

ORTHODOX INFLUENCES ON METHODISM.

At first sight, few Christian traditions might seem further apart than Orthodoxy and Methodism, Orthodoxy with its insistence on the integrity of the whole of the Tradition as handed down from the time of the apostles, Methodism with its constant renegotiation of a tradition rooted in eighteenth century evangelicalism and piety. The simplicity of Methodist worship and the bare austerity of many of its older church buildings contrasts with the magnificence of the Orthodox liturgy and the plethora of icons.

Before the twentieth century, contacts between the two traditions were very rare. They were largely geographically isolated from each other, Orthodoxy flourishing in eastern Europe, Russia and the Middle East, Methodism in the anglo-saxon world, England, USA and the 'old dominions' of white settlement of the British Empire. In the nineteenth century, the missionary activity of Methodists extended to large areas of Africa and Asia, particularly, but not exclusively, those then under British colonial rule.

Nevertheless, despite isolation and obvious surface differences, some Methodists and Orthodox have come into closer contact since the beginning of the twentieth century. Some very small Methodist communities have been established in historically Orthodox countries, in Europe rather than in the Middle East. Some of these resulted from small Methodist missions (as in Russia), others from the return of emigrants who had discovered Methodism in North America and then had returned home in their new faith. From the end of the nineteenth century, the Orthodox diaspora has also brought increasing numbers of Orthodox into parts of the anglo-saxon world where Methodism has been historically strong, particularly the USA where both communions now have a membership of several million.

The other source of greater contact between the two traditions has been in the world of scholarship, particularly in the context of the Ecumenical Movement. Since the 1950's some prominent Methodist leaders and scholars have become much better acquainted with Orthodoxy than their predecessors and, in some cases, very deeply appreciative of its riches. Respect has also come from the Orthodox for some Methodists as can be easily seen in the preface to the festschrift for world Methodism's leading liturgical scholar and ecumenist, Geoffrey Wainwright, in 1999. Patriarch Bartholomew congratulated Wainwright on the way

in which he had been able to 'present the richness and depth of the Orthodox liturgy to many who otherwise would have had little or no exposure to our tradition'¹. Nicholas Lossky, in his contribution, cited one of Charles Wesley's great hymns on the Incarnation, 'Let earth and heaven combine, angels and men agree' as a perfect example of theology in prayer'². Wainwright and Lossky alike were key pioneers in a gift exchange between two communions which had previously enjoyed so little contact. Lossky also pointed to the way in which Anglicans, Methodists and Orthodox shared so much, particularly in their understanding of the call to holiness, for which thanks are particularly due to those Anglicans who had studied the Greek fathers so assiduously and whose understanding was handed down both to later Anglicans and to Methodists through the Wesleys³.

It has to be admitted that grass roots contacts between Orthodox and Methodists have not been so happy, particularly in eastern Europe and Russia. Orthodox have never been happy with the intrusion of western churches into their historic territory. In some cases, the nationalistic attitudes of Greeks and Russians, who regard Orthodox identification as essential to true patriotism, have stiffened resentment. On the other side, many of the small Methodist churches in historic Orthodox territory have been and continue to be very evangelical pietistic in attitude, deeply misunderstanding Orthodox piety and worship which they can all too easily and glibly dismiss as empty and formalistic. They can, of course, also too easily become the victims of Orthodox misunderstanding and labelling of them as mere sects, ignoring the fact that Methodists share the same trinitarian faith and, apart from the filioque, the same creeds. There is always a fear of proselytism, shown when in the 1990's Pope John Paul II appointed four Latin rite bishops for Russia and the United Methodist Church USA appointed a bishop for Russia. Despite the assurance from both John-Paul II and the Methodists that these bishops were appointed to look after *existing* communities, not to proselytise, the Russian Orthodox Church insisted at the time on stalling further dialogue with both communions.

For those who wish to understand the complexity of the situation in Russia, there is an excellent essay by two ministers of the United Methodist Church, Revs Thomas Hoffmann

¹ Cunningham, D. et al (eds) *Ecumenical Theology in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, (1999) p ix.

² Ibid, p. 29.

³ Ibid, p. 29.

and William Pridemore. They examine in particular detail the shifting relationship with particular reference to the turmoil of the 1920's and 1990's⁴.

In the West, many Orthodox clergy have seen their key function as the protection of their immigrant communities rather than any making of fruitful links with the pre-existing indigenous churches. Many of the first generation clergy had only an imperfect command of the languages of the countries they were ministering in. Later generations and, in particular, convert clergy with strong roots in western ecclesial culture, have been able, in some cases to do far more, Bishop Kallistos Ware, an ex-Anglican, being a particularly shining example, a man well informed about Methodism as well as the Anglicanism in which he had been reared.

Nevertheless, there are still far too few ordinary Methodists, east or west, with any deep knowledge or experience of Orthodoxy. What has developed over the last fifty years or so in England, amongst other Christians as well as Methodists, has been a widespread interest in icons, perhaps the most widely known being the Roublev icon of the Trinity, sometimes used by Methodist preachers as a visual aid on Trinity Sunday! The spiritual works of the late Bishop Antony Bloom are widely used and respected as are such introductions to Orthodox history, theology and spirituality as Bishop Kallistos's *The Orthodox Church* (1963) and *The Orthodox Way* (1979).

In this paper, I intend first to look at the reception and evaluation by Methodist scholars and ecumenists of Orthodox insights, culminating in an account both of the proposed international Orthodox-Methodist dialogue, in which Wainwright and Bishop Kallistos were key movers, and of the achievement of the informal dialogue between St Vladimir's seminary in New York and some Methodists led by ST Kimbrough of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries. In the second section, I will look at several areas in which there are resonances for members of both communions in the other's theology. In many ways, it is easier to speak of these resonances and their potential for future dialogue than it is to say exactly how far modern Methodism has been influenced by Orthodoxy as distinct from

⁴ 'Esau's Birthright and Jacob's Pottage: A Brief Look at Orthodox-Methodist Ecumenism in Twentieth Century Russia'. (accessible on line, googling Orthodox-Methodist relationships)

collateral influences from other Christian traditions through multilateral and other bilateral relationships.

Early Reception in an Ecumenical Context.

Three closely related movements, flourishing from the mid twentieth century, have made Methodists far more aware than previously of the Orthodox contribution to the universal Church. The first, already touched on above, is the Ecumenical Movement. Important Methodist leaders, active and respected both ecumenically and in the internal life of their own communion, became aware of Orthodoxy and the way in which it resonates strongly with Methodism. Philip Potter, a West Indian Methodist minister, saw from his patristic studies how much the thought of the fathers had helped to shape that of John Wesley. Later, he recalled that when he first met Orthodox Christians in 1957, he ‘was struck how instinctively we felt drawn to each other’. Potter came to believe that Methodists needed to learn four things from Orthodox, not to be afraid of the modern world ‘just as the early fathers were when they took ideas from paganism’, secondly to stress the full potential of human beings as people ‘caught up in the work of glory as well as being necessarily penitents’, thirdly ‘to recover the simple ordinary sense of the Parousia, not putting it into the future as the West often does’, and, finally, to place more emphasis on the Trinity⁵.

Even before the birth of the modern Ecumenical Movement, Methodists, following the Wesleys, had always stressed what they called the ‘catholic spirit’ of co-operation with and learning from other traditions, though, in practice till the end of the nineteenth century, that meant from other Protestants, Roman Catholics still being seen as unbiblical in many beliefs and practices and virtually nothing being known about Orthodoxy. Nevertheless, the early Methodist ecumenist, Scott Lidgett, stressed that ‘catholicity means we belong to one another’⁶. This deeply rooted principle certainly predisposes Methodists to receive from other traditions.

Some Anglicans played a key role in helping Orthodox-Methodist relationships to develop. In 1965, A.M. Allchin, an Anglican with a profound knowledge of both traditions, edited a book

⁵ Potter, P. ‘Introduction. Methodism and Orthodoxy’ in Frost, B. *Living in Tension between East and West* (1984), pp. 4-7.

⁶ Cited by Rupp, G in his contribution to Allchin, A.M. (ed) *We Belong to One Another. Methodist, Anglican and Orthodox Essays* (1965), p. 13.

of essays entitled *We Belong to One Another-Methodist, Anglican and Orthodox Essays*. In his introduction, he cited the example of another prominent Methodist, Marcus Ward, who discovered the Byzantine Church in the course of graduate studies, being surprised to realise how he 'was rediscovering things central to his own Methodist heritage and seeing them in a totally new way, learning 'that the capacity of man, made free to love and make sacrifices, is not bound.'⁷ A second Anglican contributor to the book, H. A. Hodges, mentioned an American Methodist student who had begun his work thinking that the only two consistent Christian positions were those of Roman Catholics and Lutherans. His studies converted him to the view that there was another Christian axis that ought to exist, the Epworth-Canterbury-Constantinople one, marked by the fact that its theology proceeded from liturgical criteria rather than scholastic ones⁸. Certainly, one of the commonalities is the frequency with which Orthodox quote from liturgical texts and Methodists from their hymns, particularly those of Charles Wesley. To them the *lex orandi* is certainly the *lex credendi*. Anglicans were aware that many of the links had come from the fathers through them, particularly the Laudian divines and the non-jurors, some of the latter having had live contact with the young John Wesley⁹.

Closely related to the Ecumenical Movement was an internal Methodist movement of *ressourcement* in which Methodist scholars, challenged by their peers in other traditions to exchange and dialogue, sought to re-examine their tradition in the light both of its faithfulness to the early Church and to the complex heritage left by the Wesleys. John Wesley had been a voracious reader, drawing on an enormous range of sources including the Puritans, the continental pietists and some of the early fathers, whom, he said, he greatly venerated. Wesley was not afraid to quote those, of whose views on some matters he deeply disapproved, provided the example of the holiness of their lives and practice could help his preachers; thus, he commended several of the counter-Reformation spiritual writers to his followers¹⁰.

⁷ *ibid*, p. 6.

⁸ *Ibid*, p.33.

⁹ Hunter, F. *John Wesley and the Coming Comprehensive Church* (1968), pp. 9-44.

¹⁰ They were published in a series of volumes, which Wesley called *The Christian Library*. For a consideration of the range of influences on Wesley, see the chapter by J. Orcibal in Davies and Rupp (eds) *History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol 1 (1965), pp. 81-112.

The original Methodist revival in England had in some ways been as much a eucharistic one as an evangelical one. It is believed John Wesley celebrated the eucharist (sometimes for large gatherings) about every five days, far above the normal frequency for eighteenth century Anglicans¹¹. Charles Wesley produced a book of 166 eucharistic hymns in 1745, showing a profound appreciation of the eschatological aspect of the eucharist¹². The circumstances of post-Wesley Methodism, on both sides of the Atlantic, led to a marginalisation of the eucharist from which Methodism has still not fully recovered and a stress on the more evangelical pietistic aspects of the Revival.

The key mover in reviving a broader Wesleyan vision was the American scholar, Albert Outler, who gave an enormous stimulus to Wesley studies on both sides of the Atlantic, leading scholars to explore many previously neglected writings and in particular to look at the ongoing influence of Wesley's early formation in Oxford and Georgia, where he had read so widely¹³. Outler's key aim was to seek a form of what he called 'evangelical catholicism' in which many of the theological disjunctions stemming from the Reformation might be reconciled¹⁴.

Scholars working in the wake of Outler have stressed the extent of *indirect* eastern influence on much of John Wesley's thought, mediated through the Laudian Anglican reception of the early Greek fathers. Professor Orcibal mentions Wesleys' contacts with some non-jurors, such as Thomas Deacon¹⁵. Randy Maddox stresses Wesley's emphasis on the progressive healing of human nature through prevenient grace. 'And now we can perform through God what was impossible-a recovery of the image of God, a renewal of the soul after his likeness', a very eastern stress in line with later developments there of which Wesley would not have been aware¹⁶. The recent informal dialogue between some American Methodists and Orthodox has devoted attention to the similarities between the thinking of the Wesleys and those later Greek fathers.

¹¹ Bowmer, J. *The Lord's Supper in Early Methodism* (1960).

¹² Rattenbury, J.E. *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (1948) contains the full set plus theological commentary.

¹³ Albert Outler 1908-89.

¹⁴ Allchin, pp. 62-3.

¹⁵ Orcibal, J. op cit, p. 89.

¹⁶ Maddox, R. *Responsible Grace* (1994), p.84

More modern scholarship has slightly tempered the stress Outler and some others put on Wesley's relationship with the fathers, arguing that his direct quotations from them were few. Nevertheless, it is significant that when laying the stone of a new chapel in London in 1777, Wesley stressed that Methodism was nothing other than 'the old religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive Church... found in the works of Chrysostom, Basil, Ephrem Syrus and Macarius'¹⁷. Ted Campbell in his book *Wesley and the Early Church* argues that it was the discipline and manner of life that the early Christians led that was most important to Wesley rather than the theological achievement of the fourth and fifth centuries. Nevertheless, Wesley stressed the centrality of the Trinity and his brother wrote many trinitarian hymns. Charles also celebrated the joyful quality of the life of the early Christians amidst trials and persecution¹⁸.

Charles Wesley, in particular, merits far more attention, both from Methodists and Orthodox. Despite the enduring popularity amongst Methodists of a hundred or so of his vast output of 9,000 hymns, he has received far too little attention in comparison with his elder brother. His hymns, particularly those on the Trinity, christology and pneumatology are packed with theology. The leading hymnographer of the western Church, he shared with St Symeon the New Theologian, arguably his eastern counterpart, a passionate personal experience, conveyed both lyrically and theologically in his hymns. Though it is John Wesley's sermons that Methodists preachers are expected to read and be examined on, the hymns of his brother have arguably been even more important in expressing the faith, practice and experience of Methodists. It is Charles' *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (1745) that can help bring Orthodox and Methodists closer in their understanding of the eucharistic mystery¹⁹.

Finally, there is the influence of the Liturgical Movement, one of the modern giants of which is the British Methodist scholar, Geoffrey Wainwright, simultaneously the leader in both ecumenism and liturgy in world Methodism. Wainwright shows the value of doing theology liturgically in his magnum opus, *Doxology* (1980). His earlier study, *Eucharist and*

¹⁷ Sermon 112 in the *Abingdon Edition of Wesley's Works*.

¹⁸ I have examined this in my *Sobornost* article 'Church and Praise in the hymns of Charles Wesley' vol 18, no 1 (1995)

¹⁹ Rattenbury, J.E. *The eucharistic hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (1948) contains the entire corpus of the Hymns on the Lord's Supper (pp195-249).

Eschatology, (1971), draws widely on primitive and eastern sources but is also aided by drawing on Charles Wesley's hymns. Well before any modern liturgical revision in Methodism, Charles' epicletic hymn 'Come Holy Ghost, thine influence shed/and realise the sign' had enjoyed a place in Methodist hymn books²⁰. On both sides of the Atlantic, revisions of Methodist eucharistic liturgies have taken into account the primitive and eastern stress on anamnesis of *all* the great saving events, not just that on the Cross. They have generally included an epiclesis.

The cross fertilisation between the Ecumenical and Liturgical Movements has been particularly important in enabling reception and convergence. The ninth quinquennium of the Methodist-Roman Catholic international dialogue paid testimony to this when it said that previously both traditions had tended to stress the memorial of the Cross at the expense of the other saving event, particularly the resurrection²¹.

In 1984, a British Methodist layman, Brian Frost, with a keen interest in Orthodoxy, published *Living in Tension Between East and West* in which he particularly looked at Methodist and Orthodox hymns, spiritualities and doctrines of the Church. He looked briefly at the few primitive and eastern hymns in the 1933 British Methodist Hymn Book, (most of them, in my opinion, rarely used), the great exception being St John of Damascus' 'The day of resurrection, earth tell it out abroad' which is still in the present hymn book and is frequently twinned in Easter services with Charles Wesley's great 'Christ the Lord is risen today', thus allowing Methodists, even if they are unaware of the fact, to celebrate the feast of feasts with hymns redolent of the approaches of both east and west²².

Frost notes one of the great lost hymns of the Wesleys, 'Hosannah in the highest', a eucharistic hymn which he says could be adopted by Orthodox as well as being readopted within Methodism. Two verses will give the overall flavour

'His bleeding love and mercy,

His all-redeeming passion,

²⁰ As in the *Methodist Hymn Book* (1933), no 767.

²¹ *Encountering Christ the Saviour* (2011), p. 35.

²² Of the eleven hymns surveyed by Frost only one other, 'Of the Father's love begotten' is still in the current official British Methodist hymn book, *Singing the Faith*.

Who here displays
And gives the grace
Which brings us our salvation'.
'Angels in fix'd amazement,
Around our altars hover,
With eager gaze
Adore the grace
Of our eternal lover'.²³

The closeness of Charles' verse to the approach of the Orthodox liturgy can be particularly well illustrated in the hymns on the Incarnation which celebrate the kenotic life of the Incarnate Christ who emptied himself of all but love. The miracle of the hypostatic union is celebrated. We can compare an extract from Vespers on Christmas day with Charles Wesley.

'How shall I tell of this great mystery. He who is without flesh become incarnate
The Word puts on a body; the Invisible is seen;
He whom no hand can touch is handled;
And he who has no beginning begins to be.
The Son of God who became the Son of man:
Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and for evermore²⁴.

Now follow two quatrains from Charles Wesley

'Emptied of his majesty,
Of his dazzling glories shorn,

²³ Cited by Frost, *op cit*, p.17.

²⁴ Cited in Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, p.114.

Being's source begins to be,
And God himself is born'
'Knees and hearts to him we bow,
Of our flesh and of our bone,
Jesus is our brother now
And God is all our own',²⁵.

Frost has an interesting chapter on spirituality, in which he draws on the work of a now almost forgotten Methodist minister and spiritual writer, A.E. Whitham (1878-1938), a man who stressed the interpenetration of the material and spiritual in a very orthodox way. He also stressed the humility of God, even his shyness, citing him as saying, 'we have always thought of God as a mystery, but a mystery of power, greatness, majesty, never as a mystery of lowliness, humility and reserve...we never thought of a microscope strong enough to find him under our feet, in the hiding of humble nearness'.²⁶ Frost illustrates Whitham's combination of asceticism and joy as follows, 'the price of joy is an undivided mind; it has no secrets from God. It has a clear and single purpose to do the will of God, not bothering about ourselves, very anxious that others should have a good time'.²⁷

In his chapter on Methodist and Orthodox doctrines of the Church, Frost looks at the approaches of Berdyaev and Khomiakov, stressing two things that certainly resonate strongly with Methodists, Berdyaev's stress on the Church as 'not an institution...it is life in the Holy Spirit, which is both its guarantee and its criterion' and Khomiakov's emphasis on it as the community of the Spirit in which truth is guarded by the whole people of God...a unity...based on the strength of mutual love'. Frost argues that these views are consistent with those of Wesley, citing, 'This is catholic or universal love. He bears all who love Christ continually on his heart. He has an unspeakable tenderness for their persons, longs for their

²⁵ *Singing the Faith* (2011), the current official British Methodist hymnal, no 199.

²⁶ Frost, p. 22.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 25.

welfare, does not cease to commend them to God in prayer...He is ready to spend and be spent for them; yea, to lay down his life for their own sake'²⁸.

Methodists will continue to resonate with Berdyaev and Khomiakov on these points. The great nineteenth century Methodist ecclesiologist, James Rigg, insisted that Methodism was as much a revival of primitive church life as it was of doctrine²⁹. It should however, be stressed that Methodists do insist on the divine institution of the pastoral office, that there must necessarily be in the church those who watch over the people of God 'in faith and love' and over their own order mutually in the same faith and love. Orthodox and Methodists can agree that in the Church both order and charismatic gifts and persons are needed.

In an excellent contribution on 'the idea of fullness in the hymns of Charles Wesley', Frost notes how the great hymnographer stresses both in his hymns on the Holy Spirit and his eucharistic hymns the sheer transforming lavishness of God's love in such sets of verses as

'Send us the Spirit of thy Son

To make the depths of godhead known

To make us share the life divine.'³⁰

'Author of life divine,

Who has a table spread,

Furnished with mystic wine

And everlasting bread,

Preserve the life Thyself has given,

And feed and train us up for heaven'³¹.

²⁸ *ibid*, p. 33.

²⁹ Rigg, J. *A Comparative view of Church Organisations, Primitive and Protestant* (1897), p, 207.

³⁰ *Singing the Faith* (2011), no 378.

³¹ *Ibid*, no 572.

He parallels these stresses with some taken from Khomiakov, who talks of the Church as the place where³² the Holy Spirit 'sets forth all his gifts'.

By 1990, Patriarch Demetrios agreed with Wainwright and Bp. Kallistos that the time was ripe for an international Orthodox-Methodist dialogue. Accordingly, a small preparatory commission was appointed to set out possible proposals. It issued a short report in 1995, 'Orthodox and Methodists', most of which was very sensibly devoted to giving members of both communions some basic information about each other, covering historical and geographical location, church structures, emphases within worship and decision making. A third section dealt with shared impressions and what might be recognised or missed in terms of first impressions.

Orthodox would miss icons but be struck by the stress on the sermon and on personal experience. They would be impressed by the hymn singing and particularly by the richly theological context of many of the hymns. They would note the stress common to both churches on the universal offer of salvation, on the need for human co-operation with divine grace and on the call to holiness. Methodists might be struck by the incense, the devotion shown in the lighting of candles and kissing of icons and the elaborate dress of the clergy. They would also be struck by the limited number of those actually receiving communion, but perhaps even more its administration to some very young children³³. Despite the strangeness of the scene, they would hopefully detect a deep sense of worship. Many would want to learn more about the Orthodox and their history.

A final section outlines 'our plans for the dialogue'. These include unity in faith, sacramental communion and shared witness, but three questions would have to be tackled along the way, how much diversity would be tolerable in expression of articles of faith, how much conformity might be expected in worship and church government and how far there is a common understanding of the missionary vocation.

³² Frost sets forth this emphasis both in Allchin, op cit, pp 48-61 and in his own book, *Living in Tension*, op cit, pp. 38-43.

³³ In recent years, many British Methodist churches have begun to allow children to receive holy communion after careful teaching, adapted to their age, on its meaning. It would still be rare to see it administered to babies and toddlers.

The preparatory commission accepted that organic unity seemed 'still a distant hope' but believed that an ongoing dialogue could stimulate mutual awareness and knowledge which would need to become received by the whole people of God. Opportunities for mutual help and encouragement should emerge.

Several topics were suggested for the initial stages of the dialogue. They included, ministry, sacraments and the understanding and experience of the Holy Spirit. The two most fundamental and, one might add, all-encompassing suggestions were the understanding of salvation within the two traditions and the role of the church community and the sacraments in the experience and living out of our salvation.

Sadly, as a result of the situation in Russia, already mentioned, the dialogue did not go ahead.

However, in America, an informal dialogue was started through collaboration between St Vladimir's Seminary in New York and the United Methodist Global Board of Mission. This dialogue has resulted in a very detailed interchange and the issuing of three volumes of proceedings. The riches of the first one, on comparative spirituality, are manifold³⁴. Peter Bouteneff looks at the sheer breadth of the understanding of salvation in Wesleys and Gregory of Nyssa, stressing the inaugurated eschatology of Charles Wesley in such a couplet as

'We need not now go up to heaven

To bring the long sought Saviour down'

and the tendency of all three towards a degree of universalism³⁵ and also the involvement of the whole of creation in ultimate redemption. Kenneth Carveley looks at deification in the Wesleys and in Maximus (a theologian of whom the Wesleys would have been unaware), citing Wesley on the 'great end of religion...to renew our hearts in the image of God' and the concurrent emphasis of both Charles and Maximus on salvation as both intensely

³⁴ Kimbrough, S.T. (ed) *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality*, (2002). A further volume was produced in 2007, Kimbrough, S.T. (ed) *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology*, (2007).

³⁵ albeit that the Wesleys did stress, in preaching, and in Charles' hymn 'Terrible thought, shall I alone', *Wesley's Hymns* (1877) no.80, a very real belief in the possibility of eternal lostness in hell. C. Wesley quotation from *Wesley's Hymns*, (1877) no 902.

individual, yet also cosmic. For Maximus, the Incarnation was the central turning point in the history of the cosmos, for John Wesley 'God presides over the individual as over the Universe and over the universe as every individual'³⁶. Tore Meistad looks at the missiology of Charles Wesley and its links with eastern emphases, recording Charles' statement in his journal that 'universal redemption and Christian perfection are the two great truths concerning the everlasting gospel. He argues that, for Charles, from a soteriological point of view, Christ's atoning sacrifice is not completed till Pentecost'³⁷.

A point that clearly comes out from this and other studies is the need for both Methodist and Orthodox scholars to pay far more attention to Charles Wesley as a theologian than was usual in the past³⁸. In both volumes cited, Methodist and Orthodox scholars alike pay tribute to the depth and range of Charles Wesley's hymnody as a resource for theological dialogue.

Resonances and challenges.

In this section I examine, under various headings, places where Methodists find that Orthodox theology and practice resonate with aspects of their own, but I also look to ways in which Orthodox practice challenges Methodists in general to think again about aspects of the Tradition that Methodists may have unreasonably previously discounted, usually as a result of reaction against traditions *other* than the Orthodox. This has been particularly the case where devotion to the saints, particularly Mary, the mother of Christ, and understanding of some aspects of the eucharist and the use of icons are concerned.

Revelation and the Trinity.

Both the Orthodox and Wesleyan traditions stress the importance of revelation. The Orthodox stress on apophatic theology that not everything can be known about God's nature, nor indeed ever will be completely known, is a useful counterbalance to the perennial temptation in the western tradition to analyse and define everything. Kallistos Ware stresses the teaching of the Greek fathers on the simultaneous otherness and

³⁶ Kimbrough, op cit, p. 180.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 206.

³⁸ Only relatively recently has a selection of Charles's sermons been edited. Much has been written about his hymns but they still await an overall systematic theology.

nearness of the eternal. 'A God who is comprehensible is not God, yet he is infinitely close to us'³⁹. Symbols are insufficient for explaining the transcendent.

Both Methodists and Orthodox agree on the centrality of belief in the Trinity. McGuckin stresses that direct movement to the Father, the arche and source of godhead is impossible. One moves to the Father through the prompting of the Spirit who also points us to Christ the Logos, who initiates us into the love of God. Similarly Wesley stresses that all the works of God towards us begin with the prompting of the Spirit, pointing us to Christ through whom we come to the Father.

Kallistos Ware, in an interesting reflection, sees agreement on the Trinity as necessarily leading Orthodox to take seriously any other Christian body that professes the same faith. He writes of encountering an Albanian evangelical church which quite clearly professed the orthodox trinitarian faith⁴⁰. Trinitarian faith also undergirds much modern rapprochement in ecclesiology and is endorsed in the most recent British Methodist statement on ecclesiology⁴¹.

St Cyril of Alexandria sees the 'entire mystery of the economy consisting in the self-emptying and abasement of the Son of God'. It is the renunciation of His own will in order to accomplish the will of the Father. Lossky further refines this statement by commenting that the Son's self-divestment is 'the manifestation of his very being, his personhood, which is no longer a willing of his own, but his very hypostatic reality as the expression of the trinitarian will, a will of which the Father is the source, the Son the obedient realisation and the Spirit the glorious fulfilment'. The Son accomplishes the Trinity's work of love, there being a 'profound continuity between the personal being of the Son as renunciation and his earthly kenosis'.

All this is very close to the hymnic teaching of Charles Wesley. Christ 'empties himself of all but love'⁴². His very deity is revealed on the Cross to those with eyes to see.

Vouchsafe us eyes of faith to see

³⁹ Ware, K. *The Orthodox Way* (1979), p.13.

⁴⁰ K Ware in *Returning Pilgrims* (1995) p.30.

⁴¹ *Called To Love and Praise*, (1999), para 2.1.9 'The Church is called to mirror, at a finite level, the reality which God is in eternity'. A very Orthodox sentiment!

⁴² In the hymn 'And can it be'. *Singing the Faith*, no 345.

The man transfixed on Calvary

And know thee who thou art

The one eternal God and true.

And let the sight afflict subdue

And melt my stubborn heart⁴³.

For both Wesley and the Orthodox, the Trinity is the source of all things and of all salvation. The saving work of the Trinity can be presented as beginning with the Father's eternal design for salvation, continuing with the sending of the Son and culminating in the sending of the Spirit. Alternately, it can be seen as beginning with the prevenient grace of the Spirit, the Spirit's first prompting in the human heart, continuing in the pointing of the Spirit to Christ and concluding with the Son's handing over of the completed Kingdom to the Father⁴⁴.

In his sermon, *The New Creation* Wesley states that at the consummation 'to crown all, there will be a deep, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and His son Jesus Christ through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the three-one God, and of all creatures in him'⁴⁵.

Christ.

The quotation in the previous section from St Cyril of Alexandria indicates one of the key resonances in Christology between Orthodox and Methodists, an emphasis celebrated in the liturgy and hymnody of both traditions on the humility of the Incarnation, a theme of constant wonder, particularly to Charles Wesley, whose great hymns on that theme are perennially popular with Methodists. He sings

'Emptied of his majesty,

⁴³ *Wesley's Hymns*, (1877), no 120.

⁴⁴ Wainwright, G. *Methodists in Dialog* (1995), ch 17 'Why Wesley was a Trinitarian', pp. 261-274.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p 260.

Of his dazzling glories shorn,
Being's source begins to be'.
Later, in the same hymn,
'Stand amazed ye heavens at this!
See the Lord of earth and skies;
Humbled to the dust he is
And in a manger lies'
'Knees and hearts to him we bow;
Of our flesh and of our bone,
Jesus is our brother now,
And God is all our own
And God Himself is born'⁴⁶.

These sentiments of wonder can be very easily paralleled in Orthodox hymnody.

'Whom have we, Lord, like Thee,
The Great one who became small, the Wakeful one who slept,
The Pure One who was baptised, the Living One who died,
The King who abased Himself to ensure honour for all.
Blessed is your honour'⁴⁷.

There are however some contrasting emphases from which each church can learn from the other. Orthodox images of Christ Pantocrator, ruler of all, seated in majesty in the manner of a Byzantine emperor, remind Methodists that the humble Son of Man to whom they are so devoted is also the ultimate source and ground in partnership with the Father and the

⁴⁶ *Singing The Faith*, no 199

⁴⁷ St Ephrem, cited by Kallistos Ware in *The Orthodox Way*, p. 115.

Spirit of all that is. He is, as the Methodist father, George Findlay, reminds us in his commentary on Ephesians, both the personal saviour and yet also the cosmic Christ, the new Adam, the source of the re-integrative relationship that he offers to all humanity through his body, the Church⁴⁸.

At the same time, the emphasis of Charles Wesley on the sufferings of the dying Lamb remind us of the cost of his kingship. The fifth verse of 'O thou who hast redeemed of old' makes this clear

'Love, only love, thy heart inclined,

And brought thee, Saviour of mankind

Down from thy throne above;

Love made my God a man of grief,

Distressed thee sore for my relief:

O mystery of love'.⁴⁹

The Spirit and Holiness.

Orthodox and Methodists alike stress that the Spirit is a real person and must not be seen as a sort of impersonal emanation from the Father and the Spirit. So far, however, British Methodists have been unwilling to renounce the filioque completely and unilaterally within the western Church, whilst accepting that its addition has never been fully ratified by a universal council or received by the faithful everywhere⁵⁰.

In the Orthodox tradition great stress is placed on the humility, almost the anonymity of the Spirit, yet, at the same time, there is no doubt as to His mission and power. Ware stresses that 'there is a secret and hidden quality about him which makes it difficult to speak about

⁴⁸ Cited in my article, 'Faith, The Believer and the Church' in *One in Christ* (1995, vol 1, p. 66).

⁴⁹ *Wesley's Hymns* (1877) no 772, v.5.

⁵⁰ The matter was briefly discussed in the British Methodist Faith and Order Committee in the 1980's

him'⁵¹. His function is always to point us to Christ; at the same time, he is felt in all his energy of transforming, purifying, sanctifying, facilitating, leading onwards into the fullness of Christ⁵². His action cannot be defined verbally. It has to be lived and experienced. According to Lossky, the only icon of the Spirit is the multitude of all the saints taken together; it is in the Spirit that humanity, so divided and differentiated, is recreated.

The same paradox is celebrated in Wesleyan theology, particularly in the many hymns of Charles Wesley on the Spirit. The Spirit is 'inmate of a humble heart', yet also is invoked in power.

'Refining fire, Go through my heart

Illuminate the whole

Scatter thy love through every part

And sanctify the whole'⁵³.

Both St Symeon, the eastern counterpart of Charles Wesley and Charles Wesley, the western counterpart of Symeon, are at their most lyrical in singing of the Spirit. Charles invokes the Spirit in a hymn perennially popular within Methodism,

'O thou who camest from above

The pure celestial fire impart.

Kindle a flame of sacred love

On the mean altar of my heart'⁵⁴.

Symeon responds with his celebrated invocation,

'Come true light.

Come life eternal.

⁵¹ Ware, K. *The Orthodox Way*, op cit, p.119.

⁵² McGuckin, J. *The Orthodox Church* (2011), p. 134.

⁵³ *Wesley's Hymns* (1877), nos. 758,

⁵⁴ *Singing the Faith*, no 564.

Come, hidden mystery.

Come, treasure without name.

Come, reality beyond all words.

Come, person beyond all understanding.

Come rejoicing that knows no end.

Come light that knows no evening⁵⁵.

The Spirit in a very real way crowns and completes the work of salvation. His ministry is essential. As Charles Wesley sings

‘Thou knowst the Son, and must make known;

In vain He died, and rose on high,

And stoops beseeching from his throne,

Till thou this alien heart prepare,

And gain for Christ an entrance there⁵⁶.

Two distinguished modern theologians of each tradition underline the ongoing work of the Spirit in Church and eucharist. Bobrinskoy states that the eucharist is totally epiclesis...the eucharist is a permanent Pentecost⁵⁷. Ward argues that the descent of the Spirit was inaugurated at Pentecost but has never ceased⁵⁸.

Finally, the Spirit is the giver of all charisms, bestowed alike on all Christians, lay as well as clergy for the enrichment of the Church. The key role of the Spirit is in deifying true believers, ‘God making us God’. The great Orthodox fathers, St Basil in particular, stress that the Spirit makes us everything that God can be except in terms of eternal self existence since we can only be gods by grace and not by innate nature. The Wesleyan tradition does not use quite this language, though it does come close to it in such lines as

⁵⁵ Cited in Ware, op cit, p. 137.

⁵⁶ *Wesley's Hymns* (1877), no 770.

⁵⁷ Bobrinskoy, B, *Le Mystere de La Trinite* (1996), p. 190.

⁵⁸ Ward, M. in *Sobornost*, Winter-Spring 1968, p. 739.

'Spirit immense, eternal Mind,
Thou on the souls of lost mankind
Dost with benignest influence move
Pleased to restore a ruined race
And create a world of grace
In all the image of thy love'.

The Church.

In 1935, Sergei Bulgakov wrote, 'The Church of Christ is not an institution. It is a new life in Christ, with Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit'. The person who wishes to understand it must 'come and see'⁵⁹. One only understands the Church by experiencing it by grace, by participating in its life'. Later, Paul Evdokimov wrote, 'in the time of the fathers, the Church was so obviously a spring of life that the question of its nature was never raised'⁶⁰.

Methodists would identify with both Orthodox writers. They would not deny that, in the conditions of the present order, the Church has a necessarily institutional aspect. However, at the deepest level, it is new and everlasting life bestowed by the all merciful and loving Father through the operations of his two hands (to use Irenaeus terminology), his Son and his Spirit. It is communion into which we are drawn by the Holy Trinity. It is a life in catholic fullness, into which humankind is invited. As Charles Wesley sings,

'A Church to comprehend
The whole of human race
And live in joys that never end
Before thy glorious face'⁶¹.

⁵⁹ Bulgakov, S. *The Orthodox Church* (1935), pp. 9.

⁶⁰ Evdokimov, P. *L'Orthodoxie* (1979), p. 123.

⁶¹ Cited in *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology*, op cit, p. 130.

Bulgakov caps the hymnologist's stress. 'All the life of Orthodoxy is full of heavenly visions...it is bound up with visions of the other world. The Divine office comprehends, as I have indicated not only the commemoration, but the reality of great events'⁶².

It is a life in continuity with the apostolic experience. James Rigg wrote in 1897 that early Methodism was as much a recovery of apostolic life as of apostolic doctrine⁶³. Charles Wesley recounts the essential identity of the lived experience of Methodism with that of the apostolic and patristic churches. In the hymn *The Love Feast*, Charles Wesley speaks of the identity of the early Methodists with the Church across the ages and the Church in heaven. They 'sweetly join Christ to praise in hymns divine' and

'Hands and hearts and voices raise,

Sing as in the ancient days,

Antedate the joys above,

Celebrate the feast of love⁶⁴.'

In 1746, having just experienced being rescued with other Methodists from mob violence, Charles Wesley wrote the hymn 'For times of trouble'.

'Head of thy Church triumphant,

We joyfully adore thee,

Till thou appear,

Thy members here

Shall sing like those in glory'.

It ends with the assurance that

'if thou count us worthy,

We each as dying Stephen,

⁶² Bulgakov, op cit, p. 168.

⁶³ Rigg, J. op cit, p. 207.

⁶⁴ *Wesley's Hymns*, op cit, no 520.

Shall see thee stand

At God's right hand,

To take us up to heaven'⁶⁵.

Both Methodists and Orthodox stress the essentially corporate and mutually supportive nature of all Christian experience and growth in holiness, a fellowship indicated in the next section on the Communion of Saints. To Bulgakov's stress on the need to participate in order to understand what life in Christ means and brings to the community of believers, Methodists, Charles Wesley in particular, add a stress on the way in faith is verified in such participation. In a hymn greatly loved by all generations of Methodists, he sings

'The gift that he on one bestows

We all delight to prove;

The grace through every vessel flows,

In purest streams of love'⁶⁶.

Does this refer to gifts given to all in due course or rather to affirmation of the perception of a particular charism given to a particular person? Perhaps both. Certainly, there is a common rejoicing of those who together celebrate that they are 'glad to fulfil all righteousness'⁶⁷.

Both Methodists and Orthodox can identify with the teaching of Archimandrite Vasileos that 'the apostles build the Church with the architecture of the Spirit'⁶⁸. The outward ministries of Methodism and Orthodoxy differ in particulars but have the same apostolic function, as Bishop Asbury, the American successor of Wesley affirmed, describing his own ministry as replicating 'the apostolic, itinerant plan of ministry.'⁶⁹ Both communions place a strong emphasis on the royal priesthood of all the faithful and their active role in defending and witnessing to the faith.

⁶⁵ *ibid*, no 853.

⁶⁶ *Singing the Faith* (current British Methodist Hymn Book), no 608.

⁶⁷ From the hymn 'Behold the servant of the Lord'. *Singing the Faith* (2012), no.546.

⁶⁸ Vasileios, *Hymn of Entry. Liturgy and life in the Orthodox Church* (1984), p. 50.

⁶⁹ Cited in *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology* (2007), p. 154.

The Communion of Saints.

Methodism and Orthodoxy hold what might come to be regarded within both communions as complementary ways of understanding and appreciating the communion of saints. Both churches believe that all Christians are 'called to be saints' and are always saved and sanctified within the fellowship of the Church. Methodists can endorse Kallistos Ware's statement, 'no one is saved alone; he is saved in and through others'. Both communions stress that the communion of saints transcends death, the saints are 'one family, above, below' (Charles Wesley), 'death is not an impassable wall' (Kallistos Ware)⁷⁰.

Methodists certainly revere many saints, from their own tradition and others, as outstanding examples of Christian discipleship, models to be emulated. They give particular emphasis to the encouragement that Christians, as fellow pilgrims within particular Christian communities, give to each other on the pilgrim way. Charles Wesley's hymns 'for the society meeting' particularly stress this, good examples being the perennially popular hymns 'Thou God of truth and love' and 'All praise to our redeeming Lord', the first speaking of mutual care and 'kindly helping each other on', the second of 'building each other up'⁷¹. John Wesley loved and duly observed All Saints' Day, but, with the exception of May 24, when they celebrate the anniversary of John Wesley's evangelical conversion experience, Methodists do not observe individual saints' days nor do they commonly invoke the prayers of particular saints⁷².

By contrast, it seems natural to all Orthodox to ask the saints for their prayers. If on earth we ask others to pray for us, why not also ask the saints who have gone beyond?

Methodists should face this logical corollary. A slight move towards this can be traced in the British Methodist liturgical revisions of 1975 and 1999 which insert into the liturgy a memorial of the Church militant and triumphant, 'in you, Father, we are one family in earth and heaven. We remember in your presence those who have died...giving thanks especially for those who have revealed to us your grace in Christ. Help us to follow the example of

⁷⁰ Ware, K. *The Orthodox Way*, p. 141.

⁷¹ *Singing the Faith*, nos 620, 608.

⁷² Wainwright, G.

your saints in light, and bring us with them into the fullness of your eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord'⁷³.

Methodists may be helped to move further on in this by the work of the French monk of Taizé, Pierre-Yves Emery, whose researches have highlighted the presence in the thought of some of the reformers of the concept of the saints at rest, who, still awaiting the final judgement and resurrection of the body, nevertheless are with Christ in a way more intensely close than on earth. In that state, they pray both for the final Parousia but also for those still on earth in their struggle against the flesh⁷⁴.

Methodists will welcome Bp. Kallistos' stress that 'strictly speaking no one is a saint but God and thus no one a saint except on and through through the work of to Christ and the Spirit'. We can ask for the prayers of the saints because they are in Christ, taken up in baptism into the paschal mystery true members of Him, who is, 'never without his people seen.'⁷⁵

Orthodox reverence for two particular sorts of saints, the staretsi and holy fools of the past, has a parallel in Methodist reverence for class leaders, lay leaders of prayer and mutual counsel groups and for some of the more eccentric local (i.e. lay) preachers of the past. Billy Bray, a converted drunk, who faced persecution as a travelling lay preacher, once said 'if they imprisoned me in a beer barrel, I would still cry out, 'Glory' through the bung hole'⁷⁶.

Mary, the Mother of God.

Probably the aspect of Methodism that would most disappoint Orthodox, particularly those who may already have come to appreciate the closeness of the two traditions in respect of belief in the Trinity and the work of Christ and the Spirit, is the apparent lack of devotion to the Mother of God. For some of the more robustly Protestant Methodists the very term Mother of God can sound idolatrous, though it should be possible to assuage such fear by pointing to several things that could lead to a Methodist reassessment. The first is to stress,

⁷³ *Methodist Service Book* (1975), p. B9

⁷⁴ Emery, P-Y. *The Communion of Saints* (1966 ET).

⁷⁵ Charles Wesley in 'See where our Great High Priest', hymn no 622 in *Hymns and Psalms* (1983, the previous official British Methodist hymn book).

⁷⁶ For his life, see Bourne, F.W. *The King's Son* (1869).

as I remember a decidedly evangelical Anglican once doing, that the term theotokos, God bearer' *must* be legitimate if we believe in the two natures of Christ. Mary bore the child who is both truly God and truly a human being. The second thing is to stress that though Scripture tells us relatively little about her what it does say is highly significant. She is a model of grace, faith and obedience to the divine will. She consents instantly to God's will, puzzled though she was by it. She is twice stressed as a model of contemplative life (Luke 2: 19, 51). She is present at the Cross, and at Pentecost when the spirit is given, her expectant and obedient waiting being manifested then, as it had been in a different way at Cana.

A third consideration that might help is the fact that Orthodoxy imposes no such questionable doctrines as those of the Roman Catholic Church, relating to Mary's immaculate conception and bodily assumption. Certainly, Orthodox refer to her as the All-Holy and celebrate her falling asleep on August 15, but they accept that belief about her presence as already in heaven belongs to the private hope of the faithful rather than being a part of the essential public kerygma. Finally, Orthodox accept that, though respect is due her above the level owed to all other saints, the hyperdulia sanctioned by Nicea II does not equate with worship, which is due only to the Holy Trinity.

In the 1990's, British Methodists had fruitful discussions with Roman Catholics in which they accepted that much that Catholics believed about Mary as a model disciple of her son could be accepted by them whilst they still maintained reservations (which, of course, Orthodox share) about the definition of the marian doctrines of 1854 and 1950⁷⁷.

The Image of God in human nature.

Perhaps the most important emphasis within Orthodox theology for Methodists to appropriate, pastorally, missionally and in daily interaction with their neighbours is the stress on human nature as created in the image of God.

Western theology, as a whole, has been deeply influenced in the past by an almost obsessive emphasis on sin. Jeremiah's statement that 'the heart of man is above all things

⁷⁷ Evans, M. (ed), *Mary, Sign of Grace, Faith and Holiness* (1995), a distillation of work in the British Methodist-Roman Catholic Committee.

desperately wicked' (17:9) has often been privileged over the Genesis statement on the creation of humankind in the image and likeness of God. John Wesley's theology was to an extent ambivalent. He analysed the image of God in humanity in terms of what he called its natural, political and moral components, arguing, as all would accept, that they are distorted by sin, but also talking, in true Augustinian style of their total loss through the Fall.. However, he added that an element of human freewill had been restored by the prevenient grace of the Holy Spirit. Charles Wesley, in his hymnody, makes frequent references to the divine image and to Christian prayer for its full restoration as central to Christian aspiration. One may cite the following examples

'still for thy loving kindness, Lord,

I wait my vigour to renew

Thine image to retrieve.⁷⁸

There is often a corporate and eschatological emphasis, as in

'Our mutual prayer accept and seal

Till all in thine whole image shine

And share they majesty divine

And mount our thrones encircling thine.⁷⁹

The search involves asceticism and purgation, a stress strongly affirmed in the recent Anglican-Orthodox dialogue report when it affirms that the recovery of the fullness of the image involves dynamic growth through repentance and prayer, through sacramental life and through the life of service in obedience to the commandments of God⁸⁰. John Wesley made a similar assertion when he urged the Methodists repeatedly to use all the means of grace, both instituted and prudential⁸¹.

⁷⁸ *Wesley's Hymns* (1877 edn), no 92.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, no 18. Note also the petition for the total reversal of the fall in 'be to us what Adam lost, let us in thine image shine' in no 54.

⁸⁰ *In the Image and Likeness of God-A Hope Filled Anthropology* (2015). p.21.

⁸¹ By 'instituted', John Wesley meant those means of grace directly commanded in the Bible; by the 'prudential', he meant spiritual practices developed later in the Church

'Fire our graces shall refine

Till moulded from above

We bear the character divine

The stamp of perfect love'⁸².

Finally, we noted that, for Charles, the image is that of the Trinity. We are called to be 'transcripts of the Deity'⁸³. Charles' vivid phrase reminds us of the essential sociality of human beings, that it is in sharing in, in celebrating together, in serving each other in the common hypostasis of their humanity that human beings fulfil the original divine intention and obey the second great commandment, as indeed the archimandrite Sophrony sees⁸⁴.

Methodists and, indeed, other western Christians need to recognise that the teaching on the image in scripture is not confined to the three quotations in Genesis, II Peter and James but is widely implicit elsewhere, as in Psalm 8 and in particular in Christ's command to be perfect 'as your heavenly Father in perfect' (Matt 5: 48). Alone amongst all creatures, human beings have a capacity for response to God in ways that both fulfil and delight the human partner and at the same time fulfil the aim and purpose of the divine initiator. Through the Incarnation, human nature receives a pattern into which to grow. Paul teaches in Ephesians that Christians are to 'grow into the mature stature of the personhood of Christ'⁸⁵. Elsewhere, we read of Paul's injunction to 'do good to all people, but especially to them that are of the household of faith'⁸⁶. The benevolence of Christians must be fruitful within the chosen community but must also spill over into the wider human community, indeed into the whole of creation, following the example of the divine lavishness shown in creation, redemption and the gift of the Spirit. We are to be transcripts of the Trinity in mirroring the benevolence of the Father, the love of the Son and the creativity of the Spirit⁸⁷.

⁸² *Methodist Hymn Book* (1933), no 519.

⁸³ *Wesley's Hymns* (1877), no 7.

⁸⁴ The commandment being given 'to re-establish the consubstantiality of the human race, rent asunder by sin'. Cited in Louth, A. *Modern Orthodox Theologians* (2015), p. 311.

⁸⁵ *Ephesians* 4:13.

⁸⁶ *Galatians* 6:10.

⁸⁷ *Wesley's Hymns* (1877), no 7.

Methodists will find much to resonate with in the Orthodox emphasis. They will understand that the image corresponds with the human potential for holiness as restored by the prevenient grace of the Spirit and the likeness as corresponding with what Charles Wesley calls 'the spirit of finished holiness' and John the gift of perfect love. To the Orthodox stress on our life in Christ corresponds the dictum of the Wesleyan theologian, W.B. Pope, that our regeneration corresponds with the eternal generation of the Son and our adoption with His status as the eternally beloved of the Father⁸⁸.

We note the way in which, for the Wesleyan tradition, the kenotic divine love in Christ calls for a human response, the essence of which, according to John Wesley is 'humble patient love'. The self-limiting of the godhead in conferring a risky freedom on human beings must find an answering response in human nature, one in which the respondents gladly 'fulfil all righteousness', offering to God a redeemed nature, enabled in the Holy Spirit to share fully in the completion of the divine plan'⁸⁹.

Orthodox and Methodists alike can certainly affirm the teaching of the recent Anglican-Orthodox international dialogue report on the image of God in human nature. 'To be human is to know, love and delight in God and share in God's life as far as created beings may'⁹⁰. The Report emphasises that 'God has become human not only that we may share in the divine life but also we that may become fully human'⁹¹.

These points are important as we seek to reconcile our belief in God's call and gift of empowering grace with our experience both of a dysfunctional world and a church of imperfect discipleship on the part of both Orthodox and Methodists. As creatures, we are necessarily limited and have to grow, Intellectually and physically, as indeed did the Incarnate Christ (Luke 2:52). It is here perhaps that an Irenaean rather than Augustinian account of the Fall and its effects on human nature is more helpful. Irenaeus stresses the immaturity of Adam and seems to indicate that his actions were primarily the result of immaturity in the relationship being offered by God and thus, one might argue, that sin was almost inevitable. Human beings have to *grow* into the image. They have to learn to develop

⁸⁸ Pope, W. B. *Compendium of Christian Theology* (1880), vol 3, p.4.

⁸⁹ 'and sweetly lose our wills in thine' is Charles Wesley's memorable phrase. *Singing the Faith*, op cit, no 620.

⁹⁰ *A Hope-filled Anthropology*, op cit, p.3..

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.5.

true relationships, human as well as with God. We have to learn that we are called to relationships of mutual self-giving, to preferring each other in honour, to a truly priestly celebration of creation, involving responsible stewardship of it, finally that only in relationship with the Trinity and with the 'consubstantial humanity' of which we are part can the gracious intention of our creating and redeeming Lord be fully fulfilled and all be at the end 'wonder love and praise' in which 'thy gifts we offer back to Thee, in ceaseless hymns of praise'⁹².

We may say in conclusion that the understanding of our creation 'in the image and likeness of God' provides a framework for the understanding of the whole of Christian life. It encapsulates everything in our calling, it calls for true stewardship of all possessions and charisms. It allows the ultimate synthesis between divine and human creativity. It enables us to receive the ministry of God's love through each other. It reveals the final aim of life in the Church of God, growth into the likeness of God, which is, to use a phrase from Charles Wesley, 'the spirit of finished holiness'⁹³. The deification/theosis of human beings 're-establishes the consubstantiality of the human race and renders the Church catholic in the fullest sense in which each individual member of the body is in the fullest communion not only with his contemporaries but with all who have gone before and are now in God's presence'⁹⁴. At the end of time the eternal counsel and plan of God will be fulfilled. Christ will hand the finally perfected kingdom over to the Father, saying 'here am I and all the children that you have given me' and God will be 'all in all'⁹⁵.

Worship and Eucharist.

Despite the surface differences noted at the beginning of this chapter, there are deep similarities between the approach to worship in the two traditions. Kallistos Ware argues that 'Orthodox worship at its best has always succeeded in combining the two qualities of mystery and informality'⁹⁶. He asserts that the Christian to the end is always been between assurance and awe in his or her approach to God, an approach we find sung in Charles Wesley's hymns, which include the lines 'Thou great mysterious God unknown' and the

⁹² C. Wesley in *Singing the Faith*, op cit, no 503,

⁹³ *Methodist Hymn Book* (1933), no 554.

⁹⁴ Bulgakov, S. *The Orthodox Church* (1935), p. 62, as cited by Pilch, J in *One in Christ* (vol 2, 2018), pp. 201-2.

⁹⁵ Hebrews 2:13, 1 Corinthians 15:28.

⁹⁶ *Sobornost*, Winter-Spring 1970, p. 729.

couplet, 'Jesus is our brother now/and God is all our own'. The same combination of awe and intimacy is at the heart of Methodist worship at its best⁹⁷.

For Orthodox, the awe is expressed in the liturgy, the informality in the gestures, the crossings, the embracing of icons. For Methodists it can be expressed in extempore prayer, offered by the preacher leading worship and sometimes by impromptu responses from the congregation, but also particularly in smaller prayer and fellowship groups.⁹⁸

Methodist worship has a dual heritage. It is liturgical in terms of the eucharistic liturgy and office of morning prayer, both inherited from Anglicanism, plus some later Methodist liturgies such as that for the Covenant Service⁹⁹. It is informal in terms extempore worship based on prayers, hymns, reading and a sermon, all orchestrated by the appointed preacher, sometimes assisted by a worship leader.

The history of eucharistic worship within Methodism has been influenced by the nature of its relationships with Anglicanism and the speed of its spread. The Wesleys never intended to split from the church in which they were priests but to reinvigorate it through the worship and witness of their societies which were meant to complement, not replace the worship of the parish church. They laid great store on the eucharist, celebrating it far more frequently than was the then norm. However, their lay preachers could not preside at the eucharist, the early Methodist people often failed to attend the parish church for the sacraments in the way in which the Wesleys wished and the Methodists became used to a different diet of worship as provided by the itinerant and local preachers. After 1795, the critical point of separation from the Church of England, the travelling preachers were authorised to preside at the eucharist but, as they only visited many smaller churches rarely, communion services became very infrequent. Sometimes, they were tacked on to the end of a preaching service with only a few ultra devout members staying to partake despite the

⁹⁷ *Wesley's Hymns*, op cit, no 97, *Singing The Faith*, no 199.

⁹⁸ A favourite expression in my local church at Watley's End (near Bristol) is the spontaneous repetition of the final verse of a favourite hymn.

⁹⁹ See the (British) Methodist *Book of Offices* (1936), the *Methodist Service Book* (1975) and the *Methodist Worship Book* (1999) and parallel texts of overseas connexions.

Conference repeatedly reminding Methodists that the sacrament was of 'divine institution and perpetual obligation' on all Christians¹⁰⁰.

Partly as a result of reaction against the extreme Romanising sacramental theology of the Tractarians, Methodist views of the sacrament became increasingly memorialistic, in contrast to the rich theology of presence and sacrifice in the hymns of Charles Wesley. It was only from the 1930's, under the influence both of the Ecumenical Movement and the internal development from 1935, within British Methodism, of the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship, that a richer theology and more frequent celebration began to spread¹⁰¹.

Marcus Ward, an eminent Methodist missionary and one of the few Methodists of his era with a profound knowledge of Orthodox faith and liturgy, stressed the epicletic role of the Spirit in all worship, not just the eucharist. Ward pointed to the fact that Charles' epicletic hymn, 'Come Holy Ghost thine influence spread and realise the sign' had always remained in the hymn book and in a very Orthodox way stressed that 'the Holy Spirit remains master of His Gifts'. Ward also extolled the eastern sense that 'the priest does not consecrate on his own before a passive congregation'¹⁰².

British Methodist revisions of the eucharistic liturgy in 1975 and 1999 added an epiclesis. They also added a stress on the eucharist as anticipation of the end time in the acclamatory formula, 'Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again'. In 1971, Wainwright's ground breaking work, *Eucharist and Eschatology* was published, including the vivid statement that 'at each eucharist, the Church is in fact praying that the Parousia may take place at that very moment, and if the Father merely sends His Son in sacramental mode, we may at least have a taste of that future which God reserves for Himself to give one day'¹⁰³. This of course came into the 1975 thanksgiving after communion in which Methodists thank God for 'giving us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet'¹⁰⁴.

There is much that Methodism has yet to learn from the Orthodox about the eucharist. Schmemmann's excellent book *The Eucharist* (1988), stresses the way in which the eucharist

¹⁰⁰ The words of the Deed of Union of 1932.

¹⁰¹ For the history of this and its dedication to the evangelical catholic tradition, see Wallwork N. *The Gospel Church Secure-The Official History of the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship*. (2013) American Methodism has also seen something of a eucharistic revival in recent years.

¹⁰² *Sobornost*, Winter-Spring 1968, pp. 391-

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p.67.

¹⁰⁴ *Methodist Service Book* (1975), p.B17.

is far more than the simple commemoration of the Cross to which it tended to be reduced in so much western theology. It is 'remembering this saving commandment and all those things that have come to pass for us; the Cross, the Tomb, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the sitting at the right hand and the Second and Glorious Coming'. Interesting is the holistic approach which Schmemann takes to the sacrifice of Christ, stating, 'He is sacrifice not only in his ministry but above all in his eternal Sonship, his giving of himself in perfect obedience to His father...we can trace the sacrifice to the very life of the Trinity'¹⁰⁵. Schmemann sees the whole of the eucharistic act as 'a single sacrament of the Kingdom of God'¹⁰⁶.

Mission.

Ever since the conversion of the Prince of Kiev in the tenth century, worship and mission have been closely connected in the Orthodox mind. Indeed, the beauty of worship has been seen as a key evangelistic tool and is still represented as such in a key article on the missionary philosophy of Archbishop Anastasios of Albania¹⁰⁷. Western Christians are often ignorant of the fact that the Orthodox are still active in mission, both in traditionally Orthodox countries recovering from the years of communist oppression and in other places such as Alaska, Japan and Uganda, where the missions are of modern origin.

Fotiou's article presents a holistic concept of mission which resonates with much modern missionary thought in the West amongst both Catholics and Protestants. At the base of it is the understanding for the work of the Trinity as internal communion of love, reaching out to embrace human beings in the Church, 'the place where human beings, through the gift of the Spirit, take part in the communion of love', a transforming communion, liberating them both from 'selfish individualism' and the danger of 'massification', a communion that 'bears witness to the whole of human nature as a 'good creature of God'. Fotiou stresses that in the Divine Liturgy the faithful participate with their whole psychosomatic dynamism, that is with all their senses. The Divine Liturgy encapsulates the total truth of the Christian gospel.

¹⁰⁵ Schmemann, op cit, p. 207. It is interesting to compare this with the statement in the ninth quinquennium of the Methodist-Roman Catholic international dialogue, *Encountering Christ the Saviour* (2011), p.35, which speaks of 'the innermost reality of Christ's Grand Oblation' as 'an eternal mystery at the very heart of the Holy Trinity'

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 210.

¹⁰⁷ Fotiou Stavros in *One in Christ* (no2, 2012), pp. 233-245.

It is interesting to compare this vision of the evangelising effectiveness of the Liturgy in revealing the full gospel with the Wesleyan concept of the Lord's Supper as a 'converting ordinance', one at which the seeker after God can finally be drawn into lively faith and commitment.

Conclusion.

I hope that what I have indicated reinforces the case both for formal national and international Methodist-Orthodox dialogues and for as much informal local contact amongst the faithful as possible. I think it important to stress one point in common that I have underplayed in the main text of this chapter, viz the deeply disciplined ascetical nature of both traditions at their best. Early Methodism expected all members to meet weekly with a group of their fellows in a class meeting under a lay leader. In that 'class', they prayed studied the scriptures and took responsibility for each other's growth in grace and practical Christian discipleship in the world; Methodists were expected to use all the means of grace, in the sacraments, in public worship and in private prayer and devotion¹⁰⁸. In recent years, many, on both sides of the Atlantic, have sought to recover, in forms adjusted to modern conditions, the disciplinary system of early Methodism¹⁰⁹.

Similarly, Orthodox have always seen monastic life as setting a standard to which all other Orthodox, lay and ordained should approximate as thoroughly as possible within the constraints of their secular lives. Though both traditions stress the joy of worship, they also accept that a deep spirit of penitence is also needed, hence the importance of Great Lent for the Orthodox and the annual Covenant Service for Methodists, the content of which, up till the British revision of 1936, was severely penitential, the penitential element remaining perennially significant, if now less wordily expressed!

Modern Methodism on both sides of the Atlantic for a long time rather let slip both the discipline of the class meeting and other disciplines of self-denial (it has nothing like the Orthodox rules of Lenten fasting). It could learn much from the Orthodox example. Both churches could learn much from each other's liturgical riches and hymnody, particularly that of Charles Wesley and St Symeon the New Theologian. Deep calls to deep also in the

¹⁰⁸ Watson, D.L. *The Early Methodist Class Meeting* (1992), gives a clear account of the discipline.

¹⁰⁹ See e.g. Watson, op cit above and Roberts, Andrew, *Holy Habits* (2018)

traditions of the liturgy after the liturgy, in the service of the poor and disadvantaged, in the common pursuit of the eschatological vision, in the tradition alike of St Isaac the Syrian and of the Wesleys in calling for universal benevolence towards all human beings, even all creatures. Thomas Hopko and H.A. Hodges are at one in seeing Methodism and Orthodoxy as standing apart from some of the grimmer Augustinian tendencies of Roman Catholicism and the classical Calvinist and Lutheran traditions, but not, of course, from the need for serious dialogue with those three traditions¹¹⁰.

Together Methodists and Orthodox can make a valuable contribution to theology and spirituality in their joint emphasis on the humility of Christ as a key element in the image Christians are called to 'retrieve'. We may here compare the teaching of the Wesley brothers and a modern Orthodox saint, the starets Silouan¹¹¹. John Wesley states,

'The ground of a thousand mistakes in religion is the not considering deeply, that love is the highest gift of God, humble, gentle, patient love...There is nothing higher in religion...You can go no higher than this till you are carried into Abraham's bosom.'¹¹² Silouan states that 'if only the world knew the force of Christ's words, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart'... it would abandon all other knowledge to study this heavenly science'¹¹³. Charles Wesley stressed the self-abandonment of Christ, who 'emptied himself of all but love', a literal translation of Phil 2:7, eschewed by the mealy-mouthed AV with its 'made himself of no reputation'¹¹⁴. He also described the early Methodists in his hymns as 'meek, simple followers of the Lamb', the one so often in other of his hymns referred to as the 'gracious, dying Lamb'¹¹⁵.

Silouan was famed for his life, 'incomparable in its simplicity.'¹¹⁶ He stressed the importance of prayer for all, a point echoed by a friend of mine in the Reformed tradition, when he once said, 'we know you Methodists and your Arminian theology by the way in which you pray so often and indiscriminately for the whole world'.

¹¹⁰ Hopko in the Foreword to *Orthodox and Methodist Spirituality*. Hodges in Allchin (ed), op cit, p. 59.

¹¹¹ For a short account of St Silouan, see Ware, K. 'Kenosis and Christ-like humility according to St Silouan'. *Sobornost* 21:2 (1999), pp 21-29.

¹¹² As cited by Fletcher in *The Last Check to Antinomianism*, (1775), p.312.

¹¹³ Ware K, op cit in *Sobornost*, p.26.

¹¹⁴ *Singing the Faith*, op cit, no. 345.

¹¹⁵ *Wesley's Hymns*, op cit, no 16.

¹¹⁶ Ware, op cit, p. 26.

In this stress on the deep humility of Christ, even in sense also that of the Father, both in creation and in the sending of His only Son, Orthodox and Methodists are brought very close together, despite their many surface differences.

My final suggestion for future fruitful Orthodox-Methodist dialogue is that it should be centred on comparative studies of liturgy and hymnody, so interwoven in both traditions. That would take us to the heart of what is central to both and enable a surprising and mutually enriching encounter between both traditions. From that we could then proceed, confident in the help of the Holy Spirit, to explore how we can reconcile out two differing ecclesial structures, recognising that in the building of both the Spirit has been at work¹¹⁷.

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¹¹⁷ Cf Archmandrite Vasileios, 'the Apostles build the Church with the architecture of the Spirit',