

CHURCH PLANTING IN THE BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN, 1980-2010:

A CRITICAL STUDY

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Abstract

This qualitative study reviews and documents the activity of Church Planters within the Baptist Union of Great Britain, who have started churches between 1980 and 2010. Two periods of church planting have been identified. From 1980 to the mid 1990s practitioners reacted to the threat of decline and secularisation. From the mid 1990s to 2010 practitioners re-engaged with the missionary task of church planting, drawing on the concept of contextualisation.

The difficulty of gathering statistics about church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain has been identified by reviewing all the available data. A qualitative study was chosen to give an in-depth analysis of the experience and perspectives of practitioners. Twelve practitioners participated in the study. Each participant was interviewed and the contents of the interview transcribed and analysed. The interviews, along with accounts of church planting from both periods has enabled the practice of planting churches to be set into context. Firstly, into the context of decline in church attendance and the developing social theory of secularisation. Secondly, into the missiological theory of contextualisation.

A review of the developing theory of secularisation revealed that current research calls progressive and total secularisation into question. This research suggests that decline in religious practice is evidence of a change in general approaches to spirituality, rather than evidence of a total secularisation. The reality of church decline and the theory of secularisation paved the way for a robust approach to church planting. During this period the need for contextualisation was identified but was practised by a relocation of worship meetings to a different venue. A review of the development of contextualisation in the field of missiology was conducted. The theory of contextualisation has influenced practitioners involved in church planting from the mid 1990s to 2010. During this time practitioners took the process of contextualisation further. Rather than simply relocating their meetings they began to contextualise the content of the meeting.

With these developments in mind the practice of planting churches within the Baptist Union of Great Britain has been described, along with events that have influenced church planting practice. As practitioners have engaged with the process of contextualisation it is possible to see how a missionary approach has gathered pace among the practitioners. It is appropriate for practitioners to continue the processes of learning from wider missiological perspectives and developing their own contextualised practice.

Declaration

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

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As I have developed my own understanding and practice I have been particularly grateful to the Members and Friends of Morecambe, Stanley Road Baptist Church. They have exercised patience with me as I have studied and willingly granted me a sabbatical to complete the writing up of the thesis.

A final thank you is reserved for all the participants in the study, without whom this snapshot of church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain would not have been possible. They represent a dedicated group of people who have been instrumental in starting new churches, some of them in the most testing of circumstances. It is my hope that the church planting community will find this thesis of use as they continue to develop their practice.

The Author

This thesis is written by Rev. Graham Doel. His academic and research experiences include:

May 2003:

Bachelor of Arts in Theology in Ministry (hons) through St. Johns College, Nottingham.
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Ordained as an Accredited Minister within the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

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Commenced the research documented within this thesis, supervised by Rev. Dr. Richard Kidd of the Northern Baptist Learning Community and the Partnership for Theological Education in Manchester. The second supervisor was Dr. Stuart Murray-Williams.

1. Introduction

Starting new churches has been on the Baptist agenda since Baptists began 400 years ago. My particular interest is in the church planting endeavours of the Baptists within the Baptist Union of Great Britain¹ from 1980 until 2010. My enthusiasm for church planting was kindled while growing up during the 1980s. I was caught up in the church planting rhetoric as I listened to accounts of how these new churches were experiencing phenomenal growth. During my ministerial formation I was involved in planting one church, and now as a practising Baptist Minister I am involved with evaluating potential church planting situations, creating the environment for a new church plant and encouraging others who are starting new churches.

Baptists have been good at starting churches but not necessarily good at thinking about why and how they start them! I shall describe how the study was designed, discuss the decisions that I made and review the pilot study. As I outline the results from the study it will become clear that there are two concepts important in mission studies. Both are particularly pertinent to the field of church planting. The first, secularisation and its counter arguments, have risen from the field of sociology. The changing attitudes towards religion in Western society have been extensively discussed by sociologists, looking at the worldwide phenomenon of religious growth and decline. The second concept, contextualisation, is a missiological term arising out of the missionary community of the twentieth century. I shall define these two concepts and show how they have become important for people planting churches.

No church plant exists within a cultural vacuum and I propose that the Baptists have independently, yet collectively, planted churches in response to the way in which society in Britain has been changing. I have observed two phases in church planting since 1980. The first stage was driven by reaction to the overtly negative overtones of secularisation theory. During this period changing patterns in worship were ushered into churches, through the contemporary monastic and charismatic movement (Webber 1994:Chapter 7). The Church Plants were particularly influenced by the Charismatic movement. In an attempt to galvanise the growing momentum behind Church Planting in Great Britain, an enthusiastic rhetoric of revivalism prepared the way for both excitement and disillusionment. This sense of disillusionment led to a discernible lull in church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The second period I have identified is the period of re-engagement.

1 It is my intention to avoid confusing acronyms and abbreviations that may only make sense to those who have been inducted to the life of The Baptist Union of Great Britain.

It is during this period that church planters began to engage with the missiological challenge of contextualisation. Church planters began to listen carefully to the mission situation that they were in and adapt their approach depending upon their context.

The study has been conducted by interviewing church planters who have been involved in church planting since 1980. As I describe the study I shall interact with the literature that emerged from within the Baptist Union of Great Britain, drawing on authors from within the British and Western church planting scene where necessary. In a study that is conducted among a fairly small community of church planters, it is likely that there will be one or two significant influences. Rev. Derek Allen, Rev. Stephen Ibbotson and Dr. Stuart Murray emerge as significant participants in the church planting community. It will become apparent that Dr. Stuart Murray is significant to this study. He confesses to multiple authorship of church planting books (Murray 2008:xv). His influence among church planters extends beyond his writing through his involvement in training and deploying church planters. In focusing on the British context and in particular on church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain, it is necessary to make extensive reference to his literature.

Before the study was conducted I engaged in a process of reflection and design, which led me to identify the precise nature of the study and the people that I would approach as participants.

1.1 How the study was designed and the choices that have been made

It is necessary at the outset of a project like this to make some decisions that give the study clarity and direction. Three approaches to the study were considered: A comparative study, a quantitative study and a qualitative study.

My initial thoughts were to do a comparative study of two Baptist church planting movements. As a child of the East Midlands, I was particularly interested in the New Connexion of General Baptists and how their Armenian theology related to their prolific church planting activities. I undertook a review of the minutes, reports and address² to the annual assembly. I further reviewed the life and writing of Rev. Dan Taylor, the founder and inspiration behind the movement. My review revealed a total absence of reflection on church planting practice. The social environment was so conducive to the establishment of Christian churches that there was no need to reflect upon the process or

² The address was called the annual “Epistle”. It was delivered at the annual assembly and later published with the minutes of the assembly.

motivation behind such plants.

The second, quantitative, study was evaluated. A process of trying to map every church that had been started by churches within the Baptist Union of Great Britain was considered, and a pilot carried out within the North West Baptist Association. It became apparent very quickly that the task was almost impossible. Two factors influenced the incredible complexity of the task. Firstly the lack of co-ordinated, historic, statistical information within the Association manifested as a problem. Secondly the difficulty of contacting practitioners who had been involved in planting new churches. Not all churches that had been started remained within the Baptist Union of Great Britain, not all the key leaders were identifiable through the Baptist Union of Great Britain's systems, either because they had not been accredited through the system, or they had removed themselves from the system. The problem of gathering data was further compounded by the age of the data. Memories had faded and in some cases the practitioners had died.

Churches that belong to the Baptist Union of Great Britain are by their nature independent in their approach. This has led to the local and national picture of church planting being scattered. Churches had been started where there was energy, enthusiasm and money. Further consideration was given to the usefulness of the exercise. Would such a data gathering exercise be of use to the church planting community? It would show how many churches had started and their longevity, but such a statistical review would not yield the motivation or changing attitudes behind the process of church planting.

A further issue was highlighted during this process, and that was the development of a culturally specific church planting movement within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. This movement was happening in larger cities where there were migrant communities. Within these communities churches would be established. Their success has been noted and the way in which they reshape "inner-city church demographics" (Kilpin & Murray 2007:9) observed. These churches have a passion and desire for evangelism which has been successful within their cultural setting, but has had limited success outside of its orb. I investigated the possibility of engaging members of these church plants in this study, but I had no success. A study could be made of this church planting phenomenon in Great Britain, but it would need to be conducted in a semi covert manner engaging with the churches as a "participant observer" (Clifford 1988:34). I judged that it was beyond my resources and the scope of this project.

Having reviewed my pilots, I decided to investigate the possibility of a qualitative study that would

enable me, as a researcher, to uncover some of the influences and themes behind the practice of church planting. During my initial investigations within the church planting endeavours of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, I became increasingly aware that there had been a process of development. The churches that had been started during the post war recovery in Great Britain had been different in their process of inception to those started in the 1970s and 1980s. I became aware that the enthusiasm for church planting had somewhat diminished towards the 1990s and the process re-evaluated and re-imagined during the early part of the twenty first century.

Qualitative Research

I concluded that undertaking a qualitative research programme was appropriate. Investigating the phenomenon of church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain would enable the patterns, styles and approaches used in the practice of starting new churches to become apparent. Qualitative research offers the opportunity to engage with the participants of the study in a way that would reveal the complexity of church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

It has been my intention to try and discover the interplay within the practise of church planting between the changing attitudes that are observed in the development of sociological perspectives on secularisation. Brinkmann & Kvale suggest that qualitative research interviewing allows the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee to bring about a body of knowledge (Brinkmann & Kvale 2009:16). Approaching the interviews with an interview guide rather than a strict set of questions allowed dynamic, and clarifying questions to tease out the perspectives that lie behind the participants assumptions and preconceptions (Brinkmann & Kvale 2009:129-132).

There were three decisions that had to be made at the outset of the study:

- I needed to clarify my approach to the confidentiality of the participants in the study;
- Identify potential participants;
- Define the interview guide through a pilot.

Interview confidentiality and participant welfare.

The study was designed in accordance with the British Sociological Association's statement of ethical practice (British Sociological Association 2004). Every care was taken to ensure that the participants welfare and confidentiality was protected.

The participants in the study gave informed consent (Flick 2009:41) to their participation in the

study prior to any interview commencing. The process of seeking informed consent followed a series of steps:

- they were contacted to investigate the possibility of their involvement in the study;
- once they had agreed in principle, they were sent a statement (Appendix 1) outlining the study and detailing how the contents of their information would be used;
- after they had received this statement an appointment was arranged.

The issue of confidentiality was governed through the statement that was sent to each participant in the study prior to the interview. Confidentiality is particularly pertinent to the relatively small community that people starting new churches within the Baptist Union of Great Britain belong to. Ministers and practitioners interact with each other on a regular basis and the likelihood of easy identification was high. It has been observed that it is almost impossible to maintain absolute confidentiality; pseudonyms and false locations will be identified by those readers with inside knowledge (Christians et. al. 2005:145). I took the decision to separate the participants comments from their church or location in order to preserve the aspect of confidentiality as far as possible. I judged that this would allow the participant's to speak freely on matters that they may have perceived controversial. However, it is likely that despite this attention to confidentiality someone who is well acquainted with this particular church planting scene will be able to identify some of the participants. As I shall describe later, the data was gathered using audio recordings, which will be destroyed one year after completion of the degree.

Further consideration had to be given to the nature of retelling the stories of church plants in order to describe church planting practice. To prevent the identification of participants in the study, the historical accounts were written and then verified through personal communication with practitioners. In order to enhance and verify the accounts permission was sought to quote parts of the personal communication. There is some crossover between those people who have been anonymous participants in the study and those who have been identified and quoted as practitioners. I have taken care to make sure there is nothing to link their contribution as anonymous participants in the study with any contribution they may have made through their writing or personal correspondence.

Identification of participants.

Having observed two periods in which church planting had taken place, it was necessary to invite

people to be participants in the study. The process of selection was done using personal knowledge and networking among the past and present church planting community within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. A target of 12 Participants was set and a short list drawn up. After an informal approach to 14 potential participants, 12 agreed to be interviewed. Of this number 4 had been involved throughout both the reaction and re-engagement periods, 5 only had experience of reaction and 3 only had experience from re-engagement. In addition 7 of the participants had been involved in facilitating church planting locally or nationally. However, every participant had first hand experience of church planting at one time or another. Each participant has been involved in planting at least one church and between them had personal involvement in planting a total of 29 churches within Great Britain.

Interview guide and pilot.

Having identified several areas of importance to the study I developed an outline interview guide (Appendix 2). The guide covered the following items:

- a clarification of the information that I already knew;
- the influence of secularisation and its counter arguments;
- the subject of contextualisation;
- a debrief and question time.

I conducted a pilot interview (Participant 1). Two things surfaced during my pilot:

- it became immediately apparent that the interview was going to be more successful if I asked the participant to start with a summary of their involvement in, and practice of, church planting;
- working with a participant who had not been active in church planting for over 5 years revealed that time was needed for them to remember and reflect on their practice. I needed to be flexible in my approach to the interview and allow the conversation to be led by the Participants memory of events. I needed to remain aware of matters of importance to the study and to prompt the Participant as appropriate;

I amended my guide (Appendix 3) and made this my practice for the following 11 interviews.

Interpretive method.

In order to evaluate the results of the interviews I undertook several steps:

- I undertook the interviews personally. Visiting the practitioners that I had not met previously and conducting interviews by phone where I already knew the practitioner;
- I recorded the interviews using a portable recorder;
- I transcribed the interviews personally (a total of more than 77,000 words).³ While I was conducting the interviews the focus of my attention was on the process of teasing out the issues of importance to the study. The act of listening carefully while transcribing the interview enabled me to become fully conversant with their content;
- each transcript was initially reread twice. During these readings I highlighted sections that I considered to be pertinent to the study. These were categorised and developed into a document that could be referred to easily;
- I undertook a further review of the transcripts re-reading them several times as I developed the arguments and retold the story of church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

I approached the research accepting the importance of the awareness of “one's own perspective and honesty about where one stands when research findings are reported” (Bogdan & Taylor 1998:28). With this in mind I approached the research as a male Baptist Minister with past involvement in church planting; A founding member of the Incarnate Network⁴, a church planting network working in partnership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain; With the awareness that I was intimately involved in a relatively small church planting community.

1.2 Review of research into church planting in the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain has never had a coordinated means of tracking church plants throughout their member churches. The lack of a cohesive approach means that the information available to any researchers is at best patchy (cf. Allen 1994:2). Researchers have commented on

3 References to the transcripts are made by identifying the participant by number and then the page on which it is listed. A copy of the transcripts can be made available to examiners on request (Doel 2010 “Transcriptions”).

4 The Incarnate Network is described in detail on Page 103

this phenomenon and Argile & Sutton propose that the autonomy that exists within the churches that make up the Baptist Union of Great Britain is a hindrance to the discovery of reliable quantitative data (Argile & Sutton 1990:24).

In order to discover the existence of any quantitative data I have spoken at length with practitioners and ministers (exercising regional or national ministry). I have investigated library catalogues, shelves and archives. I have discovered several attempts to review the progress of church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. These research projects have been in response to the enthusiasm for church planting in the 1980s and 1990s. The research has been conducted by various groups including the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Mission Department, College Students, The Church Planting Strategy Task Group and in response to the newly formed Incarnate Network. I shall present a brief outline of these studies and their findings.

Argile and Sutton (1990). Radiate, Unpublished.

The paper begins with a theological rationale for church planting drawing on the Scriptures as a primary resource. They include a report on their extensive questionnaire which includes sections about the area and the circumstances surrounding the new church plant, the ethos and leadership of the church, and any reflections that the participant may have as a result of the experience of church planting. The aim of the survey and report is not made explicit but appears to be the identification of the characteristics of a successful church plant. They received 58 replies to their questionnaire and listed most of the results with the occasional comment. They observe that:

- the church plants were trying to “come to terms with the society that we live in and to be culturally relevant”. (Argile and Sutton 1990:27);
- there was a distinct lack of evangelism, commenting “There certainly seemed little imagination and fire in sharing the Gospel.” (Argile and Sutton 1990:28);
- that the churches they surveyed had not set many goals (Argile and Sutton 1990:28);
- many churches did not engage in any theological reflection on their experience or practice (Argile and Sutton 1990:28);
- the respondents to the questionnaire had noted that there was a lack of preparation and training among the leaders and the teams of churches for the task of church planting.

They define a successful church plant as one that is characterised by conversions, baptisms and by

meeting its own goals (where they existed). The report identifies that a successful church plant was more likely to:

- be involved in evangelism;
- have a full time leader;
- be in a lower/middle class area;
- be a new plant as opposed to a re-establishment of a closed or struggling church.

The authors comment that all of the churches affirmed that the church plant had been successful even if they hadn't met the criteria of success in the report.

Argile & Sutton reflect on different models of church planting as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. The report concludes with a step by step guide on how to approach church planting, including reflective questions for potential practitioners to ask themselves before commencing a church planting project. It is not clear how widely the report was circulated within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The authors presented their research at the Gorsley Consultation in 1990 (Argile in Christine 1991:6-7) and through the Baptist Church Planter's Newsletter and Journal (Sutton 1991:6-7).

Baptist Union Mission Department (1991). No title, Unpublished.

This straight forward study attempts to list all the church plants within the Baptist Union of Great Britain between 1980 to 1991. The report is found in the Mission Department archives and comes with no comment or attempt at interpretation. The report is written on a sheet of A4 and is accompanied by a typed list showing each church plant and its location. It shows:

- a total of 156 Churches;
- 37 churches who have become members of the Baptist Union of Great Britain;
- 29 churches that have not become members of the Baptist Union of Great Britain;
- 52 daughter churches, 20 of which were in the Southern Area (this area is not qualified by way of reference to any Associations);
- 23 local ecumenical partnerships, most of which would be amalgamations as opposed to church plants;

- 34 churches that had closed or were on the verge of closure, being resurrected;
- 9 churches started as a result of a church division;
- 1 church that was no longer meeting.

Allen (1994), Planted to Grow. Didcot: Baptist Union of Great Britain

This study examines 50 church plants stretching from the north of England to north of London and the M4. The period that the report covers is not made explicit, but given that the report was published in 1994 we can assume that the churches that were surveyed were planted in the few decades leading before. The purpose of the report is to describe the kind of church plants that were happening in the Baptist Union of Great Britain at the time of its publication, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their approaches. Allen categorized the churches by their level of success but does not give the reader much indication of how he defined his categories of success.

The report looks at what the motivations for the church plants were and how they happened. Allen reflects upon the strengths and weaknesses of the church plants. The analysis of success and failure comes in the section written about the styles of evangelism, and he observes that church plants with the highest rates of success were involved in thinking and practising evangelism in a creative way. These churches used approaches that were responses to the communities in which they were placed. There were two models of evangelism. One imported approaches from success stories in other locations, the other using local imagination and initiative.

Allen's assessment of the church plants is done by way of reflective comment without making extensive reference to his research. The report has the characteristics of advice from an observer and practitioner predominantly to the Baptist Church Planting community. The biggest area of comment in the report is on leadership and training.

The report refers to the church planting training at Spurgeon's College and reflects that most churches that are planting want to train their own leaders. He observes that there is a danger of reinventing the wheel when leaders are not trained with church planting in mind. There is a short reflection on the need for a changing pattern of leadership as the church plant gets established. He comments:

Where are such leaders to be found? They are not waiting to be found – they must be created. (Allen 1994:11)

This re-enforces his high regard for the need for training and equipping church plant leaders. He

reflects further on the training that the whole team received before they commenced the church plant. Over half the churches in his study received no training. Among the others a variety of methods of training were used, from reading church planting books through to training the team using a formal course.

Allen processes his observations about the style and meeting place of the church by observing that regardless of their meeting place, the majority of the churches in his study described themselves either as “Relaxed Baptist” or as “Charismatic” (Allen 1994:20). Citing other church planting sources, commending informality, and stating an explicit agreement, he appears to contradict himself by almost ranting about the dangers of this approach (Allen 1994:21). The study concludes with the author's commitment to church planting.

Church Planting Strategy Task Group (1997), No title: Unpublished

This study attempts to gather from the local Baptist Associations that make up the Baptist Union of Great Britain, information about the Church Plants in their area from 1994-1997. Looking at the dates that Allen's study finished, that the return address on the questionnaire was to Derek Allen and the dates of this study, one would assume that the dates were chosen deliberately. It follows on from Allen's study. The study has the feeling of incompleteness about it. While the Strategy Task Group may have invested a significant amount of time in collecting the data the lack of interpretation stands in dramatic contrast to Allen.

The five question survey is addressed to the associations rather than to churches directly and attempts to collect data on:

- the number of churches that have been started in the four year period (44);
- the number of churches that are planned but not yet in existence (32);
- the number of new centres of population planned in the area (with no apparent attempt to collate the data);
- the needs of the associations (finance, consultancy, training and motivation);
- churches that had died or were failing (161).

I will conduct a review of the church planting strategy group later on.⁵ I suspect that the lack of reporting or presentation of this study is due, in a large part, to the disappearance of this group.

5 Page 81.

Murray (2007), Where are we at with Baptist UK Church Planting?: Incarnate Network

Murray reviews the progress on Baptist Church Planting since the 1992 Challenge 2000 church planting conference by examining statistics on Church Planting from 1993 to 2004. His review of the statistics was presented to the first gathering of church planters sponsored by the Baptist Union of Great Britain Mission Department, under the banner of The Incarnate Network.

His review of the available statistics shows that Baptist have been fairly consistent in planting about one church a month over the period, although there was a dip in the mid 1990s. He summarises the statistics by saying:

Some tentative conclusions can be drawn from these figures:

- Baptists plant churches in different kinds of communities but unevenly (sic);
- roughly two-thirds of church plants appear to be in middle-class communities;
- Baptists are not much drawn to city-centre church planting (Baptist ecclesiology may arguably not be well-suited to this context);
- the inner-city figures look rather more encouraging than I had anticipated. But these figures need further analysis:
 - almost all the inner city church plants (27 out of 31) are in London;
 - two-thirds of the London church plants are ethnic churches, engaging with distinct communities;
 - there have only been 13 non-ethnic church plants in inner-city areas (less than 1 a year since 1990).

(Murray 2004)

He goes on to raise questions about the approach to strategy within the Baptist Union and observes that although there has been a policy about church planting, and a climate that is open to church planting, there has been no attempt at strategy beyond local churches, and occasionally Associations. He recognises the difficulties involved in developing a national strategy within a group of churches that are associated, but independent. He concludes by proposing a number of steps that might be considered in the preparation of a strategy.

2. Secularisation and Contextualisation

2.1 Introduction

In discussion with practitioners it became apparent that there is a common theme fuelling the motivation from the 1970s through to the first decade of the twenty first century. One commented:

“that backdrop of a decline of the church was very much the sort of backdrop in the '70s” (Participant 1:7).

The comments were not limited to those beginning to plant churches in the 1970s. Practitioners from each decade mentioned that decline in church attendance formed part of the backdrop to their endeavours. Participant 3 indicated it was the backdrop to 1980s church planting enthusiasm. (Participant 3:37). This was affirmed by Participant 6 who commented:

“looking at the church and seeing the numbers declining, declining, declining, decades of uninterrupted numerical decline in the denomination and thinking 'This doesn't have to be.'” (Participant 6:69)

Participant 5, who was planting during the 1990s said that they were “very much aware of decline” (Participant 5:59). While decline in church attendance was mentioned by the practitioners across the decades, the phenomenon of secularisation was not explicitly referred to until I interviewed people who were involved in planting churches in the first decade of the twenty first century. From this latter era there was a more nuanced approach to the implications of church decline:

“... there's lots of fear over Islam, I think we're more at risk of secularisation, I don't know, but I think we are seeing, we're certainly seeing the death of Christendom. We could see the death of Christianity in this nation.” (Participant 7:80).

This view was echoed by another practitioner while they were talking about current themes in mission practice (Participant 10:105).

2.2 Secularisation and its counter arguments

The concept of secularisation has its roots in the difference between clergy involved in monastic orders and clergy who were involved in wider, secular, society. The term secular was used by G. J. Holyoake to describe his “Secular Society” that was committed to justice in the world, and a personal morality that would address human problems without the use of supernatural explanations (Swatos, 2000:4). It was later adopted into the field of social studies by Max Weber as

“secularization”. The term was imprecise and he used concepts like “disenchantment,” “rationalization” and “intellectualization” to qualify it (Hughey, 1979:85). As I consider the concept of secularisation in relation to the way in which it has influenced church planters I will refer to secularisation as the process by which societies became less reliant on religious authority and explanation. The debate about secularisation has been stimulated by the decline in church attendance in Great Britain.

Decline in church attendance

Patterns of church attendance in Britain have been given much attention over the past six decades and the reduction in people attending churches has been dramatic. It is difficult to find a British book on Evangelism, Mission or Church Planting that doesn't make a reference to it (For example: Booker 2005:2-3; Drane 2000:2-7; Moygnagh 2001:7-17; Nodding 1994:2). Investigations by the National Centre for Social Research and the English Church Attendance Survey which is conducted by Christian Research offer a snapshot of the changing patterns in Great Britain. Between 1964 and 2005 the number of people belonging to a religion and attending services reduced from 74% to 31% of the population (Clery, 2006:9).⁶ Brierley looks solely at church attendance and observes that in the period from 1979-1998 it had dropped by 1.7 million people (Brierley, 2000:27). He projects that if the rate of decline were to continue at that pace there would be only 0.9% of the British population attending church by the year 2116 (Brierley, 2000:28).

While the reality of church decline can not be denied in Great Britain the picture within the Baptist Union of Great Britain was marginally different. Along with the rest of the church in the UK, the Churches that made up the Union did suffer a large loss. In the 60 year period from 1921 to 1981 the number of Baptist Churches reduced by nearly one third. In the same period membership reduced by 57% (Champion, 1982:4). However between 1981 and 2008 the rate of change slowed considerably:⁷

- in the period 1921-1981 the average loss of members was 4750 people and 16.83 Church closures per year;
- in the period 1981-2008 the average loss of membership was 747 people per year and 1.7 Church closures per year.

6 Although there have been four subsequent annual reports since this report, none of the latter reports contain data on church attendance.

7 Data taken from the Baptist Union Directory 2008 and compared with Champion.

Although the overall picture is one of decline, in the 1990s there was a blip in the downward slide. The number of churches that comprise the Baptist Union of Great Britain increased by 256 churches in the five years between 1985 and 1990 (Brierley, 1997:9.2.2). This apparent change in Baptist fortunes was skilfully used by David Coffey, the then General Secretary of the Baptist Union, to provide encouragement and to campaign for a renewed evangelistic zeal in the churches (Coffey, 2000:22). Although this provided much encouragement to churches within the Union, a closer inspection of the figures reveals that while there was an increase in the number of churches within the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the same period yielded a decrease in the number of members (Brierley, 1997:9.2.2). It may be fair to say that the attendance of Baptist churches increased, but Coffey provides no evidence. The ongoing decline of churches within Great Britain has continued and Baptist churches have been a part of that decline.

Secularisation

The reasons for this ongoing decline in church attendance have been discussed widely and there remains a lack of consensus among sociologists about both the nature and the result of decline. The phenomenon of secularisation has been used as a way of explaining the changes in religious habits. The ongoing interpretation of sociological themes and data, mean that different interpretations are offered and evaluated. There are copious examples of attempts to describe or define secularisation, to classify secularisation, to present models of secularisation and to analyse the results of secularisation. It is necessary to present a brief review of the changing approaches to secularisation, and to observe two broad paradigms within the theme. The first paradigm is the global evaluation of secularisation. It has been broadly and briefly evaluated by Martin (2005) as he has come to terms with the need for a more nuanced approach to the subject. Secondly there is an ongoing assessment within the discipline, as to why Western European countries do not appear to conform to the patterns that have been observed globally. Within this second theme scholars are not united in their interpretation of the data. The examination of why the religious establishment is in decline, has led some to conclude that the process of secularisation in Western European nations will mean Western Europeans will all but eliminate religion from their daily lives. Others have concluded that religious practice is changing, and that the end result will be a re-imagined set of religious practices. Both these interpretive models can be helpful in further reflecting upon Church Planting practice.

Global Perspectives on Secularisation

Martin has developed his approach to secularisation over a period of about four decades, his initial approach (Martin, 1978) was developed whilst looking at four different cultural contexts: Anglo-Saxon; American; French; Russian (Martin 1978:4-5). Martin was wary of the over simplification of the process of secularisation (Martin 1978:2), and argued that religion was declining as a response to the Enlightenment and modernisation (Martin 1978:8-9). After his work took a more global perspective, he re-evaluated the possibility that a grand theory of secularisation was possible and expressed that such theories need to be reduced to “tendencies which are to be observed in certain definable circumstances and not in others” (Martin, 2005:17). He observed that depending upon the social factors that were at work in the society that was being observed, the way in which secularisation manifested varied (Martin, 2005:20). This change in perspective has enabled a more nuanced approach to secularisation theory, recognising that study of social situations exist within a bigger story of personal motives and social projects. He sets his later work into a global context, including parts of the world that were excluded from his earlier attempt to try and theorise about secularisation. The wider context allows a re-evaluation of the theory that secularisation will result in the marginalisation or cessation of religious practice. He concludes that:

These shifts have made it more possible to pursue the sociology of religion in a spirit of sympathetic understanding rather than see faith as an alienated delusion destined to disappear in the process of rationalisation ... (Martin, 2005:25).

He observes that the patterns of evangelical expansion in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa are quite different to those in Western Europe. The pattern of decline among institutional religion in Western Europe reflects complex and interwoven pattern of secularisation (Martin, 2005:55).

Perspectives on church decline in Western Europe.

The reality of decline of religion in Western Europe has provoked the kind of discussion that Martin points towards. Davie observes that churches have had a large role in forming the culture, and that although there is a diminishing influence on morality and behaviour “churches still have a place at particular moments in the lives of most modern Europeans” (Davie, 2006:247). She describes the churches as a public utility, observing that a state sponsored church provides a service at these particular moments and people rely upon the churches to provide them. Although the church provides these services (particularly during death and mourning) there is a change in culture from “obligation or duty to a culture of consumption and choice”. She illustrates this point by comparing

the post war statistics on child and adult confirmation in the Church of England. The number of child confirmations are decreasing and the number of adult confirmations increasing. Confirmation is becoming “an opportunity to make public what has often been an entirely private activity.” (Davie 2006:252). This shift from obliged participation to voluntary consumption provides something of the cultural backdrop to the decline in religious participation.

Decline of religious practice as a result of secularisation.

The change in religious participation as reflected in church attendance statistics, was initially interpreted as a natural consequence of enlightenment rationality. Wilson first advocated the thesis that the decline in the practice of religion was evidence of its impending doom (Wilson 1966:10). Soon after Wilson's analysis, Berger produced a volume which offered similar conclusions (Berger 1967). Their thesis has been summarised as “modernization leads to secularization, and therefore liberal democracies in the West have been and will continue to experience secularization, seemingly inevitably and irreversibly.” (Larsen 2006:320). Although there are alternatives to this interpretation of the data, this line of interpretation has contemporary exponents, most noticeably Bruce, in “God is Dead” (2002).

Bruce concentrates his study on the British Isles⁸ and declares that his work is a “restatement of one particular approach to explaining the changes in the presence, popularity and status of religion in the modern world ...” (Bruce 2002:xii). Although the paradigm has existed since the 1960s, Bruce's restatement brings together the arguments in a persuasive way (Partridge 2004:8), and throughout his restatement of the position he draws heavily on the work of Berger and Wilson. He observes that secularisation theorists are not working from a fixed general theory but “clusters of descriptions and explanations that cohere reasonably well” (Bruce 2002:2). He makes the following observation:

I see secularisation as a social condition manifest in (a) the declining importance of religion for the operation of non religious roles and institutions such as the state and the economy; (b) a decline in the social standing of religious roles and institutions; and (c) a decline in the extent to which people engage in religious practices, display beliefs of a religious kind, and conduct other aspects of their lives in a manner informed by such beliefs. (Bruce 2002:3)

In his assessment of why secularisation has come about he identifies three themes: Rationalisation; The Protestant Ethic; Individualism. Each of the themes identify the way in which the element of the development of society has affected the way in which people think.

⁸ The scope of my research is Great Britain, Bruce includes the entire British Isles, so while referring to his research I have used his geographic definition.

When Bruce talks about “Rationalisation”, he is referring to Christianity and Judaism as forces of rationalisation because their monotheistic belief simplified the supernatural. In this case rationalisation springs from the removal of myth from religion. The monotheistic nature of Christianity removed the unpredictable nature of the plethora of deities that were often portrayed as behaving in an “arbitrary fashion and at cross purposes” (Bruce 2002:6). He observes that theology and behaviour are systematised through the introduction of Christianity to society. He notes that this process is later reversed as Christian theology goes through a period where myth is reintroduced as the church evolves. Myth is then purged through the protestant reformation. This systematisation of theology and consequently behaviour enabled space for secular alternatives.

'do unto others as you would be done by' could be given an entirely utilitarian justification in a way that 'Placate this God or suffer' could not. (Bruce 2002:7).

Drawing on Weber (1904), Bruce goes on to restate the assessment that Martin Luther's removal of the myth and elevation of all work to the level of a calling by God, created a Protestant work ethic. It became possible to better oneself by working hard. He links the development of capitalism with the secularisation of education, health care, welfare and social control. Previously all these had been under the control of the religious establishment. The creation of this Protestant work ethic enabled specialisation in the workplace. That specialisation enabled the secularisation of the work place.

The protestant reformation and the changing nature of the economic and social spheres points towards the growth of individualism. “The consequence of the Reformation was not the Christian Church purified and strengthened but a large number of competing perspectives and institutions.” (Bruce 2002:11). The elevation of the individual created further space for secularisation by removing the domination of religion over the understanding of personal identity.

Bruce is careful to locate his description of secularisation as he sees it in the British Isles. While he does not predict the future, he does suggest that there is an inevitable nature to the continued decline of religion in the social context he has identified (Bruce 2002:38).

Decline in church attendance as a result of religious re-imagination.

The inevitability of decline is not a universally agreed approach to the interpretation of the decline in attendance at church services. Berger, who initially advocated the “Religious decline as a result of secularisation” paradigm, had a growing sense that the evidence he was looking at pointed in another direction entirely. He hinted at it in 1974 (Berger 1974:16) and in 1998 repented:

In the course of my career as a sociologist of religion I made one big mistake The

big mistake, which I shared with almost everyone who worked in this area in the 1950s and '60s, was to believe that modernity necessarily leads to a decline in religion. (Berger 1998:782).

He goes on to illustrate his belief that although secularisation may be dominant in the west and among “the humanistically educated intelligentsia”, it is clear that the way that people believe is changing (Berger 1998:782). His article sets the understanding of secularisation into a global context in a similar way to that of Martin (2002).

This approach to the interpretation of religious decline had been articulated soon after Berger made his initial observations. Campbell observed that phenomena such as the rise of “Eastern religion, the occult revival, the astrology craze and the new Pentecostalism ” (Campbell 1978:146) did not fit into the secularisation paradigm, and that it “required a fairly convoluted form of argument to maintain that such movements were evidence of continuing secularization.” (Campbell 1978:146).

This theme has been developed by Partridge, who offers an interpretation of the changing patterns of religious observance. Drawing on Max Weber's view of disenchantment he observes that religion has shifted from being central to society's understanding of the world, to a place where it is both privatised and less socially important (Partridge 2004:8). He observes several contributing factors to this process:

- decline of community;
- proliferation of large impersonal conurbations;
- increasing fragmentation of life;
- impact of religious plurality;
- growth of bureaucracy;
- creeping rationality;
- influence of scientific world views (Partridge 2004:16).

He argues that this process of disenchantment has not paved the way for progressive and total secularisation, but for a re-enchantment. He observes that there is a widespread re-imagination of religious practice and spirituality in the west. For Partridge it is this re-imagination that is the difference between Western Europe and the rest of the World. He observes that “the situation may be less one of secularization and more the relocation of religion.” (Partridge 2004:39). He

introduces three concepts to describe this: a return to a “form of magical culture” which he terms “occulture” (Partridge 2004:40); the rise of “non-traditional religious vitality” (Partridge 2004:46); the transformation of exotic religious thought patterns into mainstream options or “de-exotification” (Partridge 2004:53).

The development of the occulture forms part of the fragmented religious landscape in Western Europe. Partridge observes that: the current state of religion in Western Europe is complicated and difficult to map accurately; the big existential questions of life are beginning to be answered by new religions and alternative spiritualities; the first characteristic of contemporary re-enchantment to note, is that it is not a return to previous ways of being religious, but rather the emergence of new ways of being religious (Partridge 2004:43-44). Occulture is, to Partridge, a development of a world view that integrates a physical and a magical plane. The magic practised in this new occulture is not divorced from the psychological and sociological interpretations of the world, and makes reference to them. As such this is not a return to the Pre-Enlightenment forms of magic, but a development of them (Partridge 2004:41).

Partridge develops the emergence of new ways of being religious by citing a number of surveys conducted in various western countries, in support of his argument that there is a non-traditional religious vitality emerging in the west. He contrasts religion and spirituality in the following ways:

Spirituality is vital and subversive. Spirituality breaks boundaries. Spirituality is the life-enhancing (sic). Religion is about cataloguing. Religion is about comprehending experiences (rather than, I suppose, simply experiencing). Religion belongs to the past. Religion is lifeless collections of words. Religion is the end of vitality. (Partridge 2004:48).

This understanding forms part of his rebuttal of the secularisation paradigm. Like Campbell, he argues that an increasing interest in spirituality offers no support to an increasing secularisation of society.

He links the increasing interest in spirituality with the de-exotification of Eastern religion, highlighting the growing belief in re-incarnation (Partridge 2004:51), the growing practice of alternative medicine (Partridge 2004:52), and observes that it has a particular appeal to the middle classes (Partridge 2004:53). He points out that the gap between “religious deviance and respectability has considerably narrowed in recent years (Partridge 2004:54).

Partridge's observations of re-enchantment are based on observations that include both Western Europe and America. There have been three sociological studies that illustrate the point that Great

Britain is becoming less religious and more spiritually aware:

- Davie (1994) identified the principle of believing without belonging to a community of faith.
- Hay and Hunt (2000) studied people who were prepared to report having had some kind of spiritual experience but did not attend any church.
- Heelas and Woodhead (2005) researched changing attitudes to organised religion in the Lake District town of Kendal.

Davie: Believing without belonging.

Davie's approach to the changing nature of religion in Britain is to observe that, at the time of publication (1994), there was an underlying belief in God:

“... between two-thirds and three-quarters of British people indicate fairly consistently that they believe in some sort of God, though exactly what they mean by this phrase is not at all easy to say.” (Davie 1994:74-75)

Her work is based upon studies of post war Britain, reviewing studies from the '60s, '70s and '80s.

She observes:

- nominal Christian belief is more prevalent than secularism and Christian assumptions and Christian vocabulary remain important. She acknowledges that content of those assumptions and vocabulary has altered quite significantly (Davie 1994:76);
- that although there is an underlying Christian belief there is a growing incorporation of different beliefs and practices (Davie 1994:84);
- reflecting on the communal outpouring of grief and mourning that followed the Hillsboro disaster of 1989 she observes a “curios mixture of common and conventional religiosity that continues to pervade contemporary British society” (Davie 1994:91).

Having reviewed the different nature of belief in the countries that make up Britain she observes a difference in patterns of belief depending on the nature of the communities. Her generalisation of those beliefs suggests that: Urban communities have a suppressed belief; Suburban communities an articulated belief; City centres a civic belief; Rural communities an assumed belief (Davie 1994:105).

Although she is studying people with an underlying Christian belief, she foresaw the possibility that

the spiritual dimension would remain in peoples lives, even though church attendance would continue to decline (Davie 1994:122-123).

Hay and Hunt: Understanding the spirituality of people that don't go to church.

Hay and Hunt selected participants who had no connection with a worshipping community. 31 people took part in focus groups (Hay and Hunt 2000:2.2) and of those 29 went on to be interviewed in their own homes on a one to one interview (Hay and Hunt 2000:2.5). Their intention was to examine their theoretical stance that “spirituality is present in some form in everybody’s life and is not always directly connected to religious beliefs and practices” and to discover “personal understandings of their own spiritualities.” (Hay and Hunt 2000:2.7). The results of the conversations were processed in order to generate a questionnaire for a national survey. The national survey was conducted in partnership with the BBC.

When the results of the survey were compared with a similar Gallup poll that was conducted 13 years earlier the researchers reported a marked increase in awareness of some kind of spiritual experience (Hay and Hunt 2000:3.3). Over three case studies they observe the following:

- with those people who have had some affiliation to the Church as children there was a recurrent theme. There was talk of ‘the seed having being sown’ and of a sense that they cannot escape either God or religious belief. The participants saw it as part of their inheritance (Hay and Hunt 2000:4.2.6);
- that conversations with those who have had some, but very little in the way of systematic church background “vividly illustrates the struggle that many people have to believe and to nurture their own spirituality without either the language or the legitimating framework of an institutional religion. In doctrinal terms, [their] beliefs may seem thin, but the desire to believe is strong.” (Hay and Hunt 2000:4.3.7);
- there was a tension in nearly all the conversations that they had “how to maintain one’s integrity as a member of a highly rational, logical, scientific culture and yet at the same time allow one’s spiritual awareness to flourish.” (Hay and Hunt 2000:4.4.8).

They conclude the presentation of their research by reflecting on how an increasing spiritual awareness might affect mission in the local church. Their findings serve to illustrate the growing interest or awareness of spiritual experience. Their case studies reveal a tendency in people regardless of the amount of contact that they have had with church towards an acceptance of some

kind of spiritual reality.

Heelas and Woodhead: The spiritual revolution

Heelas and Woodhead, researchers from Lancaster University, looked at the town of Kendal in the North West of England with regard to conducting a thorough survey of religious and spiritual realities in the lives of participants. Their express aim was to test the theory that “subjective-life spirituality is growing and life as religion, declining.” (Heelas and Woodhead 2005:12). The researchers divided the up two domains, looking primarily at traditional Christian congregational worship and at other activities that were spiritual rather than Christian.

They observe that:

- while Christianity has provided a regulated approach to spirituality that has appealed to a transcendent deity, there is a growth of a less regulated approach to spirituality that is experienced through personal relationships (Heelas and Woodhead 2005:10);
- there is very little overlap in participation between the two worlds of spiritual experience that they observed in Kendal (Heelas and Woodhead 2005:32);
- in terms of growth and decline, they summarise that those events that are uniquely personalised to the individual are faring better than those that are not (Heelas and Woodhead 2005:75);
- there is evidence of a shift towards the individual in patient care and education as well as in the religious domain (Heelas and Woodhead 2005:126).

They conclude that while there has not been a complete change in approach to religion and spirituality either in Kendal or the UK as a whole, the evidence that they have studied points to a growing shift towards a more personalised expression of religious belief and practice.

These three studies indicate that the observations that Partridge makes are not an academic idea, but have some grounding in reality. He concludes his discussion about the de-exotification of spiritual practices from other religions is an example of contextualisation:

“terms such as Gaia, reincarnation, feng shui, chakra, karma, prana, chi, yin, yang and tao are not only entering mainstream western thinking, but are being re-interpreted and owned by Westerners seeking to develop their own spiritualities. Whatever is going on here, it is not secularisation.” (Partridge 2004:57).

While the sociologists job is to observe and describe the social setting as they see it, Mission

practitioners and Church Planters have needed to respond to the changes in the cultures that they have been involved with. Their engagement offers the opportunity to see a process and development of contextualisation over the periods that I have studied.

2.3 Contextualisation

I will first identify the ways in which the issue of contextualisation has risen through the interviews with the participant's of the study. I will then describe the way in which contextualisation has become part of the language of the theologian and missionary. As the concept has become part of the missioners arsenal a more complex approach to describing contextualisation has emerged. After reviewing the missiologists approaches to contextualisation I shall pay particular attention to the way in which praxis and liberation have influenced some of the practitioners involved in this study.

Practitioners perspectives on contextualisation

During discussions with Church Planting practitioners it became clear that there was an engagement with the concept of contextualisation. As I investigate the phenomenon of contextualisation it will become apparent that, as in the case of secularisation, there are a number of working definitions. Hesselgrave observes that the term contextualisation has been “defined and redefined, redefined, used and abused, amplified and vilified, coronated and crucified” (Hesselgrave 1984:693). Given that there are different nuances to the various definitions I shall use a general working definition. Contextualisation has become a catch all term to as a way of expressing the need to adapt the biblical message into categories relevant to a given cultural context (Flemming 1995:139). The participants in the study rarely referred directly to the concept, but when talking about their practice they described the way in which they developed their practice to reflect something that was more culturally appropriate. It was a consistent theme throughout the Reaction and Re-engagement periods of time and the different approaches that were represented among the participants.

One participant, who had been actively involved as both a practitioner and a facilitator, reflected on the broad Baptist perspective that they saw as prevalent within the churches of The Baptist Union of Great Britain:

“... frequently within Baptist circles we have this model of church that we think is appealing to everyone. We think it is attractive to all ages ...”(Participant 3:42)

Throughout the interviews two broad phases came to light.

- In the period from 1980-1996 there was a recognition that, in most cases, the worship meeting needed to be held in a different place from the church building. This moving of the worship meeting from the traditional building was seen as an act of contextualisation.
- In the period from 1996-2010 there was a recognition that there was a need to alter the way the meeting was conducted, and the manner in which their material was presented. This second phase was influenced by the experience of interacting with people who had little or no experience of church meetings.

Reaction: Re-evaluating the location of formal worship.

It is not a particular surprise that a new church plant would use a community building for their initial meetings. Such a new church is not likely to have the resources to build a worship centre before they commenced meeting, though this is not the case in every circumstance. Throughout the research the participants that mentioned where they met reported using:

- a Scout Hut (Participant 2:21);
- a Community Centre (Participants 7:76 12:118);
- a School (Participant 10:99);
- a Private House (Participants 4:44; 7:74; 8:87; 11:107);
- a Wine Bar (Participant 5:53);
- a Public House (Participant 10:95).

Only two of the participants articulated a reason for using a building free from religious associations. There was a general feeling that the act of church planting was an act of moving into unreached areas. One of the participants of the study who had a facilitating role among new churches commented that:

... the emphasis was specifically on reaching into the community, impacting the community where the middle of the church was not impacting it, it was reaching people who were not being reached. (Participant 6:69)

Among the participants one commented that they had bought and renovated a disused Chapel. The practitioner responsible for encouraging the sponsoring agency and the church planting team, reflects that they:

“Did it totally wrong, because as I was going around ... trying to get the heartbeat for the community I came across a building which was a Methodist Church that had been burned out and I said to the church “We're going to buy that!”. So we bought a building before we had a congregation, or before we started planting it. And we kitted this building out. We had it rebuilt more or less.” (Participant 10:126).

This adoption of an existing sacred space is the only example in the study, though there are others within the Baptist Union (Doel 2007). The two participants who held their meeting in a Wine Bar and in the lounge of the local Public House mentioned that the choice of venue was deliberate. Their intention was to use a venue that would be more acceptable to people who were not part of a regular church life (Participant 10:95).

... it was contextualisation but I would have never used those words at the time, they were needs based mission at the time (Participant 10:98).

The experience of working in spaces that were outside of the control of the church was seen as a positive :

... we had done quite a lot of different events to attract non Christians. ... we had taken over pubs for a number of years and done a whole variety of different things and that had gone well. And we had seen people come to faith and that was kind of, all growing well ... (Participant 5:52).

The process of moving the main worship meeting to a building without religious association while being seen as a step towards the community, often was not a deliberate decision to stay in those buildings. The church plants long term goal would be to establish themselves in their own building (Participant 1:2; 10:98, 12:122). In one case the church bought and sold several buildings until they ended up in a more established place (Participant 12:122). The process of moving towards an unchurched community was influenced by the Church Growth Movement.

Church Growth Movement brings into focus contextualisation within church planting.

The publication of his book “The Bridges of God” (McGavran 1955) spawned the Church Growth Movement. He appealed to the missionary movement asking them for a higher priority on those who started with no contact with the church being integrated into local churches. Ten years later he reiterated his argument, strengthening the church planting dimension (McGavran 1965:451-461). This movement initially concentrated on teaching missionaries but gradually, particularly after the publication of “Understanding Church Growth” (McGavran 1970), there was an increasing awareness that missionary practice needed to be applied to evangelism in already church areas of

the west. In Great Britain two further publications on church growth (Gibbs 1981 and Pointer 1984) presented the principles of the Church Growth movement to a British audience. The interest in the Church Growth Movement was further strengthened in the British context by a series of popular training events that were held by the Bible Society in partnership with the Church Growth Association. Within the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Paul Beasley Murray enabled the message of the Church Growth Movement to be heard by publishing his research into the factors that were common to churches that were growing in number.

It is clear from the Church Planting literature of the 1980s that the need for contextualisation was beginning to influence the Church Planting world. However the dominant model of Church Planting that was practised by practitioners within the Baptist Union of Great Britain was commonly expressed as the “Mother/Daughter” model (Allen 1994:6, Wordsworth 1995:1.4). This approach to church planting assumes that the church plant will develop a similar style and characteristics to the sponsoring church.

The dominant Church Planting Books which influenced Baptist Church Planting in the 1990s concentrated on the mother/daughter model, but expressed a recognition that there was a need for different models. Christine and Robinson (1992) present a broadly mother/daughter model, subdividing it into “churches planted by churches” (Christine & Robinson 1992:102ff) and “churches planted by groups” (Christine & Robinson 1992:114ff). Although this model is their dominant commendation, they do present the reader with the awareness that planting cross culturally is an appropriate strategy. Christine examines the cultural boundaries that are present within British society and outlines some qualities that are necessary for the church planter who is planning on working cross culturally (Christine & Robinson 1992:199ff). There is an awareness that there will be some necessary differences in the style of the church. There is no acknowledgement that the model of the plant or the approach to the worship might need to be re-thought. Nodding and Weatherly have a similar approach in the presentation of the different models. The lack of reflection on alternative approaches to church planting is summarised by Nodding. Mother/Daughter church planting is the model “with which I am most familiar” (Nodding 1994:121). Both Nodding and Weatherly demonstrate an awareness of the need for contextualisation. Weatherly simply acknowledges it in a short paragraph about location but does not discuss it or its implications:

I am dodging the issue by suggesting once again it is the task of those on the ground to decide ... (Weatherley 1994:54).

Towards the end of his book Nodding acknowledges the need for planting new churches cross culturally where there is need of contextualisation. He draws heavily on Murray's article in Planting Papers (Murray 1993:1-4), to suggest that "there is a desperate need for us to plant churches that are relevant to the particular culture. It is beginning to happen with youth churches, ethnic churches and churches for the unchurched, but much more time, commitment and boldness are called for." (Nodding 1994:164).

The approach of these volumes on church planting was to provide an enthusiastic commendation of church planting to the reader. The first book to offer theological reflection on the practice of church planting was written by Murray and published in 1998. After reflecting on the past practice of church planting he considers the changes that the re-evaluation of modernity is bringing to society. He suggests that the church planter should draw on the experience and reflection on contextualisation that is offered by the missionary community (Murray 1998:167). Murray offers a counter definition of contextualisation by describing what it is not. He asserts that it is not:

- restricting our message to the questions being asked within contemporary culture;
- listening to culture and simply offering theological images in response;
- aligning the style of the church so closely to the culture that it is indistinguishable from other organisations (Murray 1998:167).

However, among the church planters there was evidence of a developing awareness that the process of contextualisation needed to involve more than simply moving the meeting towards the community.

Re-engagement: Contextualisation by changing the meeting content.

This awareness of a need for further contextualisation is prevalent in practitioners from 1996. In two cases the decision to contextualise the content of the meeting was prompted by an experience with an individual who was unfamiliar with the custom and practice of the church.

I was aware that a number of people who were either coming to faith, or moving towards that way, were really struggling with connecting with what we did on a Sunday morning. I think I was becoming increasingly aware that was a million miles away from where they were. And, there was one particular moment where at the end of the service, we went into saying the grace. We do that strange thing where you look around and smile at everyone. My mate who was there who was not a Christian yet and was on the journey towards faith said to me afterwards "That was horrible, I didn't know the words. Everyone kept staring at me and smiling at me." And I just realised that for

many people church was just completely a different world. A different planet (Participant 5:52).

Another practitioner tells a story about the differences in expectations of behaviour between the Evangelist, the Church Meeting and the new convert. A man new to faith, who had no experience of church life, applied for membership and Baptism:

The long and the short of it was that he got a visit from a couple of church members going to conduct the interview for the Church Member's Meeting. They brought their observations and report back and were highlighting the fact that they were aware that this guy was still openly smoking cannabis and had obviously talked about that to them. Which they were struggling with, with how they could justifiably allow him into membership while he still had a problem with soft drugs. So that went to a full scale discussion, which resulted in the decision being that they wouldn't accept him into membership or baptise him. And then subsequently he, er, effectively it all got a little bit messy and he kind of cleared off really and we lost touch with him ... (Participant 8:85).

The realisation that there was a gap between the experiences and expectation of those new to faith and the practice of the church reflects a theme of contextualisation of religious practice that was identified by Partridge (2004:57).

Introduction of contextualisation from mission perspectives

The language of contextualisation has become part of the contemporary theological landscape and emerged as a missiological term in the 1970s (Bosch 1991:420, Schreiter in Bevans 2002:ix, Bergmann 2003:32). Bosch identifies that although the Christian church has immersed itself into the culture of those who have embraced the faith, contextualisation has been a recent move towards bridging the growing gap between “the time and culture of the Bible and the fundamentally different modern world” (Bosch 1991:422).

The process of contextualisation has become part of church planting practice. The development of the modern Missionary Movement has fed into the debate about contextualisation. The language and practice of contextualisation has developed from the modern Missionary movement. Within this discipline and practice Church Planting has formed part of a wider debate about missiology and Ecclesiology. It has been observed that historic accounts of church planting are difficult to find, lying hidden within volumes dealing with general church history or missiology (Murray, 1998:87). It is possible to see a developing understanding in the need for contextualisation and for culturally sensitive mission. Missionary strategists Venn and Anderson both wrote about the need

for creating churches. They considered that the churches should be independent of foreign missionary control (Shenk 1981:168). Yates observes that they (and Gaul) required an awareness of ecclesiology among their missionaries and stressed the importance of an indigenous church (Yates 1994:35). These perspectives had already begun to be worked out in the context of mission. Hudson Taylor and much later, Donovan both experimented with a contextualised approach to mission (Taylor:1927, Donovan:1978). Their approach was born out of experience and frustration with the missionary system rather than a pre-defined theology of contextualisation. While in isolated pockets missionary practice was beginning to change a theology of contextualisation was beginning to develop through the liberation theologians.

Approaches to contextual theology

Participants in the study identified Liberation Theology as an influence on their practice. The dialogue between the practice of Christian missionaries in Latin America and the way in which the poor and oppressed were treated, presented an opportunity for the language of contextualisation to surface in the way the theologians articulated the difference between these separate realities. It was identified in two ways. Firstly, through theological engagement with Liberation theology:

I think during college, became (sic) exposed to some to the practices or principles or values and distinctive (sic) of the liberation theology and of the base communities in south America who ... have for decades been answering that question of what church looks like amongst the poor and it has its strengths and weaknesses and its faults as well. To some degree there are extremes of liberation theology which we clearly didn't want to endorse, that being the taking up of arms being a potentially necessary or acceptable thing (Participant 8:86)

Liberation theology can have a variety of meanings (Uchegbue 2008:15) but generally refers to theology “that is done from the perspective of those who have been traditionally powerless in society and voiceless in the church” (Gonsales 1980:12, cf. Rowland 2007:4, Uchegbue 2008:15). Having its origins in the poorer communities of Latin America it is an attempt to find a way of expressing what God is like in a context that is dominated by injustice and poverty (Gutierrez 2007:36).

The theology of liberation tries – in ecclesial communion – to be a language about God. It is an attempt to make present in this world of oppression, injustice and death, the Word of life (Gutierrez 2007:37).

It is considered to be an approach to the theological task, rather than an explicit theology that attempts to encompass all aspects of life (Rowland 2007:3). This approach makes applying the

principle of wrestling with texts from the perspective of the poor and the marginalised (Rowland 2007:5-6) in any context possible. The term is often associated with Marxism, violence and anti-establishment revolution. The fact that the application of this theology outside of Latin America has been by advocates of peaceful reform, indicates the ability of liberation perspectives to be contextualised. Uchegbue illustrates this by way of reference to the non-violent approach by black South African liberation theologians (Uchegbue 2008:21-22).

This grappling with two contexts allowed the Liberation theologians to find the space for a renewed theology that reflected the perspective, culture and language of the people, rather than an imposed theological system that comes from the west. “It was a reflection on the significance of faith in God for a people's fight for freedom from an unjust dependence upon colonial powers.” (Bergmann 2003:3).

The understanding of Liberation Theology helped the practitioners begin to re-engage with the missionary task of the church planter and identify with the interplay between two different contexts. This realisation allowed the participant to develop an approach to their mission that enabled them to see themselves as missionaries to a foreign culture:

I think from the outset we felt more attuned to being like missionaries I suppose and that's how we saw ourselves as a team. (Participant 8:86)

This deliberate perspective allowed them to deliberately jettison the way in which they had inherited their understanding of church and what church should look like. Creating the space to grow and develop a contextualised practice.

One practitioner mentioned that they found a story of contextualisation helpful in their process of re-imagination:

One of the best books is Vincent Donovan's Christianity rediscovered which was written in the sixties or seventies about this catholic priest's experience of mission among the Masai tribes in Tanzania. ... American White Catholic going into Masai tribes in Tanzania and saying “How is my understanding of the Gospel and my understanding of Church relevant at all to this culture” (Participant 7:78).

The difference between the assumptions of the standard approach to the missionary endeavour and of the people that they are engaging with day to day is keenly felt by those participants church planting after the mid 1990s. The narrative account by someone struggling with the same problems has helped them shape the way in which they have approached the task of forming their approach to church planting (Participant 7:78). The practical account of contextualisation helped them ask

questions about the culture that they were attempting to reach. Donovan's approach clarified two questions for one of the participants:

- what does it mean, how does it mean to respond to God from this understanding and world view?
- what does the gospel challenge about this culture as well as affirm. (Participant 7:78)

Another participant drew one further questions that informed their approach to their community:

- What are the differences in class, ethnic or cultural differences?

They went on to reflect that “it was that sense in which we go to listen and to put into context the gospel” within the community that they were attempting to listen to and engage with (Participant 8:86).

I shall undertake a short review of the perspectives on contextualisation. It will be come clear that each of the authors is working from a slightly different definition of contextualisation. There are several models for understanding different approaches to contextualisation. Schreiter (1985:6-16) offers three models, Bosch (1991:420-421) offers two broad models subdivided into a further four, and Bevans (2002:37-137) a comprehensive six.

In his review of church history Bosch suggests a series of paradigms of mission that can be seen across the worldwide development of the church. His sixth and final paradigm includes a section in which he draws out the way in which contextualisation is being practiced since the term entered theological language. He argues that from the beginning of its life the Church has practiced contextualisation but recognises that this contextual nature of the faith has only recently been recognised (Bosch 1991:421, cf. Bevans 2002:3).

Continuing with his historical overview he observes that every movement that deviated from a declared form of orthodoxy and the participants in the movement were either “excommunicated, persecuted or banned” (Bosch 1991:421). None of the social, political or cultural factors were recognised or considered when the movements were tested for orthodoxy. He observes two major and significant developments in church history where orthodoxy provided the boundary for who was part of the movement and who was not. The schism of 1054 when the Eastern and Western Churches declared each other unorthodox and the Reformation where Protestants and Catholics separated.

He differentiates between contextual theology and traditional theologies by suggesting that since Constantine the majority of theology has been passed down from an elitist enterprise to the educated believer. Contextual theology is worked out from below, from “the underside of history” (Bosch 1991:423). This kind of contextual theology is found in the lives of the “poor or the culturally marginalised” (Bosch 1991:423).

He draws upon three approaches, all published in the 1980s, including Schreiter (1985), Ukpong (1987) and Waldenfels (1987). Using Ukpong's Indiginization and Socio-economic models of contextualisation he develops them further by subdividing them. Indiginization is subdivided into indiginization and inculturation. Socioeconomic is subdivided into evolutionary and revolutionary. As far as he is concerned only the Socioeconomic-revolutionary model and the Inculturation-indiginisation can be considered fully contextualised models of theology (Bosch 1991:421), although by including all of the models within the discussion about contextualisation he acknowledges their contextual nature, even if he is unconvinced by their contextual pedigree. He develops the themes of the “Socioeconomic-revolutionary” and the “Inculturation-indiginization” models in later sections (Bosch 1991:432-446 and 447-456 respectively).

The categories that Bosch proposes are illuminated by engaging with both Schreiter and Bevans. Schreiter uses the concept of “local theologies” and offers three models: Translation, Adaption and Contextual. He justifies the use of a model as the means by which one may engage with theological reflection with some specific principles to help the individual approach the subject. Although he avoids using the terms contextual until the final model, all three of his local theologies are attempts to contextualise the approach of Christianity to the new culture. Bevans uses the term more broadly and considers each one of his models to be a contextual approach. I shall use Schreiter's local theologies to examine contextualisation, drawing on Bevans to illustrate concordance and difference.

The Translation Approach to contextualisation

Schreiter and Bevans both introduce a model of translation. Schreiter notes that this model is most commonly used in pastoral situations where there is a need to be able to apply a text to a different cultural circumstance. They both identify a two stage process by referring to the kernel and the husk. The theologian will read the scriptures to identify the underlying principle in the scriptures. This is done by separating the original message from its original culture. These principles become the kernel and the original context the husk:

Translation models are generally the first kind to be used in pastoral settings, because pastoral urgency demands some kind of adaptation to local circumstances in ritual, in catechesis, and in the rendering of significant texts in local languages (Schreiter 1985:7).

While the model is an important first step for the missionary to a foreign culture it is not simple word for word language translation:

By the translation model, we do not mean a mere word-for word correspondence of, say, doctrinal language of one culture into doctrinal language of another. Rather we are concerned with translating the meaning of doctrines into another cultural context – and this translation might make those doctrines look and sound quite different from their original formulation (Bevans 1992:39).

Schreiter observes that such translation is often helpful in the short term, it has two specific weaknesses. Firstly the cultural exegete is in danger of interpreting the culture too rapidly and making assumptions, missing deeper cultural undercurrents. Secondly the model assumes that there is a message that can be separated from the original cultural conditions (the kernel) that can be simply repackaged (the husk). Schreiter moves on to present the Adaption model.

The Adaption approach to contextualisation

The Adaption model is an attempt to engage thoroughly with the local culture. He identifies three ways in which western theology is adapted into a different culture:

- expatriate missionaries do the work of using their (western) theological framework that relates to the local world view (Schreiter 1985:9);
- local theologians use a western framework to describe their cultures world view or perspective (Schreiter 1985:9-10);
- the expatriate missionary enables the individuals within the culture to use their own language and expression to explain their understanding of their belief. He describes this as a new “flowering of the Christian faith” after the “seed of faith” has interacted with the new culture (Schreiter 1985: 11).

He observes that the basic thought form that underlies the first two types of adaptation is one that has its roots in an entirely different culture. It is also a theology that is born out of a western academic approach and one that is addressed to the academy. His criticism of the third form of adaption rests in the need for the individuals working through the process of adaption to have had no contact with Christianity.

The Ethnographic or Anthropological approach to contextualisation

Schreiter's final "Contextual Model" moves away from the pre-defined theological categories and allows the theology to come from the local culture. He presents two approaches to this process which are different because of the way in which they read the needs of the social context. He combines what he calls an Ethnographic approach in the same category (albeit a slightly different model) with Liberation.

The difference between these concerns and those of the adaptation approaches is that a local theology begins with the needs of a people in a concrete place, and from there moves to the traditions of faith (Schreiter 1985:13).

Bevans uses a similar approach to describe a contextual theology that starts with the culture and moves towards the themes of faith. He calls it the anthropological model and draws on the idea that God's presence can be found in the ordinary social structures and the network of human relationships.

The anthropological model would emphasise that it is within human culture that we find God's revelation – not as a separate supracultural message, but in the very complexity of culture itself, in the warp and woof of human relationships, which are constitutive of cultural existence. (Bevans 1992:56).

This model uses the culture to shape the way in which the story of Christianity is told within the culture. It understands the scriptures as local theology and allows the individual to live their life in the light of Christ who was a different cultural and historical subject.

The Praxis and Liberation

Praxis, as a model of contextual theology, combines thought and action. It draws on Marx thought that "the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." (Marx 1967:402 in Bevans 1992:72).

When we speak of the praxis model of contextual theology, we are speaking about a model the central insight of which is that theology is done not simply by providing relevant expressions of the Christian faith but also by commitment to Christian action. But even more than this, theology is understood as the product of the continual dialogue of these two aspects of the Christian faith. (Bevans 1992:72).

Although Bevans acknowledges that this model is close to Liberation theology he avoids using the term because its practice does not have to lead to the development of a liberation theology. Liberation theology is more of a critical reflection on praxis. Schreiter sees the combination of faith and action as leading towards a liberation theology. Bevans has observed an approach to contextualised theology that tries to harmonise the strengths that have been found in the previous

models.

The Synthetic approach to contextualised theology

It is synthetic in the sense that it is trying to find a synthesis between the approaches. This model looks for synthesis between the models of contextual theology. It will:

- preserve the importance of the gospel;
- acknowledge the role of context on forming theology;
- hold to the importance of thought and action;
- reach out to other contexts to find resources;
- present its self in a way that is acceptable to all standpoints.

It approaches the subject of the revelation of God within culture as both distant and present.

Revelation is both something that is finished, once and for all, of a particular place – and something that is ongoing and present, operative in all cultures, and uncircumscribable in every way. (Bevans 1992:91).

The synthesis that it tries to find between the contextual models is found in the dialogue in two spheres. The dialogue between the approaches to contextualisation and the dialogue between the culture and the faith.

Bevans offers a further two models of contextualisation that go beyond the models that he, Bosch and Shrieter have proposed.

The Transcendental approach to contextualisation

The transcendental model is based on Immanuel Kant's method of knowing. It relies on the knowledge of the individual being intimately involved with the process of contextualisation. The starting point for a contextual theology is the individual's religious experience and personality. The questions asked when working to this model do not start with themes of theology and what they will look like but on the individual's personality:

How well do I know myself? How genuine is the religious experience I am trying to interpret, how well does my language express this experience? How free of bias am I? Do I feel comfortable with a particular expression of my religious experience? Why or why not? Do I really understand what I am trying to articulate? (Bevans 1992:104-105).

The model is possibly the ultimate in individualised contextual theology, presenting the person

practising the transcendental approach with a highly individualised and personal theology that is almost oblivious to the wider culture within which the individual belongs (Bevans 1992:105-106). It stands diametrically opposed to his final model.

The Counter cultural approach to contextualisation

This model expresses a strong critical approach to the human context. While the approach may be come anti-cultural when it is practiced in its extreme it is not necessarily anti culture. It does not regard the culture as something that needs replacing but provides a vehicle for communication and expression. It takes the human experience, culture, social location and social change seriously recognising that experience and theology happen within a cultural context. The proponents want to challenge culture in order that it can be purified. Bevans points out that it draws on a biblical counter cultural tradition (eg. Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 1:23, 1 Peter. 1:1).

Contextual theology is best done, they say, by an analysis of the context and by respect for it, but by allowing the gospel to take the lead in the process so that the context is shaped and formed by the reality of the gospel and not vice-versa. (Bevans 1992:119).

As we have seen, the approach to contextualisation has become a practice that has many forms and expressions. Within the participants of this study, contextualisation has become an important and progressive part of their approach and practice.

3. Church Planting Practice Described

3.1 Introduction

Church decline and the debate about its causes formed the backdrop to the church planting movement within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Secularisation and its counter arguments have formed the sociological explanations of the downturn in the institutional churches fortune. Contextualisation of church planting practice formed the missiological response as Great Britain was seen as a mission field. The practice of the churches has developed over the period of the study. I shall describe the practice of the church planting community in each period: Reaction (1980-1996) and Re-imagination (1996-2010). Each description will be fuelled by the observations and remarks of the participants in the study and will reflect on the church planting literature of the time.

The amount of church planting literature that relates to the British context is relatively small, “most were published in the first half of the 1990s” (Murray 2008:3). During the discussions with the participants in the study I asked most of them which books influenced their church planting endeavours. Those practising before 1996 made the observation that there wasn't much in the way of church planting literature and they had got their inspiration either from visiting new churches or in conversation with other people who were thinking along the same lines as they were (Participants 1:2, 2:20, 6:66, 9:93). One participant mentioned the influence of one book written from the North American context but reflected on the difficulty of working with literature written in a different context:

Wagner's book in particular, one of the things Wagner puts in his book is, and of course he has written it the other side of the Atlantic, is how to break the 200 mark, apparently there is a barrier at 200 that lots of churches get to but never get beyond, well I always had it in mind that I would like to go through that very quickly (Participant 12:123).

They went on to say that they rarely met the targets they set and they didn't break the 200 barrier until some years after the new church was initiated.

In the 1990s there were four books written by practitioners who were within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Robinson and Christine wrote “Planting Tomorrow's Churches Today: A Comprehensive Handbook”. Christine was a British Baptist with experience of church planting in different cultures and the first leader of the Oasis/Spurgeons Church Planting and Evangelism Course. Although Robinson was not part of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, their book

influenced the church planting within the Baptist Union. It was introduced by influential Baptist Minister, Rev. Steve Chalke. The book attempted two tasks. Firstly to offer some theory and theology of church planting, and secondly to “give as much practical help as possible” (Christine and Robinson 1992:10). It was followed in 1994 by Nodding's book “Local Church Planting”. Nodding used the reflection of his own experience in Nottingham and Guildford to present a pattern for church planting that was born out of a Baptist context. Later the same year Harry Weatherly published “Gaining the Ground” which was published by the Baptist Union of Great Britain and specifically targeted at those within it.

Later on in the 1990s “Church Planting: Laying Foundations” was written by Stuart Murray. The book was not written specifically for the British Baptist context, but flows out of his experience both as an independent church planter and training Baptist Church planters through his role as director of the Oasis/Spurgeon's Church Planting and Evangelism Course. This book contained more missiological reflection on the subject of church planting. It is this missiological reflection that marked a new era in Baptist church planting (as I shall describe later⁹).

Although in the wider church there began a spirited discussion around the practice of mission and evangelism that has led to terms such as “emerging church” and “fresh expressions”, there has not been much literature on church planting within the wider British Church and not within the Baptist context. Robinson was asked to substantially revise his earlier book with Christine but found it an impossible task, describing the earlier book as “too mechanistic” (Robinson 2006:7). He published a book “Planting Mission-Shaped Churches Today” drawing on language familiar to many within the Anglican communion because of the Mission Shaped Church Report of 2004.

Murray co-authored three smaller volumes relating to church planting (Murray & Wilkinson 2000 “Hope from the Margins”, Murray & Lings 2003 “Church planting: Past, present and future”, and Murray & Kilpin 2007 “Church Planting in the inner city”). In 2008 he produced a new book providing a framework for people planting churches to help them consider their approach. The book is not as close to the Baptist church planting community as his 1998 volume. It is born out of his work in 12 different countries and across 24 different denominations (Murray 2008:vx).

As I describe church planting practice within the Baptist Union of Great Britain, I will refer mainly to the books born out of the British Baptist context, drawing in other perspectives as and when appropriate.

9 See page 103

3.2 Reaction

During the 1970s and 1980s there was an emphasis on renewal running through the evangelical church and church planting rose in popularity among Baptist Churches. Weatherly illustrates the increasing interest in church planting with an example from his experience working as a Mission Enabler within the Yorkshire area:

In the Yorkshire Baptist Association, for example, only one new church was formed from 1965-1983, and that was a Local Ecumenical Project on a new housing development. But between 1983 and 1991 some ten or so new projects saw the light of day. (Weatherly 1994:7-8)

Unfortunately there was not a uniform method of keeping track of church plants so the information available is at best patchy. As I describe the kind of churches that were planted during this period it will become clear that the approach of the church planters began to change.

It is difficult to evaluate the exact number of churches that had been started in this period. It has been observed that the information that is available is patchy and incomplete. This problem can be illustrated by looking at assessments that exist within the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Mission Department files. One report in these files calculates that there were 156 new churches and the other report 183. For this reason this study will not offer a statistical analysis of church planting activity. Accurate information is not available for this to take place. I shall describe church planting practice, introducing it by way of reference to the participants in the study. I shall interact with it by way of reference to other church planting and missiological literature, then illustrate it by way of reference to actual church planting situations.

Starting Points

During the study participants were asked to describe how they got involved in Church Planting and to describe the churches that they were involved with. There were several different styles of church that were represented. There are different approaches that can be used for describing church plants, the models used to provide direction for the planting team and the theological perspectives that may motivate a church plant. Murray divides the approaches into questions of How? (Murray 2008:19-46) Why? (Murray 2008:47-80) Where? (Murray 2008:81-108) When? (Murray 2008:109-134) and What? (Murray 2008:135-165). I shall describe some of the starting points that were mentioned by participants who were involved in church planting between 1980 and 1996. These starting points will present a framework from which to discuss the approach and other models that are evident in

the Practice of the those planting churches. Each of the churches that were described by the participants had an entirely different set of circumstances that lead to their formation, but it is clear that there were some similar factors that can be used to describe the churches.

Location

Some of the church plants mentioned by the participants in the study were planted because they already had a group of people living in the area. It is likely that in the initial flush of enthusiasm for church planting, existing churches are going to look for opportunities to plant churches that present themselves naturally. A participant in the study observed that:

... it would have been early 90s we were meeting as, we had discipleship groups then, and the discipleship group that met over at the sort of ... geographical area was very close, and good very positive, good fellowship, very warm, and that's what moved us to consider, you know, establishing a church plant. (Participant 9:89).

These churches typically formed with a small group and hit the ground running, starting with Sunday worship as the focal point of the expression of the church. One practitioner observed that a church with a level of enthusiasm planted into a growing community was likely to do well:

... if you couldn't plant a church in that new, growing community, with people moving in which was very clearly, you know, it had a live spirituality to it, there was something err, you know, it wasn't moribund, there was something to it. That was bound to attract, incomers who had some sort of church background, because the other churches that were on offer were much more formalised ... (Participant 1:5).

In two of the conversations I had (Participants 1:5; 2:24) with participants practising from this starting point, they mentioned the existence of other churches in the area they planted:

it was about 4000 people and only had an Anglican church and the Anglican was a high Anglican so I felt legitimately we could try to put a Baptist church there (Participant 2:24).

In both cases the participants reflected that the existing churches had a distinctly different style to the one that they had planted. After they had made the observation, I asked¹⁰ Participant 1 if they felt they were filling a gap in the religious market, their reply was immediately affirmative. The awareness that they were fulfilling a consumer demand was evident.

The church planting literature of the time was dominated by a practice that became known as mother/daughter church planting. Mother/daughter church planting describes a model of

¹⁰ I would have pursued the same line of questioning but their quick and fervent speech style made inserting clarification questions in very difficult.

reproduction that produces a church that has a similar ecclesiology and practice. A mother church typically sends a group to become the new daughter church. The group receive the financial and emotional support of the sending church. The concept of mother/daughter planting was widely accepted in the 1980s and 1990s and books make reference to it (Nodding 1994:107-126, Christine & Robinson 1992:100) although they don't clearly articulate the model. Murray offers a reflective set of observations describing the model as “the most popular contemporary method of church planting” (Murray 1998:260). He describes the characteristics of the model as being relatively safe because of the support offered by the mother church and offering the possibility of mobilising a large number of people both in the mother and the daughter church (Murray 2008:261-262). Although this was a widely practised model during the 1980s and early 1990s there are some drawbacks to this approach: it is labour intensive, and it can take the mother church some time to recover from the “emotional, psychological and spiritual upheaval” (Murray 2008:263).

I shall describe three churches that began with location and convenience as their starting point. The first two reflected the mother/daughter model well. Bretton in Peterborough is a church plant that has continued to function as a mature Baptist Church. The second, Twyford in Berkshire, closed soon after formally cutting its ties with the Church that acted as the Church Planting Agency. Thirdly, Cornerstone Church in Sefton, Merseyside, started in a more spontaneous fashion and continues, though faces the issues of sustainability that are present in a village community. It reflects the mother/daughter model in so much as the style they adopted was mainline (Sunday Meetings with sung worship, prayers and sermon) it differs from the mother/daughter model in that it didn't have a mother church directly sponsoring it.

Bretton, Peterborough

Bretton in Peterborough was part of the expansion of Peterborough after the town was designated a new town in 1967, under the New Towns Act of 1965 (London Gazette Issue 44377 published on the 1 August 1967 Page 8515). At the time when the church was planted its housing stock was being increased. The area contained an Anglican Church and a new Local Ecumenical Partnership. Several members of Harris Street Baptist Church in the centre of Peterborough lived in the area. The Minister of Harris Street, Rev. Stephen Ibbotson was committed to church planting (three of the 12 participants make direct reference to Stephen Ibbotson's church planting endeavours in Peterborough and Leeds (Participant 2:27; 3:40; 11:110;)). The process of planting the church was done in three stages. Reflection, Planning and Execution.

Rev. Ibbotson had reflected on a previous unsuccessful attempt at church planting in Peterborough. That attempt had focussed entirely on the Sunday meeting and paid no attention to any other factors that affected establishing a church. That experience of reflection led him to conclude that the early attempt lacked a community dimension among the people that were part of the service. Concentrating on the Sunday service and ignoring the formation of the community of the church was a problem that one of the participants in the study who was practising at a similar time observed:

it was: "church is what we do on a Sunday morning" but actually we still belong to ... Baptist Church. We never cut the chords to become and we were always stretching and it was mission outreach of probably 70s 80s style but never built community in the same ways. (Participant 10:99).

As a result of the reflection on past abortive attempts to plant, the church planting agency, Harris Street in Peterborough, took the decision to spend a longer time in planning and preparation. The individuals that were to become the church planting team met together before the church plant began. Having spent some time together as a group and in Harris Street Baptist Church they had already begun to form a sense of community. A member of the congregation who had undergone some pastoral training was appointed as leader to help the congregation into its initial launch as a church.

After planning the approach of the church together they began to meet together in the local school (Nodding 1994:111). The style of the meeting (Evangelical Charismatic) attracted people who were moving to the area and would already consider themselves Christians. The church was soon able to constitute as a Member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. They were granted an initial Pastorate Grant from the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the appointed leader became the churches first Minister (Nodding 1994:111). With help from the Baptist Union they built and moved into their own building.

Twyford, Berkshire

The church in Twyford was formed out of a weekly Bible Study that met as part of Woodley Baptist Church near Reading. Twyford is a large village with a population of about 5400 people (Office Of National Statistics 2006). It is located in Berkshire to the east of Reading. It is in easy reach of London, Reading and Wokingham. Its rail station makes it an idea area of residence for commuting. The small group that initially formed the church was part of the house group structure in Woodley

Baptist Church. Most of the members of the group lived in Twyford and the group met in a home there. The small group agreed that because they lived in the town it would be good if they could have somewhere that they could worship that was a little closer to home. Out of those thoughts and discussion came a vision and desire to commence worshipping as a community distinct from Woodley Baptist Church.

I would say that the vision was to "be a church" within the home locality, rather than contributing to church in an adjacent community with which most people had only tenuous links. The drive was coming from the group, not from Woodley in general. Indeed there was some consternation at Woodley when so many of their "best people" lined up to be commissioned and sent out. (Pete Evens, 23 April 2010, Personal Communication)

With the support of Woodley Baptist Church they commenced the life of the new church with members of the small group forming the main core. They met in a local school and commenced with a relaxed, contemporary style. They advertised the church but did not engage in any long term form of evangelism beyond inviting people to the Sunday service. When the Minister left Woodley Baptist Church, it was seen by Woodley Baptist Church (as the Sponsoring Agency) and the local Baptist Association as the opportune time for the church to constitute as a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

We probably moved too quickly, without fully weighing the implications, because commitments made in the heat of inauguration did not stand the test of time. (Pete Evens, 23 April 2010, Personal Communication).

The church was officially constituted in 1993 and does not appear in the Baptist Directory beyond 1996. One of the leaders identified that the church was officially dissolved in 1995 (Pete Evens, Personal Correspondence 22 April 2010). The members of the church disagreed about the form of leadership that the church should take and the numbers of people attending the church declined. Eventually it was felt that the church should close. In the absence of a Minister at Woodley Baptist Church, Wokingham Baptist Church provided pastoral support for them during the time of disagreement. After the dissolution of the church some of the people who had attended began to worship there, others returned to Woodley Baptist Church and others stopped attending any worshipping community.

These three examples show that location and convenience contributed to church planting in the period from 1980 to the mid 1990s.

Cornerstone Church, Merseyside

Another church that serves as a suitable illustration of this starting point is Cornerstone in Merseyside. The village of Sefton is home to about 700 people (Office of National Statistics 2001). It is a rural setting in the north of Merseyside. The church started organically through a network of relationships within the village, it grew in number and became a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain when it recognised its need for connection with the wider Church.

The church came about after the formation of a local Bible study. Local Christians who attended different churches formed a small group to study the Bible together on a Sunday morning before they went to worship at their own churches.

The numbers grew steadily and as people were blessed and grew spiritually through biblical teaching, they wanted to respond to the Lord in prayer and worship, and before we knew where we were, we had a house-church on our hands, and before long the numbers outgrew the size of our lounge and extension. (Ralph Gower, personal communication, January 24, 2009).

The fledgeling church decided to purchase one of the larger houses in the village, which would provide room for meeting downstairs and accommodation for a minister above.

Each of the three churches I have used as examples have drawn on the standard Baptist model of church which included contemporary sung praise/worship and bible teaching taking prominence during the meeting. Although each of the three churches had different outcomes ranging from producing an established Baptist church through to church closure, the examples show that convenience is a significant motivator when choosing a location to plant. The convenience of the location influenced other church plants in other ways. Replanting churches that were either on the verge of closing or had closed was another factor in Baptist church planting.

Replanting

One of the other starting points for a church plant that has emerged during the study is replanting (Nodding 1994:127ff, Weatherly 1994:9ff, Murray 1998:92ff, Murray 2008:56ff). The practice of replanting churches is examined in the church planting literature, but in the literature of the early 1990s it is given little attention. Both Robinson (1992:60-63) and Murray (1998:94-95) contain an account of how a program of re-evangelising Britain came about through the Celtic spirituality of Monks from Ireland and Scotland.

In the fifth century decline in Christian practice was linked with the rather complex story of the

decline of the Roman Empire (Hunt et al 2001:256). Murray contends that the Celtic church planting movement was contextual with the missionaries tapping into the embers of Christian practice but also rooting the practice in the culture of the people (Murray 1998:94).

The practice of re-establishing Baptist churches that I have observed is quite different from the re-evangelisation and re-planting approach of the Celts. Murray describes the process of replanting and “adoption” (Murray 2008:56). He describes three different approaches that can be taken to the replanting of churches:

- Grafting. During the process of replanting the church the adopting church send a number of their members and resources to go and be part of the struggling cause. This sending of resource is intended to enable the church to “recover and prosper” (Murray 2008:57).
- Transplanting. The adopting church send far more members and resource to the church, effectively starting a new church, but incorporating some of the older members (Murray 2008:57).
- Fostering. The adopting church incorporates the struggling church in its structures and after a period of recovery the church is eventually replanted with a new vision and emphases (Murray 2008:57-58).

I shall recount the stories of three churches that have been replanted. Firstly I shall draw on my own experience of replanting in Long Whatton, Leicestershire. Secondly, using the account of Peter Nodding, replanting the church at Ruddington (Nodding 1993:127-130), this is an example of “grafting”. Finally I shall draw on the ongoing attempt to re-establish Basford Road Baptist Church in Nottingham, which is an excellent example of fostering. Each of these three examples throws a slightly different light on the process and outcomes of replanting.

Long Whatton, Leicestershire

Long Whatton is a small village of about 400 homes and 1500 people. The Baptist Church in Long Whatton was started in 1892 by the preachers from the New Connexion of General Baptists. After a long period of decline it closed in 1996. The Baptist Church in Barrow upon Soar, a village about 9 miles away was influenced by the D.A.W.N. Church planting strategy and had been looking for a church planting opportunity for a number of years. One of the members attended a local meeting of the Baptist Association. They heard that the Church at Long Whatton was closed and the building was to be sold. They discussed the situation with the leadership team at Barrow upon Soar.

The team visited the building and walked around the village. Although the village was small and contained two other churches, the team felt strongly that the possibility of replanting the church at Long Whatton should be investigated. The wider membership of the church at Barrow upon Soar were given time to consider the possibility and to pray about their involvement. After an open day at the disused church building, the church meeting committed to sending a team to renovate the building and to replant the church. The building was renovated with help from the East Midlands Baptist Association and the remaining funds from the church that had closed.

A team of about 30 people formed the core group, none of whom lived in Long Whatton. After they and the building were commissioned, they commenced meeting on Sunday mornings. The team concentrated their efforts on the Sunday meetings and appointed a Student Minister to help re-establish the church. In the first five years of the replanted church's life they involved themselves in door to door evangelism as well as helping at the local school and improving their relationship with the other three churches. The goal of the evangelism was to see people attend the Sunday service and profess faith in Christ. Over the past 12 years they have been a training placement for two ministers and are currently being led by a lay team.

During the first 8 years it was used as a training placement for two student ministers. The lay team that followed the trainees have repositioned the strategy for outreach and have focused on the church being an integral member of the local community. Members of the church actively participate in village life although they are unable to move into the village. Between them members are involved in: the village show committee; the school as parents of children there or as support staff; running a mums and toddlers group; organising a coffee morning. One of the midweek groups makes a point of going to events at the community centre (like visiting theatre productions) and meeting in the pub once a month. They have repositioned the Sunday services and the leader comments that:

the focus of Sunday services has also changed, only two of the services in the month are still the traditional format. Once a month the three churches in the village hire the Community Centre and worship together which attracts one or two from the church fringe and non-churched. The other Sunday (sometimes 2) in the month is run as a much less formal cafe church, and this has proved attractive to one or two other unchurched, for example from the mums and toddlers group. (Andy Boston, Personal Communication, 28 April 2010)

During its reincarnation the church has slowly attracted a number of people who have no association with the Barrow upon Soar Church and are resident either in Long Whatton,

surrounding villages and towns, one or two of whom have become active participants in the life of the church. Long Whatton Baptist Church is still dependent upon the resources and support from Barrow upon Soar Baptist Church and has not, as yet, become a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

Ruddington, Nottinghamshire

The story of Ruddington is told in Nodding, *Local Church Planting* (1994:127-130). Ruddington is a village of 2800 homes located to the south of Nottingham. The Baptist church in Ruddington was started in 1823 and like Long Whatton had undergone a period of decline. It had not yet reached the point where the Church had closed but closure was imminent.

Ruddington was like many churches in which disillusionment has set in and where there is little prospect of change. These churches maintain a regular worship service, there is a loyal core... (Nodding 1994:127).

Ruddington Baptist church had a small membership and an even lower attendance at the Morning and Evening services. West Bridgeford Baptist Church in Nottingham was aware of the needs at Ruddington and entered into a supportive relationship with them in order to re-plant the church. The initial relationship worked with pastoral support in providing preachers and someone to lead the mid week Bible study. The relationship between the two churches deepened when West Bridgeford Baptist Church paid for Ruddington Baptist Church to have one of their members as a student Minister.

The period of relationship enabled the church not only to be sustained but to go through a period of growth and engagement in evangelism which included opening both a shop and a restaurant. During this period the numbers attending regular worship increased from a maximum of 25 to a maximum of 120. Eventually the church was able to self support and the support of West Bridgeford Baptist Church was withdrawn. The 2009 Baptist Directory lists Ruddington as having 49 Members and the Minister appointed in 1994 remains in the Pastorate.

Basford Road, Nottingham

The Basford Road church is an urban area of Nottingham containing about 15000 people. The church was established in 1802. During it's first phase of life, it established another church locally. Queensberry Street Baptist Church was constituted in 1852. During the 1980s the numbers had reduced dramatically and there were 11 church members when they approached the Queensberry Church for help. The church officially amalgamated with its former daughter. Queensberry Street

Baptist Church provided support for the Basford Road concern by providing an Elder and a number of other people to revive the work.

Since the move to re-plant the church began the building has been modified and the people committed to the re-establishment of the church have invested time and energy in evangelism based around inviting people to events in the building on Basford Road. They describe themselves in their church profile:

For the last twenty years the Basford Road church has been a mission church, seeking to re-establish itself through broad-based evangelism. Growth has been steady, both numerically and spiritually and the church is keen to grow further and for the rate of growth to accelerate. (Basford Road, Church Profile 2009).

In 2009 it was agreed the the concern on Basford Road had grown sufficiently to warrant a separation. The two churches underwent a formal de-amalgamation. Basford Road Baptist Church is, with support from a Home Mission grant, looking for a minister to help them develop their mission and ministry further.

These three churches illustrate the different approaches to re-planting Baptist churches. The subject of evangelism is often taken as a given for the two starting points above (apart from the case of Twyford). The purpose of evangelism was seen as the essential starting point for some churches.

Evangelism

A different starting point for the establishment of a new Baptist church is evangelism. The examples that I have described so far have approached the establishment of a church by starting the main worship meeting as their primary meeting and point of contact with those outside the church. The churches I am about to describe do not start with the establishment of a Sunday service but have evangelism as their starting point.

One participant in the study mentioned the need to engage in evangelism before establishing a church:

... we explored the idea of becoming a church plant and so I said meet midweek er, there was a natural leader and so that leader became the midweek leader, and the deal was if you can double, if you can get 50% growth in your first year or so without meeting on a Sunday then we'll consider meeting on a Sunday. I think that was lots of wisdom er, people planted too quickly on a Sunday and therefore all the resources go into Sunday ... So that particular group, there were 23 of them mostly young marrieds and they got 10 decisions of people during that first year they did a bit of door to door work they had relationships with people (Participant 2:20-21).

Christine supports their view that evangelism is important. His view is that the primary motivation for church planting should be evangelistic (Christine & Robinson 1992:236). However it is clear from the examples I have cited above evangelistic zeal is not always the prime motivation. Christine goes on to advocate that the leaders in the church planting situation allocate a high priority for the evangelistic task among the church planting team (Christine & Robinson 1992:237). Challenging the model of Pastor/Teacher led churches Murray commends a re-evaluation of the assumptions that the first appointment in the church plant should follow the norm for established churches.

Church planting provides the opportunity to challenge this monochrome and maintenance orientated view of leadership (Murray 1998:239)

He goes on to suggest that it is wise for the leader of a church planting team to have gifts in evangelism and cautions against the stereotyping of evangelist and pastor, allowing people with mixed sets of gifts to come to the fore (Murray 1998:240).

Nodding discusses conducting evangelism prior to the establishment of the Sunday service. He suggests a three phase plan using a door to door method of offering a pre-visit letter, visiting and following up with an invitation to the first service (Nodding 1994:49), he illustrates the program using a case study of planting in the village of Onslow near Guildford (Nodding 1994:93). His approach assumes that any church plant will be aimed at a geographic area.

There are examples of church plants within the Baptist Union of Great Britain that have made evangelism their priority. I shall describe two. Firstly I shall talk about Deeping, in Peterborough and secondly Lady Bay in West Bridgeford, Nottingham.

Deeping, Peterborough

The church at Harris Street in Peterborough was influenced by Charismatic Renewal and was convinced of the need to plant new churches. Having already facilitated the planting of Bretton (see above) they began to consider the next opportunity for planting a church. One of the church leadership team lived in Deeping St. James. A village of about 7000 people, it lay about 7 miles North of Peterborough and west of Market Deeping.

The leaders of the Harris Street church had been away to discuss their church planting strategy and Stephen Ibbotson had briefly sketched out a model that linked the new churches with the Harris Street church supporting and encouraging them. One of the leaders had worked with Roger Forster on the Pastoral team at the Evangelical/Charismatic conference Spring Harvest. During their discussions they recognised that the interlinked model that they were proposing was similar to the

one practiced by Roger Forster's network of Ichthus churches. With support from the Ichthus leadership team they planned for evangelism and subsequent church planting in Deeping St. James. They employed the member of their leadership team who lived in the village to head up the planning, evangelism and establishment of the church. Stephen Ibbotson prepared some training material during his sabbatical, and upon his return used the material to train a small team. The evangelism was centred around a tent mission and the church was launched with a Sunday meeting. It is not clear when the church became a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain as the date is not listed in the Union's Directory.

Lady Bay, West Bridgeford

Lady Bay is an area of West Bridgeford in Nottingham. The Members of West Bridgeford Baptist Church were committed to Church Planting and a small number of people who lived in Lady Bay were enthusiastic about starting a new church in their locality. In discussion with the Minister (Rev. Peter Nodding) and the leadership team they began to explore the possibility of church planting. Meeting as a house group in the area they were encouraged to concentrate their efforts on evangelism whilst continuing to attend Sunday worship at West Bridgeford Baptist Church.

They were set a challenge of increasing the number of people in their house group by 50% in the first year. If they were able to accomplish that, then the church leadership team would sanction their desire to meet as a separate church on a Sunday. The group engaged in evangelism through relationship building and through door to door evangelism. They achieved nearly 50% growth from 23 people to 33 and as a result West Bridgeford Baptist Church encouraged them to become a church plant. The Baptist Union Directory records them as becoming a member in 1999.

West Bridgeford Baptist Church also planted a church in the nearby Abbey Park Estate which is about half a mile from Lady Bay. In 1999 the two churches decided that they would combine their ministry and amalgamated. They are now known as New Life Baptist Church.

Local Ecumenical Partnerships

There have been a number of churches that have formed out of partnerships with churches of other denominations. There are two broad types of Local Ecumenical Projects, there are those that have been formed out of a position of weakness and those that have been formed as a result of collaboration, typically on a new housing estate. The first type are usually churches that have undergone a period of decline and come together in order to create a viable church from the ashes of

the former churches. Some of these partnerships work very well. Croft reviews the available statistics in the Diocese of Wakefield and concludes while some of these mergers do work well, the overall pattern is one of continued decline (Croft 2002:54).

The second type of Local Ecumenical Partnership is of greater interest to this study. These churches are formed as a deliberate attempt to engage a new community. Among the participants of the study there was a distinct lack of enthusiasm towards this type of church plant. One participant in the study said of one of their church plants:

It nearly became an L.E.P. plant but at the last minute it felt it was not going to be an L.E.P. plant, which was a relief to me, but we won't go there. I'm not convinced L.E.Ps. are the way to plant, but I know that's a politically incorrect thing to say. (Participant 10:98).

Another, when talking about the possibility of planting a church commented:

that has got tangled up as it does with ecumenical discussion which are the death knell quite frankly to church planting, with all the vested interests pile in and ecclesiastical bureaucracy begins to strangle, er, things (Participant 3:40).

The other participant to mention a Local Ecumenical Partnership did so in their justification for planting a church in a district that had a partnership in existence, citing the bureaucracy that surrounded the church as a reason for not being involved with it (Participant 1:5). Both Lings and Tidball echo this view. Lings writing from an Anglican perspective contends that in most cases church planting ecumenically does not fit within the Anglican paradigm of church and mission (Lings 1991:170). Tidball considers ecumenical church planting to already contain O'Dea's five hallmarks of institutional religion. The institutional elements deny the young church the opportunity benefit from the freedom of being a young organisation (Tidball 1994:62-63).

However, despite ecumenical church planting's bad reputation not all the experiences of planting in a Local Ecumenical Partnership have been negative. I shall describe the Local Ecumenical Partnership in Emersons Green in Bristol which serves as a good example of this kind of church plant. The timing of the church plant makes it borderline between the period of reaction and the period of re-engagement. I have kept it with the reaction period because the discussions about the plant and the local ecumenical partnership started in 1997, after the area was identified for development in the 1985 strategic plan.

Emersons Green, Bristol

Located on the Northern outskirts of Bristol and in the far south west of Gloucestershire Emersons Green was built in the mid 1990s and comprises approximately 3000 homes and has a population of 9700. The construction of houses started in 1997. Negotiations had begun between Anglicans and Methodists. An agreement was reached where the Anglican Church would provide a house and the Methodist Church would provide a full time Deacon to work on the new estate, with a view to establishing a congregation. Separately to the Anglican/Methodist Partnership there was a small group of Baptists meeting on the estate as an evening small group.

In the year 2000 the Anglican/Methodist churches decided not to continue with this work and gave notice that they would be withdrawing the funding of the worker in August 2001. The people who were meeting with the Methodist deacon merged with the Baptist group. With the support of the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Home Mission Fund they appointed their first Minister, a former missionary from Brazil and Portugal. The West of England Baptist Association purchased a plot of land for the group (now called Emersons Green Community Church) with funds they had received from the sale of the Baptist Church in Avening. The Association also purchased a home for the minister where the newly formed church met and continue to use for church meetings (Kevin Donaghy, Personal Correspondence, 1 July 2010).

Starting with around 6 people the church grew to 15. The 2009 Baptist directory lists the church as having 32 members. This church took an unconventional route to ecumenical church planting. One that has benefited from the work of the Anglican and Methodist alliance, but has not been weighted down with the necessity of relating to three separate ecclesiastical bodies.

Relocations

Occasionally a church relocation would happen. These relocations bring about the formation of a new church in a new geographic area even though the church itself may have been established for a number of decades (or even centuries). They are brought about where the existing building or meeting place becomes non-viable. In these examples the relationships and community life of the church is well formed and while the relocation offers the opportunity for a new start the group are likely to maintain the worshipping style and life of the community.

The literature from the 1990s does not mention this kind of church relocation. Perhaps they consider the internal style and community of the church to be so thoroughly established that it is not worth mentioning. Murray in his later book does describe the process or relocation and redistribution of

Christians as a phenomenon in church planting. He outlines the problems of some of the urban areas that have a larger density of population, but often a smaller density of churches (Murray 2008:29). He points to the initiatives of Urban Expression,¹¹ Eden and NEO as examples of mission agencies that encourage this kind of redistribution (Murray 2008:30).

There are many examples of church relocations. The Baptist Church in Openshaw, Manchester who began a nomadic experience towards the end of 2009 because of compulsory purchase and redevelopment in the area (McBeath 2009:Paragraph 5). Another is Melton Mowbray, who moved from a nineteenth century building in the centre of the town to a larger building on the edge of the town in order to accommodate their growth. I am going to describe the church at Upton Vale in Chester whose enforced building closure stimulated them to relocate to an area that was under churchd.

Upton Vale, Chester

Grovenor Park Baptist church in the town of Chester was meeting in a building that was built in the 1860s. The area had changed character considerably over the years and the church had been through various times of growth and decline. In the 1980s the church building had been through a period of neglect and needed extensive renovation, modernisation and repair. Because of the popularity of the town the site that the church was on was valuable and after a period of prayerful discussion the church decided that it was appropriate sell the building and to relocate.

They identified an area called Upton Vale. The area was not over populated with churches and the church felt that this would make a new home. They relocated with meetings initially to the local school where they met for 7 years. During this time they identified a piece of land and built a building, in which they relocated their Sunday worship to. There were 30 members who relocated and the Baptist Union Directory currently lists the membership as 50 with about 160 people attending the main morning service.

Difference in Doctrine and practice

Two participants in the study mentioned that their experience of church planting was an opportunity for the church plant to exercise a moderately different form of church style, practice, or governance. While this may have not been the starting point for their particular church plants it became a feature of their practice. As I interviewed one participant it became clear a change in practice was on the

¹¹ Urban Expression is described on page 100

agenda:

Graham: So in one sense you decided to stay faithful to Baptist heritage and in another sense you rejected it.

Participant 12: Reject is a bit strong, I think probably my own feeling would be that we would be rather more going back to our roots as a Baptist movement rather than to the place where it had often degenerated to.

Graham: So describe for me how you understand going back to the roots of the Baptist movement.

Participant 12: Well, it seemed to me that when Baptist churches were planted they had elders and leadership was quite prominent. Whereas in a typical traditional Baptist church, as we would know it today, the Church Meeting would be dominant and leadership would be very much at the beck and call of the Church Meeting. Perhaps. I'm not explaining that very well. (Participant 12:122).

The practitioner makes it clear that while this was not the starting point for the church (Participant 12:117¹²), the experience of planting the church gave them the opportunity to return to what they saw as a New Testament pattern for the church. Differences in doctrine and practice have been the starting point for many different churches, denominations and streams. You can see these tensions surfacing in the life of the early church as expressed in the New Testament, and they continue throughout the history of the church. Robinson calls this kind of church plant an accidental plant. He suggests that although disagreement might not be the most appropriate place to start considering a church planting strategy, a degree of realism is required (Robinson 1992:106 cf Nodding 1994:107). The process of disagreement isn't usually well managed but Murray observes that mismanagement of conflict is not a prerequisite for this kind of church planting (Murray 2008:42).

Several churches within the Baptist Union of Great Britain have experienced this, often accidental, form of church planting. Colwyn Bay in the North of Wales might serve as a good example, having had several disagreements over practice that has resulted in more than one new church being established in the town. I shall describe the beginnings of Tanterton Christian Fellowship because it offers a description of a difference in practice that resulted in an intentional church plant.

Tanterton Christian Fellowship

Carey Baptist Church appointed a minister in 1982 who came from a background of Charismatic practice and in line with their theological conviction had every intention of continuing. His

12 The starting point for this Participant was lack of space, which I discuss on page 65.

exposition and interpretation of the New Testament caused some consternation with a section of the leadership. The unfortunate division this caused between the leaders, some of whom had misunderstood the intentions of the Minister during the selection process, led to an understanding that it would be best for both parties if the Minister withdrew from ministering at the church and found a new post.

This decision resulted in a significant proportion of the membership, having experienced something of Charismatic renewal, leaving the church in order to worship in a style and under a theological conviction with which they felt comfortable. The disenfranchised members approached the Minister to ask him to form a church with them. He initially refused because it wasn't on his agenda to cause a church split. The disenfranchised members approached him several times, eventually he conceded that this was the best outcome for an unfortunate and unwanted situation. Two conditions were imposed by them on this new post. Firstly the new church would be located in a place that was under church and secondly that the church would affiliate with the wider Church, most likely through the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

Being just south of Preston, Tanterton has the characteristics of a suburban area. It was considered by the team as an appropriate place to start meeting because of the lack of a church in the area. Tanterton Christian Fellowship started meeting in the local community centre in 1983 with about 50 people forming the initial team. Eventually the church purchased some land and constructed a building which they have called Tanterton Christian Centre.

While division may have caused some church plants, a period of growth has been an influence on others.

Lack of Space

One participant in the study identified that lack of space was the starting point for consideration of a church plant. The church they were involved with had grown to the point that they need to consider building an extension to the existing church building. Although the starting point was lack of space, the participant expressed the desire to plant a church as a sense of calling:

we were needing to expand and we decided we would give a two year period to look for alternative places and relocate and if at the end of that if we didn't find it we would have an extension the two years came and went and we couldn't find alternative premises and yet at the end of the two years we didn't feel released to spend upwards of quarter of a million pounds on an extension ... I felt that God spoke very clearly to me and he was saying to me that actually the solution was to plant a church. (Participant

12:117)

Lack of space as a church planting method is cited as one reason for choosing church planting as a solution to the problem (Nodding 1994:5). It is referred to as “hiving off” by Robinson when discussing the means by which autonomous daughter churches are planted (Christine & Robinson 1992:102). This approach to starting new churches usually means that there are enough members initially in the church plant to have the characteristics of an established church in the mother/daughter style of church planting. An example of this starting point is Reigate Baptist Church which was formed as a response to growth in the sponsoring church.

Reigate Baptist Church

Reigate Baptist Church was planted when Redhill Baptist church outgrew their building. The church underwent a two year consultation period with the members considering what they should do about the lack of space. The only conclusion that they had reached was that they didn't feel spending a large sum of money on a building project was appropriate. Jon Bridger as associate minister, was particularly exercised by the need to plant and put the idea first to the leadership team and then to the church meeting:

We shared our vision with the church and miraculously, with only one exception everyone agreed to our proposal. (Bridger 1995:16)

The communities of Reigate and Redhill are close, and come under the same town council. Both areas have a distinct identity making a church plant seem appropriate. The church was planted as a going concern with about 50 people forming the new church.

Markers or way points in the development of church planting practice

The focus on and practice of Church Planting within The Baptist Union of Great Britain did not spring out of nowhere. There were a number of events leading up to the enthusiasm for church planting practice. Using the observations of those who participated in the study I shall outline some of the major events and circumstances that fuelled the church planting enthusiasm.

1977 Baptist Assembly

When they were asked what got them involved in Church Planting one of the participants made reference to the Baptist Assembly in 1977:

I had been at the assembly, I think it was, was, I think it was Nottingham, where, where,

er. Douglas McBain stood up and challenged the report, the annual report about decline. (Participant 1:7).

The minutes of the assembly show that there was a resolution passed asking:

That the B.U. Council be requested to set up an inter-departmental commission to examine the causes for the numerical and spiritual decline in our denomination. (Minutes of the Assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain 1977).

Since completing the study, I have been in conversations with Baptist Ministers (most of whom are approaching retirement) who mentioned this incident in Nottingham. This particular moment in the history of the Baptist Union of Great Britain marks an interesting starting point for the discussion of church planting in the Union. The event did not directly propose a church planting movement or strategy, but it raised the awareness of a decline, which would form part of the motivation for church planters. In discussion with Paul Beasley-Murray it became clear that Douglas McBain asked a question about the report on church decline. The chair tried to avoid the question. Paul Beasley-Murray addressed the chair in order to make sure the issue of spiritual and numerical decline was not simply ignored within the Union. Two significant events happened as a result of the events. The first was the report Signs of Hope. The second was the formation of Mainstream which was originally a group committed to promoting life and growth within the Baptist Union.

Signs of Hope Report

The committee formed with the aim of producing a report into the life of the Baptist Union and to analyse the reasons for the ongoing decline. Their report was called “Signs of hope”. The report has three main parts.

- A review of statistical decline. Analysing the membership statistics from 1950-1975. They observed that the decline in membership had been sharp during the 25 years but end with the optimistic conclusion that:

signs of numerical stability may be expected in about 5 years and steadily accelerating growth thereafter. (Brigs et. al. 1979:23)
- A review of elements that comprise Baptist Church life. Discipleship, Preaching, Evangelism and The Church Meeting are all highlighted. This is followed by a summary of some of the changes in society over the period: population migration from urban centres, the difficulty Baptists have relating to working class areas, the increase in leisure time and activities, the discovery of charismatic practice, the rise of increasing ecumenical co-operation and the theological problems that it raises.

- A review of the Church Growth Movement. They summarise the strengths and weaknesses of the approach. The conclusion they reach is that the Church Growth Movement might be instrumental in:

waking us up to the possibilities of our time and in matching us to this hour.
(Brigs et al 1979:42).

The report is concluded by a series of recommendations to both churches and the denominational structures. They draw from some of the principles they summarised from the Church Growth Movement and suggest that the denominational structures become more engaged in resourcing churches in their local mission.

Spurgeon's College, Oasis Trust Church Planting and Evangelism Course

Spurgeon's College responded to the increased interest in church planting by providing specific church planting and evangelism training in partnership with the Oasis Trust. One of the participants in the study commented that:

that was the time when Steve Chalke was, and Oasis was getting off the ground really and he was particularly exercised by the fact that currently none of the Baptist colleges had no specific preparation offered to Ministers who might be ministering in the area of Church Planting, rather than the pastoral teaching and ministry so he had entered into negotiations with the college to see whether some sort of joint post could be er, introduced (Participant 6:64)

Spurgeon's became a focus for the excitement about church planting that existed among the churches. They held specific church planting conferences and introduced a sabbatical study scheme so that those ministers who were wanting to explore the possibility of church planting had a framework within which they could do so (Planting Papers, Issue 1, Page 9).

During the lifetime of the Oasis/Spurgeon's Church Planting and Evangelism Course it had two course leaders, firstly Stuart Christine and secondly Stuart Murray. Both made a significant contribution to the church planting literature available to practitioners. Stuart Murray's book will be considered later.¹³ Stuart Christine co-authored his book with Martin Robinson. Essentially a church planting handbook, over 14 chapters the authors cover four broad subjects.

- Laying the foundation: an examination of how church planting fits into thinking about the Kingdom of God, a rationale for church planting, reflections on church growth thinking and a summary of some models of church planting in use.

- Preparing the way: the relationship between the sponsoring agency and the plant, issues surrounding identifying a location for the church plant, consideration of issues in cross cultural church planting, who might make up a church planting team and some guidelines for the team.
- Launching out: an intensely practical section covering finding a building, the first meeting, and how to maintain enthusiasm beyond the first week.
- Shaping the vision: biblical reflections on church planting.

The book is very much a product of its time. There is no missiological reflection on the nature of church planting and theology of church planting is almost absent. Robinson reflects on the book:

My major criticism of the book is that it is too mechanistic in style. It seems to suggest that there is a fixed method or process that one can employ which leads to a successful church plant (Robinson 2006:8).

Despite this criticism the book gives a helpful insight into the approach that individuals took to church planting during the 1980s and early 1990s. It is particularly helpful to note that in a chapter written by Robinson, the book attempts to set church planting into the context of the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

Reviewing the Gospels (particularly the synoptics) and Acts he suggests that the mission of Jesus and the disciples after the passion, was to convert people to the message of Jesus. He goes on to observe that as the fledgling Christian faith loses some of its Jewishness and becomes a faith for Gentiles that church planting is an intrinsic part of the “redemptive action of God” (Christine & Robinson 1992:22). The section is peppered with references to church planting, although no observation is made that the term church planting is not used by the authors of the New Testament. In this chapter Robinson associates the concept of the Kingdom of God with the church (Christine & Robinson 1992:26). He concedes that the church is brought about by the proclamation of the Kingdom (Christine & Robinson 1992:27). The discussion leads on to an evaluation of cross cultural missionary practices. He advocates the need for culturally sensitive churches stating that:

All too often what is planted is actually a replication of older failed structures Newbigin and others are calling for the creation of a new kind of church, aware of its missionary call and increasingly equipped to respond to the challenge of a new kind of mission (Christine & Robinson 1992:30-31).

He goes on to suggest that although this kind of missionary engagement is needed, it is beyond the reach of most congregations, who are entrenched in a pastoral system rather than a missionary

system. The chapter is an interesting mix of rhetoric and clearly thought through observation of the British church context.

1990 Gorsley Church Planting Consultation

In 1990 there was a consultation organised by the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Mission Department. The consultation was attended by 41 who comprised church planting practitioners, regional and national leaders. The consultation was organised around a series of presentations followed by discussion. The presentations that were given included the following.

- Lessons from an Association: Geoffrey Reynolds.
- Post-War Church Planting in the West Midlands: Andy Bruce.
- Insights from a National survey: Adrian Argile.
- Vision for the 1990s: Stuart Christine.
- Ideas from Brazil: Eric Westwood.
- 10 Commandments and 3 Questions.
- The Ecumenical Dimension I: John Nicholson.
- The Ecumenical Dimension II: Jonathan Edwards.
- The Way Ahead: David Coffey (Christine, Church Planting Notes 1991:1).

The participants discussed questions that were raised out of the contributions. Taking an overview of the notes from the five periods of discussion during the consultation (Christine 1991:8-9, 20-21, 28-29, 33-34) it is possible to see three themes running through the conversations:

The need for cross cultural mission in Great Britain

This issue of cross cultural mission appeared across all four of the discussion periods. The approach to the subject of cross cultural mission had several dimensions.

- In the first discussion which took place after the first three presentations the issue of cross cultural mission was raised. The focus of this discussion was on the problem of planting churches on estates that had a high degree of council or privately rented property. The discussion focused on leadership and a different culture where there wasn't a particularly high level of education.

- In the second period of discussion the issue was raised by way of reference to the difficulty of importing models from other cultures. One participant in the conversation observed that the Christian ethos in Great Britain had changed considerably.
- In the third place for discussion the focus shifted towards the East End of London and the number of plants that were Asian or Caribbean. Observations were made about their enthusiasm and vision.

Ad hoc approach to church planting strategy

It was recognised in the discussions that because of the nature of the Baptist Union there were difficulties with a strategy that is harmonised throughout the churches that comprise the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The following observations were made.

- Any strategy needed to include the diverse parts of the United Kingdom (Urban, Suburban, Rural) (Christine 1991:7).
- Part of the strategy could involve the development of tools for associations and churches to use (Christine 1991:8).
- Development of diverse approaches to funding is needed. (Christine 1991:20).

The members of the consultation agreed with David Coffey that there was a need for a network of church planters that would be able to help church planting practitioners relate to each other and share good practice.

Training

Throughout the discussion the lack of training was raised. It was recognised that despite the Oasis Church Planting and Evangelism Course delivered at Spurgeon's. There was a need to train church plant leaders who were not ministers and church planting teams. Although the issue was raised several times throughout the consultation the problems and solutions were simply re-iterated.

Baptist Church Planters Group (BACUP, latterly 1.3.6)

Baptist Church Planters (known as BACUP (Coffey 1991:8)) was formed in 1991 as a direct response to the Gorsley consultation. There was a considerable endorsement from David Coffey (the former Evangelism Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain), on the eve of his appointment as General Secretary:

it is the national features of BACUP which need to be highlighted as a unique departure in Baptist Mission strategy. The BACUP network will enable us to identify the gifts and ministries of church planters and evangelists ... it should be possible to develop a national training programme in which all colleges can participate ... BACUP can offer an opportunity for research and study and the facilities to share experiences from the different regions which will prove a valuable part of this networking. (Coffey 1991:8).

Minutes do not exist for the BACUP Executive committee until March 1992. Although there is not a full set of Minutes available there is enough in the records to be able to describe the activities and discussion of the group until it was closed in March 1994. It is clear from the first issue of Planting Papers (1991:1) that there was an executive committee in place. However, the first item on the first minutes available to us include a statement clarifying the purpose of BACUP:

“aiming to promote all aspects of church planting in the B.U. and beyond.” It sought to achieve the above objective by being a consultative group, offering training, and being a think tank. It sought to act as a stimulus to associations to consider mission strategy and church planting. (Baptist Church Planters Minutes 22 March 1992:1).

This aim was worked out in several ways:

- church Planting conferences were held in conjunction with Spurgeon's College;
- the production of a regular church planting journal, Planting Papers;
- delivering training days in partnership with the Secretary for Evangelism in the Associations.

The group changed its name from BACUP to 1.3.6 (a play on 1 Corinthians 3:6) after a request from the British Association of Cancer United Patients who used the same acronym. (1992, March 25 Minute number 7.00).

The executive committee comprised the Baptist Union Secretary for Mission (Dr. Derek Tidball), a number of active practitioners and some students from the Oasis/Spurgeon's Church Planting and Evangelism Course. The discussion in the committee focused mainly on ideas to promote and resource church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain with regular discussions about:

- the purpose and future of the group (25 March 1992:1, 8 January 1993:7, 23 September 1993:1, 1 March 1994:3);
- interdenominational conferences (25 March 1992:3, 1 April 1993:3);
- conferences for Baptist church planters (25 March 1992:5, 25 June 1992:4, 8 January 1993:2, 1 April 1993:2, 23 September 1993:2, 1 March 1994:5);

- the “Planting Papers” news letter (25 March 1992:4, 25 June 1992:3, 3 September 1992:4, 8 January 1993:2, 1 April 1993:1, 1 March 1994:1);
- relationships with the ginger group “Mainstream” (25 June 1992:6, 3 September 1992:7, 1 April 1993:7);
- working with churches and associations in consultancy and training (25 March 1992:4.00, 3 September 1992:6, 8 January 1993:4, 6, 1 April 1993:7);
- the Baptist Union of Great Britain's national mission strategy (1 April 1993:4, 1 March 1994:3).

The discussions about the group's future show that there was a desire to draw more people into the group (8 January 1993:7), which looking at the members present in subsequent groups did not materialise. After the launch of the National Mission Strategy there was a move towards closing the group and reforming it as a sub committee of the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Mission Department called the Church Planting Strategy Task Group (23 September 1993:1, 1 March 1994:3). The group were commended by Derek Tidball for exercising a “formative influence on the denomination's thinking” (Tidball in Cartwright 1994:1). The inclusion of a church planting element in the Baptist Union of Great Britain's national mission strategy and the formation of the Church Planting Strategy Task Group were used as examples of ways in which the denomination had taken strides forward in the area of church planting (Cartwright 1994:1-2).

Planting Papers (1991-1993)

Planting Papers was the newsletter and journal of the Baptist Church Planters Group. It was published from 1991-1994 covered 9 issues. It was closely connected to Spurgeon's College and was edited by two students on the Oasis Church Planting and Evangelism Course. The contents reflect the themes that I have noted that were discussed by the Baptist Church Planters Executive committee. It gives the reader an insight into the enthusiasm for church planting at the time. Among the 47 different articles contained within the editions six general themes can be seen in the contents:

- stories from practitioners;
- reflections on church planting practice raising questions;
- discussion about the D.A.W.N. and Challenge 2000 strategy;
- reports on conferences;

- book reviews;
- editorial comments and adverts for conferences, study and training days.

Many of the articles within Planting Papers are referred to and referenced to support my account of church planting in the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

D.A.W.N. and Challenge 2000

Another significant marker in the development and practice of church planting in the Baptist Union of Great Britain was the 1992 conference in Birmingham arranged by Challenge 2000. This organisation and in particular the first conference in 1992 was referred to by participants in the study. They had either been part of it and it represented a significant point for them in their church planting journey, or because they had heard about it through discussions with more experienced practitioners. The formation of Challenge 2000 was preceded by a consultation. One of the participants in the study remembered:

there was a small consultation in 1991 I say small, probably about 35-40 people who were called together to look at the whole subject of church planting and I can't remember all the details but it was a mixture of people from different denominations and different mission agencies, and I think it was at that point that Roger Forster and Gerald Cotes and Lynn Green, who became the prime movers in Challenge 2000. They discovered the DAWN strategy, relatively recently I think and presented this as the way in which church planting strategy might be developed in the UK. (Participant 11:110).

In order to introduce the reflections of those who participated in the study to the events, I shall describe how the consultation and subsequent conferences came about. Having done that I shall give an account of the participants reflections and conclude the discussion with the reflections on the conference offered by Robinson (2006:21-27).

Martin Robinson gives an account of the events that led up to the creation of Challenge 2000. His chronology of the events is:

- Enthusiasm for church planting existed in different streams of churches and included: The Church of England through Anglican Church Planting Initiatives and Holy Trinity in Brompton; The Pioneer Network; New Frontiers; Harvestime; Ichthus; Churches of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (Robinson 2006:21).
- Three mission agencies or organisations were particularly involved or exercised by the phenomenon of Church Planting. They included: Youth With A Mission, through the

ministry of Lynn Green; The Bible Society through the ministry of Roy Pointer; The Evangelical Alliance and the March for Jesus organisation; The Oasis Trust, through the Ministry of a Baptist Union of Great Britain Minister, Steve Chalke (Robinson 2006:21-22).

- Through the intersecting relationships that were developing between people and organisations a consultation on church planting was called in February 1991 which was sponsored by The Evangelical Alliance, The Bible Society and March for Jesus. It was attended by about 70 different people. During the conference two of the prominent leaders who were both church planting practitioners introduced to the conference the Disciple a Whole Nation strategy that was running successfully in the Philippines (Robinson 2006:23-24).
- Robinson reflects that while some felt that the consultation had been hijacked by those convinced by the Disciple a Whole Nation agenda, there was little or no concern about it. He suggests that there was a high level of enthusiasm (Robinson 2006:24). As a result a charity was formed under the name of Challenge 2000. The charity called a church planting congress which was held in Birmingham in 1992 (Robinson 2006:24).

The congress was attended by about 600 delegates representing most of the denominations and church streams that existed within Great Britain (Robinson 2006:24). This is the conference to which several of the participants in the study referred. The conference concluded with the delegates committing themselves to the establishment of 20000 new churches (Robinson 2006:25). The delegates were divided up into their denominational groups to discuss the number of new churches that could be established by their group.

about 100 of us met to talk about the issue ... I found it demanding all my skills to be positive and encouraging but also to ask some realistic but hard questions without discouraging people, but I came into what I know was a fairly heady stream of er, triumphalism would be too strong a word, but tending towards that because they had bought into this philosophy that said, you know that it is the greatest method of church growth and er, so if we did it we would be growing, (Participant 3:36).

While there is some difference between the participants of the study in how many people attended the group (Participant 11:109 remembers it as 40-50), there is agreement that the contingent who represented churches from the Baptist Union of Great Britain, conceived that it would be possible to establish 2000 churches by the year 2000 (Chalke 1994:109).

I remember various numbers being thrown around as to how many churches might be

viable to be planted in the decade and my memory, it may not be accurate, my memory is that a thousand was the first figure suggested, and some people thought that was too small and it suddenly doubled to 2000. Er. And I remember thinking at the time, this is a very strange way of setting goals, er and I do remember nudging somebody who was next to me and saying "That's a very big number, how many Baptist Churches are their already?", and although he didn't know, he thought it was something like 1700. Er. At which point I thought "This wasn't just a funny way of setting goals, this is absolutely ridiculous, there's absolutely no way, short of the most remarkable revival, that anything remotely like this goal was going to be achieved". (Participant 11:109)

Another participant reflected that it was:

so easy to get slogans, as various people did, about planting 2000 churches by the year 2000 and it tripped off the tongue. (Participant 3:33)

Robinson observes two different problems with the goals and the way they were set. Firstly the way in which the goals were encouraged from the platform. There had already been a calculation that suggested that there was a need for 20000 new churches in order that the number of churches needed to provide one church for every 1000 members of the population. He suggests that the delegates may well have had the figure in their minds when setting their denominational goal. Secondly he observes that the conference delegates were church planting enthusiasts and had no real authority to set goals on behalf of the denomination (Robinson 2006:25).

There was a second conference organised by Challenge 2000. It was held in Nottingham in 1995 and about 1000 leaders and church planters attended. The conference delegates were broken down into regional groups so that the number of churches needed in that region could be discussed.

I think this was the point that many people looking at progress so far and looking at the issues that were cropping up recognised that this simply wasn't going to happen, I think there was a degree of disillusionment at that point. (Participant 11:111).

After reflecting on the disquiet felt by them and their companions the participant concluded:

Of course some people might have different views but it felt as if that was the point at which it became clear that things were not working and were not going to work in the way that they wanted. (Participant 11:112).

Robinson reflects further on the nature of the strategy that was being proposed and offers for further observations about why the venture may have failed.

- No thought had been given to the differing contexts between the Philippines and the United Kingdom.

- The process of goal setting for the Disciple a Whole Nation strategy in the Philippines started in 1974 giving 26 years to implement it. The process was started in the United Kingdom in 1992.
- The strategy in the Philippines involved forming small bible study groups. This was not included in the strategy presented to the United Kingdom. (Robinson 2006:25-26).

The Challenge 2000 organisation did not organise any other conferences about church planting and soon after the 1995 conference the charity was dissolved.

Lings and Murray have reflected on the impact of the challenge 2000 movement and with the benefit of hindsight make the following observations.

- The energy was devoted to vision and practice. Little time was spent reflecting on the nature of church decline and to creative thinking about the kinds of churches that were to be planted (Lings & Murray 2003:16)
- Many church plants were pastorally focussed, leaving little thought or energy for thinking about how the new church might engage with its community (Lings & Murray 2003:16).
- In several denominations missiological reflection began in the mid 1990s. This reflection, as helpful as it may have been, resulted in an immediate loss of momentum (Lings & Murray 2003:17). This reflection resulted in the language of 'new ways of being church'. This language had already found its way into liturgical form throughout the Baptist Union of Great Britain, through the covenant 21 material (Baptist Union of Great Britain 1999:8, Covenant 21).

Within the Baptist Union of Great Britain there was a further conference on church planting that took place in 1992. The balanced nature of the presentations and the thoughtful missiological reflection may have contributed to a sustained interest in church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain after the discouragement of Challenge 2000.

Baptist World Alliance Church Planting Congress.

In 1992 the Baptist World Alliance, the body that unites Baptist groups throughout the world, met in Derbyshire to consider the world wide perspective on church planting. The congress received input from practitioners and leaders from representative Baptist groups. Some of these submissions were later compiled and edited into the book "Five to Midnight: Church planting for A.D. 2000 and

beyond” (Cupit 1994).

The conference covered several different themes which included: A theology of church planting, A theology of the people of God, Global reflections on church planting practice, Reflections on past and future practice. It concluded with a declaration commending church planting to Baptists worldwide.

Of the chapters in the book there are four that relate directly to British Baptist practice. One of which is a historic reflection on the church planting endeavours of Charles Haddon Spurgeon and three of relevance to church planting during the reaction period:

- Sociological Perspectives on church planting, by Derek Tidball (Who was the Secretary for evangelism for the Baptist Union of Great Britain).
- Reviving dying congregations, by David Neil (Who had exercised regional ministry in Northern England and was currently the Mission Field Worker in Scotland).
- Planting Churches for 2000 and beyond: Steve Chalke (Director of the Oasis Trust which was working with Spurgeon's College in delivering the Church Planting and Evangelism Course).

I shall present a brief summary of the author's perspectives in order to contrast the church planting scene in the Baptist Union of Great Britain with the rhetoric of the Challenge 2000.

Derek Tidball reviews the British Baptist scene and his intention is to examine “the commonly accepted wisdom among church planters “that church planting is the best method of evangelism” (Tidball 1994:57). He does this by examining four aspects of church planting. Reviewing the available research he suggests that church planting has been motivated by social factors:

- room within the population to accommodate them;
- willingness from an Evangelist to travel to where the population centres are and to tailor the approach and style to the needs of the population;
- an ability within the local community to have some form of ownership of the church, its cause and the clergy that lead it.

Having evaluated social factors concerning the reasons why churches are started he moves the discussion on to why churches are effective. Examining the rate of growth among new churches he suggests that the churches follow the patterns of most organisations, experiencing growth during the

initial stages of enthusiasm for the new cause before they face the dilemma of institutionalisation. He goes on to suggest that the reason why church plants that are linked to a single denomination appear to be more successful than those in started in an ecumenical setting is precisely because of the institutional element:

By its nature, official ecumenism has, in the very process of its planting, some of the dimensions of institutionalism built in, and as so such a church would not have the opportunity of going through the initial stages of youthful organisations. (Tidball 1994:63).

Having examined the reasons why churches are effective the motivation for church planting is examined, he observes three motivations for church planting: Maintenance, Competition and Cognitive Dissonance. Reviewing the case of one Baptist church plant (he does not say which) planting during the 1970s, he observes that throughout the Baptist Union of Great Britain there was a gain of 297 churches and a loss of 272. Observing that in some cases it is important to replace churches where there is ongoing closure, whatever the reasons for those closures might be. Considering the possibility that competition between rival Christian groups might be a motivation for establishing new churches he notes the evidence from the 1800s that Anglican expansion had much to do with the fear of dissenters and the extension of civil order. Recognising that the social situation is considerably different he comments on shades of competition still existing across theological divides (Tidball 1994:64).

His final point about the motivation for church planting is to suggest that the decline experienced by religious institutions compared with the increasing secularisation of society is a motivation for those who still believe to shore up the defences of their belief by denying the reality of the situation. He draws on the theory of cognitive dissonance referring to the continued activities of the Jehovah's Witnesses despite the reality of the failure of some of their beliefs as an example. He ends his reflection with a question:

Is church planting a vigorous missionary attempt to persuade more people to believe and to overcome the dissonance felt? (Tidball 1994:64).

The observations about the motivation for church planting lead towards reflections on the apparent unquestioning assumptions about the usefulness and effectiveness of church planting as a method of evangelism. He observes that the legacy of nineteenth century church planting is church buildings and structures that are inflexible and difficult to maintain. He asks if this legacy gives us the opportunity to reflect on the kind of churches that we are planting. Posing a question about the success of church planting endeavours he observes that there are some social situations in which

church planting will flourish and some situations in which it will not. The point that church planting is not evangelism is made by commending a “vigorous program of evangelism” to exist along side church planting endeavours.

Tidball concludes his paper with a note of caution to the church planting enthusiasts, asking them not to be deceived by the rhetoric that assumes church planting to be effective by itself.

Having spoken to church planting enthusiasts who were present at the congress, it is apparent that his paper was not universally well received. None of the participants of the study who were present at the congress made reference to it during the interviews, some however, did refer to it in the informal discussion that followed.

In “Reviving Dying Congregations” Neil offers some pastoral reflections borne out of his experience as a Baptist Minister and regional leader. He commends simple principles.

- Care of the existing members is important, recognising that they are going through a period of transition and change that will stimulate the growth in the congregation. Reminding the church of its roots and celebrating the history may provide a reflective platform from which to experience some growth.
- Research into the area and its needs should help the team to develop an appropriate evangelistic approach or strategy. Recognising that this approach will mean change for the congregation and that any growth will mean change he commends clearly demonstrating the need for change.

The reflections conclude by observing that one church leader who was instrumental in the revival of a dying church spent 50% of his time with the church leaders.

Steve Chalke concludes the articles by commending the practice of church planting, suggesting two reasons that it is a good idea for local churches to be involved:

- It is good news for those who have never heard the gospel because it takes the gospel nearer to the people (Chalke 1994:107).
- He points to the possibilities that church planting raises for creating opportunities for service, giving more people who are already part of a church opportunities to serve without leaving them with the feeling that the para church organisation is the best place for them (Chalke 1994:108).

Distancing himself from the use of church planting as a magic formula (Chalke 1994:109) he identifies four people groups that are not being effectively reached by British Baptists: Men, The Working Class, Youth Culture and Ethnic Minorities (Chalke 1994:109-110). He calls for a national strategy for church planting that engages the national leaders with local mission (Chalke 1994:111). The congress concluded by affirming a 10 point declaration that affirmed their vision for church planting and challenged the Churches of the Baptist World Alliance to establish more churches.

Baptist Union of Great Britain Church Planting Strategy Task Group

The Church Planting Strategy Task Group was convened by the Mission Department of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. It replaced the Baptist Church Planters Group (Cartwright 1993:1 “Editorial”) and had the purpose of developing the church planting strategy that was introduced to the Baptist Union Council. One of the participants in the study recalled:

there was ... some kind of church planting strategy group set up within the Baptist Union, ... and the role of that group seemed to be as a ginger Group to prod and provoke the Union to move forward with church planting ... (Participant 11:110).

There don't appear to be any minutes for this group within the Baptist Union Archives, but a set for the first meeting do exist in the Library at Spurgeon's College. The same individual recalls:

I think I attempted to persuade the Union that endorsing the goal from the conference might be a good idea, and there was no way that was going to happen, I don't think (Participant 11:110).

The minutes of the first meeting and a presentation made by the group to the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain do not make any reference to the goals set during the 1992 Challenge 2000 consultation. Derek Allan's “Planted to Grow” report (Allen 1994) formed the basis of the discussion. The minutes record 15 questions or points for further investigation (Minutes of the church Planting Strategy Group, 13 March 1994).

The group prepared for a presentation to the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Council in November 1995. Personal correspondence between members show that there were five subject areas that the group were concentrating on in the preparation for the presentation: Envisioning and Goal Setting, Training, Consultancy, Finance, Resources (Allen, Personal Communication, 15 December 1995).

When the presentation was made it included an international review of church planting, a summary of church attendance statistics as well as a review of Planted to Grow (Allan 1994). It concluded by describing the group's own role:

The National Mission strategy contains an admirable section devoted to Planting New Congregations (section 5:17-18) and our concern is to develop and implement this. (Papers from the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, November 1995, Section J, Page 62).

There are no further minutes available, despite an extensive search of the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Mission Department's archives. A publication by the group in 1998 (Planting Questions) indicated that they initiated both consultancy (1998:2 "Planting Questions") and training for church planters. Consultancy was enabled by a group of people who had experience in church planting being appointed by the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Mission Department (1998:13 "Planting Questions"). The publication of "Planting Questions" was to enable people considering planting churches to think and plan carefully towards their new venture. The publication was intended to be worked through in four separate sessions which addressed four questions: Why plant (Biblical rationale)? Why plant (local church planting)? Is it possible to plant? And What next? The authors intentions were to help the individual feel motivated, to identify training needs and to identify consultancy needs.

None of the participants in the study mentioned the resource "Planting Questions" and the copy held in the Baptist Union of Great Britain's archives has elements in it that are incomplete, so it is unclear if the resource made it through to final publication.

One participant in the study concluded that:

I think ... the group that staggered on for three or four years but it seemed to lose its way and was eventually dissolved. (Participant 11:110).

Given that the group was formed in 1994 and Planting Questions dated 1998 it would seem likely that their memory is correct. Church Planting in the Baptist Union of Great Britain began to undergo a reflection and re-imagination of the practice.

3.3 Re-imagination

It has been observed that enthusiasm for church planting began to wane in the mid 1990s (Lings & Murray 2003:6, Murray 2007:14, Brierley 2000:208, Robinson 2006:27). Robinson suggests that throughout the UK the enthusiasm for and practice of church planting dipped. He offers the following two explanations. Some denominations had experienced a high failure rate and were involved in the process of reflection and reconsideration while others had exploited most of the obvious or easy church planting opportunities (Robinson 2006:28). Kilpin and Murray list more

reasons than Robinson for the loss of enthusiasm in church planting. In addition to Robinson's they include newly planted churches not thriving with some failing, not having any impact on their community, leadership shortages, underestimating the time it takes to establish a new congregation, cloning with no regard to the context (Kilpin & Murray 2007:7).

Within the Baptist Union of Great Britain there had been several reflections that led to a re-imagination of Baptist church planting practice. The publication of "Church Planting: Laying Foundations" in 1998 by Stuart Murray, the graduation of several students from the Oasis/Spurgeon's Church Planting and Evangelism Course and the impetus from the experience of practitioners (Lings & Murray 2000:23) led to a change in the way in which church planting was perceived and practiced.

In a review of church planting in the West Midlands from 1989-1996 Bruce concludes that:

So far, the recent emphasis on church planting, at least as it has been experienced by Baptists in the West Midlands, has not cut much ice in addressing the missionary challenges facing Christianity in Britain. This does not mean that church planting should be abandoned as a strategy, but it does imply that deeper questions about the primary evangelistic task and the expressions of 'church' which are necessary if the Christian community is to witness effectively still require urgent attention (Bruce 1997:37 cf Robinson 2006:29).

The deeper questions about the nature of mission become evident in churches that are planted after 1996. I shall describe the starting points of churches that started after 1996. While these bear some similarities to the starting points that I have described for the churches planted between 1980-1996, there is evidence of missiological reflection influencing a change in practice.

Starting Points

Participants in the study revealed a number of different things that influenced the way in which their churches started. These starting points include: urban church planting; alternative approaches to worship gatherings; lack of space; and evangelism based church planting. I will show that these starting points all have similarities, but are expressed and worked out in different ways.

Urban church planting

The participants in the study articulated that their approach to the task of church planting was one that was born out of reflection on both their culture and the nature of the mission they wished to engage with.

One participant in the study commented:

We wanted a church that was authentic for the poor. For the more deprived communities the inner city kind of communities, and as much as our dream sort of formed, we recognised that largely church planting had been successful in middle class suburbs. But to just mirror or copy that in an inner city housing estate, we just didn't think that that was authentic ... (Participant 8:83).

Raising the profile of urban church planting has been on the agenda of Murray, hence the establishment of the mission agency, Urban Expression. He raises the issue in his first book on Church planting (Murray 1998:256) and then continues to address it (Kilpin & Murray 2007:4) giving it more attention in his most recent book. He states that there is an imbalance of Christians in the suburbs and inner cities (Murray 2008:29). His critique of this imbalance is quite severe, and he suggests that lack of attention to urban areas “questions the scope and depth of our discipleship” (Murray 2008:29).

An example of a church plant that started with a desire to be authentic in an urban and poor community is Cable Street Community Church.

Cable Street Community Church, Shadwell, London.

The church was started by a team of 8 people who moved into the area. It was the first church planting team that was commissioned by the church planting agency Urban Expression.¹⁴ The team was funded with the support of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The team involved themselves in the community, working locally where possible. Deliberately taking time to listen to the community and the needs of the individuals within it:

It was difficult sometimes trying to persuade interested parties that sitting in a café or joining a football team was a worthwhile part of ‘church planting’, but the team found it invaluable to their future church development (Kilpin 2007:Paragraph 4¹⁵).

The team deliberately focused their evangelism outside of a Sunday meeting. They met together on a Sunday afternoon but the focus of the meeting was on personal faith development and discipleship. This meeting involved the group sharing a meal, praying together and discussing passages or themes from the Bible. As the members of the team introduced people to the message of Christianity and they “became followers of Jesus” (Kilpin 2007:Paragraph 6), they were invited to join the the team in their Sunday meeting.

¹⁴ Urban Expression will be discussed in detail later as one of the markers in this period of church planting (Page 100).

¹⁵ Where I have cited a web page, and in the absence of page numbers I have cited a paragraph.

Alongside their intention to introduce members of the community to the Christian faith, the church involved themselves in active transformation of the local community. Kilpin offers two examples of this transformation. The first involved forming an action group to campaign for funds to transform a disused adventure playground. The group were successful in their endeavours and not only brought the playground back into use, but also employed play workers to engage the local children and ensure the playground was safe (Kilpin 1997:Paragraph 9). The second was to provide the community with the opportunity to take a trip out of London once a year. The church arranged a weekend in Butlins, taking between 50-100 people with them each year. Kilpin comments that this was the only time they held a church service during Sunday morning:

Butlins usually give us a place to meet for church (the one time each year when we meet at 11am – late enough for people to recover from the night before but early enough that they haven't started drinking again!) and this is always a very special time when many people who don't normally come to church experience something of God's love for them (Kilpin 2007:Paragraph 10).

The team reported that the experience of planting the church involved them in long term commitment to people who would move very slowly towards faith and a change in their lives. They likened their experience to that of a cross cultural missionary (Kilpin 2007:Paragraph 11). 10 years after the team commenced, the team leaders left (Kilpin 2007:Paragraph 12) and Cable Street Community Church amalgamated with two other church planting teams working nearby. Together they formed the E1 Community Church (Nafziger 2010:Paragraph 4 "Urban Expression, London").

The emphasis on moving into an urban area in order to meet and engage with people who are beyond the reach of any existing church is reflected in the next starting point I am going to describe. Some of the participants in the study had deliberately set out to plant a church that aimed to engage people who were culturally, rather than geographically beyond the reach of any existing church.

Church for people with no experience of church culture

Another theme that emerged in discussion with the participants in the study was the issue of the style or culture of the new church. Several participants had engaged people who had no experience of church. These encounters left them reflecting on the nature of church planting and on contextualisation (as I have examined above). When it came to applying these reflections to the practice of church planting one participant reflected:

I kind of just had a heart for "Wouldn't it be good to plant a church for the unchurched. To strip away some of those unhelpful sort of culture and tradition." I guess at the time I hadn't got a kind of worked out ecclesiology as to what that might look like ...

(Participant 7:74).

As the discussion with this participant continues it becomes clear that their practice develops and emerges as they engage with their context:

kind of default position we thought it was kind of singing songs and preaching and we sort of try and be informal about it and layout the seating in different ways and and nothing felt quite right ... I don't know how we made the decision not to preach, but we decided that actually conversation/discussion would be more appropriate ... we did the teaching on a conversation based thing and I think walking in on a small group singing is quite uncomfortable if you're not used to church and so we have found other ways of reflecting and connecting with God ... trying to listen to the times that people feel spiritual, if you like, or feel close to God or trying to, to sort of you know expand on those experiences ... (Participant 7:76-77).

The experience of other church planters are similar in regard to changing practice of the worship meeting. One participant's experiences stands in contrast, although they deliberately avoided singing within the church planting context, later they discovered that the members of their community were:

very vocal and will sing very loudly at the top of their voice and we had quite, what I would call, "raw worship", eventually (Participant 8:87).

There are examples of churches that have been planted out of a desire to create a church that deliberately attempted to create a different worship environment for their communities to experience. This has formed part of a much wider debate in the contemporary church. The missiological reflection on the purpose and effectiveness of church plants gave rise to a debate about the forms that church could take. I will discuss two significant movements later (Alternative Worship, and Emerging Church).

For some church plants within the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the desire to redefine the practice of church life and meetings in order to align them more closely with cultural practice and norms was a powerful motivating factor for the church plant. The discussion about the nature of Christendom and post-modernity has fed the motivation for a change in practice. With a tinge of rhetoric Taylor sets the scene by saying:

Can you hear the grind and groan as the tectonic plates of our culture shift? We live on the fault lines of a widespread cultural change. Institutions are in decline. Ancient Spiritualities have re-emerged. World music has collided with pop music. The centre looks out to the edge (Taylor 2005:11).

Others writing on the subject of mission and evangelism observe that there have been significant

shifts in culture since the end of the second world war (e.g. Drane 1997:10-12, Grenz 1996:2, Robinson 2006:10-12, Croft 2005:8-9). Hirsh and Frost frame their discussion about the future of mission by talking about the nature of Christendom as the “sacral culture that has dominated European society from around the eleventh century until the end of the twentieth” (Hirsh & Frost 2003:8). They move on rapidly to conclude that there is a need for a radical re-imagination (rather than a reworking) of mission and ecclesiology in the Christian church (Hirsh & Frost 2003:15). Arguing that a mission minded church is emerging in a culture that exists beyond the Christendom era they commend an approach where Christology informs Missiology which in terms informs Ecclesiology (Hirsh & Frost 2003:209).

The churches I shall describe reflect this desire to let their understanding of Jesus and his mission, influence their practice. Their approach to church planting has focused more closely on the form of meeting rather than to focus more intentionally on their approach to mission. Looking from the outside in, you might be tempted to call their practice an experiment, but this term is resisted by those involved (Berry 2006:Paragraph 1). For the practitioners, their life and mission is tied up with their experience of church, and they are not so much experimenting, but living out principles of mission and evangelism as they see them.

Jacob's Well, Bristol

The church plant “Jacob's Well” started as a project of Chipping Sodbury Baptist Church. Some of the members felt that they were not reaching people who wouldn't normally attend a church but were seeking spiritually. They decided that the best way to engage their target group would be to start a church that was focussed on different approaches to Christian Spirituality. The church web site describes them as a group who are “journeying together to discover a genuine spirituality for the twenty-first century.” (Jacobs Well 2010:Paragraph 1 “about”). The team that were involved in starting the church describe the process that they went through as a process of “Deconstruction”.

We had a very interesting experience of deconstructing church and reconstructing church, we were given a blank page as it were (Entrincham 2010:39-47¹⁶).

The team decided what elements of church practice were essential to keep, and which were unnecessary and could be discarded. The team acknowledged that an attempt to start a church that didn't practice Christian Worship in the same way as the sponsoring agency, gave rise to some challenges, particularly in relation to not meeting on a Sunday (Entrincham 2010:1.26).

16 Where I have quoted a from a video, the references refer to the time that the quote can be found.

The church was deliberately planned to be a church that exists in a network of relationships rather than in a geographic location. The church has a meeting during the week, but the members of the church involve themselves in the their surrounding community as much as possible, going to “join people in their activities, rather than inviting them to join our activities” (Entricham 2010:2.24-2.50).

In order to engage with people who are beyond their network of relationships and are part of their target group (Spiritual Seekers), the church have operated a stall at their local 'Mind, Body and Spirit' fair. During the Fair they offer an approach to spirituality that is rooted in the Christian tradition (Entricham 2010:1.45-1.50).

Quench, Northampton

Jacob's well is not the only example of a church that is targeted at people who would not consider church as a place to discover or explore their spirituality. Quench in Northampton was planted with the intention of being a meeting place between people who had different approaches to faith.

Adam Eakins was the visionary and church planter behind Quench. He describes the purpose of Quench:

A church for people who want to ask questions, express doubts and explore spirituality.
A place where people of faith, some faith and no faith can gather to journey in life together (Eakins 2007:Paragraph 3).

His article continues to talk about the nature of the church outlining the desire of the planting team not to base their plant on a geographic locality but to plant within a network of relationships, removing some of the barriers for people who would consider themselves spiritual but would not see the church as a spiritual place (Eakins 2007:Paragraph 4). During the process of forming their ideas about what a kind of church they were seeking to plant would look like they consulted a number of people who did not regularly attend any church. This group along with the church planting team formed the core of the church planting team. Those people who had previously not belonged to any Christian community acted as reference panel critiquing and commenting on the style, format and events (Eakins: 2007:Paragraph 5).

The meetings they held all involved some kind of meal and a theme for the people attending to discuss. The discussion was stimulated using a variety of different media: music, poetry, prayer, film, story telling and art. These different stimuli helped those who attended to engage with the material presented. Their comments about Quench declare an appreciation for the attempt made by

the team to engage in Christian themes in a different environment to a standard church service (Eakins 2007:Paragraph 10).

Quench has not continued to meet. Their meetings were concluded after a period of consultation with those whom attended it. There had been no new people attending for about a year, and although they tried some different approaches to attract people the group remained the same. As they considered closing, it became clear that most people had felt that the venture had run its course (Adam Eakins, Personal Correspondence 16, June 2010).

Quench and Jacobs Well have articulated their starting point for their work as a desire to provide a different experience for those people who are beyond the church. The next starting point for churches post 1996 that I shall consider is those that prioritised Evangelism.

Whether or not these churches have significantly re-imagined the form of church remains to be seen. There are hints that in this case the evangelistic priority was not kept high enough for the group to be able to continue and develop.

Mission as a priority

I have described the phenomenon of placing evangelism as priority in church plants during the period 1980-1996.¹⁷ This theme reappeared in churches that had been planted after 1996. However the forms of evangelism had developed and changed. One participant in the study commented about their intention for the starting point of the church plant:

that evangelism would be highly relational and a particular model for the church we were going to use the cell/celebration, ... (Participant 4:43).

Their intention was to start with a small group that would engage in evangelism in an under church area. The emphasis was on relationship and new converts would be first integrated into a group and once the small groups were established they would meet together regularly in a larger meeting. I asked the participant to expand on the concept “evangelism that was highly relational” and the emphasis of starting small groups through evangelistic activity:

... spotting an opportunity for something new to start but the emphasis is not on starting a new group in the sense of finding where God seems to be active (missio Dei) and joining in with that in some particular, for example there might be a particular group of people or break into a new network of people, it could be a new place and through that people in the church collaborating with the people from beyond the church with some influence from ourselves a new group would emerge sometimes, or sometimes not.

(Participant 4:45)

The participant's thinking about evangelism makes this starting point different to the one I described earlier (evangelism as a priority). The mention of *missio Dei* and description of how they saw that concept being worked out is evidence that the thinking had moved on from the concept of evangelism to mission.

Since 1950, theologians have begun to articulate mission as an activity that originates with God rather than with the church. "Mission is not a primary activity of the church, but an attribute of God." (Bosch 1996:390). The outworking of this understanding shifts the emphasis from the activity of the church towards the activity of God in the world:

The missio Dei is God's activity, which embraces the church and the world, and in which the church may be privileged to participate. (Bosch 1996:391)

The outworking of this concept has some benefits for a church planting situation.

- With the focus of *missio Dei* being towards the world rather than towards the church, it can stop the primary focus on mission being subverted by a focus on internal structures (Murray 1998:32).
- It can help the church plant have a broader focus on mission rather than just evangelism and mission, to include social justice, ecological concern and engagement with culture (Murray 1998:32).
- The emphasis on the world outside the church can help feed creativity in the church planting team and enable the church find new ways of being church (Murray 1998:33).

Murray goes on to reinforce his emphases that church planting needs to be creative and that church planting teams help a church plant to stay creative. He suggests that engaging with *missio Dei* would mean that the church planter had the opportunity to reflect on the diversity within natural world and as a result engage in creative practice. He develops the point further by placing teamwork within the sphere of *missio Dei*. He refers to the theology of Trinity, rather than *missio Dei*, to illustrate the practice of team work with a theological perspective (Murray 1998:34).

Church from Scratch in Essex is a church that has deliberately engaged with the concept of *missio Dei*, deliberately trying to place themselves as a church that move towards the community they are trying to reach rather than invite the community to come to them.

Church from Scratch Essex

Peter Dominey describes Church from Scratch as a “dirt under your fingernails kind of church” (Dominey 2010:Paragraph 1 “Church Southend”). His description of the church tries to articulate both its style and its approach to evangelism. Their web site includes a quiz “Are you Church From Scratch?”. The quiz contains multiple choice questions that allow the user to evaluate how many of the values of church from scratch they share. The questions reflect the desire of the church to be rooted in evangelistic activity and focus on how active the user is, and perceives God to be, in the wider community (www.churchfromscratch.org.uk last accessed 16 June 2010).

This ethos in the church was ignited during its inception in 2002. The church was established by an accredited Evangelist from within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. His desire was to set up a church to reach an under churched area of Westcliffe on Sea in Essex. Gaining funding from Home Mission and the support of three other local churches he was sent to start the church (Dominey 2007:1.26). This appointment is not typical in the Baptist Union of Great Britain where Ministers are usually called to the pastorate rather than sent to plant (Dominey 2010:Paragraph 3 “Church planting and the Baptist Union Home Mission Fund”). Within Church from Scratch, there is no Sunday service and there are more people attending the small groups than attend the meetings when the church attempt to bring everyone together (Dominey 2007:2.20).

Dominey's practice is to spend time mixing with people who are not part of the church, by forming a friendship with them, he will introduce them to members of the church and to the message of the gospel. The church also enable people on a low income to take a holiday by providing both the camping pitch and the equipment. Their camping holidays have three aims: To get to know each other, To get away from normal routine, To get closer to God (Dominey 2010:Paragraph 1 “Forge Wood”). The emphasis on relationship based evangelism is re-enforced by the way the church is organised. Dominey describes this as “organising around the the mission of Jesus and around community life” (Dominey 2010:Paragraph 1 “Church Southend”).

The process of evangelism is described by Dominey as:

The long, long journey walking alongside people who know nothing about Jesus
(Dominey 2007:3.50).

In the church's first four years it grew from three adults to sixty adults who are involved in the life of the church at least weekly (Dominey 2007:4:50). The 2010 Baptist Union Church Directory lists the number of people committed to the church through its re-branded membership scheme as 33 (Baptist Union of Great Britain Directory 2009).

Lack of Space

Although the majority of church plants that have been started since 1996 have involved a significant change in starting points, there have been some churches that have been started on similar lines to the churches in pre 1996 church plants. Stour Valley in Warwickshire is an example of a church that was planted because the sponsoring agency (Chipping Camden Baptist Church) ran out of space and planted in 1999 as a result (Pulham 2007:Paragraph 3). I have described the phenomenon earlier in this study.¹⁸ Its continued practice without further missiological reflection indicates that it is effective both at resolving the problem of lack of space, and as a means of establishing new churches.

Characteristics of post 1996 churches

Churches that have been started within the Baptist Union of Great Britain prior to 1996 have similar characteristics in terms of their style of meeting and approach to ecclesiology. The shared characteristics of churches that have been started post 1996 are distinctly different. A number of participants in the study mentioned the characteristics of their meetings.

Food

Of the four participants in the study who were involved in church planting after 1996 all but one mentioned the place of food in their meetings:

... we came together to eat and share that's where a lot of teaching discipleship and everything happened ... (Participant 8:87).

a wine bar which provided, ... a breakfast. We'd have the Sunday papers out, we'd have music, people would come in, have some breakfast ... (Participant 5:54).

we sat in the cafe and did church and actually it just felt really right and comfortable (Participant 7:76).

Of the churches that I have described to illustrate the starting points for the church plants all but one of them are noted by the centrality of food to their meetings:

- Phil Durrant, a ministerial student on placement with Church from Scratch in Essex observed that “most of CFS' events seem to revolve in some way around food.” (Durrant 2009:3.02-3.05).
- Eakins mentions food in the opening description of a typical meeting of Quench in

18 See Page 65

Northampton (Eakins 2007:Paragraph 3).

- Cable Street Community Church had a common theme of food running through their meetings. Kilpin describes the importance of food for making and building relationships (Kilpin 2007:Paragraph 6).

Immersive approach by the pioneer planters to relating to the community.

One of the principle differences between the approach of the post 1996 church planters and those that planted before them is their approach to their own integration with the communities into which they are going to plant. Several of the participants in the study spoke about the way in which they integrated themselves into the community. One participant spoke about the way that the people from the sponsoring agency related to the way in which their approach to mission changed:

I was behaving very differently to how I had only weeks before ..., I didn't go through a character change in the sense of all my energies in church life before were focused on maintaining structures and the Sunday service and it was very much attractational evangelism ... we moved away from attractational evangelism and that word pioneer I used earlier was much more of a "go" and not a "go and in drag" but a "go and stay". (Participant 4:50).

Another participant reflected that:

I mean one of the things that, that has really changed is my whole understanding of incarnational mission and ministry and the fact that actually, you know, the fact that we're not coming to bring Jesus into a situation actually Jesus is already working here and already working among peoples lives and what really struck me as we came into this area and started to build those relationships and started to build those relationships is that people would share with us their spiritual experiences ... (Participant 7:78).

This approach was reflected in some of the churches that I have described earlier:

- Cable Street Community Church, Shadwell. The team took time to sit in cafes and get to know people, one member joined a local football club (Kilpin 2007:Paragraph 3), others attended local resident's meetings. They all invested time in learning local languages and customs (Kilpin and Murray 2007:15). One member took a job in the local bar. This was the first step in their church planting endeavour, before any meetings were established. They have described this process as "listening to the community" (Kilpin 2007:Paragraph 3) and "going to people rather than expecting them to come to us" (Kilpin and Murray 2007:15).
- Church from Scratch, Essex. Taking a similar approach, the church planting team involved

themselves in immersing themselves in the communities around them. Dominey describes the experience of meeting people in homeless shelters and visiting tower blocks for the first time in his life. The initial approach of the church was to be deeply immersed in the communities that the church wanted to engage. The church has tried to maintain this approach as it has matured from a church plant into a planting church (Dominey 2010:Paragraph 1 “Church Planting”).

Re-imagination of worship and of Christian learning.

All of the participants who were involved in church planting after 1996 discussed a different approach to both worship and learning. Whereas pre 1996 churches generally assumed that singing was a culturally appropriate form of worship and monologue was a culturally appropriate way of engaging the church in the process of learning and education. Several participants mentioned a rejection of singing. During the study there were three different ways that the participants described the way the content of the worship meeting had changed, in relation to singing. Firstly an out and out rejection of singing, secondly a growing unease that singing was not relevant to the context, and thirdly an initial rejection of singing assuming that the context didn't demand it but later discovering that it did (I have quoted these participants earlier, Page 86).

The re-evaluation of preaching as the main model of education and learning was also a common theme among the participants in the study. One participant observed that:

it wouldn't so much be around bible study and prayer, we don't do much bible study, we never do verse or though a section of the bible or critique it line by line, it would be much more application and community life and living community life together one another type stuff, which would be fuelled by the bible among other things (Participant 4:45).

Another participant took a similar approach but saw using discussion as a vehicle to allow the people involved to set the agenda.

I think also continually allowing the congregation to shape where things went so we really keen on some kind of er. Its the way we set up a cafe style round tables we were very keen on kind of throwing in a few opening questions and just then allowing people to take it where they wanted it to go. I think that then allowed the, how can I put it, it was almost allowing the word of God to meet up with the culture of the day and have a bit of an interesting discussion, debate, sparing match (Participant 5:62).

In another observation on the mode of teaching, the reason for abandoning the preaching seemed to be about the context and how the people joining in the conversation might relate to a more

traditional sermon.

we don't preach because most people on the estate have not had a further education according to statistics and school was not a positive experience for many so to sit and listen to somebody at the front stand and talk was er not going to be positive and so you know that we did the teaching on a conversation based thing (Participant 6:77).

The re-evaluation of preaching as a suitable way to conduct Christian learning reflects a wider trend within the church, especially those that fit within the Emerging church. Bolger and Gibbs identify two different ways that the practice of preaching is changing.

- Preaching as a dialogue is changing the way the sermon is presented. They note two different ways this is done. Firstly the sermon is as a running commentary encouraging dialogue from the congregation as the sermon progresses. Secondly the sermon is moved from the service to an online discussion (such as a blog) where the congregation can tease out the issues (Bolger & Gibbs 2006:165).
- Some see preaching as an art form rather than a method of learning. The engaging message of the preacher is not the centre piece of the service but the creative and short monologue is appreciated because of its creativity rather than its context (Bolger & Gibbs 229).

There is a debate about the nature of preaching happening among ministers accredited within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. A report from a recent conference for Ministers in their first three or four years discusses a defence of the sermon as a monologue, used for inspiring the congregation rather than conveying information (Jones 2010:Paragraph 1 “Defending the sermon”). Marshall picks up the subject of dialogue in a reflection after some criticism of a preacher at a Baptist Union of Great Britain conference in May 2010 (Marshall 2010:Paragraph 1 “Please criticise my preaching”). While the nature and purpose of the sermon is being debated within the wider Church and the Baptist Union, the attention by church planters to the context, the learning environment, and the need to inspire converts, coupled with the freedom that church planters have to innovate, enable experimentation and development of this practice.

Markers or way points

The re-imagined practice of church planting has not developed in isolation, it has been influenced by changes that have been happening in the wider church. These changes began to surface on the edge of the church in Great Britain in the 1980s but didn't filter into the practice of people planting Baptist churches in Great Britain until after 1996. I have identified a number of markers that have

directly or indirectly influenced the practice I have described above.

Alternative Worship

Alternative Worship has been described as being distinctive in that it encourages and develops the use of the visual and the imagination in the context of worship (Gay 1995:Paragraph 4 in Taylor 2005:27). An alternative worship practitioner, Jonny Baker, who records his reflections in an online diary says that Alternative Worship is different to mainline Christian worship because it is about:

... imagining new worlds, new relationships, new strategies and tactics, and counter-publics (sic), about saying that other worlds are indeed possible ... (Baker 2009:Paragraph 3)

The practice of Alternative Worship arose out of the British 1980s club culture. Christians familiar with the club culture described the spiritual experiences they felt while at a club, and contrasted that with the experience of being at church (Bolger & Gibbs 2006:81). These experiences led to the creation of the first church based around club culture (the remnants of the church are now a Baptist/Anglican/Independent local ecumenical partnership known as St. Thomas, Philadelphia). The church was formed out of an outreach project of St. Thomas' Anglican church in Sheffield. The desire was to reach people beyond the church in the age range of 18-30 (Bolger & Gibbs 2006:81). The group rejected the soft rock used by the Charismatic church at the time and formed a service including the Eucharist, that used music that was indigenous to the club culture of the 1980s. The service, known as the Nine O'clock service, grew significantly, Bolger and Gibbs identify that the church was unique in its approach (Bolger & Gibbs 2006:83):

- the group aimed and succeeded to have more people from the clubbing community than church goers.
- potential participants were visited by one of the church leaders who assessed their appropriateness for the work.
- members of the church were expected to immerse themselves in the club culture, wearing clothes, reading literature and listening to music that was indigenous to the club culture.

This contextual approach to Christian mission was new to the Christian scene in Great Britain. The Nine O'clock service did not have a good ending. Lack of accountability within the mission team and the controlling nature of the key leader meant that he was unquestioned. This failing combined with some character flaws, led to allegations of sexual misconduct that were exposed in the national press. The group was disbanded (Bolger & Gibbs 2006:83-84). Despite this the methods and the

approach of the Nine O'clock service began to influence a generation of young people who were in established in church life, but in many ways felt that it was alien to their culture. The example of the Nine O'clock service led to a number of different alternative worship congregations, services and churches being established in different places throughout Great Britain (Bolger & Gibbs 2006:86-87). It influenced a Baptist Youth worker from Moortown Baptist Church in Leeds (Bolger & Gibbs 2006:84). He later established a youth congregation called Revive that became a church plant and a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The 2009 edition of the directory of the Baptist Union of Great Britain lists its date of establishment as 2002, although the congregation started much earlier.

The niche approach of the Alternative Worship congregations and churches paved the way for a bigger discussion about the nature of the church which has formed under the banner of Emerging Church.

Emerging Church

The term Emerging Church has been used to describe churches that have rejected mainline Christianity in order to rethink Christian practice for the 21st Century. Perriman offers a definition that covers six aspects:

- a reaction to the forms of Evangelicalism popularised in the West since the 1950s;
- an attempt to realign the Christian faith with the changes in culture commonly referred to as post-modernity;
- it expresses its self both inwardly and outwardly with some people attracted by a more congenial approach to worship and others to the possibilities for Mission;
- it is suspicious of the mechanisms of authority and control in religious life;
- it has less defined boundaries between who is included in the group and who is excluded;
- a willingness to relate to a wider set of Christian traditions in both its practice of mission and liturgy (Perriman 2003:Paragraphs 2-7).

Bolger and Gibbs identify the Alternative Worship scene that I have described above as the starting point for a redevelopment and re-imagination of ecclesiological practice (Bolger & Gibbs 2006:82). They are supported by diarists who have an affinity with the Emerging Church, notably Jones and Dawn who both mention that they have been starting and participating in the Emerging Church

since the 1980s (Jones 2010:Paragraph 3 “Fresh expressions and emerging church historical accuracy”, Dawn 2010:Paragraph 2). Writing about the context in Great Britain Murray observes that the language of 'emerging church' became popular in the early 2000s and reflected a warning against “deciding in advance what church will look like and encourage us to reflect on our context and culture” (Murray 2008:Paragraph 19).

Murray's view is supported by Jones who describes the emerging church as a generality that covers “all ministries involved in contextual ministry to the younger generation or the current culture” (Jones 2006:Paragraph 7). This move towards contextualised worship and mission was helped among people within the Baptist Union of Great Britain who were planting churches by the introduction of a theological approach to Church Planting by Stuart Murray.

Church Planting by Stuart Murray.

Murray was the second and last leader of the Church Planting and Evangelism Course at Spurgeon's college. During his time at the college, Murray produced his first volume on Church Planting and started the mission agency Urban Expression.¹⁹ This book is significant, not because it was mentioned by any of the participants in the study directly, but because of two factors:

- it was the first seriously theological volume that was written from within the British context;
- it was the first volume to give equal attention to different models of church planting (other than the widely practised mother/daughter).

The publication of this book came in 1998 and the re-imagination of church planting practice within the Baptist Union began about this time. Given Murray's involvement with the Church Planting and Evangelism Course and that the earliest church plant to exhibit signs of church planting practice that showed any sign or re-imagination (Cable Street, Shadwell²⁰) was started by one of Murray's former students the link between the re-imagination of church planting and Murray's theological and pastoral influence is evident.

In his book he is careful to address critics of church planting (Murray 1998:1-23) but lays out a theological framework for church planting that moves beyond offering proof texts, towards what he calls a “hermeneutically responsible and theologically coherent framework” (Murray 1998:24). This framework involves an examination of the theological concepts of Missio Dei, Incarnation and The

¹⁹ Urban Expression is described in more detail on Page 100

²⁰ Cable Street Community Church is described on Page 84

Kingdom of God. These three principles are summarised as follows.

- The term *Missio Dei* encompasses the concept of God moving in mission towards the world as opposed to the world accepting the invitation of God to move towards him (Bosch 1996:389-393).
- Murray points out that a renewed vision of incarnation includes the centrality of the person and work of Jesus to the work of mission as well as an acceptance that where there is response to the message of Christ there will need to be an expression or incarnation of the church. Murray warns against the divisiveness of church planting where there is already an expression of the body of Christ, in many way this may appear divisive rather than incarnational (Murray 1998:36)
- As I have identified above the language of the Kingdom of God has been identified and used within church planting literature. Murray observes that this language has not always been used in practice and argues that “Planting churches that are freed from ecclesiastical traditions and structures to explore the implications of the kingdom may assist the church” (Murray 1998:43).

These principles are to help those planting churches to broaden their missiological framework (Murray 1998:32) and ensure that the approaches of a church planting are not monochrome but present a variety of churches being planted. Having outlined his theologically responsible approach to church planting he goes on to outline a New Testament approach to church planting, reflecting that it is important to differentiate between a biblical rationale for church planting and biblical guidelines for church planting (Murray 1998:63). He undertakes to establish the former position suggesting that the New Testament can only provide church planters with a rich source of perspectives for reflection on church planting in Britain rather than an adequate rationale (Murray 1998:64). He follows his reflection with a thorough review of different models and approaches to church planting. Within these reflections he is careful to affirm church planting, but also to advocate a contextual models of church planting (For example Murray 1998:65, 136, 161, 185). He closes his book by commenting that it is not the number of churches that are planted that is important, “it is the kinds of churches planted and the foundations that are laid for a church planting movement” (Murray 1998:292).

His influence on church planting is manifest through the establishment of a contextual church planting agency (Urban Expression).

Urban Expression

Several factors combined to form the momentum behind the establishment of a new church planting agency with a focus on establishing new congregations in urban and under churching areas. Kilpin and Murray observed that:

- churches were rarely started in Urban Areas;
- there was a lack of contextualisation and experiment in church planting;
- ministerial students on the Oasis/Spurgeon's church planting course were not, on the whole, going on to practice in church planting settings (Kilpin & Murray 2007:4).

The frustration that was felt by Kilpin and Murray is openly expressed in their book "Church Planting in the inner city: The Urban Expression Story" (2007). The vision and values of the organisation were established before they sent their first team to begin. They enshrined the values of pioneering church plants in under-churched, inner city areas. Encouraging experimentation and not imposing any particular model or style of church on the teams. Not providing finance directly to the teams but co-ordinating teams through pastoral care and training (Nafziger 2010:Paragraph 2 "Mission Statement"). The agency was formed in 1997 with two newly accredited Ministers from the Baptist Union of Great Britain leading the first team with one of them responsible for recruiting new teams to the agency (Kilpin & Murray 2007:4). It was helped with support from Oasis and the Baptist Missionary Society (Murray 2010:Paragraph 1 "History"). Since the agency was established they have developed links with other Church Planting Missionaries involved with Urban Mission and formalised the links with them through a network of Associates.

Their information makes no mention of explicit denominational links. It is apparent that there are strong links with practitioners connected with the Baptist Union of Great Britain, not only because of the initial appointments in the first team. Four of the five participants of the study who had experience with church planting after 1996, and two of the four churches I have described in this chapter have links with Urban Expression in some way. The Baptist Union of Great Britain has provided grants for some of the members of the teams and more recently to provide co-ordinators for their church planting endeavours (Murray 2010:Paragraph 7 "History").

Fresh Expressions

In 1994 there had been a report commissioned by the Archbishop's Council into church planting within the Church of England. (Breaking New Ground, Archbishops Council 1994). In response to

continued church decline a further report was commissioned to follow up and report on church planting practise within the Church of England. The report “Mission Shaped Church” used the phrase “Fresh Expression” (Archbishop's Council 2004:xi, xii) to describe a new church that was not using the traditional format for its structure or its meeting.

The report acknowledges the changing missionary context within Great Britain (Archbishop's Council 2004:xii), and observes two process that are at work in society, that the churches they are observing are working with. Communities are increasingly being formed around networks rather the geography, and “people are less inclined to make lasting commitments” (Archbishop's Council 2004:7). The report goes on to observe that there are a number of theological themes influencing the Fresh Expressions under their scrutiny:

The Church derives its self-understanding from the *missio dei* (sic), the ongoing mission of God’s love to the world. The Trinity models diversity as well as unity. Creation reveals God’s affirmation of diversity. Mission to a diverse world legitimately requires a diverse Church. Catholicity should not be interpreted as monochrome oneness. Election and incarnation reveal God daring to be culturally specific within diverse contexts.

The impact of the report has been wide spread within the Church of England and within the wider Anglican community. The findings of the report have been affirmed by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the introduction (Archbishop's Council 2004:vii). However, four years before the report had been published he had listed a number of different approaches that were being pioneered by churches that were innovative in their approach to worship and community. He lent his support to their innovations by saying:

All of these are church in the sense that they are what happens when the invitation of Jesus is received and people recognise it in each other (Williams 2003:Paragraph 13).

This support enabled the message of the Mission Shaped Church report to begin to influence the wider Anglican community with articles about “mission shaped church” appearing in international Anglican Journals (eg. Buraising 2010). A series of books published by the Church of England publisher Church House Publishing have appeared with the words “Mission Shaped” in the title (Bayes 2009; Croft 2008; Gaze 2006; Hope 2006; Sudworth 2007; Withers 2006).

The Methodist and Anglican churches have jointly started a charity called “Fresh Expressions”. The charity's purpose is described thus:

To resource and enable the development of vibrant and sustainable Fresh Expressions of church alongside traditional churches in Parishes, Circuits and Deaneries across the country. (Charity overview: Fresh Expressions)

The charity's initial remit was for 8 years, and underwent a change of name from Lambeth Projects to Fresh Expressions in 2005. The charity has offered training for people thinking of starting a Fresh Expression and has promoted rethinking church, mission and evangelism. It has provided a focus for the re-imagining of mission.

Baptist Union of Great Britain Consultation on Church Planting 2004

In November 2004 forty people met up for a consultation on church planting. The discussions and sessions were distilled into a report. The report starts with a very brief summary of some of the influences on church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain and includes the observation that the question “What kind of churches should we be planting?” should be increasingly asked:

Surely the issue in church planting is not so much How many? as What sort? (Allen et al. 2005:Paragraph 5).

The report on the consultation brought together forty eight different points. They call them action points. These were gathered under five different headings: Support, Training, Strategy, Resources, Trends and Patterns. On close examination it appears that the points raised by the report fall into three different categories.

- Decision items that could be within the power of the consultation to implement. For example the first point in the section on support is for a self sustaining network of church planters to come about with support from the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Mission Department. This point in the consultation was initiated soon after the consultation²¹ (Allen et al 2004:1.1).
- Observations towards good working practice that are the responsibility of the practitioner to implement in their particular context. For example the section 4.3 “Recycling Inheritance from closed churches” describes the good practice of the South West Baptist Association in using the resources tied up in redundant buildings, particularly in relation to church planting. The report commends the good practice but the consultation is not in any position to be able to implement such good practice else where in Great Britain (Allen et al 2004:4.3).
- Aspirations towards action that it is not within the power of the participants in the consultation to expedite. For example the report briefly discusses the lack of provision for church planters or mission pioneers within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The report

²¹ The Incarnate Network is discussed on Page 103

states that “we would want to say that, given that ministry in this country is now ministry within a missionary context (and will become increasingly so), every college course needs to be able to demonstrate that, at its heart, it is intentionally mission-based.” (Allen et al 2004:2.2). Such a demonstration would need to be agreed within the structures of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the colleges that provide the theological education for its future ministers.

As I have already noted, the consultation considered networking, training and financing to be an issue that needed some attention. They were particularly exercised by the need for strategy to be implemented in a much wider way than was currently being done. They acknowledged the good work being done at a local level by the churches but commended the need for regional and national strategies concerning future planting (Allen et al 2004:3). The report concludes with two observations about the future of church planting within the Baptist Union. Firstly it acknowledges the work of Urban Expression in pioneering new models for financing church planting in the inner city, noting that while some of them relied on grants from within the Baptist Union of Great Britain, others did not. They further commented on the need for bi-vocational church planters who would be self supporting yet still establishing new churches.

The enthusiasm for networking among church planters has since come into being as “The Incarnate Network” which I shall now describe.

Incarnate Network

The need for a network to facilitate communication between church planters has been a consistent theme for church planters being identified first at the Gorsley consultation of 1990 and after the closure of the “Baptist Church Planters (1.3.6)” group and the disappearance of the Church Planting Strategy Task Group, there was a lack of peer to peer networking for church planters. As I have noted this was the first point in the report from the 2004 consultation among church planters from within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Two people took the initiative in forming the Incarnate Network one of whom was a Mission Advisor working as a both a church planter and as a Baptist Union of Great Britain member of staff, the other was planting a church within the Baptist Union of Great Britain (Doel 2006:Paragraph 2). The network was initially instigated by bringing together people who were either planting churches or facilitating the planting of churches for a small conference.

The network describes itself as grass roots and is managed by a small steering group which includes

people currently involved in church planting, people who have been involved in church planting in the past and people who are involved in facilitating church planting (Dominey 2006:Paragraph 1 and 6. “Welcome to the Incarnate Network Church Planting Web Site”). It describes its four aims as:

- To communicate stories of church planting practice.
- To enable conversation and networking among practitioners.
- To campaign for and promote church planting strategies.
- To help practitioners learn from and develop their own practice. (Dominey 2006:Paragraph 3-6 “Welcome to the Incarnate Network Church Planting Web Site”).

The network co-ordinate an annual conference for people who are involved in church planting. The conference program involves a mixture of peer to peer resourcing and theological reflection on Church Planting.

The instigation of the Incarnate Network has provided a focus for church planting activities within the Baptist Union of Great Britain through: The ongoing communication of church planting stories; Regular events bringing church planters together in a particular area; A relationship with the structures of the Baptist Union of Great Britain via its Mission Department. It was from the Mission Department that a proposal about church planting was put to the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

Church Planting Strategy re-visited

In March 2010 a paper and strategy was presented to the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The strategy was initiated by Kathryn Morgan, a Mission Advisor to the Baptist Union of Great Britain. After discussion with a number of people involved in church planting she put together a paper proposing a way forward for church planting within the Union. After consulting with a number of interested parties her paper was refined until she was ready to present it to the Mission Department Executive, having gained their approval it was presented to the Council of the Union and approved (Kathryn Morgan, 17 March 2010, Personal Correspondence).

The document aims to present a model of working between the Mission Department, the Associations and the Colleges. Outlining the Mission Department's commitment to the practice of church planting and the ways in which it may support church planting Morgan goes on to propose

ways in which the Associations of the Union may facilitate, support and encourage the practice of establishing new churches.

The paper sets the context for the development of strategy within the churches of the Union through the Associations. It did not propose a demonstrative nature for the Mission Department but a supportive one where the Department encourages a “fresh wave of Baptist church Planting” and to “advise on good practice”. The Department promises to track “the trends in BUGB churches” and highlight “sociological changes in England”. It commits to “inspire Baptist Christians to think about this form of mission” (Morgan 2010:1).

The members of the Council of the Union were asked to pass a resolution that required the Mission Department to “help build a culture within the Baptist Union whereby church planting is expected and encouraged”. It further commended that the Department should “promote the planting of healthy, contextualised churches and congregations” (Morgan 2010:3).

Conclusion

Church planters within the Baptist Union of Great Britain have been active throughout the three decades covered by this study. Getting an accurate picture of the number of churches that have been planted within the Baptist Union of Great Britain is difficult. The Union by its nature is an eclectic group of churches and the church planting activities are not governed by a central organisation. As a result it would take significant resources to gather accurate data on the number and types of churches being planted. The studies that have tried to collect and draw together the data cannot be relied upon to give a full and accurate picture, although some are more thorough than others.

The establishment of Baptist Churches has tended to centre around enthusiastic, resourceful churches and individuals. This is a historical trend. Churches that were started by the New Connexion of General Baptists centred around Yorkshire and the East Midlands. The churches that were planted under the direction of Spurgeon concentrated in and around London. Baptists within the Baptist Union of Great Britain have continued this pattern despite the overall downturn in church attendance.

Decline in church attendance, and consequently the number of churches in Great Britain has formed the backdrop for the church planting movement within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. It is clear from the study that church planters were aware of this context. While none of them cited the national decline in church attendance as a motivating factor, they were aware of the sociological explanations for decline. The principle explanation of secularisation was a cause of concern for some participants in the study. Having conducted a review of the different ways that secularisation is perceived by sociologists it is possible to note that all agree that the religious scene in Great Britain is changing. While some see Great Britain moving towards a society that is increasingly less dependant on an religious belief, others consider there to be an appetite for spirituality within Great Britain.

Those who advocate that the religious scene in Great Britain is becoming more secular, base their arguments on a smaller body of research than those that disagree with them. The research conducted by Davie, Hay and Hunt as well as Heelas and Woodhead, present a strong case for Partridge's reversal of Max Weber's disenchantment of society as re-enchantment of society.

There is evidence of changing practice in churches planted after the late 1990s. That practice has centred around the adaptation of Christian ecclesiological norms. Further engagement from the

wider field of cross cultural missions might help inform and develop this further. There are lively debates in the the area of mission to Muslims (Travis 1998). These debates concentrate on the possibility that total separation from the Muslim community may not be the most appropriate approach for sharing the Gospel. The debate moves the boundaries away from cloaking Christian ecclesiological practice in the clothes and music of Muslim communities, towards total integration in the worshipping life of the mosque. Missiological reflection that integrates the changing nature of religious practice in Great Britain with this debate may yield a platform from which church planting practice may be developed. Church planting practitioners may find inspiration for integrating their worshipping practice more closely with the communities they are attempting to reach. Although there is room for further reflection, the changing contours of the religious scene in Great Britain have enabled church planting practitioners to engage with the theory and practice of contextualisation.

Although the participants in the study rarely referred to contextualisation as a concept, the conversations that I had with the practitioners during the interviews indicated that there was a willingness to engage with the community within which they were attempting to establish a new church and to modify their practice of mission and of collective worship to suit the social environment. During the period from 1980-1996 I have identified that the participants in the study had a growing awareness of the need for contextualisation. The outworking of this was to change the location of the worship meeting from a church building to a building without any religious associations. During this period the primary form of church planting was to replicate a familiar style of meeting that included songs, prayers and preaching. Church planters practising in the period 1996-2010 showed a developing missiological awareness of the concept of contextualisation. This was brought about through the influence of the Church Growth Movement on the theory of church planting. The influence of the missionary perspectives of Donald McGraven enabled the theory of contextualisation to trickle down into the practice of church planters. Although contextualisation was advocated prior to 1996, there were two factors that contributed to bringing it into focus. Firstly there was the the dip in enthusiasm for church planting in the mid 1990s. Secondly the experience of practitioners in their day to day evangelistic encounters.

The discipline of missiology has offered several different reflections on the forms that contextualisation can take. Of these models the language and approach of Liberation Theology has appeared in the language of people planting churches within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. It was through the theory and practice of Liberation Theology that practitioners began to find the

freedom of seeing themselves as cross cultural missionaries.

Having examined the introduction of contextualisation to the language of church planters I have observed how the practice of church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain has been influenced by some trends in the wider church. These have motivated the way in which churches have been started. In the period from 1980-1996 the dominant model of church planting was the mother/daughter approach, although the caricature of the mother/daughter model is that all churches end up looking the same, in reality the mother/daughter model produces churches that are often quite different in style, but have a similar underlying liturgical structure in their principal meetings that involves singing, prayers and preaching.

It is evident that that process of contextualisation is happening in the practice of church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The progression of contextualisation has happened through necessity, which has grown out of institutional decline. I suggest that the church planting community need to be proactive in regard to this process. The continuing debate about contextualisation in the field of Bible translation could provide church planters with rich pickings for missiological reflection on their practice. Translators struggle with being faithful to the original text and finding language that will be meaningful in the context. This presents much reflection on the nature of contextualisation. Interaction between the the nature of contextualisation in the two disciplines may help the church planting community to understand the nature of their own communities. Further enabling them to be better prepared to suspend their own presuppositions and extend the boundaries of their practice.

During the study I identified the following starting points: location and convenience, replanting, evangelism, local ecumenical partnerships, relocations, differences in doctrine and practice, and lack of space. Each of these starting points have been illustrated by way of example. The enthusiasm for church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain has not happened by way of chance. It fits into a larger context of church planting within the British Church. Different points influencing the practice of church planting have been identified. These markers and way points in the development of church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain have been both internal and external events. The 1977 Baptist Assembly influenced the direction of the churches in the Baptist Union of Great Britain by taking seriously the reality of decline within the Union. The resulting "Signs of Hope" report introduced the Church Growth Movement to the churches in the Union which influenced the thinking behind the church planting literature that emerged out of the

practice in the period from 1980-1996. Several factors converged in the early 1990s which included: the Oasis/Spurgeon's Church Planting and Evangelism Course, a consultation on Baptist church planting practice at Gorsley, a short lived church planting network and the journal "Planting Papers". The most significant event outside of the Baptist Union of Great Britain was an attempt to galvanise the enthusiasm for church planting in the different denominations and church streams that existed within Great Britain. The Challenge 2000 movement organised a conference to inspire and encourage church planters as well as to set goals for the future. The unscientific approach of the exercise produced mammoth goals, the enormity of which were realised when at a follow up conference three years later. Within the global Baptist movement there was a movement to learn from, and share practice between Baptist from different Unions around the world. This conference produced some reflective papers on the practice of church planting and a declaration, commending and affirming church planting to Baptists thought the world. The enthusiasm for church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain enabled a strategy to be presented and affirmed by the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Council. The adoption of the church planting strategy converged with the waning of enthusiasm for church planting, and was never acted upon.

From 1996 onwards church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain began to change. Although there were in some cases similarity and continuity between church planting prior to and after 1996, in general the practice of church planting reflected an engagement with missiological reflection on the subject. The motivation for and starting points of church planting began to change. Urban church planting began to appear, church planters began to experiment with ways to engage people who had no experience of church culture, and mission was seen as a priority in the way that churches started. The churches that started after 1996 shared some similar characteristics: the importance of eating together, the church planters would immerse themselves in the community, and there was desire to re-imagine the basic liturgical form of the main meetings.

Motivation for church planting and the factors that influence the starting points for church planting, is often a matter of circumstance and convenience. While there had been a move to redress the exodus of Christians from the inner cities, there is a need to be far more strategic in the way in which some potential church planting situations are identified and developed. Rather than lamenting the independent nature of the churches that make up the Baptist Union of Great Britain, with careful planning and missiological reflection the independent nature of the churches could be harnessed to good effect. The process of learning from the way in which the church planting community has begun to engage with a changing approach to spirituality and the process of contextualisation could

be further enhanced by the dialogue between the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the international Baptist mission agency (BMS World Mission). The recent commitment from BMS World Mission to become a “partner” sets the scene for this dialogue. Such conversation has the potential to gradually influence the churches that make up the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Building on the strengths of the Mission Department within the Baptist Union of Great Britain a reflective and progressive discussion has the potential to produce a more contextual approach to evangelism, mission and church planting throughout Great Britain.

Several movements have influenced the changes that have happened in church planting practice: the influence of the Alternative Worship and Emerging Church movements were significant for church planters. Stuart Murray's missiological and pastoral influence on church planters which came through three different things: leading the Oasis/Spurgeon's Church Planting and Evangelism Course, the publication by him of the first theological and missiological engagement with church planting practice, and the creation of Urban Expression which concentrated on the inner cities. There was a consultation between people practising church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain, this identified the need for a way for church planters to network with each other. Out of this need, the Incarnate Network was developed as a grass roots network. As a result of the Incarnate Network the profile of church planting was raised within the Baptist Union of Great Britain and its Council reaffirmed its commitment to church planting.

As the Baptist Union of Great Britain looks to the future regarding church planting, the history of the last three decades might inform the direction, pace and practice of church planting. I see three areas where the Baptist Union can build on the good practice that I have identified in this study.

Among the hundreds of churches that are members of the Baptist Union of Great Britain there is much to be learned from the developing practice of mission that I have identified. The stories of church planters engaging communities and sub cultures that have been beyond the reach of the established churches can inspire and motivate changing mission practice. These stories do not simply need to be told as an encouragement to the established churches but a reasoned approach applying the concepts used by the church planters will help the established situations develop their own practice.

The changing approaches to the theory of secularisation and spirituality can encourage practitioners to see the developments within the British religious scene as an opportunity to develop practice further. The developing practice that I have identified since the late 1990s can be built upon. This

would enable practitioners to push the boundaries of their practice as they engage with the changing spirituality and practice in Great Britain.

As a grass roots organisation the Baptist Union of Great Britain appears to struggle with the concept of a national strategy with regard to the establishment of new churches. The motivation and enthusiasm for church planting comes from the local church and is sometimes resourced by the Home Mission Fund. Initiative for reaching under church areas has principally come from outside agencies (like Urban Expression). If these areas are to be considered by Baptists, a national and overarching view could be developed by a Baptist agency that could encourage and facilitate the establishment of new churches where there is the greatest need.

There have been consultations on church planting within the Baptist Union of Great Britain, one in 1990 at Gorsley and one in 2004 at Swanick. A further consultation could enable the church planting community to engage with some of the issues that I raise here. In order to facilitate the continued development of practice and strategic development an interdisciplinary and missiologically reflective approach to the consultation would provide a foundation for the continuing development of church planting in the Baptist Union of Great Britain over the next three decades.

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Appendix 1: Confidentiality statement

8 Furness Road
Heysham
Lancashire
LA3 1EZ

[Date]

Dear [Name],

[Personal introductions appropriate to the practitioner in question].

My research aims to track the changes in approaches to Church Planting during the past 3 decades. As you have been [a particularly significant and influential person in the way in which Churches have been planted] or [involved in church planting during this time], I was hoping that you would consider taking part in my research by allowing me to interview you.

If you were to agree to an interview I would like to visit you for an hour and a half appointment, an hour of which would be the formal interview. I would ask you for your insights and reflections on Church Planting within the Union during the 1980's and 1990's. I would use the information you provided in the interview to help me analyse the period.

In my final thesis I will not make direct reference to you personally. I will make comments like "one practitioner suggested/said in interview/commented". I do intend to make descriptions of some Church Plants as examples of a particular style or approach. These descriptions will be made without linking them directly with the people who were involved with their initiation.

I hope that my research will provide a resource for the Church Planting community assisting in the ongoing reflection on Church Planting practice and approach.

Graham Doel
Research Student with Manchester University,
supervised by Rev. Dr. Richard Kidd, Northern Baptist Learning Community.
Minister, Morecambe, Stanley Road Baptist Church

Appendix 2: Pilot interview guide



Briefing

- Clarify the purpose of the interview.
- Explain the recorder.
- Any questions?

Warm Up Questions

- Clarify the information that I already have.
- Clarify the dates.

Secularisation

- What am I looking for?
- What affect did the extinction thesis have on their practice and approach?
- What Questions might I ask?
 - How did statistics on church attendance affect your approach to church planting?
 - What books influenced their practice or approach?
 - What styles and approaches to evangelism did they use?

Revivalist Rhetoric

- What am I looking for?
 - What was the awareness of and reaction to revivalist rhetoric?
- What kind of questions could I ask?
 - Were you involved with any of the challenge 2000 conferences?
Birmingham/Nottingham
 - Did enthusiasm about revival motivate you in Church Planting

- What role did goal setting play in your involvement in Church Planting?
- Where you aware of D.A.W.N.?
- Did the Church Growth Movement influence your thinking about church planting?

Emerging Models

- What do I want to know?
 - Did the concept of a changing culture affect or challenge the practice of church planting?
- What questions could I ask?
 - Did the discussion about Youth Congregations affect your approach to Church Planting?
 - Were you aware of the Alt. worship scene (particularly N.O.S.) ?
 - Both Peter Nodding and Stuart Christine/ Robinson advocated the need for culturally sensitive churches. Did you consider your church planting to be culturally sensitive?

De-Briefing

- Turn off recorder.
- Summarise if appropriate.
- Invite Questions.

Appendix 3: Interview guide



Briefing

- Clarify the purpose of the interview.
- Explain the recorder.
- Any questions?

Warm Up Questions

- Clarify the information that I already have.
- Clarify the dates.

Invite the story

- How did you get involved with church planting?
- Can you tell me about your church planting story/journey?

Secularisation

- What am I looking for?
- What affect did the extinction thesis have on their practice and approach?
- What Questions might I ask?
 - How did statistics on church attendance affect your approach to church planting?
 - What books influenced their practice or approach?
 - What styles and approaches to evangelism did they use?

Revivalist Rhetoric

- What am I looking for?
 - What was the awareness of and reaction to revivalist rhetoric?
- What kind of questions could I ask?
 - Were you involved with any of the challenge 2000 conferences?
Birmingham/Nottingham
 - Did enthusiasm about revival motivate you in Church Planting
 - What role did goal setting play in your involvement in Church Planting?
 - Where you aware of D.A.W.N.?
 - Did the Church Growth Movement influence your thinking about church planting?

Emerging Models

- What do I want to know?
 - Did the concept of a changing culture affect or challenge the practice of church planting?
- What questions could I ask?
 - Did the discussion about Youth Congregations affect your approach to Church Planting?
 - Were you aware of the Alt. worship scene (particularly N.O.S.) ?
 - Both Peter Nodding and Stuart Christine/ Robinson advocated the need for culturally sensitive churches. Did you consider your church planting to be culturally sensitive?

De-Briefing

- Turn off recorder.
- Summarise if appropriate.
- Invite Questions.