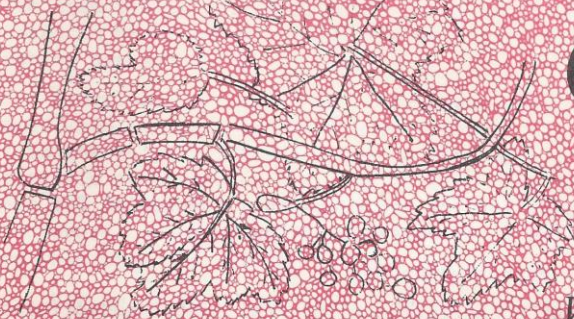


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Together

in

Christ



Vol 2 No 5 Jan 1984

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"A LITTLE THING, THE SIZE OF A HAZELNUT.. ."



In this beautiful and tiny image, Julian of Norwich (in her Revelations of Divine Love) saw an expression of the love of God as the cause of its existence.. "It exists both now and forever, because God loves it". She saw three truths in that "little thing":

"The first is that God made it; the second is that God loves it; and the third is that God sustains it. But what is he who is in truth Maker, Keeper and Lover I cannot tell, for until I am essentially united with him I can never have full rest or real happiness; in other words, until I am so joined to him that there is absolutely nothing between my God and me.

Sometimes, our work for unity seems only "a little thing" when compared with the vastness of the enterprise still to be achieved. Yet, it is the Holy Spirit who draws us into unity, and every little "hazelnut" or circle of endeavour inspired by him is of immense value, for God has made it, He loves it and sustains it. The perfection of unity will come when every member of the Body of Christ is "essentially united" with Him, and when there is nothing between God and us.

Let us go forward in this New Year to work for unity with the utmost confidence, not relying on ourselves but in Him 'whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine'. (*Eph. 3:20*)

We offer very grateful thanks to all who have supplied such a varied and lively selection of material for this issue. We thank Bishop Henderson for his faithfulness and generosity in writing for us and for the spiritual uplift he gives, and we thank and welcome our new contributors Rev. B Metcalfe (Anglican), David Carter (Methodist), David Murphy (Secretary, Catholic Truth Society), Sister Elizabeth Rees, Rev Douglas Maw (Methodist) and Fr Tom Lane.

All Christians rejoice to say "Our Father together; may we pray Père de Foucauld's prayer of abandonment (*back page*) trusting Our Father to lead us on our pilgrim way to full unity?

The three Area Ecumenical Commissions in Southwark under their Chairman, Bishop Henderson, are organising an Ecumenical afternoon of Prayer on SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 16, 1984 (venue to be arranged). Please note this in your diary now.

A HOLY AND HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

RESOLUTION 84

St Peter, on whom Christ conferred a primacy of place and responsibility, did not write as much as other authors of the New Testament. But he did leave valuable help in his two short letters. His first letter was addressed to the scattered churches of parts of present day Turkey, then named the Christian Communities of Pontus or Galatia and neighbouring regions. They were then small groups of Christians in hostile circumstances, who were sustained by their ties of communion with the Bishop of Rome and with each other. In his letter St Peter assumes this unity of the Church, which arose from a fellowship with the Risen Lord and the teaching of the witnesses to the resurrection, the apostles.

Again and again we read in the Scriptures that in Christ, who rose from the dead, the kingdom of God has come into the world. It is a kingdom proclaiming love and the inherent ingredients are unity, justice and peace. The followers of Christ everywhere are called to reflect this kingdom and to work to achieve it in all aspects of their lives and to influence society to embrace this kingdom for the good of humanity.

In many parts of the world today and in our own country, the pressures of a hostile society, the problems of minorities, the trials and sufferings of peoples are too often the experiences of good people, Christians and other adherents of the God who made us out of love. There are many who live in fear, many who despair of being released from their hunger and want and from the violent oppression which subdues them in this condition. St Peter's letter offers us hope in the renewal promised in Christ.

The need is obvious to all who proclaim Christ as their Lord that they are called to pray, to love, to share and to serve.

"Everything will soon come to an end, so, to pray better, keep a calm and sober mind. Above all, never let your love for each other grow insincere, since love covers over many a sin. Welcome each other into your houses without grumbling. Each one of you has received a special grace, so, like good stewards responsible for all these different graces from God, put yourselves at the service of others. If you are a speaker, speak in words which seem to come from God; if you are a helper, help as though every action was done at God's orders; so that in everything God may receive the glory, through Jesus Christ, since to him alone belong all glory and power for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet. 4: 7-11)

Unity is a central sign of Christ's kingdom in our midst. We are called to be one in Christ. The call is so often not heard, not heeded or simply

neglected. The invitation is pressing and our acceptance is crucial. We are children of the Father; we are the people of God: we are the temples of the Holy Spirit. Access to the ever loving God is ours.

Unity must be a conviction. The benefits of communion to a strife torn world must touch the hearts of all who are sincere in their profession of faith in the Lord and his kingdom. The conviction of the benefits to society, of benefits to the churches, the conviction of the power of unity which arises from love, must motivate our prayer for unity and our work for its fullness.

In all humility, we ask forgiveness for our neglect in this important area of our Christian responsibility. We pray that God will purify our hope and intensify our resolutions: that He will enlighten our minds and hearts to embrace the way of unity and enable us to begin our renewed task together in love, sympathy, understanding and peace.

In our hope then we are encouraged by the words of St Paul, referring to the reconciliation of the Jews and the pagans with each other and with God.

"But now in Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far apart from us have been brought very close, by the blood of Christ. For he is the peace between us, and has made the two into one and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart, actually destroying in his own person the hostility caused by the rules and decrees of the Law. This was to create one single New Man in himself out of the two of them and by restoring peace through the cross, to unite them both in a single Body and reconcile them with God." (*Eph. 2:13-16*)

WILL 1984 BE THE SAME FOR ME?

+ Charles J Henderson Southwark

(Chairman, Ecumenical Commission)

*'That they all may
be one'*



ECUMENISM NOW

A seminar on Ecumenism Now was held at Damascus House from October 3rd to 7th 1983. It was open to clergy, religious and laity from all denominations. In all there were over 50 participants from Catholic, Anglican and Methodist backgrounds. The main thrust of the Seminar was an assessment of the implications of the final report of ARCIC I. This was introduced by Bishop Alan Clark who, with Canon Dennis Corbishley, directed the whole Seminar. The other speakers were Mr. Martin Cornway (British Council of Churches), Fr Michael Richards (Editor Clergy Review), Rev Eric Allen (Council of Christians and Jews), Bro Daniel (Brothers of Gabriel), Rev Graham Jenkins (Society of St John Chrysoston), Fr Eric Doyle OFM (Canterbury), Fr Michael Munnely (Westminster Cathedral), and Mrs. Mary Tanner (member ARCIC II). A very helpful vision for the future was given by Fr Doyle and Mrs Tanner. Throughout the whole Seminar there was a spirit of honest enquiry and, above all, a deep spirit of prayer and worship. Already there have been requests for a similar seminar in 1984. The dates have been fixed for October 29th to November 2nd and the general topic will be ARCIC II and the future. Among the principal speakers will be Bishop Cormac Murphy-O'Connor.

Fr Tom Lane CM

Director Damascus House

THE THEOLOGY OF BAPTISM

A comment on part 1 of the Lima Report issued by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches by Rev Bernard Metcalfe
Vicar of the Church of the Cross, Thamesmead, and a member of the Thamesmead Team Ministry

The theology of baptism is a minefield between two opposing extremes. On one side are those committed to infant baptism. They talk about baptism as a sign of God's love; a channel of his grace; his gift of new life, pardoning, cleansing and incorporating us into Christ. God gives and man receives.

On the other side are those who insist on adult or 'believers' baptism. For them it is an act of commitment made by mature Christians in response to God's love. It is the profession of faith reached through confession and conversion which is to be expressed in a new way of living through active participation in the Body of Christ. God calls and man responds.

Either of, these two extremes could easily approach the WCC's new Faith and Order Paper (No.111) on Baptism in an aggressive spirit. viewed from one side only it can appear unsatisfactory.

'When an infant is baptized, the personal response will be offered at a later moment in life, says the paper. "WILL be offered!" scoffs the believer's baptist, "What about the fifteen million or so baptized members of the Church of England who don't even make it to church at Easter? 'The necessity of faith for the reception of salvation embodied and set forth in baptism is acknowledged by all churches' says the paper. "Then faith itself is a gift of God" comes the reply of the infant baptist, "otherwise why does the church baptize dying infants who clearly have no consciousness of faith?"

If the churches proceed in that spirit, then the WCC's paper Will have been wasted on us. We Will have missed the point.

What the Faith and Order Commission invites us to do is to take a step back from the debate and see Christian initiation in a broader perspective. Instead of concentrating just on particular sacramental moments, we are invited to see Christian initiation as a process of growth towards what St Paul calls 'mature manhood measured by the stature of Christ'. (*Eph.4:13*) 'Baptism is related not only to momentary experience but to lifelong growth in Christ'. says the WCC. In this broader view, discussion about what particular grace is mediated at what time becomes arid. God's grace reaches us throughout our growing relationship with Him. 'The Holy Spirit, the Commission reminds us, 'is at work in the lives of people before, in and after their baptism'.

The great advantage of this broader view is that it offers us a way of holding together both God's initiative and our answer to His call. t Baptism is both God's gift and our response to that gift' , concludes the paper.

In this way we can see how faith and grace are related to each other. 'We love Him' says the first epistle of St John, 'because He first loved us'. Our relationship with God is a two-way street in which our response to His love opens our hearts to receive that love. New living and new life go together. Incorporation and participation, confession and cleansing are interlocked in the process of our growth in Christ.

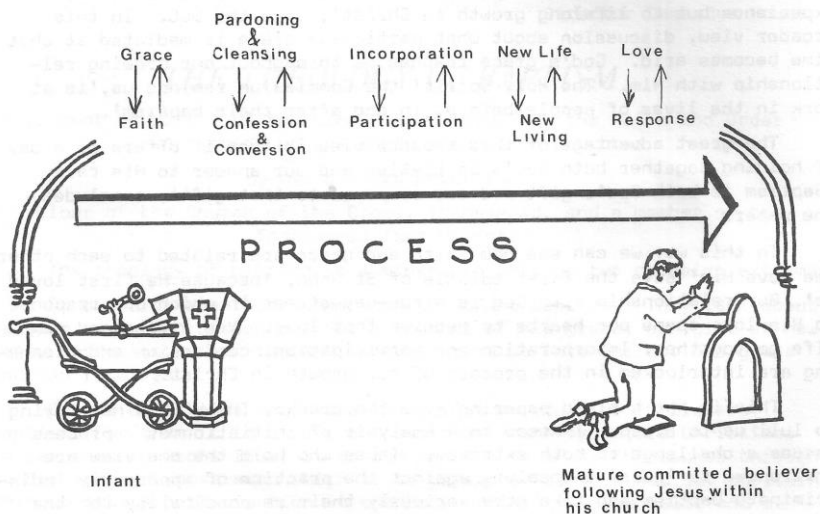
This is not a bland papering over the cracks. The WCC is not trying to lull us to sleep. Instead this analysis of initiation as 'process' issues a challenge to both extremes. Those who hold the one view are challenged to 'guard themselves against the practice of apparently indiscriminate baptism and take more seriously their responsibility for the nurture of baptized children to mature commitment to Christ'. Those who hold the

other view are challenged to 'seek to express more visibly the fact that children are placed under the protection of God's grace'.
 Will the churches take that challenge seriously? Only if they hear it! For this reason the WCC report on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry merits careful study by local congregations. The following diagram, used recently in Thamesmead, may help.

"THE HOLY SPIRIT IS AT WORK IN THE LIVES OF PEOPLE BEFORE, IN AND AFTER THEIR BAPTISM"
 "BAPTISM IS BOTH GOD'S GIFT AND OUR HUMAN RESPONSE TO THAT GIFT"
 "BAPTISM IS RELATED NOT ONLY TO MOMENTARY EXPERIENCE, BUT TO LIFE-LONG GROWTH IN CHRIST"

"Guard themselves against the practice of apparently indiscriminate baptism and take more seriously their responsibility for the nurture of baptized children to mature Commitment to Christ"

"Seek to express more visibly the fact that children are placed under the protection of God's grace"



ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

- What Have You Learnt Especially From Other Christians? What Impresses You Most About Them?

In referring to the event in Dr. Johnson's life which caused religion to become "the predominant object of his thoughts" Boswell speaks of those "occasional impressions, which it is certain many Christians have experienced" . Such experiences or impressions have been acknowledged in the Roman Catholic Church, although until recently they had been seen as the sole prerogative of Saints. On the other hand, the phenomenon is recognized far more frequently in the Non-Conformist areas of Christianity and in some cases is recognized as a formal qualification for admission to their fellowship.

Some years ago (about 60 to be more precise), my father used to take me to the outdoor meetings held by the local corps of the Salvation Army on Sunday evenings. I well remember that a feature of those meetings was the calling on one or other of the members to testify to the working of the Lord in their life. I was too young to appreciate the full implications of these testimonies, but recalling them over the years, one realises that my meetings were representative of a large number of such gatherings of the Salvation Army and also of many other Fellowships. All over the country men and women every week were giving oral witness to the personal intervention of Jesus in their lives. There were those who confessed to having been reprobate in one way or another, those in despair, those in fear or in crisis, and those just seeking Him. The end result was the same - the encounter changed their lives. Their experience is epitomised in a song they sing:

He touched me, He touched me
And O the joy that filled my soul.
Something happened and now I know
He touched me and made me whole.

For Catholics whose spiritual lives are nourished by the Sacramental principle, each celebration of each Sacrament is (or should be) a personal encounter with the Lord. However, many are discovering, often in the context of a prayer community, a deep relationship and awareness of Jesus working in their lives and are testifying accordingly. The effect is as before, a changed life; an increase of love for the Lord and His Church, greater devotion to the Mass, the Sacraments, the Scriptures and Our Lady, more caring and sharing and forgiving; in short, a greater awareness of Christian responsibility.

This has been my experience, but perhaps in my case there is some atavism. Be that as it may, after each Mass and Holy Communion I know that: He touched me and made me whole.

J B

ST CATHERINE OF SIENA (1347-1380)

The Pope has come and gone. I wonder if any of us would write a letter to him as personal as this letter of Catherine's, urging Pope Gregory XI to return from Avignon to Rome: "Ah, father, I am dying of grief, but I cannot die! Come, come and don't resist the will of God as he calls you. Your hungry sheep are waiting for you to come and take possession of the place where the apostle Peter, your champion and predecessor lived. As vicar of Christ you should live in your rightful place. So come, do not delay. Take comfort, and don't be afraid of what might happen, for God will be with you. Please pardon my boldness. I say no more" .

When Catherine was not trying to bring peace to her troubled country and Church, she was busy among ordinary people, sharing with them her experience of God. She travelled around with a group of friends, her "family", and she related with every kind of person, from convict to queen.

Catherine was not a woman bound by convention. Rules were not too important for her. The freedom of God made her free. She puts these words into God's mouth: "I am large and no miser. I am he that is jocund and merry, who keeps a soul in great spiritual gladness. Put no manner of rule to me". She learnt to be flexible in God's hands, responding in different ways to different situations, changing her mind when necessary. She urged her friends to be flexible as she was. She writes to a nun called Daniella: "You wrote to me, and seem to be troubled. Yes, it is very painful when on one hand you feel God calling you into new ways and on the other, his servants put themselves on the opposite side and disapprove. I have great compassion for you; you become so torn. Here is my simple answer, from my own poor judgement. Don't make up your mind obstinately, but respond to the situation as you feel called to. Forget your earlier decision to be silent, or anything else. Fear and serve God, and don't mind what people say; only be compassionate to them.

Catherine was talking from experience of her own obstinacy. She was a strong-willed woman, who had held out against parental pressure to marry, and had carved out her own unconventional lifestyle, wringing approval from the Church, persuading the Dominicans to let her join their Third Order. She also knew when hardness was wrong; she prays: "Lord, unmake me and break my hardness of heart, so that this tool may not spoil your works". She advises the obstinate: "Let the hard-hearted person pray for the blood of my Son, and apply it with his own hands to the diamond over his heart, and shatter it".

Like many mediaeval people, Catherine speaks of her longing to be "bathed in the blood of Christ". A fundamentalist Christian would understand her description of the good person who "lives in the memory of that blood, and in death he is made drunk with it and drowns in it. Drowned in the blood, passing suddenly through the narrow door of the Word, he reaches me, the Peaceful Sea. This Peaceful Sea is to Catherine an enchanted mirror: "The waters are an enchanted mirror into which you, eternal Trinity, ask me to gaze, so that I can see myself and you".

Our modern Catholic equivalent to being "bathed in the blood" is our devotion to the Sacred Heart. This started in mediaeval times as devotion to the heart wounds of Christ. The wound in the side (heart) of the glorified Christ is the place where we can shelter and live. Catherine tells us to "dwell and hide in the cavern of his side."

At its best, Catherine's imagery is simple and ordinary. She sees Jesus as a bridge - not an abstract bridge, but a bridge like the *Ponte Vecchio* in Florence today, cobbled, full of people, with shops, stalls and even an inn. And at its bar, wine and bread is served - the body and blood of Jesus. The ordinariness of the picture shocks us. God describes his followers: "See them running to the bridge of Christ crucified. They gather together, drunk and on fire with love, and climb the bridge. The bridge of Jesus has walls, and a roof called mercy . On the bridge is a bar, in which the Bread of Life is served, and the wine of Christ's blood, so my people won't get exhausted on the road. I ordered my Son's body and blood to be served in this bar because I love you." Only a woman who loved God with passion and simplicity could speak in imagery as bold as this. Let us dare to imitate her boldness.

Sister Elizabeth Rees

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HOW I ENVISAGE A UNITED CHURCH

The questions: "How do you envisage a united church?" and "must everyone believe the same in it?" that were posed in your July number, intrigued me. We ecumenically minded Christians of all churches take so for granted that Unity is the will of our Lord, that we often fail to ask ourselves these questions, and seek to explore; exactly what it is - into we believe we are being led.

As Methodist observer on the S W Area Commission, I want to offer a few personal observations on these topics, observations that are personal

and yet which I hope are loyal to my tradition and, also, for the most part compatible with Roman Catholic ecumenism.

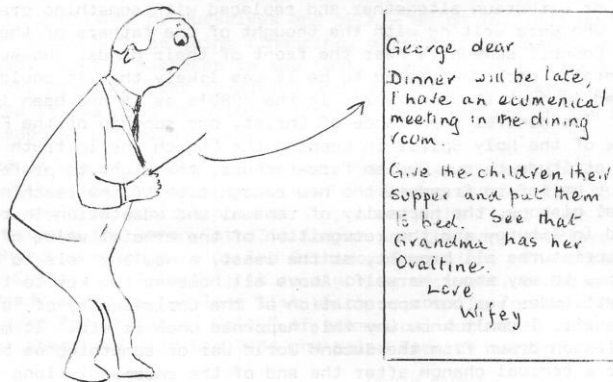
In a sense, the answer to both questions can be summed up as "Unity in diversity". Paul, writing to his Corinthian church, states that here are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit". We are not all the same in the local church situation; we have different gifts, we exercise different ministries in accordance with these gifts; we see, because we are both by nature and grace, different people, the same glorious truth of Christ and express it in different ways. If this is so in the local church, how much more must it be true in the Church Universal? There is unity, yes: one Lord, into Whom we are all incorporated by baptism, and one Spirit in which we all share and are sanctified, but there is also permitted, even required, diversity, since, as one quaint old Methodist local preacher put it many years ago, God, and especially God the Holy Spirit "loves variety". What is more, He gives us variety so that we may build each other up in faith and love. Were we to insist on a church that allowed no diversity in liturgy, spirituality and praxis, we would be quenching the creative Spirit of God.

Yet, there are, of course, requirements of unity. We have, and share together, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. We must come into full communion, at the altar and elsewhere, because there is only one Christ and it is He who calls and invites us. There is one faith. We must agree in the essentials of dogma, while retaining the right to use separate languages in which to express those common convictions. We are still, of course, far from agreed yet as to what is the common core we must all hold, though we must take courage from the signs given in the Lima statement on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, and the ARCIC statements on Papal Ministry. As we draw closer together, the Holy Spirit is giving us a common reconciled mind in matters of dogma, in which the apparently great doctrinal gulfs of the past are being transcended in a new common understanding. An easier matter for us is the "one hope of our higher calling" the common calling to be renewed and sanctified in the grace of God. Finally, there must be a commonly accepted ministry, enabling us all to share in all the means of grace, sacramental and otherwise, together. I have no doubt that such a ministry will be within the context of the 'historic episcopate' as a bond acceptable to all, maybe variously interpreted, but nevertheless accepted in practice as symbolizing effectively the apostolic continuity and interdependence of the Church of all times and places. I believe too, that there will be a role for the Pope, in which he can exercise a primacy of love and service and

teaching without in any way infringing the right of each, local church to order its own affairs in accordance with the Gospel.

The Roman Catholic Church already recognizes, in its communion with the Uniate churches, this principle of unity in diversity. I believe that all the churches of Christendom, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant are called, within the context of the search for unity to preserve, and build on creatively, those forces of spirituality and service with which God has, in their living tradition, enriched them, and that unity will mean a coming together of the churches to explore those riches in each others' traditions, which have been hidden from them in the tragedy of disunity. As a Methodist, I have no fear of seeing the end of my church as a separate church body, since I believe that all that is really precious in our heritage will live on, to be shared with everyone else in the new Church. Similarly, all that is best in other churches will live on and the treasures of Orthodoxy, Anglicanism, Rome and all the others will enrich the lives of 'the people called Methodists'. Our traditions will all, at one and the same time, be fulfilled and transcended, as God calls us into something that is greater than any one separated tradition can be on its own. God is very gracious, and out of the repentant humility that leads us back to one another, He will produce a Church glorious in His grace beyond our present conceiving.

David Carter



"The work of the mother in the home must be recognized and respected."
(Art. 10 (b) Charter of the Rights of the Family.)

THE CTS AND WORK FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY



Though we all know that Ecumenical Councils are not so called because they are to do with ecumenism, it was a 'sign of the times' in the early sixties that the media all thought that they were; an expectation that the quarrels of the past were going to be buried was already in the air. After all, the catch-phrase of British Overseas policy was 'the winds of change', while it was not long since a Prime Minister had told us (and we

believed it because it was true) that we had 'never had it so good'. A spirit of optimism was the order of the day.

For the CTS General Ecumenical Councils are not an unmixed blessing. We proudly proclaim that we were founded in 1868, but the truth is that absolutely nothing is recorded about that initial foundation two years before the First Vatican Council, and it is not until the re-foundation of 1884 that records begin. Did Vatican I have a fatal effect? The experience of 1961-4 suggests that no General Council of the Church is likely to have been summoned simply to reassert the perfect truth and appropriateness of all the teaching to be found inside the covers of our slim volumes!

The Second Vatican Council meant that virtually every single CTS publication that was in existence in 1961 has had either to be radically revised or withdrawn altogether and replaced with something prepared by authors who were writing with the thought of the fathers of the Second Vatican Council somewhere near the front of their minds. However fundamental a doctrine seemed to be it was likely that it could not be expressed in just the same words in the 1980's as it had been in the 1950's. The central importance of Christ, our sonship of the Father, the work of the Holy Spirit in keeping the Church one in truth and love, the new attitude to our Jewish forefathers, the right to profess one's religious belief in freedom, the new recognition of the teaching role of the local bishops, the necessity of renewal and adaptation in religious life and in liturgy and the recognition of the

crucial value of research in the scriptures all brought, at the least, a new emphasis to what the Church has to say about herself. Above all however the key to the change in our attitudes was our appreciation of the Christianity of 'other Christians'. I don't know why this happened when it did. It may have been a lesson drawn from the Second World War or something as banal as a wish for a radical change after the end of the enormously long and very stable reign of Pius XII, which had all the same, cautiously pointed the Church in the direction of liturgical renewal and the ordination of married convert clergy. Neither step seemed to have any ecumenical implication on the surface, but each proved seminal for the Church of today.

Thus nowadays, at least in England and Wales, it would be unthinkable not to see our fellow Christians as people either most fully in communion with us, or on the way to being fully in communion with us, - the Anglicans and ourselves being already in 'partial communion' as the official 'Briefing' about the November 1983 meeting of the Bishops' Conference puts it. Our own work has long reflected this relationship; not because the polemical publications of Victorian times are unthinkable, but because they are entirely unnecessary. No one denies that real 'Protestants' still exist, but we have learnt enough about Anglicans to know that Anglicans are often far less 'protestant' than Rome now is; and we have noticed that some of the most outspoken Protestants are often more 'Christian' than we are. So we can't rely any more on labels, and have to fall back simply on Truth - no bad thing!

In our actual day to day work we take every possible step to collaborate with (and pick the brains of) our fellow Christians. Our first co-publication with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge dates from January 1976 and it has been followed up by collaboration with societies such as the Bible Reading Fellowship and the Church Literature Association. This sort of thing has meant that it was the most natural thing in the world for 'The Final Report' of ARCIC II and the subsequent 'Study Guide' prepared by the English Anglican/Roman Catholic Committee to be jointly published by ourselves and SPCK - which involved quite a lot in human terms such as joint financing, agreement on design, common responsibility for the mistakes in the text, agreement over advertising, agreement over pricing, over royalties and over which printers to use! And of course it

was just as natural for the 'Observations of the SCDF' to be published by ourselves alone.

In 1984 we expect to see the fruits of a collaboration in another direction, within the Orthodox diocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, with whom we shall be publishing what is probably the first ever "Agreed statement" between the Roman Catholic Church and the many patriarchates and local churches which make up the Orthodox Communion. The title will be 'Church, Eucharist, Trinity'; it is a moving document, and one which we have already added to the long list which we compile for each January "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" of ecumenical documents which the Society publishes.

David Murphy

General Secretary, Catholic Truth Society

A GLIMPSE OF METHODIST SPIRITUALITY



it is impossible to think of the spiritual tradition of Methodism without thinking of the situation of John and Charles Wesley. It was John, of course, who led the Methodist revival of the eighteenth century, but without his brother Charles' hymns the movement would have been much less powerful. When people think of Methodism, the hymns often come into their minds - and that is right, because Methodist hymns contain the best expressions of the classical Methodist "emphases". One mentions "emphases" rather than "doctrine" for John Wesley

claimed that all he was doing as to re-iterate primitive Christianity in an age when the national church had become class-ridden, deistic and more concerned with decorum than with salvation. That is a massive judgement which would need modifying in a survey of the total religious life of eighteenth century England.

The Wesley brothers were Anglican clergymen. It is important to note their love of the Prayer Book, and of order and decency in the conduct of public worship. They were Anglicans to the end of their days and

falteringly at first. indeed, so much was this freedom of expression valued that in certain branches of Methodism praying "from a book" was regarded with definite suspicion as a sign of spiritual poverty and insincerity. So great was this need for spontaneity that often, after a Sunday evening service, a prayer meeting was held, at which any member of the congregation would rise, as he or she felt inspired, to offer prayers of thanksgiving and intercession.

It must be added that Methodist services were at first intended to supplement those of the Parish Church, and John Wesley gave strict orders that they were not to coincide, as to time, with the Parish Church services. Gradually, as Methodism took on more the characteristics of a church rather than a movement, the Sunday meetings of the Methodists had to take the full weight of a full Sunday service. It kept, however, some of the characteristics of the "preaching service" (two hymns, a prayer, a text and a sermon) which had been the "special diet" of the early days, hence the importance of the sermon, still seen by many as the main element in worship. However unbalanced it may seem to some, if there is not a "good" sermon, the service is ruined for many people not in the "high Wesleyan" tradition in Methodism.

The main strand of Methodist prayer, however, as many would contend, is sung prayer. By this is not meant an intoned liturgy (which some Methodists enjoy when done by others and they can join in) but the singing of hymns by the congregation. Wesley used his brother's talents for hymn writing to telling effect. Indeed, as the Preface to the 1933 Methodist Hymn Book (MHB) begins, "Methodism was born in song". That hymn book, produced for a united church, had to draw upon a very rich heritage indeed, not only of Wesley and Watts, but also of many hymns written in the nineteenth century. The Primitive Methodist movement was a protest at growing authoritarianism in the parent body, and a growing "emourgeoisement". It produced a book of 1108 hymns (The Primitive Methodist Hymnal, 1889) to which was added, in 1910, a Supplement of 295 hymns! The present MHB owes much to this and other collections, notably John Wesley's definitive edition of 1780. He had, however, already made a collection of hymns for use in Georgia in 1737, a year before his "heart-warming" experience which triggered off the Methodist Revival. The preface to the 1780 edition states clearly Wesley's purpose in making such collections: "this book is, in effect, a little body of experimental and

practical divinity" The Hymn Book became for Methodists largely what the Prayer Book is for Anglicans - a means of sustaining faith, provoking faith and enabling that faith to grow.

its importance can be judged by the fact that December 1983, exactly fifty years after MHB was published, sees the launch of a new official hymn book (Hymns and Psalms), unique in the way it has been compiled. it has been subjected to the scrutiny of the whole church, by the publication of lists of the proposed contents, and revision of those lists in answer to criticisms. It has been compiled not only by Methodist experts, but also with the collaboration of representatives of several other Protestant traditions, from the Anglicans to Baptists. The subtitle indicates its firm Methodist roots and its ecumenical intention.

What, then, in these different expressions, are the characteristic "notes" of Methodist spirituality? Some have expressed it thus: "All men need to be saved; all can be saved; all can know they are saved; all men can be saved to the uttermost" . There is thus a very strong note of personal piety and personal relationship with God. Some of the hymns reflect this, such as:

"O for a thousand tongues to sing/ my great Redeemer's praise" (PIHB 1); "And can it be that I should gain/ An interest in the Saviour's blood" (PIHB 371); "O disclose Thy lovely face/ Quicken all my drooping powers" (PIHB 545); "Give me the faith which can remove/ And sink the mountain to a plain" (MHB 390) with its beautiful last verse, ending: "And lead them to Thy open side/ The sheep for whom their Shepherd died". John Wesley was very conscious of the struggle of faith, and included hymns for that condition, gems scarcely known outside Methodism. one of the most powerful is: "Son of God, if Thy free grace/ Again hath raised me up" (MHB 477) with its persistent refrain:

"Keep me, keep me gracious Lord, / And never let me go".

Salvation by grace, through faith with the emphasis on perfection in love, and the joy of knowing with an inner certainty that one is reconciled to God - this is classic Christianity. Charles put it into verse:

"My God, I am thine,

What a comfort divine,

What a blessing to know that my Jesus is mine! In the heavenly lamb,
Thrice happy I am,

And my heart, it doth dance at the sound of His Name. (MHB 406)
Not only the heart, but the whole being would dance to the rhythm of it. And the root of the matter? Nothing other than the working of the Holy Spirit, who gives us hope, courage and joy, so
"Away with our fears,
Our troubles and tears;
The Spirit is come,
The witness of Jesus returned to His home." (MHB 278)

Because of this, we can go on to perfection, for:

"All things are possible to him/ Who can in Jesus' Name believe."
(MHB 548)

But this quest is not simply individualistic. If there is a great emphasis on personal faith, this is only to be truly experienced within the context of Christian fellowship. Methodist spirituality differs, perhaps, from some strains of "Evangelical" spirituality in this emphasis on fellowship, on mutual sharing and encouragement. One of the characteristic hymns of Methodism has this first verse:

"All praise to our redeeming Lord,
Who joins us by His grace,
And bids us, each to each restored,
Together seek His face." (MHB 745)

The excessive individualism of western society has affected the life Of the church, so that this dimension of its life has been weakened, and we have to struggle to reaffirm our belonging to each other in Christ, and to find new ways of expressing such belonging. But for Wesley there was no doubt. He called Methodists "The friends of all, and the enemies of none" (not even of those he had to oppose). All Saint's Day was an important one in the calendar for him. It is said that on one occasion in the pulpit in the chapel at City Road which bears his name, he announced a hymn about the church: "Come, let us join our friends above/ That have obtained the prize." (MHB 824) and stood in silent rapture for several minutes before the congregation could begin singing. He was a man of catholic spirit, and that has always marked Methodism at its best. One of Wesley's most outstanding sermons bears the title "Catholic Spirit" and brother Charles' hymns express the same feeling. The hymn beginning: "Lift up your hearts to things above" (MHB 722) contains the verse:
"You on our minds we ever bear

Whoever to Jesus bow;

Stretch out the arms of faith and prayer, And 10! we reach you now".

But this was not merely emotional. The Wesley's knew the importance of Holy Communion for the Christian life, and were themselves both frequent and regular at the sacrament. When it became obvious that the Establishment was either unable or unwilling to cope with the new movement, John himself held great communion services, often at an early hour, sometimes in the open spaces near London. Charles wrote some of the most powerful communion hymns in the English language:

"Saviour, and can it be
That Thou shouldst dwell with me?
From Thy high and lofty throne,
Throne of everlasting bliss,
Will Thy majesty stoop down
To so mean a house as this?" (MHB 761)

"Come, Thou everlasting Spirit/ Bring to every thankful mind,
All the Saviour's dying merit/ All His sufferings for mankind"
(MHB 765)

"Victim divine, Thy grace we claim/ While thus Thy precious death
we show....

...To every faithful soul appear/ And show Thy real presence here".
(MHB 771)

The universality Of the offer of salvation has always been the mark of the Gospel according to Methodism (this was, of course, where Wesley has, reluctantly, to engage in theological controversy with the Calvinists of his day on the question of predestination that "horrible decree"). The little word "all" recurs in many hymns. The one beginning:

"Let earth and heaven combine/ Angels and men be joined" (MHB - 114) ends on this note:

"O for a trumpet voice
On all the world to call! To bid their hearts rejoice In Him who died
for all;
For all, my Lord was crucified,
For all, for all my Saviour died."

This was (and is) the impetus for the missionary thrust of Methodism, expressed in such a hymn as: "See how great flame aspires/
Kindled by a spark of grace" (MHB 263) Wesley told his preachers to go, not only to those who needed them, but to those who needed them most. The discipline he set up for his travelling preachers was such that they were sent, rather than choosing the place where they should go. Had Wesley been a Roman Catholic, one wonders whether he would not have been the founder of some great missionary order.

Much of the genius of Methodism has been seen in the way it has recaptured the role of the laity in the church. Indeed, as far as preaching is concerned, the distinction is not so much between "ordained" and "lay" as between "travelling" and "local" preachers. This implantation in the daily life of Christians has led to a view of sanctification which releases spirituality from the confines of the cloister and sends out into the working world:

"A charge to keep I have, / A God to glorify/ A never-dying soul to save/
And fit it for the sky/ To serve the present age/ my calling to fulfil/
O may it all my powers engage/ To do my master's will." (MHB 578). If there is a Methodist activism, it springs from this concern - that perfect love has to find a way of expressing itself in an imperfect world. This is the root of Methodism's well-known social concern - some of which hits the headlines, bringing approval in some quarters and causing shock and even scandal in others.

What are the characteristic notes of Methodist piety? modern Methodism is, in many ways, more complex than its antecedents might suggest. It has entered fully into the ecumenical movement, at least officially. indeed. the present General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (Rev. Dr. Philip Potter) is a Methodist. But certain notes remain the emphasis on personal experience Of Christ, the insistence that the Gospel is for all, the belief that no limit must be set to the transforming power of Christ. the "practical holiness" which the Gospel is seen as demanding, the of fellowship with one another and with the whole church. That some of these things no longer appear strange or different is an indication of the influence of the Methodist revival and a cause for thanksgiving. One might even be bold enough to say that Methodism is less a denomination than a spirit, less, in essence, a distinct ecclesiastical body, more a facet of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.



MY FATHER

I abandon myself to you.

Do with me as you will.

Whatever you may do with me I thank you.

I am prepared for anything,

I accept everything

provided your will is fulfilled in me

and in all creatures.

I ask for nothing more my God.

I place my soul in your hands,

I give it to you, my God

with all the love of my heart

because I love you.

And for me it is a necessity of love,

this gift of myself,

this placing of myself in your hands

without reserve

in boundless confidence,

because you are

my Father.

Père de Foucauld
