

The ebb and flow of grace: An Investigation into the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's missionary theory and praxis

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Declaration of Authenticity

I declare that all material presented to the Potchefstroom Campus of North-West University, RSA, is my own work, or fully and specifically acknowledged wherever adapted from other sources.

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Date: 31 January, 2017

Abstract

The flag of the Republic of Ireland enshrines two distinct traditions. The Green represents the Nationalist and the Orange the Loyalist. Traditionally these colours have been associated with different cultural and theological views. In focusing on the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI), this dissertation seeks to engage with a denominations whose history includes evangelism, Church extension/ planting and ecumenism. PCI's activity is set within the wider context of "mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism" in and from Ireland. This research aims to discern PCI's theological justification for mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism.

PCI's mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism is considered in respect to a theological and practical understanding of and relationship to the Catholic Church. Attention is given to a theological consideration of PCI's historical and confessional position on Catholicism. Further, attention is given to how PCI, in reflecting their historical and theological position on Catholicism, can engage with Catholicism through mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism.

This dissertation considers the theological question whether the doctrinal tenets of confessional Presbyterianism are a hindrance or an aid to mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism. In asking this question, this research seeks to respect the theological and historical traditions of the Reformed Churches and to highlight the contribution of Reformed theology and Churches to the belief and praxis of mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism. This research seeks to highlight the mutually informative relationship between evangelism and ecumenism. This relationship is investigated to understand how they enrich one another. The possibility of mutual enrichment leads to the question whether both the evangelical and ecumenical perspectives can be adopted with integrity, in the light of the historical and confessional theology of the PCI. This research also seeks to discern whether the evangelical and ecumenical positions are mutually exclusive with regard to their theology and ecclesiology. The theological question is filtered through Irish Presbyterianism within the matrix of Ireland.

Motivations are a key subtext of this dissertation, particularly the motivations for the PCI's mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism. Motivations of history, culture and politics are reflected upon to discern whether they have primacy over or equality with theological motivations. The discussion is carried out through a conscious engagement with Catholic theology, within the specific context of Ireland.

After the Introduction outlining the background and problem statement, Chapter Two looks at the missional history and tradition in Ireland. Mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism within the PCI receives specific attention. Chapter Three outlines the current literature of mission, evangelism and ecumenism in order to highlight a gap which this research attempts to fill. Chapter Four considers the theological touchstones on which mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism rest: missiology, the kingdom of God, covenant, culture, ecclesiology and ecumenism. Chapter Five conducts a dialogue with the Catholic theology of mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism. Chapter Six considers the Reformed understanding of the *Ordo Salutis* as the theological model of how mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism respond to the gospel. Chapter Seven acts as a case study of mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism within the PCI. In conclusion, the research questions are answered in the light of the dissertation's harmony, and implications are offered for further research on mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism within PCI.

Key Words: Mission; Evangelism; Ecumenism; Gospel; Church; Reformed; Presbyterian; Culture; Religion; Denomination.

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SOLI DEO GLORIA!

The Ebb and Flow of Grace

An Investigation into the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Missionary Theory and Praxis.

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Abbreviations

CCC:	<i>The Catechism of the Catholic Church.</i>
CoI:	The Church of Ireland.
CoS:	The Church of Scotland.
ECT:	<i>Evangelicals and Catholics Together</i> (1995).
EPC:	The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
ERCDM:	<i>The Evangelical Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission, 1977-1984.</i> (1986).
FPCU:	The Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster.
ICC:	The Irish Council of Churches.
JFEM:	<i>Justification and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement</i> (2003).
MEE	“Mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism”
NRSV:	<i>New Revised Standard Version.</i>
NSPCI:	The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
PCI:	The Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
RPCI:	The Reformed Presbytian Church in Ireland.
WCC:	The World Council of Churches.
WCF:	<i>The Westminster Confession of Faith.</i>



John Owen, oil painting by an unknown artist; in the National Portrait Gallery, London. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London

“God hath been faithful in doing great things for you, be faithful in this one - do your utmost for the preaching of the gospel in Ireland.”

John Owen, preaching on the Day of Humiliation, before the House of Commons, London, 28 February, 1650.
(Christopher Anderson (1828). *Historical Sketches of the Ancient Native Irish and their Descendants with Regard to Literature, Education, and Oral Instruction*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd.



When we get out of here, we will show, that (ecumenicism) is more than personal friendship. We will continue to carry the historical burden of our separated churches, as baggage and inheritance. But never again shall it become shameful to Christ. Like you, I do not believe in the utopia of complete unity stews. But the one Christ is undivided, and when undivided love leads to him, we will do better than our fighting predecessors and contemporaries.

Alfred Delp (2004:7-8) “Letter to Eugen Gerstenmaier.” In *Prison Writings*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Chapter 1:

Background and Problem Statement/ Rationale

1. Introduction

This research endeavours to address the interplay between the messenger of mission, The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI), and the context of mission, the island of Ireland. The interplay between the messenger and context of mission, through an ebb and flow of grace, will be looked at through the integrated praxis of mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism (MEE; Yates, 1994:5). The historical context of mission in Ireland forms an integral part of the interplay between messenger and context. Examples of this have been the Sixth Century Papal sending of Irish missionaries to the Germanic peoples (Latourette, 1845:272-273) and the Irish church's preservation of ancient documents in the monasteries (Cairnes, 1981:117).

1.1. Messenger-Context Interplay

The interplay between messenger and context is also seen in the development of evangelicalism as an ecclesiastical and theological movement in Ireland. It has been suggested that evangelicalism only began to take root in Ireland in the eighteenth century (Yates, 2010:37). The rectitude of this assumption will be addressed through reflection upon the missional history of Ireland. This research will endeavour to show evangelicalism as being present in the Irish church from the time of Patrick's missionary call to Ireland (Latourette, 1945:101-102; Cairnes, 1981:128-129). The flow of mission from Ireland to the world will also be argued as being present in Columba and Columbanus (Hamilton, 1887:15; Stewart, 1936:20-21; Hamilton, 1887:19; Latourette, 1945:342-343).

1.2. Irish Presbyterianism

Particular attention will be paid to Irish Presbyterianism. Historically this will begin with the establishment of the first Irish Presbytery of the Church of Scotland (CoS) in 1642 (Stewart, 1936:58-59). The ebb of grace is seen in the separation, secession, schism and splitting of the Irish Presbyterianism. The flow of grace is seen in the

union of the synods in 1840 (Stewart, 1936:97-99, 122-124; Hamilton, 1887:164). The ebb and flow of grace continued in the theological battle over Arianism in the newly united Church through the work of Trinitarian apologist Henry Cooke (Hamilton, 1887:148; Hamilton, 1887:149; Holmes, 1981:100).

1.3. Persecution and Revival in the PCI

The early persecutions of Irish Presbyterians influenced an understanding of MEE (Stewart, 1936:81-89; Latourette, 1945:830). These persecutions began first from Irish Catholics (Holmes, 2000:26-27; Holmes, 1983:25), then latterly by the Church of Ireland (CoI).

1.3.1. Revival within Irish Presbyterianism

Historically, persecution of Irish Presbyterians was accompanied by revival. The Six Mile Valley revival (Hamilton, 1887:43-44) and the 1859 Ulster Revival (Gibson, 1989) were particularly formative upon MEE within PCI. This influence is seen in the historical and contemporary praxis of open air preaching (Eyers, 1841:171).

1.3.1. Persecution within Irish Presbyterianism

The negative influence of persecution and the positive influence of revival have had a formative role in creating an Irish evangelical subculture (Mitchell and Tilly, 2004:585-601; Ganiel, 2006:38-48). The ebb of grace can be discerned in this subculture through a distance from ecumenism because of the shared memory of persecution. The flow of grace in MEE can be discerned through a willingness to engage with missional praxis at home and abroad. The example of open air preaching cited above is one such product of the subculture.

1.4. Irish Evangelical Subculture

The Irish evangelical subculture can also be discerned through the North of Ireland Keswick Convention at Portstewart (Keswick Ministries, 2017). While the focus of the convention is on the deepening of the spiritual life, the main demographic support comes from those identifying with the evangelical theological position.

1.5. Mission as Ecumenism in Ireland

MEE has also been an aspect of the Irish church. This is seen positively through PCI's involvement in the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 (Stanley, 2009:90; Ellis, 1992:5; Gay, 2011:33). It is seen negatively through withdrawal from the World Council of Churches (WCC) (Holmes, 2000:153-154; Newell, 2016:51, 70-84).

1.5.1. Personal Examples of Ecumenism

Personal examples of PCI's positivity in ecumenism are seen in Rev. James Rutherford's argument for a united Protestant Church (Rutherford, 1942:25). Rev. Kenneth Newell's pioneering work with Clonard monastery is another local example (Quinn, 2004; Brewer, Higgins and Teeney, 2011:67; Wells, 2005; Lowery, 1985:123).

1.6. The Influence of the Charismatic Renewal

The Charismatic Renewal had particular implications for MEE (Mitchell, 2008:224; Stewart:2015). William W. Kay states: "... it was clear that Presbyterian institutions in Northern Ireland and Scotland and high Anglicans have been least receptive to Pentecostal and Charismatic trends" (Kay, 2007:228). Kay fails to take account of the theological rationale for Presbyterian worship in the regulative principle (Gore, 2002:9-20; Old, 2002:1-6; Muller, 1987; Hart and Muether, 2002; Dawn, 1995; Hart, 2003). The *Irish Presbyterian Hymnbook* (2004) draws widely upon charismatic hymnody. There is also a claim that the Charismatic Renewal had a degree of success within Scotland (McIntyre, 1997:vii). It also seems that the historical genesis for the Charismatic Renewal in Ireland began within Presbyterianism (Smail, 1995:8; Gibson, 1987:67-68). Within PCI specifically a church planting strategy has developed (Maynooth.org, 2017; Donabate.org, 2017).

1.7. The Denominational Context

The denominational context of rooting MEE within PCI enables a contextual approach. It also raises the question of whether PCI focuses on reproducing elements of itself within the mission foci or whether there is a wider focus on the kingdom of God, covenant, culture or ecclesiology (Lonergan, 1971:57).

1.7.1. The Unique Context of Ireland

The unique context of Ireland has influenced PCI's missional hermeneutic. The history of violence in Northern Ireland between Protestant and Catholics has had a particular formative influence on PCI's MEE (Volf, 2006:90-91). These complex elements have informed PCI's motivation for MEE. For objective reflection, there is a need for some distance from the subject in order to explain the structure (Frei, 1992:12). This will be aided by Paul Ricoeur's "four levels on the scale of praxis" (Ricoeur, 2013:30-35).

1.7.2. PCI and the Catholic Church

This research will, therefore, reflect upon MEE within PCI. Specific attention will be given to PCI's relationship and interaction with the Catholic Church. This will be accomplished by using systematic theology as a means of ordering theological influences within established religion (Thiessen, 1979:3). The Reformation theological principle of *semper reformanda* also has a bearing on this research. The principle of being Reformed and always reforming can be used to address PCI's self-reflection upon ecclesial identity and theological axioms (Frei, 1992:25; Moltmann, 1992:120-121; Horton, 2010; Nicole, 1990:160-161; MacArthur, 2013).

1.8. The Public Nature of MEE

MEE is carried out in the public arena and raises certain questions concerning its ethics. The ethical question is whether some or all of the praxis of evangelism is immoral (Thiessen, 2011:20). MEE is also impacted by questions of ethics. One such question is whether ecumenical engagement is overshadowed by an evangelical imperative toward those with whom there is theological disagreement. Another

question is whether ecumenism provides an opportunity for conversation on the basis of common theological axioms and the areas of theological divergence.

1.8.1. Other Presbyterian Denominations

Beyond PCI, other Presbyterian denominations' praxis of MEE will also be reflected on. This will be addressed through relationships with other Protestant churches as well as with Catholicism.

1.9. Presbyterian Symbolology and Documents

Presbyterian symbolology will also be considered as a formative influence upon MEE. The symbol of the burning bush has particular resonance. The burning bush symbolises the ongoing witness and work of the church in MEE despite persecution and opposition (Barkley, 1988; Munnik, 2010; Dunning, 2009:12; Daniels, 2003:136).

1.9.1. Interpreting Symbols

The interpretation of such symbols has a theological connotation. Symbols can be subject to a "discreditation and even disenchantment" (Farley, 1996:1). This results in a "double-meaning structure" (Ricoeur, 2013:5). The double meaning structure implies that the literal meaning informs reflection on a secondary meaning. The secondary meaning, therefore, becomes more formative on the rationale for MEE than the primary. Three PCI documents inform MEE. The Mission Statement of 1992, the Coleraine Declaration of 1990 and the Peace Vocation of 1994 all influence PCI's missiology.

1.10. How Context Informs Praxis

How context informs and moulds praxis is a key question in this research. Northern Ireland is the geographical sphere in which most Irish Presbyterians live, and, therefore, its history requires theological reflection. The role of memory, specifically of wrongs and the repetition of those wrongs, will be considered as a theological influence upon PCI's theology (Volf, 2006:12). Context produces a contextual

theology rather than an abstract theology. Context then becomes “part and parcel of the attempt by Christians to think through how they should live in the world in which they find themselves” (Hauerwas, 2015:20-21). MEE arises from the ways in which Christians relate to that world in which they live. Evangelism relates to those deemed to be outside of the church: ecumenism relates to those of differing Christian traditions.

1.11. PCI's view of Catholicism

How PCI views Catholicism (loving the personnel but hating the institution) has a bearing on the ebb and flow of grace in MEE (Mak and Tsang, 2008:379; Augustine, 2005:25; Volf, 2006:8). Theological commonality between Presbyterians and Catholics can also further inform MEE (ERCDM, 1986:16-17; 30-32).

1.11.1. Practicing Catholics

The term “practicing Catholic” (Code of Canon Law, 1983:774; <http://portlanddiocese.org>; Carroll, 2009:10) aids Reformed praxis. This term denotes those who are Catholic both by convention and conviction. Whether evangelism or ecumenism has the primary emphasis in MEE would seem to depend upon how PCI's views non-Reformed denominations (Altemeyer, 2003:17; Erskine, 1988:43). The question whether Reformed theology is predisposed to emphasise evangelism or ecumenism in MEE provides part of the theological rationale for this research (Brewer, Higgins and Teeney, 2011:44). This potential tension between the evangelistic and ecumenical aspects of MEE, therefore, will be considered in the light of Reformed theology.

1.12. The Formation of Presbyterian Missiology

The formation of Presbyterian missiology has three primary influences: Scripture alone (Uprichard, 2000:7), eschatologically (Holmes, 2006:711-737; Weeks, 2004:62; Mt. 25:1-13), or personal profession of faith (Uprichard, 2000:78). The role of Presbyterian support of MEE through financial giving also has relevance (Lucas, 2006:143; Dunlop, 2013; Uprichard, 1992:114-116).

1.12.1. The Centrality of Preaching

The centrality of preaching in Reformed missiological praxis forms part of the discussion on MEE (Murray, 1976:125; Johnson, 2007; Stewart, 1972). This is seen in juxtaposition to the Catholic view of mission as ecumenical engagement via proclamation of the evangel in word and sacrament (McBrien, 1994:677; 724; Catechism, 1995:para.1116:316; Weigel, 2013:44). The role of proclamation in both Reformed and Catholic theology suggests a theological commonality on MEE (O'Brien, 2010:11; Dulles, 1987:76; Weigel, 2013:59).

2. Research Problem, Aim and Objectives

This research seeks to address the ebb and flow of grace in MEE with PCI both theoretically and practically. A theological rationale for emphasising either the evangelistic or ecumenical aspects of MEE will be considered. This rationale will consider the rectitude and necessity of theological agreement prior to ecumenical engagement. The logical implications of Reformed theology will be considered in order to ask whether an ecclesiastical exclusivity is unavoidable.

2.1. Tension between Theology and Praxis

A potential tension between theological reflection and practical ecclesiology also has implications. This tension builds upon the work of mission as it took place within the matrix of “diverse expressions of the growing ecumenical movement” (Guder, 2016:329). To address this tension the theological justification for the praxis of MEE will be considered. The definition of missional praxis in an authentically Presbyterian and Reformed tradition is an emphasis of this work.

2.2. A Double Focus

A double focus-to be theologically abstract but practically applicable-informs this research. Any conclusions made and recommendations offered may require a review of PCI's doctrinal tenets and praxis. This research cannot determine whether Presbyterianism is doctrinally or practically superior to any other Christian tradition.

It can, however, address the theological manifestation of MEE within PCI's praxis. Certain avenues of debate may come from other theological traditions than the Reformed, which may result in ecumenical rapprochement.

3. Central Theoretical Argument

This research addresses how MEE is practised within PCI. The focus is primarily theological and the context is primarily Ireland, North and South. The connection between theological belief, ecclesiastical identity and loyalty are key issues to be considered. They will be explored through PCI's interaction with the Catholic Church in Ireland. Which aspect of mission, evangelism or ecumenism, has been emphasised or rejected theologically and practically within PCI?

3.1. Theological Touchstones

The research rests upon a number of theological "touchstones" which inform the argument and through which the reflection will be filtered (Colglazier, 1999:3).

Mission and Evangelism: The key theological discipline is that of mission and the secondary focus is that of evangelism.

The *Missio Dei Trinitatis*: As mission is the key theological touchstone, the genesis of mission is found within Triune relationships.

The Kingdom of God: The inspiration and overarching theme of the kingdom of God informs and interprets the praxis of mission.

The Covenant of God: The rationale for mission is the belief that the Triune God enters into relationship with humanity through covenant.

The Cultures of the World: The contexts in which mission is practised are the differing cultures of the world.

The Church of Christ: The agents of mission are the covenant members of the kingdom of God, practising mission in culture and belonging to the church.

Ecumenism: This refers to the manner in which mission manifests itself through ecumenical engagement between people of different Christian traditions.

These theological “touchstones” inform, frame and contextualise this research. They will provide a lens by which PCI’s MEE is considered contextually and critiqued theologically.

4. Research design/ Methodology

Systematic theology is the method by which this research will consider MEE. Systematic theology has been chosen because it is argued to be a cultural expression found in praxis (Tillich, 1968:4). Systematic theology provides the theological rationale for reflection on MEE. Systematic theology also provides the theological rationale for the praxis of MEE. On that basis mission, evangelism and ecumenism are interpreted as being sub-sections of systematics (Diem, 1967:29-42; Holmes, 2006:72-90; Bevans, 2011:3).

4.1. The Beginning of the Research

Mission in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been influenced by British imperialism, which aimed to expanding Western culture (Stanley, 1990:34). This symbiotic relationship between British culture and mission provided the ideological rationale for MEE. A superior worth and a greater spiritual value was attributed to the sending culture, the West, over the receptor cultures. The notion of superiority informed the theology and praxis of mission. Cultural superiority as a motivation for mission seems to have eclipsed the theological mandate for mission. This meant that mission was used to establish one culture, and associated worldviews, as supreme over others (May, 2004:76).

4.1.1. Specific Attention

If a theological, cultural, ecclesiological and missional superiority are motivations for mission then PCI's relationship with the Catholic Church requires specific attention. This takes the general comment upon missional praxis and applies that to PCI in Ireland.

4.1.2. The Theological Gap

Evangelism has been suggested to occupy a potential gap in theological reflection (Guder, 1998:25). This supposed gap provides this research with its theological and academic rationale. Ecumenism has also been suggested to occupy a potential gap in theological reflection (Avis, 2010:vii-ix). By implication, the integration of the evangelistic and ecumenical perspectives into MEE gives this research a theological and academic rationale.

4.2. Qualitative, Constructivist/ Interpretivist Research

A Qualitative Constructivist/ Interpretivist model is being used as a basis for this dissertation (Creswell, 2009:74-75). Theological literature is the primary source because the ways in which words are interpreted relate belief to experience. The relationship between belief and experience impacts the praxis of MEE (Porter and Robinson, 2011:2). Qualitative research also honours the role of community in forming an understanding of reality (Berger and Luckmann: 1991:13). The community in this work is PCI. The view of reality is a salvific theology of God's engagement with humanity through the kingdom of God, covenant, culture, church and ecumenism.

4.2.1. Community Response

Questions about the ways in which people respond to what they have been taught highlight the educational role of theology for a community's missional praxis (Taylor, 2004:182). Accordingly, PCI's theological rationale for MEE will be considered. MEE has a focus upon those outside of a given community. The issue arises, therefore, of how those not born into the community understand missional

praxis. A Hegelian dialectical model is used, where a thesis is present, and the antithesis reacts against the thesis producing a synthesis is used (Hegel, 1833:51; Muller, 1958:166ff; Kauffman, 1978:154; Berger and Luckmann, 1991:149). In this research MEE within PCI presents the Reformed position, is countered by a non-Reformed position, and potentially results in a new position. Accordingly, evangelism can give way to ecumenism through theological interaction producing an integrated missiology of MEE.

4.2.2. Induction into Community

Induction into a community takes place in two ways: initial socialisation in childhood and secondary socialisation through personal and institutional relationships (Ritschl, 1986:51). Induction and participation into PCI primarily through institutional relationships with different denominations will be theologically considered in this research (Macquarrie, 1966:1-2).

4.3. The Role of Theology

Theology plays the role of mediating between a cultural context and the manifestation of religion in that context (Lonergan, 1971:xi). The context for this research is Ireland and PCI is specifically addressed as a manifestation of religion in this context. The nature of the church, its ontology, and the meaning of its existence, is the focus of this research. As such it is an investigation into the “very nature or essence of the social phenomena being investigated” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000:5).

4.3.1. Historical and Systematic Theology

MEE is being investigated through the matrix of systematic and historical theology. Such a hermeneutical approach is then applied to the “deliberate and explicit task” of MEE within PCI (Macquarrie, 1966:33). Investigating PCI’s MEE from an exclusively objective position may prove difficult. This is because historical theology is influenced by a “historical ambiguity” informed by personal and corporate experiences. In the case of PCI in Ireland, these experiences in turn inform MEE as

much as systematic theology informs it (Tracy, 1987:70). The interpretation of historical experiences produce a hermeneutical empathy toward prioritising either evangelism or ecumenism within MEE (Ritschl, 1986:41; Berger and Luckmann, 1991:51). It is this potential predisposition toward evangelism or ecumenism in MEE, and the theological justification thereof, which is the central question of this research.

4.3.2. Sub-Section of Ecclesiology

The primary disciplines of this research are historical and systematic theology (Tillich, 1968:195; Frei, 1992:2; Hegstad, 2013:3). Within historical and systematic theology the sub-discipline of ecclesiology is of particular resonance. Ecclesiology is significant because the church is “the bearer of the whole Christian message for the twentieth century, as well as the recapitulation of the entire doctrinal tradition from preceding centuries” (Pelikan, 1989:282). Further, as theological reflection develops, the church becomes central for how the world is understood. This in turn provides an “alternative linguistic community” in juxtaposition to the world (Hauerwas, 2015:29). It is within the juxtaposition between the church and the world that missional engagement happens.

4.3.3. Connection between Ecclesiology and Missiology

This research suggests a connection between ecclesiology and MEE. The church provides “the ecclesial form of life in which they (people) live,” the outworking of which is MEE (Stone, 2007:25). Further, mission has been defined as the driving force of ecclesiology (Guder, 2016:331). Historical and systematic theology are being used here to investigate a potential tension within MEE. The theological formulas of PCI and Catholicism can be difficult to discern. This is because of the “hypothetical, imperfect, analogical, obscure and gradually developing understanding for the mysteries of faith” (Doren, 2012:7; Lonergan, 1971:342; Tillich, 1968:12; Phan, 2011:14-15). Taking into account the ever changing principles of doctrine, a theological reflection of the systematic and historical

doctrinal positions is important. Such a reflection will help us to appreciate how both traditions understand and relate to each other ecclesiastically.

4.3.4. Historical Theology

Historical theology is being used to reflect upon religion and culture, and PCI's connection to both within Ireland (Tillich, 1968:33). The hermeneutical approach to the Bible will be in general literal rather than symbolic, following the tradition of Calvin (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:81; Haroutunian and Smith, 1958:28; Thiselton, 2009:130). Further, a redemption centred theology, following a Calvinist view of humanity, is typically followed (Calvin, 1957, Vol. 1:214; Bevans, 2011:21-22).

4.4. The Research Question

The research question of this dissertation is: Why is a primacy given to either evangelism or ecumenism within MEE? The integration of MEE is based upon Hugh MacMillan's research into the influences of foreign mission on ecumenism. His argument is that mission prepared the way for ecumenism (Macmillan, 1948:253). This dissertation seeks to take MacMillan's statement and apply it to Irish Presbyterian missions. Historical and systematic theology will be used to sift through any justification for a missional primacy. Further, historical and systematic theology are being applied to the doctrinal position of PCI to discern the justification for a given view of MEE as well as attitudes toward the Catholic Church.

4.4.1. Appropriating the Gospel

One key notion is how the message of the gospel, "the appropriation of the news," informs and justifies MEE within PCI (Brueggemann, 1993:19; Lonergan, 1971:34). The reason for an emphasis on evangelism or ecumenism with MEE, and any tension between, will be addressed hermeneutically.

4.4.2. Hermeneutical Reflection

A hermeneutical reflection, building upon Ricoeur's suggestions, takes into account the practices of PCI. These practices are the outcomes of the theological aims of PCI, the narrative unity of life which encompasses all PCI does, and demonstrates the ways in which PCI is true to its own doctrinal aims. Hermeneutical reflection also addresses the praxis of PCI, whether it is random or planned, what is done habitually and the reason for the praxis (Ricoeur, 2103:30-35). The hermeneutical reflection is carried out through a historical and systematic theological investigation of the basis of MEE within PCI.

4.4.3. Secondary Socialisation

Secondary socialisation, primarily through inter-ecclesiastical engagement, is also being used to understand how people imbibe theology (Berger and Luckmann, 1991:158). Whether PCI has a theological predisposition, therefore, toward evangelism or ecumenism in MEE, particularly regarding the Catholic Church, raises the issue of prejudice. Religious prejudice has been described as "the most persistent and the most insidious of all sources of hatred" (Newman, 1982:3). If consciously or unconsciously PCI's theological justification for MEE is informed by prejudice, the sources of that prejudice require noting (Newman, 1982:11, 24). Bigotry, discrimination, ethnocentrism, bias, racism, etc. will be examined as to whether they are theologically justified according to PCI's doctrinal tenets.

4.4.4. Secondary Research Foci

A number of secondary foci also arise from the research question:

- i. The importance of and implied extent of theological agreement as a prerequisite for ecumenical engagement and missionary praxis.
- ii. The extent to which Reformed and Presbyterian theology implies a priority of emphasis on evangelism or ecumenism within MEE.
- iii. The relationship and tension between the theological and ecclesiological positions of ecumenism and evangelism.

This dissertation speaks into the wider ecclesiological discussion on the nature of the church and the church as the proclaimer of mission (Hurley, 1998:148; Melano, 1999:159). A degree of self-reflection is implied which allows the theological reflection to proceed in any direction (Tracy, 1987:18, 28-29). Historical research, which attempts to locate, evaluate, synthesise and logically conclude an answer, therefore, best fits this reflection (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2005:158-159).

4.4.5. Theological Justification for Missionary Praxis

The theological justification for mission praxis directly relates to the enactment of theology. A historical precedent from the eighteenth century evangelical awakenings, to the nineteenth century missionary movements relates to the enactment of theology. Such enactment would seem to suggest that orthodox belief produces orthodox praxis (orthopraxis) in MEE, because denominations take their history with them (Stanley, 2006:444; Avis, 2010:80; Hope, 2006:47). This work seeks to investigate the praxis of MEE. By placing the worldview of PCI and the Reformed tradition in relation to what is done, the justification for deeming action orthopraxis can be discerned (Smith, 2009:11).

4.4.5.1. The Primary Focus

The primary focus of this work is the theological justification for emphasising one aspect of mission as either evangelism or ecumenism at the expense of the other. This issue will be discussed in the context of the ebb and flow of grace from PCI to Catholicism. The church will be seen to be both abstract, as a theological concept, and subjective, as the denominational institution to which people belong (Berger and Luckmann, 1991:37).

4.4.6. Limitations of this Research

This research cannot determine whether one form of Christian expression is more theologically accurate than another. Rather, it is a reflection on the theological justification of PCI's MEE. The theological reflection will consider a dialectic struggle between evangelical and ecumenical praxis (Lonergan, 1971:111, 235).

“Symphonic theology” will aid this research as it considers how different theological traditions may influence and inform one another (Poythress, 2001:82). Accordingly, evangelism and ecumenism could become inseparable manifestations of theologically authentic ecclesiology.

4.5. Historical and Qualitative Research

Historical research is “the systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2005:158). Historical research is, therefore, being used to consider theology as a motivation for praxis. Reformed historical theology is being used to ask whether MEE is definitive of Reformed praxis and an authentic model for PCI.

4.5.1. Double Meaning Structure

A “double meaning structure” arises when theological justification is considered as primary or secondary to historical and cultural experiences (Ricoeur, 2013:5). Applied to PCI’s missiology, the double meaning manifests through the expression of certain assumptions about Catholicism which PCI believes are formed theologically. The formation, however, is moulded by history, politics and culture. Expressing these assumptions uses theological language, yet that language is both theological and expressive of the history, politics and culture of Ireland. As such the double meaning is on the surface theological, but under the surface much more complex and unique to Irish Presbyterianism. The double meaning structure of PCI’s missiology will be accessed through the theology and praxis of evangelism and ecumenism. The justification for the tension within MEE is, therefore, both culturally historical and theological. The double meaning structure dovetails with “habitualization” in which actions are constantly repeated with little thought for the reasons (Berger and Luckmann, 1991:70-71).

4.5.2. Qualitative Method

Qualitative method compares one set of facts with another (Bell, 2009:7-8). Qualitative method, therefore, provides a hermeneutical detachment from the principles, beliefs, events and rhetoric which may motivate PCI's theology of MEE. Qualitative method also gives priority to the objectivity of written language (Porter and Robinson, 2011:119, 125).

4.5.3. Social Constructivism

Social constructivism contends that knowledge is constructed within a given society and understanding that knowledge requires understanding of the context (Berger and Luckmann, 1991:13). Within social constructivism, history and culture form a definite influence on belief (Creswell, 2009:8). Historical and cultural influences on PCI's theology and praxis of MEE will be considered. The issue of whether there is prejudice whenever MEE is focused upon the Catholic Church by PCI in praxis is also informed by social constructivism (Newman, 1982:26-27). This further feeds into cultural linguistics which suggests that action is a manifestation of how we are prepared to understand the world (Smith, 2013:31). Consideration of social constructivism and cultural liturgies will help this research by addressing the stimuli which form PCI's theology and praxis.

4.5.3.1. Positivism and Anti-Positivism

History will be addressed in this dissertation through the tension between "positivism and anti-positivism" (Ricoeur, 2013:97). The historical and cultural influences on Reformed theology and PCI will be considered in order to grasp whether Reformed theology is predisposed toward emphasising evangelism or ecumenism or both within MEE.

4.6. Merits in the Study

Theological reflection on evangelism is important because “there is no substitute for serious theological inquiry about evangelism as a practice” (Stone, 2007:19). Asking the research question about PCI’s theology of MEE is worthwhile because it considers a public aspect of the PCI’s witness and relationship to other denominations.

4.6.1. Sectarian Missiology

The sectarian aspect of MEE, such as seeking to convert potential missional targets, has resulted in the study of evangelism going out of vogue. Accordingly, there is a paucity of literature on the subject of evangelism (Abraham, 1991:5; Tomlin, 2002:16, 71). This research attempts a modest addition to academic reflection on evangelism.

4.6.2. Reasons for Evangelistic Emphasis

If evangelism is emphasised at the expense of ecumenism within MEE then reasons other than theological may be responsible. Numerical decline, financial shortages and cultural changes in Ireland can be discerned as moving the Ulster psyche toward evangelical conservatism (Stewart, 1997:99-100). These influences, and reactions to them, challenge the theological identity of PCI. As a church PCI claims that its identity is formed by theology and the Bible rather than context (Farley, 1996:36). If non-theological and non-biblical influences inform PCI’s MEE, then its ecclesiastical identity may be compromised.

4.6.3. The Fullest Manifestation of Mission

This research argues that mission can only be fully manifested as both evangelism and ecumenism. This research gives ecclesiastical respect to the multiplicity of denominational expressions within Christianity as a genuine manifestation of theological reflection. This research also argues that mission can only properly be manifested as both evangelism and ecumenism within PCI and Ireland. The imperative of reconciliation, both human-divine and human-human (2 Cor. 5:18-19),

is interpreted as being integral to the gospel. Rather than reacting to historical and cultural influences, a practical alternative is then offered. This alternative refuses to interpret denominational aims as imperative upon MEE. Instead, an ecumenical engagement with different traditions informs, inspires and encourages missional praxis (Farley, 1996:37; Willowbank, 1978; Avis, 2010:25). This research contends that PCI will be better and stronger through MEE being indivisibly linked.

5. Partial Conclusion

This section has considered how this research will be conducted, the manner in which the subject came to be considered and the research question it will endeavour to answer. The work has been grounded in the field of historical and systematic theology and ecclesiology. Proposed limitations of the research were highlighted. Both historical and qualitative research were noted as the primary basis of this research. Social constructivism also aids the research question. Lastly, the merits of the study as an investigation into evangelism and ecumenism were also discussed.

Chapter 2

The Context for the Ebb and Flow of Grace

1. Introduction

Michael Hurley, a well-known Jesuit priest involved in Irish ecumenism, stated if he were to change his church allegiance it would be from Catholic to Presbyterian. Hurley's opinion was influenced by a personal friendship with a non-ecumenical PCI minister, Donald Gillies. Despite the deep theological differences between Hurley and Gillies, Gillies' theological acumen gave Hurley a new appreciation for Reformed systematic theology (2003:62-63).

1.1. Personal Context

Hurley's confession paints a personal context for this research. Through focusing on mission as evangelism and ecumenism (MEE) within PCI this research will consider whether theological agreement is a prerequisite for ecumenical engagement. It will reflect upon the historical context of PCI to explore the interplay between the setting, the message/ messenger and the specific society of Ireland (Yates, 1994:5). The goal of this research is to discern whether ecclesiological isolation results from an authentic interpretation of historic Reformed and systematic theology.

1.2. Mission and Pentecost

The Christian church's mission can be traced back to the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples at Pentecost. The Spirit's descent inspired the church to MEE as the gospel was to be taken from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. The Spirit's descent also inspired MEE unifying the early Christians into one church (Schillebeeckx, 1989:5).

1.3. Christianity Comes to Ireland

How Christianity first came to Ireland is not recorded in the biblical corpus. There are hints that locations on the extreme edges of the Roman Empire would be evangelised (Rom. 15:20-21). As the church bore witness to Christ, MEE would take

the gospel from “Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NRSV). Presbyterianism is one manifestation of the church of Christ and Ireland is one geographical location where the gospel took root.

1.4. Twain's Perception of Presbyterians

The ways in which Presbyterians have been viewed give helpful insights into a popular caricature. Mark Twain describes the Presbyterian as a devoted person with a concise knowledge of church law, and if misunderstood would take the opportunity to “explain it with any weapon you might prefer from bradawls to artillery” (Twain, 1998:7). Such a caricature of Presbyterians suggests a confrontational personality combined with an evangelistic fervour. Grace would, therefore, flow in evangelism but ebbing in ecumenical engagement. Orthodox theology would be held as superior to orthodox practice (orthopraxis). Twain's caricature could mean that the Presbyterian missionary blurs the message of mission.

1.5. Reasons for Evangelism's Primacy

Twain's caricature may explain why evangelism rather than ecumenism has been more readily defined Presbyterian mission than ecumenism. The mode of delivery and the public persona of the missionary would result in ecclesiastical rejection from other denominations. Grace would then ebb from Presbyterian missions because of the perceived need to maintain the exclusivity of theological truth. Ecclesiastical isolation becomes the de facto position because the missionary misinterprets the rejection of their theological position. Presbyterian missionaries interpret the rejection of their theology as resulting from the plausibility of false theology.

2. The Evangelical History and Tradition of Ireland

Before discussing the key contextual themes of Irish Presbyterianism, it is necessary to comment on the theological tradition which gave birth to the Reformed faith. John Calvin (1509-1564) has had a profound influence upon Presbyterianism, being claimed as the founding father (Holmes, 1985:1). The overarching theme of the sovereignty of God over the spiritual affairs of humanity seen in drawing, sustaining

and consummating faith is key. Calvin writes: “God reigns when men, in denial of themselves, and contempt of the world and this earthly life, devote themselves to righteousness and aspire to heaven” (Calvin, Vol. 2, 1957:189). The devotion to righteousness informs MEE by underlining the need for reconciliation with the divine. The devotion informs MEE by forging links amongst those who are under divine sovereignty.

2.1. The Sovereignty of God

Divine sovereignty is identified by Calvin with the coming eschaton in which the kingdom of God corrects personal human fallenness. This takes place by “taming sinfulness” which brings an obedience to Christ (Calvin, Vol. 2, 1957:189-190; Skydsgaard, 1951:386). Such obedience influences MEE through emphasising the communal aspect of ecclesiastical transformation. MEE is further informed by the same eschaton as Christians define themselves in opposition to “the world” as a passing entity (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Aspects of the coming kingdom of God are, therefore, implemented in corporate transformation through personal spiritual development. The twin themes of personal conversion to Christ and commitment to the church are married in Calvin’s theology (Calhoun, 2008:362). While this research considers the role of PCI as an entity in MEE, the personal cannot be ignored. It is the personal which informs the corporate, and even substitutes for the corporate when it is absent.

2.2. Calvinist Ecclesiology and Confessional Identity

Calvin’s particular influence upon PCI is seen in the rejection of bishops, opting instead for a collegiate government by elders arranged in geographical areas called presbyteries (Holmes, 1985:2-3). Calvin’s ecclesiology finds expression in the theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF). It has been argued that the WCF has had a greater impact on PCI than Calvin (Barkley, 1958:11-15). It has also been argued that in general “Reformed theology cannot do without confession” (Allen, 2016:28). An interaction with the “subordinate standards” of the

church may, therefore, have more relevance to the uniqueness of PCI than Calvin's historical influence (*Code*, 2013:3:12). The twin elements of Calvinistic theology and the WCF form the theological basis of PCI and as such inform all aspects of MEE.

2.3. Ireland and Mission

Ireland as a geographical entity has been associated with mission from the early Christian times. Pope Gregory the Great in the sixth century used Irish missionaries to evangelise the Germanic peoples who had settled in Britain (Latourette, 1845:272-273). The Irish church would continue in MEE through the preservation, copying and illumination of ancient manuscripts in Irish monasteries (Cairnes, 1981:117). This provided a service to the wider church and to the church throughout history. Ireland has also recently experienced a drawing of mission to the island through African migration which established black churches (Cagney, 2007).

2.4. Ireland and Evangelicalism

Evangelicalism has long been associated with Ireland. Evangelicalism began to take root in Ireland in the later eighteenth century through the Church of Ireland (CoI) and PCI (Yates, 2010:37). The eighteenth century, however, did not give birth to evangelicalism per se. Evidence can be deduced of MEE in prior centuries, albeit different in context than the more recent forms. Nonetheless, central evangelical doctrinal tenets can be seen throughout Irish church history.

2.4.1. Evangelicalism Described

Evangelicalism can be described as “a dedicated personal relationship with Jesus Christ . . . sustained by the constant struggle for grace and faith alone” (Spencer, 2012:37). The struggle for grace and faith alone is the emphasis of this work's title, “The Ebb and Flow of Grace”. While there may have been times when grace flowed in revival and ecumenism, there were also times when it ebbed through persecution, separation and division.

2.5. St Patrick and Mission

Patrick has been credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland, however, the initial flow of MEE to the Celts was pioneered by Palladius. Palladius was sent by Pope Celestine in 431 CE as the first Irish bishop (Stewart, 1936:9; Schaff, Vol. 4, 1884:20-21; Edwards, 1993:1-12). This does not, however, eliminate the central and formative role Patrick played within the Irish church.

2.5.1. Patrick's Background

Patrick was born a Briton and grew up in the final days of the Roman Empire's occupation. Patrick was a third generation Christian, his father Calponnus and grandfather Potitus both being priests. He was born in Bannaventa Berniae, the exact location of which has been lost. His name, Patrick, meant "of the noble or patrician class" (Freeman, 2005:2-3; Bury, 1998:16-18; Thompson, 1985:1-15, Latourette, 1945:101-102; Cairnes, 1981:128-129). Patrick was captured and sold into slavery, but escaped back to Britain. After undergoing theological training in Lérins and Auxerre, he discerned God's voice calling him back to Ireland and Christian ministry (Freeman, 2005:24-32; Bury, 1998:37-53; Thompson, 1985:35-78).

2.5.2. Patrick and the Catholic Church

Patrick's relationship with the Catholic Church has been described as Catholic but not Roman Catholic. Some have even identified him as an independent catholic or semi-Protestant (Pearson, 1947:3; Schaff, Vol. 4, 1884:20). Whether these are correct designations of Patrick or not, the Celtic church of which he was part did seem to differ from the Catholic Church.

2.5.2.1. The Ebbing of Grace in Patrick

An ebbing from Catholicism is seen in Patrick's missiology. Patrick engaged with Celtic chieftains through a process of evangelism and church planting (Carnduff, 2003:7; Stewart, 1936:15). Patrick's passion for mission in Ireland is summed up as follows: "I am prepared to give even my life without hesitation and most gladly and

for his name, and it is there that I wish to spend it until I die, if the Lord should grant it to me” (Holmes, 1992:113).

2.5.3. Patrick's Cultural Sensitivity

Grace flows in Patrick through a cultural sensitivity toward the Irish psyche. At the same time grace can be seen to ebb through his desire to transform the Irish psyche into something more “humane and more noble while keeping it Irish” (Cahill, 1995:115). That Patrick was consciously emphasising evangelism and downplaying ecumenism toward the Catholic Church seems possible. His focus was on grace flowing through the church to gain followers to Christianity from the pagan, Celtic, druidic religion.

2.5.4. Patrick's Ecclesiology

Under the influence of Patrick and his appointed bishops grace flowed through the Irish church developing a unique culture, liturgy and theology: “distinctive but orthodox Christianity that was as beautiful in its art as in its spirit” (Ryan, 2004:17). Rather than being based on a parochial model, the Irish church was built around monasteries and schools (Stewart, 1936:17-19, 21-22; Hamilton, 1887:9).

2.5.5. Wandering Bishops

The Irish church adopted the practice of “wandering bishops” who travelled throughout monastic settlements offering spiritual oversight. Missionaries were sent from Ireland to the Orkney Islands, the Faroe Islands, Scotland, Iceland, Germany, France and Italy from Ireland (Latourette, 1945:332-333). To claim Patrick as “presbyterian” in polity seems somewhat farfetched as the evidence of bishops suggest. A non-diocesan ecclesiology, however, does seem to suggest that Patrick deviated from traditional Catholic ecclesiology (Hamilton, 1887:12).

2.5.6. Columba

The Irish church became “a gleam in the growing darkness”. One example of the centrality of mission was demonstrated in Columba, the “apostle to the Northern Picts”. Columba was born of Irish royal blood and in 563 CE sailed from Derry to the Island of Iona in Scotland, to begin a monastic settlement (Latourette, 1945:342; Hamilton, 1887:15; Latourette, 1945:244 Stewart, 1936:20-21).

2.5.7. Columbanus

Columbanus was also an example, sent by the Irish church to Burgundy in France to establish a Celtic monastery and school in the tradition of Patrick. Columbanus would ultimately refuse to submit to the Frankish bishops (Hamilton, 1887:19; Latourette, 1945:342-343). The Irish church demonstrates the flow of grace in MEE throughout the island and into the nations. The Irish church seems to ebb and flow in MEE in their relationship to the Catholic Church.

2.5.8. Catholic Reaction to Patrick's Church

The Catholic Church took notice of the Irish church and how it had developed along a distinctly Celtic path. Theologically, the Celtic church was critical of papal councils and decrees, emphasising the exclusive role of Scripture in doctrinal formation. Practically, the Celtic church maintained Saturday as the Sabbath and Sunday as the Lord's Day. Ecclesiastically, the Celtic church looked to Iona rather than Rome as its centre of power (Stewart, 2008:124; Holmes and Bickers, 2002:49; Wilkerson, 2004:188). Pope Adrian IV called a synod in Cashel in 1101 which brought the Irish church under the supremacy of the English Church and the jurisdiction of the See of Rome, effectively Catholicizing Ireland (Ryan, 2004:18; Schaff, Vol. 4, 1884:27-28). Cashel divided the island of Ireland into dioceses with a threefold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon (Hamilton, 1887:19-20).

2.5.9. Celtic Monastic Praxis

MEE flowed from the Celtic monastic praxis of Patrick, Columba and Columbanus, partly because of the unsympathetic attitude of the Catholic Church for Irish ecclesiology. The ebb continued through a Catholic desire to enforce a common liturgy, ecclesiology, catechesis and language upon Ireland.

2.6. The Beginning of Irish Presbyterianism

Irish Presbyterianism, as the Celtic church before, flowed in its own theological and ecclesiastical emphasis. The first Presbyterians were present in Dublin in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Walter Travers, a Fellow of Trinity College Cambridge, was appointed first Provost of Dublin University. The university college was modelled on Trinity College Cambridge with the aim of providing an education for the clergy in the Irish church (Holmes, 1985:3-4).

2.6.1. Archbishop James Ussher

Within the Irish church James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh (1625-1656), produced 104 Articles of Faith (Annexure 1). Ussher's theology was that of an "extreme Puritan and Calvinist" (Carr, 2006:164; Snoddy, 2014:5; Capern, 1996:57-85; Campbell, 2014:7). While he was an episcopalian, Ussher's articles did not refer to the ordination of bishops and allowed multiplicity in ecclesiastical polity within the Church of Ireland. While not specifically Presbyterian, Ussher's Irish church would enshrine MEE through the wide spectrum of ecclesiastical praxis.

2.6.2. The Failure of the Irish Reformation

The Irish Reformation would ultimately fail because of the lack of an "agreed strategy" (Stewart, 1936:39; Gribben, 2003:110; 2004:37-44). MEE flowed between the different Protestant traditions. Yet the ecumenical engagement between the Protestant traditions seems to have been directly responsible for the Irish Reformation's failure by not producing a commonality of purpose. Instead a focus on reforming the church according to each tradition's ecclesiastical emphasis dominated.

2.6.3. Anti-Catholicism and the Irish Articles

The Irish Articles pointed out where Protestants theologically disagreed with Catholics (Gribben, 2003:38-39). Questions 68 to 69 deal with the nature of the church, arguing that there is no salvation outside of the church as the church consists of the entire number of the elect. Visible churches, the denominational and local manifestations of the wider whole, have a mixed theological identity. This includes both the elect and non-elect (Ussher, 2007:584-585). While flowing in MEE, the Irish Articles portray the ebb of grace through anti-Catholic theology which dominated the seventeenth century.

2.6.4. The Plantation of Ulster

Presbyterianism came to Ireland primarily through James I's plantation of Ulster, although Scots had settled in Ulster before (Irwin, 2009:52; Clayton, 1998:46). This was an attempt to unseat the Irish Catholic nobility and to impose a commonality of culture between Ireland and Britain (Robinson, 2000; Perceval-Maxwell, 1990). Many ministers travelled from Scotland and took up pastorates within the established church, although retaining a presbyterian polity and liturgy (Roulston, 2005:31). MEE flowed from Scotland and England to the Irish church, albeit with a distinctly anti-Catholic ethos.

2.6.5. The Act of Uniformity - Division and Unity

With the Act of Uniformity of 1662 ministers were ejected from Church of Ireland pulpits for refusing to use the *Book of Common Prayer*. This resulted in the establishment of nonconformist congregations (Appleby, 2012:68; De Kray, 2007:41; Mayne, 2006:203). These nonconformist congregations joined to establish the first Irish Presbytery of the Church of Scotland (CoS). The first meeting was held on 10 June, 1642 in Carrickfergus (Stewart, 1936:58-59). Irish Presbyterianism demonstrates the ebb and flow of grace in MEE through separation. The ebb of grace is evidenced when, in 1705, the Presbytery of Antrim separated from the Synod of Ulster over Arianism. The flowing of grace is evidence in 1840 when the Synod of

Ulster and the Secessionist Synod united to form the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (Stewart, 1936:97-99, 122-124; Hamilton, 1887:164).

2.6.6. Arianism in Irish Presbyterianism

Arianism had a formative influence on MEE within Irish Presbyterianism. The doctrine of the Trinity became a means of evangelising those who rejected it and a source of division amongst early Irish Presbyterians. Grace ebbs and flows in a lack of ecumenical grace between the Trinitarians and Arians with the Synod of Ulster, but in the solidifying of common doctrine as a basis for the new Church.

2.6.6.1. Royal Belfast Academical Institution

The issue of Arianism arose from the in 1810 establishment of the Academical Institution in Belfast (<http://www.rbai.org.uk>). “Arianism became dominant in the management of the new seminary, and no small part of the Arian controversy in the Synod of Ulster arose out of the relations between that body and the Belfast College” (Hamilton, 1887:148). Arianism was based on the writings of the third century North African theologian Arius. Most of Arius’ works are only referenced by Catholic theologians trying to demonstrate his unorthodoxy (Williams, 1987:95-99). Arianism taught: “There was [a time] when God was all alone, and was not yet a father; only later did he become a father” (Williams, 1987:100).

2.6.6.2. Rev. J Smethurst

An English proponent of Arianism, Rev. J. Smethurst, was brought to Ireland to preach on the subject. Henry Cooke of the Synod of Ulster “pledged himself to refute every dogma which the commissioned advocate of Arianism had propounded” (Hamilton, 1887:149; Holmes, 1985:100). Cooke’s main adversary over Arianism within Irish Presbyterianism was Rev. John Abernethy. Abernethy was a complex man, and while historically divisive, it is claimed he was naturally a “conciliator” (Stewart, 2008:11). Abernethy championed the “new light” movement within Irish Presbyterianism. The term “new light” was first attributed to Abernethy by John Malcome. Initially Abernethy did not like the term, believing it to be

“vulgar,” despite becoming widely used in Ireland (Abernethy, 1727:17; Malone, 1720:5; Steers, 2006:37). Abernethy became the “intellectual impetus” for the Non-Subscribing position.

2.6.6.3. Bishop Benjamin Hoadley

Abernethy's New Light Presbyterianism owed much to Bishop Benjamin Hoadley's 1717 work *The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ*. This work was critical of any ecclesiastical authority or discipline not authorised by Jesus himself. This led to a critical view of subscription. Instead, Abernethy embraced “the freedom of reason, the rational containment of the passions, and the sense of fulfilment born of good works” (Stewart, 2008:18). Practically, this meant a rejection of Calvinism, particularly the doctrine of original sin, and an embracing of Arminianism (Stewart, 2008:18). Abernethy argued that the only test necessary for membership and ministry of the church is that laid down by Christ, namely confession of personal faith (Holmes, 1985:64). While Abernethy may have been a Trinitarian, the rejection of any creed by the non-subscribing position carried with it the stigma of Arianism.

2.6.6.4. Synod of Ulster's Response

The Synod of Ulster, meeting in Cookstown in 1823, established a panel to interview prospective candidates for the ministry. This had the aim of eradicating Arianism from Irish Presbyterianism (Hamilton, 1887:153). Cooke, however, went even further. He was not just content with countering the theological position of Arianism in debate but he set about exterminating it from the church. Whether he sought to win converts to Trinitarian theology is unclear. There seems to have been, however, a deliberate targeting of those with a different theology, assuming that they were not proper Christians. Grace ebbs away in doctrinal division, separation and schism, but at the same time flowed in the synodical union amongst Trinitarian Presbyterians.

2.6.7. Persecution of Early Irish Presbyterians

Throughout the history of Irish Presbyterianism there was persecution and backlash. Initially this was by Irish Catholics who led a rebellion in 1641. Led by Owen Roe O'Neill, their aim was that "the English and Scottish settlers in Ulster would be swept away" (Holmes, 2000:26-27; Holmes, 1985:25). This rebellion was partly caused by the targeting of Catholics in MEE by early Presbyterians. Such targeting identified Presbyterianism with the political ethos of Britain as much as with the theological teaching of the Reformation.

2.6.7.1. British Persecution

British persecution began in 1560 when the Act of Uniformity banned conducting services in Irish. If the clergy could not speak English then Latin was the preferred language. An attempt to anglicise the Irish through religion seems implied in this policy. The protection of the Anglican ascendancy of bishops and gentry was a further aim (Jefferies, 1998:128-141). The CoI targeted mainly Scottish ministers for not using the Prayer Book. The 1691 Test Act required communicant membership of the Parish Church in order to be able to serve in any social sphere (Stewart, 1936:81-89; Latourette, 1945:830). It was not until the reign of Queen Anne that the Test Act was abolished (Hamilton, 1887:111). The Test Act was a manifestation of an evangelistic aim rather than ecumenism, being described as "a further attempt to compel all to come into the Anglican Church" (Henderson, 1954:145-146). Grace ebbed through CoI's persecution of nonconformist traditions and the aim of anglicising Irish Christianity. Grace equally ebbed in a failure to recognise the common Reformed theological principles present in Anglicanism and nonconformity.

2.6.7.2. The Solemn League and Covenant

Prior to the interregnum the Scottish Church, in 1638, signed The Solemn League and Covenant. This demanded an ecclesiastical and political reformation in Britain and Ireland. With the movement of Scottish settlers to Ireland the covenant became a focus of Irish Presbyterianism. In 1639 Thomas Wentworth, Lord Deputy of Ireland, passed the Black Oath requiring abjuration of the Solemn League and Covenant. This

forced Presbyterians to go against their theological conscience or face persecution (Gribben, 2003:68-70).

2.7. John Owen and the Interregnum in Ireland

On 28 February 1650, John Owen, who had returned from Ireland as chaplain to Oliver Cromwell's army, preached before the House of Commons. Whilst in Ireland he had been Chancellor of Trinity College, Dublin, and had been involved in preaching in the city (Oliver, 2002:20). The experience deeply affected him, saying to the Commons: "God hath been faithful in doing great things, be faithful in this one-do your utmost for the preaching of the gospel in Ireland" (Anderson, 2008:94; Owen, 1967:236; Thompson, 2004:45). Owen, as a Puritan, represents the Reformed churches and an understanding of MEE. Owen further represents the ongoing commitment of the English to change the spiritual identity of the Irish people. How this was to be accomplished was not elaborated upon by Owen; however, history would seem to suggest a colonial attitude rather than a spiritual one.

2.7.1. Cromwell and Ireland

Colonialism can be discerned through the events of Cromwell's Irish Campaign (1649-1653). The events in the towns of Drogheda and Wexford has produced significant debate. For some the events have been variously described as "savagery" and "bloodletting" (Barnard, 1993:181-182). This generally negative few of Cromwell's siege of Drogheda has been popular amongst historians (McElligott, 2001:109-132; Ó'Siochrú, 2007:266-282; Lenihan, 2007:94-109, 129-135). On the other hand, Drogheda was a garrison town for English royalist soldiers, commanded by Arthur Aston (1590-1649), himself an English Catholic (Adams, 1747:242). Cromwell ordered his soldiers to "spare none" when they entered the town (Reilly, 1999:71). Drogheda could, therefore, be interpreted not as an instance of English imperialism over the Irish, but as a manifestation of Parliament's conflict with the crown. Reassessment has viewed Cromwell's actions in Drogheda differently (Royle, 2005; McKeiver, 2007:65-73). It is pointed out that Parliamentary troops lived in the town alongside the populace for the two years prior to the siege and continued to live

in Drogheda after (Reilly, 2014:60-110). The rectitude of viewing Cromwell's Irish campaign negatively or positively is a matter of disagreement. What can be said, however, is that the events in Drogheda continues to cast a shadow over contemporary Ireland (BBC News, 2017).

2.7.2. The Regium Donum

While these events happened centuries ago, their implications can still be discerned today. Within PCI the *regium donum*, a financial payment which Cromwell instituted to control Irish Presbyterian clergy (Hamilton, 1887:73), still financially benefits parish clergy. An anti-Presbyterian ethic can also be discerned in the Cromwellian period as Independent (Congregational) and Baptist Congregations were moved into Presbyterianism meeting houses from their own meeting houses (Holmes, 2000:38).

2.7.2.1. Ebb and Flow of Grace in Cromwell

During Cromwell's protectorate grace continued to ebb and flow. Grace ebbs in the Black Oath which contradicted the conviction of Irish Presbyterians. Grace flowed ecumenically in the uniting of Independent and Baptist congregations into a wider Reformed context within Presbyterianism. Evangelism and ecumenism were, therefore, equally present in Ireland.

2.8. Revivals in Ireland

With the coming of Presbyterianism to Ireland a series of revivals or spiritual awakenings ensued. Revival has been described in different ways. James Buchanan (1842:227) suggests a general impartation of new life to the church and awakening conversions amongst the community. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1960:38) agrees, highlighting the "unusual work" of the Holy Spirit bringing new life to the church.

2.8.1. The Six Mile Valley Revival

As a result of the Six Mile Valley revival (1625) the first Irish Presbytery was established (Hamilton, 1887:43-44). Whether there is a causal relationship between the birth of Presbyterianism in Ireland and spiritual revival is a matter of conjecture, but it seems that they accompanied one another. The Six Mile Valley revival demonstrates MEE under the leadership of Rev. James Glendenning. Glendenning preached law and terror to elicit a response from hearers (Stewart, 1936:43-44; Patton, 2008). The format of these meetings was a monthly communion service, patterned on the Scottish system, whereby Saturday was given to preparation, Sunday to preaching and the sacrament, and Monday to thanksgiving (Holmes, 2000:19). This provided “a deep-seated and enduring” impact, different from other revivals (Gribben, 2003:57).

2.8.2. The 1859 Ulster Revival

Perhaps the best-known revival in Ireland was the 1859 Ulster Revival (Gibson, 1989). Although evangelicalism was prominent in Ulster at the time, the revival transformed the “cold, religious observance” of Presbyterianism into something much warmer. The revival had an ecumenical aspect, including people from the CoI, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists and individual Catholics. Some of the Catholics joined Protestant churches as a result of the revival (Holmes, 1985:122-123). Grace ebbs and flows through the changing of denominational allegiance, whether through deliberate influence or not, between Catholicism and Protestantism. Grace flowed through the widespread spiritual awakening in Ulster. The expectation that Catholics would leave their Church as a result of evangelical experience to join Protestantism became a key issue in ecumenical reflection. If evangelism and ecumenism are believed to work together in mission, producing MEE, then such expectations may provide evidence of grace’s ebbing in the objectification of religious traditions.

2.9. Evangelicalism in Ireland

Evangelicalism is seen in microcosm through open-air preachers in Belfast, historically developing from the Baptist and Congregational Churches (Newsletter, 2014; Evers, 1841:171). The genesis seems to have been George Whitfield in 1739 (Newsletter, 2014), continuing through the nineteenth century amongst all the Protestant denominations (Holmes, 2002:47-66; Farrell, 2009:146; Maltby and Maltby, 1979:241). This continues today through, for example, the Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle, the Elim Pentecostal Church, and the “Belfast Outreach Campaign” (“Belfast Outreach”). This public aspect of Christian expression suggests a general evangelical ecclesiology within the Northern Irish churches (ECONI, 1998:9; Ganiel, 2009:10).

2.9.1. The Unique Context of Ireland

It has been argued that evangelicalism finds its most virulent forms in those contexts which are distant from modernity and cultural change (Jordan, 2002:16). If this is the case, then the unique geography of Ireland as an island may as much inform evangelicalism as theological reflection. Irish evangelicalism, therefore, cannot be separated from the ever-evolving historical, social and political context. This context informs the interpretation of Irish history and the formation of Irish identity (Mitchell, 2008:223). The result is a unique evangelical subculture, impacting political morality, ecclesiastical identity and missional praxis (Mitchell and Tilly, 2004:585-601; Ganiel, 2006:38-48).

2.9.2. Contextual Impact

The impact of history, politics, social culture and church on the moulding of an Irish evangelicalism may mean that a purely theological critique is impossible if it chooses to ignore such influences. What requires comment is whether these influences on evangelicalism are contradictory to PCI’s theological foundations. Grace is seen to ebb by attaching social, political, historical and ecclesiastical conditions to Christian evangelism. Grace is seen to flow in a desire and commitment to share the gospel in MEE.

2.10. Keswick and the Deepening of the Spiritual Life

The Keswick Convention began in the late nineteenth century in the North of England under the guidance of an Anglican clergyman, Canon T.D. Harford-Battersby. Keswick emphasised the “higher life” or deepening of the spiritual life (Harford-Battersby, 2012; Price and Randall, 2000:18-37). Liberalism within the Church of England pushed evangelicals to examine their own spirituality and provided a context for Keswick (Randall, 2014:89-108).

2.10.1. Keswick Daughter Conventions

Daughter conventions were set up throughout Britain and further afield, including Portstewart. The North of Ireland Keswick has been described as “the most impressive of them all” (Pollock and Randall, 2013:1940; Keswick Ministries, 2017). Keswick at Portstewart sought and continues to seek to maintain a “high level of Biblical ministry focused on the deepening of spiritual life and the promotion of Scriptural and practical holiness in the lives of the attendees” (Fell, 2013:190).

2.10.2. Gospel Inclusivity

A key thought of the Keswick movement is “gospel inclusivity,” where creed is not as important as evangelical experience or a shared commitment to evangelical theology. This results in a willingness to allow secondary theological matters to remain secondary rather than cause division (Keswick Ministries, 2017). Evangelicals from the main Protestant denominations are, therefore, enabled to come together despite the doctrinal differences in their ecclesiastical traditions.

2.10.3. The Holiness Background

Keswick is an example of MEE, grace flowing in evangelical ecumenism. The focus of the convention is internal: “cleansing and consecration, deliverance and dedication” (Harford, 2012:79). The holiness movement of the nineteenth century claimed that Christians could experience victory over sin through a second blessing experience after conversion. It had particular influence upon Keswick (Fell, 2013:9; White, 1986; Scotland, 2009:117-136). The three emphases of Keswick holiness

were: first, it is biblical; second, there must be a willingness to enter into holiness and live the life; third, it must be claimed at the moment (Smith, 1874).

2.10.4. Challenges to Keswick

A number of issues challenged the Keswick convention in the 1980s. These have been a lack of youth attendance, lack of familiarity with communication trends, dated approach to music, and the date of the Convention during the school term (Fell, 2013:150-152). A further issue for Keswick at Portstewart is the lack of women's involvement. Only twice in the Convention's history have women addressed the gathering. In 1914 Mrs. S.A. Bill, founder of the Qua Iboe Mission, spoke and in 1994 Violet McComb, from the Middle East Christian Outreach, and Maizie Smith, of the Unevangelised Fields Mission, addressed the missionary meeting. It was not until 2001 that Anne Taylor joined the organising committee (Fell, 2013:192). If the lack of women addressing the Convention and the later involvement in the organising committee is through conviction or even by default, then a problem could arise for PCI which has emphasised egalitarianism in leadership (*The Code*, 2013:15).

2.10.5. Women and Keswick

Since 1923 women have been eligible for election to the eldership in PCI, and since 1973 to become ministers. In reality few Irish Presbyterians have thought through the theology of egalitarianism (Morrow, 2014:11-12). Why Keswick at Portstewart has not emphasised and supported the role of women in the church's ministry and leadership is unclear. It may be that the historical focus of Keswick itself is backward-looking rather than forward looking. The internal focus of the Convention on personal holiness may also produce an inwardly focused theology which is negligent of wider ecclesiastical developments.

2.10.6. The Ebb and Flow of Grace in Keswick

Keswick may not directly relate to MEE, but the ebb and flow of grace is seen in the Convention. The ebbing is seen through a preoccupation with maintaining a holiness theological position as primary and attaching complementarianism to its ethos. Grace flows in a passion for spiritual development, growth in holiness and an ecumenism of spirit.

2.11. Ecumenical Witness in Ireland

PCI has been involved denominationally in a number of distinctly ecumenical activities. Denominational involvement began in 1910 with the sending of a delegate, Rev. R.K. Hanna, of the Whiteabbey congregation, to the Edinburgh Missionary Conference. The theme of the Conference was “Unity in the Church so the world may believe” (Stanley, 2009:90; Ellis, 1992:5; Gay, 2011:33). The unifying aim of the conference was not entirely realised until 1948 with the foundation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) (Hooft, 1982:58).

2.11.1. PCI and the WCC

Initially PCI was involved with the WCC. During the 1970s, however, concern began to be raised about the distribution of finances to liberation groups in Africa who used violence to achieve their ends. In the mind of some within PCI this paralleled the activity of Irish Republicans (Holmes, 2000:153-154). The WCC record simply states that PCI withdrew because of “grants for humanitarian purposes made from the WCC Special Fund to Combat Racism, to liberation movements in southern Africa” (World Council of Church, 2017). The reasoning behind withdrawal, therefore, would seem to have been primarily political through the association of the Protestant/ Unionist axis against the Catholic/ Nationalist. It has also been claimed to reflect some of the ethos of Paisley and the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster (Newell, 2016:70-84).

2.11.2. Liberation Theology

The political interpretation led some Irish Presbyterians, including Rev. Robert Dickinson, to suggest the Catholic Church was behind all motivations against democracy: “Romanism only believes in democracy when they’re in a minority. When they’re in the majority, it’s the stake, the Inquisition, and so forth” (Irvine, 1991:198; Appleby, 1999:178). The support of armed freedom fighters in South Africa was seen as a precedent for the support of Republican terrorists in Northern Ireland. This was interpreted as an issue affecting the very identity of the state of Northern Ireland and the safety of the Protestant people.

2.11.3. Context and Ecumenism

The unique context of Northern Ireland Christianity has been defined as a “refined parochialism and specialised exclusion”. This resulted in churches being willing to survive alone without connections to the wider Christian family (Spencer, 2011:48-49).

2.11.4. Apocalyptic Interpretation

Theologically, there seems to have been an apocalyptic aspect to the reasoning for withdrawal from the WCC. The WCC was seen as becoming an apostate body which would be controlled by the Antichrist (Searle, 2014:102). What seems incongruous in PCI’s reasoning is the critique of the WCC’s support of the liberation political movements, while itself having a theology informed by a political context. It claims to be theologically driven when it appears to be contextually driven from the political context of Northern Ireland. This seems to have led to ecumenical relationships being interpreted apocalyptically. If this is the case then a theological decision was made on MEE on contextual, historical and political reasoning, not theological.

2.11.5. The South African Connection

PCI was not alone in having difficulties with the WCC's position on South African politics. The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa withdrew in 1960 over the WCC's condemnation of apartheid (Botman, 2000:106). This demonstrates that often a cultural context informs an ecclesiological perspective of MEE as much as a theological perspective.

2.11.6. The Rationale for Withdrawal

There may be a sense in which PCI was looking for a voice to comment on world affairs as well as home politics through withdrawal from the WCC. This has been suggested because "Protestant ministers do not use their influence effectively in the political sphere" (Mitchell, 2005:53). A practical and pastoral aim of identifying with those Irish Presbyterians who had lost family in the Troubles seems to have prevailed. This was accompanied by an apocalyptic interpretation of world and home affairs. PCI desired to be defined as theologically conservative. To identify one reason, whether theological, cultural, historical or political as the dominant motive for withdrawal would be an injustice to the cultural tapestry of PCI. All seem to have been considered in the mix as motivations to leave the WCC.

2.11.7. The Moment of Withdrawal

The General Assembly took the decision in 1980 to withdraw from the WCC by 448 votes to 388. Membership was maintained in the Irish Council of Churches, the World Council of Reformed Churches, the Conference of European Churches and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe. This suggests a generally cautious approach toward ecumenism denominationally in PCI. The issue of rejoining the WCC has not been on the agenda of PCI nationally since.

2.11.8. Ecumenism in PCI

Two principles underpin ecumenical engagement within PCI. First, the true church is not confined to any denominational expression; second, the pursuit of truth ought never to be compromised (Erskine, 1998:62). These principles led to two different outcomes, one which is pro-ecumenical and the other which is cautious. Both of these traditions have been expressed within PCI. While positive engagement has been in the minority, it has not been extinguished by the more cautious view. To a cautious mind within PCI ecumenism is challenging but could be focused on evangelism through engagement with those having no denominational connection. Evangelism would then be based upon a covenantal understanding of the kingdom of God. Different traditions would come together in a common focus. This would make up the church catholic in juxtaposition to a negative view of culture.

2.11.9. The Challenge of Ecumenism

Ecumenical engagement has been noted as a challenge for evangelicals in two ways. First, it has high ideals and has achieved much, whereas evangelicalism has been plagued with a negative worldview. Second, ecumenism challenges evangelicals with its optimism. Evangelicals within PCI, therefore, could be a positive influence upon the ecumenical movement without adopting it wholesale (Gillies, 1964:7). Whether the church is pro ecumenism or not, ecumenism remains a principle which cannot be ignored. The ebb and flow of grace suggests a new attitude toward the spiritual authenticity of differing religious traditions. MEE operates through different theological and ecclesiastical traditions, while maintaining theological disagreements with other traditions. The challenges of history, culture and politics remain, however, and these challenges could result in the ebbing of grace if they are perceived to be a key indicator of authentic Christianity. The result would be that MEE ignores those who represent a different history, culture and politics but accepts them as genuine Christians. The question is whether ecumenism can exist without such engagement.

2.11.10. Personal Examples of Ecumenism

There have been a number of personal instances of ecumenism within PCI. James Rutherford (1881-1942), a proto-ecumenist, advocated the union of the PCI and the CoI. Rutherford spent much of his life speaking for and working toward that unification. Rutherford came from Belfast and after working in the shipyard trained for PCI ministry in both Belfast and Edinburgh. Having served in World War I as a stretcher bearer, he served as assistant minister in Newtownbreda before being called in 1919 to Warrenpoint. In Warrenpoint he ordained the first female elders in PCI. In 1927 Rutherford was called to Kingstown, now Dun Laoghaire (History of Congregations, 1982:436-437).

2.11.10.1. Rev. James Rutherford

Rutherford served on the PCI/ CoI Committee on Reunion (1931-1934). He argued that bishops could be appointed within presbytery bounds but would have little authority over local congregations in the calling of ministers. This vision would then move beyond PCI and CoI to include Methodists, Congregationalists and Moravians (Ellis, 1992:40-46; Barkley, 1970:214-215). Rutherford's thesis was that any claims for "unity of the Spirit" are pointless without a commitment to "organic" union (Rutherford, 1942:25).

2.11.10.2. Rutherford's Critique of Ecumenism

Rutherford's critique is of a verbal commitment to ecumenism at the expense of a practical one. The question arises whether it is possible to affirm Christian unity without taking any practical steps to implement it. The call to unification was not to rally Protestantism against Catholicism. Rutherford assumed that union between Protestants and Catholics could never be achieved because of the Catholic demand for complete absorption and submission to the papacy (Ellis, 1992:39-46).

2.11.10.3. Rev. Kenneth Newell

A further example of personal ecumenism was the invitation of Catholic Archbishop Sean Brady by Rev. Kenneth Newell to his installation as Moderator of the General Assembly (Quinn, 2004; Brewer, Higgins and Teeney, 2011:67). The invitation came from the pioneering work of Newell through The Clonard-Fitzroy Fellowship of his own congregation, Fitzroy Presbyterian Church, and Clonard Monastery. It began with Bible study and ended with pulpit exchange (Newell, 2016:92-117; Wells, 2005; Lowery, 1985:123).

2.11.10.4. Congregational Ecumenism

Johnston McMaster (1994:17-38) notes eight examples of personal and congregational ecumenism including PCI: four urban South Belfast congregations including Fisherwick Presbyterian and St. Brigid's Catholic; Enniskillen Together Inter Church Group; Poleglass/ St. Columba's; Clonard/ Fitzroy Fellowship; Kilrea Cross Community Group; Lurgan Inter Friendship Prayer Group; First Presbyterian Lisburn and St. Michael's Anderstown; and Lower Antrim Road Clergy Fellowship. These groups were primarily relational in outlook, without any specific ecclesiastical agenda such as Rutherford had espoused. Meetings focused on Bible study, prayer, reflection and friendship. In recognition of this work, Newell was appointed an ecumenical canon by the CoI, along with Rev. Wifred Orr of Newtownbreda and Rev. Dr. Donald Watts, the Clerk of the General Assembly (Newtownbreda, 2007; Ireland.Anglican, 2007; Ireland.Anglican, 2012).

2.11.10.5. Rev. David Armstrong

A further example of local ecumenism was that of Rev. David Armstrong of First Limavady. Armstrong began a series of ecumenical meetings, eventually leading to his leaving the congregation and joining the Anglican Communion because of the local backlash (Armstrong and Saunders, 1985). More personal ecumenism was shown through Rev. Prof. John Barkley's meeting with Pope John Paul II in 1979 on the Pope's visit to Ireland (Barkley, 1993:167-168).

2.11.10.6. Presbyterian Openness

These movements seem to agree with Dunlop's attestation of an openness from Catholicism toward Irish Presbyterianism (Dunlop, 1995:33). There is also a suggestion of a reticence by Irish Presbyterianism to interact with Catholicism. Perhaps the fear of conservative reprisals or opposition within the courts of the Church cause the PCI's clergy and elders to lack the confidence to embrace ecumenism. Grace is seen to ebb in PCI's ecumenism and in departure from the WCC in 1980. Grace flows, however, through personal engagement with Catholics and the Catholic Church acknowledging a commonality of experience in Jesus Christ.

2.12. Evangelical Witness in Ireland

Ecumenism in Ireland has been accompanied by an intentional commitment to evangelism. The same commitment has been noted specifically within PCI: "Evangelism has remained a prominent characteristic of the Irish Presbyterian Church". This characteristic has been interpreted as bringing times of "blessing" for PCI (Holmes, 1985:158; Thompson, 1971). The exact nature of the "blessing" is not explained. It could be interpreted as being numerical and financial security. In the light of the apparent decline within the denomination, however, such a clear line of connection may be more dubious (Dickinson, 2009).

2.12.1. Evangelism in PCI

As was noted above the evangelistic emphasis of Irish Presbyterianism practically defined the praxis of the denomination. Evangelism would, therefore, take place throughout the island of Ireland. One example is that of Rev. John Woodside in Kilkenny Presbyterian Church. The congregation of Kilkenny was founded in 1838 but had experienced significant numerical decline (*History of Congregations*, 1982:547-548). Plans were developed to unite the congregation with the Methodist Church and dispose of the property. Woodside received a call to the congregation in 1984 resulting in such numerical growth that plans for closing were shelved (Bread, 1995:221-227).

2.12.2. The Irish Mission

PCI has had a tradition, through the Irish Mission, of installing lay evangelists to work alongside parish ministers in the Republic of Ireland for some time (Mission Ireland, 2017). This practice sought to support parish clergy working in a culture different from that of the North. It also sought to supplement the pastoral ministry of clergy to congregations with an evangelistic aspect.

2.12.3. Church Planting

PCI has also been involved in Church planting in Ireland. Maynooth was started in 2002 (Maynooth, 2017) and Donabate in 2008 (Donabate, 2017). Church planting represents a desire to unite evangelism and ecumenism within an integrated model of mission-the MEE model this research argues for-by placing it within the context of ecclesiology. MEE no longer seeks existential commitment to a gospel story but practical integration into the cut and thrust of congregational life.

2.12.4. Congregational Growth

Whereas the numerical growth in Kilkenny, Maynooth and Donabate suggests possibilities, the context of the Irish Republic as a majority and culturally Catholic nation suggests a lesser priority on ecumenism than on evangelism, splintering the MEE integration. There may have been an element of evangelising Catholics with the aim of them joining PCI. Local ecumenical praxis, with its emphasis on a kingdom focus, is made secondary to a common evangelistic praxis (Skuce, 2008:105). It may be that the changing culture in Ireland from the 1950s has led to less practical commitment to Catholicism while retaining a Catholic culture (Corkey, 1999:371). Catholicism as well as PCI, therefore, would focus less upon pastoral ministry and more upon mission work as the population generally drift away from denominational Christianity.

2.12.5. The Ebb and Flow of Grace in Growth

Grace ebbs and flows through the establishment of Presbyterian congregations in a Catholic culture where the Catholic Church is in decline. It could even be interpreted as playing on their ill fortune. Grace can be seen to flow in a desire to engage with the “unchurched” whatever their denominational, cultural, political or social background.

2.13. The Influence of the Charismatic Renewal

MEE has also been informed and influenced by the Charismatic Renewal. One example was the visit of John Wimber to Ireland in 1985 to conduct a signs and wonders conference in University College, Dublin (Dublin Vineyard). The impact of the Charismatic Renewal effected a “significant proportion” of Irish evangelicals, including PCI (Stewart, 2015; Mitchell, 2008:224). A by-product of the Charismatic Renewal was an exodus amongst Catholics into Protestant denominations (Cagney, 2007).

2.13.1. Rev. Tom Smail

Within PCI the influence of the Charismatic Renewal was felt through Rev. Tom Smail. In 1967 Smail, at the time a CoS minister, conducted a renewal seminar in Ballysillan Presbyterian Church (Smail, 1995:8). Smail would later be called to Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church. Smail “laid hands upon” Rev. David Baillie a returning missionary from India and Church Extension minister in Bangor. Baillie would gather together those in PCI impacted by the renewal into a charismatic fellowship numbering some one hundred ministers (Gibson, 1987:67-68).

2.13.2. Wider Charismatic Impact

The impact of the Charismatic Renewal was felt beyond the denominational boundaries also. The work of Youth for Christ and their monthly “Mannafest” meetings gathered together hundreds of young people. Speakers represented a wider spectrum of the Charismatic Renewal (Bread, 1995:12-15). “Mannafest” would have significant influence upon the churches in Ireland as young people embraced the

duality of MEE and as they met other like-minded youth from different denominations.

3. Mission within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

This research focuses on an integrated evangelistic and ecumenical approach to mission in the theology and praxis of PCI. The question is further considered whether evangelism or ecumenism has the primacy in Presbyterian consciousness (Lonergan, 1971:57). Presbyterian consciousness in being investigated to discern whether mission has a wider focus on God's kingdom or whether it is self-perpetuating (Wallis, 2000:20-21). If it is the latter, then MEE can be interpreted as being used to bolster the ranks of PCI.

3.1. Cultural Conformity as a Motivation

The aim of cultural conformity within mission implies a compartmentalising of life into religious and secular areas. Such compartmentalising produces a "mutual indifference" in which aspects of life which are contradictory to Christianity are held. This enables beliefs which seem to be at odds with one another to be held at the same time (Tillich, 1968:15-16). Motivations for MEE may not, therefore, be theologically driven. Instead culture, politics, history, race and religious affiliation inform and mould missional praxis.

3.2. A Hermeneutical Understanding

MEE can also be understood hermeneutically. Through an engagement with history, imagination and memory, meaning is achieved for communities (Porter and Robinson, 2011:2). No religious group is devoid of influences; their history, culture, politics and race all provide a formative influence on their identity. MEE must, therefore, authentically engage with these non-theological influences and interpret them theologically.

3.2.1. Hermeneutics of Suspicion

Being a piece of academic reflection, this research requires a degree of distance. The “hermeneutics of suspicion” provides a means of accomplishing that distance (Frei, 1992:12). All theological assumptions are, therefore, up for discussion and critique. Whether theological considerations alone or other influences inform PCI’s missional praxis, they all provide the context for addressing the ebb and flow of grace. Suspicion will be applied to the ebbing of grace in MEE throughout Ireland. Suspicion will also be applied when grace ebbs as cultural attachments are made elemental to mission.

3.3. The Remit of the Research

This research deliberately seeks to engage with PCI’s theological motivation for MEE taking into account both its context and praxis. Ireland’s own context of violence and injustice forms important elements in theological formation. Violence has flowed between the Catholic and Protestant communities. This flow has produced a situation which is “less clear” than other contexts (Volf, 2006:90-91). This research seeks to discern the unique history and theology of PCI in Ireland. It further seeks to discern how that context informs the experience and praxis. Attention will be given to Reformed doctrine which influences and moulds Presbyterian praxis and belief (Doren, 2012:144; Bushcart, 2006:85-86). Aspects of Reformed theology are presented which can effect theological and practical change (Willis, 1999:187). To effect change is not the primary goal of this research, however, but investigating the theological motivations of PCI’s missiology may require change.

3.4. The Motivation for Mission

This research is seeking to theologically address the motivations for the praxis of mission within PCI. Ricoeur's “four levels on the scale of praxis” will aid this research. Ricoeur suggests that actions are motivated by complex precepts; he explains how those actions feed into a given life plan, how actions betray the ways in which life is seen in unity, and the moral aim of actions (Ricoeur, 2013:30-35). While this research is looking at one aspect of PCI’s praxis, that one aspect is part of a

larger whole, which defines denominational self-understanding and aims. The aim of this investigation is to discern the initial theological justification for MEE. In attempting to discern that theological justification, also aspects of culture, history and politics are also investigated.

3.5. Mission Reflection

This work proposes a reflection upon the nature of MEE within the PCI, and how mission is manifested in the context of Ireland. While there are many non-Reformed traditions in Ireland, the Catholic Church will receive particular attention in this research. Catholicism represents a different theological, historical, cultural and political position than Presbyterianism. In entering this cultural matrix, the issues of history, politics and denomination come into consideration. This research, however, will restrict reflection to historical and systematic theology.

3.5.1. Presbyterian Symbolic Understanding

This research specifically seeks to address how PCI understands MEE. In a wider sense the role of the church in society has relevance. One symbol which has particular resonance for Presbyterians is the burning bush. The symbol is incorporated into both the denominational logo and the General Assembly's seal of PCI.



Figure 1: Presbyterian Symbols

This symbol represents God's appearance to Moses in a burning bush which was aflame yet not consumed (Ex. 3:2). The symbol comes from the French Huguenots.

It was used alongside the words “Flagror non consumor,” meaning “I am burned but not consumed”. The Church of Scotland chose the tagline “nec tamen consumebatur”, meaning “not consumed”. This was passed on to PCI who changed the words to “ardens sed virens,” meaning “burning but flourishing” (Barkley, 1988). The Presbyterian Church in Canada says of the burning bush as a symbol: “The burning bush is a symbol for an oppressed people. Burning but not consumed. Hopeful and persistent” (Munnik, 2010). An association with oppression and persecution is an important aspect of Irish Presbyterian personality. It mirrors the biblical reference to Christians as not being part of the world while living in it (1 Peter 2:11). Withdrawal from society is not supported by the burning bush. Instead the Church is to engage with culture which, in early Christian times, was opposed to Christian principles, honouring the emperor and submitting to Roman authority (Dunning, 2009:12).

3.5.1.1. Involvement and Resistance

The notion of involvement with a culture but resistance to a culture’s characterises the church’s relationship with the world. It also explains why the first Christians were encouraged to pray for their leaders that they may live a quiet life (1 Tim. 2:1-2). A further missional dimension is added to this symbol of the burning bush, emphasising the sovereignty of God. Sovereignty is seen in God’s deliverance of his people from servitude. Sovereignty is also seen in mission by creating a servant people sent out with his message of the gospel (Daniels, 2003:136).

3.5.1.2. Ecclesiastical Identity

Combining these concepts, a picture forms of a church whose identity is defined by a covenantal relationship of servitude to God. This is based upon deliverance from slavery, which provides the opportunity to proclaim the message of God to the world. The twin themes of oppression and mission join together in Presbyterian identity. These themes work in a cultural context which may be far from the Christian ideal. Grace ebbs with a remembrance of past persecution and a potential hanging on to

these hurts. Grace flows as spiritual growth happens through opposition and persecution.

3.5.2. PCI Mission Statement of 1992 (Annexure 2)

The theme of mission is taken further with the PCI Mission Statement of 1992 to mark the 350th anniversary of the founding of the first presbytery (“Mission Statement,” 1992). The statement begins by affirming the Reformed nature of PCI as part of the wider catholic church. The church exists through the power of the Spirit to be a witness to Christ. This manifests itself through a “shared life” in which every member is encouraged to play their part. The shared life is seen in a whole of life worship, including sacraments and congregational commitment. Underlying this is the assumption that humans “can’t not worship” (Smith, 2013:3). Grace flows in a commitment to mission both within Ireland and the wider world. Mission is amongst those “with whom we feel comfortable, those from whom we feel alienated and those who are in any way distant from us in culture and faith”.

3.5.2.1. The Mission Statement and Discipleship

The statement concludes with a commitment to discipleship which impacts how we view church and the believer’s part in it. The themes of engagement with society and maintaining a Christian witness are emphasised, along with a commitment to relationship with those from other backgrounds. This would presumably include the Catholic and Nationalist as an evidence of the ebb and flow of grace.

3.5.3. PCI Coleraine Declaration (Annexure 3)

In 1990 the PCI met in a Special Assembly to mark the 150th anniversary of the Union of Synods to form PCI in 1840. The Declaration begins by confessing a conformity to the world, yet a thankfulness for God’s calling. Relationships with other Christian denominations are also considered (Declaration, 1990:3:1). The key issue here is that of the mission of the church to break down barriers within society. This is shadowed by the affirmation of the unique theology of the Reformed faith (Eph. 2:14-18). The Declaration highlights a tension between those who are happy to

engage with the Catholic Church and those who are cautious. Accordingly MEE is to be practised sensitively to individual needs (Declaration, 1990:3:5). It seems significant that MEE is being addressed within the Irish context. There is an implicit acknowledgment that PCI may not have incarnated Christ in their relationships with Catholics.

3.5.4. PCI Peace Vocation (Annexure 4)

PCI has also adopted a document called the “Peace Vocation”. This document acknowledges the Church’s commitment to pursuing peace in Ireland. Peace and mission are explicitly connected in this document, arguing that the evangelical faith demands new attitudes to Irish relationships. This is opposed to the practice of “matching injury with injury, hate with hate, ignorance with ignorance” (Peace Vocation, 1994). The document is applied to relationships both within PCI and with those of other Christian traditions (Peace Vocation, 1994).

3.5.4.1. The Gospel and Peacemaking

The role of the gospel in peacemaking is central to this document. It is argued that as recipients of grace “Christians ought to be at the forefront of working toward a more equal and just society for everyone. This is part of Christian mission” (Johnston, 2012:26-27). As the church has received grace from the divine, so grace ought to define the actions of the church. This will be especially seen amongst those with whom there are theological, cultural, political and historical differences. This horizontal aspect of peace building reminds the church that the gospel “brings Jews and Gentiles together” (Williams, 2008). This points toward “reconciliation and a shared future”, albeit not having arrived yet (Stevens, 2009:18).

3.5.4.2. The Foundation of the Cross

Williams (2008) notes that building on the cross all divisions in society have been reconciled to God and one another through the cross of Christ (Eph. 2:14-16). Accordingly, an exchange happens: personal, family, group, racial or national identities cease to be determinative, as a new emphasis of personal experience of

Christ now dominates. In Northern Ireland this would impact MEE by moving the emphasis away from cultural markers as being definitive of Christianity. Peace-building would further impact MEE as a common identity through God's grace and faith in Christ. This would then dominate ecclesiastical identity rather than theological differences and cultural baggage. In this way PCI has sought to make a missional contribution to the future of Northern Ireland. This has moved beyond culturally identifying with one community at the expense of the other.

3.5.5. PCI Vision for Society (Annexure 5)

The most recent comment on mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism by PCI is the 2016 "Vision for Society" statement (Vision for Society, 2016). This statement places PCI within the Irish context and seeks to provide a means by which the Church can engage with "wider society" (Vision for Society, 2016). The engagement with wider society envisioned by the "Vision for Society" emphasises PCI's role in "Christian and biblical witness" (Vision for Society, 2016). Wider society is defined as the context in which the congregations of PCI exist and witness throughout Ireland. The "Vision for Society" draws together the themes of evangelism and ecumenism through the mission of PCI, within the matrix of Ireland.

3.5.6. Systematic Theology's Role

Systematic theology is being employed as the primary mode of investigating the research question. Systematic theology provides a starting point by considering humanity's position in the present cultural context, which has been produced by history (Schillebeeckx, 1980:71). The ebb and flow of grace will highlight the principles which have informed the theology and praxis of PCI's MEE. Systematic theology's role is also helpful as it provides consideration of God and the universe and unifies that into an academic discipline and organised religion (Thiessen, 1979:3). Accordingly, this research is grounded in religion as the public manifestation of MEE. This would not negate the theological aspect of this reflection, but places the reflection within a specific institutionalised religious praxis.

3.5.7. *“Semper Reformanda”*

The need for an on-going reformation within the church may also be served by this research. This reformation is needed because of the limits of abstract theological knowledge to describe the human experience of the divine. The theological reflection may act as MEE by leading people and communities to a better understanding of the divine (Frei, 1992:25).

3.5.7.1. *“Reformatory Theology”*

Reformed theology is “reformatory theology”, or “semper reformanda” theology. Such theology is in service of the historical principles of the Reformation and is concerned with the reformation of all of life. All belief and praxis, therefore, are required to be moulded and informed through the primary source of the Bible (Moltmann, 1992:120-121; Horton, 2010; Nicole, 1990:160-161; MacArthur, 2013). The “material norm” of systematic theology provides such a rationale by considering how “being new in Jesus as the Christ” is expressed (Tillich, 1968:59). A systematic theological exercise is being applied to PCI’s MEE to discern where grace ebbs and flows. The message of MEE is being interpreted as the presentation of theological principles concerning the identity of Jesus through the gospel.

3.5.8. *The Ethics of Mission*

This public manifestation of MEE has raised questions about the ethics of evangelism. Two issues are considered: one, all forms of evangelism are immoral; two, some forms of evangelism are immoral (Theissen, 2011:20). An ecumenical fear of evangelism has also been suggested because of the traditions of intolerance and cultural superiority that have been attached to the belief and praxis of evangelism (Stone, 2007:10).

3.5.8.1. The Philosophical Basis of Ethics

The ethics of MEE forms the philosophical basis for this research. The implications of considering missional ethics may lead to flowing in ecumenism or ebbing in separation. Accordingly, the ethics of PCI's theology of mission will be considered as the basis for praxis.

3.5.9. Historical Cultural Context Hermeneutics

Historical-cultural contextual hermeneutics aid this philosophical aspect. The question is whether mission proceeds from a specific historical and cultural situation and whether that context is a normative basis for mission.

3.5.9.1. "Deobjectification"

The degree to which this research can be applied to the population of Ireland will be addressed through "deobjectification." This provides a means of considering the theology of MEE, while highlighting who could be potential foci of MEE (Lindbeck, 2009:7; Virkler and Ayayo, 2007:82-83). The ebb and flow of grace is present here through the criteria used to determine whether a person or institution is a focus of MEE. Grace ebbs in consideration of all ecclesiastical differences as indicative of the absence of theological truth. Grace flows in considering theological difference to illuminate areas of absence in one's own belief.

3.6. The Strands of Irish Presbyterianism

Within Ireland there are a number of different strands of Presbyterianism. These strands raise the issue of how grace ebbs and flows between the different Presbyterian traditions through MEE (Falconer, 2008:25). Ecumenically there are many areas of commonality: similar liturgy, pastoral practice and even ecumenical relations. Yet the model of "action, reaction and separation" seems to typify Irish Presbyterian history (Falconer, 2008:27). The ebb and flow of grace is discerned through the reaction of different Presbyterian bodies to one another. This has manifested itself through moving from one ecclesial identity to many. Applying the

model of action, reaction and separation, this research will reflect upon how Presbyterianism views Catholicism within a historical and cultural context.

3.6.1. The Evangelical Tradition

The evangelical tradition within Irish Presbyterianism has been noted. This evangelicalism is filtered through Reformed theology and is common to most Irish Presbyterians (Thomson, 1998:249). This research's primary focus on PCI suggests that ecumenism could be a benefit as other Presbyterian traditions filter their identity through other aspects of Reformed theology. Which filter is more authentically Reformed will require deep reflection and ecumenical engagement to discern. It may be the case that PCI has a wider spectrum of theological opinion than other Presbyterian denominations in Ireland. Such a wider spectrum of theological opinion would, therefore, provide a wider spectrum of ecumenical conviction. The common commitment to Presbyterian church government, however, unites all the denominations (Form of Presbyterian Church Government; Uprichard, 2000:83-85).

3.6.2. A "Schizophrenic Appearance"

The multiplicity of Presbyterian denominations in Ireland, all aligned along the core of Reformed theology, suggests a "schizophrenic appearance". One denomination may flow in grace by emphasising one aspect of Reformed theology as axiomatic. The same denomination may ebb in grace when an alternative denomination emphasises another aspect of Reformed theology as axiomatic (McEnhill, 2003:77; Buschart, 2006:256). It may be that grace ebbs more easily when denominational differences are acute in the interpretation of common theological principles. The result is that there are many Presbyterian manifestations. All emphasise certain aspects of Reformed theology while having little to do with each other. MEE toward Catholicism also differs among the denominations. The ebb and flow of grace is, therefore, seen in both intra-Presbyterian relationships as well as in relationships with Catholicism.

3.6.3. Paisley, Free Presbyterianism and Fundamentalism

One manifestation of Irish Presbyterianism is the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster (FPCU, consisting of 61 congregations, 100 ministers and 15,000 members). As a denomination they stand uniformly against ecumenism, splintering the MEE integration this research argues for. The “free” in the denominational name is used to describe a “total disassociation from the major Presbyterian denominations of the world, which have largely repudiated the Christian faith” (Paisley, 1998:133). Such separatism impacts not only inter-confessional ecumenism but also inter-Protestant ecumenism. This is informed by the doctrine of “secondary separation” described as follows:

Separatist in Practice, believing and practicing the doctrine of Biblical separatism. In accordance with this, the Free Presbyterian Church has no association with the modern Ecumenical or Charismatic movements, nor will it fellowship with any church which has departed from the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God. (FreePresbyterian.org, 2017).

When discussing the FPCU it is important to give attention to the Moderator of the Church for most of its existence, Rev. Ian Paisley (Bruce, 1989:30-33). Paisley in early life was an ardent anti-Catholic preacher and Unionist politician. Toward the end of his life, however, he entered government with Republicans, which led to a strained relationship with his denomination (Peterkin, 2007; Kerridge, 2014). The reasons for this change appear to be the close relationship between his ecclesiology and his politics. The reasons for this rift will provide political theorists and historians much discussion in the future.

3.6.3.1. Fundamentalist Influences

The influence of North American fundamentalism and Bob Jones in particular has had a formative role in the FPCU (Bruce, 2001:387-405; Bruce, 1989:18; Abbott, 1973:49-55; Wallace, 2005:126; James and Waller, 2010:147). Fundamentalism, however, is wider than the FPCU and represents a broad spectrum of theological opinion, including many non-Reformed denominations.

3.6.3.1.1. The Birth of Fundamentalism

The term “fundamentalism” came from a series of essays (*The Fundamentals*) published by the Bible College of Los Angeles between 1910-1915 defending certain biblical truths and forging pan-denominational alliances (Marsden and Longfield, 1999:103). It is important to distinguish between fundamentalism as a theological tradition and personal fundamentalists who were often critical of theology. Such people bemoaned the waning of revivalistic evangelicalism and the growth of liberal Protestantism in many denominations (Murray, 2000:38; Harper and Metzger, 2009:15; Bauder, 2011:21; Percy, 1998:59; Packer, 1996:24; Marsden, 1987:4). A certain inconsequence appears to exist within fundamentalism where trans-denominational unity is emphasised, but at the same time separation from those with whom one disagrees.

3.6.3.1.2. Paisley and Fundamentalism

Ian Paisley embodies fundamentalism personally and denominationally. Yet despite his criticisms of PCI he was never a member of the denomination. Paisley was ordained and installed as pastor of Ravenhill Evangelical Mission in 1946, a church which split from Ravenhill Presbyterian Church in 1935. His father had been pastor of Hill Street Baptist Church in Ballymena and his brother, Harold, was a Brethren evangelist (Jess, 1997:49; Fell, 2013:128-130). Paisley could then be said to personally embody MEE.

3.6.3.1.3. Fundamentalism and Unionism

Theological fundamentalism attached itself to the Unionist politics in Northern Ireland as a justification for opposing the existing government (Abbott, 1973:49):

It was Paisley who first “declared war” on the “Romeward” tendencies of the government of Terence O’Neill, the Prime Minister. It was Paisley who led the first protest march that precipitated the first Catholic riots, and it was Paisley who first went to the gaol for failure to “keep the peace”. But Paisley was, before all else, a preacher. His preaching propelled him into prominence and into prison.

These verbal attacks on all perceived enemies became characteristic of Paisley's ministry. This would become a hindrance to mission, as anyone who thought in a different way or was prepared to engage with a wider ecclesiastical demographic would be publicly harassed. It may be argued that MEE requires conviction rather than commendation. Nonetheless, such public vitriolic critique could discourage even the most convinced missionary.

3.6.3.2. Catholic Preoccupation

Paisley's preaching and theology appeared to be fixated on Roman Catholicism. Dennis Cooke (1993:3) notes two recurring themes in Paisley's preaching: first, the Catholic Church is not a Christian church; second, the Roman Catholic Church is behind persecution throughout the world and the Troubles in Northern Ireland. For Paisley, political issues were informed by his theology. Paisley's theology viewed Catholicism with extreme suspicion, even reading Ancient Egyptian mythology in its theology and structures (Bruce, 1989:216, 222, 225-225). This led to many of his political and social campaigns, seen especially in his protest when in 1963 the Union Flag was flown at half-mast to mark the death of Pope John XXIII (Dixon, 2011:23; Bruce, 1989:73).

3.6.3.3. Political Connections

The FPCU best represents the close link between a theological and ecclesiastical tradition and a political-cultural worldview. Paisley's direct confrontation with PCI sprang from his involvement in evangelistic work in Lisarra Congregation, Crossgar. He was unable to conduct a gospel mission in the congregation as the Church was in vacancy and only ministers, licentiates or elders could conduct worship (Code, 2013:47-48). This then led to the formation of the first Free Presbyterian Church (Crossgar). Through the foundation of this new denomination Paisley declared war on PCI because of its supposed liberalism (Jordan, 2008:128). This comment on liberal theology continued for a number of years and manifested itself in the picketing of the PCI General Assembly (Hurley, 2003:66-67).

3.6.3.4. *The Westminster Confession*

The FPCU's adherence to the WCF can be described as a loose one at best. Section 6a of their Articles of Faith directly contradicts the teaching of the WCF on baptism. Equally, their insistence on the sole use of the King James Bible also contradicts the WCF (FreePresbyterian.org, 2017; Paisley, 1955:1). It could, therefore, be assumed that the FPCU exists more to condemn Catholicism and to critique PCI than for any other positive function. This contradicts Reformed theology, which argues that the aim of the Reformation was to express "Catholic doctrine", rediscovering what belonged to the whole church (McEnhill, 2003:83). If this is the case, then an exclusive position such as that of the FPCU seems irreconcilable to Reformed tradition.

3.6.3.5. *The Person of Paisley*

Regarding MEE, there seems to be a divergence between the institution of the FPCU and Paisley as a person. Paisley's personal attitude toward Catholic people is less vehement but still negative. Paisley continued to believe that their only hope is to be rescued from their Church (Cooke, 1993:61). This impacts MEE by taking the focus of the gospel away from the Reformed *ordo salutis*. The emphasis then rests upon the supposed errors within the Catholic Church as an institution. As pointed out above, the doctrine of secondary separation impacts not only any meaningful engagement with the Catholic stream but also anyone with a different ecumenical conviction.

3.6.3.6. *The Rural Context*

Rural areas east of the River Bann, where Irish Presbyterianism was already strong, proved a fertile ground for the FPCU (Bruce, 1989:39-62; Jordan, 2008:128-130). This begs the question of whether there existed within the FPCU any missional passion or whether it was only focused on tearing down PCI as an institution? There was a deliberate targeting of Irish Presbyterian congregations with the aim of proselytising them to become FPCU congregations. Often this strategy exploited problems within PCI congregations, especially regarding PCI ministers' personal

morality (Maloney and Pollak, 1986:42-51; Jordan, 2008:128-130). One example was Rev. William Hyndman of Drumreagh, who was accused of alcohol and spousal abuse. The authenticity of these claims is difficult to discern. What does seem to be the pattern is the use of any means possible to establish the new denomination. It could, therefore, be argued that FPCU sought to proselytise PCI through their evangelism, although their own literature denies this claim (The Armagh Manifesto, 1965):

The Free Presbyterian Church is an evangelistic gospel preaching church. It believes in Revival and in the power of believing prayer. It has no desire to build on any other man's foundation. It seeks to win souls to Christ rather than members to a denomination.

This statement resonates with a biblical ethos of the church building upon the foundation "that has been laid," Christ, (1 Cor. 3:11, NRSV) and proclaiming "the good news, not where Christ has already been named" (Rom. 15:20, NRSV). If the FPCU did seek to proselytise members of PCI then it would seem that PCI is viewed as not being built upon the foundation of Christ and a context where Christ is not named. The question of why there is little emphasis on evangelising practising Catholics also arises. It may be that the political and cultural attachments of the FPCU were so entrenched in their psyche that knowledge of the other appeared so radically different that there was no desire for any engagement. The anti-ecumenical (anti-Catholic) stance of Paisley may also be connected to this. The result was a dread of any engagement with Catholicism even evangelistically.

3.6.4. The Reformed Presbyterian Church

The Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPCI, consisting of 39 congregations, 51 ministers and 1000 members) has a long history in Ireland. As with PCI there is a Scottish basis for this denomination. The events of British history, however, have defined the RPCI more clearly than PCI. Edward Donnelly notes that many Presbyterians welcomed the Glorious Revolution of 1690. A minority disagreed with the setting aside of the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 (Donnelly, 1998:158). This was further exacerbated by the acceptance of the *Regium Donum* (Loughridge, 1987:51).

3.6.4.1. Division with PCI

Donnelly (1998:162) notes that the RPCI's theological conviction means that they do not interact with Catholicism in any manner. In a sense the RPCI is seeking to maintain a historic position on a political issue. While the rectitude of ignoring the Solemn League and Covenant is historical, there appears to be a reticence to engage with recent history. It could be said that they are fighting a battle which has long been abandoned. Unlike the FPCU, the RPCI does not manifest a confrontational manner toward Catholicism. While there is evidence of the ebb and flow of grace with regard to Catholicism, it is not as evident as in the FPCU.

3.6.5. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC, consisting of 9 congregations, 10 ministers and 850 members) traces its roots to the heresy trial of Prof. J. Ernest Davey. A trial against Davey was instigated by a fundamentalist element within PCI (Alderdice, 2010:306). Davey was acquitted of the charges levelled against him by the General Assembly of PCI in 1927. Rev. Hunter and a licentiate, W.J. Grier, resigned from PCI and began the work of the Irish Evangelical Church, later to be renamed the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Bruce, 1989:20-24). A key characteristic of the EPC is a strict adherence to the WCF (Spencer, 2012:70).

3.6.5.1. The Purpose of Division with PCI

Ecumenical praxis within PCI is one of the reasons why the EPC does not engage denominationally. An aim is painted which seeks to encourage conservatives within PCI to leave (Beckett, 1998:190). EPC seems to have deliberately separated MEE into its two constituent elements, demonstrated through their distance from those who do not hold to their conservative position. Unlike the FPCU and like the RPCI, they are not openly hostile to other denominations. Rather, an appearance of theological aloofness manifests. This suggests an ebbing of grace ecumenically, but flowing in a personal manner to those whom they understand to be conservatives within PCI

3.6.6. The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church

As their name suggests, this branch of Irish Presbyterianism does not subscribe to the WCF. While the name may appear “unwieldy” it defines their resistance against human creeds, and the WCF in particular, for church membership, although they do not necessarily reject its theology (Nelson, Peddie, Steers, 2009:4). They are described as one of the many “splinter groups from mainstream Presbyterianism” (Banham, 1998:151-153). They began to organise in 1835 with the Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians. In 1910 the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster, the Presbytery of Antrim and the Synod of Munster formed the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland (NSPCI, consisting of 34 congregations, 15 ministers and 4000 members).

3.6.6.1. The Liberal Tradition

Whereas PCI appears to have maintained a relatively conservative theology, the NSPCI represents a more liberal tradition (Bruce, 2011:453; Campbell, 1914:51). This has led to varying theological positions within the denomination, ranging from Arminianism to Arianism and even unitarianism in the present (Banham, 1998:152-153). Defining NSPCI as liberal may be better understood by their emphasis on personal interpretation of the Bible. The emphasis on private judgement and personal interpretation is defined as “liberal and non-dogmatic” Christianity (Nelson, Peddie, Steers, 2009:6, 9). The latter designation of “non-dogmatic” may provide a less theologically evocative label for the NSPCI.

3.6.6.2. Ecumenical Tradition

With the freedom to move amongst varying theological positions, the NSPCI has been actively involved in ecumenical engagement (Hurley, 1966:517-519). NSPCI’s ecumenical position is reinforced by their insistence upon the teaching of Christ to love one another above doctrinal formulas (Spencer, 2012:72). This manifests itself in a unity of love toward everyone. This appears to be one manifestation of Presbyterianism in Northern Ireland which has no issues to resolve regarding the integration of MEE. Nor do there appear to be any doctrinal issues to resolve in how

they understand the Catholic Church. The NSPCI is partly responsible for the movement away from cultural engagement with Irish Catholics as the issue of the Irish language was allowed to lapse within Presbyterianism (Malcolm, 2006:5).

3.6.6.3. A Difficult Identity

Having considered the degree of ecumenical engagement by the NSPCI, it is an interesting challenge levelled against them. It could be argued that the subscription issue was of theological primacy because it defined the doctrinal identity of the Church. It was, therefore, an easier fight to engage with those within the Presbyterian tradition who were theologically trained, than with those from a different ecclesiastical tradition. This could mean that doctrinal purity was emphasised over missional engagement. A potential reason for this could be the establishment of Presbyterianism as a recognised denominational tradition in Ireland. Yet it seems to have allowed an alternative cultural and ecclesiastical position to become dominant. Grace ebbs and flows in ecumenical engagement through the NSPCI. Grace further ebbs and flows with a reticence to insist on any theological formulation for membership and a non-engagement with any form of mission.

3.7. Theological Formation

While this research will refer to historical and systematic theological writings, the attitudes of Christians may not be moulded by such literary influences. The principles of hermeneutics need to be applied as much to the cultural and political moulding or socially constructed consciousness as to the written historical and systematic claims and content of MEE. This research will attempt to discern the peripheral issues of culture, politics, history and denominationalism, while asking what motivates mission? Such questions see mission as an essential element of ecclesiastical identity. Such symbols, as noted before in the burning bush, have been subject to “discreditation and even disenchantment” (Farley, 1996:1). The question then becomes the degree to which Presbyterian symbols aid or hinder MEE.

3.7.1. A “Double Meaning Structure”

In agreement with Ricoeur, this research addresses the “double-meaning structure” in which the literal meaning directs reflection to a second meaning (Ricoeur, 2013:5). The initial reflection is that MEE is a means of telling others about the gospel and Jesus. This initial reflection leads to a hidden meaning where MEE seeks to engage people because of some cultural marker which is interpreted by PCI to be un-Christian. The hidden meaning is an assumption that Christianity is exclusively Presbyterian. This hidden meaning is further identified with a specific form of Presbyterianism. This specific form of Presbyterianism is understood to be spiritually evangelical, historically protestant, politically unionist and nationally British. If these hidden meanings are genuinely present in MEE then engagement with non-Reformed traditions may become a means to convert them. The aim would be to turn converts into an evangelical, a Protestant, a unionist, and a British identity from a sacramental, Catholic, Nationalist or Irish identity.

3.7.2. Hidden Meaning and Mission

Whether a hidden meaning is authentic to mission or compromises its identity, informs the ebb and flow of grace in MEE. Potential hidden meanings influence the ebb and flow of grace personally, socially, culturally, politically and ecclesiastically.

3.8. The Specific Context of Northern Ireland

How Presbyterians understand MEE, biblically, historically and theologically, informs the praxis of MEE. MEE is not carried out in a theological vacuum. The role of a specific denomination, PCI, in a specific context, Ireland, will be addressed as an example of MEE’s theory and praxis. The ecclesiastical role, the denominational meaning and the self-understanding of PCI all relate to this research. Consideration will be given to MEE in the light of the inter-church movement, to its development within PCI, as well as to significant moments and people who participated as missionaries.

3.8.1. The Role of Memories

Within PCI the role of being historically wronged or unjustly dealt with has played a significant role. This memory has caused a repeating pattern towards others at later times (Volf, 2006:12). Remembrance and understanding of the past influences whether PCI ebbs or flows in grace toward Catholicism. Remembering and understanding is then interpreted theologically, being manifested in PCI's missional praxis.

3.8.2. Reconciling Stances

A way of reconciling different approaches to MEE has been suggested: loving the person but hating the wider system (Mak and Tsang, 2008:379; Augustine, 2005:25; Volf, 2006:8). This position fails to bring under scrutiny the theological presuppositions which mould the person or institution and direct their missiological orientation and actions. To dismiss the institutional and focus on the personal in an objective way omits the hermeneutical account of the realm of subjectivity and the need for self-scrutinising critique. It further uproots the persons in view, alienating them from their confessional affiliation and self-identification. Prejudice toward the other cannot be ruled out and requires analysis and understanding.

3.8.3. Presbyterian and Catholic Self-Understanding

Before considering how Presbyterians and Catholics understand mission, it may be worthwhile to note a number of areas in which there is agreement on mission. *The Evangelical Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission, 1977-1984* (ERCDM) highlights some areas of commonality. First, the necessity of revelation in order for humanity to engage with God through Scripture. Catholics view revelation as a hypostatic union between God and Scripture, the example of which is Christ's incarnation. Evangelicals view revelation is the evidence of God's providence for his people (ERCDM, 1986:16-17). Second, mission begins in the self-giving love of the triune God and his eternal purpose for all of the creation, including humanity, to enter into his eternal kingdom. Catholics see the church like a sacrament used in salvation; evangelicals see the church as the beginning and anticipation of the new creation

(ERCDM, 1986:30-31). Last, the need for a response to mission. Catholics understand this through the hierarchy of the Church, evangelicals emphasising personal access to God (ERCDM, 1986:32). While there are nuances of difference here, there is a central core idea. This core idea is the need for humanity to engage with God and to enter his kingdom. This takes place either through personal, existential experience or ecclesiastical rite (Kierkegaard, 1990:15-17; Kierkegaard, 1992:10; Allen and Springsted, 2007:190).

3.8.4. Presbyterian Missiology

The principles which inform PCI's missiology are derived from Reformed theology. Mission is the involvement by God in the world through creation, history and salvation, the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* (Uprichard, 2011:7). God's involvement, or immanence, implies that through Christ, the One whom the Father sent into the world, humanity can engage with the divine through salvation.

3.8.5. Eschatology and Evangelicalism

Eschatology and evangelicalism have informed Irish Presbyterian attitudes to MEE. Eschatology and evangelicalism were expressed through the Enlightenment and the expansion of the British Empire (Holmes, 2006:711-737). The association between eschatology and evangelicalism informed Reformed theology which defined Calvinists as: "particularists in the interest of being more consistently evangelical than are other Protestants" (van Til, 2003:88). Van Til is arguing that Presbyterians and Calvinists have a degree of superiority to other denominations because of their theological traditions. This superiority would, on the one hand, inform MEE as the revelation of Reformed doctrinal exclusivity, and on the other hand, endue MEE with a denominational superiority and an implied need to proselytise. It could also produce an inward-focused theology which seeks doctrinal orthodoxy at the expense of all other aims. Such a focus would use ecumenical engagement as an opportunity to convert others to Calvinism. In some senses this would sit well with some expressions of Irish Presbyterianism (RPC, EPC, FPCU). A broader ecumenical

praxis, however, would seem to suggest less of a preoccupation with evangelism and a greater degree of theological latitude.

3.8.6. PCI and Growth and Decline

Presbyterianism has been described as “connectionalism” where the ruling officer’s authority extends beyond the local congregation and the option of appeal to such authorities for spiritual guidance is provided (Uprichard, 1992:114-116). Regarding MEE, this places the emphasis beyond congregational initiative into the hands of the wider church who pull resources to work together in missional enterprises.

3.8.6.1. PCI and the Union of Synods

From the time of the Union of Synods (1840) there was considerable growth within PCI. In 1841, 137 new congregations were added to the denomination (Holmes, 2000:97). The motivation for PCI’s mission is based upon a personal confession of faith and the anointing of the Spirit to share that faith with the world in MEE (Uprichard, 2011:78). Support for mission has manifested itself through the financial support by congregations (Lucas, 2006:143). One of the ways in which PCI has supported mission is through The United Appeal for Mission, a central, unified offering, determined by presbyteries on the basis of congregational size and resources resulting in a “Target of Honour”. This money is distributed centrally to support the various mission activities in Ireland and overseas (Dunlop, 2013).

3.8.6.2. PCI and Decline

Despite the historical growth and the assertion that Presbyterians are consistently more evangelical than other Protestants, there has been a sharp decline amongst many Presbyterian churches. Dickinson (2009:10) notes that in 2008 PCI lost 1,994 people claiming connection, 1,223 fewer contributions to the funds of the denomination, 979 fewer people attending Communion and 731 fewer on the rolls of our Sunday Schools and Bible Classes. The same issues have been addressed regarding the Church of Scotland (CoS), surmising that an overly evangelical approach is out of touch with modern Scotland (Reid, 2002:91-103). There has also

been some reflection on how liberals and evangelicals need each other to encompass the entirety of the Christian gospel (Warner, 1988:156-190).

3.8.7. Cultural Change and Challenge

It may be that an emphasis on the evangelistic element of mission to the exclusion of the ecumenical, and vice versa, misrepresents the Christian gospel. The impact of the church is, therefore, limited. It may also be that the church is struggling to relate to a changing culture wherein Christianity no longer occupies a privileged position. A shift in thinking to see the parish context as the beginning of MEE is needed. The events of the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference highlighted the supremacy of the Western world to provide for all the needs of the rest of the world (Stanley, 1999:3). The shifts within the last century require the churches to change, something which can be extremely difficult to embrace where history and tradition are so important.

3.8.8. Evangelical in Praxis

The challenge would be to become evangelical in praxis as well as in theology. This would allow for a breadth of Christian theology without an exclusivity of ecclesiology. Further, evangelicalism is theology and praxis also underlines the principle that to be Reformed is to be missional in evangelism and ecumenism. The eschatological aspect of mission focuses on the coming kingdom of God for which the church is preparing (Weeks, 2004:62; Mt. 25:1-13). It is a refocusing of the church's view from a position of superiority to that of pilgrimage. It is a transformation from preaching the gospel top-down, from standing to those kneeling, into a stance of all kneeling before God (Eph. 3:14-21).

3.8.9. Mission and Gospel Communication

One way in which Presbyterianism and Reformed Christians have practised MEE is through gospel communication. Such communication is connected to the Bible, because "the message of evangelism is the whole counsel of God as revealed in his Word, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments" (Murray, 1976:125; Johnson:

2007; Stewart: 1972). This suggests that, rather than specifically preaching evangelistic sermons the whole ethos of Reformed preaching should be mission focused.

3.8.10. Defeater Beliefs

Evangelical belief has found a contemporary praxis in Timothy Keller who, rejects targeted evangelistic sermons in favour of a relevant application of biblical texts. Keller writes: “Paul didn't just beat people over the head with the Gospel. He crawled up inside people's belief, found something they believed that he could affirm and used those beliefs against them” (Keller, in Martinez, 2014). MEE encompasses all that is said and done within the church. It is descriptive of ecclesiastical identity.

3.8.11. Reformed Apologetics

One manifestation of Reformed MEE is apologetics. Apologetics defends the Christian philosophy of life against other non-Christian philosophies of life (van Til, 2003:17). It is not primarily focused on aspects of Christianity (creationism is one example), but the whole doctrinal basis of the faith. It acknowledges that humanity may approach God through reason but only grace can save (Edgar, 2003:14). Such preaching is a move away from any proselytising on the basis of sacred cultural shibboleths (Jd. 12:6) which are specific to one Christian stream. It is a wider theological defence of the Christian faith against theological and philosophical systems entirely different from it, for example, other faiths, as well as political and cultural philosophies.

3.8.12. The Missional Church

In discussing the role of the church in mission it may be helpful to consider the connection between mission and the identity of the church. MEE is not just an aspect of the church's ministry but the role of the church itself (Harper and Metzger, 2009:238; Guder, *et al.*, 1998:4-6; Conder, 2008:168; Guder, 2000:9). This is a movement from an “ecclesiocentric” view of the church to a “theocentric” view of the church. Mission finds its genesis in God's sending of the church into the world,

beginning with Israel and ending in the return of Christ (Guder, *et al.*, 1998:4). MEE operates within the missional identity of the church because there would be little rationale to focus on exclusivity of belief within one tradition.

3.8.12.1. Engaging with Western Culture

The missional church is a means of engaging with a changing Western culture to enable Christians to effectively, relevantly and sensitively practice MEE. Practices are being constantly reassessed and reinterpreted (Frost and Hirsch, 2003:17; Guder, *et al.*, 1998:154). A missional church asks what “face” the church is giving to the world and the appropriate way in which the gospel can be handed on to the next generation (Schillebeex, 1989:6). It is also worth noting that there is an Eastern culture also, and that culture has also wrestled with MEE. In India the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches came together to form the United Church of South India (Leithart, 2016:25).

3.8.12.2. Orthodoxy versus Orthopraxy

The issue of orthodoxy in belief against orthodoxy in practice (orthopraxis) then arises. If theology is to influence and form praxis, then praxis ought to change as it is influenced by theology. This research argues that to distil “Christian faith into an intellectual summary formula” does not take into account the influence of worldview (Smith, 2009:11). This perspective will have special relevance to cultural baggage attached to the gospel in Northern Ireland. Grace will ebb through cultural attachments which exclude difference from the church, but flow through a commitment to cultural engagement within Ireland.

3.9. Catholic Missiology

Catholic theology begins by defining mission in relation to the church. MEE is a proclamation of the gospel in word and sacrament as a witness to and service of all of humanity (McBrien, 1994:677). This can be further explained by the statement:

The mission of the Church is focused, as is Jesus' mission, on the Kingdom of God. By Kingdom of God is meant the redemptive presence of God actualised through the power of God's renewing and reconciling Spirit (McBrien, 1994:724).

The difference with Protestant missiology is the close connection between the church and mission, almost a causal connection. The emphasis on the sacraments would be different from Protestant missiology as Catholics would understand them as essential to the faith (Catechism, 1995:para. 1116, 316; Weigel, 2013:44). There is also a close relation to the sacrament of penance by which the Catholics can give money to overseas missions to demonstrate their contrition (Johnson, 1994:50).

3.9.1. Catholic Mission Praxis

Catholic theology emphasises the praxis of mission through demonstration of what is believed. The word "proclaim" is used to describe the act of mission, the church being called a "kerygmatic community" (O'Brien, 1970:11). Accordingly, "ecclesiology goes with a strong evangelistic missionary thrust" (Dulles, 1987:76). Both Dulles and O'Brien demonstrate their understanding of proclamation as remarkably similar to that of the Reformed tradition. Whether that would be universally accepted amongst Catholic theologians is unclear. It does, however, appear to demonstrate a degree of continuity between the Reformed and Catholic traditions.

3.9.2. Reform of the Church

Another issue of commonality with Reformed theology is also raised in the statement: "The truth about God and humanity the church bears, and to which it must give witness in mission, evangelism, and service, is the principal criterion for the ongoing reform of the church" (Weigel, 2013:59). This commitment shares aspects of the Reformed notion of *semper reformanda*, where the work of reformation never ends. Connecting *semper reformanda* to mission enables an engagement with the key doctrinal tenets of Presbyterianism and Catholicism. This could then result in theological cross-pollination. Doctrinal agreements can provide a degree of commonality against perceived cultural developments which seem at odds with

Christianity in general. Accordingly, MEE would emphasise matters of agreement as more significant than those of disagreement, in the light of an apparently antagonistic culture.

3.9.3. Evangelisation

One term which has been used in Catholic missiology is “evangelisation”. The term comes from coming from the Roman Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples (Roman Curia, Vatican.va, 2017) and the 1975 *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI (McBrien, 1994:1156). Bavinck (1960:74) suggests that it means to “bring back into the church covenant members who have wandered or strayed”. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* suggests the central theme of evangelisation is fidelity “both to a message whose servants we are and to the people to whom we must transmit it living and intact” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 4).

3.9.3.1. The Goal of Evangelisation

Evangelisation is described as a desire “to lead people not merely to subjective experiences of the future salvation of the soul but to a radical reorientation of their lives” (Padilla, 1975:47). This appears to be somewhat critical of the Reformed notion of a personal experience in evangelism without any connection with the world.

3.9.3.2. Evangelii Nuntiandi

Evangelii Nuntiandi raises three more questions concerning the implementation of evangelisation: how the “hidden energy” of the Gospel cleanses human consciences; how the “evangelical force” transforms people; and how should the Gospel should be shared to demonstrate its power? (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 4). Again MEE is understood pragmatically as in need of being put into action, not just believed in an abstract manner.

3.9.3. Liberation Theology

One Catholic manifestation of MEE is Liberation Theology. Codified by Gustavo Gutierrez, Liberation Theology argues that the church has a role of “conscientising evangelisation”. This educates and inspires Christians who are being oppressed to become masters of their own destiny (Gutierrez, 1973:116):

The whole climate of the Gospel is a continual demand for the right of the poor to make themselves heard, to be considered preferentially by society, a demand to subordinate economic needs to those of the deprived ... this evangelisation will free, humanise, and better man. (Gutierrez, 1973:116).

This emphasises a political aspect of MEE. The gospel of “total love” addresses people in the social relations which keep them in a “subhuman condition” (Gutierrez, 1973:270). As discussed above, PCI withdrew from the WCC on account of its involvement in Liberation Theology and financial support of political movements. The implications of Liberation Theology are challenging, because, if people feel themselves oppressed by the dominant tradition, then MEE becomes a means of inverting society in preference to their needs. Applied to the Catholic people in Northern Ireland, it could provide a theological rationale for revolting against a Protestant government that was perceived to keep them in a subhuman condition.

3.9.4. Practising Catholic

In thinking about Catholic mission the term “practising Catholic” is significant. “Practising Catholic” is how Catholics define themselves (Code of Canon Law, 1983:774). Joseph Krupp suggests that the foundational principle is the belief that God desires “a personal relationship” with humanity, worked out through membership of the community of God’s people (Portlanddiocese.org, 2017). The specifically Catholic aspect of this is how commitment to the Church is displayed. Commitment is not reduced to a minimum, but defines the whole of the Catholic’s life (Schmidt and Schmidt). “Practising” is understood as a preparation for death and does not imply current spiritual holiness (Carroll, 2009:10).

3.9.4.1. Practising Catholic Spirituality

These suggestions imply that being a “practising” Catholic shows a desire to change and to become more spiritual. It emphasises the role of the community in this aim. A further definition of a “practising Catholic” is someone who is committed to the worship and witness of the Church, attending Mass weekly and on feast days; in a marriage recognised by the Catholic Church; attendance at confession; and belief in the doctrines and ethics of the Catholic Church (Trigillo and Brighenti, 2007:104). This is not just a connection to a religious belief, but an involvement in a religious tradition. A “practising Catholic” could, therefore, be defined as someone whose Catholicism defines their entire life. This is not nominal in any way, in the sense of a historical, cultural or familial connection to the faith, but building daily life around the religious and spiritual principles of the Catholic Church.

3.9.4.2. Good and Bad Catholic

As to the definition of what a “bad” or “good” Catholic may be, distinctions may not be easily defined (Carroll, 2009:288). There also appears to be a connection to MEE, Catholicism viewing every believer as an evangelist (Weigel, 2013:86).

3.10. Mission and Superiority

There is a perception that religious individuals are prejudiced against those with whom they disagree (Altemeyer, 2003:17). If there is prejudice, then the act of MEE may become the art of changing someone into the image of the evangelist. This will amount to proselytising, which assumes one theological position is superior to that of the other.

3.10.1. PCI's Motivation

The possibility of proselytisation begs the question of what motivates PCI in MEE (Erskine, 1988:43). A degree of introspection regarding contact with those whom we disagree with could be essential to counter superiority (Merton, 2003:125). While this research does not intend to convert anyone to a Presbyterian or Reformed theological position, it does aim to challenge Presbyterian attitudes toward those with

whom there is significant theological disagreement. It provides an invitation to become engaged in the kind of introspection advocated by Merton. In this sense this research could be understood as an exercise in ecumenical reflection.

4. Partial Conclusion

In this chapter the historical context of evangelism was highlighted, with reference to prior and on-going missionary praxis in Ireland. This was considered in the light of a Presbyterian caricature from literature which emphasised orthodoxy over orthodoxy.

4.1. The Tension in PCI

The key theme of this research-mission, evangelism and ecumenism-and the tension that exists within PCI regarding the theological implications of how they view non-Reformed traditions and potential ecumenical relationships were also discussed, leading to a brief consideration of the motivations for mission. Such motivations are wide. This research, however, seeks to narrow them theologically within the sphere of systematic theology. This research attempts to be an example of theological reflection within the field of systematics when considering Presbyterian and Reformed missiology.

4.2. The Tension between Evangelical and Ecumenical

In a practical way this tension can be seen when a progressive is elected as Moderator of the General Assembly. This was seen in microcosm when Kenneth Newell was elected Moderator (2004-2005) and invited as his personal guest Archbishop Seán Brady to the opening night of the General Assembly. This triggered protests from the FPCU (BBC News, 2015), as well as among conservatives within the PCI (Brewer, Higgins and Teeney, 2011:44-46; Wells, 2012:265-278). Often any attempt at MEE on that level is controversial (Brewer, Higgins and Teeney, 2011:44).

4.3. Personal Ecumenism

The ecumenical advances have usually been personally driven by certain clergy and congregations. There seems to be a lack of denominational conviction in ecumenical engagement, perhaps because of a desire to appease theological conservatives. The issue remains, however, that if conservatives are offended by ecumenism, ecumenicists are often not vocal in their opposition to ultra conservative statements. One example is that of Rev. Mervyn Gibson who likened the Parades Commission to the Taliban waging a “jihad” against Protestantism (Newsletter, 2013). Such statements may cause a future problem within the denomination if a more aggressive form of ecumenism should arise. It would seem that evangelism is codified in a given confrontational style which may not represent the whole. Such a style associates the kingdom of God with a given religious tradition. That tradition is, therefore, implied to have the right to exert their culture upon others because of a perceived superiority.

4.4. Evangelicalism’s Emphasis

There seems to be little genuine interest in MEE by this model of evangelicalism. The emphasis is more on an opposition of one culture to another, and a tendency to view Catholics as being beyond conversion because of their “errors of belief” (Barritt and Carter, 1972:23-24). While promoting cultural diversity and awareness may not be a bad thing in and of itself, the attachments with a given religious tradition carry certain theological motifs which may not be helpful to wider ecumenism.

4.5. PCI’s Relationships

From this discussion of evangelicalism within PCI the question arises: how does PCI relate to the core beliefs of either generic evangelicalism or Reformed evangelicalism? The way in which the anti-ecumenism of some evangelicals within PCI represents the gospel and the activity of mission is questionable. It may help to no longer classify such beliefs and actions as “evangelicalism.” Instead, it is some hybrid form of theological conservatism mixed with Irish history and politics. Any relation to the kingdom of God or covenant is dubious in this hybrid form. As a

comment on culture, however, PCI's hybrid theological conservatism mixed with Irish history and politics may be valid.

Chapter 3:

Theological Reflections

1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to address the theological literature on the key areas which this research builds upon. It is proposed that a missing element in the present theological literature will be filled by this dissertation. The theological reflection will follow a dedicated method which reflects upon mission, evangelism and ecumenism (Ridley, 2009:7). This chapter aims to access mission through evangelism and ecumenism from a Reformed and Presbyterian perspective. Accessing mission in such a manner provides the basis for a consideration of the theology and praxis of mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism (MEE) within the PCI.

1.1. Approaching the Literature

The theological literature is being addressed through a hermeneutical approach. This in turn provides a means of considering the praxis of MEE within PCI through an academic knowledge of the subject (Ricoeur, 2013:9). A hermeneutical approach addresses the key issues raised by the literature. Interacting with the literature then enables research into the theological rationale for MEE which informs the praxis of PCI.

1.2. The Audience of Missionary Literature

Much of the literature on mission, evangelism and ecumenism has been written for a popular rather than academic audience. Accordingly, this review deliberately engages with the breadth of theological reflection on mission, evangelism and ecumenism, whatever the focus. The inclusion of popular literature is justified because of MEE's contextual approach through local, regional, national and international manifestations of the church.

1.3. Popular Writings

Popular writings enable discernment of the general public's response to MEE through the use of "popular media" (Ridley, 2009:33). The public in this context is the Christian community whose praxis may be informed more by popular writings than academic reflection (Jesson, Matheson, Lacey, 2011:34-35).

1.4. Social Constructivism

The social constructivist worldview adopted in this work's methodology further supports the use of popular reflection on mission, evangelism and ecumenism. It is also worth noting that often the authors of popular literature are from the academy, and their qualifications justify their reflection (Vhymeister, 2008:69).

2. Theological Reflection on Mission

Mission provides the key touchstone for this dissertation. This research contends that mission inspires, guides and defines evangelism. Further, this research also contends that mission inspires ecumenical engagement across denominations (Bosch, 1987:94). It is also the contention of this research that unless both the evangelical and ecumenical elements are present in mission, mission is misrepresented.

2.1. The Science of Mission

Mission has been categorised as a "science" which considers the sending of the church into the world to fulfil the apostolic task of world evangelisation (Bavinck, 1960:xvi). Science is used as a means of describing the "proved, planned and systematic knowledge of a truth" which represents an organisation (Collet, 2015:103; Payne, 2010:110). Missiology is an attempt at a full investigation into the purpose of the church in reflection upon the action of the Triune God throughout creation. Alongside the scientific approach this is a philosophical model, and these two represent the "co-equal branches of missiology" (Skreslet, 2012:12). This research attempts to do service less to the scientific aspect of missiology but more to the philosophical, and hence theological.

2.1.1. The Church's Role in Mission

To achieve the scientific aim, reflection on mission has sought to address the church's role in responding to the Old and New Testament's teaching (Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:9-20; Acts 1:7-8). A number of works address the biblical and historical timeline of mission, but pay scant attention to the theological foundations (Glasser *et.al.*, 2003; Hedlund, 1985; McNeill, 1986; Yates, 1994). This research aims to fill that potential gap in reflection on the theological foundations of mission.

2.1.2. Israelite Proselytising

In the reflection upon the biblical teaching on mission there has been consideration of Israel's proselytising of Gentiles at the beginning of the Common Era (Wright, 2006:502; Miller, 1985:8; De Ridder, 1975:58-127). Five reasons for Jewish proselytising of Gentiles have been suggested: decline in the Jewish religion; monotheism; religious confidence; different religious traditions; the Maccabean rebellion (Bamberger, 1939:17-19). Israelite proselytising seems, therefore, to have developed from a perceived drift in the state of the Jewish religion. This could then be potentially rectified through gaining new members by proselytising. Being applied to Christianity this would suggest that the specific denominational challenges take a priority for MEE. Grace would ebb through lack of concern for the wider state of God's kingdom in favour of local necessities.

2.1.3. Interaction with Different Traditions

While proselytising is not a primary concern in this research it raises the issue of how people with religious differences interact with one another. The theological differences between Judaism and Christianity are more pronounced than between Christian denominations. Nonetheless, it is a historical example of one religious tradition practising MEE upon another.

2.2. Is Calvinism Pro or Anti Mission?

One critique of Reformed theology is that Calvinism is doctrinally and “logically anti-missionary” (Estep, 1997; Hunt, 2013). It is worth noting that John Wesley, a historical critic of Calvinism, argued against the objectification of theological principles, seeing them as terms of abuse or reproach (Wilson, 2011:60-61). The theological rationale for viewing Calvinism as anti-missionary is based on the doctrine of election. This doctrine is claimed to make “nonsense of all missionary and evangelistic fervour” (Hughes, 1973:42; Wesley, 1931:298; McGonigle, 2001:313). Some have concluded that Calvin “displayed no trace of missionary enthusiasm” (Hunter, 1920:154). If so, by implication Calvinist theology would not express itself practically through MEE.

2.2.1. Election and Mission

To the contrary, it has been argued that Calvin’s doctrine of election provides mission with a degree of certainty (James, 1986:26). It has been specifically stated that Calvinism has been a “a power in the evangelisation of the world” (McFetridge, 1882:15). If so, this certainty would inform MEE with an assured result to its work. There are a number of lines of investigation which, therefore, require reflection. First, what is Calvin’s theological justification for mission? Second, what is the relationship between Calvin’s doctrine of election and mission? Third, did Calvin discourage or encourage mission? Last, what are the practical implications of Calvin’s missiology?

2.2.2. Calvinist Missionary Justification

The term mission is not used widely by Calvin. To discern his position, therefore, requires a consideration of how his theology informs mission. The starting point for Calvin is human inability. Humanity cannot pursue a relationship with God nor perform any act which pleases God (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:281-282). Accordingly, humanity is “bound by the fetters of sin” (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:282). If mission places an emphasis on the human response, human inability would deprive mission

of any practical outcome (2 Cor. 4:3-7). Grace would ebb and flow to the degree in which MEE connects with God's sovereign plan of election.

2.2.3. The General Call of the Gospel

Calvin addressed the moral problem of offering an invitation in mission to a humanity which is unable to respond. He responded to the claim that such an invitation is cruel. He denied that God "cruelly mocks" humanity through mission. He did, however, acknowledge that humans are not the masters of their own will (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957,:281). This does not seem to address the main criticism that mission shares the gospel freely to some who cannot respond. The logical outcome would be a sense of fecklessness where humanity feels unable to respond to God. Further, the church would be deprived of an impetus or theological justification for MEE because God wills.

2.2.4. Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit

To enable any success in responding to MEE, Calvin notes humanity's dependence upon the Holy Spirit. It is through the Holy Spirit that humanity is guided to the correct path (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:282; Jn. 16:13). Without divine intervention, humanity would be unable to respond to mission. The hope, however, is that the Holy Spirit aids humanity to comprehend and respond to MEE. Grace flows as mission connects with the Holy Spirit's work. Humanity is not mocked by God for their spiritual inability (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:282). MEE is, therefore, informed by God's sovereignty and dependent upon his willingness to elect some. The "some" is unknown to the church, so mission is practised indiscriminately. This is fair because no one can respond on their own.

2.2.5. Calvin, Mission and Election

One aspect of Calvin's theology which is regarded as being inherently anti-mission is the doctrine of election. John Wesley differed from the traditional Calvinist position that God elected some but rejected others. Instead he suggested that every human being has a "divinely given free will", which, with reason, personal insight and the

indwelling of the Spirit, would lead to salvation (Wilson, 2011:10, 63). Wesley understood that election was discouraging to Christian holiness (Wesley, 1991:49-60; Clutterbuck, 2004:63). In practice election means that mission could become devoid of compassion for all of humanity (Wallis and Dongell, 2004:197). The implication would be that if God chooses some but not others grace would ebb and flow in MEE to the degree in which a person or institution is understood to be elect. This could justify sectarianism, injustice, persecution and discrimination of entire people groups if they are regarded as non-elect.

2.2.6. Election and Acceptance

Calvin (Vol. 2, 1957:234) defines his view of election in a less partisan manner. He argues that God does not accept “persons”. Person does not refer to an individual’s humanity, but those aspects of human personality and spirituality which produce “favour, grace and dignity, or, on the contrary, produce hatred, contempt, and disgrace”. People are determined by the spiritual conditions within humanity which produce sin. Accordingly, nationality, religion, culture, politics or history are irrelevant to God’s election (Gal. 3:28). Despite God electing some and passing over others, there is nothing in the elect to warrant adoption. God’s mercy, therefore, is “free to display and exert itself when and where he pleases”. The inability by the church to predict who is elect and who is not produces an apparent randomness in election. The implication for MEE, therefore, is to flow in grace to all of humanity. Mission would require a consideration of what characteristics are viewed as being a cause for ebbing in grace: culture, politics, history, theology or religion. Mission would be incarnated indiscriminately with a confidence that the gospel will never be ineffectual (Isa. 55:11).

2.2.7. Did Calvin Discourage Mission?

Calvin is clear and concise in his commitment to mission: “There is no people and no rank in the world that is excluded from salvation; because God wishes that the gospel should be proclaimed to all without exception” (Calvin, 1970:2172). Calvin claimed that there was no contradiction to the inclusive passages of the Bible and the doctrine

of election. He argued for a duality of mission (Ezek. 18:23): the general call for all sinners to repent, and the choosing of a people for salvation. The tension between these dual aspects of mission are confirmed by those who reject God's offer and those who confirm his election by acceptance (Calvin, 1960:1038; Haykin and Robinson, 2014:31-32).

2.2.7.1. Calvin's Endorsement of Mission

Calvin also specifically endorsed the praxis of mission:

If the gospel be not preached, Jesus Christ is, as it were, buried. Therefore, let us stand as witnesses, and do Him this honour, when we see all the world so far out of the way; and remain steadfast in this wholesome doctrine... Let us here observe that St. Paul condemns our unthankfulness, if we be so unfaithful to God, as not to bear witness of His gospel; seeing He hath called us to it (Calvin, 1998: Comment on 2 Tim. 1:8-9).

Such a clear statement demonstrates Calvin's commitment to mission. This commitment was demonstrated by an evangelistic zeal for the nation of France. Calvin focused on this from 1564 until the time of his death (Hulse, 1998). In both tenor and tone Calvin was committed to the theology and practice of evangelism. His commitment to ecumenism, however, was not as clearly evident. Anabaptists received the brunt of his partisan ecclesiology in theological engagement (Calvin, 2001). There was also the physical mistreatment of Anabaptists, demonstrated in the drowning of Balthasar Hubmaier and Conrad Grebel in Zurich (Melton, 2005:250 & 273). It could be argued that this theological and practical prejudice was partly due to the ethos of his historical time. It does, however, raise an interesting point regarding the unity of MEE in Calvinist praxis.

2.2.8. The Implications of Calvin's Missiology

Having noted the conversation surrounding Calvin's missiology, the accusation of being anti-missionary remain attached to the implications of his theology. Albert Mohler argues that if Calvinism is anti-missionary then, by implication, it is an enemy of the gospel (Mohler, 1997). Further, if Calvinism is anti-missionary, then

any theological reflection on MEE from a Reformed perspective would have its theological foundation questioned. Whether Mohler's statement is academically justifiable does not deal with the issue of Calvinism's relationship to a missionary mandate. Mohler seems to further enflame and polarise discussion on Reformed missiology. Grace would ebb in MEE within Reformed churches through a perceived inherent theological flaw.

2.2.8.1. Calvin's Missionary Commitment

The evidence, however, seems to contradict any assumption of Calvin's anti-missionary ethos. While there is little theological justification for claiming an anti-missionary bias from Calvin, evidence does seem to suggest that a bias did result. Calvin's own commitment to mission developed into a colder and more non-missional praxis in later Calvinist churches (Chaney, 1964:102-103). The historicity of this claim, however, is debatable. PCI, as one example, has demonstrated a practical commitment both to home and foreign mission (PCIMissionoverseas.org, Missionireland.org). This evidence, albeit in microcosm, demonstrates the commitment of one branch of the Reformed churches to MEE.

2.3. Reformed Systematic Theologies

Within Reformed systematic theologies there is a lack or entire omission of reflection on missiology (Hodge, 1976; Hodge, 1993; Berkhof, 1998; Tillich, 1968; Grudem, 1994; Rodman Williams, 1988, 1990, 1992). The same is true for popular Reformed and Presbyterian works on mission (McGrath, 1991; Leith, 1997; Uprichard, 2011; Lucas, 2006). The reason for such an omission is unclear. One possible reason could be the focus of Reformed theology on its own theological axioms, and how those axioms diverge from other Christian traditions. This has resulted in the theological discussion on evangelism coming mainly from other traditions.

2.3.1. Reformed Theological Distinctiveness

A theological preoccupation with how Reformed theological axioms differ from other Christian traditions may explain why the ecumenical aspect of mission is marginalised within PCI. Where doctrinal differences between Presbyterianism and Catholicism are the focus, MEE only becomes doctrinal expansion. Grace would then ebb in ecclesiastical aloofness from non-Reformed traditions. Grace could, however, flow through the propagation of the aspects of Reformed theology relating to the *ordo salutis*.

2.4. The Breadth of Mission Reflection

The paucity of missiological reflection within Reformed systematic theologies has already been noted. There have, however, been considerable wider reflections in general terms. These reflections would have implications for the theology and praxis of MEE within PCI. The issue of a proper hermeneutic is, therefore raised again. Such a hermeneutic would facilitate biblical interpretation of mission related texts (Bauckham, 2003:11; Beeby, 2000:268-283). The hermeneutic this research proposes seeks to place mission as the defining characteristic of all church activity. This would include the doctrinal positions which define one tradition in juxtaposition to another. In such a case MEE would ebb and flow in grace through inter-ecclesiastical engagement.

2.5. Mission as Biblical Interpretation

The ebb and flow of MEE depends on how missionary practitioners read the Bible. This further underlines the need for a missional hermeneutic (Wright, 2006:39). The common acceptance of the Bible as a sacred text amongst Christian traditions is a unifying factor for MEE. MEE is, however, influenced by the differences of biblical interpretation which inform denominational doctrine. This further supports the fundamental role of both evangelism and ecumenism for a complete theology of missions.

2.6. Missional Hermeneutics

MEE would aid inter-denominational engagement through a missional hermeneutic. Positively, such a hermeneutic enables an understanding of the process of doctrinal formation. Negatively, it could reinforce notions of superiority of one tradition over another (Wright, 2006:41-43). Grace would ebb or flow to the extent that evangelism and ecumenism dovetail or are separate in mission. This could then manifest in an evangelistic approach to ecumenical engagement.

2.6.1. Non-Theological Influences

A missional hermeneutic would aid theological reflection by highlighting the key doctrinal differences and their relation to biblical interpretation. Social constructivism further highlights the importance of culture in the forming of community identity. A missional hermeneutic would then acknowledge the role of other influences than theology in informing missional praxis. Culture could then be used as a lens to consider doctrinal formulations in the light of their implicit cultural positions. This would enable a reconsideration of all theological positions while retaining a confessional authenticity which values historic doctrinal positions.

2.7. Mission and Proselytising

A connection between mission and proselytising has been suggested. Such a connection is claimed to be a manifestation of legalism in which external religious and cultural attachments are understood to be axiomatic of genuine conversion (Newbigin, 1995:136; Taylor, 2004:153). The proposed centrality of religious and cultural attachments raises the issue whether there is a “vital difference between converts and proselytes” (Wallis, 2000:20-21). Any supposed differences between a convert and a proselyte would impact the ebb and flow of grace in the degree to which the rejection or acceptance of cultural attachments is embraced. If rejected, grace could ebb from MEE by a rejection of the convert. Grace could flow from MEE where common cultural and religious trends are embraced. The ebb and flow of grace becomes the degree to which the convert/ proselyte reflects the missionary’s culture.

2.7.1. Proselytising and Culture

Proselytising through MEE demonstrates the degree to which the prevailing ethos of the missionary culture influences the missionary focus (Bauckham, 2003:55). A preoccupation with replicating cultural and religious trends through MEE would become paramount. The discussion surrounding the relationship between Judaism and Christianity at the Jerusalem Council address this matter (Acts 15:1-35). The Jerusalem rejected the universal application of circumcision for all Gentile converts to Christian, thus respecting the non-Jewish culture of the Gentile converts. Taking into account the different contexts in which MEE operates in makes “biblical geography ... a key ingredient in the particularity of human existence” (Bauckham, 2003:55; Blauw, 2003:55-60). The question of the ebb and flow of grace would then require a deep consideration of why certain cultural attachments would be regarded as central to MEE. Could it be that pure luck in where a person is born will define the religious and cultural tradition they embrace? If this is the case, then a re-evaluation of the central axioms of the Christian faith seems to be implied.

2.8. Mission and Culture

The centrality of a missionary hermeneutic can aid an understanding of the role of culture in MEE. Manifestations of presumed superiority of the missionary's culture over other cultural contexts is seen where Western missionaries have imposed Western cultural principles (Schleiermacher, 2002:190). The presumption of Western missionary superiority has been claimed to result from confidence in the training methods for missionaries (Allen, 1962:6). Again the issue of cultural and contextual influences on truth claims arises (Newbigin, 2003:7). This would seem to suggest that a robust missiology is prepared to acknowledge cultural and contextual influences on theology. Further, it would seem to suggest a local acceptance of such influences without necessarily viewing them as axiomatic.

2.8.1. Missionary Ethics

The issue of missionary ethics, therefore, arises in regard to cultural and contextual theological influences. How ought MEE ought to be understood and practised in an ethical and theologically consistent manner? An awareness of cultural and contextual influences on theology will aid ethical reflection on MEE.

2.8.2. Missionary Enculturation

One approach has been to immerse missionaries in the culture they work in to enable a “sympathetic understanding of their intellectual position” (Allen, 1962:67). Such an awareness highlights aspects of their home culture which may be a barrier to their missionary work (Greenway, 1999). An awareness of cultural barriers can be very challenging as it can highlight significant aspects of personal and denominational identity as being theologically secondary. Grace could ebb in MEE where the cultural context is understood as less developed and theologically authentic than the cultural context of the missionary’s home.

2.9. The Unique Contribution of this Work

This research attempts to fill a gap in the current literature on mission. The perceived anti-missionary bias within Calvinism has been highlighted. The paucity of missionary reflection within Reformed systematic theologies was further noted. The breadth of missionary reflection throughout popular and academic literature was discussed. The issue of how culture, context and mission interact ethically was given attention. A gap was proposed to be filled through the drawing of a connection between the Reformed theology of mission and missionary praxis. How grace ebbs and flows was applied to the cultural and contextual influences on missiology, and how they have impacted PCI’s missiology and praxis.

3. Theological Reflection on Evangelism

Within the theological discipline of missiology one of the specific aspects this research wants to address is evangelism. Evangelism has an ancient history, being associated in the New Testament with proclaiming the gospel, repentance, baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit in the New Testament (Webber, 2003:19). In this “pre-

modern” context of evangelism was done with the aim of gaining more members to a given community. This is at odds with a “post-modern” approach which embraces diversity rather than uniformity (Spong, 1983:166). The ancient beginning of evangelism has been disputed by others. It has been claimed that evangelism really began in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Abraham, 1991:40). This tension may be resolved by a consideration of the style of evangelism, which, in the nineteenth century, may have differed from that of earlier times. If evangelism is a relatively modern concept then any appeal to a historical and theological tradition would fail. The relatively modern ethos of evangelism may also explain the attachments of certain cultural appendages to an evangelical ethos as there is a paucity of historical precedent.

3.1. Implications of a Modern Beginning

If evangelism is understood to be an exercise in gaining more adherents to a given group then cultural and contextual influences would be significant. Indeed, cultural and contextual influences may even have a greater importance than theological understanding. Cultural and contextual influences could contribute also to the ebb of grace. Grace would ebb in an objectification of people from certain communities whose culture is determined to be the antithesis of the *ordo salutis*. This suggests a need for “thoughtful evangelism”, which recognises the universal human need for ritual and community. This would in turn educate the missionary and inform decisions about who are appropriate targets for MEE (Adams, 1995:1).

3.2. The Universality of Religion

The universality of religious experience and ritual, even beyond Christianity, requires a missional comment. If humanity requires religious meaning then MEE can feed into that principle. The criteria for genuine religion, however, would need to be further defined to discern what religious experience is to be sought. Implied in the universality of religion is a personal view of objective truth and evangelism: “The need of a religion are relevant to an assessment of its truth” (Allen, 1990:11). If religion is reduced to what is personally fulfilling then grace would ebb in the degree

to which religion is personally authentic. There would be little emphasis on the universal axiomatic truths of Christian theology through MEE. Further, there would be an implied abdication of any social responsibility to challenge religious sectarianism and bigotry. Grace would then only flow to those of similar personal conviction without giving attention to the cultural and contextual influences on theological formation.

3.3. Academic Works on Evangelism

While there are many academic works addressing mission, there is a paucity of academic works specifically addressing evangelism. This may be because of the negative view of evangelism as discussed above. A negative view of evangelism has persisted in which the missionary is assumed to be selling the evangelistic message (Battin, 1990:129-130; Dever, 2007:66). A capitalistic understanding of evangelism like this can find resonance within Christian television programmes in which money and faith are linked together, so that method and meaning ebb and flow in a missionary hypostatic union.

3.3.1. Personal Application of Evangelism

Academic research into evangelism may also be difficult because of the personal manner in which it is practised and received. Where the personal aspect of evangelism is emphasised academic objectivity may prove difficult. Grace would flow in the existential realm as people engage with evangelism, personally interpreting what evangelism communicates.

3.3.1.1. The Content of Evangelism

The personal element in evangelism raises the question of the content of the evangelistic message. It has been argued that there is an emphasis on Christ and the kingdom, as evidenced in the Gospel, and away from sin or personal response (Budiselić, 2013:10). This emphasis addresses the theological content of evangelism rather than the personal need of the evangelised. The criteria for judging who would be evangelised could be determined by other than theological criteria, therefore,

emphasising Christ and his kingdom provides a means of disarming cultural objectification. Grace ebbs and flows in the degree to which the praxis of MEE is informed by the Gospel content.

3.3.2. Key Texts on Evangelism - George Sweazey

Two books mark the beginning of serious academic reflection on evangelism (Abraham, 1991:2). First, George Sweazey (1953:16-17) roots evangelistic praxis in the church and not para-church organisations. This emphasis on the role of the church is significant as in 1954, the year after Sweazey's book was published Billy Graham conducted a mission in Harringay Stadium, London (Chapman, 2008:131-132). While Harringay resulted in some people going into ordained ministry in general the local churches failed to benefit. It has become clear that this kind of evangelism, based upon one person who encourages people to take a leap of faith, is difficult to follow up. The reason is that weekly attendance and membership of a local church is so unfamiliar to the new convert that it fails to take root (Booker and Ireland, 2005:65-66). Sweazey may have seen this coming and was concerned about the future of the church in which convert identity is moulded by non-parish ministries.

3.3.2.1. Evangelism and the Church

Sweazey places evangelism firmly within the remit of the church. Evangelism actively encourages people to enter the church's buildings and become members. Four spiritual goals inform and describe evangelism: belief in basic truths, conversion, a personal relationship with Jesus and self-dedication. These are mirrored by four visible or practical goals of evangelism: the act of decision, public acknowledgement of faith, baptism/ confirmation, and church membership (Sweazey, 1953:40-48). The centrality of the church is significant as missiology feeds into ecclesiology. A close connection, however, between evangelism and church membership may be the reason for proselytising, which has made evangelism itself unpopular. Indeed, grace would ebb in MEE by the specific targeting of non-Protestants (Sweazey, 1953:73).

3.3.3. The Key Texts on Evangelism - Bryan Green

Writing at the same time as Sweazey, Bryan Green's book (1951:18) is the second of the key texts on evangelism. Green begins from the premise that those most passionate about evangelism are often the most partisan in their churchmanship. MEE would ebb in missional actions of the church. The ebb and flow of grace will be evidenced either by a missional superiority and suspicion of theological differences, or an embrace and acceptance of theological differences. Green also sees the aim of evangelism as the enabling of people to accept a place in the church (Green, 1951:20).

3.3.3.1. Para-Church Influences

The same results of post-war para-church evangelicalism seem to have informed the reflections of both Green and Sweazey. The identity of the church to which Green is referring is unclear. It could be the church in general (catholic), a denominational church, a local parish or all three. Grace would ebb and flow through MEE omnidirectionally. Grace would begin in the evangelistic praxis to bring people into the church catholic, leading to a denominational affiliation and local parish. If, however, a given denomination or parish is viewed negatively, then the ebb of grace could proceed back to the evangelistic response itself.

3.4. Culture and Evangelism

Having noted previously the importance of culture and context, it is necessary to see their influence on evangelism. If a theology of evangelism is divested of all cultural, historical or contextual influences, evangelical resonance may itself be undermined. Such a divesting of culture would shift Christianity into an exclusively existential experience and the church could struggle in integrating converts into its community. This may have been one of the concerns of Sweazey and Green with the rooting of evangelism in para-church organisations. The unique history and culture of the local and denominational context would become lost amid a generic, non-specific evangelicalism.

3.4.1. Cultural Preoccupation and Christendom

Culture can itself become a preoccupation of evangelism. A retrospective tendency which interprets the past as superior to the present can develop. A retrospective tendency considers a time when culture was understood to be more Christian and critiques the present where a perceived gap between faith and culture now exists (Carrier, 1993:1; Barrs, 2001:142). This is a manifestation of a Christendom mentality. Christendom has been described as “vague Christian ideas” applied to culture by the church (Green, 1951:14). Such vague Christian ideas become a means for the church to engage with the culture through a common awareness of biblical narrative (Murray, 2004:1-2). A shift is then required to reinterpret the present condition of PCI’s culture away from a desire to extend Christendom (Jenkins, 2011:1-2; Smith, 2003:2-3). Grace would ebb in MEE when a Christendom mindset looks down on other cultures.

3.4.2. The Challenge of Christendom Thinking

Evangelistic praxis would also require re-evaluation when the general understanding of the biblical narrative is absent from a culture. Christianity can make a significant cultural impact yet there remains “an immense ignorance” of what Christianity is about (Green, 1951:14; Leith, 1977:13). This suggests a need for cultural relevance so the church can communicate with culture in a comprehensible way. If cultural relevance is marginalised, then grace would ebb in MEE into a theological linguistic subculture. Such a subculture would be comprehensible to the church but inaccessible to a great many because of the cultural appendages present within the language. Cultural relevance aims to take the listener back into the biblical narrative (Brueggemann, 1993:26). Grace would flow as MEE is practised through culturally sensitive communication.

3.4.3. Hebraic Holistic Faith

To ensure a connection between evangelism and the church a return to a holistic Hebraic concept of faith has been argued. In the Hebraic concept of faith there is a defining link between evangelism, discipleship, baptism and teaching. These four aspects encapsulate the essence of evangelism (Webber, 2003:18, 22; Mt. 28:19). The Hebraic concept also unites MEE because of the central role of the church in mission. The expected result of evangelism would, therefore, be an integration and commitment to an ecclesiastical institution. Grace would ebb and flow in MEE in the degree to which one church is deemed to be theologically correct.

3.4.4. Evangelism's Influence on Culture

Culture could appear to be irrelevant to evangelism in anything more than providing a common starting point for the praxis. The reformation of culture by evangelism, therefore, becomes “counter-cultural”. Through a personal engagement the church flows in cultural reformation rather than ebbing away from cultural engagement (Keller, 2005). This has been called “inculturation”, which happens when people, groups, institutions, mentalities, customs, forms of expression, values and practices are used as foci for evangelism (Carrier, 1993:67-69). Culture is defined as a field for the flowing of grace in evangelism, utilising some cultural elements in the praxis. Where cultural manifestations become a source of ecclesiastical division grace would be deemed to ebb, but could equally flow if those manifestations were addressed as secondary to ecclesiastical identity.

3.5. Evangelism and Proselytising

As with mission, the connection between evangelism and proselytising has also been considered:

As I have already indicated, I am using *evangelism*, or *missions*, or *the making of religious converts*, as synonyms for *religious proselytising*. Other words and phrases describe the same phenomenon. *Religious recruitment* is often used when talking about the proselytising activities of cults or new religious movements. Evangelical Christians prefer the use of terms like *evangelism*, *witnessing*, *sharing one's faith*, *saving souls*, or *proclaiming the gospel*. *Pushing* or *peddling the faith* is how many critics would describe proselytising (Thiessen, 2011:3, 9).

Proselytising is a focus on “the intentional, direct, and overt communication that results in someone’s conversion” (Thiessen, 2011:10). The association between proselytising and personal conversion resulting from a directed communication is well attested to (Leith, 2010:15; Adams, 1995:12). This positive understanding of proselytising, however, is not uniformly accepted (Delgado, 1980; Schopf, 1997; Rorty, 2003:141-149; Sherr, Singletary and Rogers, 2009:157-165; Volokh, 2001:57). It would seem that the term “proselytising” could be interpreted to implicitly ebb in grace as practised in MEE.

3.5.1. Ecumenical Reflection on Proselytising

The Joint Working Group of the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches has produced one of the fullest statements on proselytising (1970:182). They suggest that proselytising distorts and corrupts Christian witness by misrepresenting the unity of God’s people through schism and division within the church. Proselytising, therefore, rests upon the assumption that one Christian expression is superior to others (Battin, 1990:169). By implication this would require an embrace of the superior Christian expression and a rejection of all inferior ones. Such superior notions betray a perceived arrogance and intolerance in the proselytiser (Thiessen, 2011:55, 59, 105). How proselytising is distinguished from other methods for evangelism remains unclear. Grace would ebb and flow in the degree to which the claims of superiority by the proselytiser resonate with those of other traditions. Accordingly it may be more readily accepted in inter-faith dialogue but not in inter-church.

3.5.1.1. Proselytising and the WCC

The Joint Working Group of the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches define proselytising (1970:178):

Here is meant improper attitudes and behaviour in the practice of Christian witness. Proselytisation embraces whatever violates the right of the human person, Christian or non-Christian, to be free from external coercion in religious matters or whatever in the proclamation of the Gospel does not conform to the ways God draws free men to himself in response to his calls to serve in spirit and truth.

If MEE is understood as a form of Western colonialism then proselytising could be seen as a genuine outcome (Thiessen, 2011:96). The associations of coercion and superiority with colonialism would also add to a negative view of proselytising. The result would be the robbing of any ethical warrant to the praxis of MEE (Newman, 1982:90; Newbigin, 1995:134-135). Grace would be seen to flow in MEE as adherents speak positively of their faith. Positivity would then, by implication, supplant any notion of superiority by the evangelist. The Hebraic holistic approach informs evangelism by taking account of the cultural influences on the church (Smith, 1922:627). Such a harmony between cultural influences and doctrinal axioms suggest that some agreement between the two are necessary for MEE.

3.5.2. The Implications of Proselytising

Proselytising has been described as the definite act of converting people, or the attraction of Christians from one tradition to another. Converting and attracting result in a “change of belief, behaviour, identity, and a sense of belonging” (Thiessen, 2011:10-14, 29). Such a wholesale transformation manifests in a “reimagined life” where all of life is “reordered” according to the outcome of evangelism. Personal transformation correlates with the understanding of conversion as a central aspect of the Christian faith in personal transformation (Brueggemann, 1993:10, 15; Löffler, 1975:24-25). Proselytising, therefore, changes MEE into a radical transformation of personal and community identity. The implied basis of such transformation is the theological and spiritual superiority of one tradition over another.

3.5.3. The Ethics of Proselytising

The term “proselytising” appears to carry a negative ethical ethos which can eclipse the spiritual rationale for evangelism. The term “proselytising” may, therefore, prove to be too emotive a term to be used to describe MEE. If so, any theological investigation into the kind of evangelism which uses proselytising would become blurred also. Proselytising as a definition of MEE should be dropped because of the confusion and ethical implications the use of the term brings.

3.5.4. Evangelism in Ecumenical Context

Evangelism’s relationship to the wider ecumenical context is seen when evangelism invites converts to enter the kingdom of God and not a denominational church (Abraham, 1991:95; Leith, 2010:9). Grace flows when MEE substitute denominational affiliation for conversion. When proselytising is linked with evangelism a presupposition of the theological and ecclesiastical end of conversion overshadows the praxis. This in turn presupposes the primacy of a given culture and ecclesiology. This moves the church from a position of neutrality to one of partiality (Brueggemann, 1993:69, 129). To counter any proselytising tendencies a separation of the aim of evangelism from the means of achieving it is required (Battin, 1990:137; Dever, 2007:66). There are both positive and negative results of such a separation. The Hebraic holistic approach would fail because the link between church and MEE is broken. Conversion would become highly personal, and therefore, cultural associations with Christianity would be severed.

3.6. Popular Writing on Evangelism

As was noted above, there has been considerable popular reflection on evangelism. One source I have chosen not to include is David Watson (1999). Watson had a specific influence on the doctrine and praxis of evangelism through his parish, university and global missionary work (Manwarring, 1985:207; Hunsberger, 2015:27). Watson has a further impact on Northern Ireland. Through his charismatic experience he rejected a negative view of Catholicism and committed himself to work toward peace and reconciliation (Atherstone and Maiden, 2014:14). While he

was a prominent person in the evangelical community, his work is difficult to evaluate because he does not cite his sources. This does not negate his influence, but does reinforce how academic reflection on evangelism has been a neglected field.

3.6.1. The Work of Robert E. Coleman

Robert E. Coleman (1972 and 2011) considers the praxis of evangelism rather than the theological motivations for evangelism. Accordingly, Coleman's contribution has been defined as pragmatic rather than idealistic (Abraham, 1991:3). Despite being critiqued as pragmatic, Coleman does deal with the ethical and theological implications of evangelism. Coleman argues: "Every person deserves equal respect and rights" (Coleman, 1972:64). This statement would seem to challenge any proselytising tendency or denominational superiority in evangelism. Indeed, MEE suggests cultural, theological, ecclesiastical and liturgical diversity in the church (Coleman, 1972:212). Grace would flow in MEE through dialogue and the identification of common theological and spiritual axioms.

3.6.2. The Work of Alvin L. Reid

Alvin L. Reid (1998 and 2002) is another writer in the popular field of evangelism. Reid is Senior Professor of Evangelism and Student Ministry and Bailey Smith Chair of Evangelism at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Reid has academic qualifications in evangelism, having studied Calvin's contribution for his doctorate (Lewis, 2009:48). Accordingly, Reid is viewed as a leading authority on the theology and praxis of evangelism (Smith, 1999:xi). Reid's first work (1998:4) seeks to maintain a connection between theology and evangelism. This connection seeks to avoid proselytising by considering historical and biblical precedent. Reid does not answer how historical and biblical precedent are important but assumes they mark a movement toward theological reflection on evangelism. For Reid the focus of evangelism is the "radically unchurched". Such have no connection or history with a "Bible-teaching, Christ-honouring church" (Reid, 2002:21). The criteria for being defined as a "Bible-teaching, Christ-honouring church" is not expounded. If a church

was deemed to contradict this definition grace would ebb in MEE. Such an interpretation could even be used to justify proselytising.

3.7. Reformed Evangelism

It has been claimed that Calvin and the Reformers extinguished evangelism, whereas the Catholic Church and monarchs kept it alive (Hogg, 1961:96-97; van den Berg, 1950:174-187; Holsten, 1953:1-32; Edwards, 1967:47-51; Chaney, 1964:24-28). On the other hand, it has been claimed that Calvin revitalised evangelism (Calhoun, 1979:16-33; Reid, 1983:65-74; Zwemer, 1950:206-216; MacMillan, 1989:5-17). Whichever of the two positions is correct, Calvin's influence, or lack thereof, on evangelism requires reflection.

3.7.1. Calvin and Evangelism

Calvin (Vol. 2, 1957:286) suggests a symbiosis between God and the church in evangelism. This symbiosis understands God as sovereign, but elects to use the church to incarnate MEE. The essentially human role of evangelism could ebb and flow on grace simply because of human preconceptions and prejudices. The office of evangelist is rejected by Calvin, who sees the proclamation of the gospel as the central tenet (Hall, 2008:394; Beeke, 2004:74; Hughes, 1973:44). Such a preoccupation with the proclamation of the gospel could ebb in grace through MEE by emphasising denominational superiority. Further, the dependence of the convert on the ecclesiastical tradition could militate against ecclesiastical breadth. The conclusion of Calvin could be interpreted as the exclusive authenticity of Reformed theology and churches. This would result in Reformed expression as the only basis for genuine evangelism and Reformed theology as the only proper Christian understanding.

3.9. The Unique Contribution of this Work

This research attempts to fill a gap in the current literature on evangelism. This gap is considered through the relationship between the ebb and flow of grace among Reformed expressions of MEE. A paucity of academic reflection on evangelism has been demonstrated within the literature. The areas of evangelism and culture have been reflected upon. The literature specifically dealing with evangelism and proselytising has also been considered. The implications of proselytising for MEE was highlighted. This has demonstrated that there has been little Reformed reflection on MEE.

4. Theological Reflection on Ecumenism

Within the theological discipline of missiology the other specific aspect that this research wants to address is ecumenism. One understanding of ecumenism has been suggested by the World Council of Churches (WCC). WCC emphasises a vision for unity which comes from a sense of belonging to the Christian traditions and an affinity with those suffering for their faith. Ecumenism reflects a movement from the edges to the centre rather than the centre to the edges (*Unity Statement*, 2013:1; *Together Toward Life*, 2012:5). Grace flows through MEE by an acknowledgement of the multiplicity of Christian expressions that point toward the common theological core.

4.1. Ecumenism as an Eschatological Act

Ecumenism reflects on the unity of creation as the church flows in grace embodying a foretaste of the unified new creation (*Unity Statement*, 2013:2; *Together Towards Life*, 2012:4, 7). The quest for unity builds upon the premise of “confessing with sorrow that our disunity undermines our witness to the good news of Jesus Christ and makes less credible our witness to that unity God desires for all” (*Unity Statement*, 2013:4). Such affirmations indicate that MEE must address disunity as well as the proclamation of the evangel. The eschatological aspect of ecumenism underlines the essential unity of the church. Further, it inspires dialogue amongst the differing streams in order to better understand how each tradition does theology.

4.2. The Purpose of Ecumenism

The purpose of ecumenism is to seek reconciliation between the differing traditions of Christianity. This pushes beyond inter-denominationalism and inter-confessionalism, but not as far as interfaith dialogue (Fitzgerald, 2004:1-4). Ecumenical dialogue carries an “ecumenical imperative” by understanding ecclesiastical separation as less than ideal because it is causing racial and national divisions (Fitzgerald, 2004:5). The connection between ecclesiastical division and societal division requires further reflection. Disunity, however, seems to suggest that the church has a wider influence beyond the purely spiritual. This influence could be understood as evangelistic seeing, MEE improving society as much as gaining converts and unifying the church.

4.3. Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT)

A significant document on ecumenism is the 1994 work *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (ECT). ECT argues that it is both ecumenical and missiological, distilling “common convictions” for the wider church. None of the signatories were officially speaking on behalf of their denominational bodies (ECT, 1995:xv). ECT does, however, recognise the evangelistic efforts of both traditions as prominent (ECT, 1995:xvi). ECT seems to encapsulate the essence of the flow of grace in MEE by connecting two ecclesiastical traditions. The implication would be that if either evangelism or ecumenism is absent from mission, mission is inauthentic.

4.3.1. ECT and Justification by Faith

ECT expresses a common affirmation of justification by faith as the basis for unity: “We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ” (ECT, 1995:xviii). Further, there is a commitment to flowing in common witness both within and without the church as an aim toward full conversion (ECT, 1995:xxiv). ECT suggests a “new ecumenism” which regards doctrinal difference in the light of full communion, uniting both traditions to stand on common areas of biblical teaching and ancient confessions (ECT, 1995:2). The significance of ECT is the implied knowledge of theological difference. Theological difference does not

stop the flow of grace in MEE but acknowledges the need for one another. In this sense it could be that evangelism needs ecumenism for missionary support, theological perspective and ecumenical unity. Thus both principles work together to create a full and integrated definition of mission, namely MEE.

4.4. C.S. Lewis on Ecumenism

C.S. Lewis (1999:318) describes Christianity as entering a large hall, through evangelism. Once in the hall an awareness develops of smaller rooms with “fires and chairs and meals”. These smaller rooms symbolise the different Christian denominations. Accordingly, evangelism is an invitation to enter the hall and ecumenism is settling in one of the rooms expressed through MEE.

4.4.1. Ecumenism and Superiority

Arising from this image is the question whether some in one of the rooms feel their room is superior to the others. Superiority would result in seeking to bring people into that room from the other rooms. The theology of ecumenism is further addressed by Lewis by noting a shift in ecumenical dialogue from friendship to concrete engagement with doctrine (Lewis, 1990:17). This shift does not focus upon faith or good works as the means to salvation, but upon the “seat and nature of doctrinal Authority” (Lewis, 1990:18-19). Lewis is hinting at the manner in which different traditions seek to develop their beliefs. In the Reformed churches it is via biblical and confessional means and in the Catholic Church via the bishops and the Pope. Such differences may be unresolvable: however, ecumenism aids an understanding of the doctrinal nuances. The superiority of one doctrinal position over another is not implied, but may require further investigation.

4.5. The Ecumenical Thought of Paul Avis

Paul Avis is a key thinker on the theology of ecumenism. Avis argued that although there is talk of one church, to the common mind there is a multiplicity of churches (Avis, 2010:4). Avis focuses on doctrinal difference in the ecumenical matrix, critiquing the tendency to “tame” God into a function of denominational liturgy

(Avis, 1986:2). For Avis the liturgical and sacramental emphases are key. This underlines the baptismal basis for Christianity and the fundamental nature of fellowship among the baptised (Avis, 1990:10-13, 15). The importance of baptism for MEE will be considered later on as it relates to inter-confessional engagement.

4.5.1. Ecumenism and the Nature of Doctrine

Avis' primary thesis is the understanding of doctrine as asserting the "nature of truth as a dynamic apprehension of a personal reality". Truth is then filtered through culture as well as the doctrinal history of the ecclesiastical tradition, resulting in the cultural context informing theology (Avis, 1986:11, 23-33; 2010:28). Avis concludes that Christianity is "a venture of faith and life, an exploration into truth and reality", remaining open to new things. This is in opposition to an understanding of truth as an ideology to be preserved (Avis, 1986:115). Those who experience unity in turn transform the institution which they are part of because of their existential experience (Avis, 2010:61).

4.5.1.1. Ecumenism and Justification

Avis also considers the issue of justification by faith and acknowledges that it has become a badge of orthodoxy among Protestants (Avis, 1990:98). For MEE the doctrine of justification by faith is a key issue. While baptism is practised by Reformed and Catholic traditions, justification by faith is a key Reformed tenet. To emphasise baptism at the expense of justification would not satisfy the theological differences between the Reformed churches and other Christian traditions.

4.6. Ecumenical Rapprochement

Ecumenism begins with a strong conviction in one's own doctrinal beliefs, but also with an attitude of openness toward other positions (Lowery, 1985:5). This is the essence of the flow of grace in MEE. The challenge for the Reformed churches is the seeming disparity between their theological understanding of soteriology and that of other churches.

4.6.1. Reformed Theological Tension

The theological tension between confidence in Reformed theology as the fullest revelation of theological truth, on the one hand, and ecumenical authenticity in engaging with other positions, can be an issue. The result may be the ebb and flow of grace in either wholehearted unity or separation and aloofness. MEE provides denominations, therefore, with an opportunity to seriously engage with theological differences (Lowery, 1985:123). While theological engagement is not a precursor to theological agreement, it can provide a knowledge of how different doctrinal positions are arrived at.

4.6.2. Ecumenical Rapprochement and Proselytising

Ecumenical rapprochement also has implications for proselytising. Proselytising arises in six areas with relation to ecumenical rapprochement: employment of pressure; offering incentives; exploitation of people's weaknesses; political, social and economic pressure; use of unjust or uncharitable words; and emphasising the achievement of one tradition over the other (Gros, McManus and Riggs, 1998:79). Only the fifth element would have direct implication for the ebb and flow of grace in MEE.

4.7. Ecumenism and the Church

Reflection on ecumenism must consider the relationship between unity and ecclesiology. One work which deals with the church and unity is *Ecumenical Ecclesiology: Unity and Diversity in a Fragmented World*, edited by Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen (2009). A wide variety of areas are covered in the book, some of which have a direct influence upon this research. Ecumenism is located in doctrinal statements and documents of churches. These are imbibed into the life of churches and congregations from denominations. Doctrinal statements are then interpreted to ascertain which are deemed to be binding (Thiessen, 2009:35-36). This has particular resonance for PCI, as the Westminster Confession forms a central, core theological tenet. Engagement, therefore, with the WCF's teaching defines how PCI understands non-Reformed traditions.

4.7.1. Ecumenism and Church Government

One area where disagreement with PCI's doctrinal standards may arise is the assertion that the New Testament does not teach one model of church government (Thiessen, 2009:40). Presbyterian polity is central to the Reformed model of PCI, and by implication other ecclesiastical governmental models would be inconsistent with the Presbyterian understanding. Five theses on unity have, therefore, been suggested: ecclesiastical unity is based on covenantal principles, not doctrinal confessions; the confessing church is not necessarily protected by confessions; church discipline focuses on Christ's return; God's covenant constitutes the visible and invisible church; and it is forbidden to "church shop" (van Driel, 2009:64-72). These statements lock unity within covenantal theology. If covenant, therefore, implies a singularity of relationship with God, then the issue of whether confessional statements of differing denominations are secondary to that relationship informs the ebb and flow of grace.

4.7.2. The Work of John A. McKay

A further exploration on the relationship between the church and ecumenism is seen in the work of John A. MacKay (1964). MacKay's reflection addresses the necessity of seeing mission-as-ecumenism. The church is then seen as the first-fruits of Christ's redemptive work on the cross. Such ecclesiology shines a light on the church's confrontation with the world (MacKay, 1964:29). This widens the scope of mission to include the entire church (MacKay, 1964:33). These two principles connect the church with the doctrine of salvation, the message proclaimed in evangelism, and the role of the church ebbing and flowing in MEE.

4.7.2.1. A Common Identity

Interaction between the church and the world could provide a common identity for all Christian traditions in the light of perceived cultural changes. These changes have been highlighted previously through engagement with the concept of Christendom. An evidence of commonality between Evangelicals and Catholics is evidenced in the

North American political field to accomplish common moral aims (Weigel, 1995:45-80). MEE, therefore, sits in the praxis of Christian people who see a common morality between religious denominations. What this practice fails to do, however, in any meaningful way is to engage with the theological differences between the churches, and consequently it may not even be defined as ecumenism. While doctrinal differences remain in opposition, dialogue could be opened on the beliefs which underline the moral commonality.

4.7. The Unique Contribution of this Work

What has been shown in this section is the need for a theologically driven ecumenism. Theologically driven ecumenism would engage with and build upon the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith. Alternative starting points may be possible: however, it is this doctrine which formed the historical and theological justification for the Protestant Reformation. To ignore justification, therefore, requires a re-evaluation of Reformed theology and history. While this may be worthwhile, it is aspirational and does not deal with the issue as it now stands. There is a need for a theologically driven critique of ecumenical engagement and the implications of the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith for MEE. This dissertation attempts to fill that gap in the literature by offering a Reformed position on MEE within PCI.

5. Partial Conclusion

This chapter has sought to highlight the key theological literature relating to the ebb and flow of grace in MEE. Beginning with mission, Reformed missiology was considered and the question was asked whether Calvinism was essentially pro- or anti-mission. Further consideration was given to the paucity of theology on mission within Reformed systematic theologies. The breadth of mission reflection was considered. The specific issue of ecumenical evangelism and mission was also considered in the light of the cultural influence on missiology. The seemingly missing aspects of Reformed systematic theology on mission were highlighted along with the proposed connection to ecumenism.

5.1. The Second Literature Block

The second block of literature considered were those on evangelism, beginning with academic theologies and the key theological texts. The relationship between culture and evangelism was reflected upon in the light of MEE. Popular evangelical comment on evangelism was considered because of the wide number of works which have a bearing upon the subject, and specifically Reformed evangelism was also highlighted. A potential gap in the literature of evangelism from a Reformed perspective was highlighted along with a general paucity of academic reflection on the subject.

5.2. The Last Literature Block

The last block of literature dealt with was on ecumenism. This looked at the purpose of ecumenical engagement as uniting the diverse Christian traditions. As this research looks specifically at MEE, the ECT movement and literature was noted as well as Lewis' views on unity. The work of Avis on ecumenism was highlighted as a key contribution to this discussion, as well as the connection between ecumenism and the church. A potential gap in the literature was highlighted: the need for positive ecumenism, discussed on the basis of the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith, and for its connection with inter-denominational evangelism.

Chapter 4

Theological Touchstones

1. Introduction

This chapter will identify a number of key theological touchstones on which mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism (MEE) rest. A “touchstone” was a medieval means of determining the weight of gold. The term is being used here to discern how God works through the “regular tracks and in ways that have been established beforehand” (Colglazier, 1999:3; Ritschl, 1984:71). Theological precedence aids reflection on MEE as the touchstones’ weight or precedent frames the theological reflection.

1.1. Theological Self-Reflection

The identification of the theological touchstones is also an exercise in theological self-reflection. Touchstones could also be described as “deep symbols.” These deep symbols are “the values by which a community understands itself, from which it takes its aims, and to which it appeals as canons of cultural criticism” (Farley, 1996:3). These theological touchstones are located within the field of systematic theology, which will be accessed through the touchstones within the canvas of Trinitarian theology. Trinitarian theology provides the doctrinal context for MEE (McGrath, 1987:110). The Trinity provides a sense of commonality, drawing the touchstones together into one comprehensive theology. The ebb and flow of grace is discerned by the touchstones which inform PCI’s missiology and provide the rationale for MEE.

2. Mission as a Central Theme of the Church’s Identity

Mission is a central theological theme of ecclesiastical identity. It is also an influential force on missional praxis through MEE. The place of the church in missiology addresses the manifold denominations in the world while keeping MEE central (Hauerwas, 1981:91). Denominational division implies a breach in the unity

of MEE. Where division exists so too does a potential manifestation of grace ebbing between theological traditions in their ecumenical engagement.

2.1. Introduction to Missiology

Mission was historically seen as the threefold aim of converting non-Christians, establishing the church and manifesting divine grace (van Andel, 1951:150; Bavinck, 1960:191; Durr, 1951). This led to mission being used as an adjective and was attached to different ecclesiastical functions such as church, spirituality, leadership and ministry (Ott, Straus and Tennent, 2010:197-200; Roxburg and Boren, 2009; Hirsch, 2009; Feeney, Lings and Neal, 2004; Hull, 2006; Guder and Barrett, 1998; Van Gelder, 2007; Van Gelder, 2011). The meaning of mission when attached to these other aspects of ecclesiastical life is wide and varied. In some cases the meaning sought to inform the church with a responsibility to prioritise and demonstrate MEE.

2.1.1. Towards a Definition of Mission

To offer a narrow definition of mission may be neither possible nor useful. An alternative is to access a definition through an investigation of the praxis of mission. This dissertation seeks to do this through a consideration of MEE (Ferdinando, 2008:46). An investigation into missionary praxis implies a consideration of context along with a “sympathetic understanding of their intellectual position” (Allen, 1962:67). To properly consider missionary praxis an investigation into the theological touchstones guiding the praxis is required (Tillich, 1968:44). This provides the academic rationale for investigating MEE within PCI. This dissertation seeks to improve on prior academic reflection by using historical and systematic theology to investigate MEE. Account will be taken of the biblical basis of mission as reflecting the aims and ethos of PCI (Ott, Strauss and Tennent, 2010:149; *The Code*, 2013:64). This dual allegiance suggests MEE is to be understood both biblically and historically/ systematically.

2.1.2. Mission in the Old Testament - Creation

The first glimpse of mission is seen in God's creation of the universe, Christ speaking the word and the Spirit hovering over the deep (Gen. 1:1-2; Jn. 1:1-3; Tillich, 1968:155). A *proto-evangelium* can be discerned in the creation and fall of humanity which points to Christ's incarnation (Köstenberger and O'Brien, 2001:27; Collins, 1997:139-148; Alexander, 1997:363-367). Mission can be discerned through God's willingness to create the universe in the knowledge of human sinfulness. Human sinfulness is a central tenet, and redemption as key to mission will be considered through Reformed soteriology in a later chapter.

2.1.3. Abraham and his Descendants

The calling of Abram and his dependence on God to provide a home and offspring is another example of mission. Abram was invited to participate with God in mission and at his renaming promises were given to future generations (Gen. 12:1-3; Gal. 3:7-9; 1 Pt. 2:9-10; Glasser *et. al.*, 2003:28). It was through the family of Abraham that a covenant community was initiated with the command to take God to the world (Gen. 17:5; Isa. 2:1-5; Wright, 2006:63). Abram's renaming as Abraham suggests that the covenant community is actively participating in mission, making the blessing of the nations practical as well as theoretical (Köstenberger and O'Brien, 2001:30). Grace would flow through Abraham and his family as they enter into a covenant relationship with God.

2.1.3.1. Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy

A key area of this research is the relationship between orthodoxy of belief and orthodoxy of praxis (orthopraxis). MEE would ebb and flow in grace to the degree in which they interact with one another practically as well as theoretically. Any exclusion of either evangelism or ecumenism would result in a skewed manifestation of mission.

2.1.4. Israel and Mission

The descendants of Abraham would become the nation of Israel. Mission was central to their identity and role in the world suggesting a universalist rather than exclusivist aspect of God's revelation. Israel would become a missionary people to the world, demonstrating God's lordship in their personal, national and religious lives (Köstenberger and O'Brien, 2001:34; Ex. 19:5). Grace ebbs and flows in the extent to which God's lordship defines the nation of Israel.

2.1.4.1. The Exodus

The story of the Exodus from Egypt further points to Israel's missionary identity. God entered into Israelite history to deliver them from Egyptian bondage. Israel would then be formed into a free covenant community of mission witnessing to the nations (Wright, 2006:271; Verkuyl, 1978:93). There seems to be a degree of exclusivity in the choosing of one nation among the others to be God's people. Grace would be seen to ebb and flow in the degree to which God's choice informs mission or results in religious exclusivity. MEE operates through the nation of Israel's invitation to enter God's covenant in which there is equality of identity.

2.1.5. David and Kingship

Israel's development after the release from Egypt became increasingly centralised, shown in a desire for a monarch to rule, as with other nations (1 Sam. 8). The first king was Saul. His line, however, was discontinued as a result of David's reign being instituted. David resonated more with God (1 Sam. 13:14; 15). The role of the king in mission was as the person who "embodies and represents the people" (Köstenberger and O'Brien, 2001:39). The covenant community is embodied in the king and the king represents the covenant community to the nations. MEE would become more militaristic and nationalistic. New citizens were required for the kingdom to remain strong among the nations. Grace would ebb and flow in the degree to which the monarch properly embodied the spiritual principles of the nation.

2.1.6. Isaiah's Servant Songs

As kingship developed in Israel, division and exile resulted. Isaiah's servant songs iterate the complaint of Israel that God had rejected them. There was also an aspect of hope that God would come and deliver them into a new covenant (Isa. 42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12; Isa. 61:1-3; Köstenberger and O'Brien, 2001:46-50). This new covenant would come from the line of David which would personally fulfil all the prior promises made to Israel. One example of this was the expectation of the year of Jubilee (Isa. 61:2). The proclamation of freedom was the "normative" manner by which God would raise up missionaries through the Spirit (Isa. 61:1; Bosch, 1998:75). MEE through the servant songs defined both personal and corporate experience. Grace flows through Israelite people who transform the nation into missionaries proclaiming God's favour. Proclamation to the nations accompanied by favour among the people encapsulates the evangelical and ecumenical aspects of mission.

2.1.7 Mission in the Gospels

The Trinitarian model of mission becomes more evident in the New Testament. It formed the basis for Christ's historical mission (Mt.3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-13; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn. 1:31-34; Mt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-13). Christ's temptation in the wilderness marks the start of his mission. The Spirit "throws" Jesus into the wilderness to overcome evil (Strong, 2010:n.1544). The ongoing spiritual battle would be continued as the disciples spread the gospel among the nations (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-18; Ac. 1:8). Christ commands his church to be missional, whether "voluntarily or involuntarily"; mission would then produce an "actualisation of the Spiritual Community within concrete churches all over the world" (Tillich, 1968:206). This would demonstrate the equality of evangelism and ecumenism in mission. MEE can, therefore, be seen as community based and community replicating. Grace ebbs and flows in the degree to which a denominational or local church is emphasised at the expense of the wider church.

2.1.8. "The Great Commission"

"The Great Commission" in Matthew's Gospel presents the centrality of mission for the New Testament. It has been claimed that viewing the entire Gospel through the commission obfuscates further study of Matthew's missiology (Köstenberger and O'Brien, 2001:87; Bosch, 1998:56-57, 340-341). While the commission is an element of Matthew's missiology, there is a wider missionary implication. The emphasis on the nations dovetails with the Abrahamic mission by viewing people as representatives of the different nations (Glasser *et. al.*, 2003:237). On this point the church is stepping beyond the traditional praxis of Judaism, which refrained from missional engagement with the nations (Bosch, 1998:57; Harnack, 1908:42). The church is open to others as under the Abrahamic covenant (Köstenberger and O'Brien, 2001:87, 106; Wright, 2006:213; Taylor, 2004:21). Further, there is a dependence upon the church to fulfil the commission and complete the Abrahamic mission (Bosch, 1998:78). Grace ebbs and flows in the degree to which MEE engages with the nations without inferring any implicit supremacy (Bell, 2011:175; MacDonald, 2012).

2.1.9. The Pentecostal Church

Pentecost (שבועות) was a Hebrew festival which marked the giving of the Law (Ex. 34:22; Lev. 23:15-22; Deut. 16:16; 2 Chr. 8:13; Eze. 1). With the coming of the Spirit upon the church at Pentecost MEE was linked with the Israelite people. While linking with Israel, Pentecost also marks a movement away from a racially defined people to an inclusive community (Ac. 1:6-8; Ac. 2:1-39). Pentecost affirms that while Israel received the theological understanding of Messiah before the Gentiles, a decentralisation from one racial group to wherever and whoever the church is would now develop (Bosch, 1998:95; Ott, Strauss and Tennent, 2001:27-28). Pentecost demonstrates the flow of grace from the resurrection of Christ to the anointing of the church (Jn. 14:16-17; 16:7-11). The physical ascension of Christ results in the Spirit coming among the church to reach the nations (Ac. 2:7-12; Moltmann, 1992:60; 2009:152, 158-159). The church received the impetus, fulfilment and revelation of MEE at the Pentecost event.

2.1.9.1. Pentecost and Mission

Pentecost, while a singular event, marked a wider movement in MEE. The Holy Spirit anoints a minority church for the “proclamation and activity” to effect change on a majority culture (Bonhoeffer, 2011:149; Smart and Konstantine, 1991:155-156; Plant, 2013:78-79). There is little tension between the communal and personal aspects of the church, as people make up that wider community. An experiential aspect is also evident as people engage with the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. Rather than viewing mission as a presentation of certain foundational doctrines, it becomes an invitation to engage personally with God (Ac. 2:41, 47). For PCI, the centrality of the core doctrines in the WCF may, therefore, have a lesser role in ecclesiastical identity than engaging with the praxis of MEE. The ebb and flow of grace is witnessed in the church among the nations wrestling with theologically understanding a divine experience of conversion.

2.1.10. Peter and Cornelius

The ebb and flow of MEE is further discerned in Peter’s interaction with Cornelius. Cornelius was a Roman officer who through prayer recognised the voice of God (Ac. 10:1-4). As a Gentile, Cornelius is evidence of the widening arc of mission and the demonstration of Christ’s lordship over all creation (Bevans and Schroeder, 2011:26). This story suggests a racial equality within the church and, as a result, Gentile converts not having to obey the Jewish ceremonial law (Ac. 10:9-17). The Jewish ceremonial law is now seen as culturally relative rather than culturally normative (Smith, 2003:73-74). This results in spiritual identity becoming superior to cultural, religious, social, political, historical or racial identity. The flow of grace is discerned as Peter is challenged about the width of God’s grace to include Gentiles like Cornelius, but ebbs in Peter’s own sectarianism. There is also a challenge for MEE to interact with those whom the missionary may find abhorrent because of some historical, cultural or religious stigma in the missionary’s own background.

2.1.11. Pauline Missionary Passion

Paul was a practitioner of mission, first for Jewish orthodoxy, then for the Christian faith (Ac. 9:1-9). Ananias is instructed to initiate Paul into the Christian church and reveal his calling as a missionary (Ac. 9:15). This call implanted within Paul a desire to take the gospel to virgin missionary contexts (Rom. 15:20). Paul is seen as a “primary evangelist” whose role was to forge new missionary avenues along with an ecumenical knowledge of fellow missionaries (Köstenberger and O’Brien, 2001:180, 190). He is a personal example of the marriage between evangelism and ecumenism. Grace flows through Paul as a witness for the gospel and a founder of new mission contexts.

2.1.12. The Theological Foundation for Mission

On the basis of the emphasis on mission in the Old and New Testaments a potential description can be developed. Mission can be theologically defined as bringing God’s Word to humanity in specific situations (Tienou & Herbert, 2005:6). Identifying potential contexts helps to inform missiology regarding missionary praxis. Theology is used, therefore, to assess the criteria for objectifying missionary contexts and the place of religious or philosophical systems within those contexts. Where there is already a religious system within a missionary context the challenge of sectarianism arises. The solution is to link evangelism and ecumenism through a common focus on the church (Diem, 1967:29-42; Newbigin, 1995:7). Mission becomes a universal aspect of the church, much wider than denominational or theological traditions. Mission also acts as a uniting focus among the Christian denominations. Grace would ebb through engagement with other religions in a sectarian manner, but flow in the unity of the church incarnating mission.

2.1.13. The Historical Foundation for Mission

Historical evidence also provides an ongoing aid to addressing MEE. Mission is described as being “universal” in its application of the gospel (Guder, 2016:319). It has been suggested there were three models of mission seen in different congregations of the early church (Bevans and Schroeder, 2011:36-49).

2.1.13.1. "Type A Theology"

"Type A Theology" which came from Carthage and was influenced by Tertullian, understands mission as the salvation of souls and the extending of the church. A high Christology accompanied a penal substitution view of the atonement. This resulted in an ecclesiological centrality for mission where there was no salvation outside of the church. Tertullian argued that only those sent by the church ought to be received by the church because of apostolic leadership (Tertullian, 1995:45-46). Cyprian further expanded upon apostolic leadership by connecting the unity of the church to the bishops as the apostles' successors. Ecclesiastical identity and faithfulness, therefore, come exclusively through subjection to the episcopate (Cyprian, 1995:261-262). The flow of grace is seen in how the church relates to missionaries through the prism of apostolic authority in the bishop, but would ebb if the bishop were bypassed.

2.1.13.2. "Type B Theology"

"Type B Theology" developed from Greek concepts of God's transcendence, and the human ability to engage with God through philosophy. Jesus is seen as an incarnate example of God's love for humanity (Bevans and Schroeder, 2001:51). The church is, therefore, a community of knowledge but not central to mission as in "Type A" (Bevans and Schroeder, 2001:54-55). Grace, therefore, ebbs and flows in the minds of Christians who elevate their knowledge of God. This would become clear through philosophical reasoning producing an exclusive theological nomenclature. Prior to engagement with MEE an understanding of that nomenclature would be required because only the church would be cognisant of it.

2.1.13.3. "Type C Theology"

"Type C Theology" has a high view of humanity, and emphasises God's creation of humanity, who would develop into the fullness of his image. There is little emphasis on the fall, God's law or human depravity. There is, however, a pervading sense in which history works out mission in a Hegelian dialectic (Bevans and Schroeder, 2001:61; Hegel, 1977:111). Hegel has particular resonance with Christianity because

of the common importance placed on history (Allen and Springsted, 2007:169). Grace would ebb in the emphasis on human ability to engage with God and the interpretation of reasons why that was not happening.

2.1.13.4. Theological Synthesis

I want to suggest a hybrid form of “Type A” and “Type C” as a potential basis for MEE. This hybrid emphasises experiential salvation in mission, but is linked with a social liberation of humanity. There is no implicit connection to denominational Christianity because an ecumenical spirit is spread across the denominations. Grace flows through ecumenical engagement in mission which emphasises the central core of the Christian faith while resisting tendencies to schism over difference.

2.1.14. Mission and Nation

It has been argued that the Protestant churches used missions to extend British culture and the reach of the British Empire in the nineteenth century: “to establish white settler communities” (Tillich, 1968:389-390; Stanley, 1990:34; Leith, 1977:53). Such mission brought about contexts where Western culture would be present, so that the natives’ living conditions could be improved (Schleiermacher, 1799:190). The Protestant churches aligned themselves with a political and social position which sought to aid cultural expansion. Expansionism can, therefore, be described as imperialism. The Western churches assumed the supremacy of Western society (Stanley, 1990:34). Grace ebbs and flows to the degree that theology and doctrine are used to further a political or cultural worldview. The furtherance of a political or cultural worldview manifests through a sense of superiority in MEE.

2.1.14.1. Idolatrous Cultural Expansionism

Using mission for cultural expansionism has been labelled idolatry. The idol in question is the presupposition that the missionary’s culture is in some way superior and more Christian than that of the place where the missionary functions (Stone, 2007:37). MEE, therefore, requires a “great need for more biblical and theological discipline in our understanding, formulation, and practice of evangelism” (Guder,

2000:25). This research attempts to give such a contribution to missiology through an investigation of PCI's missionary praxis in Ireland. Using mission for cultural expansionism was not universal. Some missionaries, such as Hudson Taylor and many others, affirmed indigenous cultures and adopted local practices (Bevans and Schroeder, 2011:237; Austin, 2007:2). Grace ebbs and flows in the degree to which missionaries respect the cultural context they minister in. This requires a robust examination of missionary praxis to ensure that no cultural assumptions are present.

2.2. The Changing Understanding of Mission

At the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference mission was seen as being directed primarily to overseas fields (Gay, 2011:82-85; Ross, 2010:11-12; Martin, 1960; Stanley, 2009). The location of the Conference was significant. Scotland had provided an educational commitment to foreign missions (Yates, 1994:21-24). The missional church conversation, therefore, specifically engaged with the sending culture to aid authentic missional praxis (Ott, Straus and Tennent, 2010:197-200; Roxburg and Boren, 2009; Hirsch, 2009; Feeney, Lings and Neal, 2004; Hull, 2006; Guder and Barrett, 1998; Van Gelder, 2007; Van Gelder, 2011). A conversational approach also enables mission to engage with a current context while prophetically inviting a deeper reflection about personal interaction with the Trinity (Bevans and Schroeder, 2011:285). Grace ebbs when MEE is viewed as an overseas matter or a purely spiritual experience without critiquing human relationships and influences. Grace flows as MEE connects with the sending community as well as foreign mission fields.

2.2.1. Missio Dei Trinitatis

Mission may be best understood within the context of Trinitarian relationships (Adams, 2010:65; Young, 2002:84-91). The notion of the Trinity had “gradual advances” and “partial ascents” through the Old Testament where God the Father is spoken of openly and God the Son obscurely (Gregory, 1978:4; McDermott and Netland, 2014:86). Discernment of Triune relationships may be best seen through Triune actions. There is a tension in Trinitarian relationships as members have the

same substance but different persona. Such relationships demonstrate that God exists as “uncompounded, without diversity of parts, wholly identical and consistent” (Irenaeus, 1983:65; WCF 2:3). MEE flows in grace as Triune relationships form and inform orthopraxis.

2.2.1.1. Trinitarian Relationships

Trinitarian relationships are further mirrored through speech, emotion and action in humanity’s participation in the otherness of God (Fiddes, 2000:37-38, 48, 55). Knowledge of the Trinity, therefore, implies an engagement with the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. Engagement with the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* then provides transformation into a fuller understanding of the Triune character (*Ad Gentes*, 1965). Grace flows in personal spiritual development informing missional praxis, but ebbs when Trinitarian relationships are marginalised.

2.2.1.2. The “Mystery” of the Trinity

While the term Trinity expresses a “mystery” it remains a common definition of God. It is preferred because it does not reduce God to abstract concepts, but emphasises personhood as a context for God’s engagement with humanity (Moltmann, 1992:55, 1981:71; 2000:39). Grace flows through personal connection to the Trinity in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*, and from that personal connection into the wider church. The Triune mystery is experienced personally in a revelation that “the Son of God is the Logos of the Father, both in thought and reality” (Athenagoras, 1972:21). The role of the Spirit is seen in the preparation of people for the Son. The Son then leads people to the Father and the Father dispenses immortality (Irenaeus, 1983:87). Grace flows through Triune relationships as God works to bring people into experiential relationship with himself through MEE.

2.2.1.3. *The Orthodox Influence*

Engagement with the Orthodox Churches in the latter part of the twentieth century underlined the necessity for a Trinitarian understanding of mission (Scherer and Bevans, 1992:203-204). That engagement shifted mission from something the church does to something the church participates in with the Trinity and is central to ecclesiastical identity (Bevans and Schroeder, 2011:348; Newbigin, 1989:117-118; Verkuyl, 1978:5). Grace flows in MEE when ecclesiastical identity becomes less significant and a common missionary identity becomes primary. The *Missio Dei Trinitatis* welcomes people who are led by the Spirit to those in need of missionary contact. This results in MEE engaging with “new dimensions of the reality of Jesus Christ” (Miglore, 2003:151). Grace flows through MEE as people develop spiritually and engage with the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. Grace ebbs as people resist either evangelism or ecumenism.

2.2.2. *A Shift from Ecclesiocentric Mission*

The role of the church in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* is that of the primary protagonist in MEE (Wright, 2006:67; Johnson, 2003:65). The church connects God to human suffering through the gospel which offers a hope of transformation (Kärkkäinen, 2011:223). As mission is practised God experiences the same rejection as the missionary experiences when their message is not accepted. God also relates to humanity in the flux of human culture. Such engagement enables God to overcome the contradiction between sinful humanity and his own holiness (Farley, 1996:17; Bauckham, 1995:153). MEE can be seen in the inclusiveness of racial acceptance by the gospel (Gal. 3:28-29). Grace flows from the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* through the church into the world and within the church through inter-ecclesial relations. Where the church does not demonstrate inter-ecclesial relations grace necessarily ebbs.

2.2.3. *Missio Dei Trinitatis* and Jesus

The *Missio Dei Trinitatis* highlights the sending of the Son to the world in mission. This is further seen in the Son serving the Father through the incarnation. The notion of one member of the Trinity serving another may contradict the unity of the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. To avoid a “political monotheism” in which one member of the Trinity dominates another, the Trinity “must for its part point toward a community of men and women without supremacy and without subjection” (Moltmann, 1981:192). If servitude is implied in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* then the same could be inferred in a missiology which imposes one culture upon another (Moltmann, 1997:97). MEE may, therefore, benefit more from the “Christus Victor” model. This model emphasises the liberation of humanity in Christ’s mission (Aulen, 1969:20). A correct Christology in the light of the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* shows how grace flows from Triune relationships through the church and into human experience, but ebbs when domination of one over another is practised.

2.3. The Relationship Between Evangelism and Mission

The relationship between evangelism and mission is significant for this research. Evangelism is sometimes understood as being interchangeable with mission, mission then having an overseas focus and evangelism being done at home. Such interchangeability does not do service to the nuances of mission’s meaning and the role evangelism plays within it (Wright, 2006:319). Equally, evangelism is not just proclamation of the gospel and mission the wider enterprise. Both aspects go together to describe the relationship between mission and evangelism (Mt. 25:31-46; Moltmann, 1992:76). The flow of grace is witnessed through a proclamation of the evangel and a praxis of compassionate and merciful acts. Grace ebbs through a proclamation of the evangel which is unconnected to compassionate and merciful acts. Grace further ebbs when orthodoxy of theology is emphasised but not orthopraxy. It would, therefore, seem that mission informs evangelism with a wider scope of praxis and a spiritual focus rather than an exclusively personal encounter.

2.3.1. *Mission, Evangelism and Ecumenism*

This research considers the dual focus of mission in evangelism and ecumenism. Ecumenism is informed by evangelism through the missionary principles of inclusion reaching beyond the denomination of the missionary. The Holy Spirit, through the proclamation of grace, highlights Christ's suffering and resurrection. Evangelism thus proclaims the freedom of which Christ's suffering and resurrection speak (Clement, 1983:31; Moltmann, 1992:5). Ecumenism is implicit in mission as it includes everyone and emphasises the universal love of God in the gospel (Moltmann, 1965:224). Ecumenism is also central to evangelism because separation is at odds with the universal freedom provided in the cross (Wright, 2006:316-317). Grace flows in MEE when the common application of the gospel to all humanity is emphasised. Divisions based upon race, culture, history, politics or denomination fail in the light of the gospel.

2.3.2. *The Kerygma*

The content of the proclamation has been defined as the *kerygma* (Dodd, 1963:25ff; Bultmann, 1958:71ff; Sweazey, 1953:22; Newbiggin, 2003:86). The distinction between mission and evangelism may lie in emphasising the last aspect of the *kerygma*, which is the personal response to the gospel. Emphasising the final aspect of the *kerygma* assumes the prior elements are either implicit or familiar to those who are being addressed (Abraham, 1991:4). Such an assumption may require a prior knowledge of theological doctrines and a Christianised culture. The presence aspect of Christian mission presents Christianity as connected to people's real needs and not as a mystical religion (Volf, 2011:7-8). As such MEE becomes wider than just proclamation. Grace flows through proclaiming a theological message which engages with people's needs in practical ways. Grace ebbs when people's needs are sidelined for an emphasis which places the fulfilment of people's needs exclusively into the eschaton.

2.3.3. *Mission as the Inspiration for Evangelism*

Mission as the wider theological category, therefore, supplies the inspiration for evangelism. Mission “presupposes a sender, a person or persons sent by the sender, those to whom one is sent, and an assignment” (Bosch, 1998:1; Müller, 1987:31-34). This widely held concept assumes there is a force which targets those perceived to be in need of evangelism and motivates the church to engage with them. The church, therefore, participates in “God’s mission within the history of God’s world” (Wright, 2006:22-23). The church is the “locus of mission,” but not the agent (Newbigin, 1989:128-129). As God works through the church, converts are made members of the community which then practises mission (Newbigin, 1989:119). Grace ebbs and flows around how the church understands its place and role in evangelism, ebbing in exclusivity, but flowing in partnership.

2.3.4. *The Theological Understanding of Mission*

The theological understanding of mission informs the practice of mission by tracing out a theological metanarrative. This theological principle is divided into two aspects: mission in the singular-*Missio Dei Trinitatis*-and missions in the plural-*Missiones Ecclesia* (Bosch, 1998:10). It is the first-the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*-which forms the theological foundation for the doctrine and praxis of mission. The *Missio Dei Trinitatis* is worked out in the metanarrative of the kingdom of God at work in the world (Sundermeier, 2003:560; Morrow, 1998:494). Taking into account the fundamental significance of the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*, missionary praxis becomes dependent and secondary. The *Missio Dei Trinitatis* transcends praxis, representing Triune relationships manifested through the Holy Spirit. Grace flows from the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* in evangelistic praxis by the church in the world. Grace can also ebb when the church substitutes the *Missiones Ecclesia* for the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* in evangelistic praxis, resulting in ecclesiastical separation and distance.

2.3.5. *The Difference between Evangelism and Mission*

Evangelism is contextualised in personal experience when God enters into covenantal relationship with humanity, providing humanity with a new identity (2 Cor. 5:17). Evangelism is, therefore, placed as a central praxis of the church, as “there can be no greater transformation for humans than the work that God does in their lives when they turn to him in faith” (Hiebert, Shaw and Tienou, 1999:389). Evangelism’s focus is on “awakening personal experiences of faith in God’s Spirit and bringing people to make their own personal decisions of faith” (Moltmann, 1997:239). Rather than the participation in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*, evangelism’s focus is more upon personal engagement with God through the gospel.

2.3.5.1. *Competition between Mission and Evangelism*

Sometimes it has been argued that mission and evangelism are two competing but related elements within the church’s praxis (Verkuyl, 1978:9; Russell, 2008:1; Bosch, 1998:10). This suggests that evangelism is an expression (even the most visible and personal expression) of mission. Theologically mission would have a wider application than evangelism. Evangelism, therefore, participates in mission but does not define mission, as mission is participation in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. If evangelism is seen as humans participating in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*, then the inseparability of mission and evangelism arises.

2.3.5.2. *“Primary Business” of Mission*

Newbigin suggests evangelism is the “primary business” of mission, implying the two are indivisible (Newbigin, 2006:92). The difference, therefore, between mission and evangelism may be one of magnitude. Mission encompasses the church’s work in representing God to the world, an aspect of which is evangelism. Evangelism would then be a subdivision of mission (Bosch, 1998:10-11). If, however, the two terms are used interchangeably, then participation in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* runs the risk of being focused only on the procurement of converts. This could mean that the church’s participation in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* ought to be focused on conversion. Grace would ebb and flow in the degree to which mission includes

pastoral care, Bible education, social justice, etc. Any discussion on the praxis of evangelism would become a moot point. The end of seeking converts would come to justify any potential means of achieving that end, and grace ebbs.

2.4. Partial Conclusion

This section has considered the concept of mission in the light of the church's identity and role as the agent of mission. Mission has been traced through the Old Testament, the nation of Israel, David's kingship and Isaiah's servant songs. Mission was further traced through the New Testament. The church moves beyond racial identity by participating in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. The Spirit's coming at Pentecost to empower the church for mission was noted through Peter's engagement with Cornelius and Paul's missionary passion, which included Gentiles. A definition of mission sought to harmonise the different theological trajectories of missiology. Through considering the models suggested by Bevans and Schroeder, cultural imperialism in mission was seen in the nation's relationship to mission. In bringing these themes together mission changed from overseas to everywhere, as implied in the theology of the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. A shift from ecclesiocentric mission reflected Triune relationships as evidenced through the church's praxis of mission. Lastly, the relationship between evangelism and mission was considered. It was suggested that mission inspired evangelism and while related the two were different.

3. The Kingdom of God as the Inspiration for Mission

3.1. Introduction

The first touchstone on which mission rests is the kingdom of God. While the kingdom of God was perhaps obscure within Jewish theology, it developed into a central principle for the church. The centrality of the kingdom of God for the church is dependent upon redemption and personal salvation which establishes God's rule over covenant people. The church, therefore, becomes a living witness to the reign of God. The church's mission is to incarnate aspects of God's reign, justice, holiness and righteousness to the world (Schillebeeckx, 1981:149; 1989:18; Ott, Strauss and

Tennent, 2010:105). Grace flows as the church surpasses personal experience and engages with God's eschatological aim of world transformation. Grace ebbs as personal experience becomes normative for theological, missional and interdenominational engagement. MEE is, therefore, informed and inspired by the eschatological aim.

3.1.2. The Meaning of the Kingdom

The Greek for kingdom (βασιλεία) is used 155 times in the New Testament. It is also used to denote the kingly rule of God (βασιλεία Θεοῦ) as Lord of creation (Schillebeeckx, 1981:141; Newbigin, 1989:119-120). Both God's actual rule and the goal of that rule are summed up in kingdom (βασιλεία). God's rule is not actualised in its entirety but promised through covenant and the Holy Spirit (Moltmann, 1992a: 190). A tension, therefore, between the already and not yet aspects of the kingdom of God exists. While not fully established in the present, the kingdom of God is brought near through the Spirit (Moltmann, 1992a:190; Bauckham, 1995:22). Grace ebbs and flows through MEE in the degree to which the church emphasises the already/ not yet tension. This acknowledges the church as pilgrims with finite revelation, remaining open to different understandings of the Christian faith.

3.1.3. The Trinitarian Aspect of the Kingdom

A Trinitarian aspect of the kingdom is seen in the affirmation of Christ as immanent Lord. This affirmation enables God to "enter into fellowship" with humanity through the Spirit (Cullman, 1971:195; Moltmann, 2000:310). Trinitarian immanence is discerned through humanity's experience of God in the history of salvation. This is an "economic Trinity" in which characteristics of the Trinity are revealed to humanity, illuminating and informing human society (Rahner, 1969:21-22; Gunton, 1997:28). Through the communal aspect people are welcomed into divine relationship to participate in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* (2 Peter 1:4; Brueggemann, 2007:51). MEE is informed by the kingdom of God through participation in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. In turn this invites people to experience the Trinity and find their sense of belonging in the kingdom community. The flow of grace is witnessed

in the preparation of creation for the coming of the kingdom through evangelism but ebbs when denominational distance results from ecumenism (Rev. 11:15). MEE proclaims the freedom of the coming kingdom in the present.

3.2. The Relationship between the Kingdom and Christ

The sending of the Son into the world, the *Missio Dei*, is a manifestation of the kingdom of God. Christ was sent to redeem Israel and pass on eternal life through the experience of salvation (Gal. 4:4; Moltmann, 1981:72). MEE challenges humanity to comprehend and identify with the cross of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (Moltmann, 1974:54; Mk. 8:31-38). A “radical discontinuity” is suggested in the incarnation of Jesus, between his humanity and divinity, his sovereignty and death, his resurrection but human existence (Bauckham, 1995:5). The cross and the resurrection, therefore, vie for primacy in the gospel.

3.2.1. The Cross and the Resurrection

The flow of grace is seen in the resurrection’s promise of new life and in the cross’ sacrifice. Instead of seeing a tension between death and resurrection it may be better to see both as central elements of the experience of new life. An aid to relieve the tension has been suggested, namely to see the cross as experiential rather than historical (Moltmann, 1997:16). The historicity of the cross along with the historicity of the resurrection are, however, integral aspects of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:12-19; Phil. 2:5-11). An emphasis on the experiential at the expense of the historical could undermine claims of factual accuracy in the gospel. On the other hand, grace could flow from the cross to the resurrection. The result is an experience of faith rooted in the historical event of the resurrection, experiencing spiritual resurrection in human spirituality and practically changing the way converts live practically in the world.

3.2.2. Jesus as the Herald of the Kingdom

Part of the Son's mission was to bring the Father's message to the world as a herald of the kingdom and the gospel of God's universal reign (Newbigin, 1995:22, 66). The connection between heralding and truth is seen in Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well, implying that knowledge of the truth brings spiritual freedom (Jn. 4:1-45; Schilder, 1939:328). As a herald of the kingdom Jesus was the "kingdom of God in person" (Barth, 2010:210). Grace flows through the kingdom and Christ as a herald into the matrix of human experience, but ebbs when the matrix of human experience becomes a defining force. Where issues of culture, religion, politics or race are emphasised at the expense of the kingdom, the kingdom recedes. MEE, therefore, emphasises the importance of historical fact in the proclamation of Jesus, but also the experiential reception rather than mere intellectual assent to the gospel.

3.2.3. Missio Dei Trinitatis and Christ's Death

As the "kingdom of God in person" Christ's journey to the cross demonstrates the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* (Barth, 2010:210). The cross was an "event between God and God" in which God abandoned and contradicted himself, dying but not dying, and offering himself to himself (Moltmann, 1974:244; Bauckham, 1995:47). The flow of grace can be discerned in Trinitarian relationships in which the Son offers himself to the Father, through the Spirit (Lk. 23:46; Heb. 7:27; 10:12; Heb. 9:14). The interplay within the Trinity has been likened to a dance in which one person delights in serving another. This service becomes a central core of Triune relationships, thus creating the dance (Keller, 2008:215). Grace flows between the members of the Trinity and through the cross to humanity and into the world. This flow is proclaimed in MEE.

3.2.4. A Scientific View of the Cross

A scientific way of understanding the divine interplay on the cross is to assign different roles to the different members of the Trinity and having them interact within observable models. The Father is the creator, sustainer and ruler, the Son is the incarnate God and the Spirit unites us to the Trinity and to one another (Newbigin, 2003:40). This assignment of roles would also encapsulate the internal and external

reach of MEE. Grace flows in the Triune interplay on the cross by taking experiences of forsakenness, death, damnation and nothingness into the Trinity. This in turn makes human communion with God flow in salvation: “[T]he cross stands between the Father and the Son in all the harshness of its forsakenness” (Moltmann, 1974:246). Those aspects which could make grace ebb-human fallenness and sinfulness-are dealt with at the cross, so divine fellowship can flow in MEE. This divine relationship is both personal and corporate, suggesting that mission must encapsulate both evangelism and ecumenism (Kärkkäinen, 2011:226). The divine relationship further includes the entire Trinity: Christ as the forsaken One, the Spirit as the witness to Christ, and the Father as the welcomer into his kingdom (Jn. 3:1-15).

3.3. The Relationship between the Kingdom and the Spirit

The kingdom’s relationship to the Father and the Son has been noted; therefore, the relationship with the Spirit requires consideration. The Spirit manifests God’s presence by enabling humanity to serve God in the communication of the gospel (Moltmann, 1997:10-11; Moltmann, 2000:145; Wright, 2009:96-97). As the Spirit manifests God’s presence his own personhood and function within the Trinity is discerned. The emphasis on the entirety of human life provides a rationale for MEE to be understood as less of an action and more of a description of life (Moltmann, 1997:19). Grace ebbs and flows through humanity into mission in every aspect of life. Were mission to be compartmentalised as an isolated aspect of life the flowing of grace could be stopped. Grace would then ebb through contradictory attitudes and actions in other parts of life.

3.3.1. The Relationship between the Spirit and Believers

If the Spirit gives a whole of life understanding to mission, then a close relationship between believers and the Spirit is implied (Taylor, 2004:6). This relationship implies participation in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* as the primary focus of the Christian life. Praying “your kingdom come”, therefore, expresses a desire to experience the life of God in the present through the Spirit’s presence. This brings kingdom life and

enables discipleship and commitment to mission (Mt. 6:10; Moltmann, 1997:12; Moltmann, 1992:191). As a connection between orthodoxy in belief and orthopraxy in action is implied, it is appropriate to add the element of “ortho-experience”. Ortho-experience is informed by the Spirit’s work in mission, applying the gospel to human hearts through the new birth (Jn. 3:6-8; 16:8; 2 Cor. 5:17). As such the Spirit is both “substantial” and formative of new life (Origen, 1983:227; Cyprian, 1983:272). The flow of grace is seen in the Spirit flowing through believers and empowering them for MEE. The ebbing of grace is seen when people are judged not to have ortho-experience because of a cultural, religious, social, political or historical identity.

3.3.2. The Spirit’s Presence Includes Participation in Mission

As the Spirit flows through believers, empowering them for MEE, the result is a participation in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* (Ac. 1:8). This challenges the view which sees mission as an aspect of Christian life rather than a defining characteristic (2 Cor. 5:17; Moltmann, 1997:240). Four ways in which the Spirit “carries on the ministry of Jesus” are: healing by bringing divine life; forgiving sins by removing the “oppressive burden of guilt from life”; freeing the oppressed from unjust structures; giving us a life beyond death (Moltmann, 2000:147-148). The role of the church in MEE is implied throughout these four suggestions. Grace flows through the church, who are inspired and empowered by the Spirit, informing the praxis of MEE. Grace flows through the church in missional praxis producing a spirit of unity (Tillich, 1968:118). The *Missio Dei Trinitatis* provides a common sense of identity to differing Christian churches ensuring the marriage between the evangelical and ecumenical.

3.3.3. The Spirit’s Presence brings New Birth

Participation in mission rests upon an experience of new birth in which the Spirit transforms human existence. The Spirit takes believers out of death and into the light of God enabling personal interaction with the Trinity (Schillebeeckx, 1980:21; Jn. 3:3, 12:24; 2 Cor. 5:17). Rebirth and new beginning point to the eschatological coming kingdom made immanent through the gospel (Moltmann, 1997:29; 1992:77).

The resurrection of Christ is the example of new life through which the Spirit creates a “renewal of life” (Moltmann, 1981:124; 1965:221-222). Personal engagement with the future coming of the kingdom suggests the forgetting of the past and a focus on what is yet to come (Haught, 1986:31-32). Grace flows from the Trinity, through the Spirit, producing new birth. New birth provides a focus on the future as kingdom promises are claimed as a foretaste in the now. MEE would, therefore, deliberately forget past justifications for division and emphasise the current, common experience of new life.

3.4. The Relationship between the Kingdom and Mission

How the kingdom of God relates to MEE informs the ebb and flow of grace. Further, the engagement of the Trinity in mission implies the need for an ethical missionary praxis by missionaries. Religious domination is banished by affording an inherent dignity to all people irrespective of their culture, history, politics, race or religion (Moltmann, 1997:19). Grace ebbs and flows in the degree to which culture, politics, race, history or religion inform missional engagement. Where such descriptions are dominant an inconsistency with the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* is implied (Phan, 2011:24). MEE manifests through an inclusive approach by which peripheral aspects of humanity do not dominate over common spirituality.

3.4.1. Kingdom and Ecumenical Evangelism

The kingdom of God provides an ecclesiastically wider and theologically broader understanding of MEE. The broader aspect informs missional praxis by challenging proselytising tendencies and superior notions of one religious tradition over another (Nichols, 1998:563-564; Stalnaker, 2002:337ff; Lerner, 1998:478; Thiessen, 2011:11; Thangaraj, 1999:346). Proselytising is defined as “a conscious, deliberate, organised and extensive effort to convert others to one’s religion by way of evangelism” (Köstenberger and O’Brien, 2001:57, 254). Grace would ebb through a preoccupation with theological and ecclesiastical multiplicity viewed through a superior mindset of the missionary. This would in turn lead to an ecclesiastical

isolation in which missionaries view themselves as exclusively truthful and alone in theological accuracy.

3.4.2. Proselytising as Objectification and Conformity

Proselytising is the objectification of persons and denominations manifested in a resolve to reduce the multiplicity of religious traditions. There is an emphasis on the areas of disagreement and a wilful ignoring of the many areas of theological commonality (Lonergan, 1971:57). Practically, proselytising means a degree of “indifference” about the spread of different theological positions. These positions are interpreted in the light of the missionaries’ own conviction that their position is exclusively true. In turn this would lead to an ecumenical distance (Tillich, 1968:15-16). Ecumenical exclusion objectifies those of a different tradition and reduces their personality to the areas of denominational theological difference. Grace ebbs when theology becomes increasingly partisan and focuses on the exclusion of those who are different. Grace flows in acceptance of plurality in belief and praxis within the wider principle of the kingdom of God.

3.4.3. Proselytising Challenges God’s Immanence

Where theological difference becomes the motivation for MEE the immanence of God is challenged. Theologically this means: “God was thought of without a world, and so the world could be thought of without a God” (Moltmann, 1997:98). Where God’s immanence is seen as peculiar to one tradition and not present in all, then grace would ebb in exclusion and flow in acceptance. Theological “errors” dehumanise people by excluding them from God’s kingdom, and thus make it easier to objectify and hate them. Where God’s immanence is seen as inclusive of all humanity, irrespective of any theological differences, the functions of mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism mutually support one another.

3.4.4. Kingdom of God Grants a Larger Perspective

The kingdom of God grants a larger perspective to MEE by removing any proselytising tendencies. The church is, therefore, connected to the metanarrative of the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*, and not just the personal experience of salvation. The larger perspective is gained hermeneutically as the church theologically converses with the themes of history, imagination and memory (Moltmann, 1997:227-228; Volf, 2006:90-91; Porter and Robinson, 2011:2). Grace ebbs and flows through MEE in the historical, cultural and theological traditions of different denominations engaging with the kingdom of God. Where traditions are viewed as theologically in error, grace would ebb, and where an ecumenical spirit prevails grace would flow.

3.4.5. Kingdom of God Informs Change

The kingdom of God provides influences which can, therefore, inform change (Willis, 1999:187). Such change is not easy to discern, the implication being an ability to discern God's kingdom flowing through different denominational traditions. Proselytising, as an ebbing of grace, would be inconsistent with such discernment because denominational identity is no longer normative in MEE. Instead an emphasis on the kingdom of God will result in the *Missio Dei Trinitates* (Moltmann, 1997:251).

3.5. The Relationship between the Kingdom and the Churches

As the kingdom of God provides the context for MEE, the church occupies the role of the servant (Tillich, 1968:400; Moltmann, 1997:191). The role of the churches is seen in the specifically religious aspect of the kingdom of God as it relates to Christian structures (Colglazier, 1998:19; Newbigin, 2006:160-161). The kingdom of God, therefore, provides the churches with a context for MEE through the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. The context is an emphasis on wholeness, achieved by a missionary emphasis, rather than division amongst the denominations (Moltmann, 1992:348-349). Grace flows as the churches recognise their common mission in the light of the kingdom of God. Denominational differences then become increasingly

less significant, and serving the kingdom takes priority. This will result in an ecumenical openness.

3.5.1. The Pneumatological Aspect of the Kingdom

The pneumatological aspect is implied, as all who have received the Spirit are: “merged together with one another” (Cyril, 1872:paras. 736.23-737.4). Merging transcends denominations and theological differences through the Spirit’s unique relationship with the kingdom. The Spirit flows through MEE into the church, as an “integral part of the gospel”, drawing people into its fellowship (Newbiggin, 2003:81). Grace ebbs and flows in the degree to which the churches pneumatologically understand their identity as participants in MEE. For those dependent upon the Spirit for Christian initiation that same dependency continues in ecclesiastical relationships.

3.5.2. The Christological Aspect of the Kingdom

As the church is dependent upon the Spirit for identity and unity, Christ provides the focus for the church in MEE. Christ, therefore, both informs and authenticates missional praxis (Volf, 1998:145-146). A preoccupation with the person and work of Jesus minimises divisions by offering a common focus beyond the denominational tradition. An emphasis on denominational differences, therefore, would be a misdirection away from Christ as the focus of the kingdom. Grace would ebb if proselytising takes priority and those outside of the kingdom are ignored because of the aim of denominational conformity. Grace would flow as the emphasis on Christ overshadows all denominational differences.

3.5.3. Community Identity and Personal Transformation

The church manifests itself through the social institutions of the churches. Churches have a corporate identity which is expressed in their doctrinal statements and ecclesiastical history. Beyond the abstract there is also a personal and communal element as people form church memberships. The kingdom of God intersects with the churches when MEE witnesses to the already/ not yet kingdom of God

(Augustine, 1949:356). Grace ebbs and flows as the churches filter their identity through the kingdom of God and their praxis through incarnating the kingdom of Heaven in the present.

3.5.4. Dispensationalism and the Church

Dispensationalism provides a theological system which is an alternative to Reformed covenant theology (Poythress, 1993). Dispensationalism arose in reaction to liberal post-millennialism of the nineteenth century by seeking theologically to separate the church and the kingdom. Dispensationalism sought to spiritualise MEE by steering it towards personal conversion and away from global transformation (Harper and Metzger, 2009:55). Grace ebbs as the church focuses away from social engagement to an exclusively spiritual understanding of the gospel.

3.5.4.1. Dispensationalism and a Social Gospel

Dispensationalism assumes a tension between a social gospel and a personal gospel, but this tension does not necessarily exist. Personal transformation connects the kingdom of God with the church through an existential experience of salvation. This experience draws a line of connection between Advent and Easter (Moltmann, 1992:86). The *Missio Dei Trinitatis* is constituted by the Father sending the Son to go to the cross, and by the Son's obedience to the Father, so releasing the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit's power is experienced within God's people, they participate in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. Grace flows as the church shares the gospel which aims for personal salvation. Grace could also ebb in emphasising the means of societal transformation resting upon people. The tension between evangelism and a social gospel need not be theologically necessary.

3.5.5. Mission, Kingdom and Ecumenism

Ecumenism is specifically suggested through the concept of the kingdom. The role of MEE is not the extension of denominational influence but an invitation to engage with the coming kingdom (Rev. 11:15). Grace ebbs when ecumenism becomes a vehicle for denominational expansion but flows in an expression of the kingdom of

God. Proselytising would be interpreted as having God's blessing as a means of expanding the denomination (Moltmann, 1997:21). The antidote to proselytising through ecumenism comes when life flows through those who have engaged personally and corporately with the love of God (Moltmann, 1997:21). The church acts as a conduit for the kingdom providing an understanding of all the churches as participating in MEE.

3.5.6. Ecclesiastical Identity and Missionary Praxis

The emphasis on MEE's relationship to the kingdom of God reminds the church of its missionary identity. This is further reinforced through the Spirit who draws the two together in "the same package" (Lietzmann, 1960:90; Taylor, 2004:4, 133). MEE becomes the purpose of the church's existence, personally and corporately. Triune relationships are demonstrated in the church's fellowship as the manifestation of the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. Grace flows as the church relates to itself and the world in MEE, but ebbs when the church becomes distant in relating to other ecclesiastical denominations.

3.5.7. Ecclesiastical Identity as Triune Interaction

The church manifesting itself as the incarnation of Triune relationships informs and moulds the praxis of MEE. Two views of how the church participates in mission as "signs and witnesses" have been proposed. First, "objective redemption" was accomplished by Christ on the cross. In this the church plays no part. Second, there is no "subjective redemption" in which "objective redemption" is applied to people by the Holy Spirit. In this second view the church plays a "modest role" as a "reflector of light" (Bloesch, 2002:58-59, 63). This "modest role" attributed to the church is seen in the proclamation of the historical message of Jesus in the gospel (Bultmann, 1958:82-83). Grace flows in the church's witness to Christ as a personal and corporate demonstration of Triune relationships. Grace would ebb when ecclesiastical identity overshadows the kingdom of God. This informs MEE by providing a distinctly Christological and gospel-focused praxis connecting orthodox belief to orthopraxis.

3.6. The Relationship between the Kingdom and the World

The church as a social institution occupies a place in the world which presents a context for MEE. The world has to be understood as more than the physical earth, but as the spiritual principles of humanity that define the prevailing ethos of human existence (1 Jn. 2:13-15; Moltmann, 1974:56). A tension exists between the church, which is defined by the Triune God, and the world, which is defined by its own ethos. The identity of the church can be traced throughout human history as the body which bears witness to God's grace through practising MEE (Tillich, 1968:408). Such identification is personal prior to becoming communal (Moltmann, 1992:53). Grace flows as the church understands its identity as distinct from that of the world and in some cases in direct opposition to the world. Grace ebbs when worldly categories are used to define people within the church. This provides a common focus and identity for the different Christian denominations.

3.6.1. The Church Proclaims Freedom

The church operates within the world as the proclaimer of human liberation from enslavement to the worldly ethos through the gospel (Moltmann, 1992:191). The historical example which informs this proclamation is Christ's crucifixion, since it was carried out by servants of the Roman Empire to bring freedom (Weber, 1975:5-6; Phil. 2:5-11). History is then rewritten as personal faith liberates humanity from the world's ethos (Westermann, 1968:5). Grace flows as the church identifies itself in juxtaposition to the world, but ebbs when the world is used to define the church. MEE, therefore, emphasises personal as well as societal transformation in the world away from an exclusively eschatological emphasis on the coming kingdom.

3.7. Partial Conclusion

Reformed theology is reforming theology-*semper reformanda*. As such the kingdom of God provides a practical challenge to ecclesiastical praxis (Moltmann, 1999:120). MEE becomes participation in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*, where God is discerned to be active in history at the moment and working toward the spiritual aim of personal

and communal transformation (Taylor, 2004:37). The kingdom of God provides this wider perspective beyond ecclesiastical extension, uniting Christians from different traditions on the common ground of the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. The meaning of βασιλεία (as the influence of God's rule), provides the basis for the understanding of the kingdom of God. The Gospel's emphasis on βασιλεία suggests that the experience of the kingdom is not exclusively futuristic but has a present application. A movement away from ecclesio-centric mission is inspired by the kingdom of God and is enhanced by the role of the Son and the Spirit in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. A style of MEE that focuses on proselytising different Christian traditions becomes inauthentic. An exclusively personal application for mission is also incongruent with the kingdom of God. Participation in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*, therefore, implies a degree of ecumenism as the promise of new birth is applied to both personal experience and global transformation.

4. The Promise of Covenant as the Rationale for Mission

4.1. Introduction

Having noted the function of the kingdom of God as the inspiration for mission, the covenant then becomes the rationale for mission. Covenant is the means by which God relates to humanity and is proliferated through MEE. A precedent of God's covenant with Israel forms the justification for the church's adoption of the same means of divine interaction (Bavinck, 1960:14). Covenant implies a tension which understands God as "beyond the fray" of humanity, yet entering into covenant with people in their life journey (Beal and Linafelt, 1998:4). Reformed theology particularly resonates with the concept of the covenant, understanding the Trinity as fulfilling the terms of God's covenant with Abraham (Murray, 1977:130). Covenant, therefore, becomes the means by which the Trinity includes humanity and invites participation in the divine nature (2 Pt. 1:4). Grace ebbs and flows on the criteria the church views as normative for covenant membership.

4.1.1. The Meaning of Covenant

The original meaning of covenant has been obscured by historical development and cultural contexts. It can be said, however, that the covenant as a theological concept achieved “higher prestige” amongst Reformed churches than amongst other traditions (Allen, 2016:36). It is a theological construction which applies to humanity living in the world (Brueggemann, 1999:1). Covenant speaks of interpersonal, mutual relationships experienced through a given group. Covenant, therefore, manifests itself as a treaty or agreement of allegiance which provides common attitude and behaviour defining the group (Schillebeeckx, 1980:93; Baker, 2005:22). Within the biblical context covenant is viewed through God’s love (ἄγάπη) for Israel. Covenant can, therefore, be discerned as a means of describing how people relate to others within a corporate category. Grace flows through the historical commitment of God to Israel as a corporate identity but ebbs by attaching a sense of superiority to the covenant by those participating therein. In turn this provides a matrix for MEE as people enter into covenant with God in response to the gospel.

4.1.2. The Communal Aspect of Covenant

Covenant’s emphasis on the communal aspect of human existence addresses how God enters into relationship with people (Schillebeeckx, 1980:93). A tension can be perceived between the communal and personal aspects of covenant. The tension is whether membership of the covenant community is determined by personal response or some other means. The tension mediates between personal decision or initiation into membership of the church (Ricoeur, 2013:123). Grace would ebb or flow to the extent to which either the communal or personal aspects of covenant are highlighted. Emphasising the communal aspect would inform MEE to objectify membership of different denominations, potentially resulting in proselytising. Emphasising the personal aspect would inform MEE by separating people from their historical, religious, cultural and social contexts. Neither result would give an entirely accurate picture of covenant response, but both may complement one another to provide a more authentic human identity.

4.1.3. Covenantal Community Exclusivity

Covenant may imply the choice of one community and the rejection of others: “I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau” (Rom. 9:13; Buber, 2013:20). The implications could result in denominational superiority and exclusivity. MEE should then challenge partisan tendencies by addressing the other and by discerning Christ’s image flowing in every stranger (Webber, 2003:57). Exclusivity emphasises that only certain people fulfil the criteria for membership of the community. Commonality emphasises that people engage with the covenant personally, irrespective of the community (Ricoeur, 2013:123). These two options are not an either/ or choice but both/ and. Therein lies the tension. Accordingly, theological differences can be recognised but also a commonality between denominations on doctrinal axioms (Brueggemann, 2007:57). Grace flows through covenant thoughts which understand denominational traditions as multiform but within the unity of the covenant people. Grace ebbs when one denominational tradition is viewed as axiomatic to covenantal membership manifested through partisan ecclesiology.

4.1.4. Covenant and the Trinity

Covenant begins with an “initiatory act of love” from God which brings humanity into relationship with God (Brueggemann, 2009:23). This initiatory act of love requires a human heart which discerns God’s grace in offering the invitation and responds with gratitude (Ps. 118:6; Isa. 41:10; Jer. 31:3; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 Jn. 4:16). Covenantal love discerns God’s commitment to humanity through the “pathos” of human suffering while personally remaining beyond human classification (Brueggemann, 2011:25; 1999:6). Grace flows as the covenant God relates to the living reality of humanity while remaining beyond complete human comprehension. MEE would, therefore, emphasise the common experience of God yet maintain a limit on theological classifications which could be a source of ecclesiastical exclusion.

4.2. The Biblical Covenants

Covenant is a central theme in the Old Testament, affirming God's rule over creation and his sovereign choice of Israel: "That community produced an ideological explanation that came to be constitutive for the on-going community of Judaism" (Brueggemann, 2002:37). Divine choice divests Israel of any sense of exclusivity by emphasising divine sovereignty. MEE then widens into a universal appeal for all of humanity to enter into covenant with God. The divine promises of rejection and destruction for covenantal disobedience counters any exclusive tendencies within the covenant people (Tillich, 1968:158-159). Grace flows in covenantal acceptance and the experience of the associated blessings. Grace ebbs where the covenant is ignored or disregarded and subsequent curses result (Deut. 28:1-68).

4.2.1. Theology and Covenant

Humanity enters into covenant for the purpose of "dialogical existence in relationship to this God of fidelity and freedom" (Brueggemann, 2011:27). This uniquely Jewish anthropology speaks of national election through which humanity in general benefits through missional engagement. MEE retreats from any kind of supremacy or detachment from people. The church's role is to take the gospel to the nations.

4.2.2. Reformed Covenantal Theology

Reformed theology has emphasised six biblical covenants, all of which spring from, are influenced by, or supersede the Sinaitic covenant (Robertson, 1980:67ff; Brueggemann, 2014:53-54; 2002:38). Each covenant has specific aspects which relate to the ebb and flow of grace in MEE. A clarity of taxonomy is needed to discern the implications for mission within each covenantal manifestation. This may not be helpful because it could separate the gospel into different manifestations dependent upon unique aspects of each covenant.

4.2.3. The Adamic Covenant

The Adamic covenant relates to the practical implications of humanity's fall from grace (Gen. 3:14-19). It has the right to be called a covenant because of the promises, conditions and capability bestowed to Adam from God (McKay, 2001:11-12; Westermann, 1971:49). The gospel can be discerned through the future promise of the crushing of the serpent's head by a descendant of humanity (Robertson, 1980:96). In the Adamic covenant we see a "fearful vengeance on the whole human race" (Gen. 2:16-17; Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:164, 212-213; Vol. 2, 1957:214; Westermann, 1971:3). This vengeance results from Adam's breaking of the covenant prohibition regarding the eating of the fruit. The result was estrangement from God and the entrance of a "radical corruption" into humanity and the world (Sproul, 1992:147-149; Sproul, 2005:118). MEE must, therefore, engage with the concept of God's wrath as a result of the fall (Jos. 10:22-25; Ps. 91:11-12, 110:6; Chalke, 2003:182-183; Jeffrey, Ovey and Sach, 2007). Grace would flow as the human condemnation is proclaimed in the gospel with the promise of deliverance through Christ (Jn. 3:16-18; Rom. 8:1). Grace would ebb as the gospel become preoccupied with divine wrath and human inability. Further, grace would ebb as engagement with social problems or ecclesiastical relations become secondary to dealing with divine wrath.

4.2.4. The Noahic Covenant

The theme of judgement is continued in the Noahic covenant. Humanity is viewed as entirely sinful, connecting the Noahic covenant with the Adamic covenant (Gen. 6:5; Newbiggin, 2003:4; McKay, 2001:70). The sinfulness of humanity is understood primarily as corporate rather than individual (Westermann, 1971:20). In MEE there would be a need to engage with the source of human sinfulness and the role of the person in forming it.

4.2.4.1. Grace in the Noahic Covenant

God's grace is seen in two ways through the Noahic covenant: first, in God plan to destroy humanity, and, second, in his universal embracing of creation after the fall. These emphasise a shift in the focus from human disobedience to God's grace revealed in human history (Brueggemann, 2003:62). Grace ebbs in the divine judgement upon those who did not listen to Noah, but flows through the rescue of Noah's family.

4.2.4.2. The Rainbow and the Noahic Covenant

The symbol of the rainbow articulates the ebb and flow of grace by reminding humanity of the judgement of the flood and the hope for grace from God. A "platform" for MEE is provided as God's grace is discerned in the recreation and renewal of the physical world (Wright, 2006:326). Grace flows through God's choosing of one family to save from the flood and the implicit rejection of others (Robertson, 1980:109-111). By implication, grace would then ebb in the rejection of other families and their subsequent destruction.

4.2.5. The Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic covenant connects the promises of God with the physical land of Abraham's inheritance (Gen. 15:7-8). The themes of judgement and consequence are also seen in the Abrahamic covenant. The ebb and flow of grace is seen in Israel's obedience to the covenant and punishment for disobedience through exile from the Promised Land (Robertson, 1980:130; Golding, 2004:73; Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:536). MEE would, therefore, emphasise the twin aspects of covenantal identity and disobedience. The focus of mission would not primarily be upon those outside of the covenant community. Mission would, however, inform denominational relationships with an importance which speaks of the essence of ecclesiastical identity.

4.2.5.1. The Imperative of the Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic covenant demonstrates an “imperative dimension”. This dimension reorganises the lives of Abraham and his family around their divine relationship. The twin themes of conditionality and unconditionality also arise as the covenant requires a “passionate commitment” (Brueggemann, 2009:24). This reorganisation is focused primarily on the future and the covenant promises which have not yet been fulfilled in the Messiah (Brueggemann, 2003:67-68; Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:294). The flow of grace in MEE resonates in the Abrahamic covenant with the blessing of the nations through Israel (Wright, 2006:327). Grace further flows through the declaratory activities of the covenant community proclaiming what God has already done (Heb. 11:6; Brueggemann, 2003:73). Grace continues to flow through the faith journey of the Christian denominations to a destination which none has arrived at. Grace would ebb in ecclesiastical superiority because the journey is not yet complete (Wright, 2006:192). Grace flows in the exclusivity of the covenant choice of one people and their obligation to take the hopeful message of covenant inclusion to all humanity, but ebbs when this is not lived up to.

4.2.6. The Mosaic Covenant

Covenant obedience and obligation are specifically addressed through the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant. The legal elements which formed the basis for the covenant produced normative principles for the covenant community (Ricoeur, 2013:120-121; Brueggemann, 2003:87-88, 115; 2010:23; 1999:50-51). The giving of the law is more than an explanation of the consequences for covenantal disobedience. Rather, it represents how covenant informs every aspect of life through divine relationship (Brueggemann, 2013:22-23; 1999:25-26; Robertson, 1980:170-171). This requires a personal acceptance of the law which become manifest corporately (Ex. 20:1-17; Robertson, 1980:170-171). Grace ebbs and flows in the degree to which humanity incarnates the law personally and corporately. MEE is, therefore, focused on the personal and corporate reordering of life around the legal principles.

4.2.6.1. Covenantal Obligation

The issue of covenantal obligation through the commandments is central to the Mosaic covenant (Murray, 1976:196-197). MEE is informed by the Mosaic covenant as the community witnesses to the nations through a proclamation of the law and adoption of the legal principles (Wright, 2006:343-344; Brueggemann, 2003:161). Grace could ebb where one reading of the law is viewed as normative and others an inauthentic. Grace could also ebb if the missionary's culture is viewed as better reflecting the Mosaic covenant than others.

4.2.7. The Davidic Covenant

As Israel developed into a nation the people asked for a king to rule them as the other nations had (1 Sam. 8:6). The Davidic covenant, therefore, reassured Israel of God's on-going commitment to fulfil his covenant promises (Brueggemann, 2003:69; Westermann, 1968:19). The connection to the land, which began in the Abrahamic covenant, now becomes codified through David. When Israel was excluded from the land, an "essential part of the patriarchal tradition" came undone. Exclusion was interpreted as God's judgement upon Israel because of covenantal disobedience (Wright, 2006:292). Grace would ebb internally within Israel through the promise of the land and the exclusion from it. Any relation of the Davidic covenant to MEE seems harder to discern. This is due to the essentially internal aspect of judgement resting upon God's people and the implication of grace ebbing in that judgement. As such the Davidic covenant has more of an application to community identity and personal holiness than to cultural engagement in mission.

4.2.7.1. The Centrality of Jerusalem

The establishment of Jerusalem as the centre of Israelite religion also has implications for the Davidic covenant. A centralised political hegemony and religious administration replaced the multiform and scattered situation of Israel after entering Canaan (2 Sam. 7:4-17; Robertson, 1980:236). The impact for MEE would be seen in a centralised form of worship controlled by a priestly caste. In this centralised form there would be little room for cultural difference and instead an emphasis on

uniformity. Where such differences did exist the Jerusalem priesthood could claim spiritual and moral supremacy. Identifying a physical location as the centre for and the authority in worship raises some of the same issues that Reformed churches have when engaging with Catholicism and its centre in Rome. Grace ebbs through a singular religious manifestation in Jerusalem at the expense of any other geographically centred religious manifestations.

4.2.8. The New Covenant

Christianity makes specific claims about the New Covenant and the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant within the church (Brueggemann, 2003:70-72; Rom. 4:1-25; Gal. 3:6-9; Ac. 15:1-35). Where grace could ebb through the racial pedigree of the Israelite nation, the church provided an inclusive flow for Gentiles and Israelites. Inclusion came through Christ's fulfilment of the Mosaic covenant and the law which eradicates exclusion (Westermann, 1963:218-219; Schilder, 1939:282). Israelite history and the Jewish context of Christ's earthly life mark the progress of revelation from one covenant to another (Weber, 2002:6; Schilder, 1939:227). The New Covenant represents the culmination of the previous covenants interpreted through a new understanding of the meaning of faith (Jer. 31:31-33; Brueggemann, 2003:222; Rom. 9:6-29, 11:25-32). Grace can be seen to flow from the Old Testament to the New as covenants are fulfilled and completed by the New Covenant. MEE is able, therefore, to engage with everyone on the same foundation as those needing covenantal introduction. Inter-denominational conversation would also be enabled as the central core of the New Covenant is understood to surpass any focus on individual churches.

4.2.8.1. Communal and Personal Belonging

A number of key concepts are raised in the New Covenant: a return to the land of promise; restoration of God's blessing on that land; fulfilment of previous covenant commitments; internal renewal by the Holy Spirit; full forgiveness of sin; union between Israel and Judah and its everlasting character (Robertson, 1980:274-278). A tension between the communal and the personal engagement with the covenant is

implied. This is evidenced through baptism which initiates people into the community but implies the need for personal affirmation to confirm membership (Robertson, 1980:106; Brueggemann, 2010:106).

4.2.8.2. Personal/ Communal Tension

Personal/ communal tension could potentially result in one of two outcomes. First, the externalisation of the covenant. Here the actions are thought to convey the meaning. In this case there would be little need for personal conviction on any covenantal matter. Second, an antinomianism where fulfilment of covenantal promises is secondary to obligation. In this case what is believed would have little or no relationship to what is done. The Reformed doctrine of eternal security, or “once saved, always saved”, has been accused of this second manifestation (Kendall, 1992; Murray, 1984; Alderson, 1986). Grace would ebb when membership of the covenant community is seen as axiomatic without personal conviction. This would produce a scholastic church without any personal knowledge of covenantal promises. MEE would be redundant if someone is a physical member of the covenant community irrespective of their personal conviction.

4.3. Covenant and Exile

The consequence for covenant breaking became an issue for Israel historically through their national exile (Brueggemann, 2003:158). A tension between God’s covenantal promises to Israel concerning the land and the use of other nations to dispossess and enslave Israel exists (Brueggemann, 2010:17, 92). Grace would ebb and flow as the Israelites interpreted their exile while striving to comprehend the purpose of God within the pagan nations (Ps. 137:12-6; Isa. 45:1-8). Israel would struggle with how God was fulfilling covenantal promises through their exile in rebellion against God (Wright, 2006:324). MEE would become self-reflective as the covenant people examine their own hearts and call themselves back to a passionate embrace of God’s covenantal promises. Rather than being out-reach to others, mission becomes in-reach to themselves.

4.3.1. Pilgrims in the New Covenant

While the New Covenant does not have the same connection to a promise of land, the notion of pilgrims in exile has resonance. Grace flows through MEE in cultures which do not yet acknowledge God's kingdom, and through a universally inclusive promise for all humanity (Wright, 2006:74). This connects with the touchstone of God's kingdom which transcends cultural supremacy. Grace, however, may ebb if the church interprets covenant as a separation from the world's cultures and discerns worldly cultures in other denominations (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). MEE would then become the rescue of people, even those from other less authentic denominational traditions, into a purer church.

4.4. The Specific Context for Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI)

Reformed theology has been called "covenant theology" because of the importance of covenant to its beliefs (Coxe and Owen, 2005; Williams, 2005; Horton, 2009). Covenant theology understands that God's will is manifested through history, thus humanising theology and providing a basis for missional engagement (Leith, 1977:116). This perspective pays tribute to historical precedent and the importance of passing on how God is interpreted as flowing through a given history. As this research addresses MEE within PCI (Code, 2013:11), the notion of covenant requires reflection in the light of Reformed theology and the Westminster Confession of Faith.

4.4.1. Calvin and Covenant

Calvin understood covenant to relate to those whom God has adopted from the beginning of creation and taken into relationship (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:369). This act was interpreted as taking place through the entirety of human history (Lillback, 2008:181; Vollmer, Good and Roberts, 2009:ch.30). MEE is, therefore, informed by God's historical covenantal actions and is understood as God's sovereign election of people to enter covenant. Grace would ebb if a person or people groups were deemed to be outside of God's sovereign choice. This could not only manifest in religious proselytising but a myriad of other social or racial stereotyping and discrimination.

4.4.2. Westminster Confession of Faith and Covenant

The role of teaching the gospel to the nations was central to the reflections of the Westminster Assembly (Santos, 2009:328). This places the WCF in a missiological context and ought to, therefore, continue to inspire PCI to MEE. The WCF (7:1-2) begins by emphasising the otherness of God and how, by “voluntary condescension”, he chose to make a covenant with Adam. The theme of covenant is described as “transcendent benefit” through which God administers his kingdom (Shaw, 1998:95-96; Hodge, 1998:121). There is an implied inequality in the covenantal relationship between people and God. God is sovereign and humanity finite; therefore, the appropriate response of humanity is thankfulness and obedience to God’s covenantal engagement (Williamson, 2004:82). Grace flows from God through covenant to people, but ebbs when people stem the flow of personal and corporate praise back to God.

4.4.2.1. Initiation of Covenant

The WCF (7:3-4) further expands on covenant by addressing how God initiated humanity’s entrance into relationship with himself. Such relationship depends on the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* in the Father’s sending of the Son into the world to procure salvation and the Spirit working within human hearts (Shaw, 1998:129-132). Fulfilment of covenantal promises, therefore, comes through Christ as both completion and as Head (Hodge, 1998:125; Ward, 2004:100). Grace flows through Christ who fulfils covenantal promises, which remind the church of their role in obeying covenantal obligations. The ebbing of grace in religious superiority would, therefore, occur because of humanity’s utter dependence on Christ’s fulfilment of the covenant promises (WCF, 7:5-6; Williamson, 2004:88; Ward, 2004:102-103; Hodge, 1998:129). If PCI were to objectify any religious group or person because of perceived errors in doctrinal tenets, this action would be irreconcilable with the WCF. MEE is, therefore, endowed with a hope that everyone can experience covenantal inclusion through Christ.

4.5. Partial Conclusion

Covenant was not a uniquely biblical concept but a common concept well known in the ancient world. The implications of the covenant for Israel, however, marked their difference from other religious traditions (Brueggemann, 2010:19). The tension between affirming the unique choice of a specific people yet also affirming the hope for all people to engage with God through covenant is key to missional reflection (Wright, 2006:65). This section has considered the place of the biblical covenant as the rationale for mission. The meaning of covenant and how covenant is a manifestation of divine love for humanity was noted. The interaction between the different biblical covenants was traced out. Special emphasis was placed on the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, and how they feed into the New Covenant. Covenantal disobedience was also highlighted along with how the covenant community related to those outside of itself. Calvin and the WCF were also considered as the basis for PCI's MEE informed by covenant.

5. The Culture as the Context of Mission

5.1. Introduction

Having noted that the kingdom of God is the inspiration for mission, and covenant the rationale for mission, we then observe that culture is the context in which MEE takes place. Religion, while focused on the divine, has a cultural dimension because it defines the manner in which adherents live (Hiebert, Shaw and Tiéno, 1999:35-36). Accordingly, there is a need to discern a "theology of culture" (Tillich, 1957:57; Hauerwas, 1981:2). A theology of culture considers the uniqueness of religious contextual manifestations in order to understand how MEE can be practised in a relevant and accessible manner (Ritschl, 1984:114; Jenkins, 2011:40-41). Grace ebbs and flows according to how culture is theologically interpreted and reconciled to theological axioms which are universal to Christianity. The ebb and flow continues according to how theological axioms are presented and understood within a given culture.

5.1.1. Tension between Salvation and Conversion

Salvation and conversion raises another tension between mission and culture. This tension is evident when “markers of salvation”, which may have cultural resonance in one culture but not universally, are applied indiscriminately in MEE (McDermott and Netland, 2014:161; Taylor, 2007:478; Bryant, 1996; Smith, 1993; Wolters, 2005:5). The battle between worldviews informs actions and attitudes within a culture. This suggests the need for contextualising MEE within culture (Kraft, 2009:401ff; Yoder, 1984:68). Grace ebbs and flows in the degree to which cultural understanding predetermines and moulds the worldview of the missionary. This may infer a need to reconcile some aspects of culture which are contrary to the missionary’s own. Further, it may require a need to drop aspects of the missionary’s culture which, while normative at home, are hindrances to gospel acceptance.

5.1.2. Culture and the Biblical Pattern

Culture can be discerned in the Bible through the authors who filtered revelation through their worldview (2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1-2; 2 Pe. 1:21; Gunton, 2002: 53; Weber, 2002:5). One example is the literature of the Babylonian exile in which lament over being separated from Jerusalem is expressed but cultural engagement encouraged (Ps. 137:5-6; Jer. 29:1-23; Brueggemann, 2010:1). The New Testament also provides a twofold pattern of cultural engagement. The first is Jesus’ principle of beginning in the local synagogue (Lk. 4:16ff). The second is Paul’s preaching in Athens where he used Greek poets as a starting point for debate (Acts 17:16-34). Both examples demonstrate a respect for local culture. While endorsement of these cultures is not normative, nor are they ignored in missional engagement. Grace flows as religious tradition is honoured and philosophical ethos engaged with, but ebbs when the missionary’s culture is imposed upon the missional context.

5.1.3. Success and Cultural Engagement

Cultural engagement is not endowed with a biblical promise of success. While the exact reason for Paul's apparent failure in Athens is not given (Ac. 17:16-34; Allen, 1962:3; Ott, Strauss and Tennent, 2010:266), it raises the greater question of why some cultures respond more readily to MEE. It has been argued that some cultures have "defeater beliefs" which intrinsically mitigate reception of the gospel (Keller, 2015). The biblical justification is pointed out in the symbol of Babylon as a culture which is viewed as opposed to covenant and kingdom (2 Ki. 25:1-7, 11; 1 Pe. 5:13; Rev. 17:1-18:24; Brueggemann, 2010:3, 9; WSC: 25:6; Koester, 2000:260; Resseguie, 1998:138; Rhoads, 2005:174; Blount, 2014:346). Babylon is a manifestation of fallen humanity, by which impaired human reason creates a culture antithetical to grace, and for which God hands humanity over to their fallen nature (Luther, 1970:124; Althaus, 1963:9, 64; Paulson, 2011:150). Grace flows through rejoicing at the fall of Babylon as a culture opposed to the gospel. The rejoicing at Babylon's fall would imply a negative attitude toward some cultures or some cultural aspects. Babylon has historically been used (in the PCI) to describe the Catholic Church (Rev. 17:1-18; WCF, 25:5; Hunt, 1994:68; Miller, 1874:190-191). If this is maintained then grace may in fact be ebbing when MEE works toward the destruction of the Catholic Church and the proselytising of Catholics.

5.1.4. Culture and the Historical Pattern

Cultural engagement was encouraged in the New Testament as a holy and prophetic act toward unbelievers (1 Pt. 2:12). This was further outlined as Christians deliberately chose to engage with the eternal values of the kingdom (1 Jn. 2:13-15). An internal work in which the values and customs of the world were to be internally resisted through a change of thinking was also encouraged. Here we see the tension between living in the world and living for another kingdom. Grace flows as the church identifies itself with different standards and principles than the world, but could ebb in cultural disengagement.

5.1.4.1. Pliny's Letter to Trajan

Pliny's letter to the Emperor Trajan encapsulates cultural engagement as Christians bound themselves with an oath not to commit any crimes, not to break their word and to pay their debts (Pliny, 1957:13). MEE was taking place in a non-Judaeo-Christian context and the church sought to demonstrate the flow of grace in their actions.

5.1.4.2. Aristeides and Christian Character

Aristeides highlights the ethical standard of the first Christians. He emphasises many of the same characteristics which Pliny noted but added love for neighbours, giving the right judgement, care for widows, orphans, and strangers. Aristeides underlines prayer for the Emperor, concluding: "I have no doubt that the world stands by reason of the intercession of Christians" (Aristeides, 1957:56-58). Grace flowed in the church's commitment to the Roman Empire as good citizens not seeking to overthrow the government.

5.1.4.3. Athenagoras and Christian Living

Athenagoras (1957:71-72) notes three accusations made against Christians: atheism, cannibalism and incest. He concludes that if any of these accusations are found to be true then the emperor ought to punish the Christians; however, he remained unconvinced. There is a deliberate attempt at demonstrating how grace flows through the Christian witness of the church. MEE is not a political act, but comes from pure intentions with a desire to disseminate genuine beliefs to others.

5.1.4.4. Justin and Christ's Supremacy

Justin (1987:160) addresses the issue of the Christ's supremacy over the world. He affirms that prior to the incarnation there were those deemed to be atheists. Such atheists lived according to the Word (*λόγος*) and could be said to be Christians. Grace ebbs and flows through history as through intuition people follow standards of biblical morality even unknown before. The flow of grace continues on through the church's resolve to live morally in an opposing culture despite being persecuted.

5.1.5. Towards a Definition of Culture

The biblical and historical examples cited above provide a way toward defining culture theologically. Some have argued that to address culture theologically requires an understanding of a “general” phenomenon which manifests in “particular forms” separate from human achievement (Niebuhr, 1951:31; McDermott and Netland, 2014:216). Others have argued that any general or specific definition is inherently flawed because of the close connection between human action and language (Gunton, 2002:50; Kwast, 2009:397-399). These two positions highlight the tension between the human aspect of culture and wider cultural phenomena (Buber, 2013:13, 22). Whether culture is created or inherited by humanity, how the church manifests itself within a culture by relating to or opposing cultural norms has implications for the ebb and flow of grace in MEE.

5.1.5.1. Human Role in Culture

Through the creation of something new as well as the transformation of something already in existence, human moulding of culture can be discerned. This will vary from context to context (Tillich, 1968:61). A potential definition of culture is: “the sum total of ways of living that shape (and also are shaped by) the continuing life of a group of human beings from generation to generation” (Newbigin, 1995:142). Theologically this definition would attempt to discern the flow of God’s grace through people and institutions. As grace flows through people and institutions, in particular the church, it would motivate the church toward gracious engagement. MEE would become a means of speaking graciously of the gospel and doing gracious things to people.

5.1.5.2. Cultural Self-Awareness

To avoid cultural imposition through MEE there is a need for cultural self-awareness. Such cultural self-awareness is a step toward divesting mission of the imperialism that stops the ebb of grace to alternative cultures (Bosch, 1998:294). A *via negativa* can be one means of approaching cultural self-awareness by addressing cultural identity, formation and manifestation (Niebuhr, 1951:32). Both the global and local

aspects of culture are addressed in a *via negativa*, alongside the human interaction with and influence on culture (Newbigin, 1989:185; Tillich, 1968:63; Tracy, 1987:28-29; Schillebeeckx, 1980:55). The ebb and flow of grace would be both global and local. The human role acknowledges “human purposiveness and effort” within the “total process of human activity” (Niebuhr, 1951:33). A theological definition of culture would then address the ways in which that human purposiveness and activity are spiritually critiqued as representing the ebb and flow of grace into the world. The global ebb and flow of grace is channelled into local cultural manifestations. A tension between a local manifestation and wider cultural movement impacts MEE. Grace would ebb and flow through this tension and the position of the churches in relation to cultural agendas.

5.2. The Relationship of Christ to Culture

A theology of culture implies a relationship with Christ. This relationship is placed within the context of morality, providing concepts of right and wrong. Morality is informed when two kinds of truth are expressed. First, the expert truth and, second, the local or reality truth, which is a product of local culture (Niebuhr, 1951:11; Brueggemann, 2013:3-4; Bosch, 1998:291; Newbigin, 2003:67). Morality is formed through the fundamental issues of a given culture which inspire the attitudes and actions of that culture. The tension between local and general culture has been noted before as directly informing MEE. This happens when a people group within a culture understand their beliefs as in opposition to general culture. This can lead to ecclesiastical isolation and cultural alienation, all feeding into the psyche of the group which reinforces their isolation.

5.2.1. Culture and Christian Metanarrative

Emphasising local cultural contexts can produce a form of situation ethics. The issue then becomes one of relating those situation ethics with the metanarrative of Christian theology. The aim of Reformed theology is the specific study of the Christian faith as it attempts to articulate the truth of the Christian belief (Berkhof, 2002:35). The truth of the Christian faith can be identified as the “expert” truth. Such

expert truth can be attributed with a divine origin. Expert truth is enshrined in the church and imposed upon culture through MEE. The ebb and flow of grace will be determined by the extent to which a local culture reflects and enshrines general Christian cultural principles.

5.2.2. How Christ Relates to Culture

The tension between the general and local culture of Christianity has been noted theologically. MEE seeks to relate the principles of Christian theology to the matrix of local culture. In doing so, a challenge arises: how can Christ enter that local culture through the church?

5.2.2.1. Cultural Crisis

It is in “times of cultural crisis” that Christ’s relationship to culture is discerned in the connection between cultural elements which seem to be at odds with Christian theology (Tracy, 1987:8; Tillich, 1968:289-390). Connection between Christian theology and local cultural context informs the essence of religious identity. This identity is closely related to public life with the aim of securing the “well-being of the world” (Brueggemann, 2009:35; Jer. 29:1-9). Grace flows as local religious identity is reconciled to wider Christian theology in what seems best for the bigger picture. Grace ebbs when a local religious identity is viewed as axiomatic to a wider Christian theology and becomes a means of judging difference. MEE would, therefore, be contextually local but closely linked to the wider issues informing a Christian worldview.

5.2.2.2. Cultural Neutrality

It has been argued that Reformed theology is culturally neutral. This means that any association between culture and faith is inauthentic (Leith, 1977:211; WCF, 23:1-4). Cultural neutrality, however, is a contested point: “faith is always transmitted and received in a particular context” (Cassidy, 2002:17). An assumption of cultural neutrality would make impossible any investigation of a Reformed church in a local context. MEE would be uniform in every context without any desire to contextualise

with respect to culture. Responding to the gospel would be abstract, driving a wedge between orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

5.2.2.3. Cultural Resistance or Accommodation

Yet the church is both catholic and local, and locally it often encounters cultural principles which are thought to be at odds with its theological principles. This results in either resistance to culture or accommodation to culture (Brueggemann, 2010:53). MEE proclaims the gospel within a cultural matrix with the aim of producing conversion irrespective of the cultural matrix (McDermott and Netland, 2014:165). The ebb and flow of grace will determine the degree of cultural sensitivity or insensitivity in a local context. The challenge for the missionary is how to engage neutrally with a local culture without carrying aspects of their own culture with them (1 Cor. 9:19-23). This restates the question of how Christ relates to culture.

5.2.3. Christ Against Culture

The first position is Christ against culture. The only authority over the Christian is, therefore, Christ, and any totalising claims of the culture are resisted (Niebuhr, 1951:45-49; Mt. 6:24; Ac. 4:1-37; Rev. 12:1-18; Eph. 6:5-8; 1 Tim. 2:1-2). The outcome of this position is often the persecution of the church because clear differences become evident in Christian lives (Niebuhr, 1951:66; Volf, 2006:39).

5.2.3.1. Fundamentalism and Culture

This position has found particular resonance with Fundamentalism. Grace flows only where an obvious Christian or biblical imprint upon culture is discerned. MEE retreats from cultural engagement for the goal of eschatological expectation (McDermott and Netland, 2014:7). Grace ebbs through a rejection of reason and science, emphasising that the biblical revelation must be enforced upon culture (Niebuhr, 1951:27, 81; Schillebeeckx, 1980:32). The result is that Christianity is placed beyond cultural relevance and faith can become confused with outward conformity to a given worldview (Volf, 2011:93-94).

5.2.3.2. *Implications for Mission*

There would be little impetus to engage with those who are deemed to have compromised with culture. Churches would consider themselves the sole custodians of the truth, either locally or denominationally. This would result in distance from all with whom there is theological disagreement.

5.2.4. *Christ of Culture*

The second position states that Christ is associated with culture. Here culture affirms Jesus as its saviour. Everything historically prior points to him enabling the church to be comfortable within a culture which is deemed to be Christian (Niebuhr, 1951:83-84). Culture is the matrix for biblical interpretation and forms the basis for MEE by grace ebbing and flowing between Christianity and culture (Bevans and Schroeder, 2011:386-388).

5.2.4.1. *Gift of Culture*

In some cases culture is viewed as “the gift of God the Spirit through Christ” (Gunton, 2002:51). Mission becomes participation in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* on the basis of God’s imprint on creation. Culture is, therefore, distilled to identify the key markers of God’s grace (Rom. 1:19-21). MEE would become an exercise in imprinting one culture upon another. Grace would ebb and flow to the extent that a given culture is deemed to be contrary to the Christian culture of the missionary.

5.2.4.2. *Christian Culture*

Any problems within a culture are challenged by an assumption of one’s own culture having a Christian ethos (Brueggemann, 2011:205). This could allow for differing cultural views to be held in tension, encouraging dialogue amongst differences (Niebuhr, 1951:102-103; Marsden and Longfield, 1999:103; Murray, 2004:38; Bauder, 2011:21; Percy, 1998:59, 64-66; Marsden, 1991; 1987:4). In this context mission could be difficult to discern because the gospel is connected to a culture. This would present an apologetic problem (Newbigin, 1989:144; Niebuhr,

1951:110-112; Brueggemann, 2007:3-4). MEE would manoeuvre to discern the ebb and flow of grace through culture without making Christ responsible for culture's negative elements.

5.2.5. Christ Above Culture

The third position states that Christ above or transcendent of culture. This places divine holiness and human sinfulness in direct opposition (Niebuhr, 1951:117-118). Grace would ebb and flow through human achievement but would be challenged by human depravity. This would assume God's inability to relate to culture (Niebuhr, 1951:119). This position could produce a form of MEE which emphasises a personal gospel to be received personally. This would in turn produce a church which is unrelated to cultural issues and stands back from cultural engagement. The reverse could also become evident in the church's acts to demonstrate Christ's supremacy over culture in social evangelism; for example, in hospitals, schools, political policies, and charities. There would be little place for cultural superiority as Christ is removed from every culture.

5.2.6. Christ and Culture in Paradox

The fourth position is Christ in paradox to culture. God's perfection is juxtaposed with human corruption which has a negative influence in forming culture (Niebuhr, 1951:150-151). This position emphasises human sinfulness and informs MEE with a judgmental ethos. Comparisons between God and humanity are drawn because of the inevitability of human condemnation (Niehuhr, 1951:152, 157; Edwards, 1979:80; Clarke, 2007:358; Gerstner, 1991:494; Murray, 1992:168). Evil is understood "meditating on the symbols and myths carried by the great cultural traditions that have instructed the Western mind" (Ricoeur, 2013:4). Self-examination discerns the ebb and flow of grace in unusual places, despite human sinfulness. MEE would emphasise dialogue, as the human role in culture and religion is acknowledged. The gospel would primarily be negative, emphasising human unworthiness and coming spiritual judgement, which could result in a withdrawal from cultural engagement.

5.2.7. Christ the Transformer of Culture

The last position states that Christ is the transformer of culture. God's sovereignty and power are emphasised as the source of cultural transformation. Through divine interventions God inspires humanity to achieve much in changing culture (Niebuhr, 1951:190-191; Brueggemann, 2003:318). Grace flows as the church works in the world serving God. This service engages with humanity's problems, which are their own construction, in anticipation of the eschatological transformation of the world at Christ's return (Rev. 21:1-4; Brueggemann, 2011:48). MEE would labour for what is right irrespective of any relation to cultural ethos. In some cases this could be interpreted as opposition to some aspects of culture, and an adoption or extolling of others.

5.3. Culture and Tolerance of Belief

How culture tolerates different beliefs, aims and agendas provides a challenge to the church. Grace has ebbed and flowed through the church because of its aims being at odds with cultural axioms (Niebuhr, 1951:7, 34-36). Christianity could, therefore, be claimed to have a unique and different culture. MEE participates in that culture within the matrix of human culture. The challenge comes when ecclesiastical culture is identified with human culture, resulting in cultural proselytising (McDermott and Netland, 2014:163). MEE requires the church to decipher culture to find "their hidden religious significance" (Tillich, 1957:58). The religious significance evolves into morally defining statements manifested in an "ambivalence and ambiguity" within culture (Daly, 1988:145; McDermott and Netland, 2014:206, 246; Tillich, 1968:15, 45).

5.3.1. Identification of Key Cultural Issues

Grace ebbs and flows between religious traditions through the identification of key cultural issues which are perceived threats to Christianity generally (Ritschl, 1984:241; Wright, 2006:442). This suggests a common religious, theological or doctrinal basis for different denominations. When the church seeks the "conservation of values" contradictory to Christian culture but common to local context, spiritual

transformation is implied (Niebuhr, 1951:37). Grace could ebb in cultural imperialism where one set of beliefs is seen as superior to others rather than culturally and contextually informed.

5.3.2. The Mission of Demonstrating Indiscriminate Love

The ways in which the church manifests indiscriminate love in a cultural context are challenged by the acceptance or rejection of that love. Rejection can result even when the church is truthful and hospitable (Niebuhr, 1951:71; Hauerwas, 1981:93; Brueggemann, 2011:75; 2007:6). The church is the means of demonstrating God's love in MEE. This love is to be indiscriminately dispersed, reflecting the pattern of Trinitarian relationships (Smart and Konstantine, 1991:35; Daly, 1988:1; Bevans and Schroeder, 2011:303; Macquarrie, 1966:343). Grace ebbs and flows through engagement with the ethics which provide morality in a given culture. Concepts such as personality and community are enshrined within a religious concept providing the "unconditional character of the moral imperative" (Tillich, 1968:101). MEE engages with the general principle of religion within a culture with the aim of demonstrating love to all. Grace ebbs when humanity is objectified by the cultural or religious categories they have adopted, but flows when personal and cultural uniqueness is acknowledged.

5.3.3. Loving Enemies

A tension in the ebb and flow of grace is seen in the command to love those seen as enemies (Jn. 13:34-35; Mt. 5:43-48). This can inform MEE by objectifying mission targets and reducing them to cultural stereotypes (Niebuhr, 1951:240; Leith, 1977:189). Grace flows in a prophetic challenge to manifest love indiscriminately to all of humanity. This can be evidenced in the goal of universal justice when covenant and kingdom are exalted above culture (Isa. 1:17; Am. 5:24; Mic. 6:8; Lk. 6:37; Jas. 1:26-27). Justice is a key concept when engaging with enemies. It provides in the Old Testament a "public theology" which the entire covenant community must enter into (Brueggemann, 2013:11; Moltmann, 1997:74). MEE would, therefore, be

required to use different media-personal, corporate and cultural-as a means of engaging with all of humanity within a cultural matrix.

5.4. Culture Transforms Christendom

The Christian faith's engagement with culture produces either Christendom or rejection of the gospel (Jenkins, 2011:14; Murray, 2004:1-4; Higgins, 2013:35-37). Christendom is defined as "in the literal sense a continent. We come to feel that it contains everything, even the things in revolt against itself" (Chesterton, 1990:102). Where Christendom is claimed, a tension with secularism ensues, often manifested in a rejection of the church (Jenkins, 2011:13-14; Volf, 2006:86). This rejection is of the ultimate values where culture does not accept the supremacy of God (Niebuhr, 1951:4-5; Taylor, 2007:556; Brueggemann, 2011:131, 224; Col. 2:13-15; Rev. 11:15). MEE then becomes subversive focusing on the aim of shifting the dominant cultural hegemony (Brueggemann, 2011:224; 2013:150; Peterson, 1989:27-28; Taylor, 2007:459, 537, 766). Grace ebbs and flows through this subversive act as Christianity deliberately engages with culture to overthrow it. The aim is to implant a new culture in the psyche of people through missional praxis.

5.5. Culture and Pluralism

By definition culture includes different aspirations, principles and priorities of the people within the culture. By definition it is pluralist (Niebuhr, 1951:38; Newbigin, 1989:1, 14, 25, 39; Strange, 2002:14-15). Pluralism impacts the church by "forcing them to seek new and adequate ways of understanding and relating to peoples of other religious traditions" (San Antonio Paper, 1990:para.2). Pluralism mitigates against a monolithic view of culture which is often particularly evident in the religious sphere. MEE can become dominated by superiority, filtered through the kingdom of God, and rejecting pluralist religious manifestations. Superiority would provide justification for a proselytising tendency.

5.5.1. Cultural Pluralism and the Church

Superiority produces a tension in cultural pluralism as the uniqueness of different traditions is emphasised (Volf, 2011:81). One solution may be to adopt a form of relativism in faith where truth is comprehended as a personal preference and not axiomatic (Niebuhr, 1951:234-236; Volf, 2011:85). How relativism would inform MEE is unclear. It may reduce the gospel to a personal preference rather than a historical event and theological axiom. Grace would ebb and flow in each tradition but also be challenged through exclusivity.

5.5.2. Triune Truth in a Pluralistic Culture

In plurality the concept of axiomatic truth arises. For Christians grace is understood to flow through certain theological formulations and ebb away in their rejection (Ac. 4:12; Col. 1:8; 1 Tim. 2:5; Newbigin, 1989:158). One solution is to see any claim of exclusivity as leading toward a totalitarian culture. Every religion possesses elements of truth (Schillebeeckx, 1981:616; Lindbeck, 2009:33, 50-51). Such totalitarianism depends upon a given view of history discerned through personal and corporate experience (Newbigin, 2003:19). Truth then becomes a means of judging how propositional belief is to be understood as justified. A philosophical query into this is the Gettier problem, investigating justified belief (Binmore, 2013:2; Gettier, 1963; Paisner, 2013; Beeson, 2009:1; Pritchard, 2009:30; Lesser, 1996:118; Newbigin, 1989:35). If every faith is claimed to possess the truth then the members of a tradition may affirm that their faith has the most truth (Tillich, 1968:102). If an assumption of superiority is made then grace is affirmed to be in more than one tradition. Grace will ebb and flow through the identification of cultural aspects which are incongruent with truth. If all belief is personal and justified there is no place for superiority or withdrawal in MEE.

5.5.3. Culture and Triune Supremacy

Within a plural society different claims for the absolute are encountered, raising the issue of God's supremacy (Niebuhr, 1951:75; Mt. 4:8-10). Tension between plurality and divine sovereignty is seen when the church refuses to accept political institutions as ultimate authority (Yoder, 1984:48-49). While truth may be understood as an abstract invention, cultural influences are discerned through which aspects are viewed as normative (Newbiggin, 2003:7, 16; 1989:5-8, 10; Ott, Strauss and Tennent, 2010:127; Schillebeeckx, 1981:48-49). The degree to which these cultural manifestations are viewed as normative within another culture will determine the ebb and flow of grace. Issues inappropriate in one culture, such as attitudes to alcohol, the place of women, observance of feast days, etc., may resonate in another. MEE would engage with these peripheral cultural manifestations as significant to context but not necessarily definitive of Christianity in general.

5.5.4. Local Religious Tensions

In this instance different religious traditions mould human experiences into "different, sometimes mutually exclusive, experiences of self, community, and world" (Lindbeck, 2009:130). Cultural tension comes when the church, as a part of one culture, stands apart from other cultures on the basis of doctrinal affirmations. Grace ebbs and flows among the religious traditions in their affirmation of common theological axioms against a totalising claim of culture (Ott, Strauss and Tennent, 2010:125). The challenge of different moral standards within the different religious cultures raises an issue for MEE. What one would see as a proselytising tendency another would view as a Christian cultural norm.

5.6. Partial Conclusion

The relationship between Christianity and culture is a complex, troublesome and challenging one. There is "no single way" Christianity can relate to culture because culture is too complex and has been in a state of constant flux throughout history in relation to faith (Volf, 2011:xvi; Jn. 1:11). Issues further arise when culture is seen as a means of establishing Christendom, yet mission may require an objectivity from

certain cultural aspects (Niebuhr, 1951:248). One solution is expressed as follows: “So long as the heaven of Thou is spread out over me the winds of causality cower at my heels, and the whirlpool of fate states its course” (Buber, 2013:7). An existential disconnection with culture may be implied where God is interpreted as present in one culture and when that culture is viewed as contradicting another culture’s religious tenets.

5.6.1. The Work of Mission and Culture

In this section aspects of culture in relation to mission have been discussed. A suggestion was made that culture is both universal and specific. Biblical and historical narratives were reflected upon in the light of culture. This led to a discussion of five categories of how Christ engages with culture. Pluralism and totalitarian influences on culture were examined in the light of mission. This led to an attempt to define the nature of truth and how the church is to navigate amidst cultural multiplicity.

6. The Church as the Agent of Mission

6.1. Introduction

If the kingdom of God is the inspiration for mission, covenant the rationale for mission and culture the context for mission, then the church as “the assembly of covenant people” becomes the agent of mission (Murray, 1976:237-238; Harper and Metzger, 2009:53). Developing from the pietistic influences of the nineteenth century there has been a para-church emphasis on MEE (Bavinck, 1960:59). Organisations such as Youth for Christ, The Billy Graham Evangelistic Agency, The World Council of Churches, etc., are some examples of the para-church involvement.

6.1.1. The Centrality of the Church

This dissertation emphasises the centrality of the church to missionary praxis. The concept of church is itself difficult to define. There are local, regional and denominational manifestations as well as the church catholic, which is the mystical body of Christ (Avis, 2010:7). Through all the nomenclature of church the emphasis seems to be upon something which happens. Happening is seen through the church's participation in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* (Schweizer, 1961:189; Hegstad, 2013:3; Melano, 1999:159; Ott, Strauss and Tennent, 2010:193). MEE is the church manifesting Christ's presence to the world in word and action which draws people to faith (Bonhoeffer, 2001:165; Ziegler, 2013:19; Newbigin, 2003:81-82; Volf, 1998:234-235; Augustin, 2012:para.29). The church is the means by which Christ works in mission, for the kingdom and within culture (Tietz, 2013:183-185; Green, 2013:206, 214; Bonhoeffer, 2009:21; 2001:xxxvi; Lindbeck, 2002:78; Bevans and Schroeder, 2011:36-49; Metaxas, 2010:91, 161). The ebb and flow of grace is seen in the degree to which the church emphasises the themes of mission and kingdom within the prism of culture. Grace would ebb when church becomes the focus of mission rather than the vehicle of mission.

6.1.2. The Church in the Bible

The Greek word for church (ἐκκλησία) has its origin in the monthly assembling of the men of a given Greek city who gathered to govern (Fine, 1983:151-152). The early Christians adopted this term to describe their common identity (Jones, 2008:162). The model of the Jewish synagogue (סֵדֵרָה) was mixed with the ἐκκλησία to produce the concept of the church which emphasised a place where people meet with God (Mt. 18:20; Bonhoeffer, 2009:134; Volf, 1998:135-137; Hegstad, 2013:17; Schillebeeckx, 1980:47). One aspect of the Christian church's essence is expansion into the world (Lindbeck, 2002:157, 237-238; Gal. 3:6-9 6:16; Col. 2:10-11). Church speaks also of a movement from racial identity to voluntary association (Gunton, 2002:126-127). Covenant is important as a means by which ecclesial identity moves away from being defined by culture (Brueggemann, 2007:65; Ott, Strauss and Tennent, 2010:195-196). MEE speaks, therefore, of a common identity

universally embraced by the church as a people different from the pervading culture (Gunton, 2002:135; Harper and Metzger, 2009:1; Hegstad, 2013:66, 131; Groupe des Dombes, 1993:21). Church may, therefore, be described as the body or institution which flows in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. The flowing of grace is through culture, producing a common aim of kingdom advancement and covenantal belonging.

6.1.3. Church as the Body of Christ

One analogy used of the church is the “the body of Christ” (Rom. 12:3-5; 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph, 4:16; Col. 1:18). This places Christ at the core of the church so his life enlivens the body in mission. To be in Christ, therefore, is to be in the church (Tillich, 1968:173, 186; Bonhoeffer, 2001:179). Enlivenment happens as the Spirit comes, clothing Christ in flesh and transforming the church into an “eschatological end-time temple” (Horton, 2008:15; Harper and Metzger, 2009:33). Grace flows in MEE through the affirmation of the Triune supremacy in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* (Hegstad, 2013:28; Bevans and Schroeder, 2010:298; Mt. 28:19; Rom. 10:11-15; 15:19; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; 2:4; Col. 4:3a; Gal. 4:4-6; Col. 4:3b; 1 Thess. 1:5).

6.1.4. Church and the Early Fathers

The early church presents a multiplicity of different models and different styles (Higgins, 2013:65; Fuellenbach, 1995:235; Minear, 1960:28). Multiplicity produced a tension between what should be universal throughout the church and what is contextually local in the church. Uniformity was encouraged in general practices of worship, communion, confession, reading of scripture, prayer for the empire and discipline (Clement of Rome, 1983:32; *The Didache*, 1983:52; Justin, 1983:62-63; Pliny, 1957:14; Tertullian, 1995:141-142). Grace ebbs and flows through these inward activities of the church with little emphasis on MEE in cultural engagement (Guder, 2000:9). The reason may be that it is essential for the church to organise itself correctly prior to engaging with anyone else. MEE is seen in the church’s representation of God’s character in “moderation, righteousness, and love of man” resulting in people being admitted “to immortality and fellowship with God” (Justin, 1983:59). As such, church is both something internal and something external, an organism which relates to its own needs and to those of others.

6.1.5. Church and the Reformed Tradition

The church has particular resonance for the Reformed tradition. Calvin suggests the church is divinely appointed but not divine itself. Further, there is a unity within the true church, which is one, not many different churches, as the one church remains true because the church is free and bound to no one (Kuiper, 2009:13-18). Grace ebbs and flows in these distinctions, flowing through the inclusion of different forms but ebbing if one form of church is raised above another.

6.1.5.1. Ecclesiastical Praxis

Calvin addresses the praxis of the church in Geneva through the 1541 Ecclesiastical Ordinance (Pettegree, 2004:217; Olson, 2004:157-165; Pauw, 2013:108). Calvin argues that where there is “sincere” preaching of the Bible and sacramental observance, there can be no doubt that the church is present (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:289). The tension between the visible and invisible church is also addressed by Calvin. He asserts that believers are the invisible church but are part of a wider mixed church which includes unbelievers and shall remain so until the eschaton (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:280-282). MEE would encompass the church’s prophetic role in the world to unbelievers. There would also be an emphasis on those who are members of the visible but not the invisible church. Grace would ebb and flow according to how membership of the invisible church is discerned from the membership of the visible.

6.1.5.2. Calvin’s Theological Foundation

The foundation of Calvin’s soteriology was in the doctrine of election. Election dovetails with the touchstone of covenant, as a means of discerning the ebb and flow of grace in MEE (Wiley, 1990:96-97). The ebb and flow of grace is discerned through the interaction between the visible church, with its mixed spirituality and multiple priorities, and the invisible church, whose emphasis ought to be upon serving the kingdom of God.

6.1.6. Confession and the Reformed Tradition

The WCF deals with the concept of the church in Chapter 25. Paragraph 1 considers the catholicity and invisibility of the church under its head Christ. Paragraph 2 considers the membership of the church of all who profess “the true religion”. Paragraph 3 looks at the purpose of ministry within the church. Paragraphs 4 and 5 reflect on the mixed nature of the church in doctrine and membership. Paragraph 6 specifically deals with the Catholic Church, identifying the Pope as “that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition”. This last statement was deemed by the PCI to be theologically inaccurate and a historical hangover, making it no longer binding upon elders of that Church (*Firm Foundations*, 1994:132). Grace would ebb in a negative understanding of the Catholic Church, and MEE would become more exclusive if it is based on theological agreement and focused on proselytising those with whom there is theological disagreement.

6.1.6.1. Confessionalism and Identity

Confessionalism gives the covenant community a sense of identity. This identity includes the kind of inter-confessional dialogue seen in the seventeenth century context of the WCF which is anti-Catholic and pro-Lutheran (Groupe des Dombes, 1993:3; Barker, 2003:413-414; Ward, 2004:221-223; Leatham, 2009:32-322). The visible/ invisible nature of the church is also addressed by the WCF. The invisible church constitutes membership of the visible church but not necessarily vice versa. Accordingly, “there is a collective body, comprising all the elect of God of all generations, called the church invisible”, discerned by spiritual fruit (Shaw, 1998:311-312; Hodge, 1998:311-312; Williamson, 2004:224). Grace would flow as the invisible church reaches into the visible church in evangelism. Grace would also flow through engagement with cultural influences which can have a negative influence upon an understanding of what the church is.

6.2. The Church as Social and Spiritual

The church is both social, an organisation existing contextually within a given culture, and spiritual, an organisation existing through the covenant for the kingdom of God (Bonhoeffer, 2009:127). MEE is practised as the church engages in self-reflection on its place within culture. This requires a clarity which does not confuse the church with the kingdom of God, or consider the church as an exclusively spiritual institution (Bonhoeffer, 2009:125-126). The social aspect of the church may explain why some people affirm allegiance to a given denomination. Taken to its most basic description, denominational identity may be socially something like a postcode lottery. Grace would ebb when cultural conditioning informs denominational understanding. Cultural conditioning would make any notion of denominational supremacy dependant upon cultural conditions, not theological (Bonhoeffer, 1954:18). MEE would, therefore, engage with those outside of the church while drawing lines of communication and unity among those inside the church irrespective of denominations. The social aspect of the church would have particular application to Protestant and Catholic engagement.

6.2.1. *Volkskirche* Theology

The place of the church as both a social and spiritual institution caused a tension in twentieth century Germany. When National Socialism came to power in Germany their totalitarianism sought to take control of the churches. Bonhoeffer reflected on this. The Nazi government sought to produce a *Volkskirche* theology. In 1934 the churches produced *Die Barmer Theologische Erklärung*, which sought to comment theologically on the current state of the German churches. *Die Barmer Theologische Erklärung* affirms that only the church is able to provide a total conception of human life, not the German State. When the State attempts to control the entirety of human life, it trespasses on the “church’s vocation”. It rejected the notion of the church playing a role for the state by becoming its organ (Schlingensiepen, 2010:411). Grace would ebb in the direction which the government dictated without any reference to theological or historical precedents. Totalitarian views about racial minorities, other

religions and alternative political convictions would flow through the churches. MEE would, therefore, become an exercise in furthering governmental policy.

6.2.2. The Mission of Volkskirche Theology

The mission of *Volkskirche* was to create a church expressing the personal nationality of one people group. This would strengthen the ethos of a governmental system which emphasised racial superiority. This church would thus accede to state control over all of life (Yates, 1994:34-36). Such a church would be active in social renewal through engagement with the political establishment (Diephause, 1987:336). This connection with the political establishment produced a “body of commonplace expectations and assumptions which orient the church and direct its work in the world” (Ziegler, 2012:157). The *Volkskirche* was used as a means of furthering governmental policies. This tied the church to one political position and divested it of any prophetic challenge to the nation. This would naturally exclude some while engaging others. Serving God’s kingdom was secondary to serving the state, covenant was replaced by racial identity, and culture was indistinguishable from the church. Grace ebbed as the government controlled the beliefs and praxis of the church.

6.2.3. The Problems of Volkskirche Theology

The notion of a national church was initially welcomed in Germany. It was believed that such a body could be a sign of unity in the gospel for all Christians (Green, 1999:123). The speed with which the German Church, however, aligned itself with National Socialism became an issue. Bonhoeffer, and others like him, soon switched allegiances to a Confessing Church, where the ecclesia severed links with the state and sought to be a gospel witness to their culture (de Gruchy, 2002:99). This issue became all the more poignant with the anti-Semitic policies of National Socialism, so that the *Volkskirche* became complicit by aligning with the Nazi state (Gerdmar, 2008:548). Grace ebbed because *Volkskirche theology* curtailed MEE within its political philosophy.

6.3. The Church as Community

The social and spiritual elements of the church combine in the notion of community. The personal and corporate identities flow together, being anchored in the personal (Bonhoeffer, 2009:34-44). The ebb and flow of grace moves from personal to corporate as the personal informs and impacts the corporate (Hegstad, 2013:57). This would particularly impact what is done in MEE. While people may act on their own, their connection to the church has a direct impact upon the churches. Grace ebbs and flows from personal to corporate identities, each informing and influencing the other (Bonhoeffer, 2009:78; Hauerwas, 1981:83). The challenge is that while institutions may develop MEE as a praxis, unless that is personally adopted a lack of conviction may be discerned.

6.3.1. The Personal Aspect of Community

The personal aspect of community can be discerned spiritually: “For Christian philosophy, the human person originates only in relation to the divine; the divine person transcends the human person, who both resists and is overwhelmed by the divine” (Bonhoeffer, 2009:49, 56, 72). Personhood is defined in relation to God and in service to God manifest through MEE. The flow of grace is moulded into a confessional speech which affirms the doctrinal axioms of Triune relations (Volf, 1998:150-151; Miglore, 2003:147). The flow of grace continues in missional engagement with the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* incarnated in the churches, informed by the kingdom of God and covenant, working in culture. There is no guarantee of cultural acceptance of either personal or corporate mission and its call to identify with the kingdom and not culture (Groupe des Dombes, 1993:17; Bosch, 1998:373-374; Groupe des Dombes, 1993:34; Schillebeeckx, 1980:57). Grace ebbs and flows more evidently at some times than others, and with more passion than at other times. This is seen in how people accept or reject an invitation to engage with the Trinity in the kingdom of God and enter relationship through covenant.

6.4. The Church and Christian Identity

The relationship between personal and corporate Christian identity can be discerned in two ways. First, the church is understood to be “the foundation, the cornerstone, the pioneer, the master builder” of personal Christian identity. Second, through the ongoing presence of people who are members of the body (Bonhoeffer, 2009:139; 1 Cor. 12:2ff; Rom. 12:4ff; Eph. 1:23; 4:15f; Col. 1:18). Grace flows in personal spiritual growth and discipleship, as these are developed through MEE. Where there exists an objectification of or a lack of charity toward others a question over the extent of personal spiritual development arises. Triune relationships inform and influence the church as the kingdom of God inspires covenant, giving ecumenism a theological rationale and a concrete context (Davies, 2007:56; Hegstad, 2013:83). Personal Christian identity and corporate Christian identity are formed through the ebb and flow of grace, informing and defining each other.

6.4.1. Cheap and Costly Grace

A tension between personal growth and corporate identity develops directly through grace. Bonhoeffer’s “cheap grace” is to be understood as that which offers fulfillment without responsibility and repentance without discipleship. He identifies it as “the deadly enemy of our Church” (Bonhoeffer, 2011:3-4). Costly grace means a willingness to engage culturally in mission, inspired by the kingdom with the rationale of covenant (Bonhoeffer, 2011:4; Mt. 4:18-22; 5:29; 13:44-46; 18:9; Mk. 1:16-20; 9:47). The flow of grace is costly because it is a call to follow Christ, demanding an entire commitment by reflecting on the cost of the cross (Bonhoeffer, 2011:5). Grace is not exclusively an abstract theological concept but has practical implications. The challenge to the church is to discern those areas where culture has informed and eroded MEE (Dyrness, 2005:255; Lindbeck, 2002:206). When grace becomes a means of judging another Christian tradition’s theology or ethics, it ebbs into cheapness. Costly grace, however, demonstrates something of the breadth of kingdom and covenant by flowing in mission.

6.5. Towards a United Church

Rather than seeing unity as something which is to be strived for, we see that the Spirit's presence demonstrates unity practically even where it is most absent. The Spirit's role places unity in the Triune God's domain (Jn. 17:11; Bonhoeffer, 2009:192-198; Hegstad, 2013:11). The flow of grace is seen in Christian love, despite theological disagreement as a common witness to Christ's lordship (Jn. 13:34-35; Bonhoeffer, 2009:202). The flow of grace suggests closeness and implies the need for ecclesiastical engagement. Where difficult areas of disagreement are not addressed they may become beliefs which intrinsically defeat any aim for unity. Grace flows in a loving relationship and mutual commitment despite doctrinal differences.

6.5.1. Visible or Invisible Unity

The issue of whether unity is something spiritual, through a common faith in Christ, or visible, through a common worship of Christ, applies to the church's role in MEE (Webster, 2005:97). Covenant informs this discussion as the "church of the elect" reflects upon its identity and interprets mission (Hegstad, 2013:10). Where a strict division between visibility and invisibility of the church is raised, the communal element of the church is questioned. The invisible church is the "spiritual essence of the visible church". While this may be hidden, it determines the nature of the visible church (Tillich, 1968:174; Webster, 2005:100). The tension between the visible and invisible church may be uniquely Protestant. Protestants emphasise that a personal experience is necessary prior to ecclesiastical belonging (Groupe des Dombes, 1993:44). Grace ebbs where other traditions dare required to articulate their faith in the same nomenclature as the Protestant churches. This suggests that a confessional identity is a prerequisite for membership of the invisible church. Understanding the nomenclature of each tradition would, therefore, aid MEE (Daly, 1998:110; Gunton, 2003:103).

6.5.2. Unity and Doctrinal Agreement

Doctrine is a key concern of the Reformed churches: “The truth of the gospel is not an esoteric truth to be concealed but a public faith to be joyfully shared” (Migliore, 2003:143-144). Genuine fellowship is impossible if doctrine is ignored. An engagement, therefore, with the tenets of Reformed theology is required. Reformed theological documents, however, are “not to be invested with absolute authority”. This suggests a need for consensus on which aspects of confessional doctrine are fundamental and which are secondary or “fragmentary” (Miller, 2003:144; Tillich, 1968:159; Hauerwas, 1981:91). While identification of key doctrines may work within the one tradition, it is likely to have greater appeal and resonance when done ecumenically. The spread of doctrinal opinion would suggest that uniformity may be impossible. Multiplicity could be seen as highlighting the ebb and flow of grace which other traditions do not emphasise. The issue of which doctrines of the visible church are fundamental to membership of the invisible church still remains to be defined, and it may be impossible so to do.

6.5.3. Applying Unity to Action

To achieve the flow of grace in ecclesiastical unity a differentiation between personal and corporate actions may be suggested. Personal actions have a cultural implication in the ebb and flow of grace (Bonhoeffer, 2009:75; Harper and Metzger, 2009:71). The flow of grace in actions flourishes where membership incarnates “being-for-each-other” (Bonhoeffer, 2009:182-183; 1 Cor. 12:12; Rom. 12:4ff; Eph. 4:4, 12ff.; Col. 3:15). The relationship between the institutional church and its members implies personal deeds flowing with a corporate impact. When MEE is practised it mystically represents the church. The notion of fellowship (κοινωνία) as a participatory issue implies that being Christian needs ecclesial engagement (Hegstad, 2013:98). The flow of grace in fellowship could, therefore, become a basis for MEE. This would issue an invitation to come and live without any doctrinal preconditions. An understanding of what is significant to one denomination would transform the church into a place of discourse and engagement. Such discourse and engagement flows horizontally within the church and outward through culture into mission.

6.6. Partial Conclusion

The role and identity of the church in mission and ecumenism is a vast issue. This section sought to underline the importance of ecclesiology as a touchstone to address mission. The multiform manifestations of the church argue that it is held together solely through grace flowing in Jesus Christ (Bonhoeffer, 1954:8; Mt. 24:3). This ebb and flow provides the basis for mission as the common identity of the church. The concepts of in-reach and out-reach enable the church to reflect on its doctrine and ecclesiastical relationships. This touchstone has considered the church as the agent of mission, via the inspiration of the kingdom of God, the rationale of covenant and the context of culture. The biblical meaning of the church was considered, charting the move from covenant family to universality. The body of Christ as a concept was considered. The church in the early church Fathers, the church in the Reformed tradition and the confessional tradition of the WCF was also outlined. The tension between the church as a social institution and a spiritual reality was considered. This informed the church as a community through personal relationships and how these relationships enable engagement with different theologies. The issue of unity and division was also reflected upon, raising questions about the invisible and visible nature of the church.

7. Ecumenism as the Outcome of Mission

7.1. Introduction

The basis of mission has been noted as being in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*, being inspired by the kingdom of God, on the rationale of covenant, in the context of culture, and in the church as the agent of mission. It is the contention of this work that another outcome of mission is ecumenism. This dissertation argues for a mutuality between evangelism and ecumenism. This mutuality relates to different denominational traditions working in local contexts without drifting into competition or proselytising (Bavinck, 1960:199). A theological framework for ecumenism is necessary to address ecclesiastical relationships and partnership in missional praxis.

7.1.1. Covenantal Existence and Ecumenism

Covenantal existence is an important element of ecclesiastical ecumenism. Through the “uncommon generosity” of interpersonal relationships covenantal membership dominates. This results in a common commitment to unity informed by the kingdom of God, given the rationale of the covenant, within the matrix of culture leading the church into ecumenism (Brueggemann, 2011:33). This highlights the previous discussion on the tension between the personal and the corporate. While they can be separated to a degree, they both inform and inspire one another.

7.1.2. Ecumenical Winter

It has been suggested that the church entered into an “ecumenical winter” in the twentieth century. This resulted from the prior dialogue which emphasised theological differences within the denominations but not doctrinal rapprochement (Nilson, 1995:v). The claim of an “ecumenical winter” may portray one view of the ecumenical movement in the twentieth century. It may be better to state that a more nuanced aim for ecumenism began to evolve in the twentieth century. Shadowing the ecumenical winter has been a decline in denominational commitment (Volf, 1998:19). This would suggest that as grace ebbed and flowed through the church it produced ecclesiastical distance and a personal view of denominational belonging. The evidence for this can be seen in the movement from traditional churches to more relational communities (Johnstone, 2013:183). It is in this context that theology has a role to play by healing broken relationships and repairing schisms. The healing of broken relationships and the reparation of schisms are done by tracing the influences of history and culture on belief (Schillebeeckx, 1981:32-33). Grace flows as the church opens up to its many manifestations throughout the world. MEE becomes a conversation about, and respect for, these many manifestations.

7.1.3. Ecumenical Praxis

Ecumenism takes place in a number of different ways. There is an exclusive form which affirms the uniqueness of Christianity for salvation. There is also a pluralistic form which asserts that all religions are essentially equal. Further, there is an inclusive form which affirms Jesus as superior to all other religious leaders and offers salvation from other faiths (McDermott and Netland, 2014:12-13). The tapestry of theological beliefs is produced by people's engagement with God. Different Christian traditions imply that God has related to people, albeit in an unclassifiable way (Brueggemann, 2011:29). This has led to a lack of consensus on what an authentic church is (Koskela, 2008:9). Denominational differences remain significant, however, because of the Spirit's role in forming beliefs. Any rejection of denominational doctrines would, therefore, imply a rejection of the Spirit's presence (Barth, 2004:653). The ebb and flow of grace can be seen in how the different denominational traditions are viewed and the degree to which they are inclined to engage with difference.

7.1.4. Ecumenism and the Bible

The term ecumenism is not found in the Bible. The principle, however, can be discerned from the unity of the community of Israel, including the different tribes. This principle has its fulfilment in the church as the successor to Israel (Ritschl, 1984:46; Gal 3:7-9; 6:16). Hermeneutically this means that some inferences made concerning Israel in the Old Testament now become applicable to the church in the new.

7.1.4.1. The Church in the New Testament

The concept of the church is further developed in Matthew 18:20 where Christ's presence is connected to his people who gather in his name (McKay, 1964:45). This would suggest that grace flows through the church when gathered corporately in Christ's name. MEE would seek to incarnate Christ's presence through out-reach to culture and through in-reach to the different denominations.

7.1.4.2. The Jerusalem Council

The first specifically ecumenical council was in Jerusalem (Ac. 15:1-32). The council was called to deal with a disagreement amongst the apostles over Gentile converts (Gros, McManus and Riggs, 1998:11). Grace ebbed and flowed in how the Jewish apostles wrestled with Gentile inclusion and relationship to the Jewish law. Some felt that Gentiles ought to become Jews first, whereas others did not want to impose any Jewish conditions on Gentile converts. The Jerusalem Council shows that in times of theological crisis the church unites to discern the correct approach, mirroring the love existent already within the Trinity (McKay, 1964:188, 199; Bonhoeffer, 2009:198; Jn. 13:34-35; 17:22; Volf, 1998:19). This process may suggest that doctrinal agreement is secondary to ecumenical engagement and the demonstration of love (McKay, 1964:189).

7.1.5. Inter-Church Relations and the Early Fathers

For the early church Fathers the issue of unity revolved around obedience to the bishop as a divinely appointed authority “as the Lord himself” (Ignatius, 1983:40-42). Bishops had been appointed in the place of the apostles, and they adhered to the apostolic writings (Irenaeus, 1983:90; Tertullian, 1995:20-21, 32, 36). The identity of the church, therefore, is in the bishop: “the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop, and that if anyone is not with the bishop he is not in the Church” (Cyprian, 1983:266). Reference is also made to obedience to the presbytery and the presbyters as to the apostles, and the bishop as to Christ (Ignatius, 1983:43; 1983a:42-43; 1983b:49). Grace would ebb and flow in the extent to which Christians commit to and obey the ecclesiastical structures.

7.1.5.1. The Primacy of Rome

Obedience is taken a stage further in the argument for the primacy of the See of Rome as successor of the Petrine episcopacy (Cyprian, 1983:263-264; Mt. 16:18). Grace would then ebb and flow in the relationship of local congregations and regional bodies to the authority and supremacy of Rome. Where a theological conviction about ecclesiastical polity diverged from the episcopal, then the very

identity of the churches would be brought into question. Disunity would, therefore, be considered as “the beginning of evils”, and the beginning of heresy (Ignatius, 1983b:49; Clement of Alexandria, 1983:107-108). Roman primacy remains an issue for Reformed Christians and could be a reason for the separation between evangelism and ecumenism in missional praxis. It could further become the source for a proselytising tendency amongst some Christian traditions.

7.1.6. Ecumenism and the Reformed Tradition

The Reformed tradition developed ecumenically through the way the Reformers read and interpreted biblical and historical texts. This hermeneutical approach produced many variations of Reformed theology with a generally common respect amongst Reformed churches for one another (Lindbeck, 2002:72). This has led to some claiming that the Reformed churches have a “schizophrenic” ecumenical appearance (McEnhill, 2003:77). The “schizophrenic” ecumenical appearance is seen in the many different manifestations of Reformed denominations, the splits within those denominations and the ecumenical distance between those denominations. Grace flowed through a common commitment to Reformed theology but ebbed in a divisive tendency over cultural issues. This can be seen in the many Presbyterian denominations in Ireland who, while agreeing on the core theological tenets, have split from one another over other issues.

7.1.6.1. Reformed Attitudes to Catholicism

Reformed attitudes to the Catholic Church have, at times, demonstrated a potential lack of grace. Catholicism has been described as a “perverted government” ruled over by the Pope who is a “tyranny of Antichrist.” The Pope was believed to be the “Antichrist (who) would sit in the temple of God” (Calvin, Vol. 2, 1957:305). Despite such vitriolic statements Calvin was prepared to admit that there were genuine believers in the Catholic Church (Calvin, Vol. 2, 1957:313). Calvin did not expel Catholics from the church. He discerned vestiges of orthodoxy within Catholicism although he remained critical of Catholic sacramentalism (Hurley, 1998:149-153; Paul, 1940:111). Grace ebbed in some uncharitable statements

concerning the Pope which may have more to do with political and cultural contexts than theological rationale. These statements were held in tension with Calvin's attitude to those remaining in the Catholic Church whom he saw as genuine believers.

7.1.6.2. Reformed Catholicism

Despite these negative inclinations the Reformers wanted to be reconciled with the Catholic tradition. As a reformer, Calvin had the aim not to establish a new church but to reform the Catholic Church (Fergusson, 2002:32, McEnhill, 2003:78; McNeill and Nichols, 1974:15). Reformation would happen through the retrieval of lost doctrines of the early church (Mannion, 2011:8). Calvin also accepted the authenticity of Catholic baptism because of its Triune formula (Hurley, 1998:151-153; Paul, 1940:111). The ebb and flow of grace is seen in the tension between a desire to reform the Catholic Church and the need to keep a distance from certain Catholic theologies. The notion of doctrinal retrieval may suggest that Calvin saw himself as a true Catholic. The ebb and flow of grace is also seen in Calvin's attitudes toward vestiges of authenticity in the Catholic Church and in a critique of the Papacy and sacramentalism.

7.1.7. Ecumenism and Confessionalism

Exploration of the nature of confessionalism has been relegated to an academic exercise in which theologians highlight doctrinal divergence. It has been suggested, however, that local ecumenism is the result of specific ecclesiastical teaching (Ritschl, 1984:47). Confessions represent the reflection of the wider church on key theological principles. The application of such principles, however, are reflected upon and imbibed through congregational ministry. They may provide a matrix for MEE at a local level. This would take into account the wide variety of beliefs and attitudes experienced locally which may be in tension with wider confessions.

7.1.7.1. Lumen Gentium

The Catholic document *Lumen Gentium* affirms the unity of the church through the profession of Peter and the resurrection of Christ. This would take place with a society governed by bishops and in communion with the Papacy (*Lumen Gentium*, 1964). Grace would ebb and flow in the degree to which the primacy of the bishops and the See of Rome are accepted.

7.1.7.2. The Westminster Standards

In the case of the Reformed churches confession plays a significant role. Presbyters within PCI are to “teach and defend” the Westminster Standards (*The Code*, 2013:67). Grace would ebb and flow in faithfulness to the Westminster Standards and whether they are viewed as normative for all Christianity. Where confessional identity converges a common commitment to MEE could result.

7.1.8. Towards a Definition of Ecumenism

To define ecumenism is a hermeneutical question which vacillates between interpreter, the churches and interpreted theology. As such, ecumenism has a wide variety of definitions. Ecumenism can be a worldview or an ecclesiology, ranging from “conciliatory ecumenism” for denominational unity to interfaith dialogue. There is no one exhaustive definition of ecumenism and often different aspects are held in tension (Körtner, 2003:399). The lack of an exhaustive definition implies the need for conversation among the denominations on issues of unity (Porter and Robinson, 2011:6). Grace would, therefore, flow as different traditions engage with one another to discuss and understand their theological statements. MEE may ebb in a desire to proselytise on the basis of difference; however, authentic engagement with ecclesiastical difference requires an engagement with the reasons why a denomination holds to certain theological axioms.

7.1.8.1. The Meaning of Ecumenics

Ecumenics comes from the Greek word for house (οἶκος), which refers to both a house or series of rooms to dwell in (McKay, 1964:24). This is specifically applied to the church as the house of God standing below the cross in affirmation of human suffering and divine revelation (Körtner, 2003:410). Theologically, an ecumenical outlook sees in others the same commitment as in one's self, the same Spiritual presence informing doctrine and practice. This is because of a common membership of a moral community (Best and Robra, 1997:78-79). The concept of dwelling (οἶκος) suggests a flow in relationship between people and a sense of common belonging. This would embrace mission as both evangelism and ecumenism (McKay, 1960:219). Denominations not engaging with others ecumenically would, therefore, suggest a lack of commitment to mission itself.

7.1.8.2. Ecumenism's Impact

Ecumenism's impact on people implies a discovery of commonality with members of other churches. In this commonality, doctrinal differences are viewed as secondary to the Spirit's leading of the church into a "catholic unity" (Bruggemann, 2011:294; Hurley, 1998:104-105; Moltmann, 1977:203). Unity displays the liberation of churches from contextual boundaries to engage with the peace of Christ in ecumenical engagement (Moltmann, 1992:12). Theological disagreement will remain, but ecumenism demonstrates the church's willingness to debate the essence of Christian unity. This would lead to a common commitment to MEE, doing together what they cannot do alone (Hurley, 1998:105; Metzger, 2010:xii-xiii). Grace flows from discussion to exclusivity and ebbs from theological conviction to repentant proselytising (McKay, 1964:159; Moorhead, 2012:397; Hart, 1994:35-83; Nichols, 2004:41-60). The ebb and flow of grace defines the challenge of being theologically evangelical and ecumenical at the same time-espousing diverse doctrinal views while maintaining the fundamental unity of all Christians.

7.2. Theological Connections of Ecumenism

Ecumenism engages with the different traditions of Christianity through mutual relationships. The search for unity is the search for truth and those doctrinal truths on which there is least ecumenical agreement are often the most important to a denomination (Ritschl, 1984:116; Best and Robra, 1997:18). Theological multiplicity can be understood in three ways. First, church doctrines are propositional; second, doctrines are non-informative but symbols of inner feelings; third, a combination of both (Lindbeck, 2009:2). The third option gives appropriate place to how grace ebbs and flows through experiential as well as the normative claims of doctrine. Grace ebbs when local considerations cloud wider theological principles common to the church. This could mean that while local congregations may be able to practise MEE, local personalities would make it impossible.

7.2.1. Theological Multiplicity

For some Christians theology has become synonymous with division and localism, manifested through a lack of consensus on the central affirmations of the faith (Best and Robra, 1997:14-15). It may be easier to engage with the normative aspect of theological multiplicity, as the experiential is harder to understand and critique because of its psychological nature (Lindbeck, 2009:64). Hermeneutics plays a role as two Christian traditions can develop from a reading of the same sources (Freyne, 2003:60). Grace flows through the text to the formation of the church, but ebbs when the ascription of primacy to certain texts over others is used to judge the traditions for adopted from those texts.

7.2.2. The Church and Moral Ethics

Moral ethics is one example of how denominations with different theologies can work together for a common aim, for example, to work on pro-life issues (Neuhaus, 2004:106). Grace flows to all of humanity in recognition of human worth. Moral ecumenical activity represents an “ecumenism of the trenches” where doctrinal differences are secondary to a perceived common enemy. Ecumenism of the trenches suggests a commonality amongst churches. Theological uniqueness then becomes

secondary to the main definition of being Christian. Accordingly, people would be Christian first, and then Protestant or Catholic (Aristotle, 1996:17). This definition allows for loyalty to one's own tradition while remaining open to others (Lowery, 1985:5). Ecumenism would then produce freedom from doctrinal self-understanding (Moltmann, 1992:12). The flow of grace is evidenced in the theology of others, and moulded through contextual influence.

7.2.3. The Place of the Church in the Search for Unity

Ecumenism deals with relationships amongst the churches. Such relationships affirm the church as having a divine origin for the benefit of people, being endued with justice for all of humanity (Best and Robra, 1997:18; Dulles, 1987:142). Yet the issue of fragmentation remains and is evidenced in the plethora of different denominations, beliefs, liturgies and polities (Avis, 2010:4-6; Hegstad, 2013:20; Dulles, 1987:140). Ecumenical engagement is seen most clearly amidst such diversity, understanding the church as the "first fruit of the redemptive achievement of Christ" (McKay, 1964:29). Ecumenics takes hold of ecclesiological implications to formulate how the church can practise MEE within a given culture (McKay, 1964:29). A tension exists between local ecclesiastical identity, which is concrete, and denominational identity which is broader (Groupe des Dombes, 1993:2). Grace flows through the acknowledgment of commonality among all Christians and the ways in which that commonality informs mission together.

7.2.4. Historical Reflection in the Search for Unity

As the church grew and developed, historical context provided the matrix for theological reflection. The Reformed churches passed on the stories of those who framed their identity, especially in opposition to Catholicism (McEnhill, 2003:84). The flow of grace is seen as people learn from their own historical tradition, but are challenged by the discoveries of others living faithfully to their historical influences (Hauerwas, 1981:92; Hegstad, 2013:208). Ecumenism differs from historical influences by focusing on the contemporary context of the church and its missionary efforts in the world (McKay, 1964:30-31). Grace ebbs through a historically focused

theology resulting in a backward looking church. Positively, this could also provide an inward focused ecclesiology which seeks to define itself as faithful to historical traditions.

7.2.5. The Place of Missions in the Search for Unity

This dissertation suggests a necessary and direct relationship between evangelism and ecumenism. Mission is a central calling of the church and was intended to be central in the church's praxis (McKay, 1964:33; 1960:209; Lindbeck, 2009:131). If evangelism and ecumenism are causally linked, because mission is a central theme of the church's identity, then mission ought also to work toward the unity of the churches (Bonhoeffer, 2009:192). This will require engagement with different doctrines and the reasons those doctrines are significant to each tradition. The church will incarnate MEE for all people and in every cultural context (Forrester, 1997:94, Volf, 2011:94). MEE witnesses to society in demonstration of the church's breadth of membership. The church will also witness to those outside the church through the unity which faith provides amongst the denominations.

7.2.6. Ecumenism and Proselytising

Proselytising rears its head when ecumenical engagement is used to convert people to another tradition. The concept of proselytising has been raised above, along with the negative associations of the term. Such associations are: the employment of violence or pressure; manipulating people's needs or weaknesses; applying political, social or economic power to conversion; uncharitable designations; and emphasising the achievement of one community over another (Gros, McManus and Riggs, 1998:79). Grace ebbs and flows in the degree to which respect for other denominations is shown in MEE (Hurley, 1998:199). Proselytising makes theological difference the focus rather than a focus on serving the kingdom of God in a covenant relationship within culture.

7.2.7. Unique Reformed Ecumenism

The Reformed tradition has been credited with a unique ecumenical ministry because of a theological devotion to mission. This devotion to mission did not raise issues of church politics, ministry or order above a common commitment to the gospel (McEnhill, 2003:83; Willis, 1999:183-191). This would suggest a flow of grace in a Reformed commitment to MEE. While that has been challenged through denominational schism, the common core remains.

7.3. The Context of Ecumenism

MEE reflects the Trinity of different divine persons but of the same substance (WCF, 2:3). Through church relations denominations, which are many, share the same spiritual basis. Ecumenical aspiration can be seen in two ways. First, an organic model which begins with the living reality of denomination aiming to grow together institutionally. Second, a conciliar fellowship where catholicity is emphasised through the inter-dependence of mutual church relationships, growing into a mutual responsibility and accountability (Haar, 2009:51-60). The first kind of ecumenism demonstrates the ebb and flow of grace through those serving Christ, perhaps in mission. The second perceives grace to ebb and flow more definitely in ecclesial unity. Ecumenism, therefore, presents a tension in the ebb and flow of grace between aspirational unity and the implementation of that unity.

7.3.1. The Basic Foundation

Congregational life is the foundation of church praxis, the microcosm of the church catholic (McKay, 1964:40). The ebb and flow of grace is, therefore, contextually local where concrete relationships are addressed and mission incarnated, producing a mutual respect amongst the churches (Gay, 2011:34). Ecumenism comes through the foundation of Christian unity amongst all believers. This unity respects the experiences of different traditions and practises a commitment to serve others by rejecting other loyalties which may cause distance (Yoder, 1998:230). Grace ebbs and flows through different theological and ecclesiastical traditions. As grace ebbs

and flows an awareness of cultural influences, which are often the source of disagreement is made more acute.

7.3.2. The Wider Ecclesiastical Context

In the wider denominational context there are more opportunities for ecumenical engagement. Issues such as doctrinal beliefs, historical precedent and Christian identity are wrestled with in conversation with other traditions (McKay, 1964:41). For the Reformed churches neither doctrinal formulations nor the reasons for developing those formulations are held exclusively by one branch of the church. Rather they are understood to belong to the wider Christian church which shares many of the same principles (McEnhill, 2003:85). This demonstrates that grace flows through a connection to common Christian doctrine applied and manifested in local praxis. MEE would identify these key issues and make them the focus of all engagement.

7.3.3. Reformed Ecumenical Baptism

One principle which is almost universal to the church is the sacrament of baptism. This sacrament incorporates people into the church. The ecumenical nature of baptism is seen in communion where a sense of oneness amongst Christians is proclaimed (Avis, 1990:28, 41; Volf, 1998:156-157). In that sense baptism is an ecumenical sacrament representing the new birth. For this reason baptism is acknowledged in other traditions and connects Christians with one another throughout denominations (Best and Robra, 1997:70-71). Grace flows as the Christian denominations acknowledge Triune baptism as the basis for fellowship (Mt. 28:19). If Triune baptism is not acknowledged, then membership of the church is brought into question. This could result in MEE focusing on proselytising those whose baptism is thought questionable.

7.3.3.1. Baptismal Acceptance

The ecumenical nature of baptism is demonstrated in the Reformed acceptance of Catholic baptism as authentic (Pauw, 2013a:134; Hodge, 1846:320). This wider ecclesiastical context demonstrates that membership of the church is greater than of the institution which administered the sacrament. This implies an implicit sacramental ecumenism through the Triune baptismal formula. Accordingly a child baptised could be in membership of both the Catholic and Protestant traditions (Hurley, 1998:113-115). Grace flows through the sacrament irrespective of the denominational context of administration.

7.3.4. Culture and Ecumenism

Cultural influences are a significant issue for ecumenical engagement. Cultural influences aid the understanding of different praxis amongst denominations. Grace ebbs and flows where a theological emphasis contradicts a core tenet of another tradition (Best and Robra, 1997:73; McIntyre, 1946:17). This informs MEE when some issues in a given denomination are viewed as theologically suspect. Interpretation of certain issues as resistance to theological truth could result in separation and distance of one denomination from one another. If culture is the formative influence on doctrinal influences then ecumenism demands a desire to be all things to all people to demonstrate the flow of grace (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

7.3.4.1. Context of Ecumenism

Within the Reformed tradition culture, geography and society have an influence on ecumenism. Western culture's emphasis on autonomy, democracy and volunteerism has influenced the Reformed churches. This has manifested in ecclesiastical fragmentation and schism, producing a new tradition (McEnhill, 2003:82; Schillebeeckx, 1981:82; Niebuhr, 1951:105). While the reason for division may have been understood as biblical or theological, the influence of culture on personal attitudes has a role. Grace ebbs and flows in the degree to which culture informs and impacts ecumenical engagement through an understanding of its primacy over theological and biblical principles.

7.3.5. Ecumenism and the Evangelical Unity

The establishment of the Evangelical Alliance is an example of the unity in MEE. Rev James McCosh, a professor of metaphysics at Queen's College Belfast, addressed the American branch of the Evangelical Alliance at New York in 1873. The Reformed and Presbyterian delegates in response to McCosh's address organised the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (McNeill and Nichols, 1974:193). While this example of ecumenism was intra-Reformed, it was an example of cultural differences and interpretations being set aside for wider unity.

7.4. Christ and Church Unity

MEE is a means by which the Christian church represents Christ to the world. Issues of doctrinal commonality influence ecumenism by providing areas of common witness. Theological conversation furthers this by acknowledging divergence in belief and by addressing areas in which theological divergence compromises theological integrity (McKay, 1964:62, 65; Heb. 6:1-2; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Heb. 12:2). Doctrinal divergence is perhaps best exemplified in Protestant and Catholic relations. The necessity of dialogue to better understand those issues of divergence informs the ebb and flow of grace by engaging with historical stereotypes (Gros, 2004:119). MEE becomes central to doctrinal understanding of different traditions. Grace ebbs when withdrawal dominates and both traditions are robbed of the opportunity to learn from one another and witness together for the gospel.

7.4.1. Christ and the Membership of the Church

The membership of the church is composed of those who serve the kingdom, have entered covenant, to witness in culture through the church. Membership of the church can, therefore, be defined as those who affirm the lordship of Christ (1 Cor. 12:3; McKay, 1964:46-47). Ecumenically this means that people of different denominations are members of the church irrespective of any doctrinal differences between the denominations (Bonhoeffer, 2009:199). From a Presbyterian perspective no single church tradition expresses Christ perfectly. Through confession, however,

pardon and grace in reconciliation is achieved (Pauw, 2013a:139). The flow of grace is central to ecumenism because of an acknowledgment of common sinfulness and a commitment to make grace known (Moltmann, 1977:204). Reconciliation connects to mission as a witness to the gospel, which would rather have believers suffer injustice than seek vengeance. Reconciliation is rooted within a local context and critiques a commitment to ethnic identity and social division (May, 2004:80-81). The flow of grace moves from the local congregation into the wider community, breaking down historical denominational boundaries.

7.4.2. Christ and the Presence of God within the Church

The presence of Christ within the church is discerned through *κοινωνία*. This refers to a community of fellowship, established by the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension (McKay, 1964:47). Fellowship inspires the unity of the churches while accepting present denominational structures (Best and Robra, 1997:7, 12). A tension exists between personal belief, accessed exclusively, and corporate faith, achieved inclusively (Tillich, 1965, Part III:165). The solution is the Spirit's presence providing a sense of unity amongst all Christians, and love for God and fellow Christians (Bonhoeffer, 2009:200-202). Fellowship (*κοινωνία*) is, therefore, a fundamental aspect of the church, as all Christians, however imperfectly, are already in communion with one another through Christ. Perfect fellowship (*κοινωνία*) will be achieved through conversation, spiritual renewal and ecumenical engagement (Gros, McManus and Riggs, 1998:59). Fellowship (*κοινωνία*) demonstrates the flow of grace already in existence, irrespective of the extent of involvement in ecumenism.

7.5. The Connection between Mission and Ecumenism

The relationship between mission and ecumenism developed because some believed the age of mission had passed. This belief placed the emphasis on local congregations contextually serving in their own locale rather than Western churches sending missionaries abroad (Ott, Strauss and Tennent, 2010:218). This emphasis may have resulted from a desire to distance the church from imperialistic tendencies seen in the mission of the nineteenth century. One evidence of this was missionaries

in India and China who found denominational structures a hindrance to their work in a majority non-Christian culture (Stanley, 2013:22-23). Grace ebbs and flows as mission moves from a catholic praxis to something which is essentially local.

7.5.1. A Changing Western Culture

There is an assumption that Western culture is changing from a Judaeo-Christian foundation. If so, a common commitment to MEE is implied within the churches (Avis, 2010:22-23; Brueggemann, 2011:29; Bevans and Schroeder, 2011:62; Gros, 2004:119). Mission can be partly responsible for the transformation of Western culture as influences due to engagement with other peoples were brought back by returning missionaries and through population drift (Avis, 2010:28, 36; Guder, 2000:69). The challenge is for the church to move beyond the bounds of history and tradition, becoming missional by “conviction and commitment” (McKay, 1964:51; Lowery, 1985:2-3; Verkuyl, 1978:10). MEE is pneumatologically driven as churches cooperate as the Spirit leads (Taylor, 2004:58; Bosch, 1998:457). Grace ebbs and flows both into mission-as-evangelism and from mission-as-ecumenism when a common purpose of serving Christ is focused upon.

7.5.2. The Three Elements of Ecumenism

Hurley (1998:104-108) outlines three elements which contribute to his definition of ecumenism. First, ecumenism represents a resolve to understand different positions which may not result in agreement. Second, ecumenism embodies a study of an alternative tradition. Third, ecumenism theologically engages and collaborates with different positions, resulting in an intolerance of ecclesiastical multiplicity but rejoicing in theological divergence. Ecumenism, therefore, seeks to develop “areas of communion with separated Christian communities, rather than an ‘exclusive’ theology which seeks only to establish frontiers” (Quinn, 1967:373). Doctrines are viewed symbolically as non-objective inner feelings; they are not necessary for religious agreement (Lindbeck, 2009:2-3; Lowery, 1985:5). Understanding doctrine symbolically rather than axiomatically could rob ecumenism of a theological imperative informed by biblical teaching as nothing is thought to be concrete.

Whether this does justice to the meaning of theological doctrine is unclear but suggests that correct belief about God is secondary to experiencing God.

7.5.3. The Doctrinal Challenges of Ecumenism

Ecumenism requires theological opinion and diversity to be taken seriously and investigated deeply (Bloesch, 2002:111; *The Code*, 2013:para.11; Avis, 2010:32). This may be beyond the realm of ecumenism, which has been described as “a frail, limited, and stumbling move toward such a vision of the universal fellowship of churches” (Newbiggin, 1995:150). Whether uniformity of doctrine could be achieved is debatable as uniformity assumes a doctrinal unity. This separates doctrine from any contextual influence and supposes a revelation which is non-personal but propositional (Avis, 1990:53-55). Grace ebbs and flows in the degree to which doctrinal beliefs are taken as primary and fundamental. This implies a need for theological ecumenical study to enable an understanding of why some beliefs are central and some are secondary.

7.5.4. Theological Commitment of Ecumenism

A robust theological commitment to core doctrinal beliefs may provide a more stable root for ecumenical engagement. This would result in a conversational approach to inter-church relations with respect for multiplicity in doctrinal formation (Avis, 1986:6-7). The flow of grace through the doctrinal formulations of given traditions would, therefore, be accepted. An openness would develop for such an ebb and flow in other traditions. A “differentiated consensus” welcoming and transcending difference may be helpful for ecumenical engagement. This would view denominations as complimentary and contribute to a comprehensive picture of the church (Thiessen, 2009:37; Küng, 1998:204). The practical implication of each stream emphasising a doctrinal element which another stream does not contributes to the unique tapestry of the church. MEE would reflect the breadth of denominational beliefs, all of which provide a fuller picture of the gospel.

7.5.5. The Philosophical Ethos of Ecumenism

Ecumenism provides a philosophical critique of “schismatic thinking” which views one position as exclusive and representative of the whole of the church (Moltmann, 1977:206). Blei suggests four aspects of ecumenical activity: a movement within the “Holy Catholic Church”; an attempt to connect the visible with the theological church; addressing the unity of believers and the unity of denominations; and visibly describing the present spiritual unity of God’s people (Blei, 2003:51-54). The rationale for ecumenism is theological and spiritual rather than political, based upon historical divisions resulting from the Reformation (Quinn, 1967:373; Fitzgerald, 2004:1-4). The Reformation has been noted as producing a “tragedy” within the Christian church through “traumatic” divisions (Braaten, 2000:12; Bloesch, 2002:253). Grace ebbs and flows in the tension between theological authenticity and the desire for unity. MEE would, therefore, consider the tragedy of disunity as a hindrance to the gospel (Jn. 13:35). Yet the tension would remain in the need to be true to theological conviction within the denominations.

7.5.6. Protestant Disunity

The Reformation produced four traditions of Protestantism: Lutheran, Reformed, Free and Anglican (Küng, 2002:140-141). Division was caused primarily because the Reformation failed to reform the Catholic Church but instead created new churches to reflect the different theologies. This may be why the ecumenical movement could be motivated by evangelical fervour with the aim of completing the Reformation’s task. By working toward this goal the Reformed churches would demonstrate that “the agenda of the Reformation obstinately refuses to go away” (McGrath, 1994:199-200). The flow of grace would be seen in a commitment to achieving Reformation, but ebbing with the Catholic Church’s refusal to change (Fitzgerald, 2004:3; Bloesch, 2002:255). MEE could become a means of furthering the Reformation. Attention will be given in a later chapter to the role of Vatican II in effecting reform within the Catholic Church.

7.5.7. Implications for the Reformed Churches

The Reformed churches started with a historical movement which then produced a theological system. This is accompanied by the advancement of secularism in many of the nations impacted by the Reformation (Tillich, 1957: 221). While history and doctrinal influences challenge the identity of Protestantism, ecumenism fails by not achieving the unity of the churches (Best and Robra, 1997:2). Rather than seeking to reform one manifestation of the Christian church, the Catholic, it has been suggested that the Reformation aim could be applied to the whole Christian church. Rather than Reformed theology specifically defining one manifestation of Christianity, the doctrinal principles of Reformation theology would be attributed as belonging to the whole church (Johnson, 2003:67). The Reformed churches have this broad view in microcosm by recognising the ministry, sacraments and membership of other traditions (Busch, 2003:25; Leith, 1977:23, 54). While unity has not been achieved, the “paradoxical character” of the church begs the question of whether it is even possible (Tillich, 1965, Part III:181). Grace flows through the Reformed churches as ecumenism emphasises commonality and ebbs as it emphasises schism.

7.6. Partial Conclusion

In considering ecumenism as the outcome of mission this section has considered the theological basis and rationale for ecumenical engagement in the light of an actual cooling in ecumenical engagement. The biblical, historical and confessional implications on ecumenism were considered. The theological connections of ecumenism were also considered in the light of the common ethical commitment of both Protestantism and Catholicism on some moral issues. The central role of the church in unity was outlined along with the use of historical reflection. The role of missions in the churches’ search for unity was further outlined. An attempt was made to place ecumenism in its context, beginning in the local congregation, spreading to the churches and ending with the church. The unique connection between Christ and the church was considered in the light of unity as it applies to membership and the divine presence. An attempt was made to draw a connection between mission and ecumenism, which emphasised the need for missional engagement and ecumenical

conversation. The type of ecumenical engagement was reflected upon, the doctrinal challenges of ecumenism and the philosophical ethos of ecumenism. This was summed up in the implications for the Reformed churches.

Chapter 5

Dialogue with Catholic Missiology

1. Introduction

PCI's mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism (MEE) is being investigated within the matrix of Ireland. The Catholic Church in Ireland, although having lost some of its public hegemony in recent years because of moral crises, continues to exert an influence within wider Irish consciousness (Inglis, 1998:245; Elliot, 2014:177). Many Irish people continue to remain "stakeholders" of Irish Catholicism. This includes those who have transferred to other Christian denominations and those raised within other Christian denominations, albeit within the Catholic culture of Ireland (Littleton, 2015:26). This resonates with the theme of this research as PCI's MEE engages with Catholicism within modern Ireland. It is, therefore, a worthwhile endeavour to consider how the Catholic Church understands MEE.

1.1. Cultural and Ecclesiastical Engagement

One way in which PCI engages with the Catholic Church in MEE is through Youth Link. Youth Link began in 1991 as an ecumenical effort to work with the youth within the Irish churches. The priority was to aid "transformation in a divided society" through government lobby, education, social engagement, relationships and practical developments (<http://www.youthlink.org.uk>). Engagement through Youth Link suggests a common willingness to collaborate for common ideological ends despite theological differences.

1.2. Theological Engagement with Catholicism

The Reformed churches' engagement with Catholicism has been noted previously, with particular regard to proselytising. Proselytising produced as assumption of the need for Catholic conversion. This would be defined by the ability to profess a personal testimony of religious conversion. Where this was absent, conversion itself would be assumed to be absent also (Butterfield, 1985:13). On a more positive vein there has been praise of the Catholic Church for the changes initiated in Vatican II

(Wells, 1973:17). In the light of Vatican II a need arose to discern “old interpretative stereotypes and the inner development and manifold reality of Roman Catholicism itself” (de Chirico, 2003:15). It is this balance between what is taught centrally, Vatican theology, and the personal convictions of Catholics locally where a tension between MEE exists.

1.2.1. Reformed Critique of Catholicism

Catholic theology has been critiqued by a number of theological and popular Reformed commentators. One core issue has been that of sacramentalism. Reformed theology asks of sacramentalism whether Christ left a “message or a method for salvation” (Zins, 1995:13-15). Emphasising the message rather than method locates the Church from standing between God and people, to proclaiming God to people (Kuyper, 1987:47). Whether these are genuine Reformed critiques or a caricature of perceived Catholic beliefs is unclear. The division seems to be over the Reformed church’s emphasis on the proclamation of a theological truth. This is in juxtaposition to the Catholic invitation to participate in an ecclesiastical community. Grace ebbs in the rhetoric and objectification given to Catholicism by the Reformed churches.

1.2.2. Global Critique

Catholicism has also been critiqued globally rather than theologically. This has happened through Reformed churches identifying majority Catholic countries as potential areas for mission (Carson, 1996:11). Underpinning this was a perception of the supremacy of Protestant countries, which are

Comparatively strong, progressive, enlightened, and free, while the Roman Catholic countries have remained relatively stationary or have stagnated and have to be aided economically and politically by Protestant nations (Boettner, 1962:13).

It is difficult to theologically consider this claim because it relies on non-doctrinal tenets for its justification. The claim presupposes the supremacy of one nation state over another on the basis of which Christian tradition dominates therein. Little thought is given as to whether religion is practised or nominal in these countries. MEE is in effect through the attachment of a national identity to an ecclesiastical

expression. Grace ebbs and flows in the extent to which people accept the authenticity of a political state and attached denominational association.

1.2.3. Historical Critique

The role of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 in formulating missiological praxis has also been noted previously. There were, however, a number of ecumenical and missiological problems which arose from the conference. The convenors steered the conference away from any ecumenical doctrinal engagement which was viewed as divisive. The impact on ecumenism was, therefore, an organisational unity. This was achieved through wilful ignorance of theological disagreements (Hesselgrave, 2007:122-123). The reason for ignoring doctrinal differences may have been a naive assumption that all delegates were in agreement on Christianity's core tenets (Hesselgrave, 2007:139).

1.2.3.1. The Focus of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference

The main focus of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference was on non-evangelised contexts. The Conference did not engage with Catholic persecution of Protestants in Latin America (Hesselgrave, 2007:125). A suspicion toward Catholicism, based on a perceived absence of key theological tenets embraced by Protestantism, remained unaddressed. This in turn resulted in the ebbing of grace in uncharitable assumptions and actions. The conference provided little or no theological foundation or theological focus for MEE resulting in an unclear outcome.

2. Catholic Theological Missiology

Catholic theological reflection on mission affirms a constant movement of the Trinity. This views God as a pure act who is not influenced by anything (Aquinas, 2012:3:1). God is always flowing with ease into the world (Davies, 2001:228). The flowing of God represents divine self-witness throughout history (Savage, 1963:76). Mission, therefore, comes from God, defines the character of God and witnesses the work of God in the world (Kasper, 2013:292). The theology of mission has been somewhat unnoticed within Catholic ecclesiology (Bevans, 2014:184, 196). An

understanding of the theology of Catholic missiology is, therefore, required prior to addressing the praxis of Catholic mission. This would discern the role Catholic theology of mission has had on the ebb and flow of grace in MEE.

2.1 Triune Relationships as the Basis of Mission

Catholic missiology affirms its beginning in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* (van Gelder, 2005:31). In mission the Church is inspired and led to “share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love” (*Catechism*, 1995:245). The immanence of the Trinity is, therefore, experienced in salvation history (Godzieba, 2011:140). *Missio Dei Trinitatis* was highlighted previously as a theological touchstone for this research. The implications for Catholicism and Protestantism is that the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* provides a common foundation. This common foundation is where MEE begins. Accordingly, mission is wider than denominational manifestations thereof, being something in which the denominations participate with God.

2.2 Christological Presence in Mission

As the Trinity provides the context for Catholic MEE, Jesus provides the focus. *Redemptoris Missio* argues for a close connection between Jesus and the gospel to such an extent that they are mutually indistinguishable (Scherer and Bevans, 1992:170-171). This has been the “fundamental belief” of the Catholic Church that “Jesus is the Saviour of the world” (Buckley, 1997:21). The exclusivity of Christ informs MEE by inspiring the church to participate in Christ’s mission to make the Father known (Brunk III, 1994:39-54; Kavunkal, 1994:89-91). Thus a common focus for MEE is provided by broadening the denominational platform for mission. Grace would flow from Christ into mission, focusing on those who do not know Christ (Scherer and Bevans, 1992:172). This would leave little room for proselytising, supremacy or distance in ecclesiastical relationships. Instead, a common focus on Christ would inform all Christian traditions enabling participation in mission.

2.3. *Kingdom of God as the Focus of Mission*

As the Trinity forms the basis for Catholic missiology, the kingdom of God provides its focus. The Trinity is discerned through Christ's proclamation of the kingdom of God and his performance of kingdom values (Godzieba, 2011:144). The Church's mission focuses on the kingdom, which is almost indistinguishable from God. The Catholic documents *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Redemptoris Missio* and *Dialogue and Proclamation* all assert the centrality of the kingdom of God. This is a shift in focus away from anthropocentric mission to kingdom focused mission (Scherer and Bevans, 1992:94, 171, 190). The evidence of the kingdom can be discerned wherever and whenever God's will is seen, fulfilled and followed (McBrien, 1994:724). MEE, therefore, points away from the Church to a wider principle of God's reign and rule in the world. In this sense the Church typifies the "voluntary society" of theological agreement (Ratzinger, 1995:83). If mission becomes ecclesiastically focused then the universal aspect of the kingdom is lost. Grace flows where the kingdom of God provides a wider ecclesiology than denominationalism, inviting dialogue between different traditions.

2.4. *The Role of the Papacy*

As an institution the role of the Papacy within Catholic missiology is formative. Only the Pope has the authority to call Church Councils, formulate doctrine and speak *ex cathedra* with infallibility on matters of faith and praxis (Küng, 2002:85 & 94). As such the Papacy is the leading example of, and primary director for, all Catholic mission. By implication, therefore, grace ebbs and flows in the extent to which non-Catholic Churches acknowledge the centrality of the Pope as a key role in Catholic theology (Falconer, 2008:3). The Papacy has also been suggested as a potential unifying focus for all Churches in MEE (Ratzinger, 1987:49; Falconer, 2008:5). This area will require deeper and fuller investigation particularly if Catholic missiology is to move beyond the bounds of an ecclesiocentric theological ethos to include non-Catholic Churches as equals.

2.5. The Interplay between Personal and Corporate

Catholic theology of MEE represents an interplay between the personal and the corporate. Catholic theology affirms that conversion does not primarily lead to a personal relationship with the Divine. Rather, conversion initiates people into a pattern of doctrines by which people enter the Church (Ratzinger, 1987:16; 1995:59). Accordingly, theology has a central role within ecclesiastical identity (Ratzinger, 1995:48). This interplay is informed by eschatology which provides a hope for Catholic people and community in mission (Fletcher, 2011:636). The interplay between personal and corporate has produced a tension between belonging to the Catholic Church and having a personal relationship with the divine. The theological rationale for this tension develops from an ecclesiastical view of being chosen (Twomey, 2003:31). From being chosen mission begins corporately through the sacraments, when people are dedicated to God in baptism. This continues as adults dedicate themselves to God through sacramental observance. Sacramental observance, therefore, dedicates people to the good of the Church. MEE is both personal, a people personally engage with God, and corporate, as people are engaged in MEE through the church, in the light of eschatological anticipation of the coming kingdom (*Catechism*, 1995:266; Dulles, 1987:84).

2.5.1. The Tension of Personal/ Corporate

Evangelii Nuntiandi notes that as people receive the faith and are included within the Church, the Church then becomes an evangelising community (Scherer and Bevans, 1992:92-93). Faith can be referred to as the *sensus fidei*. *Sensus fidei* is a universal supernatural belief in the faith and morals of the Catholic Church by the entire membership of that Church (*Catechism*, 1995:33-34). *Sensus fidei* informs the consciousness of the Christian community as a whole about what is right and true before God (Buckley, 1997:13). Faith is, therefore, not just acceptance of abstract theological and ecclesiological truths, but knowing God and achieving union with the mind of God (Dulles, 2011:90-91). The tension begins within the community, is applied personally and worked out through a commitment to the Church. Grace ebbs and flows from the Catholic Church in MEE to people and then back into the

Church. The central role which the Church occupies informs ecumenical dialogue and could potentially manifest as a proselytising tendency toward other Churches.

2.6. Missionary Challenges to the Church

As the Catholic Church engaged with the world in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries a new challenge arose. The issue of cultural colonialism, which was associated with Protestant mission, became associated with Catholic mission (McBrien, 1994:642). Thus the mission of the Catholic Church was more than attracting new members (Dulles, 1987:97-98). The Catholic Church reflected its European roots through its ecclesiology and the domination of Western bishops. The development of western culture, therefore, informed and defined how MEE was practised by the Catholic Church. This is seen in the relatively late appointment of native bishops and establishment of local hierarchies in non-European countries (McBrien, 1994:648).

2.6.1. The European Influence

In one sense a Church which has been defined by European history and culture could do little else than reflect European culture in its ecclesiology. The issue is whether the European context of the Catholic Church and the supremacy of the See of Rome would inevitably hinder mission by manifesting itself in cultural imperialism (Weigel, 2013:100). The same challenges apply to the Protestant churches whose culture and theology were also informed by European history. It may be impossible, therefore, to separate a Church from its historical context without dismantling its uniqueness. The issue then becomes whether that European context is deemed to be contextually normative for MEE. As such the flow of grace would become controlled by the European context.

3. The Ecclesiastical Context of Catholic Missiology

Catholic missiology has focused primarily on the extension of the Church into non-European countries. This emphasis on the Church, “*plantatio ecclesiae*,” contrasts with the Protestant emphasis on personal conversion (González, 2005:112). Placing the Church at the centre of MEE is based upon the doctrine of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus est* (Espín and Nickoloff, 2007:439). The centrality of the Church is further seen in evangelisation which rests upon an “inherent” link between God and the Church (Weigel, 2013:30-31). Catholic missiology’s link with Church membership is also enshrined in the supremacy of the See of Rome over local congregations. This is in contrast to the Reformed position which presupposes personal conversion as the purpose of MEE.

3.1. Catholic Mission as a Science

One way in which Catholic theology addressed missions is through defining it as a science. A scientific approach argues that the theology of mission can be investigated and explored through rational means of examination (Dujardin and Prudhomme, 2015:15). Falsification, therefore, becomes the enemy for a scientific methodology. Science is used to discredit and silence “novelties and anomalies which jeopardise the usual model” (Küng, 1989:13). Practically this means the Church will attempt to discredit anything which disturbs the status quo of Catholic doctrine.

3.1.1. Resisting Modernisation

A further aim of the Catholic scientific method is to resist modernising trends which contextualise and date missiology. To achieve this a reconciliation with current culture was sought (Toulmin, 1989:237). The scientific method informs MEE by seeking to maintain the official position, while actively working against all alternatives. This could result in an ebbing of grace through theological proselytising and an unwillingness to change any beliefs.

3.2. Catholic Ecclesiocentric Mission

We noted earlier that Catholic missiology affirms the theological centrality of the Church. In this context the Church is the institution made up of people who have been sent into the world for mission (Fahey, 2011:359-361). The Church is, therefore, called “the universal sacrament of salvation” (*Catechism*, 1995:245). Within the Church exclusively resides the revelation of the truth of salvation. This revelation motivates the Church to missionary praxis in affirming God’s universal love for humanity. God’s universal love is then proclaimed as a fundamental truth which enables salvation. Proclamation provides an “evangelical sharpness” for Catholic mission (Rymarz, no date:20).

3.2.1. The Missionary Identity of the Church

Reflecting Catholic ecclesiocentric mission means that the Church by its very identity must be missionary (*Catechism*, 1995:245). As the message of the truth is proclaimed, local Churches are established under the authority of the See of Rome (*Catechism*, 1995:246). Mission becomes indivisibly linked with the Church and feeds back into the Church. Where theological differences exist between different denominations, the question of doctrinal authenticity arises. Catholicism’s belief that its proclamation is binding rather than presenting a hypothesis suggests exclusivity (Ratzinger, 1995:62-63). Indeed, if Catholicism is the only source of theological truth, and by implication salvation, then an ebbing of grace follows because MEE is exclusive and potentially proselytising.

3.3. Vatican II and Mission

Vatican II’s reflection on the nature of mission was central to its deliberations (Bevans, 2013a:101). The Council has been described as “the most significant theological and religious event of the Twentieth Century” (Bevans, 2013:7). Although the centrality of the Church to mission was once again emphasised, there were also calls to end all missionary activity to enable the Church to engage with other faiths rather than evangelise them (Martin, 2012:188; Theisen, 1986:157-161; Martin, 1982:57-113; Ziegler, 2011:17-21). Vatican II produced a number of key

documents on mission, especially *Ad Gentes*. While the focus of Vatican II was on the Church, the ecclesiological developments were informed by mission (van Gelder, 2005:32). Mission was seen to be at the centre of the Church and was the reason for the Church's existence.

3.3.1. *Ad Gentes and the Pilgrim Church*

Ad Gentes: On the Mission Activity of the Church sought to move mission to the centre of the Church's life (Vatican, 1965; Gregory, 2013:155). *Ad Gentes* sought to define the Church as being in a missionary context. The purpose was to "rally the forces for all the faithful" to "spread everywhere the reign of Christ" (Vatican, 1965). *Ad Gentes* begins with the doctrinal principles of mission which form the context for mission work, which includes Christian witness, preaching, worship and the development of local congregations. The growth of congregations, the role of missionaries and mission activity, along with cooperation with other traditions all form the essence of *Ad Gentes*.

3.3.2. *The Pilgrim Church*

Ad Gentes roots mission in the pilgrim nature of the Church. The pilgrim nature of the Church is where engagement with the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* is taking place. The Pilgrim Church begins with internal growth in theological self-understanding toward the outside (Ratzinger, 1987:15). The result was anticipated as not only personal conversion but incorporation into the ecclesiastical community (1 Pe. 2:11-12; *Ad Gentes*, 1965:2-3). The notion of pilgrimage has resonance with the Reformed churches in the adoption of the symbol of the burning bush (Barkley, 1988; Munnik, 2010). It has even been suggested that Vatican II's use of the concept was inspired by Protestant missiology (Bevans, 2013:11). This would suggest grace flowed through a cross pollination between Reformed and Catholic traditions through MEE.

3.3.3. *Ad Gentes and Covenant*

Ad Gentes used the term covenant to describe the manner in which God relates to humanity through the action of the Holy Spirit (*Ad Gentes*, 1965:4). There is also resonance here with Reformed theology which views covenant as central to God's interaction with humanity. Divergence with the Reformed tradition exists over the place of bishops and the primacy of the Pope in Catholic MEE (*Ad Gentes*, 1965:5). Potentially this could result in MEE aiming at producing Church membership. *Ad Gentes* did, however, want to distance itself from proselytising as being unworthy of mission (Bevans, 2013:12). Yet the logical outcome of associating the goal of mission so closely with Church membership may indeed be proselytising.

3.3.4. *Ad Gentes and the Definition of Mission*

Ad Gentes describes the Catholic understanding of mission as the Church's sending out into the whole world "heralds of the Gospel" to preach and plant Churches (*Ad Gentes*, 1965:6). An emphasis on establishing the Church through new faith communities is reflected in the establishment of parishes and bishoprics (*Ad Gentes*, 1965:19). The exact criteria of what is meant by belief is not further elaborated upon. One solution was to adopt the commonality of the Lord's Prayer as a symbol of theological belief in God as Father. This could inform MEE with a wider ecclesiology than exclusively Catholic (*Ad Gentes*, 1965:7). Rooting mission in the local congregation also enables the Church to comment and act upon local culture and context. This is specifically done on issues which negatively impact people (*Ad Gentes*, 1965:12). Liberation Theology, an iteration of this which will be discussed at more length later, is one example of such ecclesiastical mission. Grace ebbs and flows, therefore, in the degree to which the centrality of the Catholic Church is emphasised as the outcome of mission.

3.4. *Lumen Gentium*

Lumen Gentium, another Vatican II document, specifically applies to mission. *Lumen Gentium* expresses uniquely Catholic theology, like the superintendence of the bishop in mission (*Lumen Gentium*:20, 27). This strong episcopal emphasis in Catholicism does not mitigate against a place for the laity in mission, although it limits it, because of their non-ordination (*Lumen Gentium*:30-31). Further, the role of Mary as an example of missionary piety is also specifically Catholic (*Lumen Gentium*:65). These doctrines could demonstrate the ebb of grace in defining Catholic theology and usually repels Reformed theology.

3.4.1. *Lumen Gentium and Salvation*

Lumen Gentium rejects the presumption that those who have never heard the gospel are unsaved and those who have heard are saved (Martin, 2012:19; Philips, 1989:128). Yet, *Lumen Gentium* also argues that the belief that all would be saved in their own way is an obstacle to mission (Martin, 2012:91). Salvation would be accomplished through the “universal mission” of the Church. Universal mission proclaims the kingdom of God through an ecclesiastical “initial budding forth” of the kingdom (*Lumen Gentium*:1, 5). The role of the Church in MEE is, therefore, central in *Lumen Gentium*. Grace flows in the place afforded to the Church as axiomatic to authentic MEE. Exclusivity could ensue that membership of the Church is seen as integral to an experience of salvation.

3.5. *Ecumenical Engagement in Catholic Missiology*

It has been noted that Catholic missiology hints at exclusive implications. While there may be theological justification for ecclesiastical supremacy, Catholic missiology encourages the Church away from it. The unity of the church is emphasised through the common response of all people to the one gospel in two main ways (Dulles, 1987:83). First, the discrepancy between the message of the gospel and the human weaknesses of the missionaries is noted. The path of penance and renewal counteract this discrepancy (*Catechism*, 1995:246). Second, mission is to take place in the context of respectful dialogue between the Church, unbelievers

and those of different theological conviction. Such respectfulness enables a comprehension of different theological positions (*Catechism*, 1995:247). MEE flows in grace as the Catholic Church engages with other church traditions and with unbelievers. Engagement enables a better understanding of how doctrine is formulated. Whether such knowledge encourages the ebbing of grace from ecumenism or a supremacy of praxis is unclear.

3.6. Nine Breakthroughs in Catholic Missiology, 1965-2000

Vatican II's impact has been highlighted through nine key principles. These are defined as "breakthroughs" as they propose a new insight or better understanding of mission. The nine breakthroughs aim to minimise barriers to "ongoing missiological development" (Frazier, 2001:9). The breakthroughs cover the breadth of missiological reflection and praxis: First, salvation is a universal phenomenon not just for Catholics. Second, the Church is missionary in its very nature. Third, the local congregation has a missionary role and not just pastoral. Fourth, rather than sending and receiving churches there is a "mutuality in mission". Fifth, the full participation of the laity in mission. Sixth, mission is applicable for all those in the priesthood. Seventh, development of evangelisation. Eighth, culture intensive evangelisation. Ninth, mission is a foundational tenet of doctrine (Frazier, 2001:9-12; *Ad Gentes*, 1965:2). These nine breakthroughs describe the centrality of MEE for the Catholic Church. This includes local congregations within local cultures as Catholics bear witness to Christ. MEE flows in the Church's commitment to these breakthroughs.

3.6.1. Drift from Western Cultural Hegemony

The nine breakthroughs paint a picture of a drift from Western cultural domination in MEE. A symbiosis between the sending and receiving cultures is implied in the drift from Western cultural hegemony. Placing mission as central to both doctrine and priesthood suggests a change in the context of the Western world itself. A purely pastoral approach would not, therefore, engage with the ecclesiastical drift of Catholic young people from Catholicism (Greeley, 1997:111). Such a drift is often

countered through engagement with a priest, again supporting the missionary role of the clergy (Greeley, 1997:147). The Catholic Church, therefore, is defined by its missionary identity. This identity informs ministry, theology as well as cultural engagement. MEE becomes the essence of the Catholic Church.

3.7. Proselytising and the Catholic Church

There has been a historical praxis within Catholic missions of proselytising other religious traditions, both within and without Christianity. As has been noted previously for Catholicism the roll of mission is not to add new members to a denominational constituency (Dulles, 1987:97-98). Yet proselytising has spanned the globe and included many different contexts (Choi, 2006:4; Keith, 2012:208; Tejiran and Simon, 2012:38; van Otter, 2006:45). Proselytising through MEE is one of the most significant challenges to inter confessional dialogue and relationship.

3.7.1. The Exclusive Claims of Catholicism

Underpinning the praxis of proselytising has been the theological premise that the Catholic Church has an “exclusivist claim on truth”. This claim was backed up by the premise that the Catholicism represents “the true form of Christianity” (Schreiter, 1994:113). This principle began to be challenged through engagement with non-European cultures which enlarged the Catholic worldview (Schreiter, 1994:115). An encouragement toward a wholesale rejection of proselytising was made by Pope Francis. Pope Francis categorically stated: “proselytism is solemn nonsense, it makes no sense” (Akin, 2013). This same principle echoed the ethos of Vatican II Council (Gros, 2013:166). The implication is that grace must flow through a healthy and respectful relationship with other Christian traditions. MEE, therefore, engages with the unchurched but does not seek adherents to a denominational expression or theology.

4. The Development of Missionary Theology

Theological attention to mission, as noted in the last of nine breakthroughs of Catholic Missiology, has been a relatively recent development. Despite that relative newness, the Catholic Church has had “clear goals for missionary action” (Dulles, 1987:43). Prior to Vatican II little attention was given to missiology beyond the *Missio Dei* seen as God sending Christ and Christ sending the Spirit. The emphasis on sending “follows on the bestowal of sanctifying grace, and has as its object the indwelling of God in the soul of the just” (Ott, 1955:73-74). Mission has been more of an abstract concept of what God does within the world rather than what the Church does in the world. Mission would, therefore, be more abstract than practical. There may even be a mystical aspect through the sacraments. The Church would do little more than witness to the *Missio Dei*.

4.1. Sacraments and Mission

Catholicism places the sacraments as central to ecclesiastical praxis (*Catechism*, 1995:738-740; 815; 1118; 1132-1134; Hill, 2013:334; Spielvogel, 2014:220). Conversion is understood to operate through these: “liturgical acts” (*Catechism*, 1995:947, 1127, 1129; Peace, 2004:10). Conversion would become as much communal as personal. Sacraments are accessed through personal faith which accepts the order of salvation through the sacraments (*Catechism*, 1995:1113, 1117, 1210; Dulles, 2011:91). Within mission the Church would proclaim the Word of God and display the gospel through the sacraments (McBrien, 1994:685). The sacraments, therefore, become the means by which people can encounter Christ, as people were baptised to be evangelists (Weigel, 2013:49, 193).

4.1.1. Celebration of the Sacraments

Celebrating the sacraments keeps Christ’s memory alive, ensuring history revolves around him and prepares for his return. As such the Church itself is a “sacrament of God’s kingdom” (McBrien, 1994:726-727). This places the Church as central in mission, making the aim of mission would as initiation into the Church. Proselytising could then be used to achieve this end. MEE would ebb and flow in the degree to

which sacraments are central to mission. In Catholic thought mission is operating where the sacraments are central. Where they are absent missional integrity could potentially be compromised.

4.2. Evangelisation

One theme which rises consistently in Catholic missiology is that of evangelisation. Evangelisation has an internal double focus on the rekindling of Christian devotion and the engagement with those who are “distant”, having drifted from the Catholic Church (Fahey, 2011:361). Mission is believed to be a manifestation of evangelisation and service, placing evangelisation at the centre of Catholic missiology (Dulles, 1987:220). Evangelisation is understood to be the proclamation of the gospel (McBrien, 1994:684). This is not just one activity of the Church but “the mission of the Church in its totality” (“Dialogue and Proclamation,” 1984). This all-inclusive definition seeks, through the proclamation of the gospel, a holistic outcome for human spiritual transformation. Evangelisation could, therefore, be understood as interchangeable with mission as a means of identifying and describing Catholic theology and praxis of MEE. Grace flows through evangelisation into the world, albeit with a perceived return to the Catholic Church.

4.2.1. Evangelisation's Focus

Evangelisation is rooted in the context in which people are living rather than in an existential personal experience (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 29). In one sense evangelisation and Liberation Theology both apply to cultural contexts. Practically, evangelisation focuses on the Church's activity of proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. The Church becomes “preachers of truth in our contemporary world” (Smyth, 2004:24). In proclamation the Church declares its obedience to Christ's commission along what it has heard and believed (Mt. 28:18-20; Dulles, 1987:76). The flow of grace is seen in the Church's commitment to bringing the gospel into cultural contexts. A problem may arise here if a context is too closely aligned with the Catholic Church. Then the critical aspect of evangelisation could fail.

4.2.2. Evangelisation's Content

Evangelisation proclaims the invitation to encounter Jesus through the sacraments, fellowship and charitable deeds of the Church (Weigel, 2013:59). There is both a Biblical aspect and a theological aspect to MEE. The Biblical aspect is obedience to Christ, the theological is experiencing doctrinal conviction to pass on to others. MEE would mean that evangelisation becomes the Church's witnessing of a higher spiritual reality - the kingdom of God. This is done by missional engagement with non-believers and dialogue with different Christian traditions. Grace would, therefore, flow through cultural engagement and ecumenical dialogue.

4.2.3. The Five Aspects of Evangelisation

Initially evangelisation had one aspect, but that has now developed into five. The five aspects are: presence and witness; human development and liberation; liturgical life, prayer and contemplation; inter religious dialogue; and finally proclamation and catechesis (Frazier, 2001:11). Development and liberation feature heavily in evangelisation, which means that a holistic approach to MEE is proposed. These five aspects suggest a shift from viewing evangelisation as something done in another context to something practised at home. This change notes a move from an ecclesio-centric mission to an engagement with and participation in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. MEE takes place, therefore, wherever the Church finds itself located. Grace flows from the Church into the context through evangelisation.

4.3. Archbishop Oscar Romero

One example of contextual evangelisation was Oscar Romero, a Catholic Prelate in El Salvador (1917-1980). Romero sought to contextualise mission within El Salvador by speaking out against injustice (Eaton, 1991). Romero spoke against the assault upon and murder of Christian missionaries and priests by agents of the government (Noone, 1959). Mission for Romero was not a matter of competition with other denominations, but of providing freedom for humanity (Romero and Brockman, 1988:234). On this matter he agreed with Dom Hélder Câmara, the archbishop of

Olinda and Recife in Brasil (Câmara, 1974:21,47,54; Câmara, 2009:69ff). This also dovetails with the principles of Liberation Theology. Romero argued that the Church acted as the “flesh” which makes Christ evident throughout history by proclaiming the cross (Clarke, 2014:112 & 39). MEE is contextually located and seek to bring the perspective of Christ into a given situation. As such mission would be critical of any regime which ensures that people remain in subjection and oppression. Grace would flow through interaction with a state which opposes and persecutes the Church and the people. Yet even in this context opportunity will be provided for missionary proclamation (Mt. 10:19-20).

4.3.1. Romero’s Critique of the government in El Salvador

Romero was particularly cutting in his critique of the El Salvadoran government:

In less than three years, more than fifty priests have been attacked, threatened, calumniated. Six are already martyrs--they were murdered. Some have been tortured and others expelled [from the country]. Nuns have also been persecuted. The archdiocesan radio station and educational institutions that are Catholic or of a Christian inspiration have been attacked, threatened, intimidated, even bombed. Several parish communities have been raided. If all this has happened to persons who are the most evident representatives of the Church, you can guess what has happened to ordinary Christians, to the campesinos, catechists, lay ministers, and to the ecclesial base communities. There have been threats, arrests, tortures, murders, numbering in the hundreds and thousands. (Romero, 1985:79).

Romero’s scathing attacks on his government ultimately cost him his life. He was shot while celebrating Mass on 24 March 1980 after calling El Salvadoran soldiers to obey God’s will and stop persecution and violence (Gomez, 2003:100-127). For Romero a social commentary was coexistent with the proclamation of the gospel (Dennis, Golden and Wright, 2000:41). MEE is not promised to be widely accepted or lauded. It does, however, bring a critique to given contexts where humanity are not treated with the value of having God’s image (Gen. 1:26). It is through the freedom to experience human worth that the flow of grace is discerned, providing the comment of God in the gospel.

5. Liberation Theology

One aspect of Catholic missiology which directly intersects with culture and context is Liberation Theology. While birthed within the Catholic tradition, its Liberation Theology's impact and influence was felt ecumenically. Catholic missiology enshrines the Church's leading by the Spirit into mission to the poor (*Catechism*, 1995:246). It is this aspect of MEE that Liberation Theology engages with.

5.1. Liberation Theology and the Presbyterian Church of Ireland

The impact of Liberation Theology on PCI was noted previously as informing MEE. The WCC's financial support of liberation groups in Africa was interpreted through the matrix of Northern Irish identity. PCI drew parallels between such liberation groups and the aim of Irish Republicanism (Holmes, 2000:153-154). An axis of Catholicism and anti-democracy was proposed, eliciting a fear of Protestant persecution in a united Ireland (Irvine, 1991:198; Appleby, 1999:178). This led to the conviction that Irish Catholicism had preserved nationalism throughout the centuries (Twomey, 2003:45). Liberation Theology was, therefore, understood as a means of erasing the identity of Protestantism and Unionism in Northern Ireland. Later there has, however, been a re-evaluation of Liberation Theology within PCI and Ireland (Gibson, 2006).

5.2. The Theological Context

Liberation Theology rests within a Catholic self-consciousness which is aware of their spiritual identity as people and community (Twomey, 2003:74). Grace ebbs and flows between the personal identity and the Catholic dominated community. Liberation Theology provides a uniquely missional understanding of the Catholic Church. Whether such a view of Catholic identity would endow mission with ecclesiastical superiority or not is unclear. The potential for a proselytising tendency could exist if cultural appendages are understood to be axiomatic of genuine Christianity.

5.2.1. Liberation and Catholic Theology

Gustavo Gutiérrez (1973:5-7) defines Liberation Theology in opposition to the traditional Catholic theology of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas emphasises the abstract and intellectual aspects of theology (Brown, 1999:8; Dumont, 1961:1034-1050). In this sense Liberation Theology can be viewed as a new way of doing theology rather than a new theology (Rowland, 2007:3-4). Aquinas calls theology a “sacred science”, suggesting an intellectual exercise in comprehending God (Aquinas, 2012:1:1:4). Gutiérrez reacts against this abstract view of theology through his context in Latin America. Theology is argued to provide a “posture toward life” which emphasises the anthropological aspect of revelation (Gutiérrez, 1973:7). Grace flows from the theological abstract to the missional context as ecclesiastical doctrines are applied to a given local context.

5.2.2. Theology and Critical Self Reflection

Liberation Theology is used as humanity’s means of critical self-reflection on economic and social issues. This provides a way for the Church to transform the world (Gutiérrez, 1973:11-15). Liberation Theology rejects the abstract for the concrete, working from experience to reflection (Rowland, 2007:2). As such it argues for a “lived praxis” which discloses in real actions the essence of theology (Bennett, 2007:39; Weigel, 2013:50). Gutiérrez's connection between what is believed (orthodoxy) and what is done (orthopraxy) resonates with the key thoughts of this research. Grace flows from theory into praxis, suggesting a causal link between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Gutiérrez further unites what is believed about God in the gospel with the activity of the Church. This is the link between MEE which this dissertation argues for.

5.2.3. Liberation Theology and Salvation

Liberation Theology addresses the relationship and interplay between human salvation and human history (Gutiérrez, 1973:45). While having a social impact, Gutiérrez primarily addresses the relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Gutiérrez (1973:149) seeks to present a comment on the doctrine of salvation which

he asserts has been “one of the great deficiencies” in theological reflection. For Gutiérrez salvation is not primarily about an assurance of heaven for eternity, but an event which happens in history (Gutiérrez, 1973:255). This provides an emphasis on the here and now, on experiencing liberation and justice in the present. This emphasis seeks to redress the present state of people against a society which is ambivalent or antagonistic toward the underclass (Lk. 18:1-8).

5.2.4. A Theological View of Society

Gutiérrez’s theology interprets the world theologically through commenting on the present state of human society. The principle which Gutiérrez calls “secularisation” is “perfectly” in line with Christian anthropology (Gutiérrez, 1973:67). The movement of the Church from the central force in world culture, through the decline of Christendom, has provided an alternative community whose role is to critique society as an outsider. There is some commonality with Reformed theology on this matter, which emphasises God’s sovereignty over this creation. According to Reformed theology God has ordained all that comes to pass (WCF, III:1), and that he is bound by no one (Pink, 1993:20-21). Sovereignty is juxtaposed against human changeability. Human changeability is determined by principles and influences reacting contrary to human planning (Boice, 1986:144). A tension exists, therefore, between God’s sovereignty and human ability. Grace can be seen ebbing and flowing between these two principles as they are practised through MEE.

5.2.4.1. Eschatological Understanding

Gutiérrez offers an eschatological understanding of humanity by focusing on the future of society, where humanity acts to discern new ways of existence (Gutiérrez, 1973:32-33, 160-168, 213-239). While not specifically using the term eschatological, Gutiérrez’s comment can be interpreted as a preparation of society for spiritual transformation prior to Christ’s return (Mt. 25:46; James 1:27; Rev. 11:11-15). The Church’s role is to act as a people who have experienced a foretaste of “perfect peace and total justice” (Fletcher, 2011:643). This eschatological understanding resonates with Catholic theology’s “beatific vision”, which expects the coming of the kingdom

through mission (Fahey, 2011:362-363). There are also similarities with Reformed Post-Millennialism (Kik, 1974; Mathison, 1996). Whether or not Gutiérrez is focused on a distinctly spiritual eschaton, the focus of his argument harmonises with this expectation. Grace flows from eschatological expectation into the present to effect the kind of changes reflecting God's kingdom.

5.2.4.2. Spiritual Understanding

Gutiérrez offers a spiritual understanding of humanity and society. He argues that behind every unjust structure is a personal or collective will responsible for the injustice. While Liberation Theology works for change it will not be able to eradicate all evils (Gutiérrez, 1973:35). This dovetails with a spiritual view of the world as controlled by human and demonic collectives (2 Cor. 10:3-5). While Gutiérrez does not specifically name spiritual warfare, it could potentially be interpreted that way. This aspect resonates with Protestant evangelicalism which views the world through the lens of spiritual warfare (Pink, 1993:12-13). Where Protestant evangelicalism diverges with Liberation Theology is on the issue of social application. Evangelicalism critiques Liberation Theology as substituting “the works of the wicked one” with a “gospel of self improvement and self sufficiency” (Edman, 1966:38). Gutiérrez considers the human context of injustice, whereas the Reformed churches focus on the spiritual reason for injustice. Both positions could demonstrate the flow of grace as they complement one another in a fuller understanding of MEE.

5.3. The Majority World Context

Liberation Theology found its home primarily in the majority world, that world which is non-Northern European (Pardue, 2014:1). While geographically distinct, Liberation Theology sought to gain freedom from European ecclesiastical dependence (Hebblethwaite, 2007:209). Within that context Gutiérrez sought to connect mission with Christendom through “Christian politics”. The aim of such politics was the: “evangelising mission and safeguarding of the Church's interests” (Gutiérrez, 1973:54, 65). Such a close connection between Church, mission and state meant that injustice was institutionalised in society and Christianity

lost its prophetic comment. Christians tended to be poorer and by implication “fervently liberal, activist, and even revolutionary” (Jenkins, 2011:7). This was in juxtaposition to the comfortable and conservative views of many Western Christians.

5.3.1. Majority World Twentieth Century History

One reason for the unwillingness to engage politically in the majority world was the lessons learned from Twentieth Century European history. Two well-known examples of the church becoming the victims of negative political alignments are its involvement with National Socialism in Germany and with apartheid in South Africa, both with very negative outcomes (Jenkins, 2011:173). This produced a general unwillingness to engage politically in the West. MEE became exclusively focused on personal conversion and unconnected to the social reality of many people. Grace would flow from contextual involvement and social ministry, but ebb from specific (party) political engagement.

5.4. Catholic Position in Northern Ireland

Gutiérrez’s context of Latin America may also resonate with Northern Ireland whose context has not generally been effected by historical reinterpretation. Traditional alignments of Protestant/ Unionist/ Loyalist and Catholic/ Nationalist/ Republican remain. Gutiérrez argues that the (Catholic) Church has become a “ghetto church” with a defensive attitude moulded by the counter reformation (Gutiérrez, 1973:101). With a potential connection between Protestantism and the political establishment in Northern Ireland the same emphasis could also inform Irish Catholicism. Grace would ebb in a Protestant dominated society in which Catholicism is an excluded minority. The question of justice on social and political issues would then become associated with MEE. Grace would ebb and flow in the extent to which society enshrined justice for its minorities.

5.4.1. Irish Catholic Liberation Theology

Catholic resonance with the principles of Liberation Theology demonstrated their position as a minority in Northern Ireland, mirroring African “minorities” in South America. If democracy enshrines the rights of minorities, then any a claim of anti-democratic motivations from a majority about rights of a minority in Northern Ireland seem inherently flawed (*Commission on Human Rights Resolution*, 2000:2). Anti-democratic motivations if applied to the Church would manifest in an ebbing of grace. This would be demonstrated by MEE being unconnected to physical, cultural, political and historical context.

5.4.2. Context and Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology developed and moved within Latin and South America, being defined as “self-consciously contextual” (Villa-Vicencio, 2007:183). Taking into account the contextual aspect of Liberation Theology the implications for Catholics in Northern Ireland are vast. Liberation Theology would question the fundamental assumptions of the political establishment from a position of popular religion where the context provides the agenda (Villa-Vicencio, 2007:192). This is theologically rooted in the principle that “Christian theology is about community” (Villa-Vicencio, 2007:197; Twomey, 2003:56). MEE would actively engage with the contextual aspect by asking challenging question about Northern Irish’s culture. How Catholicism interprets the context would also have a bearing on this. Grace would ebb where the majority Protestant faith in Northern Ireland engages with the culture and critique of their Catholic neighbours. Community reconciliation would, therefore, become an essential and integral part of MEE demonstrating a flow of grace.

5.5. Political and Social Implications

How mission intersects with culture, politics and socio-economic position is specifically addressed in Liberation Theology. The principle is that the Church does not exist for itself but for others. The Church’s role is one of witnessing and listening to the world. Such interaction produces a stand against social injustice (McBrien,

1994:701). Liberation Theology does not tie the Church to a political party, even if common aims are shared. The Church surpasses human ties of culture, politics or socio-economic positions (McBrien, 1994:673; Gal. 3:28). Witnessing to injustice within the political and socio-economic aspects of culture, however, is a valid manifestation of mission (McBrien, 1994:683-684). This would have particular resonance on the ebb and flow of grace in Northern Ireland, where denomination and religion closely align. The Church should comment not just on perceived injustice against Catholics by Protestants, but also injustice against Protestants by Catholics.

5.6. Ecumenical Implications

Liberation Theology is rooted in the local or “popular” church, rather than the diocesan bishop. This uniquely Latin and South American context allows for Biblical reflection and formation rather than denominational and scholastic formation. Liberation Theology on this issue manifests some key similarities with Protestantism (Rowland, 2007:6-7). Rather than viewing Liberation Theology as a challenge to an evangelical Protestant ethos, it could be seen as complementary. Part of the complementary aspect is seen in mission’s theocentric focus on orthopraxis (Luzbetak, 1989:4.4.3.4). Grace would flow from Liberation Theology across denominational boundaries into an essentially practical application. MEE becomes orthodox in its Biblical hermeneutic and orthopraxical in its incarnation of the gospel.

6. Reforming Catholicism

Engaging with mission provides a means by which the Catholic Church can conduct self-reformation. There had previously been a Catholic Counter-Reformation which sought, through a “teaching mission”, to counter the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation (Mullett, 2010:22). As this aim progressed and much ground was made up in the new world and Asia discerning “the finger of God in Catholic victories” (Bireley, 1990:159). The primary aim of the Counter Reformation was not to change Catholicism but to extinguish the Protestant Reformation, bringing the errant Churches back under Rome. In recent years mission has become defined as a

means of making the Church a “more effective sacrament” (Rush, 2012:56). Grace ebbed as proselytising took place and a resistance to accept the authenticity of Protestant doctrine resulted. MEE became an exercise in reinforcing Catholic dogma and attacking the theological principles of Protestantism.

6.1. Mission as a New Reformation

Catholic mission, which is not necessarily inclusive in ethos, can provide a means for a new reformation in the Church. The “criterion of mission” emphasises a renewed focus on engagement with those outside of the Church rather than proselytising Protestants (Weigel, 2013:87). Not only would mission reform the focus of the Catholic Church, it would reorientate mission on the essence of what the Church is

All true Catholic reform is reform ordered to mission, to the proclamation of the gospel, to the building up of the body of Christ for the healing and salvation of the world (Weigel, 2013:93).

Mission resets the Catholic Church from a pastoral/ chaplaincy role to one of cultural and social engagement. Grace would flow from the Catholic Church to society and from the context of society into the Catholic Church. MEE becomes an engagement with communities rather than extending the reach of the Catholic Church. Proselytising would, therefore, be inconsistent with mission when mission becomes a central identity of the Catholic Church.

6.2. Ecumenical Theological Implications

In a general way Catholic missiology has ecumenical implications for Protestant churches. This is acknowledged through the multiform ways of engaging with the “transcendental nature of salvation” (Gregory, 2013:157). The doctrinal differences between Catholicism and Protestantism were influenced and informed by the historical Reformation, challenging how different denominations are viewed. If Catholicism views Protestantism as defective in some of its doctrinal statements, then the implication would be a lack of spiritual life. The cross, therefore, which speaks of life springing from death, would inform ecumenical engagement (Fahey, 2011:363). Death and rebirth is argued as providing the philosophical basis for Catholic theology (Ratzinger, 1995:13-15). If life springs from death through the

cross then the same could happen through ecumenical engagement into a perceived dead religion. Seen positively this could be accomplished by a “constant mutual exchange of ministers and mutual accompaniment” to aid Churches (Bevans, 2005:8). Grace would ebb in a proselytising tendency as an assumption of spiritual life would be understood in Catholicism, but flow in ecumenical cross-pollination through clergy. MEE would then become a means of seeing spiritual life from within theologically questionable contexts.

6.3. Ecumenism and Religion

An alternative to an exclusive view of Catholicism is a more inclusive understanding of divine revelation. Mission provides the matrix for ecumenical dialogue as each tradition reveals what it has learnt (Oborji, 2006:15). This is built upon the notion that God reveals himself in many or all religions. Their differences complement one another by emphasising different divine aspects (Dulles, 2011:86-87). Protestantism and Catholicism would necessarily inform and influence one another thus painting a broader picture of God. Ecumenical engagement, therefore, provides a positive view of the eschatological destiny of other traditions (Fletcher, 2011:648). Grace would flow from the Catholic tradition to the Protestant and vice versa. Neither tradition has a comprehensive view of God’s nature, but they complement each other. MEE becomes a complementary exercise in which Catholic and Protestant co-operate together to paint a fuller picture of God.

6.4. Soteriological Implications

MEE specifically addresses the ebb and flow of grace. Grace is the love, goodness and benevolence of God to humanity, manifested in God’s interaction with sinful humanity (Haight, 2011:408). One manifestation of God’s interaction with humanity was seen in the incarnation and passion of Christ. The cross speaks of the interplay between Christ, grace and sin, demonstrating how grace ebbs and flows (Galvin, 2011:278). Grace expresses gratuity in every aspect through self-giving and opening up of self to others (Haight, 2011:408). The implications for MEE is a deliberate engagement with people. This would challenge any notion of superiority in mission

and suggests a mutual enrichment through missional engagement. Grace would then flow as the church engages with the non-churched as much as with members of other ecclesiastical traditions.

7. Partial Conclusion

This chapter has sought to highlight various aspects of Catholic missiology and their implications for MEE. This provides a theological basis for understanding the physical reality of the Irish churches. Reformed theological engagement with Catholicism has been noted providing a critique that is both doctrinal and global. The Triune relationships were highlighted as the basis of mission along with the Christological presence in mission, which provides a focus on God's kingdom. The tension between the personal and corporate, as well as the role of the papacy were considered.

7.1. The Ecclesiastical Context of Mission

The ecclesiastical context of mission was discussed, viewed as a science and focused on the extension and replicating of Catholic Churches. How Vatican II informed and changed Catholic understandings of mission was highlighted, along with ecumenical engagement in Catholic mission which provided new constructs. The contentious issue of proselytising was also discussed.

7.2. The Sacraments and Mission

Catholic missiology was discussed, considering the role of sacraments and evangelisation. The influence of Oscar Romero and Liberation Theology were also highlighted to discern popular manifestations of Catholic mission. A question over Liberation Theology's application to Northern Ireland was then debated.

7.3. Mission as a Reforming Force

Lastly, how mission acts as a reforming force within Catholicism was considered. This considered mission as a reformatory act itself, the ecumenical implications of mission and how Catholicism relates to different theological traditions. The implications of soteriology were highlighted to consider how grace can ebb and flow through missional engagement.

Chapter 6

Dialogue with Reformed Evangelism

1. Introduction

The importance of mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism (MEE) in sharing the gospel is the focus of this research. MEE builds upon the Pauline confidence that proclaiming the gospel is a spiritually powerful and absolutely necessary task (Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 9:16). This research suggests an implied connection between the knowledge of the gospel and a commitment to MEE praxis. For Reformed theology the goal of such praxis is to elicit a personal response to the gospel and reconciliation to Christ, manifested through joining a local congregation (Reisinger, 1982:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:18-19). Having noted in the previous chapter a dialogue with Catholic missiology, this chapter intends to dialogue with the doctrine of Reformed evangelism.

1.1. The Gospel in Dialogue

A key element of Reformed evangelism is the concept of the gospel. On the issue of the gospel there have been historic differences between Catholic and Reformed theology. Yet the concepts of grace and justification remain central to all MEE (Venema, 2007:68). This research is itself an exercise in Reformed self-criticism (Leith, 2010:6). Self-criticism provides a clearer understanding of what the gospel means and enables MEE to engage with the doctrinal essentials of the gospel (Sproul, 1995:39). One of the aims of this research is to address the need to reconcile theory and praxis in order to provide a unified understanding of MEE (Reid, 1998:84-85). The reconciliation of theory and praxis acknowledges the importance of doctrinal tradition and formulation while also addressing how they are demonstrated in praxis.

1.2. A Definition of Evangelism

A definition of evangelism is difficult to codify comprehensively. The term “evangelism” itself comes from a variety of related terms associated with the gospel and informing ecclesiastical praxis (Guder, 1985:135-136). The church’s role is, therefore, to “enflesh the gospel” through speech and action (Stone, 2007:37). Enfleshment requires an understanding of the tension between the internal and external goals of the church. Those aspects of the church which are internally culture specific can eclipse the external. They can further culturally imperialistic agendas. In this instance the gospel itself can become so identified with Western culture that it is used and understood as a means of expanding that culture.

1.2.1. The Tension Between Individual/ Community and the Kingdom of God

A tension exists between a focus on the personal or communal and a focus on the wider kingdom of God. When personal or communal preferences hijack the extension of the kingdom of God in MEE, certain culturally specific markers betray the church’s preoccupation. This was seen in microcosm with the Stuart persecution of the Covenanters in the early seventeenth century. The aim was to anglicise the three kingdoms under one episcopal church (Morrill, 1994:209-237; Gu, 2012:141; Purves, 1990). The challenge is to seek to divest MEE of all imperialistic tendencies and foci. This would provide a clearer focus on the kingdom of God and covenantal membership. The critique of culture may also lead to growing membership of the church and an ecumenical engagement beyond the previous retention of imperial baggage. The implications for PCI will be examined in the next chapter.

1.3. Ecumenical Understanding of the Evangelical Gospel

For evangelicals the gospel is the proclamation of the message of Christ’s power to deliver, pardon, renew and indwell humanity through his death. For Catholics the gospel centres around Christ’s person, message and activity administered through the Catholic Church by which people are included into the covenant community (ERCDM, 1986:43-44). The evangelical position suggests an existential understanding of the gospel to be experienced apart from institutional involvement.

The Catholic position suggests a link between the existential and the visible manifestation of the Church.

1.3.1. Hearing the Gospel

The question of what is heard when one tradition listens to another arises from this difference. Tension may arise through “slips of the ear” in which the different denominations hear what is said, but interpret it through their own doctrinal filters. For example, a Catholic may understand what the evangelical says but filter it through their tradition. This results in not asking what ought to be believed but where ought to be visited (Yule, 2015:159). A gospel conversation would then become dialectical in “semiotic modalities” of which language is one (Fairclough, 2010:230). The gospel would then be interpreted in opposition to a different tradition. MEE would, therefore, need to engage with the semiotic meaning, enabling the different traditions to understand what the other is saying. Grace would both ebb and flow through mutual incompatibility and reformulation of doctrinal views.

1.4. A Critique of Modern Evangelism

There has been some criticism of modern evangelistic methods and theology. The criticism surrounds claims of conversion with little evidence of internal transformation and cultural impact through witness (Chantry, 1989:13-14). Further criticism of the content of evangelism argues for the centrality of membership and participation in the sacramental life of the church (Leith, 2010:9). MEE, therefore, does not emphasise an exclusive existential experience. Rather, the emphasis highlights the communal identity where the convert thrives through the church. These critiques imply a need to investigate how Reformed theology understands MEE. Grace ebbs and flows in the extent to which ecclesiastical identity accompanies the gospel and forms the faith of the Christian in relation to other traditions.

1.5. The Core of Reformed Theology

It could be argued that Reformed theology is primarily the belief in the sovereignty of God and his absolute authority over all spiritual and temporal matters of life (Edgar, 2004:19; Boettner, 1963:30; Kuiper, 1989:181). Divine sovereignty is one of the key principles in Reformed theology and informs the *ordo salutis* of MEE. Divine sovereignty has a specific challenge to notions of superiority and proselytising tendencies. It is the contention of this research that a distancing from a proselytising tendency in MEE is necessary in order to be authentically Reformed. This is informed by the notion that proselytisers are “ignorant, arrogant, hypocritical, meddlers” who fail to grasp the depth of personal religious commitments (Newman, 1982:88-89). As an exercise in Reformed theology this research aims to engage with the depths of personal religious commitments. This research is not seeking to be a polemic for the primacy of Reformed theology over other denominational expressions. Accepting the breadth of religious commitments means grace is seen to flow within the wider Christian faith. Where divergence of opinion exists Reformed MEE seeks to enter into a conversation to acknowledge the plurality of personal and communal Christian belief.

1.6. Toward a Definition of Evangelicalism

While this research is situated within the broad field of Reformed theology, it also rests within a specific subset of evangelicalism. A historical connection between the Reformation and Evangelicalism has been suggested. The Reformation is said to have rediscovered certain biblical truths which have then been passed on to the Reformed ecclesiastical tradition (Sleith, 2004:70). Evangelicalism as a theological tradition, however, is broader than the Reformed churches, finding adherents among different denominational traditions. To attempt a definition of evangelicalism is difficult because of a “contested meaning” (Sleith, 2004:70). Evangelicalism, however, shares a number of key beliefs throughout the spectrum of denominations. The Bebbington Quadrilateral defines evangelicalism as a belief in conversion, the centrality of the Bible, an emphasis on the cross and an active praxis (Bebbington, 1989:2-3). This could be expanded to include a belief in the Trinity, the sovereignty

of God, the inspiration of the Bible, universal human sinfulness, redemption in Christ, Christ's bodily resurrection, the power of the Spirit to indwell and create new life, justification by faith, the universal church and Christ's parousia (Catherwood, 2010:15-25).

1.6.1. Hyphenated Evangelicalism

Recently there has been a trend toward a "hyphenated movement" within evangelicalism (Harris, 2007:201). Hyphenation qualifies the kind of evangelicalism being professed, for example conservative-evangelicalism, progressive-evangelicalism, etc. It has been suggested that the reason for hyphenation is that evangelicals are unsure of their own identity (Henry, 1990:72). Hyphenation further demonstrates the breadth of theological and ecclesiastical opinion within evangelicalism (Bauder et. al, 2011). Accordingly, the term "evangelical" seems no longer to have a clear definition. Hyphenated definitions result from the wide spectrum of evangelical opinion and praxis. Hyphenation describes how grace ebbs and flows within MEE according to the evangelical sub-category. This dissertation opts for an emphasis on conversion within MEE as a key definition of being evangelical.

1.6.2. Reformed and Calvinist Evangelicalism

Evangelicalism in this research is being interpreted as closely linked to Reformed theology. This acknowledges the principles of the Reformation, the five solas, as central to evangelical belief and praxis (Henry, 1990:79; Strange, 2002:5-10; Johnson, 2004:1-17). It has even been argued that evangelicalism was a historical synonym for the Protestant Reformation. This was because the "formal cause" of the Reformation centered on *Sola Fide* and *Sola Scriptura* as applied to justification (Sproul, 1997:24-26). As such the Reformation produced "classic evangelical spirituality" (McGrath, 1991:12). As a reforming tradition Calvinist belief grew from "sustained" conversation with the Catholic Church's critique of Reformation theology's view on acceptance and renewal in Christ (Venema, 2007:68). The historical and theological evidence would seem to suggest that central to Reformed

and Calvinist theology is a robust commitment to MEE. Grace ebbs and flows from the historical and theological precedents into the contemporary praxis of the church.

2. Calvinist Theology of Mission-as-Evangelism and Ecumenism

The historical theological basis for Reformed MEE is deeply influenced by Calvin. Calvin did not address MEE specifically; however, his soteriology provides the theological rationale for MEE. Calvin's soteriology begins with creation where humanity existed in an "upright state". This meant that humanity had "freedom of will, by which, if he chose, he was able to obtain eternal life." The internal pliability of humanity meant that a fall from this state of grace occurred (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:169). The fall is theologically interpreted through a federalist doctrine in which all of humanity is "undone in the person of Adam" (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:292). The implications of the fall and federalism provide a focus for Calvin on human choice relating to God's offer of salvation (Dakin, 1949:13; Kuyper, 1987:31; Walls and Dongell, 2004:7; ERCDM, 1986:39). Theologically the fall means that the image of God remains within humanity. With relation to salvation, however, divine access and knowledge are restricted (Wooldridge, 2016:40). MEE emphasises human inability to relate to God spiritually because of an inherent sinfulness inherited from Adam. Grace then ebbs and flows in the degree to which that sinfulness is engaged with or overcome by God's sovereignty.

2.1. Human Radical Corruption

The federalism of Calvin means that all of humanity are included in a radical corruption relating directly from the fall. Adam is understood to have perfectly represented the human race in disobeying God (Sproul, 1986:92). Through Christ God set out to "restore and exceed what was lost in the garden" (Wooldridge, 2016:67). This required a second Adam-Jesus-who broke the solidarity between the first Adam and humanity (Peterson, 1999:61; Gaffin, 2008:253). The implication of Adam's fall makes humanity not only undeserving but "also ill-deserving" of God's grace (Murray, 1976:119). This makes God's grace all the more awe-inspiring. The doctrines of original sin and total depravity result directly from Calvin's federalism.

MEE relates to original sin and total depravity through human inability to spiritually change their condition.

2.1.1. Divine Sovereign Choice

Any spiritual change is dependent upon God's sovereign choice to engage with humanity (Murray, 1977:83; Barrett, 2013:40-41). Grace ebbs and flows through a myriad of human beliefs which are all, by implication of Calvin's federalism, corrupt. This may imply that a proselytising tendency is necessary to convert people to Calvinist theology. Conversion emphasises the flow of grace in God's sovereign choice of those who cannot choose for themselves and do not deserve to be chosen. God's sovereign choice may bring by implication a degree of ecclesiastical superiority which equates the kingdom of God with the covenant community. This could then place the church in juxtaposition with its cultural contexts.

2.2. The Reformed Meaning of Evangelism.

The term "evangelism" has a wide spectrum of interpretation. The Reformed understanding, however, emphasises the extension of the kingdom of God through mission (Kuiper, 1989:113). Such a view separates missional praxis from cultural attachments by emphasising the objective of the kingdom of God as an inclusive ecclesiastical identity. The church then becomes the major mover in evangelism rather than individuals or para-church organisations (Barrs, 2001:38). MEE, therefore, becomes consumed with the kingdom of God. This is entered through the covenant which provides an ecclesiastical identity within an antagonistic culture. Grace ebbs and flows in the extent to which the common identity of the kingdom of God eclipses denominational and cultural associations.

2.2.1. Reformed Methods of Evangelism

Calvin's theological foundation in federalism informs Reformed praxis of evangelism. Such a theological basis would become evident in MEE. Popular evangelicalism, however, has often emphasised a passion for mission but a neglect of doctrine's role in eliciting belief (Kennedy, 1874:21-22). Historically, this was seen

in D.L. Moody's evangelistic work which reaped numerical success but tended toward Arminianism (Dorsett, 1997:200). It has been noted previously that Calvinism was said to hinder evangelism (Wesley, 1980:358-361; McGonigle, 2011:313). Moody's influence resulted in a passionate flow of grace for human conversion, with a distance from the theological basis of Reformed evangelism. The results was that MEE became preoccupied with numerical results, while remaining ignorant of the need for theological formation. A non-theological evangelicalism and ecumenism ensued, which ignored the important issues of doctrinal disagreement along side the need for serious theological engagement.

2.2.2. Confessional Methods of Evangelism

The Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) and associated Catechisms along with the Reformers present a paucity of references to mission-as-evangelism. This may be because their primary emphasis was on the reformation of the church. The reformation of the church did not exclude a commitment to MEE amongst the Reformers. The issues they faced, however, were different from those faced by the Reformed churches today (Beeke, 2012). To discern the ebb and flow of grace in MEE requires an interpretation of Reformed theology and an application to a given context. The question would then be asked whether what the Reformed Churches are currently doing represent orthopraxis as well as orthodoxy.

2.2.3. The Nomenclature of Evangelism

One contemporary contextual issue is nomenclature. The terms "saved" and "unsaved" have been used in MEE to define those who are in and those who are out of the kingdom of God (Murray, 1976:124). Identifying those in need of missional focus, therefore, becomes of primary importance. Grace ebbs and flows when those deemed "unsaved" are associated with an alternative denominational tradition, potentially resulting in proselytising. MEE then becomes preoccupied with ensuring correct theology and conversion not only to Christ but to given doctrinal statements. The kingdom of God and covenant become identified with one tradition and cultural expression which places the church at the centre of MEE.

2.3. Supernatural Christianity

Reformed doctrine states that humanity is totally depraved. To experience conversion, therefore, the illumination of the Holy Spirit is required, via faith, to purify the human mind to desire divine truth (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:499). Supernaturalism expects the direct intervention of God through the initiation of salvation. This, in turn, provides humanity with the ability to exercise faith for conversion (Warfield, 2003:359). Supernatural Christianity emphasises the forensic aspect of justification as humanity is pronounced without a charge to answer because of divine action (Gaffin, 2008:260-261; Dabney, Vol. 1, 1982:484; Wooldridge, 2016:67). Grace flows through God taking the initiative in securing human conversion through Christ's work and illuminating human minds to comprehend. MEE emphasises what God has done rather than what humanity needs to do in conversion.

2.3.1. Criticism of Supernatural Christianity

A supernatural emphasis is not without criticism. It has been argued that supernaturalism has no place in a rational world, that God cannot control free agents without compromising their essential freedom, and that there is injustice in both condemning and pardoning those who are naturally sinful (Hodge, 1993:37-38). Supernaturalism, on the other hand, would divest the ecclesiastical denominations of superiority by emphasising the existential aspect of conversion. MEE emphasises the commonality of faith amongst the different traditions and human bondage to sin.

2.3.1.1. Human Bondage to Sin

Bondage to sin means that, even if confronted with divine punishment, humanity could not desire God. Humanity cannot change their fundamental nature; therefore, Christ's teaching further damns their souls and it is only through God's direct action that salvation happens (Luther, 2012:52; Althaus, 1963:112, 151, 156; Paulson, 2011:115, 150). Traditionally this has meant a rejection of free will: "Free will is a mere empty notion, and ... everything which we do is done from necessity under the bondage of sin" (Luther, 2012:96). Grace flows through God's engagement with

humanity despite everything humanity does to limit that engagement. MEE again emphasises divine sovereignty rather than a human role in conversion.

2.4. Monergistic Christianity

For Calvin there was no inherent ability within humanity to make the conscious decision to accept God's salvation, because that ability was lost at the fall (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:169). God had to act monergistically through "irresistible grace" and "effectual calling" to draw humanity to himself (Warfield, 2003:359; Barrett, 2013:121). Monergism demonstrates divine sovereignty in MEE, becoming the "hinge of Calvinist soteriology" (Warfield, 2003:359). The means by which God is calling people is through history and the church and other people, rather than a natural ability in humanity (Godfrey, 2009:121; Barrett, 2013:151). Grace ebbs and flows through the history of the church and its servants into the lives of people. MEE pays particular attention to what has gone before to discern and recognise the work of the gospel in religious tradition.

2.4.1. Monergism and Legal Justification

Monergism emphasises Christ's role as a legal substitution bearing punishment for humanity (Peterson, 1999:80; Downey, 1952:222-224). The appropriate human response to monergistic justification is repentance and faith (Beeke, 2008:295). Repentance suggests full cognisance of human nature and utter reliance upon Christ for salvation. Grace flows directly from Christ's role as the substitute, being sovereignly implanted within a human heart. MEE emphasises the divine role in monergistic justification and disarms denominational and cultural influences that have been wrongly considered as axiomatic to the gospel.

2.5. The Content of the Gospel

Calvin argues for indiscriminate MEE on the basis of the Old Testament prophetic message of covenant being fulfilled in Jesus (Calvin, Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:371; Godfrey, 2009:21; Thomas, 2008:206). Any superiority resulting from specific human understanding of the gospel is countered by a proclamation of repentance and

forgiveness. The full extent of faith, however, is not currently seen, because of human disobedience to God's moral law (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:509, 525). Theologically, freedom from condemnation is not achieved through human effort but "entirely through the interposition of Christ" (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:39). This informs the content of the gospel by emphasising a "specific message" about Jesus rather than the divine law and human response (Packer, 1961:46, 47-48). MEE is, therefore, intentionally Christocentric, emphasising the role of the Son of God in conversion. Grace flows from the Christocentric proclamation into the lives of humanity irrespective of religion, nationality, culture, politics or race. The Christocentric gospel disarms any proselytising tendency by emphasising the commonality of human sinfulness.

2.5.1. The Response to the Gospel

If the gospel is deliberately Christocentric, emphasising Jesus' role in bridging the gap between humanity and God as a result of the fall, what ought to be the appropriate response to the gospel? Christocentric proclamation of the gospel emphasises that humanity can do nothing to warrant the benefits of the gospel before conversion nor to demonstrate the effects of the gospel after conversion. This doctrine gives rise to the charge of antinomianism, namely that belief in Christ means humans can do as they please (Rom. 3:3; Lloyd-Jones, 1989:186-187). Grace flows freely without any human engagement other than simple belief, as MEE is divested of any cultural baggage. This may have resonance with some sections of the church, those reformed in theology, but is not a universal theological axioms of belief and praxis in every Christian tradition.

2.5.2. The Expectation of Personal Piety

There is indeed an expectation of how the gospel is to be responded to. Through union with Christ a personal piety is to be anticipated, with an emphasis on worship, prayer, Bible reading and traditionally Sabbath observance (WCF, XXI:I-VIII; Beeke, 2008:271-271; Stone, 2007:49). Grace ebbs and flows through human sinfulness in relationship to perceived responses to the gospel. MEE, however, ought

not to anticipate a gospel response according to cultural contexts. It would, therefore, be beholden upon the church to discern what is contextual and what is universal.

3. Confessional Theology of Mission-as-Evangelism

Within Reformed theology the teaching of the WCF has specific importance for MEE in PCI. There are a number of references to the gospel in the WCF: the revelation of the Messiah in the Old Testament and covenant theology (WCF 7:5); deliverance under the gospel from divine wrath, guilt of sin and the devil's domination in the gospel (WCF 20:1); and the eternal judgement of those who reject Christ's gospel (WCF 33:2). For Presbyterians adherence to the WCF implies a "doctrinal correctness" (Dabney, Vol. 1, 1982:447). Plurality of theological opinion would be seen as a challenge to the flow of grace as only the position of the WCF is deemed to be orthodox. MEE could then become preoccupied with winning converts to the WCF's theology.

3.1. The Means of Gospel Communication

As well as affirming the theology of the gospel, the WCF argues for the primacy of preaching in propagating the gospel (WCF 7:6). Preaching would include "repentance unto life" as "an evangelical grace" (WCF 15:1). Repentance is a change of heart, effected by the grace of God (Ward, 2004:147). In preaching the gospel there is a positive emphasis on the "good tiding" of what God has done for humanity in preaching the gospel (Murray, 1976:59, 83). The proclamation of the gospel emphasises the flow of grace in Christ, described as "that tremendous incomprehensible redemption of God's grace in Jesus Christ" (Bavinck, 1960:129, see also Coleman, 2011:11). God's grace to humanity is mediated through MEE and begins the path of repentance.

3.1.1. Grace and Repentance

The emphasis on grace is distinct from a legal repentance which results from a fear of God's wrath in punishment. Instead, grace engages with a sense of shame that acknowledges that sin dishonours God (Shaw, 1998:199). Grace is the means by which humanity can grasp salvation through trusting exclusively in Christ (Hodge, 1998:125). The appropriate response to MEE becomes consumed with declaring human sorrow for sin in repentance and dependence upon Christ for conversion. Grace flows through humanity to Christ in personal trust and faith.

3.1.2. The Techniques of Gospel Communication

With preaching as the primary means of gospel communication, the role of techniques in preaching arises. The use of "gimmicks and techniques" is irreconcilable with the Confession and Reformed theology because of the radical corruption of human nature (2 Cor. 4:1-6; Horton, 2002:61). One example of a possible gimmick was the use of ACDC's "Highway to Hell" song in Dayspring Church as an evangelistic emphasis concerning divine judgement (Weber, 2016). It has been argued that in order to be contextually relevant gimmicks are to be used to connect with people. The WCF argues for a dependence upon and confidence in the Bible's evangelistic role (Ferrie, 2008:214; Armstrong, 1979:12). The Bible's expression of God's love has particular resonance with evangelistic techniques (Booker and Ireland, 2005:93-94). MEE is primarily concerned with declaring what Christ has already done. This proclamation will rest upon the commonality of the biblical texts which are trans-denominational. Grace ebbs and flows through the mouth of the preacher in declaring the gospel. Preaching, therefore, requires consideration as to whether cultural appendages are attached to the gospel.

3.2. Judging Genuine Conversion

How conversion is deemed to be experienced is also addressed by the WCF. A positive response to the gospel is seen through obedience to the commandments and the moral law as well as a connection to the church (WCF 16:2; 19:5, 7). In this response human conscience is made aware of its spiritual witness to other human

beings (Hodge, 1993:259). Rather than seeing the law as a means of eliciting conversion, it becomes the evidence of conversion as good deeds become a means of giving thanks to God for conversion (Shaw, 1998:210, 247; Ward, 2004:172; Williamson, 2004:154). Grace ebbs and flows in the criteria the church understands as essential to conversion. MEE would then emphasise these axioms outlined in the WCF, and exclude all who do not associate with them.

3.2.1. Faith and Conversion

The demonstration of genuine conversion requires more than faith. There is a need to apply faith to the manner in which human life is led, which would then display the evidence of faith (Hodge, 1998:221, 257). Stating the criteria for judging the authenticity of conversion could burden MEE with a proselytising tendency. This would happen by attaching to the Christian faith cultural markers which are contextual to geographic, political, social, racial, religious or cultural situations. Grace would ebb and flow in whether the cultural markers are viewed as normative or specific to one context.

3.3. The Ecumenism of Gospel Witness

The WCF asserts that the purity of local churches is determined by their relationship to the gospel (WCF 25:2, 4). An ecumenical principle is implied by this statement because the gospel is accepted throughout church traditions. Another implication is that the church is made up of all who are faithful to the gospel and “does not consist of individual competing parts” (Ward, 2004:244-245, 227). Faithfulness to the gospel is judged according to the loyalty of the converts to Christ (Hodge, 1998:315). This loyalty is seen in what converts do in response to the flow of God’s grace (Williamson, 2004:246). The ecumenical principle implies a gospel commitment also to those outside of the Reformed tradition (Shaw, 1998:313; Jn. 10:16). MEE emphasises partnership in the gospel between the denominations. The challenge becomes when the denominational doctrine are so different from those of the Reformed church that membership of such a denomination is seen as compromising

the genuineness of Christian conversion. Grace ebbs and flows from converts into ecclesiastical streams and then into inter-confessional engagement and conversation.

4. Underlying Principles of the Reformed *Ordo Salutis*

The theology of the gospel which the Reformed churches are committed to spreading is informed by the content of the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*). The term *ordo salutis* was used first by two Lutherans, Frank Buddeus and Jakobus Korpov in the eighteenth century, developing themes which stretched back to before the Reformation (Ferguson, 1988:48-481). There have been historic differences between the Reformed and Lutheran *ordo salutis*, the latter emphasising illumination and mystical union (Cooper, 2015:169). The *ordo salutis* defines the “process by which the work of salvation, wrought in Christ, is subjectively realised in the hearts and lives of sinners” (Berkhof, 1988:415-416). There were differences between the different Protestant streams, but these have become less pronounced than before (Payton, 2007:136). The concept itself, therefore, seems to have developed from a historical and ecumenical reflection upon historical theology to become universal to Christianity. Grace ebbs and flows in the respect which the different denominations acknowledge commonality on the *ordo salutis*. MEE is both informed by and focused upon the *ordo salutis*.

4.1. The Matrix of the Ordo Salutis

This order provides a matrix to understand the stages people go through in conversion. The *ordo salutis* provides the “scope and sequence of events wherein the work of Christ’s redemption accomplished in the Gospel history of salvation (*historia salutis*) would be applied to particular men and women” (Allen, 2016:37). Rather than viewing conversion as a singular event, it is viewed more as an unfolding pattern (Rom. 8:29-30). There is also a comprehensiveness in the *ordo salutis* which describes the entirety of God’s plan of salvation from start to finish, emphasised in divine foreknowledge and predestination, and producing eternal security (Stott, 2001:246). Foreknowledge provided Christ with the tools to effect atonement for the elect (Boettner, 1953:316). Predestination meant God’s will was not subject to other

conditions, but was immutable (Boettner, 1963:21). MEE is a conscious participation in the foreordained plan of God to effect salvation. Grace ebbs and flows from eternity to eternity as humanity engages with the immutable will of God through the *ordo salutis*.

4.2. The Logic of the Ordo Salutis

The *ordo salutis* represents a logical development of distinct, chronological occurrences which define human conversion (Venema, 2007a:198). The *ordo salutis* provides a theological means of engaging with the conversion process which connects faith with a wider Christian identity (Berkhof, 1998:16). MEE is a distinctly theological activity which seeks to connect with and support the process of conversion within humanity. Grace flows through the elements of the *ordo salutis* to inform a holistic view of the gospel.

4.3. The Elements of the Ordo Salutis

The elements of the *ordo salutis* are often used interchangeably to refer to the experience of salvation. For clarity, however, it is important to understand the role and place of each aspect (Hodge, 1993:3). Underpinning the Reformed *ordo salutis* is the claim that personal faith in Christ is the only divine means of experiencing salvation (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim.2:5). Such an emphasis on personal faith in Christ has been argued as not giving appropriate attention of Christ's humanity, instead all the attention is placed on his divinity (Schillebeeckx, 1987:2-3). Rather than investigating this claim, this dissertation opts to suspend judgement and begins from the assertion of Christ's exclusivity for salvation. Christ's uniqueness does justice to the theological tradition of both Calvin and the WCF. The *ordo salutis* is composed of a number of doctrinal principles, all of which demonstrate the flow of grace in Reformed MEE.

4.3.1. *Grace*

Key to Reformed theology is the doctrine of grace. Grace finds its root in the New Testament in the word χάρις, which is used to describe the means of conversion (Kittel and Friedrich, 1971:721) and the pardon humanity received from God (Kittel and Friedrich, 1971:577). The transformative purpose of grace in conversion suggests it is the beginning point of the *ordo salutis* (Guthrie, 1990:71). Grace can be understood as the flow of God's pardon for humanity, effecting conversion. MEE is defined, informed and built upon grace as a key characteristic of missional belief and praxis.

4.3.1.1. *Reformed Theology of Grace*

Grace is emphasised as the divine remedy to the natural corruption of humanity prior to all merit (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:255-257). Grace chooses to ignore humanity's original sin by providing a new ethos which is pliable to God's will (Eze. 36:26-27). Calvin's argument emphasises the inner transformation of people so they see the need to trust Christ rather than compelling them so to do (Barrett, 2013:16). Grace is, therefore, intimately connected with Christ. Christ gave himself to the Father for the elect's salvation, the Father then gave that salvation to the elect (Murray, 1982:57). Grace is sovereign and, therefore, has been defined as "intoxicating" because of the overwhelming effect on the human will (Horton, 2002:123). MEE is particularly informed by grace, which extols the principles of divine sovereignty and inner transformation.

4.3.1.2. *The Exclusivity of Christ*

The exclusivity of Christ is also implied by grace as humanity relies upon Christ and what he accomplished on the cross (Horton, 2002:13, 23). Grace is a key principle of this research, which explores how grace moves between people and ecclesiastical traditions. The implication for MEE is that no human identity, whether religious or secular, is spiritually defining. Proselytising is, therefore, disarmed on the basis of ecclesiastical identity which is secondary to spiritual identity.

4.3.2. Election

Grace effects human election into a covenant relationship with God, which through Jesus is expanded to include both Jews and Gentiles (Gal. 3:9). Electing grace is both “effectual” in transforming human hearts, and “prevenient” in providing the grace for the elect to respond to Christ (Sproul, 1986:120-125). Grace and election are, therefore, the “only” gospel, emphasising human inability and divine favour (Murray, 1977:88). While grace would seem to disarm a proselytising tendency in MEE, election may work against it. When grace flows into an elect people, that elect people may develop a sense of superiority and distance from the non-elect. The criteria for election may then be interpreted as less than spiritual and more identified with cultural attachments which are interpreted as being anti-gospel.

4.3.3. Original Sin

Conversion depends upon a sovereign disposition of God toward humanity in grace and election. The question of why humanity needs this sovereign disposition requires reflection. The issue of human sinfulness finds many references in the Bible (Gen. 6:5; Jer. 13:23; Rom. 3:9-20; 2 Cor. 4:3-6). The source of that sinfulness has been traced previously to a federal understanding of Adam and Eve. The implications of that federal understanding form the foundation for the doctrine of original sin (Boettner, 1953:271; Barrett, 2013:38). There is some divergence between the Reformed Churches and the Catholic Church on this matter. Reformed Churches emphasise original sin as a distortion of human nature, whereas the Catholic Church emphasises original sin as “an injury and disorder which has weakened-though not destroyed-human free will” (ERCDM, 1986:40). The main difference between the Reformed view and the Catholic view is over the flow of grace. Catholics understand the flow of grace to be partially divine and partially anthropological. Reformed theology understands the flow of grace as entirely divine. MEE within this matrix raises questions of orthodoxy of belief and orthopraxy of evangelism.

4.3.3.1. Federalism

Original sin develops from a federalist view of Adam and Eve. God had tested Adam and Eve on behalf of all humanity because they were the first created humans (Sproul, 1986:90). Federalism accepts a total depravity but not an utter depravity, as humanity remains capable of doing good. Total depravity could also be defined as “radical corruption”, which mars every aspect of human existence (Sproul, 1986:104; Horton, 2002:45). Federalism also informs free will; humans have a freedom of choice, but sin inevitably leads to rebellion against God (Peterson, 2007:127-128; Coleman, 2011:73). This produces a “fixed bias of the will against God” (Boettner, 1963:62). Total depravity, therefore, means an absence of original righteousness and the presence of evil within humanity (Barrett, 2013:39). As such, any action of humanity toward God is inherently flawed (Murray, 1977:87). Grace ebbs and flows from the sinful essence of humanity producing an inability to do anything to please God. Grace further ebbs and flows in an utter dependence upon divine action in salvation. MEE recognises the role of human nature in all areas of life, even in the theological formation of ecclesiastical structures. This would provide a forum for inter-confessional conversation and fellowship.

4.3.3.2. Federalism and Christ

Federalism implies the need for another model of humanity to undo the alienation which resulted from the fall between God and humanity. The alternative model of humanity is seen in Christ (Wiley, 2002:205-206). Christ was both actively and passively obedient to God, being the antithesis of what happened at the fall (Murray, 1982:20-22). The ebbing of grace is seen negatively in humanity from the fall to humanity, then flowing positively from Christ to humanity. MEE is given a common focus for all the Christian churches in Christ’s perfect obedience to the Father. Christ broke down the walls of separation between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14-18), and can be expected to do the same in ecumenical engagement.

4.3.4. Atonement

The pinnacle of Christ's obedience in undoing the fall led to his death. The cross typifies the meeting place between God and humanity in which original and actual sin is dealt with (Turretin, 1994:7; Murray 1977:142). Atonement engages with the right of God to punish human sinfulness and the principle of sacrificial religion (Boettner, 1953:275). Atonement takes place within the Trinity itself as Father and Son interact in creation, incarnation, redemption and glorification, a *pactum salutis* (Kuiper, 1989:13; Murray, 1977:143). The reason behind the atonement is the love of God for his people (Boettner, 1953:290). Grace ebbs and flows in the atonement as Christ presents himself to the Father as a substitute for humanity. MEE is informed by Christ's substitution and emphasises the role of Christ in spiritual formation. This would provide a common identity for the different Christian streams.

4.3.4.1. Limited Atonement

One of the more controversial aspects of Reformed theology is the doctrine of limited atonement. This position argues that Christ died only for the sins of the elect (Isa. 53:8-12; Mt. 1:21; Jn. 10:15; Eph. 1:4; Rom. 9:18-21). It is also closely aligned with the doctrine of predestination and election (Boettner, 1963:150). An alternative term is "planned atonement", emphasising divine strategy (Reisinger, 1982:19; Rev. 13:8), or "purposeful atonement" (Sproul, 1997:171). It has been claimed that limited atonement restricts the axiomatic element of God's love for all humanity (Walls and Dongell, 2004:50-51; Olsen, 2011;136-154). A Reformed response is to emphasise the effectiveness of the atonement in providing actual assurance of the elect's salvation (Murray, 1961:61, 75; Palmer, 1980:42). Grace ebbs and flows in a very definite manner from Christ to the elect. It does, however, inform MEE with a degree of uncertainty as to who the elect may be. If one institution is understood to be non-elect, then engagement becomes endowed with a proselytising tendency.

4.3.4.2. Atonement and Ransom

Another way of understanding the atonement is accessed through the concept of “ransom”, emphasising its specific focus (Boettner, 1957:317, 325; 1963:155-156, 157-159). Ransom suggests a limit in extent for what is being redeemed, something which is universal to all theological systems whether emphasising divine sovereignty or human ability (Steele and Thomas, 1963:39). Potentially the atonement could reach everyone because it was endowed with divine power (Boettner, 1953:323). As such, the limit of the atonement has little to do with its value or power, as they are determined by the person making the claim, God. Grace ebbs and flows from Christ’s paying the ransom for the elect through the atonement. MEE is informed with a confidence in the power of the gospel (Palmer, 1980:54). Orthopraxis then reflects doctrinally upon the assurance of the atonement and personally in ignorance of whom the elect are.

4.3.4.3. Atonement and Propitiation

Another means of describing the atonement is with the word propitiation. The term is a translation of the word ἱλασμός meaning an appeasing or vindicating of God’s wrath with humanity through Christ’s death (Kittel and Friedrich, 1971:365; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 Jn. 2:2, 4:10). The concept is ecumenical, Reformed churches emphasising Christ’s substitutionary atonement, and Catholics the solidarity with Christ as believers enter into his sacrifice (ERCDM, 1986:43). It has been argued that propitiation presupposes a duality of good and evil, presenting a vindictive deity appeasing his own anger (Murray, 1977:145-150). Others have argued that propitiation is not divine hatred but divine anger (MacLeod, 2014:134). Propitiation engages with both actual sins and sinful nature (Kuiper, 1989:49; Murray, 1961:30). Grace flows from God to humanity through the cross which dispels God’s anger. MEE could become overly negative, focusing on divine wrath and human condemnation. A middle ground between the Catholic and Reformed traditions can be found in emphasising Christ’s work on the cross along with the invitation to suffer with him.

4.3.4.4. Propitiation in Contemporary Dialogue

Propitiation was raised in the Western Church's conscience through popular Christian literature. Some contemporary writers view propitiation as "a form of cosmic child abuse" (Chalke, 2003:182; McLaren, 2003:102ff). This debate has produced a number of responses which deal not only with the nomenclature but also the theological justification for rejecting propitiation (Carson, 2005:186; Jeffrey, Ovey and Sach, 2007). The interesting thing about this debate is that it arose from those in local church ministry. This may suggest that the ebb and flow of grace is determined theologically through engagement with people in MEE.

4.3.5. Election

Election takes what has been accomplished in the atonement and applies it to humanity. On the issue of the election there is significant divergence between Catholic and Reformed views. The Catholic position emphasises the universality of salvation to undo the universality of sin. The Reformed position emphasises the particularity of salvation based on an existential experience (ERCDM, 1986:45-46). The ebb and flow of grace in election is seen in God's choice of whom to convert (Calvin, Vol. 2, 1957:202-204, 214). This ensures that God is not responsible for evil or sin (WCF, 3:1). MEE, therefore, emphasises the holiness of God and his entire otherness from humanity.

4.3.5.1. Election and Predestination

Election is closely linked with the doctrine of predestination (Boettner, 1963:83). Election, therefore, engages with humanity prior to the fall. God's disposition did not change. His will for humanity was sovereign (Van Til, 2015:41; Kuiper, 1989:28). God's love is a necessary component of his character, but this is not his sole characteristic (Murray, 1961:10). His choice to elect some demonstrates that he is not compelled to elect anyone and he could have dealt with humanity as rational beings irrespective of their fallen nature (Kuiper, 1989:37). Election resonates with the formulation of the covenant being monopoleuric in electing people and dipoleuric through covenantal engagement (Kuiper, 1989:48). The flow of grace develops from

God's character, through his love, into electing some and damning others. MEE could, therefore, view God's love as secondary to his sovereign purpose.

4.3.6. *Calling*

In the Reformed *ordo salutis* the next stage is that of calling. Calling is achieved effectually as the church proclaims the gospel in partnership with the Holy Spirit who illuminates people's hearts (Calvin, Vol. 2, 1957:240-242). The designation "effectual" is added to calling because it "effected what it intended to do" (Reisinger, 1982:44). The effect is the calling of people through the indiscriminate witness of the church. The Spirit's role is to effect a willingness within people to engage with God's grace (WCF 10:1; Brueggemann, 1993:30). The call is also effectual because of the invitation to enter the kingdom of God, therefore "The call is God's action and it cannot be frustrated". As such, the call is what unites the elect with Christ (Murray, 1961:93, 163). The call happens monergistically through God's sovereignty calling people to his predestinating purpose (Murray, 1961:93-94; 1977:166). Grace ebbs and flows through the church as they participate with the Spirit in the effectual call. MEE is, therefore, both a human and divine action. Being directed by the Spirit's calling is also broader than any denominational manifestation of the church.

4.3.7. *Regeneration*

The effect of the call leads to regeneration in which the Spirit gives new birth (Jn. 3:1-15; WCF: 13:1). The word "regeneration" is being used in this thesis in a restricted manner to refer to the beginning of spiritual life which corrects the human bias of original sin (Hodge, 1993:7, 15-16). In regeneration grace is bestowed upon people and is symbolised through the sacrament of baptism (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:164; Vol. 2, 1957:517). Regeneration enables an understanding of the nature of conversion as monergistic and also enables participation therein (Murray, 1977:179; Murray, 1961:106). This word emphasises what is done to the elect rather than what is done by the elect, being unconsciously received in a preconscious manner (Boettner, 1963:165). Grace ebbs and flows through the Spirit's giving of new life in

conversion. MEE focuses on the experience of regeneration which transcends human categories by engaging with the monergistic will of God.

4.3.8. *Faith*

Regeneration enables humans to have faith in Christ and to believe in the atonement (Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 11:6). Faith is an understanding of divine favour through the offer of the gospel being implanted by the Spirit within the elect (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:475, 479; WCF, 14:1; Kuiper, 1989:33). Faith's focus is upon the Bible, which reveals the *ordo salutis* and certain key elements about God and Christ (WCF 14:2; Kuiper, 1989:142; Murray, 1977:235-236). Faith, therefore, becomes the "first conscious exercise of the renewed soul" (Hodge, 1993:41). Faith is a general principle which includes psychological conviction, emotional response to the gospel and an educated decision about the gospel (Murray, 1977:260-261). The essence of faith would suggest an understanding of trust in God and in the gospel (Hodge, 1993:43, 46). Faith ebbs and flows in the strength of faith which can be attributed to people. There seems to be a spectrum of faith. This would mean that the differing traditions and cultures, which emphasise aspects of faith, cannot become the normative means of judging all traditions and cultures.

4.3.9. *Repentance*

From faith the next step is repentance. People develop a consciousness of their fallen nature, the price of conversion and a commitment to on-going Christian living (Venema, 2007:79). From faith to repentance has been called the "shortest" of transitions (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:509). A key influence on repentance is a fear of divine punishment (WCF, 15:2). For Reformed theology repentance is not a one-off event but an on-going characteristic of the Christian life (Luther, 2011:47). Grace ebbs and flows in repentance contrary to the partiality of the Reformed view of the atonement, but because of the universality of human sin (Murray, 1976:60). MEE is informed by repentance through a cultural and contextual critique of the manifestation of certain sins which are seen as prohibitive to genuine repentance (ERCDM, 1986:76). In targeting certain sins as culturally and contextually

prohibitive of genuine repentance MEE can seem to be culturally monochrome. Little attention would be given to the complexity and multiformity within culture itself. Social constructivism would propose an inability to neutrally discern moral norms. MEE would expect a surrender of personal conviction to the ecclesiastical metanarrative which is formed as much by culture as by theology.

4.3.10. Justification

Repentance begins a reorientation of life toward God and produces an awareness of justification. Justification is, therefore, understood as the elect being counted as righteous through the monergistic imputation of Christ's righteousness (Calvin, Vol. 2, 1957:37-39; Venema, 2007:79; Sproul, 1995:70; WCF 10:1, 3). Justification in Reformed theology is used forensically, pronouncing humanity as having no case to answer for their fallenness, because of Christ's fulfilment of the law (Murray, 1977:204-206; Sproul, 1995:95). An alternative to the imputation of fallenness, justification presents an imputation of grace through Christ (Dabney, Vol. 1, 1982:149; Venema, 2007:81). The flow of grace provides spiritual hope in justification for those who have followed the path of the *ordo salutis* (Murray, 1977:217). MEE presents a gospel in which everyone is offered a hope of acceptance by God because of Christ. This would imply a transcendence of denominational and cultural identity.

4.3.10.1. Justification in Ecumenical Dialogue

The theology of justification has been an area of ecumenical debate because of the significant theological differences between the Reformed and Catholic traditions (Kasper, 2003:21). In viewing the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith as axiomatic the implication is that the Catholic Church has "rejected an essential truth of Christianity" (Sproul, 1995:39). On the other hand some have argued that the differences between Reformed and Catholic doctrine on justification are not that great (Daly, 1998:134). MEE would need to engage with the theological differences concerning justification to discern issues of commonality. Grace would ebb and flow

in the extent to which a genuineness is attributed to the Catholic tradition because of their doctrine of justification.

4.3.10.2. Lutheran and Catholic Engagement

Ecumenical engagement between the Lutheran and Catholic traditions on justification has been on-going. In 1999 The Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church issued the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” (www.vatican.va). The “Joint Declaration” affirms the centrality of the doctrine of justification to the history of the Reformation and to the spiritual position of Christians as converts. There is a common affirmation of justification relating to reception of the Spirit and incorporation into the church. Justification is, therefore, exclusively dependent upon the sovereign intervention of God (www.vatican.va: 18-25). Grace ebbs and flows in both traditions from God to people, incorporating them into the church. MEE would become a cooperative effort as both Lutherans and Catholic bear witness to the same theological view of justification.

4.3.10.3. Reformed and Catholic Engagement

The Reformed churches attach the same centrality to justification as affirmed by the Lutheran tradition (Fackre, 2003:64). This centrality is affirmed by Calvin in the Christian experience of salvation, emphasising divine sovereignty in election (Fackre, 2003:65). Justification, therefore, is not an exclusively existential experience but relates to institutional relationships. This implies a causal relationship between the elements of MEE. Grace would flow through missional engagement between the Reformed churches and the Catholic Church toward those who have no connection to the church.

4.3.11. Adoption

Justification enables people to become adopted children of God. Adoption is then causally connected to justification as Christ’s righteousness is imputed in bringing people into God’s family (Turretin, 1994:48-49). Adoption is, therefore, connected to predestination as God elects some to enter his family (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:206;

Murray, 1961:132). Election unites humanity with the divine in a familial relationship (Calvin, Vol. 2, 1957:241). Adoption is viewed as a “grace” which permits entrance to the privileges of being a child of God. God’s anger is then transformed to paternal commitment (WCF, 12:1). God’s fatherhood is limited only to those whom he has chosen to have relationship with (Murray, 1977:233). The flow of grace is seen in fallen humanity’s adoption into the family of God. MEE is informed by this position and may by implication provide a sense of superiority to and distance from the non-elect.

4.3.12. Sanctification

As adoption initiates people into God’s family, sanctification is the process of manifesting family characteristics. Sanctification works upon the human heart to remove attitudes, “circumcision”, which are contrary to God (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:279; WCF, 13:1). Sanctification is also a demonstration of human obedience to God (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:319). Using the term “circumcision” deliberately attempts to draw parallels between the church and Israel through the notion of covenant (Deut 10:16; Romans 2:29). The church is the theological heir of the covenant promises to Israel, baptism replacing circumcision as a sign of internal transformation (Gal. 3:7-9; Col. 2:8-9). Grace ebbs and flows in sanctification in the extent to which converts actively engage with the work of the Spirit in internal transformation. MEE becomes a journey through which people travel as they wrestle with their fallen nature and move toward greater godliness. There would be no sense of superiority implied in sanctification as all streams of Christianity acknowledge the journey and their own need for more sanctification.

4.3.13. Perseverance

While the work of sanctification may ebb and flow, perseverance is an assured promise (Rom. 8:35-39). Perseverance affirms that all of the elect will continue in their state of salvation from conversion to eternity (WCF, 27:1-3). There is a difference between Reformed and Catholic theology on this matter. The Reformed asserts a secure promise, the Catholic emphasises the vagaries of religious

experience (ERCDM, 1986:61). Perseverance is built upon justification in which converts are declared as having no case to answer because of their faith in Christ. If justification involves a synergistic aspect then perseverance becomes fluid (Venema, 2007:68). The flow of grace is seen in the assurance which faith in Christ gives that transcends feelings, emotions or failure. Perseverance informs MEE by offering a security of belief and position for converts. Such assurance could produce a sense of superiority to those who do not have confidence in their perseverance. Equally it could endow ecumenical engagement with a sense of confidence that engagement with theological multiplicity would have no tangible effect on spiritual condition.

4.3.14. *Glorification*

The last element of the Reformed *ordo salutis* is glorification, in which converts are transformed through the grace of God. This begins at the start of the *ordo salutis* and continues as the Holy Spirit effects new desires and inclinations within the elect through to the promise of perseverance (Peterson, 2007:131). Glorification relates to MEE because at the heart of the message is a question of identity. Identity asks whether the church is defined by its position in the world or whether it is to be separate from the world (Stone, 2007:115). Glorification points to a separation from the world, that the church's identity is to reflect the character of God rather than the characteristics of a given culture. Grace ebbs and flows into an understanding and expectation of what is yet to come through the spiritual journey of converts. MEE could become preoccupied with ridding the church of its earthly identity. This could mean that the cultural attachments which may blur the gospel are routed from the church. It could equally inform a lack of charity toward those who are deemed to be compromising their Christian identity.

5. Predestination and the Reformed Ordo Salutis

The Reformed *ordo salutis* interacts with the Reformed doctrine of predestination. Predestination suggests God has agreed upon a plan for the elect's salvation without waiting for any human response because it is only by the "mere pleasures of God that salvation is offered to some" (Calvin, Vol. 2, 1957:202-205). Predestination endues

the *ordo salutis* with the assurance that all for whom Christ died will experience salvation (Boettner, 1963:173). One implication of predestination is that God is not bound to offer salvation to anyone but chooses to pardon according to his own will, but in so doing he pardons only when satisfied it is right (MacLeod, 2014:183). Grace flows in predestination to those who are the elect and ebbs away from the reprobate. Predestination could impact MEE away from universality toward distance and particularity. It could also be seen as a pointless act, as God has predestined what will happen.

5.1. The Spirit and Predestination

MEE relies upon the work of the Spirit in illumination (Jn. 16:8; 2 Cor. 4:3-6). Any converting response to the gospel rests upon the work of the Spirit intersecting with the church's mission to effect salvation. Predestination means that God's eternal and sovereign will is determined by his own person. This is discerned in the election of some and reprobation of others, meaning not all are created equal (Calvin, Vol. 2, 1957:206; WCF, 3:6). Grace flows in the gospel to the elect whom God will definitely save through his Word and Spirit (WCF 10:1). MEE becomes a "gospel of particularism" (van Til, 2015:119). This particularism links creation and the fall with Christ's incarnation, providing God a means of viewing humanity either in Adam or in Christ. Predestination provides MEE with a sense of certainty that God's will always comes to pass. The effectiveness of the gospel is not determined by the ingenuity of the church, but by the authority of God's will (2 Cor. 4:1-2).

5.2. Predestination and Human Freedom

If God has predestined everything that happens, including the spiritual identity of humanity, then the question of human freedom arises. The question becomes whether humans are mindless automatons following pre-decided paths. There is a need, therefore, to distinguish between predestination and determinism. Determinism makes everything predictable, predestination makes salvation assured (Carson, 1981:1-3). Grace ebbs and flows in the extent to which humanity can exercise a freedom to respond to and incarnate God's love in the gospel. MEE asserts God's

sovereignty in establishing his kingdom, entering into covenant with the elect. This would permit a wider ecclesiology which embraces doctrinal and denominational difference within the global principle of divine sovereignty.

6. The Free Offer of the Gospel

The theology of predestination, election and choice begs the question of whether the gospel ought to be offered indiscriminately (Barrett, 2013:72). In one sense the *ordo salutis* strengthens missionary praxis as the church proclaims Christ's power over the world in the gospel (Bavinck, 1960:xix). The Reformed concept of limited atonement emphasises the actual power of Christ to bring people to salvation. This could endow Reformed MEE with a theological confidence in proclaiming the gospel. The crux of the argument is whether God desires the salvation of all people? In the decretive will of God there is an apparent contradiction between God's plan for sinful humanity to experience salvation and his desire to punish their sinfulness (Murray, 1982:113). Grace ebbs and flows in both the decretive and gospel will of God, through calling all to conversion but electing to save some. MEE navigates between predestination and human freedom through the proclamation of the gospel.

6.1. The Content of the Free Offer of the Gospel

The free offer of the gospel is the proclamation of God's kindness to all humanity and his delight that those whom the gospel is shared with would experience conversion through repentance and faith (Murray, 1982:114). God's delight is in humanity coming to repentance even though he may not have willed it (Murray, 1982:131-132). The gospel is, therefore, offered to all irrespective of their ability to respond. There is also a sincerity in that offer which is universal to all theological positions (Boettner, 1963:282). Although offered to all, the gospel remains dependent upon the Spirit doing "something for the sinner that he cannot do for himself" (Reisinger, 1982:19; Barrs, 2001:85; 2 Cor. 4:3-6). Grace flows in the free offer of the gospel to all of humanity. This could be understood to be a pointless task for MEE if it is contrary to God's predestination.

6.2. Preaching Hell and Damnation

Historically the Reformed churches have emphasised a tendency to communicate the gospel with an emphasis on hell and judgement. Reformed MEE has emphasised eternal separation from God in a primarily vertical application of the gospel (Horton, 2002:83). Hell and damnation are present in both Testaments and were applied to that context (Murray, 1976:125, 156-157). Preaching hell and damnation is epitomised in Jonathan Edwards, who was one of the first to use the phrase “fire and brimstone” (Edwards, 1979:80; Edwards, 1741). Edwards’ use of language is colourful and focuses on evoking a spiritual response to the gospel. This is done through presenting the law of God by which humanity will be judged (Clarke, 2007:358). Grace ebbs and flows in such a proclamation as people are reminded of their ultimate accountability to God and the hope of justification. MEE is endowed with a seriousness which engages with God’s sovereign will and the immanence of humanity’s need to respond (Gerstner, 1990:18-19).

6.3. The Contemporary Benefit of Fear

The cultural difference between Edwards’ time and today begs the question of whether preaching a hell and damnation message is a relevant praxis for the church. Hell is argued to be relevant to the world today for two reasons. First, what happens in the afterlife is determined by choices in this life, to have Christ or self as Saviour. Second, hell and damnation is a logical consequence for living a “self-centered, self-absorbed, self-pitying, and self-justifying” life (Keller, 2009). Certain aspects of the symbolism about hell, however, rob the principle of its potency, as the understanding of punishment is different today (Keller, 2009). The challenge of preaching a hell and damnation message is whether the hearer can discern love coming through the rhetoric. As love is essential to the motivation of gospel proclamation the issue is whether the message hides the intention (Kuiper, 1989:98). Grace ebbs and flows in the intensity and joy with which the church presents hell and damnation. MEE needs an emphasis on why divine accountability and punishment are logical conclusions of rejecting the gospel. Rather than emphasising the punishment, an emphasis on God’s grace may be a better option.

7. Implications for Reformed Praxis

Emphasising the Reformed *ordo salutis* has been challenged by some as robbing evangelism of any passion or purpose. The language used in evangelistic preaching may imply the inaccuracy of Calvinistic theology by emphasising human response (Walls and Dongell, 2004:35). If the gospel is good news the question of how the doctrine of election and predestination is good news to the non-elect remains unanswered (Walls and Dongell, 2004:188-194; Olsen, 2011:102-135). Grace ebbs and flows for the elect in the Reformed *ordo salutis*, but necessarily also for the non-elect. MEE prioritises the positive aspect of the gospel in which predestination would not necessarily play any role. It may be better left to discipleship formation.

7.1. The Role of Predestination

It has been argued that predestination influences the means as well as the ends which fit together to produce salvation (Boettner, 1963:254). If the means should fail, that would cascade into the ends also. God has, therefore, ordained the means of spreading the gospel through the preaching of the church irrespective of any perceived end. MEE challenges the church regarding whether there is a message to proclaim to those who stand outside of the kingdom of God (Gillespie, 1990:5). Reformed theology endues MEE with purpose and urgency, as it is only through the proclamation of the gospel that the elect are saved (Kuiper, 1989:38-39). The church, therefore, has a sense of responsibility to proclaim the gospel (Reisinger, 1997:166). Spiritual responsibility means that grace must never ebb and always flow in gospel proclamation. MEE must also understand the sense of urgency and divine accountability for orthopraxis as much as for orthodoxy.

7.2. Universalism in the Gospel

The death of Christ marked the end of nationalism in faith and the beginning of universalism beyond Israel (Kuiper, 1989:74). The theme of mission and imperialism has been considered previously. For the Reformed churches this may mean a departure from the trappings of one nationality to affirming a common identity found through the cross. MEE, therefore, becomes an invitation to tolerance shown in the

praxis of “compassion, patience, humility, and boldness” (Abraham, 1991:229). The ecumenical consequences of mission offer an invitation to theological conversation. This is rooted in the church as the community which disciplines theological statements and roots theological discourse in the life of the kingdom of God. The church can, therefore, only be enriched through debate, disagreement and discussion (Leith, 2010:10-11). Grace ebbs and flows beyond traditional cultural, racial, religious, political and national barriers to engage with the common reality of kingdom membership. MEE is called upon to divest itself of all external attachments in order to engage with the heart of what it means to follow Christ.

7.3. Membership of the Church

MEE is linked closely with church membership. Church growth may, therefore, become a by-product of mission (Brueggemann, 1993:45). Reformed theology presents an invitation to receive the reconciling grace of the gospel which is applicable to all humanity, irrespective of how they may define themselves socially, racially, politically, historically, culturally or sexually (Guthrie, 1990:73). Tolerance is, therefore, prepared to accept variations in theological doctrine within the wider church of Christ. Underpinning this is the fact that covenantal acceptance is not ecclesiastically driven. The church has a role to play in MEE by engaging with culture and stretching across denominational barriers. MEE is enriched by a plurality of approaches and multiplicity of manifestations because no singular form of church is possible (Leith, 2010:1). Emphasising reconciliation implies the need for grace to flow horizontally between the denominations as much as vertically between God and humanity.

8. Partial Conclusion

This chapter has sought to address the salient theological points associated with Reformed evangelism. The concept of the gospel was examined to provide a definition for evangelism specifically. The tension between the individual and community was acknowledged in the light of the ecumenical application of evangelicalism. This led to a critique of modern evangelicalism in the light of the

core of Reformed theology. A working definition of what evangelicalism means was proposed, specifically to address Reformed evangelicalism.

8.1. Specifics of Calvinistic MEE

The specifics of Calvinist MEE were outlined. Human corruption was noted as the basis from which the Reformed meaning and methods of evangelism develop. It was noted that Reformed evangelism was both supernatural and monergistic in ethos. This begged the question of what the gospel was and the response to be expected from its proclamation.

8.2. Confessional Mission

The specifics of confessional MEE were outlined paying particular attention to the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF). The means and techniques of gospel communication were considered. This led to discussion on how conversion was to be judged genuine. The ecumenical nature of gospel witness was also highlighted.

8.3. The Logic of the Ordo Salutis

The elements of the Reformed *ordo salutis* were outlined, and the logic of their progression. The uniqueness of the Reformed position was discussed in relationship to other Protestant traditions as well as the Catholic. The emphasis on divine sovereignty was highlighted as a key principle.

8.4. Predestination and the Free Offer

Two topical and divisive issues were then highlighted. The doctrine of predestination in the light of the Spirit's work and human freedom was discussed. That led to a discussion of the free offer of the gospel. The free offer of the gospel informs the content of what is preached; therefore, specific attention was given to preaching hell and damnation.

8.5. The Challenge of the Ordo Salutis

Lastly, challenges to the Reformed Churches of the *ordo salutis* were considered. A discussion of how predestination informs MEE in praxis in the light of the universalistic elements of the gospel fed into a discussion on membership of the church and the gospel.

Chapter 7

Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Mission-as-Evangelism and Ecumenism

1. Introduction

The literature review noted C.S. Lewis' likening of Christianity to a large hall. Off this hall there were many different rooms which provided heat and sustenance. While the hall represented the Christian faith, the rooms off the hall represented the different Christian denominations. Lewis comments: "For that purpose the worst of the rooms (whichever that may be) is, I think, preferable" (Lewis, 1999:318). This sets the scene for a discussion on how one of those rooms, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI), relates to the other rooms within the context of the larger hall. The scene being set, the question of how grace ebbs and flows from PCI to other denominations in mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism (MEE) arises.

1.1. The Link between Mission-as-Evangelism and Mission-as-Ecumenism

This research suggests a close link between evangelism and ecumenism within mission. Further, this research suggests that the link is both theologically implied and practically necessary if the church is to participate in the *Missio Dei Trinitatis*. The relationship between evangelism and ecumenism in mission can be discerned positively as flowing in grace, particularly in times of numerical growth. Such numerical growth results in a "loosening of institutional ties" (Avis, 2010:18-19). In the imagery of Lewis, a loosening of institutional ties introduces people into the hall of Christianity, but does not express a preference for which room they then choose to enter.

1.1.1. The Impact of Loosening Institutional Ties

Practically, a loosening of institutional ties could mean a more fluid relationship between people and denominational Christianity in which adherence to denominational tenets is less important than a common experience of God. This could then result in less denominational loyalty and less denominational authority over Christians. As MEE focuses more on the hall of Christianity, disagreements and divergence between the rooms become less important. Disagreements and divergence remain. They become, however, the basis for flowing in theological conversation against the ebbing of ecumenical distance. For PCI this would mean an emphasis on the common hall of Christianity and a respect for the different rooms off that hall. MEE would then flow in grace reflecting a common religious experience of entering the hall. That common religious experience would react against any potential ebbing of grace regarding attitudes toward other rooms off the hall. Practically, the differences between PCI and Catholicism would remain, yet they would not be a source of division in the light of that which is common to both traditions.

1.2. Mission in the Light of the Denominations

Certain theological touchstones have been used to frame the doctrine and praxis of MEE within PCI. These theological touchstones help to understand how the church's worship and liturgy enshrine MEE (Smith, 2009:35). This being so, this research asks questions about one ecclesiastical institution, PCI, within a given cultural and geographical matrix, Ireland. The flow of the touchstones argues that mission addresses how people become members of God's kingdom, are initiated into that kingdom through covenant, which exists within human cultures, initiating people into the church, and how that church manifests MEE. Thus the question of whether grace ebbs or flows in MEE is born.

1.2.1. Culture's Influence on the Denominations

This research uses PCI as a case study of MEE, asking whether grace ebbs or flows in relation to the Catholic Church. It is suggested that culture has an influence on the ebb and flow of grace, because theological formulations are developed within the cultural context (Cassidy, 2002:17). This research, therefore, seeks to identify Irish historical and cultural influences, both “general” and “particular”, on the theological formation of PCI with respect to Catholicism (Niebuhr, 1951:31). The culture of Ireland, which takes into account historical and political influences, mixes with Reformed theology, in particular the *ordo salutis*, to inform PCI's understanding of MEE (Yates, 1994:5). Not only Irish historical and cultural influences, but also wider theological influences have an influence on PCI's understanding of MEE. Thus a human aspect of culture is identified, the matrix of Ireland, as well as the wider cultural phenomena of Reformed theology (Buber, 2013:13, 22). A growing polarisation between theological conservatism and liberality, in both Protestantism and Catholicism, further frames this research in a wider theological context (Lindback, 2002:6). Culture and theology, therefore, work together to mould the theology which informs how PCI incarnates MEE. The rationale for ebbing or flowing in grace is determined by this mix of culture and theology, both locally and globally. The tension between the global and the local then feed into the distinct history and ethos of PCI, which manifests itself within Ireland.

1.3. Historical Anti-Catholicism

The culture of Northern Ireland has been identified with and formed by anti-Catholicism. This has been partly because of the political distinctiveness of Irish politics which centres around nationalist/unionist policies, unlike much of the socially driven politics of mainland Britain (Ruane and Todd, 1996:98). Anti-Catholicism became the “dominant narrative in Protestant culture” (Mitchell, 2005:103). Northern Irish anti-Catholicism was peppered with “theological references” (Mitchell, 2005:113). Anti-Catholicism, therefore, became the “tap roots of sectarianism”. This happened through the development of negative beliefs about individual Catholics, the Catholic Church and Catholic theology. Anti-Catholicism

then became an ethnic boundary marker for Protestant culture (Brewer and Higgins, 1998:2). Anti-Catholicism has a direct bearing on the ebb and flow of grace in PCI's MEE. Where an anti-Catholicism can be justified theologically, then an ebbing of grace becomes normative. This means proselytisation of Catholic could become a focus of evangelism and ecclesiastical aloofness definitive of ecumenism.

1.3.1. The Breadth of Anti-Catholicism

Putting anti-Catholicism in its context is wider than Ireland. There has been a tradition also extant within England and associated with English Presbyterianism (Paz, 1972:181). Liverpool, with its close connections to Ireland via travel, was one such base for anti-Catholicism (Paz, 1992:202-204; Blackstock and O'Gorman, 2014:79). The establishment of the Grand Orange Lodge of England in 1807 carried some anti-Catholicism from Ireland to the north of England (MacRaid, 2009:48-69; Neal, 1990:185). This anti-Catholicism manifested itself in political sectarianism and destruction of Catholic churches (Hayden, 1994:98,156-157,179; Paz, 1992:18). Anti-Catholicism can also be discerned in Wales (Miskell, 2004:106; Hughes, 2002:313). While there were religious overtones to anti-Catholicism, there was concern that Irish immigrants would take Welsh jobs from Welsh people. Scotland also exhibited aspects of anti-Catholicism. The Presbytery of Glasgow report to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland highlighted a Scottish nationalism which wanted Scotland for the Scottish (*Report*, 1923:751). This was evidenced by some thirty-nine specifically anti-Catholic societies existing in Glasgow alone (Gallagher, 1987:9). This same anti-Catholicism continues today with the rivalry between the football teams of Glasgow Rangers and Glasgow Celtic (Kerr and Twomey, 2010:163-166). The spread of anti-Catholicism in Britain demonstrates that it is not just an Irish phenomenon.

1.3.2. Historical Anti-Catholicism in Ireland

Irish anti-Catholicism was moulded by historical interactions between Scottish settlers and the Irish populace. This was a two-way street in which each community interpreted historical confrontation, developing a sectarian attitude toward each other (Rodgers, 1991:13; Blaschke, 2013). Within Irish Presbyterianism Henry Cooke played a formative role in anti-Catholicism. Through his Unionist politics, conservative values and evangelical theology Cooke provided a formative influence on justifying anti-Catholicism (Jackson, 2010:65). The Reformed theology of covenant, self-applied to Irish Presbyterians, produced a sense of being God's chosen people apart from Catholics (Ganiel, 2016:32). Grace ebbed as PCI interpreted theological differences and erected a barrier against ecumenism, resulting in a justification for anti-Catholicism (Brewer, 1992:359-360). Evangelism was endowed with a political, cultural, historical and national ethos which sought to maintain British rule in Ireland and limit Catholic influence in the political, cultural and national spheres. Little thought was given to what could be learnt from a different viewpoint nor to the areas which Catholicism and Presbyterianism shared in common.

1.4. Vacillation in Ecumenism

As PCI wrestled with MEE, a recapitulation of anti-Catholic sentiment from previous centuries arose once more. This was evidenced through a return to the "polemical" theology of Catholicism that was developed in the Reformation (de Chirico, 2003:14). Such vacillations are the result of value judgements which PCI has made upon the beliefs and actions of Catholics and Catholicism (Hiebert, Shaw, Tiéno, 1999:37). Vacillations are often underpinned by fear of Catholicism, which Presbyterianism views almost as its antithesis (Webb, 2001:21). The result of vacillation is an ebbing of grace in ecumenism which is seen through an ecclesiastical distance from Catholicism. In its most extreme manifestation, vacillation could be used to justify a proselytising tendency in which Presbyterians seek to make converts to their own ecclesiastical camp. This would impact beyond any Presbyterian/Catholic relationship and impact inter-Protestant relationships.

2. Theological Considerations

This research uses systematic theology to understand the praxis of MEE within a cultural context (Tillich, 1968:4). The cultural context is that of Ireland and the agent of MEE is Irish Presbyterianism. Culture is expressed through a religious tradition's interpretation of history (Falconer, 2008a:23). Cultural institutions, such as the Loyal Orders, provide one means for Irish Presbyterians to interpret their history. The extent to which the Loyal Orders clarify or obfuscate evangelism or ecumenism requires consideration in due course (Virkler and Ayayo, 2007:82-83). To interpret cultural phenomena, like the Loyal Orders, within the cultural context of Ireland, the touchstone of culture has particular resonance (Niebuhr, 1951:30). Theologically interpreting cultural phenomena within a cultural context can be difficult. This is because it is an "underdeveloped discipline" (Webb, 2001:67), and there are "no clearly established rules" for so doing (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952:41ff). This results in a "cultural crisis" when Irish Presbyterianism and Irish Catholicism interact (Tracy, 1987:8). This work of theological investigation rests within this "cultural matrix" (Lonergan, 1971:xi). Theology will, therefore, investigate where grace ebbs and flows between the culture of Irish Presbyterianism and the culture of Irish Catholicism in the matrix of MEE.

2.1. The Significance of Culture for the Church

As a general definition of culture the following formulation is helpful: "a set of rules or standards that, when acted upon by the members of a society, produce behaviour that falls within a range of variance the members consider proper and acceptable" is helpful (Haviland, 1990:30; Carter, 2007:40). The notion of culture is being used here to describe how people can understand the natural world (Niebuhr, 1951:32). PCI, as an institution, has a role in the formation of Irish culture. This aids PCI's understanding of the cultural matrix, Ireland, in which it now exists. Grace both ebbs and flows from the church and toward the church. This research, being informed by social constructivism, builds on the principle that culture informs belief (Berger and Luckmann, 1991:13; Bevans, 2011:5-6). Considering PCI's MEE must, therefore, take into account the role which Irish culture has had on PCI's theological

understanding of Catholicism. The ebb and flow of grace is, therefore, as much formed by theological principles as by cultural influences.

2.1.1. Ecclesiology and Irish Presbyterianism

The doctrine of the church, ecclesiology, provides the theological context to reflect on PCI's MEE. Ecclesiology lies at the heart of this research because of the investigation into the ecclesiastical praxis of mission (Pelikan, 1989:282). Placing PCI in a missional context with a missional praxis suggests Irish society has moved from a Christian foundation, Christendom, to become a mission field itself. The perceived disintegration of Christendom has led to a re-evaluation of the nature and role of the church within the Western world (Goheen, 2002:345). This has resulted in a change of focus for MEE from being focused on the church to a focus on culture. The church continues to play a part in MEE, but does not control the process (Roxburgh and Boren, 2009:20). Any value judgement on the authenticity of a faith tradition, such as how PCI views Catholicism, cannot be considered on its own. Cultural issues, such as denominational loyalty and doctrinal tenets, continue to have an influence. Ecclesiology also challenges the perceived goal of MEE. Rather than adding new converts to a given faith tradition, Irish Presbyterianism's MEE becomes more existentially focused. The aim of PCI's MEE also becomes engagement with the divine. The issue of whether PCI's faith tradition, with its theological, historical, cultural and political interpretations, would be seen as genuine Christianity by another Irish faith tradition remains to be answered. The issues of doctrinal divergence between PCI and Catholicism remain.

2.1.2. Doctrine's Role within Culture

It has been suggested that when doctrine is introduced into a given culture, it exploits that culture, using that culture to further its aims (Lonergan, 1971:300). There is a potential tension between doctrine's critique of a given culture and its exploitation of that culture for its own ends. The reality may, therefore, exist within this tension. Reformed theology entered the cultural matrix of Ireland. Out of that entrance PCI has created its own Protestant culture which reflects historical interpretation,

Presbyterian polity and the unique context of Ireland itself. Its ecclesiology's existence within this tension honours Reformed theology as a wider principle, but within a given Irish cultural matrix. How PCI understands the role of doctrine within culture determines whether grace ebbs or flows toward Catholics in MEE.

2.1.3. Is There a Uniquely Irish Presbyterian or Catholic Culture?

In considering the role or significance of culture for the church and the role of doctrine within culture, the question is whether there is a uniquely Irish Presbyterian or Catholic culture. Use of the term "culture" seems to point to something greater than one institution or historical interpretation. Instead, culture suggests a general phenomenon (Niebuhr, 1951:31). Reference has been made to native Irish culture; however, that is broader than a denominational manifestation within a culture (Valente, 2010:86). Culture is described as a total process of human activity and achievement, and is, by implication, pluralistic (Niebuhr, 1951:32-33, 38). Despite the pluralism of culture, the existence of majority positions means that cultures need to "somehow deal with the minorities" (Walsh and Middleton, 1984:22). Culture cannot, therefore, ignore those within it who deviate from the majority position. For Northern Ireland this would mean a conscious attention to the minority Catholic tradition. The goal of culture also seems to mitigate against a narrow application: "culture in all its forms and varieties is concerned with the temporal and material realisation of values" (Niebuhr, 1951:36). As such, the goals of MEE would seem to contradict any notion of a specific Irish Presbyterian or Catholic culture.

2.1.3.1. An Irish Presbyterian Worldview and Theology of Culture

An alternative term to culture may be worldview. A worldview is "the comprehensive framework of one's basic beliefs about things" (Wolters, 2005:2). Worldviews have "spiritually formative and cultural power in the lives of individual people" (Walsh and Middleton, 1984:29). Further, a worldview asks ultimate questions, producing a framework or pattern for praxis (Wolters, 2005:3). It may be that PCI's relationship, theologically and missionally, with Catholicism has been a clash between a wider, pluralistic culture and a narrower worldview of a

denomination. PCI's worldview then interacts with the plurality of culture by asking ultimate questions about the authenticity of a given person's or denomination's faith, namely the Catholic Church. PCI's worldview would then become a theology of culture. This theology of culture would address people as actors within culture, expressing their worldview through practices and institutions accessed through worship (Smith, 2009:35). PCI's worldview addresses culture by reflecting on the actions of Catholics and their religious practices through the matrix of worship. Then grace would ebb and flow in the extent to which authenticity was attributed to the Catholic worldview by PCI.

2.2. Redemption-Centred Theology

Underpinning the praxis of MEE is a redemption-centred theology. Such a view assumes that culture and experience need to be theologically challenged (Bevans, 2011:21-22). The theological challenge to culture and experience happens through the touchstone of the kingdom of God (Webb, 2011:22-23). A theological critique reflects on whether the ethos of a given culture acknowledges Christ as supreme or propagates difference as an axiom for division. Thus, PCI's relationship to Catholicism is less a clash of cultures and more a clash of worldviews (Carrier, 1993:65). PCI's MEE challenges the pluralistic aspects of culture by emphasising the supremacy of one worldview. This Irish Presbyterian worldview then believes itself to be normative of culture. Grace ebbs as PCI seeks to impose its worldview on Catholicism, personally and corporately, potentially resulting in a proselytising tendency.

2.2.1. A Classicist View of Culture

To maintain a worldview as normative builds upon a "classicist" understanding of culture (Lonergan, 1971:xi). A "classicist" understanding of culture is dependant upon Greco-Roman values mediated through a liberal arts education, which emphasises values rather than facts, ideas to be imitated, eternal truths and universally valid laws (Vincie, 2009:166). In this view of culture one worldview, Irish Presbyterianism, appoints itself as axiomatic to a given culture, making its

theology universally applicable. MEE then becomes focused on extending the reach of PCI's worldview in the belief that the worldview is definitive of culture. Grace would ebb toward Catholicism as it is mistakenly interpreted as contradictory of culture, also potentially resulting in a proselytising tendency.

2.2.2. An Empirical View of Culture

An alternative view of culture as "empirical" could mean that theological engagement and progression of worldviews develop as different theologies are investigated (Lonergan, 1971:xi). The "empirical" view of culture informs this research as a conversation is conducted between Irish Presbyterian and Catholic worldviews, expressed in their theology and praxis, within the cultural matrix of Ireland. As Presbyterian and Catholic theology and praxis are investigated a greater degree of understanding results. This greater understanding challenges the ebbing of grace from PCI to Catholicism on the basis of assumed superiority of the Presbyterian worldview. A flowing of grace in ecumenical engagement enables learning and theological growth beyond one worldview.

2.3. Response Hermeneutics

Response hermeneutics aids the understanding of the worldview of PCI within the cultural matrix of Ireland. Through addressing the plurality of culture the assumption of the superiority of PCI's worldview to others is challenged. Response hermeneutics aids PCI to understand an Irish Catholic worldview as an alternative historical reflection on the same events within the culture of Ireland (Virkler and Ayayo, 2007:67-68). Social location enables historical, cultural and political influences to differ within one geographical area. The issues which, therefore, may have particular resonance for PCI's worldview may not have the same resonance for an Irish Catholic worldview. Through PCI's addition of a value judgement to its worldview a negative reflection is attached to an Irish Catholic interpretation of the same cultural influences. Grace ebbs by associating an Irish Catholic worldview as interpreting incorrectly. An exclusive worldview would endue PCI's MEE with a potentially proselytising tendency. Response hermeneutics provides a broader approach to

differing worldviews and raises the issue of commonality of theology and culture between PCI and Irish Catholicism.

2.4. Culture and Value Judgements

Inherent within culture is the notion of values and the passing of judgement upon other cultures (Niebhur, 1951:34). The Christian position assumes that there is one unified good for humanity which is rooted in the monotheistic theology of Christianity (Carter, 2007:40). This good is then imposed on a culture which, on its own, would be human-centred and polytheistic. Accordingly, PCI's worldview may assume that a Catholic worldview requires transformation, implying that Catholicism is informed by a non-Christian culture entirely, placing Catholics outside of Christianity (Twomey, 2003:51). In expressing such a potential value judgement, PCI equates its worldview with the culture in which it exists without any need of transformation. MEE would, therefore, become consumed with reconciling a Catholic worldview with the perceived cultural axioms of Presbyterianism. Such value judgements are based upon a belief that only PCI properly reflects the kingdom of God by being uniquely in covenant with God, and expressing the true culture of Christianity through one specific church. If, however, PCI would become convinced of a plurality of worldviews within culture, then the value judgements would fail. Grace would then flow in MEE toward Catholicism.

2.4.1. Cultural Osmosis

Cultural osmosis may provide an understanding of how assumptions are imbibed. This would suggest a less analytical and more personal formation of cultural assumptions (Kraft, 2009:46-49). The plurality of beliefs within a given culture is, therefore, assumed. Such assumptions are formed by the cultural osmosis. The worldview of a given denomination, such as PCI, includes more than its theological beliefs. It may even be that cultural interpretations of history and politics eclipse the theological axioms. If so, grace would ebb to those of a different worldview within a given culture. For this reason it may be important to address the cultural influences on PCI's worldview to discern the theological basis. This could then result in a

flowing of grace as the worldview's interpretation of culture and theological basis are better understood.

3. Presbyterian Personality

PCI's self-understanding informs its theological, ecclesiological and cultural interaction with MEE. PCI's personality has been described as "self-confident, grand, bold, defiant" (Rodgers, 1991:12). Such a view will be examined in the light of the theological justification for Presbyterian feelings of supremacy. The previous chapter outlined the influence which the Reformed *ordo salutis* has upon Presbyterian identity and praxis. Presbyterian personality can, therefore, be considered as having been influenced by Reformed, in particular Calvinist, theology and praxis (Reid, 1836:325; Whan, 2013:13; Edwards and O'Dowd, 2008:75). Interpreting the influence of the Reformed tradition in the light of the Reformed *ordo salutis*, an evangelical identity can be discerned within PCI. An evangelical identity would propose that MEE is primary to PCI's identity and praxis. It would further propose that grace flows through PCI in its service of the gospel.

3.1. Religious Identity and Group Membership

Personal religious beliefs admit people into the group which enshrines those beliefs. The group provides social support to aid living in society as well as a sense of common identity. A common sense of identity informs not only the group but also those who are different from the group (Hickey, 1984:60-61). Social constructivism makes this of particular relevance when considering Presbyterian personality. The social constructivist worldview can be improved by giving adequate attention to the role of theological doctrine in informing community identity. Social constructivism proposes where influences flow into a group; however, theology determines whether they ebb or flow from that group. If theology determines that certain beliefs are viewed as spurious, then grace will ebb in ecumenism, but flow in evangelism with a potential proselytising tendency.

3.1.1. Global Influences on Identity Formation

Identity formation is also informed through the global influence of contemporary living. Through globalism change happens at an accelerated pace. This makes identity harder to define because of the multiform nature of a global worldview. With the failing of fixed anchor points people often search for an alternative sense of safety and belonging (Melucci, 1996:2). Global influences have also impacted Ireland as the rest of the world. As an island, however, Ireland has seen a slower growth of secularisation (Coakley, 2010:4-28; Hornsby-Smith, 1994:265-290; Leerssen, 2001:204-222). In some senses the church still has a semi-privileged position rather than an independent position as in the wider Western world (Frei, 1992:1-2). Grace ebbs and flows from that position through social connections which the church in Ireland occupies. Perceived cultural conformity becomes significant to MEE by equating the denomination's worldview with a normative cultural authority.

3.1.2. The Cultural-Linguistic Framework

Using a cultural-linguistic framework aids understanding of Presbyterian personality in Ireland. The cultural-linguistic framework is used as a symbol of Irish culture in which religion plays a formative role in shaping life and thought. In this framework becoming a Christian involves learning biblical stories proficiently so as to be able to interpret and experience them in one's own world (Lindbeck, 2009:19-21). It has been noted that through identification with the covenant and the burning bush Presbyterianism defined itself as a pilgrim people in an antagonistic world. Such identification informs Presbyterian identity within Irish culture. The identification enables an interpretation of history, tradition, culture and politics. Grace would ebb where a cultural-linguistic framework challenges notions of theological difference. This is because grace was interpreted as flowing through one worldview, the Presbyterian, and not others. Symbols of a worldview, such as flags, institutions and political parties, then become central to Presbyterian identity beyond the theological. MEE would, therefore, attach symbols of the Presbyterian worldview to culture alongside a Reformed interpretation of the Christian faith. This could then result in

cultural divisiveness because one worldview is held as being synonymous with wider Irish culture.

3.2. Theological Formation Within PCI

This research asserts that religious identity is not formed exclusively by abstract theological reflections. Instead cultural, historical and political influences also have a formative role. The personality of a church can be discerned by the areas of distinction between the denomination and the congregation. The denomination provides the “church ideals”, the congregation carries them out in the local context (Douglass, 2008:4). This suggests a line of causality between denominational affiliation and congregational identity. Within PCI congregations express their worship and evangelism in different ways. If, therefore, the church ideal ebbs in grace toward a given view of the Catholic Church, the local potential outcome could be the same. Equally, if the denominational identity flows in grace toward the Catholic Church, the local congregation could resist that for local reasons.

3.2.1. PCI and “Church Ideals”

In terms of these “church ideals” how does PCI view itself as a denomination? Presbyterian identity is formed through three media: shared beliefs, practices and stories (Lucas, 2006:4). In the second medium, Presbyterianism shares much commonality with the Catholic Church: baptism, Eucharist or communion, ordination and hymn singing. The areas of divergence are in the doctrinal understanding of what these practices accomplish. This suggests that the doctrinal views of PCI may lie within the stories of how faith developed in Irish society and the uniqueness of such memories (Volf, 2006:90-91). One of these stories shared between PCI and Catholics is a common distrust and resentment of Anglicanism. This was due to having to contribute to Anglican clergy stipends (Megahey, 2000:14). A common historical identity of how grace ebbed from Anglicanism to both Presbyterianism and Catholicism could provide a common ground for MEE.

3.2.2. Cultural Identity and Religion

The connection between religion and a specific worldview offers a potential challenge to the identity of religion itself. Religion in Northern Ireland does a “secular” job of informing cultural identity and maintaining communal boundaries in society (Mitchell, 2004:243). Whether this is the purpose of religion can be debated. It may be that religion is being used as a general term to encompass every aspect of life in Northern Ireland-cultural, political, ecclesiastical as well as theological. If this is the case then it is important to distinguish between different religious strands and the accompanying cultural, political, ecclesiastical and theological convictions. Grace would ebb and flow in the importance attached to these accompanying convictions and the centrality they are given within the Christian faith. MEE would identify these convictions and use them as a means of identifying potential mission areas. The result could be a proselytising tendency toward different cultural, political and ecclesiastical traditions.

3.3. Presbyterian Multiplicity in Theological Thought

Presbyterianism is not theologically or practically uniform but represents a wide spectrum of Reformed theological opinion (Erskine, 1998:48). Such diversity can be understood as fragmentation, the ebbing of grace, or a rich abundance, the flowing of grace (Buschart, 2006:95). Differences are evidenced through the approaches to MEE within Presbyterian denominations and within PCI (Lucas, 2006:8). The many forms of Presbyterianism flow together in a common commitment to presbyterian polity and to Reformed theology, as outlined in Chapter One. The different strands of Presbyterianism may believe themselves to be more or less committed to the essential core of Reformed doctrine. Grace ebbs and flows between these strands and influences attitudes toward common MEE.

3.3.1. Presbyterian Identity and Cultural Transformation

An integral element of Presbyterian identity is a commitment to be “transformers of the culture in which we live” (Weeks, 1990:24). This is seen through engagement in different levels of society. A commitment to be transformers of culture can be discerned as a common commitment throughout the multiplicity of Irish Presbyterianism. This commitment affirms one of the principles of this research: that to be Presbyterian is to be evangelical in doctrine and praxis. MEE, therefore, exists at the centre of Presbyterian identity. The degree to which culture is interpreted as needing change, however, will determine the degree to which culture influences Presbyterianism. If a culture is viewed as essentially Christian, then grace would be deemed to flow into that culture and the church would align with that flow. Cultural manifestations which are deemed to be contrary to the doctrinal core of Presbyterianism would be interpreted as ebbing in grace. This may explain the different ways in which Presbyterianism relates to the culture of Ireland.

3.4. The European Roots of Irish Presbyterianism

As a Reformed denomination PCI can trace its roots to the European Reformation and John Calvin in particular. The Reformation’s goal was to eradicate from the church all which was not biblically mandated (Johnston, 2004; Sproul Jr., 2003; Buschart, 2006:86). This goal gave rise to the doctrine of the “regulative principle” in which ecclesiastical praxis was weighed against biblical teaching. The “regulative principle” was specifically applied to worship: “God rules all human life through his word, and he thus rules worship by Scripture” (Frame, 1996:38; Dawn, 1995:75-104; Gore, 2002; Hart, 2003:21-40; Hart and Muether, 2002:77-87; Johnston, 2005:9-29; Old, 2002:1-6). PCI’s relationship to culture, therefore, relates to the doctrine of the “regulative principle”, producing two possible outcomes. First, the ebbing of grace to non-Reformed traditions because they are viewed as not worshipping biblically. Second, an overly negative approach to what the Bible prohibits dominates thinking. MEE would be empowered with a proselytising tendency because of the apparent inauthenticity of non-Reformed worship. Ecclesiastical distance would also be implied as a means of maintaining doctrinal and practical purity.

3.5. The Scottish Roots of Irish Presbyterianism

The influence of Scottish Christianity on Irish Presbyterianism primarily through the plantation of Ulster was noted in Chapter Two (Irwin, 2009:52; Clayton, 1998:46). The Scottish influence is particularly seen in MEE because of Scotland's pioneering work in sending missionaries (Yates, 1994:21-24). The Scottish influence continues in PCI up to the present through the adoption of the WCF and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as "subordinate standards". The Westminster Standards were adopted on the precedent of the Church of Scotland (CoS) decision of 1 July 1643 to adopt the Westminster Standards as descriptive of the aims and objectives of the Scottish Church (Code, 2013:10-11; Holmes, 1985:30; Bailie, 2008:34). Grace flows from the Reformation in Scotland into the Irish Presbyterian Church. Whether grace will continue to flow to or ebb from Ireland to Scotland is debatable. The evidence seems to suggest an ebbing of grace from PCI to the CoS because of the latter's position on homosexuality (Belfast Newsletter, 2015).

3.5.1. Scottish Influences on Irish Presbyterianism

Two Scottish events have particularly affected Irish Presbyterian personality. First, the impact of the Scottish Covenant and the resulting 1641 uprising in Ireland. Second, the CoS failure to provide aid for Irish Presbyterians who suffered greatly as a result of the uprising (Holmes, 2000:26-27). The twin forces of Irish rebellion and perceived abandonment by Scotland led to a loss of identity. The loss of identity removed any sense of belonging to Scotland or resonance with Scottish culture (McBride, 1998:2). This loss of identity meant that after the 1641 rebellion Irish Presbyterians sought converts not only from Scottish settlers but also from the indigenous Irish Catholics (Dunlop, 1995:20-21). Grace ebbed from the Scottish influence to produce a distinctly Irish Presbyterianism. Grace also ebbed from positive engagement with Irish Catholicism, ending MEE with a potential proselytising tendency. Further, the perception of the Irish Catholic worldview and Celtic culture as being diametrically opposed to the essence of Reformed doctrine took root within Irish Presbyterianism.

3.6. Irish Presbyterianism and Evangelicalism

The evangelical conviction and ethos within PCI has already been noted and is evidenced in the doctrine of personal interaction with God (Uprichard, 2011:xiii; Dunlop, 1995:17). Accordingly, a genuine Presbyterian experience is a personal engagement with God (Miller, 1978:66). Such a clear connection between Presbyterianism and evangelicalism, however, is not universally acknowledged. A liberal Presbyterian tradition has also been identified (Ottati: 2006). MEE exists right at the heart of Irish Presbyterianism. Grace flows through the theology and the structures of the PCI into human lives. The issue becomes whether exclusivity is attached to the Irish Presbyterian belief in personal engagement with God. If so, grace would ebb toward traditions whose theology of divine personal encounter is understood to be deficient, and could potentially manifest in a proselytising tendency.

3.6.1. Irish Presbyterianism and Conformity

In 1662 seventy Presbyterian ministers were ejected from their congregations because of a refusal to use the Anglican Prayer Book (Holmes, 2000:40). While Presbyterian in polity, many of these ministers came from Scotland and were serving in the Church of Ireland (CoI), which was itself episcopalian. Up to this point there had not been division over ecclesiastical polity. Ministerial standing in the national Scottish Church was mirrored by ministerial standing in the Irish national Church, in much the same way as clergy in the CoI can serve in the Scottish Episcopal Church today. This demonstrated an ebbing of grace from the CoI towards non-episcopal church polity. This may be the reason Irish Presbyterians adopted a decentralised power structure in kirk sessions and presbyteries to distance it from episcopal polity (Dunlop, 1995:9). MEE was influenced by the 1662 events in alienating Irish Presbyterianism from the wider ecumenical context in Ireland. A distinctly anti-Catholic rhetoric developed. This was influenced through evangelicalism which viewed Catholics as “alien in race” (Brown, 1991:19). Such experiences and views would inform MEE with a potential proselytising tendency and a suspicion of proselytes from other traditions as polluting the purity of Irish Presbyterianism.

4. Theological Ecumenism

In giving consideration to ecumenism specifically, two principles regarding the church and doctrinal truth arise. First, the invisible church transcends all denominations and cannot be defined entirely by any denomination. Second, doctrinal truth ought never to be compromised (Erskine, 1998:62). These two principles, which are often held in tension, together vie for primacy in ecclesiastical praxis. At times grace will ebb in an exclusive understanding of denominational identity. At other times grace will flow in inter-ecclesiastical relationships and a common commitment to the core beliefs of Christianity.

4.1. Change in Ecclesiastical Relationships

Ecumenism works to effect change within ecclesiastical relationships: “It is the great test of the sincerity of the new relationship and the clarity of thinking behind it” (Hurley, 1998:199). Attention to the doctrines which divide the Christian traditions, therefore, becomes central to ecumenism. Mission is indivisibly linked with ecumenism because of the requirement to show the church’s unity in witness to the spiritual needs of the world (Hegstad, 2013:216). This expresses both a pragmatic and evangelistic view of unity. The pragmatic view emphasises grace flowing through different manifestations of the church into the goal of world evangelisation. The evangelistic view emphasises the need for the church to be active in missionary pursuits.

4.2. Reformed Baptismal Ecumenism

One aspect of Reformed theology and praxis which is implicitly ecumenical is the observance of the sacrament of baptism (Pauw, 2013a:134). Reformed baptismal ecumenism accepts the validity of the sacrament when administered by denominations with which there is theological difference. Catholic baptism, therefore, meets the requirements for validity as set down by the WCF (Hodge, 1846:320; WCF, 28:1-7). Grace flows through the Trinitarian baptismal formula irrespective of the ecclesiastical institutions. In Reformed theology baptism is the sacrament of initiation into the membership of the church (Ross, 2003:85-11). The

implication, therefore, is that the Catholic Church is a valid church, albeit one with which there is doctrinal disagreement. Grace flows from God, through the institution into the sacrament and back into the institution. Ecumenism would build upon grace's flow in baptism through inter-church relationships.

4.2.1. Reformed Understanding of the Catholic Church

Debate has continued within the Reformed tradition whether Catholicism is a Christian church or not because of its theological beliefs (de Chirico, 2003:22-23). This debate points back to the regulative principle which addresses certain Catholic doctrines which are not sanctioned in the Bible (Boettner, 1962:22, 27). While grace has ebbed where Catholicism is disqualified as Christian, grace has also flowed with the conversion of Reformed Christians to Catholicism out of theological conviction (Hann, 1993). On the basis of Reformed baptismal theology it is inconsistent to claim that Catholicism is not Christian. Ecumenism is, therefore, provided with a theological aim of better understanding ecclesiastical differences. Grace ebbs where theological truth is deemed to make the Catholic Church un-Christian, and flows where theological commonality with the Catholic Church is recognised.

4.2.2. Presbyterianism as Part of the Catholic Church

PCI identifies itself as part of the "Catholic Church Reformed" (Erskine, 1998:46). The implication being that there are other members of the Catholic Church who are not Reformed. The expression of common identity within Catholicism is then held in tension with the historical and theological influences of the Reformation. For PCI grace flows through the Catholic Church in the extent to which Reformation principles are embraced. Ecumenism is then endowed with a potential proselytising tendency, albeit within the wider family of the church.

4.3 John Calvin and Catholicism

Presbyterianism has a theological and historical relationship with John Calvin (Buschart, 2006:85; Falconer, 2008:29; Naphy, 2007:71; Erskine, 1998:45). Calvin's aim at reforming the Catholic Church led to his theological reflection on ecclesiology. He began correspondence with the King of France to plead for tolerance toward Huguenots, and part of the plea was a statement on Presbyterian polity (Lee, 1981). Calvin's influence is felt through John Knox, who returned from Geneva to Scotland, and proceeded to work toward reforming the Scottish Church along Presbyterian lines (Lingle and Kuykendall, 1986:45). Accordingly, Presbyterianism has defined the Church polity and Calvinism the theology (Lowery, 1985:109). In wrestling with historical theology on the nature of the church, consideration needs to be given to the historical and cultural context of the time. For Calvin grace flowed through the Reformation of the church, but often ebbed in statements regarding the Catholic Church which reflected the culture of the time.

4.3.1. Election, Justification and Catholicism

Calvin's understanding of Catholicism is linked to his view of the election of the church and divine superintendence of human history (Calvin, Vol. 1, 1957:369). One of the main areas in which Calvin and Catholicism disagreed concerns the nature of God. Catholic theology understands God as a "damning judge" rather than a covenant maker (Carroll, 2009:86). This impacts the doctrine of justification. Calvin understood justification as an acceptance into a covenantal relationship with Christ. This acceptance means believers are pronounced to have no case to answer before God's judgement because of Christ. For Catholicism justification comes through infused righteousness via the sacraments rather than covenant (Venema, 2007:68, 74). Calvin's view suggests that God interacts personally through covenant whereas the Catholic view suggests that God interacts corporately through the church. This impacts the *ordo salutis* because in the Reformed tradition justification is before sanctification whereas in the Catholic tradition sanctification is before justification (Ehlich, 1965:62). Sanctification would happen through the sacraments: "Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify" (CCC,

1995:319). Grace in Catholicism flows through the sacrament, via the clergy to people. In the Reformed tradition grace flows from God, through Jesus personally to Christians. Here MEE wrestles with the difficult question of which position on justification and election is theologically accurate. This informs the way in which grace flows toward the institution aligned with theological accuracy.

4.3.2. Calvin's Influence in Ireland

While not Irish, nor is there any evidence of him ever coming to Ireland, the influence of Calvin upon Irish Presbyterianism is considerable. Calvin is described as a “founding father of Presbyterianism” (Baillie, 2008:31). His theology provided Presbyterians with “a key to their social cohesion” (Sherling, 2016:49-50; Bowden, 1984:47-67). This would mean that Calvinism was a contributing factor in shaping Presbyterian identity within Ireland. Calvin’s theological views of the Catholic Church and the papacy would inform how Irish Presbyterianism engaged in MEE toward the Catholic Church.

4.3.3. Calvin and the Papacy

For Calvin the papacy became a matter of division because of its claims of jurisdiction in both temporal and spiritual life (Falconer, 2008:13-14). Calvin, however, did not attack the principle of the Petrine ministry itself. Rather he rejected papal claims which he believed obscured the Bible. This is a sanitised comment on Calvin’s view of the papacy and papal claims for the primacy of the Roman See. Calvin describes the pope as “the most inveterate enemy of Christ, the chief adversary of the Gospel, the greatest devastator and waster of the Church, the most cruel slayer and murderer of the saints” (Calvin, Vol. 2, 1957:385). Calvin believed that the See of Rome had become the See of the Anti-Christ, as evidenced through papal tyranny of the church, and pride (Calvin, 1996:5; Fung, 2003:173-176). Such statements reflect the historical context of the sixteenth century as much as theological formulation (Hurley, 1998:151-153; Ehrlich, 1965:37). For PCI this may mean that ecumenism requires some degree of rapprochement with the papacy prior to formal ecclesiastical engagement. It may require an apology from Calvin’s

successors for the vitriolic language used by Calvin concerning the papacy. A potential solution may be to distinguish between the individual pope and the office of the papacy. For PCI ecumenism would continue to have theological concerns with the claims made and the position given to the papacy in Catholic theology. The individual who is the Bishop of Rome, however, could be personally engaged with. This would allow grace to flow through interpersonal relationships without any claim that Reformed theological disagreement over the papal office is being compromised.

4.4. The Issues of Agreement

Before considering the theological differences between Presbyterians and Catholics, areas of commonality can be discerned. A common historical experience in Ireland of being required to contribute financially to the funds of the Church of Ireland is shared by both traditions (Hurley, 1998:83). Further, the concept of infallibility is shared by both traditions, Presbyterians emphasising the Bible, Catholics emphasising the Church's teaching (Küng, 1991:51-53). The commonality of infallibility, rather than aiding a flowing in grace, can be used to justify an ebbing in grace. As both traditions believe their doctrines to be axiomatic, how those doctrines are arrived at remains a point of sharp disagreement. Ecumenical engagement would, therefore, "recognise differences as differences and seek to find harmony without removing these differences" (Roussel, 2012:6). MEE would need to engage not only with different doctrines but also with the ways in which doctrine is formed without any particular goal of reconciling those differences, which may result in a proselytising tendency.

4.4.1. Inter-Church Marriage

Marriage is an institution which both Presbyterians and Catholics embrace. Catholics view marriage as a sacrament (CCC, 1995:1607-1654), whereas Presbyterians view it as a relationship between a man and a woman (WCF, 24:1). The praxis of marriage has been opened up to include the clergy of both churches and the promise to bring any children up in the Catholic tradition has been softened (Morgan et.al, 1996). The

doctrinal differences between PCI and Catholicism prove problematic: “a minister should not join in marriage a member of the Church with one holding beliefs or having a Church membership incompatible with the Christian witness of the Protestant Reformation” (*The Code*, 2013:28). For Catholics two special dispensations are required to sanction an inter-church marriage (Baillie, 2008:139-140). The Catholic Church, however, states that “difference of confession between the spouses does not constitute an obstacle for the marriage” (CCC, 1995:1634). The practical outcome of inter-church marriage now includes both spouses becoming members of both traditions (Hurley, 1998:47-48). The reason for this inclusive praxis may be down to the fact that for Catholics marriage is a sacrament witnessed by the Catholic Church, not conferred by it (CCC, 1995:452-453). Theoretically this opens up the potential for other clergy, from different traditions, to be involved in the marriage ceremony. Grace flows in Catholicism through a more open attitude toward inter Church marriages. Grace could equally ebb if a Presbyterian obeys the letter of *The Code* which would seem to exclude the possibility of inter-church marriages beyond even Catholicism.

4.4.2. Christian Vocation

Another area of theological agreement is that of Christian vocation. Both traditions learn from the Reformation principle that everything a Christian does is in service to God. This leads to a break in the division between sacred and the secular (ECT, 1995:36). This emphasis enables churches to flow together in MEE from a common understanding of the Christian’s role in the world. The differences about the nature of Christian vocation and ordination in particular remain to be addressed. Christian vocation, however, provides a means for both traditions to flow together in the unity and witness of the gospel expressed in MEE.

4.4.3. Corrymeela

One example of ecumenism was the establishment in 1965 of the Corrymeela Community, Ballycastle. Established by a Presbyterian minister, Rev. Ray Davey, Corrymeela began as a reflection on the need for peace after World War II (Davey, 1986:33-37). The ethos of Corrymeela was to change society through changing individuals as a personal response to sectarian division (Brow, 1994:152; Love, 1995:86; Ryan, 2001:290-291). Corrymeela was driven by individuals rather than denominations, being defined as “an idea, and, above all, it is people” (Wells, 1991:58). Although seeking to engage with the political culture of Northern Ireland, Corrymeela sought to keep personal politics at a distance (Baillie, 2008:75). The refusal to engage with party politics sought to position Corrymeela as a unifying witness to all of Northern Ireland. Corrymeela flows in grace through ecumenism by disentangling Christians from party politics, which reflect division. Grace continues to flow as different traditions interact with one another in a culture of acceptance, enabling theological and doctrinal differences to be debated.

4.5. The Issues of Disagreement

Highlighted areas of agreement between Presbyterianism and Catholicism does not negate the differences which do exist. Indeed, the theological reason for the Reformation “obstinately refuses to go away” (McGrath, 1994:199-200). If grace is to flow in MEE then a conscious engagement with these areas of disagreement is essential. Theological engagement was evidenced by The International Bilateral Dialogue, sponsored by the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

4.5.1. PCI's Disagreements with Catholicism

PCI has itself published *Agreements and Disagreements of Irish Presbyterianism and Roman Catholicism* (1991). One of the most obvious disagreements between PCI and Catholicism concerns the sacraments-obvious because of the seven sacraments in Catholicism: baptism, eucharist, confirmation, ordination, marriage, penance and extreme unction (CCC, 1995:1210), whereas PCI has two: baptism and communion

(WCF, 7:6; *Agreements and Disagreements*, 1991:7). It is also worth noting that American Presbyterianism has adopted a quasi-sacramental form of confirmation (Osmer, 2006:113). On the two sacraments where there is agreement, there is disagreement on how they function. The Catholic Church affirms baptism as the entrance into the church and, therefore, the presence of Christ. Accordingly, baptism flows from the cross (CCC, 1995:1225), producing a “life-giving effect” from the Word of God spoken in the rite (CCC, 1995:1228; *Agreements and Disagreements*, 1991:8-9). PCI believes baptism is the means of entrance into the “visible” church, as a sign and seal of what will happen when faith is added to it (WCF, 28:1; Crooks, 2001).

4.5.1.1. Scripture and the Catholic Tradition

Scripture in the Catholic tradition is interpreted through the Church rather than personally interpreted as in PCI, is interpreted through the Church. Interpretation comes via the teaching offices of priest, bishop and pope, and in reflection upon ecclesiastical tradition (*Agreements and Disagreements*, 1991:2-3). Accordingly, the Catholic Church maintains that they are the only true church, under the bishop’s and pope’s authority (*Agreements and Disagreements*, 1991:5). Presbyterianism affirms: “The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan” (WCF, 25:5). This has led to a cautious understanding of nature of the church and Christianity:

Thus Presbyterians and Roman Catholics each consider that, while it is possible for members of the other church to be Christian, they do not have the Christian faith in its fullness (*Agreements and Disagreements*, 1991:12).

How this tension can be resolved is unclear. Whatever interaction there may be in MEE, the totalising claims of both traditions seem to mitigate against any significant flow of grace. The extent to which these statements are adopted may in fact contribute to an ebbing of grace as each tradition views the other as somewhat defective.

4.5.1.2. Two Insurmountable Problems

Despite these developments, two insurmountable problems continue to remain for Presbyterians. First, the claims of the papacy for universal jurisdiction. Second, the doctrine of papal infallibility (Falconer, 2008:11-13. Power, 2006:5; McBrien, 1994:1188). Such issues have led some to question whether Catholic conversion was even possible (Rodgers, 1991:16). Grace by implication would ebb if a local congregation of Presbytery deviated from papal doctrine. The implication would be that of leaving the Christian faith.

4.5.2. The Confessional Basis

The common confessional basis of the first four ecumenical councils provides the core beliefs for both Catholicism and Presbyterianism (Willis, 1999:185). It could be said, therefore, that Reformed theology's future, as well as its past, is tied to ecumenism. PCI has expressed an ongoing pattern of interpreting and explaining their theological standards (*The Code*, 2013:11). Grace flows in the conversation with both the subordinate standards of PCI and Catholic theology, as well as their common confessional basis. Grace ebbs and flows where theological engagement on the common confessional basis happens and respect for different theological positions results. It is important for MEE to engage with doctrinal differences, to endeavour to understand the rationale behind those differences and to accept the logicity of their formulation.

4.5.3. The Hermeneutics of Theology

The theological basis of ecumenical dialogue raises a hermeneutical question of how theology is done. Catholic interpretation comes through the magisterium, doctrine flowing through the Church first (Naphy, 2007:54; Strimple, 1994:85). This is different from PCI where the right of private judgement is placed in the personal hands of believers. Not only is there the right of private interpretation, inspiration is not to be refused from any source (*The Code*, 2013:10-11; WCF, 22:2; Naphy, 2007:55-56). This difference of interpretation means that outside of the magisterium there is not the same reliance on personal understanding of the Bible, rather an

emphasis on the tradition of the Church. This also applies to the doctrine of salvation. In the Catholic tradition salvation is experienced through membership of the Church as people submit to its teaching and sacraments (Wells, 2008:49). If these disagreements are deemed to be insurmountable and mutually exclusive to a genuine Christian faith, then grace would ebb in MEE. If these disagreements are understood to reflect the influences which aided their hermeneutical development, then a flowing in grace would characterise MEE. Grace would flow because each tradition would acknowledge different influences on their theological development, which resulted in different theological formulations.

4.6. How the Catholic Church is Understood

How the Catholic Church is viewed by Protestants in Ireland is often based more upon doctrinal assumptions than theological engagement (Barritt and Carter, 1972:22). This has led to a personal engagement with Catholics as distinguished from a corporate engagement with the Catholic Church (Rodgers, 1991:23). The lack of corporate engagement between the denominations manifests in an ebbing of grace in MEE. Theologically, it is manifested by raising secondary theological issues to primacy, producing an obstacle for MEE (Schillebeeckx, 1987:8-9). The perceived unchanging nature of the Catholic Church has led to the assumption that Catholic theology “had always been uniformly bad” (Wells, 1973:17). PCI does not identify with this position entirely. While there are major theological differences, as noted above, the Catholic Church is understood to be Christian with vestiges of authenticity (*Agreements and Disagreements*, 1991:12). Any assumptions that Catholic Christians are less genuine than Protestant is, therefore, flawed (Rutherford, 1942:30-32). The Catholic Church in return also sees Protestants as part of the true church (McBrien, 1994:7). The ebb and flow of grace from PCI to Catholicism is often determined more by local issues than global, and by the local culture than by denominational theology. The influences of the unique culture and history of Ireland may inform PCI’s attitudes more than the global context of Reformation theology.

4.6.1. Globalism and Localism

The rectitude of adopting a global religious system at the expense of the local is problematic for three reasons. First, there is a lack of uniformity, second, there is a lack of system values and last, there is a lack of organisation (Schreiter, 2004:14-15). The same tradition in different locations, therefore, can express itself in different ways within the wider whole. The issue of the centralised government of the Catholic Church, however, needs to be considered as giving a greater degree of conformity than in other traditions. While contextual differences exist in Catholic praxis, there is also a commonality which may not be as readily seen in the Reformed churches.

4.6.2. The Context of Northern Ireland

The context of Northern Ireland provides a matrix for a world system to interact with local systems. The influences on the local system are, therefore, theological, political, cultural and historical. The challenge is to see through the local to the true nature of the Catholic Church (Buschart, 2006:17). The wording of the WCF along with the theology of the Westminster Assembly accepts the Catholic Church as Christian (WCF, 25:6; Gribben, 2011:93; Leatham, 2009:321-322; Hodge, 1846:320). The challenge for PCI is to flow in grace through ecumenism to a church which has significant theological differences with itself.

4.6.3. Calvin's Understanding of the Catholic Church

Apart from PCI's acceptance of the WCF as its subordinate standard, the views of Calvin also have a bearing. Calvin was primarily a reformer and not a schismatic (McEnhill, 2003:78). While critical of the Catholic Church, Calvin allowed for some elements of truth remaining in the Church (Calvin, Vol. 2, 1957:305). There is debate as to whether Calvin understood the Catholic Church as "not a true church anymore" (Puosi, 2008:118). There is also debate as to whether Calvin understood the Catholic Church as in ruins but the ruins still referencing the truth (Berkouwer, 1976:66; Bloesch, 2002:254; Hall, 2008:390-410). The answer would seem to be that Calvin viewed the Catholic Church as Christian, albeit compromised by an over-dependence

upon sixteenth century philosophy and clerical nominalism (Noll and Nystrom, 2005:39). Calvin also accepted, with critique, the movement of clergy and members between the Catholic Church and the Reformed (Spierling, 2008:92). Without ignoring the significant differences between PCI and Catholicism, the implication stands that the Catholic Church remains a Christian church. This would imply the need for PCI to flow in grace toward Catholics, if for no other reason than to highlight Calvin's critique of their doctrine.

4.6.4. The Nature of the Catholic Church

The nature of the Catholic Church differs from the Reformed churches. Regarding what constitutes the universal church, the Reformed churches highlight personal faith in Christ as "the whole number of the elect" (WCF: 25:1). The Catholic Church states that power is through the Pope, his teaching office, his infallibility, and the bishops (*Lumen Gentium*, 1964; Clowney, 1995:76). There is also a sacramental element in which the Church, in dispensing the sacraments of Christ, makes him known (de Lubac, 1950:29). In this sense the identity of the Catholic Church is seen in its commitment to the authority of the papacy. This differs from the Reformed position which believes the church has no authority but is a voluntary organisation (Lucas, 2006:134; Uprichard, 2011:78; Clowney, 1995:113). These differences can be summed up as follows: Catholicism sees the church as a connection to the Pope, whereas Presbyterians see the church as a spiritual connection to God. This is a fundamental difference in ecclesiology with ramifications for MEE. PCI, in not accepting the Pope's authority over the church, rejects it as an essential aspect of Catholic ecclesiology. Catholics, in not emphasising the spiritual nature of church membership, can accept members of an institution without personal conviction. It is in this tension that grace is needed to flow to enable better understanding. As grace flows between both institutions, a better understanding of their beliefs results, and new pathways are discovered beyond denominational doctrinal differences.

4.6.5. Historical Protestantism

Historical Protestantism began as a movement of reform within the Catholic Church (Hauerwas, 2015:57). The historical Protestant position, however, moved from viewing the Catholic Church as antichrist to being able to be reformed (Ramsey, 2009:160-161). If the Catholic Church, therefore, is able to be reformed it would imply that it is a true church, albeit with errors (Hodge, 1846:320; Noll, 1995:88-89). While the theological differences between Presbyterianism and Catholicism remain, the weight of the evidence suggests that the Catholic Church is indeed a true church. As such, grace ought to flow freely between the two traditions.

4.6.6. The Implications of a View of Catholicism

Taking a negative view of Catholicism could mean placing it beyond the remit of the kingdom, outside of covenant, and implicitly arguing for the exclusivity of a certain brand of Christianity. By implication this could identify the Catholic Church more with a culture which is seen to be “against Christ” (Niebuhr, 1951:45-49). If so, PCI may feel it needs to avoid ecumenism, emphasising instead evangelism to covert Catholics from false religion.

5. The Confessional Statements on Catholicism

The Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) is an ecumenical, historical document, accepted by a wide variety of Reformed traditions. This confession is different from the early church’s confessions expressed in the historic creeds. As a distinctly Reformed phenomenon, the WCF is valued within the Reformed tradition particularly (Leithart, 2016:27). The documents of the Westminster Assembly themselves also have an ecumenical flavour (Barkley, 1958:11). The WCF as the “subordinate” theological standards of the Church (*The Code*, 2013:11), defines PCI’s theological identity within the Reformed tradition (Willis, 1999:183; Tracy, 1987:9; Lucas, 2006:4). In adopting the WCF, PCI is expressing a theological sincerity and honesty to provide a worldview for its members (Alderdice, 2010:309). The WCF’s centrality is evidenced in the question asked to PCI elders at services of ordination and installation: “Do you accept the Westminster Confession of Faith . . .

to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God” (*The Code*, 2013:64). This question inquires about the personal confession of the elder’s faith, not about an abstract commitment to a historical theological document (Campbell, 1914:41; Boyd, 2006:32; Holmes, 2000:92). What the WCF teaches concerning the nature of the church, the Catholic Church and the Pope all have relevance for the ebb and flow of grace in PCI’s MEE.

5.1. The Text of the Confession

The WCF refers to Catholicism in its section on the nature of the church, focusing on who is the head of the church. It states:

There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ: nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God (WCF:25:6).

This statement could endue the ebbing of grace with a theological rationale. MEE would become partisan, on the grounds of confessional orthodoxy, as it seeks to avoid interaction with those who accept the papacy. The papacy is not just an issue for PCI, it is also an issue for Catholics, and reflects one of the greatest hindrances to ecumenism (Falconer, 2008:3). There are a number of issues which are difficult for PCI to accept within Catholicism: the negative view of the ordination of women (held also by some within PCI); the mandatory celibacy of the priesthood; the lack of private dissent amongst theologians; the reverence of Mary at the expense of Christ; formalised sacramentalism; the lack of a personal faith; and a strongly centralised power structure (Dunlop, 1994:412-413). The theological differences between PCI and Catholicism are an example of “theologies and catechisms in opposition” (Falconer, 2008:25). Such differences are not just a divergence in theological understanding but also in the meaning of the words used to describe the doctrines (Leithart, 2016:2). Identity is, therefore, formed by what PCI identifies with in opposition to and in disagreement with Catholicism. Grace ebbs if the WCF is taken as descriptive of current theological principles, not historical, and flows in the extent to which final authority is given to the WCF as a representation of Reformed theology’s authenticity.

5.2. The Confession and the Pope

The WCF describes the Pope as “antichrist”, a term of derision wrapped in theological language (Ward, 2004:230). Seventeenth century historical influences on the definition can be discerned, reflecting a time which represented “an age of unparalleled religious earnestness” (Lowery, 1985:110). There remains, however, a need to engage with the actual wording of the WCF, as it is “an axiom” of Protestant Christianity (Sproul, 2007:60). If the wording of the WCF on the Pope is universally applicable, then it would imply an evangelism aim to convert Catholics, and an ebbing of grace in ecumenism, separating over theological orthodoxy. The historical context of the WCF’s statement on the Pope needs to be considered. The application of theology in the seventeenth century was different from that of the twenty-first. Historically, theology framed all of life, today it is more of a private matter (Gore, 2008:9; Ford, 2004:123-124; Weeks, 2005:197-198; *Firm Foundations*, 1994:100; “Resolution of Assembly,” 1988:54). Taking the WCF’s statement as reflecting historical culture, in which theology controlled all of life, would release grace to flow toward Catholics in MEE. If the WCF’s statement reflects an axiomatic position of Reformed theology, then grace would ebb toward Catholics in MEE.

5.3. The Confession and the Papacy

The WCF engages with Catholic philosophy underlying Catholic theology. A need for Catholicism to explain their theological convictions becomes paramount. Any failure to do so is “a blasphemous treason upon divine prerogatives and treason to the human race” (Hodge, 1998:318). There is an assumption that the WCF provides correct theology. There is a need, however, to distinguish between the WCF’s theology, which is universally applicable, from that which reflects seventeenth century ideals. The anti-Catholicism of Cromwell and the Puritans is one such historical influence on the WCF’s theology (Warden, 1997:122-123; Williamson, 2004:251; Shaw, 1998:320-321). Added to the seventeenth century Puritan influences on the WCF, the Scottish influences also have a bearing on how Catholicism is understood (McKay, 2007:136-142). If the WCF represents the ebbing of grace in

Seventeenth Century convictions and theology, the issue of its relevancy for PCI in the twenty-first century arises. One way around this may be to identify the WCF's statement with individual popes, rather than the papacy as an institution (Falconer, 2008:15). While individual Popes may have influenced the WCF, the statement seems to reflect a critique of the papacy as an institution. The flowing of grace may, therefore, be aided by a theological critique of the papacy as an institution alongside a willingness to engage with individual popes.

5.4. The Confession and PCI

PCI has wrestled with the WCF's statement about the Pope. In 1988 (Annexure 5) a decision was taken by PCI to reinterpret the statement about the Pope:

The General Assembly under God reaffirm this teaching but declare further to their understanding that the historical interpretation that the Pope of Rome as a personal and literal fulfilment of the Biblical figure of "the Anti-Christ" and "the Man of Sin" is not manifestly evident from the Scriptures (Resolution of Assembly, 1988:54).

While the theological issues with the papacy as an institution remain for PCI, this revision enables a flowing of grace in MEE between the two traditions. The use of the term "literal" allows for an interpretation in which the papacy figuratively fulfils the figure of Anti-Christ and the Man of Sin. Identifying the papacy as figuratively fulfilling the criteria of Anti-Christ and the Man of Sin does justice to the historical influences on the WCF. Further, figurative interpretations enable a flowing of grace in MEE with individual popes, who may or may not reflect the ethos which led the WCF to make its attestations.

5.5. The Pope as a Figure for Unity

The Pope has been suggested to be a potential unifying focus for the church to aid grace flowing in MEE (Falconer, 2008:5). The challenge is, therefore, not just the wording of the WCF but the role the WCF occupies within PCI. PCI understands the WCF to be the unifying force within the Church (*The Code*, 2013:72). If Falconer's suggestion is adopted, this unifying force would then change to be the papacy.. A major theological transformation would need to occur within PCI to accept the

papacy as unifying, not least in the area of ecclesiastical polity. If the Pope became a unifying figure, then grace would flow from him to the church, and from the church in MEE. Rejecting the Pope, and indeed the primacy of the bishop's office in general, would then cut off a church from grace's flow entirely. MEE would become focused on extending the unifying role of the papacy. This could mean that a proselytising tendency toward communions which reject the papacy becomes paramount.

6. Mission-as-Evangelism and Ecumenism in PCI

Having considered the confessional theology on the Catholic Church, the ways in which PCI and the Catholic Church interact in MEE require consideration. This is a matter of "convergence ecumenism" (Lindbeck, 2005:28). The praxis of such convergence ecumenism has been noted as being driven both by PCI personalities as well as by the denomination. Two theological principles underlie convergence ecumenism: the true church is not confined to any denominational expression, and the pursuit of truth ought never to be compromised (Erskine, 1998:62). Convergence ecumenism is ideally suited to Presbyterianism because of its inherent openness, making PCI a "paradigm form of denomination" (Pauw, 2013a:133). Denominational identity becomes secondary to the wider theological category of being Reformed (Busch, 2003:20-33). The tension between maintaining the truth uncompromised but acknowledging that the church is bigger than any denomination, has typified PCI's MEE. When the truth is emphasised, an ebbing in grace results toward those with whom there is doctrinal difference. When the breadth of the church is emphasised, a flowing in grace results among the denominations.

6.1. PCI and Cautious Ecumenical Engagement

Within the wider Reformed constituency there has been a limited degree of ecumenical engagement between Presbyterians and Catholics, via the Reformed-Roman Catholic International Dialogue (1990:7). This limited degree results from Presbyterian polity. Clergy had to navigate between the tension of Reformed ecumenical ecclesiology and the local congregational attitudes to the Catholic Church (Irwin, 2009:176; Dunlop, 1995:12). Amongst the Protestant traditions

ecumenism flourished briefly in the PCI and Church of Ireland (CoI) talks on reunion (Ellis, 1992:76-88; McDowell, 1975:135-136). The problematic issue was ordination. CoI maintained the necessity of episcopal ordination, whereas PCI maintained that the presbytery has this role. Despite these immovable obstacles, there has been encouragement for clergy toward ecumenical engagement: “to be more outgoing in their association with the clergy and members of the Catholic Church, and encourage them where possible to study the Scriptures together” (Barkley, 1993:165). The 1990 Coleraine Declaration further enshrined an ecumenical ethos, looking for “a biblical ecumenism which is concerned with both truth and love” (Coleraine Declaration, 1990). These events paint a picture of a cautious and thoughtful flowing of grace through MEE.

6.2. Inter Protestant Ecumenism

As highlighted previously, there has been evidence of inter-Protestant ecumenism by PCI. In the 1970s this reached its zenith with the Tripartite Conversations between PCI, the CoI and the Methodist Church in Ireland (*Towards a United Church*, 1972). This ecumenism built upon joint evangelistic work between PCI and the Methodist Church from 1922 onwards, particularly in the Republic of Ireland (Megahey, 2000:125). The goal of a United Church in Ireland came to a conclusion in 1988 when PCI withdrew because of changes in the personnel of the commission (Kingston, 2002:1-2). This may demonstrate evidence of a growing conservatism within PCI, which also reached its zenith with PCI’s withdrawal from the World Council of Churches (WCC) (Power, 2006:63). The Tripartite Conversation attempted to reconcile different ecclesiastical polities and denominational doctrines. Little attention was given to the local congregation. The conclusion was that ecumenical unity will be achieved from the ground up and in so doing affect the leadership at the top (Hurley, 1998:35-36). Grassroots MEE has tended to be the pattern followed within PCI. This allows for local interaction without engaging with ecclesiastical or theological differences. Grace flows locally but not necessarily institutionally. This produces a tension between local ecumenical engagement and institutional ecumenical cautiousness. The flowing of grace locally cannot deal with

the theological differences of theological and ecclesiastical polity denominationally. While encouraging in local flowing of grace in MEE, the denominational ebbing can often overshadow the local.

6.3. Evangelicalism within PCI

Alongside ecumenism within PCI, a strong tradition of evangelicalism exists. There is some debate concerning the taxonomy of the term “evangelicalism.” The exact meaning is difficult to fully define. The term often requires another adjective to qualify its meaning (Webber, 1978:25; Noll, Plantinga and Wells, 1995:495). In this context the term “evangelical” is being modified by “Irish Presbyterian”. The evangelical position has gained a greater denominational control, meaning that ecumenical engagement has not been reconsidered (Holmes, 1981:173). The uniqueness of both evangelicalism within PCI and the culture of Northern Ireland have informed the subculture of evangelicalism within PCI. The result is that “some see direct links between their faith and political unionism, whilst others believe that faith is a private matter, and others again believe that evangelicalism calls to build peace rather than to protect their ethnic group” (Mitchell and Ganiel, 2011:4; Brewer and Higgins, 1998; Jordan, 2001; Ganiel, 2008). Within PCI evangelicalism is often suspicious of ecumenism because of a strongly “separatist and exclusivist” theology (Thompson, 1998:259). MEE ebbed in grace because of cultural, historical, theological and political influences upon PCI.

6.3.1. Who and What is Evangelicalism?

In order to understand the reasoning behind PCI and evangelicalism’s general distance from ecumenism, it is necessary to define what is meant by evangelicalism. The key tenet of evangelicalism is the understanding that “God has public importance” (Henry, 1990:70). This results in a general agreement on the key doctrinal positions: the doctrine of the Trinity, the unity of the Godhead, the infallibility of the Old and New Testaments, the virgin birth of Christ, universal human sinfulness and the exclusivity of salvation by faith in Christ (Catherwood, 2010:15-23; Murray, 1976:152-153; Edwards and Stott, 1998). Strict adherence to

these theological axioms inevitably draws distinctions with those of alternative views, whether within Catholicism or Protestant liberalism. An exclusivity orthodoxy is, therefore, implied within the definition of an evangelical. Exclusivity provides a practical rationale for grace ebbing in MEE in the name of theological truth.

6.3.2. Evangelicalism's Influences on PCI

Coming from the New Testament Greek word εὐαγγέλιον, evangelicalism emphasises the good news of the Gospel that God justifies sinners through the person and work of Jesus (Henry, 1990:75). This combines both the theological and the practical elements of evangelicalism. Within evangelicalism there is a multiplicity which lacks any “unified structure and centralised organisation.” The label “evangelical”, however, is able to include these different strands (De Chirico, 2003:30). Grace flows through the breadth of evangelicalism throughout the different denominations.

6.3.2.1. Ecumenical Evangelical Influences

Evangelical influences on PCI can themselves be understood as ecumenical. The influence of John Wesley, and his Arminian rather than Calvinist theology, has had an influence on PCI's evangelicalism (Wesley, 1980:358-361; McGonigle, 2011:13; Miller, 1978:66). Wesley visited Ireland twenty-one times on missionary visits (Wilson, 2011:106-107). The Wesleyan influence rejects any notion of God's sovereign choice in election being immovable. It has been claimed that welcoming Wesley into the Presbyterian pulpits in the eighteenth century demonstrated a reaction against strict Calvinism (Jeffrey, 1964:48). A practical evangelicalism became increasingly evident in praxis. This tacitly accepted the Arminian principle that “everything is at stake in the mission of the church” (Clough, 2004:46). Further, the emphasis on grace within PCI resonates with the Wesleyan principle that “responsible grace means that mission is the shared responsibility of the whole church” (Shier-Jones, 2004:30). Where PCI makes Wesleyanism its own is by rejecting the social aspect of Arminianism in favour of the evangelistic. PCI focuses on the need to see individuals converted rather than society transformed. This may be

because societal transformation would bring evangelicals into contact with Catholics, with whom they share many of the same ethical opinions. Any ebbing of grace in MEE in the name of theological orthodoxy may, therefore, become a moot point. There have already been non-Reformed influences on PCI's evangelicalism via Wesley. The challenge would be to widen those influences to potentially include Catholicism.

6.3.2.2. The Emphases of Evangelicalism

Other key emphases of evangelicalism are: conversion, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism (Bebbington, 1980:2; Stackhouse, 2011:116-142). As evangelicalism is contextualised within PCI, an alignment with national identity, political parties and Loyal Orders becomes manifest (Mitchell, 2003:260-269). A further manifestation is "liberal evangelicalism". Liberal evangelicalism is unassociated with political or cultural agendas and is often more comfortable with ecumenism (Mitchell and Ganiel, 2011:29). This research identifies evangelicalism within PCI as being generally suspicious of ecumenism. This suspicion emphasises the flow of grace in MEE as primarily personal, in reconciling people to God. Any wider social implication for evangelicalism is either ignored or abdicated to political and cultural institutions.

6.3.2.3. Evangelicalism and Politics

Evangelicalism's abdication of social commentary to political and cultural institutions has tied it to a monolithic worldview, namely Unionism. Conversely, in so abdicating the social commentary, evangelicalism has become self-defeating. Rather than highlighting the need for personal reconciliation, cultural supremacy has become dominant. Cultural supremacy assumes the superiority of Protestant/British/Unionism over Catholic/Irish/Nationalism. In some cases it has even placed Catholics beyond conversion, because of their "errors of belief" (Barritt and Carter, 1972:23-24). The marriage between evangelicalism and politics exists because cultural symbols carry theological meaning. Any rejection, therefore, of flag, nation or political ethos is interpreted as a rejection of the gospel. This results in an ebbing

of grace in MEE, not on theological grounds but on cultural ones. It could also endue PCI with a proselytising tendency as MEE becomes a means of recruiting more people to its Protestant/ British/ Unionists.

6.3.3. Revivalist Influences on PCI

The influence and experience of revival upon PCI has been noted previously. This produced a large number of conversions, the establishment of new churches, and even “unusual phenomena and emotional behaviour” (Holmes, 2005:361). Six Mile Water was a significant event in the history of Irish Presbyterianism. The preacher, Rev. Glendenning, had a powerful effect on his listeners, producing feelings of extreme “anxiety” concerning their spiritual condition (Stewart, 1936:44). In his revivalism he is claimed to have used unorthodox methods (Carnduff, 2003:35). If evangelicalism is the theological category which defines PCI, revivalism would define the theological praxis and expectation. Grace flows spiritually to transform people and through them the nation. Revivalistic influences on MEE could manifest in partisan ecclesiology and denominational distance.

6.4. The Davey Heresy Trial

One event which has had a profound impact on Irish Presbyterianism was the heresy trial of Rev. Prof. J.E. Davey (*Record of the Trial*:1927; Fulton, 1970:32-33). Davey was Professor of Biblical Languages at Assembly’s College in Belfast. Davey has been variously described as “one of the most distinguished men of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland” and a “genius” (Montgomery, 1972:15). This heresy trial gave birth to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church as well as the Free Presbyterian Church. As a theological event the trial raised the issues of progression or continuity in theological positions. There is also a wider implication as it was a “really significant heresy trial in a major British religious denomination” (Alderdice, 2010:305-306). Grace ebbed toward theological difference, but was also deemed to flow in the fight for theological orthodoxy.

6.4.1. The Reason for the Trial

The kernel of the issue was the continuation of orthodox theology as a foundation for MEE in the Church. Davey was charged with five counts of heresy: the grounds of human forgiveness; the perfection of Christ's character; the inspiration, authority and infallibility of Scripture; the source of human sinfulness; and the doctrine of the Trinity (Dunlop, 1995:14-15; Jordan, 2013:97). These charges were primarily based on his 1923 book (Davey, 1923). The charges were brought by W.J. Grier, a licentiate under the care of the Belfast Presbytery, and Rev. James Hunter, minister of the Knock congregation in East Belfast and President of the Bible Standards League. The trial reflected a tension between the theological conservatism and strict adherence to the WCF of Grier, and a perceived liberalism of Davey (Holmes, 2000:131; Jordan, 2013:96-97). Davey was ultimately acquitted of heresy: "His brilliant defence of his position before Presbytery and Assembly won him an overwhelming verdict of acquittal" (Holmes, 1985:154). The result of Davey's trial was a suspicion regarding ecumenism because of a perceived dilution of theological orthodoxy. Grace ebbed in ecumenical engagement but was interpreted as flowing in the cause for public evangelicalism.

6.4.2. The Impact of the Trial

The trial had important implications for ecumenism. Davey was viewed as theologically liberal and active in ecumenism. Yet Davey shared a common suspicion of Catholicism with Grier and the Bible Standards League (Holmes, 1985:169-170; 2000:147). The initial impact of Davey's acquittal was the withdrawal of both Hunter and Grier from PCI. This resulted in the establishment of the Irish Evangelical Church, later rebranded the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Holmes, 2000:131; Jordan, 2013:97). A further impact of Davey's trial is discerned theologically within fundamentalism. Fundamentalism shifted its focus from evangelism to the perceived doctrinal errors within the churches. With the growth of fundamentalism grace ebbed in MEE through separation over perceived theological errors. This made confessional identity and theological orthodoxy a "symbol of affirming an intransigent and even

sectarian identity” (Groupe des Dombes, 1993:2). MEE became partisan. The expression of theological positions other than that deemed orthodox by the fundamentalists became a sign of the need of conversion. A proselytising tendency, therefore, soon dominated evangelicalism.

6.5. The Ministry of W.P. Nicholson

The 1920s also saw the return of Rev. W.P. Nicholson, an Irish Presbyterian cleric, to Northern Ireland from the USA to conduct a series of gospel crusades (Alderdice, 2010:307). A possible trans-Atlantic influence can be discerned here as Grier, having left PCI, travelled to America to train under J. Gresham Machen at Westminster Theological Seminary. The Seminary was product of schism from the Northern Presbyterian Church and Princeton Theological Seminary. Grier also fellowshipped within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, which was also birthed by Machen (Jordan, 2013:98). One of the significant aspects of Nicholson’s ethos was the avoidance of addressing Catholicism. This was due to advice from Unionist politicians about a potential backlash against Protestants. Instead he focused on perceived liberals and ecumenists within the existing Protestant denominations (Alderdice, 2010:307). Nicholson’s ministry was formed more by political expediency than by theological conviction. This suggests a close relationship between evangelicalism and Unionism. To attack perceived Protestant liberals was a soft option, rather than engaging with the theological differences between Catholicism and Presbyterianism. Grace ebbed in Nicholson’s ministry within wider ecumenical relationships and between different Protestant denominations. Grace also flowed within an evangelicalism which spanned the different Protestant denominations.

6.6. The Impact of Vatican II on PCI

Vatican II (1962-1965) is recognised as one of the key events of the twentieth century. It effected an “aggiornamento”, or updating, amongst both Catholics and Protestants. This enabled evangelical engagement with individual Catholics and Catholic agencies (de Chirico, 2003:49). The original purpose of the updating was

the communication of the gospel to the world in a clearer manner (Martin, 2012:1). Upon returning from Vatican II, John Charles McQuaid, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, was asked if anything had changed. His response was: “Nothing.” This suggests a reticence within Irish Catholicism to engage with the Protestant Church (Lane, 2004:67-84; Cooney, 1999:358). Such a statement raises the question: If the changes of Vatican II were being resisted in Irish Catholicism, what impact did they have upon PCI’s ecumenism? The answer would seem to be that it reinforced traditional ecclesiastical stereotypes.

6.6.1. Vatican II as a Cultural Event

Vatican II has been described as a “cultural event of historical importance,” akin to the first Christians understanding that the gospel applied to the Gentiles also (Carrier, 1993:7, 13). One of the key documents of Vatican II was *Lumen Gentium* (1964). *Lumen Gentium* deals with the essence and identity of the church. *Lumen Gentium* (1965:paras. 8, 67, 69) addresses the “separated brethren” on three occasions. It notes that Protestants are outside of the Church governed by the successor of Peter; Catholics are to be careful of their influence which may lead to error concerning the true nature of the Church; and a joy at the reverence give to Mary the “Mother of God” amongst some of the “separated brethren.” The Catholic Church, however, is no longer considered to be essential to salvation. Salvation now comes from internal inner attitudes (Wells, 1973:77). This ought to have encouraged PCI toward ecumenical engagement as the possibility of salvation amongst those outside of Catholicism was now acknowledge in Catholic theology. Grace flows from God directly to people, the same as enshrined in PCI’s evangelicalism. MEE could, therefore, become inclusive of all Christian traditions, manifesting a common flowing in grace.

6.6.2. PCI's Response to Vatican II

PCI's response to the 1965 Vatican decree on ecumenism was positive within the General Assembly, yet resisted locally. The reason for a cautious local response was attributed to Irish Presbyterians being able to "see the beam in the eyes of their Roman Catholic countrymen more clearly than they could see the mote in their own" (Holmes, 1985:170-171). There was a fear that Vatican II marked the beginning of a Rome-ward trend within PCI. This dovetails with the social constructivist view that beliefs are not made in isolation from context and human influence. Irish society has had a formative influence in the moulding of ideas. This also seemed to contradict the general principle that ecumenism is generally congregational rather than institutional. The fear of Catholic expansion and the perceived threat of a return to Rome effectively killed any further debate by raising the deepest fears within PCI. Grace ebbed from PCI to Catholicism because of Vatican II rather than flowing when confronted with the evidence of real theological change.

7. PCI and the Northern Irish State

PCI as a religious and theological institution exists within the historical, political, cultural and religious context of Ireland, both north and south. This context informs PCI's identity as much as does the theology of the Reformation. Religion has been used to legitimise the Northern Irish State which was established in 1922 (Fox, 2001:65-66; O'Brien, 2010:7). A symbiotic relationship between PCI and the political establishment of Northern Ireland can be seen in the explicit and implicit engagement of PCI in party politics. This led to a correlation between Protestantism/ Unionism and Catholicism/ Nationalism. Grace ebbed from politics into Presbyterian religion and from Presbyterian religion into politics. Grace ebbed when controlled by political identities which disenfranchised Catholicism/Nationalism.

7.1. Systematic Theology

This research is theologically considering PCI's MEE within Ireland. Systematic theology provides a "creative interpretation of existence" carried out through history in all contexts (Tillich, 1968:4). A distinctly prophetic aspect is inferred theologically as the church critiques context from a faith perspective (Lonergan, 1971:185). PCI is formed through the uniqueness of the Irish context and, while sharing similarities with other Reformed churches, PCI is itself unique. Grace flows through the context into PCI producing Irish Presbyterian theology. Grace ebbs when influences other than theological are used to interpret the Irish context.

7.2. Historical Theology

Historical interpretation informs how PCI interprets its role as an agent of MEE (Tracy, 1987:39). Interpretation connects a religious identity with a political position. History also informs PCI's view of Catholicism through the influences of the Irish context as well as the doctrinal (McMaster, 1994:8). History is then celebrated in poetry and song within the religious communities (Falconer, 2008a:23). Systematic theology, therefore, is rooted in contextual theology, because universal theology provides general characteristics without making reference to the tapestry of local contexts (Schreier, 1994:1-2). In this way the unique local context of the church, in Ireland and within the cultural traditions in Ireland, is held in tension with the universal theologies of the Reformed and Catholic churches. PCI's theological attachment to history informs the ebb and flow of grace in MEE.

7.3. The Catholic Context in Northern Ireland

PCI's interpretation of history is but one position in Northern Ireland. Another tradition, that of Irish Catholicism, also exists and makes similar claims of authenticity. Irish Catholicism understands itself as elect, not just in terms of individual predestination but also collectively. This understanding has sustained them through difficult times (Twomey, 2003:23-34). There is a similarity in the use of historical interpretation with that of any religious tradition. The interpretation of historical facts, however, may result in radically different conclusions. Thus PCI can

believe that its position is axiomatic to theological and religious truth just as Catholicism can. This would imply the need to flow in grace between the different communions to understand their self-identities.

7.3.1. Interpreting the Doctrine of Election

Interpreting election in history raises difficulties for MEE. First, there is a feeling of superiority which may lead to an evangelical malaise as membership of the community is seen as essential to salvation (Martin, 2012:5). Second, different traditions wrestle for superiority amongst themselves, making the political, cultural and ecclesiological aspects of Northern Irish life become even more significant and divisive. Election provides an understanding of the flow of grace into a community and justification for an ebbing of grace from non-elect communities.

7.3.2. The Role of Memory

The connection between historical interpretation and salvation happens through memory: “When we remember the past, it is not only past; it breaks into the present and gains a new lease on life” (Volf, 2006:21). Memory affects the present by bringing past events into the now. This moulds current praxis by ignoring any current developments within the present cultural context. From PCI’s perspective, interpreting the past could result in the idea that grace has flowed only to them, because only they have received salvation. This would attach a sense of superiority to PCI resulting in an ebbing in grace from other traditions. MEE, therefore, becomes focused on furthering the reach of one tradition, and may embrace a proselytising tendency.

7.4. Scottish Planters and a British Mentality

The historical and theological influence from Scotland upon PCI has already been highlighted. The doctrine of predestination provides a sense of purpose to the initial settler communities. This produced a fear of their close proximity to the Catholic Irish (Higgins, 2013:26). Interpreting theology through the matrix of culture is another manifestation of social constructivism. Such interpretation in turn has an

impact upon the markers of a given culture which have theological significance attached to them. Presbyterianism came to Ireland through the plantation of primarily Scottish settlers. The relationship had historical precedent before the seventeenth century, as noted before in the Celtic church and Iona. The planters mentality could be interpreted as God's grace flowing to his chosen people as they took possession of their inheritance in Ireland. Grace would then ebb toward those who are not understood as predestined and whose ownership of Ireland then becomes suspect.

7.4.1. The Scotch Gaelic Language

The Scots Gaelic language shared the same philological root as the Gaelic spoken in Ireland. This enabled communication between the planters and non-English speakers and permitted cultural engagement (Malcom, 2006:2, 5-6; Blaney, 1996; Stothers, 2007). It aided the transplanting of the Scottish Presbyterianism into the Irish culture, as well as Scottish commerce and entertainment. The use of the Irish language took place naturally and pragmatically without any attached cultural agenda (Malcolm, 2006:7). Prior to the partition of Ireland the Irish language became associated with the aim of Irish independence. A romantic association with Irish culture fuelled the leaders of Sinn Fein and the uprising of 1916 (Garvin, 2008:176-177). With the political partition of Ireland many Protestants were distanced from the Irish language. This became institutionalised in Protestant state schools where little or no access to Irish was offered, but it was offered within Catholic schools (Darmody and Daly, 2015:25). This led to the Irish language becoming associated with a Catholic/Nationalist political position (Cahill and O'Cathail, 2007:111-126). Such politicisation of the Irish language produced a feeling of alienation by Protestants, who saw the Republican use of the language in their statements of violence (McCoy, 1997:161). What began as a means of flowing in grace between Scottish settlers and the native Irish ended up as a source of grace ebbing because of a political overshadowing.

7.4.1.a. Presbyterians and the Irish Language

The initial use of the Irish language by Presbyterians became widespread (Blaney, 1996; Stothers, 2007). It soon, however, became to be associated with the Catholic Church (McBride, 1998:1). This has produced a distance and ignorance of the Irish language and an abandonment of Irish as a potential means for Presbyterian expression (Pritchard, 2004:82). Currently there are no congregations of PCI in Ireland which conduct worship in the Irish language. A rediscovery of the Irish language, however, may be a potential tool for PCI's MEE in contemporary Ireland: "I believe that the Presbyterian Church had a natural, people-centred affinity with the Irish language" (Malcolm, 2006:12-13). Such a natural affinity may be a way of engagement with the Catholic community without carrying the cultural, historical and political baggage attached to the Protestant/ Unionist alliance. The Irish language, therefore, represents a common cultural and historical experience which the two traditions share. This would then provide a route toward a common cultural understanding beyond political and cultural labels. Grace could flow through the use of the Irish language, which would provide a non-political but common historical means of ecclesiastical engagement.

7.5. The Failure of the Irish Reformation

The Plantation of Ulster did not, however, effect reformation within the Irish Church. Instead a rival ecclesiology was established alongside episcopalianism. Initially this was tolerated within the CoI, but non-conformity was soon expelled (Erskine, 1998:46). In a sense Irish Presbyterianism can be viewed as an immigrant ecclesiology seeking to implant an alternative ecclesiastical culture. As such, the concept of covenant had specific resonance for early Irish Presbyterians. This tied their identity to election and separation from those outside of the covenant. As Presbyterianism took root in Ireland it adapted to its new context and developed a unique Irish Reformed theological identity. This in turn has impacted relationships with the mother CoS. In recent years there has been a perception of a liberal tendency within the CoS. This is seen in respect of the issue of homosexuality that has further driven a wedge between mother and daughter (Church News Ireland,

2011). PCI's identity, therefore, has not been formed exclusively by theological reflection but also by the context in which it was planted in Ireland and its connection to Irish history. The ebb and flow of grace is the product of the cultural, historical, political and ecclesiological context of Irish Presbyterianism.

7.6. National Identity

The issue of national identity has defined the history of Ireland. Divisions within Ireland relate to the Scottish influence, via Presbyterianism, primarily in the north east of the island (Waterman, 1984:106). This influence was maintained through Irish Presbyterianism's links with the various nineteenth century Scottish Presbyterian churches (Cooke, 1925:343). Division became even more pronounced with the passing of the fourth Home Rule Bill, "The Government in Ireland Act," in 1920. Further, the "Irish Free State Agreement Act" in 1922, by the Westminster Parliament, divided the island into two nations with their own governments (Altholz, 2000:114-120). Partition happened because of the fear of Northern Protestants at being a minority in a majority Catholic country where their history, politics, culture and religion did not have a privileged position (Duffy, 2009:116). The flow of grace became particularly tied to a political identity in the northern six counties. Yet PCI retained a presence in both countries. How grace could flow in a majority Catholic context when PCI was seemingly aligned to one cultural position in the North proved an issue of reflection.

7.6.1. The Demographics of Northern Ireland

The political breakdown in the new Northern Ireland became Protestant/ Unionist/ Loyalist and Catholic/ Nationalist/ Republican. Accordingly, "for the majority of people in Northern Ireland their political identity and their religious affiliation are almost coterminous" (Mitchell, 2005:28-29). The religious affiliation defines and fosters political identity. The nonconformist congregations, of which PCI is one manifestation, reinforced the Ulster-Scots identity (Barnard, 2007:227). A tribal affiliation may help to understand the Protestant assumption that the Catholic Church's involvement with politics "is a great threat to civil and religious

liberty” (Barritt and Carter, 1972:27-28). Religious affiliation has a profound influence, therefore, upon the personal understanding of nationality in Northern Ireland, perhaps even more so than theological position (Mitchell, 2005:29). The challenge to PCI as a religious institution was how it could manifest the flow of grace to another tradition whose identity was so different from their own. In many cases this challenge was ignored. Instead a mentality developed which closely associated national identity with Reformed theology.

7.6.2. Presbyterianism in Northern Ireland

With the establishment of Northern Ireland Presbyterians became dominant in society. The 2011 Northern Ireland Census demonstrates that, from a population of 1,810,863 people, Presbyterians make up 19.06% (345,150), Church of Ireland 13.74% (248,813) and Methodists 3% (54,326) (*Census 2011*). This has remained fairly constant: PCI 336,891, Church of Ireland 299,280 and Methodists 59,517 in 1991 (*Census, 1991*); PCI 410,215, Church of Ireland 353,245 and Methodists 66,639 in 1951 (*Census, 1951*). While some Presbyterians were located outside of Northern Ireland, the alliance with the Church of Ireland through the Orange Order placed PCI in a strong position (Bruce, 1988:15). This context connected PCI in the North with the new governmental institutions and impacted attitudes toward MEE in Ireland. Seen through the matrix of the kingdom of God, the political association became as significant as the coming of the eschatological kingdom. Covenant would have suggested God’s choosing of the Ulster Protestants and their protection of them from Irish Catholicism. The church would then be tied to one cultural manifestation of democracy within a British, Unionist, partitioned Ireland. Grace would be tied to a political identity rather than the supra-political kingdom of God. This would in turn inform how PCI flowed in grace toward Catholicism on the basis of non-theological reasons.

7.7. Irish Presbyterianism and Unionism

With the majority in Northern Ireland being Protestant, the political affiliation ensued as the majority of Presbyterians aligned themselves with the Unionist party. This symbiotic relationship has its own unique problems: “Most religious traditions, however, have their own history of compromise with political power and privilege and of complicity in violence that has marred human history” (The San Antonio Paper, 1990:4). The implication is that the Christian faith is in danger of being captured by ethnicity and nationalism as it protects the privileges and lifestyles of certain groups. The church’s primary calling, however, is to be a prophetic voice and symbol showing itself as “a community of relevant moral witness for such a world” (Best and Robra, 1997:52). Identification with one political grouping makes the church something less than the all-encompassing community of grace.

7.7.1. Henry Cooke and Unionism

The connection between PCI and Unionism through Henry Cooke has been noted previously. Cooke opposed the 1829 “Catholic Emancipation Act”. He also opposed the reopening of the Irish Parliament which had been dissolved with the 1800 “Act of Union”. He further openly opposed Daniel O’Connell, the Irish political leader who campaigned for Catholic emancipation and the reinstatement of the Irish Parliament (Boyd, 2006:43-54; Holmes, 1981:93-124). This clear alignment of Presbyterianism with a distinctly British, pro-Unionist and anti-Catholic agenda would become dominant in PCI. Cooke’s supporters included followers those outside of PCI. Revs Thomas Drew, William McIlwaine and Thomas Wellesley were from the Church of Ireland. Within PCI Rev. Hugh Hanna, of Berry Street congregation, was an ardent anti-Catholic in the tradition of Cooke (Jordan, 2013:86; Baker, 1998:803). Hanna preached widely in the open air, often resulting in public disturbances because of his anti-Catholic rhetoric (Farrell, 2009:147-148; Magee, 2001:88). Hanna also encouraged the support of anti-Catholic political candidates and opposition to Liberal emancipation policies (Holmes, 2014:141). It is interesting that the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, rather than PCI, has been suggested as the successor to Cooke’s tradition in Ireland (Scanlan, 2006:46).

7.7.2. The Parliament of Northern Ireland and PCI

From 1921 until 1932 the Parliament of Northern Ireland sat in the Chapel of Assembly's College, Belfast, the seat of the Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland (Holmes, 2000:125-126). This close connection has led some to assume that Presbyterianism and Unionism are synonymous (Morrow, 1998:495). Indeed, Presbyterians particularly benefited from the close connection to the Parliament and produced a sense of duty within them toward the political establishment (Irwin, 2009:29; Dunlop, 1995:96). The Presbyterian/ Unionist/ Loyalist axis may explain why PCI is strongest in Antrim and Down and less so in more Catholic/ Nationalist/ Republican counties (O'Brien, 2010:2). The Presbyterian/ Unionist/ Loyalist axis may also answer why grace was less likely to flow into contexts where Catholicism directly opposed the Protestant hegemony.

7.7.3. The Geography of Ireland

Geographical and social factors have also contributed to Unionist affiliation. The connection with Scotland was maintained through clerical education as the Church trained ministers within the Scottish universities (MacLaughlin, 1992:393). This could be interpreted as Unionism by convention rather than conviction. Grace flowed easier across the Irish Sea to Scotland than within the context of Ireland. Instead an ebbing of grace was more evident toward Catholics and their attached political aims of Irish Nationalism.

7.7.4. PCI and the Northern Irish Government

The Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist axis is further endorsed by PCI clergy serving as political representatives in the first Northern Ireland Government. Very Rev. Prof. Rt. Hon. Robert Corkey, professor of theology, was the Ulster Unionist member for Queen's University from 1929 until 1943. He was elected to the Senate from 1943 to 1965, and served as Assistant Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Finance (Assistant Whip) from 6th February 1942 to 6th May 1943, Minister of Education from 6th May 1943 to 21st March 1944 and Deputy Speaker of the Senate

from 1952 to 1953 and from 1957 to 1958. He was also the Moderator of PCI's General Assembly from 1945 to 1946 (<http://www.election.demon.co.uk/stormont/biographies.html>). Such a close connection was not without implications. Lord Brookborough, Northern Ireland Prime Minister (1943-1963), sacked Corkey as Education Minister in 1944 because Corkey was unable to be physically present in the Department of Education. Corkey claimed, however, that he and Brookborough had fundamental political differences (Barton, 1995:70; 2008:250). The independence of the flow of grace is challenged through a close political and religious alliance. If grace were to ebb politically toward Catholics, PCI, because of its close connection to Unionism, would be included.

7.7.4.1. The Challenge of Robert Corkey

The tie of PCI to Unionism through Corkey raises some issues of concern. A connection between a theological position to a party political philosophy puts stress on different political opinions within PCI. It also is challenged by Bonhoeffer's notion that those in privileged positions ought to work for the betterment of others (Plant, 2013:85). If applied to MEE it could assume that conversion to the theology of PCI implies an adoption of Unionist politics. It could also imply a degree of prejudice and intolerance, as "political leaders are not as worried about offending religious minorities as they are about offending the religious majority" (Newman, 1982:131). The motivation to keep Northern Ireland Protestant would then become both theological and political. The flow of grace would relate primarily to the religious majority Protestant tradition and ebb toward the Catholic minority tradition. The kingdom of God as transcending political reality is then ignored. Covenant is tied to geography rather than to membership of the church. PCI would effectively ignore the fact that there is more than one culture existing within Ireland and the church transcends cultural identity.

7.7.5. The Theology of Unionism

The religious political axis between PCI and Unionism begs the question of how Unionism theologically understands Catholicism. One of the aims of this dissertation is to theologically critique culture as not being neutral, but alienating to another culture (Smith 2009:23). Despite the claim for neutrality, any system which includes politics, religion, history and culture as influences is inherently biased. This is why an attack on the system produces a passionate defence (Wolters, 2005:2-4). Accordingly, a theology of Unionism is offered. It has been argued that Unionism is not anti-Catholic per se, rather it is anti-Rome. This comes from a fear that religious freedom and a good economic standard of living would be destroyed in a United Ireland, which would be unduly influenced by Rome (Hurley, 1998:225). The influence of Catholicism is traced, therefore, into the public arena. This position is challenged through the ministry of Rev. Dr. James Alexander Hamilton Irwin. Irwin was a Scot and minister in the PCI congregation of Lucan, in Dublin from 1937 to 1954. Irwin was a close personal friend of Eamonn de Valera, the leader of Fianna Fail and the anti-treaty Nationalists. With De Valera Irwin wrote the draft Irish Constitution in the Lucan manse (Bailie (ed.), 1982:439; Keogh, 2003:241). This connection enabled Article 44.1.3. of the Irish Constitution to recognise Presbyterians and other non-Catholic groups including Judaism, rather than the Catholic Church as the official religion (Cooney, 1999:100). This challenges the view that Ireland was controlled by Catholicism. Unionism ebbed in its grace toward Catholicism by wilfully or ignorantly ignoring the role of Presbyterians within the Irish political state.

7.7.5.1. Catholic Unionists

There are examples of Catholics who have been Unionists. Sir John Gorman, who was a Unionist Assembly member from 1998 to 2002, is one example (Gorman, 2002:3). In the main, however, the Unionist political position has been the Protestant theological position. This implies that the criteria for MEE is as much political as spiritual. It also raises the question whether one who holds to Presbyterianism but is not a Unionist is true to their principles. The implication would be that anything

other than Unionism is inconsistent with Presbyterianism. Unionism, as a political philosophy, without any theological overtones, would sit better with the kingdom of God's transcendence of politics. It would move covenant to a religious rather than political identity. It would liberate the church from a political agenda, enabling the church to work within different Irish cultures without expressing a personal preference for, or the supremacy of, anyone in particular. The flow of grace would be more freely discerned and more readily evidenced.

7.7.5.2. Volkskirche Theology and Northern Ireland

The notion of *Volkskirche* theology was raised in the chapter on theological touchstones. *Volkskirche* theology was an alignment in the German Church with the policies of National Socialism, tacitly approving of anti-Semitic policies (Gerdmar, 2008:548). While the initial reason for identification with the state may have been to achieve social renewal through influence, the practical implications were detrimental (Diephause, 1987:336). This begs the question whether PCI's association with Unionism is a manifestation of *V Volkskirche* theology. Presbyterian influence on government may have meant a positive ethical and moral impact. When an anti-Catholicism, however, took root within Ulster society it was akin to the German Church's tacit endorsement of anti-Semitism. While the extent of the Northern Irish government's policies were not as extreme as those of National Socialism, the same intent was endorsed because of a theological disposition against Catholicism. Grace ebbed from any engagement with Catholicism for political aims.

7.6. The Church's Influence in Northern Ireland

The wider issue of the churches' influence on political policy also bears reflection. Throughout the original Northern Ireland Parliament (1921-1972) churches exercised a powerful influence on law making, particularly on Sabbath issues and moral laws on abortion (Mitchell, 2004:239-245). While there are theological arguments to be made concerning the Sabbath Day and abortion, these laws were politically achieved through identification with a political party. There may also be areas of commonality between Presbyterianism and Catholicism on such moral issues, seen in the Free

Presbyterian Church (FPCU) and Catholic opposition to the opening of the Mary Stopes Clinic in Belfast (Guardian, 2012). The political aspects of these laws, however, continue to divide people along political lines, irrespective of any faith commitment. This may further imply that identification with a political opinion is the same as a theological conviction. Grace flows through the church on the basis of theological conviction attached to a political position and ebbs when that political opinion is rejected.

7.7. The Northern Ireland Parliament and Nationalism

With an apparent link between Unionism and Irish Presbyterianism after partition, it is interesting to see how that affected legislation. The 1922 the Northern Ireland Parliament took a decision to overturn proportional representation as a means of electing local government. This had been established in the 1919 Local Government (Ireland) Act, and was interpreted by Catholics as a means of removing their political representation (O'Brien, 2010:8-10). Irish Presbyterians, the clergy of which sat in government positions, were motivated to limit the political enfranchisement of the Catholic minority. Such an evidence of the ebbing of grace reaffirms the Protestantism/Unionist/Loyalist axis against the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican. It may have been that Presbyterians were seeking to make it so difficult for Catholics to remain in Northern Ireland that the alternative of becoming a Protestant was appealing. MEE offered the incentive of political representation once the Catholic culture and politics had been removed. This seems to be a clear evidence of ebbing in grace.

7.8. The Loyal Orders and Northern Irish Presbyterians

An almost unique aspect of Northern Irish Protestant culture is the association between religious Protestantism and Unionist politics through the Loyal Orders. The Loyal Orders are predated by "Orangeism". Orangeism is a political and religious philosophy embraced throughout the British Empire. "Orangeism" remembers the Glorious Revolution of William of Orange and the Protestant nature of the British state (Kennaway, 2007:15). The Loyal Orders are fundamentally sectarian and seek

to be different from society through their fraternal relationships (Lindbeck, 2002:93). The Loyal Orders focus on the differences between the Catholic/ Nationalist/ Republicanism and the Protestant/ Unionist/ Loyalist positions. The Orange Order claims to be a specifically Christian and Protestant institution (Long, n.d.). The Orange Order is in particular “a complex amalgam of interlocking elements,” including the cultural, political, ethnic, religious and national, rooted in a theological interpretation Northern Irish history (Newell, 2016:30). The designation “militant Protestant organisation” has also been attributed to it (Roberts, 1971:269). Grace ebbs in the Loyal Orders through an obvious sectarianism of an organisation which exists to keep Catholics at a distance.

7.8.1. Presbyterian Relationships to the Loyal Orders

The Reformed Presbyterianism Church in Ireland (RPCI) is one brand of Irish Presbyterianism which distances itself from the Loyal Orders. Historically this distance comes from a rejection of the constitutional settlement of Charles II and the failure of the British Government to implement the 1643 Solemn League and Covenant (Kennaway, 2007). The historical and political unhappiness with the Constitutional Settlement has meant that the RPCI encourages its members not to vote in elections (Magahey, 2013:29; Briles, 2011:9-14). Further historical influences reflect upon Catholic reaction to the 1641 Penal Laws. This produced a sense of Catholic disenfranchisement resulting in Catholic violence toward Protestant settlers. This in turn led to the foundation of the Orange Order in 1795 in Loughgall (Wilson, 1997:10-12).

7.8.1.1. The Orange Order and the Masonic Institutions

What also concerns the RPCI are the similarities of the Orange Order with the Masonic Institution. These similarities are: secrecy, passwords, initiation rites and secret knowledge being passed on within each degree attained. Further, the RPCI maintains that the Orange Order was established because the Masonic Institution was ambivalent about Catholic violence (Wilson, 1997:12). More fundamentally, the RPCI views the Orange Order as a direct challenge to the church: “The church alone,

as the pillar and foundation of the faith, is the Lord's instrument for the defence of the faith, the propagation of the gospel and the nurture and discipline of believers" (Wilson, 1997:13). The RPCI believes that Orangeism is a barrier to sensitive evangelism in Ireland and has little relation to genuine, theological Protestantism (Wilson, 1997:10-14). This is a challenge to the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist axis. The RPCI's critique of the Loyal Orders suggests a desire to flow in grace toward Catholicism without embracing ecumenism. Yet it would seem that a disentanglement from cultural Protestantism may present itself in a commitment to MEE, by highlighting common theological principles.

7.8.2. Baptism, the Loyal Orders and Catholicism

The Reformed understanding of Catholic baptism would imply no need to re-administer the sacrament should a Catholic become a Protestant. If, however, a Catholic who converted to Protestantism should desire to join the Orange Order, the passage may not be quite as simple. The Orange Institution believes Catholic converts to be Trojan horses (Edwards, 2012:56). This suspicion suggests that Orangeism is not in sympathy with the Presbyterian theology of baptism as an ecumenical sacrament. It also seems counterproductive to invite new members into the church, yet exclude them from a cultural expression of religion. Further, the Loyal Orders never "hinted at the need to resolve our conflicts, banish the scourge of bloodshed under a new era of respect for the rights and freedoms of both communities" (Newell, 2016:25). Grace ebbs in the Loyal Order's attitude toward Catholics and, by implication, any Protestant Church or member associated with it.

7.8.3. The Loyal Orders and Protestant Unity

It has been claimed that the Loyal Orders unified Unionism in religion and politics through the election of Unionist candidates to the Westminster Parliament in 1886. All the candidates were members of the Loyal Orders (Kennaway, 2006:25; Harbinson, 1973:8; Flackes and Elliot, 1998:380). The Loyal Orange Order membership includes politicians, religious leaders, industrialists and commercialists. It became "Protestant society in Northern Ireland in microcosm". This enabled many

people to feel part of the power structure of the state through Orange political influence (Hickey, 1984:65). Such a close connection between a social institution and a theological principle turns MEE into a socially focused action. Grace ebbs from Catholics because of their religious and political axis with little thought to the wider kingdom of God.

7.8.4. The Loyal Orders as a “Pseudo-Church”

The Loyal Orders are seen by some as less sociological and more ecclesiastical. It has been labelled a “pseudo-Church which brought together those who variously attended church and meeting” (McCaughey, 1993:12). As a “pseudo-church” the Orange Order has its own qualifications which members must adhere to. In relation to Catholicism the qualifications state that a member “should strenuously oppose the fatal errors and doctrines of the Church of Rome, and scrupulously avoid countenancing (by his presence or otherwise) any act or ceremony of Popish Worship” (City of Londonderry Grand Orange Lodge, 2015). There is a similarity in the qualifications to the anti-Catholic rhetoric of the WCF (Kennaway, 2006:5). Examples are cited of people who, although brought up in Protestantism and steeped in Orangeism, did not understand the evangelical significance of the Order before conversion (Mitchell and Ganiel, 2011:72). As a “pseudo-Church” the institution ebbs in grace in its relationship to Catholicism. The same ebbing would also be attributed to the Protestant Churches if they sought to engage with Catholicism. In this instance the Loyal Orders would perceive itself as the last bastion of true Protestantism, justifying grace ebbing toward the Protestant Churches also.

7.8.5. Protestant Clergy and the Loyal Orders

Beyond the involvement of the laity, Protestant clergy also are members of the Loyal Orders. Clerics often act as chaplains in private lodges and at district, county, national and international levels. This merging of religion and politics is “part and parcel of their religious duty as Protestants” (Barritt and Carter, 1972:31-32; Skuce, 2008:19). Rev. Martyn Smith, a PCI minister and Unionist MP, was Grand Master of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland from 1972 to 1998 (Kennaway, 2006:217). It is

interesting that other PCI clergy severed their links with the Loyal Orders because of a perceived contradiction with an inclusive gospel (Newell, 2016:47). If Protestant clergy are to flow in grace, then membership of the Loyal Orders could compromise that aim. What does seem clear are the connections between religious identity, cultural expression and political position. These are further connected to the metanarrative of a wider soteriology. This metanarrative has been rarely addressed because PCI is assumed to be “comfortable” with its relationship to the Loyal Orders (Mitchell, 2003:313-136). PCI clergy are, therefore, comfortable with ebbing in grace toward Catholics through the Loyal Orders because of a wider social/religious/cultural/political axis.

8. The Troubles and Northern Irish Presbyterians

With the sizeable minority within the Northern Irish State being nationalist in politics, and generally Catholic in religion, conflict was to be expected. Nationalists were more trusting of British intentions and willing to work within the machinations of state to dissolve Northern Ireland. Republicans, however, distrusted Britain deeply and sought to break its rule by any means (Hickey, 1984:31-43). The Unionist government encouraged a siege mentality which viewed “Northern Ireland as a Protestant, British state for a Protestant, British people on mainland Ireland” (O’Brien, 2010:18). This was mirrored by a “coercion mentality”. This was witnessed amongst Catholics who viewed themselves as colonised by the British and felt coerced into another religion (Falconer, 2008a:24). The concept of being under siege also suggests a war footing. This means that Protestants were ready for an onslaught from their Catholic neighbours, whose desire was interpreted as not only to remove their nationality but also their religious freedom (Alderdice, 2010:308). The logical outcome for MEE would be a challenge to this siege mentality. Grace flowing from Presbyterians to their Catholic neighbours would then result. Where it would ebb is if Catholics were particularly targeted in MEE to alleviate the siege mentality.

8.1. Towards a Definition of the Troubles

The Troubles were not primarily religious but ethnic. Religion, however, played an important role in the sustained conflict (Mitchell and Ganiel, 2011:20). The role of religion in sustaining the Troubles, therefore, becomes a critique of the churches reinforcing secular identities at the expense of the spiritual, biblical and ecumenical identity of Christianity (Gal. 3:28-29; Eph. 2:14-18). Defining the dates of the Troubles is difficult. The beginning was in 1968 with the civil rights movement (Whyte, 1991:256). The context of the civil rights movement was political because the right to vote was restricted to those who were home owners or occupiers. This meant that the Unionist Government sought to ensure Protestant housing at the expense of Catholics (Hickey, 1984:23-24). Grace ebbed toward Catholicism because of an alternative responsibility of maintaining the political hegemony.

8.1.1. The Manifestation of the Troubles

The Troubles manifested themselves through acts of violence perpetrated by both sections of the community upon one another, upon their own community and upon the security forces. This was justified by an implied truthful remembrance of past wrongs. The cultural interpretation of history, however, often coloured such remembrance (Volf, 2006:44-45). Religion is a part of the Troubles, but “only one dimension” (Muldoon, 2004:457). While there remained historical, political, cultural and ecclesiological differences between the two communities in Northern Ireland, the Troubles almost seem to have eclipsed them. The religious aspect remained an issue as the Troubles were indiscriminate in their violence. Grace flowed through acts of kindness and ebbed through acts of violence from one community to the other.

8.1.2. The Effect of the Troubles on Unionism

The effect of the Troubles on Unionism was counterproductive, as murder and bombing alienated the British from Unionism (Hurley, 1998:227). Unionists felt betrayed by the British and a fear of Nationalist victory rose. This reinforced the Unionist/Protestant/Loyalist axis. The losses experienced on both sides offered a

potential source of reconciliation and spiritual healing. That did not, however, break the cycle of blame which the families of the deceased felt toward those who carried out the violence. Grace ebbed in a failure to lift religion above the political matrix. Grace ought to have flowed from religion into God's covenantal promise to his church through the kingdom of God to supplant and transform culture. MEE would then provide a point of commonality between both communities. This would provide a means for both sides to meet in the centre of their newfound Christian identity and flow in grace to one another.

8.1.3. The Imperative of Reconciliation

The concept of reconciliation is indivisibly linked with the gospel as a definition of how God relates to people through Jesus. It becomes the means by which the church relates to people across denominational, cultural, racial, social and political boundaries (2 Cor. 5:16-19). Reconciliation is described as a human and social process which requires theological explanation. Reconciliation is, therefore, a theological concept needing human and social embodiment (de Gruchy, 2002:20-21). Often reconciliation will spring from a personal resolve to influence the group to change (Ritchl, 2004:521). The relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxy is raised again. This notes the connection between what is believed and what is done. This gives MEE a moral imperative to address the reasons for the ebbing of grace from PCI to Catholicism.

8.2. The Impact of the Troubles on Irish Presbyterianism

The Troubles also had a specific effect upon Irish Presbyterians. It is often the memory of this personal aspect of the Troubles which has the deepest impact upon PCI. The memories of these "serious wrongs" challenge the ways in which people view the world (Volf, 2006:86). The troubles impacted MEE by associating those engaged in ecumenism with those perpetrating the acts of violence (Irwin, 2009:175). The result was an ebbing of grace as hurt people sought to heal themselves through the wounding of others.

8.2.1. PCI's Response to the Troubles

Rather than developing a moral relativity, PCI developed a means of reaction through MEE. Underpinning this praxis is the assumption of self-protection through proselytising Catholics to the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist axis. The action of Irish Republicans was “cleverly calculated”. This sought not to harm people because they were Protestant but because of their involvement in the security forces. This caveat “exacerbates” Presbyterian anger because many serving in the security forces were also members and leaders within Presbyterian congregations (Dunlop, 1995:123-125). While the theory of who is a possible target seems impersonal, the implications are very personal. On a denominational scale, the establishment of the Irish Council of Churches (ICC) in 1970 to advise member bodies on how to approach problems in society was an attempt to flow in grace through the denominations (Ellis, 1992:121-125).

8.2.2. The Shadow of Loss

The shadow of loss in many families and congregations remains and will continue to remain for a long time. There are, therefore, a number of possible ramifications of the Troubles on PCI. First, there is the assumption that Irish Republicanism is anti-Protestant and, if a united Ireland was achieved, that could become government policy. Second, many are suspicious of Catholicism and any manifestation of ecumenism at grassroots level because Protestants were killed by Catholics/Republicans on account of their identification with the British establishment. The goal of MEE would then become a political, cultural and religious one upon which the security of the nation rested. A rethinking of grassroots ecumenism is therefore needed. The emphasis should be on trust and understanding, rather than reunification of the churches and differences of theology (Power, 2006:4-7). A rebranding of MEE to flow in grace locally passes on the theological disagreement as the two communities relate to one another contextually. This could then become a pre-ecumenism; however, at some point theological differences will have to be dealt with.

9. The Church's Response to the Northern Ireland Community

How churches identify with a specific community in Northern Ireland, providing that community with the theological justification for separation, is an important theological issue (Falconer, 2008a:25). One way in which this impact is seen is the relatively high percentage of ecclesiastical commitment within Northern Ireland, around fifty percent (Tearfund, 2007:7-8). This high level of involvement in the churches in Northern Ireland has had an impact on other spheres through the "high levels of physical and ideological segregation between groups" (Mitchell, 2004:239). Such segregation, maintained through schools, political parties, and cultural organisations, maintains the distinctions between Protestants and Catholics even when ecclesiastical commitment drops. There remain inevitable distinctions between groups which hold to different theological positions. These differences, however, provide the basis for the flowing of grace in MEE. If grace is permitted to ebb, then a proselytising tendency could be given to all inter-ecclesiastical relationships, including Protestant ones.

10. Partial Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to trace the involvement of PCI with the context of Northern Ireland through relationships with the institutions of state, British/Loyalist culture and the Unionist political parties. Systematic theology was used as a means of cultural expression and the significance of culture for the ethos of the church was considered. The specifics of a redemption-centred theology, which assumes the church must challenge the culture in which it exists, was offered as the potential task for PCI's existence within Northern Ireland. The use of response hermeneutics was part of the method used in considering PCI's involvement in Northern Ireland as it supposed a Presbyterian understanding. This may not be shared with other traditions, but is assumed to be superior by PCI and the matrix for judging other cultures in Northern Ireland.

10.1. Irish Presbyterian Personality

An attempt was made to trace out the uniqueness of Irish Presbyterian personality through theological formation which produced a multiplicity of perspectives. The European and Scottish roots of PCI were highlighted as having a formative influence upon denominational identity, producing the theological evangelicalism which describes elements in PCI. How PCI has manifested itself through MEE was also described. This drew on the basis of Reformed baptismal theology and ecclesiology. The theological influence of John Calvin and his views concerning Catholicism were addressed, along with the issues of agreement and disagreement between Irish Presbyterianism and Catholicism, giving a foundation for PCI's understanding of the Catholic Church.

10.2. Confessional Identity

The confessional identity of PCI was reflected upon in the light of the WCF's statement on the papacy. Ecumenism within PCI was described and suggested to be cautious in some areas, particularly with Catholicism, and more virulent with other Protestant denominations. Evangelicalism, having been outlined as a theological identity within PCI, was considered through PCI's evangelism, demonstrated in a revivalistic tendency within the Church.

10.3. Vatican II

The impact of Vatican II was studied as a potential source of rapprochement between Catholicism and PCI. PCI's relationship with the Northern Irish state itself was outlined theologically, with specific reference to Catholics in Northern Ireland and the Scottish planters which produced a British mentality, raising the issue of national identity itself. The questionable relationship between PCI, Unionism and Orangeism was highlighted as a manifestation of PCI's identity within Northern Ireland, along with involvement in the machinations of government. "The Troubles" were addressed with regard to their impact upon PCI and how the denomination responded with MEE.

Chapter 8

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Introduction

How mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism (MEE) are theologically justified and practised within PCI has formed the basis for this research. This dissertation has sought to address the relationship between the messenger of mission, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI), and the context of mission, Ireland (Yates, 1994:5). The ebb and flow of grace was traced through PCI's MEE with particular reference to the Catholic Church. A significant influence on PCI's MEE was the historical British mindset toward the expansion of Western culture through political imperialism. With the historical, political and cultural divides established alongside the religious with Ireland, the motivations for PCI's MEE informed the ebb and flow of grace (Stanley, 1990:34; May, 2004:76). PCI became aligned with a British political position and a loyalist cultural expression.

1.1. The Development of Evangelicalism

Evangelism as a theological and ecclesiastical principle informed how grace ebbed and flowed through PCI's MEE. Further, evangelicalism, the movement which developed from the theological and ecclesiastical principle, particularly influenced PCI and wider Northern Irish culture. Evangelicalism's influence can be seen historically as it provides the matrix for PCI's MEE (Latourette, 1945:101-102, 342-343; Cairnes, 1981:128-129; Hamilton, 1887:15, 19; Stewart, 1936:20-21).

1.1.1. Spiritual Influences on Irish Presbyterianism

Two specifically spiritual influences have made PCI the church it is today. These influences are persecution and revival, both of which informed MEE. The influences of persecution and revival also had a wider influence upon Ireland itself (Mitchell and Tilly, 2004:585-601; Ganiel, 2008:38-48). Grace ebbed to the source of persecution, but flowed in collaborative evangelism and mission (Stewart, 1936:81-89; Latourette, 1945:830; Holmes, 2000:26-27; Holmes, 1985:25; Hamilton,

1887:43-44; Gibson, 1989; Eyers, 1841:171). Persecution explains why grace ebbs in ecumenism. Revival explains why grace flows in evangelism (Bread, 1995:221-227).

1.1.2. PCI's Personality

PCI has many similarities, theologically and ecclesiastically, with other Reformed denominations both inside and outside of Ireland. The historical, cultural and political matrix of Ireland, however, have worked together with the theological basis of PCI to produce a unique personality. PCI's personality is particularly concerned with orthodoxy, at times at the expense of orthopraxis (Twain, 1998:7; Rodgers, 1991:12). Grace can then be justified in ebbing toward the Catholic Church as an integral expression of PCI's personality and its emphasis on maintaining correct theology. What is viewed as correct theology is moulded through an amalgamation of Reformed doctrine (Reid, 1836:325; Whan, 2013:13; Edwards and O'Dowd, 2008:750), global influence (Coakley, 2010:4-28; Hornsby-Smith, 1994:265-290; Leerssen, 2001:204-222). Irish cultural influences (Lucas, 2006:4; Volf, 2006:90-91), and the historical impact of the Reformation (Johnston, 2004; Sproul Jr., 2003; Buschart, 2006:86). Theology, therefore, becomes the reason and justification for ecclesiastical distance. Distance is manifested in an objectification of individual Catholics and a critical attitude toward the Catholic Church, without any personal knowledge of individual Catholics or the Catholic Church (Mak and Tsang, 2008:379; Augustine, 2005:25; Volf, 2006:8; ERCDM, 1986:16-17, 30-32). Theological and ecclesiastical objectification meant that PCI targeted Catholics in MEE (Uprichard, 2011:7, 78; Holmes, 2006:711-737; Weeks, 2004:62; Mt. 25:1-13; Lucas, 2006:143; Dunlop, 2013; Uprichard, 1992:114-116). Catholics and Catholicism were viewed as implicitly non-Christian, even if PCI was unwilling to specifically state that position, but it was implied through their personality.

1.2. The Development of Irish Presbyterianism

The influence of Scottish culture and genealogy adds another level of distance from Irish Catholicism (Yates, 1994:21-24; Code, 2013:10-11; Holmes, 1985:30; Bailie, 2008:34; Holmes, 2000:26-27; McBride, 1998:2). Irish Presbyterianism was itself the product of the missionary work of Scottish Presbyterians. The denominational fragmentation of Irish Presbyterians mirrored Scotland. A separate identity, however, was formed through the union of Irish Presbyterians (Stewart, 1936:58-59, 97-99, 122-124; Hamilton, 1887:164). The Scottish roots of PCI provided a separate sense of historical, cultural and political identity toward Catholicism. Mixed with the theology of the Reformation, Catholics and Catholicism were viewed as outside of true Christianity. Grace would flow through evangelism as PCI attempted to convert Catholics. Grace would ebb through ecumenism as the Catholic Church was viewed as non-Christian. Mixing together the historical, cultural, political and theological personality, it is not difficult to understand why MEE took a particularly anti-Catholic direction.

1.2.1. The Public Face of Irish Presbyterianism

PCI's personality may not always be visible to the world; it does, however, impact the Church's public face. PCI's public face is best seen in the praxis of MEE. That public face was moulded through the history of violence within Ireland and the remembrance of past hurts by PCI (Volf, 2006:90-91). This gave particular resonance to the image of the burning bush, the "trademark" of Presbyterianism. The burning bush enabled PCI to present themselves as a pilgrim people under threat from their enemies, namely the Catholic Irish (Barkley, 1988; Munnik, 2010; Dunning, 2009:12; Daniels, 2003:136). Another evidence of PCI's public face are the documents which they produced to define their theology and praxis ("Mission Statement," 1992; Declaration, 1990:3:1; Peace Vocation, 1994). While the public face of PCI is primarily focused on orthopraxy, it is never too long until theology becomes evident. PCI's public face is a manifestation of its theological, cultural, historical and political formation, evidenced where grace ebbs and flows in MEE.

1.3. Examples of PCI's Ecumenism

The primary emphasis of PCI on evangelism did not negate some involvement in ecumenism. PCI's participation in the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910 is a positive example, whereas PCI's withdrawal from the World Council of Churches is a negative one (Stanley, 2009:90; Ellis, 1992:5; Gay, 2011:331; Holmes, 2000:153-154; Newell, 2016:51, 70-84). The experience of the Charismatic Renewal provided opportunities for PCI members and clergy to engage with different traditions who shared a common pneumatic experience (Mitchell, 2008:224; Stewart: 2015; Smail, 1995:8; Gibson, 1987:67-68). The emphasis on ecumenism has been driven more by individual Irish Presbyterians than the denomination as a whole (Rutherford, 1942:25; Quinn, 2004; Brewer, Higgins and Teeney, 2011:67; Wells, 2005; Lowery, 1985:123). The reason for this may be that certain local contexts are more conducive to engagement with Catholics and the Catholic Church than others. There may also be a denominational fear of flowing in ecumenism because of the backlash which would come culturally, politically and ecumenically.

2. Theological Reflections

This exploration of the ebb and flow of grace in PCI's MEE fills a gap in the current theological literature (Guder, 1998:25; Avis, 2010:vii-ix). Further, it fills another gap in the doctrinal tenets of Reformed theology (Lonergan, 1971:xi; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000:5; Macquarrie, 1966:33; Tracy, 1987:70). Historical and systematic theology provides the academic discipline in which this research sits (Tillich, 1968:195; Frei, 1992:2; Hegstad, 2013:3). Within historical and systematic theology the subsection of ecclesiology provides the context for this dissertation as it asks questions about the theology and praxis of the church (Pelikan, 1989:282; Hauerwas, 2015:29; Stone, 2007:25; Guder, 2016:331). In investigating the ebb and flow of grace a gap in the theological literature is highlighted which connects evangelism and ecumenism through mission. Connecting evangelism and ecumenism through mission makes an original contribution on how PCI justifies the ebb and flow of grace toward the Catholic Church.

2.1. Theology, Qualitative, Constructivist and Interpretivist Research

The role of context on PCI's MEE was outlined earlier in this dissertation. The reflection on context investigated PCI as a religious community, by engaging with the literature concerning mission, within a theological framework of the wider discipline of systematic theology (Creswell, 2009:74-75; Porter and Robinson, 2011:2; Berger and Luckmann: 1991:13; Ritschl, 1984:51; Macquarrie, 1966:1-2). MEE occupies an educational place within Irish society and the wider world by presenting the thesis of the gospel, the antithesis of differing theological positions and the synthesis of ecumenical engagement (Taylor, 2004:182; Hegel, 1833:51; Muller, 1958:166ff; Kauffman, 1978:154; Berger and Luckmann, 1991:149). The community has exercised as important and significant a role on the ebbing and flowing of grace in PCI's MEE as has its theological. This implies that any claim PCI may make about praxis being exclusively theologically driven is a misrepresentation of their personality and a misunderstanding of their context.

2.2. The Influence of Calvin

The influence of John Calvin is felt both theologically and ecclesiastically within PCI. Calvin's ecclesiology has particular relevance for MEE as it provides the background for assessing the authenticity of other churches. Additional to Calvin's influence the confessional Reformed document (Westminster Confession of Faith) also influences PCI's ecclesiology (Holmes, 1985:2-3; Barkley, 1958:11-15; Code, 2013:3:12). Calvin's influence provides a historical and systematic theological rationale for the ebb and flow of grace in MEE. The WCF provides a doctrinal identity to form PCI's personality. These influences are not neutral; however, they operate within the specific historical, cultural and political context of Ireland.

2.2.1. Calvinism and Mission

Having noted the influence of Calvin on PCI, his own position on mission was suggested as having particular resonance for this research (Calvin, Vol.1 1957:281-282; Estep, 1997; Hunt, 2013; Hughes, 1973:42; Hunter, 1920:154; James, 1986:26; McFetridge, 1882:15). Calvin's emphasis on the sovereignty of the Spirit

and the doctrine of election were presented as a pro-mission position (Calvin, Vol.1, 1957:282; Calvin, Vol.2 1957:234; Wesley, 1991:49-60; Wallis and Dongell, 2004:197; Calvin, 1998: Comment on 2 Tim. 1:8-9). Discerning a pro-mission ethos within Calvin's theology provides this dissertation with a theological mandate for PCI's MEE.

2.3. Specific Irish Influences

Local Irish influences on PCI's ebb and flow of grace in MEE are also important. There is the example of Bishop James Ussher and his ecumenical suggestions on church polity within a Reformed Irish Church (Stewart, 1936:39; Gribben, 2003:110; 2004:37-44). While emphasising a Protestant ecumenism and openness to different forms of ecclesiastical polity within the Irish church, Ussher maintained that the theological differences between the Reformed churches and Catholicism were too great (Gribben, 2003:38-39; Ussher, 2007:584-585). Ussher's influence many explain why PCI is more comfortable flowing in grace toward other Protestant churches in MEE toward the Catholic Church. What needs to be acknowledged are the changes within the Catholic Church since the Reformation. If PCI is to maintain Usher's caveat, then it would require a re-evaluation of current Catholic theology.

2.4. Reformed Theology and Mission

The ebb and flow of grace in PCI's MEE raises the issue of a paucity of missiological reflection within Reformed theology (Hodge, 1976; Hodge, 1993; Berkhof, 1998; Tillich, 1968; Grudem, 1994; Rodman Williams, 1988, 1990, 1992; McGrath, 1991; Leith, 1997; Uprichard, 2011; Lucas, 2006). Yet within wider Christian theology there is also a dearth of missiological reflection (Bauckham, 2003:11; Beeby, 2000:268-283; Wright, 2006:39). This lack of Reformed missiological reflection may explain why potential proselytising tendencies can exist within the praxis of MEE (Newbigin, 1995:136; Taylor, 2004:153; Wallis, 2000:20-21; Bauckham, 2003:55; Blauw, 2003:55-60). Proselytism requires an ethical investigation as to whether it is an authentic manifestation of Reformed missiology. Consideration of the role of community, history, politics and culture

upon PCI suggests wider influences on the ebb and flow of grace toward Catholics and the Catholic Church. Where a proselytising tendency exists, this research argues that it is because of non-theological influences rather than specifically Reformed missiology.

2.5. Evangelism Theology

The ebb and flow of grace has particular application to evangelism. Indeed, the nomenclature used throughout this research is based upon the belief that evangelism is a subsection within mission. Within the academy there has been a generally negative view of evangelism (Battin, 1990:129-130; Dever, 2007:66). This negative view implies the need for a positive, academic investigation into evangelism, which this work aims to provide. The historical, cultural and political influences on PCI's evangelism produce the ebb and flow of grace to Catholicism. The cultural influence of enforcing and applying a uniform model to ecclesiastical existence and praxis within Ireland is Christendom (Carrier, 1993:1; Barrs, 2001:142; Green, 1951:14; Murray, 2004:1-2). Yet Western cultures have moved away from Christendom (Green, 1951:14; Leith, 1977:13; Brueggemann, 1993:26). With the shift away from Christendom, the Western Church now exists in a missionary context. What the churches, therefore, hold together rather than what they disagree on ought to inform the ebb and flow of grace. Historical, cultural and political influences, when they inform evangelism, obfuscate the theological basis for evangelism. The same influences, by implication, no longer define the Western world; therefore, a new identity is needed beyond the historical, cultural and political. This new identity can encompass divergent ecclesiastical streams in a common commitment to evangelism. Hence, evangelism forms ecumenism within mission.

2.5.1. Evangelism Theology and Proselytising

The new ecclesiastical identity beyond the historical, cultural and political implies a proselytising tendency, which is an evidence of grace ebbing. Proselytising, therefore, is viewed uniformly negatively (The Joint Working Group of the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, 1970:178; Delgado, 1980; Rorty,

2003:141-149; Sherr, Singletary and Rogers, 2009:157-165; Volokh, 2001:57). Any sense of ecclesiastical superiority would be inconsistent with the flowing of grace and evangelistically arrogant (Battin, 1990:169; Thiessen, 2011:55, 59, 105). If PCI's evangelism seeks to proselytise Catholics then the justification for such praxis is unsure. Separating the flowing of grace from historical, cultural and political influences impacts how PCI views itself, as imperfect pilgrims, the same as other denominations. Evangelism would then flow in grace through different denominations, in ecumenism, into a non-Christian culture.

2.6. Ecumenical Theology

Ecumenical theology addresses the nature and unity of the church (*Unity Statement*, 2013:1; *Together Toward Life*, 2012:5). The connection between evangelical and ecumenical is one of the key areas of this dissertation (ECT, 1995). Ecumenism acknowledges the many different Christian theologies within the church, but holds back from passing judgement on their theological rectitude (Lewis, 1990:17-19; Thiessen, 2009:35-36). The ebb and flow of grace addresses the theological differences within the Christian church, but maintains a focus on the church as a missional community. The implication for PCI is that grace flows best when MEE define their belief and praxis.

3. The Implications of Non-Proselytising Evangelism for PCI

The specific context of PCI's MEE is Ireland. The unique historical, cultural, political and religious history and traditions of Ireland have informed the conditions under which grace ebbs and flows. The object to which grace flows or ebbs from is the Catholic Church. The issue of whether MEE, therefore, is "sectarian" has implications for PCI (Abraham, 1991:5; Tomlin, 2002:16, 71). Sectarian MEE would seek to proselytise Catholics, not on theological grounds, but because of their different history, culture and politics. If, therefore, the fullest and most holistic manifestation of mission includes both evangelism and ecumenism, then PCI will have to judge whether sectarian proselytising of Catholics in mission is theologically authentic (Farley, 1996:37; Willowbank, 1978; Avis, 2010:25). For PCI to be true to

its theological core there needs to be an identification and assessment of the theological differences with Catholicism. This process of identification and assessment will acknowledge the formative role of history, culture and politics in ecclesiastical formation. Further, it will conclude that the influences of history, culture and politics provide a negative preconception of Catholic theology. PCI, therefore, does not view MEE purely theologically. A self-reflection is then required to transform PCI into a purer theological conduit for grace to flow toward Catholics.

3.1. The Legacy of WCC Withdrawal

The influence of historical, cultural and political influences on PCI's MEE is best witnessed in the withdrawal from the World Council of Churches (WCC). The justification for withdrawal was interpreted as the WCC's support of Catholic Liberation Theology. PCI felt that the criteria for such support could also be used to justify Republican paramilitary action in Northern Ireland (Holmes, 2000:153-154; Irvine, 1991:198; Appleby, 1999:178). PCI interpreted the support for Liberation Theology as evidence of a Catholic control of the WCC (Searle, 2014:102). The withdrawal from the WCC is an example of local historical, cultural and political influences overshadowing the theological within PCI. Little concern was shown for any theological justification for Liberation Theology until relatively recently (Gibson, 2006). Justifying withdrawal on the basis of local historical, cultural and political influences, PCI gave little consideration to the local historical, political and cultural contexts to which the WCC's aid was going. PCI needs, therefore, to reconsider the justification for withdrawal theologically, acknowledging the decision was made for other than theological reasons. These non-theological reasons have continued to impact how grace ebbs and flows to the Catholic Church, in Ireland and globally.

4. Answering the Research Question

The key question for this dissertation was whether PCI gives a primacy to evangelism over ecumenism or vice versa. To answer this question Reformed doctrine was used, via historical and systematic theology. Systematic theology is particularly important in recognising the historical, cultural and political influences on PCI's praxis in the context of Ireland (Tillich, 1968:4). Systematic theology judged whether PCI ebbed or flowed in grace toward the Catholic Church because of their doctrinal base.

4.1. Secondary Socialisation

Acknowledging that PCI's relationship to and engagement with Catholicism was not moulded exclusively theologically, secondary socialisation came into play. Secondary socialisation addresses how groups engage with each other, both personally and corporately (Berger and Luckmann, 1991:158). Secondary socialisation then suggests that PCI's attitude to the Catholic Church was prejudiced (Newman, 1982:3, 24). The source of the prejudice is as much theological as it is historical, cultural and political. In fact, the secondary non-theological influences were often more effective in moulding PCI's praxis of MEE than the theological. Non-theological influences infer a need for PCI to re-examine the attitudes which inform the praxis of MEE, particularly regarding the Catholic Church. Such a re-examination would need to be carried out theologically, as the doctrinal basis of PCI does not necessarily imply a given view of Catholicism.

4.1.1. Examples of Secondary Socialisation

History provides one way in which secondary socialisation produced an anti-Catholicism within PCI (Paz, 1972:181; Rodgers, 1991:13). Often such historical influences are based upon doctrinal assumptions more than theological engagement with the sources of Catholic theology (Barritt and Carter, 1972:22). Secondary socialisation was used by religion in general, and PCI in particular, to bolster and legitimise the Northern Irish State from its inception in 1922 (Fox, 2001:65-66; O'Brien, 2010:7). Legitimation is seen through the Northern Ireland Parliament's

residence in the Chapel of PCI's theological college from 1921 to 1932 and Presbyterian ministers serving in government (Holmes, 2000:125-126). Secondary socialisation produced a religious/political axis which identified Presbyterianism as Unionism (Morrow, 1998:495; O'Brien, 2010:2). The political/religious alignment produced by secondary socialisation has obfuscated PCI's MEE. Obfuscation occurs because where PCI identified with Unionism, Catholicism identifies with nationalism. Obfuscation continues as the Unionist political ethos becomes increasingly dominating in MEE, using the praxis as a means of bolstering the Northern Irish State. The justification for the ebb and flow of grace becomes political rather than theological. PCI may need to distance themselves from their own history and apologise for the dominance of secondary socialisation over theological.

4.1.2. Secondary Socialisation and Cultural Associations

Culture also provides one way in which secondary socialisation produced an anti-Catholicism within PCI. Cultural institutions, such as the Loyal Orders, are founded on the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism (Kennaway, 2006:15; Long, n.d.; Newell, 2016:30; Roberts, 1971:269). The Loyal Orders includes many PCI clergy (Kennaway, 2006:25, 2017; Harbinson, 1973:8; Flackes and Elliot, 1998:380; Hickey, 1984:65). Theology is used to justify ecumenical theological differences, but not exclusively. Culture is a greater unifying source within the Loyal Orders in which a given reading of history and a common expression of identity are posited against the Catholic alternative. The Loyal Orders are an evidence of secondary socialisation which hijacks MEE to become the furtherance of a specific cultural identity. Grace ebbs toward Catholicism but flows through a common Protestant culture. PCI may need to reassess whether such cultural institutions provide an accurate portrayal of Presbyterians in modern Ireland. Further, PCI may need to distance themselves from cultural institutions which use religion to further their non-religious goals. The association of PCI with the Loyal Orders has obfuscated the theological justification for MEE.

4.1.3. Secondary Socialisation and Volkskirche Theology

Both this secondary socialisation and theological influences have come together in PCI to assume that Catholic religious experience requires theological transformation (Twomey, 2003:51). Theological and secondary socialisation unite within PCI to produce a *Volkskirche* theology (Gerdmar, 2008:548). The concept of a people's church means that PCI worked toward ecclesiastical homogenisation through MEE. Such homogenisation is not exclusively theological but includes elements of secondary socialisation such as history, culture and politics. Accordingly, grace ebbed in ecumenism because PCI judged the Catholic Church according to a strict interpretation of Reformed theology and secondary issues of history, culture and politics. Grace flowed in evangelism to create a uniform church which converted all religious traditions other than PCI. The areas of secondary socialisation became primary in the journey toward a unified people's church.

4.2. Appropriating the Gospel

If grace was flowing through PCI's evangelism, the way in which the gospel was appropriated becomes a central issue (Brueggemann, 1993:19; Lonergan, 1971:34). The Reformed *ordo salutis* enables gospel appropriation to be considered theologically (Calvin, Vol.2, 1957:202-205; Boettner, 1963:173; MacLeod, 2014:183). PCI's style of evangelicalism, therefore, became hyphenated, Irish Presbyterian-Evangelicalism, Reformed-Evangelicalism and Presbyterian-Evangelicalism (Harris, 2007:201; Henry, 1990:72; Bauder *et. al.*, 2011; Henry, 1990:79; Strange, 2002:5-10; Johnson, 2004:1-17). Having argued that issues of secondary socialisation have a formative role in PCI's MEE, Reformed soteriology is brought into question. PCI embraces monergistic soteriology, in which God's sovereignty is emphasised as central in appropriating the gospel (Calvin, Vol.1, 1957:169; Warfield, 2003:359; Barrett, 2013:121; Godfrey, 2009:121; Sproul, 1986:92; Murray, 1977:83; Barrett, 2013:40-41). Yet, through secondary socialisation, issues other than theological are emphasised, and a value judgement expressed toward those who do not share them. Little emphasis is placed upon God's sovereignty in appropriating the gospel. Grace ebbed because of secondary reasons

as much as theological. Ecumenism was predicated not only on theological agreement but also on historical, cultural and theological considerations. Evangelism sought to further the acceptance of the historical, cultural and political principles of Unionism as much as Reformed theology.

4.3. Hermeneutical Reflection

Secondary socialisation raises the hermeneutical question of whether the praxis of MEE is planned, random or habitual (Ricoeur, 2103:30-35). MEE is a visible representation of PCI's personality, and the theology underpinning them enables PCI to be true to itself. Secondary socialisation, however, suggests a symbiosis of history, culture, politics and theology in forming PCI's personality. Grace ebbs and flows in the degree to which PCI accepts the issues of secondary socialisation as normative for theological authenticity as the church. PCI practises MEE in a habitual manner, moulded by primary and secondary issues. A reevaluation, therefore, of the inspiration for MEE is required to flow in grace and stem any ebbing toward the Catholic Church.

4.4. Secondary Research Foci

This dissertation also sought to address secondary research foci. It is unclear whether doctrinal agreement is a prerequisite for MEE. While some degree of agreement is implied through the general designation of being a Christian church, the question of where the line of demarcation is placed depends on theological influences and secondary socialisation. Where a high level of agreement is expected, then a lesser emphasis on ecumenism seems to ensue, and there is a greater emphasis on evangelism.

4.4.1. An Inclusive Emphasis

Reformed and Presbyterian theology implies an emphasis on both elements of MEE. Any emphasis on evangelism over ecumenism, or vice versa, makes the other of secondary importance. For PCI, therefore, to do true justice to Reformed and Presbyterian theology both evangelism and ecumenism are needed to express the flowing of grace in the gospel.

4.4.2. A Tense Emphasis

Where a tension between the ecumenical and evangelical exist the reasons are both theological and secondary. Indeed, the areas of secondary socialisation present themselves as more significant and accessible than the theological. This may be because of an emphasis on a theologically educated ministry within PCI, something which is not universal to all the members of PCI. This leaves the laity to abdicate the theology to the professional clergy, whereas the laity are more in touch with the grassroots areas of secondary socialisation. While there is no theological inauthenticity in maintaining an ecumenical and evangelical position and praxis, a tension remains between the members opposed to ecumenism and the clergy open to it. For PCI to properly flow in grace in MEE and fight against ebbing, a greater degree of theological awareness is needed within the laity.

5. The Harmony of the Dissertation

MEE is built upon and flows according to certain theological touchstones. Each touchstone lays the foundation for and the praxis of the next. Mission is a central theological theme of ecclesiastical identity, developing from the *Missio Dei Trinitatis* (Wright, 2006:319; Gay, 2011:82-85; Ross, 2010:11-12; Martin, 1960; Stanley, 2009). Mission becomes manifest in history, culture and context (Bevans and Schroeder, 2011:36-49; Tillich, 1968:389-390; Stanley, 1990:34; Leith, 1977:53). Mission is wider than a denominational praxis, emphasising the themes of difference and uniformity displayed in the Trinity.

5.1. The Kingdom of God

Mission is inspired by the kingdom of God as a means of extending the reign of God over the nations (Schillebeeckx, 1981:142, 149; 1989:18; Ott, Strauss and Tennent, 2010:105; Newbigin, 1989:119-120; Cullman, 1971:195; Moltmann, 2000:310).

5.2. Covenant

Membership of the kingdom through covenant provides the rationale for mission (Beal and Linafelt, 1998:4; Brueggemann, 1999:1; Schillebeeckx, 1980:93). Covenant emphasises divine operation rather than a personal response to MEE.

5.3. Culture

God's covenant is made in the context of culture as the matrix through which MEE operates (Hiebert, Shaw and Tiéno, 1999:35-36; Tillich, 1957:57; Hauerwas, 1981:2). While culture may initially seem to reflect secondary socialisation, it is itself a theological concept (2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1-2; 2 Pet. 1:21; Gunton, 2002: 53; Weber, 2002:5). MEE operates in antithesis to culture as the announcement of an alternative kingdom (Pliny, 1957:13; Aristeides, 1957:56-58; Athenagoras, 1957:71-72; Justin, 1987:160; Niebuhr, 1951:32; Newbigin, 1989:185; Tillich, 1968:63; Tracy, 1987:28-29; Schillebeeckx, 1980:55; Niebuhr, 1951:7, 34-36; Tillich, 1957:58; Hauerwas, 1981:93; Brueggemann, 2011:75; 2007:6; Niebuhr, 1951:38; Newbigin, 1989:1, 14, 25, 39; Strange, 2002:14-15).

5.4. Church

Within culture the agent of mission is the church which declares the covenant and announces the reign of God's kingdom (Murray, 1976:237-238; Harper and Metzger, 2009:53; Avis, 2010:7; Tillich, 1968:173, 186; Bonhoeffer, 2001:179; Horton, 2008:15; Harper and Metzger, 2009:33). The role of the church in MEE is, therefore, central. A commonality of function implies that the outcome of mission is ecumenism, reflecting the church as God's dwelling place (McKay, 1964:24).

5.5. Ecumenism

A commitment to mission, therefore, is a commitment to both evangelism and ecumenism (Best and Robra, 1997:18; Dulles, 1987:142; Avis, 2010:4-6; Hegstad, 2013:20; Dulles, 1987:140; McKay, 1964:33; 1960:209; Lindbeck, 2009:131). Mission provides a path between the multiform expression of ecclesiology among the denominations.

5.6. Implications of the Touchstones

The kingdom of God widens PCI's vision to view the breadth of Christian expression. While theological differences remain between PCI and Catholicism, there is a unifying aspect within the kingdom of God. While covenant has particular theological resonance with PCI, the issue of whether God makes a personal or communal covenant remains. No simple resolution will be forthcoming on this matter. Debate concerning the personal/corporate application of covenant must be ongoing alongside a conscious disentangling from areas of secondary socialisation which obfuscates the theology. Areas of secondary socialisation are perhaps best seen in culture. The challenge for PCI will be how to disentangle the ebbing and flowing of grace from the cultural influences of secondary socialisation. Separating the areas of secondary socialisation from the theological will lead to a greater flowing in theological grace through MEE. PCI may, therefore, need to reassess its reason for withdrawal from the WCC and justification for ecclesiastical distance. Further, an emphasis on MEE enables PCI to engage with issues of theological commonality while respecting theological difference.

6. The Application of the Dissertation

The suggested implications of this research for PCI are just that-suggestions. While they may be theologically deduced from the quantitative data, PCI has no obligations to accept these conclusion and recommendations. Connecting evangelism and ecumenism through mission could, however, provide a new model of praxis for PCI. Through conscious engagement with areas of secondary socialisation and an emphasis on the primacy of the theological influences, a challenge can be brought to

the Presbyterian/Unionist axis (Paz, 1972:181; Rodgers, 1991:13; Jackson, 2010:65). To dismiss the ecumenical aspect of mission in favour of the evangelical affords too significant an influence to non-theological influences. Whatever motivates the praxis of PCI in MEE needs to be judged theologically.

6.1. The Theological Application

Ecclesiology is the key subsection in theology which relates to MEE (Pelikan, 1989:282; Goheen, 2002:345; Roxburgh and Boren, 2009:20; Lonergan, 1971:300). Calvin's attitude toward Catholicism has had a particular impact upon how PCI views Catholicism (Calvin, Vol.2, 1957:385; Buschart, 2006:85; Falconer, 2008:29; Naphy, 2007:71; Erskine, 1998:45; Lee, 1981; Lingle and Kuykendall, 1986:45; Lowery, 1985:109). Calvin's theology itself is not purely theological, but reflects the issues of secondary socialisation from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The challenge will be to sift through the secondary areas of influence, both historically and in contemporary Ireland, to address the doctrinal differences between PCI and Catholicism (McGrath, 1994:199-200; Falconer, 2008:11-13; Power, 2006:5; McBrien, 1994:1188; Rodgers, 1991:16). The areas of secondary socialisation cannot be allowed to overshadow the theological, as it is the theological which provides the church with its *raison d'être*. Further, theological difference is not justification for grace to ebb.

6.2. The Confessional Application

The place of the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) in PCI's personality is significant, and so is the negative slant it gives toward Catholicism producing ecclesiastical distance (Reformed-Roman Catholic International Dialogue, 1990:7; Ellis, 1992:76-88; McDowell, 1975:135-136; Barkley, 1993:165; Coleraine Declaration, 1990; Holmes, 1981:173; Mitchell and Ganiel, 2011:4; Brewer and Higgins, 1998; Jordan, 2001; Ganiel, 2008; Thompson, 1998:259). PCI presented itself as an ecumenically distant evangelical denomination, critical of the Catholic Church. PCI will need to approach their confessional basis with the same rigour as

their theological basis to sift out the areas of secondary socialisation which gave rise to the WCF's statements on Catholicism.

6.3. The Orthodoxy Application

MEE within PCI demonstrates the relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. A generally conservative theological position has been maintained, as evidenced through responses to the theological diversity within and to Vatican II from the outside (*Record of the Trial*, 1927; Fulton, 1970:32-33; Montgomery, 1972:15; Alderdice, 2010:305-306; de Chirico, 2003:49; Martin, 2012:1; Lane, 2004:67-84; Cooney, 1999:358; Holmes, 1985:170-171). These responses are formed through the mix between theology and secondary socialisation, primarily the Presbyterian/Unionist axis (Fox, 2001:65-66; O'Brien, 2010:7; Higgins, 2013:26; Waterman, 1984:106; Cooke, 1925:343; Altholz, 2000:114-120; Duffy, 2009:116). A re-evaluation of the responses given to theological reflection within and without PCI will require a conscious identification of the areas of secondary socialisation and a consideration of whether they are the same in the present. For PCI to be truly orthodox, therefore, there is a need to emphasise the theological as primary and weigh the historical and theological sources for PCI's personality.

7. The New Picture of the Dissertation

This dissertation suggests a new model of mission which is theologically and practically evangelical and evangelistic, but also consciously ecumenical. There is a need to reflect on the influences which have formed PCI's personality, leaving behind a "cramped evangelical mindset toward a more generous and encompassing perspective" (Newell, 2016:10). Mission within PCI, therefore, is consciously evangelical and committedly ecumenical. To be authentic to both these aims the ebbing of grace is unjustifiable, and a flowing in grace is asked for, toward Catholics.

7.1. Interaction with Catholic Missiology

While there are differences between the theology of PCI and the Catholic Church, there are also areas of commonality, where there is currently co-operation (Youthlink.org.uk.). None of these engagements or cultural positions eliminated the theological differences between Catholicism and PCI on the key area of how the gospel is appropriated (Zins, 1995:13-15; Kuyper, 1987:47). The challenge of Catholic missiology, however, ought to mitigate against the identification of Catholic people and communities as potential areas for evangelism (Carson, 1996:11; Boettner, 1962:13). The authenticity of a personal response to the gospel, from either a Presbyterian or Catholic background, is beyond the realm of academic theology. The flowing of grace would imply a generosity toward those of different ecclesiastical traditions, reflecting the unique personal influences of theological and secondary socialisation, which can be as varied as the ecclesiastical.

7.2. The Goal of Reformation

While the purpose of the Reformed churches was to effect reformation, this research suggests that through MEE reformation can happen within the Catholic Church, even impacting soteriology (Mullett, 2010:22; Bireley, 1990:159; Rush, 2012:56; Weigel, 2013:87; Haight, 2011:408; Galvin, 2011:278). The need for the dual approach of MEE is, therefore, essential for PCI's Reformed theology and aims. The caveat of avoiding the ebbing of grace in proselytising needs to be raised with respect to reformation. Even if reformation is never achieved, PCI's identity will be enriched by flowing in MEE.

8. Areas for Future Research

This dissertation does not represent the final word on MEE within PCI, or the wider Reformed churches. In the process of this investigation a number of areas for potential future research have arisen:

1. The Implications of the Papacy for Reformed Missiology. This theological investigation would investigate the logical implications of accepting or rejecting the papacy, argued from a Catholic or Reformed position.

2. The Role of Baptism and Church Membership in Reformed Mission. As baptism is an ecumenical sacrament, which is the means of entering the church, and the means of affirming that membership, how would baptism inform mission?
3. Ecumenical Relationships between the Irish Presbyterian Denominations. How do the different branches of Irish Presbyterianism relate to one another ecumenically, theologically, historically and in mission?
4. Missional interaction between Presbyterian and Episcopal Polity. How can Churches which affirm the centrality and importance of a bishop engage in mission-as-evangelism and ecumenism with those who affirm the centrality of presbytery?
5. The Relationship between the Irish Catholic Church and the Irish Celtic Church of St. Patrick. This would address the similarities and differences between both historical and contemporary Irish Catholicism and historical Celtic Christianity?
6. Christology in Modern Irish Presbyterianism. The role of Arianism as a historically divisive and unifying force within Irish Presbyterians raises the possibility of an investigation into contemporary Christology in Irish Presbyterianism.
7. Church Planting, Church Extension and Church Revitalisation in Irish Presbyterianism. Has PCI responded to demographic changes in contemporary Ireland, numerical decline and congregational closure through an emphasis on planting new congregations, extending congregations into new developments and revitalising declining inner city and rural congregations?
8. Cultural Differences between Northern Irish and Southern Irish Christians within PCI. What has informed, moulded and created two related but different ecclesiastical cultures, divided by the border and differing on moral and social issues?
9. The Relationship between Calvinist Soteriology and Evangelical Soteriology. With a significant number of evangelicals, either consciously or by default, adopting the doctrine of universal atonement, how does Calvinism deal with theological tension?

10. How the Catholic Church Understands the Reformed and Presbyterian Church in the light of the Counter Reformation and Vatican II. How does Catholicism theologially interpret and weigh Reformed theology and praxis in the light of significant doctrinal differences?
11. The Impact of Vatican II on Irish Catholicism and the Inter Church Movement. How have the documents of Vatican II informed and changed aspects of Catholic doctrine and praxis in Ireland, with specific attention to the relationship with the Reformed churches?
12. The Relationship between the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church USA. As Scotland provided the beginning of Irish Presbyterianism and from Irish Presbyterianism the PCUSA began, what are the current issues of theological agreement and disagreement within their traditions with particular respect of mission?
13. The Influence of John Wesley on Irish Presbyterianism. This would consider Wesley's evangelical missions during the eighteenth century and whether they had any impact upon Irish Presbyterians through membership growth, Arminian theology and PCI's understanding of mission.

These are but some suggestions which have been raised from this research. Some are practical, some historical and some theological, but all have implications for the current position of PCI.

9. Conclusion

How a religious denomination presents itself to its culture, context and the world, while reflecting its unique theological, doctrinal and secondary foundations is the focus of MEE. Flowing in grace through MEE is a more authentic manifestation of PCI's identity than an ebbing into ecclesiastical distance. Areas where Catholicism and PCI diverge theologially may never be resolved. This dissertation, however, argues that keeping the lines of communication open through ecumenism, and the work of the gospel through evangelism, is the best model for PCI to adopt as it seeks to do God's will and share the gospel in the twenty-first century.

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Annexure 1:
The Irish Articles of Religion (1615), Paras. 63-67
(<http://www.lasalle.edu/~garver/irish.html>)

Of our duty towards our Neighbours.

63. Our duty towards our neighbours is to love them as ourselves, and to do to all men as we would they should do to us; to honour and obey our Superiors, to preserve the safety to men's persons, as also their chastity, goods, and good names; to bear no malice nor hatred in our hearts; to keep our bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity; to be true and just in all our doings; not to covet other men's goods, but labour truly to get our own living, and to do our duty in that estate of life unto which it pleaseth God to call us.

64. For the preservation of the chastity of men's persons, wedlock is commanded unto all men that stand in need thereof. Neither is there any prohibition by the word of God, but that the ministers of the Church may enter into the state of Matrimony: they being nowhere commanded by God's Law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage. Therefore it is lawful also for them, as well as for all other Christian men, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve better to godliness.

65. The riches and goods of Christians are not common, as touching the right, title, and possession of the same: as certain Anabaptists falsely affirm. Notwithstanding every man ought of such things as he possesseth liberally to give alms to the poor according to his ability.

66. Faith given is to be kept, even with Heretics and Infidels.

67. The Popish doctrine of Equivocation & mental Reservation is most ungodly, and tendeth plainly to the subversion of all humane society.

Annexure 2: The Mission Statement of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

The Mission Statement below was received by the General Assembly in June 1992 at its meeting to mark the 350th anniversary of the establishment of the first Presbytery in Ireland.

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND, as a Reformed Church within the wider body of Christ is grounded in the Scriptures, and exists to love and honour God through faith in His Son and by the power of His Spirit, and to enable her members to play their part in fulfilling God's mission to our world.

GOD CALLS US TO A SHARED LIFE in which we love, honour and are reconciled to one another whilst respecting our diversity within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. We are called to encourage the exercise of the gifts of every member of the Body for the work of ministry and, seeking the renewal of the whole Church, to co-operate with other parts of Christ's Church without betrayal of our convictions.

GOD CALLS US TO WORSHIP HIM with our whole lives, meeting together in groups large and small and gathering especially on the Lord's Day for the preaching and study of His Word, the celebration of the sacraments and the offering of prayer and praise with reverence and joy, using language, form and music appropriate both to Scripture and to our time and culture.

GOD CALLS US TO MISSION as witnesses to Christ through both evangelism and social witness challenging the values of the world in which we live with the values of God's kingdom and winning men and women to faith and discipleship. This mission is to be pursued amongst all the people of Ireland and the peoples of the European Community and the whole world: those with whom we feel comfortable, those from whom we feel alienated and those who are in any way distant from us in culture and faith.

WE OURSELVES ARE CHALLENGED with a biblical discipleship which is radical in its self-denial, simplicity of lifestyle, stewardship of money, faithful relationships, prayerfulness, concern for the world which God has created and love for its people whom he loves and for whose salvation He gave his Son.

"Mission Statement" (1992). Available from <https://www.presbyterianireland.org/About-Us/Statements/Mission-Statement>: Accessed on 25/3/15.

Annexure 3: The Coleraine Declaration

In 1840 two Presbyterian Churches, the General Synod of Ulster and the Secession Synod, came together to form the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. As well as giving thanks for 150 years of service, the 1988 General Assembly decided to mark this anniversary by arranging a special meeting of the Assembly to look to the future. 850 elders and ministers met at the University of Ulster in Coleraine in September 1990 to worship, study preparatory papers, listen to lectures and take part in seminars. On the final afternoon, the Coleraine Declaration was 'received' by the Assembly as a document that witnessed to some of the insights and visions gained at Coleraine. It was sent to the Boards and Committees of the Assembly, to Presbyteries and to Kirk Sessions for prayer, study, reflection and response.

Gathered at this great Assembly, 850 of us in all, animated and uplifted by a fresh hearing of God's word, by joyful music and by songs of praise, we have been gripped by the Assembly's theme 'Transformed, not Conformed'. We confess that too often we have been conformed to this world;

- by our failure to listen to God;
- by our lack of appetite for God;
- by our failure to recognise and use the power of prayer;
- by casually assuming God's presence with us;
- by our failure to listen to one another;
- by being bound to the traditions of the past;
- by being more committed to Presbyterianism than to Christ;
- by being content with superficial fellowship;
- by our preoccupation with money and possessions;
- by our failure to enable all our members to exercise their personal ministries;
- by ministering to ourselves rather than to others;
- by our lack of concern for the divisions within the Church, the Body of Christ;
- by not challenging sectarianism;
- by being afraid to take risks for our faith.

In spite of all this, we thankfully acknowledge God's mercy in calling us, unworthy as we are, to be His people, chosen and redeemed in Christ. It is our vision that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be transformed, so that we may

- be hungry for God - and His truth and righteousness;
- be open and willing to listen to His word;
- be enriched in worship as we celebrate God's awesome and joyful presence amongst us;
- be ready to make each congregation a living example of the family of God;
- be renewed in our personal and local church life so that members contribute to the total ministry;
- be willing to adopt a simple lifestyle, no longer preoccupied with money and possessions;

- be glad to share our time, talents and money for the work of God;
- be committed to mission, not only in our own country, but in all the world;
- be responsive to the needs of the world Christ came to save;
- be present as Christ's love, Christ's justice, and Christ's hope in the world's darkness and decay;
- be concerned to proclaim with new confidence and joy the saving name of Jesus, both by word and action;
- be gifted to present Christ attractively and to apply the Word relevantly;
- be able to affirm our oneness with all who sincerely love the Lord Jesus.

God make us a joyful and expectant Church, confident in Him who has made us His people, and given us a heavenly destiny. God make us no longer a Church of yesterday, but a Church of today and tomorrow. God make us mindful of Christ's living presence in our midst, leading us where He wants us to go, no longer conformed to this world, its mind-set and lifestyle, but transformed by the Spirit's renewing power. To God be glory in the Church, now and ever.

Coleraine Declaration: Preamble

1.1 The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, met in special General Assembly at the University of Ulster in Coleraine from 10-13 September, 1990;

1.2 gives thanks to Almighty God for His many blessings given to our Church from its first beginnings in Ireland;

1.3 and especially for the Union of Synods in 1840 and for all that we have received from the Lord during the 150 years since we first met in General Assembly.

1.4 We humbly acknowledge before God our many sins and failures, and pledge ourselves anew to seek first His Kingdom and righteousness in our common life, and in our witness to our society, and to the whole world in His Name.

The Mission of the Church

2.1 We rejoice afresh in the mission to which Christ has called us. Recognising His concern for the less privileged in society, we recognise our largely privileged membership, and we urge upon each congregation the need to share Christ's love with people of every kind, so that everyone may be reached with the gospel of Christ, and in turn may be prepared to offer their gifts in the life and mission of the congregation and of the wider Church.

2.2 Mission overseas has been a particular calling and enthusiasm of our Church since the inception of the General Assembly in 1840. We rejoice that God has enabled us to play our part in establishing the gospel in distant lands, and in building up the Churches there. We gratefully acknowledge also all that God has enabled us to receive and learn through the witness of partner Churches overseas, as well as from individual Christians from every continent

2.3 Recognising the enormous changes which are constantly taking place in our world, we affirm that the Great Commission of Christ our Lord is an unchanging mandate to preach the gospel to people everywhere, and we pledge ourselves afresh to the work of mission overseas, not least in Europe. We shall continue wherever possible to do this in co-operation with partner Churches, and we shall endeavour to learn from their vision, insights and priorities how best we may express our solidarity

with them in the work of the gospel. We call upon our own Church to give itself heart and soul for the work of mission, and pledge greater resources of personnel, money, and pastoral care to serve this end. We urge congregations to set up overseas mission groups, and try to encourage active involvement, not least by men.

3.1 Mission in Ireland must always be our first and immediate task, but mission has been seriously hindered by the unhappy divisions of Irish society, both north and south.

We confess that we have not done all that we should to break down those barriers. Within our Church we are deeply divided between those who would affirm what we have in common with Roman Catholics, and those who feel that to minimise the differences is to compromise the Gospel. Both sections need to listen to each other and learn from each other. For some of us 'Speaking the truth in love' will require new, sustained and costly efforts to build friendships across the sectarian divide; for others the challenge will come in not being afraid, in the context of existing friendships, to witness to reformed truth. Only through a biblical ecumenism which is concerned with both truth and love shall the wounds of the people be healed.

3.2 We believe that amid conflicting cultures God is willing us to create a distinctively Christian counter-culture, in which we distance ourselves from the kind of Protestantism which closely identifies the reformed faith with particular political and cultural aspirations. We commit ourselves to learning what it means to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God.

3.3 In Northern Ireland, we need great courage to work for change, and the flexibility to find new ways of enabling the two traditions to relate to one another in a positive and constructive way, developing new structures that will build trust, and help create a just and sustainable community life for the years ahead. Many people of different backgrounds have acted with great courage in the face of violence, intimidation, and deep personal hurt. We urge our people to act with equal courage also in finding new ways forward, playing whatever part they can in public life for the future good of all. To practise neighbourliness, and to bridge divisions with friendship, and care for 'enemies', is the clear command of the gospel. In southern Ireland, where there is an atmosphere of greater harmony and openness, our people need to be courageous in bearing witness to Jesus Christ, and in sharing the biblical gospel in fellowship with all those who sincerely love the Lord.

3.4 In the face of widespread indifference to the Church and to the gospel, especially in urban areas, we are freed with a gigantic evangelistic task. The whole Church must make resources available, both in terms of money, and of Church members who are prepared to engage in new and imaginative ways of teaching biblical truth, evangelism and Church planting.

3.5 Sensitive evangelism must take account of the sheer speed of change in recent decades, and what this has done to human life. We need to challenge secular assumptions, (e.g. that wealth gives happiness, or that human wisdom has all the answers), and to minister to the confusion and bewilderment they have created, both by our words and deeds. We need to discern what are people's deepest hopes and fears, and to expose the emptiness of the secular sources of comfort to which they turn, and the power of the gospel of Christ alone to meet the real needs of our human condition.

4.1 The task of mission involves both the proclamation of the gospel of salvation, and the demonstration of the love of God through the works of the Kingdom. Evangelism and social concern are linked together inextricably in the purpose of God. We affirm the wide-ranging concerns in which we have been and still are involved. We are determined to work with other Christians as salt and light in contemporary society, challenging injustice, and offering compassion and help to people in their needs. This must involve both biblical insight and adequate social analysis, as well as caring in practical ways in the name of the Lord Jesus. New initiatives will inevitably involve taking risks.

4.2 The constraints of time, manpower and resources inevitably mean setting limits to what we attempt to do, and particularly in the field of social witness. At a local level there needs to be a genuine listening to the community we seek to serve, so that they may have some part in setting the agenda. Local people need to know that our Church not only preaches the gospel, but lives the gospel in the love and compassion of Christ.

4.3 Congregations need to be regularly informed of the wider work of the Church, carried out in their name. A deeper sense of mission needs to be developed, both centrally and locally, so that we become less concerned with the maintenance of buildings, projects and present patterns of ministry, and make mission our priority, sharing the limited resources available to us, and deciding in a prayerful and ordered way what God is leading us to do.

4.4 The Church must develop a strategy for urban mission, adequately financed, as a matter of high priority. Forward-looking policies regarding buildings, co-operation with other Churches, partnerships between suburban and inner-city congregations, the development of team ministries, significant lay leadership, the setting up of mission centres, are all areas that must be explored.

4.5 Three-quarters of our congregations are rural, and this is often where our Church appears at its strongest with much generosity for local needs. Rural congregations, however, are often unenthusiastic about the needs of the wider Church, and lacking in leadership. Their members are often too reserved to share their faith with others. It is important that our Church should develop new ways of rural evangelism, social witness and pastoral care, and of training elders and lay people to be involved in such tasks.

4.6 Recognising the value of small groups from the model of Jesus' ministry and the experience of many congregations all over the world, we would urge the greater use of such groups in our congregations, particularly for evangelism, discipleship training, and to foster community care. Such groups must be carefully integrated into the life of the whole congregation.

The Life of the Church

5.1 Our engagement in the tasks of mission involves a particular understanding of the nature of the Church 'We believe one holy, catholic and apostolic Church...' We confess that, while valuing the diversity of our several traditions, we have been less than enthusiastic about visible unity. The quest for unity is a costly and difficult one, and beset with many problems. We rejoice in the privilege of belonging to the one Church of Christ, and we will seek to give visible expression to this whenever and however we and our sister Churches can in conscience do so.

5.2 The ordained ministry is one of the Church's most important resources. Many ministers are overburdened, and hindered in their spiritual, pastoral and teaching tasks, by the pressures of correspondence, administration and representative roles in the community and the wider Church. Ways must be found, especially at congregational level, of liberating ministers to fulfil their primary tasks.

5.3 The strengths of our traditional theological education need to be released into a new integration of theory and practice. This must address the problems of 'ministry' in inner cities, rural areas, and in counselling, youth work, and social witness. None of these problems will be properly tackled without the kind of training which equips a leader to motivate others.

5.4 The scriptural pattern of ministry encourages us to motivate, train and utilise a team in the outworking of congregational life and mission. The ordination of men and women to the eldership has built this biblical perception into the structures of our local churches. The Kirk Session, together with Congregational Committee and the local leaders of many kinds ought already to have experience of working as a team. In practice, we acknowledge we have often been weakened by the absence of vision and lack of resources, team leadership, and training. We urge Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to review our present practice, and to seek ways to equip elders and others for this approach to ministry.

5.5 Christians are indeed God's pilgrim people in the world; as such they should travel light and live simply. They should not be enslaved to materialism or indulgent living, but ready to share their resources with others. The biblical principle of tithing should be taught and encouraged in our congregations so that, in a willing and cheerful way, funds may be released to further the work of God. Sacrificial sharing of time, energy and possessions, as well as a healthy disregard for their own comfort, should characterise the lives of Christian people.

6.1 The Church is the family of God. As such it incorporates into its membership Christian families, including singles, widowed, childless couples, one-parent families, as well as parents and children. We hold to the scriptural principles of purity before marriage, and fidelity within marriage. Increasingly, however, we are being called upon to offer pastoral care and counsel to those whose marriages are in serious difficulties, or have already come to an end, and to divorced persons seeking re-marriage congregations need to take these pastoral opportunities much more seriously. Training for those involved in counselling, who need not always be ministers, should be made available frequently. Presbyteries should encourage the provision of marriage preparation courses and marriage enrichment courses.

6.2 Loving family relationships are God's purpose for His children and we should do all in our power to instruct our people and to model before them authentic Christian family living, in all its love and discipline. The local congregation in a real sense should be a family and a fellowship should encourage hospitality, using the homes of its people as a base for fellowship, pastoral care and evangelism.

6.3 The majority of those who come to personal faith do so before the age of twenty! Believing in the place of children within the covenant of grace, we need constantly to reassess our ministry to children and young people, as to its effectiveness in leading them to faith in the Lord Jesus, and building them up in discipleship. Church must be for them a place where they know they belong, and where they feel valued and loved

throughout their growing years. Both here at Church and in the home they must be taught about the faith so that they are enabled to relate it to life in the world as they know it. There is a desire to re-emphasise the significance of sacramental discipline, and to reappraise the consistency of our approach to it.

The Worship of the Church

7.1 The renewal of the Church, for which we long, depends in the ultimate sense not upon human organisation, but upon the grace of God, bestowed in Christ, and sealed to us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We humbly acknowledge our deep sense of failure and need, as we call upon God to cleanse and forgive us, and to renew us by His Word and Spirit, so that we may serve Him as we ought, and carry out the work of mission faithfully, as He has entrusted it to us.

7.2 In such renewal, worship is central. We rejoice in the gifts of God for the people of God. Biblical preaching must be at the very heart of true worship. It must, of course, be presented attractively, and applied sharply to the actual situations and needs of our time. Yet the nourishment of mind and heart cannot adequately be accomplished by Sunday worship alone. We urge Kirk Sessions to be creative in providing additional opportunities to study the Bible, and we urge our people to take these seriously.

7.3 The sacraments are also gifts of God, and should be celebrated with joy. Careful ordering of the services can go hand in hand with the use of modern worship resources. The biblical practice of frequent communion is worthy of serious consideration by ministers and Kirk Sessions.

7.4 A rediscovery of prayer is also of vital importance to public worship, as well as to personal discipleship and congregational life. It is the clue to the Church's renewal, and to the effective carrying out of her mission. Many of our people miss out on the discipline and joy of personal prayer, and are fearful and ill-at-ease at the prospect of praying with others. These barriers must be overcome if we are to have the joy of seeing prayer answered in the renewal of the Church and the healing of our land. We need to help our people to more disciplined prayer in personal and family contexts, to more meaningful participation in the public prayer of the Church, and to a new commitment to group prayer.

7.5 The singing of praise is another important part of Christian worship. Recognising that music should help to renew the mind rather than the emotions it is believed that music and songs must be related to the worship and the Word. The time has now come for a new supplemental hymnody incorporating some of the best of recent material. The revision of the Psalter ought also to be contemplated, since the Psalms must always have a normative place in Christian worship. We call upon our congregations to give a high priority to improving the standard of Church music, offering possibilities for wider training and experience to organists, choirs and others involved in congregational music. We call on all our people to put new heart into their singing and to let the inspiration and joy of Christian praise be heard in all our Churches.

Conclusion

8.1 The General Assembly records its grateful thanks to all who have organised this special residential Assembly and have contributed to its programme through teaching, discussion, the leading of worship and in any way.

8.2 We offer thanks to Almighty God for all that we have learned and shared together in these days, and pledge ourselves anew to Him, and to the tasks of mission to which He sends us. To the Living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be glory in the Church now and ever.

“The Coleraine Declaration.” Available from: <https://www.presbyterianireland.org/About-Us/Statements/Coleraine-Declaration>. Accessed on 25/3/2015.

Annexure 4: The Peace Vocation

We, members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, called by God, in the grace of Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, to live in faith, hope and love, as children of our heavenly Father, and witnesses to God's Kingdom, publicly acknowledge our vocation to peace, which is both the gift and mission placed on us by God.

We believe that the same evangelical faith in Jesus Christ, which emboldens us to pray to God as our heavenly Father, challenges us to develop radically new attitudes and relationships with our neighbours in Ireland.

We affirm that to be Christian peacemakers in our own situation: We must grasp more clearly the distinctive teaching of our Lord which challenges the general practice of our world, and breaks the vicious cycle of matching injury with injury, hate with hate, ignorance with ignorance.

We must therefore be prepared to meet and talk together: with those in our own church with whom we have disagreements; with those from churches whose practices and beliefs differ from our own; with those from whom we are politically divided.

We affirm that to be Christian peacemakers in our own situation: we must recognise the responsibility given by God to government, and to those who serve the cause of law and order, so as to encourage well-doing, correct evil-doers, and protect the innocent. We must therefore reject violence; seek ways to advance justice and promote the welfare of the needy; affirm that in democratic societies all citizens are called to share in these responsibilities; and encourage all efforts to establish new structures of consent and participation.

We affirm that to be Christian peacemakers in our own situation: We must be initiators of programmes of action which will contribute to peace in our community. We must therefore provide resources and encouragement to enable congregations to move forward at the local level in the field of inter-community relations.

We understand peacemaking to be an affirmation and accommodation of diversity, and that our particular history in this land of divided communities and recurring violence, of mutual suspicion, fear and injury, makes it imperative that we reassert the Church's own proper calling to seek peace, and the things that make for peace in our day.

“Peace Vocation.” Available from: <https://www.presbyterianireland.org/About-Us/Statements/Peace-Vocation>. Accessed on 25/3/2015.

Annexure 5:

PCI Vision for Society

WE, MEMBERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND, saved by grace and called by God to grace-filled relationships, in the power of the Holy Spirit as ambassadors of Christ's Kingdom in a broken and divided world;

BELIEVE that the Good News of Jesus Christ challenges and equips us to develop radically new attitudes and relationships with our neighbours throughout the whole of Ireland.

WE CONFESS our failure to live as Biblically faithful Christian peacebuilders and to promote the counter culture of Jesus in a society where cultures clash.

ACCORDINGLY, WE AFFIRM Christian peacebuilding to be part of Christian discipleship and reassert the Church's calling to pursue a peaceful and just society in our day

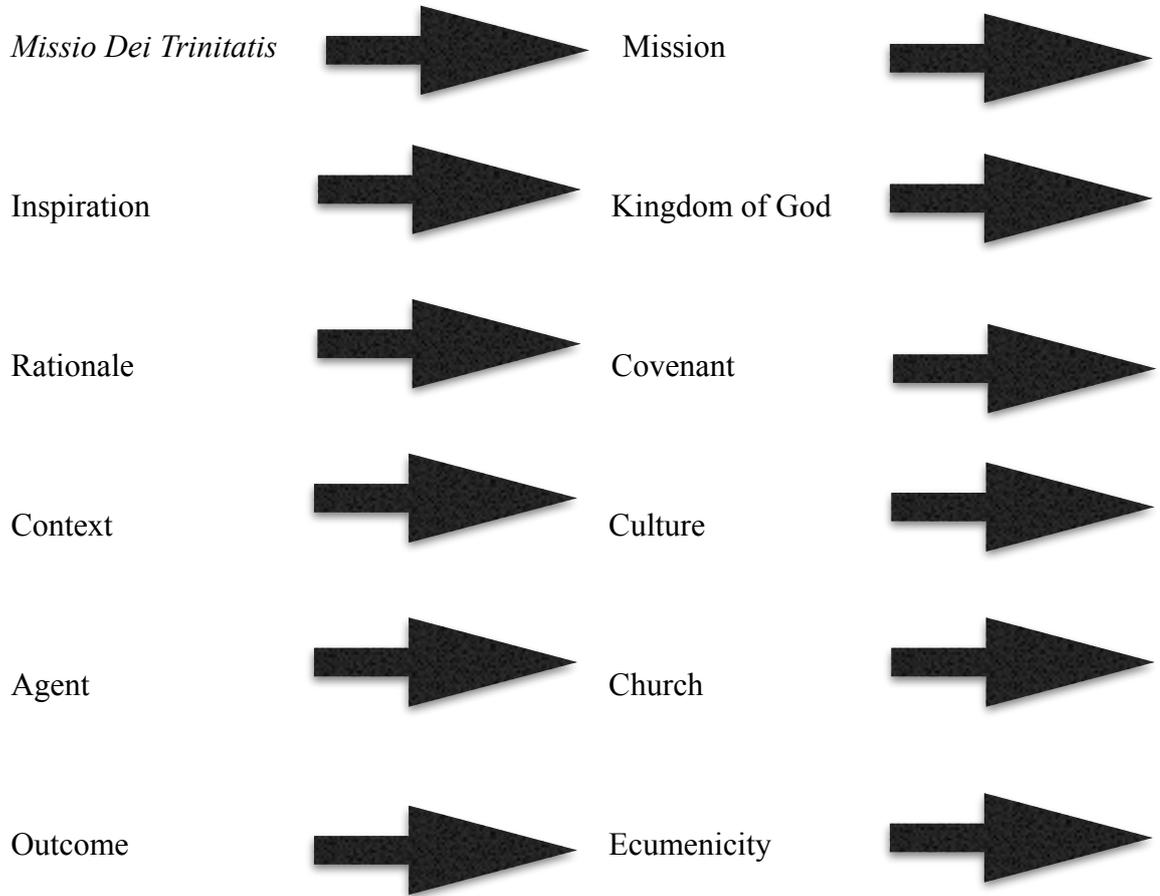
WE SEEK a more reconciled community at peace with each other, where friend and foe, working together for the common good, can experience healing and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Annexure 6:
Resolution of 1988 General Assembly re Antichrist

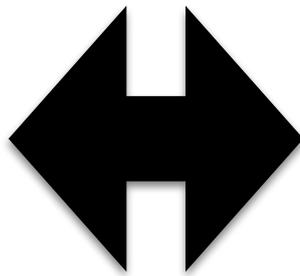
In exercising the right to interpret and explain her standards the church may set forth her understanding of the meaning of disputed passages. Chapter 25: paragraph 6 of the Westminster Confession of Faith steadfastly proclaims that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only King and Head of the Church. From this it follows that no mere man can be head thereof, and any claim to such headship is anti-Christians. The General Assembly under God reaffirm this teaching but declare further their understanding that the historical interpretation that the Pope of Rome as a personal and literal fulfilment of the Biblical figure of “the Anti-Christ” and “the Man of Sin” is not manifestly evident from Scripture. A variety of views has been long held on this topic consistent with a loyal regard for the authority of Scripture and genuine acceptance of Reformation standards.

Firm Foundations: A Faith for Today's Church - A Study Manual on the Westminster Confession of Faith (1994). Belfast: The Board of Evangelism and Christian Training of The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, p.132.

Annexure 7: Theological Touchstones Flow Chart



Missio Dei Trinitatis



Ecumenicity

Annexure 8:

The Totality of Christian Mission (Ott, Strauss and Tennent: 2010, p.151).

	Creation Mandate	Gospel Mandate
<i>Given to and binding for . . .</i>	all humanity (Christians and non-Christians alike)	Christians and the Church
<i>The purpose is . . .</i>	provide for human well-being in an ordered and just society	provide for a restored relationship with God and freedom from the effects of sin in all areas of life
<i>Applies to . . .</i>	human dignity, family, government, stewardship of the environment, care for the poor and weak, creative expression	spiritual life, vertical and horizontal reconciliation, brining all aspects of life under the lordship of the King
<i>Primary biblical basis . . .</i>	Gen. 1-2; Ex. 20:1-7; Jer. 29:7; Mic. 6:8; Rom. 13; Gal. 6:10; 1 Pet. 2:13-14	Mt. 28:19-20; Ac. 1:8; Eph.2
<i>Advocated by . . .</i>	the state, institutions, action groups, philanthropic and development organisations; the church as salt and light	the church, mission agencies
<i>Typical activities . . .</i>	social action, hospitals, schools, relief efforts, economic developments, family advocacy, environmental protection, etc.	evangelism, discipleship, church planting, cross cultural mission to all peoples
<i>God's provision . . .</i>	common grace, general revelation	special grace, special revelation, the power of the Holy Spirit
<i>Fulfilled in this age . . .</i>	in part and imperfectly	in part as a sign of the kingdom yet to come