# Irish Methodism and Servant Leadership – a Vision of Ministry for the Twenty-first Century

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**A thesis submitted to**
**Dublin City University**
**School of Theology, Philosophy and Music**

**In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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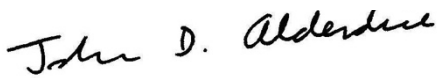
**September 2022**

# Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.



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# Dedication

This study is dedicated to the generations of those who have sought to ‘serve first’ through the Methodist Church in Ireland. The faithfulness of those in the past has laid a foundation and example to those who would seek to serve and lead in the present. In these uncertain times our call is to build up and encourage people to flourish and serve for the wider benefit of all.

# Acknowledgements

This research project would not have been possible without the support of a significant number of people who have kept me on track over the past six years.

Firstly, my two supervisors Dr Gabriel Flynn, and Professor Patrick C. Flood have given me tremendous encouragement, support, counsel, and friendship. They believed I could complete this project on many an occasion when I didn't. I have learnt a huge amount from them and will be forever grateful for the opportunity to work with them.

I am also grateful to other members of staff and faculty at DCU who have helped and advised me on this journey.

Thank-you to those academics and ministry colleagues who have read draft chapters and offered technical advice and guidance, especially Dr Michelle O'Riordan (Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies), Dr Chris O'Riordan (South-East Technical University), Rev Dr Martin Wellings, and Rev Dr Richard Clutterbuck.

Thank-you to Rev Robin Roddie, the Archivist of the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland Archive at Edgehill House, and Mrs Jennifer Stutt the Associate Archivist, for their help and advice.

Many colleagues in the Methodist Church in Ireland offered their support and encouragement. I am particularly grateful to those who agreed to be interviewed as part this research and to those who have 'kept me going' on the journey, encouraging me towards the finishing line.

Thank-you to my former colleagues from the Ministries Team of the Methodist Church in Ireland and to the leaders and members of the Ballynafeigh Circuit, where I now serve, for their permission and patience when I have disappeared to write. Thank-you to the Circuit Staff team who have given me space and taken on tasks on my behalf to alleviate pressure. I would especially acknowledge the support of Rev Tanita Lee, my ministerial colleague on the Circuit.

My greatest supporters have always been my family. Thank-you to my parents, parents-in law, sisters, and their families. Most of all, I want to thank my wife Ruth, and children, Hannah, and Daniel, without whom life would not be so fulfilling nor fun and who have supported me every step of the way.

This thesis is of course an academic work. Personally, however, it has also been a spiritual and vocational journey as I have wrestled with the challenges, theme and ideas contained in the pages that follow. Ultimately, I am grateful to God for this opportunity to study and pray that this work will encourage others to servant leadership.

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# List of Abbreviations

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| DCU | Dublin City University |
| MCI | Methodist Church in Ireland |
| MHSIA | Methodist Historical Society of Ireland Archive |
| MN | Methodist Newsletter |

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# Abstract


## Irish Methodism and Servant Leadership – a Vision of Ministry for the Twenty-first Century

### John D Alderdice

The fundamental concern of this thesis is to articulate a vision for ministry in Irish Methodism for the twenty-first century based on the theory and practice of Servant Leadership. It will show how Servant Leadership offers the most effective framework for the development of ordained ministry in the Irish Methodist Church.

Chapter One presents the research methodologies utilised in the thesis. These include historical analysis of sources, a review of literary resources and empirical methodologies. The latter includes thematic analysis of qualitative data and the presentation of findings gathered from semi-structured interviews.

Chapter Two identifies the unique context of the origins and development of Irish Methodism in contrast to English Methodism. This detailed historical analysis shows the radical differences in context between Ireland and England and simultaneously illustrates the symbiotic relationship between these two branches of Methodism.

Chapter Three addresses the themes of ministry and leadership. It draws deeply on primary sources in the Irish Methodist historical archive, Edgehill House Belfast. The chapter outlines the evolving nature of ordained ministry and considers the challenges facing the contemporary Irish Methodist Church.

Chapter Four surveys the definitions of servant leadership to unearth their unique and creative insights for an original vision of ministry. The chapter argues that the servant leadership commitment to the development of people is fundamental to the practice of ministry.

Chapter Five presents the empirical data drawn from eighteen semi-structured interviews with ordained ministers. These interviews explore the participants' ministry experience, perceptions of leadership, and understanding of servant leadership.

Chapter Six discusses the findings of the research. It asserts that servant leadership provides an innovative framework for understanding the role of the contemporary Methodist minister. It claims confidently that this framework enables ministers to lead congregations and facilitate growth in the twenty-first century Irish Methodist Church.

# Introduction

The primary focus of this research is encapsulated in the title: 'Irish Methodism and Servant Leadership – a Vision of Ministry for the Twenty-first Century.' The author is an ordained Minister of the Methodist Church in Ireland with an academic interest in history, contemporary Christian ministry, leadership, and mission. Acknowledging his status as an insider researcher at the outset, the author was both brought up in the Methodist denomination and, as an adult, made a profession of faith that is philosophically committed to a Methodist ethos and theological emphasis. It is the author's opinion that, in common with much of the western world, the influence of the Christian Church is declining in Irish society, both in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland.[1] In response, focusing on ordained ministry, the thesis investigates the most appropriate model of leadership required by the Church in a changing context concentrating on the theory of Servant Leadership. This chapter will, therefore, introduce the research by exploring the background and context, stating the key research questions, setting out the significance and relevance of the research, and outlining the structure of the thesis.

## Background and Context

Methodism emerged as one of the significant movements of the eighteenth-century evangelical revival in England.[2] The key architect of this movement was John Wesley (1703-91).[3] David Hempton is unambiguous regarding the importance of Methodism when he states: "[T]here are

[1] See for example data from the Central Statistics Office in the Republic of Ireland available at https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp8iter/p8iter/p8rrc/ [accessed 16 May 2022]. For Northern Ireland see commentary on the 2011 census results, including comparisons with data from previous censuses, published by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency found at https://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/census2011analysis/religion/religionCommentary.pdf [accessed 16 May 2022].

[2] R. L. Maddox and J. E. Vickers, *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 1.

[3] Wesley was a high church Anglican priest whose personal spiritual awakening characterized the movement that become known for its heart-warming personal piety, its rigorous spiritual discipline, and its practical concern for the poor and marginalized in society.

grounds for stating that the rise of Methodism as the most important Protestant religious development since the Reformation."[4] Methodism grew into a major international denomination that by the beginning of the twentieth century numbering with 8.7 million members worldwide.[5] At its peak in Ireland, Methodism had an adult membership of approximately 42,000 in 1840.[6] By the end of 2020, adult membership was estimated to be just over 13,000 spread over 206 local Methodist Societies across Ireland and served by 94 ministers.[7]

Religious belief and practice in Ireland is, of course, a complex matter. Historians have long debated the relationship between church, state, politics, socioeconomics, and popular belief.[8] Methodism, as a small denomination, receives some attention in general Irish historical literature focusing on the nineteenth century. It is important, however, to consider the broad debate concerning religion in Ireland from before the reformation as it forms the backdrop to the emergence of Methodism. The foremost contribution from the perspective of Irish Methodism is research produced by David Hempton. He has written extensively on the rise of Methodism and its impact on socioeconomic, political, and religious life in Britain, Ireland, and America often focusing on the transformative impact of Methodism on ordinary people.[9]

[4] David Hempton, *Methodism, Empire of the Spirit* (Yale: Yale University, 2005), p. 2.
[5] Ibid., p. 1
[6] Ibid., p. 214.
[7] Statistics taken from the Minutes of Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland, June 2021.
[8] Significant historical debate has taken place concerning religious belief and practice in Ireland through the early modern period into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Often the focus of such debate has been the question of the apparent success or failure of the reformation in Ireland right up to the period of the evangelical awakening when Methodism would have been at its zenith in Ireland. See for example: J. C. Beckett, 'Introduction - Eighteenth Century Ireland', in *A New History of Ireland*, ed. by T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan, 9 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), IV, pp. x-xlv; Brendan Bradshaw, 'Sword, Word and Strategy in the Reformation in Ireland', *The Historical Journal*, 21, (1978), 475-502; Nicolas Canny, 'Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland: *Une Question Mal Posée*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 30, (1979), 423-450; Patrick Corish, *The Catholic Community in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Dublin: Helicon, 1981); Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688-1832* (London: Arnold, 1997).
[9] Hempton has produced an extensive body of research on Methodism throughout the world and especially in Ireland. See David Hempton, 'The Methodist Crusade in Ireland 1795-1845', *Irish Historical Studies,* 22, (1980), 33-48; David Hempton, 'Methodism in Irish Society, 1770-1830', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 36, (1986), 117-142; David Hempton, *Methodism, Empire of the Spirit* (Yale, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

In recent years, the American Methodist historian Ted Campbell has surveyed the various narratives found in the body of literature that explores the origins of Methodism.[10] Although much of the literature contains references to the arrival of Methodism in Ireland, it tends to receive less scrutiny than events in Britain and America.[11] The Irish Methodist historical works tend to be more popular in form such as C. H. Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland* produced in the late nineteenth century or Dudley Cooney's early twenty-first century book, *The Methodists in Ireland*.[12] The exceptions to this are of course the research of David Hempton and the determined work of the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland. The Society maintains a significant archive of primary source material at Edgehill House in Belfast and produces an annual *Bulletin of the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland*.[13]

Turning to the theme of ministry, Dennis Campbell argues that the theological understanding of ministry in Methodism is characterized by practicality and results rather than by historical theological tradition.[14] Similar to the historical literature, discussions on ministry have also focused more on developments in Britain and America.[15] John Lenton is one exemption to this rule. His research on Wesleyan itinerant preachers offers insightful material

[10] Ted A. Campbell, *Encoding Methodism* (Nashville, TN: New Room Books, 2017).
[11] See for example: Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 2nd edn (London: Epworth Press, 2000); Cracknell, Kenneth, 'The Spread of Wesleyan Methodism', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. By R.L. Maddox and J.E. Vickers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010) pp. 245-61; Gregory, J., 'The long eighteenth century' in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley,* ed. by R. L. Maddox and J. E. Vickers, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 13-42; Heitzenrater, R. P., *Wesley and the People Called Methodist,* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995); Henry Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast – John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, (London: Epworth Press, 1989); W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[12] *C. H. Crookshank, History of Methodism in Ireland, 3 vols (Belfast: Son and Allen, 1885); D. L. Cooney, The Methodists in Ireland (Dublin: Columba Press, 2001).*
[13] https://methodisthistoryireland.org [accessed 24 May 2022].
[14] Dennis M. Campbell, 'Ministry and Itinerancy', in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, ed. By W.J. Abraham and J.E. Kirkby, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 262.
[15] See John Bowmer, *Pastor and People* (London: Epworth, 1975); Dennis M. Campbell, *The Yoke of Obedience – The Meaning of Ordination in Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988); William R. Cannon, 'The Meaning of the Ministry in Methodism' in *Methodist History*, 8/1, (1969), 3-19; David Chapman, 'Holiness and Order: British Methodism's search for the Holy Catholic Church' in *Ecclesiology*, 7, (2011), 71-96; Kenneth J. Collins, 'John Wesley's concept of the ministerial office', *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 23, (1988), 107-121; Martin Wellings, 'Presbyteral Ministry: A Methodist Perspective', in *Ecclesiology*, 1, (2005), 57-74; William H. Willimon, *Pastor – the theology and practice of ordained ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2002).

on the early Methodist preachers and includes a substantial examination of the experiences of those who served in Ireland.[16]

A gap in this substantial body of literature, which this thesis seeks to address, is the integration of history, theology, ecclesiology, and ministry with a distinctive focus on Ireland to the present day.

**Key Research Questions**

Considering the overall title of the thesis, the author has identified a series of significant research questions which provide a framework for thesis structure. These questions include, what are the distinctive features of the origins of Methodism and Methodist ministry in Ireland? What are the challenges facing the contemporary mission and ministry of the Methodist church in Ireland? To what extent does servant leadership theory correlate with Methodist ministry? How do Irish Methodist ministers understand their role as leaders in the current context? Finally, what vision does servant leadership offer for the future mission and ministry of the Methodist Church in Ireland?

**Thesis Structure**

Before addressing the key research questions in chapters two to six, the thesis begins with a chapter on research methodology to highlight interdisciplinary nature of the research. The work combines historical, theological, and organisational-research approaches to the investigation of church function and leadership effectiveness.

Chapter two provides a historiographical survey of the origins of Methodism in Ireland. It includes analysis of the most crucial secondary sources that reference Irish Methodism. The chapter addresses the question of the unique context of Irish Methodism seeking to identify the

[16] Lenton, John, *John Wesley's Preachers*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009)

key characteristics of early Methodism in Ireland. This is a vital aspect of thesis as it provides a crucial insight regarding the mission of Methodism in Ireland, and a foundation for all that follows in relation to the evolution of ministry and leadership.

Chapter three focuses on the theme of ministry. It investigates John Wesley's pragmatic approach to authorised forms of ministry and the ecclesiological questions that Methodism had to address after Wesley's death. This includes a detailed exploration of the primary archival material from the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland archive in Belfast. The purpose of the study of the archive is to understand how ordained ministry developed in practice through the nineteenth and twentieth century. The final section of chapter three draws the discussion to the present day. It examines the challenges and opportunities facing contemporary Irish Methodist and identifies the key questions facing the denomination and its ordained ministers in relation to their leadership role.

Chapter four introduces servant leadership theory as a framework for ordained ministry today. It assesses Robin Greenleaf's original philosophy of leadership and presents a survey of subsequent servant leadership literature. Building on the findings of chapters two and three, chapter four integrates servant leadership theory with ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland. The chapter is key in integrating the different elements of the thesis, acting as a bridge between the theoretical and empirical elements of the research.

Chapter five presents the findings of the empirical element of the research. Eighteen current Irish Methodist ordained ministers were interviewed using a semi-structured approach and the data analysed using a qualitative method. The interview participants were invited to share their experiences of ministry and leadership. The ministers discuss their sense of call and motivations, their core beliefs about leadership, and key aspects of their leadership and ministry practice. The findings report the contemporary views of the ministers compared with the historical origins of Irish Methodist ministry.

Chapter six draws the constituent elements of the thesis into a creative discussion. This chapter addresses the question of whether servant leadership as a paradigm can indeed offer a vision for ministry in the twenty-first century that is consistent with Methodism's history. This includes John Wesley's inimitable approach to ministry, mission and leadership and the subsequent evolution of the Methodist denomination in Ireland since Wesley's time.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of the key insights and wider contribution of this thesis to the church today and identifies the challenges and opportunities that the research offers to contemporary Methodism.

**Significance and Relevance**

This research is significant for three substantial reasons. This is the first time a research project such as this has been undertaken in relation to Irish Methodism. The interdisciplinary approach combining humanities and social science is unique, drawing together history, theology, ministry, and leadership theory.

Furthermore, it comes at a crucial phase in the history of the Methodist movement in Ireland. The social and cultural context is such that the default narrative of life in Ireland is no longer exclusively Christian. Stuart Murray describes this post-Christian society as "a culture in which central features of the Christian story are unknown and churches are alien institutions whose rhythms do not normally impinge upon most members of society."[17] Irish Methodism as a denomination is concerned about the challenges facing it. It believes that Christian mission is its raison d'être. This vigorous discussion requires reliable academic research that can contribute to the future thinking of the church. This new post-Christendom paradigm has created a host of challenges for denominations, congregations, and the leadership of those

[17] Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom – Church and Mission in a strange new world* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster: 2005), p. 1.

churches. These challenges include declining membership, increasing age profile, and financial instability.

Finally, handling the challenges facing the church is undoubtedly a leadership matter. How those in leadership roles both in the local in the church and in the wider denomination think and act is of paramount importance. Will church leaders have the courage and the capacity to enable individuals and congregations to explore new models of church and mission, or will they be content with managing the decline of an institution? If, as this thesis argues, leadership is important in the church a further crucial issue concerns the style of leadership exercised. Although the church has organisational and institutional features, it is primarily a body of people and therefore some models of leadership will not fit comfortably with the exercise of ministry. Servant leadership as proposed by Robin Greenleaf offers a particular framework for leadership that resonates with the practice of Christian ministry as it is primarily concerned with the development of people.

Having considered the significance of this research, the limitations of the thesis must be acknowledged. Firstly, the author has deliberately chosen to focus on ordained ministers as they are the key leaders in local churches at this time. Secondly, the scope of the research has been kept to Irish Methodism. Although there are some references to other denominations and other Methodist Conferences, the findings cannot necessarily be applied to other churches or contexts. Thirdly, a qualitative approach has been selected as the empirical methodology. The author recognises that such an approach can be viewed as being overly subjective, however it correlates with the authors role as an insider and his desire to explore the research themes in depth.

# Chapter One

## Researching Methodist Ministry in the Twenty-First century

### Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology and various research methods used to address the key themes of this thesis, namely, Irish Methodism, Ordained Ministry and Servant Leadership. To address these themes the thesis adopts an interdisciplinary approach that draws the humanities and the social sciences into dialogue, exploring history, theology, leadership theory, and ecclesiology. Swinton and Mowat note a creative tension in such research since it necessitates the use of sociological methods and insights to enable theological reflection on the data produced. As they remark: 'The social sciences have been vital and fruitful dialogue partners in the ongoing process of theological reflection.'[1] Such an interchange is creative and productive, as opposing perspectives and understandings are brought into a fruitful dialogue. Part one of this chapter describes the research methodology deployed, with due consideration of the philosophical and ethical challenges pertaining to the research, not least the role of the author who is an 'organisational insider' researching within his own professional and vocational fields. Building on this, part two surveys the range of methods used in the present study. These include standard archival research and a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews with an appropriate sample of ordained ministers of the Methodist Church in Ireland.[2]

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[1] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2016), p. xii.

[2] The terms *methodology* and *method* are frequently used interchangeably in discussions about research. These are, however, different facets of the research process. See Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, *Successful Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE, 2013), p. 31. As they state: 'Method refers to a tool or technique for collecting or analysing data… Methodology is broader and refers to the framework within which our research is conducted.' Methods include surveys and interviews as well as approaches taken to data analysis such as thematic analysis or grounded theory. Methodology is the theoretical frame within which the research takes places and includes discussion of the researcher's underlying assumptions and how these impact on decisions made in regard to method. Burrell and Morgan, *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2016) is a reprinted edition of a 1979 seminal work. It is a comprehensive survey of established and emerging paradigms

## (I) Researching Visionary Ministry: Philosophical and Ethical Issues

The research methodology deployed is informed by philosophical and ethical questions that in turn have a direct bearing on the research methods used. The thesis author must necessarily be aware of his own worldview and consider how his perspectives will impact the research in order to reliably address the research question. Several key methodological factors will now be considered.

### (i) The 'Insider' Researcher: Ethical Implications

Jodie Taylor, commenting on the privileged role of the 'insider' researcher states:

> [T]he [insider] researcher is working, at the deepest level, within their own 'backyard'; that is, a contemporary cultural space with which the researcher has regular and ongoing contact; where the researcher's personal relationships are deeply embedded in the field; where one's quotidian interactions and performances of identity are made visible; where the researcher has been and remains a key social actor within the field and thus becomes engaged in a process of self-interpretation to some degree; and where the researcher is privy to undocumented historical knowledge of the people and cultural phenomenon being studied.[3]

Brannick and Coghlan, writing in 2007, argue that insider research is generally regarded as incompatible with academic ethical research.

> Insider research typically is seen as problematic, and indeed, frequently is disqualified because it is perceived not to conform to standards of intellectual rigor because insider researchers have a personal stake and substantive emotional investment in the setting.[4]

More recently, Lori Ross discusses the danger of viewing insider and outsider research from either extreme. As she states:

> A binary understanding of insider/outsider positioning can be seen to place too much emphasis upon difference, rather than on partial and simultaneous commonality and

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of social theory and sociological research. They illustrate the crucial importance of the distinction between methodology and methods as follows: 'The problem of developing methods appropriate to the nature of the phenomena to be studied remains one of the most pressing issues within the whole realm of social science research.' See Burrell and Morgan, p. 399.

[3] Jodie Taylor, 'The intimate insider: negotiating the ethics of friendship when doing insider research', *Qualitative Research*, 11 (2011), 3-22 (p. 9).

[4] Teresa Brannick and David Coghlan, 'In Defense of Being "Native"', *Organizational Research Methods*, 10 (2007), 59-74 (p. 60).

> difference between the researcher and the interviewee that may shift over the course of the research relationship.[5]

Nonetheless it is important to understand the primary objections to insider research. These include the charge of being too close to the field of research thereby lacking objectivity; potential conflicts of interest when funding is involved; the author unconsciously overlooking certain routines within the organisation; the nature of relationships, positively and negatively, with colleagues; and assumptions made by participants regarding what the author already knows.[6]

Despite these objections, insider research is becoming increasingly common particularly for those who are blending part-time research with a full-time professional career.[7] In this context insider research has several advantages. As Ross states: 'Researchers operating within interpretative or critical paradigms see potential value in knowledge that arises from lived experience.'[8] The advantages include knowledge of the organisational language and culture, and ability to access information in a way that an outside researcher would find more challenging.[9] Further, significant levels of trust may already exist between participants and the researcher creating the climate for honest and open conversation that is efficacious in terms of the data produced.

The insider researcher must deploy safeguards to protect the integrity of his/her research mindful of the adage 'fish don't see the water they swim in.' These include being

[5] Lori E. Ross, 'An Account from the Inside: Examining the Emotional Impact of Qualitative Research Through the Lesn of "Insider" Research', *Qualitative Psychology*, 4 (2017) 326-337, (p. 326). See also, Danica G. Hays and Anneliese A. Singh, *Qualitative Inquiry in Clinical and Educational Settings* (New York: Guilford Press, 2012), p.141. This provides a discussion on the concept of otherness in relation to insider and outsider theories of research.
[6] Sema Unluer, 'Being an Insider Researcher while conducting Case Study Research', *The Qualitative Report*, 7 (2012), 1-14 (p. 6).
[7] Brannick and Coghlan, p. 61.
[8] Ross, p. 326.
[9] Unluer, p. 5.

aware of underlying assumptions and adopting an intentional research philosophy that is open and questioning. As Brannick and Coghlan state:

> [P]otential researchers… need to be aware of the strengths and limits of their preunderstanding so that they can use their experiential and theoretical knowledge to reframe their understanding of situations to which they are close. They need to attend to the demands that both roles - organizational roles and the researcher role - make on them. They need to consider the impact of organizational politics on the process of inquiry, who the major players are, and how they can be engaged in the process.[10]

The onus is on the insider researcher to ensure the methods used address the research question effectively and comply with ethical research guidelines. In this thesis the researcher ensured he followed the policies outlined by the University Research Ethics committee. In addition, when developing the interview cohort, the researcher ensured that participants were deliberately chosen individuals whom he did not have authority over. Objective interview questions were developed from existing literature and an interview protocol was followed that ensured participants were able to answer in a full and open manner. Finally, interview transcriptions were checked with participants to ensure accurate representation of answers

(ii) Research Philosophy[11]

Ontologically the author adopts a stance that is close to that of *critical realism*. Margaret Archer et al state '[c]ritical realism is a series of philosophical positions on a range of matters

[10] Brannick and Coghlan, p. 72.

[11] Philosophical questions and assumptions are key in the field of social science research. Research integrity and reliability is maintained first through acknowledgement of the researcher's own worldview. Through the second half of the twentieth century the debate on philosophical approaches to and assumptions about the nature of social science has been vigorous. The work on terminology produced by Burrell and Morgan provides a foundation to enable the researcher to understand their worldview, develop their methodological philosophy, and to establish reliable research methods. See Burrell and Morgan, pp. 1-9 for a synopsis of terms such as ontology, epistemology, nominalism, realism, positivism, and anti-positivism. Karen L. Henwood, 'Qualitative inquiry: perspectives, methods and psychology', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. by John T. E. Richardson (Leicester: The British Psychological Society, 1996), pp. 25-42. This work provides further commentary and analysis of the philosophical foundation of qualitative methodology considering other terms such as contextualism and constructivism, and exploring the philosophical perspectives and methodological principles of methods such as Content Analysis, Grounded Theory and Discourse Analysis. More recent publications such as, Braun and Clarke, pp. 26-38, and, Hays and Singh, pp. 32-66, bring the debate on research philosophy to the present day outlining the need to address ontological and epistemological assumptions in order to ensure rigorous research.

including ontology, structure, persons, and forms of explanation.'[12] The variety of critical realist philosophies are bounded by the common cause of articulating a post-positivist philosophy. The author was drawn to Vincent's and O'Mahoney's argument that '[c]ritical realist scholars assume the existence of an objective world that has powers and properties that can be more accurately known as a consequence of scientific endeavour, but recognise that knowledge is a subjective, discursively bound and constantly changing social construction.'[13] Although not an advocate of an extreme critical realist position, the author is interested in discovering as far as possible what is real and exploring the causes of such reality. Nevertheless, the author is realistic about the limitations to what can be truly known. Therefore, the author is seeking to inquisitively position himself between the extremes of a *realist* approach which claims reality is entirely discoverable, and a *relative* approach which claims there is no external reality that is separate to context and culture. As Braun and Clarke state that 'the critical realist position holds that we need to claim some 'authentic' reality exists to produce knowledge that might 'make a difference.'[14] The discovery of aspects of reality through critical realism affords the opportunity to establish facts that will be of benefit to a particular context.

The critical realist stance requires a comparable approach to epistemology that is open to the importance of context and experience and concomitantly seeks truth in context. This is precisely the *contextualist* approach to epistemology. It is neither *positivism*, which considers that objective truth is discoverable through firm scientific research, nor *constructionist*, which argues that knowledge is essentially subjective. The constructionist rejects the concept of

[12] Margaret Archer and others, 'What is Critical Realism', *Perspectives*, 38(2016), 4-9 http://www.asatheory.org/uploads/4/3/3/7/43371669/perspectives_38_2__fall_2016_final.pdf [accessed 10 January 2022] (p. 5)
[13] Steve Vincent and Joe O'Mahoney, 'Critical Realism and Qualitative Research', in *The sage handbook of qualitative business and management research methods*, eds. Cassell, C., Cunliffe, A. L., and, Grandy, G. (London: SAGE, 2018), pp. 201-216, https://www-doi-org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.4135/9781526430212 [accessed 10 January 2022].
[14] Braun and Clarke, p. 27.

objective truth, knowledge generated from research is always subjective, immersed in context.[15]

A critical realist ontology that is epistemologically contextual occupies the centre ground that respects the social and cultural contexts that shape knowledge and understanding, and at the same time seeks reality. As Farquhar states: 'The critical realist… accepts that our world is socially constructed but not entirely so, as reality makes an appearance.'[16]

(iii) Methodological Decisions

Having acknowledged the 'insider' status of the author and identified the preferred ontological and epistemological stance as close to critical realism, consideration must be given to how this worldview shapes methodological decisions. As Karen Henwood states:

> Researchers who adopt a more open, interpretative, constructionist (or deconstructionist) stance have a clear affinity for qualitative research, plus a strong conviction that choice of method is liberated and informed by the position one takes with the epistemological debate.[17]

Such an approach underpins the researcher's inquisitive spirit in relation to the research question, and the aim of developing knowledge and informing practice. In this instance an insider view is, in fact, an advantage since the author has unfettered access to his ministerial colleagues and has the advantage of his own similar understanding and experience of ministry and leadership.

The author views human nature as neither entirely voluntaristic nor entirely deterministic. The research participants and the author are subject to the same external pressures from congregations, denominational oversight, and societal expectations, and

[15] Burrell and Morgan, p. 5.
[16] Jillian Dawes Farquhar, 'Philosophical Assumptions of Case Study Research', in *Case Study Research for business* (London: SAGE, 2012), pp. 15-29 (p. 8), < https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781446287910> [accessed 13 October 2021].
[17] Henwood, p. 29.

concomitantly have a significant degree of autonomy in the exercise of their role. Therefore, methodological discipline is required on the part of the researcher. As Taylor remarks:

> The researcher… is forced to look both outward and inward, to be reflexive and self-conscious in terms of positioning, to be both self-aware and researcher self-aware and to acknowledge the intertextuality that is a part of both the data gathering and writing processes.[18]

The approach taken in relation to the empirical element of this thesis is to make use of the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews as a means of gathering rich data. The data drawn from the interviews both interrogates and is complemented by the historiographical and archival research, and complemented with a theoretical survey focussing on the practice of Servant Leadership amongst the Methodist Ministerial community. This interdisciplinary method of triangulation enriches the thesis and allows both inductive and deductive approaches to be utilised within the same research.[19] As Hammersley states:

> In all research, we move from ideas to data as well as from data to ideas. One can distinguish between studies that are primarily exploratory, concerned with description and with generating theoretical ideas, and those that are concerned with testing hypotheses. But these types of research are not alternatives: we need both.[20]

Engaging with the empirical research component of the thesis necessitates a deep understanding of the relevant history, theory, and contextual challenges in the exercise of ministry and leadership. Having explored the philosophical and ethical foundations of the research methodology, attention now turns to the research methods used in the thesis.

[18] Taylor, p. 9.
[19] Michael Q. Patton, 'Enhancing the Quality and Credibility of Qualitative Analysis', *Health Services Research*, 34.5 (1999), 1189-1208.
[20] Martyn Hammersley, 'The Relationship between Qualitative and Quantitative Research', in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. by John T. E. Richardson (Leicester: The British Psychological Society, 1996), pp. 159-174 (p. 166).

### (II) Research Methods[21]

As an interdisciplinary endeavour, this thesis deploys a variety of research methods to address the primary research themes. Gunn and Faire argue that exploration of research methods is less common within the field of historical research and that historians should 'foster an increased methodological literacy.'[22] Consistent with Gunn's and Faire's argument, the author draws into dialogue research methods associated with both the humanities and the social sciences. Such an approach illustrates the creative relationship between the different chapters of this thesis. As Bernard J. F. Lonergan states: 'Method is not a set of rules to be followed meticulously by a dolt. It is a framework for collaborative creativity.'[23]

Addressing the primary research question first requires an historiographical survey of the origins of Methodism in Ireland and the development of the Church's model of ordained ministry. Standard methods associated with the humanities are deployed in chapters two and three, including the study of primary archival material and secondary literary resources. Taken together, these elements provide the vital foundation for the remainder of the thesis. As Michelle T. King states:

> We go to the archives not to find answers but articulate a better set of questions. Answers in the archives – in the form of documents – always abound; the real difficulty lies in figuring out what questions to ask of them. This is the hard work that awaits outside the archive, long after one has returned home.[24]

The questions unearthed through the historiography and archival research form the basis of the survey and examination of Servant Leadership theory in chapter four. The findings of chapters

[21] Qualitative Research Methods are the tools, strategies and techniques deployed both to gather and to analyse data. Interviews, case studies and surveys are the most common forms of data collection. Grounded Theory, Thematic Analysis, Narrative Analysis, Ethnography are common methods of data analysis. See Braun and Clarke, p. 13. See also Part 3 of Hays and Singh, for a comprehensive assessment of qualitative data collection and analysis methods.
[22] Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire, 'Introduction: Why bother with Method?', in *Research Methods for History*, ed. by Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 1-10 (p. 6).
[23] Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975), p. xi.
[24] Michelle T. King, 'Working with / in the archives', in *Research Methods for History*, ed. by Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 13-29 (p. 20).

two, three and four together provide a foundation for the empirical research set out in chapters five and six.

Ciulla, an academic working in a business school environment, outlines the significant benefits of historical research in relation to leadership studies, which are more commonly associated with the social sciences: 'Without the humanities, leadership research offers descriptions and theories of leadership that are not always understood in the broader context of the history, values, and emotions that shape behaviour and give it meaning.'[25] It is exactly this interdisciplinary and mutually beneficial scenario that the author of this thesis is seeking to create through the historical and qualitative research.

(i) Why a Qualitative Approach[26]

A qualitative approach corresponds effectively with the research methodology outlined, allowing subjectivity and reflexivity on the part of the author.[27] As Braun and Clarke state: 'Research is understood as a subjective process; we, as researchers, bring our own histories, values, assumptions, perspectives, politics and mannerisms into the research – and we cannot leave those at the door.'[28] As an insider, the author is present in the study and must consider and reflect upon his impact in the research process itself.

[25] Joanne B Ciulla, 'The Two Cultures: The place of humanities research in leadership studies', *Leadership*, 15(4) (2019), 433-444 (p.434).

[26] The debate concerning the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches in academic research is lively and unremitting and can be found in all research publications. In recent years the debate has matured from a quantitative verses qualitative paradigm to recognising the relationship between different approaches. M. Maggetti, F. Gilardi, and C. M. Radaelli, *Designing research in the social sciences* (London: SAGE, 2015), https://www-doi-org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.4135/9781473957664 [accessed 27 September 2021] emphasise the importance of the researcher understanding the implications of choosing a particular approach. See also, Perri 6 and Christine Bellamy, *Principles of Methodology: Research Design in Social Sciences* (London: SAGE, 2012), https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781446288047 [accessed 27 September 2021].

[27] Braun and Clarke, p. 37, state: 'Personal reflexivity in research is about bringing the researcher into the research, making us visible as part of the research process.' The researcher did not ignore his own place in the research as an ordained minister of the Methodist Church in Ireland, recognising his own values and perspectives on the themes that emerged in the research process. See also Tone Stangeland Kaufman, 'Normativity as Pitfall or Ally?', *Ecclesial Practices*, 2 (2015), 91-107.

[28] Braun and Clarke, p. 36.

The use of a qualitative approach, as opposed to a quantitative one, is justified as the intention is to produce data of sufficient depth to provide a rich resource of themes, to expand understanding, develop theory, and enrich ministry and leadership practice. As Hays and Singh state: 'Qualitative researchers aim for insight and deeper understanding to illustrate a phenomenon fully, rather than for generalizability to a larger sample.'[29]

A qualitative approach is further justified when considering Servant Leadership theory. Quantitative studies, such as those surveyed in chapter four illustrate the subtle and enigmatic nature of Servant Leadership and associate it with attributes such as 'listening', 'honesty' and 'empathy'. Winston argues that deep qualitative work is required to enhance the findings of quantitative research and uncover the distinguishing features of Servant Leadership.

> While we have theoretical studies on servant leadership, we have not spent sufficient effort on deepening our understanding of the theories we proffer. This is where qualitative research methods can assist us.[30]

At an early point in the research design process, several approaches to data analysis were considered. These included thematic analysis, grounded theory, [31] ethnography[32] and case

[29] Hays and Singh, p. 8.
[30] Bruce E. Winston, 'The Place of Qualitative Research Methods in the Study of Servant Leadership', in *Servant Leadership: Developments in Theory and Research*, ed. by Dirk van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 180-191 (p. 180).
[31] Grounded Theory is concerned with using data to develop new and credible theory rather than testing existing theory. The key exponents of Grounded Theory in the 1960's were Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss. Their former student, Kathy Charmaz in her work *Constructing Grounded Theory* (London: Sage, 2014), p. 5, states: 'Glaser and Strauss aimed to move qualitative inquiry beyond descriptive studies into the realm of explanatory theoretical frameworks, thereby providing abstract, conceptual understandings of the studied phenomena. They urged novice grounded theorists to develop fresh theories and thus advocated delaying the literature review to avoid seeing the world through extant ideas.'[31] See also Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research* (London: Aldine Transaction, 2008), and A. Strauss and J. Corbin, 'Grounded theory methodology', in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), pp. 273-85.
[32] Kathryn Roulston, *Reflective Interviewing: A Guide to Theory and Practice* (London, SAGE, 2010), p. 161 states: 'Ethnographic analysis is to make sense of particular cultures, including the language or 'folk terms' that members of the culture routinely use, and to generate findings that will provide descriptions, analyses, and interpretations of how members experience and understand their world.' Ethnography requires the researcher to engage in sustained observational fieldwork and is an approach adopted by anthropologists. For the purposes of this thesis, the status of the researcher as an 'insider' would have made it difficult to adopt an more distant and observational approach. See also Christina Toren, 'Ethnography: theoretical background', in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. by John T. E. Richardson (Leicester: The British Psychological Society, 1996), pp. 102-112.

study.[33] The author was drawn to the flexibility of Braun's and Clarke's method of theoretical thematic analysis which they define in the following terms: 'Analysis is guided by an existing theory and theoretical concepts (as well as by the author's standpoint, disciplinary knowledge and epistemology.)'[34] Thematic Analysis allows the author to hold in creative tension both the experience and perspective of the participant and the theories and ideas extracted from the earlier research. As Roulston states: 'Qualitative analysis typically involves both inductive and deductive reasoning, given that authors generate findings through close examinations of data in combination with applications of substantive theories from prior research.'[35] Carla Willig states that thematic analysis 'can be used to generate both empathetic and suspicious interpretations… [i]t guides the process of identifying themes in the data which capture meaning that is relevant to the research question.'[36]

In addition, the author found the basic definitions of Grounded Theory to be relevant to the data analysis process, as Glasser and Strauss state, 'grounded theory is a way of arriving at theory suited to its supposed uses.'[37] It provides theory that is 'useable in practical applications.'[38] For the author, practical application derived from the data generated in this research was a key desired outcome. Therefore, an approach inspired by features of both Thematic Analysis and Grounded Theory was deployed, and was consistent with the methodological, philosophical, and ethical questions in the research.

[33] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research* (London: SAGE, 2014) is a comprehensive guide to the use of Case Studies as a method of data collection and analysis. This approach was deemed to not fit with this research as making comparisons between research participants based on the identified research questions would be difficult. Hays and Singh, p. 44, state: 'Case studies are distinguished from other qualitative traditions because cases are researched in depth and the data are delineated by time period, activity and place.' A case study approach would not allow for the type of nuanced conversation that the researcher was seeking with the participants.
[34] Braun and Clarke, p. 175.
[35] Roulston, p. 154.
[36] Carla Willig, 'Interpretation in Qualitative Research', in Carla Willig and Wendy Stainton Rogers, *Qualitative Research in Psychology* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2017), pp. 274-288 (p. 279).
[37] Glaser and Strauss, p. 3.
[38] Ibid.

(ii) Data Collection Method: Semi-structured Interviews

There is a variety of data collection strategies available to the qualitative author. These include qualitative surveys, focus groups, naturalistic observation, and author-directed dairies. As already stated, the method deployed is the individual semi structured interview as this approach is consistent with the research questions and the philosophical stance taken by the author. [39]

An overly structured approach to interviews can limit the depth of data produced while an unstructured approach places the interviewer in an observational role. Neither of these options was deemed appropriate for this thesis. A semi-structured method was, therefore, selected. This gave the participants a role during the interview and allowed a productive dialogue to develop between the participant and the author. As Hays and Singh state: '[A]lthough this type of interview does not ensure consistency of data collection experience across participants, it makes up for this disadvantage by including more participant voice… to provide a richer picture of a phenomenon under investigation.'[40]

The role of an ordained minister is varied and complex. A key concern for the author was to listen deeply to the responses of the serving Methodist ministers interviewed and to present accurately their experiences and perspectives. This included their understanding of leadership, and the challenges they face in exercising ministry and actualising the mission of the Methodist Church today. At an early stage the author carried out five exploratory interviews with ministerial colleagues. These interviews where useful in mapping the territory of servant leadership and ministry. The author concluded that the questions used in the exploratory interviews were too general and that he needed a significantly deeper understanding of servant leadership theory and its correlation with ordained ministry. The findings of the author's research into Servant Leadership theory are set out in chapter four of the thesis and provided a

[39] Hays and Singh, p. 237.
[40] Ibid., p. 239.

greater understanding of what was required to carry out effective research. This enabled the author to develop a more rigorous set of questions as follows:

| **Question** | **Commentary** |
|---|---|
| How do you understand the nature of leadership? | Establishing the participants foundational understanding of leadership. |
| What values describe leadership in the Methodist Church in Ireland? | Identifying the participants' wider understanding of the function of leadership within the Methodist Church in Ireland. |
| What do you understand Servant Leadership to be? | Testing the participants knowledge of Servant Leadership characteristics. |
| What do you see as the relationship between ordained ministry and Servant Leadership? | Enabling the participant to reflect on the relationship between their current role and their leadership responsibilities. |
| How would you describe your leadership style? | Offering the participant the opportunity to articulate their approach to leadership. |
| What motivated you to become an Ordained Minister? | Exploring the participants underlying motivation and 'sense of purpose and call'. Are they focused on serving others? |
| How do you encourage others to grow and develop? | Investigating the participants commitment to enabling others to flourish. |
| To what extent are you responsible for vision in the local church? | Examining the participants approach to collaboration with others. |
| What do you believe the role of the church is in relation to the wider community? | Analysing the participants commitment to making a difference for the wider community. |

**Table 1.1 Empirical Research Questions based on Authors Research**

(iii) The Participant Cohort: Sample Size and Saturation

In the autumn of 2020, there were approximately ninety-eight active ordained ministers serving with the Methodist Church in Ireland. Qualitative research projects tend to involve smaller numbers of participants due to the amount of data generated in semi-structured interviews. A

strategy was required to identify a suitable and realistic sample. Braun and Clarke identify *convenience*, *snowballing* and *stratification* as three approaches to sampling.[41] All three approaches were deployed for this research. *Convenience* is simply about accessibility and all ninety-three ministers were readily accessible to the author. An email was sent to the group to explain the nature of the research and to invite interested parties to respond within a certain time frame. This generated ten responses. The author then developed the sample through personal contact and networking, a technique known as *snowballing*. At the same time, the author paid attention to the makeup of the interview cohort in relation to gender, ministry experience, ministry context, i.e., urban, rural, suburban, and geographical location in terms of north and south. This form of *stratification* ensured the interview cohort was diverse and representative of the body of Irish Methodist Ministers. A further eight participants were added to the initial ten bring the total number to be interviewed to eighteen. The details of each participant are set out in Table 1.2.[42]

[41] Braun and Clarke, p. 57.

[42] The outcome of the sampling strategy produced a cohort of 18 ministers of which 56% were male and 44% female. This compares to overall figures of 73% male and 27% female amongst the total of 98 ministers in 2020. 72% of those surveyed were located in the north and 28% in the south, this correlates exactly with the overall figures for all the ministers. 66% of the cohort served in urban or suburban settings against 56% of all ministers serving in such settings. In terms of years of service, there was a reasonably even spread among the participants, 5 having served up to 10years; 5 served 11-20 years, 6 served 21-30 years and 2 over 30 years.

| Participant ID | Age | Gender | Years of Service | Number of appointments | Current Context |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01 | 44 | Female | 11 | 2 | Suburban (N) |
| 02 | 60 | Male | 30 | 6 | Urban (N) |
| 03 | 40 | Female | 5 | 2 | Urban (N) |
| 04 | 56 | Male | 31 | 10 | Rural (N) |
| 05 | 36 | Male | 6 | 1 | Suburban (N) |
| 06 | 49 | Male | 25 | 5 | Urban (S) |
| 07 | 59 | Female | 7 | 1 | Rural (S) |
| 08 | 55 | Male | 26 | 5 | Urban (N) |
| 09 | 57 | Female | 14 | 3 | Rural (S) |
| 10 | 52 | Male | 23 | 4 | Urban (S) |
| 11 | 48 | Male | 6 | 3 | Suburban (N) |
| 12 | 65 | Female | 15 | 3 | Urban (N) |
| 13 | 54 | Female | 6 | 3 | Suburban (N) |
| 14 | 56 | Female | 30 | 5 | Urban (N) |
| 15 | 60 | Male | 31 | 6 | Urban (N) |
| 16 | 60 | Male | 30 | 7 | Rural (N) |
| 17 | 55 | Male | 12 | 2 | Rural (S) |
| 18 | 60 | Female | 12 | 2 | Rural (N) |

**Table 1.2 Analysis of Participants' Data**

The author was acutely aware of the link between *sample size* and *saturation*.[43] Hays and Singh argue that this is 'one of the most hotly contested issues in both qualitative and quantitative fields.'[44] Generally, qualitative research engages with smaller numbers of participants. As

[43] Mark Mason, 'Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 11(3) (2010) https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-11.3.1428 [accessed 1 November 2021]. This article presents a comprehensive overview of issues relating to the question of sample size and saturation in qualitative research with particular reference to PhD studies, noting the complexity and diversity of opinions on these matters.
[44] Hays and Singh, p. 172.

Braun and Clarke state, 'a sample size of between fifteen and thirty individual interviews tends to be common in research which aims to identify patterns across data.' [45] This is opposed to quantitative research which can involve hundreds or even thousands of participants. The primary purpose of the research, the method deployed, the length of interviews, and the depth of the questions are all factors that must be considered as even small cohorts of participants can produce significant amounts of data. Mason makes the following fundamental argument:

> Ultimately, qualitative samples are drawn to reflect the purpose and aims of the study. A study schedule is then designed, the study is carried out and analysed by researchers with varying levels of skill and experience. The skill of the interviewer clearly has an effect on the quality of data collected and this will have a subsequent effect in achieving saturation. The sample size becomes irrelevant as the quality of data is the measurement of its value. This is as a result of an interaction between the interviewer and the participant.[46]

The key issue for the author concerned was *saturation*, the point at which no new data emerged in the data gathering process. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, in their experimentation with data saturation, found that no new thematic codes were developed after twelve interviews.[47] Consistent with Guest's findings, the author noted at both the interview stage and in the data analysis stage that no new codes were being generated after fourteen interviews. Useful insights on existing codes were drawn from the remaining interviews, however, which added to the quality and depth of the resultant data. The diverse profile of the participant group as set out in table 1.2 above, and the saturation of themes, point towards the reliability of this research in terms of sample size.

(iv) Schematisation of Research

Given travel restrictions imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic in the autumn and winter of 2020, the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee granted permission for the

[45] Braun and Clarke. p.55.
[46] Mason, 'Sample Size and Saturation,' https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-11.3.1428 [accessed 1 November 2021].
[47] Greg Guest, Arwen Bunce and Laura Johnson, 'How Many Interviews Are Enough?', *Field Methods*, 18(1) (2006), 59-82 (p.74).

interviews to be conducted and recorded online using the Zoom platform. Braun and Clarke comment that 'online interviews are no longer regarded as (poor) substitutes for face-to-face interviews but as different types of interview method, with their own advantages and disadvantages.'[48] What may be perceived to be a loss in terms of physical presence is made up for in terms of convenience and accessibility for both interviewer and interviewee. In addition, participants may feel less inhibited in an online format and, therefore, freer to discuss sensitive topics thus enhancing the resultant data.[49]

In line with University research conventions, the participants were provided with a protocol document which included a mechanism for giving their consent to participate. A plain language statement provided an overview of the research topic, an outline of question themes, and instructions relating to the use of Zoom. A personal data security statement informed participants about the measures taken to protect privacy and ensure data security.[50] Participants were also informed that the data gathered would be retained for up to five years following completion of the research after which both hard and soft copies of data would be securely deleted and destroyed.

Hays and Singh state: 'Rapport building is absolutely necessary for a successful interview.'[51] Following connection to the Zoom call, the author allowed time for brief greetings at the start of the interview. In each case there was an immediate rapport between interviewer and interviewee likely due to the pre-existing colleague relationship in each case. Two of the participants appeared to be slightly nervous and commented on feeling out of their depth and hoping that their contribution to the research would be helpful. This concern underlined the importance of the author being aware of the power dynamic related to his role within the

[48] Braun and Clarke, pp. 97-98.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Appendix 1 includes the interview protocol document, the plain language statement, and the personal data security statement.
[51] Hays and Singh, p. 243.

Methodist Church and the potential underlying desire of participants to please the author. Braun and Clarke suggest that first it is important to be aware of such a scenario and second a researcher can mitigate against such dynamic becoming a problem by being empathetic and reassuring during the interview.[52] The author sought to reassure interviewees regarding the importance of their contribution to the research and underlined the separation between the authors current denominational role and the research itself.

Each participant was thanked for his/her willingness to take part, reminded that the interviews would be recorded, and of the steps that were being taken to ensure data security and anonymity. Using Zoom to conduct the interviews did not appear to impact the experience negatively as visual cues can be maintained to a certain extent. The Zoom software provides a reliable high-quality method of recording which, according to Braun and Clarke, is vitally important. 'Qualitative researchers are interested in the detail of the participants' responses, and the language and concepts they use in talking about their experiences and perspectives, it is important to have a precise record of the interview.'[53] As well as recording the interviews the author recorded brief notes on paper. These notes enabled the author to maintain a focus on the participant and their responses. After the interview the notes also provided the author with an opportunity to reflect on how the interview went and any important initial thoughts regarding the data gathered.[54]

Participants were informed that their names would be replaced by a reference number during the transcription process and that placenames would be removed altogether. The participants were also assured that they would receive a copy of the transcript of the interview to enable them to offer feedback or corrections to the author and to ensure accuracy.

[52] Braun and Clarke, pp. 95-95.
[53] Ibid. p. 92.
[54] Ibid. p. 93.

The first formal question in the interview provided the opportunity for participants to share some biographical detail consisting of gender, age, number of years in the Methodist Ministry, number of different appointments served in the Methodist Church in Ireland, and current ministry setting. The author then followed the schedule of questions pertaining to the theme of the research. The aim was to allow the participant to be at ease and to retain a conversational style. Pre-prepared follow-up questions provided the author with a tool to keep the conversation on topic. As Braun and Clarke comment, however, 'interviewers need to be wary of the rushed and overly rigid interview.'[55] The author endeavoured as much as possible to be in 'listening mode', to avoid leading questions and personal comments. This was especially important given the author's insider status and to mitigate against research bias. At the end of the interview, participants were given a final opportunity to add any other comments. The author then thanked them for their participation and indicated that the recording had been stopped.[56]

(v) Data Analysis

According to Hays and Singh, qualitative data analysis is understood to be 'challenging, time-consuming and requiring creativity.'[57] The author quickly realised that his own relationship with the data itself was a key factor in the analysis process. The progression through the analysis process was not a simple, linear one, but involved reflection after each interview and re-examination of the research questions and the findings of the literary research.

The author deployed both electronic and manual tools in the transcription, organisation, and analysis of the interview data. According to Kowal and O'Connell, 'the aim of producing a transcript is to present on paper as accurately as possible the strings of words uttered… and

[55] Ibid. p. 95.
[56] Most of the interviews were one hour in length, ranging from approximately forty-give to ninety minutes.
[57] Hays and Singh, p. 292.

any accompanying non-linguistic behaviour.'[58] The presentation of the spoken word is different to the written word and it was important for the purposes of the research to ensure transcriptions were comprehensive. The audio recordings were first transcribed digitally using a secure transcription application, Otter.ai.[59] The author then used the initial digital transcriptions as a basis for a full manual transcription of the interviews. Participants were provided with a copy of the transcription for verification. None offered any significant changes to the text. It was at this point that the transcriptions were anonymised.

The next phase in the analysis process is set out in diagrammatic form in Appendix C. The process involved the author reading the interview transcriptions in order to immerse himself in the data. The transcriptions were then coded using NVivo, digital software used to analyse data. Roulston defines codes as 'labels that researchers apply to sections of data – whether interview transcripts, documents, or field notes – that represent some aspect of the data.'[60] The author adopted what Braun and Clarke describe as a 'complete coding' approach, i.e. to 'identify anything and everything of interest or relevance to answering your research question, within your entire dataset.'[61] The identification of codes was both an deductive and inductive endeavour as the codes were generated by the literary research and existing theory and also by ideas and concepts identified in the data itself.

Braun and Clarke argue that one of the limitations of digital coding is the 'risk of technologically mediated 'distancing' from the data – less 'immersion' leading to less insight.'[62] Having coded the transcriptions using NVivo, the author then decided to recode the data manually by re-reading hard copies of the transcripts and coding them by hand. Adopting

[58] Sabine Kowal and Daniel C. O'Connell, 'The Transcription of Conversations', in Uwe Flick, Ernst von Kardoff and Ines Steinke (eds), *A Companion to Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2010), pp. 248-258 (p. 248).
[59] https://otter.ai
[60] Roulston, p. 154.
[61] Braun and Clarke, p. 206.
[62] Ibid. p. 219.

this non-digital approach gave the author a deeper and richer understanding of the data. This is consistent with Roulston's observation that 'analysts are frequently advised to stay close to the data.'[63] The results of the manual coding process were broadly similar to those of the NVivo coding, offering a level of confidence to the author concerning the reliability of the data.

Once the initial coding had been completed, the author began to sort the codes into similar themes producing a data sheet with thematic headings. A summary of the High-level themes and codes can be found in Appendix D and a sample of the data sheet in Appendix E. Continuing to follow Braun's and Clarke's framework of thematic analysis, the author then sought to identify the material that was most relevant to addressing the research themes. This was not always related to the frequency of words or ideas, it was also about data that carried weight in relation to the research themes. As Braun and Clarke state:

> In working out which patterns are relevant and important in relation to your research question, it's not just a question of which are most frequent. While frequency is an important factor, it's also about capturing the different elements that are most meaningful for answering your research question.[64]

The author was also attentive to such factors as participant gender, experience, and geographical location as variations in the data that might be explained by those factors. Braun and Clarke argue that the process of identifying themes is similar to the art of sculpture:

> Analysts, like sculptors, actively make choices about how they shape and craft their 'raw data' into an analysis. Like the sculptor's block of marble, the dataset provides a material basis for the analysis; it provides some limits or boundaries on what it is possible to produce. However, it does not completely determine the shape of the analysis; it's possible to create many different analyses from qualitative data, just as it's possible to create many different sculptures from one piece of marble.[65]

[63] Roulston, p. 156.
[64] Braun and Clarke, p. 223.
[65] Ibid. p. 225.

The key factor for the author was to ensure that the developing themes addressed the research question. Braun and Clarke state that '[g]ood themes are distinctive and need to make sense on their own; at the same time, good themes need to fit together to form the overall analysis.'[66]

Having organised and analysed the data, the author began to write up the findings. In some ways, this was a continuation of the analytical process, but crucially it also involved interpretative work that sought to recount the story of the data. Willig states '[i]nterpretation is at the heart of qualitative research because qualitative research is concerned with meaning and the process of meaning-making. Furthermore, qualitative data never speaks for itself and needs to be given meaning by the author.'[67] Using the data table and revisiting the codes, the author presented the high level themes identified in the analysis thus illustrating the themes with important quotations extracted from the data. Having completed a draft of the findings, the author re-read all of the interview transcripts as a means of confirming the validity of the findings.

(vi) Validity and Reliability

Hays and Singh state: '[T]he validity of your study is the truthfulness of your findings and conclusions based on maximum opportunity to hear participant voices in a particular context.'[68] It is crucial for a author to demonstrate that their findings are valid, reliable, truthful and creditable. Rose and Johnson argue that a systematic and rigorous approach to research design, the use of appropriate methods, the plausibility of the findings, and the integrity of the author are fundamental aspects of the trustworthiness of a piece of research.[69]

The author considered the use of interrater reliability as a method of verifying data, discussing the possibility with an experienced academic author. Inter-rater reliability has long

[66] Ibid. p. 231.
[67] Willig, p. 274.
[68] Hays and Singh, p. 192.
[69] Jeff Rose and Corey W. Johnson, 'Contextualizing reliability and validity in qualitative research', *Journal of Leisure Research*, 51(4) (2020), 432-451 (p. 434).

been a feature of quantitative research but raises challenges in the qualitative field.[70] Belotto outlines his use of inter-rater reliability in a qualitative interview survey of emergency medical technicians. In his research project he acknowledged the challenge of finding independent researchers with an depth knowledge of the subject area being studied and the time to code the transcripts.[71] This is exactly the challenge that the author discovered in relation to this PhD thesis. Braun and Clarke argue that whereas quantitative researchers attempt to create generalisable concepts, neutralising the influence of the researcher as much as possible, in qualitative research, 'the researcher inevitably influences the research process and the knowledge produced.'[72] This makes the use of interrater reliability virtually impossible for a small scale study such as this. Instead Braun and Clarke contend that qualitative reliability is more about the 'trustworthiness or dependability of our methods of data collection and analysis.'[73] Lincoln's and Guba's seminal work on trustworthiness and authenticity surveys a range of methods of establishing credibility, transferability and dependability.[74]

The present study is interdisciplinary in nature with the empirical element of the thesis constructed on the in-depth historical and literary surveys contained in chapters two, three and four. These chapters provide a firm theoretical platform for the empirical research. The present chapter has surveyed the protocols and procedures followed by the author in terms of recruitment of participants, informed consent, and gathering, analysis and interpretation of findings. The sample of participants in terms of gender and experience ensures a breadth of representative across the body of Irish Methodist ministers ensuring the findings have

[70] David Armstrong and others,'The Place of Inter-Rater Reliability in Qualitative Research: An Empirical Study,' *Sociology*, 31(3) (1997), 597-606 (p. 597).
[71] Michael Belotto, 'Data Analysis Methods for Qualitative Research: Managing the Challenges of Coding, Interrater Reliability, and Thematic Analysis,' *The Qualitative Report*, 23(11) (2018), 2622-2633 (p.2625).
[72] Braun and Clarke, p. 279.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Thomas A. Schwandt, Yvonne S. Lincoln, and Egon G Guba, 'Judging interpretations: But is it rigorous? trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation,' *New Directions for Evaluation*, 114 (2007), 11–25 (pp. 18-10) https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.223 [accessed 18 January 2022].

generalisability and transferability.[75] As noted already, all of the interview transcripts were verified by participants, ensuring the accuracy of the raw interview data. The author adopted a prolonged engagement with the data and took a thorough approach to coding and the development of distinctive and coherent themes and ensured that the write up reported the findings of the data. In addition the author explored the issue of data saturation and, as stated earlier in the chapter, identified that no new codes or themes emerged after fourteen interviews. At all times the author sought to remain open minded, inquisitive, questioning, and aware of his own place in the research.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been to explore the methodology and methods used to address the primary research question. Acknowledging the insider role of the author, the chapter investigates ethical questions and the steps taken to ensure a consistency of approach between the philosophical stance adopted in the research and the research methods. In addition, the survey of the interview and data analysis processes underpins the reliability and validity of the thesis as a whole. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, addressing the primary research question requires an interdisciplinary study of Methodist ministry in Ireland. Consistent with such an inter-disciplinary approach, the thesis will now proceed to consider history and historiography in a chapter entitled 'The Origins of Methodism in Ireland: 'Complexity and Variety.''

[75] Braun and Clarke, p. 280.

# Chapter Two

# The Origins of Methodism in Ireland: 'Complexity and Variety'

## Introduction

Methodism, as a sect of Christianity, emerged in the eighteenth century as a renewal movement within the Church of England. Addressing the primary research question, which is concerned with leadership and ministry within Methodism, first requires an exploration of the history and origins of Methodism in Ireland.

John Wesley was the founder and main architect of Methodism.[1] Wesley was an Anglican clergyman, and son of an Anglican clergyman, who first came to prominence at Oxford University in the late 1720s when a group of friends began to meet as a Religious Society to engage in Christian prayer and worship, and to discuss matters of doctrine and theological conviction.[2] The group was made up of brothers, John and Charles Wesley, along with, initially William Morgan and Bob Kirkham. Morgan, a friend of Charles, was from Dublin where his father served in the Court of Exchequer in Ireland,[3] is credited as inspiring

[1] From this point John Wesley will be referred to as 'Wesley' throughout this thesis. Other members of the Wesley family, for example Charles Wesley, will be referred to using their full names.

[2] Religious societies were a significant feature of religious life in England and many parts of continental Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Such societies emerged in the wake of the political and religious wars that plagued Europe from the time of the Protestant Reformation onwards. By the mid-seventeenth century religious conviction was often more a matter of confession than devotion. W.R. Ward states that '[t]he striking characteristic of Protestant mentality in the late seventeenth century was low morale; this notwithstanding that one great Church of England, had recovered its position after twenty years of revolution, and engaged in major reconstruction. But everyone knew that the Protestants had lost perhaps half their numerical strength; and almost every change seemed to be for the worse.' See W.R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening,* p. 16. Similarly, David Hempton remarks on the degenerate state of European Protestantism in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and the subsequent appearance of new religious societies that reinvigorated Protestantism and its mission on the world stage. See David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, p. 13. In addition, Ward draws attention to similar challenges for the Roman Catholic Church through Europe. On both sides of the divide religious societies stemmed from individuals' interest in spiritual renewal and collective concern for the moral state of the nations. Ward's work explores in depth the origins of the Evangelical Awakening throughout Europe and America. For a detailed exploration of the relationship between Religious Societies, the Evangelical Revival, and the emergence of Methodism see, Henry D. Rack, 'Religious Societies and the Origins of Methodism', in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* 38 (1987), 582-595. See also Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people called Methodists*, pp. 17-25.

[3] D.L. Cooney, *The Methodists in Ireland*, p. 18.

the social conscience of the Society for poverty alleviation and prison visitation.[4] Kirkham, an old friend of the Wesley brothers, was also the son of a clergyman, studying at Merton College, Oxford and was later ordained to the Church of England priesthood.[5] Wesley quickly assumed a leadership role in the society. Richard P. Heitzenrater suggests that this arose from his 'ability to fit [their] various pursuits together with a sense of purpose, which gave direction and spiritual impulse to the Methodists' search for salvation.'[6] As the group came to public attention and their influence grew, they attracted several nicknames. As Collins states:

> When John joined Charles at Oxford in the fall of 1729, Robert Kirkham also began associating with this emerging group, whose visible activities resulted in a variety of names given briefly such as the Holy Club, Bible Moths, Sacramentarians – and, by 1732, the name that eventually stuck, Methodists. Over the next two or three years as many as four dozen persons participated in the activities of various related cell groups throughout the university, including James Hervey (1714-58) and George Whitefield (1714-1770).[7]

This first Methodist society lasted just over five years, ceasing to exist after Wesley left Oxford in 1735. Nonetheless, it provided a template for the Societies that would be formed in the future and hints at the leadership role that Wesley would assume for the movement. Maldwyn Edwards notes that 'apart from James Hervey, the popular devotional writer, and George Whitefield, none save the Wesleys came into national prominence.'[8]

The diffusion of the movement mirrors Wesley's own personal spiritual journey that was heavily influenced by his deeply religious parents who came from a dissenter background but later converted to Anglicanism. [9] This journey is also characterised by reasoned thought

[4] John A. Vickers (ed.), *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2000), p. 245.
[5] Vickers, *Dictionary of Methodism*, p. 194.
[6] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people*, p. 42.
[7] Kenneth J. Collins, 'Wesley's life and ministry' in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. by R.L. Maddox and J.E. Vickers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 45.
[8] Maldwyn Edwards, 'John Wesley' in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, ed. by Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp, 4 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1965), I, p. 44.
[9] With the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, the Anglican Church was also re-established. This required clergy to affirm their acceptance of the doctrine of the church as laid out in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. Those who could not assent to the articles, due to their more radical theological views, were known as 'dissenters' or 'non-conformists'. See Heitzenrater, p. 15. He notes that one clergyman who was removed from his parish in Bristol was John Wesley, paternal grandfather of John Wesley. As with many clerical families, John Wesley's

and powerful religious experience, all of which transformed his life and his understanding of the nature of the gospel, the church and Christian ministry. Over the ensuing two hundred years, this small group in Oxford grew into a disparate worldwide movement. By the early years of the twentieth century, it is estimated that Methodism had grown to somewhere in the region of nine million members and thirty-six million adherents.[10] David Hempton describes this 'empire of the spirit' in the following terms:

> [M]ethodism from its unpromising origins among the flotsam and jetsam of religious societies and quirky personalities in England in the 1730s to a major international religious movement some hundred and fifty years later… refashioned the old denominational order in the British Isles, became the largest Protestant denomination in the Unites States on the eve of the Civil War, and gave rise to the most dynamic missionary movement of the nineteenth century. For all these reasons, there are grounds for stating that the rise of Methodism was the most important Protestant religious development since the Reformation.[11]

In a sermon entitled 'The General Spread of the Gospel', written in Dublin in April 1783, Charles Wesley outlined his views on the fallen state of the world and describes the spread of the Methodist movement up to this point:

> From Oxford, where it first appeared, the little leaven spread wider and wider…It afterwards spread to every part of the land, and a little one became a thousand. It then spread into north Britain and Ireland, and, a few years after into New York, Pennsylvania, and many other provinces in America.[12]

Further, he expresses his hope that Methodism, as a tool in the hands of God, would see the Kingdom of God spread across all of Europe, among Protestants and Roman Catholics, and to the continents of Asia, Africa and America.[13] Kenneth Cracknell notes Wesley's interest in

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son, Samuel, father of John Wesley, also became a clergyman. Samuel married Susanna Annesley whose father was a well-known non-conformist minister in London. Heitzenrater (p. 27) states that '[b]oth Samuel and Susanna… as young adults became "converts" to the Established Church. As is often the case, their change of loyalty was accompanied by a zeal for those new position – they became ardent supporters of the establishment and arch Tories as well.' John Wesley's upbringing undoubtedly accounts for his loyalty to the Established Church throughout his lifetime, his leadership of the Methodist movement, and for his pragmatic approach to the growth of Methodism in England and America.

[10] Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, p. 202.

[11] Ibid., p. 2.

[12] John Wesley, 'The General Spread of the Gospel' in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. by Albert C. Outler, 27 vols (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), II, p. 491.

[13] Wesley, 'The General Spread', p. 493.

missionary endeavour to see the gospel spread to places where it had not yet been proclaimed and gives the example of Wesley's concern for members of the Muscogee whom he had encountered in Georgia when serving with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in America in 1736.[14] The story of the spread of Methodism to Ireland is not an incidental component of the wider story of the expansion of world Methodism, but is rather a crucial element in understanding the growth and impact of the Methodist movement. The way in which Methodism developed in Ireland, in contrast to Great Britain, offers an interesting insight into Wesley's personal attitude and understanding of life in Ireland, the role of the church there and missionary endeavour. Exploring the religious, political, social, and economic history of Ireland is not a straight-forward endeavour, however. This historical chapter will explore the background to the emergence of Methodism in Ireland, focusing on the following essential elements:

(I) Social and Religious life in Ireland in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries;

(II) The growth of Methodism in Ireland from the 1740s to the close of the Eighteenth Century.

In addition, two further essential historical surveys that should be read in conjunction with this chapter can be found in the Appendices as follows:

Appendix E - The Complexities of the Protestant Reformation in Ireland in the early modern period.

Appendix F - The Failure of the English Reformation in Ireland;

[14] Kenneth Cracknell, 'The Spread of Wesleyan Methodism', p. 245.

## (I) Social and Religious life in Ireland in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Irish society in in the eighteenth century presented complexities belied by the image of a superficially quiescent rural society. In terms of religion alone, a substantially more complicated picture can be uncovered. The account here will give attention to aspects of it. At the heart of the image is the domination of the 'ascendency', the victorious Protestant ruling class in Ireland, small but comprehensive in terms of power and influence. Ian McBride argues that this was a period of lingering, deep-seated tensions among the diverse seams of Irish society: Catholic, Protestant, dissenter, native, settler, landlord, and tenant.[15] These tensions were rooted in the history of the relationship between the island of Ireland and its nearest neighbour, Great Britain. It was characterised by the impact of conquest and colonization and needs to be understood in the context of the complex political, religious, and social turmoil affecting the entire continent of Europe at that time.[16] McBride's argument is in contrast to earlier interpretations of this period in Irish history posited, for example, by J.C. Beckett who describes the period between the signing of the Treaty of Limerick at the end of the Williamite wars in 1691, and the passing of the Act of Union in 1801, which dissolved the Irish Parliament in Dublin and formed the United Kingdom Great Britain and Ireland, as a time of unity and peace for the government and parliament in Dublin. As he writes:

> It was in this period that the political, economic, and social ascendency of the protestant minority reached its height. It was then, for the first time, that the Irish parliament, the mouthpiece and agent of the ascendency, became a regular and essential part of the machinery of government. And under this regime Ireland experienced a longer period of internal peace than in had ever known before.[17]

[15] Ian McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and McMillan, 2009), p. 1.
[16] McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, p. 213.
[17] J.C. Beckett, 'Introduction - Eighteenth Century Ireland', in *A New History of Ireland*, ed. by T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan, 9 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), IV, pp. x-xlv (p. xxxix).

From the end of the seventeenth century the minority Protestant, landowning, and established-church elite controlled the institutions of state. The majority Catholic population, and to a certain extent, a smaller minority of Protestant dissenters, through the provision of penal laws, were disenfranchised politically. In addition, according to Beckett, while the notion of forcing the Reformation on the majority population had been abandoned nonetheless the penal legislation deeply impacted the social and economic circumstances of Roman Catholics and dissenters and curbed their freedom to practice their religion.[18]

Frank O'Gorman, in his influential work *The Long Eighteenth Century: British political and social history 1688-1732*, argues that since the 1960s the assessment of historians of the eighteenth century focus less on developments relating to high politics and more on social history, class, gender, popular culture, and in more recent decades, developments in religious history.[19] Furthermore, O'Gorman contends that the eighteenth century must be surveyed considering events from the time leading up to the Glorious Revolution of 1688 until the Reform Acts of the late 1820s and early 1830s. O'Gorman also draws attention to the need to understand not just the political manoeuvrings of the landed gentry, but also the highly localised circumstances of the population at large. As he writes: '[T]o examine the political and social history of the period is to be struck with the complexity of its values and practices, especially within the four nations and within the heavily localised communities in which people lived their lives.'[20]

Despite the impression of parochialism, local communities in Ireland were shaped by influences from distant places in continental Europe. Nicholas Canny discusses the impact of the exiled Irish, merchants, gentry, soldiers, and priests who remained in contact with families and acquaintances at home during the first half of the seventeenth century. Such relationships

[18] Beckett, 'Introduction - Eighteenth Century Ireland', p. xlviii.
[19] Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688-1832*), p. xi.
[20] O'Gorman, p. xii.

served to advance the cause of the Counter Reformation in Ireland not merely on a macro scale, but also at local level. Literature and preaching, in the native vernacular became effective tools to resist the spread of Protestantism ensuring that, despite the defeat of the army of James II by William of Orange in 1690, local religious allegiance remained predominantly Roman Catholic. As Canny notes, '[t]hose in Ireland who were introduced to Counter-Reformation literature and teaching were thus being exposed to a religion that was both highly pietistic and highly combative.'[21]

Constitutionally, the three kingdoms of Ireland, Scotland, and England and Wales were united by a common monarchy, beyond which the institutions of the state operated separately from each other. The key issue for the people of the three Kingdoms and many other European states was that the religious loyalty of the monarch was, in theory, replicated by their subjects. The Lord Lieutenant was the governing representative of the Crown in Dublin and ruled with the help of an English-appointed Executive. An Irish parliament in Dublin remained in place until 1800, and had the power to pass legislation, but only after it had been approved by the English parliament. Conversely, all legislation passed by the English parliament automatically came into law in Ireland. English appointees held all the influential state roles and Established Church positions in Ireland.[22]

Beyond the legislative functions of the parliaments in London and Dublin, central government remained largely non-interventionist in relation to the wider populations' everyday life. Taxation was a controversial issue and, overall, avoided, except in times of war. Further, the parliaments operated by means of a limited franchise, dominated by the landed gentry and influential families. The concept of political parties was still at an early stage of development

[21] Nicolas Canny, *Making Ireland British 1580-1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 424.
[22] O'Gorman, p.12.

while the monarchy remained a significant influence or force in the political process.[23] As O'Gorman states:

> The government of Britain… was still assumed to be the King's government. Contemporaries found it difficult to conceive of the state independently of the person of the monarch. The monarch, or chief ministers enjoying the favour of the monarch, was responsible for appointments not only to the major offices of state in London but also to the Privy Council in Edinburgh and to the viceregal administration in Dublin; the personnel of these governing institutions were answerable to him, not to the parliaments of their respective countries.[24]

In terms of general population size, J.L. McCracken notes that it is difficult to give exact figures relating to Ireland at the beginning of the eighteenth century but that historians are united in their view that the country remained under populated and predominantly rural.[25] O'Gorman suggests that Ireland was no different, in these terms, to the rest of the British Isles. He estimates that Ireland had a population of approximately 2.5 million, twenty per cent of which was made up of English settlers and their families. For all intents and purposes, Ireland was a colony of England. This situation was backed up by the presence of a sizeable English army. In 1699 an English Parliamentary act limited the size of the king's army in Ireland to 12,000 during peacetime and, except for a couple of periods, this number remained relatively static throughout the eighteenth century. The purpose of the army was largely to act as a reserve force to be deployed in mainland Europe if required, and to deal with any internal uprisings that might occur.[26] From 1701 onwards, Guy notes that the army was to be made up of Protestants

[23] Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast - John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, p. 7.
[24] O'Gorman, p. 31.
[25] J.L. McCracken, 'The social structure and social life' in *A New History of Ireland*, ed. by T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan, 9 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), IV, pp. 31-56, (p. 31).
[26] See Alan J. Guy, 'The Irish military establishment', pp. 211-230 (p. 216), and S.J. Connolly, 'The Defence of Protestant Ireland' pp. 231-246 (p. 246), in *A military history of Ireland,* ed. by Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffrey (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996). Both Guy and Connolly refer to the main function of the army in Ireland in the eighteenth century as being that of a substantial reserve, ready to be deployed in the ongoing military conflicts in mainland Europe. Connolly does refer however to the presence of the army acting as a deterrent against unlikely local uprisings in the first half of the century. Towards the end of the century circumstances were changing and the army was increasingly involved in maintaining order in the face of popular disaffection and resistance. As Connolly states: 'The role of the army in Ireland after the 1690s was thus ambiguous. Part of its function was to guard the kingdom against the threat of invasion allied to internal subversion…The result of this was force that was not quite a part of the society in which it was stationed, but could not really be perceived as an army of occupation… By the 1790s Ireland had become a society held down by armed coercion, and this reliance on the army continued until the introduction in the 1820s of a centralised national police force.' (p. 246).

only, and within that, the number of Irish Protestants was strictly limited.[27] This fact is important to note as the army and garrison centres were to become key places where Methodism grew at a later stage. In terms of the development of cities and larger towns, Dublin, Cork, and Limerick were the biggest urban centres, with Dublin having a population in the region of sixty thousand. As O'Gorman writes: 'It was local families, local custom, local institutions and local boundaries that maintained the framework in which people lived their lives.'[28] The majority of the population lived and worked on the land, but they did not own it. Following the Williamite settlement and throughout the course of the eighteenth century the percentage of land owned by Catholics dropped from 20% to a mere 5% in 1776.[29] Ownership lay mainly with the normally absentee Anglo-Irish aristocracy whose preferred domicile was London.

It is helpful to briefly compare the features of Irish society with those of England where Methodism first emerged. The historian of religion, Henry Rack, in his seminal work on the rise of Methodism, is in broad agreement with the others noted already in relation to the similarities of the experiences of the general population in Ireland and England at that time. Rack argues that Wesley, given his extensive travels around the British Isles during the religious revival, provides a unique insight into life in eighteenth century England. Although politically and socially conservative, Wesley was positive about the future of England and the growth and influence of the Christian message that he sought to spread. As Rack states:

> John Wesley as not an impartial witness, but his constant travels and mixing with varieties of people made him one of the best-informed observers of his time, though he had an unusual tenderness for the poor and a jaundiced opinion of the aristocracy and 'gentlemen'... If he deplored poverty, he thought that the country was generally increasing in population and wealth… He was also optimistic about the growth and spread of religion, His theological creed centred on a vision of cumulative holiness, issuing in love and service to God and man.[30]

[27] Guy, 'The Irish military establishment', p. 217.
[28] O'Gorman, p. 11.
[29] McCracken, 'Social structure', p. 34.
[30] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, pp. 9-10.

Further, Rack notes that the population of England in the first half of the eighteenth century remained relatively low and stable at approximately 5-6 million, making it over twice that of Ireland. Beyond London, the largest cities in the early part of the century remained Bristol and Norwich. Some of the larger northern towns such as Manchester and Leeds had begun to grow; England, nonetheless, remained a largely rural society during the 1700s. Significant change began to take place in the second half of the century as the population of England increased to approximately 8.7 million by 1800.[31] These demographic changes resulted in clashing ambiguities in architecture, economics, and religion, as seen in the construction of Georgian buildings in proximity to hovels. Such population growth did not feature in Ireland to the same extent, though the city of Dublin began to develop in the same manner as the large urban centres in England.

Though agriculture remained the dominant force in economics across Britain and Ireland, the emergence of new industries and opportunities brought about by increased trade would have a great effect on England during the eighteenth century. As O'Gorman states, 'Eighty-five per cent of the inhabitants of England lived either in villages or in small market towns with less than 1,000 inhabitants. Over 90 per cent of them were employed in agriculture or in associated trades and crafts.'[32] Among those who owned the land on which this agricultural industry took place, were the landed aristocracy and gentry, who continued to be the power-brokers in society both at a national level, with their influence in parliament, and at a local level.[33] It was these individuals who ran local government and influenced every aspect of the operation of local communities and villages, including the church. Beyond or below this stratum there were both large and small holding farmers, the majority of whom were tenants. Then came the majority population of labourers beneath who were the most economically

[31] Ibid., p. 1.
[32] O'Gorman, p. 11.
[33] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 4.

vulnerable cottagers and paupers.[34] Within this hierarchy there was undoubtedly an understanding of the dependence of the lower social orders on the landowners and gentry, equally, however, there was an expectation on the part of the lower orders that the landowners and gentry would fulfil their responsibilities to wider society in terms of provision of work and wages. Roy Porter summarises three features of English society during this time as (i) the fortitude of the social hierarchy; (ii) the fact that you could traverse the hierarchy, despite its injustice; and (iii) the use of influence, persuasion and religion in the first instance by the ruling class to maintain harmony, and if necessary, to use force to ensure harmony.[35] In Ireland the social hierarchy was broadly similar to that of England but in contrast to Porter's account, movement within the social hierarchy in Ireland was more difficult.

Writing more recently, Tim Blanning explores the history of Europe from the mid-seventeenth century to the early-nineteenth century. In the first section of his book, he provides a succinct overview of the everyday experiences of the general populace, exploring issues such as the development of road networks, migration, trade and commerce, gender roles, marriage, and religious belief. In his conclusion, Blanning offers an overview of two positions that can be taken when reflecting on this period. First, to see the period considering the enormous changes in science, philosophy, politics, and religious belief, and second, to realise that despite the revolutionary events that took place not much changed in the everyday lives of citizens across the continent. Blanning argues that this second perspective 'draw[s] attention to the superficial nature of much of the apparent change and the illusory quality of much of the apparent achievement. At the end of the period, the land-owning elites were still firmly in charge of even the most advanced countries, most Europeans were still illiterate peasants, superstition still rife, and a major religious revival was underway.'[36]

[34] O'Gorman, p. 22.
[35] Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Penguin, 1982), pp. 358-362.
[36] Tim Blanning, *The pursuit of glory* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 676.

O'Gorman argues that such inequitable features, visible across European society were keenly felt in Ireland where land was owned by a small percentage of largely absentee Protestant landowners.

> At this period, therefore, most farming in Ireland remained subsistence farming; in many places a money economy did not exist, most payments being made in kind. Most serious of all, about half the entire population of Ireland was made up of landless labourers (or 'cottiers') who were probably worse off than their English counterparts and who existed precariously at around subsistence level. The poverty of Ireland and the relative absence of opportunities for picking up casual work left large numbers of people dangerously dependent upon the weather and the harvest.[37]

General descriptions of the circumstances faced by the populations of the different countries that made up the British Isles in the eighteenth century have revealed a broad spread of themes in terms of social status, economics, and occupation. As we have seen, the literature shows that within these broad themes there were differences in experience for the general population of each country. These variations are most clearly seen in religious belief and practice.

Hempton argues that much of what is written about religion in Britain and Ireland during the eighteenth century focuses on the perceived successes and failures of the established churches.[38] His argument strengthens the picture of the complexity and variety of religious practice during that period and draws attention to the significant societal changes that made Britain and Ireland increasingly pluralist from a religious perspective:

> [S]ocial historians of religion have detected forces operating from around the middle of the eighteenth century which were inexorably eroding Established Churches throughout the British Isles. These include rapid demographic growth, the commercialisation of agriculture, an increase in the pace of industrial and urban expansion, the rise in popular evangelicalism… and the renewed vitality of older forms of both Protestant and Catholic Dissent.[39]

Rack, in agreement with Hempton, notes the extensive societal influence of the Established church, particularly in England. This influence was not simply due to size and numerical

[37] O'Gorman, p. 24.
[38] David Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland – From Glorious Revolution to the decline of the Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 1.
[39] Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture,* p. 2.

strength, it was also related to the legal privileges and constitutional role of the Established church in civic society.[40] Church and state were in an enmeshed relationship, one depending on the other. As Hempton argues: 'Far from being regarded as a protected subsidiary of the State, the Church of England was an integral and indispensable part of the theory and practice of governing.'[41] A significant feature of the relationship between church and state was that bishops occupied positions in the House of Lords, at the very heart of the government of the state. A common argument among historians is that such duties meant that bishops were often absent from their dioceses for lengthy periods of the year and so exercised little oversight and care for their clergy and parishes. Bishops were appointed by means of a political process, and though, as Rack notes, they were normally of creditable character and in some cases demonstrated a degree of spiritual devotion, the manner of their appointment meant their priority was not primarily the spiritual welfare of the nation. As Rack states: 'The eighteenth-century bishop was essentially a remote figure, seldom seen by his clergy and only intermittently troubling them.'[42] Rack's argument regarding the state of the eighteenth-century church in England is, however, not the only one. Jeremy Gregory provides an effective analysis of the historiography of the church at that time, exploring how nineteenth century scholarship, which was generally critical of the state of the church has undergone a revision.[43] As Gregory states: 'To a certain extent the criticism of earlier historians could be shown to be based on the biased opinions of the Church's opponents, of the result of anachronistic expectations, judging the eighteenth-century Church by late nineteenth century standards.'[44] As is often the case, the revisionist perspective has itself been critiqued as commentators. W.R. Ward suggests that the

[40] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 10.
[41] Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture,* p. 3.
[42] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 15.
[43] J. Gregory, 'The long eighteenth century', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. by R.L. Maddox and J.E. Vickers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 25-34.
[44] Gregory, 'The long eighteenth century', p. 26.

more positive review of the eighteenth-century church goes further than it should.[45] What remains then is a mixed interpretation of the state of the church. The Anglican Church was not a homogeneous entity; there was a wide variation in participation and quality of ministry between different diocese and parishes. Hempton articulates his view of the situation as follows:

> [I]t is now clear that there were often enormous variations of belief and practice between neighbouring parishes within the same diocese and equally wide regional variations within the country as a whole, national projections form local studies need to be based on much wider samples than have customarily been the case.[46]

Variations in the Church of England were not confined to the question of geography; they are also demonstrated by political and theological questions. The events of the second half of the seventeenth century shaped the circumstances of the clergy in the eighteenth century, not least with the expulsion of James II on the grounds of his favourable disposition towards the papacy. During the reign of Queen Anne (1702-1714) there was factional infighting between high and low church bishops and clergy, and beyond this time pressure on both sides of the argument to moderate and, therefore, to enable the church to have a conforming influence over the general populace. This position is clearly articulated by Rack as follows:

> [T]he Establishment ideal was that all should be members of a single church, supervised by the clergy in their parishes and overseen by the bishops in their dioceses. This was to be done by a mixture of pastoral care backed by the sanctions of spiritual or financial penalties through the church courts.[47]

In view of the nature of what may be described as 'lightly governed' society, local clergy had significant influence in parishes and experienced a broad variation of circumstances and practices in church and society. While some had a privileged status and access to wealth, others faced significant challenges with many less well-off curates and parochial clergy juggling

[45] W.R. Ward, review of John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of the Enlightenment* (1989), *History*, 73 (1990), 497-498.
[46] Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture*, p. 3.
[47] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 12.

multiple benefices thereby increasing the incidences of absenteeism and non-residence.[48] In spite of these difficulties, for many of the sons of landowners, becoming a member of the clergy was an effective mechanism for social advancement. Such a possibility also made ordination attractive to young men from the emerging strata of society such as industrial, business and trading families. Similarly, it was not unusual for the sons of clergymen, including the Wesley brothers, to follow the same career path of their fathers, and in their case, grandfather.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century there was a marked increase in dissent and non-attendance at Communion in urban areas, and the emergence of religious societies focused on the development of religious life and personal piety. In rural areas, folk religion and superstition remained part of the common life. In small villages with single landowners a resident clergyman would have found it easier to stave off the influence of religious enthusiasm and dissenting groups. The relationship between the local clergy and the local landowners was crucial in terms of how the rest of the community engaged with the church. According to Rack, the general view among the wider population seems to have been that 'the dutiful parson ideally held two services on Sunday, preaching two sermons; and theoretically read morning and evening prayer daily, or at least on Wednesdays, Fridays and Feast days. He would catechize the young, apprentices and servants and visit the sick.'[49]

Acts of worship were simple in format with Holy Communion services held on average four times per year in rural areas and monthly in urban areas.[50] The vicar conducted baptisms, marriages and funerals as required, and acted as a funnel for charitable causes, providing local administration and welfare support for educational, charitable, and medical needs. The common pattern of systematic pastoral visitation did not emerge until later in the early nineteenth century as a characteristic of the evangelical movement.

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[48] Ibid., p. 11.
[49] Ibid., p. 16.
[50] John Munsey Turner, *Conflict and Reconciliation – Studies in Methodism and Ecumenism in England 1740-1982*, (London: Epworth Press, 1985), p. 5.

The weakness of the parish model that developed in a predominantly rural context, where change happened relatively slowly, was that it was inflexible. While community life could be controlled by landowners and clergy in rural areas, in the rapidly growing towns and cities, it was a very different matter. Early Methodist success in England lay more with the small-holding farmers, artisans, and tradesmen, who had some level of education, than with the lower social orders. As Rack notes, in such towns '[i]t (the failing rural parish model) was already visibly ineffective in new and rapidly growing areas where the flexible, lay-centred system of Methodism had early successes which multiplied later as these areas multiplied, and with them a less dutiful and less easily controlled population.'[51]

The circumstances for the established church in Ireland were markedly different from those in England. The obvious challenge, as stated by many historians, is that the established church in Ireland drew loyalty from a minority of the population. David Hempton in his exploring the fortunes of the established churches in the British Isles in the eighteenth century, assesses the variety of circumstances faced by each. Noting the usual interpretation that the Anglican Church was simply an imposition on the people of Ireland, Hempton argues that what was being asked of the Church of Ireland was never possible.

> The Irish Church was neither fabulously wealthy nor, by eighteenth century standards, unusually ineffectual in its pastoral conduct; it was simply a rather threadbare established church creaking under the weight of unrealistic expectations, not unlike many of its European counterparts. Its main strength was, partly owing to its patronage connections with the Church of England, in supplying a religion ideally suited to the Irish landed classes. Its main weakness as an established church was that its rituals, symbols and celebrations could not operate as socially binding mechanisms on anything like the same terms as in England for the Protestant historical victories it celebrated were interpreted as defeats by the majority Roman Catholic population it could neither convert nor coerce.[52]

According to Rack, the challenges faced by the Church of Ireland simply did not exist in the Church of England. The established church in Ireland had a top-heavy ecclesial structure with

[51] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast,* p. 16.
[52] *David Hempton, The Church in the Long Eighteenth Century (London: Tauris, 2011), p. 174.*

four archbishops and eighteen bishops. Clergy were frequently absent from their parishes and often the wealthier appointments were filled by English-born incumbents. Ireland was a useful place to hide away clergy who had in some way misbehaved and were not acceptable in English parishes. For Rack, fundamentally, the Church of Ireland represented the colonial presence of the British in Ireland and therefore had little possibility of making a significant impact on the general population.

> Given its history of colonization, exploitation, and civil war as well as religious divisions, it is not surprising that the Protestantism of England and the Anglo-Irish had not been accepted by the mass of the people. The Irish branch of the established church was part of this originally alien culture, and, as in England, tied to the political establishment, but with much more slender physical resources and active or passive membership. [53]

In addition to the Anglican presence in Ireland there was also a significant number of Presbyterians across the island.[54] Though predominantly in the northern province of Ulster there were also significant numbers in Dublin. Many were the descendants of settlers who moved from Scotland to Ireland in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Presbyterian Church was of course the established church in Scotland, and was, as Hempton notes 'the most successful of the established churches (in the British Isles), at least in terms of popular allegiance, the exercise of moral discipline and the weakness of non-Reformed alternatives.'[55] At different stages in the century following the Reformation, the Church of Scotland had at times adopted the Episcopalian model of church and some of the Presbyterian ministers, who followed the settlers to Ulster, having been ordained by bishops in Scotland as

[53] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 231.
[54] According to Finlay Holmes, Presbyterianism 'is a way of being Christian community in the world.' It is a form of church organisation or governance espoused by the Swiss reformer John Calvin in the sixteenth century. Reacting against the corruption of the Roman Catholic episcopal system, Calvin argued that the New Testament and Early Church apostolic movement provided a model of ministry and church polity that meant the church 'should be governed by groups rather than individuals, by synods rather than bishops.' Authority in the church was vested in the councils and courts of the church, rather than individuals. In theory, this should mitigate against the abuse of power by individuals. See Holmes, *Our Irish Presbyterian Heritage* (Belfast: Publications Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1985), pp. 1-2.
[55] Hempton, *The Church in the Long Eighteenth Century*, p. 175.

opposed by presbyteries, ended up serving in Established church parishes in Ireland.[56] In the years following William III's victories in Ireland culminating with the battle of the Boyne in 1690, the place of Presbyterianism was secure, but as a dissenting minority as opposed to the established status of Presbyterianism in Scotland.[57] At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Scots Presbyterians in Ulster had a significant sense of religious and ethnic identity, living at Scots in Ireland. As McCracken shows unambiguously, the Presbyterians 'like Catholics, were subject to discriminatory legislation which, though much less stringent, was sufficiently irksome to arouse bitter resentment.'[58] These dissenters, however, were different to the small pockets of English dissenters in Ireland. J.C. Beckett describes the situation of the Presbyterians as follows:

> [T]he Irish Presbyterians, in Ulster at least, claimed to be in some sort the church of the country. Race and religion with them went together. They were Scots and their church was a part of the Scottish national church. Since their immigration Ulster was, in a way, an extension of Scotland, and their church, as a self-governing extension of the church of Scotland, ought of right to enjoy the same privileges and liberties.[59]

Nonetheless, Presbyterianism in Ireland was not a uniform body and continued throughout the eighteenth century to suffer significant internal division. These conflicts between traditionalist Covenanters and radical latitudinarians seeped into the Irish church from the mother denomination in Scotland and led to the establishment of further dissenting congregations who took issue with liberal clergy.[60]

The complexity of life in Ireland in the early modern period was in no small part due to the competing cultural and religious identities of those who lived on the island, exacerbated by the impact of the English Reformation on the religious affiliations of the population throughout

[56] Finlay Holmes, *Our Irish Presbyterian Heritage* (Belfast: Publications Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1985), pp. 10-11.
[57] Holmes, *Our Irish Presbyterian Heritage*, p. 55.
[58] J.L. McCracken, 'The ecclesiastical structure, 1714-60' in *A New History of Ireland*, ed. by T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan, 9 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), IV, p. 101.
[59] J.C. Beckett, *Protestant Dissent in Ireland 1687-1780* (London: Faber and Faber, 1946), p. 14.
[60] Holmes, *Our Irish Presbyterian Heritage*, p. 62.

the island and the emergence of a significant number of Presbyterian congregations in Ulster. The arrival of Methodism in Ireland in the mid eighteenth century added to the complexity of the religious composition on the island. How Methodism grew varied throughout the world as well as within the British Isles. The spread of Methodism to Ireland will now be surveyed paying attention to the features of the movement in Ireland.

## (II) The growth of Methodism in Ireland from the 1740s to the close of the Eighteenth Century

Methodism was born in England as a revival movement within the majority Established Anglican church. As the movement spread to other parts of the world it adapted so that it could become rooted in different contexts. Hempton describes this process of adaptation as follows:

> [A]s Methodism expanded in the new world order of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries its patterns of growth cannot be explained solely by internal categories… Methodist growth was symbiotically linked to other social, economic, and political contingencies. To argue thus is not to convey a reductionist interpretation of Methodist growth with the "religious" components left out; rather, the reverse is the case.[61]

The complex set of religious, political, social, and economic circumstances relating to Ireland, that have already been explored in detail, mean that it should be regarded as a new context for Methodism as opposed to merely an appendage of the development of the movement in England, though in practice John Wesley may have treated it as such.

The seminal history of the birth of Irish Methodism was written by C.H. Crookshank in three volumes published in late nineteenth century. These volumes outline the narrative history of the early Methodist itinerant preachers in Ireland and the expansion of the movement from 1747, to the evangelical revival of 1859. In the introduction to volume one, Crookshank, exploring the complex nature of religious life, describes Ireland as a bastion of Roman Catholicism and constructs an argument that suggests that blame for the failure of the

[61] Hempton, *Methodism*, p. 29.

Reformation in Ireland can be placed entirely at the door of the policies of the English government in Ireland. The acquisition of land from the native Irish, the plantations, the introduction of penal laws, the imposition of the English, and the spiritual hollowness of the established church are highlighted in this regard:

> The new religion was identified with aliens, that had invaded and seized the country, and thus was hated for their sakes. No attempt was made to teach the people religion in their own language; while monasteries were suppressed, the symbols of superstition demolished, and penal laws enacted. Large districts of country were forfeited to the Crown, and numerous English and Scotch families encouraged to settle on them, thus intensifying the hostility of the natives to Protestants and their religion. Churches sprang up in all directions; but the services were invariably conducted in the English language and thus the truths of the Gospel were as much veiled as ever they had been beneath the cumbrous ritual of Romanism.[62]

Crookshank, an ordained Methodist preacher serving in Ireland and a product of the Protestant Evangelical revival of the nineteenth century, describes the state of the churches in Ireland in the mid eighteenth century in stark terms. Catholicism faced the problem of absentee bishops, failing to exercise their spiritual oversight. The perception of the Church of Ireland was that episcopal appointments were more related to political influence and reward than spiritual maturity, and that while the established church had significant societal power and influence, it was spiritually shallow. The Presbyterian Church was beset by theological controversies with a resulting schism and a hardening of positions by the leadership on both sides. It was into this context that Methodism arrived in Ireland. Though Methodism was moderately successful in Ireland, it did not have the same impact as in England. According to his research, Rack estimates that by the time Wesley died in 1791 there were 14,158 members in Ireland, less of a proportion of the total population than in England.[63]

Despite his position as the pioneer of the movement, Wesley was not the first Methodist in Ireland, and the first Irish influence on Methodism did not come about from visits to Ireland by the Methodist preachers. The group of friends who started to meet for bible study, prayer

[62]C. H. Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, 3 vols (Belfast: Son and Allen, 1885), I, p. 2.
[63] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 231.

and regular attendance at church together in Oxford in 1729 consisted of Wesley, his brother Charles, their friend Bob Kirkham, and a friend of Charles', Irishman William Morgan.[64] Crookshank quotes from a letter written by Morgan's father from Dublin in 1732, 'You cannot conceive what a noise that ridiculous society in which you are engaged has made here.'[65] This illustrates the beginning of the influence of Methodism on the island of Ireland. William Morgan died prematurely only a few months after he had received this letter. His brother Richard subsequently became a student of Wesley, underwent a conversion experience, and became a leader in the Oxford society. Despite exploring the possibility of becoming involved in itinerant preaching in America, Richard Morgan ended up returning to, and settling in Dublin in 1735.

According to Eric Gallagher, George Whitefield, who was Wesley's friend, colleague, fellow itinerant preacher, and Holy Club member, made an unintended visit to Ireland in 1738.[66] Whitefield, a significant figure in the early evangelical revival in Britain and America, was on board one of several ships caught in a storm on the way back from Carolina. The ships took shelter in the Shannon estuary where Whitefield disembarked and visited Limerick. He then travelled across the midlands to Dublin, preaching in two Church of Ireland churches in the city before returning to England. Gallagher states, '[h]is stay was brief, but when he returned to London he gave a glowing account of the welcome he had had from the Irish.'[67] It was not until several years later, however, that a more strategic engagement in Ireland began.

Religious Societies, the primary vehicle for the spread of Methodism had already existed in Dublin from the last decade of the seventeenth century. Toby Barnard assesses the rise and fall of religious societies during this earlier period. The societies mirrored the

[64] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People*, p. 38.
[65] Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, p. 12.
[66] R.D. Eric Gallagher, 'Methodism in Ireland', in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, ed. by R. E. Davies, A. R. George, and E. G. Rupp, 4 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1983), III, p. 233.
[67] Gallagher, 'Methodism in Ireland', p. 233.

emergence of similar groups in England and were brought to Ireland by clergy returning from London in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution and the defeat of James II. They were characterised by anti-Catholic sentiment, competition between Anglicans and dissenters, and concerned with the moral and social reform of the nation. Barnard states that by 1717 the groups had all but disappeared, but elements of what they tried to achieve lingered through the rest of the eighteenth century.[68]

The Religious Societies that appeared in the 1730s and 1740s featured in a variety of contexts in Europe through the eighteenth and the nineteenth century and are associated with the Protestant Evangelical Revival. Rack analyses the similarities and differences between these societies and those that had existed at the end of the seventeenth century. The variety of groups that were established in the earlier period began to operate in London before spreading to the other parts of the British Isles. They illustrate a deepening interest in religious devotion with an emphasis on prayer and Bible reading. Some, however, were focused on more than private religious devotion, for example, those that existed under the banner of 'Societies for the Reformation of Manners' sought the prosecution of offenders through the judicial system. This, in Rack's opinion, affected the popular development in the societies at that time as they appeared to take on a distinctly more political tone.[69] In the context of Ireland, Patrick Walsh describes the nature of the meetings of the societies in the following terms:

> A strict order for each meeting was prescribed, with specific biblical passages to be read by the prelector or steward of the society at particular points during each meeting. Gatherings were to take place on Sundays either before or after church services. The venue to be used was not stipulated, but members were instructed to avoid gaming houses completely, and ale houses and taverns as much as possible, though the latter were the usual meeting places for clubs and societies in this period…. One striking difference (with other societies) is the absence of any

[68] T.C. Barnard, 'Reforming Irish Manners: The Religious Societies in Dublin during the 1690s' *The Historical Journal*, 35 (1992), 805-38 (p. 806).
[69] Rack, 'Religious Societies and the Origins of Methodism', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 38 (1987), 582-595 (pp. 582-583).

> reference to a membership fee. Members were expected instead to provide alms for the poor according to their abilities to do so.[70]

The societies that emerged later, from the 1730's, such as the Holy Club, were more pietistic than those from the earlier period, and, as the Methodism grew, took on other features that further distinguished them from the older groups. They welcomed non-Anglicans, they were open to women, they began to engage in field preaching and other evangelistic practices, and, particular to Methodism, Wesley sought to connect his various societies into a national network as opposed to autonomous groups. John Kent believes that the success of Methodism in eighteenth century Britain was that it tapped into the belief system of the general population in England that was, to a significant degree, unfulfilled by the existing religious structures.

> What got Wesleyan Methodism off the ground in the 1740s was the Wesley's encounter with and response to the demands of primary religion, a passionate hunger for access to invisible powers, and so for ways of changing the life and prosperity of the adherent.[71]

Regarding the impact that this movement had on Ireland, David Hempton argues that it was these new and innovative characteristics that affected the change in religious life in Ireland, bringing a new player unto the scene.

> Methodism in its pragmatic structure, Arminian theology, innovations in worship, utilisation of the laity, and conversionist zeal, brought a new feature to the Irish religious landscape, which until then had been dominated by churches ministering to their own communities.[72]

Wesley deployed a particular methodology to organise the gatherings that emerged because of the open-air revival preaching. The pattern was not dissimilar to that used by other revival movements at that time. Preaching locations were organised into geographical groups that he called 'circuits'. Wesley assigned itinerant preachers to travel around these circuits in

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[70] Patrick Walsh, 'Club life in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Ireland: in search of an associational world, c.1680-c.1730' in *Clubs and Societies in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, ed. by James Kelly and Martyn J. Powell (Four Courts Press: Dublin, 2010) pp. 36-52 (pp. 40-41).
[71] John Kent, *Wesley and the Wesleyans – Religion in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 8.
[72] David Hempton, 'Methodism in Irish Society, 1770-1830', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 36 (1986), 117-142 (p. 123).

teams. After a month, he would then rotate the teams between the different circuits. The aim was to reach as many people as possible with the good news of the gospel. Heitzenrater argues that this approach, inspired by Wesley's desire to grow the preaching ministry, precipitated his first visit to Ireland. As he states '[T]he emphasis during this period on widespread preaching rather than forming societies may account in part for the spread of Methodism into Ireland in 1747.'[73]

Crookshank describes the formation of the first Irish Methodist Society in Dublin in 1745 by an unnamed soldier who had begun to preach. Subsequently the group was led by a Baptist named Benjamin La Trobe.[74] According to Heitzenrater, La Trobe later joined the Moravian movement which led to an invitation to John Cennick to preach to the society in Dublin.[75] Cennick had been a Methodist preacher in the 1730s but had separated from Wesley and the Methodist movement over theological matters.[76] Despite this fact, Gallagher argues that Cennick was 'regarded as a Methodist, and one sermon on 'the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes' prompted a Dublin priest to bud the Methodists 'Swaddlers'. The name stuck.'[77]

Welshman, Thomas Williams, another young preacher, who had previously fallen out with Wesley moved to Dublin in the summer of 1747 and started another Methodist society. It was his invitation that led to the first of Wesley's twenty-one visits to Ireland in August 1747. Initially Wesley visited on an annual basis then bi-annually up to 1789. John's brother, Charles, made just two visits to Ireland, firstly from September 1747 to March 1748, then from August to October 1748. Charles' first visit was at the behest of John in response to a mob attack on the chapel where the fledgling Methodist society was meeting. Cooney comments that Charles appears to have been successful in reassuring the members of the society and that during this

[73] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People*, p.163
[74] Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, p.13.
[75] Heitzenrater, p. 163.
[76] Sean Boyle, 'Swaddling John and the Great Awakening', in *History Ireland*, 18 (2010), 18-21 (p. 21).
[77] *R.D. Eric Gallagher, 'Methodism in Ireland', p. 233.*

time the movement began work in the midlands of Ireland.[78] Heitzenrater describes the organisational development of the Methodist presence in Ireland as follows:

> The spread of Methodism into Ireland thus appears to follow the typical spread of the revival. Local revival activity and the resultant societies were initiated by persons who either had been associated with the Wesleys or had followed a general pattern similar to the Methodists. These groups were then incorporated into the connectional network, provided with Wesleyan preachers, and "regularized" by inclusion in Wesleys' own itinerary and correspondence.[79]

One of the significant features of the spread of the Methodist movement in Ireland in the initial years was that it was closely related to the distribution of British army garrisons. John Lenton claims that this is one reason why Wesley has drawn criticism, as this feature of Methodism would likely have made it less attractive to the native population.[80] It is also, however, typical of Wesley's pragmatic approach. The junior officers of the army were recruited from working classes in England, the same strata as were attracted to the Methodist movement and who had become accustomed to having religiously enthusiastic support from the close-knit community that their Methodist society provided. It should come as no surprise that they looked for similar support when they found themselves posted to the alien environment of Ireland. Where there was no local society it would have seemed obvious to take the opportunity of establishing one, especially if there were any local families, particularly landowners, who were also in sympathy with the revival movement. As Cooney states:

> Wesley in Ireland was not a pioneer; he went where Methodist work had already been commenced by others. We have noted the pioneering work of the army officers in various places. A small amount of work was done by Methodist families who moved from one town to another in pursuit of their craft or trade, and if there was no Methodist society in the place to which they went, commenced meetings.[81]

[78] Cooney, p. 31.
[79] Heitzenrater, p. 164.
[80] John Lenton, *John Wesley's Preachers*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009) p. 196.
[81] Cooney, *The Methodists in Ireland*, p. 33.

The development of the movement in Ireland contrasts that of England, where Methodism appears to have had a broader appeal. The issues of language and religious identity are undoubtedly reasons why Methodism grew more slowly in Ireland in the eighteenth century.

Wesley kept his itinerant preaching teams on the move. While several Anglican ordained clergy joined Wesley's band of itinerant preachers, John McEllenney argues that as the movement grew it was predominantly young men who joined the ranks of Wesley's preachers. They were generally, unmarried, lacking in educational attainment, and socially marginalised from the established church. In addition, they were preaching to people who were in that same social sphere, as he states:

> Methodist itinerants, men of low rank and uncertain breeding, ministered among men and women who felt as if they too did not fit in anywhere. Unlike their ancestors, who were rooted in the same parish and social class for centuries, the men and women to whom Methodism appealed were rootless. The traditions that measured every step taken by their ancestors lacked authority for them.[82]

Rack notes that, regarding Ireland, Wesley was conscious of the significant contextual differences especially in facing the majority Catholic population. Initially the Methodist movement was more successful in the southern half of the island in garrison towns and in places where there had been an influx of immigrants from continental Europe. In the later decades of the eighteenth-century Methodism grew most strongly in the 'linen triangle' area of mid Ulster and in the Lough Erne region, particularly the places where Anglican parishes where struggling and there were significant numbers of people on the fringes of the church. Wesley first visited Ulster in 1756 visiting Newry, Lisburn, Belfast, and Carrickfergus.[83] The challenge that the Methodist preachers faced was that the underlying religious superstition of the general population in Ireland was well catered for by their affinity for their Catholic roots. Rack states

[82] John G. McEllhenney, 'Itinerancy is dead – but it can live again', in *Quarterly Review*, 23 (2003), 59-71 (p. 60).
[83] Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, p.114-15.

that 'Roman Catholics who swelled open air crowds did not translate into secure members.'[84] Beyond the mid Ulster and Lough Erne regions, the numerically strongest Methodist communities were initially to be found in concentrated groups in West Cork, Limerick, and North Tipperary. The Limerick community was made up of a significant number of German Palatine refugees from the Lower Rhine area who fled poverty and French persecution in 1709.[85] Many relocated to London, Ireland, and America. Wesley first encountered the Palatines in Limerick in 1749 and there was an obvious resonance between the Arminian 'holiness' style preaching of the Methodists and the pietistic spirituality of those Palatines that came from a Lutheran background.[86] Significant growth in the larger urban areas such as Belfast did not come about until the nineteenth century.

The expansion of the Methodist movement in England and Wesley's recruitment of preachers to do the work required the development of organisational structures to share news among the leadership of the revival, to co-ordinate arrangements including that of the itinerancy, and to maintain relationships. The initial pattern of meeting on a quarterly basis and holding an annual conference meeting of the leaders' dates to 1739.[87] Subsequently Wesley attempted to hold conferences with other revival groupings such as the Moravians and the Calvinistic groups led by Wesley's friend and colleague George Whitefield. Ultimately Wesley failed to unite the different groups but did succeed in establishing a significant number of preachers who regarded themselves as loyal to Wesley and the Methodist movement. Heitzenrater summarises these efforts and the important role of the conference as follows:

> The stage was set then for the conference of 1744 to become an important benchmark the development of Wesleyan doctrine and discipline. Wesley had drawn the line; the main efforts to overcome divisions were behind him, and he was ready to move forcefully ahead in his own domain.[88]

[84] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 235.
[85] Cooney, p. 231.
[86] Vivien Hick, 'John Wesley and the Irish Rhinelanders', in *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, 5 (1990), 89-103 (p. 92).
[87] Heitzenrater, p. 109.
[88] Ibid., p. 144.

From this point the annual conference became an essential feature of Methodist organisation with an emphasis on support, discipline, and doctrinal understanding. As well as the conference in England, Wesley gathered his preachers for a first conference in Ireland in Limerick in 1752 with nine preachers present for the two days.[89] According to Cooney, Wesley held this first conference in Ireland as he judged that the work of the movement had become sufficiently strong to merit it. The decisions of that conference, however, could in theory be overturned by subsequent meetings of the English conference.[90] Crookshank outlines in detail the business conducted in Limerick, which focused on doctrinal matters, outlining the duties of the itinerant preachers, setting stipends and allowances for preachers (a number of the itinerants were now married and therefore required some type of regular income to sustain their households), creating six circuits across Ireland, giving guidance concerning the operations of society worship, and receiving new preachers.[91] In all there were seventeen Irish conferences from this point until Wesley's death in 1791. From 1782 the Irish conference met on an annual basis with Wesley and his assistant Thomas Coke alternating the chairing of the meeting.[92]

While conference dealt with urgent practical matters the focus for the itinerants continued to be on the preaching. This was their religious calling, and so motivated by their radical enthusiasm and desire to see 'converts' they kept on the move through towns and villages preaching wherever they could. Hempton summarises their activities in the following terms:

> Methodist missionaries and itinerant preachers, disparagingly called Black Caps, Swaddlers and cavalry preachers, spoke wherever they could attract a crowd – a markets, fairs, wakes, pilgrimages, public executions, Volunteer meetings and Orange gatherings.[93]

[89] Ibid., p. 186.
[90] Cooney, p. 125.
[91] Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, p. 91-92.
[92] Gallagher, p. 234.
[93] Hempton, *Methodism in Irish Society, 1770-1830*, p. 120.

There is no escaping the fact that most of the early preachers in Ireland, until the 1760s, travelled from England. It was not until the 1780s that the majority of the preachers in Ireland were native born. John Lenton's research explains that the lack of information on Irish preachers was due to a fire at the Irish Public Records office in 1922. Nonetheless Lenton has been able to establish a significant amount of material that illustrates the early deployment pattern of the preachers:

> Of the 210 preachers who are known to to have travelled in Ireland in the period up to 1791, 106 were Irish-born and 104 were born elsewhere, roughly in equal numbers. This hides the fact that those born elsewhere predominated in the early days of Irish Methodism (1747-1765), while after the mid-1780s those who travelled in Ireland were almost all Irish-born preachers.[94]

The increasing number of Irish preachers made it more costly for them to move across the Irish sea and therefore the Irish settled into a pattern of moving around appointments in Ireland with fewer English preachers itinerating to Ireland. While there was no formal separation in the relationship of the two conferences, according to Cooney, they naturally became more independent.[95]

The establishment of a separate conference gave Methodism in Ireland the foundation to develop an identity of its own. Yet there continued to be an interdependent relationship between the English (subsequently British) conference and the Irish conference. The movement of itinerant preachers between the conferences, while it decreased from the 1780s, continued until 1800.[96] After Wesley's death, the British conference annually appointed a preacher to preside over the Irish conference, and from 1817 until 2010 the President of the British church chaired the Irish conference. Until this recent change the Irish conference elected an annual President of the church who was understood to be the Vice-President of the Irish conference.

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[94] *Lenton, p. 195.*
[95] Cooney, p. 127.
[96] R.D. Eric Gallagher, 'Methodism in Ireland', p. 234.

By the 1770s it was becoming important for Wesley and the Methodist movement to make plans for what would happen when Wesley was no longer fit to lead. In Wesley's mind, the main contender for the role was the Anglican clergyman, John Fletcher. Fletcher had become an assistant to Wesley and one of the leaders of the Methodist movement but had remained, despite Wesley's encouragement, a parish vicar. Fletcher advocated that the Methodist preachers and societies should be 'regularised' by the Church of England to prevent secession and remain a reforming influence in the Anglican church.[97] Fletcher put his plans in a letter to Wesley prior to the conference of 1775. It is unclear if Wesley ever received the letter or if he chose to ignore it as in his communication with Fletcher after the conference he makes no mention of it.[98] Undoubtedly Fletcher's unwillingness to leave his parish and join the itinerancy ruled him out of succeeding Wesley as leader of the movement.

Another contender to succeed Wesley emerged in the form of Thomas Coke whom Wesley first met in the summer of 1776. Coke was a young Anglican priest, an Oxford graduate with a legal background, who, a year after that first meeting, was forced out of his parish ministry due to his 'Methodist leanings'.[99] He would become the ageing John Wesley's senior assistant, erstwhile successor, and a significant influence in Irish Methodism. Coke became involved in the leadership of several aspects of the Wesleyan movement including the Tract Society, responsible for the production and distribution of literature, and he was a primary influence over attempts to develop Methodist mission work in other parts of the world.[100] Coke played a significant role in the process of drawing up the 'Deed of Declaration' that gave legal status to the conference and the Methodist movement after Wesley's death. Rack discusses the varying opinion on Coke's legacy as a leader in early Methodism. He was regarded by some

[97] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 466-67.
[98] Heitzenrater, p. 258.
[99] John A. Vickers, 'Thomas Coke Revisited', *Bulletin of the Wesley Historical Society*, 14 (2008/09), 3-14 (p.4).
[100] Heitzenrater, p. 281-82.

as being highly ambitious, manoeuvring himself into a position where he exercised too much influence over the ageing Wesley.[101] Vickers argues that the relatively young Coke brought energy, enthusiasm, and drive to the movement at a time when Wesley's energy was beginning to drop. He states, 'Wesley was able to send him here and there in response to crises that had begun to arise over the settlement of preaching houses and the degree of control Wesley and the conference were able to exercise over them.'[102] Coke was operating in a context where there were difficult and contentious matters to be resolved regarding the future of Methodism. Ultimately his contribution can be summarised in his enduring commitment to the spread of Methodism across the world and his role as the first 'bishop' of American Methodism.[103]

Coke first presided at the Irish conference in 1782, and then alternated in this function with Wesley until the latter's death. Vickers notes, however, that Coke, upon arriving at the

[101] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 496.
[102] Vickers, 'Thomas Coke Revisited', p. 5.
[103] John Wesley first visited Georgia, America, in the autumn of 1735, having been persuaded to join in the mission of the SPG (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) and the SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) in the New World. It was during this time that Wesley was deeply influenced by the piety of German Moravians who he first met onboard the ship to America. Wesley spent two years in the Georgian colony establishing a society like that of the Holy Club in Oxford, engaging in work in the school in Savannah and in mission work among the native Indian population. There were also difficult personal experiences that ultimately led to Wesley returning to England. None the less Methodism now had a presence in American colony. George Whitefield was the key figure in the development of American Methodism up until his death in 1770. According to Heitzenrater in *Wesley and the People*, (p.245) Wesley viewed Whitefield as crucial in terms of the development of preachers in America, particularly those who were sent from England and Ireland. Whitefield's premature death, however, left the young and unproven preachers without an experienced leader. Wesley sent Thomas Rankin to be his General Assistant in America in 1773. Rankin held the first Conference there and Heitzentrater (p.258) details the agenda which included resolutions that ensured the preachers recognised Wesley's authority over the American movement. Wesley encouraged the Methodists to be advocates of peace in the developing tensions over American independence. Later Wesley took a more critical line against those advocating for independence and by 1777 all the preachers Wesley had sent to America, except Francis Asbury, had returned to England. Asbury, sympathetic with the American independence movement would become the most influential leader in the growth of North American Methodism. Following the American war of independence Wesley appointed Asbury as the General Assistant in American and later, following the conference of 1784 in England, and against the advice of his senior leaders, Wesley effectively carried out an episcopal ordination of Coke as 'Superintendent' of the church in America. He justified his actions as now that America was an independent state it was outside the jurisdiction of the established Anglican Church. He also ordained two others as firstly deacons, then priests and sent them, with Coke, to America in November 1784. They met with Asbury in Philadelphia and explained Wesley's plan that Asbury also be ordained superintendent by Coke. Asbury argued that the American preachers should be given a say in this decision and a General Conference was held at Christmas 1784 in Baltimore. Asbury and Coke were elected superintendents of this episcopal Methodist church. Coke did not remain in America but according to Vickers (ed) in *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and* Ireland, p. 73, he visited a further eight times until 1805. Even though he was the co-superintendent his influence on the American church was restricted due to his absences and his status as British. See a full discussion on these events and the implications for Methodism in Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, pp. 506-520.

first Irish conference following Wesley's death, discovered the preachers had elected one of their own to preside as they did not wish to make any presumptions as to who would be the successor of Mr Wesley.[104] Crookshank's account of this incident states that Coke had been pre-warned that this would happen as there was the view among some that he was trying to take Mr Wesley's place. Some of Coke's friends tried to persuade him not to attend so as not to be embarrassed or hurt, but Coke was undeterred and travelled to Dublin. The Irish preachers formed a committee and elected another preacher to chair, although, according to Crookshank, their intentions towards Coke were benign.

> [I]n order to give Dr Coke a plain intimation, once for all, that however highly they esteemed and loved him, they could not accept any minister as occupying the exalted position, long sustained by the venerated Wesley, elected as their chairman John Crook, who presided with much judgement and dignity.[105]

Despite this setback for Coke in Ireland Lenton maintains that he 'developed a special relationship with the Irish preachers.'[106] Coke engaged in preaching tours, developed relationships with the circuits, and aided the development of the conference including initiating the practice of publishing separate minutes for the Irish conference. As time progressed, the decrease in the number of young English preachers being sent to Ireland began to create a distance between the two conferences. Coke was one of a few who continued to travel to Ireland and inevitably became the key figure in maintaining the relationship. It was Coke who, following the 1798 rebellion,[107] proposed the creation of a mission endeavour to preach to Irish

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[104] Vickers, 'Thomas Coke Revisited', p. 7.
[105] C.H. Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland,* II, p. 38.
[106] Lenton, p. 209.
[107] Political instability was a characteristic of Irish history throughout the long eighteenth century. By the 1790s matters were escalating as England faced an economic crisis triggered by trade war, the revolution in America, and pressure created by the French revolution. These events had a knock-on effect in Ireland creating pressure on the Irish Parliament that as O'Gorman notes in *The Long Eighteenth Century* (p. 328) 'still did not represent the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian populations, who together made up over 90 percent of the population.' There was increasing pressure in both Dublin and London for reform of the political institutions and the introduction of religious tolerance for the Catholic population and for Protestant Dissenters in Ulster. O'Gorman further notes (p. 329) that 'Catholic grievances were rendered more acute by worsening economic hardship, which culminated in systematic rural violence.' R.B. McDowell, 'Reform and reaction, 1789-94' in *A New History of Ireland*, ed. by T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan, 9 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), IV, pp. 289-338, outlines the events

Catholics in their native language,[108] a practice that, according to Lenton, Wesley had not promoted despite the obvious benefits of doing so.

> In Wales, Ireland and Scotland Wesley was against the use of the local language and as a result there was a relative failure, where otherwise the neglect of the Established church might have rendered them ripe for success. In Wales and Ireland later attempts in the local languages after Wesley's death led to some success.[109]

Lenton's research on the preachers in Wales and Scotland shows that in both places there were few who spoke in the Gaelic language. In Wales, most of the preachers came from the anglicized south of the country. In Scotland, in addition to the difficulty of language, there was significant anti-English sentiment, and, with the influence of the Presbyterian model of governance, considerable resistance to clericalism. There were two distinct differences in Ireland. Firstly, the larger proportion of the population that was both Roman Catholic and Gaelic speaking, and secondly even the minority Anglican presence in Ireland was larger than its equivalent in both Wales and Scotland. Pádraig De Brún argues that from the 1720s the Anglican Church made little effort to engage with the Gaelic language and culture in Ireland,

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leading to the formation of a plethora radical political groups in Belfast, Dublin, and many other provincial towns and who then started to come together as the Society of United Irishmen in the autumn of 1791. The societies co-ordinated a widespread and eloquent campaign for social, political, and religious reform. Further, R.B. McDowell in 'The age of the United Irishmen; revolution and the union, 1794-1800' in *A New History of Ireland*, ed. by T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan, 9 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), IV, pp. 339-373 (p. 339) argues that by 1795 the failure of the London government to act for reform in any meaningful fashion created the context in which 'Irish radicalism began to transform itself from a constitutional into an underground movement, with an organisation that implied the possibility of direct action.' Measures to suppress the extensive activities of radical opposition groups in numerous parts of the country in 1796 and 1797 were operating at the same time as the various elements within the United Irishmen, including Wolfe Tone, who had fled to France to seek support, were planning an insurgence. Despite government successes in arresting leaders of the opposition, the rebellion broke out on 23rd May 1798. McDowell, describing the lack of co-ordination of the rebellion, suggests that 'the rising resembled a rural riot on an enormous scale rather than a military campaign.' (p. 355). Assistance from French forces with United Irish exiles did not prove to be enough to defeat the British forces, and there was the distinct lack of and organised approach by the different elements of the rising. Brutal suppression of the rebels followed, and the whole venture cost 12,000 Irish lives according to O'Gorman (p. 330). One of the immediate consequences of the rising was the decision by the London government that the Dublin Protestant parliament and government was a failing project. As a result, an Act of Union was passed by both parliaments which disbanded the Dublin administration and allowed for 100 Irish MPs to be added to the House of Commons, 28 peers and 4 bishops to the House of Lords and the amalgamation of the Church of Ireland with the Church of England. See McDowell pp. 366-367.

[108] Dudley L. Cooney, 'The influence of the army on the first hundred years of Irish Methodism', *Bulletin of the Wesley Historical Society*, 7 (2001), 80-91 (p.91).

[109] Lenton, p. 193.

instead, choosing to focus on English education. There was a general concern that the continued use of the Irish language would serve as a mechanism to promote the independence and separation of Ireland from England. Later, following the 1789 rebellion this feeling intensified with organisations such as the British and Foreign Bible Society being discouraged from publication of the Bible in Gaelic:

> [W]hen in 1807 that Society first canvassed Protestant opinion as to the desirability of publishing the Scriptures in Irish, it received advice from several quarters in Ireland against the undertaking; rather than be encouraged, the language should be brought into disuse as quickly as possible.[110]

Wesley's loyalty to the crown and his sense of national identity, it would appear, shaped his views on how the Christian gospel should be proclaimed in the context of the home nations. It was after his death that the Methodists experimented with the Gaelic preachers and only to a limited extent.

Nonetheless, the formal move by the Methodists came in the middle of the most sustained period of growth in membership figures for Irish Methodism from 1770-1820. After 1820 the rate of growth declines and then membership begins to fall from the 1840s. Of primary concern is the first period, during which, according to Hempton, significant efforts were made to engage in missionary work among the native Irish. As he states:

> The first stage reflects the period of intensive missionary efforts, the second shows the effect of the political and religious conflict with a more aggressive Irish Catholicism and the third stage indicates the tragic effect of the Irish famine and consequent emigration. [111]

According to Vickers, Coke's first-hand insight, having witnessed violent scenes in Ulster, gave him the ability to influence the British conference to throw its weight behind the Irish-speaking mission. Earlier experimentation by figures like Thomas Walsh and Charles Graham

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[110] Pádraig De Brún, *Scriptural Instruction in the vernacular* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2009), p. 3.

*[111] David Hempton, 'The Methodist Crusade in Ireland 1795-1845', Irish Historical Studies, 22, (1980), 33-48 (p. 35).*

was followed with 'a more concerted and sustained effort to convert the benighted Catholics.'[112] The three preachers initially set aside as Gaelic missionaries were James M'Quigg, Charles Graham and Gideon Ouseley. Although they saw some success in converting Roman Catholics and the numbers of Irish Methodists continued to grow during this time, many of those who converted found it difficult to remain in their own communities. Their conversion was often interpreted as not merely a religious one, but also a political one, meaning that they were also deserting their Irish identity and joining the enemy. The easiest path for many ardent converts was emigration.[113]

The development of preaching in Gaelic and the response of the Methodist conferences in Ireland and England to the 1798 rebellion uncovers a significant anti-Catholic sentiment within Methodism during this period and in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Rack considers the complexity of Wesley's view of Catholicism in detail:

> Three main influences affected him: first, the inherited fears and mythology of English Protestants about false popish doctrine, deceit, cruelty and political subversion; second the growing eighteenth-century sense of propriety of religious toleration which often resulted in a limitation on the practical implementation of the very severe penal code against Catholics; third, the pressures induced by the fortunes and needs of the Methodist mission. A special part was played here by the interests of the mission in Ireland and by the Methodist preachers who originated there.[114]

Wesley had been positively influenced by elements of Catholic spirituality and yet concurrently found himself in a political and social environment shaped by a confusing relationship with Roman Catholicism since the time of the English Reformation. He recognised aspects of shared Christian doctrine with Catholics and appealed for mutual respect and 'brotherly love'.[115] And

[112] Vickers, 'Thomas Coke Revisited', p. 9.
[113] Lenton, p. 214.
[114] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 309.
[115] For a detailed discussion on the relationship between John Wesley and Roman Catholicism see David Butler, *Methodists and papists* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1995). Appendix B pp. 211-16 contains the full text of Wesley's 'Letter to a Roman Catholic.'

yet, at the same time he advocated for the need for the wholesale conversion of Catholics in Ireland believing this to be the only solution to the political and religious turmoil there.[116]

Wesley's perspective on Catholicism, it could be argued, contributes to the position taken by the Conferences at the turn of the nineteenth century, when, as Hempton states:

> The Irish Wesleyans, like their English counterparts, were impeccably loyal to the 'constituted authorities', so much so that they were able to obtain special permission from the lord lieutenant for the meeting of the Irish conference in 1798 at a time when all assemblies of more than five were prohibited. The rebellion of the United Irishmen not only reinforced Irish Methodist opinion that Roman Catholicism was disloyal and violent but the accounts produced by Irish preachers had a powerful effect on English Wesleyanism.[117]

This concerted view of English Methodism, undoubtedly influenced by the presence and leadership of Irish preachers serving in England, enabled the expansions of the 'mission' in Ireland. The team of three was soon expanded and by 1816 there were twenty-one 'mission' preachers operating on fourteen circuits in Ireland. During this period the oversight of the mission remained with a committee in London and, in fact, did not come under the direct control of the Irish conference until 1906.[118]

The question of Catholicism was not the only issue that Methodism was wrestling with in the decades following Wesley's death. In fact, the English conference support for the Irish mission should be assessed considering wider tensions between the two conferences. For example, there were tensions concerning financial resources and the provision of annuities for Irish preachers, with the English requiring the Irish to provide more information on their accounts. Secondly, Wesley's original legal hundred contained eleven preachers stationed in Ireland, but in the following years this number reduced significantly. This led to protests from the Irish conference and the agreement in 1811 that there should always be ten Irish appointments to the list. Finally, there was the controversial question of the provision of the

[116] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 310.
[117] Hempton, 'The Methodist Crusade in Ireland 1795-1845', p. 36.
[118] R.D. Eric Gallagher, 'Methodism in Ireland', p. 240.

sacrament of Holy Communion in Methodist societies. The significant growth of Methodism in Ireland from 1800 consisted of many who came from Catholic and dissenting Protestant backgrounds, not merely from the Anglican church. With the growing societies there was a demand that the people should receive the sacrament from their own preachers. This increasing tension and Coke's premature death in 1813 while travelling to India, removing a significant intermediary between the two conferences, meant that this was a matter that would continue to cause tension and division in the years ahead.[119]

In summary, by the start of the nineteenth century Irish Methodism was at a crucial phase in its early history. What was to follow in the first half of the new century was a period of significant growth that would see its numbers peak in 1844. This growth took place against the backdrop of religious and political turmoil in the aftermath of the 1798 rebellion and the push for Catholic emancipation. The response of the Irish and English Methodist conferences was to embark upon a concerted effort to engage with the Irish-speaking, Catholic majority population. Other great challenges lay ahead, both from the outside, in the form of the Irish famine and subsequent widespread emigration, and theological disputes within, relating to church, ministry and sacramental life.

**Conclusion**

The principal aim of this chapter has been to provide a context for understanding the emergence of Methodism on the island of Ireland from its inception in 1738 to the end of the eighteenth century. With due attention to the question of history and of historiography, the chapter sought to provide a clear account of the expansion of Methodism under the two headings illustrated above. The principal finding of this research is that a complex relationship pertained between Methodism in Ireland and Methodism in England for the period under consideration. Effectively, the chapter has shown that the context is radically different in the social, political,

[119] Lenton, p. 217.

and religious domains. Furthermore, it has shown that despite the radical differences of context between England and Ireland, a symbiotic relationship endured between the two Conferences. This symbiotic relationship will be the subject of Chapter Three with particular reference to ministry.

# Chapter 3

# Methodist Ministry and Leadership in Ireland: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives from Wesley to the Present

## Introduction

The Methodist movement, as illustrated in chapter two, was at a defining phase in its development at the beginning of the nineteenth century. With its erstwhile founder deceased, leaving behind sizeable, efficiently organised associations in Britain, Ireland and America, the question of how its ministry and leadership would develop was crucial. This chapter will build on the exploration of the origins of Methodism in Ireland with reference to the theme of Christian ministry. This task is a complex one as it is evident that questions about Methodist ecclesiology and ministry are difficult to answer with clarity and precision due to the expansive and evolving nature of the movement. Campbell describes this context as follows:

> We have to content ourselves with the fact that Wesley did not have systematic clarity about the theological or practical implications of the pattern of ministry for Methodists either in England or in America. At first, he certainly did not intend to start a church, but events and the mission brought him finally to the point where he did intend to found a church for America… He wanted to embrace both Catholic teaching, as mediated in Anglicanism, and the truths he came to know and believe as a result of his evangelical experience.[1]

Effectively, events forced Wesley to act in a way that would result in the founding of a denomination with a theology of ministry based on inherited understandings of ordination blended with an emphasis on evangelical experience.

This chapter will consider original source material from Wesley, allowing his voice to be heard. This will include Wesley's sermons that explore the theme of ministry and other relevant items of correspondence, that will speak to the themes under discussion. In addition,

[1] Dennis M. Campbell, *The Yoke of Obedience – The Meaning of Ordination in Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), p. 67.

the Reports and Minutes of the Methodist Conferences in Ireland and England provide a rich insight into the practice of ministry in Methodism from the earliest phase of the movement to the present day. The primary source material is drawn from the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland archive at Edgehill House in Belfast.[2] The archive is one of the foremost collections of Wesleyan and Methodist documentation in the world, and it is the only depository of such material in Ireland. In addition to the extensive and original archive material, the perspectives of various authors and commentators on the development of Methodist ministry and the challenges facing the contemporary church will be surveyed.

The evolution of Methodist ministry, grounded in the context of Ireland, has not previously been explored in this way. This research provides the opportunity to learn from the history of the outward orientated nature of Methodist ministry in Ireland in the early days, ascertaining what lessons can be learned for the church and those who exercise ministry today. The most significant challenge for the contemporary Methodist Church in Ireland is that it struggles to reach beyond its institutional boundaries. This challenge is not unique to Irish Methodism but is a test for most established denominations in the post-Christendom context of the west. The theologian Darrell Guder has made a significant contribution to the discussion around the future of the Christian church and mission in the western context:

> [M]ainline denominations are, across the board, losing members and income. The cultural and legal privileging of churches is rapidly disappearing. The interpretation of the Christendom history and legacy in public educational institutions is, when addressed at all, allegedly neutral, but often negative. Biblical illiteracy is rampant inside the churches and endemic in society at large. The separation of facts (scientific truth) and values (including religious convictions) has become dogma, with the public marketplace and the public conversation largely devoid of religious interaction, while religious activity in congregations is viewed as private, voluntaristic, and thus insular, inward and member orientated.[3]

[2] https://methodisthistoryireland.org/about-us/
[3] Darrell Guder, *Called to Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), p. 30.

This experience leaves institutional churches in a state of flux under the weight of questions regarding their numerical and financial sustainability. For those who serve in roles such as ordained ministers these issues raise a further set of questions about their sense of call and purpose.

The study of the concept of Religious Societies in chapter two showed that the early Methodist Holy Club was a prime example of such organisations. From the late 1730s the early Methodist Societies comprised of local groups of people who professed the Christian faith and were committed to meeting together for mutual spiritual edification. Wesley's guidance to members was that they should remain committed to attending the local Anglican parish church for worship and the sacraments rather than separating from it. Wesley's personal oversight of the preachers held the societies together as a network in 'connexion' with him.[4] This term conveyed a sense of relationship and covenantal commitment initially to Wesley and then to one another. It remains an important term today expressing the interdependence of the relationships and the consultative model of governance across all levels of Methodist denominations.

After his time in Georgia, America, from 1735-1738, and inspired by Moravian practice, Wesley organised small groups or 'bands' within each society. In December 1738, he wrote his own rules for the 'bands' involving a set of questions to be used during their meetings. The purpose of the band/group was to create a more intimate setting where questions could be

[4] Originally the word 'connexion' was used in a variety of settings, secular as well as religious, to convey a relationship with an individual or group. Wesley used the term to describe the nature of the relationship that he had with the other Methodist preachers etc. and their relationship with each other, and most vitally an understanding of their common call and unity of purpose in the mission of God. As time progressed the word 'connexion' could be substituted for 'church' or 'denomination'. In the Methodist psyche it has always meant something more than structure or organisation. Russell E. Richey, *Marks of Methodism* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), pp. 17-40, discusses the spiritual and theological nuance of the word, arguing for a need to recover this understanding as well as the practical and organisational sense of its use in American Methodism. A detailed discussion on the use of the term connexion' in the eighteenth century can be found in John A. Vickers (ed), *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* (London: Epworth, 2000), p. 77. Here Vickers states 'This Connexional principle continues to be intrinsic to Methodism, as a structural expression at all levels of life of essential interdependence, through fellowship, consultation, government and oversight.'

asked of members to encourage continued spiritual vitality. Numerically 'bands' contained no more than four or five people, they were single sex, and all members would have had the same marital status.[5] Davies maintains that Wesley did not merely copy what others were doing, but always sought to adapt what he saw as effective strategies for the benefit of his own movement:

> [I]t is not hard to account for the and trace the origin and growth of Wesley's Methodist societies, so long as it is remembered that he never adopted the practices of others, or his own earlier ones, without strict scrutiny or without modification for his purposes. He was certainly a pragmatist, in the sense that he was always open to consider and use what was suggested to him in the form of ideas and activities. But he did not fail to put his own stamp on anything he proceeded to borrow.[6]

Later the 'class' layer of organisation was added to the local society, initially in the Bristol society in 1742, and then adopted more widely as societies grew. This was a bigger group of approximately twelve members, mixed sex, and marital status. The purpose of the 'class' developed as a means of gathering a weekly collection and of providing pastoral care to growing societies. Baker describes the class as a 'weekly meeting for fellowship of a somewhat less searching kind than that of bands.'[7] 'Classes' and 'bands' were steered by lay leaders appointed initially, by Wesley.

In 1746, in response to the growth in the number of societies, Wesley created seven 'circuits' in England. The circuits were geographical groups of societies that the itinerant preachers travelled around for a period, initially around a month. He then rotated the preachers between the circuits. Initially Ireland was one circuit, but by the time of the first Irish conference in Limerick in 1752 there were six circuits.[8] Wesley allocated preachers to the circuits, not to individual societies, a practice which largely continues to the present day. The term 'itinerancy' describes the policy adopted by Wesley of keeping his preachers on the move.

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[5] Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 2nd edn (London: Epworth Press, 2000), p.79.
[6] John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. by Rupert E. Davies, 27 vols (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), IX, p. 8.
[7] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p.78.
[8] Lenton, p. 208.

Following his example, preachers were to travel from place to place preaching the gospel message, as opposed to being fixed in one parish area. The concept of itinerancy remains a key feature of Methodism throughout the world though the method of deployment of preachers and allocations to circuits has evolved in distinctive ways in different contexts.[9]

The non-ordained preachers who joined Wesley's movement were initially called 'helpers.' The term 'assistant' was later deployed and came to be used to designate the preacher who supervised the other preachers, and the work of the societies, within a circuit. In 1784 Wesley used the term 'superintendent' to describe the overseeing functions of Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke for Methodism in America, though the American Connexion quickly adopted the word 'bishop' to describe this role. In Britain and Ireland, 'Superintendent' replaced the use of 'assistant' in 1796 after Wesley's death and its use persists to the present day.

Wesley gathered a select group of preachers, both ordained and non-ordained, together each year in a 'conference'. The purpose of the conference was to consider the nature of the mission, and to regulate doctrine, discipline, and practice. During Wesley's lifetime he considered that its function was to advise and to guide him rather than to govern. As discussed in chapter two, Wesley formed an Irish conference in 1752, which initially was subservient to

[9] Section 7 of the Constitution of the Methodist Church in Ireland states 'The principle of the Itinerancy, being essential to the life and well-being of the Church is maintained by the yearly appointment of Ministers.' *Manual of the Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church in Ireland*, 2004 (Revised 2011), p.10. The itinerant system, and the stationing process that serves it, is a core value of Methodism in Ireland and Britain, and broadly throughout the Wesleyan family of churches. In many ways 'itinerancy' is the ultimate expression of what it means to be a 'Connexion', it is the defining characteristic of the relationship between Methodist societies, circuits and the conference. In addition, it underlines the covenantal relationship between ordained ministers and their individual and collective relationship with the conference. While the method of appointment varies from Conference to Conference, and has evolved in varying ways in different places, the core principle of itinerancy is maintained. Wesley saw considerable value in the practice of itinerancy, an emphasis that was shared by the other Methodist leaders including Francis Asbury, who was to become the key leader of the Methodist movement in America. Both Wesley and Asbury saw itinerancy as being a key tool for evangelism and mission. It was the itinerant system that enabled Methodism in America to expand rapidly as the United States moved west in the early nineteenth century. In England, the system of parish boundaries was restrictive when it came to reaching people, who had little or no contact with the parish churches in the expanding industrial towns and cities. The itinerancy gave Wesley a methodology to work around the parish boundary system.

the British conference. The 1784 Deed of Declaration legally defined the conference and began to shape arrangements for what would happen when Wesley could no longer preside over the movement. After his death in 1791 the conference effectively became Methodism's supreme governing body.

The shape of Methodism developed gradually and often pragmatically as the movement grew. Increasing numbers necessitated a structure and terminology that ensured Wesley's values and emphasis were maintained. Baker describes the movement as 'a network of itinerant preachers… throughout the nation, preaching in the open air, forming new societies, keeping in constant touch with the Wesleys, and meeting with them annually in conference to settle problems, to consider new openings for evangelism, new ideas for improving its efficacy, and to station preachers during the coming year.'[10]

David Chapman's contemporary perspective corresponds with Baker's when he states that '[w]hile Methodism has come to acquire many of the elements commonly associated with the church, its ecclesiology mostly reflects the suppositions and priorities of a holiness movement.'[11] In his chapter Chapman explores the basis of Wesley's personal ecclesiology; the variety of sources that underpin a Methodist understanding of church; Methodism's approach to the creeds; ordained ministry; the Methodist emphasis on the means of grace and authority; and the future agenda for Methodist ecclesiology given that it appears to remain a work in progress.[12] This chapter follows a similar line of reasoning to Chapman as it seems clear that the development of an ecclesial structure, and understanding of the ministry roles within that structure, amplified the sense that Methodism was developing into a denomination despite Wesley's insistence that his intention was precisely the opposite. At the same time the

[10] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p.114.
[11] David M. Chapman, 'Methodism and the Church', in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, ed. by Paul Avis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) pp. 317-443 (p. 317).
[12] Ibid.

'holiness movement' motif remains a significant theological anchor for Methodist communities around the world.[13] Chapman states:

> At some point, Methodists will have to decide whether and how their understanding of the nature of the church should determine mission strategy, or whether ecclesiology is a chapter of missiology. Calls for a 'missional ecclesiology' obscure the theological difference between these approaches. A fresh vision of the church is necessary for the proper orientation of Methodism's historic mission to spread scriptural holiness.[14]

The development of these issues in the context of Methodism in Ireland will be explored now with a discussion focused on the following themes:

(I) John Wesley's model of Christian ministry and servant leadership;

(II) Ministry in Ireland after Wesley: An emerging Methodist ecclesiology;

(III) Contemporary and Future Perspectives on Methodist Ministry.

### (I) John Wesley's model of Christian ministry and Servant Leadership;

In May 1743 Wesley wrote to John Haime, a professional soldier, striving to live fully according to his Christian faith while fighting battles in continental Europe. Later, Haime became one of the Wesleyan itinerant preachers. The spirit of the letter is an example of Wesley's encouragement to potential preachers:

> It is a great blessing whereof God has already made you a partaker; but if you continue waiting upon him you shall see even greater things that these. This is only the beginning of the kingdom of heaven which he will set up in your heart… It is but a little thing that men should be against you, while you know God is on your side. If he gives you any companion in the narrow way it is well; and it is well if he does not. So much the more will he teach and strengthen you by himself; he will instruct you in the secret of your heart. And by the by he will raise up, as it were out of the dust,

[13] The term 'holiness movement' is American in origin and is essentially a collective term used to describe the different strands that made up part of the evangelical revival in the second half of the nineteenth century. It can be compared to the concept of the early eighteenth-century Religious Societies of which Methodism is a prime example. Vickers (ed), *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* (London: Epworth, 2000), p. 161 states that the holiness movement 'was widely disseminated by the growth and popularity of the camp meetings and characterised by revival preaching and encouragement to every Christian to seek the 'second blessing' and bear witness to it.' The 'holiness movement' can be understood to be one of the precursors of the Pentecostal movement of the early twentieth century and the Charismatic movement of the later twentieth century. For a detailed exploration of the relationship between Wesleyan Methodism and the holiness movement see Randall J. Stephens, 'The holiness/ Pentecostal/ charismatic extension of the Wesleyan tradition' in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. by R.L. Maddox and J.E. Vickers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 262-281.
[14] Chapman, p. 331.

those who shall say, 'come, and let us magnify his name together.'[15] But by all means miss no opportunity. Speak and spare not; declare what God has done for your soul; regard not worldly prudence. Be not ashamed of Christ, or of his word, or of his work, or of his servants. Speak the truth in love,[16] even in the midst of a crooked generation, and all things shall work together for good,[17] until the work of God is perfect in your soul.[18]

Wesley was a disciplined and devoted priest of the Church of England. He was committed to the traditional teachings of the church in relation to the three-fold order of ministry of bishop, priest, and deacon, based on the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England and as set out in the preface to the ordinal in the *Book of Common Prayer*.[19] This three-fold order of ministry was the mechanism that enabled the episcopal model of church government to function. Wesley believed that the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion could only be administered by those who were ordained and licenced by bishops. Undoubtedly, both his upbringing in a committed Anglican household, and the actuality of the Church of England as a state church contributed to Wesley's apparent conservatism with regard to ministry.[20] According to Cannon, '[t]here is no evidence that Wesley ever abandoned his preference for the episcopal form of government, but preference is not the same as conviction that this form of government is essential and that any other form of government is therefore to be excluded or proscribed.'[21] Even after ordaining ministers to serve in America and authoring the Deed of Declaration Wesley continued to declare with conviction his steadfast commitment to the Church of England.[22] Yet, with the benefit of hindsight, Wesley seemed prepared to act

[15] Psalm 34.3.
[16] Ephesians 4.15.
[17] Romans 8.28.
[18] John Wesley, 'To John Haime', in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. by Frank Baker, 27 vols (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1982), XXVI, pp. 98-99
[19] See Kenneth Collins, 'John Wesley's concept of the ministerial office', *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 23, (1988), 107-121, (p. 107). The preface to the 1662 version of the *Book of Common Prayer* can be accessed here online at https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/form-and-manner-making-ordaining.
[20] Campbell, *The Yoke of Obedience*, p. 48.
[21] William R. Cannon, 'The Meaning of the Ministry in Methodism' in *Methodist History*, 8/1, (1969), 3-19, (pp. 10-11).
[22] In 1763 a Model Deed was drawn up in the name of John and Charles Wesley as a means of establishing control over Methodist preaching houses. This legal document provided a template that established how property would

in whatever manner required to support the growth of Methodist religious societies from the late 1730s onwards, even if his actions were interpreted as contravening the historic teachings of the Church of England in relation to ministry. Campbell argues that Wesley's actions stem from his observation that Anglican ministry in the eighteenth century lacked the zeal and vigour necessary to fulfil the mission of the church:

> The Church was a dominant institution because it was established as an arm of the state, but, on the whole, it lacked vitality, perhaps in part because its clergy were participants in a staid system which did not encourage or demand creative leadership. While John Wesley frontally attacked the lack of Christian vitality in the Church, and the quality of its clergy, he assumed the Anglican context… At the same time, he introduced innovations he judged essential to mission, which were contrary to Anglican practice.[23]

1755 is understood to be a key year in the account of the development of Methodism due to the evolution of Wesley's understanding of the nature and practice of Christian ministry. As Baker states:

> By 1755 Wesley was quite convinced that in essence there were two orders of ministry, with the higher order (which alone was empowered to administer the sacraments and to ordain) subdivided into bishops and presbyters. He completely rejected the notion that there was only one order authorized both to preach and to administer.[24]

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be managed by trustees and used by Wesley and other preachers he might appoint. See Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people*, p. 213. The Deed ensured that the Wesley brothers were able to appoint preachers to those places by right. In addition, the Model Deed stated that the 'Yearly Conference of the People called Methodists' would be the legal successor to the brothers upon their death. (See Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people*, p. 238). The difficulty with the Model Deed was that it did not clearly define the membership of the 'Yearly Conference' and invitations to participate were entirely a matter for Wesley. Therefore, as time passed, and the Methodist movement grew there was increasing concern regarding what would happen after Wesley died. Wesley was concerned about Methodism separating from the Church of England and yet the circumstances and religious practices of those who joined Methodist societies from the middle of the eighteenth century appeared to make such a separation inevitable. Henry D. Rack in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. by Henry D. Rack, 27 vols (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2011), X, pp. 84-93 discusses the potential solutions to the question of succession that were considered during the period of the 1760s to the 1780s. Eventually, in 1784, rather than appointing an individual successor Wesley settled on the idea of the Conference as a 'defined body' succeeding him. A Deed of Declaration was drawn up to supplement the Model Deed. It legally defined the Conference as consisting of one hundred preachers personally selected by Wesley, who as a collective entity would inherit his authority over the movement on his death. In addition, it outlined how the Conference was to carry out its business and allowed the one hundred to fill vacancies and invite others to attend and participate. It was the annual Conference that would assess and admit preachers to the Connexion and appoint those preachers to their circuits. Matters of doctrine and the question of property rights had already been dealt with in the Model Deed. See also Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, pp. 504-505.

[23] Campbell, *The Yoke of Obedience*, p. 48.

[24] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p.153.

In 1755 Wesley also published his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*. Here, his commentary on Ephesians 4.11 draws a distinction between different offices in the church:

> And among other of his free gifts, he gave some apostles – His chief ministers and special witnesses, who saw him after his resurrection, and received their commission immediately from him. And some prophets, and some evangelists – A prophet testifies of things to come; an evangelist of things past: and that chiefly by preaching the gospel before or after any of the apostles. All these were extraordinary officers; the ordinary were some pastors, watching over their flocks: and some teachers, whether of the same, or lower order, to assist them as might be required.[25]

Additionally, at the conference that year Wesley made a significant statement in opposition to separation from the Church of England in the face of a substantial element within the body of Methodist preachers.[26] The main argument against separation was that it was not expedient to the advancement of the work of Methodism. Baker notes that Wesley's use of the word 'expedient' doubtless caused his brother Charles some consternation as it left the question open to being revisited in the future.[27] Wesley's ecclesiological views had already adapted in response to his experiences of life and ministry as he held in tension his loyalty to the institutional church, his own sense of call, and his love for this new mission.

The tension between loyalty to the Church and the growth of the Methodist movement continued to affect Wesley's thinking over the next twenty years. By the 1780s his ordination of ministers for America, subsequently Scotland, and finally for work in Yorkshire, England, pushed Methodism over a precipice in its relationship with the Anglican Church. His actions made a statement about his underlying vision for Christian mission and ministry at the end of his life and created the context for an inevitable separation from the Anglican Church. Yet, Wesley continued to state that he was steadfastly committed to the church of his birth. Fifty

[25] John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (London: Bowyer, 1755). Wesley's notes were later added to his sermons to form Methodism's doctrinal standards.
[26] In his work *John Wesley and the Church of England*, pp. 326-340 Baker published an appendix entitled 'Ought we to separate from the Church of England'. The appendix is based on a transcription of a speech given by John Wesley at the 1755 Conference where the issue of separation from the Church of England was discussed intensely by the gathered preachers, only three of whom were ordained Anglicans.
[27] Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p.167.

years after the beginnings of the emergence of Methodism and within two years of his death in 1789, he wrote a sermon in which he presented a survey of his views on the nature and practice of ministry and the relationship between Methodism and the Anglican church in which he declares:

> I hold all the doctrines of the Church of England. I love her Liturgy. I approve her plan of discipline, and only wish it could be put into execution. I do not knowingly vary from any rule of the Church, unless in those few instances where I judge, and as far as I judge, there is absolute necessity.[28]

Outler explores the origin and background to the sermon in his introduction to the most recent version of *The Works of John Wesley*.[29] The sermon was written with the intention of addressing two issues over which Wesley appeared constantly to battle with his followers, one concerned the relationship between Christian faith and practice in relation to wealth and personal riches, the other, which is relevant for this discussion was the question of the separation of the Methodist movement from Anglicanism. For the purposes of this research, it is important to emphasise the significant pressure from elements within the Methodist movement in Ireland to create a clear distinction from the established Anglican church. Wesley confronted this in his visit to Ireland in March and April 1789. According to Outler, Wesley wrote the sermon in May 1789 during a stay in Cork. Subsequently, the sermon was published in the *Arminian Magazine* in 1790.[30] Outler notes the different ways in which historians and editors of the works of John Wesley have viewed this sermon and the controversy surrounding it. Wesley did not give it a title and therefore Outler entitles it 'Prophets and Priests' as this distinction, in his view, is the most important and consistent when exploring Wesley's

[28] John Wesley, 'Prophets and Priests' in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. by Albert C. Outler, 27 vols (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), IV, pp. 80-81.
[29] Outler, 'Introduction' in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. by Albert C. Outler, 27 vols (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), IV, pp. 71-74.
[30] A significant feature of religious life in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain was the use of printed pamphlets and papers, deployed to share evangelistic messages, communicate information, and deal with criticisms. John Wesley began publishing extracts from his personal journal in 1740. The *Arminian Magazine* was a Methodist publication that began disseminating articles and information from 1778, see Rack, *The Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 113.

understanding of ministry: 'Its twin theses (no separation and no Methodist priesthood) reflect a standpoint from which Wesley never wavered. The distinction between 'prophets' free to preach and teach, and 'priests' commissioned for sacramental administration.'[31]

In his 'Prophets and Priests' sermon, Wesley, explores the biblical narrative drawing a distinction between the pastoral role of a priest and the distinct role of a preaching evangelist.[32] Wesley concurred with the argument that it was only after the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine to Christianity that one person was understood to function in multiple roles as preacher, pastor, evangelist and prophet. The marrying of these different functions was to become the classical view of the ministry and is reflected in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England.[33] Article twenty-three states:

> It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of publick preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have publick authority given unto them in the Congregation, to call and send Ministers into the Lord's vineyard.[34]

In eighteenth-century England this was the customary model of Christian ministry. The Ordained parish priest was understood to exercise a dual role of prophet, proclaiming the good news of the gospel, and priest, administering the sacraments to the people under his care. How then can Wesley's apparent contradiction between his loyalty to the concept of the three-fold nature of ministry within the Anglican tradition, and his pragmatic views and actions relating to the development of ministry in Methodism, be understood? Collins contends that, as

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[31] Albert C. Outler, 'An Introductory Comment' in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. by Albert C. Outler, 27 vols (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), IV, p. 73.
[32] Wesley, 'Prophets and Priests', p. 75.
[33] The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion is a doctrinal statement of the Church of England setting out, alongside the *Book of Common Prayer*, the church's beliefs regarding worship and practice. They are heavily influenced by the previous forty-two articles drawn up by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer in the wake of the English Reformation which saw the Crown and Church in England rejecting Papal authority in 1534. The Thirty-Nine Articles were approved at a Convocation held in London in 1571. In the same year an act of Parliament required all ordained clergy in the Church of England and Ireland to subscribe to the Articles. See E. J. Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*, (London Longmans: 1925), pp. 9-27.
[34] https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/articles-religion#XXIII

demonstrated in the 'Prophets and Priests' sermon, Wesley's thinking evolved to the extent that he did not believe that the functions of priest and prophet necessarily needed to be carried out by the same person. 'Instead, he declared, lay people could exercise a prophetic office in the church through preaching.'[35] Wesley uses an argument from history and the practice of other Christian traditions to illustrate this distinction:

> Yet even at this day, although the same person usually discharges both the offices, yet the office of an evangelist or teacher does not imply that of a pastor, to whom peculiarly belongs the administration of the sacraments – neither among the Presbyterians, nor in the Church or England, nor even among the Roman Catholics. All Presbyterian Churches, it is well known, license men to preach before they are ordained, through the whole kingdom. And it is never understood that this appointment to preach gives them any right to administer the sacrament.[36]

The apparent antinomy in Wesley's consideration of Christian ministry is at the core of this discussion of the nature of ministry in early Methodism. The pace of growth of Methodism compelled Wesley to make pragmatic decisions about organisational structure and the exercise of ministry to cope with the challenges of growth. Five factors, which will be explored in detail, undoubtedly influenced Wesley's thinking:

- His unusual post-ordination ministry experiences;
- His exposure to alternative cultures and Christian beliefs;
- His 'conversion' experience of 24 May 1738;
- His deployment of lay leadership;
- The evolution of his theological thinking about ordination.

First, Wesley did not follow the normal trajectory in his ministry. He was ordained deacon in 1725 and became a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford in 1726, before ordination as a priest in 1728. Rather than entering parish ministry as a priest-in-charge, he remained in Oxford. Both prior to and following his ordination he spent time assisting his father as curate in Epworth parish outside Doncaster in North Lincolnshire. This, however, was to be Wesley's

[35] Collins, 'John Wesley's concept of the ministerial office', p. 108.
[36] Wesley, 'Prophets and Priests', pp. 77-78.

only experience of regular parish ministry in England. By the end of 1729 he had returned to Lincoln College to fulfil his teaching responsibilities and it was in this setting that he became significantly immersed in the operations of the Holy Club.[37] The simple approach to spirituality within the Holy Club, focused on the spiritual disciplines of bible study, regular attendance at Holy Communion, prayer, holy living, and social concern, inspired Wesley. He began to view the church through a lens other than the historical, organised approach of the episcopal model with which he had grown up. Already, Wesley's experiences were leading him away from the traditional understanding of the exercise of Christian ministry. As Baker remarks:

> [A] fellowship of believers who shared both the apostolic experience of God's living presence and also a desire to bring others into this same personal experience by whatever methods of worship and evangelism seemed most promising to those among them whom the Holy Spirit had endowed with special gifts of prophecy and leadership.[38]

Secondly, Wesley's approach to ministry was influenced by his exposure to other cultures, contexts, and Christian beliefs. At the end of 1735 Wesley accepted an invitation to serve as a missionary priest in the Georgia colony with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Charles and two other friends journeyed with Wesley to America. Their intention was to develop the same model of religious discipleship, based on the primitive church, in the 'New World.' The journey to America on-board the *Simmonds* brought Wesley into meaningful contact, for the first time, with German Moravians emigrating to the new world.[39] The

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[37] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people*, p. 39.

[38] Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 2nd edn (London: Epworth Press, 2000), p. 137.

[39] The Moravian Church is a reformed protestant movement dating back to the fifteenth century and the teaching of John Huss. In the eighteenth century it was associated with the Pietist movement in Germany. See Vickers, *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*, p. 245. The Moravian community at Herrnhut in Saxony, Germany, was characterised by their belief in personal salvation and devotion to Jesus Christ. They placed an emphasis on building Christian community through small discipleship groups akin to the religious society movement developing across Europe in the eighteenth century. Wesley first encountered the Moravians, including an ordained minister, Peter Böhler, while sailing to Georgia, and subsequently spent time with them while in America. After returning to England, Wesley was further influenced by Böhler who had also returned to London and had set up the Fetter Lane Religious Society. Wesley later visited Herrnhut where he discovered differences in theological emphasis in relation to faith and salvation between the German and English Moravians. These differences were to lead Wesley eventually to split from the Moravians in 1740. See Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people*, pp. 59-89.

Moravian emphasis on personal piety and ordered community coalesced with Wesley's primitive church ideals that would later influence the development of the Methodist movement:

> Through their piety, communal discipline, and hymns, the Savannah Moravians had a long-term impact on Wesley. He saw them as an incarnation of the primitive church in his day because they maintained three essential aspects of the early church, episcopacy, discipline and holy living. Their stress on heartfelt faith in Christ and the transformative effects of the new birth was incorporated into his developed Anglican emphasis on purity of intention and pure love towards God. Moravians practices such as love-feasts and watchnights were later adapted by Wesley for his Methodist societies.[40]

Their ministry among the tough and coarse colonists was more of a challenge than they anticipated, moreover, they were unable to successfully establish the religious society model among the native American population. As a result of personal turmoil and the apparent failure of the mission Wesley returned to England at the beginning of 1738. Campbell argues that this excursion illustrates Wesley's search for deeper religious experiences to strengthen his faith and fortify his ministry:

> The Georgia experience did not do for Wesley what he hoped. It made his anxieties more severe as he realised that his ministry suffered from a lack of authenticity. He was a serious and responsible ordained minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, but his ministry was unsatisfying to himself and ineffective with others.[41]

The Georgian ministry experience, although a chastening one, should not be understood as a complete failure, however, when assessing the development of Methodism. Baker argues that Wesley's experience in Georgia, where he was exposed to people from other Christian denominational backgrounds, and even those of other faiths, further served to loosen his commitment to Anglican polity:

> His Georgia experience of ministering to a parish of mixed denominations had helped to soften some of his prejudices. The Salzburghers and Moravians in particular were influential in this, but so also were the Scots Presbyterians, and even the Spanish-speaking Jews, some of whom, he said, seemed 'nearer to the mind that was in Christ than many of those who called him Lord.'[42]

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[40] Geordan Hammond, 'Versions of Primitive Christianity: John Wesley's relations with the Moravians in Georgia, 1735-1737' in *Journal of Moravian History*, 6 (2009), 31-60, (p. 59).
[41] Dennis M. Campbell, *The Yoke of Obedience*, p. 50.
[42] Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 140.

This influential experience, combined with his ongoing search for meaningful spirituality, created the environment that enabled Wesley to make pragmatic decisions as the Methodist movement began to grow rapidly in the 1740s.

Thirdly, Wesley's 'conversion' experience of 24 May 1738 was the factor that, more than any other, shaped his view of ministry. Much has been written regarding how this conversion experience at a meeting of a Moravian religious society at Aldersgate Street in London should be interpreted. One side of the debate proposes that this was a conversion experience in the evangelical sense, a decisive personal experience of God's presence that shaped Wesley and became a catalyst for the Methodist movement. The opposing view is that the significance of the conversion experience has been overplayed and even exaggerated, and that a more accurate date for a conversion experience is likely to be found in the mid-1720s. Further, in later life Wesley himself changed the language that he used to describe his experience that night.[43] Outlining the different interpretations of 24 May 1738, Rack concludes that Wesley himself saw Aldersgate as being vitally important in shaping his approach to the movement.

> [I]t is easy to show that whatever Wesley subsequently thought about the lasting significance of 1738 for his own Christian life, he certainly regarded what he learnt then as the beginning of his distinct doctrine and mission. Time and again to the end of his life he harks back approximately to this date. There is also much in the general character and specific content of his preaching of justification by faith and assurance, together with his observations on converts, to show that he regarded this way of salvation as the norm. Moreover, many of his pre1738 High Church practices and prejudices were gradually abandoned or modified: apostolic succession; the invalidity of Dissenting ministries; and of course a wholesale breaking of High Church ideals of church order in the his use of field preaching, lay preaching, infringing parish integrity and in the end ordination.[44]

[43] For a more detailed discussion of the different views on Wesley's 24 May1738 experience see Rack, *The Reasonable Enthusiast*, pp. 153-154, and Kenneth J. Collins 'Twentieth-century interpretations of John Wesley's Aldersgate Experience: Coherence or Confusion', in *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 24, (1989), 18-31.
[44] Rack, *The Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 154.

It is imperative to consider Wesley's own description and comment on the events of 24 May. In his journal entry for that day Wesley outlines in detail the most significant life experiences that had led him to that moment and goes on to describe his Aldersgate experience in the following terms:

> In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter to nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.[45]

It is difficult to underestimate the implication of this striking moment in Wesley's life for the Methodist movement that he was already leading. In the months leading up to the Aldersgate experience Wesley spent considerable time with the Moravian leader, Peter Böhler who was attempting to establish the Moravian denomination in England and undoubtedly saw Wesley as a potential leader. A significant atmosphere of religious fervour was building within the network of friendships and acquaintances and religious societies of the Wesley brothers and the other members of the Oxford Holy Club.[46] Wesley, convinced by Bohler's theological arguments about the nature of faith and the need for personal spiritual experience, began to change the emphasis of his preaching, speaking more about justification by faith and the need for spiritual rebirth. As Wesley met with growing numbers of people gathered in *ad hoc* societies, Böhler encouraged him to adopt an organisational structure for the groups. Each society was to embrace two rules, first to meet on a weekly basis to confess to each other and to pray for healing; secondly, that they should be open to others who would want to join them for the same purpose. In the middle of May 1738 Böhler left London for New York effectively entrusting the developing network to Wesley's leadership.[47] Several days later the religious

[45] W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (eds), *The Works of John Wesley - Journals and Diaries I*, 27 vols (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1988), XVIII, pp. 249-250 (242-250).
[46] Rack, *The Reasonable Enthusiast*, pp. 138-139.
[47] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people*, p. 79.

enthusiasm that Wesley saw increasing in the lives of those around him had a profound effect on his brother, Charles. This initially disturbed Wesley but his own renewal moment came only three days later when he 'felt his heart strangely warmed.'[48]

Fourthly, consideration must be given to Wesley's response to the initial growth of the numbers of Methodist societies and the development of structures to cope with the size of societies, and his deployment of lay people in leadership roles. As time progressed and momentum increased, it became increasingly challenging for Wesley to hold the movement together. Significant numbers were meeting in disparate groups in London, Oxford, and Bristol. What was required was a leadership structure that preserved the unity of the societies and the wider network. In Bristol, with the encouragement of George Whitefield, Wesley reluctantly began to preach in the open-air. The immediate impact of his preaching was felt as the societies started to grow even more rapidly as thousands of people gathered to listen and respond to Wesley's preaching.[49] This level of activity was impossible to maintain, functioning as an open-air preacher, so drawing more into the societies, and at the same time watching over internal relationships and operations. While being involved in the development of a building project in Bristol to house two growing societies in the city and visiting other societies springing up around the city, Wesley needed, at the same time, to pay attention to the Fetter Lane Society in London where divisions had arisen among members over the nature of how they would meet. Baker describes the nature of Wesley's intervention as follows. 'The application of firm spiritual discipline upon his return established them once more. Gradually under his leadership they achieved both religious vitality, unity, and a sense of identity which distinguished them from the other religious societies.'[50] What was emerging was a sizeable network of groups that were closely aligned to John Wesley himself, many of whom had little

[48] Ibid., p. 80.
[49] Ibid., p. 99.
[50] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 76.

or no connection with any other religious group or church, expect perhaps in some cases to the established church.

This growth presented Wesley with a significant practical problem, and his solution demonstrated his adaptability. Among his group of trusted friends and associates there were not enough ordained priests to oversee and lead the growing demands of the societies. This was also a time of significant social upheaval which saw a proportionate increase in religious enthusiasm and passion. In such circumstances the potential for relational dysfunction within the societies could not be underestimated. Many of the ordained clergy who were associated with the Wesleys in Oxford in the late 1730s had separated from them. The result was the emergence of distinct groups of Calvinist, Moravian, and Wesleyan religious societies. The Wesley brothers moved around those societies that aligned themselves with them, but more leaders were required. Hempton notes that Wesley appropriated ideas from Moravians, Quakers, and others involved in the revival, but he asserts this concerning Wesley in particular:

> What gave him his preponderance were energy, mobility, perseverance, and sheer force of will. What gave Methodism its preponderance over other early evangelistic associations was its ability to bestow an element of coherence and order on the disparate and often bizarre religiosity it encountered.[51]

The logical solution to the question of leadership was for Wesley to appoint lay leaders and soon the model became an effective means of ensuring the continued spiritual vitality of the societies, as Baker notes:

> It was a close-knit family system which made so many demands and maintained so many checks on deed and word and even thought that it is remarkable that most Methodists had time not only for normal parish activities but in fact attended them more faithfully than did the non-Methodists.[52]

[51] Hempton, *Methodism, Empire of the Spirit,* p. 16.
[52] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 78.

Wesley had no concern about engaging lay people in the leadership of local societies to act as leaders of bands and classes and to take responsibility for organisational and financial matters. A further and more contentious step lay ahead for Wesley in deciding to engage lay people in ministry activities such as that of preaching and teaching within the societies.

As the movement grew both the number and proportion of ordained preachers who assisted Wesley dropped. It became necessary, therefore, for Wesley to appoint non-ordained helpers to support the work of the circuits. Heitzenrater discusses Wesley's use of trustworthy individuals to lead societies, people such as John Cennick, a Quaker, who had been part of the original Oxford Society, Samuel Wathen in Bristol and Thomas Maxfield.[53] Maxfield had been left in charge of the Foundery society in London in 1740 and, with the encouragement of others, went beyond Wesley's instructions to lead prayers and read the bible, and started to preach. Wesley was angry that Maxfield had taken this step, complaining to his mother, Susanna, about this abnormal practice, but she urged him to consider first the results of Maxfield's preaching before jumping to conclusions.[54] Wesley took note of his mother's advice, listened to Maxfield preaching and having observed the impact shared his mother's conviction that Maxfield had a call from God to preach. This experience progressed Wesley's thinking on the nature and practice of ministry and his distinction between ordinary/priestly and extraordinary/prophetic that will be explored later in this chapter. As Collins notes:

> At the conference held in 1744 at the Foundery, Wesley began to draw a distinction between the "extraordinary" and "ordinary" ministries. The former ministry embraced lay preaching while the latter referred to ordained clergy who exercised not only a preaching role but an exclusive sacerdotal role as well.[55]

[53] See chapter one for a full discussion on the emergence of Religious Societies in England in the eighteenth century. See also Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people*, pp. 113-115.
[54] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 79.
[55] Collins, 'John Wesley's concept of the ministerial office', p. 108.

Both the Wesley brothers, despite their principled views on the preaching role of the ordained minister, nurtured the development of the 'lay preachers' within their sphere of influence regarding them as 'sons in the gospel'. They began deploying more 'helpers' within the growing circuit system. Some of the 'helpers' remained serving in one place, others joined the group of itinerating preachers and were subject to Wesley's direction in terms of where they should preach. Wesley's primary concern was that his preachers would remain focused on their task of preaching to 'save souls' and not to get distracted by or drawn into the detailed affairs of local societies or the parishes within which they were located. Lenton argues that the nurturing of his band of preachers was one of Wesley's most significant strategies. It meant that the preachers were able to conduct more services, and their improving preaching had a greater impact on the listening crowds. This in turn led to more people sensing a call to join the movement contributing to the growth of Methodism. This approach was to have a significant influence on the development of Methodist ministry in the nineteenth century:

> John had been at first against the idea of lay preachers. Very quickly his 'attitude changed to an eager use of the new method' and he gathered around him men, mostly lay, who would travel in the circuits he was forming. They were to preach to the societies and in the open air, to whomever would listen. They faced many problems and often gave up as a result. Each year from 1744 they met in a 'Conference' called by Wesley to discuss their practice and doctrine, provide training, report on their success or otherwise and discover where Mr Wesley would station them next.[56]

Members of societies while committing themselves to the discipline of their bands and classes within the society, were instructed to attend the local Anglican parish for the sacrament of Holy Communion.[57] Wesley's dualistic intention remained both the nurturing of the new movement and the reformation of the Anglican mother church. The provision of Holy Communion remained a contentious issue at the heart of the movement. Should Wesley have allowed his preachers to preside at Holy Communion in Methodist society gatherings it would

[56] Lenton, p. 9.
[57] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 79.

have signalled separation from the Church of England at an early stage. Therefore, even in the face of Anglican colleagues, often indifferent and sometimes in opposition to the Methodists, he set an example himself and made extraordinary efforts to ensure Holy Communion was not a feature of society meetings. For instance, Wesley instructed his societies not to meet at the same time as services of Holy Communion in local parish churches. Furthermore, he avoided, for many years, presiding at Communion in the places where the Methodist Societies met and did not seek the consecration of such buildings. He planned for significant numbers of Methodist society members to receive Communion in episcopally-consecrated buildings.[58] The administration of Holy Communion was not to be a function performed by the un-ordained Wesleyan preachers. Thus, as Collins states:

> By employing lay ministers who were allowed to preach, but who were not permitted to administer the sacraments, John Wesley believed that he was keeping the Methodist movement well within the ecclesiastical rubrics of the Church of England. In his mind, at least, the repudiation of lay administration of the sacraments was inextricably tied to Methodism's connection with the Anglican Church.[59]

As the Methodist movement grew the question of access to the sacrament of Holy Communion failed to dissipate. Many new members simply could not understand why they could not receive the sacrament from their own spiritual leadership, i.e., the preachers. This was especially true outside the jurisdiction of the Church of England and where a minority of Methodists were from an Anglican background. This issue was naturally bound together with the question of what would happen to the Methodist organisation beyond Wesley's lifetime.

Fifthly, the substantial development of Wesley's theological thinking regarding ordination. He fostered both a practical and, in his view, a fundamental biblical perspective of the functions of deacons, priests, and bishops. Wesley stated that his understanding of the priest/elder role evolved after reading Lord Peter King's book *An Enquiry into the Constitution,*

[58] For a full discussion of this issue, see Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, pp. 83-87.
[59] Collins, 'John Wesley's concept of the ministerial office', p. 111.

*Discipline, Unity and Worship of the Primitive Church,* which was published in 1691, and Edward Stillingfleet's book *Irenicon*, written in 1659. Both works suggest that in the role of elder and bishop in the early church were essentially the same.[60] Collins argues that '[b]y 1755, Wesley had come to realize that there is practically no ministry in the church that can be denied to an elder on Biblical grounds.'[61] The implications of Wesley's thinking for the Methodist movement subsequently cannot be underestimated even though he took no liturgical actions based on this thinking until the 1780s. In introductory comments to the Sunday Service, he developed for Methodists in North America in 1784, Wesley remarks:

> Lord King's account of the primitive church convinced me many years ago, that Bishops and Presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned from time to time, to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our travelling preachers. But I have still refused, not for peace's sake, but because I was determined, as little as possible, to violate the established order of the national church to which I belonged.[62]

Nonetheless Wesley drew a practical distinction between the role of an elder/priest and someone who might oversee the work of a group of elders which he designated with the title 'superintendent' rather than bishop. As Cannon states:

> Wesley disliked the word 'bishop' because of its connotation of pomp, prestige, and temporal privileges and power. Nonetheless he had conferred on his superintendents all the administrative authority that has traditionally been associated with the episcopacy.[63]

In contrast to his views on priests/elders and bishops/superintendents, Wesley appeared to place less emphasis on the role of deacon, which was little more than a transitional stage on the journey to ordination as a priest, in that he accentuated the ministry of service and support to be exercised by deacons and downplayed a preaching role. This was perhaps an attempt to avoid criticism of his deployment of lay preachers. As Collins states:

> Wesley's reluctance to associate the task of preaching too strongly with the office of deacon is probably best understood in terms of his distinctions between prophets and priests, and between

[60] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 145.
[61] Collins, 'John Wesley's concept of the ministerial office', p. 116.
[62] *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*, ed. by John Wesley (London: [n.p.], 1784), p. 3.
[63] Cannon, p. 13.

> extraordinary and ordinary ministries…Wesley defined ordination to elder's orders, quite simply, as an outward and human call to serve the church through preaching and sacrament which in the best of circumstances is preceded by a divine inward call.[64]

Wesley's primary concern, however, was that his preachers would continue to be engaged in the work of the mission of God, faithfully proclaiming the 'good news' without impediment. The American war of independence presented a further opportunity to act pragmatically to enhance mission. Methodist Societies, in the now independent America, were no longer under the jurisdiction of the Church of England and the leadership of the movement were free to act theologically in line with the practices of the early church. Heitzenrater describes the evolving situation in America in the early 1780s where Francis Asbury had been appointed 'General Superintendent' by Wesley in 1783 at the end of the War of Independence.[65] The American Methodists were looking for more however, with a sense of sacramental deprivation, they needed ordained clergy. If it meant refining or redefining inherited models, Wesley, armed with his evolved understanding, was prepared to act. He now viewed himself as a 'scriptural episcopos' – that he had a right to appoint 'workers for the harvest.' Wesley consulted with Coke and other senior preachers on the matter, but despite their apparent opposition he pressed ahead and on 1 September 1784 in Bristol he ordained Thomas Vasey and Richard Whatcoat as deacons and the following day as priests, to join with Coke in travelling to serve in America. Coke, already an ordained Church of England priest, was 'set apart' as a superintendent:

> The argument could be made that Coke did not need such an ordination, since he was already, as was Wesley, a presbyter and could presumably use the same rationale as Wesley to ordain other as a scriptural bishop in cases of necessity. But it is clear that Coke was receiving more than simply ordination in this act by Wesley; it served as a formal designation of authority from Wesley that was necessary in order for Coke to exercise leadership in America.[66]

[64] Collins, 'John Wesley's concept of the ministerial office', p. 112.
[65] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people*, pp. 285-289.
[66] Ibid. p. 287.

The implications of Wesley's actions in ordaining clergy cannot be understated. What emerged was an order of ministry for American Methodism based on eighteenth century Anglicanism and a potent mix of Wesleyan spirituality. Cannon outlines the implications of this action in the following terms:

> What had been a partial and restricted ministry during the early and middle years of Mr. Wesley's career became, before it closed, a full and unrestricted ministry; for the Methodist movement itself, at least in one of its major geographical segments, became a church… That which Mr. Wesley had earlier disallowed in regard both to his preachers and societies… he not only allowed and sanctioned but he also took the initiative in causing to happen. Here again circumstances dictated policy, and theology defined a situation which had already been brought about by a practical man's response to the pressure of events.[67]

The ordinations for America were just the beginning. In the following year Wesley ordained John Pawson, Thomas Hanby and Joseph Taylor for ministry in Scotland. In 1786 he ordained William Warrener (Antiqua) and William Hammet (Newfoundland) justifying his actions on the basis that the ministry was to be exercised in places outside of the jurisdiction of the Church of England. Later Wesley ordained Alexander Mather in 1788 for ministry in England, an act that Rack states 'manifestly shot his earlier sophistries to pieces.'[68]

Following the death of Wesley in 1791, Methodism was still not officially a separate church but remained a 'society' within the Church of England, legally constituted by the 1784 Deed of Declaration. The body of preachers which constituted the conference was a mixture of ordained Anglicans, the small number of those ordained by Wesley, and many non-ordained assistants. Among the preachers there were differing views on how the conference should proceed. Heitzenrater discusses these views and the challenge of the patterns and practices that developed as a response to local situations noting that '[o]ver a period of more than sixty years, Wesley had developed methods and procedures that, while intended to "reform" the Church of England, in fact gave the Methodists a self-conscious identity distinct from the Church.'[69]

[67] Cannon, p. 6-7.
[68] Rack, *The Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 520.
[69] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people*, p. 312.

After Wesley's death, the conference as a body immediately adopted a cautious approach, seemingly unwilling or unable to act as pragmatically as their erstwhile founder:

> The Conference reduced the confusion by deciding in 1792 to cease ordinations and by decreeing the following year that there should be no distinction between ordained and un-ordained preachers and that clerical dress and the title 'Reverend' should be proscribed.[70]

These moves simply exacerbated the situation, particularly around the issue of provision of the sacraments in Methodist Chapels. A growing body of lay members saw little distinction between the role and function of the itinerating preachers and the ordained clergy of the Church of England. Eventually, in 1795 a Plan of Pacification was passed by conference effectively giving the lay leadership in each chapel the authority to decide whether they should receive Holy Communion from a travelling preacher. 'In effect, the Plan represented an acknowledgement of British Methodism's final ecclesiastical separation from the Church of England.'[71] It should be noted, however, that many local societies continued to operate a fluid relationship between parish and society throughout the course of most of the nineteenth century. The implications of this move are not to be underestimated. It demonstrates that Methodism very soon after Wesley's death became a movement where decision making was more consensual and democratic involving the lay leadership in local societies as well as the itinerant preachers. Wesley's theological pragmatism served this kind of decision-making process well.

In summary, Wesley became a key figure in church history as the most recognised founder of Methodism in the early phase of what became known as the Evangelical Revival. Although he lived and died an Anglican and persisted in arguing his love for the Church of England and desire to remain loyal to it, he was in the end, confronted with the choice of submitting to the institutional church or seeking to resource the growing movement which all

[70] *Martin Wellings, 'Presbyteral Ministry: A Methodist Perspective', in Ecclesiology, 1 (2005), 57-74, (p. 60).*
[71] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people*, p. 316.

the outward evidence suggested he was called to lead. This brought him to the point where his actions, despite his desires or best intentions, ultimately created the context in which the separation of Methodism from the Church of England became inevitable.

> The first quarter-century of Wesley's ministry witnessed changes both in his religious practices and his doctrine of the church, the ministry, and the sacraments. Already it has become clear that these things were mutually influential: his practices modified his theology, and his changed theology led him into new practices. Most of his ecclesiastical innovations were forced upon him by emergencies, when he clutched at the likeliest expedient to further the work to which he firmly believed that God had called him to.[72]

The eighteenth-century debate on ministry within the Methodist movement appears to have focused on a broadening understanding of who could exercise ministry beyond the boundaries of the institutional church. After Wesley's time, as Methodism grew and separated from the Church of England, the nature of the debate developed into an ecclesiological discussion on the nature of Methodism as a distinct denomination, focusing on the role and function of those in ministry. In the period of extraordinary growth in Methodism during the nineteenth century much of this debate was driven by pragmatic concerns. Cannon again effectively underlines this intricate and potentially confusing process, stating that 'ministry in Methodist history has been defined almost entirely by circumstance. Practical necessity in this instance has dictated theology as well as determined polity and devised the strategy of mission.'[73]

[72] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p.137.
[73] Cannon, p. 3.

## (II) Ministry in Ireland after Wesley: An Emerging Methodist Ecclesiology

During his visit to Ireland in June 1758 Wesley wrote the following to his long-time friend and correspondent Ebenezer Blackwell:[74]

> I have now gone through the greatest part of this kingdom: Leinster, Ulster, and the greater half of Connaught. Time only is wanting. If my brother could take care of England, and give me but one year for Ireland, I think every corner of this nation would receive the truth as it is in Jesus. They want only to hear it; and they will hear me, high and low, rich and poor. What a mystery of Providence is this! In England they may hear, but they will not. In Ireland they fain would hear, but cannot. So in both, thousands perish for lack of knowledge. So much the more blessed are your ears, for they hear; if you not only hear the word of God, but keep it.[75]

Given his numerous visits Wesley evidently viewed Ireland with affection and felt a providential call from God to preach there. During his lifetime Methodism in Ireland grew steadily and Irish preachers joined with those who travelled from England. Writing to his brother Charles from Dublin in June 1785, Wesley stated:

> I came hither (as I proposed when I set out) yesterday. This week I am to meet the classes. Next week we have our little Conference. The work of God, almost in every part of the kingdom, is in a prosperous state. Here is a set of excellent young Preachers. Nine in ten of them are much devoted to God. I think, number for number, they exceed their fellow-labourers in England. These in Dublin particularly are burning and shining lights.[76]

The relationship between Methodism in Ireland and England following the life of John Wesley was complex and symbiotic. In Lenton's opinion '[m]any English Methodists of Wesley's day and later thought of Wesley's diversion of resources to Ireland as a waste of time.'[77] In people's minds two factors militated against success, the dominant role of Catholicism in Ireland, particularly in the southern provinces, and the more rural geography did not seem to offer the same prospects for renewal of spiritual vitality as within the Church

[74] Blackwell was a London banker and relative of George Whitefield. He assisted Wesley with financial matters relating to Kingswood school in 1739. Their correspondence led to an enduring friendship. See *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. by Frank Baker, 27 vols (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1980), XXV, pp. 678-679.
[75] John Wesley, 'To Ebenezer Blackwell', in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. by Ted A. Campbell, 27 vols (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2015), XXVII, pp. 127-128.
[76] John Wesley, 'To Charles Wesley', in *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. by John Telford, 8 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1931), VII, p. 274.
[77] Lenton, p. 195.

of England. Crucially this was not a perspective shared by Thomas Coke, who mirrored Wesley's affection for the Irish Conference. Despite the snub of not being elected President of the Irish Conference in 1791 Coke worked tirelessly, until his death in 1814, to hold together the connection between the two conferences and to encourage the growth and development of preachers, societies, and circuits in Ireland. Questions of financial support, representation within the legal hundred of the English conference, and sacramental discipline, threatened to destabilise that which Wesley's persona had held together. Coke fought for continued recognition of the mission in Ireland and raised significant funds for that purpose from English Methodist Circuits. In no small part his influence and popularity in Ireland was unquestionably in proportion to his effort to itinerate around the Irish circuits, something that Lenton suggests '[n]o other British preacher of the period would do.'[78] Undoubtedly strong leadership from personalities such as Coke served to hold together the fledgling Methodist Connexion in Ireland in the years following Wesley's death.

The advance of the Methodist movement in Ireland was not merely affected by the personalities and perspectives of the Methodist Church in Britain. Though Wesley did not ordain anyone specifically for the work in Ireland, the Irish conference was established at an early stage of the movement in 1752 and consistently presided over by Wesley until his death. After Wesley's death, the Conferences in Ireland and Britain embraced a way of working akin to a Presbyterian, as opposed to an Episcopal, model of governance. Bowmer holds that Wesley would have preferred an episcopal model like that developed by American Methodism. To have adopted such a model in Ireland and Britain, however, would have been to truly break with the Church of Ireland and Church of England respectively. In his discussion Bowmer illustrates the crucial matter of the relationship between the preachers in shaping the development of Methodism. The fact that many of the most influential non episcopally

[78] Ibid. p. 215.

ordained preachers had Irish and Scottish heritage and were more familiar and comfortable with Presbyterianism is significant.[79] As Bowmer states:

> Surveying the preachers as a whole, however, with all their built-in fears and tendencies, considering their modicum of scholarship, it is understandable that they were guided more by practical necessities than by theological niceties. Nor is it surprising that in the absence of any precise instructions from Wesley (apart from the Deed of Declaration and Wesley's alleged saying that 'as soon as I am dead, the Methodists will be a regular Presbyterian Church') the Methodism that emerged was as democratic as the age would allow and as Presbyterian as a quasi-allegiance with the Church of England made possible.[80]

The existence and operation of the Irish conference, although initially in deference to the conference in Britain, gave Methodism in Ireland its own sense of identity. Ecclesiologically, as with the Church of England, Wesley remained committed to the principle of the jurisdiction of the established Church of Ireland. In Ireland, however, he was confronted by the reality of the minority position of Protestantism in the face of the overwhelming majority Catholic population, the nuance of which would have been far better understood by the Irish preachers. In addition, there was the significant Presbyterian presence in Ulster which undoubtedly impacted the organisational patterns adopted by the Methodists. By the 1780s less English preachers itinerated to Ireland, thus the smaller body of preachers in Ireland developed a culture and mindset regarding the mission and purpose of Methodism in Ireland as distinct from England. Wesley's profile of the ideal assistant, appointed as the preacher responsible for the smooth operation of a circuit, to supervise other preachers, to demonstrate depth of devotion, organisational ability, and commitment to the Church of England, became increasingly difficult to deliver in the Irish context, on the last point at least.[81]

The wider environment of social, religious, and political turmoil in Ireland persisted into the first half of the twentieth century and beyond. Rebellion, sectarian strife, famine, the

[79] See discussion regarding the opinions of the senior Wesleyan preachers on the question of church governance in John Bowmer, *Pastor and People* (London: Epworth, 1975), pp. 62-66.
[80] Bowmer, *Pastor and People*, p. 67.
[81] MHSIA, *The Large Minutes (Last Edition),* 1752-1819, Published by the Methodist Conference 1864, p. xxvii.

rise of nationalist, republican and unionist political movements, civil war and partition all form a background narrative to the growth and development of the Irish Methodist Church. The development of Methodism in Ireland was not a smooth or linear organisational process, it was dependent on the relationships between the itinerating preachers themselves:

> In many ways the development of Methodism in Ireland was that of the creation of a coalition, led by the preachers. There were women, Palatines, Huguenots, craftsmen and traders in the towns, as well as soldiers, a few gentry, many English immigrants and a large number of farmers and others from the Ulster border region from south Donegal and West Tyrone round to Co. Down.[82]

The image of the itinerant, or, as in America, the 'Circuit rider', is undoubtedly the quintessential picture of the Methodist preacher. The itinerating body of preachers became the glue that held the identity of the circuits and societies together. They had a key role in coalescing the Methodist movement in Ireland in particular. Concurrently the symbiotic relationship with the Conference in Britain remained, exemplified in the tradition of the annual conferences sending each other an address or summary of the main discussions and issues being faced by each conference. One such address from Ireland to Britain in 1795 highlighted the concern of the Irish Conference at the declining numbers of English preachers travelling to Irish circuits.[83] The response from the British conference is noted a year later and shows that a primary concern for the British was the cost of preachers itinerating to Ireland.[84]

A selection of primary sources from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries provides a rich resource of material illustrating the developing understanding of ministry and ecclesiology in Irish Methodism.[85] In what follows, this archive material will be explored following a summary of the ecclesiological issues before the conferences in Ireland and Britain.

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[82] Lenton, p. 213.
[83] MHSIA, *The Large Minutes (Last Edition),* 1752-1819, Published by the Methodist Conference 1864. p. 98.
[84] Ibid., p. 100.
[85] The Methodist Historical Society of Ireland archive (MHSIA) is kept at Edgehill House in Belfast. It is the foremost collection of Wesleyan and Methodist archive material in Ireland and one of the most important collections worldwide. Among the content are bound collections of the Minutes of the Irish Conference, Reports

There were significant differences of opinion among the preachers who made up the Conference in Britain on matters that included whether preachers should be allowed to preside at the sacrament, should Methodism ordain its preachers, and the future relationship with the Church of England. The Plan of Pacification passed by the 1795 conference, allowed individual societies to decide if they should receive the sacrament from their preachers. This Plan failed to lessen the divisions over the question of ordination and separation from the Anglicans. In addition to these internal discussions there was also the ongoing tensions with both evangelical Anglicans, who were more committed to the parochial system and theologically were more Calvinistic, and High Anglicans, who were suspicious of the involvement of laity in ministry normally preserved for the ordained.[86] These tensions originated during Wesley's lifetime but did not dissipate in the years following his death as the Methodist movement sought to work out its place in religious life in Britain and Ireland. The dispute over whether Methodists in England and Ireland should ordain their preachers or if reception into Full Connexion with the conference constituted a form of virtual ordination, rumbled on for the best part of fifty years. Eventually the British conference of 1836 agreed that the acts of Reception into Full Connexion and Ordination by laying on of hands were both required and that itinerant Methodist preachers would be admitted to formal ministry via both ceremonies. By this time those who favoured continued alignment with the established church and opposed separation, had to come to terms with the reality that the Wesleyan movement was becoming a denomination.

> It is more honest to admit that Wesleyan Methodism evolved slowly from a society to a Church, and that it is not possible to say exactly when it (or other branches of Methodism) began to be a Church, or its travelling preachers began to be presbyters, or to define precisely what was or

and Agendas of the Irish Conference, historical pamphlets, serials and newspapers, manuscripts, local church and connexional records.

[86] See David Hempton, 'Wesley in Context' in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. by R.L. Maddox and J.E. Vickers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 60-80. Hempton addresses the complexity and often ambiguous personal relationship between Wesley and Anglicanism and inherited by the movement that he left behind. Ryan Nicholas Danker, *Wesley and the Anglicans* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016) explores in depth the relationships between Wesley and the Anglican Evangelicals. For material on the issue of parochial boundaries see Danker pp. 97-127. See also Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people*, pp. 141-142.

was not an ordination. But what is clear is that from 1836 onward Wesleyan Methodism ordained by imposition of hands, with the full intention of doing what the Church does.[87]

The deliberations within Irish Methodism regarding the future relationship with the Anglicans, sacramental provision, and the role of the itinerant preacher, were different in kind. Jeffrey comments on the different way in which the Conferences in Ireland divided over the question of relationship with the established church. 'Division in Methodism in Ireland away from the parent Wesleyan body was for the purpose of keeping in closer relation with – and not to move further away from – the Established (Anglican) Church of Ireland.'[88] Due to the minority status of the established church in Ireland, particularly outside Ulster, Methodist separation was seen by some as a further dilution or weakening of the Protestant cause.[89] The Plan of Pacification, passed by the British Conference in 1795, did not apply in Ireland, marking the first significant divergence of approach between the two conferences. It was 1816 before a similar set of principles were agreed by the Irish Conference. The plan allowed the Lord's Supper to be administered in a society by the appointed preacher using the Anglican liturgy. Two-thirds of the stewards and leaders of the society had to agree and seek the permission of Conference before any services could take place.[90] Those opposing this move attempted to have the decision reversed at the 1817 Irish Conference in Clones. Their failure led to the formation of the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Connexion in Ireland in 1818, eventually under the leadership of senior preacher the Revd. Adam Averall, but with vital support from the influential lay leadership particularly in mid-Ulster and Dublin. The primary concern of the Primitive Wesleyans in Ireland was that Methodism should not separate from

[87] A. Raymond George, 'Ordination in Methodism', *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 1951, 156-169 (p. 169).
[88] Fred Jeffrey, 'Church Methodists in Ireland', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 34 (1963), 73-75 (p. 73).
[89] Material from the 1814 Minutes of Conference highlights concerns in Ireland on both sides of this debate. Some circuits and societies lobbied for the provision of the sacraments within the movement, others feared this would lead to total separation from the Church of Ireland. See *The Large Minutes (Last Edition)*, 1752-1819, pp. 364ff.
[90] MHSIA, *The Large Minutes (Last Edition),* 1752-1819, Published by the Methodist Conference 1864, pp. 391-393.

the established church but remain as a reforming society within in it. The move to allow Methodist preachers to administer the sacrament required the Primitives to separate to 'preserve Methodism in Ireland in the manner of John Wesley.'[91] Primitive Wesleyan circuits and societies generally maintained good relationships with local Anglican parishes and clergy throughout their sixty-year history. In many situations the local Church of Ireland clergy were in effect patrons of the local Primitive societies and Primitive members attended the local Church of Ireland parish for Holy Communion. In the early 1870s, following the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, the Primitives and the Church of Ireland engaged in dialogue regarding a formal relationship. These negotiations broke down and by 1873 the Primitives and Wesleyans were in conversations about reconciliation and amalgamation. In 1878, after the Wesleyan Methodist Church agreed to introduce lay representation at the Conference, the way was open for the two branches of Methodism to reunite as the Methodist Church in Ireland.[92] With the reunification of these two Methodist entities those of the Primitive movement were in effect accepting the status of Methodism as a distinct denomination with ordained ministers as key leaders.

The developing understanding of the role of the preacher in Irish Methodism will now be explored by analysing primary-source documents from the period under consideration. These archive documents trace the settlement of Methodism illustrating the journey towards an organised denominational structure. The documents include the published Reports and

[91] MHSIA, *Minutes of the Primitive Wesleyan Conference* (Dublin: Porter, 1817), p. 7.

[92] The formation of the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Connexion in Ireland meant that there were two main Methodist Connexions in Ireland, the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Primitives. The use of the name 'Primitive' creates a potential semantic confusion for a historian of Methodism. In Ireland the Primitive movement advocated nonseparation from the Established Church. In contrast, in Britain, the sizeable movement known as the 'Society of Primitive Methodists' was founded in 1812. The British Primitives were known for their evangelical zeal, open air meetings, low-church view of ministry, and strong emphasis on lay leadership. See Vickers, *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland,* pp. 281-282. Robin P. Roddie, 'Keeping the Faith; Ireland's Primitive Methodism', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 57 (2010), 225-245, presents a comprehensive overview of the history of the Primitive Wesleyan Connexion in Ireland exploring the relationship between the Primitives in Ireland, the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Ireland, the Church of Ireland, and the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Britain.

Agenda of the annual Conference, the Minutes of Conference and the early editions of the *Manual of Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church in Ireland*. The preface to the compendium of the Minutes published in 1864 states that the editorial committee were 'not able to find any distinct record of the proceedings of the Irish Conference before 1783.'[93] What remains of the Irish minutes of Conference prior to 1783 can be found in full in the edited works of John Wesley and they offer helpful insights into the developing Irish Conference. As Rack remarks: 'In 1778, the first separately printed Irish minutes appeared. From 1783, they were published annually in Dublin.'[94] The focus here will be on the rich source of material from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The initial attempt at collating the Minutes of the Conference dates to 1814, with the first edition of what was known as 'The Compiled Minutes'. The contents page of the Minutes shows that a clear understanding of the role of the preacher already existed and customs and practices peculiar to Methodism were already in place. Areas covered include the history of the perceived divine purposes in the emergence of Methodist preachers, the selection of preachers, the office and duty of preachers, and the specific function of superintendents. In addition, there are instructions on how to deal with both practical matters relating to circuits, such as financial collections and subscriptions, and addressing pastoral matters and relationships within the Circuits.[95] All the early editions of the minutes are set in the pattern of question and answer, as was Wesley's preferred approach. As Rack remarks: 'The method of procedure would be by question and answer (as they are to this day) and (unfortunately for historians) only conclusions

[93] MHSIA, Preface to *The Large Minutes* (Last Edition) 1752-1819 published by the conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland, May 1864.
[94] Henry D. Rack (ed), *The Works of John Wesley*, 27 vols (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2011), X, pp. 957-1007 (p. 957).
[95] MHSIA, *The Compiled Minutes* first published in Dublin in 1814 under the direction of the Irish Conference. This edition reprinted in Portadown in 1851.

would be recorded and not the debates that led to them.'[96] This approach replicates Wesley's original intentions for the preachers to whom he gave his *Rules for Helpers* in the late 1740s:

> To foster the discipline necessary for ministry, Wesley gave the helpers a number of rules which covered such matters as punctuality, evil speaking and personal comportment, especially in relation to women… As such, these helpers were extraordinary messengers whose special assignment it was to goad the ordinary ministers into action.[97]

An important development to note concerns the designation 'minister'. One section in the Compiled Minutes is entitled 'The Method of Trying Candidates for the Ministry'.[98] Lenton notes that '[t]he term "minister" was not used of Wesleyan preachers before 1810.'[99] It is clear that from this period 'minister' was applied to describe the role of the itinerant preacher in Methodism, an indication of the growing status of the movement as a distinct Christian denomination. Historically the use of the designation 'minister' described those set apart to serve the church community. In contrast, the function of Wesley's itinerant preachers was to preach to those beyond the church community. The move to the use of the term 'minister' may indicate an increasing focus on the internal pastoral matters of a local church. The regulations included the following themes: the spiritual demeanour and character of the candidates, their previous involvement with and contribution to a local society, the requirement to be assessed by and to preach before a district committee of existing preachers, and the length of time they would remain on trial prior to being accepted into Full Connexion with the conference, and how they would be examined at that point.[100] These functions, now undertaken by the body of preachers and the conference, were all matters that Wesley himself would have previously dealt with. There are many examples of disputes and conflicts but predominantly, he was committed

[96] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 243.
[97] Collins, 'John Wesley's concept of the ministerial office', p. 109.
[98] MHSIA, *The Compiled Minutes,* p. 2.
[99] Lenton, p. 35.
[100] MHSIA, *The Compiled Minutes,* pp. 2-6.

to the development of preachers in whom he saw the call of God and the potential to serve the movement:

> Wesley's authority was highly personal. He was the founding father, and generations grew up having known no other leader. His authority was cumulative, like that of long-lived Popes, with whom he disliked being compared. Moreover, he was constantly in touch with the whole movement at all levels. This was one reason why the people and preachers would listen to him more readily than to Charles, who had ceased to itinerate, and certainly knew far less of Methodism as a whole then did his brother. But there were also more subtle bonds. John was able to value the gifts of the humble and those of limited talents; he shared their taste for the supernatural, their belief in 'providences' and extraordinary calls. Taken together, these factors go far towards explaining his unique position, which everyone (including himself) recognized could not be handed on to any other individual. Despite minor secessions and individual losses, the remarkable thing is how many were retained in the movement.[101]

In the years following Wesley's death the Irish conference attempted to enshrine his covenantal and relational approach to leadership that sought to nurture and encourage preachers by developing questions for the agenda that reflected this position:

> Q. 11. What can be done in order to (maintain) a closer union of our Preachers with each other.
>
> A. Let them be convinced of the absolute necessity of it. Let them pray for a desire of union. Let them speak freely and lovingly to each other. When they meet, let them never part with prayer. Let them be aware how they despise each other's gifts. Let them never speak slightly of each, in any kind. Let them defend each other's characters in everything, as far as they can with a good conscience; and let them labour in honour to prefer the other before himself.[102]

It is evident that as the role and structure of the conference evolved, the language used within Methodism became increasingly ecclesiological through the nineteenth century. Correspondingly an underlying deference to the Wesleyan philosophy of the itinerant preacher as the ultimate icon of the Methodist movement remained. This is illustrated, for example, in the preface to the 1864 collection of the Minutes of Conference which includes themes that were core to Wesley's thinking including his views on the role and function of those who became preachers in the movement. Question 23 asks about the office of the Christian Minister

[101] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 248.
[102] MHSIA, *The Compiled Minutes,* pp. 19-20.

to which Wesley responds, it is '[t]o watch over souls, as he must give account.'[103] Question 24 points to Wesley's view of his 'helpers', the preachers who joined his mission, it asks: 'In what view may we and our Helpers be considered?' The answer given correlates with material assessed earlier in this chapter relating to Wesley's sermon entitled 'Prophets and Priests', stating that helpers were to be considered '[p]erhaps as extraordinary messengers designed 1. To provoke the Regular ministers to jealousy, 2. To supply their lack of service toward those who are perishing for want of knowledge.'[104] The evolution of the conference to accept such responsibilities and operate in a distinctly democratic manner is something that Wesley appeared to envisage for the future:

> [S]ome of our Helpers say, "This is shackling free-born Englishmen," and demand a free Conference; that is, a meeting of all the Preachers, wherein all things shall be determined by most votes. I answer, it is possible after my death something of this kind may take place. But not while I live. To me the Preachers have engaged themselves to submit to "serve me as sons in the Gospel. "All I affirm is "The Preachers who chose to labour with me, choose to serve me as sons in the Gospel; and the people who choose to be under my care, choose to be so on the same terms they were at first."[105]

The debate within Irish Methodism on the sacraments offers an excellent example of the democratisation of the movement and the evolution that Wesley himself foretold. As has been shown, the Irish circuits and societies lobbied conference through the first decades of the nineteenth century both for and against preachers being allowed to preside at the sacrament. The conference of 1814 showed a majority in favour of the move to provide the sacraments. 'After a long deliberation, a vote passed in favour of the claimants, but on reconsideration it was judged right to stay the operation of the said vote for one year.'[106] The conference held a similar debate the following year and, on this occasion, granted a dispensation to the Revd. Adam Averell to administer the sacrament. The Minutes of 1816 show that the conference felt

[103] MHSIA, Preface to *The Large Minutes* (Last Edition) 1752-1819 published by the conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland, May 1864, p. xvi.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid. p. xx.
[106] MHSIA, *The Large Minutes* (Last Edition), 1752-1819, p. 365.

it necessary to discipline eight preachers who had violated the instructions not to administer the Lord's Supper.[107] In the same year, however, apparently under increasing pressure, the conference relented and under strict criteria allowed the provision of the sacrament for the sake of preserving the unity of the Connexion:

> As our Connexion has been greatly agitated for some years past, respecting the Administration of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper by our Preachers, and, as the matter is become so serious as to threaten a division in the body – what shall be done to restore and preserve peace in our Societies?[108]

The deliberations continued for several years after the 1816 decision not least due to the breakaway formation of the Primitive Wesleyan Conference. A letter from the Conference to Methodist societies in 1819 illustrates the democratic and consensual approach now being taken by the Conference:

> Liberty of conscience we believe to be the right of every man; and those members of our Society who believe it to be their duty to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, from the hands of the Clergymen of the Church of England… we advise to receive it in that way; but we also believe it to be the privilege of our members, who wise to receive it from the hands of their own Preachers, to have the opportunity of receiving the memorials of our dying Lord, according to the Pacific Plan.[109]

By the second half of the nineteenth century, it was evident that a document was required to collate the various constitutions, rules, and procedures of the church. In 1873 the first 'Manual of Laws and Discipline' was agreed and published by the Conference. This Manual drew together material from the annual Minutes of Conference and the Journal of the conference, both of which had become more sophisticated and extensive documents through the nineteenth century. This development further emphasises that a 'Methodist way' of organising and being church had emerged through the century and perhaps that a mindset of 'this is how we do things' rather than 'this is what we need to do next' had developed.

[107] Ibid. p. 390.
[108] Ibid. p. 391.
[109] Ibid. p. 486.

Chapter IV of the Manual is entitled 'Ministers and Preachers' and begins with an outline of what is understood to be the 'Office and Duty of a Methodist Preacher'. This first section reflects much of Wesley's 'Rules for Helpers' including similar statements, questions and answers as found in the *Compiled Minutes*. Guidance is given on effective preaching and leading of worship and on the management of the affairs of societies. An interesting comment explores the organisation and running of Classes as a means of continuing to 'carry on the present glorious revival of the work of God.'[110] Preachers were encouraged to meet the classes monthly, and the following note is made regarding what would be understood today to be pastoral visitation of members in their homes:

> As private visits must in many cases, from our plan of continual itinerancy and village preaching, and from the number of members in the larger societies, be greatly limited, let us endeavour so to arrange in our several circuits the plans for quarterly public visitation of the classes, as to allow full time for a more minute examination into the Christian knowledge, experience, and practice of the members; and for pastoral inquiries, instructions and counsels, respecting personal and family religion.[111]

Section 2 of the chapter focused on the process of candidature for the itinerant preaching ministry with little difference in the guidance in comparison with the Compiled Minutes. Section 3 deals with regulations for probationer preachers, not yet received into Full Connexion. The regulations require the annual appraisal of probationers at a local district meeting and includes a list of required reading, as well as a clause declaring '[p]reachers who marry while on trial are thereby set aside.'[112] Section 4 outlines the process of 'Admission into Full Connexion' to be held at the annual conference. Interestingly there is no direct reference to the separate service of Ordination, however the following clause references the Conference journal of 1837 where it was agreed that those who had completed their time of trial as probationers would be both received into Full Connexion and Ordained by the laying on of

[110] MHSIA, 'Report on of the Committee appointed to prepare a Manual of Laws and Discipline of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion in Ireland', *Minutes of Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland*, 1873, p. 47.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid., p. 57.

hands: 'It is cordially and unanimously resolved, that, in the future, imposition of hands be added to our usual method of receiving preachers into full connexion.'[113] Sections 5 and 6 deal with the marriage of ministers and the itinerancy respectively. Section 7 focuses on the 'Duties of a Superintendent'.[114] Often the most senior ordained preacher on a circuit, the Superintendent was responsible for overseeing the work of ordained colleagues and probationers on the circuit. In addition to overseeing the spiritual and ministerial life of the circuit they were responsible for administrative functions, circuit discipline, and to be the key representative to the rest of the Methodist connexion. The remaining sections of the chapter on ministry deal with retired preachers, resignation of preachers, ministerial discipline, and local preachers.

By 1900 a further edition of the *Manual of Laws* was published. The term 'Minister' is used to describe the role and function of full-time itinerant preachers. The chapter on Ministry begins with a summary reminder of the 'Office and Duty of a Methodist Minister':

> 69 The design of God in raising up the Methodist Ministry may reasonably be believed to have been to assist in spreading Scriptural holiness over the land.
>
> 70 The office of a Christian Minister us to watch over souls, as he that must give account; and in order to do this he must feed and guide the flock.
>
> 71 The duty of a Methodist Minister, in addition to regular and faithful preaching, is to meet the Societies and Classes, to meet the Leaders, to visit the people of his charge, especially the sick, and to attend to all part so the Methodist discipline.[115]

Wesley's 'Rules of a Helper' continue to be deployed as a key guide to ministers, but directions found in the first edition on preaching etc have been summarised and simplified. A series of standalone resolutions give an insight into the practice of Methodist Ministry, they include guidelines on the following themes:

- Regard for ministerial colleagues;

[113] Ibid., p. 59.
[114] Ibid., pp. 61-66.
[115] MHSIA, *Manual of Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church Ireland*, 3rd edn. (The Methodist Conference: Dublin, 1900), pp. 23-50.

- House to house visitation for the purposes of encouraging all to embrace the Christian faith;
- Personal spiritual and theological development in ministry;
- Opening new 'preaching places';
- Dealing with those described as 'backsliders' to the faith, i.e. those perceived to no longer be practicing Christian faith;
- The avoidance of sectarianism;
- Good relationships with other denominations.

The regulations for selection processes for candidates for the ministry had, by this time, further evolved with the appointment of a Board of Examiners to oversee the process on behalf of the conference indicating an increasing level of educational and academic prowess across the ministry.

The theme of theological education and the development of resources to aid preachers can be traced in the Minutes of Conference from the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1802 there is a reference in the British address to the Irish Conference regarding the creation of a book room in Dublin to stock printed Methodist material and permission is given for the reprinting of material from the London book room.[116] The Conference of 1828 in the address to the British conference stated:

> We are strongly impressed with the conviction that the growing improvement and intellectual cultivation of society in general, render it necessary for us to make use of all suitable means for our advancement in every requisite qualification for the Christian ministry; that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, even as it is with you. We have in view, particularly, the closer study of the Holy Scriptures, with much prayer, and with the special exercise of faith in the vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God.[117]

The underlying issue appears to have been the financial provision for a resource to train candidates for ministry. By 1833 a significant financial bequest meant that the conference business now contained the question '[w]hat steps can now be taken in order to provide some efficient assistance in theological studies for the young Preachers on our list of Reserve?'[118] By the second half of the 1830s the British conference was providing places at theological

[116] MHSIA, *The Large Minutes* (Last Edition), 1752-1819, p. 156.
[117] MHSIA, *Minutes of Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland*, vol 2, June 1828, p. 246.
[118] Ibid., June 1833, p. 385.

institutions in Britain for small numbers of suitably qualified Irish candidates.[119] This provision remained in place until the opening of Methodist College Belfast in 1868 which consisted of a day and boarding school for secondary-level children and a theological school to train candidates for the ministry.[120] Individual candidates could now be recommended to do further study at Methodist College Belfast, appointed to circuit, or kept on a list of reserve for the following year.[121] Further developments in the practice of ministry can be inferred from the 1900 *Manual of Laws* with new sections outlining arrangements for ministers seeking to serve in other countries. Regulations on marriage, itinerancy, superintendency, retirement, resignation, and disciplinary procedures are largely unchanged.

Subsequent editions of the *Manual of Laws* were published in 1916, 1934, and 1976. These volumes contain no substantial changes regarding definitions of the office and work of an ordained minister. Although there were no significant amendments made to the Manual this did not mean that discussions about the nature of ministry in the Methodist church were not ongoing. A Board of Mission Report to Conference 1973 illustrates the issues the church was beginning to consider at that time. The report suggests that the function of the ordained is primarily to be concerned with the building up of the whole congregation to enable all people to exercise their ministry:

> An understanding of the concept of the ministry of the whole people of God is essential to a consideration of the role of the ordained minister. The ordained ministry operates with and within the laity, in the whole ministry of the church. We recognise that God gives certain gifts to certain people (1 Cor 12) and the Church must encourage and sustain each Christian as he plays his part in accordance with those gifts. There are those "who are set apart to be ministers of the Words and Sacraments", whose task is "with holy boldness to proclaim the Gospel of Thy Kingdom, to administer the word of Thy truth and to offer gifts and spiritual sacrifices unto Thee (Ordination Service)".[122]

[119] Ibid., June 1836, p. 466.
[120] MHSIA, *Minutes of Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland*, vol 3, June 1868, p. 50.
[121] MHSIA, *Manual of Laws and Discipline*, 3rd Edition, p. 31.
[122] MHSIA, *Reports and Agenda for conference*, 1973, p. 145.

In many ways, this marks the beginning of an enduring debate that has continued to the present day. Since the early 1970s the church has broadened its understanding of ministry generally and has adopted other patterns and models of ordained ministry. Two examples warrant closer inspection.

The first is the admission of women into ordained ministry. In 1974 the General Purposes Board of the Methodist Church in Ireland proposed the following resolution to the Conference:

> That, in view of our understanding of the mind of Christ and the equality of the sexes, women who wish to offer themselves for the ministry of the Methodist Church in Ireland may do so under the same conditions as men in relation to candidature, training, probation, ordination, status, stationing, allowances and retirement except as otherwise directed by the Conference.[123]

There is a dearth of information to be found in the reports in the lead up to the conference, but they indicate that the issue was discussed over several years. The *Methodist Newsletter*, the independent paper that shared news and events relating to the Methodist Church in Ireland, contains just a brief comment on the debate simply stating '[t]he Conference approved by an apparently unanimous vote.'[124] For the purpose of comparison, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland began ordaining women as ministers of word and sacrament in 1976.[125]

Twenty years later, the Conference received and published a report on the 'Role of Women' in the Church. It contained biblical material and comment regarding the role of women within the church and wider society and recommended action in five areas: attitude, language, enablement, representation, and ordination. Regarding the ordination of women the report states, '[a]cceptance has not always come easily: much remains to be done to facilitate their participation in the ordained ministry on the same terms as their male colleagues.'[126] By

[123] MHSIA, *Minutes of Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland*, June 1974 p. 42.
[124] Editorial, 'Conference Edition', *MN*, 1974, p.7.
[125] Finlay Holmes, 'The Presbyterian Church in Ireland', in *Christianity in Ireland – Revisiting the Story*, ed. by Brendan Bradshaw and Daire Keogh (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2002), pp. 124-133 (p. 132).
[126] MCI, *Role of women in the church*, 1998, p. 4.

1997 there were 9 women among the body of approximately 133 ordained ministers, not including those retired.[127] The survey carried out in preparation for the 1995 report indicated that 90% of those who responded indicated that having a female minister was a positive experience for their church and 75% saw no disadvantage in having a female minister to their congregation.[128] As a sign of further progress on this front by 2018 there were 30 women among the body of 116 ordained ministers, not including those retired.[129]

The second example concerns the introduction of flexible patterns in the exercise of ordained ministry. Until the 1990s, it was only possible to serve as an ordained minister in a full-time stipendiary capacity, but by 1991 the option of non-stipendiary ministry was introduced. The origins of conversations about non-stipendiary ministry can be traced back to a 1975 conference report which explored four issues:

1. The meaning of ordination;
2. Economic factors relating to ordained ministry;
3. The possibility of a part-time mode of ordained ministry and expansion of lay ministry roles;
4. Deployment of ministerial staff.

The exploration of the meaning of ordination traces the ecclesiological history of ordination and identifies the challenge of secularism and the post-Christian context as the most significant factor affecting the exercise of ordained ministry. The report emphases that ordination is understood to be for those who have an obvious call of God recognised by the church. It gives those ordained an authority to serve, it is a blessing of the Holy Spirit, and it places the individual within a discipline. Those ordained are understood to be set apart for a specific role in the church relating to preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and church order. The report stresses that ordained ministry in Methodism is exercised within and alongside the wider ministry of all people in the whole church, and the role of the ordained is to enable others to

[127] MHSIA, *Minutes of Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland*, June 1997, pp. 102-117.
[128] MCI, *Role of women in the church*, 1998, p. 11.
[129] MHSIA, *Minutes of Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland*, June 2018, pp. 106-130.

exercise their ministry. The report highlights the broader ministry of the church is changing in the face of secularisation and declining meaningful church connection within the wider society. Ultimately the conclusion is that there is no theological argument against the creation of a part-time mode of ordained ministry with the purposes of allowing a wider group of people to respond to the call of God, and to provide for the continuance of congregations in places where full-time stipendiary ordained ministry can no longer be afforded.

> In view of the plurality of modern society and of the decline of Church membership and finance, the predominant pattern of ordained ministry should no longer be the one-minister one-congregation church in a local neighbourhood. In keeping with the traditional Methodist practice renewed emphasis should be placed on the group and the team and to promote this larger circuits should be formed. As well as focussing the attention on the mission of the Church to a plurality of needs in the community through a group of specially trained men and women, the team promotes a closer grouping of churches within their own region, and a closer alliance of ministers and lay people for ministry. Team ministry is not only a suitable response to present difficulties but also a creative possibility for extended Christian witness and service.[130]

The 1975 Irish Conference accepted the recommendations of the commission on local ministry but in 1979 decided not to proceed with the recommendation and instead referred the matter to the Faith and Order committee of the church.[131] The significant issue was that of the Methodist understanding of Full Connexion as distinct from the universal understanding of ordination. Full Connexion status gave Methodist ordained ministers a special covenant relationship with the church and placed them solely at the disposal of the Connexion. A vital question to be considered was how could a part-time ordained minister be fully available to the appointment processes the church if they were employed in another capacity? The Faith and Order report to the 1987 Conference recognised this challenge but saw no theological difficulty in a form of local non-stipendiary ordained ministry. Ultimately the Conference chose to adopt the mode and at its 1991 conference approved legislation which created the option of 'candidating' for local non-stipendiary ministry.

[130] MHSIA, *Reports and Agenda for conference*, 1975, p. 142.
[131] Ibid., 1987, p. 37.

> The Local Ministry is an auxiliary ministry, ordained for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, in Full Connexion with the Conference and answerable to the Synods in matters of Discipline and Doctrine. It is a non-stipendiary office for one of independent means either in employment, self-employment or in active retirement. Local ministers are thus not entitled to a manse or ministerial grants from Conference funds other than for normal travel.[132]

The examples cited above are reflected in the significant changes to be found in the subsequent editions of the Manual of Laws published in 2004 and revised in 2011. Beyond the mechanics of the operation of the new modes of ordained ministry however the most recent versions of the manual do not reflect the wider ongoing discussion about the nature of ministry across the church during these decades and the unintended consequences of the changes. Additional papers and reports received and adopted by the conference do however reflect the ongoing discussion concerning the churches understanding of the theology, nature, and practice of ministry.

The conference created another Commission on Ministry in 2004 in response to decreasing numbers of candidates for the ministry. The Commission was asked to 'examine the 'theology, principles, and future ministry in the Methodist Church'.[133] The wider issues addressed in the Commission's report will be explored in more detail in the third section of this chapter. At this juncture it is helpful to note that the report recommended a review of the procedures relating to non-stipendiary ministry. This arose from the findings that suggested there were differing understandings and practices about non-stipendiary ministry across the Connexion. The review of non-stipendiary ministry reported to the 2009 conference and in summary made the following recommendations:

- That both modes of ordained ministry, stipendiary and non-stipendiary are equal in value;
- That non-stipendiary ordained ministry should be regarded as a 'tent-making' ministry;[134]
- That ordained ministers could transfer between the modes;

[132] Ibid., 1991, p. V.
[133] Ibid., 2007, p. 25.
[134] A 'tent-making' ministry is a role which involves an individual engaging in paid employment that enables him/her to serve in a ministerial role without receiving any numeration for that role.

- That there was a need for clear working agreements to be created between non-stipendiary ministers and the circuit in which they were appointed;
- That that the conference should consider the creating a part-time stipendiary ordained ministry.[135]

By 2013 the church passed legislation allowing for the appointment of ordained ministers in part-time appointments:

> Ministry in a Part-time Appointment: This is an itinerant ministry in which ministers feel called by God to be partially self-supporting while exercising ordained ministry. The distinctive feature of this ministry is that the minister receives a pro-rata stipend in accordance with the scales set down by the Conference.[136]

The deeper impact of this latest development will be felt in the years ahead as will the effect of other conversations about the nature of ministry which will be picked up in the third section of this chapter.

The primary source material explored illustrates the development of Methodism in Ireland as a complex organisational structure through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Central in supporting this structure was the provision of human resource, in the form of ordained ministers, to maintain the ministry of the church. As Methodism evolved as a separate denomination in both Ireland and England it mirrored the characteristics of other denominations including the more extensive ownership of buildings, governance structures and committees, and a form of separated ordained ministry. The rules and regulations dealing with the provision of this ordained ministry resembled that of other denominations as well as reflecting the origins of the Methodist preacher. Ordained ministers increasingly became involved in the routine matters of pastoral ministry and administration of circuits, to sustain churches that had already been established, a far cry from Wesley's vision of extraordinary messengers. At the same time the first decades of the nineteenth century saw a period of

[135] MHSIA, *Reports and Agenda for conference*, 2009, pp. 81-82.
[136] MHSIA, *Reports and Agenda for conference*, 2013, p. 75.

significant numerical growth in Irish Methodism doubtless impacting the role and function of the ordained ministers.

Similar developments in the understanding of ordained ministry can be see in British and American Methodism. Wellings outlines the development of ordained (presbyteral) ministry in the Methodist church in Britain within a similar timeframe to this study of Ireland. He explores the evolution of the role of Conference in the nineteenth century and the divisions that resulted in different expressions of Methodism and the compromises required to bring about reunification of some those expressions in 1932. [137] The article notes the important developments in the second half of the twentieth century including the ordination of women, the creation of an order of deacons as distinct from presbyters, the changing patterns of ministerial service and the development of forms of lay ministry. Finally, he assesses several reports received by the British conference related to the understanding and practice of ministry, lay and ordained.

Similarly, Dennis Campbell, writing from an American Methodist perspective, argues that although Wesley never outlined a distinct doctrine of ministry, his approach can be summarised as involving the following:

- recognition of a preaching ministry not related to ordained ministry;
- an essential need for a clear call from God to ministry;
- a high degree of moral integrity;
- genuine ministry evidenced by fruitfulness;
- effective central organisation of the ministry for the Methodist movement;
- that inherited Anglican ministerial orders, while important, they are not the complete model. [138]

These examples show the clear parallels in terms of the developing understanding of nature and practice of ordained ministry in Ireland, Britain, and the United States.

[137] Martin Wellings, 'Presbyteral Ministry: A Methodist Perspective', in *Ecclesiology*, 1, (2005), 57-74.
[138] Campbell, *The Yoke of Obedience*, pp. 52-55.

The journey of Methodism through the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in both Ireland and Britain, at face value, appears to run counter to the sentiment of Wesley's 'Prophets and Priests' sermon. Wesley's vision for his itinerant preachers was that they would be extra-ordinary messengers, sharing the good news of the gospel with those whom the Anglican church had failed to reach. Wesley's concern was that his preachers should not become distracted by temporal matters but remain focused on their extra-ordinary calling. Thus, he deployed irregular methodologies such as field preaching, lay preaching, extemporary prayer in worship, and close personal supervision of the preachers. Ironically, the growth of Methodism in the nineteenth century, and the transition from religious societies to denominations, threatened this ideal as the itinerants became increasingly involved in maintaining the mechanics of local circuits and the connexion.

The only example of an Ordination Service sermon appended to an original set of Minutes of Conference dates to 1889, 100 years after Wesley had died. The President of the Conference that year was the Revd Joseph Bush, a British Methodist minister, as was the custom. In his sermon Bush provides some insight into what the main emphases might be relating to the exercise of ordained ministry in Ireland and Britain at that time. The sermon underlines Wesley's emphasis on the necessary characteristics of a Methodist preacher: 'We believe that when the Lord Jesus chooses a man to be a Minister, He gives a three-fold sign and token; and in every man whom God makes a Minister, the church finds three things – grace, gifts and fruit; not any one, not any two, but all three.'[139] Bush explores the question of the personal spirituality of the minister and then focuses this on its outworking within Methodism and in particular within the circuit structure. He laments the problem of ministers being drawn away from the work on their circuits and argues that their primary responsibility is to build up their circuit through preaching and pastoral care. Bush argues that this ministry was what

[139] MHSIA, *Minutes of Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland*, June 1889, p. 75.

Methodist preachers were called to and trained for. To what extent this contrasts with Wesley's view of the Methodist preacher is a fascinating question. In contrast, Wesley described his preachers as 'extraordinary' messengers, Bush however states:

> Extraordinary working has its place and use; and how to use, without abusing, extraordinary methods and measures is a problem which requires much wisdom for its solution. But after making full allowance for the extraordinary within our gates, it is the ordinary working of our Circuits that, year by year, makes of mars Methodism.[140]

The overall tenor of the sermon appears to be focused on strengthening the spiritual condition of the circuit in contrast to Wesley's focus on the expansion and growth of the movement. This may simply reflect a common perspective on ordained ministry within Methodism as expressed by the President of the day. It may also reflect the extraordinary growth in Methodism in the nineteenth century that required ministers to focus on the pastoral needs and organisation and relationships within circuits. Certainly, it offers an important insight into the maturing of the Methodism from movement inspired by an individual to an organised denominational church.

Similarly, Albert Outler argues that by the mid-twentieth century the United Methodist Church in the United Sates maintained an understanding of the exercise of ordained ministry moved far removed from the original intentions of its founders.

> [W]e have passed beyond the gravitational field of our historical origin and are now in what might be called a condition of weightlessness as far as our peculiar history is concerned – a detraditioned state of mind and polity. In America at least, Methodism is an "established church" (in the sociological sense) in which the maintenance and expansion of the establishment has become an undeclinable prime duty for almost everyone associated with it.[141]

The Anglican gravitational field of the origins of Methodism in Ireland were undoubtedly less vigorous to begin with considering the size of the Church of Ireland, the influence of Scottish Presbyterianism and the majority allegiance of the Irish population to the Roman Catholic

[140] Ibid. p. 85.
[141] Albert C. Outler, 'Do Methodists have a Doctrine of the Church?', in *The Doctrine of the Church*, ed. by Dow Kirkpatrick (London: Epworth Press, 1964) pp. 11-28 (p. 24).

Church. None the less, in Ireland too, it seems that the nature and practice of what became ordained ministry had moved considerably from the time of Wesley.

David Chapman argues that discussion on the nature of Methodist ecclesiology and ministry that primarily focuses on domestic and historical debate serves little purpose when considering the nature of the church today and its mission in this world:

> If the Methodist doctrine of the church in the twenty-first century is to progress beyond stale internal debates about the nature of ordained ministry, then Methodism will have to overcome the tensions inherent in its founding charisms in order to consider how being free to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit can be reconciled theologically with the providence of the same Spirit in the past.[142]

To that end, the third section of this chapter will move to consider the twenty-first century landscape of the practice of Methodist ministry in Ireland and to explore the challenges being faced by ministers and congregations today.

### (III) Contemporary and Future Perspectives on Methodist Ministry at the beginning of the twenty-first century

> [L]et all those who are real members of the church see that they walk holy and unblameable in all things. 'Ye are the light of the world!' Ye are 'a city set upon a hill, and cannot be hid. O let your light shine before men!' Show them your faith by your works. Let them see by the whole tenor of your conversation that your hope is all laid up above! Let all your words and actions evidence the spirit whereby you are animated! Above all things, let your love abound. Let it extend to every child of man; let it overflow to every child of God.[143]

Wesley penned these words in a sermon published in the *Arminian Magazine* at the beginning of 1786. The sermon 'Of the Church' illustrates Wesley's views on the nature of Christian discipleship and the work of ministry of the whole of the church and remains a challenge to the contemporary church.

During the second half of the twentieth century, fault-lines began to appear in the landscapes of many established denominational churches, particularly in the west. Evidence of

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[142] David M. Chapman, 'Holiness and Order: British Methodism's search for the Holy Catholic Church' in *Ecclesiology*, 7, (2011), 71-96, (p. 96).
[143] John Wesley, 'Of the Church' in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. by Albert C. Outler, 27 vols (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1986), III, pp. 45-57, (pp. 56-57).

these challenges include declining membership, decreasing levels of church engagement and attendance, a drop in the number of people training for ordination, rapidly accelerating age profiles of congregations, and the rise in tensions within denominations and between denominations and the civic powers in relation to moral and ethical questions. Mead describes these fault lines as 'cracks in the system' which reveal the inherent weaknesses that exist in denominational structures. Closer investigation would suggest that these weaknesses have been developing for at least the last century.[144] Similarly, Murray defines this contemporary context as '*post-Christendom* – a culture in which central features of the Christian story are unknown and churches are alien institutions whose rhythms do not normally impinge on most members of society.'[145] Like Mead, Murray argues that the church in the west is in the middle of an extended period of transition, and it remains unclear as to what forms and structures of church will emerge. While such transition and change might present institutional churches with significant challenges it also provides the opportunity to engage in new and creative ways of relating to secular culture. Church and mission theologian Darrell Guder synopsises the challenge in the following terms:

> As Christendom ends and the western world becomes an ever more difficult mission field, the churches are challenged to reclaim their missional calling… This process means that their inherited forms of leadership are also subject to review and change.[146]

Mead argues that the cracks in the system lead to what he describes as 'dislocations', i.e., places where there is confusion over the nature of the mission and ministry of the church and the operation of leadership. He notes four of these dislocations as follows:

i. The role of the clergy;
ii. The role of the laity;
iii. The role of the bishop or church executive;
iv. The role and work of the congregation.

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[144] *Loren Mead, The Once and Future Church Collection (The Alban Institute, 2001), pp. 55-57.*
[145] Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom – Church and Mission in a strange new world* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2005), p. 1.
[146] Guder, p. 149.

The Methodist Church in Ireland is currently experiencing the symptoms of disruption as set out by Mead. Writing from a British and Irish context, Croft makes the point: 'The models of mission and ministry that have nourished the church through previous centuries are no longer proving effective or sustainable for many congregations and clergy.'[147] Mead's four dislocations will now be used to explore the current landscape of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

(i) The Role of the Clergy

A minister in the Methodist Church in Ireland is ordained to 'word and sacrament.' This ministry, according to the Manual of Laws of the church, is primarily focused on the 'winning and watching over souls', pastoral oversight of congregational members and the leading of worship and preaching.[148] In this regard, the Methodist Church in Ireland is at one with the practice of ordained ministry in other mainstream denominations operating at the end of Christendom. Mead summarises this practice as follows:

> In Christendom, the role of the clergy was clear. It was strong, central, and unquestioned. It as a high-status role, carrying authority. Clergy were *the ministry.* Clergy were chaplains and guarantors of community life, with power far beyond the walls of the church.[149]

What may appear, on the surface, to be a relatively simple role that has become increasingly complex. Guder traces this complexity back to, and even beyond, the time of the Protestant Reformation.

> In the almost five hundred years of Protestantism, there has been an enormous proliferation of concepts and structures of office, in which the old patterns of Christendom and revisions of the Reformation are intertwined and adapted. For all the talk of the priesthood of all believers, there are many traces of Christendom's legacy in the ways that the ordered ministry actually functions. The clergy-laity distinction persists in spite of all Protestant affirmations that we are all part of the *laos*, the laity of God. Congregants still tend to think that their ministers are there to provide the services that meet their religious needs, based on the assumption that their ordinations, however celebrated, conferred a special status on them.[150]

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[147] Steven Croft, *Ministry in Three Dimensions* (London: Darton, Longmann and Todd, 1999), p. 4.
[148] MCI, *Manual of the Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church in Ireland*, 2011, p. 23.
[149] Mead, p. 57.
[150] Guder, p. 148.

Within the Methodist Church in Ireland, two examples of issues relating to the dislocation of the role of clergy can be found in reports adopted by the annual Methodist conference in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 2006 a report was presented exploring factors affecting the health and well-being of Ordained Clergy.[151] The report drew evidence from a survey commissioned to explore ministers' experiences. It showed that pastoral care, preaching, and teaching remained the activities that ministers found most fulfilling, along with wider community development work, and youth and children's ministry. It also highlighted many of the issues and activities that ministers found increasingly difficult to deal with, including, conflict resolution and mediation, leadership functions, time management, and change management. The conclusions of the report highlighted that the church faced significant challenges in relation to the exercise of ordained ministry. These included broad themes such as arresting the numerical decline of congregations, wider societal changes in terms of attitudes towards institutional churches, broader understanding of the nature of ministry that includes all those who are members of the church, not just those who are ordained, and, the development of new forms of pioneer ministry and mission.[152] In addition, the report highlighted the increasing difficulties of operating significant technical processes in the church including the

[151] MHSIA, 'Health of Ministers Report', *Reports and Agenda for conference*, 2006, pp. 27-36.

[152] The term *pioneer ministry* or *pioneer mission* has come into popular usage over the last twenty years in traditional denominations in west. The underlying argument is that to reverse decline in traditional churches both models of church and leadership need to change. Guder. p. 143, describes this as a 'radical revision of traditional ecclesiologies.' Pioneer mission and ministry is concentrated primarily on ministry and evangelistic activities that focus on people who are beyond the gathered church community. As Christendom ends and the Western world becomes an ever more difficult mission field, the churches are challenged to reclaim their missional calling. That is the vocation of the missional community as we have been describing it. This process means that their inherited forms of leadership are also subject to review and change.' (Guder, p. 149). In practical terms many existing, aging congregations can no longer sustain the model of ordained ministry they once enjoyed. There are not the resources to support a full-time stipendiary clergy. Faced with this dilemma many denominations have begun to explore other models of ministry, both ordained and lay. Some of these models have been about sustaining existing church communities with part-time stipendiary or completely non-stipendiary clergy. Others have deployed personnel resources to attempt to help tradition churches 'transition' to outward orientated mission communities. The challenge of exercising leadership and helping communities change in such settings is not to be underestimated. Michael Moynagh, *Church for Every Context* (London: SCM, 2012), is the seminal work on this theme in the context of Britain. See also Steven Croft, *Mission-Shaped Questions, Defining Issues for Today's Church*, (London: Church House Publishing, 2008), and Jonny Baker and Cathy Ross (ed), *The Pioneer Gift*, London: The Canterbury Press, 2014). No significant studies have been carried out in relation to *pioneer ministry* in Ireland at this time, though the context is understood to be broadly like that of Britain and the United States of America.

mechanisms for maintaining the itinerant system, the nature and scope of training for ordained ministry, and the development of leadership among both ordained and lay. Issues such as those highlighted above have continued to be discussed across the Methodist church over the last ten years and are in line with Mead's assertions over the changing role of ordained clergy. As he states:

> [L]oss of role clarity lies behind much of the stress and burnout among clergy. Most clergy come to their vocations from a deep faith and commitment. Trained in institutions that were generated by the mind-set of Christendom and ordained into denominations and congregations predominantly shaped by Christendom, they discover that the rules have been changed in the middle of the game. Instead of front-line leaders and spokespersons for mission, they now feel they are being asked to take a back seat to a newly awakened laity. The role they sought out and trained themselves for no longer fits what they have to do. Many are unsure how to give leadership in the new time.[153]

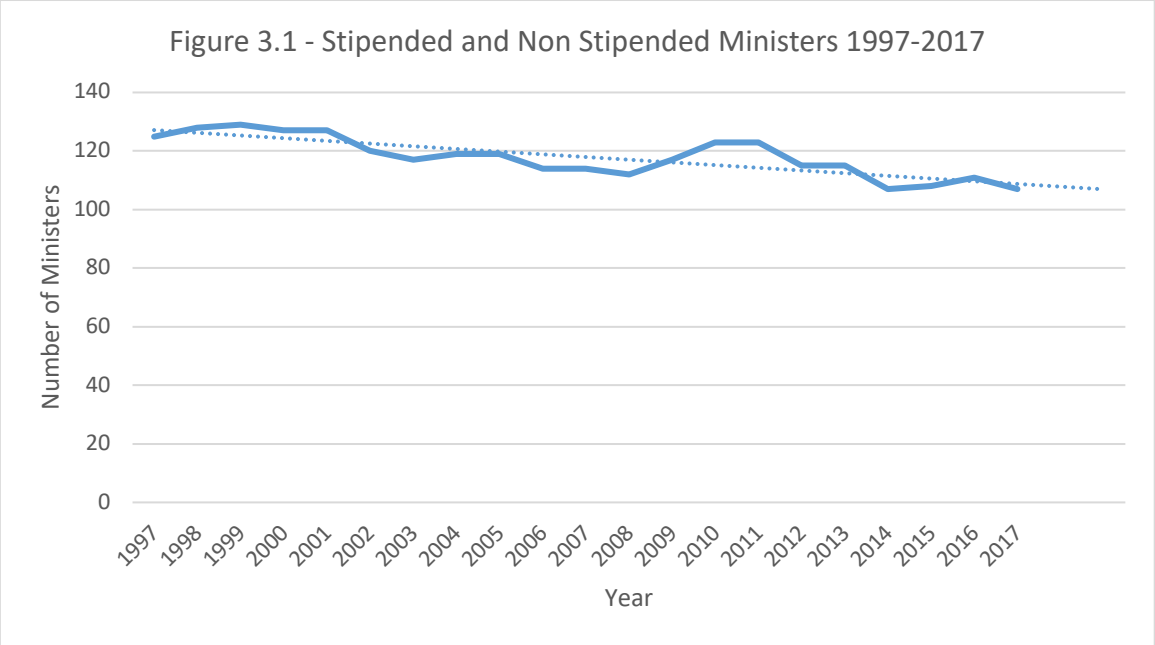
Based on his research, Mead suggests that clergy are searching for roles that are clearer and less ambiguous. Some clergy see themselves as social activists or spiritual directors, "enablers" or community organisers, educators, or counsellors. Often these new role descriptions are added onto the more traditional roles of preacher, pastor, and administrator. The multiplicity of options and opportunities, however, has resulted in less clarity, not more, as individual clergy to simply decide for themselves their preferred approach to ministry.[154]

Data extracted by the author from official Methodist Church in Ireland records is shown the charts below. Figure 4.1 indicates the decline in the numbers of ordained ministers available for service in local churches. Figure 4.2 provides further detail, showing a slight decrease in the number entering the ministry over the period. The number of people leaving the ministry through resignation, retirement or transferring to other churches overseas, however, is increasing at a higher rate. The impact of the increase in those leaving is offset by an increase in ordained ministers from other churches overseas coming to serve with the

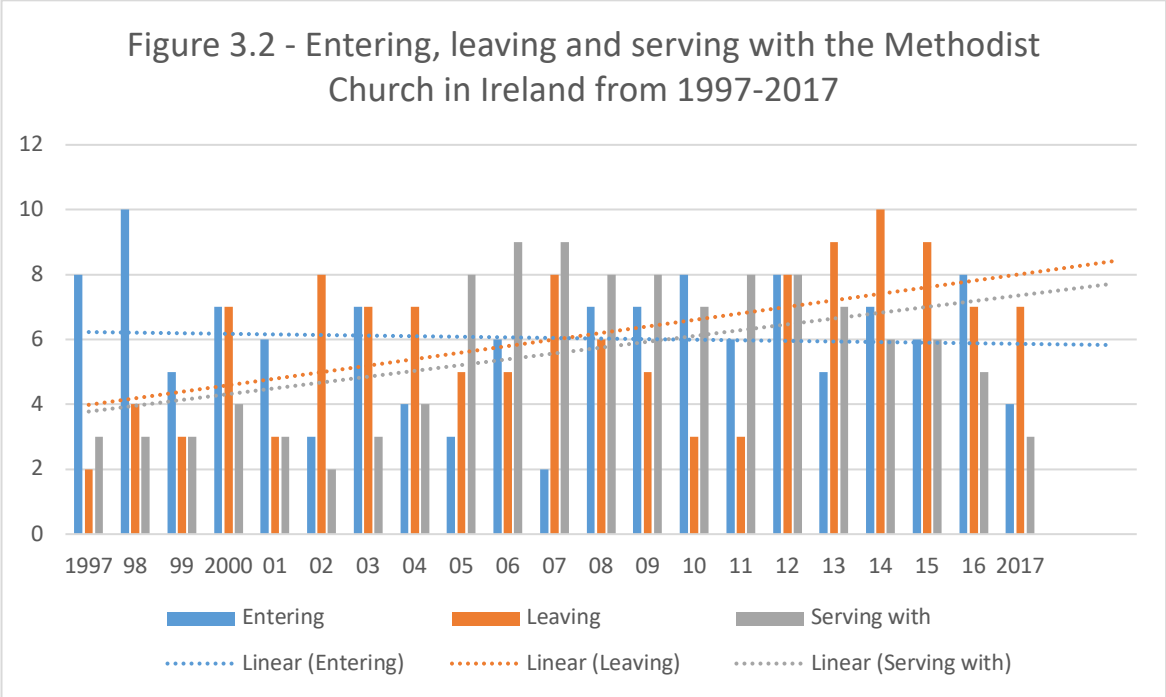
[153] Mead, p. 59.
[154] Ibid, p. 58.

Methodist Church in Ireland.[155] This reality increases pressure on remaining clergy who by necessity are spread over more local congregations. At the same time the challenge of competing expectations of congregations and lay leaders further increases the pressure on the ordained. The significant reality is that the denomination, local congregations, and clergy must adapt considering changing circumstances. As Croft states:

> [C]hanges in deployment patterns call for a different set of skills and a different mindset among the clergy. We are moving further and further away from the concept of the ordained as the person whose primary responsibility is to lead the worship of the people, to do the primary work of pastoral care, and teach the faith to the children and young people. We are moving much more rapidly towards the primary skills of the ordained being focused around leading and building communities of faith who are able to engage in God's mission to the world.[156]




[155] Data extracted by the author from the *Minutes of Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland* from 1997-2017.
[156] Croft, p. 12.




(ii) The Role of the Laity

'All people are called to minister' is the title of a strategic paper adopted by the Methodist Conference in June 2017.[157] It outlines a strategy for the reinvigoration of lay ministry that builds on a previous church publication from 2014 entitled 'God's Mission, Our Mission' which stated:

> The concept of whole life discipleship is one where disciples engage in mission wherever they are every day – at the 'frontlines' of everyday life and the local worshiping and nurturing church fully supports and equips such discipleship shaped by and for comprehensive mission; such an understanding provides a rich underpinning for how we might seek to fulfil our mission at local society and district levels in particular but also as a whole Connexion.[158]

These ideas relate to Mead's second dislocation which explores the changing role of the lay members of local churches. He argues that during the last fifty years the United States has seen a shift in the understanding of how congregational members express their religious convictions in their everyday lives. In the past, involvement in local congregational work by volunteer lay members focused on the maintenance of church programmes and involvement in

[157] MHSIA, 'All people are called to minister', *Reports and Agenda for conference*, 2017, pp. 209-212.
[158] MHSIA, 'God's Mission Our Mission', *Reports and Agenda for conference*, 2014, pp. 222-245.

on the upkeep of church buildings. Mead shows that lay leaders are confronted by this dislocation now and face several complex and often competing demands including:

- A demand to increase the amount of time committed to and financial resources given to the function of the congregation;
- An understanding that the ministry of the laity should be expressed beyond the activities of the church in members everyday lives, within family life, workplace and leisure activities;
- The need to understand the nuances of often complex social and theological issues, such as human sexuality, migration, and global politics and economics;
- Embracing significant changes in worship style and liturgies with little sense of ownership or consultation.

These competing demands are creating a further sense of disequilibrium for the laity, as Mead states:

> Although some articulate lay leaders today call for laity to be the primary ministers of the church, neither clergy nor laity are clear what that means. As a matter of fact, most lay people are already doing what they assumed they were supposed to do – working hard in their jobs and trying to make their communities better. They are surprised and hurt to find that their leaders consider those expressions of faithfulness somehow wanting.[159]

In Ireland and Britain, as in the United States, the challenge of declining church attendance and increasing age profile within the older denominational churches means that local churches cannot depend on the presence of children and young people to ensure a future. The challenge that the church faces is to engage in mission to families currently beyond the fringes of the church. As Croft states:

> Churches which do not attempt to engage in mission in this way will, in the course of time, simply have to close. The existing congregation grows older and declines as people become too

[159] Mead, p. 61.

> infirm to attend church or as they die. The income of the church declines and so the congregation is unable to support a full-time vicar or minister. The pastoral oversight they receive from the denomination by way of part-time ministry has energy only for maintenance of the existing congregation. The decline continues until the circuit or diocese makes the decision to close the building and focus its energies elsewhere.[160]

The arguments made by both Croft and Mead are applicable in the Methodist Church in Ireland. The conference documents on ministry, ministers' health, and mission all provide evidence of a debate within the church regarding the perceived need for a changing understanding of the role of the laity. One example of this issue concerns the role of the ordained minister as the primary provider of pastoral care within the context of a local circuit. A series of comments, articles, and letters by semi anonymous commentators, published in the *Methodist Newsletter*, the monthly magazine of the Methodist Church in Ireland, in the period of January to June 2016 focus on this example. The first commentator writes:

> Here is the ministerial ethic I grew up to believe to be universal: the minister of a congregation cares about every single individual within his/her remit of care. The minister, at varying suitable intervals, visits the members of the congregation. The minister knows the congregation and their cares, responsibilities, and joys – even if a small notebook of reminders is needed. Am I foolish in thinking that this is part of a minister's remit? Modern lifestyles make this more challenging, but isn't it still in the job description? There were many more Methodists in Ireland in past years, but the ministers called on their people, even if they had to cycle miles to do it. Pastoral teams of lay people are wonderful and necessary but when people are in distress, they want to see the person into whose pastoral care they have voluntarily placed themselves, someone whom they know and who knows them.[161]

In the February 2016 Newsletter an item of correspondence responded to the comment above, stating, 'In my opinion this is a matter of concern to many. We are all aware that membership of our Church continues to fall and I wonder if lack of pastoral care is a contributing factor.'[162] The correspondent proceeds to infer that this is because of ordained ministers not engaging in pastoral visitation to the same degree as they did in the past. Similarly, a comment in the June 2016 edition of the Newsletter suggests ordained ministers are neglecting or rejecting their role

[160] Croft, pp. 6-7.
[161] SJ, 'If Methodism were not in my DNA', *MN,* January 2016, p.33.
[162] MW, 'The importance of pastoral visitation', *MN*, February 2016, p. 31.

in relation to pastoral visitation.[163] In the same edition, a second correspondent goes further highlighting the dislocation raised by Mead, as he/she states:

> As the church is reminding us to pastor each other, it appears to have forgotten that this has always been an important part of a Methodist minister's responsibility. How can a minister preach effectively to people without knowing their joys, sorrows, and difficulties? To whom do people address their questions about faith in relationship to society today? I, for one, will not discuss concerns with someone with whom I do not have an established, trusting relationship. Society may have changed but people have the same needs and more than ever require a pastor/counsellor. If the Methodist ministers of the twentieth century were able to fulfil this role, with much larger congregations, why can they not do so now?[164]

In contrast to these perspectives on pastoral care, Luscombe writing about the practice of ordained ministry within the Methodist Church in Britain, articulates something of the tension between an understanding of pastoral care today and the original understanding of the role of a Methodist minister. As he states:

> Today, improved communications allow the ordained minister to be called in as the expert, allowing or forcing the minster into the role of professional pastoral carer, which is very far from Wesley's original concept of his helpers. This might be simply the inevitable working out of the change from new movement into settled denomination.[165]

There can be no doubt that the tension as outlined by Luscombe is a feature of the current debate within the Methodist Church in Ireland. At the conference of 2017, it was agreed to add a preamble to the church's criteria for selection for ordained ministry training, stating:

> 'Ministry' is about the whole Church's calling to serve God in worship, in each other, and in the world. Particular ministries express this service in different ways, but the ordained minister is especially related to the total ministry of the body of Christ, as leader and enabler of others. The ordained minister acts as a sign of the Church which is itself a sign of the Kingdom of God.[166]

The key words in this preamble are undoubtedly 'leader' and 'enabler' which emphasise that the role of the ordained is not simply to be those who 'do' the ministry, but in exercising their

[163] BT, 'Destination Station', *MN*, June 2016, p. 31.
[164] JH, 'Confused and puzzled', *MN*, Jun2 2016, p. 34.
[165] Philip Luscombe, 'Where is the Minister?', in *What is a minister?* ed. by Philip Luscombe and Esther Shreeve (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2002), pp. 33-47 (p. 40).
[166] MHSIA, 'Board of Ministry Report', *Reports and Agenda for conference*, 2017, pp. 223-225 (p. 223).

specific ministry, the role of the ordained is to inspire, equip, train, and release the laity into the exercise of ministry. While the Methodist Conference agreed this statement, the greatest challenge is implementation. Successful implementation requires a significant change in culture across the denomination where there are significant numbers of members, such as those quoted above, who hold to a more traditional and settled view of the role of the ordained. In addition, among ordained ministers, many want to retain the classical reformed model of a 'pastor / teacher' which provides a degree of certainty and comfort in times where, as already stated, there is significant change and uncertainty in the wider culture and society.

(iii) The role of the Bishop or Church Executive

Executive oversight is the third area of dislocation that Mead surveys. In Irish Methodism such oversight is provided by the Governance Board, Connexional Team, the General Secretary, District Superintendents, and various committees and boards who work to implement the decisions of the Annual Conference and provide effective governance and support to local circuits and societies.

For those leading and managing the Irish Methodist Connexion today there is a set of competing and contradictory tensions. First, there is a question concerning purpose. Within the Christendom paradigm the significant purpose of the wider church structure was to enable local churches to relate to the wider world and connect with the mission of the church in other countries and cultures, including the collection and distribution of financial resources. The delivery of this function today is affected by the development of information technology and improved communications and travel which make it much easier for local churches to connect with churches and communities in other parts of the world, filtering out the perceived need for a central coordinating body. In addition, if western culture is no longer seen as being predominantly Christian then the location of the mission of the church is no longer in a far-off

land, but is close by, in the streets and neighbourhoods around out church buildings. The denominational structure therefore is no longer viewed as relevant in enabling the mission of the church to function in this local setting. In fact, Mead argues that it is not simply a matter of relevance, central denominational structures can be perceived to hinder the mission of the local church, not enhance it. As he states:

> But when local congregations rediscovered a primary missionary frontier at their own doorstep, the judicatories did not seem to be as necessary; indeed, sometimes they seemed to be impediments. Congregations felt no need to ask the bishop before setting up a soup kitchen. Sometimes, as a matter of fact, they forgot to tell their executive that they had begun such a mission effort. The judicatory was seen as irrelevant to these strictly local expressions of mission.[167]

A second tension for those with executive oversight is how to manage the dislocations around the role of the clergy and the role of the laity. Resolving this challenge increasingly requires intervention in the local setting by central denominational representatives. As indicated, the Methodist Church 'Health of Ministers' Report' found that ordained ministers in local settings were struggling to deal with conflict within their circuits. Such conflict leads to increasing demands for connexional staff to intervene in local situations to mediate, to resolve conflict, to discipline allegedly errant clergy, or deal with difficult lay leadership. Gibbs argues that the issue of conflict is more significant in church settings than in others due to a mixture of factors:

> One cannot have community without conflict. This is as true in the church as in any other area of life. In some respects the potential for conflict is even greater in the church than elsewhere. This is due to the diversity of constituencies that make up many congregations, the fact that the church is not selective but welcomes all comers, and the fact that the matters of faith and life with which the church deals represent deeply held convictions.[168]

These interventions require the resources to provide the time, training, and support necessary. This creates a clear contradiction where local congregations may question the need to resource

[167] Mead, p. 63.
[168] Eddie Gibbs and Ian Coffey, *Church next – quantum changes in Christian ministry* (Leicester: IVP, 2001), p. 112.

a central body and at the same time the call for denominational intervention in local situations increases in volume.

The question of sustainability is a third area of tension for the executive oversight. As local congregations face financial crises and denominational investments and endowments begin to be used to prop up weakening structures, naturally the argument is made that significant cuts should be made to those structures. As Gibbs states:

> [T]housands of churches with small, aging and dwindling congregations are finding themselves in a financially precarious position. Many manage to keep their doors open only because they can draw upon endowments or outside subsidies… Church members resent their dwindling resources being siphoned off to shore up bureaucracies they no longer trust.[169]

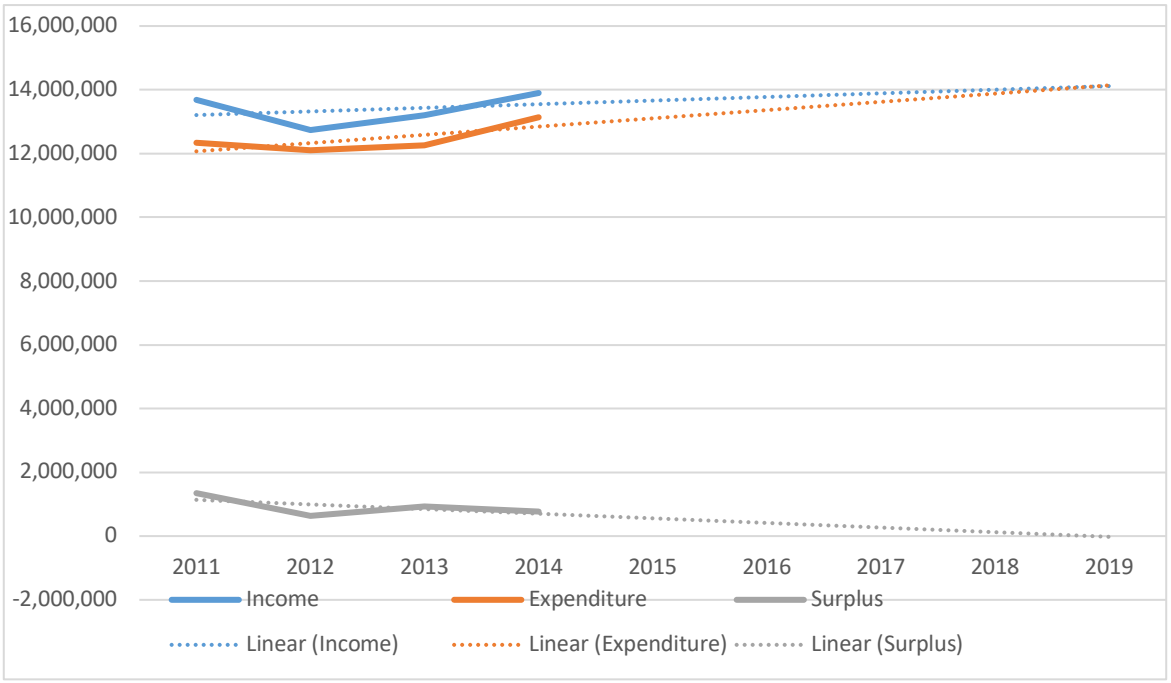
The Revd Dr John Stephens, the General Secretary[170] of the Methodist Church in Ireland, gave a presentation to the 2016 Methodist Conference outlining the challenges facing the church in terms of membership decline and financial resources. Table 4.1 below shows the declining numbers of both those in membership and the total Methodist Community between 2009 and 2014 and projects these figures forward to 2019 and 2024. Stephens argued that these figures, which show a decline of around 2% per annum, highlight, will result in a decline in the financial resources of the church. Figures 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 illustrate the income and expenditure trend since 2011 and offer a forward projection showing that within a couple of years the denomination would be using its reserves to sustain its work rather than annual income.

[169] Gibbs, p. 72.

[170] The role of the General Secretary is akin to a Chief Executive Officer of the church. An ordained minister is stationed (appointed) to this role with the responsibility of ensuring that the decisions and policies of the Methodist Conference are implemented and adhered to by all.

| *Table 3.1 - Methodist Church in Ireland Membership Figures*[171] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***Full Members*** | *% decrease* | ***Total Methodist Community*** | *% decrease* |
| ***2009*** | ***15,503*** | | ***51,425*** | |
| ***2014*** | ***14,835*** | ***-4.3%*** | ***45,828*** | ***-10.9%*** |
| ***2019*** | ***14,093*** | ***-5%*** | ***41,254*** | ***-10%*** |
| ***2024*** | ***13,388*** | ***-5%*** | ***37,129*** | ***-10%*** |

**Figure 3.3 – Financial Projection – all other factors remaining equal**[172]




[171] Data extracted from a presentation given by Rev Dr John Stephens to the Irish Methodist Conference in June 2016.
[172] Ibid.

**Figure 3.4 – Financial Projection – based on 1% reduction in income[173]**

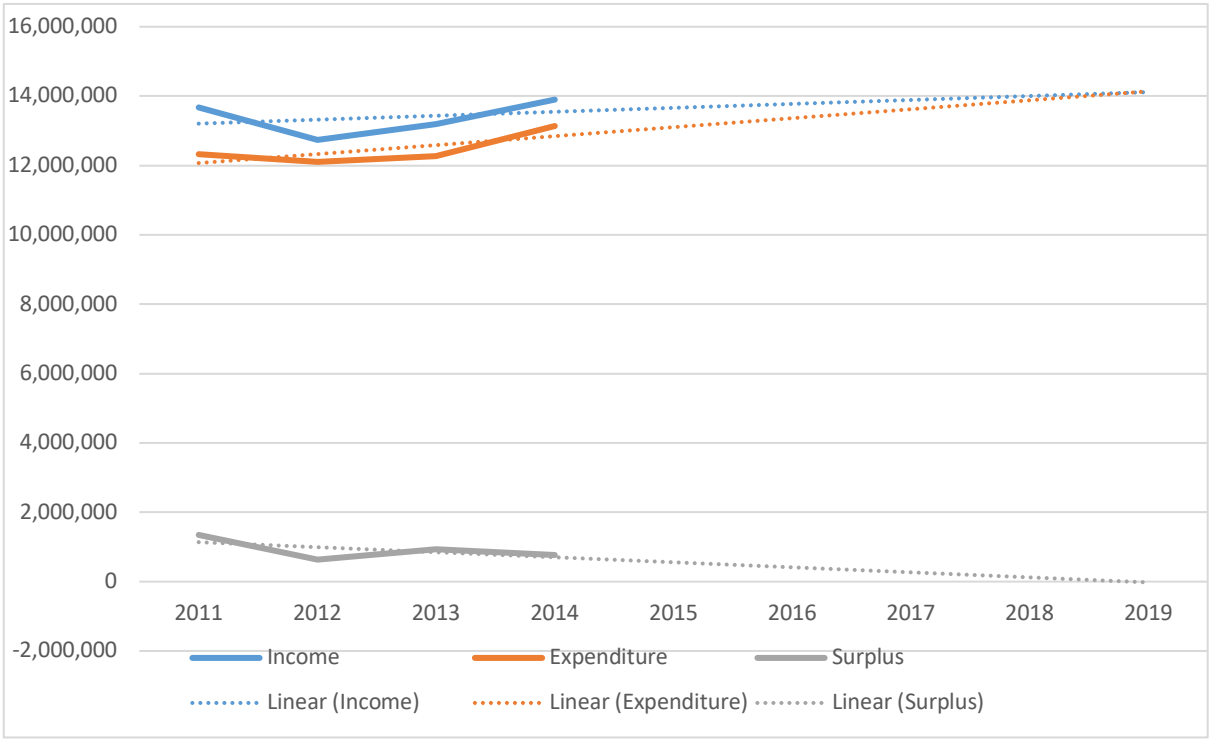
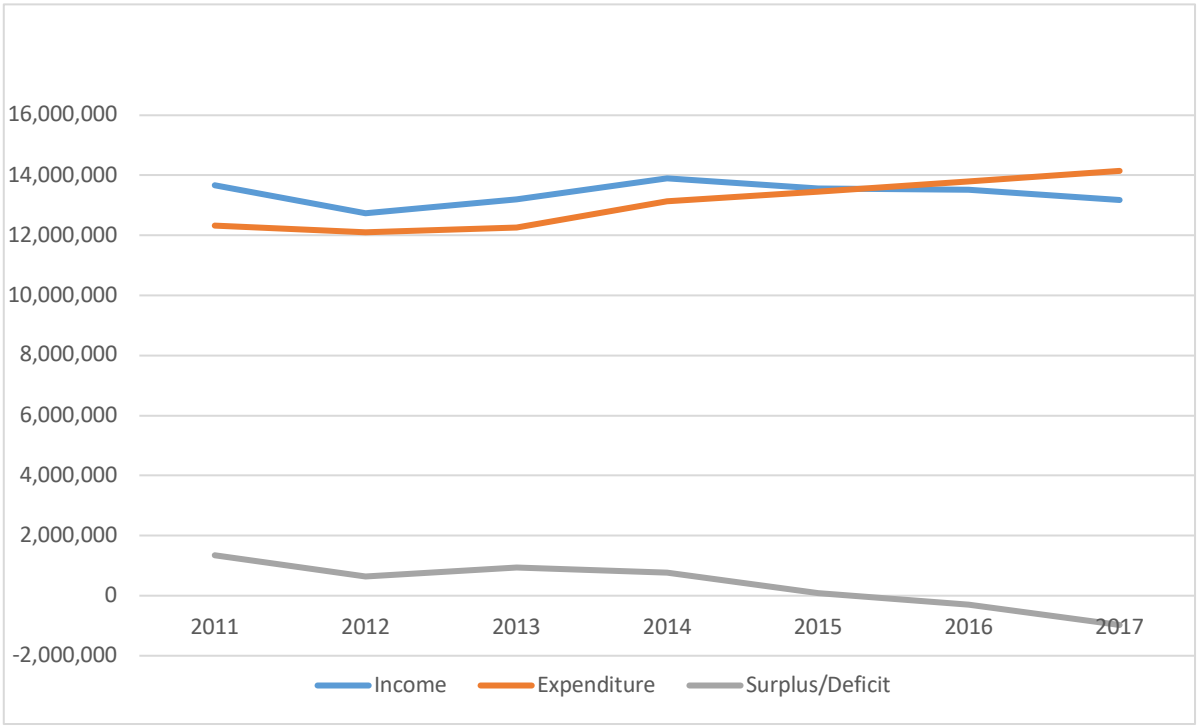



**Figure 3.5 – Financial Projection – based on 2.5% reduction in income[174]**




[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.

Stephens' concluding arguments were that the central Connexional structure needed to become smaller as it is too large for the declining membership to sustain. Local circuits will not be able to meet the required budget to keep it going, thus limiting the ability of the Connexional structure to fulfil its function of resourcing the local mission and ministry of the church.[175]

(iv) The Role and Work of the Congregation

Mead's final dislocation is concerned with the circumstances facing local congregations operating in a rapidly changing culture and facing the challenge of secularisation. As he states:

> All the uncertainties and changes of the emerging age of ministry come to a head in the life of the local congregation. Once a stable centre and guarantor of community and family life, it witnessed to the deep values and commitments that made life coherent and whole. Today, the local church has become merely one institution alongside all the others. Competing for time and energy and often less sure that the others about its basic reason for being.[176]

The membership figures of the Methodist Church in Ireland illustrated in table 4.1 above do not simply impact on the operations of the denomination. They first and foremost have an impact on churches at a local level. Many congregations face an uncertain future in the face increasing irregular support both in physical attendance and financial support, and the prospect of being unable to sustain clergy to do the work of ministry amongst them.

The Home Mission Department of the Methodist Church in Ireland provides both mission advice and financial support to local congregations. In the past it would have supported churches in areas where the congregations were not big enough to financially sustain the appointment of a minister. One of the Departments main sources of income has been via an annual appeal across the denomination. In effect it is an example of the large supporting the small. This situation has changed as more circuits seek support to survive. The Department has worked hard to ensure that it is not merely propping up circuits but supporting new mission

[175] Note that this presentation took place prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore does not reflect the impact of the pandemic.
[176] Mead, p. 65.

and ministry projects in local settings. In reports to the Conference over the last five to six years the Department has highlighted the financial and mission challenges being faced by local churches and has outlined the serious questions that the conference needs to address in relation to funding mission and ministry.[177]

A further change that impacts local congregations concerns the deployment of clergy over wider areas with individual ministers having responsibility for more churches. An alternative method of dealing with this challenge has been a move to develop other models of ministry including Non-Stipendiary Ordained Ministry and Part-time Ministry appointments. Such models have enabled circuits and local churches to survive longer but can be critiqued from two different angles. In some cases, the deployment of such models can delay local leadership engaging in genuine conversations about change and the future. The expectations around the exercise of the traditional ministry remain unchallenged and unrealistic even if they are now being delivered on a part-time stipendiary or non-stipendiary basis. On the other hand, such appointments have fostered genuine discussions about the future of local churches, new models of ministry and mission delivery and increasingly collaborative leadership taking place between ordained and lay.

Gibbs and Coffey note that a temptation for traditional churches in the emerging context is to adopt strategies from wider culture critiquing the use of secular business and marketing strategies to attract new members:

> [W]hile valuable lessons can be learned from marketing, those lessons must be carefully evaluated from a theological perspective and… marketing insights and tools will prove increasingly inadequate as western society moves still further into its postmodern, post-Christian and neopagan phase.[178]

[177] For examples of such discussions see the Home Mission reports in the MHSIA, *Reports and Agenda for conference*, 2012, pp. 38-41. 2013, pp. 29-30. 2014, pp. 40-42.
[178] Gibbs, p. 42.

A possible unintended consequence of the adoption of market-driven strategies is that rather than drawing new church members from sections of the population who do not attend church, existing church members are simply making consumer choices and moving to churches that they sense fulfil their needs or reflect their personal preferences. As Gibbs states:

> A distinction needs to be made between those 'seeker-sensitive; churches that represent new growth (returning 'de-churched' people as well as 'never-churched'), and the 'market-driven' churches that have grown at the expense of smaller local churches around them. In the latter case, one is left wondering what will happen to these market-driven churches when their small-church feeder systems dry up.[179]

Many local Methodist clergy and lay leaders report the movement of congregational members to new churches or other established churches that have transitioned into contemporary forms. Such an approach alone will not resolve the challenges facing the Methodist Church as illustrated through Meade's definitions.

**The Future Agenda of the Methodist Church in Ireland**

Wesley did not intend to establish a new Christian denomination, nor did he intend that his itinerant preachers would be become pseudo-Anglican priests. This chapter has explored how Methodism in the nineteenth century transitioned from religious society to settled denominational entity. What has been presented shows that the major consequence of this development has been the domestication of the itinerant preacher. What remains in the psyche however is a sense of there being more to Methodism than the business of a denominational church. The framing of Methodism as *holiness movement* and the image of the itinerant preacher is deep seated. This sustains those who advocate missional discipleship and pioneer ministry in the church today. Concurrently many established and aging congregations simply want their ordained minister to be a pastor and purveyor of the sacraments. The tensions within this debate are exacerbated by the wider western cultural challenges faced by the church as its

[179] Ibid. p. 47.

influence decreases in the secular post-Christian context. Outler, writing as far back as the 1960s, stated: '[W]e must ourselves beware lest… we should deceive ourselves by falling further into the fatuity that this business of "being a church" is really our chief business.'[180]

The Methodist Church in Ireland, like most other established denominations in Britain and the United States, face an uncertain future. As has been argued, these challenges may be described using Mead's words, namely, 'dislocations' or 'cracks in the system'. Alternatively, they provide an opportunity for the church to reconsider how to fulfil its purposes in a significantly changing context.

> The Church – its laity, clergy, congregations, executives, and bishops – has organized and structured itself for one mission. We have awakened to a world in which the mission frontier has changed. The organization and the structures of church life, formed for that one mission, now need to be reoriented to face the new frontier.[181]

Rather than discovering an entirely new method of operating, the church needs to recover values focused on identifying and enabling the ministry of all those who are members of the church. Murray argues that the ordained and lay distinctions of the past are no longer sustainable for the church going forward:

> Post-Christendom churches cannot justify this caste system or sustain a clergy/laity division that undergirds maintenance orientation, misconstrues their focus and drains gifted Christians by requiring them to support an institution that should be supporting them. Nor can we endorse a system that damages the spiritual, emotional, and physical health of church leaders for so little benefit. This system is unsustainable.[182]

Such change, facilitated and resourced by what remains of denominational structures, requires a significant shift in focus for those set apart for ordained ministry. A move from being those who deliver pastoral care, worship leading and preaching and faith catechesis for youth

[180] Albert C. Outler, 'Do Methodists have a Doctrine of the Church?' in *The Doctrine of the Church*, ed. by Dow Kirkpatrick (London: Epworth Press, 1964) pp. 11-28 (p. 28).
[181] Mead, p. 67.
[182] Murray, p. 263.

and children to a broader set of skills focused on enabling and equipping all the members of congregations. As Croft states:

> Changes in society and emerging ways of being church however call for new ways of being church and therefore make new demands on the ordained ministry. A cluster of skills which, for the moment, we will call enabling or collaborating leadership skills has now become one of the primary skills of those who exercise their ordained ministry within the local church.[183]

Wesley conveyed a deep sense of calling to the Methodist movement as an expression of the work of the Kingdom of God. He gathered around him individuals with a similar passion and drive for this work. He took risks in developing the preachers who served with him, showing a willingness to break with theological conventions in relation to the exercise of ministry. He developed an organisational structure, based on the concept of covenantal relationship, designed to help the preachers exercise their ministry. The wider structure of societies with classes and band meetings was designed to help members to grow in their knowledge and understanding of Christian faith and to exercise a ministry of their own to those around them. As the church seemingly finds itself beyond Christendom in an emerging context a new framework for ordained ministry is required. The extent to which Wesley's approach to ministry might be understood to be an example of servant leadership and provide a template for the exercise of ordained ministry today will be the focus of the next chapter.

[183] Croft, p. 16.

# Chapter 4

# Servant Leadership: A Paradigm for Irish Methodism in the Twenty-First Century

## Introduction

This thesis focuses on the themes of Irish Methodist Ministry and Servant Leadership. This chapter argues that the paradigm of leadership theory, and in particular, servant leadership, when applied to the role of an ordained minister, can address the challenges faced by the contemporary church as examined in the last section of chapter three

The view that ordained ministers are leaders is a contested one with significant differences of opinion concerning how helpful the leadership paradigm is to an understanding of ordained ministry.[1] As the field of leadership research has grown enormously in the last fifty years in general terms so too has the debate on leadership across the range of Christian churches and denominations.[2] There are significant themes in leadership studies that can help the church

[1] See Justin Lewis-Anthony, *You are the Messiah and I should know* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) as an example of a writer who regards leadership in the context of the Christian church as a myth and potential heresy. He engages effectively with contemporary writing that promotes the importance of leadership in the church. 'Leadership is an alien virus, ingested by the Christian host. It seems to be reasonable (reflecting our wider society's anxiety about direction, effectiveness, and coherence), and appears to synthesise many scriptural discussions of influence, witness, pastoral care, and oversight. But 'leadership' in our society is fatally flawed by its roots in violence, the will to power and destruction.' (p. 263). Croft, *Ministry in Three Dimensions*, one of those critiqued by Lewis-Anthony, argues that the contemporary context of the church's mission demands a different approach in relation to the church's understanding of leadership, with a particular focus on ordained leaders as equippers of the whole people of God to serve the mission of the Kingdom of God. Similarly, James Lawrence, *Growing Leaders* (Oxford: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2004), argues that leadership is a reality that cannot be ignored. Both Lawrence and Croft warn against the dangers that Lewis-Anthony points to, of adopting secular leadership models. They advocate an understanding of leadership in the church rooted in the person and work of Jesus. 'Many ordained leaders have an instinctive reaction to the word 'leader'. They sense that their calling was to be a priest and are unsure how the roles of priest and leader tie up.' (Lawrence, p. 29). Despite the different perspectives on leadership in the church, there is a synthesis between the arguments. Lewis-Anthony's objection to the myth of leadership in the church is a theological one, but in the end, he concedes that leadership is an inescapable reality. 'Any 'leadership' exercised by a Christian must be based, not on personal skills, not on innate traits, not on charismatic authority, not a will to power, not on a willingness to exercise violence, nor on a manipulation of others' fears and fantasies. The end result of all those strategies is to become complicit in the monomyth of redemptive violence. Rather, the 'leadership' exercised by a Christian must be based firmly, wholly and completely under the authority of Christ' (Lewis-Anthony pp. 274-275).

[2] For in depth discussions on the development of leadership theory in the twentieth century see Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership Theory and Practice*, 7th edn (London: Sage, 2016); Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 8th edn. (Harlow: Pearson, 2013); B. Jackson and K. Parry, *A very short, fairly interesting and reasonably cheap book*

in its mission and development, equally there are aspects that run counter-intuitively to the mission and purpose of the church. Arthur Boers, an ordained minister and an academic, evaluates this tension as follows:

> We now have a parallel challenge of critically and appreciatively appropriating leadership studies. Leadership has implications for church life and how we relate to workplaces and society. We need to learn from others and to examine underlying assumptions. We also must speak forthrightly where Christian faith has different priorities. We settle for neither uncritical embrace nor wholesale rejection; we can opt for redemption… Redemption implies both that something requires redeeming and is worth redeeming. Leadership studies have significant insights. But there needs to be caution and criticism in our reception.[3]

Notions of leadership that focus on success in economic and political contexts, in industry, business, and in the field of entertainment fit less comfortably in the Christian church. Similarly, leadership insights that draw attention to the success of an individual leader seem to have a certain dissonance when considering Christian ministry. Further, there is the potential that research focused on the development of leadership within the church can contribute to the ongoing wider discussion about the nature of leadership today.

> Leadership is good in that it is graciously provided for the ordering of persons and societies towards justice and peace in a fallen world, and church leadership is good as it attends to the particular means and ends of God which befit a Christian community. What that looks like in any given place and time will inevitably and properly be shaped to some degree by the language, culture, and leadership modes at hand, but not unthinkingly so. Even in Judeo-Christian cultures that appear to offer leadership models ready-made to copy and paste into church leadership, we

*about studying leadership* (London: Sage, 2011); S.R. Komives and J.P. Dugan, 'Contemporary Leadership Theories', in *Political and Civic Leadership: A Reference Handbook,* ed. by R.A. Couto (California: Sage Publications, 2010). These works built on the writings of authors such as James MacGregor Burns and Joseph C. Rost, two of the early protagonists who questioned traditional views of leadership which tended to focus on the heroic acts of individuals, the traits possessed by those occupying leadership roles, and the responses of perceived followers. Both Burns and Rost argued that leadership was a more complex process that required broader research and deeper understanding. Burns in the prologue of his seminal work describes the contemporary situation as a 'crisis of leadership' focused on personality and the use or misuse of power, as he states: 'Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth.' (James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1978)) p. 27. Joseph C. Rost, *Leadership for the twenty-first century* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1991), a student of Burns who sought to build upon his work, argues that leadership studies have focused wrongly on personality traits and management techniques. This has resulted in the proliferation of leadership theories and subsequently the inability to find agreement on the definition of leadership, rather than discovering the essence of leadership that to both Rost and Burns is concerned with the nature of relationships between people: 'Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes.' (Rost, p. 102).

[3] Arthur Boers, *Servants and Fools: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Nasville, TN: Abingdon, 2015), p. 10.

> must take care to follow Word and Spirit not only in discerning what is called for in any given circumstance, but what makes leadership Christian, and what makes church church.[4]

Whatever perspective one takes on the question of the relationship between ordained ministry and leadership, the reality is that the church exists within wider society where the debate about and research on leadership is lively and ongoing. Jackson and Parry state that 'leadership is a fundamentally important human experience that evolutionary theorists argue was initially created as a survival mechanism by Early Man. As then, leadership has a significant bearing on the conduct and quality of our everyday lives.'[5] The church, and those given responsibilities within it, cannot avoid this human experience and the need to reflect on the nature and practice of leadership.

As an illustration of the importance of human experience, Jackson and Parry proceed to outline their own leadership history and interests, arguing that such narratives tend to shape underlying beliefs about leadership and its practices. 'You will have ready developed a fairly sophisticated philosophy of leadership… whether you are explicitly aware of it or not. You will also have some clear convictions about what you think constitutes the right and the wrong way to lead someone or be led by someone.'[6] It seems self-evident that personal experience and feelings will emerge in light of an individual's experience of either good or bad leadership and this will have some bearing on how that individual views and exercises leadership in the future. In addition to an individual's own experience of leadership, there will also be what Bruce Avolio describes as the 'organizational context'. He argues that leadership takes place in a 'dynamic, emerging context' which must be considered when assessing the development of leadership within that organization.[7]

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[4] Jon Coutts, *Church Leadership* (London: SCM, 2019), pp. 13-14.
[5] Jackson and Parry, p. 7.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Bruce Avolio and William Gardner, 'Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership', *Leadership Quarterly*, 16 (2005), 315-338 (p. 327).

The Methodist Church in Ireland has accepted that ordained ministers exercise key leadership in the life of the church.[8] The most recent statement made by the church on ordained ministry describes their role in the following terms: 'The office of an ordained minister is as a Presbyter in the universal church of God. A Presbyter in the New Testament refers to a leader in local Christian congregations.'[9] The church has not however defined what it means by leadership, or what type or style of leadership its ordained ministers should adopt or develop. The United Methodist Church, a worldwide denomination centred on the United States of America, adopted the term 'servant leadership' to describe the approach the church takes to all leadership roles in 2008.[10] Research by Dearth and West in 2014, however, highlights a similar challenge in the United Methodist Church as is found in the Methodist Church in Ireland. They argue that the church has not been clear enough concerning its understanding of servant leadership. 'By leaving out interpretations regarding the function and ideal implementation of servant leadership, the UMC has left members to infer the meanings of the nature of servant leadership and the nature of authority as associated with the performance of leadership.'[11]

There are, therefore, important questions to be asked about how both individuals and institutions understand the nature of leadership. Leadership in the context of the church is impacted both by organisational dynamics and personal experience. What is the culture of leadership within the Methodist Church in Ireland? What are the philosophical influences or frameworks through which Methodism views leadership? To what extent has the persona of

[8] The Methodist Church in Ireland Board of Mission report to the 1973 Conference contained a statement on 'The Role of the Minister in the Methodist Church in Ireland.' This statement sought to clarify the role of the church in discipleship and mission stating that the task of ministry belonged to all who were part of the church community. It stated that the role of the ordained was to serve and equip in the church, to preach and preside at the sacraments. It describes the ordained role as a leadership role. 'The first task of the leader is to decide what his own priorities are. A leader, leads, but he must remember that he is called to be a servant. He must not allow himself to become anyone's slave, save Christ's. He above all is steward of limited time and must decide how best to use it.' See MHSIA, *Reports and Agenda for conference*, 1973, pp. 144-147.

[9] MHSIA, *Reports and Agenda for conference (Ministerial)*, 2019, p. xxiii.

[10] *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2008), p. 91.

[11] Jessica Dearth and Bud West, 'The Use of Servant Leadership in the United Methodist Church', *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, 10(2014), 2-26 (p. 3).

John Wesley and others shaped the leadership culture of the church?[12] How can the move to a non-hierarchal, democratic form of church government in the nineteenth century, as described in chapter three, be weighed alongside a theology of ordination deeply influenced by Anglicanism? How have the key leaders in Methodism themselves experienced leadership both inside and outside the church and how has this impacted the way in which they lead? The reality that ordained ministers face in the local church setting is that congregations will look to them to lead whether that minister wants to or not. Surely, in line with the conclusions of Burns and Rost, the key leadership question concerns the relationships fostered between ordained ministers and their congregations. How these relationships function will depend on inherited understandings of role, personal leadership approach, and style.

The primary research question of this thesis concerns the extent to which the theory of servant leadership provides a suitable framework for understanding the leadership role of an ordained minister in the Methodist Church in Ireland. The present chapter will, therefore, explore the nature of leadership in the Methodist Church in Ireland through the paradigm of servant leadership under the following headings:

(I) Robin Greenleaf's theory of Servant Leadership

(II) Servant leadership as a Contemporary Paradigm for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland

[12] Ted A. Campbell, *Encoding Methodism* (Nashville: New Room Books, 2017) investigates the various ways in which Methodist writers and their communities have interpreted the history of Methodism. In attempting to explore a foundational narrative for Methodism, Campbell warns against the danger of what he describes as 'Wesleyan icons', particular images from the past that shape the contemporary identity of Methodist communities, for example, 'Wesley the church founder', 'Wesley the evangelist' or 'Wesley the social reformer' (see Campbell pp. 169-179). Each icon has an element of truth, but when focus falls on just one element the full picture is obscured. Focusing on 'Wesley as a leader' has the potential to obscure the bigger picture of how leadership developed in Methodism in different parts of the world.

### (I) Robin Greenleaf's Theory of Servant Leadership

Equating the concepts of servanthood and leadership seems inconsistent and illogical when considering general perceptions of the practice of leadership. Such perceptions focus on the ability of the leader to exercise power and control over others, and the personality traits of the leader that stereotypically include extraversion, drive, and conscientiousness. As Yukl states:

> Leadership is a subject that has long excited interest among people. The term connotes images of powerful, dynamic individuals who command victorious armies, direct corporate empires from atop gleaming skyscrapers, or shape the course of nations. The exploits of brave and clever leaders are the essence of many legends and myths.[13]

Robert K. Greenleaf is credited with devising the concept of servant leadership in the late 1960s and 1970s. Following a career as a business executive, Greenleaf became a much sought-after management consultant, working with several large American corporations and organisations. He founded 'The Center for Applied Ethics', which later became the 'Greenleaf Center', as a means of promoting leadership thinking and development, and publishing materials on the theme of Servant Leadership. Former President and CEO of the Greenleaf Centre during the 1990s, Larry C. Spears, encapsulates Greenleaf's purposes as follows:

> As a lifelong student of how things get done in organisations, Greenleaf distilled his observations in a series of essays and books on the theme of 'the servant as leader' – the objective of which was to stimulate thought and action for building a better, more caring society.[14]

In his original essay entitled 'The Servant as Leader', Greenleaf introduces a story written by Hermann Hesse entitled *Journey to the East*.

> In this story we see a band of men on a mythical journey, probably also Hesse's own journey. The central figure of the story is Leo, who accompanies the party as the servant who does their menial chores, but who also sustains them with his spirit and his song. He is a person of extraordinary presence. All goes well until Leo disappears. Then the group falls into disarray and the journey is abandoned. They cannot make it without the servant Leo. The narrator, one of the party, after some years of wandering, finds Leo and is taken into the Order that had

[13] Yukl, p. 17.
[14] Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Power of Servant Leadership*, ed. by Larry C. Spears (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1998), p. 3.

> sponsored the journey. There he discovers that Leo, whom he had known first as servant, was in fact the titular head of the Order, its guiding spirit, a great and noble leader.[15]

For Greenleaf, the story was an inspiration, a catalyst for considering a new way of framing a concept of leadership that sought to engage with the challenges of the contemporary world. Greenleaf argued that existing models of leadership were not adequate in enabling organisations to respond to the inequality he perceived in the world around him, in fact those existing models of leadership were often contributing factors to that inequality. Instead, he argued that what was required was leadership that focused on serving the needs of others. Such service would enable individuals to reach a greater potential and develop an altruistic perspective that committed them to in turn serve others. Writing at the same time, Greenleaf's ideas were like those of Burns who formulated the concept of *transforming* leadership which was an ethical form of leadership concerned with morality and motivation, '[t]ransforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and this it has a transforming effect on both.'[16] Rost later categorises Greenleaf's servant-leadership philosophy as one of the new ways of considering leadership for the twenty-first century.

> The (established) leadership narratives may have served their purposes since the 1930s in reflecting the industrial paradigm, but they are no longer acceptable as our understanding of leadership is transformed in the twenty-first century to reflect a post-industrial paradigm. Leadership scholars need to develop a new leadership narrative…And practitioners of leadership need to adopt post-industrial leadership models that help them make sense of what they do as leaders and followers in the postmodern world of the twenty-first century. Only with these transformed leadership models in their minds will they be able to develop the skills – the practical ways of doing leadership – that are necessary to help make the future work.[17]

[15] Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977), p. 21.
[16] MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, p. 20.
[17] Rost, p. 36.

For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to consider the thinking of scholars such as Sendjaya and Sarros who do not regard Greenleaf as the instigator of servant leadership, but that it is a much older concept:

> It was Christianity's founder, Jesus Christ, who first taught the concept of servant leadership. From the narrative accounts of his life in the bible, it is evident that servant leadership was taught and practised more than two thousand years ago.[18]

Jesus' exhortation to his disciples centred on how they were to exhibit different values from those whom they observed as leading in the society around them. These counter principles can be summed up by reflecting on Jesus' words as found in the gospel according to Mark.

> You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.[19]

Bekker, like Sendjava and Sarros, points to the religious and spiritual undertones of servant leadership. Bekker notes the influence of Greenleaf's Quaker background and how it shaped his formulation of servant leadership.[20] One of the key features of the Quaker movement is the collaborative and democratic conceptions of leadership. This influence on Greenleaf's ideas regarding servant leadership means that it is categorised among the leadership definitions that are viewed as a reaction against modern, industrial, and capitalist philosophies. Instead, servant leadership is a virtuous model of leadership that promotes equality, justice and enables human and societal flourishing. For Bekker, this rejoinder to traditional leadership approaches coincides with an increased curiosity about the relationship between leadership and spirituality.

> Greenleaf's concepts of servant leadership and the leader as both servant and prophet can best be described as a form of counter-spirituality that expresses itself in a dynamic system of social marginality. Greenleaf's servant-leader seeks to bridge the opposing world views of self-interested commerce and altruistic philosophies of public service and social transformation.

[18] Sen Sendjaya, and James C. Sarros, 'Servant Leadership: Its Origin, Development and Application in Organisations', *Journal of Leadership and Organisation Studies*, 9/2 (2002), 57-64 (p. 58).
[19] Mark 10.43
[20] Corné Bekker, 'A Modest History of the Concept of Service as Leadership in Four Religious Traditions', in *Servant Leadership: Developments in Theory and Research*, ed. by Dirk van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 55-66 (p. 58).

> Greenleaf proposes that the servant-leader is a prophet that facilitates the formation of a new vision that unites and transforms.[21]

Jackson and Parry similarly draw attention to the discussions exploring the relationship with servant leadership and spirituality. At the core of this aspect of servant leadership is the virtuous and sacrificial behaviour on the part of the leader that they regard as emerging from intangible sources within the leader themselves and appeals to the instincts of the follower.[22] We now turn to an exploration of the key features of Greenleaf's notion of servant leadership as he described them, before reviewing how other scholars have developed Greenleaf's thinking in their literature.

A fundamental challenge in the study of servant leadership is that Greenleaf, deliberately did not provide a clear definition of servant leadership. Instead, he viewed his theory as an 'intuitive insight' from which he outlined the various features of this new formulation of leadership as he understood them.

> I do not see what is relevant from my own searching and experience in terms of a logical progression from premise to conclusion. Rather, I see it as fragments of data to be fed into my internal computer from which intuitive insights come. Serving and leading are still mostly intuition-based concepts in my thinking.[23]

In contrast to other leadership theories, Greenleaf's first thought is not leadership itself but the concept of servanthood.

> The servant leader is servant first… It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. For such, it will be a later choice to serve, after leadership is established. The leader first and the servant first are two extreme types.[24]

[21] Ibid., p. 59.
[22] Jackson and Parry, pp. 120-121.
[23] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 26.
[24] Ibid., p. 27.

The primary instinct of the servant leadership is to serve others. Counter intuitively, this cultivates the influence of the servant on those around them to such an extent that they assume a leadership role. This does not mean that they then stop serving; instead, the servant-leader continues to set a behavioural example to those who follow. The servant-leader's chief concern is the personal development and flourishing of others as opposed to any notion of self-fulfilment, self-preservation, or the advancement of the institution. Such an approach is intended to inspire others to follow the example of the servant leader.

The instinct to serve juxtaposes notions of power and authority in most other leadership taxonomies. Northouse states that 'power is a concept people often associate with leadership… power is often thought to be synonymous with leadership.'[25] All leadership infers some level of authority on the part of the leader and the ability to back that up using power. In the past, at least, leaders were perceived as those who possess power because of the role or position they occupied. In addition, an individual's capacity to use personal power has been understood to correlate with their ability to exercise leadership. 'In discussions of leadership, it is not unusual for leaders to be described as wielders of power, as individuals who are able to dominate others. In these instances, power is conceptualized as a tool that leaders use to achieve their own ends.'[26] In this scenario, the leaders appear to need for power for themselves rather than using their power for the good of others. Leaders, therefore, tend to be judged on how they are understood to have exercised the power they possess. In this regard, certain questions arise. Have leaders used power to coerce others or involve others? Have they used power to bring about equality of opportunity, or have they abused power and created inequality? Has power been used by the leader to simply further their own agenda or for their own financial, or otherwise, advantage?

[25] Northouse, p. 10.
[26] Ibid., p. 12.

According to Greenleaf, persuasion and example are the sources of power for the servant leader. The servant-leader framework does not allow for the use of what is understood as coercive power whether it is used blatantly or insidiously.

> The trouble with coercive power is that it only strengthens resistance. And, if successful, its controlling effect lasts only as long as the force is strong. It is not organic. Only persuasion and the consequent voluntary acceptance are organic.[27]

Power is rather deployed for the benefit of others and requires leaders to be responsive listeners, as well as nurturing, benevolent and supportive. Jill Graham argues that servant leadership is a countertype of charismatic leadership. In contrast to other charismatic leadership styles that may be dependent on individual authority, personal celebrity, or transformational leadership skills, where in a negative sense intimidating behaviour might be involved, servant leadership emphasises the positive example and humility of the leader. '[I]t is the leader who models service by humbly serving the led, rather than expecting to be served by them. Therein lies the paradox of servant-leadership.'[28] The servant-leader must demonstrate his/her willingness to act, to work hard, and actually set an example in terms of what needs to be done. Such behaviour is not merely so that others can see it but acts as a catalyst for discussion and action on the part of followers within the organisation or institution. As Graham remarks:

> [S]etting the stage for good moral dialogue in organizations requires that leaders serve as practitioners of the art, not just pious preachers of organizational philosophy. Their actual behaviour will include sensitivity to the needs and interests of all organizational stakeholders, and provision of opportunities for wide participation in discussions about policies and practises. These safeguards increase the likelihood that leaders fulfilling their responsibility to make timely decisions in the face of uncertainly and conflicting views will do so on the basis of relational and unilateral power.[29]

Graham's approach to power and its utilisation does not mean that the servant-leader is seen as weak, ineffectual, or powerless. '[W]orking from a need to serve does not imply an attitude of

[27] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 55.
[28] Jill W. Graham, 'Servant-leadership in organizations: Inspirational and Moral', *Leadership Quarterly*, 2 (1991), 105-119 (p. 111).
[29] Graham, 'Servant-leadership in organizations', p. 112.

servility in the sense that the power lies in the hands of the followers or that leaders would have low self-esteem.'[30] The power of a servant leader emanates from his/her commitment to actions that are to the benefit of others, setting an example and demonstrating what needs to be done in circumstances that build people up. It is wholly constructive, life-giving, and person centred as opposed to organisationally or institutionally focused. This vision of leadership is relational, example setting, and sets the tone for the other attributes of servant-leadership that frame Greenleaf's thinking. The focus for servant-leaders is on the development of all those around them, not on the achievement of a goal or vision that is separate to or beyond those who follow. A consequence of such follower development, however, will ultimately be the achievement of other more positive outcomes for individuals and for the wider society.

As observed, Greenleaf's framing of servant leadership runs counter intuitively to common notions of leadership. In fact, servant-leadership appears to operate in contradiction to most other theories and forms of leadership.[31] Neither is servant leadership simply about the development of followers.[32] For Greenleaf, servant leadership concerns both the follower and

[30] Dirk van Dierendonck, 'Review of Servant Leadership' in *Journal of Management*, 37/4, (2011), 1228-1261 (p. 1231).

[31] One example of a leadership theory that is relatively close in definition and purpose to servant leadership is transformative leadership. A. Gregory Stone, Robert F. Russall and Kathleen Patterson, 'Transformational versus servant leadership: a difference in leader focus', *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 25(2004), 349–361, argue that servant leadership and transformational leadership are similar given both their emphasis on valuing and developing people through effective listening, support, development, and exposure to experience. They argue 'the principal difference between transformational leadership and servant leadership is the focus of the leader. While transformational leadership and servant leaders both show concern for their followers, the overriding focus of the servant leader is upon service to their followers. The transformational leader has a greater concern for getting followers to engage in and support organizational objectives. The extent to which the leader is able to shift the primary focus of his or her leadership from the organization to the follower is the distinguishing factor in determining whether the leader may be a transformational or servant leader.' (pp. 358-359).

[32] The role of 'followers' has become a crucial feature of leadership research. As Yukl asserts 'followers make attributions about leader competence and intentions.' (Yukl, p. 231). Furthermore, he argues that '[a] servant leader must attend to the needs of followers and help them become healthier, wiser, and more willing to accept their responsibilities.' (Yukl, p. 337). Northouse similarly draws attention to the issue of follower receptivity when considering the effectiveness of servant leadership. He states '[s]ome followers do not want to work with servant leaders. They equate servant leadership with micromanagement, and report that they do not want their leader to get to know them or try to help, develop, or guide them.' (Northouse, p. 12). Jackson and Parry focus on the mutually productive relationship between followers and leaders. They describe servant leadership as a 'follower-centred perspective.' (Jackson and Parry, p. 63). They argue that it is a form of Leadership-Member exchange theory which involves an exchange or transaction between follower and leader that is often unspoken. As the leader acts in a benevolent way towards the follower, so the follower reciprocates in terms of their behaviours so

the leader. The inner motivation of the leader is altruistic, perhaps it might even be described as 'a sense of calling'. As Bernard M. Bass remarks:

> Servant leaders have a 'natural' feeling that they want to serve. They consciously make the choice to lead. The servant leaders have as concomitant goals helping others to grow as persons, to become wiser, healthier, freer, more autonomous, and more likely to become servant leaders themselves. The less privileged are benefited when the servant leaders succeed. The servant leader succeeds whenever the followers gain and achieve the goals set forth above.[33]

The comment by Bass underscores the issue of motivation for the servant leaders. They are not seeking personal power and influence for the sake of it. They are not interested in personal gain or success. Their inner drive is highly relational and focused on the development of people and the betterment of communities.

The people-orientated nature of Greenleaf's thinking can be further conceived in his description of the relational characteristics of the servant leader. Such characteristics include the ability to listen well and communicate effectively. Greenleaf argues that 'true listening builds strength in other people.'[34] Effective listening demonstrates the ability of the servant leader to understand the one to whom they are listening and builds their sense of value. Similarly, Greenleaf argues that the servant leader has the capacity to accept others for who they are and offer empathy. Such empathy for others does not equate with acceptance of their

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that together leader and follower are productive. Leader-Member Exchange Theory focuses on the process of the development of relationships between leaders and followers. This contrasts with theories that explore leadership from the perspective of either the leader or the follower only. Northouse states: 'Before LMX theory, researchers treated leadership as something leaders did toward all their followers. This assumption implied that leaders treated followers in a collective way, as a group, using an average leadership style. LMX theory challenged this assumption and directed researchers' attention to the differences that might exist between the leader and each of the leader's followers.' (Northouse, p. 137.) One outcome of LMX within an organisation results in the leader working closely with an 'in-group' of followers, who are perceived to be able to contribute more in terms of positive outcomes. Other followers within the organization are the 'out-group' who are treated fairly but not as intimately involved in the running of the organization as they are perceived as not being able to contribute as effectively as the 'in-group.' The positives of LMX focus on how good relationships and the chemistry between leaders and followers can be leveraged to produce good outcomes. A criticism of LMX is that it creates the potential for disparity and division within organizations with perceptions of favoritism and discrimination. See also Yukl, pp. 221-244.

[33] Bernard M. Bass, 'The Future of Leadership in Learning Organizations', *The Journal of Leadership Studies*, 7/3 (2000), 18-40 (p. 35).

[34] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 31.

performance. It should be noted, however, empathy has positive effects on those who follow. As Greenleaf writes:

> People grow taller when those who lead them empathize and then they are accepted for what they are, even though their performance may be judged critically in terms of what they are capable of doing. Leaders who empathize and who fully accept those who go with them on this basis are more likely to be trusted.[35]

In this setting the servant leader will often have to learn to tolerate those who fail to live up to their expectations. The servant leader who is a perfectionist will struggle to put up with humanities imperfection. 'Anybody could lead perfect people – if there were any. But there aren't perfect people. And the parents who try to raise perfect children are certain to raise neurotics.'[36] Concomitantly, the servant leader does not want to leave people in a lesser state. Instead, they will have a sense of the potential for growth and development in individuals, encouraging and supporting them on their journey in the hope that they will flourish.

As well as the outward demeanour of the servant leader, Greenleaf explores several ideas that pay close attention to the inward state of the body, mind, and soul of the leader. It is the crucial state of the inner self that enables leaders to function in an affirming and life-giving manner towards those around them. One practice that Greenleaf describes is that of withdrawal. He argues that whatever the temperament or preferences of the individual in terms of the way in which they deal with pressure, whether it allows them to perform at their best, or if pressure requires them to rest more, all leaders can benefit from the discipline of withdrawal. It enables restoration of energy, time to refocus and gives the leader the opportunity to discern the next steps.

> The ability to withdraw and re-orientate oneself, if only for a moment, presumes that one has learned the art of systematic neglect, to sort out the more important from the less important – and the important from the urgent – and attend to the more important, even though there may be penalties and censure for the neglect of something else… Pacing oneself by appropriate

[35] Ibid., p. 35.
[36] Ibid., p. 34.

> withdrawal is one of the best approaches to making optimal use of one's resources. The servant leader must constantly ask: How can I use myself to serve best?[37]

This practice of withdrawal is closely related to other ideas put forward by Greenleaf. These include the ability to consider matters beyond the rational or immediately verifiable. This ability to think intuitively can be nurtured by pausing and giving space to thought and reflection but is not readily available to the person who does not have the capacity to stop, who is too busy and too involved in an abundance of activities. Busy leaders tend to rush decision making without clarity of thought, and often without necessary consideration of the people impacted by their decisions and actions. As Greenleaf comments:

> As a practical matter, on most important decisions there is an information gap. There usually is an information gap between the solid information in hand and what is needed. The art of leadership rests, in part, on the ability to bridge that gap by intuition, that is, a judgement from the unconscious process. The person who is better at this than most is likely to emerge the leader because of the ability to contribute something of great value.[38]

For Greenleaf, withdrawal and intuition give birth to foresight, an important quality for servant leadership. Foresight is primarily about the ability to sense what it likely to happen in the future. It begins with an understanding of current information and events and it creates the context for wise planning and action in the present. This thinking and foresight do not happen in a vacuum or in a mechanistic fashion, they are related directly to human experience. Greenleaf argued that there was a relationship between foresight and the concept of faith. The servant leader requires confidence and trust to keep going when considering what the future might look like particularly in turbulent times. As he writes:

> Stress is a condition of most of modern life, and if one is a servant-leader and carrying the burdens of other people – going out ahead to show the way, one takes this in the belief that, if one enters a situation prepared with the necessary experience and knowledge at the conscious level, in the situation the intuitive insight necessary for one's optimal performance will be forthcoming.[39]

[37] Ibid., p. 33.
[38] Ibid., p. 36.
[39] Ibid., p. 39.

Greenleaf went further to suggest that lack of foresight on the part of the leader might be regarded as an ethical failure. This is because the failure to foresee can result in a failure to mitigate the most serious consequences. The leader who can stand back, reflect, and discern the wider picture will be able to act and influence the actions of others to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable.

This series of inner qualities can perhaps be summarised, using Greenleaf's notions of 'awareness' and 'perception', as follows:

> The opening of awareness stocks both the conscious and unconscious minds with a richness of resources for future need. But it does more than that: it is value building and value clarifying, and it armors one to meet the stress of life by helping build serenity in the face of stress and uncertainty. The cultivation of awareness gives one the basis for detachment, the ability to stand aside and see oneself in perspective in the context of one's own experience, amid the ever-present dangers, threats, and alarms. Then one sees one's own peculiar assortment of obligations and responsibilities in a way that permits one to sort out the urgent from the important and perhaps deal with the important. Awareness is not a giver of solace – it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener. Able leaders are usually sharply awake and reasonably disturbed. They are not seekers after solace. They have their own inner serenity.[40]

Servant-leaders are self-aware, aware of those around them, aware of those whom they lead, aware of the wider context in which people live and work, aware of needs, aware of what is happening in wider society and aware of both the opportunities and challenges of what might lie ahead. The example that Greenleaf uses to illustrate such awareness is the extraordinary story of Jesus Christ's encounter with the woman caught in adultery.[41] He argues that Jesus responds to the challenge laid before him by the Pharisees and teachers of law by giving himself withdrawal time, by stooping down and writing in the sand, in order to think, to expand his awareness, and to respond creatively.[42]

A final aspect of Greenleaf's characterisation of servant leadership concerns the concept of vision. Vision is a familiar feature of several leadership theories including

[40] Ibid., p. 41.
[41] John 8. 2-11.
[42] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 42.

charismatic and transformational leadership. In these theories it is often the role of the leader to motivate followers by creating and communicating an appealing picture of the future and persuading them to be part of the delivery of that future. Vision is often shared with many people at once by a great public speaker with tremendous powers of persuasion and who can argue logically.

> Top-level leaders are always in the spotlight, and their actions are carefully examined by followers in a search for hidden meanings that may not be intended by the leader. Ambiguous remarks may be misinterpreted, and innocent actions may be misrepresented… Charismatic leaders arouse enthusiasm and commitment in followers by articulating a compelling vision and increasing follower confidence about achieving it.[43]

Greenleaf advocates an alternative approach to vision. The servant leader will be prepared to work one-to-one with people to enable them to see what a better future might look like. The servant leader will persuade gently and to ask clear reflective questions that will help people change their thinking and behaviour. Such an approach may take longer than the current impatient and instantaneous world tolerates but will ultimately lead to better change and healthier relationships for individuals and communities. In Greenleaf's words: 'Leadership by persuasion has the virtue of change by convincement rather than coercion. Its advantages are obvious.'[44]

The picture that Greenleaf paints of the servant-leader consists of interrelated layers of characteristics and abilities. The servant leader will have a resilient motivation to serve, otherwise described as a 'sense of call' or a 'quiet determination'. They will be characterised by an inner strength that is resourced by time spent in contemplation and reflection. This time develops the servants' capacity for awareness in relation both to themselves and to the context in which they lead. They have a sense of the way ahead for themselves and others. The primary motivation of the servant leader is the self-actualisation of others, which is achieved through

[43] Yukl, p. 326.
[44] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 44.

real listening, acceptance, empathy, and encouragement that builds trusting relationships. Servant leaders are persuasive because they have carried out the required relational work and are prepared to work hard with people on a one-to-one basis. The ultimate success for the servant leader is better people, including themselves, and better communities that are in turn committed to serving others. Greenleaf illustrates this sort of transformation by telling the story of Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig who facilitated the transformation of the education system for the poorest strata of society in nineteenth-century Denmark.[45] As Greenleaf remarks:

> [A] truly remarkable social, political and economic transformation, stemmed from one individual's conceptual leadership…What he gave was his love for the peasants, his clear vision of what they must do for themselves, his long articulate dedication – some of it through very barren years – and his passionately communicated faith in the worth of these people and their strength to raise themselves – if only their spirit could be aroused. It is a great story of the supremacy of the spirit.[46]

Greenleaf continued to reflect on the ideas contained in his seminal essay, 'The Servant Leader', in articles and talks given over a period of twenty years from 1970. In these compositions, he sought to apply his thinking to larger institutions, business, education, corporate governance, churches, charities, and civil bureaucracy. As Spears remarks of Greenleaf's legacy: 'In all of these works, Greenleaf discusses the need for a new kind of leadership model: a model that puts serving others – including employees, customers, and community – as the number one priority.'[47]

The widespread influence of Greenleaf's work cannot be disputed. His ideas have produced a significant body of research as scholars have endeavoured to develop his thinking.

[45] According to Greenleaf (p. 45), Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig is known as 'the Father of the Danish Folk High Schools.' Grundtvig was a controversial Danish bishop, theologian and poet who lived from 1783-1872. He is credited with renewing the Danish Lutheran Church as well as instigating reform of the Danish education system. See https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/grundtvig-sought-a-transformed-denmark-11630563.html [accessed 9 April 2021].
[46] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 47.
[47] Greenleaf, 'The Power of Servant Leadership', ed. by Larry C. Spears, p. 4.

His intuitive approach, however, which intentionally does not provide a neat definition of servant leadership, has proved to be a test for those attempting to research this field and especially for those who are interested in developing tools for measuring and validating the theory. These difficulties notwithstanding, it is important to grasp the main aspects of Greenleaf's reasoning and reflect on how subsequent researchers have explored and written about his ideas. His reframing of the concept of leadership challenges pre-conceived notions about how leadership is practiced and offers an alternative, valuable source of thinking and ways of being.

One of the foremost researchers and writers in the field of servant leadership in the last twenty years, Dirk van Dierendonck, addresses this challenge. He states that Greenleaf 'did not leave us an empirically validated definition of servant leadership. Consequently, writers and researchers started developing their own definitions and models, to a lesser or greater degree inspired by his work.'[48] Similarly, Parris and Peachey discussed this issue noting the philosophical as opposed to scientific nature of servant leadership.

> Greenleaf's conceptualization of servant leadership as a way of life rather than a management technique perhaps has slowed the acceptance of this leadership theory in academia as scholars ask the question: If it is a way of life – a philosophy, how can it be empirically tested?[49]

Parris and Peachey's systematic literature review concluded that the absence of a single agreed definition of Servant Leadership makes the research field a challenging one. Sendjaya and Sarros argue that the use of the concept of servanthood as a framework for servant leadership is one of the main contributing factors to the lack of research of the concept. This inner contradiction is clearly depicted as follows: '[T]he very notion of 'servant as leader' is

[48] van Dierendonck, 'Review of Servant Leadership', p. 1229.
[49] Denise L. Parris and Jon W. Peachey, 'A systematic literature review of Servant Leadership Theory in Organizational Contexts', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 113/3 (2013), 377-393, (p. 378).

an oxymoron. It may be difficult to think and act both as leader and servant at the same time – a leader who serves and a servant who leads.'[50]

Northouse, recognising that servant leadership critiques inherited notions of leadership, describes it as 'a paradox - an approach to leadership that runs counter to common sense.'[51] He argues that servant leadership, although focused on the development of followers, is concerned primarily with the behaviour of the person in the leader role. Such an individual is required to behave in an ethical manner seeking outcomes that relate to the greater good for individuals, organisations, and wider society.

Yukl, like Northouse, argues that servant leadership is an early form of ethical leadership. The key consideration in ethical leadership is that it is concerned not just with the values, beliefs, and behaviours of leaders themselves but also the extent to which they influence others to behave in a similar way. He includes transformative, authentic, and spiritual leadership along with servant leadership as forms of ethical leadership. 'Most theories of ethical leadership emphasise the importance of leader influence on followers and the ethical climate of an organization.'[52] Yukl's overview of servant leadership underlines the fact that it is not primarily concerned with positive economic outcomes and therefore it is more pertinent in 'not for profit', charitable, voluntary, and public sector situations. Instead, the focus of servant leadership is the development of the follower, empowerment, and the realisation of shared goals.

Despite the uncertainty within the academic field concerning the intangible nature of ethical theories such as servant leadership, interest in them has gathered pace since the 1970s. Old assumptions about the nature of leadership that focused on natural ability, heroic activity,

[50] Sendjaya and Sarros, p. 57.
[51] Northouse, p. 225.
[52] Yukl, p. 334.

and the exercise of power over others has given way, encouraged by writers like Rost, to a more nuanced discussion about what constitutes leadership. Van Dierendonck and Patterson, proponents of servant-leadership theory, describe this contemporary situation in the following terms:

> Within a few short years, our view on what accounts for good leadership has changed dramatically. The ideal of a heroic, hierarchical-orientated leader with primacy to shareholders has quickly been replaced by a view on leadership that gives priority to stewardship, ethical behaviour and collaboration through connecting to other people.[53]

Parris and Peachy argue that empirical research of servant leadership has developed in three distinct ways, first, a conceptual stream, secondly, a measurement stream and, thirdly, a model development stream.[54] Examples of each of these approaches will now be considered.

Spears, a student of Greenleaf, readily acknowledges the challenge of defining Servant Leadership. Spears spent many years reading and reflecting on all of Greenleaf's writings in order to draw out clear principles and concepts, argues that the difficulty of offering a clear definition is, at least in part, due to Greenleaf's cryptic writing style which proves difficult for many.

> Like any good researcher-organizer, I began to see patterns emerging in his ideas, and I started to make notes on all kinds of seemingly disconnected traits and thoughts that popped up throughout his writings. At some point, Greenleaf's thoughts on servant leadership characteristics coalesced as a group in my own mind. I simply extracted them from his various writings and pulled them together, with the belief that they might prove helpful for many people as a means of easing into servant leadership. [55]

Spears identified ten separate characteristics that he suggests are not exhaustive but should be viewed as being the core of servant leadership: Listening as the key communication skill;

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[53] Dirk van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson, 'Servant Leadership: An Introduction', in *Servant Leadership: Developments in Theory and Research*, ed. by Dirk van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 1-10 (p. 3).
[54] Parris and Peachey, 'A systematic literature review of Servant Leadership Theory in Organizational Contexts', p. 380.
[55] Larry Spears, 'Servant Leadership and Robin K. Greenleaf's legacy' in *Servant Leadership: Developments in Theory and Research*, ed. by Dirk van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 11-24 (p. 16).

empathy as a means of understanding others; healing for self and others as a means of achieving wholeness; awareness generally and the development of self-awareness in the leader; persuasion as means of decision making, rather than the deployment of positional authority; conceptualization or the ability to see the 'bigger picture'; foresight, the ability to be able to see the consequences of a course of action; stewardship of an organisation to ensure it works for the greater good of society; commitment to the growth of people; and, building local community.

What is immediately obvious from the above list is the people-orientated nature of the characteristics with less attention on economic or organisational outcomes. Spear's conceptual approach helps to clarify the key aspects of servant leadership, but it does not provide a mechanism for measuring these characteristics in the individual or organisation.

Kathleen Patterson in her research argues that 'love' is the conceptual basis of servant leadership. Patterson defines love as a virtue, an internal, ethical quality which illustrates an individual's character and motivation. She argues that leadership operating in any other basis will not be as effective or productive. The goal is human flourishing, which will have a positive impact on any setting. 'In complete contrast to… fear-based leadership, the love in leadership is an atmosphere where respect, trust and dignity are fostered. Within this organizational environment, the doors are open for followers to thrive.'[56] Patterson's argument is not that servant leadership should be understood from a sentimental perspective, instead to act in love can be a tough path for the leader to walk as it runs counter to common perceptions of leadership. Understood through the filter of love, servant leadership involves humility, self-

[56] Kathleen Patterson, 'Servant Leadership and love' in *Servant Leadership: Developments in Theory and Research*, ed. by Dirk van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 67-76 (p. 69).

sacrifice, and self-denial on the part of the leader, it requires the leader to be prepared to be vulnerable and courageous in their efforts to see followers grow and develop.

More recently, a collaborative effort by Patterson and van Dierendonck sought to offer a more detailed reflection on the theme of 'virtuous love'. Their work demonstrates how love draws together different aspects of servant leadership arguing that is an antecedent for servant leadership. A leader who already exhibits the capacity to love others deeply will be more likely to act altruistically and display characteristics of humility, gratitude, and forgiveness.[57]

Moving from conceptual research to the question of measurement, John Barbuto and Daniel Wheeler created a scale to measure potential servant leadership factors.[58] This produced a five-factor model based on the concepts of altruistic calling, emotional healing, persuasive mapping, wisdom and organisational stewardship.[59] A key argument posed by Barbuto and Wheeler is that their research evidences a distinction between servant and transformative leadership. '[S]ervant leaders create serving relationships with their followers, which contrasts with transformational leaders, who transcend followers' interests toward organizational goals.'[60]

Robert Liden and others developed and tested a method for measuring servant leadership in 2008.[61] Like Barbuto and Wheeler, Liden and others were interested in exploring the relationship between servant leadership, transformative leadership, and

[57] Dirk van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson, 'Compassionate love as a cornerstone of Servant Leadership: An integration of previous theorizing and research', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 128 (2015), 119-131.
[58] John E Barbuto and Daniel W. Wheeler, 'Scale Development and Construct Clarification of Servant Leadership', *Group and Organizational Management*, 31/3 (2006), 300-326.
[59] Barbuto and Wheeler identified 11 characteristics from a range of servant leadership literature. From the 11 items they identified 56 subscale items which were used to test the validity of the 11 characteristics. This process involved asking over 80 public officials to fill in a questionnaire and based on the items, and for their performance to be rated by colleagues or employees. The use of factor analysis reduced the original 11 characteristics down to 5 that for the authors 'captured the essence of servant leadership.' Barbuto and Wheeler, 'Scale Development and Construct Clarification of Servant Leadership', p. 311.
[60] Barbuto and Wheeler, p. 319.
[61] Robert C. Liden, Sandy J. Wayne, Hao Zhao and David Henderson, 'Servant leadership: Development of a multidimensional measure and multi-level assessment', *Leadership Quarterly*, 19 (2008), 161-177.

leadership member exchange. Their aim was to identify the distinctive features of servant leadership theory that set it apart from other theories with the purpose of enabling leaders to be able to develop followers and employees to their fullest potential. They identified nine dimensions from the existing literature: emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, empowering, helping subordinates grow and success, putting subordinates first, behaving ethically, relationships, and servanthood.[62]

Liden and his co-authors compared their measurement tool to others used to measure transformational leadership and leadership member exchange. The results of their research showed the distinctive features of servant leadership theory as compared to the others.

> The ability of servant leadership at the individual level to uniquely explain community citizenship, in role performance, and organizational commitment distinguishes it from both transformational leadership and LMX. Perhaps servant leaders are unique in the way they exhibit an active concern for the well-being of broader organizational constituencies and the community at large.[63]

This conclusion correlates with Bass's much earlier discussion of about the similarities and differences between transformative and servant leadership which he argues 'goes beyond transformational leadership in selecting the needs of others as its highest priority… It stresses that to serve others is the leader's main aim. The transformational leaders strive to align their own and other's interests with the good of the group, organisation or society.'[64] Similarly, A. G. Stone and others, although duly noting a widespread perception that there are no real differences between the concepts of transformational and servant leadership, examine the

[62] The authors then identified further headings for each of the 9 dimensions producing a total of 85 items that were tested initially with a group of 298 students. The responses were subjected to factor analysis which produced 7 distinct servant leadership elements, conceptual skills, empowerment, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, behaving ethically, emotional healing and creating value for the community. 4 sub factors were identified under the 7 elements producing a 28-item servant leadership scale which was then confirmed using factor analysis.
[63] Liden and others, 'Servant leadership: Development of a multidimensional measure and multi-level assessment', p. 174.
[64] Bass, p. 33.

similarities and differences between these two theories.[65] By focusing on the role of the leader, they seek to show that the primary focus of the transformational leader is on the organizational outcomes while the primary focus of the servant leader is on the development of followers. What Liden's team of researchers appeared to do was successfully produce a validated measurement tool that corroborated the thinking of those such as Bass, Stone and others, and could assess the unique features of servant leadership at an individual and organisational level.

A further multidimensional instrument to measure servant leadership, the *Servant Leadership Survey* (SLS), was developed by Dirk Van Dierendonck and Inge Nuijten from the Rotterdam School of Management.[66] In assessing previous attempts to develop multidimensional measurements, including that of Liden and others, Van Dierendonck and Nuijten argued that their SLS was able to measure both the 'people' and 'leader' attributes of servant leadership whereas previous measurements focused more on 'people'.[67] An analysis of previous literature produced a summary of characteristics that were then tested with a sample of managers who were perceived as servant leaders. This process produced the following set of primary characteristics of servant leaders: empowerment, accountability, standing back, humility, authenticity, courage, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship. They then tested these characteristics in series of large-scale surveys and studies involving hundreds of participants from a range of professional backgrounds in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom, to verify the reliability of each. The phases of the study included comparison with other servant leadership measures and leadership theories that are regarded as like servant leadership, namely, transformational leadership, leader-member exchange theory, charismatic

[65] A.G. Stone, R.F. Russell, and K. Patterson, 'Transformational versus servant leadership: a difference in leader focus', *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 25 (2004), 349–361.

[66] Dirk Van Dierendonck, and Inge Nuijten, 'The Servant Leadership Survey: Development and Validation of a Multidimensional Measure', *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 26 (2011), 249-267.

[67] Ibid., p. 251.

leadership, and transactional leadership. They also endeavoured to explore leader behaviour and organisational outcomes and arrive at the following conclusion.

> The most important contribution of this instrument to the development of servant leadership theory is that it is the first instrument to include elements from the servant leadership literature that can be psychometrically distinguished. The SLS not only measures the 'servant' but also the 'leader' part of servant leadership. Accountability, courage and forgiveness are essential and the more important new additions compared to the existing servant leadership instruments.[68]

Undoubtedly the significant positive contribution of Van Dierendonck and Nuijten's study is the emphasis on the 'leader' aspect of servant leadership. It begins to draw out the characteristics and behaviours of the individual servant leader who is required to both demonstrate a concern for individual people but also needs to facilitate how groups and organisations work as a whole.

A further approach to servant leadership research focuses on the development of models that might deepen the understanding and practice of servant leadership. Russell and Stone's methodology consisted of reviewing servant leadership literature to identify key characteristics and attributes, then using these to develop a theoretical model.[69] From their assessment of a significant body of literature drawn together from books, articles and pamphlets written between the 1970s and the late 1990s they identified what they defined as 9 functional attributes and 11 accompanying attributes.

> The functional attributes are the effective characteristics of servant leadership. They are identifiable characteristics that actuate leadership responsibilities. Each functional attribute is distinct, yet they are all interrelated…. The accompanying attributes appear to supplement and augment the functional attributes. They are not secondary in nature; rather they are complementary and, in some cases, prerequisites to effective servant leadership.[70]

[68] Ibid., p. 264.
[69] Robert F. Russell and A. Gregory Stone, 'A review of servant leadership attributes: developing a practical model', *Leadership and Development Journal*, 23/3 (2002), 145-157.
[70] Ibid., pp. 146-147.

Table 4.1 below sets out the two lists:

| *Functional Attributes* | *Accompanying Attributes* |
|---|---|
| *1. Vision* | *1. Communication* |
| *2. Honesty* | *2. Credibility* |
| *3. Integrity* | *3. Competence* |
| *4. Trust* | *4. Stewardship* |
| *5. Service* | *5. Visibility* |
| *6. Modelling* | *6. Influence* |
| *7. Pioneering* | *7. Persuasion* |
| *8. Appreciation of others* | *8. Listening* |
| *9. Empowerment* | *9. Encouragement* |
| | *10. Teaching* |
| | *11. Delegation* |

**Table 4.1 Russell and Stone's Functional and Accompanying Attributes of Servant Leadership**

Russell and Stone then developed two models based on the two sets of attributes. The first model illustrated that the presence of the functional attributes was dependent upon the core beliefs and values of the individual leader. The accompanying attributes enhanced the impact of the functional attributes, 'they affect the level and intensity of the functional attributes.'[71] A second, more complex model, usefully drew in organisational factors that could impact the effect of servant leadership such as organisational culture and employee attitudes and behaviours.

[71] Ibid., p. 153.

Russell and Stone's models provide a useful method of discussing the impact of leaders in organisations and their relationships with colleagues. Exploring values and beliefs, weighing the impact of behaviours, and assessing the impact of organisational culture. 'Servant leadership offers the potential to positively revolutionize interpersonal work relations and organisational life. It is a concept that longs for widespread implementation.'[72]

Further research carried out by Van Dierendonck developed a conceptual model with the purpose of clarifying 'what servant leadership is and to establish an overall theoretical framework highlighting the most important antecedents, underlying processes and consequences.'[73] Drawing from servant leadership literature Van Dierendonck identified six key characteristics of empowering and developing people, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, providing direction and stewardship. In addition, he added other elements that impact on the operation of servant leadership. Of first importance is the question of motivation to serve and lead which along with the six characteristics forms the core of servant leadership. Alongside motivation there are other antecedents that impact the operation of servant leadership, this includes individual characteristics such as moral development and self-determination, and issues relating to organisational culture. Other factors then impact on the consequences of servant leadership, these include the relationships between servant-leaders and followers, levels of trust and fairness in the organisation, and levels of self-actualisation and commitment to development.

The value of Van Dierendonck's model lies in his distinction between antecedents, behaviours, and outcomes in relation to servant leadership. Like Russell and Stone, this provides a rich framework for discussion about what servant leadership is and its usefulness to the contemporary discussion about leadership. 'Servant-leaders empower and develop people;

[72] Ibid., p. 154.
[73] van Dierendonck, 'Servant Leadership: A Review and Synthesis', p. 1229.

they show humility, are authentic, accept people for who they are, provide direction, and are stewards who work for the good of the whole.'[74]

This section has sought to provide an in-depth study of the theory of servant leadership as formulated by Robin Greenleaf and the literature developed by those who have followed his lead. Greenleaf's aspirational approach and oblique style presents a challenge to those seeking to build upon his legacy in terms of clear definition and objective measurement. Nonetheless servant leadership resonates with contemporary thinking about the theory and practice of leadership in a more person centred, community building and ethical environment. Prosser states: 'Servant leadership may well have few established rules and regulations, but the principles lying at its heart are crucial and non-negotiable.'[75] The key factor for assessing servant leadership lies in the individual's motivation to first serve then lead. All other characteristics and behaviours flow from that primary motivation. This is of relevance in the context of the Christian church where there should be a significant correlation with the theory of servant leadership. The relationship between ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland, as outlined earlier, and the theory of servant leadership will be considered now.

### (II) Servant leadership as a Contemporary Paradigm for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland

The second part of this chapter provides a theoretical synthesis, exploring the connecting points between servant leadership theory, the historical Wesleyan understanding of ministry, and the contemporary model of ordained ministry in the Methodist Church. This correlates with the argument in the introduction to the present chapter that the notion of leadership is an inescapable reality for those who exercise ordained ministry despite the differing assessments

[74] Ibid., p. 1232.
[75] Stephen Prosser, 'Opportunities and tensions of Servant Leadership', in *Servant Leadership: Developments in Theory and Research*, ed. by Dirk van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) pp. 25-38 (p. 37).

of the usefulness of the leadership paradigm when considering ordained ministry. The theory of servant leadership as then outlined offers a methodology for understanding the leadership dynamic operational across Christian denominations such as the Methodist Church in Ireland, as quasi-voluntary organisations.

Before exploring the specific features of servant leadership that connect with contemporary ordained ministry there are several overarching arguments that need to be considered. The first relates to the growth and expansion of leadership theory and research over the last half century. This evolution has created the space to consider a broader range of definitions of, and approaches to, leadership. This development is useful as it provides a wider frame in which to understand the leadership role of an ordained minister. As in the past, churches, and established denominations such as the Methodist Church in Ireland, have imbibed secular models of leadership in operation in the wider world of business, commerce and even politics, so in the present context the church has much to learn from new ways of understanding the nature and practice of leadership. Such research has not previously taken place within the context of the Methodist Church in Ireland. As noted in the first half of this chapter, Robin Greenleaf's theory of servant leadership is one example of how traditional views of leadership have changed. Greenleaf offered a framework for considering leadership through the lens of the servant rather than previous theories that focus on the heroic individual, powerful personality, or particular traits.

A second and related matter concerns the relationship between leadership theory and the concept of spirituality. Leaders are facing into the prevailing wind of increasing secularisation in the west and, at the same time, are encountering a growing interest in

spirituality.[76] These circumstances have not gone unnoticed in the field of leadership research. As Bekker states:

> Contemporary public discourse and scholarly interest have been marked by an increasing interest in the phenomena of spirituality and this interest has reached the fields of business, economics, commerce, and leadership studies. This current turn to spirituality coincides with the emergence of alternative, post-industrial, and global paradigms of leadership where leadership is reimagined as acts of virtue in community and mutuality rather than the strivings of power and prestige by one privileged individual.[77]

Fry goes further by arguing that organisations must actively embrace spirituality as a facet of leadership if they are to be effective in the contemporary world:

> It has been argued that organizational environments in the 21st century are chaotic and require rapid response from highly committed, productive, intrinsically motivated learning organizations with self-directed, empowered teams that are flexible, flat, networked, diverse and global. The effective bureaucratic organizations of the past reflected their larger centralized, standardized and formalized societies. These organizations primarily motivated their workers through fear and extrinsic rewards and therefore could not be a source of spiritual survival.[78]

Greenleaf frames his concept of leadership as beyond personality or trait factors. He sees that leadership emerges from a deep inner motivation to serve people in order that they might experience healing, wholeness and growth. It correlates with Fry's argument that spiritual leadership is necessary for personal and organisational transformation.[79]

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[76] See especially the third section of chapter 3 of this thesis for an in-depth assessment of the mission and leadership challenges being faced by the Christian church in western society. Resources such as: Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom – Church and Mission in a strange new world*, Darrell Guder, *Called to Witness*, Loren Mead, *The Once and Future Church Collection*, William H. Willimon, *Pastor – the theology and practice of ordained ministry*, Graham Tomlin, *The Widening* Circle (London: SPCK, 2014), Arthur Boers, *Servants and Fools: A Biblical Theology of Leadership*, Jon Coutts, *Church Leadership*, Eddie Gibbs, Ian Coffey, *Church next – quantum changes in Christian ministry*, Corné Bekker, 'Prophet and Servant: Locating Robert K Greenleaf's Counter-Spirituality of Servant Leadership', *The Journal of Virtues and Leadership*, 1/1 (2010), Corné Bekker, 'A Modest History of the Concept of Service as Leadership in Four Religious Traditions', in *Servant Leadership: Developments in Theory and Research*, ed. by Dirk van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), and, Sen Sendjaya and James C. Sarros, 'Servant Leadership: Its Origin, Development and Application in Organisations, provide a full range of analysis of the leadership questions facing the church in the west broadly and in particular the relationship between leadership and spirituality for those in ordained ministry.

[77] Bekker, 'Prophet and Servant: Locating Robert K. Greenleaf's Counter-Spirituality of Servant Leadership', p. 3.

[78] Louis W. Fry, 'Toward a theory of spiritual leadership', *Leadership Quarterly*, 14 (2003), 693-727, (p. 717).

[79] Ibid.

The broader understanding of leadership and the incorporation of spiritualty into leadership theory strengthens the argument that servant leadership is an ideal framework for considering the leadership role of the ordained minister within the life of the community of faith and beyond. Such a role should be markedly different from the traditional leadership role of a chief executive officer or business owner, as Greenleaf demonstrates.

> I have said that leading is so dependent on spirit that the essence of it will never be capsulated or codified. Part of that essence lies beyond the barrier that separates mystery from what we call reality… The premise here is that to lead is to go out ahead and show the way when the way may be unclear, difficult, or dangerous – it is not just walking at the head of the parade – and that one who leads effectively is likely to be stronger, more self-assured, and more resourceful than most because leading so often involves venturing and risking. It is further premised that what distinguishes a leader as religious is the quality of the consequences of her or his leadership. Does it have a healing or civilizing influence? Does it nurture the servant motive in people, favour their growth as persons, and help them distinguish those who serve from those who destroy?[80]

The church as a community of people, not unlike other voluntary organisations, has broader aims and objectives concerned with spirituality, faith, community development and human flourishing. This contrasts with businesses and industrial organisations that prioritise positive economic outcomes. Ethical leadership theories such as servant leadership offer a more appropriate way of understanding the role and purpose of individuals appointed to leadership roles within such organisations.

Beyond the widening understanding of leadership and the nature of the church in terms of organisational aims and objectives, a third overarching argument relates to the status of an ordained minister within the Methodist Church in Ireland. As demonstrated in chapter three, the pattern of ordained ministry that emerged in the Methodist Church in Ireland is expressed through a covenantal relationship amongst the body of ordained ministers and with the Methodist connexion. In this covenantal structure an ordained minister is not an employee of the denomination or the local church. The ordained minister has no contract outlining might be

[80] Robert K. Greenleaf, 'The Servant as Religious Leader', in *The Power of Servant Leadership*, ed. by Larry Spears (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1998), pp.111-167 (pp. 113-115).

understood to be regular terms and conditions of employment. Many of the rules and entitlements that apply in employment relationships do not fit with the role of an ordained minister both in terms of their relationship with the denomination and their relationship with the local church that they are set apart to serve in. Examples of such would include clearly defined job descriptions, set working hours, holiday entitlement, statutory sick leave, and salary and allowances commensurate with qualifications. Ordained ministers have a freedom to organise their own time and activity, though must be mindful of congregational and denominational expectations. This covenantal model of relationship corresponds with the less definitive framework of servant leadership allowing the ordained minister the time and space to invest in the kind of behaviours described by Greenleaf in his various writings.

The breadth of research focused on servant leadership has generated various ways of characterising its main attributes. A precis of these characterisations is listed in table 4.2 below along with the name of the leading researcher associated with each. Parris and Peachey argue, however, that although significant attempts have been made to define servant leadership, and develop systems to measure servant leadership, 'notably absent… are empirical studies that explore servant leadership in a given organizational setting.' [81] The key objective of this chapter of the thesis is to investigate the dynamic between servant leadership theory and ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland, both historically and in the contemporary context, and to identify the connections and possibilities of viewing ordained ministry through the lens of servant leadership theory. This will establish a theoretical foundation for an empirical study of servant leadership among ordained ministers in the Methodist Church in Ireland that is presented in chapter five of this thesis. In assessing the various attributes outlined in the

[81] Parris and Peachey, 'A systematic literature review of Servant Leadership Theory in Organizational Contexts', p. 380.

literature it must be recognised that the data sources are drawn from a variety of contexts and not all will be applicable to the church or ordained ministry.

| *Author(s)* | *Attributes* |
|---|---|
| *Spears (1998)* | *Listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth, building community* |
| *Laub (1999)* | *Developing people, sharing leadership, displaying authenticity, valuing people, providing leadership, building community* |
| *Patterson (2003)* | *Agapao love, humility, altruism, visionary for the followers, trusting, empowers followers, serves* |
| *Barbuto and Wheeler (2006)* | *Altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, organisational stewardship* |
| *Liden and others (2008)* | *Emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, empowering, helping subordinates grow and success, putting subordinates first, behaving ethically, relationships, servanthood* |
| *Sendjaya and others (2008)* | *Voluntary subordination, authentic self, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, transcendental spirituality, transforming influence* |
| *van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011)* | *Empowerment, accountability, standing back, humility, authenticity, courage, interpersonal acceptance, stewardship* |
| *van Dierendonck (2011)* | *Empowering and developing people, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, providing direction, stewardship* |

**Table 4.2 - Servant Leader Attributes**

Barbuto and Wheeler's five-dimension construct of servant leadership will be used to consider ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland as it offers a manageable, refined set of

factors that enhance the empirical research in the next chapter of this thesis.[82] In addition to Barbuto and Wheeler's construct, Bekker's discussion of counter-spirituality and the Patterson's concept of virtuous love will also be examined as they represent key aspects of ordained ministry.

While acknowledging increased interest in the relationship between spirituality and leadership generally, the wider societal perception that an ordained minister should pay attention to the focus and depth of their own spirituality might seem self-evident. History demonstrates however that leaders with spirit are not necessarily benevolent. 'Spirit, as the animating force in living beings, is value free. Hitler had it; he was a great, if demonic, leader.'[83] Like Greenleaf, Bekker argues that spirituality is a facet of leadership in which leaders should embody a form of *counter-spirituality*.

> Counter movements in spirituality describe approaches that offer alternative solutions to existing social and religious power structures… Greenleaf's servant leader seeks to bridge the two opposing worlds of self-interested commerce and altruistic philosophies of public service and social transformation. Greenleaf proposes that the servant-leader is a prophet that facilities the formation of a new vision that unties and transforms (both individually and societally).[84]

Such a form of counter-spirituality is similarly evident in the Methodist understanding of the role of the ordained minister. Lovett Weems, now retired Distinguished Professor of Church Leader at Wesley Seminary in Washington D.C., argues that effective Christian leadership stems from a consistent and ongoing sense of God's presence and power in the life of the leader. It is only through such spirituality that the servant leader can offer encouragement and support to others. 'Leadership disconnected from God's power leaves leaders adrift. They then pursue their own agenda or mere self-fulfilment.'[85] This principle is evident in the development of early Methodism as outlined in chapter one. As Wesley planted his religious societies around

[82] Barbuto and Wheeler, 'Scale Development and Construct Clarification of Servant Leadership', p. 316.
[83] Greenleaf, 'The Servant as Religious Leader', p. 113.
[84] Bekker, 'A Modest History of the Concept of Service as Leadership in Four Religious Traditions', p. 57.
[85] Lovett H. Weems Jr., *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1999), p. 117.

England and Ireland, he used lay people in whom he discerned spiritual commitment and passion to organise and lead the local societies and provide continuity as the itinerant preachers (ministers) moved from place to place. At the same time, as shown in chapter three, Wesley set a 'high bar' in relation to the spiritual condition of his itinerant preachers placing a significant emphasis on the need for personal holiness. In his sermon 'An Address To The Clergy' written in 1756, Wesley laid out in considerable detail his views on the character of those exercising Christian ministry within the Church of England and the fledgling Methodist movement. He makes it clear that the outward words and actions of the clergy are worth nothing if their inner life and spirit are inconsistent with their behaviour.

> Am I… such as I ought to be, with regard to my affections I am taken from among, and ordained for, men, in things pertaining to God? I stand between God and man, by the authority of the great Mediator, in the nearest and most endearing relation both to my creator and to my fellow-creatures. Have I accordingly given my heart to God, and to my brethren for his sake? Do I love God with all my soul and strength and my neighbour, every man, as myself? Does this love swallow me up, possess me whole, constitute my supreme happiness? Does it animate all my passions and tempers, and regulate all my powers and faculties? Is it the spring which gives rise to all my thoughts, and governs all my words and actions? If it does, not unto me, but unto God be the praise! If it does not, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"[86]

Wesley was determined that those that joined his movement as preachers would not fall into the same state as he observed among many of his Church of England colleagues:

> Throughout his lengthy career Wesley had seen an ordained, educated clergy operating under the auspices of the Church of England, some of whom were spiritually dead, while still others were outright wicked. They neither preached the doctrines contained in the Anglican Articles, nor did they practice holiness, and yet they had all the formal trappings of ministry. To make certain this kind of minister did not emerge with the Methodist movement Wesley exercised discipline.[87]

At the heart of Wesley's discipline was the matter of personal spiritual vitality. This remains the case for ordained ministry and leadership today both within the Methodist Church in Ireland

[86] Wesley, 'An Address to the Clergy', p. 498.
[87] Collins, 'John Wesley's Concept of the Ministerial Office', p.114.

and beyond. Henri Nouwen, the acclaimed academic, theologian, and spiritual writer, expressed this exquisitely in his seminal work on Christian leadership:

> [F]or the future of Christian leadership it is of vital importance to reclaim the mystical aspect of theology so that every word spoken, every advice given, and every strategy developed can come from a heart that knows God intimately… Through the discipline of contemplative prayer, Christian leaders have to learn to listen again and again to the voice of love and to find there the wisdom and courage to address whatever issue presents itself to them.[88]

Similarly, Eugene Peterson states that prayer and personal spirituality form the foundation of the role and work of the pastor.

> What is my proper work? What does it mean to be a pastor? If no one asked me to do anything, what would I do?... I want to cultivate my relationship with God. I want all of life to be intimate – sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously – with the God who made, directs, and loves me. And I want to waken others to the nature and centrality of prayer.[89]

At the core of a Christian understanding of counter-spirituality must be the concept of love. Greenleaf offered the following extraordinary statement which captures the essence of his thinking about leadership.

> Love is an undefinable term, and its manifestations are both subtle and infinite. But it begins I believe, with one absolute condition: unlimited liability! As soon as one's liability to another is qualified to any degree, love is diminished by that much.[90]

For the purposes of this research, it is clear that an ordained minister needs to possess an inner store virtuous love to enable them to function in their role. Kathleen Patterson, one of the foremost proponents of the argument that the virtue of compassionate love is a key characteristic of servant leadership, writes:

> Servant leaders lead with love, are motivated by love, and serve their followers. This love is a force, a force so intense that it changes lives – the lives of followers, the life of the organization, and even the life of the leader.[91]

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[88] Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1989), p. 30.
[89] Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 19.
[90] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 52.
[91] Patterson, 'Servant Leadership and love', p. 72.

Wesley's 'Address to the Clergy' effectively draws together deep spirituality and compassionate love.

> Ought not a "steward of the mysteries of God," a shepherd of the souls for whom Christ died, to be endued with an eminent measure of love to God and love to all his brethren? A love the same in kind, but in degree far beyond that of ordinary Christians? Can he otherwise answer the high character he bears, and the relation where in he stands? Without this, how can he go through all the toils and difficulties which necessarily attend the faithful execution of his office? Would it be possible for a parent to go through the pain and fatigue of bearing and bringing up even one child, were it not for the vehement affection, that expressible *agape*, which the Creator has given for that very end? How much less will it be possible for any Pastor, any spiritual parent… without a large measure of that inexpressible affection… He therefore must be utterly void of understanding, must be a madman of the highest order, who, on any consideration whatever, undertakes this office, while is a stranger to this affection.[92]

Obviously, predating Patterson, Wesley is forthright in his view that his preachers and ordained minister needed to possess a profound love for God and for people too. In fact, he is suggesting that this capacity to love people needs to exceed that of the ordinary Christian, pointing to an inspired, supernatural ability to love others. This deep capacity to love remains a key essential characteristic of the ordained minister today and is illustrated in this extract from the ordination service liturgy used by the Methodist Church in Ireland:

> God has called you into the order of presbyters among his people.
> In his name you are…
> to minister Christ's love and compassion;
> to serve others, in whom you serve the Lord himself.
> These things are your common duty and delight.
> In them you are to watch over one another in love.[93]

This implications of the ordination liturgy in practice are emphasised by Nouwen who states: 'The Christian leader of the future is the one who truly knows the heart of God… Knowing God's heart means consistently, radically, and very concretely to announce and reveal that God is love and only love.'[94] Coutts' contemporary thinking on Christian leadership emphasises

[92] Wesley, 'An Address to the Clergy', pp. 486-487.
[93] Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, *The Methodist Worship Book* (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 1999), p. 302.
[94] Nouwen, p. 25.

that compassionate love is a corporate act and responsibility not simply the responsibility of one person:

> Christian leadership means accepting a particular calling as one of the group, exercising the gifts of the Holy Spirit that are given for the purpose of following Jesus together, as we are formed into a community of self-giving, other-receiving love that bears witness to the grace of God in a systematically selfish world.[95]

Nonetheless those appointed to specific leadership roles need to maintain a personal repository of love for God and for the community or group they are seeking to serve. This is no mean task and, as Patterson states, is neither a sentimental nor straightforward path to follow.

> Before the reader begins to think that servant leadership and love is a mushy gushy or a soft approach, I would urge the reader to think again. Love is the tough road for leaders. It is easy to tell others what to do and how to do it with little engagement from the leader or from the follower; and yet this is not servant leadership. For the servant-leader, the approach to love is a much more complex journey. In fact, this tough road of love is about a great deal of hard work.[96]

The foundational attributes of the ordained minister as servant leader of deep-rooted spirituality and compassionate love connect into Barbuto's and Wheeler's five dimensions of servant leadership which will now be surveyed in relation to ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland.

The challenge of being a servant leader requires a profound sense of call or motivation which Barbuto and Wheeler define as *altruistic calling*:

> Altruistic calling describes a leader's deep-rooted desire to make a positive difference in others' lives. It is a generosity of spirit consistent with a philanthropic purpose in life. Because the ultimate goal is to serve, leaders high in altruistic calling will put others' interests head of their own and will diligently work to meet follower's needs.[97]

Altruistic calling equates with Greenleaf's description of service and resonates with the focus on call to ordained ministry that remains prevalent within the Methodist Church in Ireland.

[95] Coutts, p. 38.
[96] Patterson, 'Servant Leadership and love, p. 76.
[97] Barbuto and Wheeler, p. 318.

This assumes that an individual has a strong sense of love for God and love for the people that they are called to serve amongst. As already argued in this thesis, Wesley possessed an inimitable sense of call regarding his preaching, his desire to see people 'won for Christ', and subsequently the growth of the Methodist movement in Britain, Ireland and across the world. Key to Wesley's sense of call was his spiritual experience of what he understood to be 'God's love' at Aldersgate in 1738. The experience provided Wesley with the motivation to share the good news with others and it formed the basis of his enduring passion in leading the Methodist movement. As illustrated in chapter three the concept of call has continued to be a vital feature of discernment and selection processes for ordained ministry in the church. The ordination liturgy demonstrates this in the following terms, speaking of those being ordained. 'Their call has been tested in preparation for this ministry and they have been found to be of sound learning and faithful to their vocation.'[98]

The blending of a personal sense of call along with the affirmation of the church through its selection and formation processes provide the ordained minister with an authority that enables them to lead in the local church setting. It is in this context, serving with and alongside people, that the ordained minister will anticipate seeing people grow and flourish. The inner motivation is not self-promotion or fulfilment but to serve in order that individuals and communities might flourish, achieve their potential, and that the circumstances for all might improve. 'As the missional leadership of the community walks worthy of its calling, it equips the entire community of saints to do so.'[99]

The second servant leadership factor is *emotional healing*. This draws together several aspects of Greenleaf's servant leadership framework including empathy, listening and acceptance. Acceptance of others creates the context in which they feel secure to share their

[98] Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, *The Methodist Worship Book* (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 1999), p. 301.
[99] Guder, p. 155.

vulnerability, brokenness, and failings. The ability to listen and to be empathetic are vital in this process:

> Emotional healing describes a leader's commitment to and skill in fostering spiritual recovery from hardship or trauma. Leaders using emotional healing are highly empathetic and great listeners, making them adept at facilitating the healing process.[100]

There is a clear resonance between emotional healing and the pastoral role of the ordained minister. The inherited model of ordained ministry in all denominational church settings portrays the appointed minister as a 'pastor' of the congregation, a 'shepherd of the flock.'[101] Congregations expect the ordained minister to provide pastoral care and to offer support through the most joyous and challenging of life's experiences including births, deaths, and marriages. Two key caveats need to be made, however, in relation the pastoral role.

The first is the degree to which the leader themselves have experienced healing and wholeness in their lives. Greenleaf alluded to this in the following terms:

> Perhaps as with the minister and the doctor, the servant leader might also acknowledge this his or her own healing is the motivation. There is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between servant-leader and led, is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something they share.[102]

Greenleaf's thoughts are supported by the increasing focus in recent years on personal support and pastoral accountability for those in ministry roles. Personal developmental tools such as

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[100] Barbuto and Wheeler, p. 318.

[101] Ellison surveys the connections between the themes of pastoral ministry and leadership using illustrative texts from the Old Testament and the image of the 'Good Shepherd' as depicted by Jesus Christ in John 10.14. Ellison argues that the contemporary leader and pastor must be aware of their own need for pastoral support from others and their need to sustain their own relationship with and dependence upon Jesus as their own 'Good Shepherd'. See Jennifer Ellison, 'The Leader as Shepherd', in *Leadership the Wesleyan Way*, ed. by Aaron Perry and Bryan Easley (Lexington, KN: Emeth Press, 2016), pp. 131-139. Similarly, both Peterson in *The Contemplative Pastor,* and Nouwen in, *In the name of Jesus*, explore the crucial role of the pastor in enabling those they relate to within and beyond the church community to grow in their spiritual understanding and their emotional and relational development. See also the declaration to '[b]e shepherds to the flock of Christ' contained in the ordination liturgy for the Methodist Church in Ireland. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, *The Methodist Worship Book*, p. 308.

[102] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 50.

Pastoral Supervision, Spiritual Direction and forms of counselling are just some of the resources available to ordained ministers. As Sondra Wheeler notes:

> While some form of accountability may be useful for any Christian, it is indispensable for those who propose to lead and the church as ministers. To pastors, who must carry the burdens of others' secrets and sins, accountability offers a kind of rest, a place where they can speak the unvarnished truth about their own struggles, frustrations, and doubts.[103]

This resonates with Wesley's challenge to the clergy of his day concerning the importance of pastoral integrity and personal holiness.

> Am I such as I ought to be with regard to my practice? Am I, in my private life, wholly devoted to God? Am I intent upon this one thing, to do in every point "not my own will, but the will of Him that sent me"? Do I carefully and resolutely abstain from every evil word and work "from all appearance of evil" from all indifferent things, which might lay a stumbling-block in the way of the weak? Am I zealous of good works as I have time, do I do good to all men and that in every kind, and in as high a degree as I am capable? How do I behave in the public work whereunto I am called in my pastoral character? Am I a pattern to my flock, in word, in behaviour, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity?[104]

As shown in chapter three of this thesis the role and function of the Methodist minister evolved during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from itinerant evangelist to established pastor and preacher in a local circuit and society. This has created a tension between ordained ministers and congregations in many settings due to differing perspectives and expectations regarding the role of the ordained minister. Ministers may regard themselves as preachers and missional leaders in the spirit of Wesley, but the expectation of most congregational members is that they provide pastoral care.

The answer to this tension is found a second associated caveat. As well as seeking outside support and accountability, the pastoral care offered by an individual ordained person must be understood as representative of the wider pastoral care of the whole body of the church or congregation.

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[103] Sondra Wheeler, *Sustaining Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017) p. 126.
[104] Wesley, 'An Address to the Clergy', p. 499.

> Pastors or shepherds are called to look out for the spiritual, moral, relational, and vocational welfare and guidance of their community, and so are in turn in need of mutual support and accountability from others.[105]

In the post-Christian context, the image of the ordained minister as the sole provider of care for the congregation does not equate with the missional challenges facing the church today. Instead, the ordained minister may take the lead in terms of pastoral care, but crucially, will also equip those entrusted to their care, in turn, to care for others around them beyond the church community as well as within it. This necessitates paying close attention to the emotional and spiritual condition of their congregations and themselves and needs to be understood in the context of the wider mission of the local church and the potential to connect with those in the community beyond. The foundation of this pastoral activity cannot be reduced to a set of skills deployed by the ordained minister. Instead, they must draw from their personal understanding of the love of God for them and how it overflows to their relationship with others. This is a crucial leadership function that must be understood in relation to the other elements of servant leadership.

So far, the concepts explored - spiritualty, compassionate love, emotional healing, and altruistic calling – are undoubtedly associated with ordained ministry. The three remaining concepts of wisdom, persuasive mapping and organisational stewardship may be less familiar and more elusive when considering ordained ministry. In the current context for the Methodist Church in Ireland they are nonetheless vitality important. The church needs leaders who are realistic about the contemporary challenges being faced by denominational churches, who can enable congregations to better understand the prevailing societal context, and who can facilitate a fresh vision for mission leveraging available resources.

[105] Coutts, p. 125.

The third factor is defined as *wisdom*. Greenleaf argued that the servant leader needed to be perceptive and intuitively aware of what was happening in the present and what might happen in the future:

> Awareness… makes life more interesting; certainly it strengthens ones' effectiveness as a leader. When one is aware, there is more than the usual alertness, more intense contact with the immediate situation, and more is stored away in the unconscious computer to produce intuitive insights in the future when needed.[106]

Building on Greenleaf's thinking, Barbuto and Wheeler used the word wisdom to summarise the qualities required in a leader to be able to perceive the higher level questions and issues that need to be considered in a given situation. 'Leaders high in wisdom are characteristically observant and anticipatory across most functions and settings. Wisdom is the ideal of the perfect and the practical, combining the height of knowledge and utility.'[107]

Patterson and van Dierendonck define wisdom as 'instilling a way of life that has a positive influence on oneself, others and the society at large.'[108] Those who possess wisdom are 'people who can bridge contradictions, act selfless, integer and (are) sometimes paradoxical with a sense of taking care for the whole.'[109] Such leadership wisdom conflates with spirituality and compassionate love in the servant leadership framework.

Though ordained ministers might be considered to be both wise and capable of offering spiritual counsel and advice, the delineation of wisdom offered here is broader with far reaching implications. In considering the role of an ordained person, and his / her personal development, pastoral relationship with others, and the missional direction of the local church that they lead, there can be no doubt of the need for wisdom. It requires a wisdom beyond themselves for ordained ministers as leaders not to fall foul of models of leadership focused on numerical or

[106] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 40.
[107] Barbuto and Wheeler, p. 319.
[108] van Dierendonck and Patterson, 'Compassionate love as a cornerstone of Servant Leadership: An integration of previous theorizing and research', p. 122.
[109] Ibid.

commercial success. Leadership in the local church is a subversive activity that draws from the ancient wisdom and tradition of Christianity and focuses on connecting people with the divine. Gary Roberts describes this as follows:

> Servant leadership, as demonstrated by the life and ministry of Jesus, centers on the dynamic and sometimes paradoxical balance of achieving the mission as directed by Father God while serving others with love. This follower-directed approach merges the macro- and micro-focus of love by cultivating the growth and well-being of followers by gained their freewill commitment: to achieve a transcendent mission through goal-directed individual and collective efforts, subordinating personal interests for the greater good.[110]

The wise leader is willing to take a step back to reflect upon and consider a situation. They will give time to listen to the perspective of others and be open to change themselves. They will commit to working with people to achieve worthy goals rather than impose their opinion on others. Nonetheless they will encourage those around them to aspire to higher goals than those of popular culture:

> People who wish to embrace what Greenleaf called their "legitimate greatness" will step up and risk appearing wise fools by modelling deep listening, collaboration, persuasion, community-building, and concern for the common good rather than advocating actions that manipulate, coerce, cower, diminish, and control as first options.[111]

Undoubtedly such leadership wisdom is even more necessary in the complex circumstances being faced by the Christian church in the west today. The numerical decline described in chapter three is just one example of the challenge faced by the church. Wisdom within the servant leadership framework would suggest that the solution to these challenges does not lie simply in more dynamic leadership and better marketing, but in enabling people to reflect on the deeper facets of life and spirituality. Ironically, this may take the ordained and others within their church communities who grasp the call, out of their church buildings to connect more

[110] Gary Roberts, 'Servant Leadership Across Cultures' in *The Palgrave Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Fulfilment*, ed. by S Dhiman and others (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 271-299 (p. 275).
[111] Don M. Frick, 'Wisdom as a Pillar for Servant Leadership' in *Practicing Servant Leadership*, ed. by Dirk can Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 11-24 (p. 24).

with their wider community floundering in the superficiality of western society. Greenleaf described this new approach as 'the growing church edge.'

> The change I anticipate is a new awareness among seekers in which those whose needs will be met only as they serve others will separate themselves from those who are satisfied to remain committed almost wholly to meeting their own needs – which, in the nature of things, will probably never be met because one is rarely satisfied with what one seeks only for oneself.[112]

The fourth factor to be considered is *persuasive mapping*. This includes the capacity of the leader to understand what is happening in their context and offer a positive vision for the future. As noted in relation to *wisdom* the leadership style deployed is not directive or forceful, but involves persuasion, collaboration, encouragement and one to one investment.

One of the key features of early Methodism was Wesley's willingness to allow others to participate in the leadership of the new Methodist societies and to entrust people with responsibilities:

> From the beginning of the Wesleyan movement, many people functioned as leaders… Leadership came from Church of England priests and also from a stonemason, a printer and publisher, a baker, a cobbler, and a schoolmaster. Leaders were male and female, ordained and lay, of noble birth and modest origin, black and white.[113]

The spirit of Wesley's model of enabling others to lead remains a feature of Methodism today. For example, a significant aspect of the role of an ordained minister in the Methodist Church in Ireland is to chair and facilitate the Church Council of a local church.[114] This involves working with the leaders on the Church Council and to consider how the vision and mission of the local church is to be achieved.[115] The reality for most ordained ministers is that they oversee the church council and are key in developing the vision and mission of the church. In this setting the ordained minister must work with lay leaders in a collaborative manner. Often this will involve helping others to see opportunities and possibilities in their community, but

[112] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 259.
[113] Weems, p. 60.
[114] MCI, *Manual of the Laws and Disciplines of the Methodist Church in Ireland*, 2020, p. 93.
[115] Ibid, p. 92.

the compelling vision must be developed and shared rather than simply presented by the ordained leader. Kok-Yee Ng and Christine S.-K. Koh discuss the importance of creating a 'climate of empowerment' to develop servant leadership across an organisation.[116] Such an approach would be consistent with the Methodist Church in Irelands current understanding of the leadership role of the ordained working with lay leaders in a collaborative manner to achieve the shared vision of the church community.

The fifth and final factor is *organisational stewardship*. This builds on the previous factor and is concerned with how a leader helps an organisation to see the potential for making a positive impact on wider society through its activities. 'Organisational stewardship involves an ethic or value for taking responsibility for the well-being of the community and making sure that the strategies and decisions undertaken reflect the commitment to give back and leave things better than found.'[117]

At the heart of Greenleaf's thinking was a desire to see peoples circumstances improved, to see the world to be made a better place:

> All of this rests on the assumption that the only way to change a society is to produce people, enough people, who will change it. The urgent problems of our day – the disposition to venture into immoral and senseless wars, destruction of the environment, poverty, alienation, discrimination, overpopulation – are here, because of human failures, individual failures, one person at a time, one action at a time failures.[118]

A commitment to improving the circumstances of those in wider society who have less resources and opportunity has been a feature of Methodist mission activity. This has its roots in Wesley's commitment to sharing the gospel beyond the boundaries of the established church and outside of the parish system. Methodists became known for their service in prisons, their opposition to slavery, the establishment of schools, and the creation of missions in the growing

[116] Kok-Yee Ng and Christine S.-K. Koh, 'Motivation to Serve', in *Servant Leadership: Developments in Theory and Research*, ed. by Dirk van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) pp. 90-101 (p. 99).
[117] Barbuto and Wheeler, p. 319.
[118] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 60.

industrial cities of the nineteenth century. William Abraham describes this commitment in the following terms:

> Genuine personal holiness is expressed in love for God and neighbour. Love for neighbour is not some kind of insubstantial, abstract emotion; it is expressed in personal and corporate action in society and history. As such, Methodists have opposed any and every form of dead orthodoxy; they want a living orthodoxy that transforms the world. They want social holiness that fixes society.[119]

Lovett Weems argues that '[t]he call for churches in the Wesleyan spirit today is to once again begin to see our communities as our parishes, and not just those who show up for weekly church events.[120] Such a venture requires ordained leadership that can grasp this vision and enable others to do the same.

**Servant Leadership: From Theory to Practice**

This chapter has established servant leadership as a theoretical paradigm for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland in the twenty-first century. This has built on the findings of chapter two and chapter three which focused on the historical origins of Methodism in Ireland, and the evolving pattern of ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland.

The most significant finding of this chapter concerns the elusive nature of a definition servant leadership. Greenleaf readily acknowledged this challenge himself stating that he was offering a framework for leadership that was more *intuitive insight* than *conscious logic*.[121] This has led to a wide range of research on the part of Greenleaf's successors who have offered various ways to define servant leadership, frameworks for understanding servant leadership, and methodologies to measure servant leadership. In their own way each researcher offers fresh

[119] William Abraham, *Methodism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 80.
[120] Lovett H. Weems Jr, 'What makes Leadership Wesleyan', in *Leadership the Wesleyan Way*, ed. by Aaron Perry and Bryan Easley (Lexington, KN: Emeth Press, 2016), pp. 27-32 (p. 31).
[121] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 26.

insights into servant leadership that are useful in terms of understanding and practicing servant leadership today.

Paradoxically, the abstract nature of servant leadership is helpful when considering the relationship between ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland and leadership theory. Beyond the functional aspects of the role of the ordained such as leading worship, presiding at the sacraments and offering pastoral care, the wider role of an ordained minister is somewhat intangible. This is especially the case when considering the contemporary challenges facing traditional denominations in western society. By considering the themes of spirituality, compassionate love, and Barbuto and Wheelers five factors of altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasion, organisational stewardship, this chapter has outlined a theoretical method for understanding the leadership role of the ordained. That those who serve as ordained ministers occupy a leadership role is beyond question, but the key question under consideration is what kind of leadership ordained ministers offer.

> In his works, Greenleaf discusses the need for a better approach to leadership, one that puts serving others – including employees, customers and community – as the number one priority. Servant leadership emphasises increased service to others, a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, and the sharing of power in decision making.[122]

The desired outcome of servant leadership focuses on the growth and development of those being served with the intention that they will in turn become servant leaders. The spread of servant leadership should, in theory, make the circumstances of all people, and especially the most marginalised in society better. Servant leadership does not normally produce quick results, it is a subversive, time consuming, endeavour requiring patience and persistence, but which in the long term will produce broader more comprehensive results.

[122] Larry C. Spears, 'Introduction - The Spirit of Servant Leadership', in *The Spirit of Servant Leadership*, ed. by Shann Ray Ferch and Larry C. Spears (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2011), pp. 7-20 (p. 10).

Chapter five and chapter six will develop the thus far theoretical discussion to explore the current leadership thinking and experience of ordained ministers in the Methodist Church in Ireland. Using the empirical data gathered through semi-structured interviews, an assessment will be made concerning the leadership role of ordained minsters and its vital connection to servant leadership. It seeks to establish how servant leadership offers an effective framework for the future mission of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

# Chapter 5

# The Findings of a Recent Survey of Irish Methodist Ministers (2020-2021): Servant Leadership in Action

## Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of a qualitative survey of a sample of Irish Methodist Ministers. The purpose of the survey was to move from the theoretical to the empirical in seeking to address the primary subject of this thesis: 'Irish Methodism and Servant Leadership – a Vision of Ministry for the Twenty-first Century.' The findings are presented in correspondence with the themes and sub-themes discovered during the data analysis phase of the study as described in chapter one - 'Research Methodology and Research Methods.' The four themes identified from the data are:

(I) Journey and Call to Ministry;

(II) Motivation for Ministry and Leadership;

(III) Core Beliefs about Leadership;

(IV) Practicing Servant Leadership.

Before exploring these four themes in depth, two other matters relating to the data will be investigated briefly.

Although not a primary focus for this research, the principal researcher paid attention to the gender and experience of the interview participants during the data analysis phase. This was to assess whether there was any significant variation in response according to these factors. In general terms no significant variation was found between the responses of women and men.[1]

[1] The following comment was made by participant 18: 'I have discovered in the Methodist Church, total liberation, total freedom as a woman to be all that God wants me to be, to exercise my own gifts and skills, and to have a clear understanding that God has called me to be where I am, and the Methodist Church facilitated that call for me and facilitated where I am today. I like the way the Methodist Church is creating and has created a great diversity of styles of leadership and has allowed people freedom to exercise and to continue to develop their call.'

Similarly, in relation to experience there was no significant variation in responses according to years served. One minor issue to note is that those who had served for longer were slightly more critical of the Methodist church when it came to considering the style adopted by the denominational leadership. Half of the 18 participants have served over 15 years and of that group 4 commented negatively that the Connexional leadership of the church was not as effective as it could be in leading the wider church. For example, participant 8 states:

> We do not have a good leadership style. We talk in terms of connexion and collaboration and all of that historically. But we have a management style, historically, rather than a leadership style.

Similarly, participant 10 comments:

> I think at the upper level it is very collegiate, far too collegiate to be effective. And at a local level, it is supposed to be collegiate. But in practice ends up often quite dictatorial.

Though this is an interesting issue to note, on balance, the author did not feel there was enough evidence to make a definitive statement relating to experience.

Having considered these two issues, focus will now turn to presenting the four themes identified in the data which depict multiple perspectives on the nature of leadership in the ministry setting.

### (I) Journey and Call to Ministry

The interview participants all described their journey and call to Methodist Ministry with clarity and passion. The responses revealed several interesting sub themes worthy of exploration.

Firstly, the predominant factor that compelled participants into ministry was a clear sense of call from God. Participant 15 was typical in describing their response to God's call as an act of obedience:

> I had no desire really, but it felt obedient to God to say, 'well, listen, I'm being encouraged to do this. I think you're encouraging me to do this.' There was a sort of a reluctance on my part, obedience was the key thing. I knew the difficulties of ministry, I knew what I was getting into, and I knew I was going to be in places that I probably didn't want to be... but it was obedience that motivated me.

Ten of the interviewees described their 'call from God' in open-ended, often enigmatic, terms:

> I mean it's always about calling… otherwise I wouldn't be having this conversation with you, I would have quit already. I worked for the church before I candidated for the ministry. And there was nothing about church life that motivated me into ministry… because I saw how ministers were treated and didn't want that in any way. So, if it wasn't for the sense of call, I wouldn't be here. (Participant 3)

> It just is that sense of call. I didn't want to get ordained. You know my story...from O-level time I sensed that my call as a Christian... to go overseas into agricultural development with the church... not the ministry, and definitely not the Methodist church ministry. (Participant 10)

> It was God... he wouldn't let me alone. (Participant 13)

The sense of a call from God in the past, that the ministers could reflect upon, was a crucial factor in sustaining spirituality in the present. For example, Participant 6 states:

> It is about becoming more Christ-like in my own discipleship and trying to enable others to become more like Christ. It starts with me, and I know that if I'm running on empty, and if I'm not close to the Lord, I'm not going to be able to equip and empower others… I might inadvertently guide them in a wrong way. (Participant 6)

The theme of God's call was closely related to a second factor, personal spirituality. The participants were clear that the cultivation of their interior life with God was vital in sustaining them on their ministry journey. Not merely for them personally but also in relation to how it impacted on their congregations. Participant 3 assesses this issue rather bluntly:

> I think there is a need for me to nurture my spiritual health... significantly more than I practice, and significantly more than I think people allow me time to practice… I think they just think we wake up and we are full of the joys of the Lord. I don't think that they acknowledge that there's a need within me to be spiritually fed, or there's a need within me to have time apart, and that it needs to be probably a larger part of my working week than I'm ever afforded. And that would be for the benefit of the congregation, but they would never see it in that sense, they would see you as lazy and slacking off.

Without a commitment to their own spirituality, there is a strong sense from the interviewees that ministry and leadership in the local church are unsustainable.

> I think as a servant leader, the aim is to serve and enable everybody to serve something greater. In our case, God, the kingdom, therefore the servant leader's priority must be their walk, their relationship with, their serving of the greater. (Participant 10)

> What helps me to keep going? Just my personal relationship with God, because sometimes, that's the only thing I'm left with. Because if people have let me down if situations let me down, as they do for all of us, He's never let me down. And he's always been the one constant. Somehow or other I always find, even if it's tiny, I always find a wee gold nugget among the rubble of a day. It might be tiny, might be a phone call, might be a text, it might be somebody saying, 'thanks for that' you know, or whatever, and I say 'thank-you Lord.' (Participant 12)

Spirituality then is central to the exercise of ministry and leadership in the local church. Without the sense of being called and formed by God for the role it is difficult to persevere especially when facing the challenges that the church is facing today. As participant 18 states:

> It has to be about growing in grace, it has to be about formation. I have come to the conclusion I don't form myself. I am formed, obviously by God, by grace, and by community.

A third theme relating to journey and call to ministry concerns the participants views on the relationship between ordained ministry and the concept of leadership. All the interviewees acknowledged the reality that they occupied a leadership role. This is unambiguously stated by participant 18:

> I think that if you're an ordained minister, it's part of the package, to be a leader… you can't avoid leadership to whatever degree you choose to do it, you can't avoid it.

Participant 2 describes the positional authority of the minister that, in her / his view makes a minister a leader:

> The minute you open your mouth as an ordained minister you are presuming to speak into the very heart of people's lives, the soul of people's lives. You may not think you are because it may be some innocuous thing you think you're dealing with... maybe the finances of the church, it might be the building that needs reroofing or whatever. But every time you open your mouth, you are speaking, I believe, into the depth of people's being in a way that few other people have an opportunity to do. So, if you don't think you are a leader then I would suggest you shouldn't be in the role.

Participants also discussed the personal toll of leadership as part of their journey. For example, participant 8 talked about their mental health and how they felt their congregation at the time and the wider church viewed them during a difficult season in ministry and leadership:

> After my well documented plunge, leaders were very supportive of me health wise, and allowed me to get back on a level playing field, but never trusted me again. They perceived me to be weak, and therefore not worthy of being a leader. However, congregationally, I probably had my best two years in the wake of that because I was no longer projecting for them the picture of the omni competent superhero. It was more relatable, and I'd like to think that other people subsequently felt able to step up into leadership. I am not going to say that it was all about vulnerable leadership and wounded healer and all of that, because that's over egging it. But if it is truly about discipleship, then that is part of the whole cycle… God's grace is sufficient, his strength is made perfect in weakness.

Similarly participant 16, also discussing their mental health, contrasts the reaction of retired ministerial colleagues from a previous generation with his / her congregation.

> One Sunday, I mentioned that I was struggling with mild depression and was on medication. One of the retired ministers there thought that was a mistake, I shouldn't have said that. His reasoning, I think, was that it showed a vulnerability that the congregation didn't need to see. But I had so many people…maybe more than dozen, who in the next weeks or months, said to me, 'you know that really helped me when you said that, because me or my family member or somebody else has been struggling.' Just to know that the minister, someone they kind of by and large looked up to, could struggle these things... it probably feeds into just the earlier conversation to about servant leadership, I think expressing some degree of vulnerability is also part of what that's about.

Personal struggles are a reality of life, ministry, and leadership. Acknowledging vulnerability and the need for emotional healing correlates with the exercise of leadership and ministry. Participant 11 describes what it required in plain terms.

> What I have learned is, you have to be able to roll with the failures. Get your conscience clear before God and move on. I think what I have learned over the last six years is that my skin is getting tougher… but the heart needs to get tender, not bitter… it's being able to accept that you will fail as a leader, that there will be things that you'll say in hindsight 'I would not have done that.'

Broadly, the interview participants recognised that the role of an ordained minister is by necessity a leadership role. Even if leadership was not a primary motivation to entering the ministry in the first place, the data shows participants wrestling with the challenges of leadership. Retaining and sustaining a sense of call and personal spirituality is vital to remaining in ministry. The next theme to be considered is motivation for Ministry and Leadership.

### (II) Motivation for Ministry and Leadership

As stated above, depth of spirituality, and the strong sense of a call from God is the primary underlying motivational factor for the participants. The data shows that from a sense of call and personal spirituality emerges a desire to serve both God and people. Participant 7 puts this in simple terms:

> It was because of what Jesus did in my life. I wanted other people to know that too. So, right from the beginning, when I first made a commitment, I felt like I wanted to serve within the local church, I felt called to the local church. I think my initial motivation was that to be a disciple who makes disciples.

Participant 4, considering his / her own motivation, argued that serving first is a vital characteristic of a Methodist understanding of ministry.

> There's a strong strand within Methodism, that relates to servant leadership. I would pitch in the word 'privilege' first and foremost, rather than anything else. In some other traditions they would be much more focused on the leadership, the role, the function. I think at our best, we recognize that we are called to serve… we're not called to lead, we're called to serve. It's not an entitlement. It's not a right. It's not something we've earned and therefore others must follow us.

Interestingly, however, only three participants mention John Wesley in their responses. All three emphasise Wesley's commitment to serving the people and the wider mission of the Methodist movement. Participant 1 affirms Wesley's pastoral priority as follows:

> If you think back to Wesley, he was where the people were. So, I think for him, he had a pastor's heart. He wanted to come alongside the people, to understand their context, and to speak into that context.

Participant 2 links Wesley's pastoral concern for people with social justice and evangelism. This linkage is a significant feature of the Methodist understanding of the broader Christian mission embracing both material and spiritual needs:

> He [Wesley] actually saw people, and whatever was needed to respond to people he tried to do. For me, that is a part of Methodism, that I think is, if not unique, certainly something special… It offers the whole church, not just the Methodist Church, a connectedness between, if people want to use the language of social justice or social responsibility or whatever, a connectedness

> between that and evangelism, that it's not one is spiritual and the other practical, they are both spiritual.

Participant 4 points to Wesley's personal sacrifice on behalf of the Methodist movement as a sign of his / her servant-heart and commitment to the cause.

> He was prepared to go anywhere, to spend this time on the road, to the detriment of his marriage, even though that might not have been the smartest idea. He also demonstrated this financially, he could have ended up with quite a wealthy individual, but he didn't because he was there to serve.

The motivation to serve first, however, is not about being subject to every whim and expectation of the congregation. The vision behind serving first is seeking to glorify God and build the community of faith.

> You can mistake serving others for being a slave to others. I think, awareness of that danger is necessary especially if you have a people pleasing personality, which many people drawn into pastoral ministry have. (Participant 5)

> I think models of servant leadership that see it as passive, subservient, quiet, are flawed. So, if that's the model of servant leadership that we're trying to buy into, I don't think that's it. But servant leadership that actually is focused on the kingdom and focused on building others up will be transformational. (Participant 14)

Participant 12 discusses this issue in relation to how they describe their leadership style and the way they seek to work with local lay leaders in the church.

> I don't see myself as a preacher, I see myself as a pastor who gives servant leadership. What do I mean by that? I mean, that it is about it is about putting others first. The congregation is not there to serve me. I'm there to serve the congregation whatever that looks like. I find myself at the minute always on the hard end of the spectrum coming away from things feeling harsh. That's not my default, but it's required… I would describe myself as a facilitative leader who spends more time thinking about the how, and especially how to get local leadership to work together to make 'the what' happen. A facilitative leader builds trust to enable disclosure. They might say 'I don't get it but I trust you' is where I hope to get to with the naysayers.

Considering the theme of motivation and service, three of those interviewed, participants 4, 15 and 16, who are among the older interviewees with at least twenty-five years' experience each, comment on their theological perspective on ordination. They share a functional view of

ordination that in practice means the minister is not to be regarded as 'above' the congregation. Participant 4 voiced a concern that 'over the last generation we've got too high a view of the ordained minister as leader and too low a view of the local church lay leaders and their role.' Participant 15 stated 'I believe ordination is about being set aside to serve more than being given a status…a servant leader who ministers with and for the congregation in a particular role.' Participant 16 affirmed his / her view of their role with conviction.

> You're the leader, amongst other leaders, who has been given a particular responsibility or role within that, and not necessarily a primacy role... my leadership would be a kind of an oversight, encouragement, and management.

A further motivation clearly identified in the data is an underlying pastoral concern and love for people. A third of the interviewees express their love for people as a motivating factor even when that felt like a challenge:

> I have what I can only describe as a God given love for people, because people are difficult, and I will be difficult for people. We can only take certain people for a certain amount of time before they do our head in. But I genuinely have a real heart and love for people to communicate God's love and grace and mercy. And so, I am best, and I am most rewarded, when I'm visiting, when I'm one on one. (Participant 6)

Participant 1 encapsulates their motivation and love in enthusiastic terms:

> My motivation is to love God and to love other people… to bring God's kingdom to more people. It's what I love about Methodism. I love that it is open to all, that everybody is welcome, all who love the Lord are welcome to the table. It's not a set of rules that you have to achieve, it's about grace, it's about love, it's about mercy. And that has to come into your leadership… people need to come in and be loved by me not told what to do…If there's a situation, I'm very much 'let's go sort this right now.' I'm not afraid to call people out on what they are doing if I feel it's wrong. I love the people I work with… I try very hard to love them all… I think that people know that I love them and that brings trust with it.

The effort to love people, especially when facing conflict, undoubtedly impacts personally on the ordained leader. Nine of the participants acknowledged their personal vulnerability and the need for their own emotional healing. Two participants remarked:

> Leadership is about being prepared to be vulnerable, to take the risk that people will not agree with you. And if they don't, genuinely being prepared to work with them to take a step forward

> from wherever they are. It's been a tough journey. But I look back and still believe it's been genuine and that I, have responded to God's call. (Participant 2)
>
> Counselling is good… anyone in pastoral leadership, or any kind of leadership should be in therapy, because, everyone's got mess, everyone's got stuff, and that's fine. But if you're a leader, all that stuff will affect other people. (Participant 5)

Several participants noted that the Covid-19 pandemic inhibited their ability to relate well to others due to the lack of opportunity for one-to-one conversations. Participant 6 expressed their frustration as follows:

> It's in the individual stuff where the frustration has come in these last six months, where you can't get alongside people in the same way to be able to nurture the seed and make sure the seed has gone into the soil… Pastoral ministry has been largely therapeutic stuff. ...it hasn't been the discipleship aspect of ministry.

The data clearly points to a cohort of ministers who articulate their underlying motivation as being focused on serving God and serving people. The role of a Methodist minister following the example of Wesley is not about positional authority, it is about enabling people to find faith and serve too. The third high-level theme identified from the data concerns the participants core beliefs about leadership.

### (III) Core Beliefs about Leadership

All eighteen participants expressed the opinion that effective leadership is relational in nature and oriented towards working with and for people. Furthermore, good leadership is perceived as not reflecting any desire for personal gain or advantage on the part the leader. Participant 3 commented 'leadership is not about putting yourself first and everybody else after.' Stated negatively, participant 17 described unhealthy leadership as 'self-centred… about your own ego rather than anything else.'

The pastoral nature of ordained ministry underpins a 'people first perspective' on leadership which requires levels of empathy and a concern for people's general wellbeing. Participant 1 reflects the views articulated by the vast majority of those interviewed:

> If you don't know where people are coming from or why they think what they think it's hard to know how to work alongside them or bring them with you.

Matters of pastoral concern and spirituality would be commonly understood to relate to ordained ministry. Beyond these aspects, the data from the interviews focuses on other key features of leadership such as vision, teamwork, and follower development. The participants demonstrated more of a concern for those being led rather than focusing on any overt benefit to the leader. Participant 8 is a case in point:

> Good leaders are, to me, empowering leaders. They are collaborative leaders. They are leaders that recognise their own limitations in terms of vision and capacity but still have sufficient to vision and ability to communicate that vision… to get others to buy in to a shared analysis, not necessarily their initial analysis, but to a shared analysis of where they need to go. And then to facilitate the business of getting them there. And so, good leadership is formative, and recognises that... it's not necessarily about forming others in their image entirely, except insofar as it should be facilitative.

The people orientated leadership as described by the participants necessitates a collaborative leadership style. In fact, thirteen of the participants argued that a collaborative and facilitative approach to leadership was essential to ordained ministry. Several contended that Methodism historically adopted a collaborative approach to leadership. Participant 3 argues that Methodism was an open and inclusive movement, 'accessible to all, there was inclusion with the sense of leaders and class leaders and people being involved.' Participant 4 underlines the development of this principle by noting the democratic maturing of Methodism, particularly in Britain and Ireland during the nineteenth century.

> Once you get into the Victorian era, and you're starting to overthrow the landed gentry, the aristocracy, all that inherited authority, that's all collapsing, you've now got the rise of an educated, well, middle class, but particularly more upper working class… the sergeant in the army, the foreman in the factory, they become your Methodist local preacher. They're rising up and they're overthrowing inherited authority, they're in a much more democratic way on so democracy works really well.

Participant 14 argues forthrightly that these values of enabling the ministry of others and inclusivity are the foundation of Irish Methodism's collaborative leadership style today. As

she/he states: ‘We have a model that says that a body of people together discerns and walks into what God is saying.’

The positive sense that Methodism is a collaborative movement which empowers others is countered, however, by several interviewees who pointed to significant difficulties that a collaborative approach can create for the mission of the church today. For example, participant 1 states:

> [The church] is very much from the bottom up. Decisions are made at a local level. I do think at times that is detrimental to the vision of our church ... because people’s hearts are in a building, or in a tradition, but it’s not bringing God’s kingdom anymore.

In some circumstances therefore a collaborative culture may be regarded by ministers and lay leaders as restrictive and stifling, thwarting necessary change in the church. A further challenge to a collaborative approach relates to managing congregational expectations. Amidst the challenge of secularisation and declining numbers in local congregations, there is an enmeshed understanding of the role of the ordained minister creating a confusing array of expectations. Participant 3 describes the dilemma for ministers in stark terms:

> Some people want me to be a pastoral leader. Some people want me to be a mission leader. Some people want me to just tell them what to do and do everything for them. Other people want me to step back and shut up so that they can take control.

Similarly, participant 6 describes this problem using contractual language:

> You’re the paid individual. So, you’re going to do all the… you can fill in the blanks… the preaching, the pastoring the admin, all the stuff that goes with that, and, for some people, if you’re not doing that, well, what are we paying you for?

As well as confusion surrounding the role of the minister in a changing context, there are also differing expectations relating to leadership style. This creates a leadership predicament for the minister as explained by participant 10. ‘I’ve seen examples of situations where the congregation wants strong leadership, but the leader is inclined to be collegial... or vice, or vice

versa.' Two participants discuss this problem further relating leadership style to the mission of the church:

> Time and time again, I've sat with church councils and they say, well, you tell us what to do and we'll do it, and we will grow. I'm saying to them, no that's not it, it is about you guys taking initiative, understanding what it means to be a disciple and what it means to share Jesus yourself in your context. All I can do is help ask the right questions, thinking through the right things. But certainly, they want to be told, but then when they don't get what they want, or hear what they want to hear, then that's when the hassle starts. (Participant 15)

> One of the tensions is that some of our people don't want us to be leaders in that sense, they want us to be pastors. They want us to work with them, but they don't want us to direct them, or to challenge them and then there's others who want us to challenge them and direct them and find it frustrating that we're not doing it as much as we should be doing it. (Participant 17)

Another interesting lens for exploring collaborative leadership relates to the question of power. Participants discussed mitigations they utilised in relation to power dynamics in leadership. A collaborative leadership approach requires the wisdom to facilitate reflection and discernment rather than suggest answers before others understand the questions.

> The biggest danger is that I have a quick mind and therefore can run ahead and often have an answer before some people even ask the questions. That means I have to force myself to listen more rather because I'm miles ahead in my mind sometimes, you know... so I can be a bit impatient from my point of view. (Participant 15)

The participants highlighted the need to listen well and understand what is happening the local church context as a feature of collaborative leadership:

> Listening more than talking, I think is so key because I don't have all the answers. There's a lot of wisdom and experience in our churches among our people that you can really learn from not only about their own approach to church, and in general, their walk with God. (Participant 1)

> It's about having the skill to tap into people's receptivity. It's another dimension of leadership for me, you know that I have to work out how I can make someone come on board, how I can keep another from taking the wheels off the bus. So, it is about understanding the people you're working with and finding their pinch points and working accordingly with those pinch points. (Participant 18)

As well as positive core beliefs regarding leadership, the participants also shared what they understood to be characteristics of unhealthy leadership. Participant 5 described bad leadership as 'autocratic, distant and disengaging'. Eight participants specifically mentioned

'not listening to people' as a key feature of ineffective leadership, and participant 7 pinpointed the lack of thought or concern for people as a serious deficiency in leadership.

> Bad leadership is…dominating, it takes no consideration of the people that are being led… I think bad leadership can also be where there is no direction being given, no sense of vision, and no supporting or empowering the people and helping them to move on or to accomplish what it is they're trying to accomplish.

Furthermore, bad leadership is described not simply as ignoring or failing to listen to people, but also as failing to involve others actively in the life of the community or organisation by not adequately delegating responsibility. As participant 11 states unambiguously:

> I think bad leadership is when you try as a leader to do it all yourself… the fear of delegation, which I have experienced myself. The impatience that I have as a leader, where I've gone well, you know what, it's quicker for me to do that myself.

Leaders who neglect to take seriously the concerns of the community by not listening, not involving others, and not being committed to enabling people, create a context that stifles the long-term development of communities and organisations. Participant 8 expresses this concern lucidly as follows:

> One may get people and organizations to a defined position, and it may be a good position you know, for that moment, but they have got there by all manner of not good means that have been destructive of human personality and destructive of relationships that has perhaps, ultimately reduced long term capacity for things beyond their tenure of leadership. So, it may achieve short term goals, and they may be lauded for that, but they are storing up any amount of trouble thereafter, because, you know that they have used up all manner of capital and have maybe formed others in their image to repeat that pattern.

The core beliefs about leadership found in the interview data suggests that the participants recognise that crucial to the contemporary role of an ordained minister is a concern for developing, equipping, and empowering others and laying a positive and healthy foundation for those who follow them. Having surveyed core beliefs about leadership, attention now turns to the practice of servant leadership.

### (IV) Practicing Servant Leadership

The notion of Servant Leadership was at the core of the participants view of their role as leaders. Participant 7 makes a bold assertion as follows:

> I think that ordained ministry is leadership, servant leadership, because that's what it's all about. It's about having this group of people that are under your care, you're trying to take them somewhere, in terms of their relationship with God, and fulfilling the potential that God has given them to become the people that God intended them to be.

Participant 14 sums up his / her views on leadership in the following comment, focusing on the example of Jesus Christ:

> Leadership must be about echoing the character and nature of Jesus and pointing to Jesus. I think what came to mind after that was that you're not a leader if nobody's following. It's important for me in terms of bringing people with me, and so good leadership is, collegial collaborative, looks like movement, looks like the character of Jesus, looks like a leader who understands the folk with whom they're working.

In fact, nine of the eighteen participants cited the example of Jesus Christ as fundamental to their understanding of the nature of servant leadership. 'When you say, servant leadership, the image associated with that is Jesus washing the disciples' feet and everything Jesus teaches around that' (Participant 5). There was a strong sense, however, that the example of Jesus did not insinuate that the servant leader should simply act at the behest of followers:

> For us to be servant leaders, we are imitating Jesus. But it's not the idea from years gone by when people had servants who were subservient. It's not being walked over either. I think there's a strength to being a servant leader. There's a humility with servant leaders. For me, it's about listening to people and not pretending that we have all the answers. It also involves vulnerability. (Participant 9)

At the same time, six interviewees pointed out that servant leadership involves sacrifice and often comes at great personal cost. Participant 16 explained this clearly as follows:

> It's about being willing to give my own time and energy, not to count the cost. I am always baffled by ministers who say, they only work a 35-hour week, that's what they're paid for. I thought, well, you know, why don't you go and be a teacher or something, you'll get better holidays, and you can have as much of a spiritual influence probably in the school if that's your attitude towards your church. Being a servant means being willing to go an extra mile to inconvenience yourself to push on when you're tired and grumpy, and not let your grumpiness show as much as you would otherwise let it show.

Nonetheless the nature of servant leadership, as modelled by Jesus was described as involving and developing others. Participants 11 declared 'Jesus didn't do it all. He called others to join in with him.' For participant 8, this was a crucial issue. He / she argued that an incorrect understanding of servant leadership could conversely restrict the development of people and limit the resourcefulness of the leader.

> I think the whole concept of authentic servant leadership is something that we should explore with some depth, but with a critical depth. Too much of what is sold as servant leadership, the classic installation address of this man, this woman is your servant, but you are not his / her master. It's not servant leadership, its servile leadership. At the same time, it can be appallingly disempowering both for the minister because it restricts their creative ministry, but also for the congregation where the minister becomes not so much a servant as a slave to the whims and wishes of a congregation.

The tenor of the interview data reveals a framework of servant leadership where the leader clearly sets a practical example to followers and actively promotes the involvement and development of followers. In the words of Participant 7:

> The emphasis is on the people that you're leading, the people that are following, rather than on tasks, or things that need to be done, or that you're trying to do or whatever goals you might have. So, it's very much about focusing on the people. In whatever it is you're trying to do you're always trying to help them develop and reach their potential.

Participant 6 asserts that a servant leader 'wouldn't ask anybody to do something they wouldn't do themselves.' Participant 3 locates servant leadership within the concept of teamwork.

> Getting your hands dirty. It's not a stand back, point the finger, tell everybody else what to do, but being part of the team, being part of the direction. Servant leadership is important because it's what brings people along with you.

For Participant 1 setting an example to others is a key feature of servant leadership even when, in the church context, some of the laity would not consider that the minister should carry tasks not readily associated with their role.

> I think it's very practical. I am one of the people that after the church concert, I'm lifting the chairs. In the kitchen I'm washing the dishes. One of the property stewards said to me, 'that's not your job, ministers don't lift chairs.' I'm like, but I can and you're 70 and you probably shouldn't be.

Having explored the general comments made by participants on servant leadership, three subthemes will now be explored. These are serving people, nurturing vision, and enabling mission. Each will now be described in turn.

*(i) Serving People*

A people centered view of leadership has already been evidenced from the data. There are several interesting factors to consider regarding what serving people as a leader looks like.

Serving people starts with loving people. Participant 5 asserted that love needs to be genuine. 'I think for true servant leadership you have got to love people, in some sense. You can't pretend to serve people to get what you want. I think genuine love and care is probably the core.' Participant 15 recognised that love does not ignore difficulties and involves open and effective communication. They argued that this was particularly relevant in the exercise of ministry.

> I'd expect a servant leader to tell the people that they are working with that they love them above all else. If they know that you love them then it's much easier to do some of the hard stuff. I'm never to be afraid to tell a congregation 'Guys I love you, warts and all and I hope at some point you may get to love me and that together then we get to move forward.' Unconditional Love is right at the heart of it.

Fourteen of the participants specifically mentioned listening as a key leadership skill required to serve people well. Participant 11 stated 'I've learned that leadership is about listening. At the beginning I would have seen it more as talking.' Participant 1 linked listening to caring and to vision. 'As people are under your care you have a responsibility to listen well, and to discern a direction for those people and then lead them in it.' Similarly participant 17 described their style as focused on listening to promote co-operation and teamwork. 'My leadership style is very much you listen, and you get a sense of what God is saying through other people and then there comes a time when you say, this is what we are going to do, you know, it is collaborative.'

Pastoral oversight and strengthening and sustaining people were at the core of the interviewees approach to leadership. The challenge of balancing leadership style, pastoral care, and the expectations of both congregations and ministers is clearly described by participant 9 in the following terms:

> I think a lot of congregations are looking for the charismatic person... the popular outgoing person but I think when you strip all that away, they want someone who will listen to them and who will be there for them. Who doesn't judge either so that when they face pastoral stuff happening in their family, they might have been very black and white, but then you step into that situation and try and help them see it's not as black and white, that it's okay to be in a murky grey area, God understands.

Participant 1 argued that effective pastoral care builds trust and is crucial in alleviating conflict. 'If people can trust you, conflict is easier because you come alongside them. You may call them out and say, 'your behavior wasn't right, you're wrong in this instance' and hopefully because they know you have integrity it's easier to journey with them.'

Eleven of the eighteen interviewees also discussed enabling healing as an aspect of serving people. Participant 2 states their views on this responsibility persuasively:

> How can you in any way seek to offer leadership in an organization that is fundamentally people focused, if you are not seeking to address their needs, their hopes, their dreams, their fears, the things that are holding them back. And if you're going to address those things, then at some level, you are serving those people.

For participant 1 enabling healing is a spiritual enterprise at the core of building the church community.

> Church is not about a building; it is about God's kingdom coming. And if you aren't seeing new people coming into relationship with Christ, or current people growing in their relationship with Christ, then actually, you're not a church, you're a social club.

The purpose of the people centred service of listening, caring, and healing is to enable people to flourish and use their gifts and skills. The methods, commonly associated with ministry, included prayer, preaching, and one to one mentoring to encourage and support are those given as examples of practices outlined by the participants:

> I like to notice people; I like to watch people and how they interact with others. And I like to be in people's living rooms, and certainly listen to them and hear their stories. To think through what their gifts are. What are their talents? What are they passionate about? And how can I equip them. (Participant 1)
>
> To encourage people to grow and develop is probably related to the priesthood of all believers. You have to see the potential in your congregation. You have to look at your members, and you see a person and you think what skills, abilities talents has that person got? (Participant 18)

Despite the lack of opportunity to physically meet people one-to-one, it was clear that the lockdowns that took place during the Covid 19 pandemic gave an opportunity for ministers to encourage and enable broader participation in activities such as online worship.

> I love to create opportunities and encourage people to participate and get as many people participating as possible. That is one of the things that I've enjoyed about some of the situation in the lockdown. The way we've done services is on zoom and I've been able to get good participation. People who would never stand up in church to say things will sit on their sofa at home and participate. So, I've even had people writing the prayers of intercession, whereas before, they would maybe only have read something that they were given. (Participant 7)

A key finding from the data was the enthusiasm and commitment of the interviewees to developing others. The data shows that this was not simply about encouraging people to use their gifts and skills for internal church activities. It was also about enabling people to see how they can use their gifts to minister beyond the church to their communities and workplaces.

> I feel like a big part of my call is from Ephesians 4, equipping the Saints for acts of service, like that's what I feel called to as a person. Ordination is a structure that enables that and empowers that. (Participant 5)

Participant 8 took the theme of equipping and enabling people to serve beyond the church a step further. He / she was concerned that congregations should be helped with their understanding of the changing wider context and how the church relates to the wider society.

> Encouraging people to ask good questions in this world, because that's the way to then find answers. But you need to know what the questions are first, and particularly when engaging with the wider world. We tend to answer questions that they aren't asking. (Participant 8)

*(ii) Nurturing Vision*

The second sub-theme relating to the practice of servant leadership concerns nurturing vision. As discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis the Methodist Church in Ireland has seen significant numerical decline in recent decades. Such a reality raises significant questions regarding how church leaders and congregations relate to an increasingly post-Christian context. The Connexional oversight of the Methodist Church actively encourages and resources local churches to be outward looking and engaged in mission. The interview data shows the tensions ministers feel as they seek to lead local congregations that are often more focused on survival:

> We have a leadership team at the very top, which is singing off the same page. But I perceive that there's a gap at times between where they want the church to go and where the church is. So, you know you leave things like the gatherings we've had, and you think that's brilliant, we're on the same page, but then you see this gap between that and what happens at a local level... and we are the ones who are meant to bridge that gap... but there is this tension, between the two. I think a number of us feel that tension...so I think we are left to our own devices but on the whole, we're being quite conscientious with that... we are listening to our congregations, we are trying to lead them in a direction that moves in line with where the central leadership is but maybe at a different pace. (Participant 17)

> I was fighting for four years for a vision, which it turns like may have been the Methodist Church in Ireland's vision, or maybe just the vision of the minister before me but wasn't the church's vision. And it wasn't that it was the wrong vision. I think it was right, but they were nowhere near in the place (for it). (Participant 1)

Participants 4 and 18 argue that to nurture vision, leaders need the wisdom to stand back and reflect on circumstances so that they can see the way ahead more clearly, especially when arriving in a new situation.

> You keep on reassessing what you're doing. It's almost a pastoral cycle that we're into, you know, its action, reflection, re-consideration, further action. So, you're just doing that constantly, and you are trying to objectively assess where you're going. (Participant 4)

> A good leader, when they go into a new context and different situation, will take time to reflect. A good leader will be in an ongoing relationship with reflection, a good leader will often learn to be quiet. And it's not just quiet for a week or a month. But a good leader, when they approach a new circuit might learn to be quiet for 12 months, until you hear a whole range of different voices. And a good leader will develop relationships. A good leader, I think, will not jump to conclusions. And I talk about reflection because it's non ending in terms of using those

> reflective resources. A good leader obviously is a person who listens well. And you can't get that listening right all of the time. (Participant 18)

Seventeen of the participants argued that a collaborative approach should be taken when facilitating vision in the local church. The role of the minster is to help local church lay leaders and congregations to discern and own a vision for the future rather than rely on the minister to provide it for them.

> There can be huge pressure to do the autocratic, directive thing. To tell people where to go, so to speak. Servant leadership, and associated leadership models are about enabling and equipping. You have to enable people to go in their own direction. (Participant 5)

> If you're the catalyst for it, and the prime driver, it doesn't matter what you do, or how good it is, it won't last. (Participant 2)

In some situations, the ministers found little appetite among lay leaders to even consider future vision and mission opportunities.

> Most of the circuit wants to be left alone, even possibly to die, but to be left alone. And that's not who I am as their leader, I'm pushing them constantly to have vision to grow as disciples, to grow in mission, and to see the opportunities. (Participant 1)

Nonetheless it is a responsibility of the minister to help congregations discern vision. Participant 14 categorically states:

> I think there's a particular responsibility on the minister to make sure that there is a vision. We're responsible for making sure that the people of God are seeking and discerning God's vision. So that will require feeding ideas in, it will require saying we need to gather to pray... it will require all of those ideas, but we're responsible for making sure that we are discerning and walking in a vision.

Similarly, participant 5 discusses their approach to enabling members of the church council to discern vision.

> The first thing I want to do when I get into a room with those leaders is genuinely find out what they think and where they want to go. To draw out their gifts, their yearnings. I'll create a framework for that. I'll ask certain questions or outline the boundaries... but then within that I really want to know, genuinely want to know what they think and allow them to lead. I'm prepared that if something comes in, a real outlier, or I think is way off where God is leading, I will sit with it.

Clearly, the data shows that the ministers recognise the importance of their role in enabling congregations to discern vision and mission strategy. It also shows that they need to avoid the temptation to bring their own vision and ideas.

> I remember when I was about to go out on probation. I said to my friend 'I'm waiting here, and God has given me no vision for the circuit at all, you know, what am I going to do?' My friend said, 'it's not about God giving you the vision... it's about God giving you the energy to meet the vision that's already happening there.' That was a paradigm shift for me. That's what I've said to my current church councils, guys, God has a vision here. I don't bring it. (Participant 11)

### *(iii) Enabling Mission*

The purpose of shared vision is ultimately mission which is the third sub-theme of the practice of servant leadership. Seventeen of the eighteen participants discussed their commitment to mission beyond the church which shows that the ministers see the church as having a crucial role in making wider society more equitable for all. Such vision and generates a creative tension for the minister as Participant 1 describes:

> I think too often, we've hidden our light, and we've focused too internally. Somebody talks about...if your church closed today, would your community notice? I always hold that in front of me because we don't exist solely for the people inside our walls. I know some would say you solely exist for the people outside; I don't think that either. I think it's about both. I think our role is for the people inside our walls to be equipped and encouraged to go out and to walk that walk every day, to be doers of the word and not hearers only. So, it is about and discipling them, and enabling them, equipping them to be followers of Jesus and be missionaries in their workplaces, in their homes, and in their neighborhoods.

The participants regard mission in the wider community as a defining characteristic of the church. Participant 2 stated, 'I think that a congregation must be engaged in their wider community. If they don't have connecting points, then the purpose in being church is at best seriously hindered. And if I was being provocative, I would say, we're not actually being church.' Participant 7 argues that the function of the church is essentially an evangelistic one:

> The role of the church is to help to bring the kingdom of God into the local context, into every area, schools and health services and businesses and neighbourly relationships. You're trying to lead people to Christ who don't know Christ, trying to bring the love of God and compassion and social justice into situations.

Participant 3 contends that the church ought to be a place of welcome and hospitality to the local community.

> I think the church should feel like a safe place for a community and should feel like an accessible home where people feel welcome, where people feel comfortable. It's not just this intrusive building in the middle of all the others in the housing estate it but it's a place that they call their own and that the people there are people that they relate to and identify with and feel welcomed and loved by.

Participant 5 used the example of Jesus as the way of describing how the church should relate to the wider community today 'Washing the disciples' feet... the church is a servant to the world.' Similarly, participant 4 makes the critical comment that the wider mission of the church is about serving the community, not about attempting to return the church to a position of dominance in wider society:

> I'd put it in the servant role… if you look at particularly Irish history, it's all about dominance, control, arrogance, and conservatism. So, it is how do we serve the wider community in ways that are relevant to us, that we're capable of doing, but that make a difference that isn't our agenda.

Participant 8 comments on the role of Methodism in Irish society, pointing out how the size of the Methodist church has enabled it to influence wider society in a particular way:

> The church is part of the wider community. But it's only part and it cannot dictate. Maybe this is part of why Methodism gets a better steer than some in that we have never been the ultimate power brokers in most of society. We are never the dominant force at the top table and perhaps our engagement with wider society is a wee bit more humble than some. I believe that engagement with the wider community needs to be within that vision of servant leadership that we can cast a vision for the wider community of a, to use Martin Luther King's phrase, as the beloved community.

The data clearly illustrates the views of the participants that the practice of servant leadership involves serving people, nurturing vision enabling mission. None of this is done with any sense of self-righteousness or arrogance but with humility and vulnerability. As participant 18 states:

> I can't say that I have arrived or peaked in leadership. I'm constantly surprised by new learning experiences in leadership. And truth being told, I think that, I hope I'm still growing, I'm still learning and still developing, and adapting my leadership.

## Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed the findings drawn from the semi-structured interviews. The key themes identified in the data have been presented using quotations that have given a voice to the participants themselves.

As a cohort the participants represent the body of current Irish Methodist ministers who are grappling with the challenges of exercising ministry and church leadership in contemporary Ireland. The data illustrates the participants' personal journeys and underlying motivations in ministry and leadership. The participants care deeply about their ministry and the people to and with whom they minister. The participants' inner character and spirituality are key factors in the exercise of their leadership. The participants are pre-disposed to serving others and reflect the general characteristics of servant leadership. Such service is not simply inward-focused, however, as the participants articulated a more expansive positive vision for the wider community and the role of the church in its service. The tension which ministers live with and that requires key leadership skills, is a denominational mindset orientated towards mission and traditional local congregations struggling to survive in the changing context. Whereas the practice of servant leadership is a long-term endeavour, requiring perseverance, patience, and humility on the part of the leader. As participant 18 comments:

> Anyone can be a servant for a day. Anyone in the church can say, I'm going to take a week and be a servant in the youth programme for a week. Anyone can do that. Servant leadership is complex because it has to be sustainable. And if anyone knows anything about servant leadership over a period of 20 or 30 years, you will know that it costs, and you will know that servant leadership is somewhat exhausting.

Chapter Six will offer a synthesis of the findings of the survey presented in this chapter in conjunction with the findings of the other chapters that focused on the themes of history, ministry, and servant leadership.

# Chapter 6

# The Future of Methodism in Ireland: A Discussion of Servant Leadership as a Paradigm for Ministry and Mission

## Introduction

This chapter examines the findings of the thesis to initiate a public discussion with Irish Methodism, as part of a wider response to the entire project, as illustrated in the title: 'Irish Methodism and Servant Leadership – a Vision of Ministry for the Twenty-first Century.' The emphasis will be on the relationship between the research which focused on history, ministry, and servant leadership on one hand, and, on the other, the findings of the empirical study outlined in Chapter 5. The following thematic headings emerge from the thesis as essential elements to include in this discussion.

(I) Wesley's call to spiritual service, a living reality;

(II) The dialectic between ministry and leadership theory;

(III) People over programmes, a vision for human flourishing;

(IV) The multiplication of servant leadership in the Irish Methodist Church.

Each of these themes will now be discussed in turn.

### (I) Wesley's Call to Spiritual Service, a Living Reality

A significant historical characteristic of Methodist ministry is a deep-seated sense of call. Evidence illustrating the importance of call is presented in chapter 3, 'Methodist Ministry and Leadership in Ireland: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives from Wesley to the Present' and chapter 4, 'Servant Leadership: A Paradigm for Irish Methodism in the twenty-first century.' Wesley's own motivation was shown in his indefatigable passion which stemmed from a deep spirituality and underlying motivation to serve God. Wesley regarded such a call as essential for his colleague preachers if they were to flourish.

The findings presented in chapter 5, 'Servant Leadership in Action: Irish Methodist Ministers (2020-2021)', demonstrate that a spirited sense of call to serve remains a vital feature of the experience of ministers of the Methodist Church in Ireland. Furthermore, the minsters who participated in the research recognise that the process of nurturing their personal spirituality is essential in sustaining their sense of call to ministry and leadership. The person of Jesus is therefore both inspiration and role model to those engaged in ordained ministry. The fundamental motivation to serve others arises from the minister's obedience to God's call and the example of the sacrifice and service of Jesus. This corresponds with Robin Greenleaf's foundational argument that the servant-leader is first a servant.[1]

Responding to the call of God to serve is by no means a straightforward endeavour especially given the significant challenges facing the contemporary church, as discussed in chapter 3. These challenges include secularisation, increasing age demographics, and declining numerical strength. The ministers interviewed for this research recognise that they face a church culture that can be predominantly focused on the maintenance and internal well-being of congregations rather than on the wider mission to the world as envisaged by Wesley.[2] Such challenges have the potential to be overwhelming and necessitate a spiritual vigour and commitment to maintain effectiveness.

Wesley's enigmatic sense of call took him to people beyond the fringes of church life, particularly in England. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, 'The Origins of Methodism in Ireland: 'Complexity and Variety'', Methodism in Ireland similarly developed on the fringes of and within Church of Ireland (Anglican) parishes but also attracted people from other strata of society, including small numbers of Presbyterians and the Palatines in Limerick.[3] The Methodist movement in Ireland grew modestly until the mid-nineteenth century, but, despite

[1] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 27.
[2] For a summary illustration of the challenge facing churches in the British Isles, see Stephen Croft, *Transforming Communities* (London: DLT, 2002), pp. 25-26.
[3] Cooney, pp. 38-45.

efforts such as those who preached in Irish, it failed to draw significant support from the majority Catholic population and has steadily declined in number since then.[4]

The vital question for today is what kind of ministry and leadership does Irish Methodism need if it is to arrest is decline in numbers, and endure in any form in the future? It is difficult, however, to directly compare Wesley's call to his colleague preachers in the eighteenth century with the experiences of today's Irish Methodist ministers as the context is entirely different. Those sensing a call to Irish Methodist Ministry certainly articulate a pastoral call to an already established denominational church and concomitantly a mission beyond the church. The findings of chapter 5 show the tension facing ministers in meeting the expectations of established congregations in terms of pastoral care, traditional worship, and general church activities. Nonetheless there are principles which can be drawn from Wesley's approach that resonate with both Greenleaf's typology of servant leadership and the task facing ministers in the Irish Methodist church today.

Applying Wesley's call to service to today's context is perhaps best understood as not simply relevant to individual church ministers and leaders but to all members of local church congregations. In this context, the Methodist minister exercises spiritual service and leadership enabling members of congregations to grow in terms of their personal spiritually and to foster servant leadership within the church community.[5] Central to the task is equipping and releasing congregations to move out of their church buildings, and to engage with, and minister to, their wider communities with humility and sacrifice. Though it may not always be understood or received in this way, this is servant leadership in operation.

[4] Hempton, *Empire of the Spirit*, p. 214.

[5] Spirituality as a significant feature of Servant Leadership is explored in chapter 4 of this thesis. 'Spiritual Leadership' has been identified as a distinctive leadership theory by academics such as Louis W. Fry, 'Toward a theory of spiritual leadership', *Leadership Quarterly*, 14 (2003), 693-727. Minghui Wang and others, 'The Effect of Spiritual Leadership on Employee Effectiveness: An Intrinsic Motivation Perspective', *Frontiers in Pyschology*, 9 (2019) 1-11 (p. 2). They state, '[c]onceptually, spiritual leadership comprises three principal components, vision, hope / faith, and altruistic love.' The comparisons between spiritual leadership and servant leadership are clear in regard to these features.

Such a model of ordained ministry requires not only the development of leadership skills, but also character formation, and the enhancement of the spiritual and emotional traits of the ordained minister. As argued in chapter 4, Wesley placed a significant emphasis on the importance of his preacher's paying attention to their personal holiness, to use his spiritual language. This emphasis on spirituality resonates with Greenleaf's argument concerning awareness and self-awareness, and with the findings of the empirical research which shows the importance of spirituality to the participants. The participants recognised that they must maintain the discipline of periodic withdrawal from the intensity of activity to reflect, to recharge, and to recall the broader meaning of their calling and circumstances. Without such discipline, the servant leader runs the risk of losing perspective, suffering burn out, and ultimately an inability to lead effectively.

In considering the challenges of leadership for the contemporary Irish Methodist Ministry, a profound virtuous love for people is a key necessity in relation to the minister's sense of call and spirituality. Further as shown in Chapter 4 virtuous love is a regarded as an antecedent for servant leadership. This is illustrated in data produced through the empirical research. As Kathleen Patterson states:

> Servant-leaders lead with love, are motivated by love, and serve their followers with love. This love is a force, a force so intense that it changes lives – the lives of the followers, the life of the organisation, and even the life of the leader.[6]

Undoubtedly loving people and leading them at the same time is extremely demanding for those in ministry. The people with whom ministers engage are initially those who are already members of their congregations. These members have their own worries, concerns, and pastoral expectations of their minsters that are not always fully aligned with the wider mission of the church. The tension that this situation creates will be investigated in the next section of this chapter.

[6] Patterson, 'Servant Leadership and love', p. 72.

### (II) The Dialectic between Ministry and Leadership theory

The findings presented in chapter 5 illustrate that those who enter the Methodist ministry do so with a passion to serve God, to share the gospel, and to love people pastorally. At the same time the participants readily acknowledged that their role requires them to grapple with the concept of leadership. A critique to the application of leadership theory to Christian ministry, including that of servant leadership, is that aspiring to leadership may be problematic for the person of faith as such an aspiration runs counter to the values and character of a Christian. As Yung states, 'Genuine Christian leadership can never be attained by going after it for its own sake; it has to flow out of a life of love and servanthood for our neighbour.'[7] As those interviewed in the empirical element of this research indicated, they may not have entered ordained ministry seeking to be leaders, but their function within the life of the local church and the denomination requires them to exercise leadership. In addition, among the many expectations that congregations have of ministers, leadership is a key issue.

The second part of Chapter 4 explored the application of leadership theory to Christian ministry and the differing approaches that scholars adopt. Without repeating that discussion here, it is important to reaffirm the principle that an element of healthy scepticism concerning the place of leadership in the church is useful, but wholesale rejection of the concept of leadership is unhelpful. The kind of leadership exercised therefore becomes the crucial matter. The findings of the empirical research showed that the vast majority of those interviewed discussed the need for leadership to be collaborative in nature. The ordained status of ministers should not result in a top-down hierarchy of leadership where the ordained minister is perceived to be above the congregation in some form. Rather the ordained minister should endeavour to work with lay leaders and church members in pursuing a shared vision for the local church.

[7] Hwa Yung, *Leadership or Servanthood* (Langham: Carlisle, 2021), p. 136.

Concomitantly the empirical research findings also illustrate that for some members of local church communities a shared collaborative approach to leadership may lead to frustration. This is especially true for those more used to considering leadership from a business or economic perspective who would rather see stronger or more authoritative leadership. This frustration is felt not just by lay leaders, several of the ordained ministers interviewed also pointed to significant difficulties that a collaborative approach can create for the mission of the church today as illustrated in chapter 5.

The significant degree of change that is necessary for congregations to engage with requires careful management. Even the perception that such change is in some way being imposed on local congregations can cause immense difficulty. Mismanagement of change causes sustained damage to relationships and long-term conflict in church communities. The challenge facing local churches in relation to mission requires creative thinking, discernment, and the type of problem solving that emerges from collaboration, as opposed to an individual's good idea or vision.

A further aspect of the complex relationship between leadership and ministry relates to denominational expectations. As shown in the empirical research, the wider denominational leadership actively encourages local churches to be more outward-orientated, to explore and to engage in contemporary mission. In certain contexts, this can place ordained ministers in an invidious position when serving in local churches where it is difficult to motivate members to engage in mission. The ordained find themselves caught between conflicting sets of expectations from denomination and the local church. The theory of this situation is illustrated in depth in chapter 3 of this thesis and the reality is expressed by the participants in the empirical research presented in chapter 5. Denominational leadership is correct to promote and resource contemporary mission. Without a serious re-invigoration of mission, local churches

in the context of post-Christendom will continue to decline and close. What then is the function of the ordained in this setting?

One option for the ordained minister in the post-Christian context would be to exercise a palliative function, literally caring for dying congregations. In this scenario the ordained minister is at the same time overseeing the demise of their own vocation. As stated in chapter 3, Guder argues that the historical and inherited forms of pastoral leadership and ministry are themselves evolving.[8] Rather than exercising a palliative ministry, the ordained of today are called to lead and minster with and to their congregations, helping them to grapple with emerging models of ministry and mission. Such leadership and ministry necessitates a framework of leadership analogous to servant leadership involving working collaboratively with people, listening deeply, and understanding people's perspectives, as well as helping communities to discern vision. The ultimate intention of the ministry and leadership activity of the ordained must be to develop other people as servant leaders. In the setting of the church, the tools at the disposal of the ordained minister are ironically the ones they have already been trained for, that of Word and Sacrament, but deployed in way that enables and equips congregations to live out their faith in a changed world.

The ordained minister is to set an example in their personal lives and spirituality and to serve those around them. This is the form of counter cultural servant leadership that is required in the church:

> Leadership is the result of practicing genuine servanthood wherever we are and whatever position we are called to by Christ. By living and ministering as servants, our loving and humble service will impact those around us as great leadership.[9]

At the core of this form of leadership is a deep-seated concern for people and a desire on the part of the leader to see human beings' flourish. This is the third theme that will now be explored.

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[8] Guder, pp. 149-150.
[9] Yung, p. 14.

### (III) People over Programmes, a Vision for Human Flourishing

Robert Greenleaf argued the key difference between his framework for servant leadership and other leadership theories centred on 'the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served.'[10] To a person, the participants in the empirical research presented in this thesis argued that leadership is predominantly concerned with working for and with people. Furthermore, the participants noted that the leadership skills required for effective ministry focused on the wisdom to listen well, understand people and contexts, build trust, and to work collaboratively. These leadership skills mirror those required to exercise effective pastoral ministry, in other words, there is a deep resonance between the pastoral ministry role and the outworking of servant leadership.

As stated in part one of this chapter, a virtuous love for people and a passion to see them flourish, is at the core of both servant leadership and the exercise of Christian ministry. Nigel Wright argues that effective leadership in the church is centred on building relationships of trust:

> Showing oneself to be a caring pastor with clear and honourable motives who is a transparent disciple of Christ and has a self-sacrificing love for the church, it is possible to create the conditions in which constructive change can come about.[11]

The findings outlined in chapter 5 illustrate the participants' commitment to building relationships within the life of local congregations. Love for people, as well as love for God, was seen as crucial in the exercise of ministry. There is no escaping the reality however of the interviewees experience of significant pressure and expectation particularly in relation to delivery of pastoral care and relationship building. This is illustrated in both the empirical research and was also explored in chapter 3. Increasing age demographics and numerical decline are among the factors that feed pastoral expectations. Significant effort is required to

[10] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 27.
[11] Nigel G. Wright, *How to be a Church Minister* (BRF: Abingdon, 2018), p. 120.

provide a form of pastoral care that encourages people to grow and develop rather than the offering of a passive model of personal support and counsel.

A related challenge to the issue of relationship building outlined by the participants concerned dealing with conflict and mistrust. Relationships built on trust are crucial when working through difficult issues and managing significant change in the life of the church community. Ordained leaders cannot abdicate responsibility when it comes to building relationships and working through conflict in a healthy manner. Forming trust filled relationships and working through inevitable conflict requires a high level of emotional intelligence on the part of the leader. It also requires the leader to make conscious choices in terms of forgiveness and grace when dealing with difficult circumstances and people. This is a challenging endeavour, as Shann Ray Ferch shows.

> The right journeys are worth all the toil. Servant leadership is just such a journey – one that, at the outset, is strewn with daunting obstacles, steps swings of overdone ego or lack of self-confidence, and a stubbornly embedded sense of anger and blame for self of others. But when we approach the life of servant leadership with awe and willingness, a remarkable pathway opens itself before us.[12]

Building and maintaining positive pastoral relationships, especially through one-to-one mentoring work was discussed in detail by 11 of the 18 interview participants. Such work was seen by participants as essential in enabling members of their congregation to discover and use their gifts and skills to their full potential. This was an aspect of ministry that participants felt was lost during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. A key observation from the empirical research findings was the participants passion for enabling others to engage in Christian mission. To not merely help people serve within the church, but to help them see their potential to serve in the wider community. How this works in contexts where the age demographic of a

[12] Shann Ray Ferch, 'Consciousness, Forgiveness and Gratitude', in *Servant Leadership: Developments in Theory and Research*, ed. by Dirk van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 77-89 (p. 78).

congregation is particularly high, and the traditional pastoral demand intense, remains to be seen.

A further aspect of the findings of the empirical research was the emphasis on involving a wider variety of people in the mission of the church. It may be a temptation for leaders to look to those already deeply involved in the life of the church when pursuing new initiatives. Participant responses, however, showed an openness to trying to listen to and engage people not normally included or deeply involved in the life and witness of the church. Such an approach was viewed by participants as inherently Methodist, building on the example of John Wesley as one who was not afraid to support and encourage participation in mission as a vital feature of Christian discipleship and service.

Given the challenging context in which local churches find themselves today it is obvious that the ordained minister has a vital role in the discernment and implementation of strategic vision. The findings presented in chapter 5 show that the participants understood their role in this regard even though some faced a degree of apathy concerning vision and mission from their lay leaders and congregations. This is by no means a straightforward position to be in and ultimately requires ministers, whether they like it or not, to exercise leadership to assist congregations in considering future possibilities. In this setting, the relationship between leadership style and ordained ministry is crucial once again. The interview findings showed a commitment on the part of the ministers to work collaboratively with leaders and congregations to discern direction, vision, and mission. Seventeen of the eighteen participants in the interviews expressed the view that a shared or collaborative approach to vision for the mission of the local church was vital. In deploying this collaborative approach, the minister avoids the temptation of using his / her authority as an ordained person to attempt to force congregations in a particular direction and in so doing disenfranchise rather than empower lay leadership. A collaborative approach to vision and mission is especially important given the itinerant nature

of Irish Methodist ministry. If local church vision is overly dependent on a particular minister, significance challenges arise when that minister moves to a new appointment.

There is a clear sense from the data findings that the interview participants reflect the values of inclusivity, collaboration, and a desire to involve and empower people. This was a distinct feature of early Methodism and clearly resonates with Greenleaf's formulation of servant leadership. In the contemporary setting these values are sometimes thwarted by perceptions relating to the role of the ordained minister in the local church, the challenge of declining congregational numbers, and wider changes in society and culture. Ordained ministers who share the values of inclusivity and collaboration require a particular determination and drive that must be characterised by a love for people and a motivation to serve. The final section of this chapter will focus specifically on the servant leadership of today's Irish Methodist Ministers and the need to multiply servant leadership across the church and beyond.

## (IV) The Multiplication of Servant Leadership in the Irish Methodist Church

The underlying motivation of the cohort of ordained ministers interviewed in this research can be summed up in the description participant 15 gave of servant leadership:

> I'd expect a servant leader to (show) the people that they are working with that they love them, above all else, and if they know that they love them then it's much easier to do some of the hard stuff. I think that you should never be afraid to tell a congregation 'Guys, I love you, warts and all and I hope at some point, you may get to love me and that together then get to move forward.' Unconditional love is right at the heart of it.

The participants, almost to a person, described their love for God and love for people as the primary motivating factor for their journey into ordained ministry. They recognised that this call often requires significant sacrifice and personal and that leadership in the setting of the local church required then as ordained ministers to be characterised by humility and vulnerability.

In addition to the motivation to love, a synopsis of the participants understanding of servant leadership includes the discipline of listening well to others, setting an example of service, encouraging and challenging others to follow the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, and the ability to articulate and inspire others to see a wider vision that leads to broader societal transformation. Essential to this framework of servant leadership must be a commitment to the multiplication and development of servant leaders across the whole church.

That the data drawn from the interviews reveals a sophisticated understanding of servant leadership is one thing, the test comes in relation to the extent to which these values or characteristics of servant leadership are lived out. An individual might claim to be a servant leader and that they are acting like a servant leader but still operate like a tyrant.

In the context of authoring this thesis, the researcher as an organisational insider can give some perspective on this matter drawn from his own experience. Observationally, those exercising ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland are endeavouring to serve God and their congregations in what are significantly challenging times for the church. As presented in chapter 5, the ordained ministers are acutely aware of the challenges facing the church as they attempt to pastor their congregations and lead them in mission to their surrounding communities.

The findings of the research presented in chapter 5 support the authors observation that those ordained ministers interviewed show servant leadership characteristics. They are people orientated, relational leaders, who seek no personal gain, but who sense they have been called by God to spiritual service. The words and actions of Jesus Christ are their example. They are not servile to the whims of individuals within their congregations, but they are prepared to do what is required to serve other with humility and vulnerability. The key challenge, however, for today's Irish Methodist ministers is whether they have the capacity to develop others,

especially members of their congregations to be servant leaders too. For servant leadership to be effective in bringing about transformation it must be exercised by the many, not the few.

In considering the findings presented here, what is missing is a contemporary denominational leadership framework which clarifies the role of the ordained and a strategy for the development of lay and ordained leaders that mirror the framework. One common critique of servant leadership is that negating leadership authority neutralises the passion and drive to move an organisation forward. Coutts makes such an argument, suggesting that in a church setting the danger of servant leadership is that it creates a scenario in which the servant leader has little ability to do anything other than 'the bidding of a select minority.'[13] A way of mitigating against a situation where servant leadership is thwarted in its intention to bring about change and transformation is ensuring that there is not merely one servant leader. For Greenleaf the key test of his thinking focused on whether the individuals being served developed as people. 'Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servant?'[14] The multiplication of servant leaders must be part of any denominational framework and strategy for leadership. Such a strategy would provide clarity to congregations and ordained ministers. Sustainable church communities require servant leaders who focus not on their own needs, but on enabling others to flourish in order that the church's mission might be fulfilled.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to integrate the findings of the entire thesis to address the primary research topic. The key findings demonstrate that servant leadership does offer a paradigm for Irish Methodist ministry today, however, such servant leadership cannot be exercised simply by individual ordained ministers. Servant leadership must become prevalent across the denomination among the ordained and the laity. Servant leadership is a shared spiritual

[13] Coutts, p. 5.
[14] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 27.

endeavour where people within the church community serve one another so that they may in turn serve the wider community beyond the church. The final chapter will offer a series of conclusions to this thesis, exploring its contribution to academic debate, outlining areas of potential further research, and offering a vision for the future development of the ministry and mission of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

# General Conclusions

This thesis, as an interdisciplinary research project, is entitled 'Irish Methodism and Servant Leadership – a Vision of Ministry for the Twenty-first Century.' These concluding remarks will first, comment on the research context. Second, discuss the key insights and the wider contribution of the thesis to demonstrate its application and practical relevance for the Methodist Church in Ireland. Third, it will acknowledge challenges to the thesis findings and consider opportunities for further research.

**Research Context**

Through this important research for the future of Irish Methodism, the author has explored the significant body of research relating to the history of Methodism in Britain, Ireland, and America attempting to discover distinctive features of the origins of Methodism in Ireland. In the context of Ireland, the most significant previous historical research has focused on Methodism in terms of socio-economic, demographic, and political themes. As far as it can be established there has not previously been a significant piece of research surveying the history and development of ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland. Furthermore, this is the first time an established leadership theory has been applied to the operation of ordained ministry in Irish Methodism and an empirical study carried out to explore the leadership insights and perspectives of ordained ministers. The author hopes, therefore, that this thesis will make a significant new contribution to the body of academic research on Irish Methodism and provide a framework for ministry and leadership that will ultimately be of benefit to the mission of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

As the research progressed, the author developed a clearer understanding of his own research philosophy. This was an enlightening experience. In Chapter one, 'Researching Methodist Ministry in the Twenty-First century', the author stated that he was adopting a

philosophical position close to that of *Critical Realism*. The author is optimistic that the research presented in the thesis has produced data that is real and useful in terms of the wider debate concerning the theory and practice of ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland. The author does not claim perfection, nor to have identified all the answers in relation to the challenges facing the practice of ordained ministry in the Methodist Church today. The author is, nonetheless, confident that this research will make a significant contribution to academic debate and to the practice of ministry.

**Key Insights and Wider Contribution**

The historiographical findings of the thesis provide crucial insights into the complex story origins of Methodism in Ireland. Wesley sensed a divine call to Ireland despite the scepticism of engaging in such a mission among some of his close colleagues in the early Methodist movement. By the end of Wesley's life Methodism had become an established denominational entity in Ireland. The fledgling Irish Methodist church, with its symbiotic relationship with English Methodism, had developed a significant structure of societies and circuits and impacting particular groups within Irish Society.

The major challenge for Methodism in Ireland however was its origins from within Anglicanism. This association undoubtedly contributed to the failure of Methodism to see significant growth among the majority Catholic population with whom there was a clear distinction in terms of religious, political, economic, and social identity. Even at its zenith in the growth period in the nineteenth century, Methodism in Ireland drew new membership mainly from lapsed or dissatisfied Anglicans and Presbyterians.

The engagement with primary sources from the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland archive in Belfast trace the development of the model ordained ministry in Irish Methodism. The evolutionary journey focused initially on the model of an itinerant preacher seeking lost

souls, or those disillusioned by their churches and ministers, to that of pastors of established local church congregations. Methodism in Ireland regularised the role of the itinerant preachers in a similar fashion to that of ordained Anglicans and Presbyterians. In the contemporary setting this is the model that local congregations have come to expect.

Despite the organisational evolution of Irish Methodism from movement to institution and the domestication of Methodist ministry from radical preacher to reliable pastor, Irish Methodism has retained a missional yearning, at least at a denominational level. This yearning retains a Wesleyan emphasis on the energising, equipping, and releasing of the whole church to serve in the mission of God in the world today.

The contemporary challenges faced by the Methodist church and other established denominations in Ireland cannot be avoided by the institutional church. Christian ministry and mission in an emerging post-Christian culture faces a crisis as a result of declining numbers, increasing age demographic, and decreasing numbers of people sensing a call into forms of ordained ministry. At the same time the Methodist church, with its missional DNA, has an opportunity to rediscover its calling to serve local communities and engage with people beyond the fringes of the church. Leveraging this opportunity requires a paradigm shift in relation to the leadership function of those called to exercise ordained ministry in the church today.

The paradigm of servant leadership offers a vision for ordained ministry in the Methodist church in Ireland in the twenty-first century. Although Greenleaf's theory of servant leadership is somewhat idealistic and elusive, the review of subsequent research and servant leadership literature provides a framework for understanding the dialectic relationship between leadership and ministry for ordained ministers. In particular, the abstract nature of Greenleaf's framing of leadership fits with the often-undefined role of the ordained.

The findings of the qualitative interviews show the actualisation of leadership that is existent within the body of ordained ministers already despite the complexity of context both

within and beyond the local church. The data illustrates the participants deep sense of spiritual calling, underlying motivations to serve, and commitment to enabling others to flourish and engage in mission. The findings show the ministers possess an understanding and commitment to servant leadership as a potential framework for ordained ministry. It is evident to the author that what is missing is a clear framework for understanding the leadership role of the ordained and the training and development work required to enhance the servant leadership of both the lay and ordained across the denomination.

The common threads of the thesis are drawn into a dialogue around four themes, illustrated in the figure below. The author argues that the diagram offers a simple framework for understanding and developing ministry and leadership in the Methodist church in Ireland today.

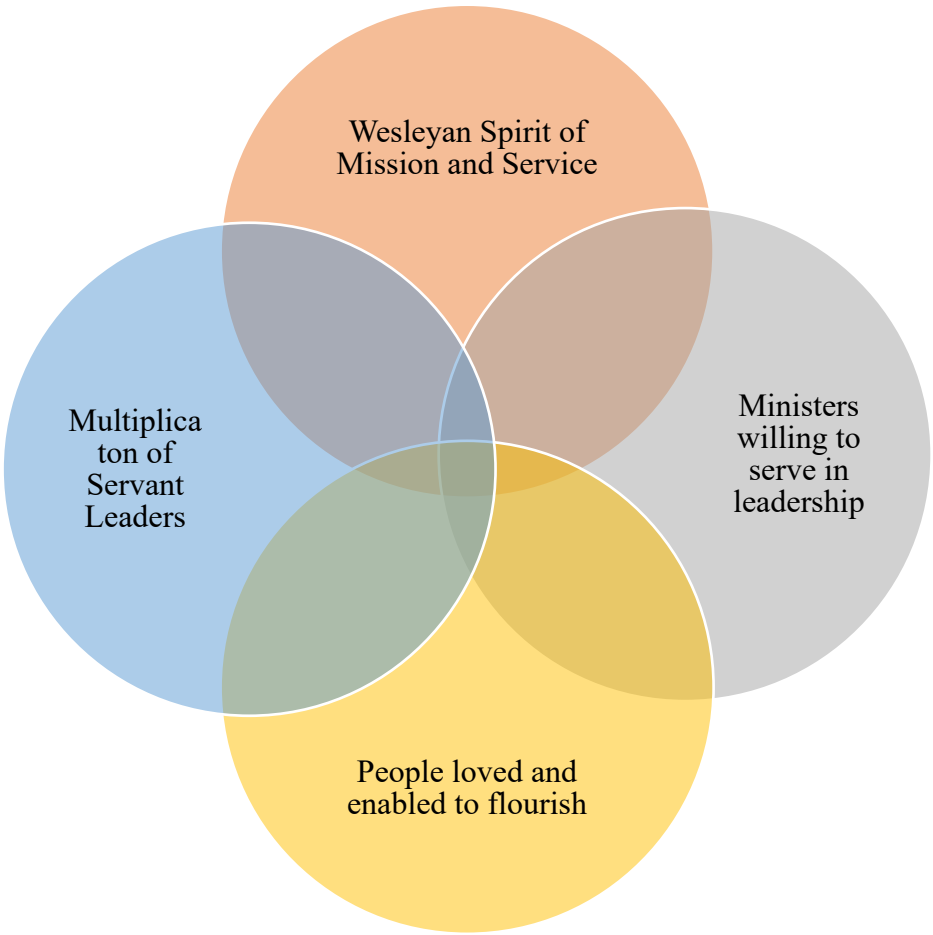


Figure 7.1 – Servant Leadership in Irish Methodism.

First, the Wesleyan spirit of mission and service remains a distinctive feature of Irish Methodism today despite the challenges of the church being an established institutional denomination. Irish Methodist ministers continue to possess a deep sense of spiritual call to share the good news of the gospel that is characterised by a love for people and a commitment to mission and service.

Second, a dialectic relationship between ministry and leadership exists both at a theoretical level and in practice. The broader literature quoted in this thesis emphasises the challenge of applying leadership theory to ordained ministry and in particular the potential for abuse of power on the part of those appointed to exercise leadership. Questions of character and motive are paramount when it comes leading effectively in the local church. The data gleaned from the interviews show that those serving as ordained ministers today live with varied expectations on the part of congregations and the denomination. The ministers also recognise the complex nature of the mission of the church today and the need to draw congregations into significant change processes. Leadership style is key at this point and ministers clearly require wisdom and a commitment to collaboration and teamwork.

Third, this research has identified the particular resonance between servant leadership theory and the practice of ordained ministry. The leader's motivation to serve, equip and develop others as a spiritual endeavour is key for those called to lead church communities. Virtuous love for people is central to a servant leaders' praxis, it begins with motivation and heart, but requires the servant leader to pay attention to people, to listen well and to encourage people to grow and develop.

Fourth, servant leadership, as proposed by Robin Greenleaf, is ultimately about the multiplication of servant leaders. When applied to the church this must mean ordained and lay leaders collaborating to serve others and to bring transformation to the community around them

through the development of more servant leaders. This must undoubtedly become a key feature of the church of the present and future.

**Challenges and Opportunities**

This thesis has sought to address themes related to servant leadership, historical and contemporary ordained ministry, and mission. A key aspect of the research includes the empirical study of the views of ordained ministers. The further application to Irish Methodism of the framework for servant leadership presented and a study of its impact is an obvious first area of potential future research. An example of such further study could include an exploration of gender. It is the view of the author that Servant Leadership offers a gender-integrative frame for leadership but he would be interested in researching the views of ministers and congregation in relation to leadership style and gender.

Although some reference is made to other leadership theories the author chose to limit his focus to Servant Leadership due to the tone of Greenleaf's writing and the obvious points of corelation with ordained ministry. Deeper exploration of other leadership theories and their potential connecting points with ordained ministry present a second opportunity for further research.

A third opportunity for further research could involve interviewing lay leaders within the Methodist church in Ireland and comparing the findings with those presented in this thesis in relation to ordained ministers. Points of similarity and difference would provide a rich depository of data that could further enhance the practice of ministry.

## Closing Comment

Robert Greenleaf declared:

> Servant leaders may stand alone, largely without the support of their culture, as a saving remnant of those who care for both persons and institutions, and who are determined to make their caring count – wherever they are involved. This brings them, as individuals, constantly to examine the assumptions they live by. Thus, their leadership by example sustains trust.[15]

The framework for servant leadership in the Methodist Church in Ireland presented in this thesis is not a quick fix to the challenges facing the church. It does, however, provide a resource for the church to use as a means of enhance the ministry, leadership, and mission of the church. The development of servant leaders requires a sustained investment in personal growth. This will undoubtedly take years that many in the church, the author included, feel the church does not have. From the perspective of the author, this is where the issue of spirituality and faith intersect with this thesis. Although the church by necessity possesses organisational features, ultimately it is more than an organisation. It is a body of diverse people with a common faith. Whatever the future of the organisation of the institution of the church, communities will continue to gather around the core beliefs of the Christian faith. These communities will require servant leaders, people who follow the example of Jesus, are motivated to serve others, to love, to listen, to foster trust, and to create opportunities for growth and service to the wider community.

[15] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 342.

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# Appendices

# Appendix A

## Interview Protocol

*Irish Methodism and Servant Leadership – a Vision of Ministry for the Twenty-first Century*

School of Theology, Philosophy and Music
Principal Investigator – John Alderdice
Student no:16212483 Email: john.alderdice2@mail.dcu.ie

Firstly, many thanks for agreeing to take part in this interview, I deeply appreciate it. This document is a guide to the process, and you should read all of it carefully. This includes the 'Plain Language' and 'Personal Data Security' statements below.

The email to which this document is attached contains confirmation of the time for the interview. You will be sent a link to the 'zoom meeting' approx. 5 minutes before the interview due to start. This will be sent from my DCU email address.

For research ethics purposes I need you to give your consent to participate. You should do this using this link:

https://forms.gle/7wPDmAkUWwm6rq5b8

The link brings you to a google form and you can fill in your responses and submit the form. Saved forms will be stored securely on my DCU Google Drive.

The interview will be recorded, store, transcribed and anonymised. I will try my best to keep us to around 60mins.

As this is a 'semi structured' interview I am not sharing exact questions with you, but to aid you here are the areas that I will be asking you about:

- Your experience and understanding of leadership generally.
- Your views on leadership style within the Methodist Church in Ireland.
- Your understanding of servant leadership specifically.
- The relationship between ordained ministry and the practice of leadership.
- We will explore themes of call. motivation, vision and purpose.

Thanks again, I am looking forward to our time together. Please remember to read to the bottom and to fill in the consent form using the google form link above

# Plain Language Statement

*Irish Methodism and Servant Leadership – a Vision of Ministry for the Twenty-first Century*

School of Theology, Philosophy and Music
Principal Investigator – John Alderdice
Student no:16212483 Email: john.alderdice2@mail.dcu.ie

This research project explores the development of ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland. The Methodist Church is a Christian denomination that emerged from the Anglican Church in the eighteenth century under the leadership of John Wesley, among others. Today in Ireland there are around 200 local Methodist churches and 100 ordained ministers serving in those churches.

The self-funded study will involve semi-structured interviews of ordained ministers of the Methodist Church in Ireland. The interviews will focus on their ministry experience, ministry practice and leadership role in the church today. The extent to which servant leadership theory is a useful means of understanding the practice of leadership in a Christian ministry setting will be assessed.

Participants will be asked questions that will enable them to share information regarding their sense of call to ordained ministry and their understanding of the practice of ministry and leadership. They will have a chance to reflect on their understanding of servant leadership and methods for helping the development of leadership and ministry in the future.

The interviews will be conducted online using the DCU Zoom application. Invitations to the zoom meeting will be sent from the principal investigator's DCU email address just prior to the scheduled start time of the interview. The invitation will include the unique meeting ID and the password. The zoom 'waiting room' feature will be used. The meeting host will record the interview using the zoom recording facility and it will be stored on DCU zoom cloud storage. It will then be transcribed by the principal investigator. Transcribed documents will be stored securely on the principal investigator's DCU google documents cloud.

Each participant will be assigned an identity number which will be used instead of participant names on the interview transcriptions to protect the identities of participants for the purposes of the analysis and written report. All files and word documents associated with the research will be encrypted and password protected. Raw data will be deleted and destroyed within five years after the submission of the principal investigator's thesis.

Participants should be aware that information collected in this research can only be kept confidential within the limitations of the law of the land i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting. Those who agree to participate in the research are free to withdraw from the process at any stage.

**If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:**

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail **rec@dcu.ie**

**The DCU Data Protection Officer** is Mr. Martin Ward and he can be contacted as follows:
Email - data.protection@dcu.ie Ph: 7005118 / 7008257

# Personal Data Security Statement

*Irish Methodism and Servant Leadership – a Vision of Ministry for the Twenty-first Century*

School of Theology, Philosophy and Music
Principal Investigator – John Alderdice
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This research will comply with personal data guidelines published by Dublin City University in line with General Data Protection Regulations. (https://www.dcu.ie/ocoo/data-protection.shtml)

Due to the use of zoom, DCU is the data controller, and both Zoom and principal investigator are data processors. The principal investigator is responsible for ensuring that they use personal data in line with the consent given.

This research involves interviewees sharing first-hand experiences and religious and theological beliefs. Therefore, the following procedures will be adopted:

- The consent of interviewees will be sought in terms of participation and retention of data.
- Recordings and transcripts of interviews will be anonymized.
- Any hard copy material will be stored in a locked filling cabinet.
- Soft copy files and audio recordings will be encrypted, and password protected and stored using the DCU google drive application.
- Data will be retained for up to five years following submission of the principal investigator's thesis.
- Data will not be shared outside of the EU.
- At the point of disposal, hard copy material will be shredded, and electronic data will be deleted using secure deletion software

**If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person,**
**please contact:**

*The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail **rec@dcu.ie***

**The DCU Data Protection Officer** is Mr. Martin Ward and he can be contacted as follows:
Email - data.protection@dcu.ie
Ph: 7005118 / 7008257

# Appendix B

## Semi Structured Interview Questions

Gender:
Age:
Years in ministry:
No. of appointments served:
Current location: North / South / East / West / Urban / Suburban / Rural

| | Primary and Follow Ups |
|---|---|
| 1 | Primary – how do you understand the nature of leadership? Can you describe what you think leadership is?<br><br>Follow ups:<br>In your experience… what does good leadership look like?<br>What does bad leadership look like?<br><br>In your opinion what values describe leadership in the Methodist Church in Ireland? What ideas about leadership do you draw from your understanding of the history of the Methodist Church in Ireland? |
| 2 | Primary - What do you understand Servant leadership to be?<br><br>What is different about servant leadership from other leadership theories?<br><br>In your opinion, how might servant leadership assist the development of the church? How might it hinder the development of the church? |
| 3 | Primary – what do you see as the relationship between ordained ministry and leadership?<br><br>Follow ups:<br>How would describe the leadership role of an ordained minister?<br>What is of first / primary importance with regard to your leadership role as an ordained minister? |
| 4 | Primary - What words would you use to describe your leadership style?<br><br>Follow ups:<br>What is one strong point of your leadership?<br>What is one week point of your leadership?<br>How do you think others perceive your leadership style?<br>What kind of leadership do you think the local congregation wants from you? |

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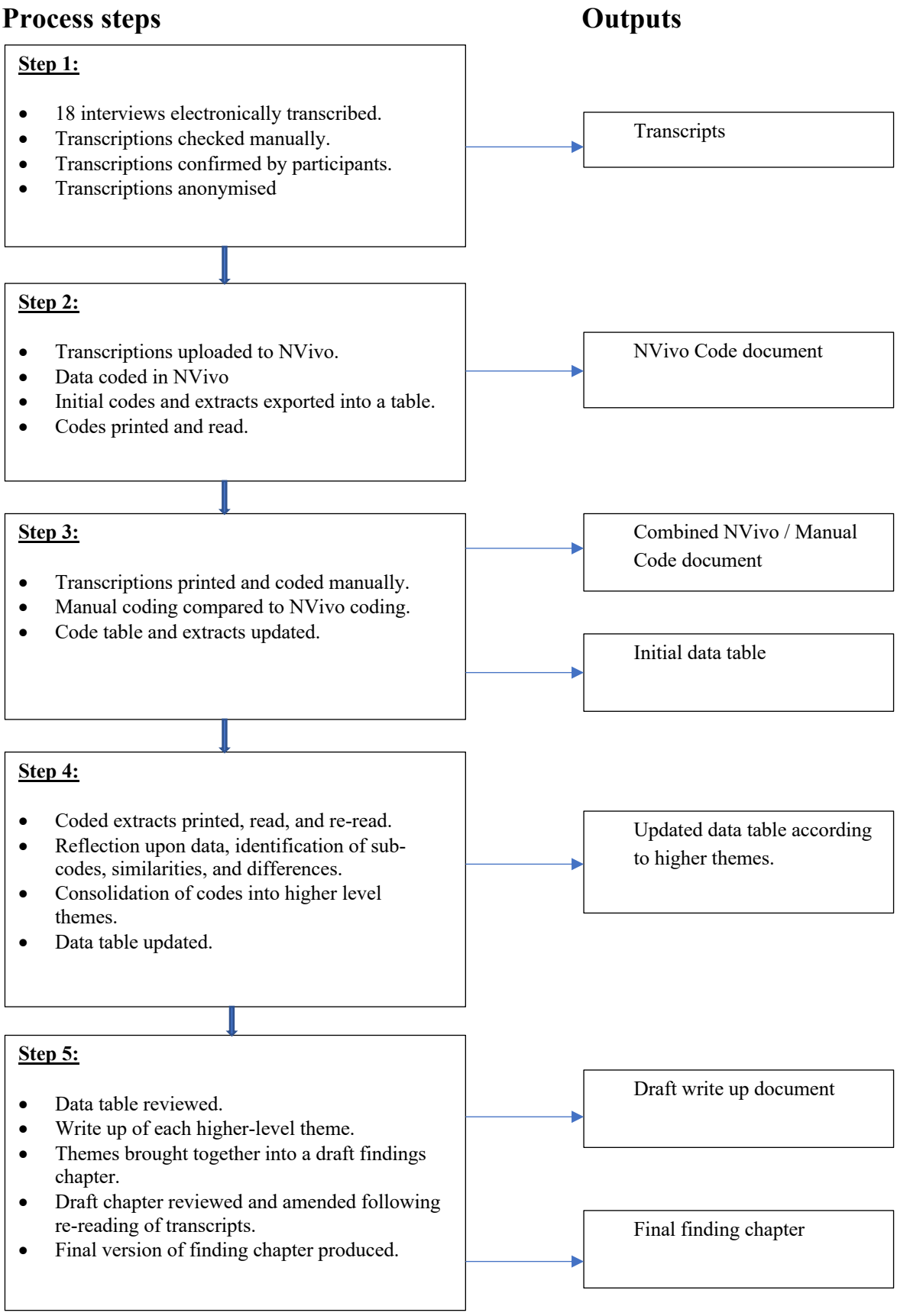
| | Describe for me a critical incident that helps you understand your leadership style in action?<br>How has leadership as an ordained minister been modelled to you? Can you describe the characteristics of someone who modelled this for you? |
| 5 | Primary – What motivated you to become an ordained minister?<br><br>Follow ups:<br>What is the key to keeping you motivated in your sense of call to ministry?<br><br>What helps you keep going in your role? What needs to be nurtured in you to help you keep going?<br><br>What hinders your ability to serve as an ordained minister? |
| 6 | Primary – How do you encourage others to grow and develop as people?<br><br>Follow ups:<br>What stops people from growing and developing?<br>How do you help them to deal with those experiences?<br>What does this teach you about the nature of leadership? |
| 7 | Primary -To what extent are you responsible for 'vision' in the local church?<br><br>Follow ups:<br>How do you facilitate vision in the local church?<br>How do you manage 'change' in the local church?<br>What are the biggest challenges in change management? How do you deal with them? |
| 8 | Primary - What do you believe the role of the church is in relation to the wider community?<br><br>Follow ups:<br>Describe your leadership role in relation to this theme? What do you do?<br>How do you keep alert to this?<br>What benefit is the mission of your church to wider society? |
| 9 | Have you any questions for me? Or anything to add considering our conversation? |

# Appendix C
## Data Analysis Process



# Appendix D
## High level themes and codes

| High level themes | Codes |
|---|---|
| Journey and Calling to Ministry | Call of God<br>Personal Spirituality<br>Standing back / space to reflect<br>Relationship with God<br>Struggles<br>Ministry and Leadership |
| Motivation for Ministry and Leadership | Serving first<br>Serving God<br>Serving people<br>Love for people<br>Methodism<br>John Wesley<br>Sacrifice<br>Managing expectations<br>Leadership style |
| Core Beliefs about Leadership | People orientated<br>Not about personal gain<br>Empowering and enabling<br>Leadership style<br>Collaborative leadership<br>Methodism<br>Managing Expectations<br>Power<br>Listening |
| Practice of Servant Leadership | Example of Jesus Christ<br>Sacrifice / Personal Cost<br>Leader must model<br>Wisdom<br>Serve people<br>Nurture vision<br>Enabling mission<br>Serving the community<br>Welcome and hospitality |

# Appendix E
## Sample Data Sheet

| Theme | Code | Memo | Frequency | Sample quotes (P = participant) |
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| Practice of Servant Leadership | Example of Jesus Christ | | 9 | P5 '…I guess when you say, servant leadership, the, the image associated with that is Jesus washing the disciples feet and everything Jesus teaches around that.'<br><br>P9 '…I suppose, you know, the first thing that comes to mind is Jesus, Jesus being the servant, and therefore, for us to be servant leaders, we are imitating Jesus. It's not the idea from years gone by when people had servants who were subservient. It's not being walked over either. I think there's a strength to being a servant leader. Yeah you're serving people, but ultimately, it's God that you're serving. And I think it was X many years ago that said he was called to serve in a particular church, but God was his master... that kind of language. There's a humility, a humbleness with servant leaders. And for me, it's about listening to people and not pretending that we have all the answers. It also involves vulnerability.'<br><br>P11 '…So Jesus didn't do it all. He called others to join in with him and companionship and not and that was a huge change. You know, last week when I was preparing for that, that's what I put forward when I was preaching yesterday. So that's how I've changed from being the Messiah figure. To be in the person who's 'No, I'm just going to play my part as a servant leader.'<br><br>P15 '…That servant is not all things to all people and try to win the approval of all people... in fact will be quite the opposite. Because to serve the one God will put you into places of conflict and especially in churches actually, where, where power issues are so prevalent at times. So first and foremost a servant of the Lord... I think then Jesus also modeled as a servant being willing to put himself out for other people, |

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| | | | | but not at the expense of, you know, not doing his father's business. So you have the healer, you have the humility, you have that picture of being prepared to do for others, even if the others aren't prepared to do that for you.'<br><br>P17 '…I suppose it is Christ centered... it's putting other people first, but that can be a difficult place. And, you know, it isn't easy in that sense, you know, because it wasn't easy for Christ. I mean it's difficult... it can be hard to take out the ego from all of our styles of leadership, you know, and because we're human, so I'm sorry, in my case, it's aspirational, rather than a reality. And then you got those things like... it's collaborative, it's trying to help people move to a place that is healthy and many other things. I think Christ centered is where I would go back to... the marks of servant leadership, none of those marks should be anything that would be contrary to Christ centered approach...' |
| | Humility | | 7 | P4 '…normally servant leadership, its humble. So it's not focused on the leader. The leader is not the key thing, and, you know, there's good wisdom and having the leader as the catalyst... you know, there's lots of advantages with that. In the servant leadership approach you rarely make yourself the catalyst. It's the community that is the important thing, not you as 'follow me over over the over the hill on on this one.'<br><br>P16 '…I think what servant adds to it is a humble spirit or a humbler spirit than I might otherwise have. I don't do that I have a particularly humble spirit...though I have been working on it for about 40 years. I think I probably am a bit more patient than I would have been years ago. Although sometimes when you get a bit older, maybe you do tolerate fools less, and there probably have been times when I've been a bit dismissive of some stupid idea that somebody has come up with. But I think by and large, and being humble, and being prepared to listen, being prepared to take time, longer than it might otherwise take, to bring people along. And to encourage.. I mean, if people come to me with |

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| | | | | ideas, I'm almost always willing for them to have a go at it I mean, if it's something stupid, okay, if something heretical I would step on it fairly quickly.' |
| | Vulnerability | Relates to not knowing everything | 6 | P18 '…I can't honestly say that I have arrived or peaked in leadership. I'm constantly surprised by a new learning experience in leadership. And truth being told, I think that... I hope I'm still growing, I'm still learning and still developing, and adapting leadership.' |
| | Leader must model | | 11 | P1 '…servant leadership is modeling what I think Jesus is calling us to do. I think it's actually very practical. I am one of the people that after the church concert, I'm lifting the chairs, and in the kitchen, I'm washing the ,dishes... one of the property stewards said to me, that's not your job, you know, their ministers don't lift chairs. I'm like, but I can and you're 70 and you probably shouldn't be.'<br><br>P2 '…If leadership can truly be defined as leadership, how can it ever not be in some form or shape serving the people whom you are seeking to offer leadership to?'<br><br>P3 '…servant leadership is leading by example. And, and getting your hands dirty. So it's not a stand back, point the finger tell everybody else what to do, but actually being part of the team being part of the direction. And for me, servant leadership is important, because it's what actually brings people along with you.'<br><br>P6 '…wouldn't ask anybody to do something they wouldn't do themselves..' |
| | Loving people | | 8 | P5 '…I think for true servant leadership, I think you got to love people, in some sense. You can't., you can't pretend to serve people to get what you want… I think genuine love and care is probably the core difference its not that you can't you can't love people and see that they need some directive leadership for a time.' |

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| | | | | P7 '…The whole thing about servant leadership is that the emphasis is on the people that you're leading the people that are following, rather than on particular tasks, or things that need to be done, or that you're trying to do or whatever goals you might have. So it's very much about focusing on the people. And then in whatever it is you're trying to do you're always trying to help them develop and reach their potential. So I think that's the main, that's the key emphasis about servant leadership. It's the emphasis on the people.'<br><br>P12 '...Bad leadership is people who keep changing the goalposts because they want to be everybody's friend. I think that's just the worst type of leadership.... that they want to be everybody's friend, whether it's in church, or whether it's in business life, you know, you can't be everybody's friend.'<br><br>P15 '...I'd expect a servant leader... to the people that they are working with that they know that you love them, above all else, and if they know that you love them then it's much easier to do some of the hard stuff. I think, you know, and I think... never to be afraid to tell a congregation... 'guys I love you, warts and all and I hope at some point, you may get to love me and that together then get to move forward.' Unconditional Love is right at the heart of it.' |
| | Servant first / servile | SL as disempowering | 6 | P8 '…I think that the whole concept of authentic servant leadership, it, you know, is something that we really, really should explore with some depth, but with a critical depth, because too much of what is sold as servant leadership. You know, the classic installation address of this man, this woman is your servant, but you are not his master. My eye... it's not servant leadership its servile leadership. And, but at the same time, it is it can be appallingly disempowering both to the Minister because it restricts their creative ministry, but also to the congregation where the minister does become not so much a servant as a slave to the whims and wishes of a congregation that the the framework that they |

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| | | | | have the unrealistic frequently framework that they have cast for ministry’<br><br>P12 ‘…it's all wrapped up in servant leadership for me, that that's my only motivation really. And there has to be an element of sacrifice in it... and that's big for me without being a doormat. If I'm a servant leader, well, the greatest servant of all had sacrifice and cost. And that has to come into it. I'm not there to please people all the time.’<br><br>P11 ‘…When I first went into ministry formation training, out on to circuit on placement, and on the probation. My idea of servant leadership was to do exactly what everybody wanted to be there to be available 24 seven, to, you know, really invest myself in everyone. You know, and I suppose, at the end of it, around it, there's this idea of where you really, if you're not there for a certain family, you've let them down.<br>P16 ‘…So the idea of servant... it's about being willing to give my own time and energy. Not to count the cost or I mean, I was always baffled by certain ministers who say, you know, what, they only work a 35 hour week... that's what they're paid for...and that always baffled me, I thought, well, you know, why don't you go and be a teacher or something, you'll even get better holidays...and you can have as much of a spiritual influence probably in the school if that's your attitude towards your church. So, I mean, there are there are balances, I have always got the balance, right in terms of caring for my family, and myself and so on... but being a servant means being willing to go an extra mile to inconvenience yourself to push on when you're tired and grumpy, and not let your grumpiness show as much as you would otherwise let it show. Yeah, so I think for me the adjective servant adds really only to the style, to the attitude, rather than to the substance of what I do.’<br><br>P18 ‘…I think that servant leadership is not at all straightforward. I think that servant leadership for whatever it is, is highly complex. Because |

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| | | | | anyone can be a servant for a day. Anyone in the church can say, I'm going to take a week and be a servant in the youth program for a week. Anyone can do that. servant leadership is complex, because it has to be sustainable. And, and if anyone knows anything about servant leadership over a period of 20 or 30 years, you will know that it costs and you will know that servant leadership is somewhat exhausting. Like you know, who wants to wash the feet of Judas. Because that is servant leadership. If we're talking about the towel and basin type leadership, you know... I can wash feet in the church, if we want to use that symbol of servant leadership. And I could do that. But when you're required as a Christian, to wash the feet of Judas, whoever Judas is, and whatever he represents, that's an entirely different type of, of servant leadership. So I think that servant leadership is complex. And I think that it is relentless and that is what we're all called to, I think to some degree. I think there's a lot of servant leadership that is impulsive, you do things impulsively because you know, it's the right thing to do. But I think servant leadership needs careful analysis, I've often been struck by the servant leadership of the Good Samaritan. And I've had to learn this... constantly learn this, that I personally can't get stuck with the person who's wounded and bleeding on the Jericho road. That true servant leadership identifies who they make their referrals to. And often servant leadership, a person can stay on the Jericho road with the wounded person on the bandages and mopping up the site and forget to leave the person at the Inn. True servant leadership needs to journey on like the Good Samaritan journied on he completed his journey. The problem was servant leadership is resisting the temptation to get stuck. And then going into extreme fatigue and burnout and disillusionment, and becoming cynical and discovering that the cost is too much. However, however, and probably I would lean myself personally towards servant leadership. However, there's a delight. There's a joy and there is an absolute satisfaction in it. And it is the way of Jesus and He is the role model in it. But one must analyze servant leadership very carefully. ne must assess the needs of servant leadership. |

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| | | | | And I truly think that servant leadership is complex. I truly think it... I thought 10/15 years ago... servant, leadership is... grab a tray of tea and handout sticky buns at the church service. Another thing too, is that sometimes, and I have to watch this in my own personality, I am naturally an introvert trying to be an extrovert in church work. And sometimes it's easy for me to hide behind the tray of cups when I'm in church serving. I sometimes do that, because it's convenient for me. But truly identifying servant leadership is relentless.' |

# Appendix F

## The Complexities of the Protestant Reformation in Ireland in the Early-Modern Period

Alan Ford illustrates the emergence of three distinct religious, cultural, and political identities in early modern Ireland. The native Irish, heirs of Ireland's ancient Celtic civilisation, the New English; the most recent wave of settlers and officials sent over by English monarchs anxious to secure their hold on Ireland; and, in between, the Anglo-Irish, the descendants of the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman invaders.[1]

The question of nomenclature, to denote political and religious allegiance, is at once complex and controversial and, as we shall see, recurs in later periods.[2] The native Irish were those who traced their roots back to the Biblical Flood, from which the earliest myths in the

[1] Alan Ford, 'James Ussher and the creation of an Irish Protestant identity', in *British consciousness and identity, the making of Britain, 1533-1707*, ed. by Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.185-212 (p. 186).

[2] Several terms are used to identify the competing ethnic groups living in Ireland during the early modern period. Ford acknowledges that it is difficult to offer clear-cut definitions of descriptions such as Anglo-Irish and Old English. T.W. Moody explores the issue of terminology in detail in his 'Introduction: early modern Ireland' in *A New History of Ireland,* ed. by T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne, 9 vols (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1976), III, pp. xlii-xliii. The Gaelic Irish, Native Irish or Old Irish as they are variously described are the descendants of those who lived in Ireland prior to the arrival of the first colonists from England in the twelfth century. The term New English describes those settlers who came to reside in Ireland during the Tudor conquest of Ireland in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century who attempted to impose the protestant reformation in Ireland. Nicolas Canny in '1641 in a colonial context', *Ireland: 1641 Contexts and reactions,* ed. by M. Ó Siochrú and Jane Ohlmeyer (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2013), pp. 52-70, discusses the view that English Elizabethans adopted similar perspectives on Native Americans and Gaelic Irish as primitive species and cultures in need of conquest, socialisation and enculturation. Ford uses the term Anglo Irish to describe those who came to Ireland as part of the incomplete medieval conquest that began in 1169 (See T.W. Moody, p. xlii). When it came to the Tudor Reformation the Anglo Irish found themselves compromised by their loyalty to the English monarchy on one hand and their religious loyalty to Catholicism and the Pope on the other. Moody notes that the term Anglo Irish is a sixteenth century term that is used broadly to describe all those who descended from the twelfth century colonists. This group, however, can be further subdivided between those who remained loyal to the crown following the establishment of the reformation in Ireland, and those within the Anglo Irish who chose to remain loyal to their Catholic religious faith. The term Old English is often used interchangeably with Anglo Irish when it describes only those Anglo Irish in the seventeenth century who attempted to remain loyal to the crown and to their Catholic faith at the same time. Moody notes that as the seventeenth century progressed it became increasingly difficult for this group to maintain this stance with suspicion on the part of King Charles I and of the English parliament (p.xlii). Ultimately, enduring religious, political and economic restrictions such as the insistence that only Protestants should be able to occupy roles in public life, Moody argues that the Old English were forced to join with the Old Irish in the 1641 rebellion (Moody, p. xliii). For a discussion on the diversity of Irish identities before and during the 1641 rebellion, see also Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British 1580-1641* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2003), pp. 461-550.

Irish written tradition derived the ancestors of the Gael. Their religious loyalties were to Catholicism and Rome; they were generally resentful of the control and colonisation of the English and strongly resisted all proselytization to Protestantism. Poetry, such as that composed by seventeenth-century Counter-Reformation clergyman Geoffrey Keating, articulated aspects of this identity. His classic work *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* synthesized tales of the origins of Ireland from its beginnings to the arrival of Christianity and developed a unitary narrative to the twelfth-century Norman conquest.[3] Keating's writings came to have a profound impact on the writing of a variety of groupings living in Ireland from the seventeenth century onwards. As Bernadette Cunningham states:

> Keating's story of Ireland… was presented to Irish readers as the 'true' history of the kingdom and people of Ireland. It was read by diverse textual communities as a history that asserted the truth about the Irish past in opposition to negative and 'false' histories promulgated by those who would deny Ireland's claims to be an ancient and honourable Kingdom… In a country that hovered between Kingdom and colony, readers understood the significance of alternative readings of the past.[4]

The New English colonisers arrived in Ireland in the decades following the Reformation at the behest of English monarchs and set about securing the presence and power of the English Crown in Ireland. They viewed the native- and Anglo-Irish lifestyle and culture with disdain, and the majority of the New English were as committed to the Reformed Protestant faith as the native Irish were to their Roman Catholic faith. Between these two groups were the Anglo-Irish, descendants of the Normans who colonised Ireland in the twelfth century. Following Ford's analysis of the creation of an Irish Protestant identity, the Anglo-Irish saw themselves as culturally superior to the native Irish and to the New English and were caught between their genuine loyalty to the English crown and their

[3] See https://www.ria.ie/library/catalogues/special-collections/medieval-and-early-modern-manuscripts/foras-feasa-ar-eirinn
[4] Bernadette Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), p. 226.

strong Catholic religious identity. Many Anglo-Irish remained faithful to the Roman Catholic Church rather than convert to Protestantism.[5]

In describing the state of the Irish Catholic community in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Patrick J. Corish assesses the impact of the Tudor Reformation on the people of Ireland and the reaction of Catholicism to such reform initiatives.[6] In common with other historians Corish argues that religious history cannot be separated from other spheres of history, such as social, political and economic. As he states: '[R]eligious history is an unreal abstraction from history because your religious life cannot be separated from the rest of your life.'[7]

In the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation the organisational structure of the Catholic church in Ireland remained and was sustained by support from the papacy and wider Catholicism across Europe. In other European states where the established churches became Protestant, generally the Catholic ecclesial structures were dismantled, and Catholic witness was maintained as a 'mission', rather than through formal structures. Thus, for example, in the United Netherlands, the papacy appointed vicars apostolic. These appointees had episcopal responsibility but where not appointed to historical sees. Instead, they were accountable to Rome directly. Such arrangements were subject to co-operation between the papacy, the state and local Catholic interests.[8] Ireland was different, in that while the Roman Catholic Church was not the state church, it was, by a substantial margin, the majority church. Henry VIII's conversion to Protestantism was undoubtedly more about his domestic arrangements and asserting his authority and power over his own dominion, than theological

[5] Ford, 'James Ussher and the creation of an Irish Protestant identity', p. 186.
[6] Patrick J. Corish, *The Catholic Community in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Dublin: Helicon, 1981).
[7] Corish, *The Catholic Community,* p. 1.
[8] *Patrick J. Corish, The Irish Catholic experience, a historical survey (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985), p. 100.*

convictions. In England, the King was able to effect the organisational element of his reformation reasonably quickly, succeeding in stopping the movement of funds from England to the papacy by 1534, and bringing the clergy into line through legislation and the threat of coercion. Ireland was a different place however, with a population less suspicious of their clergy and more loyal to their church. With less appetite for reform from the general population, the reformation in Ireland had very different beginnings. Indeed, as Hayes-McCoy argues, even the question of the monarchy's authority in Ireland remained unresolved.[9] In the decades following, as the English attempted to reform the Irish church to varying degrees of success, the Roman Catholic Church episcopate was re-established and has survived ever since. Corish states that 'Catholic Ireland had, not a mission, but a church.'[10] These circumstances provide a backdrop against which the subsequent religious, social, political and economic history of Ireland can be understood, demonstrating how the majority of the population came to be excluded from the political and civic life of the state. Despite the popular appeal of Catholicism among the population of Ireland and the existence of a semblance of ecclesiastical structure, the Roman Catholic Church, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, had little influence over the political and social elite in Dublin and beyond. Within two hundred years, however, the circumstances of the Catholic Church in Ireland would be completely transformed.[11] In the three southern provinces, Catholic nationalist identity among the population was pre-eminent; there was no real competition to counter the popular appeal, political influence and social and moral authority of the Catholic Church. In the northern province of Ulster, however, Protestantism, in its assorted expressions, was equal and opposite in its strength of identity, influence and authority. As

[9] G.A. Hayes-McCoy, 'The ecclesiastical revolution, 1534-47' in *A New History of Ireland,* ed. by T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne, 9 vols (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1976), III, pp. 39-68 (p. 55).
[10] Corish, *The Catholic Community*, p. 17.
[11] David Hempton, *Religion and political culture in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 72.

David Hempton states: '[P]erhaps in the divine economy of churches the last shall indeed by first…political and social conflicts in Ireland served to reinforce rather than to undermine religious loyalties… Catholicism in Ireland thrived on adversity.'[12]

The imposition of the penal laws in Ireland in the eighteenth century barred Catholics from serving in the leading professions and occupying roles related to public life. A feature of the laws was that they were designed to restrict marriages for Catholics, especially mixed marriages. Corish argues that if the laws had been enforced in their entirety they would have destroyed the Catholic Church in Ireland. In theory, they restricted the religious practice of Catholics, however, their greater concern was to prevent Catholics inheriting property, ensuring that they remained in a state of relative poverty. The elements pertaining to religious practice were generally not enforced in local areas ensuring that the operations of the Catholic Church at a parish and diocesan level were, for the most part, unhindered.

So the basic concern of the penal code was to preserve property and power in protestant hands. As regards the practice of the Catholic religion, there were two logical choices, either to mount a serious campaign to convert the Catholics to Protestantism, or to allow them freedom of religious practice under strict control. What happened was the prohibition of Catholic religious practice by a series of laws which soon became ineffective.[13]

The complexity of religious affiliation in Ireland was further exacerbated by the growth of the number of dissenters, mainly from a Presbyterian background, and particularly in the province of Ulster. From the mid-1530s onwards here was a significant influx of Scottish and English settlers to Ireland. Further extensive plantations took place in the early

[12] Hempton, *Religion*, p. 92.
[13] Patrick J. Corish, *The Irish Catholic experience, a historical survey* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985), p. 124.

1600s with wholesale arrivals in Ulster following the 'flight of the earls' in 1607.[14] As T.W. Moody states:

> The plantation effected a revolutionary transfer of land from catholic to protestant ownership in Ulster, created a strong British colony in a province hitherto a Gaelic stronghold, and thus decisively augmented the new colonial and protestant element that the Tudor conquest had introduced into Ireland since 1534.[15]

The great challenge was the Scottish Presbyterian religious affiliation of the majority of the planters in Ulster especially in counties Antrim and Down. Events in Scotland therefore tended to cause reverberations in Ulster, for example because of the revolt of Scottish Presbyterians of 1638 against the actions of Charles I. This led Charles I to seek the help of the English parliament to quell the revolt. In return for its help, the parliament gained concessions from the King that increased its constitutional power and influence that in turn provoked the Old Irish along with the Old English, into the rebellion of 1641 in Ireland, allegedly fighting for the King, but against the government. Following the outbreak of the English civil war in 1642, there were no fewer than four armies in Ireland representing different parties; the confederate catholic army of the Old Irish and Old English, the king's own forces, an army of the English parliament, and an army sent from Scotland to protect the interests of settlers in Ulster.[16]

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, with a Catholic King James II, brother of Charles II ascending to the English throne in 1685, Irish Catholics could be forgiven for

[14] The 'flight of the earls' in 1607 saw Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone and Rory O'Donnell, 1st earl of Tyrconnell, two of Ulster Gaelic aristocracy, and a significant number of noble families, take exile in mainland Europe. Their hope was that they could return with an invading army to re-take their land and re-establish their influence having seen this diminish as a result of the actions of the Dublin government and the policy of English and Scottish settlement in Ulster. Their alternative had been to stay and attempt to appeal to the King or accept their reduced circumstances. Ultimately their department provided the government with the opportunity to accelerate the rate of settlement in Ulster. See Aidan Clarke, with R. Dudley Edwards 'Pacification, plantation and the catholic question, 1603-23', in *A New History of Ireland,* ed. by T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne, 9 vols (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1976), III, p. 194-97.
[15] T.W. Moody 'Introduction to Early Modern Ireland', in *A New History of Ireland,* ed. by T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne, 9 vols (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1976), III, p. xlii.
[16] Moody, 'Introduction to Early Modern Ireland', pp. xliii-xliv.

thinking that their fortunes would be reversed, and civil and religious freedom would be established. They were to be disappointed though, as Simms points out, James, like his predecessors, realised that he was dependent on the Protestant ruling class in Ireland to maintain the power and control of the English monarchy.[17] Nonetheless, the influence of Irish Catholics in the Dublin administration and in the Irish army did grow during James' reign, leading to a sense of unease among Protestant officials, only appeased by the hope that James would be succeeded by his Protestant daughter, Mary of Orange. When James' second wife, Mary of Modena gave birth to a son in 1688, everything changed with the prospect of the English monarchy remaining Catholic for the foreseeable future. This began the chain of events culminating in the revolt against James and the 'glorious' revolution. The victory of parliamentary army and the establishment of the Dutch prince, William III on the throne sealed the fate of the Catholics in Ireland as being subject to the oversight of the mainly English Protestant ruling class in Dublin. The established Anglican Church faced a significant dilemma. Theoretically it was the established church that marked out the state as being a Christian state and provided the Christian pastoral oversight for the population. In Ireland, however, the religious loyalty of approximately ninety per cent of the population lay elsewhere, either in the alternative structures of the Catholic Church, dissenting Presbyterianism, or one of the other minority dissenting groups. As Hempton writes:

> The fact that the Church of Ireland was the Established Church of a landed minority, that Ulster Presbyterianism was virtually a state within a state, and that Roman Catholicism was the creed of a defeated race ensured the province's religious life would have more than its fair share of turbulence.[18]

Corish supports the view that the established church did not make significant efforts to convert Catholic Ireland, thereby ensuring that the structures of the Catholic Church

[17] J.G. Simms, 'The war of the two kings, 1685-91' in *A New History of Ireland,* ed. by T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne, 9 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), III, pp. 478-508 (p. 478).
[18] Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture,* p. 93.

remained intact and effective.[19] In a similar vein, Jeremiah Falvey suggests that any missionary zeal on the part of the established church at the beginning of the eighteenth century was focused on converting Roman Catholic landowners and thereby increasing the economic power and influence of the Protestant Ascendency, as opposed to having a distinct spiritual intention to transform the religious practice of the general population or to effect a significant transfer of loyalty from Catholicism to Protestantism.[20]

[19] Corish, *The Catholic Community,* p.78.
[20] Jeremiah Falvey, 'The Church of Ireland Episcopate in the Eighteenth Century: An overview', *Eighteenth Century Ireland,* 8, (1993), pp.103-114 (p.105)

# Appendix G

## The Failure of the English Reformation in Ireland

During the period of 1978-2016 a significant debate has taken place among historians exploring the successes and failures of the Protestant Reformation in Ireland in the early modern period. The main protagonists are, among others, Brendan Bradshaw, Nicholas Canny, Karl Bottigheimer, and Patrick J. Corish. Brendan Bradshaw argues that it was not inevitable that the reformation in Ireland would fail in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He demonstrates that there was, among the population of Ireland, those who were advocates for the reformation and that the weakness of this movement was not directly related to theological and political dispute but was a complex conflict over strategy between individuals and groups within the established church in Ireland and in the political administration, with opposing goals. Alternative strategies focused on choosing between more forceful approaches and attempts to persuade by winning hearts and minds.[1] For Bradshaw, the failure of the Reformation in Ireland was a failure on the part of the government in England to follow through with a clear and decisive strategy to reform the church in Ireland. This failure is illustrated in Stephen Ellis's argument that demonstrates the significant lack of financial investment in the reformation in Ireland by the government thus rendering the church unable to effect fully the reformation. As Ellis states:

> In Ireland, given the very inadequate resources and machinery available to Church and State for enforcing ecclesiastical change, the attitude of local nobles and gentry in determining the eventual response to the Tudor Reformation was correspondingly more vital. And, undoubtedly, political relations between the Dublin administration and the Englishry of Ireland grew increasingly strained after mid-century, and this in turn reduced the level of local co-operation and support for the government's ecclesiastical policies.[2]

[1] Brendan Bradshaw, 'Sword, Word and Strategy in the Reformation in Ireland', *The Historical Journal*, 21 (1978), 475-502.
[2] *Stephen G. Ellis, 'Economic Problems of the Church: Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 41, (1990), 239-265.*

Ellis's point regarding the question of resources reinforces Bradshaw's argument on strategy. Despite these apparent weaknesses and the failure to achieve support for the Reformation among the general populace the fact is, however, a controlling protestant political ascendency was established in Ireland. And it suited the interest of this protestant ascendency that the majority of the population remain in their Catholic faith.

By the end of the seventeenth century the catholic challenge had been defeated, and Ireland emerged with an apartheid constitution in law and in practice, religion providing the criterion for discrimination. The protestant ascendency had acquired a strong incentive to leave Ireland for the greater part catholic. [3]

Nicolas Canny argues persuasively that the arguments posited by leading historians for the failure of the Reformation in Ireland by the start of the seventeenth century are inadequate.[4] In summary, he suggests that any judgement concerning the failure of the Reformation in Ireland should not be made until the nineteenth century.

> When in the early nineteenth century a Protestant evangelisation movement known as 'the second Reformation' came to life its activities were opposed by a Catholic Church, just then becoming revitalised, which claimed all the native population for itself, decreed the Protestant action to be proselytising, and set about making its claims a reality through the remainder of the nineteenth century. It is only at that point that historians are justified in saying that the Reformation had failed in Ireland.[5]

Further, Canny argues that the question remained a live one until the mid-nineteenth century mainly because (i) the efforts to consolidate the Reformation there were at best piecemeal and / or ineffectual and (ii) there is a clear paucity of evidence for the success of the Counter Reformation in Ireland during the early modern period. In contradistinction, Brendan Bradshaw argues against what he sees as Canny's revisionist approach and points

[3] Bradshaw, 'Sword', p. 502.
[4] Nicolas Canny, 'Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland: *Une Question Mal Posée*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 30 (1979), 423-450.
[5] Canny, 'Why the Reformation Failed', p. 450.

to the fact that Ireland, unlike any other country in Europe, failed to adopt the chosen religion of its constitutional ruler. As he writes:

> The possibility that arises here is of reinstating the received wisdom concerning the triumph of the Counter Reformation. […] Thus the effect of the analysis will be to highlight a paradox: the failure of Ireland to conform to the pattern that established itself elsewhere throughout Europe whereby the religion of the prince – the magistrate – sooner or later became the religion of the community.[6]

In support of his position, Bradshaw further explores the failure of local officials to enforce religious penal laws requiring the use of Reformation liturgies and practices. He highlights papal influence in the maintenance of Catholic ecclesial structures in Ireland from 1567 onwards, a practice that brought bishops to Ireland trained in continental Europe and strongly influenced by the Counter Reformation. Indeed, he appears to go further as he argues that the fifteenth century Observant Renewal Movement[7] among monastic communities provided a template for the success of Counter Reformation missionaries in Ireland:

> The Observant reform in short played no small part in ensuring that by the end of the sixteenth century Tridentine Roman Catholicism had come to be adopted as the religious confession of the two historic communities of Ireland, and the English Reformation rejected, the will of their prince notwithstanding, as a heretical foreign innovation.[8]

According to Bradshaw, official English government policies such as colonisation, enculturation, and the establishment of army garrison settlements, failed to convert Ireland to Protestantism. Such policies, designed to undermine the socio-political *status quo*, instead created the context that began to draw together former enemies – the Native Irish and the

[6] Brendan Bradshaw, 'The English Reformation and identity formation in Ireland and Wales', in *British consciousness and identity, the making of Britain, 1533-1707*, ed. by Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 43-111.

[7] The Observant Renewal Movement deeply impacted religious orders in Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Bradshaw notes that the presence of the well-educated Observant movement in Ireland enriched the Irish church with a clerical elite that was characterised by a pastoral demeanour that related well to the general native population. The effectiveness of the movement in Ireland was boosted by the use of the vernacular as a tool for their evangelism, thereby further strengthening their relationship with the native people. See Bradshaw, 'The English Reformation', p. 90.

[8] Bradshaw, 'The English Reformation', p. 109.

Anglo-Irish – to form a Tridentine Catholic identity, and a shared Catholic / nationalist identity.

> The process by which these by no means complementary collective consciousness were fused into the common identity of the Catholic Irish was further facilitated by the emergence, as a function of the crown's reform strategy, of a new colonial elite to undermine the existing socio-political order. The appearance of the protestant New English to challenge the hegemony of the two established elites provided the latter with a common enemy, an alien 'other', over against whom the old elites could identify themselves as the joint custodians of a common faith and fatherland.[9]

Karl Bottigheimer has made two significant interventions in the debate on the success or failure of the Reformation in Ireland. In his 1985 article, he offers an analysis of the challenge faced by the Anglican Church in its role as the established church stating that '[i]n England, Scotland and Ireland Reformation and Counter-Reformation contended at least for decades, if not centuries. The result was not so much 'triumph' or 'failure' as complexity and variety.'[10] Bottigheimer explores the success of Irish Catholicism in the sixteenth and seventeenth century in resisting the growth of Protestantism, and the hold of the Reformation amongst the general population of Ireland. He contends that economic and social patterns, as well as religious practice and vernacular scriptures, enabled the Reformation to take hold in England in way in which it never did in Ireland. Bottigheimer concurs with Canny's argument that the question of the success or failure of the Reformation in Ireland should not be answered until a later time frame. He disagrees with Canny's assessment, however, that the question of the failure of the Reformation in the early modern period is one that is badly formed.[11] Bottigheimer illustrates effectively the weaknesses of the Anglican Church in reaching and converting the wider population to Protestantism. Drawing on a letter of

[9] Ibid., p. 111.
[10] Karl Bottigheimer, 'The failure of the Reformation in Ireland: *Une Question Bien Posée*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36, (1985), 196-207 (p. 204).
[11] Nicolas Canny, 'Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland: *Une Question Mal Posée*', p. 424.

William Bedell, the Bishop of Kilmore in the 1630s, which highlights the challenges being faced by the Protestant church, Bottigheimer states:

> Some of this lamentation is for the deplorable state of the Church of Ireland, much of it the result of government indifference and planter greed, rather than popular disaffection. Such elements need to be carefully separated from observations of the strength of the Counter-Reformation.[12]

A second contribution by Karl Bottigheimer came in response to Bradshaw's work in the late 1990s on Irish identity.[13] Here, Bottigheimer questions Bradshaw's assertion that the failure of the Reformation in Ireland in the second half of the sixteenth century was due to a well-formed sense of Irish nationalist identity among the predominantly Catholic population. Further, he disagrees that the Reformation process in Ireland was significantly different to the rest of Europe. Bottigheimer argues that it was not unusual to find significant anti-Reformation sentiment throughout Europe and that this resistance was not necessarily as concerned with politics as it was with religious identity.

> Bradshaw's interpretation is a specific application of his earlier generalised critique of revisionism. He implies that 'post-revisionist' Irish history should accept and emphasise the characterising devotion of 'the Irish' to faith and fatherland from the earliest possible point in time. Political resistance is to be interpreted as patriotism and a precocious longing for national sovereignty, rather than as a conservative clinging to profitable and congenial ancient rights…. Resistance to religious change is seen by Bradshaw as a sign of inveterate Catholicity, defining and even exceptional, rather than as the common-place of post-Reformation Europe as it was.[14]

Further, Bottigheimer suggests that evidence presented by Bradshaw can be used to argue exactly the opposite. For example, as already noted, Bradshaw argues that the strength of the Observant Renewal Movement in Ireland contributed to the success of the Counter Reformation in Ireland. Bottigheimer posits an alternative theory suggesting that the strength

[12] Bottigheimer, 'The failure of the Reformation', p. 200.
[13] Karl Bottigheimer, 'Revisionism and the Irish Reformation', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 51 (2000), 581-86.
[14] Bottigheimer, 'Revisionism', p. 585.

of the Observants in Ireland might be due to the failure of the English successfully to complete the dissolution of the monasteries to any significant degree beyond Dublin and the Pale.[15]

Bradshaw, in a response to Bottigheimer's critique contends that he does not over-emphasise a nationalist identity argument but that his main point relates to the 'mundane material interests' of the local elite in Ireland, and the failure of the political authorities in Ireland to bring this influential stratum of society on board with the Reformation project. [16] Bradshaw uses Wales as a comparison in the original article and in the rejoinder and argues that 'the Reformation succeeded in Wales because the elite were willing to implement the official religious programme.'[17] Moreover, Bradshaw defends his use of the Observant Renewal Movement in his argument, suggesting that it was not his intention to prove that the order significantly contributed to the failure of the Reformation, rather that he wanted to demonstrate the impact of the Order in light of their survival of the dissolution of the monasteries.[18]

In summary, Bottigheimer states that '[t]here was certainly an attempt at a Reformation in Ireland, but in most conventional senses it failed.'[19] He points to the English immigration to Ireland in the late sixteenth century, the creation of a Protestant state church, and the acceptance of Protestantism by the political elite, as evidence of a Reformation. The success of this Reformation however can only be judged in light of the reality that most the Irish population, including the Old English and Gaelic aristocracy, remained Roman Catholic.

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[15] Ibid., pp. 583-84.
[16] Brendan Bradshaw, 'Revisionism and the Irish Reformation A Rejoinder', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 51 (2000), 587-91 (p. 588).
[17] Ibid., p. 588.
[18] Bradshaw, 'Revisionism and the Irish Reformation A Rejoinder', p. 590.
[19] Ibid., p. 582.

Writing in 2016, Henry Jefferies acknowledges the long-running debate over the success or failure of the Reformation in Ireland.[20] Jefferies' key argument focuses on the issue of the ordinary population of Ireland not embracing the Reformation, and that by the end of the sixteenth century it can be said that the Reformation in Ireland had failed decisively. He offers a number of reasons to back up this argument. These include (i) a lack of evidence of widespread conversion to Protestantism during the Elizabethan period, even within Dublin and the Pale, (ii) the interests of the clerical cadre within Dublin were not related to theological issues, but related to their wider influence in society, (iii) the Catholic church was pastorally effective in the time leading up to the Reformation, (iv) ordinary people maintained their belief in key Catholic doctrines related to the mass, praying to the saints and purgatory, (v) lack of investment in the training of clergy for the reformed church in Ireland, and (vi) the energy and presence of priests from religious orders propagating the message of the Counter Reformation among the ordinary people. As Jefferies explains:

> [W]hen the Catholic church in Ireland was re-organised on a sustainable footing as a disestablished 'people's church' from the 1580s, and infused with the confidence inspired by the Counter-Reformation, can it be stated that the Reformation had failed in Ireland definitively.[21]

This debate underlines the complexity of religious affiliation in Ireland during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is not a simple question of asking why the Reforming principles that appeared to work in England did not similarly work in in Ireland. Nor is it sufficient to say that the apparent failure of the Reformation in Ireland was due to it being viewed as a colonial imposition, in that there were within Ireland those who supported the reformation, amongst the social elite at least. During the course of the seventeenth century the power and influence of the established Protestant church in Ireland was secured. This

[20] Henry A. Jefferies, 'Why the Reformation failed in Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies,* 40 (2016), pp. 151-70.
[21] Jefferies, 'Why the Reformation failed', p. 170.

highly influential hierarchy, enmeshed with the operation of the state, was relatively small in number however, and the vast majority of the population remained loyal to the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic Church.