006, Page 114.

<sup>9</sup> Tomlin, G. *The Provocative Church*, London: SPCK Publishing, 2004, Page 67.

<sup>10</sup> Tomlin 2004, Page 67.

<sup>11</sup> Niebuhr, H.R. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper & Row, 1951.

<sup>12</sup> Niebuhr 1951. Page 7.

As a study in missiology, this thesis has sought to identify the primal impulses in the scriptures that compel God's people into engagement with the world. As suggested by Croft and as it will be shown in this thesis 'such impulses involve, for example, the *Missio Dei* (Mission of God), the incarnation, and the kingdom of God.'<sup>13</sup> That this is so, I shall argue, thus describes the congregation's commitment to social justice, relational righteousness and evangelism. A more fundamental issue perhaps lays with the congregation's experiences and with the explorations of the implications of this experience as it bears on practice by congregations in mission.

The study arose out of a personal experience of the marginalisation of Christianity in the City of Newport. There was hardly any information or academic research on this subject in recent years. Consequently, I was motivated to carry out this study in order to try in part to redress this imbalance in part by making a contribution at both a theoretical and an empirical level. Whilst there were some excellent studies of Christianity elsewhere in Wales, for example, the theological reflection of Christians in Ely, Cardiff, in the work of Peter Cruchley-Jones and in the work of Paul Chambers in Swansea, there was not as far as I knew, any studies centred on Newport. In his work Chambers 'seeks to address one of the most significant transformations in Welsh society, the dislocation of its people from their religious institutions and the struggle of those institutions to retain any continuing relevance in contemporary Welsh society.'<sup>14</sup>

Therefore I wished to advance the development of similar but local missiological studies among Christian congregations in Newport. Hence it became appropriate for me to engage with the work of both Chambers and Cruchley-Jones. This study aimed at finding out about the history of

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<sup>13</sup> Croft S (Ed), *Mission-Shaped questions: Defining Issues for Today's Church*. London: Church Publishing House, 2008, Page 284.

<sup>14</sup> Chamber, P. *Religion, secularisation and social change in Wales: Congregational Studies in a Post-Christian Society*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005, Page 1.

Newport, what was happening in Newport in terms of Christian mission and how things concerning Church there were changing. In addition the aim of the study was to use any findings to test some of the claims about mission and context. The hypothesis to be tested here was: 'How context specific is mission?' This hypothesis is tested by studying congregations in mission, and the aim was to address issues surrounding contemporary congregations through the examination of the experiences of three case studies of congregations as they sought to carry out mission in an increasingly secularised or post-Christian milieu.

I came from Uganda to live in Wales in 1992. I was brought up as a Christian and as a member of the Anglican Church of Uganda. The Church of Uganda is a beneficiary of the East African Revival. This revival has been likened to Evangelical Awakenings which have been a feature of European and American Protestantism and of the British Keswick Movement. The adherents of the revival are generally marked by a zeal for evangelism aimed at conversion and salvation of souls and at adding certain quality to Christian discipleship. In revival experience emphasis is on personal renewal, personal holiness through the turning to the Lord, and is normally accompanied with a following of puritanical rules.

Congregations in Uganda increased from the hundreds to over 1,000. Church growth was taking place exponentially, with much vitality and self-sacrifice. This growth has highlighted issues such as qualities of character, service to others, and confidence in the gospel. The revived congregations were youthful, enthusiastic and hopeful. At the time all Christian denominations seemed to be vibrant and growing: outreach expansion and service to others were priorities of local churches. So when I arrived in Newport I was undoubtedly eager to share and apply my

religious experience. However, I found that the Welsh language, literature, cultural symbols and myths were very different from my own. Hence, among the reasons for this particular study was an interest in mission in a different context. In addition the subject of mission was of particular interest to me given my own Christian experience. Having been influenced by the East African Revival, I was interested to find out more about the Welsh Revival.

Prior to ordination in the Church in Wales, I worked for Gwent Health Authority as a Community Researcher in health and subsequently as a Probation Service Officer. This intimate engagement with the community granted me an insight into the Welsh way of life. Work as a community researcher gave me a lot of insight into the daily social situation in Newport and into the needs of the people. My work as a Probation Service Officer opened my eyes to many social aspects of mission.

Following ordination, I worked as a parish priest in The Church in Wales for 6 years. While in this role I became accustomed to engaging with congregational and mission related issues. It was the concerns and pre-occupations of ministry in The Church in Wales and also aspects arising from my cross-cultural ministry that prompted this study. As a Christian I wanted to express something of my inner understanding of the Christian task. My hope was that this research would resource me towards becoming a better parish priest; helping me learn to set, practice, and evaluate mission goals. I was in no doubt that it would be an experience which would move me along my own personal spiritual journey.

This thesis is presented in Eight Chapters. Chapter One is an exploration of a wide range of issues and works in mission. There is a literature review which engages with the work of Bosch and other missiologists. A number of recurrent missiological issues are raised and some commonly held assumptions about mission are addressed and in some cases either refuted or modified. The Chapter engages in dialogue with current missiological literature dealing with the relationship between evangelism and social involvement, and touches on liberation theology. This Chapter addresses some theological presuppositions that support various understandings. The question: ‘How can Mission be defined?’ forms the focus of this Chapter along with an examination of biblical basis for mission.

Chapter Two sets out the Methodology. This Chapter discusses my approach to the study. In pursuit of answers to the research questions the starting point for my study had to be a contextualisation of the value of the range of human experience. Preparation for this research required listening to peoples and to their stories, and even to their silences and the questions they were asking themselves and others. Thus the raw material for the preparatory work had to be people’s own testimonies of their lives and experience, their feelings, fears and concerns, from their point of view as ordinary Christians in Newport engaged in mission.

Chapter Three traces and details the historical background and emergence of the City of Newport. A survey of the social structure of the community was made in order to discuss how people live and how their lives feed into their religious experiences.

This Chapter thus illustrates elements that are deeply embedded in Newport culture, and from the perspective of the Christian faith. The Chapter explores the history, socio, economic, political climate in which Christians in Newport live and work; and asks whether such an environment

acts as a catalyst for their empowerment for mission. Like Chambers 'study' in Swansea, my own study in Newport was 'set against the wider economic and social changes occurring'<sup>15</sup> in this part of the world; how 'industrialisation and urbanisation has led initially to religious growth in both the Free Church traditions and in Catholicism'<sup>16</sup> and how these have 'catered for a newly urbanised population.'<sup>17</sup> This thesis asks the questions, 'Did the phenomenon of the Welsh Revivals have a significant influence on the lives of ordinary Christians in Newport?' In addition, 'what was the legacy of the 'Golden Age' of Welsh Revivals?'

Chapter Four maps the religious scene. This chapter was aimed at providing an overview of the Christian congregations and Christian organisations in Newport. It considers and surveys a number of places devoted to Christian worship, and it also 'attests to both the rich religious heritage of Wales and the effects of social, cultural and religious changes'<sup>18</sup> of Newport.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven are based on ethnographic case studies of three Congregations namely: Nant Coch, St Mary's Roman Catholic Church and the King's Church. These chapters aim to give detailed perspectives and interpretations of mission arising from comments, activities and views of members of the congregations. Principally it is an investigation of how these Christian congregations in Newport envisage their Christian task in what is called sometimes a 'post-church' society. Attention to their stories indicates that there is a deep level at which the experience of being the church in contemporary society is felt.

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<sup>15</sup> Chambers 2005, Page vii.

<sup>16</sup> Chambers 2005, Page vii.

<sup>17</sup> Chambers 2005, Page vii.

<sup>18</sup> Chambers 2005, Page 1.

These chapters set out to evidences arisen from group interviews, questionnaires, documentation, analysis of written material and observation at church services. Thus they focus on the detailed answers to the research questions I have set myself to answer.

It is shown in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven that the congregations with whom this thesis engages are of central importance to mission in Newport. The three case studies provide a framework for revealing the presence of a healthy localized mission and can perhaps be viewed as a starting point for future research.

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis with research findings. The three types of theoretical models of mission originally identified and discussed are traditional, fresh expressions, and the liberation theology model. Recommendations and suggestions for these models of mission are made on the basis of the findings of this work and in the light of the urgency of promulgating mission.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1: What is Mission?

The word mission comes from a Latin verb *mittere* meaning 'to send'. Though the word mission is not a biblical word it is biblically informed. In the New Testament for example, the Greek word *diakonia* is translated 'mission' and the Greek word *apostolos* (the noun form of the verb *apostellein*, which means to send out) translated as 'apostle' is used to refer to someone sent with a commission. This is evident in Matthew 28: 19-20, John 20:21-23. Saint Augustine used the Latin phrase *Missio Dei* (literally 'mission of God') to elucidate who was doing the sending. This is echoed by Bosch in his magnum opus, *Transforming Mission*<sup>1</sup> where he refers to mission as:

'the *Missio Dei* (God's Mission), that is God's self revelation as the one who loves the world with a boundless and matchless love. God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God which embraces both the church and world in which the church is privileged to participate.'<sup>2</sup>

It can be argued here that *Missio Dei* refers to everything God does for the communication of the message of salvation and everything the church is sent to achieve in this world.<sup>3</sup> Hence, as Bosch perceptively suggests, mission remains God's mission, *Mission Dei* since God retains the initiative, creates history, and guides its fulfilment<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, *Missio Dei* entails God's intentions and purposes, God's use of human instruments in God's mission, God's working

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<sup>1</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Orbis Books, New York 1991. See also Kirk, *What is mission? Theological Explorations*, London ,Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Bosch, 1991, Page 10.

<sup>3</sup> Gregory, T *Mission Now*, Carlisle, Authentic Lifestyle, 2003, page 16

<sup>4</sup> Bosch, D.J. 'Reflections on Biblical Models of Mission' in J.M. Phillips and R.T. (eds), *Toward the Twenty-First Century in Christian Mission*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993, Page 187.

through God's people doing a broad range of 'ministries' in God's world.<sup>5</sup> In the light of this it is suggested that mission in biblical terms is 'the divine activity of sending intermediaries whether supernatural or human to speak or to do God's will so that God's purposes for judgment or redemption are furthered.'<sup>6</sup>

This however, can be seen to lead to a central problem for mission; what constitutes mission? There is no one answer to this question and I concur with Padilla and Esobar who suggested a variety of 7 held approaches about what constitutes mission. These are as follows; Proclamation only, Traditional evangelical, Pragmatic evangelical, Integral mission, Pragmatic ecumenical, traditional ecumenical and liberation theology.<sup>7</sup> These approaches will be explored in the course of the thesis as they have a bearing on how mission works.

A number of missiologists and scholars for example Reisner, McGavran, Bosch, Drane and Dubose among others have written on these approaches. Reisner who is from the evangelical wing has proposed to define mission as an 'activity to win converts'<sup>8</sup>. Evangelicalism has been characterized by a concern with evangelism and conversion: hence it is common for its adherents to measure success in simple terms of numbers 'won for Christ.' However, this perspective has become increasingly difficult to sustain as with time evangelicals are progressively more involved in the great social problems communities are facing and indeed the whole person.

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<sup>5</sup> Van Engen, [www.teologos.ar](http://www.teologos.ar), Accessed on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2013

<sup>6</sup> Bosch 1993, Page 169.

<sup>7</sup> Padilla, Rene and Esobar, 'What is Mission? An Evangelical Perspective' online @ [www.globalconnections.co.uk/onestopCMS](http://www.globalconnections.co.uk/onestopCMS) Accessed May 2014. Padilla refers to integral mission as the concrete expression of a commitment to Jesus as Lord of the totality of life of all creation. He goes on to say that because Jesus is lord over all of creation and all spheres of life, there is no real distinction between serving spiritual needs and serving physical needs, thus the mission of the church cannot simply be reduced to making religious converts but must include action on behalf of the poor and in service of social justice.

<sup>8</sup> Reisner R, 'Mission Studies', *Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies*. Vol.2, No2, 2004, Page 168.

Consequently, they look to the Scriptures for guidance as to what they should do and how far they should go in expressing this social concern, without minimizing the priority of preaching the gospel of individual salvation. Thus, 'success' in light of this is 'to be measured in terms of the health of the wider society rather than in terms of levels of membership.'<sup>9</sup> In view of this, numerical growth of the church is only part of the *mission Dei*.

Bosch whose approach can be said to be integral mission is largely in agreement with this in suggesting that it is common to acknowledge 'a difference within societal orientation, which is concerned with the local community, and an activist orientation which actively seeks to change the world.'<sup>10</sup> However, McGavaran with a pragmatic evangelical approach makes the distinction between those that see their primary mission as saving individual souls (an evangelistic orientation) and those that see the changing of societal institutions as their goal.<sup>11</sup>

Bosch has suggested that mission as an 'activity to win converts' is a narrowly construed use of the term mission. In light of this he has suggested that 'mission includes evangelism as one of its essential dimensions.'<sup>12</sup> He goes on to define evangelism as the 'proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling them to repentance and conversion, announcing forgiveness of sin, and inviting them to become living members of Christ's earthly community and to begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit.'<sup>13</sup>

Consequently Bosch notes that 'although mission and evangelism are linked together and

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<sup>9</sup>Guest, Matthew. Tusting, Karen. Woodhead Linda (Eds). *Congregational Studies in the UK: Christianity in a Post-Christian Context*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, Page xiii.

<sup>10</sup> Bosch 1991, Page 10.

<sup>11</sup> McGavran, D. 'Salvation Today' in Ralph Winter (ed), *The Evangelical Response to Bangkok*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1973, Pages 27-32

<sup>12</sup> Bosch 1991, Page 10.

<sup>13</sup> Bosch 1991, Page 10.

inextricably interwoven in theology and praxis, mission has a broader meaning.’<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore Bosch advocates a broad understanding of mission by referring to Mission in holistic terms. He suggests that, ‘It is the proclamation of good news; it is disciple making; it is as well engagement in social, economic and political liberation to shore up humanity in the image and likeness of God and to help realize the vision of a new heaven and a new earth.’<sup>15</sup>

This approach finds an echo in the definition of mission arrived at by the Lambeth Conference of 1988, which takes the pragmatic ecumenical approach sometimes referred to as the five marks of mission:

- ‘To proclaim the good news of the gospel
- To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth.’<sup>16</sup>

A comprehensive understanding of mission is often defined by the threefold task of the church:

‘Witness (*marturia*), Service (*diakonia*) and communion (*koinonia*).’<sup>17</sup> Therefore Mission should be perceived as a joyous duty.

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<sup>14</sup> Bosch 1991, Page 409-419.

<sup>15</sup> Bosch 1991, Pages 409- 419.

<sup>16</sup> Martin, R. and Dwight S. *Invading Secular Space: Strategies For Tomorrow’s Church*. London: Monarch books, 2003, Page 94.

<sup>17</sup> Hirsch 2006, Page 170. See also Ballard. P (Ed) *Issues in church related community work*, Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 1990.

The church is called to witness to the love of God in both words and deeds. Through her deeds the church offers service to the community. '*Koinonia* is a Greek word meaning 'communion' or 'fellowship' and is used to refer both to the Christian's participation in the life of God and to the communal life created through God.'<sup>18</sup> Therefore mission involves the crossing of ethnic, cultural and other boundaries. Christian communities are called to exhibit those qualities summarized in the New Testament: 'quality to bear one another's burdens, suffer one another's pain and participate in common celebration.'<sup>19</sup>

In a language mirroring that of Dubose which embraces the proclamation and liberation theology approach at least four aspects of mission can be discerned.

- 'Mission as being sent out (especially stressed in John's gospel)
- Mission as making disciples of all nations (as advocated in Matthew's gospel)
- Mission as deliverance and emancipatory action (as it is held up in Luke's gospel)
- Mission as witness (as according to the Acts of the Apostles and John's gospel).'<sup>20</sup>

This is by no means an exhaustive list of gospel instances of the facets of mission. On the other hand if we 'champion singly any one of the concepts we risk falling into the danger' of what Nissen calls 'genre-reductionism.'<sup>21</sup>

As Bosch observes, 'we may, therefore, never arrogate it to ourselves to delineate mission too sharply and too self-confidently. Ultimately, mission remains undefinable; it should

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<sup>18</sup> Ballard 1990, Page 40.

<sup>19</sup> Ballard 1990, Page 40.

<sup>20</sup> Nissen in Dubose, *Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies*, Vol 21, No2, 2004 Page 170.

<sup>21</sup> Dubose 2004, Page 170.

never be incarcerated in narrow confines of our own predilections. The most we can hope for is to formulate some approximations of what mission is all about.’<sup>22</sup>

Reflecting on Bosch’s analysis of mission, Drane’s observation is fascinating as it can be said to embrace various aspects from the seven approaches suggested by Padilla and Escobar. Mission for Drane ‘becomes a matter of recognizing what God is already doing (the *Missio Dei*) and getting alongside that, to affirm those who have already embarked on the search for spiritual meaning and, as appropriate, to challenge them to take the Christian message seriously.’<sup>23</sup>

However, a question reflecting Dranes’ sentiments could be could be asked here, ‘With several aspects of today’s spiritual search reflected in all that: [such as] questions about suffering, about psychic powers, about the source of religious authority, could the church be trusted as a guardian of the truth?’<sup>24</sup> These considerations pose large missional question marks that this thesis seeks to address as it engages with the findings of the fieldwork and reflection on the work of missiologists and other scholars.

In discussing missional issues this thesis looks at foundational considerations more closely, such as, ‘How were the Congregations in Newport alive to all ‘mission’s operative elements namely: witness and proclamation, liturgy, prayer, contemplation, justice, peace and upholding the integrity of creation, dialogue with men and women of other faiths and ideologies, enculturation and reconciliation?’<sup>25</sup> In analysing mission’s operative elements, I will be reflecting on the biblical material which has provided foundational motivations for mission, its questions, shapes,

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<sup>22</sup> Bosch 1991, Page 9.

<sup>23</sup> Drane, J. *The Mcdonaldization of the Church*. London ,Darton. Longman and Todd Ltd, 2000, Page 10.

<sup>24</sup> Drane 2000, page 10.

<sup>25</sup> *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol 27. No2, 2003, Page 50.

guides and has traditionally informed theological and practical implementation of the Christian mission and it is a discussion of the biblical foundation of mission that forms the focus of the next section.

## **1.2: Biblical Reflection**

### **(a) Old Testament Perspectives**

From a Christian perspective mission is a central theme in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Thus the whole bible lays foundations for mission as this doctrine runs like a golden thread from Genesis to Revelation. The first Chapters of Genesis are vital to an understanding of Christian mission. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'<sup>26</sup> hence creation is portrayed as the beginning of history. The beginning of mission is instigated by the fall of man in the Garden of Eden and until humans are born who do not know God.<sup>27</sup> More so creation is considered to be the place in which God's redemptive purposes are played out.<sup>28</sup> As stated by Hirsch, 'God's mission unfolds in the history of God's people across the centuries as recorded in scripture.'<sup>29</sup> Commencing from Genesis 'it is evident that all the nations of the earth are to come to believe in the coming Man of Promise, the one who would appear through the seed of the woman Eve, through the family of Shem and then through the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and David.'<sup>30</sup> Kaiser identifies Genesis 12:3<sup>31</sup> as an Old Testament 'Great commission'. Furthermore as suggested by Senior and Stuhlmueler 'in the Old Testament the theme of mission

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<sup>26</sup> Genesis 1:1

<sup>27</sup> Genesis Chapters 3- 11.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, Genesis Chapters 3 -11.

<sup>29</sup> Hirsch, A, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the missional Church*, Grand Rapids: Brazos Press 2006, Page 129.

<sup>30</sup> Kaiser, *International Journal of Frontier Missions*. Vol 13:1 Jan- March, 1996.

<sup>31</sup> Genesis 12:1-3 The Lord said to Abraham.....all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

must be sought in the complex and evolving dialectic between Israel and its sovereign God and between Israel and its secular environment which has God's hand on it.'<sup>32</sup>

It can be argued here therefore that God's mission began with the call of Israel to receive God's blessing in order to be a blessing to all the nations which is realized in Christ in the New Testament. Israel's election was one of service as well as of world mission to share the blessing with all the families of the earth. God's covenant with Abraham is the fount and origin of biblical mission in its redemptive sense.

According to the Christian reading of the Old Testament the call of Abraham is God's response to the problem of the nations of humanity. So Abraham is commissioned by the Lord to leave his country, his people and his household and go to that land where the Lord will show him.<sup>33</sup> Here we see not just nascent but symbolically as allegory also the expression of God's plan of love for the world. Through Abraham it became for all people through one People – the Hebrew nation. This is clearly seen in the book of Isaiah where it is stated, 'I the Lord have called you in righteousness: I will keep you and make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.'<sup>34</sup> '.....that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.'<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Senior, Donald, and Stuhlmueller Carroll, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, London: SCM Press, 1983., Page 320-321.

<sup>33</sup> Genesis 12:1.

<sup>34</sup> Isaiah 42:6-10.

<sup>35</sup> Isaiah 49:6.

According to Isaiah 42:1-7 and 49:1-7, Israel is called to reveal God's 'justice' to the nations (Isa. 42:1) and to serve as 'a light to the Gentiles' (42:6 and 49:6) so that this salvation offered to Israel might reach to the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:1-6). Israel as a whole people of Yahweh would have the historical task of bringing the knowledge of God to the nations and bringing the nations to the means of reconciliation with God. This argument is lost in Bosch's analysis as he maintains that 'there is, in the Old Testament, no indication that the believers of the Old covenant being sent by God across geographical, religious, social frontiers in order to win others to faith in Yahweh'<sup>36</sup>. In addition to this Bosch rejects the mission stance in both the book of Jonah and the second part of Isaiah. However, this perspective has become increasingly difficult to sustain following Bosch's acknowledgement of the Old Testament as being fundamental to the understanding of mission.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, it can be argued that both Jonah 1:2 and Jonah 3:2 contain an evangelistic mission commanded by Yahweh and though reluctantly implemented by Jonah. The book of Jonah records the conversion of the heathen in Nineveh and the sacrifices and offerings brought to God by the mariners. It was Dobbie who suggested that the book of Jonah is 'the best missionary tract ever written'<sup>38</sup>. This is echoed by Kaiser who has argued that the book of Jonah is a landmark case for missions in the Old Testament. Jonah went to Nineveh calling for repentance and preaching salvation in the name of Yahweh and in Jonah 4:11 there is an illustration of God's relationship with the heathen.

There are a number of other texts in the Old Testament where mission and missionary activities are evident. In the book of Psalms 67:2, 7, 93- 100, the Psalmist summons the nations not only to

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<sup>36</sup> Bosch 1991, Page 17.

<sup>37</sup> Bosch, 1991, Page 4

<sup>38</sup> Dobbie R. 'The Biblical Foundations of the mission of the Church', *International Review of missions*, 51, 1962, Page 197.

recognize their creator but to acknowledge Him as their God and Lord and King over all and to come to the Lord with singing and joyful service. The Old Testament Prophets for example deal with the failure of the Israelites to embody God's standards and consequently speak of God's grace and salvation of the returning Lord (For example Joel 1- 3, Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:26). In addition Daniel proclaimed that the God of Israel was the true God, the most powerful God, the creator and that his kingdom will encompass the whole world through the atoning death of the Son of Man. This is illustrated through Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar's worship of the God of Israel after Daniel's works. More so also in Daniel is the story of Susanna whose works convince a heathen king of her righteousness and her God's righteousness. The Old Testament foretells God's sending of the messiah and the eschatological kingdom. This continuity between God's mission in the Old and New Testaments is seen through human history, revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and progressed with the people of God. The Books of Kings and Judges portray God working out in history his plan by teaching Israel and other nations about being righteous in their deeds and teaches about the repercussions of their deeds, for good and for evil which is at the heart of mission as it is taught by God in the daily experience of men and women.

## **(b) New Testament Perspectives**

### **(i) The Great Commission**

In the eighteenth century William Carey, to fire a sense of the Christian mission, proclaimed The Great Commission found at the close of Matthew's Gospel, and regarded by some as the Magna Carta of missions,<sup>39</sup> It is stated thus;

'Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'<sup>40</sup>

It has been suggested that 'the centrality of the great commission in mission appears to be self-evident to many Protestants and more particularly to evangelicals.'<sup>41</sup> Bosch suggests that, 'it is often cited as the sole scriptural foundation for mission',<sup>42</sup> thereby being considered to constitute the major biblical foundation for mission. In light of this McGravran, suggested that the great commission<sup>43</sup> gives significant guidelines as to the missionary methods as it 'distinguishes between 'discipling', which means leading people to a first commitment to Christ, and

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<sup>39</sup> *Interantional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol 27. No 2, 2003, Page 50. See also Resome J, 'William Carey' *Evangelical Dictionary of World missions (EDWM)*, ed. Moreu H Netland and Van Engen, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000, 162-63.

<sup>40</sup> Matthew 28:18ff.

<sup>41</sup> Bosch in, *Theology of mission, A Reader*, Birmingham: Selly Oak, 1992, Page 17.

<sup>42</sup> Bosch 1992, Page 17.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew 28.

‘perfecting’, which means ‘teaching them to observe everything Jesus has commanded [them].’<sup>44</sup> More so, McGavran states that perfecting refers to the bringing about of an ethical change in the disciplined group, an increasing achievement of a thoroughly Christian way of the community as a whole. He goes on to say that ‘The Great Commission clearly indicates that we ought to approach people as different homogeneous units, since this is what the phrase *panta to ethne* (‘all the nations’) means.’<sup>45</sup>

‘To disciple’ means in McGavran’s thinking, ‘to lead non – Christians to a first commitment to Christ.’<sup>46</sup> This is in line with Wilkins’ observation when he suggested that ‘.....in Matthew’s gospel the verb *matheteuo* takes on a distinctively transitive sense, ‘make a disciple,’ in which the focus is on calling individuals to absolute commitment to the person of Jesus as one’s sole Master and Lord.’<sup>47</sup> In the same vein McGavran uses ‘discipling’ as a synonym for ‘evangelizing’, as the term is understood in some evangelical circles.<sup>48</sup> As suggested by Bosch, ‘MacGavran clearly stands in the tradition of evangelical Christians for whom evangelism is the major task of the church.’<sup>49</sup> He goes on to say that ‘this view is echoed in the *Lausanne Covenant*, which asserts that, ‘In the church’s mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary’.<sup>50</sup>

Bosch recognizes the central thrust of The Great Commission in endorsing Waldron Scott’s

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<sup>44</sup> McGavran, D. ‘What is Mission?’ in Glasser, A.F. & McGavran, A.D. *Contemporary Theologies of Mission*. Grand Rapids; Baker House, 1983, Pages 15-29, See also Bosch 1992, Page 18.

<sup>45</sup> McGavran 1983, Pages 15-29 see also Bosch 1992, Page 13.

<sup>46</sup> McGavran, A.D. *The Bridges of God*. Eugene. Oregon, Wipf & Stock, 1995.

<sup>47</sup> Wilkins M. *Matthew, The NIV Application Commentary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004, Page 952. See also McGavran, 1995, Page 14

<sup>48</sup> McGavran 1993, Pages 15-29.

<sup>49</sup> Bosch 1992, Page 21.

<sup>50</sup> *World Evangelisation Information Bulletin*, No.28, 1982, Page 9.

interpretation. As Scott observes, ‘The central thrust of the Great Commission is indeed aimed at disciple making and that includes not only persuading people to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and become members of the Church (‘baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’), but also and simultaneously, teaching them to observe what Jesus has commanded: to practice love and uphold justice.’<sup>51</sup>

Bosch is also in agreement with Stott who declared that ‘.....not only the consequences of The Great Commission but that the actual Commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility, unless we are to be guilty of distorting the words of Jesus.’<sup>52</sup>

The mission inaugurated by Jesus involves teaching the word, healing and caring for social needs, and exhibiting his love, teaching and life. This was represented in the mission of the twelve disciples. ‘Therefore the missionary becomes God’s ambassador among a new people proclaiming the gospel; ministering to people’s needs, sharing God’s love in concrete, personal ways; creating fellowship in Christian love; reconciling people to one another and to God through Jesus Christ.’<sup>53</sup>

Matthew’s gospel proclaims the ‘imminence and possibility of the kingdom of God; a kingdom which for a man or woman to enter embraces the whole person, and affects and transforms all human experience, private, personal, social, communal, physical and spiritual.’<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Scott W. *Bring Forth Justice: A Contemporary Perspective on Mission*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1980, Page 212.

<sup>52</sup> Stott J. *Christian mission in the Modern World*. London: Falcon, 1975, Page 23.

<sup>53</sup> Stott 1975, Page 23.

<sup>54</sup> Ballard, 1990, Page 9.

The New Testament contains several variations on the theme of the commissioning of Jesus' followers for mission; for example in Luke 10, 12, 24:44-49, Mark 16:15-16, John 20:21, 21:15-23, Acts 1:8. As suggested by Bosch, 'Matthew's gospel is essentially a missionary text. It was primarily because of his missionary vision that Matthew set out to write his gospel..... to provide guidance to a community in crisis on how it should understand its calling and mission.'<sup>55</sup> Matthew's understanding of mission is seen as being encapsulated in Matthew 28: 18-20. As suggested by Wilkin, 'these verses that comprise this Great Commission are among the most important to establish the ongoing agenda of the church throughout the ages.'<sup>56</sup> Matthew 'focuses his gospel first on the person of Jesus the Messiah, in other words, on who Jesus is, as seen in Matthew 1:1-4 -4:16.'<sup>57</sup> From the outset of his gospel Matthew is seeking to use all the evidences valued by the Jews (for Matthew's gospel has been termed 'The Gospel to the Jews'<sup>58</sup>) so as to convince his readers of the credentials of Jesus to be Messiah Christ. This evidence was a major part of Matthew's approach to evangelisation and mission. It was the Jews, who after all were the first Christians, and not merely the men who were Christ's inner circle of twelve disciples but those whom these disciples first brought to Christ. Matthew begins with a 'genealogy which could be corroborated and which shows clearly Jesus descended from King David's line as the Old Testament proclaims that Messiah will be.'<sup>59</sup> From the very opening of the gospel, well into 'Chapter 3, it relentlessly offers powerful evidence to Jews that Jesus was in truth Messiah.'<sup>60</sup> The story of the Magi (traditionally wise men) and of Herod's anger and fear of a rival are our preparatory backdrop by means of which Matthew's evangelisation follows

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<sup>55</sup> Bosch 1991, Page 57.

<sup>56</sup> Wilkins 2004, Page 947.

<sup>57</sup> Barclay. W, *Commentary on Matthew's Gospel*, Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1969, 41.

<sup>58</sup> Bosch 1991, Page 57.

<sup>59</sup> Wilkins 2004, Page 57

<sup>60</sup> Wilkin 2004, Page 120.

through. It has been remarked that to modern eyes much appears legalistic in Matthew's evidence for the Messiah having come: for example Jesus' emphasis on the value of the Sabbath, the Temple and the Law in Chapter 12 and in other places in Matthew: but it could be argued that the people of the time and nation of the New Testament understood its points and value. So for the Jew this was strong evidence. For Matthew it was natural material for him to use, part of his mission as he viewed it, to press home his persuasions.

## **(ii) Discipleship**

Wilkin notes that in his public ministry, what Jesus' message lays out is how his Kingdom has/is to come and also Matthew pulls no punches about the costs and challenges of discipleship in the following of Christ (Matthew 4:17-16:20). These costs and challenges start to happen especially after Jesus' death and resurrection (Matthew 27). After Jesus' resurrection Jesus imparts authority to his followers to be empowered representatives of God. The disciples are promised guidance and gifting of the Holy Spirit to enable their work in mission. Whilst not abandoning a commission to the Jews, Jesus announces a way that is open to the Gentiles. Therefore, 'Jesus moves from particularism in fulfilling the covenantal promises to Israel, to universal salvation offered to all nations, as proclaimed in preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of God.'<sup>61</sup>

Discipleship is a major concern for Matthew throughout his gospel. The forms of discipleship recommended by him here are ones which transcend ethnic, gender, and religious boundaries to establish a new community of faith called the church (*ecclesia*). 'To become a disciple was a common phenomenon in the ancient world, but throughout his ministry Jesus developed a unique form of discipleship for those who followed him. He broke through a variety of barriers –

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<sup>61</sup> Wilkin 2004, Page 946.

gender, ethnic, religious, social, economic and so on- by calling all peoples into a personal discipleship relationship with himself.’<sup>62</sup> Jesus puts into practice the kingdom ethos of refocusing relationships and marshalling spiritual resources so as to bring to people via his Word that love, and justice with mercy, which meets their essential needs - and of course, meets God’s will. Congregations in doing mission are thus in these ways called to ‘embrace encounters with socially and politically irreconcilable groups and persons, so as to demonstrate to an unbelieving world that Jesus reconciles all people to God and to one another.’<sup>63</sup>

The emphasis then is on looking and working outwards so as to extend the Kingdom of disciples and their missionary activity. ‘Jesus’ final Great Commission makes sure that the congregations engaged in mission do not become ingrown, complacent, or callous.’<sup>64</sup> The risk of church becoming ‘just another club’ is thus eschewed and mitigated by this outward thrust.

Congregations in mission then must necessarily look outward and bring the good news of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven to people of all nations. This said, ‘The Great Commission also looks inward because it speaks to the ongoing transformation of those who become disciples of Jesus.’<sup>65</sup> But here is one of Jesus’ central and to the world incomprehensible paradoxes at work; that it is in outward reaching and external emphasis that this inner personal and social growth into his likeness is achieved. Jesus says as much when he says, ‘For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it’<sup>66</sup> and his words reinforce this outlook and conclusion.

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<sup>62</sup> Wilkin 2004, Page 952.

<sup>63</sup> Wilkin 2004, Page 968.

<sup>64</sup> Wilkin 2004, Page 963.

<sup>65</sup> Wilkin 2004, Page 963.

<sup>66</sup> Matthew 16:25 Mark 8:35, Luke 17:33.

Added to this is the case that ‘individual disciples consider their own personal discipleship as a transformation, as they are united in baptism to Jesus and to his community of faith and as they yield their obedience to all that Jesus commanded.’<sup>67</sup> This involves following after Christ and doing things in the same spirit that he works in. Wilkins makes an observation here that, ‘The community of disciples looks within itself to provide concrete examples, compassionate encouragement, and structured and informal teaching of Jesus’ life and words, in the process of teaching other disciples how to obey all that Jesus commanded.’<sup>68</sup> Hence in Matthew 28:20 Matthew includes the command ‘to teach others to obey what Christ taught. Teaching has to be a priority along with expecting healing and taking the risk of venturing forth in evangelism. This is to be accompanied with claiming the powers over all dark and demonic forces.’<sup>69</sup>

Matthew is clear that to decide for Jesus means renouncing old ways of behaviour. Green says that the essential ‘nature of the entire Great Commission requires all believers to be involved in it and they are to be bonded by mission.’<sup>70</sup> The New Testament has examples of people becoming bonded together as a team through the means of evangelisation; for instance the disciples themselves were once a disparate team.<sup>71</sup> Their variety of character is seen in Matthew 10:2- 4, ‘there is a contrast between a contemplative John, a fisherman like James, a hot-blooded Peter, and a cool calculating Matthew.’<sup>72</sup> The completion of the commission is not simply evangelism. Rather, as Keener confirms, it means ‘calling unbelievers to be converted and embark on the process of being transformed into the image of Jesus in lifelong discipleship.’<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Wilkin 2004, Page 963.

<sup>68</sup> Wilkin 2004, Page 963.

<sup>69</sup> Wilkin 2004 Page 963.

<sup>70</sup> Green 2000, Page 13.

<sup>71</sup> Green 2000, page 13.

<sup>72</sup> Green, 2000, Page 13.

<sup>73</sup> Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 1999, Pages 18-19.

### **(iii) The Sermon on the Mount**

In addition to Matthew 28:18ff, and passages on discipleship, the passages that are referred to as the Sermon on the Mount<sup>74</sup> are also regarded by some Christians as biblical foundations for mission. In Matthew's account of The Sermon on the Mount, 'the citizens of the kingdom are called to put God first in their motives and their actions, in their business and their language, in their thought life and their priorities.'<sup>75</sup> This is an echo of the First Commandment,<sup>76</sup> 'as in the Deuteronomic exhortations to Israel, and Jesus himself emphasizes the importance of the First Commandment more than once (for example in Matthew 22:36-40 and Mark 10:17-27 story about the rich young ruler and the Scribe he catechises in Matthew 22:36-40).'<sup>77</sup> Jesus makes clear that 'God is at the centre of life, and of life in abundance, when he sits down to recite The Beatitudes; all of which discover to us our rewards had in right relations with God.'<sup>78</sup> But the character of Kingdom life is uncompromisingly radical as Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount. This is not only because God's blessing rests on, conventionally speaking in the eyes of the world, the unlikely ones – the poor in spirit, mourners, the meek, the persecuted but also because these beatitudes are often seen by eyes in the world to be counter-intuitive and unfeasibly paradoxical. Only once Jesus as Christ has come into the world and exemplified them and by his teaching explained and amplified them, is a Christian able to see them other than as 'hard sayings' and largely as impenetrable. Thus says Green, 'the Beatitudes define reality in such a way that the usual order of things is seen to be upside down in the eyes of God.'<sup>79</sup> The Christian community then, insofar as it corresponds with the kingdom of heaven on earth, as a

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<sup>74</sup> Matthew 5-7

<sup>75</sup> Green M. *The Message of Matthew*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000, Page 89.

<sup>76</sup> Exodus 20:3.

<sup>77</sup> Green 200, Page 89.

<sup>78</sup> Wilkin 2004, Page 971.

<sup>79</sup> Green 2000, Page 89.

sublunary working prototype of its counterpart in heaven, is exhorted by Jesus in his teachings on the mount to be as much 'committed to serving the causes of justice, peace, mercy, and the integrity of creation and to making for a humane and caring and fair society as it is to evangelization.'<sup>80</sup> In fact one can argue forcefully that these are the same things; that evangelization embodies the promulgation of these spiritual causes; and that these causes fulfill the criteria for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. The essential ingredient, Jesus himself, and the Christian's adherence to his person perhaps may need to be superadded, unless one concedes that just one route is available to the kingdom being fulfilled, and that this route implies Jesus and faith in Jesus indisputably.

Christ's emphasis on a personal righteousness as well as on justice, peace and mercy then is a means by which he, as well as others who follow after him, display the kingdom life. The rules for practical outworking of personal and collective attempts to model oneself on the terms of God's love are delineated in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5: 1- 7:29. These are to be lived out by the church (as a foundation of discipleship to Jesus) in the midst of and in competition with secular society. According to Matthew's gospel, Chapter 18, 'discipleship to Jesus is to be expressed through a church (and as individuals) characterized by humility, purity, accountability, forgiveness, mercy, love and reconciliation.'<sup>81</sup> Besides the terms upon which mission as well as faith in Jesus rests being inherently identical in their character, it is also true that the individually discrete strands of Jesus teaching on the Mount adhere together in a spiritual unity. Their wholeness of direction and thrust may be argued to be that 'source from which resolution, reconciliation and wholeness of healing sent via the Holy Spirit works in the person

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<sup>80</sup> Ballard 1990, Page 9.

<sup>81</sup> Wilkin 2004, 961.

of a Christian and in the society of Church’<sup>82</sup> and out of which via these routes the Kingdom emanates. Hence righteousness becomes its own and also continues ever-fulfilling itself and its purposes under God. A primary purpose of God being the work of Christian mission.

Thus, as Hadfield notes, there are various ‘facets to mission and these are all interconnected and interdependent.’<sup>83</sup> Furthermore Hadfield provides a useful analysis of this when she suggests that ‘the sharing of Good News in proclamation, whether this be an evangelistic programme or informal conversation, accompanies other facets of mission. While nurture and teaching enable people to explore faith, service ensures that faith is manifested in action.’<sup>84</sup> Drawing on Hadfield’s argument perhaps one can argue that, ‘a zeal for making disciples, and a compassionate service to those in need, can be combined with a courageous political stance on issues of justice and compassion in society.’<sup>85</sup>

Matthew begins his gospel with the assurance that the baby born would be ‘Immanuel’ (‘God with us’)<sup>86</sup> and his mission is to incarnate the Kingdom of Heaven. The gospel closes with the ‘assurance that he is yet with us, and will be to the end of time.’<sup>87</sup> The disciples are promised guidance and gifting of the Holy Spirit to enable them in mission. In solidarity with both Christ’s sufferings and with his missionary authority Christians who are to engage in missionary activity are called to spread Jesus’ teaching, preaching and most profoundly, knowledge of him and His Names, regardless of whether spreading these disturb societal or political mores. Jesus, faithful

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<sup>82</sup> Wilkin 2004, 961.

<sup>83</sup> Hadfield, A. *Grassroots Mission: Holistic Mission in a fragmented world*. Wellington:Philip Garside Publishing Ltd. , 1999, Page 144.

<sup>84</sup> Hadfield 1999, Page 144.

<sup>85</sup> Ballard, 1990, Page 10.

<sup>86</sup> Matthew 1:23.

<sup>87</sup> Matthew 28:20.

to his Father and his authority, in the Father's constant presence had come to bring into the kingdom those yet outside it. Congregations in mission are called to follow his lead; and to 'go and make disciples of all nations.'<sup>88</sup>

#### **(iv) Luke and Liberation**

Recent scholarship particularly in 'conciliar and liberation theology has generally tended to offer other biblical bases as their foundations for Christian mission.'<sup>89</sup> In this context Bosch suggests, 'The Great Commission is beginning to lose much of its pivotal significance.'<sup>90</sup> He goes on further to say that, 'to many people particularly those touched by liberation theology, the passage 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor',<sup>91</sup> constitutes the summation of the Church's mission, in much the same way as The Great Commission does for evangelicals.'<sup>92</sup>

Luke has a particular interest in the poor and other marginalized people. It was Mazamisa who suggested that, 'Luke's concern is with the social issues he writes about: with the demons and evil forces in first century society which deprived women, men and children of dignity and selfhood, of sight and voice and bread, and sought to control their lives for private gain; with people's own selfishness and servility; and with the promises and possibilities of the poor and the outcast.'<sup>93</sup> Luke 4: 16-21 has been 'dubbed the real great commission of the third gospel.'<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Matthew 28: 18.

<sup>89</sup> Bosch 1983, Page 18.

<sup>90</sup> Bosch 1983, Page 18.

<sup>91</sup> Luke 4:18-19.

<sup>92</sup> Mazamisa, L.W. *Beatific Comradship: An Exegetical-Hermeneutical Study on Luke*. Kampen: J.H, Kok, 1987, Page 99.

<sup>93</sup> Bosch 1996, Page 98.

The words Jesus quotes from Isaiah are set within the context of the dramatic story of his first public ministry in his hometown, Nazareth.<sup>95</sup> The ‘centrality of the poor and other marginalized and oppressed people in Jesus’ concerns was extended by him in the course of his ministry. His message of overcoming vengeance by means of forgiveness and peace can be seen to move beyond the confines of Israel, first to embrace certain Samaritans and thereafter Gentiles in general.’<sup>96</sup> Phillips and Coote suggest that such a ‘motif perhaps constitutes a possible charter for the church in mission today.’<sup>97</sup>

Bosch however presents ‘Christ’s mission as one which operated primarily within a Jewish framework, and holds that within these parameters, he challenged many of the assumptions which propagated the status quo.’<sup>98</sup> It was particularly within this colonial context that his hand was outstretched to all people. Christ’s ministry indeed was inclusive, touching the rich as well as the poor: the oppressed and the oppressor alike: although special affinity with the suffering parts of humanity is clearly there. This special affection for the needy itself was a ‘challenge to the religious paradigm of the time, as also was Jesus’ solidarity with those who were marginalised from participating in society for various reasons, (poverty, political, morality, religion).’<sup>99</sup> In Biblical times ‘the people on whom Jesus has compassion are depicted as;

- The poor
- The blind
- The crippled
- The leprous

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<sup>94</sup> Phillips and Coote. (Eds) , *Toward 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Christian Mission*, Grand Rapids Michigan, Eerdmans ,1993, Page 189.

<sup>95</sup> Philips and Coote (Eds) 1993, Page 189.

<sup>96</sup> Philips and Coote (Eds) 1993, Page 189.

<sup>97</sup> Philips and Coote (Eds) 1993, Page 189.

<sup>98</sup> Bosch 1992, Page 187.

<sup>99</sup> Bosch 1992, Page 187.

- The captives
- Those who are weary and carrying heavy burdens.
- Harassed and helpless without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36)<sup>100</sup>

Christ's life and teaching also brought him into conflict, and hence offered an opportunity for redefinition of the traditional / situational understanding of the kingdom of God, and of the Torah and even of their roles as his own disciples saw these.

Jesus overthrows certain ingrained codes in contemporaneous society by endowing a boundless compassion on the marginalized. In his entire ministry Jesus's practice shows boundary breaking compassion. So are his followers likewise called to show compassion and solidarity with the poor and marginalized. The 'God, who has such compassion on the stranger, the widow, the orphan, and the poor of ancient Israel, is now seen using the weak, the suffering and those of no consequence to be witnesses in the world of His Son.'<sup>101</sup> It can be argued from this therefore that 'those who have experienced divine compassion ought to be moved by the plight of others be it spiritual or material.'<sup>102</sup> The parable of the Unforgiving Servant is testimony to this expectation of Christian Congregations in mission (Matthew 18:21-35) and social justice too is a central and doctrinal strand in the biblical tradition. Therefore the bible provides lessons for doing mission and striving for social justice. Echoing Grigg, Pannel points out that 'John the Baptist's preaching defined repentance economically and politically in order to express solidarity with the poor and powerless.'<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Bosch 1992, Page 187.

<sup>101</sup> Bosch 1992, Page 187.

<sup>102</sup> Bosch 1992, Page 187.

<sup>103</sup> Pannel, *Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* Page 316.

The radical liberating ethic advocated by Jesus within the gospels is imperative. He suggests that by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, freeing the captives and welcoming the stranger those who follow him, feed, clothe, free and welcome him.<sup>104</sup> Consequently the prime missiological question for this research becomes: How are congregations in Newport and all involved in the mission of the church breaking away from her captivity to the syncretism with a secular culture that prevents the church from being the salt and light of the earth and ‘Light to the world’? The Luke/ Acts paradigm presents a salvation which involves a change in action and not just a merely ideational change. It calls to a need for physical, spiritual and psychological change.

The Acts of the Apostles provides favourite biblical texts for mission. The opening Chapters of Acts 1-14 present a continuum of ministry from Jesus through the apostles. It was Barrett who commented that ‘Luke wished his readers to see what the life of Christians was like in the apostolic period in order that they might imitate...the story of a community.’<sup>105</sup> This for some Christians is used as a biblical foundation for mission. As a community, believers’ fellowship included coming together frequently, eating together (table fellowship), praying, worshipping and sharing goods together (according to specific need) without discrimination against the marginalised.<sup>106</sup> This was a powerful engine for mission then and remains so today. As observed by a member of a Fresh Expressions plant ‘the communities see the way they live together as the most valuable witness they can make in our individualistic and anxiety ridden society. They offer a counter-cultural lifestyle of hope and purpose to the lonely through living more intentionally in

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<sup>104</sup> Matthew 25:34-45.

<sup>105</sup> Barrett, C. K, *Acts 1-14, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 2004, Page 160.*

<sup>106</sup> Acts 2:44-47.

community'<sup>107</sup>

Acts 1:8 is the key verse for the mission of the Church. Disciples are sent as witnesses both man's witness to God and God's witness to man. Luke writes about what Jesus 'continued' both to do and teach, by the Spirit through the disciples and Pentecost links Old Testament prophesy with New Testament history. In Acts there is the critical place of the Spirit in forming and growing new Christian communities and spreading the gospel by preaching and teaching. This was done in public places,<sup>108</sup> synagogues and private places their homes,<sup>109</sup> and difficult places.<sup>110</sup> Peter's sermon is frequently quoted as a biblical foundation for mission<sup>111</sup>. It can therefore be said that the whole book of Acts is an inspiration for mission.

#### **(v) Paul and mission**

Among other biblical passages quoted as biblical foundations for mission are some passages from the Pauline Epistles<sup>112</sup>. In these letters, Paul is portrayed as chosen before birth, called, commissioned and sent out on a specific mission. In Acts Chapters 9, 18, 22 and 26 Paul's personal testimony and friendship is seen as a powerful instrument for evangelism. Paul's procedure in doing missionary work begins with a proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, being usually a short kerygmatic statement; a proclamation Paul uses to move individuals to conversion<sup>113</sup> as he writes that all people can be saved through faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>114</sup> If all

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<sup>107</sup>Church Army, *Encounters on the Edge no. 38 The Cost of Community: Issues of maturity, Sheffield; Church Army, 2008, Page 23.*

<sup>108</sup> Acts 5:21, 25.

<sup>109</sup> Acts 18:26.

<sup>110</sup> Acts 4:1, 22:7.

<sup>111</sup> Acts 2:14-36.

<sup>112</sup> Seven New Testament letters suggested to have been written by Paul namely; 1Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, 1and 2 Corinthians, Romans, and Philemon

<sup>113</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10

people are to be saved by God then all must hold the potential to be saved, thus mission is never in vain and always has potential. Mission is understood in terms of a pilgrimage towards Christ-likeness, and this understanding is drawn out in some considerable detail in the analysis St Paul makes of what it means to become more and more like Christ in his letter to the Romans (chapter 12).

Furthermore, in the Epistle to the Romans, Paul explains that he has a commission to communicate the gospel message in the unreached, unevangelised areas of the world.<sup>115</sup> The emphasis Paul puts on his missionary work and evangelism leads to Church planting. Consequently, through the life, conduct and worship of the church people are drawn to Christ.

## **Conclusion**

Admittedly, singled –out biblical texts may seem important to the foundation of mission. However, the validity of mission should not be reduced to isolated sayings and exhortations; but from an assimilation of Scripture and central messages. As Bosch suggests ‘biblical models of mission should be based on reading the entire bible missiologically.’<sup>116</sup> The evocative images of mission in Scripture can resource contemporary Christian mission. This thesis sets out to explore some biblical texts and perspectives that have inspired Newport Congregations in Mission. The questions to be asked here are, Firstly, ‘How does what Christians in Newport do fit into a pattern that can be recognized to be a form of doing The Great Commission, the Sermon on the Mount, and liberation theology?’ Secondly, ‘What can be drawn from this recognition to be lessons for Evangelism for these Christians and their Congregations?’ Thirdly,

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<sup>114</sup> 1 Timothy 2:3-4

<sup>115</sup> Romans 15:20- 22, 16:26.

<sup>116</sup> Bosch 1993, Page 177

‘Have they set their call to mission in a much wider biblical context?’ These are discussions elaborated in this thesis. The next section explores how this was being implemented.

### **1.3 : Responding to Change**

Since the days of the Welsh Revivals, Wales, like many countries in the Western world, has been greatly transformed. The world of the time of the Great Revivals (1860 to 1910) for Wales was a time of heavy industrial activity in the South East; rather less so but still considerable in the South West and far North; and of little alteration from traditional agrarian ways in the remainder of the country. With the changes over the course of the late 20<sup>th</sup> early 21<sup>st</sup> century, from an industrial to a service-based electronic economy, the cultural milieu in Wales has as a matter of course altered and transformed utterly. Even in areas such as remote hill farms and sheep farms, farming enjoys new technologies and communication such as the internet, digital satellite TV and iphones. As Ward points out ‘social, economic and cultural change has affected the nature of the Church.’<sup>117</sup> In addition to this Gill points to physical factors, economics and issues of social space as contributory factors to the empty churches. He goes on to suggest that ‘urban Churchgoing decline in Britain in both the Church of England and in the Free Churches predates the technological developments of the twentieth century’.<sup>118</sup>

Nevertheless, these changes in culture, as led by technological revolution, seem to be working as if parts of the Welsh way of life are moving in different directions. The question to be asked here is ‘How are congregations carrying out their Christian task in this revolution?’ As suggested by

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<sup>117</sup> Ward, P. *Liquid Church*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002 , Page 22.

<sup>118</sup> Gill, R *The Empty Church Revisited*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2003, Page 8.

Croft, 'the church finds itself no longer at the centre of a uniform and clearly recognized culture'<sup>119</sup>, as it was in the period wherein Welsh society was considered to be part of 'Christendom'.<sup>120</sup> Whereas at one time standards derived mainly from the bible and Christian faith had a wholesome influence over the lives of many thousands of Welsh families, this is not the case today. Christianity has been pushed out of many public spheres over which it once had influence or control for example politics, the economy, education, welfare to mention but a few. As observed by Brown, 'what is taking place is not merely the decline of organized Christianity but the death of the culture that formerly conferred Christian identity upon British people as a whole.'<sup>121</sup> Hirsh perhaps alludes to this when he states that 'during the Christendom period of history, the Church was perceived as a central institution of society and therefore it expected people to 'come and hear the gospel' rather than displaying a 'go-to-them' type of mentality.'<sup>122</sup> However, as Drane notes dryly that 'whilst there may be a spiritual hunger in our country the last place that people will find a good meal seems to be the church'.<sup>123</sup> Consequently, as Croft has put it, 'the cultural context is such that these hungry mouths are not flocking to evangelistic meetings nor battering down the doors of churches wanting to ask questions.'<sup>124</sup> Most significantly, 'the Christian message is often ignored and indeed often lampooned.'<sup>125</sup>

Influential and positioned people of repute are nowadays waging a concerted conscious and deliberate offensive against belief in God, and more particularly against Christianity in the West.

A brand of evangelical atheist such as Dawkins is using the new technologies and

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<sup>119</sup> Croft.(Ed) *Mission Shaped Church Questions: Defining issues for Today's Church*. London: Church House Publishing 2008, Page 1.

<sup>120</sup> Croft 2008, Page 1.

<sup>121</sup> Brown C, *The Death of Christian Britain*, London, Routledge 2000, Page 193, 198.

<sup>122</sup> Hirsch 2006, Page 275.

<sup>123</sup> Drane in Croft 2008, Page 105.

<sup>124</sup> Croft 2008,Page 105.

<sup>125</sup> Croft 2008, Page 105.

communications to persuade the public into a godless paradise; against all the evidences of history and of Christ. The media too is secularizing even its current minimalist Christian religious commitments. Songs of Praise, a religious Sunday Programme, is changing. There is an ongoing debate about replacing the BC (Before Christ) and A.D (Anno Domini) dating system with Before Common Era (BCE) and Common Era (CE). Such acts could grind slowly into the core of any person's fragile belief.

Contemporary accounts of religion refer to the current age as an age where individualism, secularization, consumerism and materialism hold sway. Writing about secularization, Woodhead identifies two different forms of secularization; 'social secularization' and 'personal secularization'.<sup>126</sup> She goes on to say that whereas 'social secularization' refers to the process whereby religion loses its power and influence over and within society, 'personal secularization' relates to the decline in the individual belief and practice such as allegiance and commitment to religion.<sup>127</sup> Consequently, as Ward points out 'the plight of the individual seeking to establish an enduring sense of self in the shifting waters of liquid modernity leads to significant changes in the way that community operates.'<sup>128</sup> As suggested by Ward, 'our churches are not immune from the influence of contemporary culture.'<sup>129</sup> Writing from an American point of view, although applicable to the UK, Wuthnow points out, 'that at one time people were residents of their communities; now they are commuters.'<sup>130</sup> 'Thus images of stable dwellings have increasingly been replaced by images of those who have left home; the migrant

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<sup>126</sup> Woodhead, L, *An Introduction to Christianity*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, Page 339.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, Page 339

<sup>128</sup> Ward 2002, Page 24.

<sup>129</sup> Ward 2002, Page 21.

<sup>130</sup> Wuthnow, R. *Loose Connections: joining Together in Americas Fragmented Communities*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998, Page 7.

worker, the exile, the refugee, the drifter, the person who feels alienated or displaced, the person lost in the cosmos, the travelling salesman, the lonesome net surfer, the lonely face in the crowd, the marginal person, the vagrant, the dispossessed or homeless person.<sup>131</sup>

Consequently, people relate to each other either through geographical communities and increasingly through membership of particular networks. These networks include among others; networks of parents of school children, baby and toddler networks, networks of school children, Young People's networks, work related networks, Friendship networks, networks revolving around night Clubs and residents of a social housing scheme. Some networks are via the internet whereby knowledge and other practices are shared in a 'virtual' way. This has implications for the setting of boundaries.

Furthermore society has moved from being based around production to being based around consumption. Thus a lot of people find identity in what they consume rather than what they produce. The centering of consumerism upon the self is seen in names and branding like YouTube, iTunes, Myspace, Phones4U, where personal pronouns offer personal services to consumers. This move to a consumer culture has affected peoples thinking and evaluation of truth claims and Christianity in particular. People think about the Christian message in the same way they think about shopping hence it appears as a commodity. Consequently as observed by Lyon 'we hear people say 'buy into' a belief rather than rejecting a dogma as false, they say 'cannot buy' this or that view point'.<sup>132</sup> The Christian message is regarded with the same thought people have for advertisers and people trying to sell them things. In addition, the

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<sup>131</sup> Wuthnow, R. 1998, Page 7.

<sup>132</sup> Lyon, *Memory and the Millennium* in T Bradshaw (Ed), *Grace and Truth in a secular age*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1998, Page 285.

consumerist view portrays faith as simply a matter of personal choice with many other options to be decided on the basis of what ‘works’ or makes one happy. The ‘feel good’ approach of advertising places value and success and happiness and security on external things and material goods and so adds to misconception that the material world is the whole reality. A consequence of believing this fallacy is that religious and other non-material things and truths are considered a priori to be hollow and insubstantial as means and ways in which to live better. Therefore the freedom, self-fulfillment and the autonomy of the individual takes precedence over everything else. Thus as suggested by Davie, in terms of religion, there is a gradual shift from an understanding of religion as a form of obligation to consumption.<sup>133</sup> In addition due to greater social equality the traditional church has lost its power to impose religion from above. Furthermore as suggested by Stark and Bainbridge, in the religious market theory people make rational choices based on the costs and benefits of the available religious options<sup>134</sup>. It can be argued here therefore that the emergence of networks and consumer society rooted in an emphasis on personal freedom of choice raises challenges to the mission of the church.

The change in Western religious life has been described by Davie as ‘believing without belonging’.<sup>135</sup> In her study she observes that ‘most people appear to express their religious preferences by staying away from church rather than by attending.’<sup>136</sup> This has been criticized by Bruce who observed that people’s failure to invest time in going to church reflects the declining

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<sup>133</sup> Davie, Grace. *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing Without Belonging*. Oxford Blackwell, 1994.

<sup>134</sup> Stark, R. and Bainbridge, W.S., *The Future of Religion: Secularisation, Revival and Cult Formation*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1985.

<sup>135</sup> Davie G, 1994.

<sup>136</sup> Davie G. 1994, Page 2.

strength of their beliefs<sup>137</sup>. Furthermore Davie notes that there is a trend towards what she calls ‘vicarious religion’ where a small number of people practice religion on behalf of others who experience it at second hand. At the same time, remarkably few people have turned away from belief by adopting atheism or abandoning spirituality.<sup>138</sup> According to the 2001 Census over 72% of Welsh people saw themselves as Christians as opposed to the 2011 census when it was 58% perhaps indicating that while there was a decline in the numbers of those actively worshipping God, many lives were still strongly influenced by Christian values and principles. Furthermore, as observed by MacLaren ‘resilient religion is embedded within European culture or cultures in a number of ways: Christian symbols, language, rituals, art, music, politics and styles of thinking are all buried deep in its strata.’<sup>139</sup> This is evident around Wales in many ways: in place names, people’s names, churches and Chapels, Statues and memorials, Welsh literature, language with a host of words and phrases with their roots in the bible and in many of the great figures in Welsh history, who have deeply influenced Welsh life in many ways. Moreover, recent research has revealed that many people are searching for spirituality in the UK. More so, ‘young people may be more willing to become Christians than they have ever been. At the same time they seem to be increasingly reluctant to join our institutions.’<sup>140</sup>

Writing in the book ‘Church for the Unchurched’ Hunter made an observation that ‘secularisation has advanced to the point that, in Bonhoeffer’s words, ‘ The rusty swords of the old world are powerless to combat the evils of today and tomorrow’.<sup>141</sup> In light of this, he means

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<sup>137</sup> Bruce S , *Religion in Britain at the Close of the Twentieth Century: A Challenge to the Silver Lining Approach,* *Journal of Contemporary Religion, 11(3, 1996, )* Page 261- 75.

<sup>138</sup> Davie G. 1994, Page 2. See also Ward 2002, Page 57.

<sup>139</sup> MacLaren, Duncan. *Mission Implausible: Restoring credibility to the Church,* Eugene, Paternoster, 2004, Page 78.

<sup>140</sup> Ward 2002, Page 14.

<sup>141</sup> Hunter III, G.G. *Church for The Unchurched.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996, page 24.

that the gospel needs to be preached in new ways in accordance with the new ways of life, that have brought the internet, Blackberry, iTunes, space travel, international instant communications, personal freedom, and a wealth and prosperity along with amassed material luxuries that people live by. Therefore the nature of ministry will depend on the context and what influences have shaped that context. In the gospels Jesus says as much when he says ‘New wine needs new bottles, or else the new wine will split the old.’<sup>142</sup> It can be argued from the biblical context that Jesus’ wine at Cana is ever new wine, for Christians and for each generation of men and women; it will always need new bottles, according to the times it is preached in. In contemporary culture the tools of evangelism today are the computers, Twitter, Reality TV, Karaoke, Street pastoring, counselling work, school visiting and so on. The Church is always empowered for good and for attempting good in the name of and the spirit of God in Jesus. He never leaves the Church with ‘rusty swords’ to do a job in a society that wants everything bright and polished and brand sparkling new.

The story of Daniel in the book of Daniel shows him and his three friends Hananiah, Misheal and Azariah living in exile in a culture where he had made an impact on foreign rulers of his day because he was able to interpret dreams and visions.<sup>143</sup> Accordingly, ‘people today are experiencing God through dreams, visions and all sorts of ways and they are looking for explanation.’<sup>144</sup> People are learning about God in movies and novels and in news stories of outstanding memorable actions and endurance. Here one might ask, ‘how are congregations in Newport using their prophetic abilities?’ It has been suggested by this thesis that Christian

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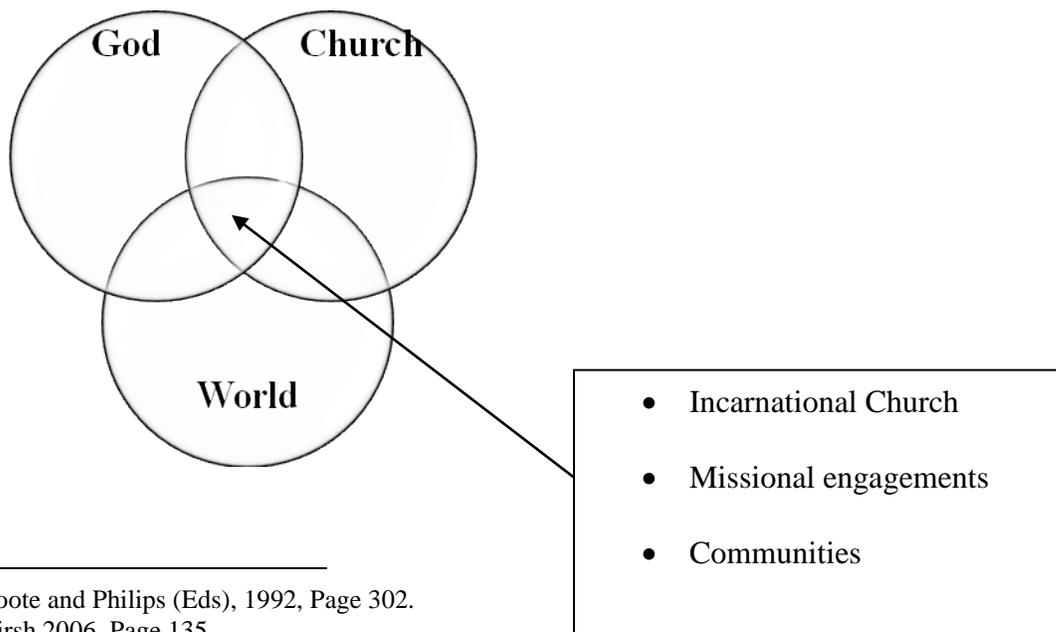
<sup>142</sup> Matthew 9:14-17, Mark 2:21-22, Luke 5:33-39.

<sup>143</sup> The Bible: Book of Daniel.

<sup>144</sup> Stoddard, C. and Cuthberth, N. *Church on the Edge: Engaging Principles of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mission: Reaching the Unchurched Network*. Birmingham: Authentic Media, 2006, Page 43.

mission has to be specific and contextual. A more fundamental question, perhaps is, how are the Christian congregations in Newport seeking to interpret the dreams of those in their communities?

In a post-modern twenty-first century, congregations in Mission are faced with a missiological challenge, experienced in the course of their doing incarnational mission ‘which should be held as a model for personal action.’<sup>145</sup> Most significantly, ‘the incarnation must inform the Christian’s and the Church’s engagement with the complex multicultural contemporary world.’<sup>146</sup> There is need for ‘creating space for mission to take place in; and in organic ways.’<sup>147</sup> In this way as Hirsch suggests ‘mission becomes something that ‘fits’ seamlessly into ordinary rhythms of life, friendships, and community and is thus thoroughly contextualized.’<sup>148</sup> Therefore ‘the Church’s love of God is seen in the Church’s caring work and in the story and in the working out of the gospel.’<sup>149</sup> This crucial challenge forms the backdrop for a useful summary of the contemporary challenge as developed by Hirsch in this diagram.<sup>150</sup>



<sup>145</sup> Coote and Philips (Eds), 1992, Page 302.

<sup>146</sup> Hirsh 2006, Page 135.

<sup>147</sup> Hirsch 2006, Page 135.

<sup>148</sup> Hirsch 2006, Page 135.

<sup>149</sup> Hirsch 2006, Page 135.

<sup>150</sup> Hirsch 2006, Page 239.

Figure 1<sup>151</sup>

Consequently, as suggested by Hirsch, ‘a truly missional church is the one in Figure 1 above whose missionary space figuratively sits within the three circles intersecting at the centre.’<sup>152</sup> He notes that in this model ‘worship of God is always done in the context of engagement with the world and hence is culturally meaningful’<sup>153</sup> for those in the world who are not (yet) committed. It has definite missional potential because it is open to all. Evangelism and social action are thus communal. It is practical caring for people in practical need. In the context of Newport, this thesis asks how the Christian congregations that were studied were engaged in imaginative ways that were missional and incarnational, how they were building bridges within the community?

Having looked at the biblical material, and the wider questions of responding to change the next section focuses on three key areas where mission has been witnessed within the fieldwork for this study: social work, worship and small groups.

#### **1.4: Social Work as Mission.**

The Bible provides us with material for lessons we can draw upon for application to mission in its manifestations as social work as mission. This is material in particular which can be found embodied centrally as important doctrinal strands derived from the bible. The Old Testament prophet Amos for instance, is clearly an advocate for social justice; as are the gospels as seen in

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<sup>151</sup> Hirsch 2006, Page 239.

<sup>152</sup> Hirsch 2006, Page 239.

<sup>153</sup> Hirsch 2006, Page 239.

Matthew 23:31-end, where Jesus is described in his own words as castigating the Pharisees for their lack of balance in their practices and the injustices towards their neighbours that result. In James 2:14, the disciple James, says plainly that without a person participating with a Christian ethical commitment, faith is hollow and has no effect or value to the person lacking the ethical commitment, and in its adumbrations upon others.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century upsurge in Christian Social Action has been expressed most clearly and systematically in The Church Of England's Report 'Faith in the City'.<sup>154</sup> A programme of action of the same title had its origin in this Report published in 1985 by the Church of England as its response to civil unrest. The Church of England website explains:

'The report came in the wake of much concern about what was happening in British inner city and outer council housing estate communities. *Faith in the City* was crucial in sparking new awareness of the emerging gaps in society.'<sup>155</sup>

Similarly, Christians in Wales have been actively involved in social action through the work of Gweini,<sup>156</sup> the Evangelical Alliance in Wales and other Welsh based Christian Charities.

Christians are called by Christ to witness to the nature of the Kingdom by way of the avenues by which they come into contact with and operate in the wider community wherein they live out their everyday lives. Congregations since 1985 have been encouraged to become involved in building links to and resources within local communities with respect to such burning issues as poverty, housing, unemployment, child abuse, asylum and racial discrimination. Many have

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<sup>154</sup> *The Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas. Faith in the City.* London : Church House, 1985.

<sup>155</sup> Source: Web site <http://www.churchofengland.org/our-views/home-and-community-affairs/community-urban-affairs/urban-affairs/faith-in-the-city.aspx> Accessed September 10<sup>th</sup> 2010.

<sup>156</sup> For more information about the work of Gweini refer to [www.gweini.org.uk](http://www.gweini.org.uk)

risen to the challenge and responded to their call. Many have chosen to work with those who are at the edges of society; who dwell on neglected Council Estates, which can be ‘no-go’ areas for police, the authorities and strangers to an area; or else among other kinds of marginalised social groups and groupings. In this respect the mission of the Church has been identified by the church as part of the mission that Christ has begun in Galilee and Judea. The Church by self-definition strives to be a caring body and this is most appropriately manifested, as is all Christian Charity, in and through activities. An important aspect of this expression being concern for one’s neighbour as s/he lives everyday life in community. Care and concern in community work ideally should bear witness to the gospel tenets which Jesus exemplifies and preaches; whose explicit aim is to point to the reality of grace.<sup>157</sup>

Therefore through its buildings, its staff and members, the church bears witness to its faith and concern for the disadvantaged. The issue here was how the service could be given without it having any strings attached. And the question of who sets the agenda is found again to be a perennial missional issue. The challenge, according to Ballard, is for the congregations who are involved in mission to ‘maintain their mission firmly and transparently anchored in the faith; and yet remain accessible, and in touch, but not over-demanding in religious terms on the people who are receiving their help.’<sup>158</sup> So that ‘these people become allowed to relate to the Church, and for them not to be or to feel coerced, pressed, into the church.’<sup>159</sup> Ballard offers a perspective that is a critique of Church related community work. He argues that ‘it is all too easy for Christian Social Activists to be pulled in a single direction, one way or other, and so the situation in the

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<sup>157</sup> One must place a caveat here that Jesus has gone on record as saying that ‘The poor ye will always have with you’ which of itself does not obviate the question of relief to the poor; but at least should temper the aims of Christians to embrace ideologies which seek to eliminate poverty by policy.

<sup>158</sup> Ballard 1990, Page 28.

<sup>159</sup> Ballard 1990, Page 28.

group activists ends up with a chasm opening which separates those who are demanding some sort of explicit Christian stand from those who prefer to keep 'open house' at any cost.'<sup>160</sup>

Though his concern must be noted it can be argued with some force that 'congregations involved in mission can be involved in 'Community work' without experiencing being forced to compromise their Christian principles by importing wholesale a scheme of provision which recognises only wholly secular needs and outlooks.'<sup>161</sup> But of course, any 'church's mission will be involved to some degree, more or less, 'in the world' for the good of others.'<sup>162</sup>

In Acts 1:8 Luke expresses the role of the church as to be called to bear witness in both life deeds and in words, to a kingdom that is essentially beyond this sublunary world.<sup>163</sup> It is a calling not to create a particular systematised social order but to point to a different order of life, a step change of perception and quality, that is present in part but whose completion remains yet to come. The time of the fulfilment of the Kingdom of Heaven lies in the hands of God alone, and is promised to be brought to full fruition one day. It can be argued here that service that Christians are called upon to provide is not having as its aim to make the world better, but to demonstrate that Jesus has made possible a new world, a new social order. That said the gospels have these words of Jesus 'Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.'<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Ballard 1990, Page 28.

<sup>161</sup> Ballard 1990, Page 45.

<sup>162</sup> Ballard 1990, Page 45.

<sup>163</sup> Acts 1:8.

<sup>164</sup> Matthew 11:4-6, Luke 7:22-23.

Stoddard and Cuthbert suggest that the Church as the body of Christ is called to express the life and ministry of Jesus to the present culture in a way that it can understand and to which it can respond.<sup>165</sup> However as Bonk points out that ‘.....for many Christians, the incarnation is merely a theological descriptive, rather than a strategically prescriptive event.’<sup>166</sup>

It can be observed here is that this statement is non-verifiable. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews cautions against complacent distinctions like this one when he warns that we should be aware how we take things for granted since we ‘might have entertained an angel unawares.’<sup>167</sup>

Shenk suggested that ‘any culture can be a means through which a people hear the gospel in their own tongue’.<sup>168</sup> He goes on to say that ‘the Apostle Paul insisted that he was prepared to ‘become all things to all people’ in order that they may hear the gospel.’<sup>169</sup> Furthermore Shenk refers to ‘Donovan’s attempt to reach the Masai by abandoning the conventional missions systems in favour of a strategy attuned to Masai culture.’<sup>170</sup> This he concludes points us in the right direction.<sup>171</sup> A number of commentators including Sanneh<sup>172</sup> have given examples in the ‘history of missions where missionaries had rejected ‘cultural diffusion’ by which he means an imposition of a cultural context, in favour of finding ways to ‘translate the message’ into the language and culture of a people.’<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Stoddard and Cuthberth 2006, 143.

<sup>166</sup> Bonk in Phillips and Coote (eds) 1992, Page 302.

<sup>167</sup> Hebrews 13:12.

<sup>168</sup> Shenk in Phillips and Cootes (eds) 1992, Page 223.

<sup>169</sup> Shenk in Phillips and Cootes (eds), 1992, Page 223.

<sup>170</sup> Donovan ,V. *Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle from the Masai*. London: SCM Press LTD 1982.

<sup>171</sup> Shenk in Phillips and Cootes (eds) 1992, Page 223.

<sup>172</sup> Sanneh Lamin, *Translating the message: The missionary Impact on culture* (American Society of missiology), , Maryknoll , NewYork, Orbis Books, 2009.

<sup>173</sup> Shenk in Philips and Cootes (eds) 1992, Page 223.

In the context of Newport: What is it that this kind of experience can teach those who seek missiological lessons from this experience? At the very least, that idea suggested by Bonk pertains, that ‘the incarnation means the giving up of power, of prestige and privilege and social position.’<sup>174</sup> Congregations involved in mission are called to live out the ramifications of a faith that is securely anchored in Christ. They are to be imitators of Christ, by the things they do and the things they say. This has been practiced by some Christians under the motto of ‘What Would Jesus Do’ (WWJD). As suggested by Ward, this has managed to incarnate Christ inside this fairly arid [secular] world.<sup>175</sup> St Paul sums this up well in his letter to the Philippians when he writes:

‘Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,  
Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited. But emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form. He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death even on a cross.’<sup>176</sup>

This is precisely what is our ideal model for missiological service and humility in our dealings with each other and the world. It is ‘ideal’ for many reasons: for instance, it is a thing to be aimed at rather than met: and it is a thing of which only Christ has been fully capable of doing: and it is an affront for a Christian to assume him/herself to be able to match the Lord in this way. However, in so far as we are allowed Grace to perform it, we are asked to allow that these things are called for. Also ‘active listening’ is called for. Listening to what people are saying ‘not just their words, but also to pauses, their hesitations, nuances of speech or actions, their joys, their

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<sup>174</sup> Bonk in Phillipps and Cootes (eds), 1992, Page 302

<sup>175</sup> Ward 2002, Page 64.

<sup>176</sup> Philippians 2:5-8.

hopes, their frustrations and pain.’<sup>177</sup> This demands patience, courage and faith. In the gospels we see Jesus making a point of spending time with the people of the land. He identified with local communities, (Capernaum, Bethany, Nazareth, Tiberias and so on). Only by ‘locating Church within culture can we find ways to develop a distinctive expression for Church within that culture.’<sup>178</sup>

‘The Church proclaims a Gospel that it believes the world needs to hear. It wants to share this with people by drawing all women and men into a living community of worship and service.’<sup>179</sup> Both Ballard and Bellah are in agreement when they suggest that, ‘there is a natural movement from liturgy, which is communion, into brotherhood, onto caring and to curing, and into social action.’<sup>180</sup> In Matthew 28: 9 we see how The Great Commission springs from worship. “It was as the Marys and the disciples fell down in total adoration of Jesus and were lost in wonder, love and praise that they were inspired to go on mission.”<sup>181</sup> The next section will look at worship as mission.

### **1.5: Worship as Mission**

It is the contention of this thesis that worship is essential to any congregation and that it is furthermore a foundational pillar and a *sine qua non* of the communal and private religious observations that congregations carry out as part of their rituals of life. What I found remarkable and even fascinating about my experience of observing and recording Christians in Newport was how differing approaches to worship, and so its manifestations as mission, were so variable.

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<sup>177</sup> Hirsch 2006, Page 217.

<sup>178</sup> Ward 2002, Page 16.

<sup>179</sup> Ballard 1990, Page 27.

<sup>180</sup> Bellah in Ballard 1990, Page 46.

<sup>181</sup> Green 2000, Page 322.

Worship could be expressed by church congregations through a range of registers; some of which being ‘sonorous spoken liturgy, hymns, organ music, incense, robes, a repertoire of praise songs, worship bands, open prayer, informal clothing, candles and Taize chants.’<sup>182</sup> Both ordained persons and lay people served in regular liturgical observance. Some people were attracted more towards a very traditional cathedral – style of worship reminiscent of the services commonly seen at Newport Cathedral. Others were drawn to loud, vibrant and enthusiastic styles of expression; usually displaying a modern make-over to the services, which utilise a rhythmic and pop-like music accompanying song lyrics in modern vocabulary. These also placed some special emphasis on personal confessions of faith and such like reality anecdotal content; and also offered a provision of leisure services such as coffee bars and bookshops; and in some instances involving celebrity preachers. This is the type of worship that can be experienced at The King’s Church. Yet others have been content to have found their experiences of God in the course of quiet contemplation and in enjoying a more sedate kind of reflective worship. Others were drawn to a centre of worship which places a particular emphasis on learning and teaching; for them to obtain a deeper spiritual life by means of exploring the Scriptures and their possible meanings and applications to everyday life. Such was the experience of worship at Nant Coch, and also at Lliswerry Baptist Church.

It can be verified by attendance and observation then as will be shown in this thesis that there are at least a handful of very varied threads of tradition in worship at present in use across Newport; perhaps with a certain limited flexibility for mixing and matching their separate elements. This means that one finds as it were, say a half-dozen packages of elements which ‘belong’ to a tradition and make that tradition all of a piece, with little influence or interchange

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<sup>182</sup> Stoddard and Cuthberth, 2006, Page 139.

of style and package elements affecting the basic half-dozen ways of worship. In this way congregations in Newport had come together and created congregations in their individual ways. They formulated their sacred element in their communal lives distinctively. This certainly carries with it a great effect upon the ways people experience their religious life.

The missiological challenge for worship has been for its messages and its appeal, to mind, heart and spirit, to connect with those in the church with those who no longer attend and with those who have never considered or intended to set foot in the church. The experience of worship in Newport meant that the variety and tastes to which it caters, necessarily challenges any notion of it being desirable for there to be, 'a one-size- fits- all' staple of worship.'<sup>183</sup> Lovas, Newbigin and also Wright affirms and so confirms that 'liturgy has a major function to assist in the hearts of God's missional people , to expand the gospel story, and to deepen its indwelling.'<sup>184</sup> and must assist God's missional people in attaining such an expansion.

Stoddard and Cuthbert point out that 'worship is an engagement with God and that such engagement is demonstrated at times beyond the place of worship through Christians loving one another and also by them fulfilling the second commandment to love your neighbour as you love yourself: This is to happen normally within the local community; but in fact wherever you might be.'<sup>185</sup> 'God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit remains the origin and end point of all our

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<sup>183</sup> Ward, 2002, Page 14.

<sup>184</sup> Lovas, Newbigin and Wright in Stoddard and Cuthberth 2006, Page 136.

<sup>185</sup> Stoddard and Cuthberth 2006, Page 139.

worship and of our missionary engagement with the world.’<sup>186</sup> As the Anglican Liturgy puts it, ‘All things come of Thee; and of Thine own do we give Thee.’<sup>187</sup>

Christian congregations in Newport who were involved in worship and mission carried out these privileged duties both privately and corporately. From making use of simple meditations, quiet, walking and praying, to music, and dance. These aspects of missionary duty, when they are looked at as being tools for mission have enabled and encouraged congregations, missional groups and individual Christians to engage both openly and also experimentally with their approaches to God. Sacramental church services, for instance, were being held not just on a Sunday; but were happening in many places during the week hence the expression, ‘thinking outside the Sunday box.’<sup>188</sup>

The society we live in, having so much technological need of 24/7 attention and maintenance, disqualifies an important portion of churchgoers or would-be fraction from attending regularly Sunday worship. Shift workers are just one fraction of these persons; and Newport having large shopping complexes with retail shops even today means that a higher number of these Sunday employment workers live there than in many, say more rural, areas. As a tool for mission weekday sacramental services have become necessary in order to provide for and to reach out to those for whom Sunday is frequently unavailable.

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<sup>186</sup> Ward 2002, Page 77.

<sup>187</sup> Church of England, *Book of Common Prayer*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1928.

<sup>188</sup> Stoddard and Cuthberth, 2006, Page 45.

My observation at this point is that ‘worship can subsist in small groups or expand as far as to be present at much larger events like festivals; and not forgetting medium sized congregations.’<sup>189</sup>

In light of this question of the sizes and natures of worship as mission it was noteworthy that in Newport a considerable number of congregations were giving much thought to plans for reworking their buildings and resources so as to allow them to provide a more genuine participation in mission as worship by attracting a broader range of types and personality in the local community. This radical reworking was also being evidenced by an increasing use being made of alternative public spaces for worship. An important example of such alternative thinking were the interesting venues for open air worship which were Newport’s indoor groceries market, Tredgar House and Park stately home and gardens, the municipal Belle Vue Park, the central sites John Frost Square, a public place which commemorates the local martyrs of the Chartist Movement; and even at local sports, leisure and recreation venues like Newport Leisure Centre.

Writing about Church, Williams observes that; ‘If ‘church’ is what happens when people encounter the Risen Jesus and commit themselves to sustaining and deepening that encounter in their encounter with each other, there is plenty of theological room for diversity of rhythm and style, so long as we have ways of identifying the same living Christ at the heart of every expression of Christian life in common.’<sup>190</sup>

This is perhaps the imperative criterion for worship to be recognisably Christian worship, and it has possibly restrained as well as inspired Christian Congregations in Newport in making their

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<sup>189</sup> Ward 2002, Page 94.

<sup>190</sup> Williams R. in Croft(Ed) 2008, Page 190.

break-out from traditional ways of worship, and risking themselves in taking new approaches entailing new forms of worship. Thus they have chosen opportunely creative and culturally – relevant ways to share the living gospel. It can be argued that ‘this breaking-out was their response; even their riposte, to all the other and competing activities that take place on Sundays these days. As if to say that, since sports clubs, coffee shops, Cinemas, Sky TV, shopping centres and a lie in’<sup>191</sup> have encroached on our time; then ours is the equal right to adventure into and take possession of some of your time.

It was evident in some congregations that their new ways and adventurous programmes for worship as mission were forcefully causing them to adapt the gospel story and their vision of it, to the language and culture surrounding. They were striving to communicate meaningfully the contemporary meaning and significance of the ancient messages of Scripture. In addition to the tried and tested, and maybe these days found wanting, traditional ways, fresh ways were being found, for Christians to put across the gospel in terms that present faith to the visual, sound-byte, techno-generation sympathetically, as a thing to relate to, and consume.<sup>192</sup> This approach towards today’s citizens has some correspondence with what Stoddard and Cuthberth suggest. They claim that ‘if Roman roads provided ways for the gospel to travel during the first centuries AD; thus new (information super-) highways are to be equally used in our own time.’<sup>193</sup> In as far as possible, that the mind could conceive and the theme could withstand the treatment, Newport churches were seen to be trying to make themselves accessible in new ways to the wider public.

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<sup>191</sup> Stoddard and Cuthberth 2006, Page 126.

<sup>192</sup> Stoddard and Cuthberth 2006, Page 14.

<sup>193</sup> Stoddard and Cuthberth 2006, Page 14.

In 'Liquid Church' Ward suggests 'The Labyrinth' as a way of offering an experience of a deeper encounter with God as in an industrialised but also a communal experience.'<sup>194</sup> He goes on to say that 'one way 'The Labyrinth' might be useful may be as feature in a café that could use 'The Labyrinth' to offer a place for spiritual exploration and discovery as well for enjoying pastries and cappuccinos.'<sup>195</sup> It must be said here that Ward's perspectives on worship may be commensurate with what is reflected elsewhere in the UK; as it will be argued in this thesis they do not express the complex realities of congregational worship in Newport. I hasten to add here that some of the Newport Congregations comprised mostly elderly people who were not modern or easily familiar with the 21<sup>st</sup> century technological networking life.

Furthermore, Ward's 'futuristic dream of worship and mission moving away from the traditional notions of church as being a gathering of people meeting in a regular venue at set times, towards the dynamic notion of church as a series of relationships and communications'<sup>196</sup> is far from the reality amongst the present congregations in Newport. The bold vision that he portrays in 'Liquid Church' where he discusses for 'God's people in worship and mission – a flexible, fluid way of being church'<sup>197</sup> - would be dismissed by a great many of the congregations involved in doing mission in Newport. Unlike in Ward's 'Liquid Church' wherein worship and meeting becomes decentred, worship amongst congregations in Newport remains centred and heavily reliant on a congregational dynamic.

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<sup>194</sup> Ward 2002, Page 97.

<sup>195</sup> Ward 2002, Page 97.

<sup>196</sup> Ward 2002, Page 97.

<sup>197</sup> Ward 2002, Page 97.

Ward is thinking of Church for the technophile and for the Social Networking youth and young adults of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The conditions required then for his 'Liquid Church' are present and are functioning; only the ambience is inappropriate. At least in the eyes of the mass of dedicated users of Internet Technology and in the eyes of the congregations in Newport who bring up the rear electronically-speaking a prospect of electronic decentralised Church is hardly feasible. Nonetheless there is scope and hope; and the question of revival for the church in the future is a real and living one. Should such a renaissance occur it will be via and (secularly) because of the internet and the ease and fluency of communications and 'networking' that God has blessed us with in these latter days.

### **1.6: Small Groups**

Small Groups are recognised to have Biblical precedents and are considered for the most part to be essential structures in the early Church. The greatest example is Jesus himself, 'who first modelled the germination of his mission to this pattern by his gathering and mentoring of 12 disciples as well as by speaking and worshipping in the synagogue and speaking to the crowds in public places, (The Temple; The Marketplace).'<sup>198</sup> In Acts 2 Luke suggests that the earliest Christian movement, following Peter's sermon at Pentecost organised the 3,000 people who responded into cells and met in homes.<sup>199</sup> Luke talks of how Paul and Silas after their liberation from jail in Macedonia, visited the church that met in Lydia's home.<sup>200</sup> Furthermore at Ephesus Paul taught Christians in large public gatherings as well as 'from house to house'<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Hunter III 1996, Page 82.

<sup>199</sup> See The Bible , Acts 2:47, 4:4, 5:14, 5:42-47.

<sup>200</sup> Acts 16:40.

<sup>201</sup> Acts 20:20.

The Small Group Model of mission is advocated by Galloway when he suggested that ‘the way to build a great church was to follow the master plan that was so effective in the early church.’<sup>202</sup> He goes on to say, ‘meet in the house of God on Sunday to celebrate all together the resurrection power of Jesus. Then, throughout the week, meet house to house in small groups for heart –to-heart fellowship.’ He further says ‘this New Testament blueprint for building a successful Church is in perfect step with meeting the needs of people who are lonely and isolated in this twenty-first century. This plan he argues is absolutely perfect for this generation.’<sup>203</sup>

This small group discussion section of this work draws on Wuthnow’s exploration of a sample of one thousand small Groups in America.<sup>204</sup> Although his analysis was rooted in America, I found that it offered a useful, general template against which the work of small groups for mission in Newport could be measured. In his work Wuthnow identifies

- ‘Bible studies,
- prayer fellowships,
- self-help groups,
- twelve-step gathering,
- therapy sessions,
- recovery groups,
- Sunday School Classes
- Alcoholics Anonymous,

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<sup>202</sup> Galloway in Hunter III 1996, Page 85

<sup>203</sup> Quoted by Hunter III 1996, Page 85.

<sup>204</sup> Wuthnow estimates that around 40 percent of the adult population of the USA (75 million people ) claim to be involved in ‘a small group that meets regularly’ Page 45, 57 % of the groups in question are ‘part of the regular activities of a church or synagogue’ Page 92 and that a majority of all small groups are estimated to have a religious or spiritual focus Page 76.

- Youth Groups, Sports and Hobby Groups,
- book discussion Groups,

as important sources of both emotional support and of settings for spirituality.’<sup>205</sup> To add to Wuthnow’s list with material discovered from research studies in Newport I would add Life Groups, House Groups, Alpha evangelism Groups and men’s Groups and women’s Groups. The findings of this research are testimony to the compatibility of Small Groups in mission. Congregations in Newport were found to be using small Groups as their master key to effective mission and ministry. They were seen by some congregations as being essential to evangelism. Hence Small Groups were a facility which was providing a reliable vehicle for spiritual conversion, self - discovery and spiritual renewal.

It can be argued here that Small Groups can be a vehicle for realising greater depth in human relations, despite the notorious post-modern pluralistic fragmentation of British society.

More so, because in small groups people are said ‘to find it fairly easy to get involved in their community of churches because many of them are loosely related to one another.’<sup>206</sup> People feel that they connect with church in this way and that they are taken seriously. Small Groups then become a means for people to rediscover the reality and power of God’s presence.

Furthermore, Wuthnow notes that ‘Small Groups have a capacity to draw their members into discussion, to make newcomers feel welcome and at ease, to cultivate trust and to make members feel appreciated.’<sup>207</sup> It is on such a basis that process evangelism courses like Alpha, Emmaus, and Christianity Explored have been amongst the fastest growing methods of evangelism

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<sup>205</sup> Wuthnow R. *Sharing the Journey, Support Groups and America’s New Quest for Community*. New York: The Three Press, 1994, Page ix.

<sup>206</sup> Wuthnow 1994, Page 147.

<sup>207</sup> Wuthnow 1994, Page 147.

attracting thousands of people. These courses are seen by evangelists as events whereabouts to invite people who are not churchgoers be they friends or family for them to meet in a relaxed and informal setting. Such courses are typically carried on as small groups and are generally open to everyone who would like to attend. The promoters of Alpha, themselves describe their courses as ‘a safe place in which to express questions, doubts and alternative viewpoints without fear of alienation or judgement.’<sup>208</sup> They are ‘places open to welcoming intelligent discussions.’<sup>209</sup> What ‘Alpha offers above all else perhaps is permission, an invitation even, that is the exception in secular culture, to open and pursue with earnest sincerity and authenticity discussion about the big questions – of life, of death and of their meaning.’<sup>210</sup> ‘According to statistics compiled by Christian Research, more that 1.3 million people in the UK have already completed an Alpha Course.’<sup>211</sup> ‘Alpha does both evangelism and discipleship effectively.’<sup>212</sup> In spite of Alpha being one of the most successful evangelising initiatives in recent years, Alpha has its critics. According to Hunt, Ireland, Booker and Ward, Alpha raises central theological disputes as well as debates concerning how evangelism should be conducted. Hunt alludes to the suspicion and objections held by liberals, traditionalists and conservatives as he summarises; ‘While liberals tended to see Alpha as too fundamentalist in its orientation, the traditionalist and conservatives, especially Protestant evangelicals, Anglo Catholics and more conservative Roman Catholics feared its ecumenical stance and its role in bringing in all things charismatic ‘by the backdoor’.’<sup>213</sup> Ireland on the other hand observes that, ‘the main theological areas of concern centred on lack of teaching on the sacraments, social ethics and resurrection, and perceived over-

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<sup>208</sup> Source : Web site <http://alpha.org/> Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>209</sup> Source : Website <http://alpha.org/> Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>210</sup> Source: Web site <http://alpha.org> Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>211</sup> Croft, Frost, Ireland, Richards, Richmond, Spencer. *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age: Communicating Faith in a changing culture*. London, Church House Publishing, 2005, Page 10.

<sup>212</sup> Source: Web site <http://alpha.org> accessed 8<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>213</sup> Hunt, *PentecoStudies*, vol. 4, 2005. Stephen Hunt, The Alpha Course and Its Critics. <http://www.glopent.net/pentecostudies/online-back-issues/2005/hunt2005.pdf/view>

emphasis on tongues, physical healing and substitutionary atonement.’<sup>214</sup> Ward’s critique in his Article – ‘Alpha-the MacDonalidization of Religion?’ was that, in the need for uniformity in Alpha, ‘the downside of this approach is that it teaches people how to use a product rather than evangelism. This he says reinforces dependence on the source of the product ...and is a classic feature of the behaviour of multi-national corporations.’ He goes on to say that ‘Alpha offers people “the illusion of religion’, in that membership to the local church and regular Sunday worship are simply not like Alpha. This is akin to what some have referred to as the “Disneyfication” of religion.’<sup>215</sup> What Gumble wrote in response to the critics of Alpha is worth noting. He writes, ‘In saying that we believe Alpha is a work of God, I am not for a moment suggesting that it is perfect. I’m sure that it is greatly marred by human error and frailty.’<sup>216</sup> That said, like most process evangelism courses used as a tool for mission, there is need for adaptation, balance and constant improvement.

Process Evangelism Courses allow time to be set aside in which to ‘process’ the gospel: thus echoing the sentiments of Ireland that, In a society where for a majority of people conversion is a journey or a gradual process, every church needs a nurturing group where enquirers are able to belong before they are asked to believe, to ask whatever for them are the big questions about life and to explore the Christian faith.’<sup>217</sup> These are non -Sunday events. Their emphasis rests in exploration and discovery in a relaxed and informal environment. Group members share their hopes, pains, sense of sin, struggles, and experience with one another. They draw together spiritually through prayer in short sentences in which as a group they converse with God. They

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<sup>214</sup> Ireland *A study of the Effectiveness of Process Evangelism Courses in the Diocese of Lichfield, with special reference to Alpha*” (MA dissertation, University of Sheffield at Cliff College, 2000) p. 2.

<sup>215</sup> Ward, P. *Alpha-the MacDonalidization of Religion?*” Anvil 15 (November 4, 1998): 279-286.

<sup>216</sup> Gumble 1994, page 23.

<sup>217</sup> Ireland 2000, Pages 39-40.

‘study the bible and what they bring from the experience they work to try and apply to its revelation, promises, wisdom, and insights to their daily lives.’<sup>218</sup> Such ‘courses are held in gyms, prisons, offices, residential homes, universities, parent and toddler groups, youth clubs, armed forces bases, schools, and they are inclusive to blind and other sensory –impaired people, and are offered in languages other than English.’<sup>219</sup> Commonly there may be some sort of communal meal; since food is a binding factor shared by all.

It is noteworthy that ‘small groups draw individuals out of themselves, pull them out of their self contained personal lives, and place their intimate selves in the presence of others who share their needs and concerns.’<sup>220</sup> They make secure friends, and by so doing become linked to wider social networks.<sup>221</sup> They talk in their groups and their discussions lend plausibility to specific rules for conduct in everyday life. Themes taken from the gospel words spoken by Jesus like, ‘Love your neighbour,’<sup>222</sup> ‘Blessed are the meek,’<sup>223</sup> ‘Let not your heart be troubled;’<sup>224</sup> ‘Pray without ceasing;’<sup>225</sup> are typical starting points. Group members commonly say that that ‘it makes sense to take these words of Jesus with deepest seriousness because their tenor applies so clearly to ordinary everyday behaviour.’<sup>226</sup> They come ‘to realise in greater definition by means of a knowledge they receive from the testimonies of people in the group, that these words are foundationally true for life and for salvation.’<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Source: Web site <http://alpha.org> accessed 8<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>219</sup> Source: Web site <http://alpha.org> accessed 8<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>220</sup> Wuthnow 1994, Page 12.

<sup>221</sup> Wuthnow 1994, Page 12.

<sup>222</sup> Matthew 22:36-40

<sup>223</sup> Matthew 5:5

<sup>224</sup> John 14:1

<sup>225</sup> Romans 12:12.

<sup>226</sup> Wuthnow 1994, Page 282..

<sup>227</sup> Wuthnow 1994, Page 282.

In the context of a congregation in mission they can organise themselves into smaller disciplined missionary cells through which the word and work of the church is spread. Small groups are commended for their warmth, friendliness, and informality. As a missional tool, 'small groups generate a more natural and relational often deeper and a more sustained impact.'<sup>228</sup> Through 'small groups people are able to learn a spiritual preparation to take on witness; often expressed as a feeling of inner confidence in God, and which strengthens one's own spiritual resolve and authenticity.'<sup>229</sup> Contrary to Wuthnow's findings in his research, my own experience has been that 'the spirituality typically fostered among small groups who are engaged in mission is orientated with some focus toward communicating religious truths to friends and neighbours.'<sup>230</sup> This is an approach which must be differentiated clearly from techniques and arguments for becoming the dreaded 'bubbly,' smiling Christian with all the answers.

Whilst noting the significance of small Groups, Wuthnow gives a cautionary note about their role. He points out that 'small groups can be divisive more especially if members start forming their own opinions and challenging the authority of central command.'<sup>231</sup> Moreover 'they are not adequate substitutes for family, friends, or other long-term personal relationships, nor can they serve in place of community organisations or government programs concerned with the social, moral, political, economic needs of society.'<sup>232</sup>

My analysis of other tools of mission that I developed earlier in this thesis might be amplified by adding that congregations in mission might do well to include a use of small groups as part of

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<sup>228</sup> Wuthnow 1994, Page 246.

<sup>229</sup> Wuthnow 1994, Page 246.

<sup>230</sup> Wuthnow 1994, Page 246.

<sup>231</sup> Wuthnow 1994, Page 352.

<sup>232</sup> Wuthnow 1994, Page 365.

their broader, multipurpose program of mission. Such a program might present a balanced assortment of opportunities for learning, worship and service as well as fellowship.

The research presented here with supporting arguments is that small group mission is able to be effective and beneficial in its own particular way. However, small groups have their limitations; so that such means to mission are likely to be used most profitably alongside other programmes of outreach.

### **1.7: Conclusion**

Within this Chapter Christian mission has been defined and biblical models of mission have been utilised. The challenges to mission posed by technological changes, changes in culture, secularization, consumerism, and individualism were analysed. Congregations in mission were seen to be responding to the challenges of mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by adopting ways of managing and sustaining mission. The mission strategies employed included among others social action, worship, process evangelism and the use of small groups.

The next Chapter details the methods used in obtaining information about the congregations in their missiological quest.

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1: Introduction

This chapter seeks to answer questions about ‘strategies and techniques by means of which data was collected and analysed’<sup>1</sup>: that is, methodology. It draws strongly from the conventions of ethnography, especially in regard to their use here to form ‘the bases on which the empirical practical activity of field work was undertaken.’<sup>2</sup> This ‘field work largely comprised participant observation and informal person to person interviewing so as to acquire much of the foundational field data.’<sup>3</sup> This data was for the most part drawn out from individual informants and at largely unstructured group interviews; and added to this was some less directly personal data acquired by way of a questionnaire, and that assisted with material herein from as many who, from a range of places of worship and church- related events, were happy to return their answers. There was a considerable ‘documentary recording of close as well as general observation.’<sup>4</sup>

Added to this were copious reading, analysis and assessment of much written material; both that which was provided by and pertinent to the persons and institutions who are the subjects of this work, as well by the mass of more academic and theoretical studies found in papers and books and online. Some specific instances taken from these latter sources are acknowledged here and referenced here. Alongside these went a careful ‘recording of and analysis and interpretation of those elements’<sup>5</sup> of Newport City ‘Church life and services that were seen to characterize in distinctive ways any denomination, church, congregation, festivity, service, outlook, religious

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<sup>1</sup> Burgess. *In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research*. London: George Allen & unwin, 1983, Page 142.

<sup>2</sup> Burgess 1983, Page 3.

<sup>3</sup> Burgess 1983, Page 3.

<sup>4</sup> Burgess 1983, Page 124.

<sup>5</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 120.

understanding’<sup>6</sup> and so on, which was encountered. The preferred ‘methodology was broad in its approach especially in view of the extent and the variety of available theory, discussion, and research’<sup>7</sup> to be found on topics with which this work deals.

## **2.2: Work in Congregational Studies**

In terms of methodology it was found useful to employ a ‘variety of approaches’<sup>8</sup> to explore mission and related issues in the Newport County Borough and region. But one of the most useful was ethnography; an approach that has affinity with the work of Woodhead, Guest, Tusting, Collins, Chambers and Stringer all of whom use ethnography as their means to focus closely on congregations in their analysis of ‘Christianity in a Post – Christian Context.’<sup>9</sup>

Collins suggests that ‘.....Ethnography is a facilitation of a more or less believable account of local or contextualized meaning’.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand in Burgess, ‘ethnography has been defined by Conklin as the data of cultural anthropology that are derived from direct observation of behavior in a particular society.’<sup>11</sup> Burgess goes on to say that, ‘the making, reporting, and evaluation of these observations is the task for ethnographers.’<sup>12</sup> However, Collins offers a more challenging description of what ethnography might be since he recognizes in it the questions posed by ethnographers. Thus, it was that ‘the central question’<sup>13</sup> I found I was asking myself was indeed that question which Collins suggests of ethnographers asking themselves; this was,

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<sup>6</sup> Source: Website: [www.kendalproject.org.uk](http://www.kendalproject.org.uk).

<sup>7</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 158.

<sup>8</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 158.

<sup>9</sup> Guest M, Tusting K, Woodhead L (Eds) , 2004

<sup>10</sup> Collins in Guest, Tusting , Woodhead (Eds) , 2004, Page 99

<sup>11</sup> Conklin, H.C ‘Ethnography’ in D.L. Sillis (ed), *International Encyclopadia of Social sciences*, Vol. 5. New York : Macmillan and The Free Press), 1968, Pages 172-8. Also in Burgees 1984, Page 2.

<sup>12</sup> Conklin 1968, Pages 172- 178. Also in Burgess 1984, Page 2.

<sup>13</sup> Collins in Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds), 2004, 99.

‘what does this group do and how do they make sense of what they do?’ (and doing here includes saying)’.<sup>14</sup> In addition, as Collins says of ethnography, ‘it is about laying bare the processes involved in the production and expression of meaning.’<sup>15</sup> It has also been said that, ‘doing ethnography is.... a matter of engaging in ‘thick description’,<sup>16</sup> ‘offering a detailed nuanced account of a cultural phenomenon’.<sup>17</sup> In turn Ward talks about ‘the complexities and ‘the ‘messiness’ of studying congregations using ethnographic methods.’<sup>18</sup> She recognizes ‘this messiness in the processes of turning observed life into text....full of difficult questions to be faced.’<sup>19</sup>

For me to have ‘adopted a complementary array of diverse understandings of what ethnography is and does,’<sup>20</sup> has allowed me to predicate my thoughts by posing to myself a mix of ‘distinct kinds of questions.’<sup>21</sup> Indeed as Stringer has suggested, ‘no one method should be seen as ‘better’ in any distinctive sense.’<sup>22</sup> My justification for choosing ethnography as one of my major starting points and marker buoys was, as Stringer points out, that ethnography was ‘seen to focus on specific kinds of questions that could not be answered by any other kind of methodology.’<sup>23</sup> In addition ‘ethnographic methods of study’<sup>24</sup> enabled me ‘to closely enquire’<sup>25</sup> of the congregations and to observe how their distinct local understandings of mission appeared

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<sup>14</sup> Collins in Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds) , 2004, page 99.

<sup>15</sup> Collins in Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds) 2004 , Page 99.

<sup>16</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, Chapter 1.

<sup>17</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead, (eds,) 2004, Page 99.

<sup>18</sup> Ward in Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds) , 2004, Page 125.

<sup>19</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds), 2004, Page 125.

<sup>20</sup> Burgess, Page 2.

<sup>21</sup> Collins in Guest , Tusting, Woodhead (eds), 2004, Page 99.

<sup>22</sup> Stringer , M. D *On the Perception of Worship*, Birmingham. Birmingham Press, 1999 Page 14.

<sup>23</sup> Stringer 1999, Page 44.

<sup>24</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 2.

<sup>25</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 2.

to shape their character and its expression within among the community.<sup>26</sup> The ethnographic method I employed enabled me to explore in a non-presumptive and so unfettered way, proceeding without prejudice upon what mission meant in and to individuals and congregations in Newport.

The presuppositions upholding ethnography, then, allow broad room for ‘investigative enquiry as well as for the additional application of other qualitative and quantitative methods.’<sup>27</sup> These also were able to be handled in such a way as to complement one another. ‘Qualitative researches’ were employed which referred to ‘approaches such as a researcher being a *participant observer*, as well as being an inquirer listener at in-depth, unstructured or semi-structured interviewing.’<sup>28</sup>

So in terms of congregational studies in the Welsh context, Chambers has carried out an ethnographic ‘study of growth and decline among congregations in Swansea observing how they have been confronted by a stream of new evangelical strategies.’<sup>29</sup> In a similar vein Jones has carried out what he terms ‘a missiological interpretation of the Ely Pastorate Churches in Cardiff.’<sup>30</sup> (Ely is a district of metropolitan Cardiff). However, my investigation led me to conclude that there had been no ethnographic congregational studies recorded for Newport district. This meant then that when I began approaching congregations across Newport, I was in ‘a virgin territory, with no clear expectations or responsibilities on either side.’<sup>31</sup> Of course such an open field that this situation left me in for my researches was a mixed blessing in that there

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<sup>26</sup> ‘Conn and Ortiz provide a useful explanation about Ethnographic task. This they say is dependent on field research. ‘The process is time intensive and requires immersion in the context of the people; it also takes into consideration interaction between individuals and their present historical reality’. 2001, Page 279

<sup>27</sup> Burgees 1984, Page 2.

<sup>28</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 2.

<sup>29</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (Eds) Cogregational Studies in UK, Page xiv.

<sup>30</sup> Jones. P.C , *Singing the Lord’s Song in a Strange Land*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2001.

<sup>31</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (Eds) 2004, Page xv.

were fewer ‘preconceptions, influences, and generally imported views of others’<sup>32</sup> in my mind about how Newport might be distinctive and peculiar when set against those other studies in other Welsh places I had looked at. On the other hand, the *tabula rasa* of Newport, like a pristine white page to my view, posed ‘questions about starting points and marshalling points’<sup>33</sup> for my ‘inquiries and their organization in the data’<sup>34</sup> and facts I was to gather. Moreover, it did not ‘erase the issue of accountability’<sup>35</sup>, even though the broader degree of ‘latitude in relation to both the questions that may be asked and the answers and interpretations’<sup>36</sup> that would be offered, might be considered a sound argument for ‘an amount of latitude in accountability’<sup>37</sup>, since no standard or yardstick specific to Newport had been discovered.<sup>38</sup> Being in a ‘virgin territory’ as it were meant I was obliged to rely solely on ‘making primary investigative researches and was having to go directly to living sources; to study real people doing real things.’<sup>39</sup> Researching therefore, from an ethnographic approach, was an attempt to take account of living Christianity and how it is special within the city and district of Newport. The hope was thereby to discover and to offer some material that evidences a holistic understanding of mission here.<sup>40</sup>

In his work Malinowski suggests three ‘essential assumptions for ‘ideal’ ethnographic study’.<sup>41</sup>

These assumptions are:

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<sup>32</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds) 2004, Page xv.

<sup>33</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 203.

<sup>34</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 203.

<sup>35</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds), 2004, Page xv.

<sup>36</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds) 2004, Page xv.

<sup>37</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds) 2004, Page xv.

<sup>38</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (Eds), Page xv

<sup>39</sup> Stringer 1999, Page 50.

<sup>40</sup> Stringer 1999, Page 43.

<sup>41</sup> Malinowski, B *Arroganauts of the Western Pacific, An Account of Native Enterprise and adventure in the Archipelagoes of Malanesian New Guinea*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1992. Page 25.

i) 'extended period of time in the Field';<sup>42</sup> ii) 'breadth.' (Stringer illustrates this need for breadth by suggesting that 'ethnography unlike surveys, questionnaires or other methodologies, tries to take account of everything that is happening within a specific social context and aims, ultimately, to provide an account which offers a holistic account of the context'.<sup>43</sup> ) and: iii) an 'attempt at least in theory, to understand the situation being researched from what Malinowski calls 'the natives' point of view.'<sup>44</sup>

At the time the field work was being carried out I was dwelling and working in Newport, and this meant that 'field and participatory observations'<sup>45</sup> that I made among local congregations and within Christian organisations was much more manageable for me. In Burgess, Gold distinguishes 'four *ideal typical* field roles: the *complete participant*, the *participant –as-observer* and the *observer- as- participant* and the *complete observer*.'<sup>46</sup> The '*complete participant*' is an ideal arrangement that allows the subjective experience of participating to be reflected upon and objectified. At one and the same time what might be termed a 'clinical objectivity' is to be tempered by the human warmth: a total immersion in the life of things. When a 'study cannot reasonably be 'conducted openly' as a formal and categorical study,'<sup>47</sup> this approach is preferred as a research method. Festinger, Riecken and Schachter, observe that this kind of immersion approach works at its most effective when researchers adopting it are 'non directive, and in the role of sympathetic listeners, in fact passive participants, who being

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<sup>42</sup> Stringer 1999, page 43.

<sup>43</sup> Stringer 1999, Page 43.

<sup>44</sup> Malinowski 1992. Page 25. Also in Stringer 1999, Page 43.

<sup>45</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 5.

<sup>46</sup> Gold, R. *Roles in sociological field observation*, *Social Forces*, Vol. 36, no.3, pp217-223. Also in Burgess 1984, Page 80.

<sup>47</sup> Festinger, Riecken and Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails*, New York: Harper and Row 1956, Page 234.

inquisitively eager to learn, accept whatever others might want to tell them.’<sup>48</sup> The drawbacks to such a method, from Burgess’ point of view are that:

i) ‘ the researchers may alter the behaviour of the group they have entered’<sup>49</sup>; ii) ‘the researchers may be handicapped by their assumed roles,’<sup>50</sup> and: iii) ‘the researchers may find they play their roles so effectively that they themselves will ‘go native’<sup>51</sup> so far for this to affect adversely the data they gather and their recorded observations.’<sup>52</sup>

However, as Burgess suggests, these potential disadvantages can be held in check by a ‘researcher taking frequent breaks from their field’<sup>53</sup> studies ‘in order that researchers can record, reflect and analyse the data that are collected against theoretical data.’<sup>54</sup>

‘The *participant-as-observer* role then, involves situations where the researcher participates as well as observes by developing relationships with informants.’<sup>55</sup> The ‘research being done is the overriding interest’<sup>56</sup> of researcher since researchers are present ‘primarily to observe, but at the same time without making their investigations a secret.’<sup>57</sup> As Roy points out, ‘the participant-as-observer is not tied down, they are free to run around as research interests beckon; they may move as the spirit listeth.’<sup>58</sup> Disadvantages in assuming this kind of role, according to Roy lie in

i) ‘combining data collection with an area of social conflict’<sup>59</sup>, which raises ii) ‘the problem of

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<sup>48</sup> Festinger, Riecken and Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails*, New York: Harper and Row 1956, Page 234.

<sup>49</sup> Burgess 1994, Page 81.

<sup>50</sup> Burgess 1994, Page 81.

<sup>51</sup> Burgess 1994, Page 81.

<sup>52</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 81.

<sup>53</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 81.

<sup>54</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 81.

<sup>55</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 81.

<sup>56</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 81.

<sup>57</sup> Burgess 1994, Page 81.

<sup>58</sup> Roy D, *The Study of Southern Labour Union Organizing campaigns*, Chicago, 1970, Page 217

<sup>59</sup> Roy 1970, Page 217.

bias'<sup>60</sup>, and which has bearing upon iii) 'the question of the extent to which a researcher participates.'<sup>61</sup> His basic argument is that researchers cannot be neutral. He would then go on to argue that 'not to make one's own bias clear can be deceptive.'<sup>62</sup>

Regarding the role of '*observer-as-participant*', Gold suggests that this term is generally 'used to refer to situations where contact with informants is brief, formal, and openly classified as observation'.<sup>63</sup> The 'observational role is made public'<sup>64</sup> and, as Gold goes on to say, 'there is less chance that the researcher will 'go native''.<sup>65</sup> Burgess recognises the inadequacy of such a truncated role by suggesting that 'the brevity of the relationships results in problems of bias arising out of the briefness of the researcher's contact times.'<sup>66</sup> Yet as Schatzman and Strauss have pointed out 'such brief encounters will mean that the researcher will find difficulty in gaining access to the meanings that participants utilise in social situations.'<sup>67</sup>

The final role suggested by Gold is '*the complete observer*'. This role he has 'identified with eavesdropping and reconnaissance in which the researcher is removed from sustained interaction with the informant'.<sup>68</sup> While conceding that this role prevents the researcher from 'going native', Burgess, argues that the role of 'complete observer'<sup>69</sup> brings 'with it the problem of

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<sup>60</sup> Roy 1970, Page 217.

<sup>61</sup> Roy 1970, 217.

<sup>62</sup> Roy's argument in the extreme actually undermines the 'observer-as-participant' approach, and with some justice. Although we are called upon not to, we are human individuals exercising our own personal predilections.

Nonetheless, nothing would get done, to any degree of success, unless we did attempt to square this particular circle.

<sup>63</sup> Gold. R *Roles in sociological field observation*, *Social Forces*, vol. 36, no.3, 1958, Pages 217-223.

<sup>64</sup> Gold 1958, Pages 217- 223.

<sup>65</sup> Gold 1958, Pages 217-223.

<sup>66</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 82.

<sup>67</sup> Schatzman, L. and Strauss, A.L *Field Research: Strategies for a Natural Sociology*, Englewood Cliffs, 1973.

<sup>68</sup> Gold 1958, See also Burgess 1984, Page 82.

<sup>69</sup> Gold 1948, Also in Burgess 1984, Page 82.

ethnocentrism as the researcher may reject the informant's views without even getting to know them'.<sup>70</sup>

And so the situation remains one of 'The Fly in the Fly Bottle'<sup>71</sup>, with an everlasting 'argument as to who is the fly and who it is who is beyond the bounds of the bottle and who is inside it.'<sup>72</sup>

In the 'world of practice a decision has to be made; and since all practicality is compromise, the soundest choice is surely to accept the human involvement working with and alongside the human analytic faculty.'<sup>73</sup> So that the roles '*observer-participant*' and '*participant-observer*' seem most likely; and to slip into and out of their joint designated roles as a situation seems to demand and at times when human frailty makes for misunderstanding and misjudgements; 'this appears to be the pragmatic course of action to be followed.'<sup>74</sup>

I found, therefore, that 'participant observation was to be very useful and grew over the course of my research to understand with some practice why it is widely adopted as a procedure within the discipline of ethnography.'<sup>75</sup> Its greatest advantage to me was that I felt I became enabled 'to collect data concerning social interaction within 'real time'; that is, upon the very occasions and in the very situations where events were occurring'<sup>76</sup> rather than having to rely upon a resort to 'positing, imposing, either before the fact or after the fact, a certain abstract, hypothetical, artificial scenarios.'<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 82.

<sup>71</sup> <http://www.gakuranman.com/wittgenstein's> Fly in the bottle Philosophy. Website accessed 20<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.gakuranman.com/wittgenstein's> Fly in the bottle Philosophy. Website accessed 20<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.gakuranman.com/wittgenstein's> Fly in the bottle Philosophy. Website accessed 20<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

<sup>74</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 84.

<sup>75</sup> Barker Chris. *Cultural Studies; Theory and Practice*, London , Sage Publications 2000 Pages 27-28

<sup>76</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 79.

<sup>77</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 79.

Within and in tandem with an ethnographic approach I took an interdisciplinary approach. As suggested by Green, 'the social sciences disciplines such as sociology, psychology, economics and politics are ideally suited to the exploration of localities, groups and issues.'<sup>78</sup> There is a danger, as Green suggests, 'of buying into certain philosophical assumptions as a consequence.'<sup>79</sup> However, I found that it was possible to 'utilise the disciplines of sociology and psychology in a fairly straightforward commonsensical way,'<sup>80</sup> taking pragmatically from here and there as a standpoint or angle shed light on what I was examining, without finding that I 'necessarily had to assume a complete ideology or set of philosophical ground rules of any kind.'<sup>81</sup> There seemed no need to 'acquire the baggage of ideological assumptions.'<sup>82</sup> Instead I attempted to use all 'the natural questioning interest of outlook and life experience.'<sup>83</sup> What I found to be of advantage was that I was able to work as a singleton unit; and so did not require extra personnel or even a great mass of cumbersome equipment. I set out with it in mind to include and so make use of the potential of any and all members of the mix of congregations I was to study. This proved a good rule to follow since information and ideas were to be found in what might have seemed at first sight some unlikely places and persons. However, I could not allow myself to 'assume to be an invisible and partial observer.'<sup>84</sup> This personal acknowledgment of being 'a researcher immersed in the action being researched'<sup>85</sup> brought numerous issues in its wake.

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<sup>78</sup> Green, L. *Let's Do Theology*. London, Mowbray Cassell 1990, page 59.

<sup>79</sup> Green 1990, Page 59.

<sup>80</sup> Green 1990, Page 59.

<sup>81</sup> Green 1990, Page 59.

<sup>82</sup> Green 1990, Page 59.

<sup>83</sup> Green 1990, Page 59.

<sup>84</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 79.

<sup>85</sup> Burgess 1984, page 79.

In recognizing ‘a key role for common-sense realism in the everyday life of most people in order for them create meaning,’<sup>86</sup> I had decided to take ‘a wide-ranging approach to my research methodology.’<sup>87</sup> The aim of being ‘wide-ranging was to avoid accidentally or doctrinally slipping into finding’<sup>88</sup> myself ‘adhering to too strict and rigid rules, methods, techniques;’<sup>89</sup> thus I was always alert to avoid ‘adopting doctrinaire positions’<sup>90</sup> that would put me in ‘danger of entrapment in a rather inflexible cage of thought.’<sup>91</sup>

Of course there was ‘loss incurred by this choice to reject highly systematic theory.’<sup>92</sup> My ‘search for and discovery of an underlying context’<sup>93</sup> in which to lay out regularly and in order my ‘mass of observation and intuitions’<sup>94</sup> made in the field became more formidable. The select parts of scholarly theory and argument that I was using in my research were more ‘disparate and less well connected as a whole than most of the more prominent idea systems.’<sup>95</sup> Nonetheless, these difficulties in their turn became a source of stimulus to my thoughts, pushing these in directions which led to meaningful discoveries. The ‘greatest asset by far to my choice of keeping to a pragmatic outlook’<sup>96</sup> was that I found I was able to keep my ‘options open from the very start of the research,’<sup>97</sup> thus allowing me ‘greater freedom to respond *ad hoc* to contingent opportunities and so to facilitate in general the maintenance of a broad working flexibility.’<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Wax, *Doing Fieldwork, Warning and Advice*. Chicago:University Press of Chicago Press, 1971, Page 10.

<sup>87</sup> Wax 1971, Page 10.

<sup>88</sup> Wax, 1971, Page 10.

<sup>89</sup> Wax, 1971, Page 10.

<sup>90</sup> Wax 1971, Page 10.

<sup>91</sup> Wax 1971, Page 10.

<sup>92</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 145.

<sup>93</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 145.

<sup>94</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 145.

<sup>95</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 145.

<sup>96</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 145.

<sup>97</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 145.

<sup>98</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 145

I soon became conscious that ‘qualitative methods,’<sup>99</sup> if they were allowed to, could let me slide into ‘soft, subjective and speculative’ opinions and apprehensions; in my stark opposition to my leaning heavily on ‘quantitative methods’<sup>100</sup> and so encouraging a tendency to ‘hard, bare and rigorous statistical measurement.’<sup>101</sup> Thus to temper my inclinations in either direction I felt that ‘qualitative methods’<sup>102</sup> should temper ‘quantitative methods,’<sup>103</sup> and *vice versa* to produce an optimum solution; as has been applied by Richter and Francis in their research.<sup>104</sup> Theirs prefers ‘two empirical components’<sup>105</sup> for their study; ‘first, the interviews—which are designed to generate qualitative data; and secondly, the telephone survey and postal questionnaire- which are designed to generate quantitative data.’<sup>106</sup> In their projects Richter and Francis<sup>107</sup> use these methods in a way differing a little from my own approach. I would like to argue that it is in this difference that I took into account the particularity of a unique situation as it held in Newport, and so tackled ‘a range of substantive and theoretical problems using a range of methods that I gauged to be appropriate’<sup>108</sup> to my study.<sup>109</sup> Richter and Francis suggest that where they adopted a ‘quantitative approach’<sup>110</sup> their ‘approach was rigorously scientific,’<sup>111</sup> and they confess that their ‘quantitative approach involved the collection of statistical data’ that shows them placing ‘considerable weight on the arrangement of statistics.’<sup>112</sup> This objective was far from what I set out to do in this research. I did not set out to ‘generate data for use in analysis of church growth

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<sup>99</sup> Halfpenny in Burgess 1984, Page 3.

<sup>100</sup> Halfpenny in Burgess 1984, Page 3.

<sup>101</sup> Halfpenny in Burgess 1984, Page 3.

<sup>102</sup> Richter Philip and Francis Leslie, *GONE but not forgotten*, London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1998, Page 174.

<sup>103</sup> Richter and Francis, 1998, Page 174.

<sup>104</sup> Richter P. and Francis L, 1998, Page 174.

<sup>105</sup> Ritcheer and Francis 1998, Page 174.

<sup>106</sup> Ritcheer and Francis 1998, Page 174.

<sup>107</sup> Richter and Francis 1998, Page 174

<sup>108</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 143.

<sup>109</sup> Burgess 1984 Page 143.

<sup>110</sup> Ritcheer and Francis, 1998, Page 174.

<sup>111</sup> Ritcheer and Francis, 1998, page 174.

<sup>112</sup> Richter and Francis 1998, Page 174.

and decline.’<sup>113</sup> I have not drawn up tables of results. The ‘data in this research is fundamentally connected to the context from which it has arisen.’<sup>114</sup> An ‘inherent disadvantage in the use of mere statistics is that they measure only what is chosen to be measured and supply answers, if at all, that are closely limited to the questions present in the choice of range and scale measurements.’<sup>115</sup> On the contrary my aim and purpose was not to ‘produce in-depth detailed statistical correlations concerning behavior,’<sup>116</sup> but rather to reflect upon and draw out in my mind answers to the question how Christians in Newport were living their Christianity and expressing their faith within the communities they constitute.

The starting point for such a methodology was to consider uppermost the paramount ‘value of lived experience’<sup>117</sup> as this might be usually informally assimilated by a listening person to the variety of people’s stories, memories, hopes, antipathies, fears, doubts, worries, certainties, disappointments, plans, joys and expectations. I was hoping to be able to listen to a series of constantly retold, constantly revised and updated accounts of regular people, even to the point of marking, pondering, and interpreting their pregnant silences.

The Christian Task was explored and pieced together by means of a seeking out of ‘ways to place the personal stories of diverse’<sup>118</sup> Christians in Newport into ‘a context of a wider narrative of Christian tradition and experience.’<sup>119</sup> Thus the attempt was made to bring the stories of Newport people ‘alongside biblical tradition, so as to be able to model local daily experience by

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<sup>113</sup> Ritcher and Francis 1998, Page 174.

<sup>114</sup> Ritcher and Francis 1998, Page 174.

<sup>115</sup> Stringer, 1999, Pages 11- 14.

<sup>116</sup> Stringer 1999, Page 86.

<sup>117</sup> Green 1990, Page 42.

<sup>118</sup> Green 1990, Page 26.

<sup>119</sup> Green 1990, Page 27.

using biblical narrative and thinking as its interpretative tool.<sup>120</sup> Such an approach was greatly influenced by the thought and advocacy of Green<sup>121</sup>; and in discussing parishioners' and my own reflections I followed the usage of Green's 'pastoral cycle: and considered his division of four operative elements of experience, exploration, reflection, and response.'<sup>122</sup> This 'pastoral cycle of analysis, experience, exploration, reflection, response,'<sup>123</sup> used as procedure for approaching a study of mission in the City of Newport was found to be of great value.

In his approach Green uses his 'pastoral cycle as a means to focus on groups doing theology together,'<sup>124</sup> but my research makes use of his elements as a procedure only, and not his model or methodology. Green's context was very different to mine; and he 'developed a style and method of doing theology which quite naturally emerged out of'<sup>125</sup> his 'individual perception of the needs of those people in their specific situations within which he engaged.'<sup>126</sup>

My own preferred route of approach has an affinity with the work of Guest, Tusting and Woodhead, who observe that, 'in general, practical theology has encouraged congregational studies by insisting that theology must be done not from above (doctrine imposed on experience) but from below (doctrine explored from the starting point of lived experience)'.<sup>127</sup> This

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<sup>120</sup> Carr W, *Brief encounters: Pastoral Ministry through the occasional Offices*. London: SPCK, 1985.

<sup>121</sup> Green 1990. Rowan Williams commenting on Green's work stated that, Green shows how theology can spring from meeting of real life situations with our understanding of tradition reveals exactly how to do this, using the pastoral cycle: Experience- Exploration- Reflection- Response.

<sup>122</sup> Green 1990, Page 28

<sup>123</sup> Green 1990, Page 28.

<sup>124</sup> Green 1990, Page 3.

<sup>125</sup> Green 1990, Page 24.

<sup>126</sup> Green 1990, Page 24.

<sup>127</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds) 2004, Page 8

proposition is an endorsement of the fact that the congregation is the core site of Christian experience.<sup>128</sup>

A similar approach is advocated by Browning who proposes ‘a theological method which begins by describing a selected congregation and the situation in which that congregation finds itself; and then goes on to examine the resources relevant to these (the congregation and the situation it is in) that have been adopted from tradition,’<sup>129</sup> and finally Browning’s method ‘synthesises any resultant conversation between these two entities.’<sup>130</sup> In the light of Browning’s ideas I felt it behoved me to pay careful attention to those stories I considered to be ‘arising from a pastoral context’<sup>131</sup>

The methodology I adopted, then, followed that model of ‘a narrative theology that is rooted in practical appreciation of the central narrative, in story-telling, story-enacting, in handing on traditions and in teaching virtue.’<sup>132</sup> This, then, I feel might be ‘an approach which would allow resonances to be shown resonances which-in so far as such any approach can do so from the starting point in today’s everyday contemporary life- marry up analogously with the life and faith of communities in the biblical traditions.’<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds) 2004, Page 8.

<sup>129</sup> Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991. Also in Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds) 2004, Page 8.

<sup>130</sup> Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 1991.

<sup>131</sup> Browning 1991, Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds), 2004, Page 8.

<sup>132</sup> Tilley.T.W, *Story Theology*, Wilmington, DE, 1985., See also the works of Karl Rahner, Karl Barth, and H. Richard Niebuhr.

<sup>133</sup> Tilley 1995.

I worked to retrieve ‘myths, legends, fairy tales, anecdotes, allegories, histories and parables;’<sup>134</sup> all of which constitute this Ongoing Saga. ‘Story’ as depicted by Drane ‘provides people with a vehicle through which to express themselves’.<sup>135</sup> In addition ‘stories are important because they focus on the whole spectrum of human experience.’<sup>136</sup> As Drane goes on to say, ‘stories do not divide life into categories of the cognitive, the effective, the relational and so on.’<sup>137</sup> To proclaim Christianity is to ‘retell, ritually re-enact, and to live the stories of faithful discipleship to Jesus.’<sup>138</sup>

Cockerell, on the other hand, recognizes ‘a danger in narrative theology; its approach being such that it invites the breeding of nostalgia and self-indulgence, an over-concern with the past, which is often idealized and then contrasted with a gloomily-presented present.’<sup>139</sup> Although his work ‘affirms the values of, and the value in the past;’<sup>140</sup> he acknowledges no ‘Golden ages’ no ‘mythic pasts’<sup>141</sup> and wryly comments ‘there is no future trying to run the film backwards’.<sup>142</sup> Nonetheless, the positive aspects of narrative theology are as Green notes, ‘if we ignore the history’<sup>143</sup> of an area or issue then we will be ‘treating it as if it had no context in time, as if it came from nowhere and, by implication, is going nowhere.’<sup>144</sup> He goes on to suggest that, ‘it is only when we appreciate the history, or the story so far, and understand the social trends, the myths and expectations about the issue, that we can set about the question of how we might

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<sup>134</sup> Green 1990, Page 11.

<sup>135</sup> Drane 2000, Page 136.

<sup>136</sup> Drane 2000, Page 143

<sup>137</sup> Drane 2000, Page 143.

<sup>138</sup> Drane 2000, Page 143.

<sup>139</sup> Cockerell D. 1989, Page 9

<sup>140</sup> Cockerell 1989, Page 9.

<sup>141</sup> Cockerell 1989, Page 9.

<sup>142</sup> Cockerell D. 189, Page 9

<sup>143</sup> Green 1990, Page 60

<sup>144</sup> Green 1990, Page 60.

participate fully in writing the next page in history.’<sup>145</sup> It is commonly agreed among many commentators that ‘narrative theology strengthens the bond and value of community.’<sup>146</sup> In modern times people have often reformatted Christianity into ‘one’s individual faith’, but the Bible’s story of God’s relationship to His people reminds us that community is an essential factor and ingredient.<sup>147</sup> Chief strengths found in ‘narrative theologies are the connections they discover between theologies and the communities of faith; in their ritual, and between past and present ways of believing and living a Christian Life.’<sup>148</sup> The advantages of narrative theology I found in my own considerations are that ‘through hearing people’s stories’<sup>149</sup> I have learnt about Newport, its history and its ways of life; and about the valued neighbourhood emphasis on community and tradition which abide and prosper there.

Certain amounts of ‘primary source literature’ I was able to gather from searching the archives section at Newport library. My supplementary background reading here generated some leading issues, ideas and insights. These were ‘applied to my research which I carried on as part of the basis of my experience’<sup>150</sup> as an ordained priest. I was conscious of the fact that in order to offer a scholarly ‘critical analysis, assessment and interpretation of data,’<sup>151</sup> I would have to acquire and show a certain level of adaptability. I found that it was because of this requirement that I came to understand and appreciate the historical, traditional, social and spiritual links that were revealed to me out of my everyday discourse with local Newport people doing mission and worship.

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<sup>145</sup> Green 1990, Page 60.

<sup>146</sup> Retrieved from the internet 27<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

<sup>147</sup> Retrieved from internet 27<sup>th</sup> April 2011

<sup>148</sup> Tilley 1995.

<sup>149</sup> Cockerell, 1989, Page 9.

<sup>150</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 34.

<sup>151</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 3.

To help me in this art of understanding what I was being told and shown, I garnered insights from The Kendal Project which ‘was a wide-ranging multi-focused survey of religion and spirituality in a single locality which included a comprehensive study of all the congregations in the town of Kendal.’<sup>152</sup> The Kendal Project was concerned with not only ‘understanding and categorizing congregations but also with looking for correlations between their rates of growth and decline and the different forms of congregational life and wider socio-cultural trends and developments.’<sup>153</sup> This Kendal Project has been suggested to be ‘one of the most informative studies in the ethnographic analysis of congregations.’<sup>154</sup> Ethnographic researchers in the Kendal Project set themselves ‘two empirical tasks; the first was qualitative; to see what was going on.’<sup>155</sup> The second was ‘quantitative to see how much of the different forms of engagement with the sacred was occurring.’<sup>156</sup>

I began by putting together a list of different churches and other Christian organizations in Newport. I carried out mapping of all the locality’s Christian denominations and organizations. I made ‘social profiles of their leaderships and memberships; and also wrote a record of the formal activities of the congregations, describing their worship and any attached societies and clubs.’<sup>157</sup> I studied whatever I could discover of ‘publicly available information in and from these organizations,’<sup>158</sup> anything that might help me orientate myself better; such as ‘documentary evidence, church magazines, journals, publications by local historians, and also

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<sup>152</sup> Guest, Tusting and Woodhead (Eds) 2004, Page xiv.

<sup>153</sup> Gust, Tusting and Woodhead 2004, Page xiv.

<sup>154</sup> <http://www.kendalproject.org.uk>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

<sup>155</sup> <http://www.kendalproject.org.uk>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

<sup>156</sup> <http://www.kendalproject.org.uk>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

<sup>157</sup> <http://www.kendalproject.org.uk>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

<sup>158</sup> <http://www.kendalproject.org.uk>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

materials produced by Church and by other local organizations for the sake of communication and publicity.’<sup>159</sup> I also found much useful information at the extremely helpful Churches Together in Newport organization and at its website.<sup>160</sup> ‘Some Churches and chapels were found to have no records at all. Others had only incomplete, often patchy, records about their origins and about when they were founded.’<sup>161</sup> In such cases where records were deficient I came to rely heavily on ‘constructing a picture of what was absent from the record by listening to and collating those orally transmitted accounts recounted’<sup>162</sup> to me by respondents. ‘Maps, cultural information, local murals, folklore, local stories and traditions were all sources’<sup>163</sup> I found helpful in my work of information gathering.

### **2.3: Mapping**

During the mapping exercise I undertook of Christian denominations in Newport it became clear early on how great a diversity of denominations there was in Newport. Many different ways of worshipping and of pursuing the Christian ideal meant that I soon began to realize I would have ‘some narrowing down to do; since, given the time scales by which I was constrained, there was no adequate way by which I was able to consider their totality in sufficient detail.’<sup>164</sup> I chose therefore, to concentrate on three interesting and different congregations in terms of church traditions, theological and missiological expressions. In addition to this was the issue of accessibility. The three congregations were; St Mary’s Roman Catholic Church, Nant Coch, and the Kings Church. Over and above this there was a general and substantial input from other

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<sup>159</sup> <http://www.kendalproject.org.uk>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

<sup>160</sup> <http://www.newportchurches.com>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

<sup>161</sup> <http://www.newportchurches.com>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

<sup>162</sup> <http://www.newportchurches.com>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

<sup>163</sup> <http://www.newportchurches.com>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

<sup>164</sup> <http://www.newportchurches.com>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

congregations and Christian organizations however, but these chosen three were to form my ‘in-depth research’<sup>165</sup> area. As a result I can make no claim that the findings and conclusions present here in this thesis are generally pertinent to all the Christians across the whole Newport Borough. It is always difficult to ‘compile an exhaustive list particularly of varied items such as congregations.’<sup>166</sup> And because those responses I received depended in their quantity as well as in their quality upon the understandings, articulateness, recall, and goodwill of the participant respondents I was among, it must be the case that the ‘exhaustiveness of the data’<sup>167</sup> I collected is limited, even within the focal area of my three in depth congregations. What are presented here are my findings and conclusions; and these are based upon a careful presentation of the information which was offered by, and the observations I was able to make on, the congregations whose experience and hospitality I was invited to share at the time. My main consideration in the course of carrying out this field work was for me to discover and then portray how plain individuals were thinking about and defining their Christian task, and how their resultant spiritual outlooks were finding expression in and as communities.

#### **2.4: Negotiating / ‘Gaining Access’<sup>168</sup>**

Having lived and worked in Newport for 5 years previous to carrying out this research, I had come to make certain friends and acquaintances who thereafter became quite important for my ability to ‘gain trust and so access to important local documents and also to persons’<sup>169</sup> who could regale me with their personal testimonies. I was thus able to breathe human life into my academic researches by adding to them the lived experiences I myself was to absorb in talking to

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<sup>165</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 106

<sup>166</sup> <http://www.newportchurches.com>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

<sup>167</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 84.

<sup>168</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 45.

<sup>169</sup> Burgess 1994, Page 45.

a host of people of all ranks and hues. There was information by word of mouth, but also other data taken from observation and from watching others interact. I had understood that I was going to be unable to ‘negotiate access with every participant’<sup>170</sup> in the congregational settings I was to attend, and so I decided to try to rely on sensitively chosen key informants. I found doing fieldwork immensely moving and enjoyable, as well as extremely edifying making contacts with so many unique persons, churches and organizations. Being part of those whom I was studying seemed the best of ways to get to grips with the sort of information I was seeking about Christianity in Newport.

Burgess describes in close parallel the sort of self-introductions I made even to the ‘kind of communicative background-filling I used to settle informants and so put them at their ease.’<sup>171</sup> Writing about Fieldwork, Gravel adds another viewpoint of interest here, when he writes, ‘It is made up of attempts at disentangling the red tape of local bureaucracies and at reviving moribund requests and permissions.’<sup>172</sup> Indeed I found that I was ‘constantly trying to reschedule timeless time and to fathom bottomless pits.’<sup>173</sup> I took on ‘voluntary roles,’<sup>174</sup> in the hope I could contribute to my respondent welfare and comfort; and that I might then ‘become accepted as having in some way earned a privilege to develop relationships’<sup>175</sup> with congregations and their members. Once I had made connections, I was studious to foster ‘good

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<sup>170</sup> Burgess 1994, Page 45.

<sup>171</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 5

<sup>172</sup> Gravel, P.B. “And sometimes all for nought” or reflections of an anthropologist upon his return from the field’, *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*. Vol. 6, no.4, 1978, pp.103-123. Also in Burgess 1984, Page 5.

<sup>173</sup> Gravel 1976, Also in Burgess 1984, Page 5

<sup>174</sup> Burgess, 1984, Page 88.

<sup>175</sup> Burgess 1984, page 5.

relations, primarily for their own sake;<sup>176</sup> although also so as to be able to enquire without intrusion into the ‘commerce and conflicts of people’s everyday lives.’<sup>177</sup>

## **2.5: ‘Establishing contacts’<sup>178</sup>**

Having compiled my list of organisations and events, the next thing attempted was to contact the various leaders of Churches and organisations. I drafted and sent general letters to a great variety of Church leaders and Christian organizations<sup>179</sup> in Newport.

These letters informed the Leaders of my intended research project, and how I envisaged their roles in assisting me in it; and asked for help in and their blessing for approaching their congregations. I asked for stories on the congregations origins, on how they had developed and about their current status. I telephoned a number of people who in the first instance had not responded to a letter and all in all I was delighted to have many positive responses. Next came letters written to the congregations I intended to study in depth.<sup>180</sup> The letters explained what I was doing and why I wanted to conduct research in specific congregations.

## **2.6: Confidentiality and Anonymity**

I ‘offered anonymity and confidentiality to any persons considering becoming a respondent, and the letters also explained the limitations to distribution and disclosure of materials they might share with me, and in general what would be happening to any stories or ideas that people might volunteer.’<sup>181</sup> I made certain that I interviewed a number of church officials as well as plain

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<sup>176</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 89.

<sup>177</sup> Burgess 1984, page 89.

<sup>178</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 45.

<sup>179</sup> See Appendix B: Sample of a letter to Church leaders.

<sup>180</sup> See Appendix B: Sample of Letter to Leaders of congregations.

<sup>181</sup> See Appendix C : The Questionnaire. Also in Burgess 1984, Page 108.

members of congregations. I attended a miscellany of churches and missions. I decided that on some occasions I would not declare myself to be an Anglican Priest to church members. This was because I felt there to be certain situations and events whereupon a priest, or a woman priest, or an Anglican woman priest, by being present would be likely to throw up inhibitions and defenses in many attendants, causing me to only ‘stand out’ like an outlier in an open field, but also to lose any warmth and confidence I had with people. For me to be noted in this way as in some way alien, not only would have disabled me from obtaining freely and openly information from relaxed and comfortable people, but would also destroy my prospects for mixing in and enjoying my tasks, now or at any future date. I had always stated at the onset that any interviews, conversations, questionnaires were to be treated as if anonymous, and that this anonymity above all was to respect the confidentiality of the respondents and interviewees. I offered individual anonymity for ethical reasons. However I had permissions from the Church leadership to use the names of the Churches in order to maintain transparency with regards to research findings.

## **2.7: The Questions.**

To ensure that I was getting the right sorts of information and a broad spread of opinion and outlook within congregations, from among places and events I was taking part in and visiting; that is, ‘data that actually addressed that set of research questions’<sup>182</sup> I had formulated, I developed a list of issues I wanted to attend to in the course of the research.<sup>183</sup> For this list I drew for assistance from Becker,<sup>184</sup> adapting the questions outlined by him to my intentions. This list I

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<sup>182</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 122.

<sup>183</sup> See Appendix D

<sup>184</sup> Becker P.E. *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, Pages 249 -250

made was used by me as ‘a sensitizing list for an unstructured prompt list of field notes, rather than it being used as a formal check list.’<sup>185</sup> Because I had no ‘project team members,’<sup>186</sup> unlike the Kendal Project, ‘which had involved making church attendance counts by asking people to be counters,’<sup>187</sup> I used church records wherever these had become available.

I asked the leaders of the different congregations and organizations to fill out answers to a questionnaire. The questionnaire answers were helpful as a first guide. As my ensuing interviews were conducted, I was able to ‘enquire and to improvise as it was appropriate concerning topics that arose.’<sup>188</sup> My care was to be tactful and receptive so that I might maintain a casual and easy dialogue with a person, and in this way without self-consciousness enjoy a deeper understanding of what people were trying to convey.<sup>189</sup> I worked hard to continue ‘interaction and be sensitive to the language and concepts’<sup>190</sup> my informants wanted to use. I was always paying attention to my choice of language and responses. As a response to what the interviewees were saying to me, over time I altered some of my earlier questionnaire questions; these were almost organically or by way of natural evolution necessarily to be modified over time; as the range of topics and concerns that people had and wanted to talk about began to be established.<sup>191</sup> I wanted to go beyond the ostensible bounds of topics, and so explore what informants were saying, and not saying, in as much detail as possible. Of course this had to be done without perturbing or disturbing the respondent using suggestion to lead into new areas and

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<sup>185</sup> Kendal Project, <http://www.kendalproject.org.uk>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

<sup>186</sup> Kendal Project, <http://www.kendalproject.org.uk>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

<sup>187</sup> <http://www.kendalproject.org.uk>. Website accessed 5 April 2005.

<sup>188</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 107.

<sup>189</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 107.

<sup>190</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 111-17.

<sup>191</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 107. Interview Procedures.

ideas. These might be those a respondent might develop or stumble upon; or else be among those that I had not myself formulated consciously at the outset of my research.<sup>192</sup>

## **2.8: Interview techniques**

It was very necessary that I built into my routine certain self-checks and balances, so that for instance, as interviews progressed that I was prompted to check myself out, that I had really understood a respondent's meanings, or least understood areas of confusion and doubt I was labouring with. Arising from doing this I discovered, after some practice and effort to master the technique, 'the need to exercise some considerable self-denial, to distrust and suppress'<sup>193</sup> my own 'predilections, assumptions and preconceptions.'<sup>194</sup> This I found particularly difficult, but saw doing so as vitally important since there was too obviously great potential for misunderstanding.<sup>195</sup> For example, some of the terminology in use generally at The King's Church (which was home to an 'emergent' evangelical activist outlook and congregation) such as 'being saved' 'or being born again' were unfamiliar to many worshippers who belonged to other more traditional churches and orthodox contexts; such as the ones had at St Mary's Roman Catholic Church. There arose also problems that happened, as it were in reverse to this particular fault line in terminologies; which involved certain conceptual phrasing in use among the older established denominations, and caused them not to be understood by members of the newer churches.

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<sup>192</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 101- 05. Interviews as conversations.

<sup>193</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 107.

<sup>194</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 107.

<sup>195</sup> The philosopher Karl Popper has said of human communication: 'There is nothing I can say that may not be misunderstood.' Source: Internet.

I made efforts to maintain interactive and sensitive responses, especially to the language and expressions I used; and this commonly necessitated that I assimilate quickly and as accurately as possible whatever was being intended when any unfamiliar terminology came into play. I had discovered quickly the importance of me not assuming from the start that congregations used Christian terminology in the same way that I was using it. Particularly attention had to be given not only to the words and phrases that people used but the circumstances and contexts in which they used them. From an exercise of this care and caution there was much understanding about what associations and connections people hold in regard to their church consciousnesses and spiritual outlooks. These could sometimes be built up in such a way as for me to attempt to reconstruct a tentative 'world view' for a denomination, or even, on a rare occasion, for a person of more definite and organized mind.

### **2.9: Quandary of 'studying familiar and strange settings.'<sup>196</sup>**

Some of my informants clearly showed in their behaviours and speech that they wished to please me and so they gave me responses that they had decided were those I wanted. One action I did take with the idea in mind to avoid this 'false testimony' was not to study Anglican congregations in any depth where I was involved as an appointed minister. I felt that in these places, too many unspoken conflicts and unconscious interferences that would most probably act to gravely distort any chance of a true report being available. I found Stephenson and Greer's observations on studying one's own society in this case congregation very illuminating.<sup>197</sup> I was made aware of both the 'advantages and the disadvantages of researchers encountered by

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<sup>196</sup> Burgess, 1984, Page 22.

<sup>197</sup> Stephenson, J.B. and Greer, L.S. 'Ethnographers in their own cultures: two Appalachian cases', *Human Organisation*, vol.40. no.2, 1981, Pages 123-30.

researchers working in cultural societies and settings other than their own'<sup>198</sup> of such a process. Familiarity with the Anglican liturgy would have been of assistance 'when interpreting words and observations into data'<sup>199</sup> and I would have had a reasonably broad intellectual grasp of a situation I was familiar with.<sup>200</sup> There is a major question to be asked here, though, which is 'would I have recognised different patterns in the congregations with which I was familiar?'<sup>201</sup>

In addition, as one of their ministers, there was likely to arise intractable 'problems concerning managing those relationships between me *qua* researcher and the congregation members *qua* objects of analytical study.'<sup>202</sup> Might there, for instance have been unconsidered pastoral implications for my selecting informants? And would such a choice have had unwanted pastoral implications for us all further down the line? As their minister would they have been able to tell me other than what they felt I expected to hear? In their study and in respect to similar familiar situations Stephenson and Greer suggest that 'familiar topics should be given what they have referred to as 'stranger value' and seen through the eyes of the stranger.'<sup>203</sup> I felt it best not to interview members of Anglican congregations about their personal definitions of mission, but rather instead to obtain whatever general information respondents could offer about church and religious life in Newport as a whole. Thus because my respondents and I were too 'over-familiar' to be suited to interview, the solutions I found was to make the topics we discussed have a 'stranger value.'<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Stephenson and Greer, 1981, Pages 123 -30. Also in Burgess 1984, Page 22

<sup>199</sup> Stephenson and Greer 1981, Pages 123 -30.

<sup>200</sup> Stephenson and Greer 1981, Pages 123-30

<sup>201</sup> Stephenson and Greer, 1981, Pages 123-30, Burgees 1984, Page 22.

<sup>202</sup> Stephenson and Greer, 1981, Pages 123-30, Burgees 1984, Page 22.

<sup>203</sup> Stephenson and Greer, 1981, Pages 123-30, Burgees 1984, Page 22.

<sup>204</sup> Stephenson and Greer, 1981, Pages 123-30, Burgees 1984, Page 22.

Other related issues I tackled that are associated with studying familiar relational settings included ‘handling and accounting for bias, recognizing and averting tendencies to oversimplification, being beware of pre-judgments and of inabilities to sort and partition perception from emotion.’<sup>205</sup> Such a list of difficulties and the strategies available and which of these I chose, of course in turn had repercussions on and informed my outlook and approach, and so redounded upon some of the choices I made.

### **2.10: Research techniques / Choices I made.**

I structured questionnaires or else formal verbal questions and put them forward in two congregations.<sup>206</sup> The questionnaire allowed respondents to be anonymous.<sup>207</sup> Anonymity and confidentiality were provided for. The letter I compiled explained how any research results were going to be used and whereabouts. Because of the complications of collating information from the congregation of such a magnitude, I decided to drop the idea of presenting my questionnaire to respondents in the third congregation. Instead I decided upon enjoying casual talks, since so much more personal, sometimes intimate, contact generated much more and more easily assimilated good quality information and was a guarantee of engaged and whole-hearted discussion. These were very informal interviews and in the main comprised a frank and amiable exchange of views on Christianity, worship and mission in Newport.

Since ‘nothing informs theory better than does sound practice,’ I chose to visit and attend a quantity of Church services and Church activities in Newport. I ‘observed on those occasions

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<sup>205</sup> Stephenson and Greer, 1981, Pages 123-30, Burgees 1984, Page 22.

<sup>206</sup> See Appendix C: The Questionnaire.

<sup>207</sup> See Appendix C: The Questionnaire.

what was going on around me, how people organized themselves, what appointed officials and their roles were like, how they fulfilled these; and the general mood and receptivity of those attending.’<sup>208</sup> I participated in worship as well as I was able to and as far as I was permitted to. In this way I was trying to get a feel for what it was like to be a Roman Catholic, or to be an evangelical; to get into the skin of an ordinary worshipper or attendant.

Furthermore, at opportune times I was able to talk to people and enjoyed the openness of members of the congregations who informed me about their, sometimes long, experiences of being Christians in Newport. Later on, and using my reflections and thoughts about events, I wrote down my observations. Over time and out of these came my broader conclusions.

After having completed the fieldwork, I sent a printed copy of my observations of the three in depth case studies of congregations to the leader of each group, (these were a Pastor, a Priest and an Elder) with an invitation to them to respond either verbally or in writing. All three responded with additional or supplemental information. Some minor corrections of a factual nature were also provided to me, but otherwise on the whole they were happy to remain in agreement with what I had written. One of the Church leaders asked for my permission for him to share my findings with his congregation. I gave full permission for this to be done and I wrote back to each thanking them and everyone in their care for accepting to take part in this research. Names of individual informants remained undisclosed to these three leaders.

### **2.11: Point of View / Perspectives**

It was important for me to consider from their separate angles a range of perspectives that might be valid to use; that is the varied point-of-view from which useful observations could be made.

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<sup>208</sup> Burgess 1984 Page 80.

In the first instance perhaps, my perspective was that of a priest and a Christian who was studying Christian congregations. There was hardly any escaping these angles. Therefore my chief angles of perception were lit by my Christian background heritage; the Bible, church history, experience of taking and doing worship, of officiating at and in receiving the Eucharist, at baptisms similarly in the congregation and leading it, and also my thoughts about hymns and sacred music.

In order to stretch myself and so extend my reach of comprehension for the tasks I was charged with, I tried to think myself into what might have been my own and others' responses had I been, say, of a different faith or indeed held no faith tradition. Perhaps some information I did receive would have been withheld in these cases and to win it would have required additional effort, or maybe would have been impossible? Or perhaps, in the same way it is sometimes easy to pour out one's heart to a stranger, knowing that it is a 'one off' confessional, stories and ideas not available to me by any other means might have come my way? Whichever way this might have fallen out, in the end I chose to take into account most pre-eminently the perspectives on my project, and on their churches, and on their flocks, of those priests/ church leaders who were in privileged status positions; and who led in churches which belonged to non- Anglican congregations. This decision enabled me to add focus to my intents and investigations, and by this, my attempting to see through others' eyes, even though the eyes of an engaged, high-status, leader, I felt I was enabling myself to give the most apt context in which a mission and church situation can be judged in its own terms and in its optimum facilitative context. The perspectives of the congregation were not left to one side but were also considered; especially wherein they aligned with or sharply deviated from those of their leaders'.

Finally there was a question of which theoretical framework I used. As I have indicated, I used a set of concepts derived from ‘Congregational Studies’<sup>209</sup> to enable me to explore the research questions.

## **2.12: Interviewing Procedure**

I aimed to conduct interviews by working within a level of flexibility which allowed informants ample space and tolerance for them to consider the questions put to them, rephrasing them should they feel more comfortable doing so, re-arranging their order of presentation of them on occasion, and generally freeing up consciousness so as to be able to discuss and analyse the questions themselves.<sup>210</sup> At the onset I took pains to ensure by use of encouragement and building trust, that every respondent was assured that they had stories and ideas and convictions that were worthwhile to be shared. As much as I could, I tried to show that I valued their contributions highly. I eschewed every urge to attempt or allow myself an attitude of accruing power over the respondents.<sup>211</sup> In fact, I made friends among all the different congregations. Some of those friends confided in me their troubles and those frustrations that they felt with their churches, and sometimes revealing their reasons for leaving a previous church. As I was to discover, these were revelations which had not been shared with anyone other than me, within the church circle. I was humbled and gratified that once in a while a respondent would remark to me that I never came before them as a ‘somebody’ who was superior to them, nor as their judge

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<sup>209</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (Eds) 2004.

<sup>210</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 106, Interviewing Procedure.

<sup>211</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 103.

of their thoughts, hurts and actions.<sup>212</sup> The most fulsome praise I received I considered to be given when I was told, I was ‘one of them, although a foreigner.’<sup>213</sup>

At one level I felt that this informal or unstructured style of interviewing I was employing gave respondents ‘opportunity and ease to develop their answers outside of a structured formality.’<sup>214</sup> This was a view also taken by Burgess who refers to these kind of dialogue as ‘conversations with a purpose’<sup>215</sup> A number of commentators such as Webb and Webb have offered a similar analysis and have demonstrated how ‘conversations can be found to be of greater value than the answers that derive from a straight question and answer session.’<sup>216</sup> This, they say, is because ‘they provide rich detailed data that is able to be used alongside other materials’.<sup>217</sup>

A major disadvantage to using an informal relaxed method is likely to be found in being overburdened by too much ‘subjectivity, a clutter of impressionistic idiosyncrasy, and general inflow of bias.’<sup>218</sup> These dangers of course raise ‘questions of the validity’<sup>219</sup> of any conclusions that are able to be drawn from the materials accumulated and laid out after this pattern. For instance the question arises: ‘How far does any researcher’s presence influence and affect the actual generation and arrangement of the data? (Internal validity).’<sup>220</sup> Yet even this danger of creep into subjectivity and bias, and into maybe other and indiscernible distortions of perception and observation, can be turned around and brought to a good account of itself in regard to some

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<sup>212</sup> Zweig, F. *Labour, Life and Poverty*. London: Gollanez, 1948, Page 1-2.

<sup>213</sup> Informant, Female, Aged 60. Also in Zweig, 1948, Pages 1-2.

<sup>214</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 102.

<sup>215</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 102.

<sup>216</sup> Webb and Webb, *Methods of Social Study*, London, Longman, 1932, Page 139.

<sup>217</sup> Webb and Webb, 1932, Page 139.

<sup>218</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 143.

<sup>219</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 144.

<sup>220</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 143-144.

instances concerning research. This is especially so when the data under the microscope bears heavily upon what might be the common and received traditions cherished by a person of clear sight among attenders, or else one such in among a congregation, a church or a denomination. In these albeit exceptional instances, a clear indication can nonetheless be got of the efficacy of mission and pastoral work within the contexts they are being applied. This said, I found conversational meetings which led to informal chatty, easy-style interviews to be on the whole most helpful because they were far more productive of interesting and strong material. In the final event and even among the most rigorous of us we each in greater or lesser degree cherish an amount of our own foibles and petty instances.

### **2.13: Developing Relationships**

The consequent relationship that I was expecting from having elected to take this method and which aligned quite well with those I actually made, were for the most part, in my own realization to be those where one is seen as coming from foreign environs and so I would always remain ‘an outsider,’ whilst in others I was only an ‘interested visitor’ and in yet some others I came eventually to be regarded as an honorary member. In one instance a particular congregation was happy to welcome with some warmth a deeper involvement on my part. I in fact was invited to join a Women’s Bible Study Group and did so. This did not compromise my professional stance as a researcher.

A long term and arduous task within such roles as I took or was pressed into in part, lay in the work of ‘integrating the physical and mental acts performed in data collecting with being in

touch with the present'<sup>221</sup> worship or service going on; or again there was difficulty often in making the step of commitment and so allowing myself to get reasonably fully involved.

Whether worshipping, singing the songs /hymns or listening to a sermon, I was confronted too often with the 'problem of facing degrees of acceptance and non-acceptance.'<sup>222</sup> In this respect, whilst I remained an outsider to particular congregations, I knew where I was and what was to be my status and community's expectations of me: I thus felt I was in study mode. I nevertheless considered I became 'reasonably familiar' with the dynamics of congregations I visited of that kind.

When I found myself to be in a position and situation which allowed me to be familiar with any particular church, its people, and setting I was able to turn this to great advantage for the task of using my insider status to gather and to collate and compare materials for this research. As an outsider I had the scope to stand back and coolly reflect with some objectivity on what I was experiencing. I heeded Green's suggestion that, 'in any action-reflection praxis there will be a need to stand back a little from the situation in order carefully to analyse the hard facts of the issue, while at the same time it will be important to keep well rooted in the experience of it; for in this way it will be easier to judge both its critical and its felt nature.'<sup>223</sup> As an outsider, I found I could carry on my observations without experiencing the clashes of prejudice and predilection that greater intimacy inevitably threw up. My mind was thus more on task in formal settings. Further, Merton suggests that 'it is the stranger ....who finds what is familiar to the group significantly unfamiliar and so is prompted to raise questions for inquiry less apt to be

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<sup>221</sup> Burgess 1984, page 21-29.

<sup>222</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 21-29.

<sup>223</sup> Green 1990, Page 57.

raised at all by Insiders'<sup>224</sup> I worked hard 'to avoid taking things for granted and not to overlook situations that at first sight appeared familiar'<sup>225</sup> to me. In addition, in cases where there was familiarity it was commonly mixed with a vein of strangeness,<sup>226</sup> since some church traditions and worship patterns I was familiar with already but remained unfamiliar with a number of others happening together in the same service or event. In observing any newly visited congregations many states of affairs were 'familiar yet also strange.'<sup>227</sup>

### **2.14 Identity Exploration of myself**

There was a due need for me to consider how I was being perceived by respondents and from this consideration assess what might have been the effects of characteristics such as class, race, gender and cultural difference were having on the course interviews took, on the materials I was getting, and for the ethnographic part of this study.<sup>228</sup> These questions became more acute once informants discovered that I was a priest and thus a woman priest, and sometimes thus an Anglican woman priest. In one Roman Catholic Church for example, certain advocates of access to the priesthood for females gladly, even fervently, engaged in conversation with me; as did others similarly in certain conservative evangelical churches. The issue of women working as official leaders in a church and also elsewhere became for us a general and much aired topic of discussion; as too did their curiosity and eagerness to share my stories of life in ministry, as a mother, and as a woman married to a vicar. Some other respondents remained always polite but

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<sup>224</sup> Merton, R. 'Insiders and outsiders: a chapter in the sociology of knowledge', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol.78, no.1 1972, Page 33.

<sup>225</sup> Merton 1992, Page 33.

<sup>226</sup> Merton 1992, Page 33.

<sup>227</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 26.

<sup>228</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 92.

maybe constrained, and conspicuously did not refer to any of this. The topic became conspicuous by its absence.

Contrary to what Liebow<sup>229</sup> has observed, neither colour nor ethnic origin, in the same way as like biography, influenced the tenor of relationships which I established whilst I was doing participatory observation. I acquired friends and close informants and because of this grew in confidence. My personal ethnicity did not become a problem, neither to me nor to anyone with whom I spoke. I often became a friend and was not seen as or even intuited to be an outsider. Burgess refers to Schwartz and Schwartz<sup>230</sup> who recognized that 'participant observers are involved in face-to-face relationships with those who are researched and that the observers are part of the context being observed.'<sup>231</sup> This then, results in a possibility that 'researchers by their very presence will necessarily modify and influence their research context as well as become influenced by it themselves.'<sup>232</sup> At a stroke then, here is raised a series of difficult problems about an influence, a sort of disturbance, of the observing researcher on the researched. This has been written about by Schrodinger.<sup>233</sup> In a similar vein Becker asks: 'to what degree is the informants' statement the same one he might give, either spontaneously or in answer to a

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<sup>229</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 92.

<sup>230</sup> Schwartz and Schwartz, 'Problems in participant observation,' *American Journal of Sociology*, 1955, Vol. 60, no.4, Pages 343-53

<sup>231</sup> Schwartz and Schwartz 1955, Vol. 60, no.4, Pages 343-53.

<sup>232</sup> Schwartz and Schwartz 1955, Vol. 60, no.4, Pages 343-53.

<sup>233</sup> Essentially this argument is an analogue to the famous thought experiment concerning 'Schrodinger's Cat' (1935). 'Schrodinger showed conclusively that a cat in a box can never be verified with certainty as alive or dead; since a person lifting the lid interferes and so changes scientific conditions of the experiment.'

question, in the absence of the observer?<sup>234</sup> While Janes asks: ‘How does the community role of the investigator affect statements made by local respondents?’<sup>235</sup>

In short, these questions question the researcher’s participation and his/ her relationships with informants: together with the impact of these phenomena upon data that are gathered.<sup>236</sup> How then, does ‘a researcher take account of the role her influences have on her research findings’?<sup>237</sup>

My training and experience as an ordained minister was a help to me in developing over time a set of questions about congregations in mission which were in large part assimilable without ripples into many and disparate congregations. And again, my being female did not seem to me to greatly deflect from the questions that I formulated and posed to people.<sup>238</sup> I had reservations about how my revealing my priestly identity might cause some derailment of this fieldwork part of the study. In one congregation I had been invited to sit at the front among the leadership team. I felt it wise to decline this offer since I preferred and felt it more in keeping sitting in amongst the general congregation. To my joy, I quickly established a rapport with respondents. A striking thing did happen though at one other of the Churches where people were looking for volunteers to clean their church and I was asked if I wanted to volunteer to help clean the church. I did wonder though if they would have asked a white male, if he had been in my place.

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<sup>234</sup> Becker and Geer, ‘Participant observation and interviewing: a rejoinder,’ *Human organisation*, vol 17, no 2, Page 39-40, 652.

<sup>235</sup> Janes, ‘A note on the phases of the community role of participant observer’ *An American Sociological Review*, Vol, 26, no3, 1961, pp 446-50.

<sup>236</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 98.

<sup>237</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 98.

<sup>238</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 98.

In the course of the research I took time to consider and explore myself more thoroughly. As it is the case in most situations, ‘no one comes to the experience from a vacuum as indeed there are prior feelings and prejudices.’<sup>239</sup> This time spent inwardly did help me to know where biases in me were most likely to come from. My being an African, and having been brought up in Uganda, brought with it a whole range of unique to myself, prior cultural and life experience, an array of thought, reflection and belief, that was all hidden from those persons with whom I was interacting. All this affected me and how I was to respond to the situations I lived through in Newport.<sup>240</sup> I felt I needed to ‘develop a great self- awareness of the ways that my own understanding of the Christian’<sup>241</sup> task in my life had been shaped within a particular and an alien-to-British culture. My African upbringing has shaped me and influenced very particularly my view and interpretation of the Gospel story very profoundly. I have always seen the Gospel and also my ‘outlook on Christianity consistently as holistic, a bridging of the gap between the so-called and too-often segregated secular and spiritual aspects of life.’<sup>242</sup> As a very soundly founded Christian I was totally bound to bring biblical and liturgical insights often foreign to others in Newport and which bore on the research. As I was looking more concerted and self-consciously through the eyes of faith and at myself I became far more aware of this fact and those peculiarities that make me this particular person.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Green 1990, Page 43.

<sup>240</sup> Green 1990, Page 43.

<sup>241</sup> Green 1990, Page 43.

<sup>242</sup> Hadfield 1999, Holistic Mission in a fractured world.

<sup>243</sup> Green 1990, page 75.

## **2.15 Conclusion**

This research I believe has confirmed what Stringer<sup>244</sup>, Burgess<sup>245</sup> and others have suggested: that there is no method superior to any of the others; and that each methodology has its own strengths and weaknesses.

The view of Schatzman and Strauss, as suggested by Burgess, became for me yet another practice I found helpful. Upon entering into this research I felt myself to be classified, if at all, as ‘a methodological pragmatist who envisaged methods of inquiry as systematised strategies and operations designed specifically for obtaining answers to questions posed about events’,<sup>246</sup> important to and interesting to me and of some benefit to scholars and to the church.<sup>247</sup>

Now, after having clarified my methodological stance, the next chapter locates the research in its geographical, historical, economic and contemporaneous setting.

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<sup>244</sup> Stringer 1999.

<sup>245</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 143.

<sup>246</sup> Schatzman and Strauss. *Field Research: Strategies for a Natural Sociology* ( Englewood Cliffs, NJ:Prentice-Hall) 1973, Page 7 Burgess 1984, Page 5.

<sup>247</sup> Burgess 1984 Page 5.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

This Chapter draws on both oral and written sources for the socio –historical background of the City of Newport. Haydyn Davis’s work, “*The History of the Borough of Newport*”, is a fruitful source of reference and so is Terry Underwood’s work, “*Yesterday’s Newport*”. Other authors include O’Sullivan (*A Century of Newport*) and Kenneth O. Morgan’s work ‘*Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980.*’ In addition to text books, Journals and magazines and other publications provide excellent perspectives on the local history. Oral Testimony has also been employed as it draws on people’s accounts of their life experiences. In addition to this mythical narratives have been evoked as this accords with tradition handed down to some elderly informants.

#### **3. 1: A Geographical Note**

Newport lies along the M4 corridor on the Usk, a tributary of the Severn situated on the southern margin of Wales. It is sometimes referred to as ‘the Gateway to Wales’. Newport is surrounded by countryside, bordered by hills and woods and in its local environment are major attractions including the Wye Valley, the Roman fortress town of Caerleon and the industrial heritage of the Gwent Valleys. It is noteworthy that the surrounding area is typified by “ribbon development”, that is villages, roads and railways often expand along the valleys; in this way, as villages grow, it often becomes difficult to see where one finishes and the next one starts. The present Borough of Newport covers 77 Square miles, a considerable urban expanse which has significantly increased through recent developments. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Resources from Gwent Libraries, 1980

People from Newport are known as Newportonians. According to the 2001 census figures, the population of Newport in 2001 was 137,011, greater than the population of the borough in its industrial heyday in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Though Newport has not seen the level of immigration of nearby Cardiff and Bristol the question on ethnicity in the census of 2001 gave a picture of a growing multi-ethnic community in Newport. 93.1% described themselves as white, 1.2% as mixed race, 2.6% as Asian, 0.5% as black, 0.2% as Chinese and 0.3% as other<sup>2</sup>. On the question of religion in the 2001 Census 71.9% indicated that they were Christian; 0.2% Buddhist; 0.2% Hindu; 0.1% Jewish; 0.1% Sikh; 2.6% Muslim and 16.8% no religion. Only 8.1% did not state any religion. The city of Newport is home to 16% of the Welsh Muslim population<sup>3</sup>.

Newport is a town of contrasts projecting the images of both beauty and beast for all: as Newport's poet has it, 'with time to stand and stare'<sup>4</sup>. In 1994 Underwood remarked that 'Newport was too large to be a town and too small to be a city.'<sup>5</sup> However, Newport became the newest city in the United Kingdom when it received the Royal warrant in 2004. This gift was decided upon by the queen during her golden jubilee year on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2002. It was appropriate and considered overdue, since Newport had been one of, "the big three" population and industrial centres of South Wales since the early days of the industrial revolution. Though Newport was noticeably less affluent, less privileged, and smaller than Cardiff and Swansea, it

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<sup>2</sup> Trett, B. Web Site [Newportpast.com](http://Newportpast.com), Retrieved 7<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Trett, [Newportpast.com](http://Newportpast.com), Retrieved , 7<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Underwood, T. *Once Upon A Time in Newport*. Newport Newport, 1994, Page 1

<sup>5</sup> Underwood 1994, Page 1

has a proud history as an important centre of Welsh industrialization. It was historically the geographical, business, and administrative focus of the pre-1974 county of Monmouthshire.

### **3.2: Historical Overview**

#### **3.2.1: Experience**

The significance of the past cannot be overemphasized. It was Cockerel who observed that ‘it is only through understanding, attending to and appropriating the past that we can have a present or a future.’<sup>6</sup> To come to Wales from another part of the United Kingdom, let alone from Uganda in the heart of Africa, was to become aware of many conversations that require a historical, topographical and economic atlas to understand. The impact that the history, landscape and industry of the Welsh nation has made upon its people was perhaps more apparent to me in many ways because of the very fact that my own background was so very radically different to anything to be met with in Wales. As an invited and welcomed outsider I saw with ‘clear’ because unbiased eyes.

But more importantly than this were the conversations I have enjoyed with Welsh men and women wherein they have been able to recall the experiences of four or more generations of family history passed on through word of mouth memories. An interest such as mine in the social history of industrial South Wales may be more important to a Christian and prospective church worker than might be realized at first. As a newcomer, one is expected at the very least to engage with a warm empathy the people’s treasury of tales, experiences and long family memories. Being one of their church leaders there were continuous and eager high expectations

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<sup>6</sup> Cockerel 1989, Page 46.

for me to live up to; and a hope and invitation that one will become immersed in the community. This included its history and remembered experiences. The Chapter on the historical, socio-political, social development, economic and religious background of Newport indicates in summary, the knowledge that has been pressed on me as essential for understanding my subject.

### **3.2.2: Exploration**

Writing in 1998, Davis noted that Newport's recorded history spans a little less than a thousand years. This he remarks to be a mere pinprick in time! For that matter he suggests that little more is known, with certainty, about the surrounding area of Gwent in the times before and after the arrival and departure of the Romans, who for a period of 450 years carved their autograph on stone for posterity to enjoy<sup>7</sup>.

This assertion is compatible with Buckingham and Frame who observed that, 'Stories as to Newport's origins are as numerous as the folk who have traded, pillaged, farmed or otherwise settled this shore close to the far western edge of Europe.'<sup>8</sup>

However, despite a vast array of stories, it is firmly held by tradition that the earliest known immigrants from the continent to Newport were known as Iberians, being a race of small dark people who apparently originated in Greece and settled heavily in Northern Spain as well. Moreover, I find myself empathizing with the truth of this supposition; one is able still to adduce evidence from the colouration and stature of many contemporary Welsh in the area. A dark hue to the skin, shorter than average stature and dark coal black locks, often curled and jet, are commonplace features found walking a Newport main street.

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<sup>7</sup> Davis, H. *The History of the Borough of Newport*. Newport :, Newport, Pennyfarthing Press, 1998, page 1.

<sup>8</sup> Buckingham and Frame. *The Haunted Holy Ground*. Newport: Newport, Dragonfly, 1998, Page 5.

During the centuries BC, as was commonplace across Europe at the time, there was a fairly large scale movement of peoples in a constant flux coming from the continent of Europe into the British Isles, including many parts of South Wales. It was at this period that the Iron Age Silurian tribes began to emerge hereabouts. The Silurian peoples made prominent features on the landscape with their settlements. To achieve control they had to build a garrison town at Caerleon known to the Romans as Isca Silurum where the second Augustian Legion was based in a chain of fortified posts. They are said to have been a ferocious race giving trouble to any who encroached on their territory. They confronted and held back for some time the advance of the next group of settlers to occupy the area, the Romans. Their hill forts in a much denuded state remain to this day: such as those found on Twm Barlum, North west of Newport and at Llamein, locally to the north of Caerwent.

Drawing upon Underwood's observations, it is probable that Newport was originally called 'Castell Newydd' after the Norman Castle (parts of which still stand and are upkept as ruins) which was built on the banks of the river Usk<sup>9</sup>. It was built so as to guard the important river-crossing at a (then) shallow place where a ford across it was feasible. Giraldus Cambriensis, the mediaeval commentator and traveller through Wales, on the other hand referred to Newport as 'Novus Burgus' (New town). His use of this name was probably to distinguish it from Caerleon, three miles to the north, which had been a garrison of strength and size in Roman times after the Roman conquest and occupation of South Wales after 75A.D<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> O'Sullivan J. *A Century of Newport, Event, Peoples and Places over the last 100years*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2007, page 14.

<sup>10</sup> O'Sullivan J. A 2007, page 14.

According to experts, Newport began, as with so many communities in Wales, as a small ecclesiastical settlement; though the Welsh ecclesiastical prefix “Llan” has not featured in present or past Welsh names for Newport. The simple huts of the Celtic Saint Gwynllyw and his followers, in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, marked its beginning. In Mediaeval times Norman invaders built a castle and parish Church of stone and the borough of Newport was founded. The nearby town of Caerleon, of late fast becoming a suburb of Newport as its rural buffer- zone green belt disappears, had been the premier site of the Roman administration of Wales. Excavation of Roman sites in Caerleon has revealed wonders and intricate details of Roman day to day life at a legionary settlement. The Roman name Isca is preserved today in the name of the Newport district known as Risca. Caerleon together with York and Chester is an archaeological site of world importance that somewhat overshadows Newport’s meagre historical remains<sup>11</sup>.

The Normans must have arrived in the area not long after the battle of Hastings in 1066. They built large castles to defend themselves. A chain of castles was created at Chepstow, Monmouth, Raglan, Usk, Newport, Abergavenny. The Norman lordship of Castell (New Castle) became the Welsh town of Casnewydd, while its development as a tidal harbour gave it the English name of Newport. The Act of Union in 1536 created the new county of Monmouthshire from a patchwork of medieval lordships with Newport as the administrative centre of the county.

Newport in fact is not a Welsh- speaking city. It belongs to that district known as the Welsh Marches; the borders along which Offa’s Dyke was reared to keep the Cymric people in their place. Historically the interchange between England and Wales has been large on these Marches or Borders. Names persist here like ‘Welsh Bicknor’ and ‘English Bicknor’, and other towns in

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<sup>11</sup> O’Sullivan, J. 2007, 14.

the region share English names in Wales and Welsh names in England. The borders were fluid and fighting persistent. It was rare to find the Borders at rest.

Newport in Welsh goes by the name 'Casnewydd' (Newcastle') but is not nor has ever been called by this name except by road signs and by the city council. As part of the county of Monmouth, Newport has had a unique status in the UK since Monmouth has been part of England and also has been part of Wales, at different times. There is an (apocryphal) story that Monmouthshire remained at war with Germany up until its dissolution as a county in the 1970's, because a peace treaty had been signed in 1945 by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Monmouthshire supposedly had a special status that excluded it from this description in the Treaty. The tale is a tall one but it does illustrate very well the 'specialness' and the idiosyncratic identity this area of the country truly has.

### **3.2.3: Commerce and Industry**

Historically 'Newport's commercial industry can be traced back to the twelfth Century'<sup>12</sup>, it remained small as a town until the Industrial Revolution began to reach critical mass in the late 18th early and early 19th centuries. The industrial revolution itself literally changed the world, not least the way of life, the environment, and the means to live for the areas in which it exploded into activity. It changed utterly the face of South Wales.

The Valleys of South Wales were where coal was first mined on modern industrial scales; where iron was first smelted by Bessemer furnaces; the first smelting being achieved at the furnace at

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<sup>12</sup> O'Sullivan 2007, Page 14.

Nant-y-glo in Glamorganshire hard-by Newport. This immense and feverish industrial activity was accommodated by Newport at its harbours and Pills (inlets) on the Usk and along the local Gwent levels. The Alexander docks included a deep sea lock which was 1,000ft long and 100ft wide, one of the largest in the world.<sup>13</sup> From Newport coal and steel went out to the world, millions of tons each year, making coal owners fabulously rich and the landscapes of the area wildernesses akin to war zones. The docks became important for exporting coal, an activity which ended in 1964 when the trade was transferred to Barry Island.<sup>14</sup>

The local Baronetcy of the Morgans of Tredegar House (now in the ownership of Newport City) levied 1d per ton for the railway to transport coal across its lands. (This money helped create one of the most up-to-date docks in Britain).<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, this levy provided opulence in lavish amounts to the Morgans, who built stables, orangeries, laid out gardens and parklands and extensions to their now stately home. Little other building of account was done in this period. Some large and palatial town houses belonging to merchants went up around the quaysides and the chandler shops and the harbourmaster's which showed off the success of the shipping trades. Later in the Century, Newport became one of the main ports for exporting cars.<sup>16</sup>

For the most part Newport, with an access to coal and to ore, set up in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a steel making town and held to this title until the 1990's when the Chinese burst onto the world steel markets and ended the reign of steel in Newport. But for a century, men worked and sweated and drank and sweated for a living at Llanwern steelworks turning out

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<sup>13</sup> O'Sullivan 2007, page 14.

<sup>14</sup> O'Sullivan 2007, Page 14.

<sup>15</sup> O'Sullivan 2007, page 14.

<sup>16</sup> O'Sullivan 2007, page 14.

steel for export and for the building of Britain. It was one of the biggest steelworks in the world and steel was a cornerstone of the Newport economy for decades<sup>17</sup> The derivative trades were plentiful - steel mills, steel rolling, casting, and fabricating - all sprang up, clustered around their parent provider, dependent on it, which in turn depended on the mines to the north and east in local proximity. Without doubt Newport's location on the estuaries of the Usk and Ebbw rivers and the deep tidal channels of the River Severn has made its not immoderate wealth. (The mines of the Monmouthshire valleys, in much the same pattern as the nearby and once small town of Cardiff served the East Glamorgan valleys).

After an era of expansion of industrial development Newport has of late suffered a decline. According to The Welsh Academy Encyclopedia of Wales, the docks were in decline even before the Great Depression and local unemployment peaked at 34.7% high but not as bad as the levels seen in mining towns of the South Wales Valleys. The old heavy industries in the latter half of the 20th century have dwindled away. As the heavy industries have disappeared the advance of the digital economy and the rise of the services sectors have filled the vacuum left behind. The world has grown small and in doing so has impoverished Newport. Recent times though have seen some recovery of the city's fortunes due to its premier location along the much overused M4 corridor.<sup>18</sup> Compared to many Welsh towns Newport's economy had a broad base, with foundaries, engineering works, a cattle market and shops. The Civil Service being the biggest employer in Newport.

The city continues to offer to developers a deepwater port alongside the Severn, and there is

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<sup>17</sup> O'Sullivan 2007, page 14.

<sup>18</sup> *The Welsh Academy Encyclopedia of Wales*: Cardiff: Cardiff University of Wales Press, 2008

considerable agricultural hinterland, and direct motorway and railway routes (100 minutes) to London. The city council has tried hard and Newport has seen the conversion of much derelict industrial land into new ventures, housing and enterprise parks. This has been accompanied by the relatively easy planning permission to build modern hi-tech facilities in Newport's green-belt. The building of many housing developments in surrounding rural villages and of late on the waterfronts has been an attempt to create a new role for Newport, perhaps as a commuter suburb accessing the English M4 corridor London.

Commercially, Newport today is a city looking for a purpose. The infamous 'credit crunch' and its aftermath have cut a swathe through development budgets and the city council has come under enormous pressure from city businesses and trading companies. The facile optimism of the 90s and the 'noughties' has collapsed, new homes sit empty and projected ones remain unbuilt. The retail heart of the city was caught in midstream by the financial crisis, and even before this shockwave hit the projected redevelopment of the city centre, it was becoming clear this had been an overreaching hubris by the council planners.

The people of Newport continue their daily round and 'just, as always, carry on.' 'With the shires of an affluent west country to the south, a principal city of wealth and importance to the west (with its extensive rural environs), and to the north the 'tweed and shined shoes' of the townsfolk of Monmouth, Newport Newport remains a poor relation.

### **3. 2.4: Socio- Political development**

South Wales as a whole has a reputation for political radicalism. The great radical reform movements of the 19th century touched Newport deeply and memorably. Newport has a pioneering role in that radical past with its participation in the great upsurge of Chartism in Industrial Britain in the 1830's and 1840's. As a centre for the transportation and export of coal, iron and steel, and other metals, minerals and ores, industry and working life in Newport was heavy and life for many working people remained harsh and difficult.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw a time of increasing unrest in South Wales and that unrest later displayed itself in the infamous Newport Chartist riot and the Rebecca riots of the 1840's.

The Chartist Movement was a radical working men's political, social and economic organisation gathering momentum in the 1830's and 1840's led in the United Kingdom by the reformer Robert Owen.<sup>19</sup> Its aims were to enfranchise and to obtain other rights for industrial workers for whom civil life and liberties were largely hitherto meager and oppressive. Owen and his movement were greatly instrumental in forcing through Parliament the Great Reform Act of 1832; which in fact was the first of a series of reforms and enactments that historically were to nourish and sustain the indigenous socialist movements of South Wales and other parts of the UK. It was enthusiastically received in Newport and the industrial valleys of Monmouthshire. Wherever working men and women would eventually gain a voice and a stake in the society they were building in wealth creation and in provision of labour, these reforms were badly needed. One of these great confrontations between privilege and deprivation, pitting the wealthy and dominant in society against the impoverished and repressed, took place in Newport. A fervent

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<sup>19</sup> Williams (ed) *Year Book Modern Newport*. Newport:1920, Page 68.

‘Chartist march and protest, perceived as an ‘uprising’ and a violent threat to the status quo, though not at all as threatening as perceived by some, was dispersed as the march passed through Newport.’<sup>20</sup> Working men and women were shot down and killed by a hail of musketry from British Redcoats called in to suppress this ‘uprising’. The local Chartist leaders Zephania Williams, William Jones and John Frost felt able to organise a demonstration which would shake the entire country and take control of Newport. The three men wanted to seize Newport and thus start a rising to form a new government for the country. Their hope was to ease the hardship of working – class men and their families. Three columns of Chartists, virtually a military operation, marched through the main industrial valleys and converged on Newport. Led by John Frost, a former mayor of Newport, the ill-fated venture was broken by the rifle fire of the yeomanry at the Westgate hotel in the centre of town. The leaders including Frost, a gentleman of local distinction, were tried and transported to Australia. Their punishment more than their actions ensured that they would join the Tollpuddle Martyrs in the radical and socialist, “hall of fame”. Nonetheless the riots were costly in terms of lives lost.

Remarkably, the Chartist riots of 1839 helped to spark the revolution which eventually led to votes for all, though women had to wait till a later time. Brown’s remarks on the Newport Rising of 1839 dismisses the assumption that the movement was without contention.<sup>21</sup> It was the most dramatic episode of the Chartist movement, but nevertheless, a movement which has been critiqued. Some observers have asked whether it was merely a local disturbance bereft of any national significance. It is debatable whether it did mark the beginning of the British revolution. Brown further comments that ‘contemporaries were divided on the issue, and until recently, the

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<sup>20</sup> Brown, R. *Chartism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, Page 60

<sup>21</sup> Brown 1998, page 63.

view of orthodox historians was that it represented a ‘monster demonstration’ that went disastrously wrong.’<sup>22</sup> However, he concludes that ‘this view has come in for some vigorous criticism from revisionist writers, especially from David Jones.’<sup>23</sup> Moreover the authenticity of the famous picture of the crowd fleeing from the soldiers at Westgate Hotel has been questioned. It was made long after the event, not by eye witnesses and as such is seen to be inaccurate. Therefore it is a reasonable assumption that this view was for propaganda purposes. ‘Jones, a revisionist writer on the other hand has vigorously criticised such views.’<sup>24</sup>

It is vital to remember here the observation made by Williams, that the Chartist riots conferred a sort of political notoriety upon the town which though such an event can hardly be said to make it famous, yet gives the place a certain historical value<sup>25</sup>. In the same vein Welsh children are schooled in the events of the great Chartist march on Newport in 1839, now described as the Newport Uprising.

Admittedly this was a defining event for the local historical consciousness for many of the people of Newport. Newport is regarded by some as a cradle of democracy, among its more prosaic claims to fame as a busy seaport and industrial town. They are proud and feel honoured to have produced such men and women who would lay down their lives in a struggle for human dignity and equity. Today they are remembered in Newport on the murals which retell the event in the city Centre’s John Frost square.

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<sup>22</sup> Brown 1998, Page 63

<sup>23</sup> Brown 1998, page 63.

<sup>24</sup> Brown 1998, page 63.

<sup>25</sup> Williams (Ed), *Year Book Modern Newport*. Newport: 1920, page 70

It is important to understand the legacy of this radicalism in the pre-1974 county of Monmouthshire and its county borough of Newport. There were many who endeavoured to link this unrest in South Wales with the prevalence of conformity and an ignorance of the English language.<sup>26</sup> Many viewed the celebrated report of 1847 on the state of education in Wales with suspicion. While many joined the egalitarian society of nonconformist chapels, many preferred a secular creed of political radicalism and preached atheism with a religious zeal. However, for a considerable part of the population the two movements of nonconformity and political radicalism were seen as two sides of the same coin, and a tradition developed in the chapels of reading the Bible as a work of social radicalism. I have found this useful in understanding religious development in Newport.

### **3.3 : The beginning, development and Growth of Christianity in Newport.**

This section presents a discussion that outlines the history of the establishment and development of the Christian faith in Newport.

It has been claimed by some Church historians, that by 300AD there was a fully established tradition of Christian worship in Newport. One of the earliest reliably documented instance of Christian witness in Newport may well be the occasion of the Roman persecution of Christians which is recorded as having reached as far west in the UK as Caerleon. Caerleon today is more or less a suburb of the City of Newport. During the Roman occupation it was garrison town housing at various times the 12<sup>th</sup> and other Legions. It is no wonder that Caerleon was targeted for persecution of Christians there, since coupled with its political and military strategic importance to the civil peace and to the continued subdual of the wild Welsh tribesmen, it was

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<sup>26</sup> Morgan 1981, Page 70

also a major seat of the Church, being a Bishopric. Caerleon was in fact far more important and of far greater size than was Newport in Roman times in Britain.

In a recent history of Newport, Davis states that from Caerleon “terrified Christians were pursued for a distance of one and half miles towards Newport.”<sup>27</sup> He continues with some particular detail that, ‘Julius and Aaron, two devout assistants to bishop Amphibulus fell on the site of (the present ) St. Julian’s Church. To commemorate their martyrdom, a chapel was erected to each. A modern church dedicated to St. Julius and Aaron was built in 1926.’<sup>28</sup>

Admittedly, it could be argued that had the church been erected in 326 we would have more confidence in the accuracy of this account. Nevertheless, old stories are often more valid in at least some content. One has to ask oneself how else was the site named after Julius and Aaron? My own observation is that it is fully consistent with Christian practice and common memorial that such an occasion as a martyrdom and such a shocking event too should be commemorated by a chapel or naming a site after it.

According to the book, *A Century of Newport*, the Christian roots of the present-day city of Newport’s can be traced back to the early parts of the first millennium. The author claims that the Church of Woolos, (Woolos is considered to be the Latin form of the name for the Welsh Saint, Gwynllyw) was built and consecrated about this time<sup>29</sup>. Inevitably some Celtic myths have accrued around this Gwynllyw and tend to constitute the greater part of his reputation. One of these myths tells of a dream of his, through which he came to repentance and turned to Jesus Christ. His dream directed him to search out a white ox with a black spot on its forehead and in

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<sup>27</sup> Davis 1998, Page 14.

<sup>28</sup> Davis 1998, Page14.

<sup>29</sup> O’Sullivan 2007, page 14

the place he found it he was directed to build a church there in an act of penitence. The site where the ox was found is said to be the location of the present day Stow hill, in Newport, and Gwynllyw's church today has become the Cathedral Church of the Diocese of Monmouth. Gwynllyw at some time in history was canonized and his name, in its Latin form, is preserved in the dedication of Newport Cathedral to St Woolos. In fact it was only in 2010 that St Woolos cathedral in Stow Hill, Newport became officially renamed Newport Cathedral.

In the early Celtic Church, Church buildings were commonly no more than simple wooden and wicker structures and it was not until the Normans that there was established on the site of the Lordship of Newport a fine stone –built parish church. Remarkably the Normans retained the Welsh dedication to Saint Gwynllyw. The Normans were firmly established within the Latin arm of Christendom, in so far as they were directly concerned with the religious life. In the 12th century this parish Church was enlarged; with further alteration and enlargement begun around 1440. Much of the Norman fabric of the cathedral remains in place; there is a fine dogtooth ornamental doorway and porch for instance, although the Church was subject to a considerable restoration and alteration during Victorian times.

### **3.3.1: The Celtic Church and Newport**

Within a relatively short time of the martyrdom of Julius and Aaron; and at about the time of death of Alban, however, Christianity had become the official established religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine the Great. Its centre, in the first place was at Rome; later, with the division into Eastern and Western Empires, the Orthodox Church worshipping in Greek language became centred at Byzantium, in present day Turkey. There was however, for the Western Isles,

as this part of the world was known then, a third option for doing worship: The Celtic Church. Jones suggested that ‘Christianity in Wales pre-dated St Augustine’s arrival in England in 597 and may date from the later Roman Empire.’<sup>30</sup> He maintains that for several centuries therefore, the Welsh Church must have been self-governing.<sup>31</sup>

The Celtic Church today is a historical memory only; in the days of the Early Church however, it rose to be a thriving, vibrant, and fruitful manifestation of the holy triumph of the Body and Blood Sacrifice and Resurrection of Christ Jesus. It was perhaps independent of Rome and perhaps of Byzantium; a Church in its own right with its own traditions and origins. It is how these origins and traditions were home-grown in what are now called, The West of England, and Wales – including Newport – that have a deep relevance for discussion in this historical review.

I was told by one of my informants that, ‘Celtic tradition for instance says that the Lord Jesus Himself came to these Islands before his ministry began in earnest; that his uncle was that Joseph of Arimathea who is named in the gospels as a follower of The Way, and who provided the pristine tomb wherein the body of the crucified Christ was laid to rest.’<sup>32</sup> He went on to say that, ‘The tradition has it that Jesus with his uncle Joseph visited Britain later, after Christ’s Resurrection and Ascension, Joseph himself returned here and established a Church in these Islands at Glastonbury; and that this indeed was the origin of the separate and independent branch of Christendom known as The Celtic Church.’<sup>33</sup> Yet another informant stated that ‘The Celtic heritage was meaningless, even deeply suspicious for the Nonconformist majority who

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<sup>30</sup> Jones, P. *The Governance of the Church in Wales*. Cardiff: Greenfach, 2000, page 1.

<sup>31</sup> Jones 2000, page 1.

<sup>32</sup> Informant, Historian, Male Aged 70.

<sup>33</sup> Informant, Historian, Male Aged 70.

preferred their Bibles and evangelical hymnody to the stories of the Celtic past over laden with enough mythology to be written off as pre-Reformation superstition.<sup>34</sup>

Arguably, the power of stories like these should not be underestimated; even whether they are true or are idle pipe dreams should not be decided absolutely and lightly as being obvious and self-evident. They are, among other things, markers of identity around which accrete national character and vision and self-respect. This is true for many Welsh people, for many Newport and South Wales people.

Jones maintains that the Celtic church was predominantly monastic governed by abbots rather than bishops, and was territorially divided between monasteries rather than dioceses.<sup>35</sup> To a certain extent it had its own liturgies, creeds, emblems, holidays, saints, calendar, offices, vestments, rites, music and styles of writing and book illumination. Some of the global Church's greatest treasures and insights are owed to the artistic endeavor of devout incumbents in this Celtic Church.

According to Welsh historians,<sup>36</sup> immediately previous to Roman occupation, what is now Wales and the Marches would have been a land in which the Celtic, as opposed to the Latin, Church would have been pervasive and at work. The Celtic Church has left its identity marks on many aspects of everyday life in the course of the history of Newport right up to the present day; from something as small as its distinctive cross emblems to its contribution towards communal cement wherein Newport people see themselves as a unit, as Welsh, as a people with a glorious past, in

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<sup>34</sup> Informant, Female, Aged 65.

<sup>35</sup> Jones 2000, Page 1.

<sup>36</sup> Davis 1998, Underwood 1994, O'Sullivan 2007, Williams 1920.

their Christian origins as well in their arts and culture.

### **3.3:2 Nonconformist Churches**

Nowadays worshippers at the Nonconformist Churches often prefer to style themselves as belonging to the Free Churches, thus accentuating their status as independent churches not dependent upon nor affiliated with established Anglicanism or Roman Catholicism. There are many worshippers who continue to hold with affection the title 'Nonconformist'; with all of this name's aggregated tradition, sublime genesis and history of struggle; their radical and dynamic past. In this thesis I will use the terms Nonconformist and Non conformism so as to draw upon the associations within this store of the past.

Non conformism as it consolidated in Britain into an array of lesser but active denominations after the Civil War and the 1688 settlement and 'Glorious Revolution', was begun and born out of the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the ensuing Protestant Reformation.

### **3.3.3: The rise of the Puritans and Non- Conformism in South Wales**

In their earliest manifestations, around mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, and before any Nonconformist churches in fact had been organised proper, the Nonconformists for the most part were known, often pejoratively, as Puritans. The Puritans were a very small minority in 17th century Wales, and largely featured only in the Anglicised border districts, particularly in Monmouthshire. These Puritans were characterised by their austerity and stiffness; they sang hymns of deliverance and fortitude, and abstained from the 'cakes and ales' in life. They dressed plainly and ate plainly; eschewed 'graven images' and in fact nearly all pictorial representation, as well

as the drama and theatre; which was linked in their outlook on life with gaming and rabble-rousing circuses.

In his poem 'A Peasant',<sup>37</sup> R.S Thomas using the character 'Iago Prytherch' describes a character of this kind, albeit made stereotyped by this description here. This was, not surprisingly in Wales taken to heart by many of the lower-middle parts of society; since it is in many ways what today we might call a natural 'plug-in' or 'application' to the native frame of mind. This frame of mind is well identified and described in scintillating poetry by the late great R S Thomas, himself was a clergyman, and whose late 20th century hill-farmer parishioners were perhaps some of the final remnant and the direct spiritual descendants of the Jacobean Welsh Puritans.

In their heyday, these Puritans were often the butt of satire and of a harsh and sometimes coarse humour, being despised by the urbane university-educated wits. See Ben Jonson's astounding character, Zeal-of-the-Land Busy (in fact Puritans gave themselves names like this) in his play 'Bartholomew Fair'; and even Shakespeare, a writer who tends to be ironical rather than satirical held his Puritan Malvolio up to ridicule in 'Twelfth Night'. South Wales, particularly Cardiff, but also Newport and district, had its heady and earnest Jacobean Puritan divines who made their marks on their societies and on posterity.<sup>38</sup>

The early Welsh Puritans translated themselves the Nonconformists. The nonconformists included among others Calvinists or the Independents. After the Civil War in the period of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century their first denominations were beginning to be founded by the

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<sup>37</sup> See Appendix D: R.Thomas Poems. Source: Web site [www.poemhunter.co](http://www.poemhunter.co). 2004. Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> June 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Neal, D. *The History of the Puritans; or Protestant Nonconformists, from the Reformation in 1517 To The Revolution in 1688*. London 1822, Vol. V, Page 132.

victorious Puritan Parliamentary side. This carried on into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The denominations founded were Quakers and Baptists. The founding fathers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century John Bunyan, John Flavel, and others; in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Wesley and Whitefield, Isaac Watts, John Newton, to mention but few, all helped in the establishment of new denominations which became known collectively as the Nonconformist denominations.

There was an interconnectedness between the rise of industry, in urban centres and also in the countryside, in South Wales with the work ethic of Protestantism and especially of the Nonconformists. Local historian Lovering maintains that, the formation of a Working Men's Association in 1838 was no doubt an event of importance to the political radicals in the town, but so was the founding of the Newport Sunday Schools Union in 1831 to many zealous chapel members.<sup>39</sup> That spiritual guidance offered by the Nonconformist denominations regulated – often strictly life for many people in Newport and district, in the late 18<sup>th</sup>early 19<sup>th</sup> century – but being strict and regular it was a rock of meaning and purpose, something that did not change like the rapid industrialisation of society, and so was a support and a stay to people, a place wherein sense could begin to be made of the mayhem and apparent chaos around people.

By 1851, Nonconformity had gained quite a stronghold, particularly in heavy industrialised areas such as South Wales. Jones quotes Simon who argues that the emergence of Welsh non-conformity was not as a result of any doctrinal dispute between non-conformists and the Established Church.<sup>40</sup> According to Simon, nonconformity had arisen out of frustration, because 'all religious thought and emotion was dead' in the established church. Simon contrasted the 'immense fervour of Welsh nonconformity' with supposed 'coldness and mere formality' of the

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<sup>39</sup>Lovering. *Gwent Local History*. Cwmbran, 2000, Page 39.

<sup>40</sup> (Sir Simon 1873- 1954, the Attorney General and future Lord Chancellor)

established Church. Thus according to Simon, the Welsh Anglican Church and nonconformists already shared a common religious belief. Besides the greater fervour of the Nonconformists Welsh Christianity was separated chiefly by a difference of cultures and by the languages they spoke and in which they expressed their beliefs.<sup>41</sup>

### **3.3.4: Methodism in Newport**

The largest of the historic non conformist churches in Newport, known also as Free Churches, are Methodists. However, the English observer of Wales has to understand that in Wales “Methodists” usually means Calvinist Methodist. After their separation from the Anglican Established church in 1811 the Welsh Calvinist Methodists preferred to be described as Presbyterians, and the largest denomination is properly called the Presbyterian Church of Wales. Those that are now denominated Methodist are the former Wesley Methodists. However, both denominations owe their origins to the 18<sup>th</sup> century Methodist Revival, which had a profound effect upon the Welsh society. The Methodist Church developed considerable following, becoming the most important non conformist church and soon expanded to outgrow the parent Anglican Church. However, an analysis of this church and its membership shows that Methodists at present time are in a crisis: Evangelicals in Methodism being only able to enjoy small pockets of growth amidst wider decline.<sup>42</sup>

The rise of Methodism amidst the Revivals of the 18th century was even more of a landmark in Welsh religious history than it was in neighbouring England. The Protestant Reformation in Wales had suffered acutely as a result of the basic Christian Scripture and Devotional matter receiving a significant lack of vernacular scholarship. The translation of the Bible and Book of

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<sup>41</sup> Simon, 1873- 1954, Quoted in Jones 2000, page 10-12.

<sup>42</sup> *Challenge to change*: Results of the Welsh Churches Survey.

Common Prayer into Welsh were late projects, and copies were always printed in insufficient quantities, and then presented as a fait accompli to an apathetic Welsh clergy and people.

This resulted in a superficial adherence to Anglicanism with resentments and discords beneath the surface, throughout an overwhelmingly monoglot Welsh population. A majority of Welsh Christians for several generations had hankered back to their beloved “Hen Ffydd” (the old faith). They were separated by the culture and language in which they expressed their belief.<sup>43</sup> The Welsh did not embrace Protestant theology in significant numbers until the Revival of faith that spread through Wales in the latter half of the 18th century, and in which the Methodist Church was born.

This Revival by contrast to the Protestant imposition of the earlier centuries became a vernacular movement, working itself up through into the laity and their society. It drew the Welsh away from a nominal Anglicanism in dramatic numbers, the 1851 census showing that the Established Church had dwindled to a minority following. Morgan remarks that ‘Anglicanism never was certainly established in the hearts of the Welsh people.’<sup>44</sup> This decline in the Anglican congregation amongst other factors became a prime motivation for an active campaign to disestablish the Church of England in Wales and this was finally, and painfully, accepted some 70 years later in 1920. Ironically, the Disestablishment Bill was pushed through a reluctant parliament by a prime minister who was himself a Welsh nonconformist, Lloyd George.

Methodism, unlike other non-conformist denominations, grew directly out of and retained strong

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<sup>43</sup> Jones, 2000, Page 15

<sup>44</sup> Morgan, K. *Rebirth of A Nation. Wales 1880-1980*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1981, 15.

historic links with the Church of England. Wesleyan Methodism took most of its early members from the Church of England and much of its ethos and liturgy were drawn also from this, its parent church.

In a corroborative vein Roberts remarked, “What we do know is that Nonconformist bodies in Wales have now entered into a period of terminal decline which neither social-gospel liberalism nor Bartian conservatism have been able to avert.”<sup>45</sup>

During the 18th and 19th centuries Newport was at the heart of a border region that was becoming increasingly Anglicized in language. As a result its populations were to receive influences from both Welsh and English Methodist evangelists. The first Welsh Methodists, who in fact preceded the Wesley’s in England, were Daniel Rowland and Howell Harris; both of whom broke free of Anglicanism and began “exhorting” in 1735. The Welsh Methodists gathered and built up societies that followed the Calvinistic teaching of Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland. It was the early followers of these men who were to create and build up dominant Calvinistic Methodist societies across Wales (though it is important to note that the Englishman Methodist George Whitefield also visited Newport.) The Wesleyan societies were predominantly English language ones and as such played an important role in the Christian life of Newport, especially as its population mushroomed in the 19th century.

John Wesley included Newport in his several tours through Wales. In 1739 he made his first visit to Newport and recorded his experience in his diary:

‘I preached this morning on What must I do to be saved?’ to the most insensible ill-behaved people I have ever seen in Wales. They are ignorant of the Gospel as any

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<sup>45</sup> Roberts. *The Journal of Welsh Religious History*. Aberystwyth, 2002 page 110

Creek or Cherokee Indian. One ancient man, during the greater part of the sermon cursed and swore almost incessantly and, towards the conclusion, took up a great stone which he many times attempted to throw!<sup>46</sup>

Other contemporaries of Wesley who also chose to preach in Newport fared even worse.

According to local historians, when Howell Harris visited Newport in 1740, he was faced by a hostile crowd and so did William Williams (the hymn writer). He was in civil court in 1742 and in the ecclesiastical court in 1743. Harris records in his diary: ‘Satan was permitted to rage against us for about two hours and after I had prayed and exhorted a little space, the mob began to pelt us like persons in a pillory.’<sup>47</sup>

However, in 1748, when Wesley was again in Newport, he must have noticed some improvements for he stated that he found the people ‘ripe for the gospel’<sup>48</sup> Later in 1775, he returned once again to Newport and found a huge, rapt congregation awaiting him. Afterwards he remarked: -

‘I reached Newport at about eight o’clock and soon after I preached to a large and serious congregation. I believe it is five and thirty years since I preached here before to a people who were as wild as bears. How amazing the scene is changed!’<sup>49</sup>

Interestingly, it took a while after this before the permanent Welsh cause in connection with Calvinist Methodists was established in Newport though it appears that there were small societies established in the town and neighbourhoods soon after the visit of Howell Harris.

Long before the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century a flourishing little “Society” existed in Newport, although having no permanent recognized place of meeting it assembled in the houses of its

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<sup>46</sup> Williams (Ed) *John Wesley in Wales 1739-1790*. Cardiff: Cardiff University Press 1971, Page 5

<sup>47</sup> Williams 1971, Page 5

<sup>48</sup> Williams 1971, Page 5.

<sup>49</sup> Williams 1971, Page 5.

various members.<sup>50</sup> In 1808, the first Wesleyan Methodist chapels were built in Dock Street and Skinner Street.<sup>51</sup> The Newport Methodist circuit began in 1810. The *Gwent Local History Journal*<sup>52</sup> lists many chapels built in rapid succession. 'Hope Independent followed the earliest Wesleyans in 1814; Charles Street Welsh Baptist, 1817; 'Tabernacle Independent',<sup>53</sup> '1822; Mariners Church, Canal side, 1829, Ebenezer Welsh Calvinistic Methodist, 1829; Reformed Wesleyan, Hill Street, 1832; Mt. Zion Independent, Hill Street, 1835.'<sup>54</sup>

Ebenezer was built in 1822 as a Welsh Calvinistic Methodist place of worship.<sup>55</sup> Services were carried out in Welsh. Since 'there was no keen desire among members to teach youngsters the language in which worship was conducted, there was a great falling away from the old sanctuary and this was to the benefit of attendances at English services in the Chapels of other denominations.<sup>56</sup> Chapels which held English services consequently benefited by the transfer of members until a Nationalistic movement towards Welsh language was begun in 1863<sup>57</sup>.

The Wesleyan Methodists set up a mission in Maindee in 1871, at which services were held on Sunday evenings. The congregations had started as house groups in the area. However by 1890s it became obvious that the small Maindee building was inadequate for the number of persons and their activities the Church wanted to provide. In its existing location expansion was out of the question. The opportunity was taken at the turn of the century to establish a completely new

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<sup>50</sup> Lovering 2000, Page 44.

<sup>51</sup> Stow Hill Methodist Church, Handbook and Souvenir (Jubilee, 1934).

<sup>52</sup> Hopkin (ed) *Gwent Local History*. Cwmbran, Gwent Record Office, 2000.

<sup>53</sup> Whitaker A. *Tabernacle Congregational Church, A Short Historical Sketch, 1835-1925* (Welsh Fair, Newport, 1925).

<sup>54</sup> Lovering, 2000, Page 43.

<sup>55</sup> Morris, A. *The Story of Ebenezer Church, Newport*. Newport, 1916.

<sup>56</sup> Morris 1916, Page 159.

<sup>57</sup> Morris, A. *The History of Ebenezer Church*. Newport: Jones Printer & Stationer 1916, Page 159.

Church building in a prominent position on Caerleon Road, at the foot of St Julian's Avenue. This building was opened for worship on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1902 and soon became known as St Julian's Methodist Church.<sup>58</sup> It was so successful that within 25 years a large extension to the Sunday School was necessary opening on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1925.

The Bible Christians or United Methodists opened a mission chapel in Hereford Street in 1893. This was parented by a mother Church in Station Road, Newport. At around the turn of the Century it became autonomous as Hereford Street Methodist Church. There is little historical material remaining about this church, so one can presume it was not one of the larger centres of worship in the Maindee area. However, it did survive until the early 1960s at which time it was closed.

The primitive Methodists developed a congregation in the Hamlet of Bishpool in the early 1860s and later, in 1866, Bishpool Ebenezer Methodist chapel opened in Bishpool Lane.<sup>59</sup> This church survived many problems and in the late 1940s with the opening of new housing developments at Bishpool and Treberth and at Always, it actually discovered a great influx of children attending its Sunday school. The subsequent growth of housing at Ringland meant that additional, more modern facilities were necessary. A new building opened on Ringland Circle in 1961, the old ones being demolished.

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<sup>58</sup> Informant, Methodist minister.

<sup>59</sup> Informant, Methodist minister.

The Primitive Methodists opened a Church on Cromwell Road in 1933. This, sadly, closed in 2001.<sup>60</sup> The beautiful building was torn down and private apartments were built on the land.

The Methodist societies quickly outstripped in size the older Baptist and Congregational movements (though these were also rejuvenated during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Revival and thereafter experienced a century of evangelical growth.) The energy of Methodism continued to be dynamic throughout the 19th century, and in this period the Anglican Church was shorn of over 80% of its membership, mostly to the advantage of the Methodists. But Nonconformist chapels continued to multiply throughout South Wales in urban and rural areas alike, far outnumbering the congregations of Anglican parish churches. Unlike the Anglicans, the non-conformists were not hampered by parish boundaries and territorial divisions and thus they were able to establish congregations where they were felt to be most needed and also continued to minister to those who lived further afield and who worshipped in these denominations by choice.

The non-conformist denominations were particularly astute in developing centres of worship to serve newly developed residential areas. Between 1800 and 1850 it was a heyday of Non-conformist growth, one new chapel opened in Wales each week. These days sadly, a chapel more or less closes every week! The loss in young members leaving Chapel and Church is even greater than the loss of older members by their decease. A serious pattern of accelerating decline threatens the future of Methodism and in fact all traditionally-centred Churches across Wales.

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<sup>60</sup> Informant, Methodist minister.

### **3.3.4 The Baptist Church**

The Baptists were the first dissenters that combined to form a gathered church in the Newport district. One small group of Baptist dissenters gathered to worship in Newport as early as the 1670's; meeting in the house of one Rice Williams, an important figure, he being one of the former Commonwealth's commissioners.<sup>61</sup> This embryonic fellowship enjoyed spirited leadership and so survived all attempts at persecution and discrimination until it grew strong enough to be able to build the first Welsh-speaking Newport situated Baptist chapel in Charles Street, Newport. The next-founded Baptist chapel in Newport was Y Deml, (the Temple), built in 1843, and was a result of schism by a group of hard-liner closed-communion Calvinists. Even from this sect a group then broke away to form Ebenezer Chapel in 1852 located in Charles Street.<sup>62</sup>

By late 19<sup>th</sup> Century other groups were emerging among the Welsh Baptists, who also were on their way to expanding their numbers by a great missionary campaign launched towards the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

From 1843 there are records of baptisms in the River Ebbw at Tredegar Park on the western side of Newport. And a fine painting exists from the same year of a large crowd who gathered to watch.<sup>63</sup> Spectacular events like this were used by Baptists to evangelise and to boost their

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<sup>61</sup> Evans, D. *A History of the Formation, Growth and Progress of the English Baptist church.*, Newport, 1828-1879 (Newport, 1879).

<sup>62</sup> Evans, D. 1879.

<sup>63</sup> Informant, Elder Ebbw Bridge Baptist Church, 2004

congregations. Most observers were the local representatives of the affluent middle classes; presumably many of them were yet still members of the Welsh Anglican church.<sup>64</sup>

These spectacles thus were significant as an important source for the draining away drop on drop of so many of the middle class from Anglicanism into nonconformity. They constituted a serious loss to the Anglicans. The literate middle classes, in contrast to the working class who had very low levels of literacy and cultivation in Welsh society as a whole at that time, gave these ever-expanding non-conformist denominations many men who could preach with conviction and teach the Bible as lay members of the church. They headed adult Bible classes as well as Sunday schools.

According to one of my informants, their Anglican Church had been solidly high church and had no acknowledged traditions of congregational Bible study, whilst the role of lay reader was not instituted in the Church in Wales before the 20th century. He went on to say that: ‘the Anglican Church was beginning to polarise into a ritualistic and liturgically-based church; as against the non-conformists for whom the Bible became the Book *par excellence*.’<sup>65</sup>

Consequently it becomes possible to perceive the implications of this polarisation still being felt today in Anglican churches in Newport, and across Wales as a whole.

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<sup>64</sup> Informant, Elder Ebbw Bridge Baptist Church, 2004.

<sup>65</sup> Informant, Male, Anglican Priest, Aged 85.

According to an informant I interviewed, it was the uprisings of the Chartist movement and a consequent decade of turbulent political radicalism that gave the Baptists of Newport a leading role in the increasing political awareness of the town's (and the county's) nonconformists.<sup>66</sup>

There was a historical record in which reference is made to a considerable Baptist presence among the three columns of Chartists who famously marched on Newport in 1839. No less than 40 Baptists were cited as present by an Anglican opponent of non-conformity, together with the wish that they be joined with the ring leaders for transportation to Australia.<sup>67</sup> Such was official disapproval of the Baptist Chartist cause that the Monmouthshire Association sent a "loyal address" to Queen Victoria to reassure the authorities that Baptist chapels were not used for meetings to foment revolution.<sup>68</sup>

However, some oral informants suggested that there was low support for the Chartist movement amongst the Chapels. Their information was that the majority of Chapels took the view that it was the duty of the Christians to accept the established order and that it was no function of the church to interfere in political matters.<sup>69</sup>

In the 1840's and 50's Newport Baptists hosted meetings of the Anti-Corn Law League and published articles of support for the League in the Baptist journal, "Seren Gomer." It is recorded in the '*Gwent Local History Journal*' that in 1865 C.H Spurgeon visited Newport, attracting a large crowd to Commercial Road Baptist Chapel. It is noteworthy that the contents of his

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<sup>66</sup> Informant, Member of the Local History Society, Interviewed 25<sup>th</sup> July 2005.

<sup>67</sup> Lovering 2000, 46.

<sup>68</sup> Lovering, 2000, 46.

<sup>69</sup> Lovering 2000, 46.

sermon, the special character of the preaching, the oratory, the imaginative presentation, the *hwyl*, were all discussed, dissected and compared by chapel goers.<sup>70</sup>

More importantly, the Newport Baptists readily embraced early on the movement for disestablishment, and formed a composite part of The anti- State Church Society. The society's spokesmen were welcomed to the Newport chapel in 1850-51. The Baptists had a natural ally in the Congregationalists and together they also tried to influence the Methodists to unite with them in campaigning for disestablishment. Their explicit aim ostensibly was to create a level playing field for members of all religious denominations at all levels of society. Lasting effects of the decades of radicalism helped to politicise the non-conformists and thus to create a solid Liberal constituency throughout South Wales. This constituency quickly switched its allegiance to the Labour movement after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the socialists entered the parliamentary arena.<sup>71</sup>

Those Baptists who lived in the Somerton, Pontfaen and Lliswerry areas were constrained to travel or walk to services as far as the chapel at Nash, which had opened in 1821. In 1888 there were fifteen members who regularly made this journey, but because residential areas were spreading rapidly it was agreed to provide a chapel on what was then known as Somerton Common (at a cost of £450). This occurred during the pastorate of one Thomas Delahaye, who had taken charge of Nash in 1897, and had built up its membership considerably.<sup>72</sup> There developed an effective separation from the parent building at Nash in June 1897, when Mr. Delahaye himself took charge of Lliswerry chapel and another, a new minister, took charge at

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<sup>70</sup> Lovering 2000, page 45.

<sup>71</sup> Informant, Baptist minister.

<sup>72</sup> Lovering, 2000, Page 43.

Nash. There was a formal deed of separation signed on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1899 and Lliswerry Baptist Chapel, now situated in Camperdown Road, has flourished ever since, including having received several extensions and refurbishments.<sup>73</sup>

In the Newport riverside area, there lie streets wedged between the railway line and the river bank which form a distinct community with its own identity. Access from here to central Newport is by only two routes – via Turner Street or else East Usk Road. In 1889 provision was made for the first time for worship in this area, when the Rev. Augustus Purnell established East Usk Baptist Chapel.

In an interview with one of the baptist ministers he told me that under Purnell's guidance, and subsequently that of Purnell's brother William, the Chapel's membership grew healthily. Within two years it became necessary to extend the Chapel building and just ten years thereafter a new Chapel was erected in place of the smaller one. Membership declined steadily and rapidly during the 1970's however, and the inevitable few left found it impossible to shoulder the burden, especially the financial cost which operating even a small church incurs.<sup>74</sup> The building was taken over at this time by a younger Christian (non- denominational) group who continue to worship there today.

The lower end of Corporation Road and its surrounding area mushroomed upon the opening of the Orb Steel Works. This had meant that increasing numbers of new settlers there had no convenient access to a place of worship. It was in response to this situation that the founders of

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<sup>73</sup> Informant, Baptist Minister.

<sup>74</sup> Informant, Baptist minister.

Summerhill Baptist chapel saw a need to work with speed and provide a place for many of the religious needs of this community. In 1898 Corporation Road Baptist Chapel was opened by them and placed in a central position it suited the area admirably. It thrived for many years and at one time even kept a schoolroom. There has been a decline in recent years, although the church happily is still alive and functioning.

Along Christchurch Road a small community was growing up at this time, and another in the upper areas of Gibbs Road. Summerhill Baptist Chapel took its opportunity here to establish a mission, titled The Penylan Mission, which it opened in 1903. This Mission functioned to continue the work of the earlier house meetings which had been established in the Christchurch and Gibbs Road areas. It remains today a worship centre and also a hall for such activities as Brownies and continues to serve the much-enlarged residential district named Penylan Park

St Julian's Baptist Chapel was opened in Beaufort Road in 1957 for the residents of the St Julian's Estate. Strictly speaking this was not a new planting of a church, since much of its accoutrements had been carried over from Commercial Street Baptist Church, which used to serve in the centre in Newport. This Commercial Street Chapel, founded early on in 1828 had, in common with many town centre churches and chapels, the malaise which found its congregations in decline as more and more families deserted the town centre in search of the relative space and comfort in the suburbs. A decision had to be taken to relocate to an area of greater opportunity, a decision which, according to one of my informants, undoubtedly proved correct.

### **3.3.5: The Presbyterian Church**

Despite the enormous impact Christian church planting made in Newport in the first half of the 19th century, with the building of many new churches and chapels, the churches themselves, in latter half of the century experienced steep declines in attendance and membership. By the 1890s in an industrial sense Newport was booming in every way; but spiritually-speaking less than one person in seven now belonged to any form of Christian church.<sup>75</sup> As an informant told me ‘ That evangelism of the Presbyterian Church known as the ‘Forward Movement’ responded to this situation in 1895 moving its crusading parties into Newport, holding its meetings wherever a few or a few hundred would gather together.’<sup>76</sup> Many flocked to hear their new firebrand barnstorming preachers. Hundreds of personal convictions and conversions followed forthwith; a new church was constituted and it grew rapidly. The Presbyterians’ adult Bible classes, Christian Endeavour society, Boys Brigade, and other activities, gave them an effective and potent outreach into the community. Most importantly the Sunday Schools became the definitive avenue by which churches reached the townspeople at large.<sup>77</sup>

Informants spoke affectionately about annual Whit-Monday processions as a regular feature of Newport town life. One of them recalls that the Whitsun procession was a great occasion, everyone wearing brand-new sandals, ankle socks and new clothes, and the Whitsun tea and games in the afternoon. It was said that their code of conduct was part of a culture that later generations found difficult to empathise with and fathom.

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<sup>75</sup> Informant, Presbyterian Minister. Aged 67.

<sup>76</sup> Informant, Presybyterian minister, Aged 67.

<sup>77</sup> Lovering 2000, Page 47.

In 1904 this 'Forward Movement'<sup>78</sup> welcomed warmly the news of Spiritual revival; a renaissance that was led by one of its own; a man called Evan Roberts. This would turn out to be the high-water mark of Christian enthusiasm for the urban areas of Wales such as Newport. As the twentieth century went on a radically altered series of events was to unfold. This was to be the spiritual life of a town that now was numbering over 100,000 inhabitants.

The first Presbyterian presence east of the river was at Caerleon Road where a Presbyterian Church opened in 1895. This building became a casualty of post war falling memberships and added to this the rising maintenance costs; it was finally closed in the 1970s. A prefabricated hall was erected on the cleared site by the Christadelphians.

The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century had seen a religious revival sweeping South Wales and the part the Presbyterian Church in Wales played in this was to send an expeditionary group to visit those areas where it was felt there was need for evangelisation.<sup>79</sup> In these places the group would hold a series of revivalist meetings so as to assess the potential in the vicinity for establishment of a permanent chapel in the area. The 'Forward Movement' gave their first contribution in Newport to East Newport at the Corporation Road Presbyterian Church which had opened in 1901. This church had always been successful in attracting large numbers, chiefly because of its wide range of occupational activities that were provided supplementary to its services of worship.

It became therefore a matter of grave concern when in the 1960's the church building was judged to have become unsafe due to sinking foundations. The minister of the time, a well known Newport Councilor called Cyril Summers, together with the church membership accepted that

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<sup>78</sup> Lovering 2000, Page 47.

<sup>79</sup> Lovering 2000, Page 45.

demolition was unavoidable. However they took a momentous decision to rebuild on the site and the new building was to be a multi-purpose one, incorporating a worship centre and also a community centre. The result, Community House, has had tremendous success since opening in 1969. It was refurbished in 1998.

Shortly after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, housing development began at the Cross Hands and Beechwood areas along Chepstow Road. With the help of Presbyterians from the Havelock Street Church in Newport, the Beechwood Park Presbyterian Church opened in 1905 in Kenilworth Road.<sup>80</sup>

Again success meant that further accommodation was needed by 1923, and the 'Forward Movement' came forward to build a new Chapel fronting Chepstow Road, immediately across from the old building which continued in use as a schoolroom and a hall.

### **3.4 What conclusions, if any, can be drawn from these findings from research on non-conformity in Newport?**

The findings reflected clearly that, within the denominations, there were matters of doctrine, worship and outlook, which made each denomination unique and distinct from the others. Notably, distinction was observed by the Baptists in their insistence on total Baptismal immersion, and by the Methodists in their organisational structures based upon an itinerant pastorate. Eventually the Methodists abandoned this however, and in 1906 found favour with a more settled pastorate of the kind the Independents used.<sup>81</sup> There was also an issue concerning

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<sup>80</sup> Lovering 2000, Page 47.

<sup>81</sup> Morgan 1981, Page 17.

open and closed communion and another about church discipline for the dissenting communions. Nevertheless, they were united as a group and so were known collectively as non-conformists. Their chapels spoke largely as one on political and social issues.<sup>82</sup>

Lovering, writing on nonconformity in Newport suggests that for many Newport citizens their chapel membership provided a first experience of democratic organisation. In addition their daily lives were said to have been made more meaningful, and in witness to this those values espoused by chapel-goers were seen to spread beyond the doors of their buildings into the everyday life of the town itself.<sup>83</sup>

Chapels then, had considerable influence on town life. In 1850s the chapels were largely unresponsive to new currents of thought, as it were hermetically sealed from within by the insularities provided by speaking the Welsh language by some of them. Until 1860, emphasis on Sabbatarianism, temperance and bible study were to the fore. This is well illustrated by Morgan's observation that in spite of all its limitations, nonconformity was responsible in Wales for almost every significant and worthwhile aspect of social and cultural activity in late the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These included education through a range of Sunday Schools, Schools and Colleges.<sup>84</sup>

However, the Census of Religion which was carried out in 1851 had shown that around half of the population of Wales attended no place of worship at all.<sup>85</sup> The growth of industrial, urban society since 1851 had also suggested that the hold of all religious bodies on working society

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<sup>82</sup> Morgan 1981, Page 17.

<sup>83</sup> Lovering, 2000.

<sup>84</sup> Morgan 1981, page 18.

<sup>85</sup> Morgan 1981, Page 18.

was increasingly tenuous. There arose symptoms of ‘decline and loss of momentum amongst the Welsh non conformist bodies in the face of industrialization, and new scientific schools of biblical criticism which were progenitors of modern secularisation. Nevertheless standing alone figures of chapel membership remained impressive enough.’<sup>86</sup>

After 1945, the impact of the chapels on social life continued to diminish even more rapidly because of trends accelerated by the steady decline in Welsh speaking, which was the medium through which most chapel services were conducted. An erosion of the ‘Welsh Sunday’ and emergence of a so-called ‘Continental Sunday’ provided nameless horrors of enticements which opened new battleground for the age-old conflict between the pulpits and the forces of secularism and material comfort.<sup>87</sup> In the early 1950s, the Sunday opening of cinemas was contested in many South Wales towns. This was billed as a decisive defeat to organized religion in the Western Mail on 27 September 1952.

### **3.5: The Anglican Church**

#### **3.5:1 Establishment of the Welsh Anglican Church**

The Welsh Church as pointed out by Jones lost its native Celtic character upon its incorporation into the Province of Canterbury in the early 12<sup>th</sup> Century. The dioceses gradually acquired a territorial structure as opposed to the monastic system. Naturally they had to fall into line with a system of governance similar to that of the rest of the now Anglicised Church.<sup>88</sup> It must be said that even though many Welsh parish Churches at least in principle might be able to trace their ancestries back 500 years further than comparable medieval English Churches, it remained

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<sup>86</sup> Morgan 1981, page 15

<sup>87</sup> Morgan 1981, 353.

<sup>88</sup> Jones 200, Page 2

ironically the case that the Anglican Church in Wales was referred to as the Church of England or English Church in Wales.

From the middle ages until the 1920s, Wales comprised originally four dioceses namely; Llandaff, St. Davids, Bangor and St. Asaph<sup>89</sup>. Later the two further dioceses of Monmouth and Swansea and Brecon were created were formed in 1921 and 1923 respectively. However, the Anglican presence in Wales remained very much a minority one, even though it had a legally established standing. Morgan makes fun of this when he states that Anglicanism was certainly not established in the Welsh people. With barely 20% of worshipping Welsh men and women claimed as Anglican communicants,<sup>90</sup> Dean H.T Edwards had asserted in 1879 that nonconformity formed the vast majority of the Welsh people. This assertion was later confirmed by Gladstone with a claim that Wales at this time was a ‘nation of nonconformists.’<sup>91</sup>

### **3.5.2: Disestablishment and its Discontents**

The disestablishment of the Church in Wales had been debated in Parliament for many years, but with the outbreak of war in 1914 the matter was shelved. Upon cessation of hostilities, the controversial question of disestablishment was again raised in parliament and in 1920 it became law. Consequently, in 1921, the Anglican Church in Wales was disestablished. It passed into its fourth state of existence. In previous lives this body had been the Celtic church, the Pre-Reformation Catholic Church, and subsequently the Church of England. With disestablishment Welsh Anglicanism lost from its formal title all reference to ‘England’; this had been seen by many as an imposition upon them too. The new standing acquired in place of the ‘English’

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<sup>89</sup> Jones 2000, Page 1.

<sup>90</sup> Morgan 1981, Page 15.

<sup>91</sup> Morgan 1981, Page 15.

reference, the title “Church in Wales” which helped give a sense of self- governance of the Church. Since disestablishment the Church in Wales has been constituted as an independent Province within the Anglican Communion. In 1930, after disestablishment, the governing Body of the Church in Wales appointed St Woolos Church to be translated and become the cathedral church to their newly constituted diocese of Monmouth.

A number of commentators have addressed the issue of disestablishment. Jones for example has suggested that the question of disestablishment ‘caused more bitterness and acrimony than any political controversy in which the Welsh nation has ever been engaged’ and that ‘nothing has so touched the Welsh nation as the struggle for disestablishment’.<sup>92</sup> In a different vein and with pointed emphasis, Green openly admits that the act of disestablishment had been a boon to the Church as a religious and social institution. On this point Green fails to say why and what these boons might have been.<sup>93</sup>

Jones goes on to say that the Church in Wales was disestablished for political reasons and was an overtly political issue fought largely along political lines. If this argument is to be sustained, disestablishment occurred then for reasons of expediency, rather than for religious reasons. An abiding motive was the Welsh themselves wanting to make their church more Welsh in nature. As Davies suggested ‘the religious situation became merged with the political and social struggle which dominated Wales for the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.’<sup>94</sup> He goes on to say that indeed ‘the tension between church and chapel was not only theological and ecclesiastical but was profoundly political as well. The division between church and chapel affected every community

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<sup>92</sup> House of Commons Official Record, 1945, Vol 409, Column 527.

<sup>93</sup> Green, *Disestablishment and Disendowment: the experience of the Church in Wales*. London, 1935.

<sup>94</sup> Davies *Religion in the Industrial revolution in South Wales*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1965.

in Wales in the last century.’<sup>95</sup> After disestablishment the Welsh Church also became markedly more in tune with Welsh national feeling and grew much more sympathetic to Welsh language than it had been during its pre-1914 period. This trend perhaps culminated in the 1960s, in which decade Welsh church men and church women were to show an engaged sympathy and enthusiasm for the causes of Welsh nationalism, cultural and political.<sup>96</sup>

Morgan notes that ‘the act of disestablishment also marked clearly an end to any claim of primacy and influence the Welsh Church could expect or make within the Welsh Social Establishment, especially within urban Wales where its support traditionally had been always at its strongest.’<sup>97</sup> The Church in Wales was now but another denomination, struggling against the secularism and the atheistic Socialist sympathies of many during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In terms of its influence the social and political life of Wales considered the Church to be of secondary importance at best.<sup>98</sup>

Importantly, questions have been asked by commentators whether disestablishment was enacted to the benefit of mission in Wales and whether in actual fact it has really made the Church ‘more Welsh.’ It can be said quite surely that the arguments offered by Members of the UK Parliament at the time of disestablishment and by others of like mind and commenting since, that mission was not among the motives for the disestablishment of the Welsh Church.

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<sup>95</sup> Davies, *Religion in the Industrial revolution in South Wales*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1965.

<sup>96</sup> Morgan 1981, Pages 172-173

<sup>97</sup> Morgan 1981, Pages 183-186.

<sup>98</sup> Morgan 1981, Pages 183-186.

Most significantly ‘several supporters of disestablishment at the time had emphasized that disestablishment was not intended to alter the religious belief of the Welsh Church’, says Jones.<sup>99</sup>

### **3.5.3: The Anglican Church in Newport**

Newport was one of the archdeaconries of the Anglican diocese of Llandaff. The Archdeaconry was created in 1884 and was mainly comprised of the historic county of Monmouthshire. For this reason as Edwards writes, ‘the boundaries of the Archdeaconry and of the new diocese were virtually co-terminous with the county boundaries.’<sup>100</sup> According to Church records, a number of Anglican Churches were erected for the purpose of providing for the spiritual requirements of the dense population which in 1884 had aggregated especially in areas near the docks. The diocese of Monmouth was the first diocese to be created by the Disestablished Church in Wales in 1921.<sup>101</sup> Writing on the subject of disestablishment, Vaughan had this to say, ‘Bits of Wales still established (whatever that means) and bits of England disestablished (whatever that means) and poor Monmouthshire shoveled into disestablishment for the crime of belonging (though an English county) to the diocese of Llandaff.’<sup>102</sup> The history and development of individual Anglican parishes will be looked at in detail in the next Chapter.

### **3. 6: Roman Catholicism in Newport**

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<sup>99</sup> Jones 2000, Page 5.

<sup>100</sup>Source: Web site [www.churchinwales.org.uk/monmouth](http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/monmouth), Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> October 2010

<sup>101</sup> Source: Web site [www.churchinwales.org.uk/monmouth](http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/monmouth), Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2010

<sup>102</sup>Source : Web site [www.churchinwales.org.uk/monmouth](http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/monmouth) Accessed 7th October 2010

During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Newport received a continuing influx of Irish immigration.<sup>103</sup> Most if not all of these Irish were Roman Catholics who brought with them the old religion.

Consequently, Newport became for a time a major centre for Catholicism within Wales.

However, Newport is now incorporated in the Archdiocese of Cardiff.<sup>104</sup> It was some years however before the influence of the Catholic community began to be felt. There were few traditional Catholic families left by 1800. In 1812 a small chapel was built on the site now occupied by St Mary's Catholic Church on Stow Hill. The large number of Irish immigrants, mainly in the 1840s, radically altered the situation. The 1851 Census showed that there were 2,737 Irish born immigrants in the town, and the Religious census reported that here were 1,300 attended morning Mass at St Mary's, with 200 at an afternoon service and 700 in the evening.<sup>105</sup>

Irish migrants are considered to have played a prominent role in the development of Newport. This was in spite of them being accepted with reluctance, since they came as refugees from the Irish famine of the 1840's. In parts of Newport they were known as Mud Crawlers<sup>106</sup>. However, the Roman Catholic Church was quickly able to prove itself within the community. The Rosminian priests for example cared for and buried the cholera victims during the major outbreaks of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It was the dedicated work of such individuals that brought the presence of the Church to the attention of the townspeople. A Father Metclafe earned respect for his work in securing relief for the unemployed, and 'The Merlin' reported on the work of Fr. Davidson among the destitute poor of the town.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>O'Sullivan 2007, Page 15

<sup>104</sup> O'Sullivan 2007, Page 15.

<sup>105</sup> Lovering, 2000. Page 42.

<sup>106</sup> O' Sullivan 2007, Page 16.

<sup>107</sup> Lovering, 2000, Page 42.

The Sisters of St Joseph of Annecy have a history of service in the fields of education, nursing and social work in Newport for more than 130 years. They live their vocation by witnessing God's unconditional love for the whole of creation, in simplicity of ordinary human relationships.<sup>108</sup>

### **3.7: Welsh Revivals**

The findings of the research confirmed that the principality of Wales carries a distinctive spiritual heritage. In the past this rich heritage was largely based upon the evangelical and revivalist character of the nonconformist churches for nearly two centuries; from the 18<sup>th</sup> century Methodist revival (also described as the Welsh Protestant Reformation) to the revivals of 1904-05, this sense of heritage has been present. It is certainly evoked when one reads the reflections of the contributors to *Challenge to Change*: 'Think of Wales- think of Chapels!'<sup>109</sup>

This, at least, is how things used to be. Churches and Chapels are ubiquitous evidence of an enduring heritage to a once dynamic revivalist fervour. However, the "then and now" of Welsh religious life has been anecdotally summarised as, 'in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century a new chapel was opened in Wales every week, now a chapel closes every week.'<sup>110</sup>

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during 1904-05, a series of religious revivals took place in many parts of Wales. The areas touched by the revival were, most prominently, the Welsh speaking west of the principality; the industrial valleys of Glamorgan and Monmouthshire; and certain areas in the North.

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<sup>108</sup> Website, [www.sistersofstjoseph.org.uk/mission](http://www.sistersofstjoseph.org.uk/mission), Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2008.

<sup>109</sup> Committee of the Welsh Churches Survey, *Challenge to Change*, 1995.

<sup>110</sup> Committee of the Welsh Churches Survey, *Challenge to Change*, 1995.

Although this excludes most of the geographical area of Wales, it does delimit the areas where most of the population lived, both Welsh speaking and Anglophone. Much has been written and broadcast about the revival during the centenary year 2000. Given the present low figures of Church attendance, and bleak prospect of the next decade, this last “golden age” of Christianity in Wales is often described in a nostalgic and hagiographical vein. So much so that the Winter 2004 edition of the ‘Evangelical Alliance Wales Bulletin’ states;

‘No records were kept, but 150,000 is a very conservative estimate of the actual number converted during the first six months of the 1904 Welsh religious revival. Wales again had become a God-fearing nation. Not only were individual lives changed by the power of the Holy Spirit, but also entire communities, transforming Welsh society.’<sup>111</sup>

It reported further that,

‘Public houses emptied and crime levels dropped drastically: so much so that in many instances magistrates came to court to find there were no presented cases. The work ethos in the coal mines was transformed: not only did the colliers put in a better day’s work, but also the dark tunnels underground in the mines echoed with the sounds of prayer and hymns instead of curses, coarse jokes and gossip. People who had been careless about paying their bills or settling debts, paid up all they owed, and longstanding interpersonal feuds were settled’<sup>112</sup>

These reports do portray some significant social and political implications of the 1904 revival for Wales.

There was a visible effect from the Welsh revival phenomena influencing the lives of ordinary people in Newport. Some Christians I encountered during this research would affectionately attribute the intensity of their own life pilgrimage to the powerful memories of prayers offered by their grandparents, who had been stirred-up by the 1904 revival. Descendants of the

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<sup>111</sup> *Evangelical Alliance Wales Bulletin*, 2004.

<sup>112</sup> *Evangelical Alliance Wales Bulletin*, 2004.

generations of the 1904 revival were found still worshipping in the Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist Chapels of Newport even though those same chapels were more or less affected during the revivals. But many fell away again after the revival.

### **3.7.1: Revival Analysis**

During 2004 a great deal attention was paid throughout out Wales to the centenary of the 1904-05 Revival. The events of 1904-05 were given extensive coverage by the secular Press; by BBC television and radio; and the ITV channels both in English and the Welsh S4C. All of these commentators commissioned their own reports and programmes on the Revival quite independently from the events organised by the religious denominations themselves. In fact, coverage offered by the media was the equal of that of the denominations who relied upon small numbers to organise a handful of regional celebrations to mark the centenary. Media treatment, took a largely sympathetic but nostalgic approach, only sufficient to remind its audiences of the once - formidable strength of Welsh Christianity in the not-so-distant past. However, the celebrations by the Churches themselves managed to highlight clearly that the Revivals had constituted a watershed in the impact of Christianity in Wales.

The effects of the Revival were remarkable, making a deep impression upon Welsh society, and with a figure of over 100,000 religious conversions in a population of less than two million, how could it be otherwise? However, the effect was far greater than the increased head count of souls. Many churches were re-energized even if they had not received a dramatic influx of passionate new converts; and yet the Revival seemed to be so transient that within very few years the decline in church attendance had resumed. Thus, Wales' leading academic historian of the

period, Morgan, observed that ‘the slaughter of a generation of Welshmen in the trenches of Flanders, many of whom had experienced the Revival and were active members of their churches, seemed to close that chapter of Welsh religious history’.<sup>113</sup>

However, the Revival also highlighted a growing tension in religious life throughout Wales. During 1904-05 the Revival was not received uncritically, and the press, including the predominant newspaper, ‘The Western Mail’, gave many column inches to the critics of the Revival, especially if they were ordained ministers like the formidable Rev. Peter Price of Merthyr Tydfil. Schism could not be far off.

That this was a watershed was noticed even at the time by men like the prominent Baptist spokesman R.B. Jones and the Presbyterian scholar Nantlais Williams. They observed that the fiercest criticism of the Revival was not from secular critics and opponents but direct from the pulpits, especially those which accommodated enthusiastic exponents of what had come to be described as liberal theology.<sup>114</sup>

Certainly the preaching of the Revivalists was more fundamentalist than that of most contemporary conservative preaching in Wales at the time. However, what followed was a century of increasing division by which the present day alignment of churches in fellowship and mission throughout Wales has been shaped. This is very apparent in microcosm in Newport.

A growing incompatibility between the two sides, conservative and liberal, within each denomination was a common place experience. In 1908 the first secessions took place as a new

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<sup>113</sup> Morgan 1981, Pages 134-135.

<sup>114</sup> Williams Nantlais, Articles in *Goleuad* (the denomination’s newsletter) 1925, *Yr Efenglydd* (The Evangelist) between 1916-1933 and *Y Llarnerydd* (The Interpreter) 1922-1926.

Pentecostal movement was founded throughout South Wales. Taking the name of “The Apostolic Church” this established the oldest Pentecostal church in Newport. Within a few years other Pentecostal churches were pioneered, belonging to the Elim and to the Assemblies of God Pentecostal denominations.

Moreover the long-term divisions within the denominations, which followed on from the 1904-05 Revival, can be observed in a case study of the Christian churches and infrastructure in Newport. By the late 1940’s considerable numbers of nonconformist leaders in Wales were impatient with the seeming loss of evangelistic initiative and impetus that the Revival had once brought in magnitude to their denominations. The divisions between liberal and conservative believers were deepening until a point came when a cross-denominational movement, ‘The Evangelical Movement of Wales’ was formed by conservatives within all the main denominations.<sup>115</sup> The movement set up its own theological college, which affiliated to the University of Glamorgan. At the time of this research this college had more resident students than all the other theological academies in Wales. It carries its own magazines, conference centres, youth camps, Christian bookshops, and Articles of Faith; it could be argued that, ‘The Evangelical Movement of Wales’ was in substance a new religious denomination. During the 1970’s the two largest Presbyterian churches in Newport namely Malpas Road Evangelical and Emmanuel Evangelical Church “severed their connection” and became Evangelical churches (affiliated to the E.M.W.) One Baptist church followed their example, while the largest Baptist congregation in Newport, though remaining within the Baptist Union, exercises an exclusively evangelical policy of fellowship and pulpit ministry.

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<sup>115</sup> *Evangelical Times Newspaper*, Darlington. Also Website: [www.emw.org.uk](http://www.emw.org.uk). Accessed 24<sup>th</sup> August 2010.

Some of the Newport evangelicals have remained within their denomination, as for instance, the Presbyterian church at Ringland, which serves the largest housing estate in Wales. There are other fellowships, not aligned to the E.M.W., which are clearly evangelical in polity and discipline, like the former 'Brethren Assembly', now Nantcoch Evangelical church. Thus the evangelical constituency continues a very active and important part of the Christian church in Newport. Deeply attached to memories of Revival, this evangelical constituency was the most enthusiastic in celebrating the centenary.

However, the trends of continuing decline among the small congregations attending the traditional denominations raise serious questions about the liberal-conservative divide; not least because the very survival of many of the liberal and traditional congregations for even another decade is a major issue for any study of church life and witness in Newport today.

### **3:8. Judaism : The Newport Synagogue**

There has been a Jewish community in Newport for most of its industrial history. The first Jews arrived in Newport as the commercial development of the town followed the industrial boom of the early 19th century. At the beginning of the 20th century there was a considerable Jewish community throughout the valley towns of South Wales. In 1911 industrial unrest led to rioting and this unaccountably spilled over into anti-Jewish riots. The rioters first targeted Jewish communities in Tredegar. Their actions were copied in the neighbouring towns of Ebbw Vale and Rhymney. The Jewish communities were so distressed by this experience that many families moved away and resettled themselves in Newport; thus the Jewish community in Newport reached its greatest numerical strength in the years between the two world wars. The

community's synagogue was originally in the Lliswerry area of town. The enlarged Jewish community added to it the present building in 1922, which serves as a Hebrew school and community centre.

During the depression years many Jewish families were forced to move away from Newport, this upheaval was the cause of displacement to much of the Welsh population at large. This displacement of the Jews heralded the beginning of a continuous decline in the numbers of the Jewish community in Newport. In particular the academic and commercial careers of successive generations of their young people have flourished subsequent to them moving away from Newport. Until recent years, the lack of a university and a medical school, as well as a sharp decline in Newport's commercial and industrial base over the past five decades, affected all the younger generations who continued to observe their Jewish faith. Most have now moved to established communities in the larger English cities. In 1934 the old Lliswerry synagogue building was closed and worship moved to the Hebrew school. This two-storey building is large enough to serve as both the synagogue and community centre.

Visitors to the synagogue used to be met with stark memories of the Jewish experience in the 20th century. A plaque on the wall in the porch greets the visitor on their first step into the building. It reads, "In memory of my parents who died in Auschwitz 1943." The author of this memorial was not the only member of the synagogue to lose close relatives in the holocaust. Here in Newport a few remaining Jewish families carry personal, indescribable, memories of the holocaust with them for the remainder of their generation. Even the children and grandchildren are intensely aware of their history.

The synagogue in Newport maintained strict orthodox practise until its closure in 1996 when members joined the liberal synagogue in Cardiff. This experience was painful to the surviving members of the Newport synagogue. Ironically, it was their orthodox practise, lacking a quorum of men to lead their worship, which forced this move to join their liberal neighbours in Cardiff.

The other faiths in Newport include among others; Muslim, Hindu, Bahai, Brahma Kumari, Buddhist, Christian Scientist, Quaker, Sikh, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and Christadelphians.

### **3.9: Reflection: 'A Golden Age '**

Historically, mission was seen as revival or evangelism and this was successful. According to written sources it is suggested for example that in 1865 when Dr C H Spurgeon preached in Newport people came from the surrounding districts to hear this great preacher. Special trains were run from the Western Valleys and South Wales. It is estimated that over 12,000 were present at the afternoon service.<sup>116</sup> Literally hundreds were converted within the walls of the church. Writing on these missions in Newport in a booklet entitled "God's work at Newport." Wrenford says: 'One Tuesday night, nearly or quite two thousand persons were crowded into the sacred edifice, while hundreds thronged the approaches unable to obtain admissions. A spirit of deep solemnity characterized the services which were prolonged to a very late hour, in consequence of the large number of anxious ones seeking direction. The result of this second mission was that three hundred souls were brought to the Lord, in connection to St Paul's alone. Surely no one can speak of an aggregate of one thousand conversions in a single parish within

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<sup>116</sup> Pryce, *One Hundred Years of Evangelical witness (1836-1936) A Brief History of St Paul's Parish, Newport*, Newport George Bell, 1936, Page 12.

four months without feelings of fervent gratitude to him who alone can turn one sinner ‘from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God.’ Many hundreds besides were converted and led to Jesus in connection with other communions in the same period of time and that the word of God spread in adjacent parishes.’<sup>117</sup> Engagement with both written and oral testimony leads one to conclude that this time in history was a ‘Golden Age’. The next Chapter goes to explore the contemporary survey.

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<sup>117</sup> Pryce, *One Hundred Years of Evangelical Witness (1836-1936) A Brief History of St Paul’s Parish, Newport*, Newport George Bell, 1936, Page 12.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**CONTEMPORARY SITUATION IN NEWPORT**

**4:1: Methodology**

At the time of the field work for this research, Newport had more than 50 established Christian Churches including English, Welsh, Chinese and Urdu spoken Services.<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that nothing informs theory better than does sound practice. To this end, I carried out a mapping exercise of most of the Christian communities in Newport. I aimed to make as great a variety of denominational contacts as possible. The findings of this research confirmed that the sizes of communities associated with these groupings varied enormously. Communities covered a spectrum across the broad range of historic denominations as well as the fellowships established during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was noticeable that Newport City skyline included among other features church towers, spires, pinnacles and turrets! In the city suburbs there are many examples of splendid churches and chapels from the Victorian era, many funded by wealthy industrialists, for the city was once a major centre for the export of coal to all parts of the British Empire. In addition to these were the more recent non-aligned churches. It is made clear in the results of this study that there is a rich variety of churches in terms of Christian denominations in Newport. The survey of most Christian organisations and churches was carried out paying attention to their geographical location, origins, development and current status. The research was specifically interested in local congregations holding Trinitarian beliefs. This helped to distinguish those congregations from groups that do not subscribe to the historic belief and from other religions. However, this Chapter is not designed to provide a comprehensive study of all the activities of the congregations but rather to point out mission where it was evident. The

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<sup>1</sup> Churches Together in Newport, Website, Retrieved, 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2006.

crucial question to the congregations and Christian organizations was how they defined their Christian task. To raise this one profoundly complex question was to invite a veritable avalanche of related questions: how did they carry out their Christian task in relation to the needs and aspirations of the community? And how effective were they in their Christian task?

The Sources for collecting data for this Chapter included among others: books, locally produced magazines, Internet Web sites and Oral Tradition. The figures/ numbers from the Anglican Church were taken from church attendance of Services that were atypical in respect for example Christmas and Easter.

Admittedly this thesis does not contain an exhaustive list of all the congregations and Christian organisations as there could never be a complete list given as Churches close and new ones open all the time. That said this is as complete a view as was practically possible. Newport congregations include among others the following:

#### **4. 2: The Anglican Church in Wales**

In terms of numbers of congregations the largest body was the Anglican Church in Wales [Diocese of Monmouth] - with 20 congregations. These were not an homogenous body since they represented the various traditions of Anglicanism: Anglo-catholic; Broad church; Low Church; Evangelical and those who are middle-of-the-road.

The Anglican Church in Wales was based on definite territorial boundaries. Its parish system meant that each Anglican Church served a confined geographical area; it looked after it and administered within it, at least a nominal spiritual mission towards the residents of that area.

This included rites of passage such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals; and also the parish had a role to play in governance and welfare in local schools, hospitals, nursing homes and other community groups and activities. Parishes were subdivided into archdeaconries, each of which was administering Ecclesiastical Parishes within themselves. In 2010 the parishes in Newport were:

**a. Parish of Bettws**, St David's Anglican Church and Bettws United Reformed Church – A Local Ecumenical Partnership. The Church had a partnership between the Church in Wales and the United Reformed Church. The Anglican building dated from the seventeenth Century. Additions and alterations were made by the Victorians in the 19th century. Reported Average Church attendance for this parish in 2009 was 26<sup>2</sup>. The Church was located on an Estate whose population in 2010 was 9,000 with 3,500 dwellings. It was within a government Communities First Area. The Church worked in the community, having a Church Related Community Worker and the Vicar at the time was the chair of the Communities First Partnership. The Church through its community project called Koinonia worked effectively to enable and support a wide range of community activity. The Vicar at the time told me that the ethos was to build up members of the local community to work effectively in co-operation. To this effect the Church provided offices and meeting rooms used by the Communities First Partnership, Newport Mediation, Job Centre Plus, Newport High School, Bettws Making A Difference, Councillor's surgeries, and a number of other organisations and individuals.

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<sup>2</sup> Diocese of Monmouth Yearbook, Newport , 2008/ 2009.

## **b. Parish of Caerleon, St Cadoc's**

Recorded Average Church attendance was 157. The Church was located to the North of the City of Newport. It stood in the centre of Caerleon next to the Roman Museum. According to Church records, the Church was built on the site of the former Roman Principia or headquarters where the Roman legionary standards were kept. By the time of St Cadoc in the sixth century, the Christian cross had supplanted the Roman Standards. St Cadoc's Church had work dating from the Norman period at the base of the tower, up to 1935 when the Lady Chapel was built. The shape and structure of the present church was the result of the Victorian rebuilding of the large and spacious fifteenth century church which reflected the prosperity of the port of Caerleon at the time.<sup>3</sup> The parish had two endowed (Aided) Primary Schools (Caerleon Endowed Infant and Caerleon Endowed Junior School). The other Schools in the Parish were Lodge Hill Primary School and Caerleon Comprehensive School. The parish was actively involved in these schools and in the life of the community through the work of the Mother's Union, Lunch Club, and Young Peoples Clubs.

## **c) Holy Trinity;**

The congregation of Holy Trinity described themselves as 'middle of the road' Anglicans. The Church building had stood since the beginning of the twelfth century, being modified through the ages to fulfill its changing functions; it was sanctified by over eight-hundred – and fifty unbroken years of worship. Recorded Average Church attendance in 2009 was 69. Their involvement in the life of the community was through the various groups that used the Church hall. One of the parishioners remarked that they had an excellent relationship with the pub next door and were planning to hold an Alpha Course in the pub.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Web site [www.caerleonparishchurch.co.uk](http://www.caerleonparishchurch.co.uk) Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> September 2009

#### **d. Parish of Malpas, St Mary**

St Mary's was an evangelical Church located in Malpas with six different congregations meeting at different times, days and even places during the week. They met in different ways for congregational worship, from traditional liturgical worship making the most of quiet and peace, to a service with a traditional choir, to more vibrant contemporary music using drama and more interactive styles of teaching.<sup>4</sup> The Mission statement stated thus: 'Live and tell the good news of Jesus Christ'.<sup>5</sup> Recorded average Sunday attendance was 139. The parish had two church controlled Primary Schools.

#### **e. Parish of Newport, Crindau, All Saints**

All Saint's Church was located on Brynglas Road in Newport. According to their Mission statement: everyone was called upon to ponder the witness of Sacred Scripture; to declare Christ's reconciling forgiveness in baptism and daily re-conversion; to find themselves caught up in His eternal self-offering as they celebrated the Eucharist Jesus commanded, and to receive afresh Christ's life into their lives so as to be equipped to live Christ's life for and in the world.<sup>6</sup> All Saints Church building had been modernized in order for the Church to be more accessible to the community. They had conferencing meeting facilities. Community events were held in the Church/ Church hall and these included entertainment for the community. Average Sunday attendance in 2009 was 65.

#### **f. Parish of Newport, Lliswerry, St Andrew and St Philips**

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<sup>4</sup> Source: Web Site [www.stmarysmalpas.org.uk](http://www.stmarysmalpas.org.uk) Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Web Site [www.stmarysmalpas.org.uk](http://www.stmarysmalpas.org.uk) Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Web site [www.allsaintschurchnewport.co.uk](http://www.allsaintschurchnewport.co.uk) Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

Average Sunday attendance in 2009 was 39. St Andrew's church was first opened as a Mission church for Lliswerry district in 1882.

St Philips Church was built in 1925 initially as a parish hall and Sunday School. This was to satisfy the immediate needs of a growing congregation in the area around Jenkins Street. In 1950 it was elevated to the status of a church within the parish of St Andrew's Lliswerry.<sup>7</sup> Both St Andrew's and St Philips Church had strong links with the Schools in the parish.

#### **g. Parish of St John the Baptist, Risca Road,**

This was a small parish on the western edge of the city of Newport. The average Sunday attendance in 2010 was 47. It had a strong Anglo-Catholic tradition. According to the vicar who was there at the time of the fieldwork for this research, "The establishment of the parish has its foundations in the Oxford movement and St John's can claim the privilege of being the forerunner of Anglo-Catholicism in Newport."<sup>8</sup> According to the church records, the church was consecrated in May 1900. However the spiritual seeds were planted some 25 years prior to this with the start of the St John Baptist Mission in 1875.<sup>9</sup> A driving force of the Mission was the initial compulsion to preach the Faith to the poor.

#### **h. Parish of St John the Evangelist, St Mary and St Matthew's, Maindee;**

St John the Evangelist had an average Sunday attendance of 113. According to their mission Statement, The three churches namely St John's, St Mary's and St Matthew's formed a Christian community whose aims were to worship God and serve the people of the parish. The Church building at St John's included a hall and kitchen which were used by church organizations and

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<sup>7</sup> Parish records.

<sup>8</sup> Informant, Vicar, St John the Baptist.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Web site [www.churchinwales.org.uk/monmouth](http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/monmouth), Accessed in September 2009

for work within the community. They had a number of social groups including The Circle of Friendship which was a social group started as a young communicant's guild. They run two Mother's Union groups and a parent and toddler group. . They were part of the Night Shelter Project, Sure Start, Breast Feeding Buddies.

St Matthew's Church was located in a working class area in Victoria Ward. It was an area of much poverty and disadvantage. It was a multi-racial Parish in an inner-city environment with poor housing conditions and the highest density of housing in Newport City. Due to falling numbers the parish had been amalgamated with the Parish of St John the Evangelist in Maindee. St Matthew's Church was a base for work within the Community which included a drop in centre, credit union collection point and a parent and toddler group. Volunteers from the parish operated a Collection Point for Newport Credit Union. The church hall was used by the local Rainbows and Brownies group and other community groups such as Weight Watchers, Slimming world and Sure Start. The church was open in the week for what was called Time 4 U. This was for anyone to call in for refreshments and a chat.<sup>10</sup>

#### **i. Parish of St Julians; St Julius and Saint Aaron**

The Parish derives its name from two local martyrs who are believed to have been Roman soldiers based in Caerleon and were executed during religious persecutions of the Emperor Diocletian in AD 304. The parish of St Julians was formed from the parishes of Christchurch and Maindee in 1921. The church was consecrated in 1926. Recorded average Sunday attendance was 66.

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<sup>10</sup> Source: Web site [www.churchinwales.org.uk/monmouth](http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/monmouth) Accessed September 2009

### **j. Parish of St Mark**

St Mark's Church was built in 1874. It is a Victorian gothic Church located in the centre of Newport. Recorded Average Church attendance in 2009 was 72.

The Parish was actively involved in the community through the Mothers Union, Mothers and Toddler groups and other weekly activities.

**k. St Paul's Church in the City Centre.** St Paul's was built originally to be a great preaching temple in 1836. During the 1990s it was at 'death's door' and the building's fabric was in a ruinous near fatal state of repair. However, the Church building was saved and renovated completely because of a vigorous Restoration Drive by a determined group of worshippers and ardent supporters. In 2011 it was a re-established thriving centre of worship. It was renovated into a modern, airy and welcoming place, yet still retains many of its original and beautiful features.<sup>11</sup> It had branched into the community – the town centre shoppers – and offered coffee and snacks on a Saturday and vibrant worship on Sundays. The Church operated a Café which was open Monday – Saturday. It boasted a dynamic Events Calendar. Recorded Average Sunday attendance was 42. It was said to be haven of peace in the heart of the city. They hired out their hall to community Groups such as Weight Watchers, Newport Orchestra and Girl Guides.

### **l. Parish of St Thomas, Maesglas & Duffryn**

The original Church was an iron building opened in 1932. At the time there was development of Maesglas housing scheme. With a rapid influx of people there was an urgent imperative for provision to be made for their spiritual need. Average Sunday Church attendance was 52. The church held various social functions connected to the church.

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<sup>11</sup> Source: <http://www.stpaulsnewport.org.uk/> Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

**m. Parish of St Stephens, Pillgwenlly;** The Parish of St Stephen & Holy Trinity lies within the area of Pillgwenlly. The word Pill (spelt with one L) is a Welsh word meaning ‘a sea ditch or trench filled with high water.’ Pillgwenlly has a population of approximately 6,000 people consisting of a number of different cultures and nationalities. Up till 1800’s the Pillgwenlly district was part of the Ancient Parish of St. Gwynllyw, now known as St Woolos. With the opening of the Alexander Docks, there was a lot of activity and development in Church life in this area. Houses were built for the accommodation of the people engaged in the rapidly developing shipping industry. The area around the docks became a hive of industry. To accommodate the growing population, the Church building of St Stephen’s was built and consecrated in 1884.<sup>12</sup> This was in response to the need for additional church accommodation. St Stephens was made a parish in 1921 in the newly formed Monmouth Diocese. It is a traditional Anglo- Catholic parish.

**n. Parish of St Teilo, Alway;** St Teilo’s was originally a daughter Church of St Andrew’s that became a separate parish to serve Alway and Ringland post-war estates. It developed a distinctively Anglo- Catholic tradition. The church building was a dual purpose church which served as the hall used by the community and one part is used as a place of worship. Recorded Average Sunday attendance was 21. Located in a Communities First Area. The Community Youth worker had strong links with the church.

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<sup>12</sup> The *Monmouthshire Merlin* 6<sup>th</sup> October 1884) Opening of St Stephen’s Church, Newport....The opening of this sacred edifice, dedicated for public worship according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, was celebrated this morning. The building was erected in the Parish of Holy Trinity, in the district of Pillgwenlly for the purpose of providing for the spiritual requirements of the dense population which has during the last few years aggregated near the locality of the Alexander docks.

#### **o. Newport Cathedral Parish**

Newport Cathedral has been on the site since the early 6<sup>th</sup> Century. St Woolos became the Pro-Cathedral of the new diocese of Monmouth in 1929. It attained full cathedral status in 1949. The Cathedral served Wales, the diocese and the City of Newport and it also served as a large parish.

<sup>13</sup> Recorded Average Sunday Attendance was 123. Like most Cathedrals, Newport Cathedral has a fine choral tradition with normally four or five services held each week. The choir sings a wide range of music from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> century including pieces written by contemporary composers of church music and talented local musicians.<sup>14</sup> There was daily prayer and the cathedral was open for visitors. The origins and development of the Newport Cathedral has been discussed in detail in Chapter Three of this thesis.

#### **4.3. The Roman Catholic Church (Archdiocese of Cardiff)**

Roman Catholic congregations were to be found at St Mary's Stow Hill, St Michaels, St Anne's, Malpas, St David's Maesglas, St David Lewis, St Gabriel's in Ringland, St Julian & Aaron at St Julians, St Michael's in Caerleon and St Patrick's Church.

Newport today boasts a large modern comprehensive school which continues to reflect the strength and identity of the Roman Catholic constituency in present day Newport. The School offers secondary education within the framework of Catholic teaching to children in the Newport area.

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<sup>13</sup> Source Website <http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/monmouth/people/cathedral/> Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009

<sup>14</sup> Source Web site <http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/monmouth/people/cathedral/> Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009

**(a) St Mary's Roman Catholic Church**

St Mary's was the oldest Roman Catholic Church in Newport. It was located in the city centre. It had become a 'central' church of the Newport Roman Catholic deanery with the largest congregation in All Saints parish. The Mass Count there was of 800. It was one of the largest in the archdiocese of Cardiff. St Mary's Church is one of the three congregations I have studied in detail and will be discussed in Chapter Six.

**(b) St David Lewis Roman Catholic Church**

St David Lewis was located in Bettws. It was one of the churches in All Saints parish. It had a Mass attendance of 225 and Mass was held on Sunday and Monday. The Church building was designed as 'dual purpose' and many social events were held in the church. The church was used as a base for the Bettws Club for the elderly on the Bettws estate.

**(c) St Anne's Roman Catholic Church**

St Anne's was in All Saints parish and was located in Malpas. The Mass count there was 100. Mass was held every Sunday. St Anne's community Club met once a week. Community activities included among others; fish and chips suppers, quiz and bingo, demonstrations and visiting speakers. Trips were organized to places of interest.

**(d) St David's Roman Catholic Church**

St David's was part of All Saints parish and was located in Maesglas. Masses were held on Sunday and Monday with a mass count of 202. There was a folk choir that sang during the masses. St David's had a children's Mass which was attended by a large number of children.

Community activities were held in the week. They held shared services with St Thomas's Anglican Church and Ebbw Bridge Baptist Church.

**(e) St Michael's Roman Catholic Church**

St Michael's Roman Catholic Church was located in Clarence Street in Pillgwenlly. Masses were held on Sunday's and Wednesdays. The weekly Mass count was 180. Reconciliation and Adoration was held on Wednesdays. They had a Fair-trade stall every Sunday after Mass. St Michael's was in All Saints parish.

**(f) St Basil & St Gwladys's Roman Catholic Church**

St Basil & St Gwladys's was located in Rogerston on the outskirts of Newport. It was in All saints parish. Masses were held every Sunday with services of reconciliation, Adoration and devotions on Tuesday's. The weekly mass count was 70.

**(g) St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church**

St Patrick's was located on Corporation Road in Lliswerry. It was a fine, modern church opened in 1993. St Patrick's used to be part of St Mary's Stow Hill until 1924 when it was established as a separate Parish. The weekly mass attendance was between 300 – 350 with about 2,000 people living in the parish. It was the only parish administered by the Rosminians in Newport. They had a Social Club whose aims and purposes included social gatherings, family and wedding celebrations, dances, church fayres and other charitable events.

#### **(h) St Gabriel's**

St Gabriel's was located in Ringland / Always and had a mass attendance between 190 – 240.

#### **(i) St Julius the Martyr**

St Julius the Martyr was located on the St Julian's estate with weekly mass attendance of 200.

#### **(j) St Julius, Aaron & David**

This was located in Caerleon. Masses were held on Saturday evening and mass count was 35.

### **4.4: Non conformist Churches**

The Free churches, formerly known as nonconformists, included the Presbyterian Church of Wales, the largest of the Welsh nonconformist denominations, and which still maintained a Welsh language presence in Newport. There are several Baptist churches, most which were affiliated to the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Baptist Union of Wales. These also represent a considerable presence throughout South Wales. The Methodists, United Reformed Churches and The Society of Friends complete the historic nonconformist representation.

#### **4.4.1: The Presbyterian Church of Wales**

In Newport these congregations were to be found located in Havelock Street and Stow Park, Beechwood, Community House, and in Ringland whose Presbyterian Church was built to serve the Eastern end of the Ringland Estate, Ebenezer (Welsh Presbyterian) and United Reformed. Malpas Evangelical was Presbyterian though independent and a conservative evangelical Church.

**(a). Stow Park Church**

In 2010, the congregations of Stow Park Presbyterian Chapel and Newport United Reformed Church joined to form a new fellowship in Newport based in Stow Park. Their vision was to build a church and create a community centre benefiting all who lived in the area.

**(b). Beechwood Presbyterian Church**

A Calvinistic Church situated in the suburbs to the east of Newport, about 2 miles from the city centre. The Community was made up mostly of middle and working class people. The Church was built in 1905. According to church records, in the late 1930's and early 1940's the membership was over 400 and the Sunday school had over 600 children. In 2010 the membership had shrunk to 44 with a Sunday school of about 15. However it was a very busy Church throughout the week.

**(c). United Reformed Church, Victoria Road**

Opened for public worship in 1859 it was home to a Welsh – speaking congregation, and also housed an English-speaking Presbyterian congregation as well as the URC. The congregation moved to join the Presbyterian Church as the congregation had shrunk over the years and the building's size meant it had become difficult to maintain.<sup>15</sup> 'As a listed building repairs can be expensive, and they have to be carried out in a certain way.'<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the Church was sold to an Islamic group who converted part of the Church into a mosque, and the rest of the space was used for a conference Hall, with meeting rooms, offices and other facilities.

United Reformed Churches once considered themselves as either Methodists or Presbyterians

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<sup>15</sup> Informant, Property Officer URC

<sup>16</sup> *South Wales Argus*, Tuesday, June, 17, 2008.

but had now joined to worship in the same building. Sow Park and Victoria Road were a case in point.

#### **(d). Havelock Street Presbyterian Church**

The Church was built in 1863 and was a typical example of Polychromatic Italianate style of architecture. The history of the church is summarized in the following statement:

‘A few of the Welsh Presbyterians or Calvinistic Methodists, worshipping at Ebenezer chapel in this town, seeing the children of the church and the majority of the young rising up ignorant of the language of their parents; and also finding that very many of their men around them were not attending any place of worship, nor their children going to Sabbath Schools; and likewise believing that there were Presbyterians from Scotland and Ireland residing, and likely to reside in the town, who would be desirous of enjoying the privileges of a Church assimilating as near as possible the Presbyterian Church government and worship which had been familiar and dear to them in the land of their nativity: after due consideration, thought it their duty to rent the Victoria Buildings, as being in a convenient locality, so as to provide them with the means of grace.’<sup>17</sup>

#### **(e). Community House**

Community House was established in 1969 by the Maindee congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Wales. It was built based on a vision conceived to build ‘a church for others’ and to be ‘the servant Church’ serving the Community. In 2010 the area of Maindee had a total of 20 different languages spoken among the children of Maindee Primary School.

Community House had continued to build up a caring community and in a statement indicated that they were there to worship God:

God in all his splendor and majesty

God in all her wisdom and gentleness

God who is love and loves us

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<sup>17</sup> Website <http://www.newportast.com>, Accessed 11<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

And has taught us how to love.<sup>18</sup>

They were committed to do this through service to the community and by challenging injustice so as to bring peace and reconciliation. Church members believed this was what it meant to be God's people. They held the fundamental belief that God called and continues to call the Christian Church to reach out to all people. They stated that the Gospel of Christ was to love God and our neighbour, and the building was designed to enable that to take place. Supported by and challenged through innovative worship, enjoying a shared ministry, the members of the church had offered a place of welcome, security and hope through challenging times for many people.

Community House hosted many activities taking place on everyday of the week. For example; Maindee Playgroup, run by Sure Start, a baby clinic, ESOL Classes, Ashianna club for Asian Women and Youth Club. These facilities were run by agencies such as Newport County Council, Newport MIND etc. Some of the people who used the facilities were of Asian origin and members of the Muslim faith.

An annual event to celebrate this diversity amongst the service users of Community House took place on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2009. This is how the event was described;

‘About 300 people, of many different cultures and faiths attended and took part in peace-making. From babes—in-arms to members of TLC, (Tuesday Lunch Club) people came to share singing, memories, photographs, food and excellent company. Muslim children sang as did members of a Christian Caribbean Church who meet at Community House; a Hare Krishna family chanted; members of the Bahai' Faith spoke of what all faiths have in common; Newport Mind Writing Group read poems; members of Maindee Active Girls performed a little drama. Children were shown how to make Peace Mala bracelets where each colour represented a major faith and children were told how everyone deserves

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<sup>18</sup> Community House Website, Retrieved 2006

respect. Peace messages were written on leaves and then tied onto a tree of life'.<sup>19</sup>

#### **4.4.2: The Methodist Church**

Those that are now defined as Methodists are former Wesleyan Methodists. These made up the Newport Circuit and congregations in Newport were to be found at Bishpool & Shaftesbury Street, Caerleon Methodist Church and St Julian's Methodist Church. There were also Primitive Methodists and United Methodists.

**(a) St Julian's Methodist Church:** Held the largest of the Methodist congregations. In 2008 the number of members was 73. The Church provided activities for the community namely: Weekly coffee mornings, Friendship lunches, drop in Coffee mornings, social club with a wide range of activities; games afternoons, crafts, speakers, entertainment for members, and outings.

#### **(b) Trinity Methodist Church**

The Church was built in 1970 amalgamating three different churches together.

#### **4.4.3: The Baptist Church**

Baptist congregations were to be found meeting at Duckpool Road, Summerhill Baptist Church built in 1862; Corporation Road; Ebbw Bridge with 27 members, St Julian's, St Mary Street, Penylan Baptist Church and Gaer Baptist Church.

I was informed by one of my informants that no two Baptist churches are the same. Some Baptist churches had closed membership with only committed members, who had been baptized by total

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<sup>19</sup> Source: <http://www.etonrdch.org/v2/> Accessed September 2009.

immersion on profession of faith and personal experience of God. Those who had never had adult baptism were called adherents. However, some Baptist churches had open membership, in other words; a person who had never been baptized in any form may by profession of faith become a member.

Leadership comprised of Pastors, Deacons, Officers; Secretary and Treasurer. There was a belief that everyone was called to ministry. As for communion, anyone who loved the Lord was invited to take communion at what was normally called an Open Table. The decision to partake was left to the conscience of the people.

Dedication Services were held for parents and children; with no statement about a child becoming a Christian. Parents made Promises; the church committed itself to provide Christian nurture and an environment for Christian nurture.

The Baptist Churches were autonomous although some belonged to the Baptist Union of Wales and Baptist Union of Great Britain and South Wales Baptist Association. Historically, the churches worship independently though act interdependently for fellowship and for mission. These Baptist Churches developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century during the development of industry and housing. Their 'Tin Tabernacles' remain famous in Wales.

#### **(a) Duckpool Road Baptist Church**

Duckpool Road Baptist Church was built in 1875. Its origins arose from a dispute involving a minister of Summerhill Chapel. Those who broke away began meeting in an upper room in a

tailor's shop on Chepstow Road. This soon became very crowded and they moved on to bigger premises until eventually three houses in Duckpool Road were transformed to become the Gospel Hall. This was its original name, before becoming Duckpool Road Baptist Church. At the time of this research, it was the largest of the 8 Baptist churches in Newport with 106 members. It was a member of the Evangelical Alliance of Wales.

**(b) Lliswerry Baptist Church** – An Evangelical church situated in a middle class area with a catchment covering 6,000 homes, taking in several City Council run estates. It was built in 1889. At the time of this research a distinct portion of the people worked in the Steelworks or in the Chemical works. The congregation was a mixed group of people ranging from unemployed, working, retired and highly qualified professional people. The Church reached out to 500 – 600 people a week with various activities. The actual membership was 125. They described themselves as a Church for the community with much going on to provide help and encouragement.

**(c) Gaer Baptist Church;** Formed in 1956 it started as a House Church. The Church was formed to be both a worshipping and witnessing community on the Gaer Estate within the Gaer and as a bridge building mission in the community. It never had been large in membership. In 2008 the number of members was 25. However, it had been moulded over the years into a close and friendly family, 'a part of the greater family of God, set, as it were, as an embattled settlement, to hold the fort in the midst of indifferent and sometimes hostile people'<sup>20</sup> It remained encouraged by its small Church ministry.

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<sup>20</sup> Informant, Gaer Baptist Minister 2007

#### **(d) St Julians Baptist Church**

Formerly an English Baptist Church established to counter the Welsh Church. It had existed at its current location since 1958 with a membership of 30-40.

In 2010 membership was 78 and attendance of 116. Members' Mission Statement was '*Touching heaven, touching Earth.*' The Church saw itself as a gathering of believers and as a place of refuge, healing, safety, hope and faith. Two thirds of the church members lived locally and unusually at the time had a gender ratio of 50/ 50.

Members were encouraged to develop relationships within the community without them being absorbed from their religious social networks. They took their inspiration from St Paul who spoke of himself becoming 'all things to all men' for the sake of Christ crucified.

According to their minister there was a feeling of being called to be balanced in all areas. They run young peoples groups with 50 or 60 young people using the church each week. There were 5 Home Groups, Home Fellowships, Sunday Tea Time for Young mums, Ladies Fellowships; Also there were Concerts to which non Church members were to expect a gratis invitation; Luncheon groups, Playgroups 4 mornings a week, teaching through Play; Tea dance, Opera singers, National Speakers.

It was suggested by one of the elders I interviewed that everything in the Church used the opportunity of mission; hence the members' emphasis on missions and teaching.

I was told by yet another member that the vision of Isaiah 61:1 and Luke 4:18ff was a source of inspiration. A calling to be like Christ is the foundation for mission at St Julian's Baptist Church.

**4.4.4: Other Non-conformist Churches include:** Bethel Temple, Emmanuel Evangelical Independent Church, Mount joy, Lodge Farm Church, Caerleon, Vine Place established by the Plymouth Brethren.

**(a) Emmanuel Evangelical Church.**

The Fellowship was founded in 1866 following the visit and preaching of Charles Haddon Spurgeon in the Newport Cattle Market. The congregation met in various locations over 8 years. In 1875 members opened a Baptist Chapel in Alma Street. Following a doctrinal dispute with the Baptist Union they broke away from the Baptist Union withdrawing their membership. In 1976, they lost their building to the town council and it was demolished. The current building was opened in 1977 in a new location on Cardiff Road. The man who was minister at the time I was doing this research told me that the task and purpose of the Church was based on the life of the early Church. They were inspired by the verses of scripture from Acts 2:42; 'And they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking bread, and in prayers'. Members were strong believers in the Great Commission in Matthew 28: 18-20. Furthermore, their task and Purpose was to worship, evangelise primarily locally, but also nationally and internationally, to build up members, instruct new converts, administer the 2 Sacraments, show compassion of Christ and to base all its doctrine on Scripture.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Informant, Minister, Emmanuel. Interview held in 2008.

They held Open Air Meetings to preach the gospel as well as going on Door to Door Visitation. An interview with one of the members of the congregation revealed that members got to know people better when chatting with them and the result was a strong sense of care for their neighbours around the Church. This determined them further in this mission work.

Their World-wide ministry was greatly inspired by the words John Wesley wrote in his Journal on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1739, 'I look upon the entire world as my parish'.<sup>22</sup>

While the main energy of the Church was directed towards demonstrating the love of God in bringing lost souls to Christ, they were also mindful of people's human needs for 'human fellowship, Friendship and companionship'.<sup>23</sup>

### **(b) Lodge Farm Church**

The Church started life in 1969 as 'Caerleon Christian Fellowship.' This was a group of Christians who had a vision to establish an evangelical witness in Caerleon. For more than 10years, the Fellowship survived as a nomadic group, meeting in homes, the Town Hall, the Baptist chapel and St Cadoc's Chapel until in 1983 when the Church was opened at the top of Lodge Hill. The Church building used to be Lodge Farm. This was converted to a church building. The Church was an integral part of the community providing services and activities including Musical Events for all ages.

### **(c) Bethel Community Church**

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/journal.vi.iii.v.html> Accessed 20th January 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Informant, Member of the Fellowship.

This was located in Stow Hill in Newport. Originally it was Assemblies of God and was known as Bethel Temple for 40 years; however at the time of this research it was an independent Pentecostal Fellowship known as Bethel Community Church. Some of the members were originally from the King's Church who moved away from the King's Church in 1970. The Church attendance was between 130 and 150. The church was heavily involved with the Community. They saw the 'church as a living, active body of Christian people who want to seek God's face and be a part of the community, to reach out and make a difference.'<sup>24</sup> Part of their vision was to be seen, heard and felt in the city. They did this through programmes and activities held weekly namely: The Olive Branch was a project run by this church to reach out to rough sleepers, homeless and vulnerably housed individuals in Newport. They provided their guests with a meal, played games and provided counseling for the families of those with addiction and for individuals. In addition to help such as this, there was provision of free medical advice, including referrals being made to a doctor or dentist. Financial advice was offered for people experiencing some financial difficulties (debt, credit cards, loans and mortgages). There was provision of opportunities to gain qualifications through NOCN (National open college network) in areas such as cookery, art, money management, food hygiene and independent living skills. Bethel Community was engaged in work amongst the international communities of Newport. They did this through 'The Sanctuary' whose aim was to show God's love in a practical way by building friendships, restoring a sense of belonging and community, and offering practical support to people from refugees and asylum seeker communities in Newport. The Sanctuary aimed to provide social and leisure opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers, help refugees

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<sup>24</sup> Source: Web site [www.emmanuel-newport.org.uk/public](http://www.emmanuel-newport.org.uk/public) accessed 20th June 2009.

find accommodation and access employment, and to support and empower refugee community leaders.<sup>25</sup> They held various Holiday Clubs and activities for children and Youth.<sup>26</sup>

The Church offered a listening ear to those who need it, help for those in a crisis and those weighed down by life.

#### **(d) Mount Zion**

It was a Welsh Chapel in Hill Street with a desire to worship God in Welsh. It was established in 1835.

### **4. 5: Evangelicals in Newport.**

Evangelical Churches in Newport included among others; Malpas Road Evangelical, Nant Coch, St Mary's Anglican Church, Lliswerry Baptist Church and Emmanuel Evangelical Church.

Within the Churches of an evangelical leaning in Newport, there was a separation into two traditions, held dear by their Churches as essential to the very character and existence of their gathered fellowships of God's people. Emerging from the 1904-5 religious revival in Wales, the two traditions imposed a highly determinative effect on the character and missiology of evangelical outlooks for Wales and Newport, even for the present.

Two very different strands emerged from the Revival: these were the Calvinistic Evangelicals and the Pentecostals. The first, Evangelicals holding fast to the Calvinistic doctrines, described themselves as guardians of orthodoxy, holding fast to the historic evangelicalism of the past.

Many congregations left their home denominations during the 1970's to form Evangelical

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<sup>25</sup> Website, [www.bethelnewport.co.uk](http://www.bethelnewport.co.uk), Accessed, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Website, [www.bethelnewport.co.uk](http://www.bethelnewport.co.uk) Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> June 2009

Churches in fellowship with the all-important Evangelical Movement of Wales (E.M.W) In Newport two of the largest congregations, one Baptist, the other Presbyterian, were leaders in this new dynamic. Their ministers, Rev. Graham Harrison and the late Huw Morgan were amongst the most highly respected Church Leaders in Wales in their day.

In addition to local Church Leaders, there was the powerful influence throughout South Wales of the wonderful and sadly late Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones (d.1981). Lloyd Jones' voice for evangelical secession from historical denominations carried much influence in Wales, and in Newport his presence was guaranteed to fill any chapel. He made frequent visits to Newport during his regular preaching engagements in South Wales.

Though this movement had not become another denomination its effect was strong in unifying fellowships in the church congregations involved. This galvanizing force was evident in the movement's journal, 'The Evangelical Magazine of Wales,' a twice monthly journal that has been active for over 50 years now.

The second group of Churches whose evangelical descent can be traced from the Revival was the Pentecostal and charismatic Churches grouping. The Pentecostal began in secession from the old denominations in 1908, and was a widespread reaction against the new evangelical character and Charismatic gifts owned among those converted or empowered by the Revival, and a return to the old ways.

The Revival then, was problematic in that by 1904-05 the main denominations had already

adhered to a large extent to the new- emerging liberal theology. This made for a widespread rejection of the terms of the Revival even at the time, and for a subsequent polarization of Welsh churches into liberal and conservative (both Pentecostals and evangelicals) wings, creating a great deal of bitterness. This antipathy was evident in the non – fellowship between liberal and evangelical churches of all denominations.

It must be said, however, that the heat of this hostility has to a certain extent abated in the past 30 years and that this was due to severe numerical decline in worshippers' numbers and the consequent survival problems for the liberal churches of all denominations. The liberals, especially in the Anglican and Methodist churches, no longer had the energy nor the leadership position with which to maintain a liberal - conservative antipathy as in the past.

By 1970 evangelicals in Wales, and without doubt in Newport were divided into 2 parties who rarely fellowshipped together, and who would certainly never work together in outreach.

This was the Arminian ( a term revived in the 1960s and 70s) Calvinistic divide.

Broadly those churches that described themselves as evangelical were Reformed or Calvinistic in doctrine, and their emphasis on studying doctrine was a distinct feature of their spiritual life.

On the other hand were the Arminian or free will churches. These were largely Pentecostal Churches; other Charismatic churches; and the evangelicals in the Anglican and Methodist churches, though of course many churches held a mixture of Arminian views.

Some of the older evangelicals and Pentecostal alliances and joint – ventures like Churches Together and its predecessor, The Council of Churches Wales were seen as the devil’s work – the single subject on which Arminian and Calvinist Churches were completely united.

An informant from the Pentecostal church told me that during 1968-75 its movement as a whole regarded Christian Unity, especially the ecumenical movement as a slippery slope to the twin evils of liberal theology (‘atheism in a religious cloak’) and Catholicism (‘the whore of Babylon’). Indeed eschatology played an important part in their defining theology, shaping their inter -church fellowship and evangelism. Liberals and Catholics both were seen as signs of the times: as the time of antichrist approaching. This hotheaded language of division had of necessity moderated in the past 30 years.

**4.6: Other Churches** included the Christian Brethren Churches such as Nant Coch, The Salvation Army and The Seventh Day Adventists represent the growth in evangelical churches in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Latterly, several Charismatic Churches and Free Evangelical Churches, all aligned to the Evangelical Movement of Wales, have established themselves and grown a following.

**(a) Nant Coch**

Nant Coch was a brethren evangelical church. It was started as a house meeting and had grown into a thriving congregation with strong emphasis on biblical teaching and community involvement. Nant Coch church is discussed in detail in Chapter Five of this thesis.

### **(b) The Salvation Army**

Another relatively early comer to Maindee was the Salvation Army. The growing district of Maindee was typical of the sort of area where the army was most active, in alleviating poverty and suffering, wherever it could. The Maindee corps was established in 1879 and originally met in a room over a set of stables. Later they acquired the whole property, a new hall being built on the site in 1955. The Corps disbanded in 1995 and the hall has subsequently become a mosque.

However, the Salvation Army still works in a very distinctive way in Newport. In Hill Street in the Shopping Precinct it runs a drop in for coffee and snacks, has a Meeting Hall and runs a Charity Shop. 'The War Cry' is still sold on the High Street of Newport. It ran its social work separately from the development of the life of the congregation.

### **(c) The Seventh Day Adventists**

The Seventh Day Adventist Church started its work in Newport in the 1880's though for many years its meetings were conducted at houses, firstly in Princess Street and later in Constance Street. After the First World War, a permanent Church building was erected in Eveswell. The building was considerably extended after the Second World War and still remains the only building serving this denomination in the City of Newport. The number of members in 2010 was 68.

The changing demographic of the population of Newport gave the city a Coptic Orthodox church and a black majority Church called New Seasons Church of God situated in Pillgwenlly, the local area with the highest and most diverse ethnic minority populations.

To close the list were the esoterically named Metro Church, Abundant Life, Assemblies of God, and the Newport City Church Covenant Ministries International.

**4.7. Peripheral Churches and Chapels:** in the area included The King's Church, Christ Church, the Apostolic Church in Rockfield street, Elim Church in Harrow Road. At various times, day schools had been used by Churches to increase accommodation for their Sunday Schools, as well as some hotels and the Newport University Campus.

**(a) The King's Church**

The King's Church was a Pentecostal Charismatic fellowship, simply named "The King's Church." It comprised a large congregation, constituting a significant proportion of the total church-going constituency of Newport. This Congregation is discussed in detail in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

**(b) Christchurch**

This was a non-denominational Church which held to orthodox doctrine. It was started in 1995. It was part of the small family of churches called Sovereign Grace. Members considered themselves to be both Reformed and Charismatic. Recorded church attendance was 450<sup>27</sup>.

**(c) Newport Gateway Church**

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<sup>27</sup> Christ church Website, Retrieved 2009.

This was a community -based Church in the St Julian's area of Newport. It was part of the Apostolic Church in the UK. Members claimed not to be religious or reclusive and to be less focused on tradition and more focused on demonstrating how relevant Christianity was even in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This they claimed was essential to building healthy friendships, families, careers and perspectives.

#### **4.8: Christian Organisations**

Among the many religious institutions I found in Newport were the various Christian organisations. The Christian organisations were those interdenominational ones formed by Christians from various denominations and based on biblical principles. These organisations included among others: The South East Wales Mission to the Deaf; The Bridge Counselling Service, Speak Easy, Raven House Trust, Teen Challenge; Grace and Peace, The GAP, Street Pastors, Newport Night Shelter, The Temperance Society and The YMCA.

##### **(a). Churches Together in Newport**

Christians of all kinds worked together under the umbrella of 'Churches Together in Newport'. It worked through organised events and Services across the town.

In 2011, 60 churches drawn from myriad backgrounds came together under this head; Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, the New Testament Church of God, Roman Catholics, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventists, the Society of Friends and United Reformed.

A local Christian Aid Committee was part of Churches Together in Newport and coordinated the collection of money for the charity in Newport especially during Christian Aid Week. A member of this committee informed me that it was a general belief of the members that God was calling God's people in Newport to work together to be His witnesses in Newport. Moreover, members believed that God was calling them as his children to work together for the good of his kingdom and also they believed that God was calling them as his children to work together for the good of those who were less fortunate, in the local community and overseas.

Inspiration was taken from the words of Jesus:

'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'<sup>28</sup>

#### **(b) The GAP ( Grace and Peace)**

This organisation was set up by members of Bethel Community Church who believed that God's love for people was best demonstrated by serving, supporting and building strong relationships with others regardless of race or religion.

Members did this through a forum called 'Oasis' which offered a free of charge advice, support and listening service. Members also run the 'Clay Cup Coffee Shop' which was a welcoming place to obtain a value for money hot meal and snack.<sup>29</sup>

The initials GAP acknowledged the gap that existed between the world and the church and the organisation was formed so as to work towards bridging this gap. It did this by reaching out to

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<sup>28</sup> John 13:35

<sup>29</sup> Source: Web site: <http://www.bethelnewport.co.uk/ministries/gap> Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

the community with a helping hand, so that people not only heard about Jesus but saw Jesus at work through Christian care.

### **(c). Street Pastors**

The Street Pastors Scheme started in Jamaica in 2001 as a Christian response to violent crime. Street Pastors were introduced in Newport in 2009. It had been reported in the local newspaper, 'The South Wales Argus' that 'revellers were to receive a helping hand from a new source'.<sup>30</sup>

The Street Pastors offered support, care, help and guidance on unconditional terms so as to ensure that revellers did not come to harm or become victims of crime. The revellers had come to look out for the Street Pastors for a chat and the odd bottle of water or a pair of flip flops.

One of the ministers is quoted to have said, 'There was evidence around to show that people were getting into trouble, drunkenness and violence but hopefully the Street Pastors would be able to prevent this.'<sup>31</sup> He went on to say that Street Pastors were not going out to convert people. He added, 'If people ask us we will tell them what we think but it's not our prime objective. We're there to listen, care and help.'<sup>32</sup> Yet another volunteer commented that: 'this work was, Evangelising by doing and by being there.'<sup>33</sup>

The Street Pastors believed that there was need for the love of Jesus to overflow into the streets of Newport; hence this organisation being a Servant to the community. It had a concern for

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<sup>30</sup> Source: Local Newspaper, *The South Wales Argus* Friday May 15 2009 Page 5

<sup>31</sup> Informant, Local Church Minister, Male, Aged 57

<sup>32</sup> Informant, Local Church Minister, Male, Aged 57

<sup>33</sup> *South Wales Argus* Friday May 15 2009 Page 5

90 Informant, Founder member of the Bridge Counselling Centre.

society, in particular young people, who felt themselves excluded or marginalised. They engaged people where they found them in terms of their perspectives on life. They ‘hung out,’ be it on the streets, in the pubs, clubs or at parties.

The Street Pastor Scheme was run by around 20 church members, ministers who volunteered their time to work in teams of four between 10pm and 4am on Friday and Saturday nights. They were trained by the police, Social Services, the Probation service and by drug awareness teams. The scheme was supported by Gwent Police, Newport City council and by local churches. The Police Sergeant Representative for the Safer Newport Partnership said that; ‘the Street Pastors were supplementing the work carried out by emergency service, by licensing authorities, the security industry door staff and other agencies.’<sup>34</sup>

The Pastors worked with Church and Community Leaders, and with social agencies and projects, either statutory or voluntary; and in collaborative ways discussed and provided relief for issues affecting youth. Through the work of the Street Pastors the Church had aimed to earn a strong credibility in the community, with the hope that people began to know and understand that the Church was there for them, and in a practical way.

#### **(d). Bridge Counseling Centre.**

The centre was located in the City Centre. It was started in 1993 in response to a prophetic word for establishing a Christian Counseling Centre<sup>35</sup> It comprised a team of Christian Trustees from

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<sup>34</sup> Source: Local Newspaper, South Wales Argus Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009 Page 5

<sup>35</sup> Informant, Male Aged 60, Founder member of the Bridge Counselling Centre

mixed denominations and was affiliated to the British Association of Counselors. It had accreditation to train people to become counselors.

Issues that were being addressed included: depression, sexual abuse, Marriage guidance, Anger management and child custody and other kinds of orders directed by the Courts. One of my informants pointed out that the Bridge Counseling Centre was seen as offering pastoral care of a specific nature.<sup>36</sup> Its counseling services were open to all and referrals were received from various organizations including hospitals and the Law Courts. It was seen as unethical to proselytise. At the time of this research over 1,000 counselors had been trained.

#### **(e). Raven House Trust**

The Raven House Trust was a Christian Charity which worked with many Churches and other agencies seeking to provide Social Action and practical support from Local Churches. Its aim was to provide accommodation, social and employment opportunities, a response to homelessness, unemployment and boredom. It worked with agencies in the area to elevate as far as practically possible deprivation in families and young people. It offered clothes, bedding, furniture and food parcels to people who needed them in Newport and beyond. Members suggested that they were a helping hand for those in need. It aimed to demonstrate a positive and vibrant Christian faith and through that faith impact on the local community.

Moreover, the organisation saw itself as a visible practical embodiment of God's people expressing God's love to the community around it. Through this organisation Christians were enabled to give in whatever way they could, whether large or small and to know that they were

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<sup>36</sup> Informant, interviewed 2008.

involved in extending God's kingdom in the locality by taking care of the practical needs first.

Commenting on their work, one of the people interviewed suggested that, 'Young people in work situations were helped to gain relevant skills and NVQ qualifications'.<sup>37</sup>

As part of training and a work experience programme they provided placements for young people for example New Deal candidates in the Raven shops and workshops. There were also opportunities for volunteers to aid in various activities. They supervised Community Service Orders.

A referral system of clients to Raven House by supporting agencies was adhered to. Its workers provided food parcels for the needy in response to names supplied by parishes, Social Services etc. They collected redundant furniture to be given or sold at affordable cost to those in need. Their Motto was, 'Helping the Homeless to help themselves.' The Scripture verse quoted was Mark 9:40 'For whoever is not against us is for us.'<sup>38</sup>

A member of staff told me that they had referrals from many different agencies, sending people with advice for many different needs. A typical week could see a homeless person sent by the Citizens Advice Bureau in need of food parcel, from Probation Accommodation Service, someone just out of prison who had found a flat but doesn't have the means to furnish it or from Social Services, a group of refugees with only the clothes they stand up in and in desperate need of warm winter wear.<sup>39</sup>

The organisation was inspired by the Prayer of St Teresa of Avila,

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<sup>37</sup> Informant, Female, Aged 55.

<sup>38</sup> Source, Documentation Raven House Trust, Registered Charity.

<sup>39</sup> Informant, Member of Staff, Raven House, 2007.

‘ Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands, but yours, no feet but yours, yours are the eyes through which Christ’s compassion is to look out to the earth, yours are the feet by which He is to go about doing good and yours are the hands by which He is to bless us now.’<sup>40</sup>

**(f). Newport Night Shelter**

This was organised by a group of 14 different churches with a total of 300 volunteers. They were committed to meeting the needs of the street homeless and those at immediate risk from rough sleeping; and those ‘others’ not classed as ‘high priority’ by the local authorities. That is, those who do not receive statutory assistance in being housed.

The Shelter was open to anyone between the ages of 18 and 80 and admittance to the Shelter was gained through Newport - based referral agencies: among these was the Accident and Emergency Department at the Royal Gwent Hospital, The Prison Service, Gwent Police, and Newport City Council.

The need was greatest during the coldest and wettest winter months of the year. The Newport Night Shelter was opened from November 31<sup>st</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup>. Its workers offered a warm welcome, a hot evening meal, and bed and breakfast to 12 homeless guests a night. The Shelter operated in different church buildings each night of the week.

It was formed in response to the need to have emergency accommodation. Its guests are moved into another more permanent shelter as quickly as possible. This was achieved by working with

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<sup>40</sup>Source: Web site <http://anunslife.org/2006/09/20/saint-teresa-of-avila-prayer/> Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

local agencies such as the Direct Access Hostel. The Night Shelter was motivated by Isaiah 58:7, 'Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your kin?' <sup>41</sup>

### **(g). Teen Challenge**

Teen Challenge in Newport was part of Teen Challenge UK. It was started in Newport in 1990. It was involved in School Projects, Bus Outreach, Counselling, Befriending, and Networking. <sup>42</sup> It was located in Lower Dock Street, Newport. Its transportation is The Outreach Bus, which is for vulnerable adults to come and sit in comfortable and non-judgmental setting and have tea, coffee, soup and biscuits where friendly trained volunteers were able to sit and chat with them on the bus. All volunteers were Christians who desired a chance to share the gospel.

The loving act of a friendly chat and offering support or a way out of situations was seen as showing more of Christ in them than does preaching at clients, actions speak louder than words. <sup>43</sup>

It was suggested that they were dealing more with the awareness and prevention of Drug Abuse. Volunteers had been to Schools to help raise awareness of the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Teen Challenge offers help to drug addicts to fight addiction, and offers rehabilitation facilities, linking up with such facilities other programs and organisations such as Kaleidoscope.

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<sup>41</sup> Isaiah 58:7. See also Housing Justice Website.

<sup>42</sup> Informant, Teen Challenge Coordinator, Interviewed, 2008.

<sup>43</sup> Informant, Client, 2008.

In an interview with one of the clients, I heard a testimony of how he had been rehabilitated and he was able to share how he had been set free.<sup>44</sup> Such testimonies were not uncommon in Cardiff Prison. I met with the rough sleepers on the street using a mobile coffee bus.

#### **(h) The Mission to Seafarers.**

The mission to Seafarers “Flying Angel Club” in Newport is to be found at the Alexander Dock Gate. It provides a bar, a shop and facilities for seafarers, and means to contact families. In conversation with the priest at the Flying Angel Club he told me that, ‘the aim of the mission to the Seafarers was to meet the practical and spiritual needs of seafarers of all races and creeds.’ He went on to say that, ‘the mission to seafarers shares its faith by offering friendship, hospitality, comfort in times of distress, aid in emergencies, spiritual support, counseling for those with problems and help in cases of injustice.’<sup>45</sup>

Other organisations supported by the Churches include: Shelter Box, Ty-haven hospice, Heart Unit Royal Gwent Hospital.

### **4.9 Ecumenism**

The research demonstrates that in Newport there was an ecumenical basis within different streams of Christian Tradition. However some congregations were not terribly keen on ecumenism. In contrast to this situation of fragmentation of witness and mission in Newport, is Paul of Tarsus’ magnificent vision of mission. It is a vision for new united communities, and much devoid of their prejudices, but it also involves the spiritualizing of the structures of our society, which can be transformed by encounter with Christ, just as Paul himself encountered and

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<sup>44</sup> Informant, Ex-offender and ex-drug addict, interviewed 2008.

<sup>45</sup> Informant, Chaplain to the Mission to Seafarers.

was transformed. Paul the Apostle's actions are described as taking place with urgency and conviction: all must submit and be transformed by Christ. It is a call of Christ and it is Paul's gift of his continual awareness of this, which provides much of the endeavor and drive that we sense in Paul's missionary journeys. Paul's proclamation of his mission thus becomes also a call to others to follow his example, even today. The call comes not out of pride or lust for dominance, but from humility, which in turn arises out of his personal Damascene encounter with the Risen Christ.

#### **4.10 Interfaith**

In 2006, there were people of many other faiths living alongside Christians in Newport. There were 7 Mosques in Newport – New Moslem network.

Community House was unique within the Presbyterian Church in Wales because it sought an appropriate way to witness to its faith in a multi ethnic, multi cultural and multi faith urban environment. Its members' argument was that the nature of mission and evangelism in their situation was very different to most situations in the Christian church. Moreover, they felt strongly that Community House was a focus for the community. Thus it was the richer variety of people who met and mixed and used their facilities.. The question of what mission was in such a situation was very much an issue in contemporary missiological thinking. People, it was felt, needed to be respected for what they brought in terms of culture, language and tradition. It was vital to seek to promote sensitive friendship, mutual understanding and common commitment to justice and peace making among all communities of faith. Nonetheless, the task for Christians was felt by members to be to share unashamedly in the proclamation of Christ crucified and risen, the Saviour of the world.

#### **4.11 Analysis**

The findings of this research reflect the point that over the past 150 years, every major Christian denomination has worshipped and proselytized for some period in the Newport locality. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century it may be a source of wonderment to many that so many churches, chapels and missions were built. It is worth remarking however that, even at the peak of the Revival there would still not have been sufficient seats were everyone living in the Newport district to have decided to attend a Church Service at the same time on the same day.

It is important to note that at a time when towns like Newport were beginning to expand and to draw in more people, often from quite distant and diverse places; there was a grave danger of serious moral decline due from the effects of poverty and deprivation. The religious denominations must have credit for having worked tirelessly to do what they could to provide a moral and structured society for their members and localities.

Despite a vast array of churches catalogued in this section, it must be said that over the years some church buildings have been lost to and closed for worship. Further more a concern to proclaim the gospel in an antipathetic culture, has weighed heavily upon the pastoral leadership of the churches. Their roles have included a responsibility to help providing the answers. The question is being asked, 'Were the Churches scratching where it was itching?'

Similarly, the Churches needed and continue to reach their communities with the treasure that the Church holds, the good news of salvation and redemption in Jesus Christ Crucified, Dead and

Risen Again. It could be argued that since there was a small number of churches that had grown in recent years, lessons might be sought and be learnt from them. Why do they not die? How do they thrive?

From my own experience of Newport arose factors that created difficulty in presenting the gospel there. They may be grouped into two categories. In the first case there were the internal problems that Churches experienced in presenting the gospel. The second category recognises there are many factors of social and personal resistance to embracing the gospel; and these have become ingrained into the popular and national culture.

It might be a serious charge to make that some factors which make it difficult to proclaim the gospel today are in fact internal church politics, factors for which the churches are themselves responsible. However, contemporary surveys<sup>46</sup> suggest that this is indeed the case: that the focus and energy of congregations is to turn away from witness and fellowship within their wider communities and towards maintenance of the fabric of their place of worship.

Further to this, the decline in Church attendance has created demoralising difficulties for congregations of many churches. Smaller numbers, ageing membership had come to see themselves as custodians of the national heritage of chapels and church buildings.

The very cost of maintenance took up every energy that the congregation could muster, in many cases it even precluded the expenditure to pastoral ministry. The results of this study did find that in addition to this decline, which diminished congregations, they had high average ages.

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<sup>46</sup> Francis and Richter, *Gone but not forgotten Church leaving and returning*, Darton.Longman+Todd, London, 1998

In some congregations they were not a representative cross-section of society and unintentionally gave the outward impression that “church” was only for the elderly. The unpalatable fact that had emerged was that members of Christian churches had failed to communicate their faith within their immediate family circles and their acquaintance. When so many of their children and grandchildren had not found a value or meaning in the faith of their elder family, then some hard questions needed to be asked at this fundamental understanding, and so about the fundamental approach and teaching of ministers and Christian life in surviving church memberships. A Church that has failed to communicate the gospel to its people’s own children has a supreme disqualification for taking up the role of a living Christian mission to society at large. However, it would be fair to state that in terms of variety of styles of worship in Newport, the number of Churches and Chapels which were still alive provided an excellence which is exemplary.

#### **4.12 Reflection**

In all the congregations studied there was a growing sense of awareness of social responsibility arising among the Christians in Newport. There were endeavors to respond to social conditions and concerns such as unemployment, drug taking and addiction, marriage breakdown, homelessness, poverty/debt, child abuse, racial discrimination, social isolation, alienation and loneliness.

Through Churches Together, the Churches have found ways of becoming drawn more urgently to the marginalized, excluded, deprived members of the community and to the homeless families

of Newport. They were working to stand alongside those afflicted, so as to witness through social action to the direction of the coming reign of God.

Most Churches ran Mums and Toddler Groups as well as a variety of clubs for children and teens; after school Clubs; Rainbow Clubs, Go For It, Brownies, Girls Friendly Societies, EXALT, Campaigners, Youth Groups. Beyond these specific clubs they also used their facilities in a community role to help young adults and children. The Churches were seen to be working in partnership with other agencies such as Switched On Project, Oxfam, Tear Fund, Welsh Refugee Council and the South Wales Churches' Refugee network.

It would be remiss to ignore that cultural, some would say religious, obsession of industrial South Wales, rugby football. In this, Newport held a premier status; more so because Newport, not Cardiff, was the oldest senior Welsh rugby club. With home attendances frequently exceeding 20,000, from a borough population not much greater than 100,000, rugby was, for a century, a vital feature of the social life of Newport. Though this *golden age* of Welsh rugby has passed, the current attendance at home games frequently exceeds 7,000. As many games are now held on Sundays we may say that the "black and ambers" at Rodney Parade command a congregational loyalty that far exceeds the combined Christian congregations of the city. Interestingly, the Hymn 'Bread of Heaven is popularly sung at these Rugby matches as indeed elsewhere in Wales.

'Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,  
pilgrim through this baren land; I am weak, but thou art mighty;  
hold me with thy pow'rful hand;  
bread of heaven, bread of heaven,  
feed me now and evermore,

feed me now and evermore.’<sup>47</sup>

Reflection and analysis of mission in contemporary Newport would suggest that the public face of mission is based on community activism.

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<sup>47</sup> Source: *Hymn Book Hymns Old and New* William Williams (1717-1791) trans. Peter Williams (1727-1796) and others.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### NANT COCH

#### 5.1: Methodology

While later chapters will take as their focus the other two case studies, the Kings Church and St Mary's Roman Catholic Church, this chapter concentrates on Nant Coch. My project with Nant Coch began with an informal chat with one of the elders at the time. I then wrote a letter to him outlining my project and seeking permission to spend some time with his congregation.<sup>48</sup> This proposal was discussed at a meeting of the leaders of the Church and permission was granted for me to carry out the project.

I visited Nant Coch whenever I could over a period of 8 months, during which period I visited the Church more than 20 times. Whilst I was with the congregation, I observed their worship and other activities, and at one event I distributed a detailed questionnaire.<sup>49</sup> The questionnaire was aimed at supplying me with a guide for carrying out structured interviews. The questionnaires were distributed one Sunday morning to all who were present; and then at the evening service I offered copies again to those yet to receive one. This was to make sure the maximum numbers of people were included.

The duty Elder graciously allowed me to have some time about halfway through the service for the congregation to fill out the questionnaires. This ensured that the worshippers were able to hand in their questionnaires before they left the service. Some people requested more time to be

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<sup>48</sup> Appendix B: Letter to the Elder at Nant Coch, 2003.

<sup>49</sup> See Appendix C: The Questionnaire. These questions were drawn from and adapted from that outlined in Becker, Becker E. B. *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life*. Cambridge, Cambridge, 1999, 249-250.

able to have a think about some of the questions. Of the 60 questionnaires that were handed out, 90% were returned completed. In addition to the questionnaire for the congregation, I was also able to carry out a series of semi-structured interviews with the Church's leaders which included among others: 2 Elders, 1 Youth Leader, 2 children's leaders, one of whom coordinated all the young people's activities including Holiday Club, whilst the other took responsibility for Mothers and Toddlers; 1 Worship Leader, 1 Women's Bible Study Leader, 1 Men's Bible Leader, and other members of the congregation. These were 15 in total. 5 were young people between 12 and 23 years of age, 5 men between 24 and 80 years of age and 5 were women between 24 and 80 years of age. The informants were encouraged to offer objective responses and some of their responses were very critical of the church.

Moreover I looked at Church records and at materials from those local documentary sources I could uncover those that were of significance to my enquiry. I attended Church meetings and activities, as well as joining in social gatherings. In this way I was able to observe and to note how members of the congregation preferred to express themselves within their close community.

Inviting the members of the congregation to inform me about their lives and to articulate their understandings of mission did mean that I had to do my best to avoid imposing my own views and interpretations. It is always a challenge to attempt objectivity.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, caution has been taken in presenting the views of interviewees rather than familiar views.

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<sup>50</sup> Conn and Ortiz 2001, Page, 279.

## **5.2. Why Nant Coch?**

I chose to focus on Nant Coch Church and its people for a variety of reasons. One of the characteristics of the people of this congregation was their great friendship and fellowship.

Guest, then, is right to assert that,

‘Friendship, fellowship and acceptance are not merely bywords for evangelical community; they are emblems of cohesion and tools for securing a shared image of harmony and success.’<sup>51</sup>

Indeed Becker too observed that, ‘Friendliness and forming close interpersonal connections are not optional in family congregations.’<sup>52</sup>

Although I am committed to my Anglican background, when I first came to Newport it was at Nant Coch Church where I first worshipped for over one year. Perhaps the most obvious and immediately noticeable feature about Nant Coch Church is their spirit of hospitality. I was encouraged by this warmth and welcome when my family and I first moved to Newport. A couple in the Nant Coch congregation generously opened their home to us and provided us with accommodation for 5 months whilst we were waiting for local Church accommodation. When we eventually were given a permanent place in which to dwell we kept in touch with the couple and Nant Coch in general, and attended worship there whenever we could make time. When I first arrived in Newport and had begun attending worship at Nant Coch, a number of people spoke to me and made me and our family feel very welcome. One of the Elders made this comment, ‘The more we welcome others, the more deeply grateful we shall be for God’s

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<sup>51</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds) 2004, Page 84.

<sup>52</sup> Becker, 1999.

gracious welcome to us.’ He went on to say that, ‘in this, way the stranger, the ‘new person’, becomes a profound gift to us and our fellowship.’<sup>53</sup> Thus early on I had developed a relationship with the Nant Coch congregation; which of course encouraged me to choose those same people to find out more about their understanding of mission. The pre-existing relationship did not impact upon objectivity due to the chosen research methods.

### **5.3: Organisation of Nant Coch Church**

Nant Coch is a Free Evangelical Church and it is located in the West of the Newport city centre. It is situated in a reasonably prosperous middle-class area compared to some areas of Newport. The resident population of Allt-yr-yn ward in 2001 was 8, 583. The Ethnic grouping was as follows: White 94%, Black 0.6%, Asian Pakistan 1.7%, Asian Other 1.3%, Mixed 1.3%, Chinese 0.5, Other 0.1%, Welsh 10.2%. The dwelling type was thus: Detached 23.1%, Semi-detached 37.5%, Terraced 19.7%.<sup>54</sup> Professionals figured highly among those who lived in Fields Park. Subsequently their needs were not obvious to a casual observer. The area around about was residential, primarily large detached and semi-detached town houses. Two houses neighbouring the Church building had been converted for use as Residential Nursing Homes for the elderly. These Homes were called St Catherine’s Nursing Home and Fields Park Nursing and Residential Home. At that time, the Alt-yr-yn Campus of Newport’s University was within walking distance.

It is helpful to trace the recent history of Nant Coch Church in order to shed light on how earlier events have impressed themselves upon its current circumstances. According to Church

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<sup>53</sup> Elder,2004.

<sup>54</sup> Census 2001, Page 13

records<sup>55</sup> Nant Coch Church was established in 1942 in the shape of a House Church, and as such was an offshoot of kindred Brethren Church in the Mount Joy area. The first members of the newly-formed House Church began meeting in a rented room of a school, and later they moved to meeting at a house belonging to one of the founder members. This house had the name of Nant Coch House and was situated on Risca Road, and at the time of the project was part of Rougemont School.

As time went on the premises became cramped because there was increasing membership. In 1954 the House Church moved to the current location as Nant Coch Church. In 1981 work was done to the building to extend it; again due to further increases in numbers. With an emphasis on the growing Youth work, there was a need to create greater space for the young people's clubs, and this meant alterations to the building.

One of my respondents, who had been attending Nant Coch since it was founded, had this to say:

‘Among the reasons for the founding of this Church was the wish to have a church nearer to the area of town where the membership lived. Early in its life the Church started a Sunday evening evangelistic service aimed partially at the large numbers of soldiers who were passing through during the war years. This service continued as a focus of evangelical teaching for some years on, until the Church discontinued it in 1997, with a wish to focus most on the community in which the Church building was situated.’<sup>56</sup>

This echoes what Chesterton avers: ‘For anything to be real, it must be local in the sense of having a firm commitment to the local people and the place where they live.’<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> The Church Records were kept by one of the elders and he let me access this information. Some of the information was obtained through interviews with the elders.

<sup>56</sup> Informant, Elder, 2005.

<sup>57</sup> The Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas: *Faith in the City*, 1995.

Nant Coch Church has its roots in the Christian Brethren; and although their people no longer used that label, they have retained some of the distinctiveness of that tradition: namely;

- (i) Lay (and Plural) leadership
- (ii) The priesthood of all believers
- (iii) The wide use of gifts in the Church.<sup>58</sup>

Nant Coch Church enjoyed an individual autonomy. The Church's policies, finances, ministries and forms of organization continued to be decided at a local level. The leadership at the time I was a visitor there consisted of five Elders who were all male, one of whom was a paid staff Elder, who worked 2 days a week for the Nant Coch Church and also elsewhere to earn a living. He was appointed during the time I was researching there, following a series of Church meetings and consultations. The Church held regular open meetings to provide an opportunity for discussion about major decisions or proposed new directions in the life of the church. Leadership at all stages was accountable both to other members of the leadership team and to the congregation.

The leadership team or the 'Coordinators' covered 5 aspects of administration: i.e

1. Main meetings- Sunday worship
2. Youth and Children
3. Mission- Home and Abroad
4. Pastoral- Bible Study
5. Care for Students, Practical and Support

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<sup>58</sup> Nant Coch Church Records. Accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2005.

The majority of elders were graduates with professional/managerial jobs; aged 45 – 65 and married with children.

Nant Coch Church had an informal membership system, which members preferred to understand as a mutual commitment thus: The Church was to look after and nurture its members and members were to attend, to pray for one another, to give towards the needs of the Church, and to use their gifts on its behalf. The membership list was a confidential document held and viewed only within the eldership and leadership teams.

I observed that more or less half of Church members were attending both morning and evening Services on Sundays, with 30- 40 people attending evening service; and 40-50 attending morning Service. The gender ratio was 5:2 - women: men. Respondents commonly spoke of being ‘born again. According to the information provided by worshippers on the questionnaire replies, members came from a wide variety of backgrounds and were of a wide of range of ages. In response to **Question 1. How old are you?**<sup>59</sup> 5% of the respondents were between 15 and 20 years of age, 10 % of the respondents were between 20 and 30 years of age, 10 % were between 30-40years of age, 25 % were between 40 and 50 years of age, 25 % were between 50 and 60 years of age, 13 % were between 60-70 years of age, 10 % were between 70 and 80 years of age, 1 % were between 80-100years of age. Most of my respondents had been attending Nant Coch Church for more than 10 years.<sup>60</sup> The congregation during my stay was entirely ethnically white, apart from one Indian couple who had recently begun attending.

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<sup>59</sup> Appendix C: The Questionnaire.

<sup>60</sup> Appendix C: The Questionnaire, question 1 (a) How long have you been coming to this Church?.

#### **5.4: The Christian Background of the Congregation**

In response to questionnaire Q 2 **Were you raised in this tradition? (Tell me how you came to decide on this Church)** respondents cited their upbringing and background as well as a number of miscellaneous reasons for joining Nant Coch. 5% of the respondents stated that they had arrived at Nant Coch, having been originally from other Christian denominations, such as Methodists, Baptists and Anglicans.

Others had been invited by friends in the first place and had stayed on; whilst others had joined so as to enjoy the ‘sound teaching’ and ‘provision for children’. One respondent who was a female aged 30 with 3 young children stated that,

‘It was recommended as being a great place for children. Very close to my home so my local church which is important to me.’<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore, some members were ‘married into’ Nant Coch, and some others ‘born into it’.

Typically over 85 % of respondents had been brought up in the Brethren tradition. Yet another respondent who was a male aged 60, commented,

‘Just arrived and never left’!<sup>62</sup>

On the whole there subsisted a core of people who had been part of Nant Coch Church for most of their adult lives.

While there was no single reason why individuals were drawn to Nant Coch, over 95 per cent of the people there cited ‘a warm, local Church ethos and sound doctrine’ were the features that had attracted them.

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<sup>61</sup> Informant.

<sup>62</sup> Informant.

What I had found particularly interesting was that 80% of the respondents had stated reasons regarding scriptural authority. One had said,

‘I was previously – all my life – a Methodist, but that Church deserted the true teaching of the Bible and compromised with worldly standards too much. It has lost its way!’<sup>63</sup>

I observed written into the Nant Coch Church Statement of Faith that,

‘The Bible is the inspired Word of God’<sup>64</sup>

and that the Nant Coch people aimed to,

‘base everything they do and say on the Bible.’<sup>65</sup>

What Guest has said about evangelical Churches and their understandings of scriptural authority is worth noting, ‘Recent studies of evangelical Churches have re-affirmed a long standing emphasis upon theological correctness, usually grounded in scriptural authority and moral precept.’<sup>66</sup>

The members of the Nant Coch congregation generally considered themselves to be evangelicals, and the elders came from evangelical backgrounds and reflected this. Indeed so did the conversations I had with some members, who were immensely proud of their evangelical backgrounds.

## **5.5: Church Activities**

### **A: Prayer Meetings and Bible Studies**

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<sup>63</sup> Informant was an Elder in the Church.

<sup>64</sup> Nant Coch, What We Believe: Our Basis of Faith.

<sup>65</sup> Nant Coch, What We Believe: Our Basis of Faith.

<sup>66</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds), 2004, Page 71.

According to many respondents, members of the congregation were encouraged to develop their faith through prayer triplets, through house groups, and by the 'Bible Study System.' These groups met during the week as follows: -

- i) Monday: a prayer meeting attracting 6-9 people.
- ii) Tuesday (3 Bible Study Groups)
- iii) Wednesday (2 Bible Study Groups)
- iv) Thursday (1 Bible Study Group) and
- v) Friday afternoon (1 Bible Study Group)

Two of these groups were given over to women, one given to men, and one to youth. Prayer was emphasized as an important feature for these groups. Every year Nant Coch Church invited members to opt for Spring Harvest, the well-known annual national gathering for Christians.

### **B: Sunday Lunch**

The congregation held lunch together in the Church building after one Sunday morning service every other month. Church members, their friends and families, relatives and children attended.

A further key emphasis for this Church was the notion of community – expressed emphatically in the ideal of 'fellowship'. Members of the Church enjoyed a full sense of collective unity and indeed showed great mutual care for one another. Newcomers were invited to share in these upon their formal entering into fellowship with Nant Coch members.

### **C: Midweek social links with the Elderly in the community**

It was evident that Nant Coch Church had social networks. Known as ‘friendship evangelism’, this was expressed through Coffee and Lunch clubs held once a month. These were attended mainly by older members, from both the Church and from beyond. Residents at St Catherine’s Nursing and Residential Home were brought by their carers to attend these monthly ‘Coffee club’ meetings.

It was most interesting to observe that this kind of provision of services and offering of individual care was seen as mission by the members of Nant Coch Church. Church members also paid visits to St Catherine’s Residential and Nursing Home. My own observations noted that this type of contact with residents, as Chambers himself puts it, was primarily, ‘an aspect of the Church’s desire to be seen as a community church and not too much is expected of these people in terms of potential recruitment.’<sup>67</sup> Therefore, Nant Coch church, unlike some evangelical churches that lacked sustained contact with the surrounding community, had such contacts. This contradicts what was suggested by an observer that for some older Christians in Evangelical churches it was not uncommon sometimes to find it hard to break out of the self-imposed straightjacket in order to reach the unreached.

### **D: Mothers and Toddlers**

One of the leaders of the Mothers and Toddlers group told me that this group was begun in order to provide a service to parents in the congregation, and in addition to facilitate, ‘friendship evangelism’. The group’s clientele was drawn from church members and from other local families.

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<sup>67</sup> Chambers 2005, 179.

One respondent from the Mothers and Toddlers leadership team stated that,

‘It provides an opportunity for the carers of young children to meet up with and make new friends in a toddler and baby – friendly environment with the availability of a wide variety of age-appropriate toys.’<sup>68</sup>

In the course of conversations I had with several of those who attended the group which included both Church members and leaders, and those from other local families, I was told that in recent years the people who were attending tended less and less to be Christians; and that some of them had never been to Church.

They were still members of the group and did receive all the benefits of membership of the group; including hearing the gospel and being invited to the Christmas Carol Service and its following entertainment, held once a year. The group was thriving. In fact it was so popular that there was a waiting list. In an interview I had with one of the leaders, she said;

‘Unfortunately, owing to health and safety concerns, we do need to limit numbers and there is a waiting list.’<sup>69</sup>

One of the mums told me that she was referred to this Mums and Toddlers group by her Health Visitor, who, I discovered, had no links with the Church. Since coming to Mums and Toddlers this mother had become a member of the congregation. Nant Coch Mothers and Toddler group had gained in significance because of the way it was complementing work being done by Sure Start. The group was run by a committed and enthusiastic team who put themselves on hand to

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<sup>68</sup> Informant, Leader.

<sup>69</sup> Informant, Female, Aged 55.

provide support and a listening ear, as it was required. There was a shared hope among informants that newcomers might convert and make a personal commitment to Jesus.

### **E: Young people's groups**

My observations were that Nant Coch Church had an exciting range of activities for children. These were enjoyed by children from the local area as well as by families attending the Church. In conversation with one of the leaders of Sunday Club she said,

‘We introduce the children to the love of God, the reality of forgiveness and eternal life through basic Bible stories, teaching of right and wrong and personal encounter.’<sup>70</sup>

She went on to say that, ‘Children are told about Jesus and how He could become their friend.’<sup>71</sup>

‘Go For it’ was a Friday evening event for 7-11 year olds which attracted predominantly non – church children. Sunday Club met on Sundays and was for 3-11 year olds. Holiday Club, which took place for one week each summer, attracted 100 children aged 7-11. There were approximately 50 helpers. I had interview sessions with several helpers and I grew to understand that a lot of planning went into these clubs and events.

Planning for Holiday Club started in February in readiness for August, and all agreed that prayer support from the Church was important for success. At the end of Holiday Club a family event and a family service were held, to which parents of the children in Holiday Club were invited.

One of the leaders told me that holding this service was part of their Mission to the

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<sup>70</sup> Informant, Mums and Toddlers’ Co-ordinator.

<sup>71</sup> Informant- Mums and Toddlers’ Co-ordinator.

neighbourhood, because some of the children only heard about Jesus once a year when they came to Holiday Club.

Thursday evening family events during Holiday Club were seen as opportunities to meet parents. Also as parents/carers were dropping children off each day there were opportunities to talk with them. She went on to say that these clubs and events were part of the testimony of Nant Coch Church to its vital and active presence in the neighbourhood. The leaders of Holiday Club told me that Holiday Club was thriving.

Among the other Church groups was Grapevine which met on a Sunday during the morning service and mid-week once a month for Bible Study and a meal. These meetings were attended by a small group of young people aged 11-18, mostly from Church families. A much larger Grapevine group met on Friday nights for socializing and indoor games such as snooker, table tennis and indoor football, and occasional other activities such as cooking or craft, and occasional outings for a variety of activities, such as swimming, skating, climbing, or hiking. There was a half hour slot during Friday night session for a meeting in which issues of faith were considered. One of the younger members of the leadership team I spoke to stated that, he felt that 'Grapevine' was a time to use sports facilities, talk to one's friends or just to hang out and try to look cool. He went on to say that there was included some in-depth study on contemporary issues followed by common prayer. Yes, they did have a little time to wind down after a long day, but this was punctuated by interactive Bible Studies on issues of faith.

In interviews, many respondents commented that university education meant that the 20-30-age band was increasingly under-represented in the congregation during term time. Each young person had an older member of the congregation praying for them and keeping in touch with

prayer requests and testimonies of answered prayer. However, one of the founder members stated that after graduation, a number of the young professionals tended to find jobs elsewhere in the country and did not always return to Nant Coch, Newport.

## **F. Services**

There were three Church Services on Sundays. They met at 8:30am – 9:30 am for a Communion Service. This was followed by Sunday morning Service which comprised of worship and Bible Teaching / Exposition at 10:00am – 12:30pm. At this Service provision was made for children in way of a Creche and a Sunday school. They held All- Age worship on the first Sunday of the Month. The evening Service was held at 6:00pm. This was led from the front with a selection of hymns, prayers and a reading followed by a speaker. On a number of occasions speakers were interviewed about their mission related work either home or abroad. Talks were recorded on tapes and made available on request.

As observed by Becker, the Sunday Morning Service provides a ritual affirmation of the congregation as family.<sup>72</sup> Public prayers sometimes included mentions of individual members especially of those who were ill or were grieving. In interviews and informal conversations respondent members also described their congregation as a family.

Some of the responses to **Q. 3: What does being a member of this congregation mean for you?** Picked up on this theme, and were as follows:

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<sup>72</sup> Becker, *Congregations in conflict*, 1999.

100 % of the respondents stated that, ‘The Church is a very important part of my life and it is part of my spiritual family.’<sup>73</sup>

Some 80 % stated that “ Nant Coch is great for fellowship and the church meant a great deal to them”.<sup>74</sup> To some 70% of the respondents, the church was their everything.<sup>75</sup> 75% of the respondents stated that, Nant Coch was great for human relationships and for personal relationships with Jesus and people felt supported, cared for and loved.<sup>76</sup> There was a sense of belonging to a loving, welcoming family and was a vital part of the life of the congregation.<sup>77</sup>

One lady, aged 65, said to me, ‘I would be lost without my Church family,’ and to one gentleman it was his extended ‘Blood’ family.’<sup>78</sup>

It was evident at some of the events I attended that members were secure and confident in their Christian identity. Most if not all of them tended to be active “doers” rather than passive recipients, and showed a highly developed sense of personal responsibility in the corporate life of the Church. One commented, ‘We are the body of Christ, called to serve one another.’<sup>79</sup>

## **G. Ecumenism**

One of the Elders informed me that Nant Coch Church had been developing ecumenical links with other Christians in the area including Trinity Methodist Church. However, he pointed out that attempts at linking with the Anglican Church at the time had not been very successful.

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<sup>73</sup> Informants, Gleaned from questionnaire.

<sup>74</sup> Informants , gleaned from Questionnaire

<sup>75</sup> Informants, gleaned from questionnaire

<sup>76</sup> Informants.

<sup>77</sup> Informants.

<sup>78</sup> Informants.

<sup>79</sup> Informant.

## **H: World Mission**

At the time I was there Nant Coch Church supported, by prayer and in giving, two couples who were mission partners in Japan and in Mongolia. Mission was central to Nant Coch which had interests abroad and at home. Members of the congregation were devoting time and effort to helping those in Japan, Albania and elsewhere to find Christ. It was felt by many informants that this wider approach recognized that local activity was only a part and seeing the bigger picture encouraged healthy growth of the Church of Christ engaged in mission. This was cited by informants in response to **Q. 6: In Nant Coch are there events in the life of the Church that you describe as Mission?**

Some respondents stated that the Church also supported a number of organizations engaged in work overseas seeking to spread the Christian Gospel. One respondent told me about a Relief to Romania Project. He showed me some photographs of the orphanage that he and some church members were supporting financially and materially. Individual church members were involved with providing for work amongst street children in Brazil. There was also ongoing support of Christian work in France, and there was some fostering of the work of Encourage International, an organisation that operated in Europe and North Africa. On display inside the church were these initiatives' newsletters and photographs of their workers and of the missionaries. Nant Coch Church took seriously the burning issues of social justice and there was support for Tear Fund and for Tradecraft. There was a stall at the back of the Church with Tradecraft products for sale.

A member of the congregation was being supported financially to do mission – in local primary schools and in the South Wales valleys, places such as Tredegar and Abertillery. His ministry was known as CWTCH (Christ’s Word To CHildren) ministries. One lady commented, ‘And of course CWTCH in Welsh means hug and yet other informants said Cwtch meant safeguarding, protecting and loving.’<sup>80</sup> The Cwtch ministries programme of events in the schools featured prominently in the Weekly Diary of Events in the Church. Church members spoke highly of the Cwtch Ministries (Christian work undertaken in local primary schools in the forms of Assemblies, Christian Unions). The Cwtch Ministries worker told me that he used sketch board, magic tricks and his computer, to illustrate his telling of Bible stories and to bring out Bible teaching relevant to children. Some respondents referred to this work as ‘creative evangelism’ and others said it was ‘Christian magician conjuring.’<sup>81</sup> In conversation with him he told me that he had built a good rapport with Head teachers and staff members in many schools.<sup>82</sup> He saw his ministry as that of loving children, protecting and safeguarding them. He went on to say that the staff shared the problems the schools were going through at that time, particularly discipline and parental problems, and they welcomed his input and prayer and his sharing with the church family.<sup>83</sup>

One of the Elders told me that in addition to CWTCH Ministries, Nant Coch was a member of ICE (Initiatives in Christian Education) Wales.<sup>84</sup> Through this initiative the members sought to engage with the local primary schools. A small group of the church members went into the schools to take school assemblies, Bible clubs and sometimes Bible Explorer lessons. At the time

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<sup>80</sup> Informant, A lady aged 35.

<sup>81</sup> Informants.

<sup>82</sup> Informant, *CWTCH Ministries*, 2005.

<sup>83</sup> Informant, *CWTCH Ministries*, 2005.

<sup>84</sup> Informant, Elder, 2005.

of my fieldwork, 2 schools had been to Nant Coch Church to learn about the real Easter through drama, storytelling, puppets and craft. This had been a great success and they hoped to repeat it and plans were underway to put on a similar presentation at Christmas.

### **5.6 : Reflections on Visits**

The service I attended several times was called 'Prime-Time' and it was held at 10:00am. When I visited on one occasion it was a Family service. The service was led by young people and by one of the Elders. There was a music group and a dramatised sketch. The lyrics to the songs were projected for all to see on a large screen at the front. Modern songs were sung from *Mission Praise* and also from *Songs of the Kingdom*, a collection compiled by Nant Coch Church ten years ago.

### **A: Worship**

I found worship at Nant Coch Church to be informal. The normal pattern, though the Church was planning to change it that autumn, was a service of open worship. These services followed the Brethren pattern of long periods of silence combined with appropriate readings. This culminated in Communion and Breaking of Bread, which was normally introduced briefly by an Elder, and open to anyone attending. Services in the evening were normally planned by a team.

According to one worship leader, worship was understood as having a particular purpose. This was: to promote the individual's spiritual development and renewal. The Church invited local Bible teachers from various denominations to preach at weekly services; occasionally they had people well known outside the area. It was mentioned that the former Archbishop of Canterbury,

George Carey, had been to preach at Nant Coch. The worship leader went on to say that, Worship Services were open to all the members of the community.<sup>85</sup> On the signboard of the Church read the invitation, *‘Come and join us for worship.’*

In the communion Service meetings worship was structured around the varied contributions of those present. This was in prayer, bible reading, song, testimony or prophecies. It was evident that allowance was made for individuals to contribute songs and prayers. If no one participated in what was referred to as the Sacrifice of Praise, there would be silence. During a number of these communion services I attended the worshippers met around the Lord’s Table for communion. The services began with either an elder, or established male member of the congregation opening with a Bible reading and sharing a brief thought on the passage followed by a hymn before inviting anyone in the congregation to bring a hymn, prayer, Bible passage or thought to the attention of those present as they felt led by the Spirit. This then culminated in the service leader administering the communion bread and wine. The whole service lasted an hour. One respondent commented that, ‘there was a good half hour of what they called ‘Open Worship’.’<sup>86</sup> Yet another informant remarked thus; ‘These Services can be truly uplifting when we are open to the Holy Spirit’s leading, and bind us closer together in fellowship.’<sup>87</sup>

## **B: Sacraments**

Baptism at Nant Coch was by immersion, in a custom built pool, set into the floor at the front of the Church. Those who were baptized gave their testimonies of how they came to faith. At the

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<sup>85</sup> Informant – Worship Leader.

<sup>86</sup> Informant.

<sup>87</sup> Informant, Female, aged 50.

time I was researching there had been no recent baptisms, which was a concern to the Elders at the time.

I attended the Eucharist, (Breaking of the Bread), on a number of occasions and I observed that during the Eucharist, the Congregation sat around a table and the Elder read from Scripture and said a Prayer of Thanksgiving. The text on many occasions was from 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. The bread was passed around and some members of the congregation each broke off a small piece. The wine was passed around in glasses, from which they each took a sip. The Communion Services were the only services where there was an open invitation for all to attend but participation was restricted to practising, 'born again' Christians. Others, who felt they were not sure they fitted into this category, were welcome to observe. It had been a custom to invite 'all who loved the Lord Jesus' to take part. At the time of this research there was a debate amongst the fellowship about when the children could begin to take part.

### **C: Prayer**

Members of the congregation believed firmly in the value and importance of prayer. Those I spoke to believed that God listened when they prayed and that He answered prayer. When I attended Bible Study I listened to a number of examples of wonderful answers to prayer.

I was told by one of the members that in the Church they had a Prayer Ministry Team specifically for those in need, praying with them in their devotions. Nant Coch did provide support for individual members in times of personal crisis, and in the event of an emergency, members were encouraged to inform whoever was organising the Prayer Chain at the time. This

worked out in practice by means of a telephone relay that enabled the whole church to pray within a short while. Members were also encouraged to pray on their own.

In response to **Q. 7: What does Nant Coch do particularly well?** Some respondents observed that:

‘There were three prayer meetings every week and they prayed for you.’<sup>88</sup>

I found this congregation in various ways fostering caring relationships. They promoted engagement with local civic life, including compassionate outreach to the poor. Nant Coch was part of Newport Night Shelter and the Church hosted over Thursday nights about a dozen rough sleepers who otherwise would have been on the streets. One of the respondents had this to say; ‘As a Church we have been united in helping and the volunteer team has drawn in people who are on <sup>89</sup>the fringes of the Church.’<sup>90</sup> She goes on to say: ‘This has also made us aware of reality of City life for some people and the opportunity to sit down and eat with those we would never have had the chance to meet otherwise,’<sup>91</sup> in addition, ‘The gospels show Jesus taking particular notice of those who were on the underside of his society, He made a particular point of eating and socializing with those groups who were disadvantaged or who lacked choices, likewise we do this to follow his example’ said one respondent.’<sup>92</sup> And yet another informant said, ‘The writer of Hebrews exhorts us to welcome strangers ‘for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it’.’<sup>93</sup> All the respondents I was in conversation with stated thus: ‘Prayer and a quiet time is on offer to all our guests making use of the Night Shelter

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<sup>88</sup> Informants.

<sup>89</sup> Informant.

<sup>90</sup> Informant, Female aged 55.

<sup>91</sup> Informant, Female aged 55.

<sup>92</sup> Informant, Female aged 55

<sup>93</sup> Informant, Hebrews 13:2

provision and usually one or two welcome this facility.’<sup>94</sup> Nant Coch was therefore engaging with Civic life by working with and through Christian agencies in the City such as Ravenhouse Trust and Teen Challenge. Members of the congregation were encouraged to and indeed did provide furniture and household requirements to those on low incomes as well as food parcels.<sup>95</sup> One of the Elders told me that he encouraged the congregation to donate throughout the year and they had a concerted effort at Christmas time.<sup>96</sup> He went on to say that members of the congregation provided packed Sunday lunches which were distributed throughout the year.<sup>97</sup>

These were some of the responses from the **Question 7 What does Nant Coch do particularly well?**

The responses included among others;

- (i) Care for individual members.
- (ii) Care for everyone.

## **5.7 Exploration**

Having given a description of the congregation, I now turn to explore expressions and descriptions of mission offered by the members of Nant Coch congregation.

The Mission Statement of Nant Coch stated,

‘By proclamation and demonstration of the truth of Christ’s message, to increase the membership of the Church local and worldwide and to encourage every member to grow in Christian character and knowledge of God.’<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Informant Male aged 65.

<sup>95</sup> Informant Male aged 30.

<sup>96</sup> Informant, Elder.

<sup>97</sup> Informant, Elder.

<sup>98</sup> Nant Coch, Mission Statement.

The language used in the Mission Statement was telling. It reflected a desire to proclaim Christ, to increase membership and for maturity in the Christian faith.

During the course of interaction with the members of Nant Coch they came up with their own definitions of Mission that was negotiated, idiosyncratic, and particular. But this raises another question, how far could they go in defining their own Mission Task? Their understanding of their own Mission Task was expressed in a range of attitudes towards community work and goodwill activities. The following question explored these various descriptions.

#### **Q. 4 Say what you know about Mission.**

Results showed that mission was regarded as

1. Evangelism by 70% of the respondents.
2. Proclamation by 65% of the respondents.
3. Loving service to those in need 68%, and
4. Social action for justice, outreach, and nurture of Christians in their faith by 98% of the respondents.

Descriptions of mission as evangelism, proclamation, loving service to those in need, and social action for justice, outreach and nurture of all Christians in their faith are taken from responses to question **Q.6: In Nant Coch are there events in the life of the Church that you describe as Mission?**

I was repeatedly struck by the emphasis on the following:

- (i) Holiday Club
- (ii) Sunday Club

- (iii) Go For It
- (iv) Grapevine
- (v) Community event
- (vi) Mother and Toddler Group
- (vii) Family Service
- (viii) Leaflet drop
- (ix) Bible Study Group
- (x) Work with Newport Shelter and Raven House

It is also important to remember that Nant Coch Church members were involved in practical Community Service. Nant Coch ran certain activities by way of Local Government Social Provision, for example Mothers and Toddlers Groups, and Luncheon Clubs for the Elderly. This had created opportunities for interaction; thus lessening the distance between members and the local population.<sup>99</sup> Ballard writing on community and Christian witness has this to say,

‘Without the word of witness there is no gospel. So community activity is seen as a form of witness whose explicit aim is to point to the reality of Grace. Care and concern are part of sharing this central concern.’<sup>100</sup>

Some of the Nant Coch people I interviewed felt that they were exercising a ministry in and through all channels that were available to them and suitable. One of the respondents rightly pointed out that he saw the proper place for his ministry being not in the Church but in the world

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<sup>99</sup> Chambers 2005, Pge 63.

<sup>100</sup> Ballard 1990. Page 29.

as nursing and residential homes visitors, prison visitors, hospital and hospice visitors and School visitors.<sup>101</sup>

Biling is also surely correct in his assumption that

‘Christian communities to which we belong need to exhibit those qualities which in the New Testament are summarized by the word: *koinonia*. This has the quality to bear one another’s burdens, suffer one another’s pain and participate in a common celebration.’<sup>102</sup>

It is evident therefore that every individual matters and each person’s gift is given full opportunity to be exercised. All this was evident at Nant Coch.

In the wording of Questionnaire **Q.5 In your opinion which verse/s in the Bible inspire you most with regards to mission today and say why.** Texts that were popular in Mission were cited as another option and way for me to ascertain more about the theology of mission as it is understood by the members of Nant Coch church.

There were a number of texts mentioned such as;

(i) ‘You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glory your Father in heaven.’<sup>103</sup> This was quoted by 50% of the respondents. In addition to this the text from John’s gospel, ‘This is my Father’s glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples’<sup>104</sup> was also quoted by 30% of the respondents.

Commenting on this last text, one of the respondents had said:

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<sup>101</sup> Ballard 1990, 29. Writing on Community and Christian Mission

<sup>102</sup> Biling writing on *Reflection on Vocation* quoted in Ballard 1990, Page 40.

<sup>103</sup> Matthew 5:14-16.

<sup>104</sup> John 15:8.

‘In March 2001 I invited anyone interested in outreach to a lunch meeting to talk and pray about reaching out into the local Community. At that meeting I took John 15:5-17 as a starting point for our prayer and discussion, focusing on verse 8, ‘This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples, love each other and bear much fruit, this will be to God’s glory and we are promised that what we ask for will be given and our joy will be complete.’<sup>105</sup>

This in this person’s view was a Biblical foundation for Mission.

She goes on to say:

‘Numbers have increased over the months. I am pleased that it is a mixed group, men as well as women. Nant Coch members have brought friends and neighbours, residents from the local nursing Home regularly attend, people from other Churches have also joined us and I praise God that there is always a feeling of anticipation and joy in the meetings.’<sup>106</sup>

Respondents also quoted the following texts as inspiration for Mission.

1. Isaiah 6:8 ‘Here I am send me’ quoted by 20% of the respondents.
2. Isaiah 6:5-8 inspires me as they reflect my unworthiness quoted by 10%.
3. Mark 10:45 Jesus’ love for us quoted by 15%..
4. Matthew 28:19; The Great Commission quoted by 95%.
5. Luke 4:21 Quoted by 70%.

The assertion that The Great Commission provided the major biblical foundation for Mission was indeed common in interviews and in conversations. The following remark came from an elderly man, one of the oldest members of the fellowship:

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<sup>105</sup> Informant, Leader of the Community Group.

<sup>106</sup> Informant, Leader of Community Group.

‘Mission has to be centered on The Great Commission. Jesus’ commission to his friends to ‘go’ and make disciples of all nations’ forms a permanent mandate for the Church. Jesus’ great commission to Mission provides the climax of His ministry and beginning of Christian missions.’<sup>107</sup>

This clearly has resonances with what Bosch observed of many conservative evangelicals:

‘Particularly in the United States, who tend to respond to questions about justification of mission with a single answer; ‘The Risen Lord has commanded it.’<sup>108</sup> Their Scriptural reference time and again, was from Matthew’s gospel, ‘Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.’<sup>109</sup>

### **5.8. Reflection**

In response to **Q.4 Say what you know about Mission**, most respondents stated that: ‘Mission was not optional for the Christian or the Church today.’<sup>110</sup>

They went on to say that to be obedient to God is to be missionary. The word missionary was to be understood as applying to anyone, anywhere, who is committed to obedience to The Great Commission. Obedience therefore leads people to serve in God’s Mission, wherever they are, home or farther afield. It was generally observed by members of the congregation to whom I spoke, that many persons are not believers because they have never heard the Gospel. To ensure that they have heard was felt to be the responsibility of all Christians; their loving duty as members of the Body of Christ.

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<sup>107</sup> Informant, one of the oldest members of the congregation and a retired elder.

<sup>108</sup> Bosch, 1996, Page 340.

<sup>109</sup> Bosch, 1996, Page 340. Matthew 28:19.

<sup>110</sup> Gleaned from Questionnaire.

As one of the members at Nant Coch pointed out, 'The word 'evangel' means the Good News that God has for everyone who will listen, He went on to say that, 'Members of Nant Coch seek to spread the Good News to others.'<sup>111</sup>

I have sought in the preceding sub-sections, to outline in broad terms the range of Church activities taking place at Nant Coch Church. Behind this particular and unassuming investigation of mine lies a whole host of questions and suppositions. The first question must surely be: Does the church stand as a symbol of divine interaction with the human?<sup>112</sup> The second issue, following quickly on its heels, concerns visible love, and deeds characterizing collective people based Christian tasks. As David Bosch has noted, 'The deed without the word is dumb, the word without the deed is empty.'<sup>113</sup> St Paul said it before him, in so many words, in Romans when he talks about love in action. He says, 'Love must be sincere.....Share with the Lord's people who are in need.....Practice hospitality.'<sup>114</sup>

My research therefore has sought to investigate how the Christians carry out their Christian tasks in relation to the needs and aspirations of their local communities. The Gospel proclaims the reality and the immanent possibility of the Kingdom of God; a Kingdom that enters into the totality of human experience, including our social and community life.<sup>115</sup> The Christian community therefore, is as much committed to serving the causes of justice, peace and the proclamation of the integrity of creation, and to making a humane, caring and fair society, as it is

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<sup>111</sup> Informant, Male aged 70.

<sup>112</sup> Bosch, 1996, Page 10-11.

<sup>113</sup> Bosch 1996, Page 420.

<sup>114</sup> Romans 12:9-21.

<sup>115</sup> Ballard, 1990, Page 9.

to evangelism. These are each various facets to mission, and they are all interconnected and interdependent.<sup>116</sup>

The Church therefore seeks to draw men and women from every place into the world to come, and turn to Christ in repentance and faith. According to J. Ukpong,

‘The goal and vision of the Church’s mission is the renewal of the earth. Jesus inaugurated a new age of God’s Kingly rule on earth and has called the Christian Church to participate in the actualisation of that kingdom until its eschatological realization. The challenge the Church faces in its mission then is how to proclaim this Kingly rule of God in a world full of oppression, violence and disregard for creation. Its message, just as Jesus’ message, must be liberating, life affirming and prophetic.’<sup>117</sup>

In a conversation I had with one of the Elders he was concerned that there had not been baptisms for a while; and so were some other members of the congregation. However, one of the other Elders and the leaders of the Mums and Toddlers group felt that their work was impacting the people in a positive way. In a conversation with an Elder’s wife, she felt that her witness had had many indirect effects, apart from direct conversions. These, and the other concerns of a number of evangelical congregations is reflected in what was observed by Guest,

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<sup>116</sup> Hadfield provides a useful analysis of the facets of mission when she says that, The sharing of Good News in proclamation whether this be an evangelistic programme or informal conversation, accompanies other facets of mission. Nurture, teaching enables people to explore faith while service ensures that faith is manifested in action. Without social action for justice much service can be like the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff and achieves little in changing the systems which contribute to casualties in the first place. Unless there is care for the environment the earth ceases to support the human community adequately.

<sup>117</sup> Ukpong, ‘Christian Mission and the recreation of the Earth in Power and Faith: A Biblical – Christological Perspective.’ *Mission Studies IX*. 2.8, 1992, Pages 134 –149

‘that to be a ‘successful’ church in popular evangelical terms is to be numerous, active and to elicit practical commitment, and this is essential to the identity of the congregation as conceived by its members.’<sup>118</sup>

It must be said however that in matters of faith, quality cannot be easily defined as it is only known to God.

The issue of how people at Nant Coch were measuring growth manifested itself during some interesting discussions I had. On the one hand it was a concern, given that in evangelical congregations, ‘believing comes before belonging.’<sup>119</sup> One of the Elders had this to say: ‘Ideally, we would have loved to see people converted and confessing Jesus as their Lord and Saviour before becoming members of the fellowship.’<sup>120</sup> On the other hand some of the leaders of the groups I spoke to would have agreed with Gill’s assertion that,

‘In matters of faith, belonging is primary. Intellectuals are apt to forget this. We are so concerned with thought that we convince ourselves that belief is primary. People believe then they belong, so it is assumed.....in that order. In contrast, I am convinced that the order is mostly the other way around – we belong and then we believe.’<sup>121</sup>

The ‘idea of belonging without having any necessary criteria of belief’<sup>122</sup> was an issue with which the leadership of Nant Coch Church was having to come to terms. As suggested by Chambers, ‘belonging without any necessary criteria of belief makes it easier for individuals in

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<sup>118</sup> Guest, Tusting, Woodhead (eds), 2004, Page 83.

<sup>119</sup> Chambers 2005, Page 66.

<sup>120</sup> An Elder, 2004.

<sup>121</sup> Ukpong, ‘Christian Mission and the recreation of the Earth in Power and Faith: A Biblical – Christological Perspective.’ *Mission Studies IX*. 2.8, 1992, Pages 134 –149

<sup>122</sup> Chambers 2005, Page 66

the local community to slip into attendance, given that the church ethos is inclusive of them and does not seek to impose unrealistic levels of commitment before any real involvement has begun.’<sup>123</sup>

In conversation with various people it was evident that a number of people from the local community found Nant Coch church to be enriching to their own lives and their children’s lives. A Muslim lady whose children went to holiday club and attended weekday activities at Nant Coch had this to say, ‘I believe that Nant Coch is doing a good job with regards to children’s work and development so I send my children to Nant Coch every week and I have noticed a change in their behaviour and attitudes.’<sup>124</sup>

### **5.9 Response: Conclusion.**

This chapter is structured upon a central argument that congregations develop distinctive local understandings of mission. This chapter has made evident the fact that there are many ways of describing and understanding mission. Some comments made to me there indicated that a general understanding of mission among Christians at Nant Coch is compatible with a range of traditions and perspectives. For some people there, it was emphasis on personal conversion; for others it was a regard for social outreach as pre-evangelism or as evangelism. It was also perceived to involve a clear commitment to promoting Church growth; an increase in the number of people who worship and act together within – and not divorced from – the local community.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Chambers 2005, Page 66

<sup>124</sup> Informant, Female, Aged 30

<sup>125</sup> The Archbishop’s Report on Urban Priority Areas, *Faith in the City*, 1995, 77.

Arising from my research a number of questions were raised with regard to how the congregation at Nant Coch was responding to the challenges posed by the social consequences of urbanization, commercialism, consumerism, and the straightjacket of pseudo-scientific materialism. These are complex and contested issues. However, whilst listening to members of the congregation at Nant Coch Church they were seen to be responding to social conditions and concerns such as unemployment, drugs, marriage breakdown, homelessness, poverty, child abuse, racial discrimination, social isolation and loneliness. According to one of the informants, Nant Coch was working with Teen Challenge in Newport. She went on to say that, ‘through Teen Challenge, drug users are being rehabilitated, young men who have been excluded from their homes have an opportunity to look for alternative accommodation and find jobs because they are in a caring environment, immigrants in the town who have lost jobs or suffered from exploitation have the opportunity to get back on their feet or be helped to return home.’<sup>126</sup> The Youth and Children’s coordinator remarked that the church was very vigilant in reinforcing the Child Protection policy and everyone who worked with young people and children had to have an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. Commenting on issues of isolation and loneliness, the coordinator for the community event made this observation, ‘I hope that our monthly Community Event set up meets some of the local need here, particularly for the elderly.’<sup>127</sup> She went on to say: ‘we provide transport to bring people to this event if there is a need and Church members living among an elderly housing area near the Church make contact with those they feel need befriending.’<sup>128</sup> The members of Nant Coch Church were seen to be working through the social and political connotations of being Christians in Newport and the difficulties that such a life involved.

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<sup>126</sup> Informant, Female aged 45.

<sup>127</sup> Informant, Female aged 55.

<sup>128</sup> Informant, Female aged 55.

Whereas evangelicals tend to have a fairly narrow view of what constitutes Mission, I was fascinated to discover that the ideas of Mission held by the people of Nant Coch Church were more of a holistic type thereby interpreting mission in terms of its social significance and via local community relations.<sup>129</sup>

However, when I was in conversation with one of the Elders, he expressed the conflict he considered that existed: On the one hand there existed a desire to be open to the needs of the neighbourhood and to allow these to set the agenda. On the other hand there was the primary desire to see the maintenance and growth of a worshipping community.<sup>130</sup> Discussions circulating around issues of this nature will continue in the course of this research. It may not be contained within the confines of this chapter. In conversation informants repeatedly drew images of Church within the New Testament as a resource for contemporary mission. The word Restoration was applied by many to what seemed to be what Nant Coch had interpreted its mission over the years and what they said to be doing in their outreach at the time.

That is to seek to restore everyone to their rightful place in the world through reconciliation to God through the Lord Jesus and in the words of 'The King, the snake and the promise',<sup>131</sup> 'God's people in God's Place again' as the journey through the Bible takes them from the Garden of Eden to the New Jerusalem as seen in the book of Revelation. It is stated thus: 'And I heard a voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or

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<sup>129</sup> Chambers 2005, Page 63.

<sup>130</sup> Ballard 1990, Page 11.

<sup>131</sup> Genesis 3:15.

pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’<sup>132</sup> This had been and was still their longing as a Church to see members of their families, their neighbours, friends, the homeless and drug addicts in Newport, all brought back into God's Kingdom. More so when they had leafleted houses or gone into St Katharine's nursing home or held a community event, it was because of their desire to see all those people restored to their rightful place in Christ. This was said to quote Paul's words in his First Letter to Timothy, ‘is good and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.’<sup>133</sup>

The painful times they had been through individually and as a Church and seeing the way God had restored them and continues to restore them and the trust the Church had shown that God will indeed restore them, as it is echoed in the Psalms of David, Isaiah 40 and the parable of the Prodigal son which they all loved and continually turned to, showed their understanding of what a Wonderful Saving God we had.

The Christians in Nant Coch Church have reflected together on their experiences, emotions and challenges of being involved in mission. It was evident that through friendship, members of the congregation availed themselves to fellow members of the fellowship as well as to the community as a witness of God's love. They did this through the strong networks the church had in place. This Chapter has shown that Nant Coch had a right balance between the concern for the individual and societal orientation. The congregation portrayed a new holistic expression of mission which can inform new approaches to mission.

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<sup>132</sup> Revelation, 21: 3-4.

<sup>133</sup> 1 Timothy 2: 3-4.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **St Mary's Roman Catholic Church**

#### **6.1: Methodology**

My project with St Mary's Roman Catholic Church began over an informal chat with one of the parish priests there. I then wrote a letter to him outlining my project and seeking his permission to spend sometime with his congregation.<sup>1</sup> These matters were discussed with church leaders and permission was granted to me to carry out the project. I was then invited to meet the other priests in the team over lunch. Since there were 6 churches in All Saints Parish at the time, it was agreed between us that it was mutually beneficial that I limited my studies to the main church of St Mary's. So my work in this chapter is concentrated on St Mary's.

On my first visit to worship there, the priest introduced me to the congregation and told the people why I was there. He explained that I was going to be with them for some months. I visited St Mary's whenever possible over a period of eight months, during which time I mingled among the congregation at more than 20 gatherings. I attended a number of Weekday Masses, Saturday Mass, Sunday Morning Mass and Sunday Evening Mass. In addition I attended some of the major festivals. At the time I mixed first among the congregation, I observed what was going on, and watched how persons acted and their expectations; and also I distributed copies of a detailed questionnaire.<sup>2</sup> Beforehand I sent a copy of the questionnaire to the parish priest. His remarks are worth noting. He stated, 'The language and concepts are not quite how we talk in the Catholic Community, so it will both challenge some, confuse others, and stretch us all.'<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, he agreed to let the questionnaires be distributed. Theoretically, he said, he

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix: B Sample of a letter to selected congregations.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix C: The Questionnaire

<sup>3</sup> Informant, Parish Priest, All Saints Parish.

preferred for me to give out these materials after Mass so as not to deflect people from their prayers. However, he gave permission for the questionnaire to be distributed at the time people were entering the church and he allowed them time to fill in their copies before the start of the service. He encouraged people to fill in their copies of the questionnaire.

This questionnaire provided a guide for structured interviews I planned to take place. Completed copies of the questionnaires were returned to me after the service before people left the church. (Some parishioners had requested more time to think about their answers.) The procedure for distributing the questionnaire copies was done at 9:30am Mass. This was repeated at 11:15am Mass so nobody was missed out. Every person attending received one and 70% of copies (140 out of 200) of the questionnaires were completed by them and returned the same day. 20% of the congregation failed to pass a copy back to me but a further 10% were completed and returned to me in the course of the following week. At this 11:15am Mass there were a considerable number of visitors to the church, because there were six children receiving their first communion that day among the worshippers. The recorded Mass Count was 300. Despite this higher-than-normal attendance another 60% (180 out of 300) of copies of the questionnaire were not returned to me or were returned uncompleted. Many of the day's visitors, numbering nearly 100 according to Mass count, chose not to fill in their questionnaire sheets.

As well as with members of the congregation who included among others 2 members of the Society of St Vincent De Paul, 2 youth leaders, 3 Eucharistic assistants, 5 people from the social club, 2 members of the youth club, 2 Sunday school teachers, and 4 other lay members, I carried out a series of semi-structured interviews with 1 deacon and 3 priests too. Those who

participated in the semi-structured interviews were aged between 12 years and over 80 years of age. Among these were an equal number of men and women. Additionally, I examined church records and certain materials that were on display in the church. The material on display included the weekly newsletter, parish magazine and Roman Catholic newspapers. I attended church meetings, church activities and church social gatherings, so as to be able to observe and try to understand better how members of the congregation preferred to express themselves in their community. A number of people spoke to me and I developed good relationships with many members of the congregation. These good relations generally enabled me to overcome my initial fears concerning how I was going to be received as a female Anglican priest carrying out research in a Roman Catholic Church.

## **6.2: Why St Mary's Roman Catholic Church?**

I chose to focus on St Mary's Roman Catholic Church for a number of reasons. At the time I was doing this field work, the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales was undergoing a difficult process of change. The Roman Catholic Church was experiencing 'progressive breakdown in those communal structures and patterns of behaviour that had rendered Catholics distinct within British society.'<sup>4</sup> There were cultural shifts going on, which were being 'accompanied by marked reductions in numbers of active Roman Catholic Church members.'<sup>5</sup> One of the repercussions of these trends was that numbers of 'lay people regularly participating in the Church liturgy were shrinking; and so naturally were contributions from worshippers towards costs for priests being available to staff parishes.'<sup>6</sup> Such a loss in finance and in stipendiary staff in particular, had 'catalysed an accelerating programme of parish

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<sup>4</sup> McGrail in Guest, Tusting and Woodhead (Eds). 2004, Page 85.

<sup>5</sup> McGrail in Guest, Tusting and Woodhead (eds) 2004, Page 85.

<sup>6</sup> McGrail in Guest, Tusting and Woodhead (Eds) 2004, Page 85.

amalgamations and closures, resulting in a sense of insecurity on the part of many lay Roman Catholics, who were also fearing for the future of their particular parishes.’<sup>7</sup> I was interested therefore in finding out more about what was happening in the Roman Catholic Church in Newport, and why; in relation to numbers of active members, and their roles in a community of worship under pressure. I had hoped to identify the reasons for my findings. Admittedly, I wanted also to attempt to establish whether indeed there had been a marked decline in numbers of lay people regularly participating in worship, (as we had seen it to be the case broadly across most of the Protestant denominations there), and indeed, whether lay workers were contributing (similarly to Protestant lay workers) to the ministry of St Mary’s Church. I was interested in trying to assess any perceived sense of their church being in decline among its people, and thus its current perceived status.

It was Ward<sup>8</sup> who observed that Catholic parishioners have ‘strong individual (vertical) identification with their parish, but weak communal (horizontal) social bond between one another.’<sup>9</sup> He went on to suggest that this phenomenon was explainable ‘in terms of ecclesiastical organization by parish; that there were strong individual relationships between priests and people, fostered particularly by a custom of regular parish visiting by priests and by the common structure of parish societies, which are formed largely from a small core of parish activists.’<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Mc Grail in Guest, Tusting and Woodhead (Eds) 2004, Page 85.

<sup>8</sup> Ward in Guest, Tusting and Woodhead (Eds) 2004, Page 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ward in Guest, Tusting and Woodhead(Eds) 2004, Page 4.

<sup>10</sup> Ward, in Guest, Tusting and Woodhead (eds) 2004, 4

In the light of this series of assertions, and using them as one of my starting points, I chose to carry on this segment of my field work by looking at St Mary's Roman Catholic Church and to investigate if the case put by Ward was also the case for this corner of Roman Catholic Newport. In addition, having decided on also studying the Pentecostal/ Charismatic and Evangelical Congregations, to include St Mary's seemed a useful choice that might give me a more rounded perspective and outlook. I was therefore interested to find out more about the way ordinary members of St Mary's Roman Catholic Church perceived, understood and responded to the sacraments and worship.

I was brought up worshipping within the Anglican Church of Uganda. In the words of Stringer, 'my thoughts about Catholic worship could be summed up in two words: 'habit' and 'tradition.'<sup>11</sup> And so in doing this research I found myself keen to find out about other Church traditions and about their particular idiosyncrasies with involvement in mission. I had studied much Ugandan Church history and one of the demarcation features in this history of religion in Uganda had been the religious wars between Protestant factions (*the Wangeleza*) and their Roman Catholic opponents (*the Wa Fransa*). It was this personal background that stayed with me and played its part in my eagerness to pursue my investigation in Newport.

### **6.3: Organisation of the Church**

According to one of my informants, St Mary's understood itself as 'The' Roman Catholic Church presence in its Newport locale.'<sup>12</sup> At the time I was doing my field work, Newport

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<sup>11</sup> Stringer 1999, Page 110.

<sup>12</sup> Informant: Roman Catholic Parish Priest.

boasted four Roman Catholic Parishes, namely; a) St Patrick's, b) St Gabriel's, c) St Julius , Aaron and David, and d) All Saints. St Mary's was one of six churches in All Saints Parish. The other five churches were; a) St Anne's, b) St Basil and St Gwladys, c) St David Lewis , d) St David's and e) St Michael's.

St Mary's Roman Catholic Church was situated in the city centre of Newport on Stow Hill, and within this council ward. Stow Hill council ward covered 130 hectares and according to the 2001 census the population of the ward was 4,453.<sup>13</sup> Its ethnic profile at that time was; White 91.0%, Black 1.0%, Asian- Pakistani 3.0%, Asian- other 2.9%, Mixed 1.3%, Chinese 0.5%.<sup>14</sup> St Mary's was located in an area surrounded by business premises. The dwelling type of the ward was represented as 48.1% terraced. 57% of the 4,453 households in the ward were owner-occupiers. There were Christian churches of other denominations in Stow Hill ward. The nearest in proximity was Bethel Temple. St Woolos Anglican Cathedral was close by St Mary's and so were Havelock Street and Stow Park Presbyterian Church, Stow Hill Methodist Church, St Mary's Street Baptist Church, The Salvation Army Centre, St Paul's Anglican Church and a Welsh Presbyterian Church. Other religious places in the vicinity were the Spiritualist Church and an Islamic Mosque.

#### **6.4: Historical Background**

The middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw an influx into the UK of immigrants arriving from Ireland.

As observed by Hornby-Smith,

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<sup>13</sup> Census 2001, Newport City Council, Office for National Statistics.

<sup>14</sup> Census 2001, Page 83.

‘Irish immigration having had such numerical impact on the English Catholic community was likely also to have strongly influenced the character of the Church in Britain as it emerged from the post-reformation nadir over the past two centuries.’<sup>15</sup>

Most if not all of the immigrants from Ireland were Roman Catholics and came with their faith.

Edward Curran’s observation on this subject is worth noting. He writes,

‘The population of the town was now about 10,000 and increasing at a phenomenal rate, and the number of Catholics approaching 2,000. The Port records state that the sloop ‘Joseph’ from Clonakilly arrived on the 8<sup>th</sup> April 1835 with 36 pigs and 68 passengers. The ‘Catherine’ arrived from Cork with 98 passengers in excess of her authorized number. She was observed unloading passengers two miles from the Watch Tower. The Master of ‘Mary’ from Cork was prosecuted for bringing more than twenty passengers. When the vessel left Cork, forty-six passengers were on board and seventeen were put ashore in a boat at the mouth of the Usk and a number were forced into the mud.’<sup>16</sup>

Newport being at the time a burgeoning industrial town situated close to the ports where these immigrants landed, it soon therefore became a major centre for Catholicism. By 1812 a small chapel had been built on the site now occupied by St Mary’s Catholic Church on Stow Hill. St Mary’s church itself opened in 1840. Its tall spire remains one of the landmarks of the city. It is listed Grade II status and in style is Victorian Gothic. There was seating capacity for 350 people in serried rows of light coloured wooden pews. The organ was housed in the balcony. There were several chapels. Starting from the Lady Chapel and running anticlockwise around the church was in view ‘The Way of the Cross’ with panels of traditional ‘Stations’. Towards the back of the sanctuary a stone reredos houses the Tabernacle in which the Blessed Sacrament was kept. The statue of Our Lady Presenting the Christ-child here is of a pure translucent alabaster.

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<sup>15</sup> Hornby – Smith, *Roman Catholics in England* 1987, 118 He looks at the relationship between the catholic community and the wider society. His work has established empirical evidence concerning in particular the Roman Catholics in England and Wales.

<sup>16</sup> Curran E. *St Mary’s Roman Catholic Church, Newport 1840- 1990*. Newport: Newport Printing, Page 9.

Over the years the building had had a number of alterations and extensions to it. 1904 saw the building of the Institute Refectory (the 'Stute). I saw this used for church and community events and refreshments like coffee, tea and squash were normally served before and after the service. I found its space useful for informal conversation. The adjacent presbytery housed the four priests attached to the six churches that comprised the parish buildings. There was some office space used for parish affairs and for matrimonial care.

Until 1915 Newport was acknowledged to be the main Roman Catholic centre in Wales. In the South Wales Valleys, Merthyr Tydfil was developing at the same time, and Swansea on the Gower coast was also growing quickly. Cardiff was a very small port around this time, and Newport remained Wales's main port for loading and for passenger traffic.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries Irish migrants played a prominent part in the development of Newport as an industrial and civic entity, although they were accepted only with reluctance when, in the 1840's, they came in droves as refugees from the Irish famines. Some of my informants at St Mary's claimed Irish descent and gave me some brief account of their ancestors' experiences in Newport. Their stories echoed a sentiment that Hilaire Belloc once observed, that

'.....our official history, [in UK] has taught by continual suggestions and by taking it as if it were for granted that the English people were in some fashion naturally antagonistic to Catholicism.'<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Belloc, H. *Roman Catholicism in England. From the Elizabethan settlement to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council*. Oxford: Edward Norman Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1985 Page. 4.

## **6.5: The Christian Background of the Congregation**

In response to questionnaire Q2. **Were you raised in this tradition? (Tell me how you came to decide on this Church?)**<sup>18</sup> Informants cited their background and a number of other reasons for their membership in St Mary's Roman Catholic Church.

(a) There was a core of people (96% of the respondents) who had been part of St Mary's all their lives. In fact a number stated that they were 'cradle Catholic'. Yet another person stated, 'I am a Catholic because I was born to Catholic parents and was educated in a Catholic school.'<sup>19</sup>

Typically members had been brought up in the Catholic tradition. Other responses included 'was born and baptised catholic'. A 94 year old man stated that the church meant everything to him and that he had been coming to St Mary's all his life.

(b) Other members (10 respondents) had moved to the area and so had joined the congregation over the past 20 years: and some few (6 respondents) had become involved fairly recently; some even during the period I was visiting.

(c) Some (6 respondents) commented that they had converted from Anglicanism.

(d) By way of joining the church choir, and of serving in the Liturgy, some 5 young people had been introduced to the culture of the church and to the Christian faith.

(e) Moreover, some adults (8 respondents) had become members through marriage to a Catholic. One informant told me that he was aware that it was not a requirement but he felt that 'because of family unity and love it was best if he upheld Catholic values.'<sup>20</sup>

(f) Some (6 respondents) had joined via an influence from some other occasional rite such as a funeral.

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<sup>18</sup> Appendix C: The Questionnaire.

<sup>19</sup> Informant.

<sup>20</sup> Informant, Male, aged 45.

(g) Some (12 respondents) had switched to the Roman Catholic Church from other churches precisely because of its uncompromising stance on certain moral issues. There was no indication of the moral issues on the questionnaire.

Regardless of their varied backgrounds, everybody seemed to get on well together. I got the impression that they looked out for each other and were supportive of one another. This contradicts Ward's view that 'horizontal ties in some congregations were generally weak.'<sup>21</sup>

In response to Qn 3. **What does being a member of this congregation mean to you? (What role does it play in your life?)** Nearly all respondents stated that being a member of the congregation meant everything to them. A 66 year old woman noted that being a member of St Mary's Church made her a member of the church family or the spiritual family, as she put it. She saw this in a wider sense as meaning that she could not feel alone. Many respondents in their 40s said that being a member was of huge importance to them; it was a major part of their lives. It was evident that for many 'belonging and believing' went hand in hand.

According to Church Records weekly Mass Count for St Mary's in 2001 was 800. One of the Parish priests told me that, 'Roman Catholics living in Newport were in the region of 6,440 with an average Mass attendance of 1,610 each week.'<sup>22</sup> He went on to say that, 'the Roman Catholic church was numerically the strongest in Newport, indeed one of the largest populations of Catholics in Wales was to be found there.'<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ward in Guest, Tusting and Woodhead, 2004, page 4.

<sup>22</sup> Informant. Parish Priest. Aged 57.

<sup>23</sup> Informant. Parish Priest, Aged 57.

### **6.1.6: Leadership**

‘A distinctive feature of the Catholic Church is its belief that the ‘pope’, the bishop of Rome, is the successor of Peter, the chief of Christ’s apostles and is entrusted with Peter’s authority given by Christ to lead the Church on earth.’<sup>24</sup> I was told by one of the priests at St Mary’s that, ‘in the Roman Catholic Church the leadership called the Magisterium and represented by bishops, led by the pope in apostolic succession from the apostles and Peter, is the final authority.’<sup>25</sup> In relation to this Archer writes,

‘The Church is incontestably a monarchy, more soberly, the Church is hierarchically structured society, of which the invisible head is Christ and of which the visible head is the pope, Vicar of Christ. The whole of the power appertains to the Pope and to the bishops who constitute the Church teaching and governing.’<sup>26</sup>

This echoes what has been suggested in the Redemptorist that, ‘Ministerial priesthood consists of three distinct orders (from the Greek taxis, meaning ‘that which forms a hierarchy’): the order of episcoporum (bishop), the order of presbyterorum (priest), and the order of diaconorum (deacon).’<sup>27</sup>

Hence, priests are appointed to parishes by bishops. St Mary’s was in the Archdiocese of Cardiff and its Parish priests had been appointed by the bishop. Its leadership consisted of four priests (and one deacon) in overall charge of six parish churches. For the Catholics in St Mary’s Parish, the priests were their primary contact and relation with the Church. The priests were more focused on the sacramental and liturgical life of the community. Therefore, they celebrated the

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<sup>24</sup> Pasco, R. and Redford, R (Eds) *Faith Alive: A new presentation of the Catholic Faith*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988, Page 4.

<sup>25</sup> Informant, Parish Priest, aged 58.

<sup>26</sup> Archer, A. *The two Catholic Churches*. London: SCM Press. 1997, 30.

<sup>27</sup> Redemptorist, *The Essential Catholic Handbook of the Sacraments*. Chawton: Redemptorist Publications 2001, Page 100.

Mass, taught and preached the word of God. They baptized and pronounced forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus in the Sacrament of reconciliation. In addition to this they bore witness to the marriages, and were present to anoint the sick and bury the dead.<sup>28</sup> In conversation with the deacon he told me that, his role was to assist the bishop and the priest in the celebration of the Eucharist. He proclaimed the gospel and did some of the preaching. He had presided over a number of funerals and officiated at baptisms. There was a parish advisory council and a parish pastoral team.

The six parish churches had certain things in common in terms of organisation and programming. They shared an institutional structure of governance through the parish priests. As a result of an amalgamation there was a newly formed parish council whose role was discernment and to lead and develop the parish of All Saints. There was also a parish pastoral council formally established as the 'All Saints Parish pastoral council'. Each of the six communities in the parish had their own 'community committee'. Several informants spoke of past parish amalgamations and closures which had engendered in them a sense of insecurity for the future of their parish.

In response to the note on the questionnaire asking for any information they considered useful, comments were made on their church leadership. A number of respondents pointed out that this was exclusively male and feared this will probably always be. Mention was made by some respondents that they were unimpressed by token female altar servers and Scripture readers. In fact when the first women deacons were priested at St Woolos Anglican Cathedral a few hundred meters away from St Mary's Roman Catholic Church, some ladies from St Mary's Roman

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<sup>28</sup> Redemptorist, 2001, Page 103.

Catholic Church were seen holding a Banner outside the Cathedral with the words, 'Roman Catholic Women Priests next'. This resonates with what has been documented in *A Redemptorist Pastoral Publication*, 'Although optional celibacy and women's ordination are debated issues, the Church is determined not to depart from its long-standing law and deepest tradition of celibate male priests.'<sup>29</sup>

### **6.1.7: Church Activities**

There were many other meetings and activities going on at St Mary's besides Sunday Mass. Some of these activities were run by the local community and some run by church members. These activities were generally held in the refectory. They were as follows:

#### **(a) Society of St Vincent De Paul**

There were five members who met fortnightly. They were dedicated to tackling poverty and disadvantage by providing direct practical assistance to anyone in need. One of the members told me that he worked regularly with the Salvation Army. All the members were involved in helping and befriending the lonely, asylum seekers, the homeless and dealt with emergency aid on request. They were involved in community projects, overseas Aid and Youth development.

#### **(b) Social Club**

In conversation, members of the social club pointed out that the social club was much reduced in activity due to the age of the existing membership. At the Annual General meeting they had decided to remove paid subscriptions such that membership was automatically open to all members of the parish.

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<sup>29</sup> Redemptorist 2001, Page 107.

**(c) Legion of Mary.**

This had a membership of 8. They gave their service to the Church on a voluntary basis. Their participation in the life of the parish was through visitation of families, and sick, both in their homes and in hospitals. In addition they were involved in every missionary undertaking sponsored by the parish. The Legion saw as its priority the spiritual and social welfare of each individual. ‘Every Legion is required to carry out a weekly apostolic work in the spirit of faith in union with Mary.’<sup>30</sup>

**(d) Folk Group**

There were between 6 and 10 members, playing accompanying the singing at masses three Sundays out of four. A younger group had been formed who played once a month. A member of the Folk Group told me that they accompanied the Sunday Mass. She went on to say that, ‘the aim of the group was to bring the liturgy alive through music and also encourage the congregation to join in the music and mass.’<sup>31</sup>

**(e) Women’s groups**

In the parish this ‘**Sugar and Spice**’. This was a group for ladies of a ‘mature age’, those who had retired and were free during the day. They met fortnightly for talks, films and outings.

Other activities included:

- Weekly Prayer Meeting attended by 4-8 people.
- Rainbows
- Brownies and Rangers
- Youth Group held once a week with 20 youths attending.

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<sup>30</sup> [www.legionofmary.ie](http://www.legionofmary.ie). Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> August 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Informant. Female 35.

These activities were attended by people drawn mainly but not exclusively from within the Catholic community. The more secular activities included coffee mornings, Slimmer's World, Civil Service Club, Cruse Bereavement Group, Extended Exercise Group, Samba band, and Bingo/Quiz group.

All these were run by community groups who hired the hall for the purpose. The church itself held English classes once a week, for speakers of other languages.

In response to **Qn. 7. What does St Mary's do particularly well?** One respondent observed, 'As a congregation we have been at the forefront of local support and welcoming all nationalities, migrants, asylum seekers and enabling them to settle in the community.'<sup>32</sup> This sentiment was expressed by nearly 30 other informants in different words.

The Corpus Christi (Body of Christ) procession was held on the second Sunday after Pentecost. There was coach transport organised for all participants. This was held at Llantarnam, a small village about 5 miles north of Newport. Members of the congregation went on other Pilgrimages during the year, including one to Penrhys: The Visitation of Our Lady. There were a number of other parish outings and coach trips laid on by the church's administrators during the course of the year.

### **6.1. 8: Reflections on my Visit**

I found the Services, the Masses, to be very formal. The Catholic Church describes the 'Mass as the source and summit of their worship.'<sup>33</sup> 'Catholics are obliged by church law to go to mass

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<sup>32</sup> Informant. Male, Aged 67. Member of the Society of St Vincent De Paul.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Conrad OP, *The Catholic faith*, 1994, 139

every Sunday,' stated one of my informants.'<sup>34</sup> He went on to say however that, the obligation was not taken seriously by many. 'Those who did not attend mass regularly would usually term themselves 'lapsed Catholics' although the tendency was for the church to describe them as 'resting' in the hope that this state will not be permanent,' remarked one of the priests. On Sundays the congregation gathered for Mass at 9:00am, (at which there was a children's Liturgy of the Word), at 11:15am and at 6:00pm. As worshippers came in they were given a hymn book and a leaflet containing the Psalm, Responses to the intercessions, a brief summary of the readings entitled, What do the Scriptures Say?, parish activities entitled Around and About in our Parish Churches, Diary Dates, names of people in need of Prayer and lastly, The Prayer of the People for various intentions.

There was the welcome group who welcomed the members of the congregation to the church and provided hymn books, Parish newsletters, and order of Mass sheets.

The Service began with an entrance rite, during which the congregation sang a hymn and the priest and the ministers (deacon, acolytes, lectors, and extraordinary Eucharistic ministers) processed to the altar. The Mass began and ended with making the sign of the cross, 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.'

This was followed by confession. They responded with a Hymn of praise, 'Glory to God.' The Mass included several hymns whenever the choir was present. At 11:15am Mass, Psalms and Canticles were chanted, led by the choir. In the absence of the choir, (comprised of seven women), there were no hymns sung. The Psalm was sung with the choir taking the lead and Canticles were also chanted during the 9:00 o'clock Mass.

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<sup>34</sup> Informant, Parish Deacon, Male, Aged 56.

Those priests celebrating the Mass stood or sat at the far end of the church building in the raised chancel area. When I was in conversation with members of this particular congregation, there was conveyed to me a sense that the altar was considered the visual and the spiritual focus of the building. 'The congregation gathered around the altar to recognise Christ's presence and undertake to make signs of his presence in the local community,' explained one of the priests to me. There was one priest at the front, assisted by extraordinary ministers of communion. They helped with the distribution of communion and after Mass took Holy Communion to the sick and house bound. These assistants did not wear any special clothing for this function. Each year new ministers of the Eucharist were commissioned by the bishop on The Feast of Corpus Christi while the existing ministers renewed their commitment.

The officiating priest wore traditional vestment; a white alb over which was placed a stole and a chasuble of a coloured fabric according to the season of the liturgical calendar in seasonal colours. The altar and pulpit linen were also in seasonal colours. The altar servers wore red cassocks and surplice. The priest read all of the service from the English version of the Roman Missal; translated into English in 1968. The priest read the gospel and all the congregation stood for his reading.

Lay people commissioned by the priest, read the lesson and led the prayers of intercessions, after which the congregation was invited to make their own intentions. The congregation listened to the Scripture reading. The bible version used was the Jerusalem Bible. There were no copies of bibles in sight. I would describe the theology of one of the priest's sermons as liberal in a broad

sense. In one of his sermons he spent time evaluating some political policies in light of the gospel. In most of his sermons he made reference to political issues.

Most Sundays the homily (sermon) was based on the day's bible reading taken from the three year cycle. The same sermon was preached during the three Masses on Sunday. The sermon lasted for 10 – 15 minutes. In his homilies the priest explained the meaning of the Scriptures especially the gospel reading, and tried to show how the congregation can put the Gospel message into practical effect in their daily lives.

The children had their own activity in a separate place for the first half of the service. When they rejoined the congregation, an opportunity was given for them to share their work with everyone. With lots of children, at times things got a bit noisy, but no one seemed to mind. The children were made very welcome. Those who were confirmed received communion and others were given a blessing by the presiding priest.

On Sunday the numbers of the congregation averaged about 200 attending each service.<sup>35</sup> Some of the people I spoke to had come from the outskirts of Newport and some came to St Mary's because they didn't have a priest at their local Roman Catholic Church. As there were six Churches in All Saints though people attended weekly, they attended Mass in a number of Churches in varying locations.

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<sup>35</sup> Information obtained from church records. The number of those sharing Communion was recorded on the weekly sheet.

The regular pattern of worship at St Mary's was: Mass on Monday – Wednesday – Friday 10:00am, 1:00pm & 7:30pm. Tuesday and Thursdays 10:00am & 7:30pm, Saturday 10:00am, Holy Days of Obligation: 7:30 am, 10:00am, 12:30pm & 7:30pm.

In addition to these times Mass was also held on Holy Days of Obligation. These were days laid down by the Roman Catholic Church when all church members were expected and obligated to attend Mass. The days of obligation mentioned were the Feast of St Peter and St Paul and the feast of All Saints observed on 29<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> November respectively.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation was held on Saturdays at 12 noon, 1:00pm, & after 7:30 Mass on Weekdays. The times for Mass and for all church activities in all the six churches were printed on the weekly sheet. During the week there was a daily Mass and this was generally well attended. I did observe that going to confession was commonly incorporated into Saturday afternoon shopping for many people. Those who wanted a Mass said for their intention, or for the serious need of some one close to them, or in remembrance of someone who had died, were asked to write on an envelope the name of the person for whom the Mass was to be said, noting what the intention was: either healing, thanksgiving or the repose of the soul. It was traditional to include in the envelope an offering for the priest. Prayers were frequently requested for all those who shared communion for the first time. Prayers were also offered for the repose of souls.

The congregation was very diverse and differing in age, social background, education and mostly people under the age of 65.<sup>36</sup> This resonates with Davie's observation that, 'As a community,

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<sup>36</sup> Information obtained from questionnaire Qn. 1 How old are you?

Catholics tend to be relatively young and working class.’<sup>37</sup> According to the responses gleaned from the questionnaires the age profile was as follows:

- 5 respondents were aged between 11 years – 14 years;
- 18 respondents were aged between 15 – 25 years;
- 25 were aged between 26 – 35 years;
- 20 respondents were aged between 36 – 45 years;
- 40 respondents were aged between 46 – 55 years;
- 30 respondents were aged between 56 – 65 years;
- 24 respondents were aged between 66- 75 years;
- 18 respondents were aged between 75- 100 years

There was a good number of families (mother, father and children). Many people walked to the services. I observed that members of the congregation came from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds. Everyone appeared to mix in together. In an interview with one of the Priests, he stated that;

‘In recent years we’ve had people from the European Union. Majority came from Poland. Others have come from the Philippines and from India. Hence the emphasis on welcoming in people from other cultures.’<sup>38</sup>

Such an observation is compatible with what Hornby – Smith stated; ‘ Roman Catholics are of considerable social and political importance because they’re a community with overwhelmingly

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<sup>37</sup> Davie, G. *Believing without Belonging*. Oxford : Blackwell, 1994, Page 8.

<sup>38</sup> Informant, Priest.

immigrant origins and they represent an important example of assimilation to British society over many generations.’<sup>39</sup>

In this connection Hawkes states that,

‘Roman Catholics are a community in themselves, and they mix freely. Their religion is so strong, they don’t have to define against colour. They just treat each other through their religion.’<sup>40</sup>

Regarding this observation, a respondent who was of Polish descent stated that the Catholic tradition was more like the immigrants’ and asylum seekers’ experience in their country of origin. This meant that they could easily follow the service. However, all the services I attended were conducted in English. I wondered how much of the service speakers of other languages understood since some of them hardly spoke any English. My observations indicated that most of them stood or sat at the back.

During the Service the hymn numbers were not announced but they were displayed on the hymn board. On one occasion I could hardly hear the priest from the back and those I was sat with also found difficulty. They missed much of what was said. It was noteworthy that for some services a large number of the congregation came in during the last five minutes before the service began. More so, they did not sing or respond very enthusiastically during the worship, and they left during the final hymn. I observed that not every member of the congregation made the Sign of the Cross with Holy Water upon their entering the church for Mass.

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<sup>39</sup> Hornsy-Smith. *Roman Catholics in England: Studies*, 1987.

<sup>40</sup> Hawkes, B . As quoted in Baumann, *Contesting Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 95.

The Catholic national newspapers were predominantly displayed at the back of the Church. These papers included, The Universe, The Catholic Herald and Times, Catholic Life, Bible Alive and Catholic People.

### **6.1.9: Sacraments**

According to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, Sacraments are fundamental to the Catholic understanding of identity and Catholic spiritual tradition.

In conversation with the priests they had this to say about sacraments,

‘Most if not all significant moments of life, from birth through all the stages of life to the moment of death are celebrated in the Catholic practice of Sacraments.’<sup>41</sup> When I asked for their understanding of sacraments the response was thus; ‘a sacrament is a sign, instituted by Christ, to give grace.’<sup>42</sup> It has been suggested that ‘the fundamental approach to sacramental theology begins with an understanding that Christ is the primary sacrament, and the Church, as the Body of Christ, is the essential sign and instrument of Christ in the world, the Church nevertheless celebrates seven specific “encounters with God”.’<sup>43</sup>

St Mary’s recognised seven sacraments as declared in the Second Council of Lyons in 1274 and clarified by the bishops of the Council of Trent (1545-1547). The seven Sacraments are:

Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance and Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. According to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, ‘the seven Sacraments for Catholics represent the high points of their life and are closely related to the

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<sup>41</sup> Informants, Priests.

<sup>42</sup> Informant, deacon, Male.

<sup>43</sup> A Redemptorist Pastoral publication: *The Essential Catholic Handbook of the Sacraments*, Denver, 2001, Page 5

liturgy, the public worship of the Church.’<sup>44</sup> It is stated that ‘Sacraments give birth and increase, healing and mission to the Christian’s life of faith.’<sup>45</sup>

It is noteworthy that all the sacraments are by tradition recognized as ritualistic celebration of God’s saving activity and encounter with the people of God. In addition it is believed that ‘such celebrations have been given by Christ himself who participated and celebrated essential moments in the lives of people whom he served.’<sup>46</sup>

It is stated in the *Essential Catholic Handbook* of the sacraments that; ‘Examples of the Institution of the sacraments that are found in Scripture are as follows: the baptism of the Lord by John the Baptist (Mt 3:13) and the apostolic commission to baptize all nations (Mt 28: 17-29; Mk 16:15-16); the celebration of the Last Supper and the Institution of the Eucharist and Holy Orders (Luke 22:7-20; mt 26: 17-29; Mk 14:12-15; 1 Cor11:23-26); the presentation of the “keys of the Kingdom” to Saint Peter and the apostles, the ministry of “binding and loosing” (Mt 16:19; 28:16-20); countless references to the compassion of Christ toward the sick (Mt 25:36; Lk 6:19, John 1:29)’<sup>47</sup>

It is not the intention of this thesis to discuss in detail the Sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church as this is a detailed subject. However the following is an outline of the seven sacraments as stipulated by the Roman Catholic Church and indeed as observed at St Mary’s Roman Catholic Church.

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<sup>44</sup> Chapman G. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. London: Cassel imprint, 1994, 276

<sup>45</sup> Chapman 1994, 276.

<sup>46</sup> A Redemptorist publication. 2001, Page 6

<sup>47</sup> A Redemptorist publication 2001, Page 8.

### **a) Baptism**

Baptism is one of the three ceremonies, all sacraments, associated with Christian initiation. The other two are confirmation and Mass or Eucharist. 'Baptism is the beginning of new life; Confirmation is its strengthening; and the Eucharist which nourishes the disciples with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ.'<sup>48</sup> According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 'Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*) and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: 'Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water and the word.'<sup>49</sup>

It was said to me by one of the priests at St Mary's that entry to the Church took place through baptism. The baptised person is brought into the community of believers as into a family. There was infant and adult baptism. One of my informants told me that increasingly the Catholic Church was placing emphasis on adult baptism. Confirmation was from 7-14 years and Eucharist from 7-8 years. The parish priest told me that, 'since the Second Vatican Council, there has been great emphasis on the Rite of Initiation of adults (RCIA)'.<sup>50</sup> The Rite of Christian Initiation was for people of any age coming new to the Catholic faith. Such people come from a wide spectrum ranging from no beliefs to baptized members of other Christian denominations. They were required to have sponsors and to attend a preparation Course lasting 7-8 months. Leading up to the Easter vigil, they are received into full communion in the Catholic Church.

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<sup>48</sup> Chapman 1994, Page 289

<sup>49</sup> Chapman 1994, Page 276.

<sup>50</sup> Informant, Parish Priest, Aged 60.

Some respondents said that the children were brought in the first weeks of their life for baptism. They went further to suggest that the priest encourage baptism ceremonies at Sunday Mass so that the wider congregation was able to welcome the child in the life of the Church. The parents were joined by godparents, who were also Catholics, and together they made promises to bring the child up in the Catholic faith.

The priest told me that infant baptism was held during Mass following baptismal preparation. There were courses for parents preparing for their children's baptism.

### **b) Confirmation**

Confirmation is said to 'perfect Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine affiliation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.'<sup>51</sup> At St Mary' Church, after baptism, the children aged twelve were encouraged to join the confirmation class. Confirmation services were held once a year.

### **c) The Sacrament of Holy Communion**

'The Holy Communion completes Christian initiation. Those who have been raised to the dignity of the royal priesthood by Baptism and configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation, participate with the whole community in the Lord's own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist.'<sup>52</sup> According to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, 'by the consecration and the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about.

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<sup>51</sup> Chapman. 1994, Page 296.

<sup>52</sup> Chapman 1994, Page 296.

Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real and substantial manner; his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity.<sup>53</sup>

According to all my informants, they believed that Holy Communion was the most important Sacrament. Members of the congregation were encouraged to participate in this sacrament as often as they could.

First Communion- This was carried on throughout the year and there were lots of visitors whenever this took place. My observation during a Service where First Communion was held was that those who were visitors sat with those taking First Communion. One lady commented, 'Even if you don't want to go, you have to go for the kids,' It was obvious from the body language of many they were not regular churchgoers. Young people making their first communions were dressed up smartly to take part. The day was made memorable and special by holding a party and celebrations for all who made their first communions.

#### **d) The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation**

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that; 'Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offence committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example and by prayer labours for their conversion.'<sup>54</sup> There are three actions in the sacrament of Penance, repentance, confession and conversion intention to make reparation and do works of reparation.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Chapman 1994, Page 318.

<sup>54</sup> Chapman, 1994, Page 319- 320.

<sup>55</sup> Chapman 1994, Page 335.

Although this sacrament of penance and reconciliation may be celebrated at any time, at St Mary's it was held at a specific time when the priest was available to celebrate this sacrament. The Sacrament was also available by appointment with the priest at any other time.

#### **e) The Anointing of the sick**

The basic purpose of the anointing of the sick as a sacramental healing grace is mainly but not exclusively for the seriously ill, the infirm and aged. It is also celebrated at other times for example before going to the hospital for surgery.

'By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of the priests the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering of the glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them. And indeed she exhorts them to contribute to the good of the People of God by freely uniting themselves to the Passion and death of Christ.'<sup>56</sup>

St Mary's like all Christian congregations encouraged prayer for the sick and the infirm. The names of those who were sick were printed on the weekly sheet for their general remembrance. Prayers were said for the repose of souls. There was prayer for all those in the family of the parish churches who were sick or housebound, and for all who cared for them. Members of the congregation were encouraged to inform the Parish Correspondent when they had someone to pray for. There was an occasion for the Sacrament of the Sick, when the normally housebound members were brought into church.

#### **f) Holy Orders**

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<sup>56</sup> Chapman 1994, Page 336.

It is the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church that, 'Holy orders are the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time: thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry. It includes three degrees; episcopate (bishops), presbyterate (presbyters), and diaconate (Deacons).'<sup>57</sup> A monthly holy hour was held for vocations to the priesthood.

### **g) The Sacrament of Matrimony**

According to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church,

'The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.'<sup>58</sup> The Scriptural references for this sacrament were Tobit, Genesis 2:18-25; the book of Ruth and Song of Songs. Marriage Preparation Care was available for couples preparing for Marriage, as well as offers of counselling.

### **Ecumenism**

One of the priests I spoke with was keen to have links with neighbouring churches, which were The Salvation Army, the Baptist church and the Anglican churches. However, he commented that he had found it frustrating trying to encourage members of his congregation to join in ecumenical events. He was keen on praying for unity and thought it was a good thing to meet with fellow Christians, to discuss faith matters together, to pray with one another in appropriate ways, and to co-operate in forms of witness and in charitable works.

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<sup>57</sup> Chapman, Page 343.

<sup>58</sup> Chapman Page 358. CCC1611.

The congregation of St Mary's was urged to join with other Christians from the churches in Newport for their annual Pentecost March of Witness and together to celebrate common faith in worship and fellowship. I attended this event and I noticed there were members from St Mary's Church in attendance. The event began with a short service at St Woolos Anglican Cathedral and thereafter was a march from the Cathedral into the local Belle-Vue Park, where a service was conducted around the bandstand area. After worship and for our entertainment there was a clown performance. Some respondents from St Mary's said it was an impressive occasion. 'A lovely day' was a comment made by another respondent who had taken part. The consensus on the event was that it was a success and worth doing again.

### **6.10: Exploration**

According to St Mary's Mission Statement, which was always published in the Weekly Bulletin, it was stated that;

'St Mary's Parish in the centre of the City of Newport, accepts and has the responsibility to:-

Build up the parish as a family.

Foster our own knowledge and love of God.

Worship God in community, celebrating the Real Presence of Jesus.

Be a community which gives service to others.

Proclaim the Good News to everyone.'<sup>59</sup>

This Statement reflects members' strong desire to build up and be part of a loving broader community. But how far could individual members go in defining their own personal mission

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<sup>59</sup> Mission Statement. St Mary Roman Catholic Church.

task? Their understandings of their mission task incorporated a range of attitudes towards community work and common activities. The following question explored their varied definitions. **Q.4 Say what you know about mission.**

The word 'mission' was not one I encountered in St Mary's congregation. 18 respondents stated that they did not know what mission meant, and 15 respondents said they only knew what the priests had told them. However observation, responses to the questionnaire and listening showed me that mission was for the most part regarded as a reaching out to others in the local community and beyond. It was also considered to be done when members were providing loving service to those in need, and seeing social action for justice, and doing outreach.

In response to questions I was asking in relation to the Christian task, some of the respondents stated that they saw the Christian task as a witnessing to others, a preaching to other people and a reaching out. Similar observations were made by other respondents who tended to see their Christian task as a bringing of the faith to those who lack faith or to those who needed help with their faith; as well as in spreading the Good News about Jesus to all (God's) people.

In response to this question about Mission the following answer quoted from the General Directory for Catechesis was quoted. It states:

'In many countries of established Christian tradition .....There exists..... an intermediate situation wherein entire groups of the baptized had lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church and live a life far removed from Christ and his gospel Such situations are considered to require 'a new evangelisation. The peculiar nature of this situation is found in the fact that missionary activity is directed towards the baptized of all ages, who live in a religious context in which Christian points

of reference are perceived purely exteriorly. Here primary proclamation and basic catechesis are priorities.’<sup>60</sup>

In response to **Question 6. Are there events in the life of the Church that you describe as mission?**<sup>61</sup> I was repeatedly struck by the emphasis of 55 respondents on members’ local support for the homeless, refugees and for asylum seekers, and by the work done collecting food, clothing and furniture for them and for the homeless and in holding social events in the church to help refugee families establish themselves socially. Five respondents said that, ‘As members of the St Vincent de Paul Society we try to proclaim the Good News through actions, especially by helping out at the local soup kitchen.’ Whereas others said that ‘Jesus taught that we should love our neighbour as ourselves’ (Mark 12:31) These went on to say, ‘we try to put this into practice and find it to be a life-giving and fulfilling way to live.’

Hence they were involved in a variety of other charitable work such as caring for the sick and elderly. The Catechesis course and Church services were also cited by some as events they described as mission.

Yet 10 respondents mentioned the ‘Journey of Faith’ course run by the Church wherein people are invited to ‘Come and See’ what members of the Congregation do at Mass, at Coffee after Mass, at Parish Events, Fetes, Socials, Scripture Sharings, to mention but a few. They went on to quote from the weekly notice that stated thus, ‘Faith comes through encounters: with Christ; with His Body the Church; and first of all with his Members’<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> General Directory for Catechesis

<sup>61</sup> Questionnaire

<sup>62</sup> Informants.

In answers given to **Question 5**<sup>63</sup> of the questionnaire popular Scriptural texts concerning mission were cited, as well as other citations which I held to be a way of ascertaining more about the theology of mission among members of St Mary's church. A number of Scriptural texts were mentioned and these included, Matthew 28 the Great Commission by 25 respondents, Luke 4:18ff by 33 respondents.

Other Scriptural texts included 1 Corinthians 13 which famously prioritises love; by 17 respondents and 11 respondents mentioned loving one's enemies as themselves and 22 respondents, the beatitudes.

St Mary's has a major role in the wider community through its impact in local Roman Catholic schools. There were to be observed very strong links with the primary schools attached to the Church and the priests went into the schools regularly for Catechesis and to give religious instruction to the children.

Pupils, staff and families were involved in the preparation of the Liturgy. They chose the readings, selected hymns / the music and presented the elements of communion and the gifts to the priest celebrating the Mass. One of the primary schools was named after St Mary's. The mission statement of St Mary's School was as follows:

'The school exists to provide and sustain an environment where the beliefs and values of the Catholic faith are developed and nurtured through providing each child with an education of the highest spiritual, moral and academic standards.'<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> See Appendix C: The Questionnaire.

<sup>64</sup> School mission Statement.

Other local Catholic schools were St Joseph's Primary and St Joseph's High Schools. St Joseph's High School was a large modern Comprehensive School, and as such it reflected the continuing strength of identity of the Catholic constituency in Newport. These schools were Voluntary Aided Schools with Foundation Governors appointed by the locality's Roman Catholic bishop. The Church was paying 15% towards buildings and maintenance to the schools. One of the schools in the parish made news headlines when it was closed in 2007 because its school roll dropped severely. People came together to protest about its closure.

### **6.11: Response /Conclusion**

What my months of observation and reflection at St Mary's have led me to conclude is that the Masses were very important events in the lives of members of the congregation. In addition to this the church took very seriously the local realities of life as being integral to and part of its mission. The church was responding in ways that appeared appropriate socially, and for a Christian organisation, to the challenges posed by heavy local immigration and national social issues. One such important issue facing the congregation at the time I was visiting was lobbying Parliament against the passing of the Human Fertilization and Embryology Bill. Members of the congregation were encouraged by their spiritual leaders to fill in pre-printed postcards and send them to the local Members of Parliament. They supported small well known charities and more national and global charities such as CAFOD. Despite this engagement and commitment any conclusion upon Mission at St Mary's has to say that there was still a lot to do. There was scant evidence of any provision having been made for seekers nor any concerted active drive to recruit new members. In fact one of the informants who had completed an ALPHA Course stated that

there was no support for Process Evangelism or for any such similar courses and teaching material.

St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church offered opportunities to all members of the congregation to deepen their personal and community prayer through different forms of prayer such as:

- 'Prayerful sharing of the Scripture reading of Sunday'
- 'Reflective Prayer'
- 'Prayerful Scripture'
- 'Ignation Prayer'
- Medjugorje Prayer/ sharing
- 'Exposition, Devotions'

St Mary's seemed not have such a provision. Some of the young people who filled in questionnaire sheets said they felt that the church made little special provision for them. Often they wanted to take a more active role in their church. They felt a need to be encouraged to feel that they had an important role in their church.

There was a deep sense of concern about vocations as the shortage of priests had led to amalgamation of parishes.

Ecumenism also needed to be taken up by the members of the congregation and so did more active participation in worship rather than the preferred spectator role.

There was a great deal of emphasis put on attending Mass. This however, could be seen as becoming more 'internally focused upon the Mass-going congregation'<sup>65</sup> as opposed to having a healthy balance between societal orientation to their mission outlook and focus on the individual.

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<sup>65</sup> McGrail, P. in Guest, Tusting and Woodhead (Eds), 2004, Page 97.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **THE KING'S CHURCH**

#### **7.1: Experience**

##### **7.1.1: Methodology**

Initially I wrote a letter to the Pastor of the King's Church at that time explaining my research and asking his permission to visit and interact with his people in pursuit of this research.<sup>1</sup> He was happy for me to conduct this research. In his response I was invited to a face to face conversation with one of King's Church Elders (Pastors). In the course of this meeting I pursued a set of pre-formulated questions in a hope of eliciting the information I was looking for.<sup>2</sup> This questioning by me was followed by me interviewing the leaders of the various Church departments. I decided not to use questionnaires among the King's Church congregants due to the practicalities involved in administering and collating 300-400 questionnaires. More importantly, I wished to be as flexible and as open as I could be, so I chose not to follow a strictly set format. This strategy transpired into a large asset as I became more and more aware of other questions I wanted to ask. My purpose was merely to find out in general what was going on at the King's Church. I thus attended public worship at the King's church a score or more times over a period of 12 months. I attended mostly on Sunday mornings and evenings, so that I could be sure of meeting a great variety of people in numbers, and so enjoy informal interviewing of them. The selection of these interviewees was designed to represent a range of different people both in terms of demographics and in terms of their beliefs and positions. The opportunity to engage in conversation normally came before the service; usually over hot drinks. As before the service, people tended to remain for a further half hour for social interaction. It

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix B: Sample of letter to Church leaders..

<sup>2</sup> Appendix A: Outline if information.

was obvious that they enjoyed chatting to each other and took full advantage of these opportunities. Everyone appeared happy to talk to me in their Church setting. In addition I attended weekday activities as well as other church run events held during the week. I kept a journal of all my visits and conversations, recording in it my impressions and observations of people, and what they said and did. In addition I sought out and made use of available recorded resources and also any literature I found that was produced by the King's Church.

### **7.1.2: Why The King's Church?**

A decisive reason for choosing to conduct this study at the King's Church was its remarkable and compelling numerical church attendance. At the time of me doing my fieldwork, the King's Church in aggregate attracted the largest congregations in Newport. While other congregations in the city of Newport at the time were struggling to maintain numbers, had aging congregations and were experiencing financial challenges, the King's Church seemed to have had great success in recruiting new members with facility, many of them according to their testimonies were previously unchurched newcomers. Understandably I was not immune to the suspicions of rapid growth. A portion however had joined often after having sampled other churches; and these, so they told me, had often found that the King's church satisfied their spiritual needs more adequately. This is a perception that fits well with the analysis given by Scotland who asserts that;

'Charismatics have gradually evolved their own pattern of Church extension. It is clearly a network pattern. People are drawn into charismatic churches through social networks in which they operate the other aspects of their daily lives.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Scotland. *Charismatics and the New Millennium*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995, Page 262.

Scotland's assertion was one that has guided this study and has facilitated my detailed conversations with many King's Church members. At the time I was visiting, the King's church could rightly have been described as a successful church and congregation in the work of evangelism. Set against this however one has to bear in mind that over the previous years the King's Church had experienced splits and breakaways. This enigmatic situation was a great motivator to my studies, as I wanted particularly to investigate the schismatic processes that had led up to doctrinal and other divisions and also the current status of the schismatics. According to Wilson, 'schism...requires a structure that is susceptible to easy fragmentation'<sup>4</sup>. Therefore I was interested to investigate what the fault lines were and how existing and previous strains in the congregation were dealt with given the size of the congregation. In the course of this study I have met several church leaders and Christians of local independent churches who had been nurtured and encouraged initially at the King's Church but for various reasons broke away. There was among many of these a general observation that they had not abandoned their faith altogether, in fact many claimed that leaving the King's Church was for them a way of actually maintaining faith. These observations and conversations proved valuable for my gaining a view of the nature of the King's Church activities and mission in general.

### **7.1.3: Organisation of the Church.**

The King's Church had customarily described itself as Charismatic and Evangelical. The word 'Charismatic' comes from the Greek word 'charisma', and it was applied to King's Church by its members as well as by outsiders as an essential descriptor of their view of their church. Whether they understood the tradition behind the fact that the 'charisma' of God is emphasised when the Graces of God are manifest was not always apparent. Yet indeed they spoke of being 'born

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<sup>4</sup> Wilson, John. *The sociology of Schism* in Hill, M.(ed), A Sociological Yearbook of Religion, Vol.4, London, SCM, 1971, Page 10.

again' or being 'saved' or of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly then, the Graces of God, which include the Spirit message of wisdom, the Spirit of knowledge, the gift of faith, the gifts of healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, the ability to distinguish between spirits, speaking different kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues or indeed the gifts of the spirit, all these were emphasised at the King's Church.<sup>5</sup>

The King's Church buildings were situated on the border of an urban commercial area of the city of Newport known as Pillgwenlly. It was located in an area surrounded by business buildings. The population of Pillgwenlly electoral ward was 5, 333 persons in 2006 . 75.1% of these residents were white, 3.6% were black (African/ Caribbean), 7.1 % Asian Pakistan, 7.8% were Asian Other, 5% were mixed, 0.4% were Chinese, 6.4% denominated themselves Welsh and 0.9% were 'Other'.

The King's Church building looked more like an old- style cinema than a church, and indeed it once housed a roller skating rink. According to one respondent, the King's Church was founded in June 1989. Its first meeting was attended by 35 people. Since then it had grown to its current size and presence.<sup>6</sup> Yet another, informant who had been attending the church since it was founded said:

'There was another church before and there was a leadership split and since then there have been several splits but the church continues to grow from strength to strength'<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.

<sup>6</sup> Informant, Male, aged 48.

<sup>7</sup> Informant, Female, aged 52.

In King's Church records there was stated thus: 'We believe that what has happened in our past has equipped us to be a great help in the present.'<sup>8</sup> Evidently, the church was proud of its past, but only in that it had given the church the platform to work within the present and the necessary experience and passion to change the future. This was an example of how perception can portray the role that past experience plays in shaping present realities. Indeed as suggested by Green, history is a significant feature in this and other examples of contextual mission.<sup>9</sup>

This sense of perception fits with the analysis given by one of the Elders who informed me that during the foundation period of the Church, the principles taken from the story of the death and the raising from the death of Lazarus had been particularly important. The event is recorded in John's Gospel, wherein Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out! The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go'.<sup>10</sup> This event was a source of inspiration to the members of the King's Church. They recognised their need to turn to God when faced with a hopeless situation, and viewed crises as opportunities to make requests of God. They believed firmly that since God could raise Lazarus from the dead, God was more than able to help them when they asked humbly.<sup>11</sup> King's Church at the time of schism was likened to the tomb experience: initially dead with grave clothes and then recalled to life. Based upon the story of Lazarus, then, the church aimed to move forward. The resurrection principles surrounding Lazarus were used in order to construct a framework.

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<sup>8</sup>Kings Church records.

<sup>9</sup> Green, L. *Power To The Powerless: Theology Brought To Life*. Basingstoke : Marshall Pickering, 1987 Page 22-23.

<sup>10</sup> John 11:43-44.

<sup>11</sup> Pastor, 2006.

Consequently, on accepting to join the King's Church, members were encouraged to sign a membership Criteria Card which stipulated the following:

'Having received Christ as my Lord and Saviour and been baptised; being in agreement with King's Church Statements, strategy and structure, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the King's Church family. In doing so, I commit myself to God and to the other members to undertake the following:

- Protect the unity of the Church. Paul in the letter to the Romans says, 'So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on growth of our fellowship together'<sup>12</sup> In his first letter Peter goes on to say, 'Have a sincere love for other believers, love one another earnestly with all your heart.'<sup>13</sup>
- Acting in love towards other members. ....by refusing to gossip. Here Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians is quoted where Paul says, 'Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs.'<sup>14</sup>
- Following the leaders. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews says, 'Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be no advantage to you.'<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, the members of the church were committed to sharing responsibility for their church.

This they did by praying for its growth. 'To the church ...we always thank God for you and pray for you constantly'<sup>16</sup> Secondly they did it by inviting the unchurched to attend. 'The master said to the servant, Go out to the roads and the country lanes, and urge the people there to come so my house will be full'<sup>17</sup> And thirdly, they did it by warmly welcoming those who visit and through friendship. As Paul writes in the letter to the Romans: 'So warmly welcome each other into the Church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified.'<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Romans 14:19, Phillips Translation.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Peter 1:22.

<sup>14</sup> Ephesians 4:29.

<sup>15</sup> Hebrews 13:7.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2.

<sup>17</sup> Luke 14:23.

<sup>18</sup> Romans 15:7.

Supporting the testimony of the Church was among the King's Church Membership Criteria. This members did firstly by attending church faithfully. 'Let us not give up meeting together....but let us encourage one another'.<sup>19</sup> Secondly by living a Godly life according to the biblical text, 'whatever happens, make sure that everyday life is worthy of the gospel of Christ'.<sup>20</sup> And thirdly by them giving regularly as Scripture instructs in the following verse: 'Each one of you, on the first day of each week, should set aside a specific sum of money in proportion to what you have earned and use it for the offering.'<sup>21</sup> Consequently tithing was mandatory for all the membership of the church. The passage of scripture frequently quoted was, 'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessings that you will not have room enough for it.'<sup>22</sup> It could be argued here that there was an emphasis on prosperity gospel. Moreover, during the time for offertory envelopes were handed out designed for the purpose. Giving was by cash, cheque or credit / debit card.

From my own observations I noticed that their beliefs were fundamental and evangelical and their sole text book was the bible, which they believed was the only infallible and authoritative Word of God. The following words recorded in Paul's Second Letter to Timothy were constantly quoted, 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.'<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Hebrews 10:25.

<sup>20</sup> Philippians 1:27.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:12.

<sup>22</sup> Malachi 3:10.

<sup>23</sup> 2Tim 3:16-17.

It was noteworthy that the King's church carried nine essential elements of the charismatic movement. These elements are: a focus on Jesus, on praise, on love of the Bible, on the belief that God speaks today, on evangelism, on awareness of evil, on spiritual gifts, on eschatological expectation and on spiritual power.<sup>24</sup> They defined their Christian task in terms of these nine elements and it was these that motivated and empowered them for mission.

#### **7.1.4: Leadership**

The King's Church as an organisation enjoyed individual autonomy. The church policies, finances, ministries, and forms of organisation were decided at a local level. The leadership consisted of the Senior Pastor who assumed the overall leadership and responsibility regarding the vision and direction of King's church. Alongside this senior pastor, and functioning in an Eldership role by assisting and advising, were two assistant Pastors. However, in several conversations I had with respondents the Pastor's wife was referred to also as a Pastor. The role she took on appeared not constitutionally stipulated. That said, she played a leading role in the women's ministry.

One characteristic of this church was its variety of departments, which were set up to meet the variety of needs in the church. Within these departments were scores of dedicated workers who had made themselves available to serve their church with joy, love and excellence.<sup>25</sup> The Church members made a pledge to serve the ministry of the Church by adhering to the following:

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<sup>24</sup> Mentioned by Lord in his book, *Spirit shaped Mission*, See also P.D Hocken, 'Charismatic Movement' in Burgess and van der Maas (eds) *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Page 515.

These elements are stipulated in the Kings Church mission statement

<sup>25</sup> Informant, Elder 2006.

- Discovering their gifts and talents, based on the biblical text, ‘Serve one another with particular gifts God has given to you.’<sup>26</sup> In addition to this text it was believed that the primary purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was to empower them to bear witness to the gospel to the entire city of Newport and the surrounding areas.
- Accepting being equipped to serve by their pastors according to the biblical text, ‘God gave some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.’<sup>27</sup>
- Developing a servant heart, based on Paul’s letter to the Philippians. ‘Each one of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who took on the very nature of a servant.’<sup>28</sup>

The Church had big programmes of week day activity which members were encouraged to attend. An information stall was located where people entered in the foyer and from here newsletters and other information about the church could be obtained.

### **7.1.5: Church Activities**

#### **A: LIFE Groups**

#### **LIFE = Learn- Influence- Fellowship-Evangelise.**

Life groups played a major part in the Church given the nature of people’s lives in Newport.

One of the pastors said that it was a useful tool for pastoral counsel and care which he regarded as an important concern. In addition, he said, the church through Life Groups recognised the

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<sup>26</sup> 1 Peter 4:10.

<sup>27</sup> Ephesians 4:11-12.

<sup>28</sup> Philipians 2: 3-4,7.

primary importance of reaching to each neighbourhood and estate and to the groups and networks and associations found there. Life Groups were located throughout South Wales, Swansea, Caerphilly, Bridgend, Barry, Cardiff, Cwmbran, Pontypool, Chepstow, Bristol, and in Newport. These were groups of 4-15 people who meet regularly once a fortnight. There were two kinds of Life Groups, a Family Life Group (for people over 30) and Youth Groups (12-16 year olds and 16-30's). According to one of the Life Group leaders, these groups provided opportunities for people to build relationships as well as to get closer to God; all in a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

He went on to explain that in the acronym 'LIFE' the letter *L* stood for *Learn*- To have more knowledge of God, *I* stood for *Influence* – To set a Godly example for people to follow, *F* stood for *Fellowship* – Give their time and commitment to building strong relationships. *E* stood for *Evangelise*- To respond to the commission which all of us have been given which is 'To reach the lost at all cost'. Hence outreach and evangelism had a high priority in the King's Church.

For one of the informants her LIFE Group had been a great source of strength and she had found great support there through prayer<sup>29</sup>, word of encouragement, and support and also in a practical way; all of which had helped her to pull through the most difficult times in her life<sup>30</sup>. Other informants they felt that through their LIFE Group they had been able to find their identity. They saw the LIFE Group as a place where the colour of ones personality, character and gifting found expression and enabled them to bless others around them. A number of informants stated that they had found purpose in life through being members of LIFE Groups. According to these God had placed each and everyone on this earth for a purpose, and that purpose was to reach out to

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<sup>29</sup> As suggested by the *LIFE* group leader, people cared for one another by praying for each other. The expectation was that God answers prayer in the lives of believers and the world in which we live.

<sup>30</sup> Informant, Female, aged 35.

the world for Christ and to win souls for him. Their guiding principle was thus, 'we might catch one fish with a rod and on our own, but the most productive way to catch many fish is with a net, with many people working together.'<sup>31</sup> Evidently there was prayer, planning outreaches and social events; all drawing Group members closer into a relationship with Jesus. Members of the congregation were greatly encouraged to develop their faith through LIFE Groups and share it with those they met. Members had explicit faith in Jesus Christ as necessary to salvation. Evidently, the Bible was their source of authority on all matters of belief and practice; and they held clearly expressed principles.

### **B: Women's work**

This was organised and run by the Senior Pastor's wife who was regarded as a Pastor in her own right. The women were involved in the various ministries of the church ranging from leading worship, teaching Sunday school, youth work and other leadership roles. The pastor's wife organised Ladies' Activities such as bible study/prayer meetings, talks for women, lunches and social activities all held at regular times, on a regular basis and a Ladies' Conference once a year. I went to a Ladies Conference which was attended by over 200 women being young professionals who had travelled from across the United Kingdom and came from all walks of life. The Conference's 'Theme' was 'Free to Fly', with a focus on what one of the organisers regarded as the most precious thing to God; the harvest of souls. One of the speakers talked about the urgent call, to mobilise women of all ages, for them to get ready for the greatest harvest in history. All who attended were encouraged to be willing labourers who would reach out and impact communities, cities and nations for the sake of kingdom of God. Thus they were being encouraged to take up their sickle and reap because the time to reap had come, for the harvest of

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<sup>31</sup> Life Group members, Aged 16-30, 2006.

the earth is ripe.<sup>32</sup> All the speakers, were women including visiting speakers from USA and Australia. It was noteworthy that they had a great way of communicating the Biblical Truth by using real life experiences. Each person who attended the Conference was given a gift of a mug with the words, “Hear the cry of the harvest” inscribed inside it. This was to be regarded as a special mug so that each time one used it, one was to be reminded of the many thousands of people who did not know Christ; and this thought was to stimulate one to pray and to be inspired to reach out to them.

### **C: Children’s work**

The King’s church clearly recognised the need for children to engage in faith activities and that these should be appropriate to their ages and abilities. There was a large Sunday school that met, segregated into age groups. During weekdays on Monday 6:00pm – 7:30 there was a Kidz Hub Church. Children were encouraged to develop their talents and gifts through creative ministries, music and drama. Several children’s productions were staged throughout the year. I attended one around Christmas time to which the Mayor of Newport had taken up an invitation to attend. Over 500 people came to this event.

### **D: Youth / Young Adults work**

The King’s Church had a massive Project for Youth works underway. The vision of the Church was to reach the Youth. There were Youth nights on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. I was informed by one of the members of the Youth Group that during these evenings,

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<sup>32</sup> Revelation 14:15.

their discussions ranged through topics like; relationships, music and current burning issues. They had formed a dance crew and a boxing club for the young adults.

Through King's Church's youth groups titled INFUSION, EDGE, and KNECT youth work was being carried out in the local comprehensive schools. Amongst the schools were the following: Duffryn comprehensive school, St Julians, Llantarnam, Caldicot, St Martin, Fairwater, Newport high and Bassaleg schools. Members of the youth leadership team took part in Assemblies and in classroom sessions of personal social health education (PSHE) and of Religious Education sessions. In addition youth events were held. A youth event I attended saw over 200 youngsters sing modern songs, with jumping and dancing. A conversation with one of the youngsters attending confirmed my impressions that the King's Church was a Church that attracted young people each evening. Through youth work, the King's Church was to a degree getting in touch with a wide section of the local population. Members of the youth group were to be found working on the streets in the evenings at sharing the message of the Good News to other youngsters and giving out tracts. Moreover, at that time the King's Church was promoting a big programme of weekday activities and by it attracting over 100 young people. These activities were community based; three youth centres had been set up. Young people were involved in what was termed as 'relationships outreach' and youngsters concerned held concerts in schools. In addition to weekly events there were national youth events held 4 -5 times a year and links were formed with Fellowship of Christian University Students (FOCUS) and 'Youth Alive'. Youth Alive was a youth organisation working across denominations to connect youth ministry to the schools. Their activities included: evangelism, praying for a generation, students

connecting students to Jesus, and working together to reach more and outreach that disciples a generation.<sup>33</sup>

Young people looking for an escape from bad drug experiences, from destructive relationships and from a sense of alienation from society as a whole had found these gatherings worthwhile.<sup>34</sup>

For these young people the King's Church had become a means to restore some sort of order, stability and meaning in their lives.<sup>35</sup>

According to one of the youth leaders, music had played a major role in getting the young people together. Indeed as Ward states,

'Modern gospel music is a truly wonderful medium for bridging the gap between church and young people outside when used in the right way.'<sup>36</sup>

In a similar light Scotland suggests that, 'In very general terms the music, the culture, and the buildings of charismatic churches are much closer to the level at which ordinary people live their lives.'<sup>37</sup> He goes on to say that this has an evangelistic effect because those who are not connected to the Church, or to use the term, 'unbelievers', find it much easier to walk into the Schools and Community Centres used by charismatic congregations. Their sense of cultural 'fit' is reinforced by the informal dress of the leaders, as well as by their warm acceptance and love which Scotland says characterises charismatic worship'.<sup>38</sup> This is an argument, with which I stand in general agreement, as indeed there is a clear and dynamic relationship between music

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<sup>33</sup> Web site [www.youthalive.ag.org](http://www.youthalive.ag.org). Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Informant, Youth Pastor.

<sup>35</sup> Informant, Youth Pastor.

<sup>36</sup> Ward, *Selling Worship: how what we sing has changed the Church*. Bletchley, Waynesboro: Paternoster Press, 2005, Page 62.

<sup>37</sup> Scotland 1995, page 66-67.

<sup>38</sup> Scotland 1995, Page 66 -67.

and evangelism. Through Christian music the unchanging story of Jesus is proclaimed and people are given a context for living. Biblical truth is proclaimed through the lyrics of the songs thereby making music a powerful tool for convincing and convicting people of God's existence and His love for them. Evidently people get converted through music as music touches the whole being not just the mind. As people sing the songs or indeed listen to music, their minds are exercised along with their emotions. Music has the potential of lifting people's spirits and if one is feeling down they can be built up relatively quickly. God reaches people's hearts through their minds and lasting change comes about through changing people's minds. By singing songs filled with the word of God, God's word is written on people's hearts. The words of the songs/hymns stick in people's heads because of memorable melodies, rhymes and rhythms attached to them. It has been argued that people forget 80% of sermons they hear within three days of hearing them. But what people remember most are the songs and hymns. The bible gives examples of dynamic relationship between music and evangelism. In Acts 16:25- 34 Paul and Silas sung songs and hymns while worshipping in prison at Philippi and their worship drew the prison keeper to want to know Jesus Christ. He and his household got 'saved' and were baptised.

### **C: Men's Group**

For this group several events were held in the course of the year and a lot of effort was put into promoting these events. Among the advertisements I saw was one which had these words: 'the King's Church is going all out for the Guys'. The men met on a regular basis for bible study and for social events. The leader of the men's group informed me that throughout the year the group had been having bible study series on men in the bible. These included among others Moses, Elijah, David, Daniel, Peter and Paul. A member of the group observed that, 'This was a way of

providing spiritual sustenance for men who would otherwise go elsewhere.’<sup>39</sup> This echoes what Murrow has suggested, ‘The ideology of masculinity has replaced Christianity as the true religion for men. We live in a society with a female religion and a male religion: Christianity, of various sorts, for women and non-masculine men, and masculinity....for men.’<sup>40</sup> In addition the events were intentionally designed to reach men. In conversation with one of the pastors, he had this to say; ‘the men’s group is one way of trying to solve the church’s perennial problem with missing or unmotivated men.’<sup>41</sup> He went on to say that ‘this group aimed to bring men into a genuine work with Christ. This was done in a structured environment.’<sup>42</sup>

One of the events I attended and observed was an annual event called Men of Honour. It had a physical theme with everything from the atmosphere, décor, to the talk delivered with a masculine accent. It was the men’s custom to start the morning with a cooked breakfast. Indeed one of the men remarked, it is true what they say, ‘the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach.’<sup>43</sup> The Programme for the day included a martial arts demonstration which turned into a friendly competition. There was prize giving at the end for both winners and losers. A little fun was poked at the losers. The gentleman in charge of the music for the day had this to say, ‘the music has to be man-friendly with masculine lyrics as this holds a great message for the men.’<sup>44</sup> There was plenty of light hearted humour and fun as the speaker included illustrations from survival, sports and personal stories.

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<sup>39</sup> Informant. Male aged 30.

<sup>40</sup> Murrow. D. *Why Men Hate Going To Church*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, Inc 2005, Page 3.

<sup>41</sup> Informant. Pastor, the Kings Church.

<sup>42</sup> Informant, Pastor, the Kings Church.

<sup>43</sup> Informant, Male aged 35.

<sup>44</sup> Informant, Male 45.

Other activities held for men during the year included outdoor activities which included team sports and golf. One of my informants had this to say: 'I feel the men's group is a safe environment where I can invite my male friends assured that the events will resonate with a man's heart.'<sup>45</sup> Men have their own language, culture and unique needs. Some of the men I spoke to had interests in classic cars and motorcycles, during the year they organised special events with related themes.

#### **D: Caring Hands**

Caring Hands was set up to help people in desperate need. It included a feeding programme for the homeless and the disadvantaged. It had been started in a small room and gradually expanded. Caring Hands was set up in 1982, as part of the King's Church and during the time I was visiting the Group catered for approximately 300 homeless and disadvantaged people each week. Its success was attributable to donations received and a group of dedicated volunteers. The volunteers gave their time and talents in order to feed, clothe and provide basic hygiene provision to local people from a wide variety of backgrounds and beliefs. It was noteworthy that although the majority of volunteers were from the King's Church, TEEN Challenge, GAVO, prisoners on rehabilitation and clients had also helped in the centre.

The church provided clothing and catered for general wellbeing among the people they helped. At Christmas time over 100 Christmas dinners were served. This has a bearing on both mission and social action and incarnational mission. The feeding programme had an evangelistic thrust to make people know the love of Jesus for them. In addition the King's Church was involved in other Programmes such as Christians against Poverty and New Pathways; the latter being a Group working with abused children.

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<sup>45</sup> Informant, Male member of the Kings Church aged 35.

Among other events organised by King's Church was Newport's Night of Honour. This Night was a community event open to all and free of charge. During this annual event outstanding achievements from within the city were recognised and celebrated. Beforehand stories of heroic qualities about individuals and organisations were collected and scrutinised by an independent panel of judges. Nomination Categories included among others:

- Neighbour of the Year
- Young Person of the Year
- Above and Beyond Award
- Parent of the Year
- Public Service Superhero
- Community Organisation of the Year
- Volunteer of the Year

Nominees that excelled were personally invited to the 'Night of Honour' event. A nationally famous singer and band or a comedian would be invited to entertain at the event.

### **E: Services.**

On Sundays the congregation gathered at 10: 30am- 12:30pm for morning worship. At 5:00pm – 7:00pm evening worship took place. Before both morning service and evening worship service, soft drinks were made available, a group of people welcoming worshippers as they arrived and offering drinks. The greeters wore red Tee shirts with the Logo, 'I love my Church' printed on them. There was a big countdown like counting down the seconds to New Year culminating in

the start of the Service. No doubt this was arranged so as to allow worshippers time to settle in their places before the Service started.

On Sunday the numbers of the congregation average about 350 – 400 mornings with similar numbers for the evening service.<sup>46</sup> The majority of the people attended both services. Some of the people I spoke to were visitors from other churches. And indeed, some had travelled long distances. Some of the respondents I spoke to had come from as far away as Hereford and some others from a Church plant in Swansea. Most of the church members did not live locally and thus there was provision of transport for worshippers. Some were bussed in from the surrounding areas like, Caerphilly, Basseleg and from housing estates on the outskirts of the city, for example those at Somerton, Ringland, Alway, Malpas and Somerton.

The congregation comprised a miscellany of people, but most of them were under the age of 50, with a good number of young families and students. The gender ratio seemed evenly balanced. The King's Church congregation reflected well the ethnic diversity to be found across the city of Newport. In an interview with one of the pastors, he stated that; 'We are a church made up of Christians from all walks of life, denominations and nationalities, who flow together in Christian love. This love is extended to all no matter what their belief or background.'<sup>47</sup>

The church had an easy atmosphere of informality about it with most people dressed casually although tidily. The atmosphere permitted people, encouraged them even, to come and go as they felt led to.

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<sup>46</sup> Information obtained from Kings Church records.

<sup>47</sup> Informant, Pastor.

## **7.6: Reflections on visits**

### **A: Worship**

I found King's Church worship to be lively and informal. The services contained a series of hymns, songs and choruses. I was informed that this arrangement was intended to reflect biblical instruction found in one of Paul's letters, thus 'be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the spirit. Sing music from your heart to the Lord.'<sup>48</sup>

The King's Church congregation usually sang standing up for more than 10 minutes. The words to their songs appeared displayed on two screens, as did the Bible readings. PowerPoint presentations and sermon outlines featured prominently. Modern technology was evident and contemporary (modern) musical instruments for example rock band drum kit and electric guitars were used to facilitate praise and worship of God. The singing was led by the musicians, who were otherwise known as Worship Band Leaders. They were extremely competent and able in leading the congregation into praise and worship according to the style and mood of the music as well as to the theme of the service. The Pastor's own musical background as a secular pop musician was reflected in the distinctive music genre of the King's Church songs. They played continuous songs running into one to another. The congregation's engagement was full, with People raising their arms whilst singing in enthusiastic songs in extravagant praise with hand clapping, jumping and dancing. I would describe the singing as high- energy charismatic worship, displaying audible praise to God. Stringer summarises well the character of this kind of charismatic worship when he describes it as 'montage', which is when, within the orderliness of the service there is 'disorder' because of the constant interruption due to the high levels of congregational participation. He goes on to say that,

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<sup>48</sup> Ephesians 5:18-19.

‘This nevertheless has an internal coherent quality to it, for example focused around the concept of conversion. Through the medium of experience, that is the experience of chaos, there comes renewed order and transformation.’<sup>49</sup> In light of this, Ward quotes what the organisers of Soul Survivor (an international Christian organisation which runs events to help young people get to know and follow Jesus)<sup>50</sup> state about worship. Worship, they state, is not simply an attempt to attract young people through the use of contemporary forms of music. Neither is it driven by a feeling that church should be trendy in some way. Soul Survivor believes that when people sing songs together, they meet God. This can correctly be referred to as a theology of encounter with God through the work of the Holy Spirit during times of worship and with the songs mediating this encounter.<sup>51</sup> Moreover respondents from the King’s Church stated that their principal focus was on building the Kingdom rather than building the Church. This fits with the analysis given by Ward who argues that worship is not a spectator sport, it is not a product moulded by the taste of the consumers. It is not what we get out of it: it is all about God.<sup>52</sup>

At the King’s Church there was speaking in tongues done openly<sup>53</sup> and other forms of behaviour to be seen at Charismatic and Pentecostal Services were carried on, such as, an invitation to come forward for ministry at the close of the service. These invitations were extended to any person present who wanted to commit their lives to Jesus. There was opportunity offered to people that they might be prayed for, so for them to receive healing in times of sickness or wisdom in time of need. The King’s Church believed in divine healing being available through a personal faith in Jesus, by means of the laying on of hands, as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>49</sup> Stringer 1999, Pages 152-154.

<sup>50</sup> Soul Survivor Website <http://www.soulsurvivor.com/> Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2009.

<sup>51</sup> Ward 2005, Page 106.

<sup>52</sup> Ward 2005, Page 172.

<sup>53</sup> Based 1 Corinthians 14: 15 -16.

Healing was available through conduit of Church government. On several occasions people gave testimonies relating to how they had seen their lives changed and their bodies healed. It could generally be argued that they believed all that the Old and New Testaments teach and were forever seeking to live faithful, fruitful and fervent Christian lives.

The preaching was done by Pastors and frequently also by the guest preachers. I found the preaching to be meaningful and thought provoking. The sermons lasted well over 45 minutes. On some occasions these were interactive, and included sharing and questioning, sometimes having vivid illustrations and stories taken from contemporary lives as well as from the bible. The preaching had a high entertainment value coupled with direct and specific challenge to action to the congregation. I had it said to me by several respondents that growth among the target population was due to the charisma of the pastor. That said, in a conversation with one of the church leaders about evangelism, the leader mentioned the influence of Reinhard Bonkke, Ray Malcolly, Terry Law and of other renowned international speakers. Invariably all the guest speakers were people who fed the theological outlook of the King's Church. All of whom make altar calls at the end of their sermons. At each such service at King's Church several people responded at each service to the invitation to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In fact my son who was 8 years old at the time I was conducting this fieldwork went forward on one occasion to be prayed for. Most of the books in the King's Church bookshop were books based on popular 'testimony teaching' type books, for example those written by Joyce Meyer. My observation here was that most if not all the books did not appear to me to be works of serious scholarship that outlined a theology.

## **b: Sacraments**

### **Baptism**

Baptism was by immersion in a custom built pool set into the floor at the front of the King's Church main building. The Pastor told me that the church held 4-5 baptismal services a year. When I attended 20 people were baptized. The age range was 11 – 45years. These people were from a variety of backgrounds and professions. One of those baptised was a University lecturer. Some others had been drug addicts and at the occasion they testified to their release from the bondage of drug addiction. There was evidence of the power of the gospel effecting transformations of individuals' lives and also of families. Each candidate gave their personal testimony, sharing with the congregation about their past, and with what God had done and was doing in their everyday lives. The diversity of ethnic backgrounds was noteworthy. Some candidates were Polish, others African - Caribbean, Asian, English and some Welsh. The baptism service was conducted by two Elders who had prepared the candidates for baptism. Each candidate was given a specific scriptural passage. One of the passages frequently quoted was from Paul's Letter to the Romans, and was as follows: '.....all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of God the Father, we too may live a new life.'<sup>54</sup> The Pastor in his sermon at the baptism service made an altar call. In addition he made reference to The Great Commission at the close of Matthew's gospel.

### **Holy Communion**

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<sup>54</sup> Romans 6:3-4.

Holy Communion was celebrated once a month on the first Sunday in the morning. I found Holy Communion to be very informal. The Pastor read out the passage from the first Letter of Paul to the Corinthians Chapter 11 verses 23-29. Emphasis thus was put on the death and sacrifice of Jesus and heavily upon the need for communicants to have a personal relationship with Jesus and not to take this lightly. A variety of Scripture sources were quoted including a passage from Isaiah which makes reference to healing. This was of significance in this regard because it was believed that through receiving benefits from the gifts of healing, many lives were initially touched by God, and people turned to God. During Communion individual cups were used. The elements consisted of bread and grape juice. People were invited to go to various points to receive Communion.

### **C: Dedication Services.**

Once every three months a service was held for the dedication of babies. Families were invited to stand and an Elder officiating gave a message about the importance of bringing up children in the ways of the Lord. This was followed by a Blessing and the dedication.

### **D: Ecumenism**

One of the remarks made about the King's Church was that 'it went along on its own'.<sup>55</sup> In addition there was at the King's Church an unwillingness to work with other churches in Newport. There was no visible community with other churches, since the understanding appeared to be that the King's Church did well in isolation what orthodox evangelical thought believes can be done better together. It was suggested by some members of the King's Church that some denominations held views the King's Church considered to be too liberal, moreover

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<sup>55</sup> Informant, former member of the King's Church currently Chairperson for Churches Together in Newport 2006

some were seen as theologically suspect. However, the King's church had independent affiliations with like minded churches throughout the world. It could be said of the King's Church that they were highly selective in their ecumenical adventures.

### **7:7 Exploration**

According to The King's Church's Vision Statement, which was situated prominently on a wall as a large banner, it was stated:

‘ To be a Church in our community Through word and lifestyle seeking to win the lost and influence our city and nation spiritually, morally, socially, ethically.  
To build the community in our Church through cell and celebration, making disciples, developing dynamic relationships, releasing potential.  
To influence the world community from our Church.  
Obeying Jesus' command to, ‘Go into the world and preach the Gospel and make disciples in all nations.’  
Through people and technology, reaching the lost at any cost, Each one reach one, Everybody loving somebody.’<sup>56</sup>

The Vision Statement thus placed great stress on winning souls. Hence outreach and evangelism had a high priority at The King's Church. It recognised that through LIFE groups the primary importance was reaching out to each neighbourhood and housing estates as well as the groups and networks and associations found in these places. According to one of my respondents, this strategy had proved an effective means of growing disciples and gaining new converts. This scenario fits the analysis given by Kirk who suggests that:

‘House fellowship groups’ (they have a variety of different names) are the key to the local church in mission. Their role is to encourage and enable Christians to witness to the truth of the gospel in everyday activities in the world. These groups focus on the stories of their members, on prayer, for specific need, on Bible Study to seek the mind of Christ in particular situations and choices.’<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Kings Church records 2007.

<sup>57</sup> Kirk 2000 page 218.

It seemed apparent from my conversations with the people that mission was regarded as evangelism and Proclamation, as loving service to those in need, and as social action for justice, outreach, and for the nurture of Christians being sent out.

In response to the questions I was asking here in relation to the Christian task, one of the respondents stated that she saw mission as ‘Christians being Jesus to those in need’,<sup>58</sup> clearly a desire to ‘incarnate’ God’s presence. A similar observation was made by yet another respondent who stated that ‘when Jesus finally ascended, he left in place a community dedicated to the same long- term incarnational approach’<sup>59</sup>.

What was striking was the intense emphasis on the cultivation of a personal faith and its enrichment, alongside close attention to the social concerns of the local community. A number of respondents said they had found their faith and fellowship to be the inspiration for their community work.

In respect of this, King’s Church members were involved in various ways in practical community service. Through the group, ‘Caring Hands,’ they actively sought to work with other social agencies in order to maximise the benefits to those who were disadvantaged, for them to receive the help they needed. Strong relationships had been formed with Kaleidoscope, The Welsh Assembly Drug Intervention Program and The Salvation Army. Two of these services were housed in the same building with ‘Caring Hands’. One of the respondents was a reformed drug user who stated that this ‘Caring Hands’ service had made a tremendous difference in his

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<sup>58</sup> Informant Female, Aged 37.

<sup>59</sup> Informant, Male aged 40.

life. He went on to say that the Christians working with 'Caring Hands' encouraged in him a sense of self-worth, identity and self-acceptance.<sup>60</sup>

It was suggested to me by one of my respondents that the word 'STRENGTH' encapsulated all that the King's Church community, as a fellowship, desire to stand for:

**'Scriptures:** priority given to the preaching and expounding them.

**Training:** every member equipped for service

**Relationships:** developed and matured, serving each other in love

**Evangelism:** both personal and corporate, always looking out.

**Needs:** a place where needs are met spiritually by the power of the Holy Spirit and practically by the loving and giving of the body

**Giving:** people are encouraged to release the ministry in giving in every area of their lives, i.e finance, talents and time. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

**Teaching:** both personally / pastorally and corporate / publicly

**Holy Spirit:** submitting and responding to His presence and guidance in all we say and do.'<sup>61</sup>

### **7.8: Reflection**

The thing that seemed apparent from my conversations with the people at The King's Church was their clearly perceived and lived-out dependence on God. One of the respondents who was part of the Outreach Team and going out with it on the streets to witness, stated that he had discovered the resources available in the Holy Spirit. The Scripture cited regarding this was:

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<sup>60</sup> Informant, Male, Aged 29.

<sup>61</sup> Informant, Elder

‘But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere- in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’<sup>62</sup>

At Easter time, whilst I was in the course of this work, King’s Church Christians took to the streets to deliver the Easter message through acting productions of open air Passion Plays. Hundreds of shoppers and passers-by gathered in Newport to witness dramatic depictions of the Passion of Christ. A member of the King’s Church, who was acting the role of Jesus, was whipped as he carried the cross down a busy thoroughfare in Newport as Jesus. He said that the public re-enactment of the Passion was a means of ‘taking the church to the people’ The Pastor of the King’s Church said, ‘We do this to remind people what it is all about. It is about a loving God sending his son to die for us and forgive our sins. Hopefully people will stop and think that Jesus was not a myth or legend, but a real human being who came to teach us about God’s love.’<sup>63</sup> Live music from a rock band and then a sermon followed the performance of the play, and a crowd of around 300 people sang modern hymns, including ‘*Upon a cross of shame*’.

One of the leaders at the King’s Church informed me of the strong belief held by this church that it was the gifts of the spirit that oriented them towards evangelism. He went on to say that the primary purpose of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was to empower believers to bear witness to the gospel to the entire world.<sup>64</sup> It was evident that at the King’s Church that they had from the start taken up a spirit-centred theology of mission and evangelisation, believing that the gifts of the Spirit orientate believers toward evangelism. A particular emphasis like this indicated that

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<sup>62</sup> Acts 11:8.

<sup>63</sup> Informant Pastor Kings Church.

<sup>64</sup> *The Christian Century*. March 7 2006 Vol 123, No 5.

there was a great deal of linkage or integration throughout of the vertical relationship with God and the horizontal relationship with neighbours. Bakke sums up this well when he asserts that: 'Ministry flows from the heart of the believer towards God in worship, towards other believers in fellowship and nurture and towards the world in evangelism and social action. He goes on to add, 'the church's mission includes these biblically authorised tasks, worship, evangelism, discipleship, stewardship, service.'<sup>65</sup>

### **7.9: Response and Conclusion.**

Months of observation and experience at the King's church has led me to conclude that The King's Church takes seriously the local realities of life and makes it a central and an integral part of its mission. The Church was responding to the challenges posed by certain social consequences of urbanisation in Newport. It was evident that through church projects, and Church activities such as 'Caring Hands', its LIFE groups, groups like 'Helping Christians Overcome Debt' and other various departments, the King's Church and its members were responding quite specifically and benevolently to localised social concerns such as drug abuse, homelessness, poverty, social isolation, loneliness and deprivation generally, and to a significant and obvious extent.

Nonetheless, there remained and remained still, a lot of work to do. A great number of the members of the congregation demonstrated an astonishing and cheering commitment to working amongst the people of Newport. Even standing alone, the King's Church's Sunday services were having an impact as I witnessed and was informed by informants that people came in to them off

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<sup>65</sup> Bakke, R. with Hart, J. *The Urban Christian*. Bromley: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987 Page 144.

the streets and took part in the services. Even though the services were quite long, there was no sense that they were being artificially drawn out.

The King's Church then, is an interesting phenomenon from both the perception of people gathering together to worship and in terms of evangelistic outreach. The church was in earnest to reach into the community so as to be meeting the needs of unfortunates, and at the same time telling people and even by demonstration showing them the truth about the love of Jesus. From the very young to the old, members strove to carry out their mission task, meeting people where they found them, both materially and spiritually, quoting St Paul's words, 'I have become all things to all people.'<sup>66</sup>

The King's Church implemented an approach that sustained proselytized recruitment. They seemed to have found an answer to Percy's question: 'Why does Charismatic Christianity apparently succeed so quickly where others have apparently failed for so long?'<sup>67</sup> Percy's answer to this question was; 'there is no real Christology, creeds, sacraments or Trinitarian theology and praxis to burden believers with.'<sup>68</sup> It could also be argued here that the congregation at the King's Church was being 'offered an immediate form of spiritual experience a kind of bathetic sentience through which they encountered quansi-numinous phenomenon.'<sup>69</sup> While at the same time its unity and stability were being threatened by schisms. These schisms in the past were occasioned by deep rooted theological convictions. Among the contentious issues was divorce and remarriage especially amongst the church leadership. It was remarked by

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<sup>66</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:22

<sup>67</sup> Percy. M *The Origin of Species*. London: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006, Page 141.

<sup>68</sup> Percy 2006, Page 2

<sup>69</sup> Percy, 2006, page 2.

someone outside the congregation that ‘whilst people were still crowding in through the front door, plenty have left through the back door too.’<sup>70</sup> This begs the question about the issue of dissensions and factionalism. It looks to be fair to say that The King’s Church was working at the cutting edge of contemporary church culture and was well placed to continue the mission task further along the coming decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The Pastor at the time was on Twitter and King’s Church was on You Tube. Arguably as suggested by Percy, ‘the absence of a theological, doctrinal ecclesiology basis makes Charismatic Christianity incredibly free in its reactions to and inculcation of contemporary culture’.<sup>71</sup> To use Percy’s word ‘social relevance’<sup>72</sup> seemed a trademark for a number of members of the congregation at the Kings Church. The congregation at the King’s Church were ‘not bogged down by centuries of tradition, nor did they have much of a past to justify or carry.’ Contrary to what Drane and others have said, at the King’s’ church it was noticeable that younger generations were found to have interest in the church and those who attended were representative of the wider population. This observation is in agreement with what Percy noted about Charismatic Christianity thus: ‘statistics appear to show that charismatic Christianity, as an ecclesiological expression, is the only ‘growth area in the firmament of Christian expression, and is therefore somehow, ‘the future’.<sup>73</sup> He goes on to say that: ‘the type of religion offered – tactile and immediate – is particularly and perfectly suited to a postmodern world, with emphasis on fulfilment, healing, and the individual celebration.’<sup>74</sup> This reflects the situation at the King’s Church. In addition, most visible was the fact that there was a balance in gender. This was also reflected in the leadership where both men and women were represented, as also were all generation groups. A single major reservation

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<sup>70</sup> Informant, Female, aged 45, Former member of the King’s Church.

<sup>71</sup> Percy. M 2006, Page141.

<sup>72</sup> Percy, 2006, Page 141.

<sup>73</sup> Percy 2006, Page 137.

<sup>74</sup> Percy 2006, Page 137.

must be that in terms of setting the goals for ecumenism there was an antagonistic factor. The King's Church at that time was self-confessedly relatively unconcerned about, and unconnected with, working with other churches in Newport. This reflects King's Church antipathy towards other Churches in Newport. Their condescending dismissal of the importance of ecumenism could be seen by non-committed people as a division amongst Christians and this could arguably be seen as a barrier to the mission of the Church.

In conclusion it could be argued that from my observations of the King's Church there was more evidence of personal orientation to their mission. However, I could also point to aspects of societal orientation evident in this congregation, though with under laying motivation for conversion.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **8:1 Introduction**

This thesis has participated in the attempts to take exegesis of the task of congregational reflection, ethnographic and missiological issues and current debates in mission a small step further. This Chapter analyses mission questions and findings and draws conclusions with recommendations for further enquiry into congregational studies and mission.

#### **8:2 Summary of Findings**

The question from which I started was, ‘How do Christians in Newport define their Christian task?’ and this was complemented by another query, ‘How did their view affect their conduct and expression in the communities where they lived?’ And thus it is that this final Chapter reflects on and brings together my ‘experience, exploration, reflection and analysis’<sup>1</sup> of issues and questions relating to 21<sup>st</sup> century congregations involved in mission.

Congregations in Newport were found having to carry out mission in a society that claims to be for the most part secularized. This thesis has argued that Christians in Newport carried on their Christian task in an environment where the greater part of the population did not have a considerable commitment to, nor maybe even grounding in Christianity. And this situation is not uncommon in the United Kingdom and indeed most parts of Wales where worship is attended by a small minority. Therefore churches were found to use different approaches and models of mission in response to their changing social, cultural and economic environments.

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<sup>1</sup> Green 1990, Page 28.

From my findings three models of mission emerged; namely a) Traditional, b) Fresh Expressions and c) Liberation Theology. These models were all identified as active in Newport. The traditional model clearly exercises within the mould that mission takes in traditional congregations. The challenge for these congregations is whether the profound impact that this model has is fully realized. For its academic basics the Fresh Expressions model draws on Croft's example of Fresh Expressions in the Church of England and in the Methodist Church. Croft asserts that, 'the churches had discovered different and practical ways to renew traditional congregations in mission and evangelism.'<sup>2</sup> He goes on to say that, 'they are learning now many new and creative ways to plant and sustain new communities: Fresh expressions of Church.'<sup>3</sup> This seems clearly to apply to some of the congregations in Newport as their response to the challenges of post-modern culture and technology. However, as much as 'Fresh Expressions as a model of mission offers the opportunity to bring new and imaginative ways of doing mission,'<sup>4</sup> nonetheless this thesis has pointed to some of the challenges associated with this model. The third model identified is Liberation Theology. I have described this Liberation Theology model in its context in Newport with the conviction that, 'Liberation Theology is an expression of the truth of Christianity and Christianity's vision of human life and existence, and that this vision of truth is not exclusively for Latin America.'<sup>5</sup> In addition, 'in Liberation Theology, conversion ceases to be an individualistic experience and becomes a turning from one's own way.....and entering upon the way of the other, the neighbour, and especially of the poor in whom we

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<sup>2</sup> Croft Steven (ed), 2008. Page 3.

<sup>3</sup> Croft 2008, Page 3.

<sup>4</sup> Croft 2008, Page 3.

<sup>5</sup> Haight R. *An Alternative Vision: An interpretation of Liberation Theology*, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1995, Page 1

encounter the Lord.’<sup>6</sup>

Insights drawn from a critical engagement with each of these three models of mission have been utilized to elaborate a broader description of mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. By means of this identification and delineation of three models of mission in Newport, it was possible to interweave these with other recognized models of mission. This variety in doing mission confirms the notion that there is not a single or even a ‘correct method.’ The engagement with the three models of mission embodied in this thesis illustrates and exemplifies the openness required by congregations engaged in mission. This in turn revealed that Newport congregations were found to be discovering diverse and realistic ways to carry out their Christian task. Through the adoption of a holistic approach in this thesis it has been possible to demonstrate a considerable level of interdependence between the variant models of mission; and to show how they can all be drawn together. This thesis has shown that many levels of missionary responses were alive amongst congregations. This variety was considered to be a consequence of congregations having to address the needs of a more openly diverse culture. Whereas some congregations were seen to take a more sociological approach to mission, others took the form of a more evangelistic approach. The ‘sociological approach moves towards bridging the gap between ‘church culture’ and ‘popular culture.’<sup>7</sup> It has been the contention of this thesis that congregations through worship, incarnational work, social work, tended towards an adaptability wherein they had ‘adapted models of church that were challenging the world instead of them aiming to assimilate to contemporary culture’.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Gutierrez G, *The Truth Shall Set you Free*. New York: Maryknoll, Orbis, 1990, Page 5.

<sup>7</sup> Chambers 2005, page 62.

<sup>8</sup> Stodard and Cutberth 2006, Page 126.

In Chapter One this thesis sought to understand mission as viewed from within a biblical setting. The Chapter explored what constitutes mission and the broad range of missiological responses and approaches to the multifaceted process of mission. Insights drawn from the critical engagement with the literature on mission were identified and employed. Through an engagement with the work of Bosch, Hirsch, Kirk, McGavran, Kaiser, Dubose, Drane and other missiologists, biblical fundamentals that underpin mission were identified and evaluated and sufficient descriptions sought. Biblical reflection in Chapter One revealed that passages from both the Old Testament and New Testament were referred to as biblical foundations for mission. However, commonly there was a broad acknowledgement that 'The Great Commission' which is significantly situated at the close of Matthew's gospel was considered the 'Magna Carta' of mission. This proposal was iterated by William Carey in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, although recently scholarship has tended generally to offer additional or alternative biblical bases as warrants for biblical mission. These biblical bases are reflected in the themes on discipleship, the Sermon on the Mount, Luke and liberation, Act of the Apostles and mission in Paul. In the context of this thesis, this formed a basis of how congregations were responding to the challenges posed by technological, cultural, economical and social changes in society. Furthermore, mission strategies such as social action, process evangelism, small groups, worship, incarnational mission were explored and found to have varying degrees of effectiveness as tools of mission.

Within Chapter Two a range of general methodology, and of a research strategy, and research techniques were explored in some detail. It was recognised that a cluster of methodological tools were indispensable to doing mission, and so insights were drawn from a number of congregational studies. These included among them the Kendal Project; and through this

Project's engagement with its recorded experience this thesis explored also 'the congregational domain'<sup>9</sup>. Congregations were seen to be engaged in mission through their use of liturgies, responses, hymns, songs and by regular ritual actions. Liturgy was seen to be 'a spiritually and emotionally binding force cementing fellowship and shared faith in its role as a source of sacred symbolism.'<sup>10</sup> Its 'variations displayed some remarkable shared characteristics.'<sup>11</sup> It was able to offer 'a world of authority, continuity, stability, adaptability, wholeness and purpose.'<sup>12</sup> Lyon says that in the recital of 'Christian Liturgy, the word made flesh –incarnate – is discovered, and it shares in human life so that humans might share in the divine.'<sup>13</sup> He goes on to say that 'because people experience each other as bodily presence, in face-to-face relationships, the word made flesh is mirrored in the everyday life experience of the participants.'<sup>14</sup> However, within the limited framework of this present research, it was not possible to attempt to test or confirm all that was done in Kendal. It would be interesting however, to conduct research in Newport having Kendal specifically in mind, so as to establish the analogues between those people actively involved in Newport in what has been referred to in the Kendal Project as the 'holistic milieu.'<sup>15</sup> The present research might be taken as a plausible starting point for exploring The Kendal Project's sense of 'holistic milieu'<sup>16</sup> as this might occur within the perceived 'tectonic shifts taking place'<sup>17</sup> in Newport in missiology, church expression and new forms of church.

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<sup>9</sup> Source Website: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/iepp/Kendal/history.htm>. Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> December 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Lyons, *Jesus in Disneyland: Religion in Postmodern Times*. Malden: Polity Press, Blackwell, 2000, Page 60

<sup>11</sup> Lyons, 2000, page 60.

<sup>12</sup> Lyons, 2000, Page 60.

<sup>13</sup> Lyons, 2000, Page 61

<sup>14</sup> Lyons, 200, Page 61.

<sup>15</sup> Source Website: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/iepp/Kendal/history.htm>. Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> December 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Source Website: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/lepp/Kendal/history.htm>, Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> December 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Source Website: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/iepp/Kendal/history.htm>. Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> December 2004.

Ethnographic research methods were found useful in exploring the personal and societal orientation in mission. It was demonstrated that the use of ethnography in this thesis was a more definite and appropriate choice than a mere arbitrary selection of it from a list of options amongst methodologies. Other methodologies included use of questionnaires, interviews, and written records and sources. Accordingly, this chapter demonstrated that my perspectives influenced the questions I asked. It was made clear in the chapter that in the context of this research abundant endeavour was made to become aware of the personal assumptions that lay behind my impressions of the congregations studied. I brought my own experience of church and mission to bear on those three particular congregations to write up as case studies. The case in point here is that a black female Anglican priest was studying congregations regarding their mission work and outlooks, and that she was interested in such a field. These circumstances demonstrate that ‘preconditions and background together with theoretical perspectives, act to condition the questions, concepts and analyses one formulates.’<sup>18</sup> Thus there was recognition within the methodology that ‘observers and researchers can never be wholly objective.’<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, insights were drawn creatively from Green’s pastoral cycle of ‘experience-exploration- reflection- analysis.’<sup>20</sup> As a result it was recognised that the starting point for this study benefited from valuing as well as evaluating experience, from listening to people’s stories and even appraising their silences. ‘Cognitive processes and moral and emotional patterns of life are significantly shaped by inherited stories and by ‘knowing where one has come from,’

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<sup>18</sup> Burgess, 1984, Pages 32-33.

<sup>19</sup> Burgess 1984, Page 143.

<sup>20</sup>Green, 1990. Page 30.

including knowledge of how these stories have impacted lives.’<sup>21</sup> This must be a fundamental starting point in any serious reflection.<sup>22</sup>

Chapter Two demonstrates that it was by studying particular elements rather than by studying models or method that results were to be best obtained for this research. These considerations mean also that the personal stories of Christians in Newport have been situated in a context by a consciousness that contains an unusual but wide narrative of Christian tradition. In regard to Newport congregants this contextualisation was highlighted by my personal perspectives on the responses from informants of various congregations, and by other supplementary observations made at house group meetings. Wuthnow’s analysis of small groups provided certain creative resources which assisted my engagement with the concept of small groups as a tool for mission. Chapter One has argued that small groups clearly had positive results when embraced as a tool for mission; and that as a consequence they have become a common feature within congregations.

Chapter Three then, explored the historical, socio-political, and economic contexts which were considered to have given rise to the types of lives lived in Newport. Theoretical aspects of social, economic, and social change were explored to highlight their impact on the mission of the church. It was suggested that Newport had a characteristic bias that was given it by the particular and idiosyncratic historical, political and demographic character of the local area. Stories and memories from the past are used there strongly to serve the present. The truth of this broadly general statement has as a rider that denomination, social class, walk of life, and other

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<sup>21</sup> Green, 1990, Page 18

<sup>22</sup> Drane 2000, Page 17

factors: even, to a simple extent, postcode, in Newport all carry with them multifarious localised and specific variations on a single leading theme. It became evident that Christian congregations in Newport, whose historical backgrounds and church traditions were so diverse, as a unit appeared to be driven by a common experience and shared love, but were being expressed in a diversity of forms of mission as mixed as the backgrounds from which they sprung.

In Newport, as in many parts of Wales, ‘churches and chapels remain ubiquitous evidence of continuity in a long strong heritage; and at certain times carry the long echo of mighty revivalist fervour.’<sup>23</sup> The significance of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century religious revivals in South Wales was explored and their afterglow was shown to be still burning bright in many lives in Newport. Powerful memories within families who had been stirred up by the 1904 revival were recalled and pored over by surprising numbers of parishioners. Even the verbatim recitals of prayers long ago prayed surfaced here and there. It has been argued that mission in what has been referred to as the ‘golden age’ tended to have a personal orientation and this was very successful at the time. Thus this present research has witnessed to the lasting power of the Welsh revivals and their enduring effects, that indeed they have not been entirely superseded and subsumed by secularism as certain sceptical detractors have claimed. This is not to say there have been no paradigmatic changes which have occurred as Newport’s history has unfolded.

Following the historical, economic and socio- political status of Newport, Chapter Four explored in some detail the current status of the churches and Christian organizations in Newport. Set beside these are the clusters of religious backgrounds to be found alive and active in Newport. It was shown that Newport was a fascinating microcosm of congregations in

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<sup>23</sup> Results of 1995 Welsh Churches Survey: *Challenge to Change*.

mission. For a moderate-sized city Newport evidences, in its extensiveness, a rich variety of congregational types. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that although Christianity appealed to all sectors of society, there were variations in the actual social structure of individual churches. There were variations in liturgy, ecclesiology and theology. There were variations in social structure and age range. In addition theological themes of the congregation's mission, witness, worship, fellowship, nurture and evangelism, social as well as the vision of the kingdom of God, varied in relation to local experience. Nonetheless it was demonstrated that there were correlations among different forms of congregational life and in the wider socio-cultural trends.

It was also evident that despite the closure of some places of worship in Newport there was evidence of new and vibrant churches emerging across the city, and that a number of congregations were growing and were active and very engaged.

Chapter Four recognizes that in Newport there was an ecumenical basis with different streams of Christian tradition. Within this chapter, the significance of ecumenism was explored and was shown to receive mixed reaction from congregations. Outreach events for the most part might be assigned to an ecumenical category. Through ecumenism, in faith and action together, Christians from diverse traditions were beginning to 'be as Christ to one another and to the world.' In Newport, nonetheless, some local churches can be said to subsist as isolated congregations having more or less no links with other congregations. In these cases one can only suggest that it appears naïve to anticipate a reconciliation of different traditions even as a distant prospect on a distant horizon given this present outlook in Newport.

It seems reasonable to conclude that there is need for greater awareness and co-operation between Churches in Newport; an awareness of the fact that people of our times are perhaps looking for variety, certainly for different things from different kinds of Churches. And it needs to be recognized by all, that churches meet a variety of needs by being interdenominational. Ultimately, by the churches of Newport being ecumenical, they are not being placed in a position of competition; but instead they enjoy collaboration. In a similar vein the varieties of church life are to be celebrated. In Newport it was evident that each tradition had formulated mission differently and this certainly affected the way people experienced it.

Chapters Five, Six & Seven sequentially presented three case studies that were developed out of ethnographic studies. These in-depth studies enabled a useful comparative study of divergent Christian communities at Nant Coch Church, St Mary's Roman Catholic Church and the King's Church; all in Newport. In contrast to what has been written about Church decline, these chapters describe congregations that have flourished in recent years, despite a situation in Wales characterized by numerous declining churches and chapels.

Chapter Five revolved around the Christian Task as experienced by the congregation at Nant Coch. This chapter demonstrated that although Nant Coch was evangelical, it did not strictly conform to the evangelical mode. It was made clear that Nant Coch had struck a good balance between the personal and societal orientation of mission through the church's teaching and their involvement with the community.

The ethnographic study at St Mary's Roman Catholic Church forms the basis of Chapter Six. Analysis of Mission at St Mary's demonstrated that the traditional liturgy was found to be the

basis and framework for the worship. St Mary's was found to need more work in their personal and societal orientation endeavors.

Chapter Seven centred on mission carried out by the King's Church. It was demonstrated that the King's Church was an interesting church from both the perspectives of the number of people attending church and societal orientation. According to my personal observations, conversations with informants, it was observed to be attracting people both from other churches and those with no church background. It was noteworthy that most if not all their programmes were centered on conversion. They were focused on encouraging an experience of personal conversion. They employed the language, music and so on of the people they are called to reach rather than their tradition's language, music and so on. However, unlike St Mary's Roman Catholic Church and Nant Coch, the King's Church showed little concern for ecumenism and observed by a number of informants it had a retention problem.

### **8.3: Models of Mission**

The research highlighted that there were striking differences between the three case study congregations with regards to worship. The King's Church offered lively and informal services with exuberant prayers and loud music. St Mary's Roman Catholic Church on the other hand was very formal. In spite of a tendency towards informality, it was shown that formality was applied subtly in Nant Coch. This finding may imply a point that Nant Coch might actually subvert one's traditional expectations of a free evangelical congregation. Outreach nonetheless was emphasised to a greater extent in Nant Coch and at The King's Church; with a consequent emphasis on personal evangelism. This was not so evident at St Mary's Roman Catholic Church.

Some further notable distinctions were recorded in the difference in Mission/Vision statements about mission. These were displayed in all the three churches. Ultimately however, the different congregations were working from different views of churchmanship. Despite denominational differences a very similar picture emerges with the same methods and even similar events. Hence dominant values remain. It could be argued that what these values are, 'rest' hidden in some of the answers that were given in the questionnaires, interviews and conversations.

This thesis demonstrated that in Newport, many Christian perceptions of mission were seen to exist side by side and as such were intensely localised. They had been developed, consciously and unconsciously, in and by parishioners and congregations, by them taking as their raw materials their local understandings of what necessary criteria should be promulgated and pursued in order to do mission successfully. Newport congregations put a common emphasis upon mission, by which they showed themselves all to be striving ultimately to seek to nurture personal conviction and Christian conversion to faith for neophytes. In this regard however, and as part of an opening gambit for doing mission, a commitment to social outreach was held by many congregations, and it was demonstrated that theirs was a genuine and unconditional caring-for-others put into action. Such an outreach was considered by them to have value in and for itself, and also, and perhaps more primarily, it was structured so as to carry along with it as much as it could hold of a dispassionate interest in nurturing newcomers into fuller reception of the Spirit; to accept in their hearts Christian love.

There was evident frequently an impressive level of desire for this ‘pre-evangelism or proto-evangelism’ and an understanding of the need for it was found to be widespread and deeply felt by many Newport Christian congregations. Moreover they were deeply conscious of the value and the Scriptural warrant for this basic building block of mission. Through engagement with traditions of the Bible, the creeds, traditions of worship, church music, and the sacraments and by their sacramental actions. congregations found means to rich expressions of their faith, in social outreach and also in more pure forms of service. This engagement with scripture and tradition in the past prevailed strongly in Newport Churches; and it does today still for many Christians of all kinds there. This holds true in spite of ‘the Bible, the early Christian creeds, the sacraments and liturgical offices of the Church all originally having been formed and developed thereafter in contexts radically different’<sup>24</sup> from those to be found in Newport past and present. Many congregations enjoy a great and vibrant resonance with them. The faith of congregations informs guides and shapes their actions. Theirs is living faith rooted in a living Lord and lived in the power of his Spirit. However, they were experiencing barriers to mission arising from secularization, technological changes, individualism, consumerism and other cultural changes.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven sought to understand mission as viewed from within biblical setting as well as from a contemporary setting in Newport . It was suggested through the evidence drawn from questionnaires and interviews that 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians in Newport had a variety of ways by which they had worked out their manifest expressions of belief in their daily lives. In some congregations the theological framework being used was St Matthew’s New Testament Commission. For many the Great Commission continued to be the ‘Gold Standard’ of the Christian task. On the other hand others were finding helpful other biblical texts such as

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<sup>24</sup> Carr, 1997, Page 171.

those words of Isaiah quoted by Jesus in the address in the Synagogue, immediately after the Temptations in the wilderness in Luke 4:18-19.

These Chapters then demonstrated that scholars and congregations were saying much the same thing. This awareness and general understanding of mission among congregations allows the bases of mission to be, as it were, 'transferrable' and so allow mission to embrace many different traditions and perspectives. The findings in this thesis re-affirmed this assertion. Furthermore for some congregations there was much emphasis on personal conviction and on religious conversion; whilst others regarded social outreach and welfare care as pre-evangelism or proto-evangelism; a vehicle through which mission became for outsiders 'palatable.'

Recognition within missiological studies was reaffirmed: that Mission is also considered to involve clear commitment to promoting Church growth; both in regard to the numbers of people who worship joined together, and these same being active within and not divorced from the local community. As a result it became feasible to claim that the Christian task might be defined as exercising faith, worship and discipleship. This thesis suggests that Christians in Newport have a responsibility to address the experience as Christians in Newport, enabling them to see themselves as participants in the *Missio Dei*- God's mission.

An important local perception of relevant concern to mission in Newport was found to be a reinforcing historical and political situation in the city. It was widely recognized there that large areas of the city were (and remain) economically deprived, in terms of UK average standards; and this deprivation very often carries with it a full set of concomitant cultural, educational, and

aspirational deficiencies. These social ills, once confronted by the strong non-conformist ethos among Newport's older denominations, has led naturally to a positive and community-based outlook for mission, tending inevitably towards social action. An alleviation of hardship was a predominant concern and goal wherever Christians were seen to be doing mission there.

Nonetheless, in exploring the form which mission has taken in Newport, this current discussion strove to demonstrate that Christian mission having a clear commitment to Church growth had not been jettisoned.

The Christian task outlook in Newport instead was found to be holistic, and as such concerned not merely with statistics that point to 'numbers of people worshipping rising, but also with the desire that Christians and new adherents might fuse and harmonise, extending themselves jointly, personally and collectively as a spiritual force, and so projecting into a receptive local community.'<sup>25</sup> In this way congregants' acts of doing mission, were considered to be also the kind of mission which fortifies the faith of its own actors. It became evident that the relationship between worship and mission was paramount; and that hence, worship and social action emerged as the leading paradigms for doing mission.

In the light of the findings of this research I was led to conclude that evangelism and social action were being combined intrinsically in the thoughts and in the mission programmes that rose out of this thought, by many Newport congregations. It was well established as being the definitive way to reach out. The more normally-observed variations found within different Christian traditions generally, with regards to evangelization, seemed to have become a thing of

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<sup>25</sup> The Archbishop's Report on Urban Priority Areas. Faith in the City, 1995, Page 77.

the past. Increasingly evangelization was being seen to be concerned with socio-economic and political needs, running alongside and in parallel with the salvation of the souls. Moreover this thesis went on to suggest that with the availability and opportunities of obtaining increased governmental support, Newport's Christian communities were emerging as important adjuncts to local government social work. This was evident through the work of organizations such as Raven House and Gweini whose mission/ vision was to represent the Christian voluntary sector to all levels of government and other faiths. Through the work of Gweini and other agencies churches carried out incarnational mission through networking opportunities and partnerships with the local councils, Communities First and local police. Examples of such networking was the work of the Cinnamon network, Projects such as Ignition, Street Pastors, caring for ex-offenders, Night shelter, Food Banks, Christmas lunch on Jesus, Asylum seekers project, provision for the homeless and many other projects. Blended together, material secular welfare joins with a potent admixture of holy encouragement, in order to enable the goals of mission. But mission was perceived to be and was adhered to as the primary and absolute factor in the blend.

Newport Congregations were also to be seen to be committed to carrying out pastoral work through compassion ministries, with an aim of working towards a transformation of local problem situations, and ultimately, of people's life-chances too. It has been suggested by Pattison that, while 'pastoral work has been seen to be a way of alleviating personal and collective suffering, that its heart as a ministry is to increase love between people and between people and God; and for it to display the specific functions of healing, sustaining, reconciling, guiding and

nurturing.’<sup>26</sup> Congregations also were playing a vital role in upholding accepted social mores; that is, those duties and obligations, such as comprise the acts of ‘the good citizen’ and ‘the good neighbour’; and all this at local, civic, and sometimes at (Welsh) national level. Churches were serving as rallying points for local community providers of welfare and so were taking on the mantle of ‘social capital’ by way of visiting the elderly, and the bereaved, and by caring for and reclaiming many of the socially marginalised’<sup>27</sup> who subsist outside accepted norms in many minds.’<sup>28</sup>

There was thus to be seen a commitment to influencing administrative, governmental, and social policy and procedure, as these were being formulated by local institutions and governing authorities. A typical example of this was mentioned; this was the socially-committed and active Christian, who was also in some kind of public office, like a School Governor, or a local Councillor, and so on. In this way Newport Christians were observed in many instances to be working at alleviating specific and contingent hardships that were being suffered among their fellows; as well as them looking to the nuts and bolts of how most compassionately to make policy and execute administration. These were ways aimed at acting positively to lift people generally out of bleak situations that they themselves could not shift. In the words of Bonhoeffer, as quoted by Wesley Carr, ‘The Church is the Church only when it exists for others....The Church must share in the secular problems of ordinary life, not dominating, but helping and serving.’<sup>29</sup> Such a realisation appears to be of particular and fundamental significance in the context of mission and the church.

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<sup>26</sup> Pattison, S. 1997, Page 14.

<sup>27</sup> Pattison, 1997, Page 65.

<sup>28</sup> Pattison 1997, Page 65.

<sup>29</sup> Wesley Carr, 1997, Page 170

The decline of the standing of the city of Newport as a busy strategic seaport was perhaps the source of a growing consciousness of a need to step in and act with social responsibility; and of a consciousness that a sense of urgency about poverty and its issues was needed among Christians in Newport. It was suggested by a respondent that, ‘in the make-up of Newport as a geographic and civic entity, (and as in other cities), there has for some time subsisted the basic formidable characteristics of magnitude, anonymity, heterogeneity, mobility problems, conflict, crime, secularisation and hectic consumerist materialism.’<sup>30</sup> Newport partakes in these problems along with British society at large, and like the UK in general, it shows emergent signs of fragmentation and alienation through impersonality. It has been, so this research argues, in competition with these kinds of post-religious, post-modern, urban social trends that congregations are stirring and striving to extend themselves. As an outward manifestation of their religious commitment congregations are trying to be seen to be active purposeful people of impact in both practice and public worship despite the challenges and barriers to mission.

The missiological significance of Social Action has been explored and has been stated to have stimulated a resurgence of community work among the congregations. Congregations were seen again and again to be situating themselves alongside the poor and oppressed. Indeed they were witnessed to be engaged in serious social action through the work of street pastors and in the provision of night shelters. The work of Raven House has demonstrated how the churches offered organised pastoral care, and Raven House was seen to be open to listening to the voices of the powerless, those on the margins, with a view to helping the dispossessed to obtain their own regeneration. In view of all this Newport congregations were observed to be developing a

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<sup>30</sup> Informant, Male aged 55.

‘prophetic dimension that is oriented towards social and political liberation against blind institutionalised and opaque oppression.’<sup>31</sup>

God, as suggested by Pattison, ‘works not by means of a transcendent intervention from on high but by and through human action to obtain liberation from below.’<sup>32</sup> Moreover, as Pattison goes on to say,

‘it is from the margins of society where the poor are confined that God breaks in to the present social order. Salvation takes place in present history and is the human work of the poor and those who identify with their aspirations, responding to God’s promises of hope. Historical liberation, as witnessed to in many parts of the Bible and Christian tradition, is the primary manifestation of salvation.

The church’s mission is to empower people to be all that God intends for them as those who are made ‘in God’s image.’<sup>33</sup>

### **8.3.1: Liberation Theology model**

The research findings tended to recognise that congregations were using Luke 4:18-19 as a mandate for mission. In Luke 4:18-19 Jesus empathises with the oppressed as he stands in the synagogue in Nazareth. In the person of Jesus, God provided for the hopes of the oppressed and announced their impending fulfilment. God’s desire for justice and for liberation for all his people is evident in the work and ministry of Jesus. Congregations made an impressive level of reference to this passage of scripture.

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<sup>31</sup> Pattison, 1997, Page 67.

<sup>32</sup> Pattison, 1997, Page 66.

<sup>33</sup> Genesis 1:27-28

However while social work had come to be considered valid as a way for alleviating the suffering, a question is to be asked about how far the congregations were prepared to take the liberation struggle. My observation was that there was inadequate and ultimately unconvincing expression of liberation theology as a model for mission.

Close observation led me to conclude that congregations have insufficient engagement with radical social change. Whilst this thesis has recognised the importance of pastoral care, little evidence was found of congregations challenging inherent structures of injustice. Relationships with the poor were not seen to be significant and long lasting. Although some may think that it is going too far to make this assumption about what is the church's due response to injustice, it is certainly the case that churches were not doing much to oppose it. Moreover, there is a certain level of scepticism about some of the social work done. It is exactly at this point that Pattison's and Selby's caution is useful. For a person, community or organisation 'to presume to care for another human being without taking into account the social and political causes of whatever it is a subject may be suffering is to confirm them in their distress while pretending to offer healing.'<sup>34</sup> This resonates with Hull's call for a prophetic church, a Church that refuses to accept the poverty which is still so widespread in our community.<sup>35</sup>

A case in point is the group which Drane has termed 'Hedonists.'<sup>36</sup> These are those who chose to deal with the discontinuities and pressures of life just by partying at every possible opportunity, living for themselves and taking advantage of the increased permissiveness of

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<sup>34</sup> Selby, P. *Liberating God*. London : SPCK, 1983, Page 76. Also in Pattison 1997, Page 218.

<sup>35</sup> Hull, J. *Mission Shaped Church: A Theological Response*. London, SCM, 2006, Page 36.

<sup>36</sup> Drane 2000, Page 63.

culture.<sup>37</sup> Such people as Drane goes on to say have suffered their own personal traumas, fragmented and broken family backgrounds, and for them the human journey is too painful for them to contemplate.<sup>38</sup> Another scenario is to ask what happens to the people in need of accommodation the rest of the year when the night shelter is not in existence. It is in relation to these kinds of issues that congregations involved in mission can learn a good deal from liberation theology. And indeed, as Drane has suggested, ‘if they are to hear the gospel it will have to be in relevant ways which are visionary and outside the orthodox existing paradigms.’<sup>39</sup>

For Drane ‘the spiritual dimensions of the gospel should not be underplayed in favour of presenting the Christian faith as some kind of programme of social improvement or therapy.’<sup>40</sup> He goes on to say, of course, that ‘as a holistic message it includes all that, and more besides, and is hence not one sided.’<sup>41</sup>

I am convinced that congregations in their engagement in mission could learn some valuable lessons from liberation theology. As a model of mission it is very relevant to Newport as it would enhance the work being done through the Evangelical Alliance in Wales and Gweini. Insights arising from liberation theology might provide there a systematic structure for mission. Such a structure would be informative for an effective programme of social action in Newport.

Insights might be drawn from Pattison who observed that though ‘the oppressions from which the Northern Hemisphere stand in need of liberation have different names (to the Southern

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<sup>37</sup> Drane 2000, Page 63.

<sup>38</sup> Drane 2000 page 64.

<sup>39</sup> Drane 2000, Page 65.

<sup>40</sup> Drane 2000, Page 83.

<sup>41</sup> Drane 2000, Page 83.

hemisphere's woes) – atheism, materialism, consumerism, individualism they are equally real.'<sup>42</sup>

In addition, liberation theology is referred to as 'a reflection of God's activity and God's transforming grace among those who are victims of modern society.'<sup>43</sup>

Mission has to be seen to be an active commitment to liberation. However, as Pattison cautions, there are challenges involved in the 'transfer of insights and methods developed in one culture to another.' In the context of Newport liberation theology needs to be done in accordance with the missiological needs of the people in Newport. Mission ought to be about challenge, change,<sup>44</sup> empowerment and new life.

And so, specific insights and methods particular to Liberation Theology have to be applied to the context of Newport, as congregations there practice pastoral care. Systematic injustice is to be challenged. The prophetic tradition of the gospel is to be renewed. In his work Pattison establishes a creative, practical, hermeneutical relationship between liberation theology and pastoral care.<sup>45</sup>

In the light of this research let it be said that congregations engaged in mission do well to make sure that there is a socio-political awareness in their mission ventures. This will ensure that they do not fall into the trap of supporting forces of domination, exploitation, authority, and power.

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<sup>42</sup> Pattison, 1997, Page 77.

<sup>43</sup> Pattison and Woodward (eds) 2000, Page 165.

<sup>44</sup> Pattison, 1997, Page 59.

<sup>45</sup> Pattison 1997, Page 59.

This thesis therefore recommends the Liberation Theology way of thinking. The way of thinking that stands side by side with the Christian faith and which champions betterment of the circumstances of the disadvantaged. Liberational mission is therefore called for.

In various ways the present study illustrates that Christians in Newport were finding their way through contemporary social and political connotations for being Christ's people today in Newport. The conflicts and difficulties which arise for them in their course of carrying-on such an 'applied' Christianity, is seen often to stimulate in their minds a heart-searching and a sobering awareness of having to begin a long process of facing up to intractable practicalities and rough compromises.

In Newport undoubtedly the social, economic and political environment was posing a hindrance to doing mission for many churches. Low incomes and many elderly retired people on pension's income meant smaller collection plates for instance. But paradoxically and simultaneously hardship was endowing Christians with a capacity by catalysis to do Christ's work, offering even an empowerment to mission. Not only was this such an inversion of expectations, like those expectations in reverse that are borne out generally by vital passages in the gospels (the widow's mite, the servant of all, etc), but in Newport in particular reversals were seen, such as when secular charitable and relief works beginning to attach themselves to (scarce) church hall premises.

The possibilities opened up by these means, and by means of other similar secular/sacred community bonding and altruisms, are there to be made best use of.

It was shown generally that Christians in Newport were responding to the challenges inherent in mission. From this research it can be argued that congregations used models and frames of reference that made sense in their congregational settings and contexts. Consequently it was demonstrated here that unlike other models of mission explored within this thesis, Liberation Theology was not embraced as a plausible unified approach.

### **8.3.2: Traditional model of mission**

Some of the biggest hurdles to successfully doing mission in Newport are posed by widespread social disadvantages associated with decayed urbanization: the sort of cycle of deprivation that feeds upon itself, because there are never sufficient civil resources available to make a good dent in the compound problem. As a work in congregational studies, this thesis has re-affirmed that congregations are able to work out answers for themselves and by themselves, and are able to place these answers in their communities. Through outwardly they were experiencing the social and political challenges of being Christ's people in the community. To this end their approach to mission was aimed to begin and end with compassion for one's neighbour - and by engaging in local community relations they continue working to feed Christ's sheep, and to petition him to return those who have strayed back into the fold.

Congregations within their secular society were symbolic of divine interaction with the human. There was noticeable and notable love, along with deeds that characterised the fact that congregations were performing mission. The communities, society, environment, were all considered by congregants to be worthy objects for the Christian task and worthy of

regeneration. These, then, are the elements that form a compound complementary mix of ingredients that make up worship and mission in Newport City.

It was shown that in all the congregations studied there was a growing awareness of social responsibility arising among the Christians in Newport. A case in point was seen in the endeavors to respond to social conditions and concerns, such as unemployment, drug taking and addiction, marriage breakdown, homelessness, poverty/debt, child abuse, racial discrimination, social isolation, alienation and loneliness. This was seen to be a characteristic feature of a number of congregations. It was shown that congregations were standing alongside those afflicted so as to witness to them and others through social action to the direction of the coming reign of God.

It was also illustrated that this has not always been the case as traditional models used to be centred for the most part on liturgical worship and sacraments. It was evident that Churches had altered their approaches and adopted different ideas. Hence the evangelical churches were involved more deeply in social action diaconia; thereby they were portraying mission as action that reflected service to Jesus Christ and care for all human life and all peoples. This engagement with the community brought words and actions together in seeking personal and social transformation in those whom they encounter. In other words, congregations sought to be good news in practical and tangible ways which in turn bring a wholeness and true liberation.

Consequently the results of this study did find that old models for mission (door-door canvassing, Open Air crusades, Marches for Jesus) were no longer working in modern days.

They are looked upon these days as impersonal, even quaint, styles of evangelism, and are proving to be very much less effective than the new ways. In any case large arena gatherings/ events apart from football/rugby are not wholly in keeping with Welsh culture and are looked at with some circumspection here. Hence there has been a shift in mission activities. Christians at local levels had a reasonable grasp of the shifts that have taken place in missiological thinking.

### **8.3.3: Fresh Expressions model**

The biblical texts from the Acts of the Apostles and John 1:14 were being used as the basis for Fresh expressions model of mission. Congregations were found to be taking initiatives that encouraged members of the congregations to go to where the people were in order to serve those who were not yet members of the church. This called for creativity as they implemented their mission task using the Fresh Expressions model. There was evidence of the existence of friendship evangelism, in which friendships were made with the intention of being there for the other person in their context as a witness and channel of God's love. Further to this friendship evangelism was Hope 2008, ministry of listening, discipleship, sharing food and hosting non-Sunday events, confirming this shift in trends and mission practices.

It was recognized that with the emergence of Process evangelism courses such as Alpha, Emmaus and Christianity Explored people had begun talking about Christian faith and hence these kinds of mission had enlivened the debate. Furthermore sharing food was an effective means of outreach and greatly contributed to building community.

Moreover, change in technology was playing a vital part in a number of ways in congregational life. This fact is confirmed in the prevalent belief that people's attention spans are now shorter. This therefore called for imagination in designing and delivering services. It was evident also that congregations were offering shorter packages, other than complete durational services. In the light of detailed analysis it is reasonable to conclude that some programmes run by the new churches do possess forceful evangelistic thrust that invites people to know Jesus. To this end personal evangelism, and nurture- through- friendship and House/ Cell groups were deemed effective in forming the Church.

It was Ward who suggested that, 'solid church has tried to adapt to modernity by adopting ways of using contemporary media and communications to package faith and offer it a market place.'<sup>46</sup> He goes on to say that 'liquid church takes some of these changes and pushes them further by taking account of a more fluid market.'<sup>47</sup> Therefore the church must find new ways to adapt to the new context. This calls for Fresh expressions of mission.

From my observations of a number of the congregations in Newport, I would say that there was evidence of a range of new formal and informal events of worship that allowed congregations and those newcomers that have been attracted by their missional facet, to enter the biblical story. These new events and creative ways included among others:

- Messy Church
- Teenage Challenge Bus
- 'Use of Drama

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<sup>46</sup> Ward 2002, Page 57.

<sup>47</sup> Ward 2002, Page 57.

- Contemporary Christian and non Christian Live Music
- Video / DVD Clips
- Computer technology ( Worship Services advertised on websites)
- Meditations as PowerPoint presentations.
- Novel use of public discourse - taking place on blogs, (Web logs, e-journals),<sup>48</sup>

In addition to this churches were holding church related events and services in alternative venues such as cafés, pubs, schools and community centres. These venues were said to be neutral ground therefore less threatening for unchurched people.

Among the ways in which congregations were reaching out to those outside the church and their communities was through ‘incarnational Mission.’ Bosch, Hirsch, Stoddard and Cuthberth and biblical evidence all point out that the Christian faith is incarnational. ‘God took a concrete human form in a specific social context.’<sup>49</sup> As it is written in St John’s gospel ‘The word became flesh and dwelt among us’.<sup>50</sup> This is the ‘act of God entering into the created universe and realm of human affairs as the man Jesus of Nazareth.’<sup>51</sup> Thereby ‘Jesus was expressing the life of God in a human life.’<sup>52</sup> Therefore, through the Fresh Expressions model, congregations were ‘embodying the culture and life of a target group in order to meaningfully reach that group of people from within that culture.’<sup>53</sup> This is demonstrated in ‘the act of going to the target group as

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<sup>48</sup> Stoddard and Cuthberth, 2006, Page 126.

<sup>49</sup> Bosch in Phillips and Coote (eds) 1992, Page 188

<sup>50</sup> John 1:14

<sup>51</sup> Hirsch 2009, Page 281.

<sup>52</sup> Stoddard and Cuthbert 2006, Page 24.

<sup>53</sup> Hirsh 2009, Page 281.

opposed to the invitation to come into our cultural group in order to hear the gospel.’<sup>54</sup> Therefore to do mission in post-modern times means moving from ‘evangelistic – attractional to missional-incarnational methods.’<sup>55</sup> In regard to the congregations involved in mission using the Fresh Expressions model, the insights from Hirsch are then informative, for as much as the daily everyday life of individuals who happen to belong to congregations are the means by which Jesus becomes Incarnate amongst the Community. Brother Lawrence is quoted to have said, ‘Practice the presence of Christ.’<sup>56</sup> Therefore, relationships, groups, and communication are fundamental, for through the connections made between people, church is formed. Indeed as Ward has suggested ‘as individuals find their unity with each other in Christ, the networks develop. Worship, prayer, and mission flow from these dynamic connections.’<sup>57</sup>

Hirsch rightly argues that ‘there is time for ‘in-your-face’ approaches to mission, but there is also a time to simply become part of the very fabric of a community and engage in the humanity and the latent spirituality of everyday mundane things.’<sup>58</sup> This resonates with the vision of the Evangelical Alliance in Wales whereby both social action and evangelism are recommended. Furthermore, the idea of presence within a societal community ‘highlights the role of relationships in mission’<sup>59</sup> when Christians rub shoulders with the uncommitted or people of other faiths on a day to day basis. Moreover, the way the Church exercises a transforming influence on culture is, ‘through Christians who are shaped by their Christian faith more than

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<sup>54</sup> Hirsch, 2006, Page 281.

<sup>55</sup> Hirsch, 2006, Page 133.

<sup>56</sup> Brother Lawrence in Steve Chalke, Faithworks, 2001, Page 30.

<sup>57</sup> Ward 2002, Page 38

<sup>58</sup> Hirsch, 2009, Page 133

<sup>59</sup> Hirsch, 2009, Page 133.

they are by the media, living out Christian lives in shops, schools, businesses, neighbourhoods, offices, parliaments.’<sup>60</sup>

Whilst the ‘creativity of Fresh Expressions model of mission’<sup>61</sup> is seen to be ‘enabling congregations to rediscover their innate possibilities for mission’<sup>62</sup> it is not without shortcomings. The point as Dawson and Milbank have indicated is ‘the importance of time, and especially on the abiding significance of Sunday worship for Christians as people of the resurrection’<sup>63</sup> The importance of Sunday as a special day is compromised by increasingly having Church as a non Sunday event. In addition the new congregations often have no real connection with the existing church community. Some of the process evangelism teaching materials have been found to lacking in theological depth and practical discipleship. More so informality in worship may appeal to some but it might alienate others. Dawson and Milbank argue that there is need for ‘mission’ services to be attended with new diligence but there is also need for ‘fellowship’ services.<sup>64</sup> Advocating for a ‘mixed economy model of mission’<sup>65</sup>, Chartres suggests that, ‘church that is genuinely open to God’s mission and accessible to its community, and where people with unlike life stories can encounter one another as friends in our highly compartmentalized society, is an ancient idea that is always fresh.’<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Tomlin 2004, Page 72.

<sup>61</sup> Croft, 2008, Page 3.

<sup>62</sup> Croft 2008, Page 3.

<sup>63</sup> Dawson, A. Milbank, *A For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions*, London: SCM Press 2010, Page 228.

<sup>64</sup> Dawson and Milbank 2010, Page 228.

<sup>65</sup> Chartres in Bayes and Sledge with Holbrook, Rylands and Seeley in *Mission Shaped Parish: Traditional church in a changing context*. London: Church Publishing, 2006, Page vii.

<sup>66</sup> Chartres in Bayes and Sledge with Holbrook, Rylands and Seeley 2006, Page vii.

## 8.4 Reflection on Findings

Therefore, implicitly drawing on the work of missiologists, scholars and also on the experience of Christians in Newport, it is the contention of this thesis that contemporary Christian Congregations in Newport had developed particular local understandings of their Christian task. Some congregations in mission had set out on a drastic course: employing the Fresh expressions and Liberation theology model. Others were attuned to what they were doing: applying both Fresh expressions and Traditional models. Whilst others continued doing what they had always done using the traditional model.

The respondents to the questionnaires offered a self definition of mission by referring to activities which they identified as mission, whilst the church's mission statements contend that mission was all that the churches existed for. This is partly reflected in the biblical text in the words of the Hebrew prophet, Micah: 'He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.'<sup>67</sup> This supports the concrete view 'that Christianity is not a matter of ritual but of a right relationship with God and others.'<sup>68</sup> This right 'relationship with others is described not just as kindly but also as an essential praxis; do justice.'<sup>69</sup> The research demonstrates that an integrated mission of spirituality and action is called for. Both Luke and Micah give a comprehensive view of mission inclusive of justice. As seen in Luke's gospel, Jesus declared his mission in terms of the Hebrew pattern of restoration which took place every 50 years in the year of Jubilee.

From my findings the definition of the Christian task strives to be in consideration of all the

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<sup>67</sup> Micah 6:8

<sup>68</sup> Hadfield 1999, Page 156.

<sup>69</sup> Hadfield 1999, Page 156.

fields in the church's pastoral work, in its dedication to the new evangelization and its efforts to transform individuals, society and culture. This realisation is of particular significance in the context of the mission of the Church. Hence this thesis has explored how Congregations in Newport were seeking to continue proclaiming the good news of the gospel and to live out their faith in the current climate in a society that is for the most part secularized.

### **8.5: Conclusions for Practice (Recommendations )**

It is evident throughout this thesis that while its deliberations emerged out of the experience of many heterogeneous Christians living in Newport, it places its interpretation of a paradigm shift in mission in a context wider than this. Expanding further on the scope of the case study material highlights that contemporary Christians in Newport have developed particular local understandings of mission. In light of this I advocate for a deeply contextual congregational mission. More so, context is an important aspect in understanding and working within the experience of a post-church and pluralist context of contemporary Britain. It was in rooting this research in the city of Newport as sociological and missiological context that I was able to draw out an understanding of contemporary congregations in mission. Thus the thesis shows a correlation between context and mission. What the research has made clear is the extent to which context matters. This is thus because context is the foremost in shaping missiological reflection. The issue of contextualization therefore becomes an important concept in the practice of mission by congregations. Therefore in any given context the models of mission need to be applied in accordance with the missiological needs of the people. From the thesis it is evident that the social, economic and worshipping lives of the community are well connected.

In addition the thesis has shown that ‘one of the most creative and influential ways of potential recruitment suggested by social and cultural conversion process models into congregational life was along social networks’<sup>70</sup> found within the work of Chambers. It is important that congregations relate to the new patterns of networks and communities in which people live. To this end congregations in mission need to identify where their priorities lie and where there is a necessity for a different set of priorities, this needs to be implemented.

Congregations therefore must operate within their socio-religious context to be effective. This means thus to seek ways to incarnate the presence of Christ among the communities, contexts and cultures congregations reside in. By congregations rooting themselves in their communities they can overcome the tendency to be irrelevant and therefore a way opens to new encounters and mission can be conducted organically.

This thesis has participated in attempts to show that there are no universalisms.

This finding is relevant in the current debates in mission and offers explanatory potential to congregations who are interested in the continuing critical role that congregations offer in society today, both in relation to personal and societal oriented work. My recommendation would be the need for balance in the component of mission. It has been shown that in a secularised society only a right balance between personal and societal orientation can resource what can be referred to as successful mission. As such a holistic approach to mission is advocated. A holistic approach calls for an interpretation of mission in terms of its social significance and through societal orientations. By suggesting this approach I do not advocate an antagonistic position against existing current missiological wisdom but rather promoting of a holistic mission as an alternative to be combined where applicable with existing models. The holistic model will in my

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<sup>70</sup> Chambers 2005, Page 191.

understanding reveal the weaknesses of the other models of mission.

Through an engagement with the work of Bosch, Shenk, Kirk, MaGravran and other missiologists, Biblical foundations and definitions of mission were discussed.

This begs the question about my definition and personal understanding of mission. My own position was not immune to the long and hard debates on the definition of mission which result in a swinging from paradigm to paradigm. I have not set to redefine mission nor do I claim to have discovered a new definition. I suggest here rather that, following numerous other missiologists and indeed as advocated in this thesis, that mission has to be seen in holistic terms. In line with Bosch and in recognition that God is not only creator and sustainer of life, but communicates with creation through prophets, Jesus the son of God and the Holy Spirit, my definition takes a serious reconsideration of the starting point for Mission as the Mission of God, *Missio- Dei*. The noun, *missio* comes from the verb, *mittere*, to send or cause to go as the Father has sent me, so I send you, says Jesus in John's Gospel.<sup>71</sup> This I believe is related to God sending his people in the business of making known his love as good news of the gospel, making disciples, as well as taking on social, economic, and political liberation of all humanity made in the image of God. Therefore, it is the contention of this thesis that the definition of mission should endeavour to put into consideration all mission's dynamic components namely; proclamation and witness, nurture and teaching of the Christian faith, service through the church's pastoral/social work, incarnation, worship, social action for justice, peace and upholding the integrity of creation and Communion through Dialogue with all peoples, and transformation of society and culture.

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<sup>71</sup> John 20:21

The missiological definitions of missiologists are brought to bear in partnership with the definitions of mission emerging from the congregations in Newport. Interestingly, the people in the congregations studied never mentioned Bosch or any missiologists, however their definitions of mission centred on what the scholars in mission have suggested. Mission was seen in holistic terms. I set out into the research expecting to find different biblical basis for mission, meanings and models of mission as experienced by contemporary congregations in Newport. However, as it has been demonstrated in this thesis, this was not the case. Interestingly, contemporary theorists of mission who attempt an abstract and general synthesis of observed practice, to a great extent, have separated out their chief themes to be those activities which mission in Newport tends to observe. This verisimilitude between theory and the practice regarding mission in Newport seems to confirm the perspicuity of recent research and observation made by scholars. This revelation is of particular significance in my consideration of congregational missiological practice not least because it supports the theoretical view that experiments do not work.

However, this thesis has highlighted the need for congregations to have goals and strategies for mission. Therefore I recommend what Donovan has called the unpredictable process of evangelism which I chose to call the capricious model of mission. In carrying out the Christian task

‘.....do not call them back to where they were, and do not try to call them to where you are, as beautiful as that place might seem to you. You must have the courage to go with them to a place that neither you nor they have ever been before.’<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Donovan V 1978, Page vii.

Therefore a model leading to a new place where neither the congregations nor where the communities have been before. It is nothing less than what Christ commanded his followers to do in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, Luke 4:18-19, John 20:21, Acts 1:8, in the sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-16) and what the congregations were involved in during the 'Golden Days' of the Revival and what congregations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been striving to do - the Christian task. It is possible to carry out the Christian task in a secularised environment remembering that it is the mission of God, *missio Dei*, not the congregation's task. Congregational mission needs to be faced with honesty and authentic meaning and implications of Biblical mission. It is only a holistic model which starts with God, commissioned by Jesus and empowered by the working of the Holy Spirit that will succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: Check List of information about Congregations.**

Name of Church / Organisation

- ❖ Location, Site
- ❖ Historical background
- ❖ Background information on the congregation / Members
- ❖ Church Tradition
- ❖ Membership
- ❖ Attendance: Average number of people who attend Sunday morning services, evening Service, Week events? Gender Ratio. How many services are held on Sunday? What happens after Sunday worship? Sunday Lunch.
- ❖ Weekly activities: Prayer meetings, Bible classes, Women's meetings, Men's meetings, Young people's groups/ activities etc
- ❖ Leadership, number of elders, deacons, officers in the Church
- ❖ Organisational structure
- ❖ Written records, policies, mission statement
- ❖ What does the Church do particularly well? Strengths
- ❖ Involvement with the community.

Any other info you feel would be useful.

## **Appendix B**

A Copy of the Letters sent to leaders of the selected Congregations.

Date .....

Dear .....

I am pursuing studies on Christianity in Newport in which I would like to discover how Christians define their Christian task and how this shapes their character and expression in the community. Since there is a rich variety of Churches in terms of denominations and Christian traditions in Newport, my focus will be on four chosen congregations.

(Name of the church) is one of the congregations I've chosen to study. I am therefore writing to seek your permission and that of the Church members before I carry out this study. The study will require my physical presence in the congregation over a period of 8 months. I will be more than happy to talk through it with you before hand.

Your contribution to this project will be highly appreciated.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you.

God bless you.

Beatrice Musindi.

## Appendix C: Questionnaire used in the selected 2 Congregations

Dear Friends,

Christian Greetings.

I am pursuing studies on Christianity in Newport in which I would like to discover more about the Mission of the Church. Your contribution to this project will be highly appreciated.

The questionnaire is anonymous, therefore do not sign it unless if you want to.

1. (a) How long have you been a member of (Name of the Church )?  
(b) How old are you?
2. Were you raised in this tradition?  
(Tell me how you came to decide of this Church)
3. What does being a member of this congregation mean for you?  
(What role does it play in your life?)
4. Say what you know about Mission.
5. In your opinion which verse/s in the Bible inspire you most with regards to Mission and say why.
  - (a) “Therefore, go and make disciples of all Nations.....” (Matthew 28:19-20)
  - (b) “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor..... (Luke 4:18ff)
  - (c) Any other biblical text (Please specify)
6. In ( Name of Church) are there events in the life of the Church that you describe as Mission?
7. What does ( Name of the Church) do particularly well?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

God bless you.

Beatrice.

**APPENDIX D: POEM BY R.S THOMAS**

A Peasant



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