

THE CHANGING PRACTICE OF METHODIST WORSHIP 1958-2010

By

ANDREW HAMILTON LYONS

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## Abstract

Over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the beginning part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, major change has occurred in the worship practice of many churches. Within this time frame enormous change has occurred in the social, economic, political, technological, scientific and religious framework of British society. Worship practice has been influenced by these changes. This doctoral dissertation sets out to explore how British Methodist worship has changed over the same time period.

The focus of this dissertation is on change in the practice of non-Eucharistic worship in British Methodism. This is the form of worship practiced most frequently in the British Methodist Church. It examines the form, content, style and ordering of worship and explores how the very ethos of worship has altered.

In this time period there has been expressed discontent about worship. This thesis examines what the Liturgical Movement has promoted as a way toward renewal of worship, and explores how British Methodism might appropriate from the Liturgical Movement ideas and lessons that would aid the renewal of worship in the Methodist Church.

## Acknowledgments

I wish to record my gratitude to a number of people and institutions who have supported, guided and nurtured me during the writing of this doctoral thesis; and indeed through life. Firstly, Rev. Dr. Stephen Burns, formerly of The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, inspired me to begin to study liturgical theology. He altered my academic direction through his own love and commitment to the teaching and practice of liturgy. My gratitude goes to all the staff at Queen's, for in my sojourn there I grew in faith and understanding far beyond expectation, and have continued to receive support and help, even though I am no longer a student there, particularly from Dr. Anthony Reddie. During my training I was fortunate to undertake placement work with Rev. Don Pickard, who, as a lover of liturgy too, discussed many issues and ideas with me. And I record a special thanks to the Principal, Rev. Canon Dr. David Hewlett, who finally persuaded me that I should write a Doctoral Dissertation.

When Stephen left the shores of England for a post in Australia and I was very fortunate that Martin Stringer, Professor of Liturgical and Congregational Studies, University of Birmingham agreed to become my supervisor in the later part of my work. His help has been greatly appreciated.

The Methodist Church has been my spiritual home all my life and I am deeply grateful for the financial support the church has given me during my training for ministry, continuing through my initial years in the presbyteral ministry, as I continued to work on this dissertation; and to the people of the Bromsgrove circuit, where I am stationed, for their support, as I have tried out some of my ideas in practical situations. I am further grateful to those presbyters and local

preachers who have provided me with their thoughts and ideas through correspondence, conversation and questionnaire responses. I am also grateful to the Methodist Publishing House who made available to me their archive of *Worship and Preaching* journals.

Finally, I thank my parents, Derek and Pat Lyons, for all their love and support offered to me throughout my life; and, especially during the last few years as I have trained for ministry and undertaken my studies – my father even did the proof reading – love indeed!

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## CHAPTER 1 – THE PURPOSE AND THE SCOPE OF THE WORK

### 1.1 Introduction

How does a Christian community evaluate its worship? How do Churches renew, deepen and intensify their worship? Are there marks of authenticity of Christian worship?

These questions emerged for me as I trained to be a Methodist Presbyter at The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, an ecumenical theological college, whose principal sponsors were the Methodist Church, The Church of England and the United Reformed Church. They continue to be for me questions of utmost importance as a presbyter in the Methodist church as I lead worship week by week. They are the questions that this thesis addresses in specific reference to worship in the Methodist Church.

One location in which these questions emerged was in The Queen's Foundation community meeting, a gathering of the students held once a week to discuss college life. In an ecumenical training setting students are exposed to alternative ways of conducting public worship from that of their own tradition.<sup>1</sup> This exposure led to questioning the validity of some of the forms of worship offered, as well as clear expressions of personal preferences for certain styles and content in worship. But it also offers up to students opportunity for exploring the meaning and purpose of worship when challenged by others' assumptions and values. The very fact that others undertake the act of worship differently

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<sup>1</sup> See Mark Stamm, "What Are We Doing? Thoughts about a Seminary Chapel Programme in an Ecumenical Setting", *Worship*, (Vol. 84, No. 2., March 2010), pp. 121-137, for an account of this process in another place



challenges one's own practice and values and creates a space in which one might learn from others.

This challenge does not take place only in theological colleges. Discussions on and about worship are taking place in the academy, and, within and between churches. It takes place within congregations who express opinions and state preferences. The debate occurs within the Methodist Church and has been the cause of Methodist Conference reports on worship.<sup>2</sup>

As I expressed an interest in pursuing my studies in the worship of the Methodist Church, to the staff at Queen's, I was introduced to the work of the liturgical movement<sup>3</sup> and to the academic discipline of liturgical theology. As a Methodist my understanding of liturgy was that of '...worship and prayer, particularly when it is contained in formalised texts'.<sup>4</sup> My initial reaction was that the liturgical movement and liturgical theology would not be of much use to me as Methodists rarely use formalised texts. However, as I began my studies I became aware of a different definition of the word liturgy, as 'Whatever our Christian assembly does when it gets together, whatever pattern of communal action we follow, written or unwritten, that is our liturgy'<sup>5</sup>. I also became aware of the discipline/s of liturgical theology and the wide range of approaches that are undertaken in the study of worship. Dwight W. Vogel's book, *Primary*

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<sup>2</sup> These are referenced and examined in this work.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 3 for an exploration of the work of the Liturgical Movement

<sup>4</sup> The Faith and Order Committee Report to The Methodist Conference 2003, *His Presence Makes the Feast – Holy Communion in the Methodist Church*, (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 2003), p. 81

<sup>5</sup> Gordon W. Lathrop, *Central Things – Worship in Word and Sacrament*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2005), p. 8

*Sources of Theology – A Reader*,<sup>6</sup> sets out to explore ‘What is Liturgical Theology?’ He observes, quoting Kevin W. Irwin,<sup>7</sup> that there is no agreed single meaning of the term liturgical theology. Vogel sketches out the wide range of approaches taken in the study of worship/liturgy. For Vogel, liturgical theology covers the study of a ‘whole geography of the landscape of a certain kind of human activity (worship/liturgy)’.<sup>8</sup>

Further Vogel notes that the words worship and liturgy are often used interchangeably, particularly when the corporate worship of the church is the subject under consideration.<sup>9</sup> Liturgical theology explores this human activity of worship, the liturgy/ies of the churches, from a large number of different perspectives but its aim is always theological. That is what does worship say about God? What does God say about worship? In what ways does worship lead people toward God? How does God approach human beings in and through worship? How does worship impact on the life of the Church? What is the purpose of worship? These are the kinds of questions that explore the activity of worship in a theological manner. Such questions, such probing is required when we are asking questions about evaluating worship, and renewing worship. The questions and answers must revolve around God-talk, God-purpose, God-meaning. Being introduced to liturgical theology and the liturgical movement whetted my appetite to explore further the worship of the Methodist church.

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<sup>6</sup> Dwight W. Vogel, (Editor), *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology – A Reader*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Kevin W. Irwin, Liturgical Theology’, *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, Peter Fink,, (Editor), (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), p. 722

<sup>8</sup> Vogel, *Primary Sources*, p. 13

<sup>9</sup> Vogel, *Primary Sources*, p. 4

## 1.2 The Author's Beliefs and Commitments

The choice of this subject matter for my own studies has been of considerable surprise to me. I only became interested in worship and liturgy, as an area of study, in 2003 whilst training for the Methodist ministry. I had, however, been an accredited Local Preacher since 1981. Now, given that I was training to be a Methodist presbyter, and would be leading worship, including the sacrament of Holy Communion, on a much more regular basis, the purpose and conduct of worship took on greater importance.

My previous professional work had been in the field of equal opportunities. I fully expected that any detailed and extended academic work I would pursue would assist me to make more theological sense of issues relating to equality. However, The Rev. Dr Stephen Burns,<sup>10</sup> through class room lecture and chapel worship, instructed and inspired me on matters relating to liturgy and worship. Indeed, for the first time I began to learn much more about Methodist worship – as it is ‘officially’ set out in worship books and how it is variously practised. I became deeply interested in the influences that have been exerted on Methodist practice, and began to reflect on those influences that impacted on my own conduct of worship; which includes for me my commitment to equal opportunities. At Queen’s I began to study liturgical theology and how the adoption of certain ideas and principles from this field impact on worship. I became more aware that one’s own background, commitments and interests impact on one’s ideas about, and conduct of, worship.

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<sup>10</sup> At the time of meeting Stephen was Liturgy Tutor at The Queen’s Foundation, Birmingham. He is currently a Research Fellow in Charles Sturt University’s Strategic Research Centre in Public and Contextual Theology, North Parramatta, Sydney, Australia.

This understanding of the author's location is also relevant when applied to the historical aspects of this study for in this work I will explore change in Methodist worship over the time period from 1958 to the current day. All history, recent and past, is evaluated from a particular perspective dependent on the social location of the writer and his/her sources. No history is ever objective – for the writer interprets history.<sup>11</sup> By using a range of sources authors can seek to minimise their own bias and in this study a variety of sources is used to construct an historical understanding of the change that has occurred in Methodist worship. I include some of the memories of current 'preachers'<sup>12</sup> and worshippers. I review the available relevant literature written about change within the time period. I have undertaken survey work to collect information from other preachers.<sup>13</sup> The use of various sources of information has enabled me to build up a picture of the major changes that have occurred in Methodist worship. But my own personal experience, remembrances and reflection also impact on how I read the available data.

When I turn to developing an understanding of the influence of the liturgical movement and of liturgical theology I appropriate ideas from a number of important writers across different church traditions, but again the choice of liturgical theologians studied impacts on what one identifies as important. The World Council of Churches (WCC) project that led to the publication of a book

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<sup>11</sup> E. H. Carr, *What is History*, (Vintage, 1967) is one important text in the academic field of history that makes clear that historians are individuals, people of their own time, with views, attitudes and assumptions about the world which influence their own reading and analysis of history.

<sup>12</sup> Throughout this study I use the term 'preachers' to describe those accredited to lead worship and to preach in British Methodism. In British Methodism there is also a category of 'worship leaders' who may lead worship, or parts of worship, but who are not accredited to preach.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 5 and the Appendices for the details of the survey work.

entitled *Worship Today – Understanding, Practice and Ecumenical Implications*,<sup>14</sup> identified that the Orthodox traditions have a very different praxis and understanding of worship so that ‘...some Orthodox groups would go so far as to say that common prayer between Orthodox and non-Orthodox is not possible’.<sup>15</sup> I seek to relate the emergent issues from the liturgical theology that is mainly of the Reformed Churches and the Roman Catholic Church to what Methodism has said of its own worship practice through Conference Reports, service books and preacher training materials, as these are the principal partners with whom the Methodist Church has been in dialogue. Further there is little reflection or conversation with Pentecostal and Charismatic worship practice in this work.

In developing ideas around an appropriate ethos for worship today and criteria for assessing worship, I am clear, and will argue that British Methodist worship will be best served and developed by adopting principles from the liturgical movement. The overall expression of these principles leads form, shape, content and ethos of worship to be guided by what has come to be known as the ecumenical *ordo*. This expression will be explored and explained through this thesis. This form of worship stands as an alternative, perhaps even in critical opposition to other forms of worship, which are in use in Protestant evangelical and Charismatic traditions. Other forms of worship - the evangelical and charismatic forms of Praise and Worship; the emergent/alternative post-modern forms; the seeker-service and multi-sensory services, which do not

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller, (Editors), *Worship Today – Understanding, Practice and Ecumenical Implications*, (Faith and Order Paper No. 194, World Council of Churches Publications, 2004)

<sup>15</sup> Best and Heller, *Worship Today*, p. x

adopt the ecumenical *ordo*, have other purposes, different ethos, ascribed to them by their adherents.<sup>16</sup>

The intersection of subjectivity and objectivity in the exercise of a particular study is apparent from what is stated above; for everyone who studies and writes is located in their own tradition; their own experience; their own social class; their own ethnicity; their own gender; their own reading and study.<sup>17</sup>

Those who make proposals about liturgical renewal need to be aware of their own location, potential biases and prejudices.<sup>18</sup> When an individual makes comments about liturgical renewal in a particular church, particularly a church that has few agreed marks of authenticity, these ideas and opinions are likely to be controversial. This thesis is a reflection on the insights that the liturgical movement and particularly the concept of the *ordo* can give to Methodism. However, attention has been given to developing a reasoned argument, based firmly upon the liturgical movement's study of worship and liturgy.

### 1.3 The Practice of Worship and The Ecumenical *Ordo*

As a discipline liturgical theology acknowledges that worship cannot be defined easily - as James White says: 'It is not an easy activity to define...worship is an exasperatingly difficult word to pin down'.<sup>19</sup> One of the main reasons for this is

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<sup>16</sup> For an examination of these other forms of worship see Bryan Spinks, *The Worship Mall – Contemporary Responses to Contemporary Culture*, (London: SPCK, 2010)

<sup>17</sup> For two examples that set out to show how social location is an important issue see Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching and the Other*, (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2009) and Anthony Reddie, *Nobodies to Somebodies – A Practical Theology for Education and Liberation*, (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2003)

<sup>18</sup> See Stephen Burns, *Worship in Context – Liturgical Theology, Children and the City*, (Peterborough: Epworth, 2006) for a specific worked example of developing a liturgical style in a specific location.

<sup>19</sup> James White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), p. 17

that different Christian churches practice worship in different ways. However, worship is a central component of the life of the churches that is distinct from other activities churches engage in. Graham Hughes says of worship that it ‘...could be seen as a gathering of believers for their mutual encouragement, or in order to study their Scriptures, or to plan their mission, but, in the absence of prayer *to* the deity, and the drawing of approbation and sustenance *from* the deity, it is hard to see how the word “worship” can apply’.<sup>20</sup> So we might at least say that worship in the Christian tradition is people gathering together to pray *to* God and to receive *from* God in and through Jesus Christ (as distinct from other communities of other faiths that gather to ‘worship’ God as known to them through some other manner).

Worship then holds theological meaning – it is undertaken, experienced and explored as an event in which people gather together through which there is encounter and dialogue with God. Quakers undertake this encounter as ‘Each worshipper makes an effort to bring all emotions, thoughts, and needs and to center them on the Divine Being’.<sup>21</sup> But whilst it is the case that other Christian communities would agree that worship is to do with encounter with God, worship in other communities is practiced in other ways and can be filled with singing, scripture reading, preaching, the Eucharist, speaking in tongues and other ritual actions. It is filled with those ritual actions that each community values because those communities believe that the particular ritual actions they perform helps to fulfil the purpose of worship held by that community. One

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<sup>20</sup> Graham Hughes, *Worship as Meaning – A Liturgical Theology for Late Modernity*, (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 41

<sup>21</sup> C. Welton Gaddy, *The Gift of Worship*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), p. 99

attempt to describe worship and its meaning for a specific community, the Baptists, is undertaken by Christopher Ellis who sets out to explore ‘...the theological meaning of worship among Free Churches...’<sup>22</sup> But he realises that ‘Christians tend to have a “home base” from which they understand ‘various theological and confessional issues’.<sup>23</sup> He notes distinct differences in relation to the practice and ethos of worship in those traditions that are more sacramental in nature and those that prioritise the Scriptures. He also says that ‘A Pentecostal liturgical theologian might legitimately claim that divine activity evident through the exercising of *charismata* in worship was a fundamental aspect of Christian worship recorded in the New Testament and should be a component part of (worship)’.<sup>24</sup>

*Worship Today* surveys ‘...the understanding and practice of worship today in a wide variety of Christian churches, communities and contexts’,<sup>25</sup> through essays written about the liturgical practices of specific churches. Whilst there are essays on Methodist worship - one from the United Methodist Church of America and one from worship in the African Methodist Episcopal Church - there is no essay on British Methodist worship. There is also very little other material available in other places about the current practice and meaning of British Methodist worship. Therefore, one purpose of this thesis is to provide an account that explores the practice of worship in British Methodism. That is what

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<sup>22</sup> Christopher Ellis, *Gathering – A Theology of Worship and Spirituality in Free Church Tradition*, (London: SCM Press, 2004), p. 259

<sup>23</sup> Ellis, *Gathering*, p. 249

<sup>24</sup> Ellis, *Gathering*, p. 253

<sup>25</sup> Best and Heller, *Worship Today*, p. ix



do British Methodists do, and why do they do these things, when they assemble to meet and dialogue with God?

White says that 'One of the best ways to determine what we mean by Christian worship is to describe the outward and visible forms of worship by Christians'.<sup>26</sup>

But White also recognises that more needs to be done. Examination of the motivations and the ethos lying behind the act of worship that different communities undertake is required. White says 'Further reading, more experiences of worship, and continuing reflection will help expand (this) meaning'.<sup>27</sup> I am attempting to work towards a deeper understanding of Methodist worship by reflecting on why it is that certain things happen in Methodist worship, and the form of worship offered by the proponents of the *ordo*, as a way of practicing authentic worship.

I recognise that worship is both central and vital to the life of the Church as that place where a community gathers to give and to receive from God. Examining worship practice and ethos is of vital importance in the on-going life of the church. This process, this examination is happening across the churches today.

The editors of *Worship Today*, write:

Christians are recognising anew that worship lies at the heart of their faith, and that it is foundational and central to the lives and witnesses of the churches...The efforts of churches to find new vitality and depth in their own worship through reappropriation of their own traditions; the rediscovery of common patterns, intentions and values in worship through the movements for liturgical renewal; the growing awareness through the ecumenical movement, of the worship of other churches and Christian communities; and the growing experience of praying and

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<sup>26</sup> White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, p. 18

<sup>27</sup> White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, p. 46

praising God together rather than separately – all these factors have created a new situation within and among the churches. This offers a chance to deepen and intensify their own public worship.<sup>28</sup>

*Worship Today* gives five reasons for the WCC project:

1. To provide information on the understanding and practice of worship in a wide range of churches and Christian contexts;
2. Thereby to promote understanding among Christians of their own, and each other's, worship lives;
3. To take account of the impact – and implications – of the liturgical renewal and ecumenical movements for worship today;
4. Through this to encourage informed reflection and dialogue among Christians about the meaning and practice of worship; both within particular churches and ecumenically;
5. To promote the deepening and renewal of worship within and among churches<sup>29</sup>

This thesis sets out to examine the liturgical/worship practice in British Methodist churches. I will use the WCC reasons given above as a framework for this study. A greater understanding of what is happening within British Methodism in its worship and why these things are happening will be of use within the Methodist church and in ecumenical dialogue.

Given that British Methodism has been part of the ecumenical movement and has been in conversation with the work of the liturgical movement I particularly wish to explore the implications on Methodist worship created by those dialogues (point 3 above). Whilst, like Ellis, I recognise that I have a “home base”, I am not concerned to develop a Methodist understanding of worship to stand as a denominational assertion of what it means to be a Methodist and to practice Methodist worship. Rather I want to develop an understanding of

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<sup>28</sup> Best and Heller, *Worship Today*, p. ix

<sup>29</sup> Best and Heller, *Worship Today*, p. ix

Methodist worship that is critiqued and informed by the insights of the liturgical movement.

I am going to work with the proposition that the liturgical movement provides to the churches today a renewed, a critiqued, and a fuller understanding of the form, content and purpose of worship in and through what is called the *ordo*. One of the most prominent conveyors of this concept is Gordon Lathrop and he sets out his exposition of the *ordo* most explicitly in his work *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology*.<sup>30</sup> The *ordo* is developed to be an instrument of unity among Christians; patterns and symbols of faith that unite us; points of convergence between different communities; a way of seeing the root elements of worship.<sup>31</sup>

These root elements consist of the form and content of worship services; but also the liturgical environment (that is the space in which the church meets and how it shapes that meeting space) and the church calendar and liturgical feasts, most notably the observance of Sunday and the annual feast of Easter. (The) liturgy<sup>32</sup> contains and expresses these beliefs in the words and actions of the worship service and in the way in which it arranges the space in which worship takes place. (The) liturgy is theological – it brings people to God; it expresses beliefs about God; it addresses God; and it forms people in faith, through the ritual words and actions used and doctrinal belief expressed within the *ordo*.

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<sup>30</sup>Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1993)

<sup>31</sup> Anscar J. Chupgunco, 'Liturgy: Many Becoming One', Dirk G. Lange and Dwight W. Vogel, *Ordo: Bath, Word, Prayers, Table – A Liturgical Primer in honor of Gordon W. Lathrop*, (Akron, Ohio: OSL Publications, 2005), pp. 201 – 215, p. 202-203

<sup>32</sup> I write (the) liturgy throughout this thesis to denote the common core understanding of the liturgical movement of the key components of 'liturgical' worship and its ethos.

I am seeking then to reflect on Methodist worship by using the insights of the liturgical movement to challenge and test the worship practices of British Methodists. This critique is made on the basis that the liturgical movement has re-discovered and given as gift to the church/es the very fundamentals, in content and ethos, of that which should be contained in the liturgy/ies of worshipping communities.<sup>33</sup> Lathrop talks of this as the 'Central Things' of the liturgy. Chupungco says: 'Despite centuries old divisions among churches, there is a core *ordo* of liturgical worship that defines them as Christian and unites them beyond their particular liturgical traditions.'<sup>34</sup> This is not just the words or even the words and actions of the church/es. It is the very ethos of the worship, which the liturgical movement seeks to identify in and through the historical evangelical and apostolic faith of the church.

Paul Meyendorff says many "free" churches, in their responses to the WCC project, found it difficult to articulate a comprehensive rationale of the purpose of their worship.<sup>35</sup> Ellis sets out to achieve a rationale for Baptist worship in his work. He says: "This study has been unashamedly denominational. It has explored Free Church worship, through the study of one denomination, and identified a set off convictions about worship."<sup>36</sup> He seeks to develop a liturgical theology for Baptist worship and to provide an answer about the fundamental purpose of worship in the Baptist church through an exploration of what he

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<sup>33</sup> There are those who dispute the *ordo* as a valid tool for authenticating worship, most notably James White. See 'How Do We Know It Is Us?' E. Byron Anderson and Bruce T. Morrill, (Editors), *Liturgy and the Moral Self – Humanity at Full Stretch Before God*, (Minnesota: Liturgical Training Press, 1998), pp. 55-65

<sup>34</sup> Chupungco, 'Liturgy: Many Becoming One', p.202

<sup>35</sup> Paul Meyendorff, 'Christian Perspectives on Worship', Best and Heller, *Worship Today*, pp. 282-297, p. 293

<sup>36</sup> Ellis, *Gathering*, p. 255

calls the embodied values of the Baptist community. Ellis assumes and adopts Methodism into his accounts of 'Free Church and evangelical communities'.<sup>37</sup> In contrast Meyendorff assumes and adopts Methodism into 'mainstream Reformation churches'.<sup>38</sup> So, outside of Methodism, people find it difficult to locate Methodism within the range of church traditions. Indeed, different Methodist churches in different nations have different worship practices. Within British Methodism the tension between Free Church worship and Reformed Church has existed historically and still does today.

Meyendorff writes: 'In reviewing the papers (given to the WCC project), I was struck by the different ways in which authors articulated their perception of the fundamental meaning and nature of worship'.<sup>39</sup> In this thesis I will illustrate that in British Methodism different authors from within Methodism will conceive of the fundamental purpose/s of worship somewhat differently. They may share a "home base" but this doesn't mean that they agree a common rationale. These differences may be accounted for, at least to some degree, by whether they primarily identify Methodism as a Free Church or within the Reformed Church tradition; and how much they wish to preserve the tradition that they believe best reflects Methodism's own core beliefs. It will be influenced by what sources they adopt to authenticate worship – will they turn to the embodied values in Methodism as Ellis does for the Baptists, perhaps by turning to John Wesley, his initial reforms and the reforms initiated by his successors? My choice of examining the worship practice of Methodism through the lens of the liturgical

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<sup>37</sup> Ellis, *Gathering*, p. 8

<sup>38</sup> Meyendorff, 'Christian Perspectives on Worship', p. 292

<sup>39</sup> Meyendorff, 'Christian Perspectives on Worship', p. 282

movement and its main concerns and principles reveals my own perspective. Those who explore the meaning and value of the *ordo* do so in the spirit of ecumenism; they value the unity of the Church and seek that which might unite all Christians. They are engaged in a programme of understanding worship not from a denominational perspective but from an ecumenical perspective. They do so because they believe that (the) liturgy is the particular form of worship that is most authentic. This view, this understanding is shared even among some who nominate themselves as evangelical and for whom the *ordo* would not be their inherited form of worship. Simon Chan, in *Liturgical Theology – The Church as a Worshipping Community*<sup>40</sup> aims to enable ‘evangelicals have a better understanding’ of the practices of liturgical worship. He does so ‘not to offer practical tips for conducting worship better’ but because he sees in the *ordo* the authentic signs of worship. He says that ‘The churches that broke free from denominational restraints also broke free from their liturgical traditions...This is largely a carryover of the Dissenting tradition, going back to the Puritans.’<sup>41</sup> For Chan the Church is formed correctly by participation in (the) liturgy, which reveals the ‘essentials...of the Great Tradition of the Church – the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church – that all Christians profess to believe ; and only within a church that is catholic and alive are truths traditioned and received as living faith...’<sup>42</sup>

The core elements of the *ordo* have been identified through two key criteria. The first is the use and reference to ancient texts, including the New Testament and

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<sup>40</sup> Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology – The Church as a Worshipping Community*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2006)

<sup>41</sup> Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, p. 15

<sup>42</sup> Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, p. 11

ancient liturgical texts. The other is the 'commonly accepted beliefs of Christians regarding the service'<sup>43</sup> in the early centuries of the Church. Reflection on these criteria by the early church forms the bedrock of the *ordo*. The discovery of commonality begins here and seeks to avoid the subsequent divisions that the Church has suffered over the centuries through disputes about the nature of God, God's purposes and the way in which God is to be worshipped. As Chupungco says 'Time and again the Church of Jesus Christ has suffered the pain of division brought about by doctrinal, socio-cultural, political, and liturgical differences'.<sup>44</sup> The *ordo* may then be used by all traditions to evaluate and critique current liturgical practice as it seeks out what are the fundamentals of the worship of the Church.

It is the claim of the liturgical movement that the worship of the church is best formed by the very ethos of this historic and ecumenical *ordo*. This form and ethos will be explored throughout this study. Put succinctly, its form is of the church gathering corporately, in the name of Christ, to praise the Triune God, to listen to the Scriptures read and the Word preached, to pray for the world, to celebrate Holy Communion, and to be sent into the world to serve in the name of Christ, through the remembrance and telling of the whole story of God and God's relationship with the created order that is structured by liturgical time. This will be done in a space that allows the people of God to celebrate the central things of the liturgy, which are to be identified as 'preaching the word, celebrating baptism and eucharist, and welcoming all the members of Christ

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<sup>43</sup> Chupungco, 'Liturgy: Many Becoming One', p.202

<sup>44</sup> Chupungco, 'Liturgy: Many Becoming One', p.202

into the house'.<sup>45</sup> The ethos of the ecumenical *ordo* is to understand worship occurring through (the) liturgy that unites all the people of God celebrating the fundamental core of the Christian faith, its founding event, which is the 'paschal mystery'. The paschal mystery is the life, passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ.<sup>46</sup> Further the Church understands all its celebration, all its praise of God, as praise given to the Trinitarian God of its faith. The '...Christian Passover is a Trinitarian event: Christ offers himself to God through the eternal Spirit'.<sup>47</sup> This event, the paschal mystery, is restored in (the) liturgy '...as the key to various rites and offices of the Church, in new service books across a wide confessional spectrum...'<sup>48</sup>

This core ethos of worship is that which the liturgical movement has promoted for evaluating the worship practice and ethos of different churches and for the renewal of worship. It is not without its critics in other churches. Baldovin notes that conservative critics of reform in the Roman Catholic Church dispute the focus on the theology of the paschal mystery because it is for them '...a betrayal of Catholic faith...because it ultimately denies the doctrine of Christ's vicarious satisfaction for sin by his death'.<sup>49</sup> But Baldovin shows that such a response fails to recognise that '...such a theology of sacrifice has been largely discredited throughout the twentieth century...'<sup>50</sup> The (reformed) liturgy of the Roman

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<sup>45</sup> Chupungco, 'Liturgy: Many Becoming One', p.213

<sup>46</sup> John F. Baldovin, *Reforming The Liturgy - A Response to the Critics*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Training Press, 2008)

<sup>47</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Embracing Purpose - Essays on God, the World and the Church*, (Peterborough: Epworth, 2007), p. 71

<sup>48</sup> Wainwright, *Embracing Purpose*, p. 71

<sup>49</sup> Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy*, p. 138

<sup>50</sup> Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy*, p. 138



Catholic Church '...does represent a radical shift in Catholic theology and piety'<sup>51</sup> but it is not a new theology but a restoration of the core evangelical and apostolic faith. Inasmuch as the *ordo* is also adopted by other churches it also changes, or perhaps better said, reforms the theology of those churches, back toward the ancient and historic purpose and theological meaning of (the) liturgy.

This is not to say that the liturgies of the churches as currently published are fixed and in no need of further reform. It is subject, as seen above, to critique by conservatives; but also by those who speak out of the experience of those who suffer from oppression and discrimination.<sup>52</sup> There is always on-going reflection of (the) liturgy and how it is translated and used within churches today. Vogel notes that 'The liberation themes that now seem so evident in the Magnificat were prayed and sung for centuries before being explicitly identified and appropriated. Once the formation inherent in that prayer is recognised, the implications must be critically explored'.<sup>53</sup> The recognition that 'liberationist themes' are evident in the early prayer of the Church can lead the feminist theologian Marjorie Procter-Smith to write, 'I am persuaded that the liturgical movement, at its best, has the potential for reforming the church of our days as dramatically as did the reformations of earlier centuries'.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Baldwin, *Reforming the Liturgy*, p. 139

<sup>52</sup> See Stephen Burns chapter, 'Feminist Gestures for Christian Assembly', in Stephen Burns and Nicola Slee, (Editors), *Presiding Like a Women*, (London: SPCK, 2010), pp. 9-18, for a discussion of how the theology of the liturgical movement has actually embraced much feminist criticism of 'traditional' liturgy.

<sup>53</sup> Vogel, *Primary Sources*, p. 9

<sup>54</sup> Marjorie Procter-Smith, *In Her Own Rite – Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition*, (Akron, Ohio: OSL Publications, 1990), Introduction, p. xi

Neither is it to say that (the) liturgy will be practised in exactly the same way within different churches. As Chupugco says, ‘In the final analysis, several components of the received liturgical *ordo* that are not of divine institution should, strictly speaking, be regarded as “neither prescribed nor forbidden”. Unity in the *ordo* of worship does not negate the fundamental freedom of any church to determine its pattern of worship under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in keeping with the liturgical principle of “sound tradition and legitimate process”’.<sup>55</sup> Worship is practised within traditions that will read the ecumenical *ordo* with the nuances of their tradition and in the time and place that they are set. Methodist practitioners of the ecumenical *ordo* will certainly preside over worship that is simpler in style than that of many other traditions. But, notwithstanding the nuances that will exist between different traditions, Horton Davies, quoting the work of Father Gabriel Hebert, sums up the hope that the liturgical movement and liturgical reform offer the church:

Hebert believed that the Liturgical Revival offered a way of presenting Christianity as more than a system of belief (which a purely theological approach would imply), and as more than an individual way of holiness (as piety had often previously regarded spirituality). Christianity could now be presented as “a way of life for the worshipping community” which was a corporate renewal of faith (through theology proclaimed in Sermon and Sacrament), of commitment and consecration (through the Offertory), and as an incentive to serve and transform the fragmented society outside, as the very mission of the Church. Thus evangelical, liturgical, and sociological are seen to be three correlated aspects of Christian life focussed in the corporate Christian cultus.<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, and as this thesis will explore, Christian worship is the enactment of (the) liturgy through which the faith of the church is proclaimed and learnt and

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<sup>55</sup> Chupungco, ‘Liturgy: Many Becoming One’, p.214

<sup>56</sup> Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England – The Ecumenical Century, 1900 to the Present*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 39-40

the people of God shaped. Consequently the actual shape, content and ethos of worship are hugely important. The *ordo* provides a distinctive shape; it sets forward a specific ethos; it contains specific theological meaning.

#### 1.4 Methodist Worship Practice, the *ordo* and the Current State of Play

Many within the liturgical movement, point towards the requirement of weekly Eucharist to give an authentic *ordo* to Christian worship. My work speaks within a context of a worshipping people whose experience is not of weekly Eucharist<sup>57</sup> and whose need is for authentic worship that does not contain this sacrament week by week. My own position has been deeply influenced by the liturgical movement, whose emphasis has been on the development of the corporate nature of the 'assembly', celebrating the paschal mystery, but I remain a minister in a Church that does not celebrate a weekly Eucharist and that relies heavily on local preachers to lead preaching services as the main form of worship. What then is required is to understand (the) liturgy, to appreciate its ethos, and to find ways to practice this ethos when it is not possible to celebrate Holy Communion. If as Robert Martin states 'Liturgy is the means by which worship is practiced'<sup>58</sup> how can a church that cannot celebrate the liturgy of the Eucharist weekly still learn from the *ordo*.

As I have studied the liturgical practices of British Methodists, I have come to see how both the ethos of Methodist worship and the liturgical practice of Methodism have already been influenced over the past 50 years through

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<sup>57</sup> This practice has been created historically through the specific dynamics of how British Methodist worship developed. See the next chapter for an account of this process.

<sup>58</sup> Robert K. Martin, 'Education and the Liturgical Life of the Church', *Religious Education*, Vol. 98, No. 1, Winter 2003, p. 53

interaction with the liturgical and ecumenical movements. This influence can be seen in the texts of the *Methodist Service Book*<sup>59</sup> and the *Methodist Worship Book*<sup>60</sup>. But its worship, particularly its non-Eucharistic worship, has also been influenced by its interaction with other Christian churches and communities whose worship practice and ethos are based on other foundations. Its worship practice has also been influenced and changed by the historical and social contexts in which it has been located and these influences are also studied in this thesis. These various influences create different forms of worship within Methodism supported by different rationales. These issues will be further explored in Chapter 2.

But it also needs to be said that conversations about liturgical practices and meanings can be theoretical in nature and not reflect the actual liturgical celebrations of churches. As we have already identified liturgy is those actions, including the words spoken, undertaken by a worshipping community when it gathers to worship. When worshipping communities do the same or at least similar things week by week, using set texts, analysis of what their liturgy is and signifies may be somewhat easier (although not unproblematic) to analyse than when, as within current Methodism, a large amount of variation exists. Ellis recognises this problem in his work on Baptist worship, as they too 'display considerable diversity of thought and practice'.<sup>61</sup> He says: 'As the Free Churches cannot turn to specific liturgies, it largely through generalization that we need

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<sup>59</sup> *The Methodist Service Book*, (Methodist Publishing House, 1975)

<sup>60</sup> *The Methodist Worship Book*, (Methodist Publishing House, 1999)

<sup>61</sup> Ellis, *Gathering*, p. 36

to approach their worship...'<sup>62</sup> However, as Martin Stringer reveals in his book, *On the Perception of Worship*,<sup>63</sup> 'ordinary Christians' can assign different meanings to their worship. He believes that to understand worship 'we should be going out into (the) ordinary churches...and discovering what real people think about their worship...'<sup>64</sup> To try to discover what Methodists think about their worship, I have in this work, in addition to identifying what is officially said about worship by the church in its reports and service books, also sought to establish what its preachers, those charged with leading worship think, and what its worshippers think. The combining of these approaches is aimed at giving a clearer picture of the actual liturgical celebration of British Methodism and the meanings attached to them.

As I set out to try to describe the actual practice of British Methodists and the changes that have occurred in these practices - and then to make sense out of the issues raised, and how I might relate to them in my own ministry, I became aware that there was little written, in any systematic form, in British Methodism, to help me with my task. One issue that this lack of writing reveals is that definitional words relating to worship practice, for example liturgy, are used in undefined and loose ways in Methodist literature. As we have seen above worship and liturgy are not easy words to define or to distinguish between. But here I am seeking to understand worship as the act of gathering in and through which the community encounters God in prayer and other ritual actions. The ritual actions and how they are performed and put together form

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<sup>62</sup> Ellis, *Gathering*, p. 36

<sup>63</sup> Martin D. Stringer, *On the Perception of Worship*, (The University of Birmingham: University Press, 1999)

<sup>64</sup> Stringer, *On the Perception of Worship*, p. 1

the specific liturgical practice of a community – what people do in their worship. The words form, shape, style and content also need some defining. I will use form to firstly distinguish between Eucharistic worship and non-Eucharistic worship which traditionally in Methodism was described as a preaching service. However there are non-Eucharistic worship forms which have emerged other than the traditional preaching service. The principal alternative is all-age worship; but other forms of non-Eucharistic services are also practised. The term shape will be used primarily to note how the component parts of a worship service are ordered to form a shape. Content is fairly easily described – it is those elements that are used in a service. Style is more problematic – it can be used to describe differences between denominational practices of worship. That is high church to low church, much ritual to little ritual. But it is also used to describe differences between traditional and contemporary expressions, for example, hymn singing or song/chorus usage; or traditional or modern language. Further, however, style might also be related to the approach preachers and congregations have toward worship. That is how formal or informal or how much the style is didactic or doxological. Importantly the way in which form, shape, content and style are combined and utilised influences and determines the ethos, or the purpose of that worship.

So the task is to explore in many and varied ways the essential practice of worship in Methodism today. My focus will firstly be on Sunday worship which is the main time the community gathers in Methodism. In Methodism three quarters of all the acts of Sunday worship are non-Eucharistic. This is an essentially Free Church tradition or mode of worship and the very fact that this

form of worship dominates creates for Methodism a specific issue when it tries to relate to the liturgical movement who promote the weekly celebration of the Eucharist as an essential component of authentic Christian worship. But given that this is the primary form of worship in Methodism this study will concentrate on how Methodists practice non-Eucharistic worship.

In the accounts of worship given in the WCC project ‘...some are more academic in tone, others less so; some emphasize historical development within their own church and tradition, while others are more theological in nature, or focus on other aspects of their church or community’s worship’.<sup>65</sup> This further illustrates the wide field of liturgical theology. The purpose of worship, the nature of liturgy can be and is examined in multiple ways in different communities. Indeed the study of actual liturgical celebrations requires such an approach. One mode employed by this thesis is historical reflection on Methodist worship and its ethos; I also explore the liturgical theology of the Methodist church as revealed in its service books and its relationship with the liturgical movement. I explore how Methodism is affected by other churches and ways of worshipping. I also explore the sociological and cultural issues that have affected the worship of the church. All of these approaches are undertaken with a view to critiquing Methodist worship theologically – that is with reference to what authenticates worship when it is understood to be a community gathering to meet with and to receive from God.

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<sup>65</sup> Best and Heller, *Worship Today*, p. xii

I have chosen to focus my examination of Methodist worship from 1958. Any starting date for a study has to be chosen by the author and to some degree is arbitrary. But the establishment of a Conference Commission on worship in 1958 provides a useful starting point. I have had to pay some attention to the worship practices of Methodism up to the date so as to recognise the influence the pre-1958 time period. But in 1958 the Methodist Conference established a Conference Commission<sup>66</sup> to examine the nature and practice of worship in the Methodist Church. The Commission was tasked with examining expressions of discontent within the Methodist Church on the content, order and purpose of worship, and to make proposals to improve worship. In 1960 the Commission reported and made reference to changes in worship taking place in a wide number of other churches, noting how these were being influenced by the study of liturgy. The report states that 'Methodists should be eager to share in this widespread renewal, both where it appropriates more fully the traditions of the past and where it ventures on new methods to meet the needs of the present age'.<sup>67</sup> The Commission's report roughly corresponds to one of the most significant dates in the history of the liturgical movement; that being 1962 and the publication of the Roman Catholic Church's *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the reforming work of the Second Vatican Council on the Liturgy. Further in the 1960s massive changes were to occur in society that had significant impact on the church and its corporate worship. All these things put together seem to provide a good start date for this study.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> The Methodist Church, Conference Minutes, Representative Session, 1960, *Conference Committee on Christian Worship*

<sup>67</sup> *Conference Committee*, para.4

<sup>68</sup> 1958 is also the birth date of the author!



This thesis claims that a process to improve worship is still a requirement, partly because expressions of discontent continue to exist in the church. Thirty years on from the establishment of the 1958 Methodist Worship Commission another report was made to the 1988 Methodist Conference.<sup>69</sup> It too examined the nature of worship, stating, “Why there is so much disquiet about the quality of our worship”.<sup>70</sup> Another ten years on, in July 1998, the Methodist Recorder<sup>71</sup> gave details of a survey<sup>72</sup> in which 68% of Methodist Ministers reported that they perceived Methodist worship as often dull. But further I will show that worship practice today has become so varied that there is no denominational ethos within the Methodist church as a whole. I will conclude that worship has actually become idiosyncratic and confused. Worship in British Methodism then still requires evaluating, authenticating, deepening and renewing.

The undertaking and the results of this study have personal value to me as I, as a Methodist presbyter leading worshipping communities week by week, seek to make the worship of those communities vital. It should also be helpful to anyone who wishes to understand more about the worship of a particular community – an understanding that the World Council of Churches believes is important to ‘engender a broader understanding of worship in and among the churches...’<sup>73</sup> as all churches seek to ‘deepen and revitalize worship, both within individual

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<sup>69</sup> The 1988 Methodist Conference – Commission on Worship, *Let the People Worship*, (Methodist Publishing House, 1988)

<sup>70</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 11

<sup>71</sup> The weekly newspaper of British Methodism.

<sup>72</sup> Details of the survey cited in Adrian Burdon, ‘Forgiven, loved and free...the distinctive character of Methodist Worship’, Jane Craske and Clive Marsh, (Editors), *Methodism and the Future*, (London and New York: Continuum, 1999), pp. 55-69, and in John Healey and Leslie Francis, *British Methodism: What Circuit Ministers Really Think*, (Peterborough: Epworth, 2006), p. 81-88

<sup>73</sup> Best and Heller, *Worship Today*, p. xiii

churches and in the churches' common praise and prayer'.<sup>74</sup> Additionally the method that I have used in this work – to explore what is actually happening in Methodist worship – rather than making generalisations – is I hope a model that is significant in exploring the actual liturgical celebrations of a community and the liturgical theology of a community.

### 1.5 Exploring the Form and Ethos of British Methodist Worship

Adrian Burdon, in *The Preaching Service – The Glory of Methodism – a study of piety, ethos and development of the Methodist Preaching Service*,<sup>75</sup> explores the development of the Methodist 'preaching' service, primarily up to Methodist Union in 1932. The 'Glory of Methodism' as a statement of the 'preaching service' shows Burdon's high regard for this liturgical form. Further, in "Forgiven, loved and free..." the distinctive character of Methodist worship',<sup>76</sup> Burdon identifies the ethos of Methodist worship, reflected in the liturgical expression of a preaching service, as being '...both soteriological and evangelistic, concerned to express the great truths of salvation and to bring men and women to an acceptance of them'.<sup>77</sup> Burdon aligns himself with this tradition and states that Methodist worship must be the place where 'Salvation's story must still be proclaimed and the people still encouraged to search for the way to heaven'.<sup>78</sup> Burdon does not identify any of his personal story or the influences that bear on his work. However, his writing provides the opportunity,

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<sup>74</sup> Best and Heller, *Worship Today*, p. xiii

<sup>75</sup> Adrian Burdon, *The Preaching Service – The Glory of the Methodists – A study of piety, ethos and development of the Methodist Preaching Service*, (Bramcote: Grove Books, 1991)

<sup>76</sup> Adrian Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved and free...the distinctive character of Methodist worship', Jane Craske and Clive Marsh, (Editors), *Methodism and the Future – Facing the Challenge*, (London: Continuum, 1999), pp. 55-70

<sup>77</sup> Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved and free...', p. 58

<sup>78</sup> Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved and free...', p. 68

in this thesis, to explore and challenge certain assumptions about this form and its purpose. Burdon's hope is that modern Methodist 'preaching' services adopt from other traditions old and new content, style and ritual acts, which might enhance the preaching service and make it more effective.<sup>79</sup> I agree with much that Burdon states. I agree that the debate about worship should not be conducted on the grounds of old and new, traditional and modern; but will argue that a different liturgical form, that of the ecumenical *ordo*, should be adopted and adapted within Methodism. This case will be made based on several factors that will emerge in this study. However, the basic contention is that, contra to Burdon's desire 'to look at worship and how those who are, or feel, excluded from Christianity might be brought together',<sup>80</sup> the renewal of the main Sunday Service needs to be predicated on the desire to give the church a liturgical form that trains existing members of the church in faith. In this form, the story of salvation is told, as the People of God worship together, and are renewed in their commitment to the world and its redemption. But its purpose is not primarily to seek out those excluded.<sup>81</sup> Other forms of church activity may be required for evangelical reasons but this is a separate agenda.

Like Burdon, David Chapman, in *Born in Song – Methodist Worship in Britain*,<sup>82</sup> believes that the preaching service should continue to be for Methodists a vehicle for the proclamation of the gospel, enabling the church in its primary

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<sup>79</sup> Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved and free...', p. 69

<sup>80</sup> Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved and free...', p. 66

<sup>81</sup> However see Patrick Keifert, *Welcoming the Stranger – A Public Theology of Worship and Evangelism*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) for ways in which 'liturgical worship' may still be welcoming, hospitable and evangelical.

<sup>82</sup> David M. Chapman, *Born in Song – Methodist Worship in Britain*, (Warrington: Church in the Marketplace, 2006)

duty to ‘...proclaim the story of salvation through Jesus Christ’,<sup>83</sup> in order that it might be an agent of soteriology and evangelism. Chapman identifies that ‘Methodist engagement with worship tends to be experiential, often concerned with the suitability of a particular form as a vehicle for the proclamation of the gospel’.<sup>84</sup> Chapman does, however, recognise that Methodist worship, in adopting an experiential approach to worship, has a tendency to ‘...encourage(s) reductionism by changing or discarding elements of worship on the basis of transient tastes’.<sup>85</sup> This, for Chapman, carries the danger that Methodists lose sight of the historical, liturgical and theological context of Methodist worship. He says that ‘The majority of Methodists are poorly informed about the origins and development of their worship and liturgy’.<sup>86</sup> But Chapman’s work, whilst generally recognising that there is much liturgical diversity in Methodism, presents no evidence on the actual practice of the preaching service today, although he ends up claiming that the preaching service has been transformed today ‘...into a sophisticated act of public worship ordered on liturgical principles’.<sup>87</sup> The evidence in this thesis will contest such a reading, and show that the preaching service has both lost its ‘traditional Methodist’ purpose of being an agency of the proclamation of a personal evangelical faith, and has not been transformed into a sophisticated act of public worship. What has happened to Methodist worship today is that it has become influenced by so many contemporary concerns, and by different opinions as to its purpose, that its current practice may be characterised as idiosyncratic and confused. Indeed it

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<sup>83</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 339

<sup>84</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 5

<sup>85</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 5

<sup>86</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 5

<sup>87</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 61

may even be claimed that the preaching service actually no longer exists as a form of worship in Methodism. The issue is what has come to take its place – what form and what purpose(s) have the three-quarters of Methodist services that are non-Eucharistic?

Burdon claims that ‘Methodism’s freedom and variety of expression is its glory, for it brings a flexibility within it to be truly evangelistic’.<sup>88</sup> Chapman says that the strong desire of Methodists to ‘...preserve freedom in worship, (makes) it seem(s) likely that extempore forms of worship will continue...’<sup>89</sup> Freedom and variety expressed in extempore form have been valued in Methodism, precisely because it allows Methodism the scope to use liturgical forms for the promotion of its wider agenda of mission and evangelism that is part of its historical identity as a movement rather than as a Church. Chapman says that a false distinction is set up between ‘liturgical’ and ‘non-liturgical’ expressions of worship, inasmuch as all corporate worship is liturgical, if one adopts the definition of liturgy as the ‘work of the people’.<sup>90</sup> However, he says that ‘...it is helpful to distinguish between *prescribed* and *extempore* forms’.<sup>91</sup> Chapman says that there has been a long history of dispute in Methodism between those that favour prescribed forms and those that favour extempore form and that ‘Though nowadays the battle lines are no longer as sharply divided, the legacy of this dialectical tension can be found in the adverse reaction to the *Methodist Worship Book*, and the fact that Methodists have never found it practicable to

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<sup>88</sup> Burdon, ‘Forgiven, loved and free...’, p. 68

<sup>89</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 337

<sup>90</sup> This is a standard definition of the public worship of the church, of its liturgy, that appears in many text e.g. Frank Senn titles one of his books *The People’s Work – A Social History of the Liturgy*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006)

<sup>91</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 8

prescribe the use of its authorised liturgies'.<sup>92</sup> But this thesis will argue that such a division is also now a false dichotomy. The issue is not between prescribed liturgies, as in following a given text, and complete freedom to do what one likes. The reality is that extempore worship can also follow patterns that get established and repeated week by week, so forming a shape to meet a prescribed ethos.<sup>93</sup> Rather the case to consider is on what basis, on what liturgical principles, does the church, and its preachers, establish what happens in its actual liturgical events, particularly in its Sunday worship? Does it primarily seek to create worship that calls people to a personal faith in Jesus Christ? Burdon says that 'All churches may agree that worship should be evangelistic and concerned with the rehearsal of the story of salvation. Emphasising Methodism's priorities simply indicates that Methodist tradition will place salvation and evangelism at the top of the list'.<sup>94</sup> But Burdon makes assumptions. The liturgical movement would certainly say that in worship the story of salvation is rehearsed. But it would not say that worship should be designed to be evangelistic. It would say that it might have an evangelistic outcome. But it is not designed, and certainly not compromised of its own primary purpose, so as to be evangelistic. The primary purpose of worship following the *ordo* is to encounter God, to praise God for the saving work of Jesus Christ and to be formed as a community as God's people.

Burdon recognises that in seeking to combine old and new, the dispute that often appears in 'our worship' appears to be between 'evangelical' and 'catholic', or between contemporary and traditional. He urges Methodism to '...include

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<sup>92</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 336

<sup>93</sup> Daniel E. Albercht, *Rites in the Spirit*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) and James Steven, *Worship in the Spirit*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002)

<sup>94</sup> Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved and free...', p. 65

elements of tradition alongside the contemporary material in such a manner that enables God to be glorified'.<sup>95</sup> He recognises that '...some traditional forms are no longer relevant and some modern ones are trite and shallow'.<sup>96</sup> But what needs to be recognised is that in Methodism the content of worship, whether it is traditional or contemporary expressions, and the way these elements are combined, are principally nowadays determined by the individual preacher and their beliefs about the purpose of the worship they are conducting; for it is primarily preachers that authenticate the worship they lead. So Burdon will combine them to make worship 'evangelical and soteriological'. But what will help other preachers make discerned choices between what is no longer relevant and what is trite and shallow? If there are liturgical principles that underpin these choices, that give worship a primary purpose and help to determine the shape and content of worship, as Chapman claims, then Methodist preachers will have some guidance in making choices. What will be revealed in this thesis, however, is that there is no clear expression within Methodism of key liturgical principles that might underpin and determine choices made; for Methodism, past historical practice of worship as an agent of evangelism is not practised by many, and the principles of the liturgical movement have not been fully understood. What then occurs is that in Methodism different interest groups and different individual preachers expound different ways of worshipping. What it is vital to note and understand is that the current practice of worship in Methodism, as this thesis will show, is based on the idea that all forms of worship, all styles and all content may be used and

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<sup>95</sup> Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved and free...', p. 68-69

<sup>96</sup> Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved and free...', p. 68

combined in different ways, to support the purpose of worship that is held by the preacher.

Just as there are no clear principles that guide worship practice, because the church does not share any liturgical principles that determine the content and purpose of extempore worship, so also the church gives freedom to its preachers in the matter of the theology expressed in worship. An exploration of the meaning of salvation will act as an example of the different theologies expressed within the church. It is difficult to determine quite what Burdon understands salvation to be in this present age. He does use the phrase 'the way to heaven', which is a phrase used by John Wesley in his preface to the 1746 edition of his *Sermons on Several Occasions*. Methodist preachers are supposed to preach nothing which is not contained in the doctrines of the Methodist church. For some Methodists salvation may still be characterised using Methodism's traditional understanding of salvation to be sanctification from sin toward eternal life in God in heaven, '...escaping a world of sin and licentiousness, and of entering a world of faith and godly living',<sup>97</sup> leading to '...a holy and peaceful death ...(as) an authentication of the way they spent their lives'.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> David Hempton, *Methodism – Empire of the Spirit*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 60

<sup>98</sup> Hempton, *Methodism*, p. 68



But what salvation has meant historically has been open to interpretation; what different theologians mean by salvation today is varied;<sup>99</sup> and how heaven is conceived is problematic, when compared with notions of heaven and hell, the temporal life and eternity, as understood in the early days of Methodism.<sup>100</sup>

What needs to be recognised, within the context of liturgical studies, is that new and old forms of liturgical expressions carry within them different expressions of the faith, including different notions of salvation. Consequently, if we are to make judgements on the authenticity of worship we need also to explore what is being proclaimed. So, for example, Rene Girard says that the penal substitution theory of atonement, historically prevalent in the Western churches since the work of Anselm in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, as a way of understanding salvation, ‘...has done more than anything else to discredit Christianity in the eyes of the modern world’.<sup>101</sup> And yet this theological idea is still expressed in worship, even in new hymnody for modern day worship, as in Stuart Townend’s song, *In Christ Alone*,<sup>102</sup> which contains the words ‘Till on that cross as Jesus died, The wrath of God was satisfied’. Others will not agree with Girard’s analysis, and see in the

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<sup>99</sup> One expression of a different understanding of salvation may be found in Kosuke Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), p. 179. ‘My experience of bombing has caused me to be less interested in individual salvation or a blessed eternity after death, and more passionate about salvation now, in this life. Christian “eschatology” is focused on the present’. For a comprehensive overview of multiple ways to understand different models of salvation throughout Christian history see David A. Brondos, *Salvation and the Cross*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) who sets out different understandings of salvation by reviewing eleven different authors from different parts of Jewish and Christian history, from Isaiah through to Rosemary Radford Reuther. For different approaches to salvation in current theological debate see Stanley N. Gundry, (Series Editor), *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995). For a re-evaluation of atonement and salvation from the evangelical wing of theology see Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000). For a perspective from a gay theologian see James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong, Original Sin Through Easter Eyes* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1998). For a Methodist perspective see Nigel Collinson, ‘A Study Article: Preaching the Atonement’, *Epworth Review*, 31.4 (2004), pp. 7-15.

<sup>100</sup> See the example stories told by David Hempton in *Methodism – Empire of the Spirit*, (New Haven and London: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 60-68 of conversion experiences in early Methodism.

<sup>101</sup> Rene Girard, *Things Hidden Since The Foundation Of The World*, (London: Athlone, 1987)

<sup>102</sup> Songs of Fellowship 3 and the number 1 song in the Christian Copyright Licensing Scheme

penal substitution theory the 'truth' of God and salvation. The issue addressed here is that freedom to set purpose for worship, and to choose content that supports such a purpose, in effect also allows the promotion of certain theological positions that were developed in the post-early church period. The *ordo* however seeks to declare that which is the historic evangelical and apostolic faith of the Church. In worship only those doctrinal positions that can be firmly established as the historic faith of the Church are to be promulgated. This is why in some traditions set text is so important as it preserves the integrity of the faith and why in the Roman Catholic revisions to their liturgy such positions were removed.

#### 1.6 The Contribution of this Thesis to the Study of British Methodist Worship

The time period on which this study focuses has been one of enormous and rapid change in the church and in society, and it is only through understanding these developments, as well as the influence of the liturgical and ecumenical movements, that change in worship can be understood. The next Chapter reports on changes in society and church that have affected the worship practice of the church; primarily examining the 1960s, the decade in which the genesis of much of the change is located. The primary focus for this study, picked up from Chapter 3 onward, is the influence of the liturgical movement on Methodist Worship, and the development of ideas appropriated from liturgical theology that might lead to further liturgical renewal, for it is from within the liturgical movement and the insights of liturgical theologians that I perceive a deeper renewal of Methodist worship can be achieved.

When I began this study my initial idea was to undertake an investigation into the influence of the liturgical movement on Methodist 'preaching' services as set out in the texts of British Methodism's worship books. In the process of undertaking the preliminary research I discovered that nobody has written extensively about and reviewed how Methodism has related to, and been influenced by, the liturgical movement; nor has anyone documented the changes that have come to pass in the content, style and order of British Methodist worship; nor the changing ethos of worship that has come to pass over the time period of this study. Nor has anyone made the point that because of the 'freedom' of Methodist preachers British Methodist worship needs to be studied through the actual liturgical celebrations that take place rather than what any of the service books indicate. After I began my study *Born in Song* was published. Chapman also notes the lack of study of British Methodist worship.

The history of Methodist worship needs to be brought up to date...Almost all the secondary sources available to students of Methodist worship pre-date the seismic liturgical changes that have taken place during the past forty years.<sup>103</sup>

Chapman's work is a review of all the forms of Methodist worship that have been practised throughout its history. There is one chapter dedicated to the 'preaching' service. No reference is given to all-age worship which has become a once-a-month, non-Eucharistic service, in many congregations,<sup>104</sup> or to other 'emerging' forms of worship, for example 'café-church'. Whilst Chapman recognises the influence of the liturgical movement on Methodist worship, he

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<sup>103</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 7

<sup>104</sup> John Munsey Turner, *Modern Methodism in England 1932-1998*, (Peterborough: Epworth, 1998), p. 57

does not, in the space available to him, go into any great detail. Consequently Chapman's work achieves other aims than mine.

In the 1960 Conference Commission report it was stated that 'Yet though a few Methodist authors have written on worship, there has been little informed experiment or development'.<sup>105</sup> Since that time it might be said that much experiment has taken place in the conduct of worship, yet little has been written on the theology of Methodist worship or its practice. It is difficult to ascertain quite why this is.

The most notable and prolific systematic and liturgical theologian of British Methodism in this time period is Geoffrey Wainwright;<sup>106</sup> yet he has written nothing specifically on British Methodist worship; perhaps because he went to work and teach in the United States of America.

Another British academic, whose work focuses on liturgical history, is James White.<sup>107</sup> He too went to work in the United States of America. Of course, the field of liturgical theology is still relatively new and there are not that many liturgical theologians across all the churches. In Methodism there are relatively

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<sup>105</sup> *Conference Committee*, Para 6

<sup>106</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, (Peterborough: Epworth, 1971/2003)  
*Doxology – The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, (London: Epworth, 1980)  
*Worship with One Accord – Where Liturgy and Ecumenism Embrace*, (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, (Editors), *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, (Oxford University Press, 2006)

<sup>107</sup> James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993)  
*Documents of Christian Worship – Descriptive and Interpretive Sources*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992)

*Introduction to Christian Worship - 3rd Edition*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000)

*Protestant Worship – Traditions in Transition*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989)

*The Sacraments in Protestant Faith and Practice*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999)

few academic teaching posts available in its theological colleges and most ministers in circuit ministry probably find it difficult to give time to writing.

William Strawson wrote that:

We (Methodists) have not, in fact, produced many outstanding scholars, and we have to recognise our dependence upon other churches for leadership in theological matters. One reason for this is that Methodists are never professional theologians. We as ministers certainly are all basically circuit men and those who are set aside to teach theology in college remain in this sense biased toward a circuit ministry, which I think it as it should be.<sup>108</sup>

The relatively small size of Methodism, and the task to which it puts its ministers, may be part of the reason why there is little writing in British Methodism on liturgy and worship. We might further speculate that as many Methodists have seen Methodism, including its worship, to be primarily an evangelistic movement and event, it has required no particular study of its worship. Rather it has needed to develop worship to meet the specific needs in the current age. Such an experiential approach to worship may be seen in *Worship For Today – Suggestions and Ideas*, a book published in 1968, where the editor Richard Jones writes in the Preface:

They (experimental service forms) are printed here as illustration of ways in which various people are trying to renew their worship, and are using genuine insights into the contemporary situation. That is they have attempted to involve the whole people of God, they have been imaginative, they have believed in a God who meets them in ordinary life of the modern world and calls us into that life with renewed energy and competence and grace in Christ...<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Cited from George Brake Thompson, *Policy and Politics in British Methodism, 1932-82*, (Edsall of London, 1984), p. 370

<sup>109</sup> Richard Jones, *Worship For Today – Suggestions and Ideas*, (London: Epworth Press, 1968), p. 14

It is the case that this kind of experimental and experiential way of worshipping can be seen in Methodism's origins and in the work of John Wesley. I will explore this issue further in the following chapter, but suffice it to say at this juncture that one of the assertions of this thesis is that Methodism today is a Church not a movement, even if it might retain some characteristics of a movement. Perhaps what Methodism has not yet fully realised is that today we '...are concerned with the worship life of the contemporary body that is a church in its own right'.<sup>110</sup> That means that most Methodists receive their 'spiritual nurturing' and their 'Christian formation' through one weekly non-Eucharistic service. Attention therefore needs to be paid to the ethos of this service in the life of the Church and its members.

### 1.7 Other Writing on British Methodist Worship in the Recent Past

Raymond George has published several articles on the development of the *Methodist Service Book*.<sup>111</sup> He became the leading figure in Methodism's encounter with the liturgical movement and was the primary mover behind the development of the *Methodist Service Book*. His most notable contribution is a chapter, 'From the Sunday Service to "The Sunday Service"', in *The Sunday Service of the Methodists*<sup>112</sup>. This chapter provides one of the most significant reviews of change in Methodist worship practice from the time of John Wesley through to the early 1990s. In his final paragraph George says '...that British Methodists have shown considerable freedom in varying from the norms (of

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<sup>110</sup> Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved, free...', p. 56

<sup>111</sup> *The Methodist Service Book*, (Methodist Publishing House, 1975)

<sup>112</sup> A. Raymond George, 'From The Sunday Service to "The Sunday Service": Sunday Morning Worship in British Methodism', Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, *The Sunday Service of the Methodists – Twentieth-Century Worship in Worldwide Methodism: Studies in Honor of James F. White*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Kingswood, 1996), pp. 31-52

authorised service books)'.<sup>113</sup> It is these very variations that I will study as we recognise how they might influence the nature of the worship service.

Neil Dixon has written two books: *At Your Service – A Commentary on the Methodist Service Book*,<sup>114</sup> and; *Wonder, Love and Praise – A Companion to the Methodist Worship Book*.<sup>115</sup> Both books are primarily accounts of the individual services contained in the *Methodist Service Book* and the *Methodist Worship Book* respectively, although there is some information provided on the processes that the church went through to create both service books and some of the issues the church debated in relation to their production.

Adrian Burdon's Grove Booklet, *The Preaching Service*, covers the development of the 'preaching' service primarily up to 1932, although there is a small amount of material reviewing the time from 1932-1975. Burdon outlines some of the changes that he perceives have occurred in more recent times in worship in 'Forgiven, loved and free...'<sup>116</sup> without providing any specific documentary evidence. He emphasises that change has occurred in worship styles in recent years and notes much greater variety of musical and other 'artistic' forms.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> George, 'From the Sunday Service', p. 51

<sup>114</sup> Neil Dixon, *At Your Service – A Commentary on The Methodist Service Book*, (London: Epworth Press, 1976)

<sup>115</sup> Neil Dixon, *Wonder, Love and Praise – A Companion to the Methodist Worship Book*, (Peterborough: Epworth, 2003)

<sup>116</sup> Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved and free...', pp. 62-65

<sup>117</sup> Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved and free...', p. 62

Angela Shier-Jones has a chapter, 'The Worshipping Community', in her own book, *A Work in Progress - Methodists Doing Theology*.<sup>118</sup> Shier-Jones' work in this chapter is primarily an exploration of the theology contained in Methodist worship as expressed through official reports, hymnbook and worship book. Shier-Jones says that the creative use of music and silence, movement and stillness, drama and the visual arts should be used much more; rather in contrast to Burdon who states these things are already occurring. For Shier-Jones the ordering and shape of Methodist worship is still controlled by hymnody.

It is not simply that Methodists enjoy their hymns; they consider them to be a fundamental dynamic of their faith. This is why the five hymn-prayer sandwich style of worship is so entrenched as the format for the Methodist preaching service.<sup>119</sup>

John Munsey Turner has a chapter entitled 'Methodist Worship and Preaching' in his book *Modern Methodism in England, 1932-1998*. The rather short length of this chapter and the fact that two thirds of the chapter are dedicated to pre-Second World War worship means it is rather sketchy in terms of detail of change in the modern period.

Judith Maizel-Long contributes one chapter in a book, *Unmasking Methodist Theology*,<sup>120</sup> which has a specific focus on British Methodist theology expressed in worship through authorised hymnody and service books. In the short space she has available to her, she is not able to address many issues that need to be

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<sup>118</sup> Angela Shier-Jones, *A Work in Progress - Methodists Doing Theology*, (Peterborough: Epworth, 2005)

<sup>119</sup> Shier-Jones, *A Work in Progress*, p. 213

<sup>120</sup> Clive Marsh, Brian Beck, Angela Shier-Jones and Helen Wareing, (Editors), *Unmasking Methodist Theology*, (New York and London: Continuum, 2004)



examined more fully to understand the expression/s of Methodist non-Eucharistic services today. Maizel-Long's chapter is entitled 'Theology Sung and Celebrated',<sup>121</sup> and her task is to identify how Methodists expound their theology through worship. She identifies how the recent texts of hymn book and service book have changed Methodism's theological emphasis, so that 'Methodist theology has become less centred on evangelism, and the pilgrimage of individual Christians, and more concerned with being a church, a body of people exploring what it means to be the People of Christ in the world'.<sup>122</sup>

However, Maizel-Long makes this premise: 'For some denominations, one may confidently write a theology on the basis of its authorised liturgy'.<sup>123</sup> This statement is simply not nuanced enough when one is trying to ascertain the theology of any Church as it is expressed in and through worship. The authorised liturgies of a Church reveal the 'official' theology of that Church. However, one must look, when considering worship, not just at the authorised liturgy, but at other distinctive features of that worshipping community; for all worship is enacted in specific places, in specific contexts. To understand what is being taught and learnt theologically, and how worship is conducted and participated in within specific communities, it is necessary to examine a wide range of issues - text and rite, order and shape, architecture and art, music sung, silence held or not, the roles and responsibilities of the 'preacher' and congregation - and other 'liturgical' expression.<sup>124</sup> Maizel-Long recognises that

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<sup>121</sup> Judith Maizel-Long, 'Theology Sung and Celebrated', *Unmasking Methodist Theology*, pp. 48-58

<sup>122</sup> Maizel-Long, 'Theology Sung', p. 57

<sup>123</sup> Maizel-Long, 'Theology Sung', p. 48

<sup>124</sup> A task undertaken by Martin Stringer in *On the Perception of Worship*. There is no study of any Methodist congregation.

in the case of British Methodism set text is minimal and that Methodist worship ‘...is authorised through being led by authorised person...all of these authorised persons may write their own prayers, pray extempore, or use published material. Consideration of such material must therefore allow for the fact that although authorised texts set out norms and standards, and though other sources are used, printed material represents only a part of the pattern of worship’.<sup>125</sup>

To understand fully the theology being expressed, and learnt by congregations, in British Methodism week by week, we need to examine the actual words used and the non-oral components of worship. Maizel-Long recognises words used can come from many sources, and not just authorised hymnody and *The Methodist Worship Book*. In Methodism, we need to know what is being promulgated in ‘preaching’ services when there is no text to study; what is said in the prayers offered that are extempore or taken from alternative sources; what hymns or songs are sung from *Hymns and Psalms*<sup>126</sup> and from other sources; and also other ‘liturgical’ matters. These include what Scripture is read; how the Scriptures are handled; who else participates in the service and in what roles; what order the service follows; how the collection is taken up; where and in what form the congregation is located - and other matters that relate to the ritual of the congregation. As Susan White says:

A worship service sends many kinds of messages to those who participate in it. Although sometimes these messages are intentional and explicit, more often they are unintentional and implicit, conveyed by such things as the roles people play, the interaction which takes place

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<sup>125</sup> Maizel-Long, ‘Theology Sung’, pp. 48-49

<sup>126</sup> *Hymns and Psalms*, (Methodist Publishing House, 1983)

between and among members of the congregation, the relationship between sound and silence, light and darkness, and shape of the worship space. These sorts of things can often be more important to the overall experience of worship than the verbal content of the prayers, hymns, sermon and exhortations.<sup>127</sup>

To develop a study that examined all the issues raised above would probably only be possible if an analysis of one or two congregations were undertaken, given the intensity of the work it would demand. This is not my task here, but would be a useful addition to the relatively bare cupboard of studies of Methodist worship. I will explore in more detail how making statements about what British Methodist worship is like, even in any single community, is difficult given that there are so many possible variables in what might actually happen on any given Sunday morning. What I am able to do in this study is to add to the overall knowledge of worship practice in non-Eucharistic services. With such information it is possible to make more informed comment on worship practice in Methodist churches, and to ask questions that will enable others to understand what theology is being promulgated in any particular service.<sup>128</sup>

### 1.7 Conclusion

As I have shown there is no comprehensive work available on the development of Methodist worship over the past 50 years. The only publication that reflects on British Methodism's relationship with the liturgical movement was

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<sup>127</sup> Susan J. White, *Groundwork of Christian Worship*, (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1997), p. 235

<sup>128</sup> Karen Westerfield Tucker sets out the need for studies of Methodist liturgy that are required, using different approaches, to 'expose the global liturgical texts and practices of John Wesley's spiritual descendants' in 'Methodist Worship', Charles Yrigoyen Jr, (Editor), *Companion to Methodism*, (London and New York: T and T Clark, Continuum Books, 2010), pp. 240-256

published as long ago as 1969.<sup>129</sup> This dissertation then will provide an original contribution to the literature. It will review how the historical pattern of the Methodist preaching service came to be, and what ethos was transmitted by that worship. It will explore what the liturgical movement has had to say to all the mainline Western churches over the last century; and explore some of the more nuanced discussion that has emerged, particularly the issue of 'enacted' rites as a necessary focus for study. It will explore Methodism's relationship with the liturgical movement and establish what change has been brought about on Methodist worship by that movement. It will set out a more comprehensive outline of what Methodist worship looks like today. It will explore what the *ordo* might have to say to Methodism. In this thesis then, the World Council of Churches questions given at the beginning of this chapter are explored and a more comprehensive picture is given of Methodist worship.

The thesis, however, also explores the issue of ethos in Methodist worship, both historically and in the present. It is of vital importance in understanding Methodist worship that one examines not just text and rites but explores what the ethos of Methodists has been and is trying to be. So too the liturgical movement's work suggests more than revising orders of service. The *ordo* contains theological purpose. As Chupungco says about Sunday worship 'Sharing a common *ordo* involves sharing the same doctrinal beliefs on which (this) liturgical feast is founded'.<sup>130</sup> And as Chan's work reveals the Sunday *ordo* has as its outcome the constituting of the gathered Church as 'the covenant

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<sup>129</sup> Raymond J. Billington, *The Liturgical Movement and Methodism*, (London: Epworth, 1969)

<sup>130</sup> Chupungco, 'Liturgy: Many Becoming One', p. 208

people'.<sup>131</sup> The liturgical movement has an emphasis on the corporate nature of worship and its role in forming the church. This theological position stands in tension with many Free Churches practice of worship through other forms and Methodism's traditional emphasis on personal salvation as the primary focus of public worship.

By undertaking the task of exploring the practice and ethos of worship it is then possible to set out to establish what liturgical reform of the non-Eucharistic worship of Methodism might be required if Methodism took more account of the liturgical movement; if it embraced the *ordo*; if it adopted the Sunday liturgy. It is then possible for discussion and debate about worship to take place around the implementation of liturgical principles and how this might assist the process of deepening and renewing worship.

Therefore this thesis addresses these questions:

1. What do Methodists actually do when the worship?
2. Why do they do these things?
3. What are the influences that have affected Methodist worship, particularly since 1958?
4. How does the liturgical movement, and in particular the ecumenical *ordo*, using the *ordo* as means of evaluating and authenticating worship, critique both traditional and contemporary forms Methodist worship?
5. What might the adoption of the *ordo* within Methodism do for the renewal of its (Sunday non-Eucharistic) worship?

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<sup>131</sup> Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, p. 41

CHAPTER 2 – A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO METHODIST WORSHIP IN  
CULTURAL CONTEXT

2.1 Some Opening Comments about Methodist Worship

Karen Westerfield Tucker asserts that across worldwide Methodism worship is varied.

At the risk of over-generalizing, it can be said that worldwide Methodist worship, at its best is characterised by a series of polarities or tensions that may be expressed in different combinations and accommodated by various means. Methodist worship may be identified as ordered and flexible, particular and catholic, traditional and contemporary, spiritual and worldly, local and global, pragmatic and perfectionist. Each of these poles, and indeed each pair of them, is valuable. The tensions they represent may actually all be embraced...diverse styles and forms of worship, resulting from different ways of keeping these values and tensions, may be found among the churches within a particular Methodist denomination, and even within the worship life of a single congregation.<sup>132</sup>

It is difficult to know what Methodist worship might look like in any given place given these ‘polarities and tensions’ and ‘diverse styles and forms of worship’.

What is required, Westerfield Tucker says, is to study each national Methodist church, and individual congregations, to identify which particular characteristics or polarities dominate in specific situations. Overall of Methodist worship she claims that Methodist worship may differ from other Churches in matters of style ‘but hopefully not in substance.’<sup>133</sup> She means by this worship of the triune God through undertaking the liturgical actions of prayer, bible reading, sermon and Holy Communion, as God is thanked for the divine work of redemption, the church intercedes for the needy of the world, and prays that the

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<sup>132</sup> Karen Westerfield Tucker, ‘Sunday Worship in the World Parish: Observations’, *The Sunday Service of the Methodists*, p. 324

<sup>133</sup> Westerfield-Tucker, ‘Sunday Worship’, p. 332

church may be built up in every generation. Westerfield Tucker characterises Methodists as people with ‘warmed hearts’ and Methodist Worship as effective in developing Christian conversion and commitment.<sup>134</sup>

The aim here is to identify what a British Methodist non-Eucharistic service looks like, what content it contains, and what ethos underlies its performance. What this study will show is that at the local level of congregations in British Methodist churches diverse style and forms of worship exist. A non-Eucharistic service in the same church in British Methodism might be different on two different Sundays – but it might also be very similar. Chapman emphasises in British Methodism the polarity between prescribed and extempore form,<sup>135</sup> but other tensions will also be discovered – notably in the ethos of worship and in the theology that worship contains. The existence of these tensions may even mean that Westerfield Tucker’s hope that Methodist worship only varies in style, not substance, is open to challenge, as well as the effectiveness of its worship. The roots of these tensions are found in Methodism’s own historical development.

## 2.2 The Influence and Legacy of John Wesley on the Liturgical Tradition of Methodism

Chapman identifies liturgical tensions that go back to the origin of Methodism:

The liturgical diversity evident within contemporary Methodism reflects its origins in the eighteenth century. Even if Methodism was born in song, the roots of Methodist worship lie not simply in congregational hymn signing but in a combination of sources: the prayer book of the

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<sup>134</sup> Westerfield Tucker, ‘Sunday Worship’, p. 332

<sup>135</sup> In the *Methodist Service Book* Preface this tension is noted as it says: ‘These forms are not intended, any more than those in earlier books, to curb creative freedom’.

Church of England; Moravian and Puritan influences on John Wesley and the early Methodists; and evangelical revivalism.<sup>136</sup>

No analysis of current Methodist worship can be undertaken without some understanding of the varied influences that have impacted on its worship from its inception, including the influence of John Wesley.<sup>137</sup> What is discovered is that early Methodism innovated forms of worship to meet specific historical needs. It did so, however, within some boundary markers established by John Wesley that were theological criteria found in Scripture; Christian antiquity; the Church of England's liturgical practice; reason; and evangelical experience.<sup>138</sup>

For some Churches, where the text and even the rubrics of their worship services are controlled by a service book, change/s requires authorised and official sanction. This is not a requirement in Methodism.<sup>139</sup> Whilst Westerfield Tucker rightly claims that Wesley established theological criteria that became operative in Methodism, Wesley also, by amending in 1784 the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer*, into his *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America, With other Occasional Services*,<sup>140</sup> established the precedent of altering set text, even though this revision was '...basically a conservative

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<sup>136</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 4

<sup>137</sup> As Heitzenrater points out Methodist authors turn to Wesley as a recognised authority in the tradition, yet adopt different approaches to their use of his work and thought. I am reading Wesley as more conservative in his approach to liturgical matters than some other authors would. Richard Heitzenrater, 'Wesley and the People called Methodists', Luke Curran and Angela Shier Jones, *Methodist Present Potential*, (Peterborough: Epworth, 2009) pp. 165-186

<sup>138</sup> Westerfield Tucker, 'Form and Freedom', p. 25

<sup>139</sup> Angela Shier-Jones in *A Work in Progress* also shows that the ability of Methodism to adapt and modify applies to its overall theology and theological positions as well as to its worship practice. She states that Methodist theology is 'vocational and purposeful rather than propositional and doctrinal'. As a consequence Methodist theology and practice is always developing, always emerging out of the questions, concerns, actions and debates of Methodists and Methodism.

<sup>140</sup> John Wesley, *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*, (London: William Strahan, 1784)



revision, characterised more by omission than by addition to the text'.<sup>141</sup>

Further, Wesley, introduced hymnody and extempore prayer into worship allowing, what Westerfield Tucker calls, 'Freedom of Expression'.<sup>142</sup> For John Wesley this did not mean '...absolute freedom, but flexibility within certain parameters; theological, liturgical, and cultural'.<sup>143</sup> The consequence, however, of Wesley's actions is that for Methodists, '...no set of liturgical texts, however treasured and venerable, is beyond adaptation and revision,'<sup>144</sup> and, '...by adapting liturgical forms in the light of contemporary theological norms and pastoral needs Wesley set an example for future Methodists to follow'.<sup>145</sup>

Wesley not only adapted the text of the *Book of Common Prayer* and introduced extemporaneous prayer and hymn-signing. Wesley also developed other forms of worship. These included love-feasts, watch-night services, and the covenant service. However, as a consequence of continuing adaptation of worship by later Methodists, Lester Ruth argues that '...what Wesley intended in Methodist worship was not what Wesley got'.<sup>146</sup>

David Hempton, in *Methodism – Empire of the Spirit*,<sup>147</sup> identifies the influence of the Enlightenment on John Wesley's thinking that enabled him, despite his high churchmanship and priesthood in the Church of England, to adapt text and to establish new forms of worship. Hempton maintains that two Enlightenment

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<sup>141</sup> Westerfield Tucker, 'Form and Freedom', p. 22

<sup>142</sup> Westerfield Tucker, 'Form and Freedom', p. 29

<sup>143</sup> Westerfield Tucker, 'Form and Freedom', p. 29

<sup>144</sup> C. Norman R. Wallwork, 'Wesley's Legacy in Worship', John Stacey, (Editor), *John Wesley – Contemporary Perspectives*, (London: Epworth Press, 1988), pp. 83-98, p. 96

<sup>145</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 2

<sup>146</sup> Lester Ruth, 'Liturgical Revolutions', William Abraham and James Kirby, (Editor), *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, (Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 313-331, p. 329

<sup>147</sup> David Hempton, *Methodism – Empire of the Spirit*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005)

ideals impinged on Wesley. The first was the developing epistemology of the age. This allowed him to understand and appropriate the idea of the equality of all men, which in turn denies the absolute right of anyone else to impose specific forms of prayer on others. The second was an ecclesiology based on the principle of association. For Wesley, Methodism was as an association, which like other associations of the time was free to draw up its own rules, structures and enforcement policies. Methodism did indeed draw up its own rules; it created structures that included governance by 'ordinary' people; it created new forms that were not the norm in the Church of England.<sup>148</sup> Westerfield Tucker also says, emphasising these enlightenment principles, that '...worship was not to be dictated or prescribed by others, for rational human beings had a God-given right to worship as they were persuaded'.<sup>149</sup> Wesley then was a man of his times, engaging with the intellectual climate of the day and making sense of worship and faith against certain current ideas.

Wesley also took the liberty of inserting into worship practices 'enthusiasm' – which, as Hempton points out, appears to be 'a dialectical tension' with Enlightenment principles. Hempton ends up describing Wesley as a 'reasonable enthusiast'<sup>150</sup>, but '...an enthusiast for all that'.<sup>151</sup> Wesley's enthusiasm was to be convinced of God's providence in all the good things of a believer's life.<sup>152</sup> This led him to allow for the work of God's Holy Spirit in and through the lives of

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<sup>148</sup> Hempton, *Methodism*, pp. 49-54

<sup>149</sup> Westerfield Tucker, 'Form and Freedom', p. 23

<sup>150</sup> This being the title of Henry D. Rack's biography of John Wesley, *Reasonable Enthusiast – John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1989). Rack acknowledges that he borrows the phrase from Alexander Knox, who wrote of Wesley, 'I...think he would have been an enthusiast if he could...(but) there was a firmness in his intellectual texture which would not bend to illusion'.

<sup>151</sup> Hempton, *Methodism*, p. 41

<sup>152</sup> Hempton, *Methodism*, p. 37

individuals, and, consequently, for spontaneity in worship. Wesley's enthusiasm and his belief in the work of the Holy Spirit present in worship<sup>153</sup> allowed for '...innovative practices, such as those drawn from primitive Christianity, (which) were justified not only by their antiquity, but additionally by the witness of the Spirit in concrete human experience'.<sup>154</sup> Hempton states: 'In short, most of the paradoxes and most of the ambiguities of its (Methodism's) distinctive kind of spirituality go back to the fact that it was a movement of enthusiasts coming of age in the era of the Enlightenment'.<sup>155</sup>

### 2.3 The Development of the Preaching Service

Of great importance to the future life of Methodist worship was Wesley's introduction of the 'preaching' service. Initially for Wesley the 'preaching' service was to be held in addition to Parish Church services,<sup>156</sup> principally because the 'preaching' service consisted only of two hymns, two sets of prayer and a sermon; and this Wesley did not regard as sufficient.

If it were designed to be instead of Church Service, it would be essentially defective. For it seldom has the four grand parts of public prayer: deprecation, petition, intercession and thanksgiving. Neither is it, even on the Lord's Day, concluded with the Lord's Supper.<sup>157</sup>

The 'preaching' service was held at 5.00 a.m., so as not to clash with Sunday worship in the Church of England. Wesley expected Methodists to go to the 'preaching' service and to the Church service. Yet, Wallwork says that it became clear to Wesley by 1786 that most Methodists wanted to go only to the preaching

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<sup>153</sup> Westerfield Tucker, 'Form and Freedom', p. 24

<sup>154</sup> Westerfield Tucker, 'Form and Freedom', p. 24

<sup>155</sup> Hempton, *Methodism*, p. 54

<sup>156</sup> George, 'From The Sunday Service', p. 32

<sup>157</sup> *Minutes of the Methodist Conference*, Vol. 1, (London: The Conference Office, 1812), p. 58

house.<sup>158</sup> Wesley reluctantly gave reasons that would allow Methodists to only attend a preaching service; and adds what should be included when there is only a Methodist service.

In what cases do we allow of service in Church hours?

I answer,

1. When the minister is a notoriously wicked man.
2. When he preaches Arian, or any equally pernicious doctrine.
3. When there are not churches in the town sufficient to contain half the people.
4. When there is no Church at all within two or three miles

And we advise everyone who preaches in Church-hours to read Psalms and Lessons, with part of the Church prayers; because we apprehend this will endear the Church Service to our brethren, who probably would be prejudiced against it, if they heard none but extemporary prayer.<sup>159</sup>

Despite Wesley's reservation about the inadequacy of the 'preaching' service, Wallwork states that early Methodists, even before Wesley's death, adopted the 'preaching service' as their norm.<sup>160</sup> This direction, that most British Methodists took, continued after the death of John Wesley and the dispute that ensued about Methodism's relationship to the Church of England,<sup>161</sup> so that 'preaching' service became the 'staple diet of worship'.<sup>162</sup> Even by 1792, just one year after the death of John Wesley, Samuel Bradburn was deploring Methodist neglect of '...the dear memorial of his (Christ's) dying love.'<sup>163</sup> George writes the 'preaching' service became consolidated as the main morning service and, that 'It came to have two lessons, four or five hymns, extemporary prayer, and a

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<sup>158</sup> Wallwork, 'Wesley's Legacy in Worship', p. 84

<sup>159</sup> Jeremiah Curnock and Charles J. Kelly, (Editors), *The Journal of John Wesley, A.M.*, 1909, Vol. 1, p.377, cited from Wallwork, 'Wesley's Legacy in Worship', p. 84

<sup>160</sup> Wallwork, 'Wesley's Legacy in Worship', p. 94

<sup>161</sup> George, 'From the Sunday Service', p. 32

<sup>162</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 28

<sup>163</sup> S. Bradburn, *Are Methodists Dissenters?* (Bristol, 1792), cited from Gordon S. Wakefield, *Methodist Spirituality*, (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1999), p. 21

sermon. Its form was never prescribed...Methodists have always felt free to choose their own forms, subject to local custom. The forms “authorised” by the Conference, even for the sacraments, are not prescribed by the law of the Church, let alone of the state’.<sup>164</sup> He goes on to note that extempore forms of worship became the norm in many places and that only when the Lord’s Supper was celebrated might the service be regulated by a book tradition.<sup>165</sup> Whilst the form may not have been prescribed by any of the connexions of conferences in the different branches of Methodism, it appears that it became a fixed form of worship by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>166</sup>

Turner notes that some chapels within Wesleyan Methodism, albeit a small number of the total number of Methodist chapels, stayed with prescribed forms of worship, notably Morning Prayer: ‘If one attended Wesley’s Chapel in London the service in the morning would be morning prayer, according to the Book of Common Prayer of 1662 or Wesley’s abridgment of it in his *Sunday Service*. Most large towns had at least one chapel, where this was the norm throughout the nineteenth century’.<sup>167</sup> This reminder by Turner, that Methodism held together more than one tradition, or way of worshipping, is a reminder that we can only draw out the main themes that emerge from a brief historical survey of Methodist worship. Local practice and performance did and does vary.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> George, ‘From the Sunday Service’, p. 33

<sup>165</sup> George, ‘From the Sunday Service’, p. 34

<sup>166</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, pp. 33-34

<sup>167</sup> John Munsey Turner, *Wesleyan Methodism*, (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2005), p. 41

<sup>168</sup> In a church in the Moseley Road and Sparkhill Circuit the 1933 Canticles and the Te Deum were still in use in my time in that circuit as a local preacher – that is in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

On the whole it was the 'preaching' service that dominated Methodism. The Lord's Supper was, when it was celebrated, perhaps monthly, but more likely quarterly, seen as an addendum to a 'preaching' service. The different 'sects' within Methodism had differing rites in the administration of the Lord's Supper and the texts of these different 'sects' suggests some variation in their formulation of sacramental theology. The rubrics of all the 'sects' suggest, however, that there was little ceremony involved in presentation of the gifts of bread and wine or in the 'minister's' blessing and distribution of those gifts'.<sup>169</sup> When it came to the Union of Methodism in 1932, two orders for Holy Communion were provided to reflect the Wesleyan tradition and the extempore tradition. George notes that even many Wesleyan churches adopted, over time, the second order which was written as a complete order to follow on from a 'preaching' service but that allowed for more extemporary expression.<sup>170</sup> This order was aligned to the normal practice in Methodism of many of the congregation leaving after the 'preaching' service; and this rubric was maintained even in the 1975 Methodist Service Book.<sup>171</sup>

#### 2.4 The Theology and Ethos of Methodist Worship

Hempton, writing about early Methodist worship, says the ethos of the early Methodists' worship was appropriate to the age in which it was set:

What is striking about Methodist hymns and sermons, taken together, is the close fit between theology, practice and style. The communication media, the communicators, and the content of the message displayed a harmony of values...Its emphases on invitation to new life, freedom of choice, and journey to holiness, combined with its fusion of preached

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<sup>169</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, pp. 65-89

<sup>170</sup> George, 'From the Sunday Service', p. 38

<sup>171</sup> *Methodist Service Book*, p. B9

word and sung verse, offered an obvious appeal to populations breaking free from the more static and emotionally restrained worldviews of Established churchmen, Calvinists, and Deists.<sup>172</sup>

The Wesleyan preacher William Vipond (1776-1809) confirms the desire of the age to move away from formality: 'Nor are we acquainted with any method of conducting public worship, which we think so well calculated to keep our assemblies from that formality, which awfully characterises the worship of the present age'.<sup>173</sup> Frank Baker notes that the theological emphasis of the Wesleys that pervaded the 'preaching' service '...was the profound conviction of the Wesleys that...salvation must be free, but it must also be for all, otherwise it was hardly a gospel. Both became key-notes of Methodist preaching and Methodist singing'.<sup>174</sup>

Burdon further illustrates these points as he writes: 'Every Methodist preacher aimed at enabling all who would listen to commit themselves to Christ. The sermon was the grand climax, a preaching service without a sermon was not a preaching service'<sup>175</sup> and, 'When the service took place in public the intention was to be evangelistic, to awaken the sleeping sinner to the need for inner holiness. When the service was on the timetable of the Methodist Society, added to this intention was that of encouraging those already awakened';<sup>176</sup> and, indeed the whole ethos of Methodism was evangelical: 'The Methodist

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<sup>172</sup> Hempton, *Methodism*, p. 77-78

<sup>173</sup> W. Vipond, *The Doctrines, Disciplines, and Mode of Worship, of the Methodists, seriously considered in two sermons, preached at the opening of the Ebenezer Chapel, Deal 4 September 1806*, (London: T. Blanchford, 1815), cited from Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 50

<sup>174</sup> Frank Baker, *Representative Verse of Charles Wesley*, (Epworth Press, 1962), p. xv, cited from Wallwork, 'Wesley's Legacy in Worship', p.96

<sup>175</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 23

<sup>176</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 23

Movement was an evangelical revival which was more concerned with the salvation of souls...John Wesley and his assistants cared little whether the preaching was conducted in the open air or a condemned man's prison cell, so long as people were 'saved from their sins'.<sup>177</sup>

Thus the ethos and the theology of Methodist worship was born in a message of salvation of the soul and in a medium communicated through extempore prayer, preaching and hymnody. Further it was communicated by preachers '...of roughly similar social status to their listeners';<sup>178</sup> who Wesley required to write out their own conversion experience,<sup>179</sup> and who spoke with '...unsuspected gifts of eloquence and thought under pressure of the Gospel...'<sup>180</sup> John Wesley chose these lay people to join his preaching mission '...for the knowledge of their personal salvation'.<sup>181</sup>

### 2.5 The Consolidation of the Preaching Service

In her study of American Methodist Worship, Westerfield Tucker describes a process that she calls non-identical repetition, which acts as an agent of control over the development of worship practice:

Methodists were inclined to describe what they did in worship as decisively and authentically 'Methodist'...to be 'Methodist' in worship automatically carried with it a variety of meanings at different times and in different locations. That this was so should not be surprising. An ecclesiastical family that put such heavy stock in the work of the Holy Spirit and in the reason and experience of the individual would be expected to understand itself as being remade in each generation, not ex

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<sup>177</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 25

<sup>178</sup> Hempton, *Methodism*, p. 74

<sup>179</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 14

<sup>180</sup> Davies, *Methodism*, p. 17

<sup>181</sup> Davies, *Methodism*, p. 68



nihilo, but grounded in the events and practices of the past. In effect, Methodist liturgical self-perception was formed by non-identical repetition...<sup>182</sup>

Perhaps before, but certainly after the death of John Wesley, the British Methodist 'preaching' service became established and then developed in structure and content<sup>183</sup> through this non-identical repetition. After Wesley's death until 1932, British Methodism split into several different branches, but this was not, according to Burdon, the result of disputes about worship and it did not have any great effect on the worship patterns of the different branches of Methodism.<sup>184</sup> However, there were differences in the different sects of Methodism in relation to the use of worship books and the role and authority of the ordained in presiding at Holy Communion. In addition Primitive Methodists continued to espouse field preaching. But the 'preaching' service, across the different connexions, was the staple diet of Methodist worship, it continued to have an evangelical ethos and it developed during the next century primarily through addition to its content. Burdon notes those changes that did occur as growth in hymn-singing, prayer style, the use of musical instruments and the introduction of choirs.<sup>185</sup> But the form of the service was established – it contained extemporaneous prayer, bible reading, hymn-singing and evangelical sermon, that remained the climax of the service, all expounding a theology of salvation and sanctification.

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<sup>182</sup> Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, *American Methodist Worship*, (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 274

<sup>183</sup> For detail of the changing structure of the 'preaching' service in the various branches of British Methodism see Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 29-36

<sup>184</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 29

<sup>185</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 31

Burdon has said: 'It is for reasons of pragmatism rather than theology that the Preaching Service has come to be the main diet of public worship for most Methodist congregations. There are simply not enough ministers for Methodism to be able to follow the Church of England down the Parish Communion road...'<sup>186 187</sup>

However, it seems that it is not simply the lack of ordained ministers that has prevented Methodism from moving toward a weekly service that includes the sacrament of Holy Communion, for the preaching service signified what it meant to be a Methodist and during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century preaching came to be seen as even more important to Methodist spirituality:

'we must recognise that the increasing belief that the principal act of the week was hearing the preacher gave to Methodist spirituality a pattern of its own with which the other Free Churches may not have been so deeply stamped, since preaching for them was not to the same extent shared by laymen, or women'.<sup>188</sup>

The 'preaching' service, as identified above, became the service of the Methodists. It did so within a specific historical context, with a very specific ethos of saving souls, often with lay people being the bearers of the gospel. It was a liturgical form that met the needs of the time and of the Methodist movement, at least up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>186</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 5

<sup>187</sup> The Parish Communion Movement was a 1930s and 40s development in the Church of England, committed, amongst other goals, to increasing the frequency of the sacrament of Holy Communion.

<sup>188</sup> Wakefield, *Methodist Spirituality*, p. 52

## 2.6 Challenges and Changes to Methodist Worship and its Ethos

Nevertheless there was challenge to Methodism's practice of worship. Jabez Bunting, President of the Methodist Conference four times and its secretary from 1814-1820, wrote in 1824 in an edition of *The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* that there was too much emphasis on the sermon and too little on worship in Methodist services.<sup>189</sup> Reflecting on Methodism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Gordon Wakefield says: 'The pre-eminence of the sermon could make the rest of the service but 'preliminaries' and it led to a failure to understand liturgy as well as a tyranny of words'.<sup>190</sup> Further as Rupert Davies wrote:

If there is one religious fault that can be found with the whole body of Methodists, it is an atomistic doctrine of salvation, and hence undue preoccupation with the future of their own souls. This was not a special fault of the Methodists. They shared it with all parts of the Christian Church in England; for all had allowed themselves to be infected much too deeply with the prevailing spirit of individualism in economics, politics, social ethics, and religion. Free Church men were the worst in this respect, and among them were the Methodists.<sup>191</sup>

In 1935 the Methodist Sacramental fellowship was created in and through which certain Methodists from the Wesleyan tradition sought to ensure that the more sacramental nature of worship and theology was practiced within Methodism.<sup>192</sup> In 1960 the Conference Commission would challenge the 'preaching' service as it was practised in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as having been arrived at '...by a series of accidents and not in any adherence to any theological or liturgical structure'.<sup>193</sup> However, this seems to be a too simplistic and dismissive

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<sup>189</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 33

<sup>190</sup> Wakefield, *Methodist Spirituality*, p. 53

<sup>191</sup> Davies, *Methodism*, p. 130

<sup>192</sup> John Newton, *Heart to Heart – Ecumenical Studies in Spirituality*, (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1994), pp. 68-84

<sup>193</sup> Conference Committee, para. 30

approach. The structure of the 'preaching' service developed to serve the purposes of evangelism and the encouragement of holiness amongst Methodist congregations. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the 'preaching' service was a liturgical renewal that was fit for its time and place, with a harmony of values between 'communication media, the communicators, and the content of the message'. The 'preaching' service changed during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century to a limited extent, but it remained the staple diet of Methodists, maintaining its mission of 'saving souls', and still attracted large crowds into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was maintained through non-identical repetition. It became the life-blood of Methodist worship in its practice and ethos: 'The primary aim of every sermon must be the conversion of the unconverted, the salvation of the sinner, the feeding of the flock'.<sup>194</sup> It was resistant to calls for change once it had acquired its position as the primary service of Methodism:

'Wesley forbid preachers to use more than two hymns. By 1932 it was woe betide the preacher who did not use five. Despite all the efforts of the 'liturgical' prophets of the nineteenth century, and in the face of those in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the sermon was still regarded as the climax of the service. All parts of the preaching service were regarded as an aperitif to the preaching of the sermon'.<sup>195</sup>

So the sermon, as the climax of worship, came to define the 'preaching' service. But hymnody was also important by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>196</sup> Hymns carry the theology of Methodism.<sup>197</sup> At the time of Union in 1932 Turner says:

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<sup>194</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 34

<sup>195</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 36

<sup>196</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, p. 50

<sup>197</sup> 'In many ways one could say that it is these (Wesleyan) hymns that shape the actual identity of Methodism'. Teresa Berger, *Theology in Hymns?* (Nashville: Tennessee, Abingdon Press, 1989), p. 24. See also, Don Saliers, *Music and Theology*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), especially Chapter 4.

Three very different worshipping traditions came together, and their common Armenian evangelical theology made assimilation relatively easy. The first great achievement was the *Methodist Hymn Book* (1933). This book still has over 250 hymns of the original Wesleyan inheritance, the best of the Victorian hymns (including revivalist material) and a fair number of hymns, eclipsing the older styles, from liberal Protestantism of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It lasted fifty years, a 'record' for modern hymn books.<sup>198</sup>

Andrew Pratt<sup>199</sup> agrees that the *Methodist Hymn Book* did use those hymns that promoted Armenian evangelical theology. However, Pratt challenges the process of compilation of the *Methodist Hymn Book*; its conservatism and out-dated theology; and Methodism's reliance on it for 50 years. Pratt's research shows that the compilation of this hymn book was dominated by the Wesleyan branch of Methodism; and that these compilers were inherently conservative and produced a book that, taken in its entirety re-produced the theology of the previous generation. It '...began with an evangelistic imperative. Its purpose was to begin the process of seeking and saving those who were lost. Once incorporated into the Body of Christ, the society of the Church, then other material would be needed (to develop scriptural holiness in the believer)'.<sup>200</sup> The hymn book gave uniting congregations '...words to sing with which they would feel comfortable, regardless of their background'.<sup>201</sup> Of the shape of the hymn book Pratt states: "The editors of the *Methodist Hymn Book* seem to have had the structure of Methodist worship in mind when deciding on the ordering of the hymns in the book. There is a natural progression through invocation, adoration, confession, gospel and response that students of preaching would

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<sup>198</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, p. 52

<sup>199</sup> Andrew Pratt, *O For A Thousand Tongues – The 1933 Methodist Hymn Book in Context*, (Peterborough: Epworth, 2004)

<sup>200</sup> Pratt, *O For A Thousand Tongues*, p. 139

<sup>201</sup> Pratt, *O For A Thousand Tongues*, p. 110

find familiar'.<sup>202</sup> Indeed, Pratt regards one of the most important reasons for the longevity of the *Methodist Hymn Book* '...its utility as a preacher's hand book. The layout lent itself to planning a preaching service. The sections followed through from awe to adoration, from invocation of the spirit to gospel call and response of the people. Other material contained in the book was supplementary'.<sup>203</sup> But Pratt's critique goes further. Pratt links the essentially conservative nature of the *Methodist Hymn Book* to the influence of the Wesleyan element in Union, which he claims were '...incapable of absorbing the new insights and vigour that the coalition of denominations might have generated'.<sup>204</sup> With the passing of time, when no new hymn book was produced, the *Methodist Hymn Book*, '...which was outdated even at the time of its publication',<sup>205</sup> became more and more anachronistic. For Pratt, this is largely accounted for by Methodism's struggle to survive as it reduced in membership. In such an environment many in Methodism held onto what was familiar. So even when, 50 years later, a new Methodist hymn book, *Hymns and Psalms*, was produced, it was more to recognise the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Methodist Hymn Book* than '...to recognise the utility of a book now 50 years old'.<sup>206</sup> In Methodism there was a '...conservatism that did not want to see the end of the *Methodist Hymn Book*',<sup>207</sup> and it is still retained for usage in a few chapels even today.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Pratt, *O For A Thousand Tongues*, p. 138

<sup>203</sup> Pratt, *O For A Thousand Tongues*, p. 224

<sup>204</sup> Pratt, *O For A Thousand Tongues*, p. 225

<sup>205</sup> Pratt, *O For A Thousand Tongues*, p. 225

<sup>206</sup> Pratt, *O For A Thousand Tongues*, p. 226

<sup>207</sup> Pratt, *O For A Thousand Tongues*, p. 226

<sup>208</sup> In my own circuit I was informed by one of the chapels when I arrived in 2006 that their preferred hymnal was the *Methodist Hymn Book*

It might be said then that a movement which began by developing styles of worship to meet specific pastoral concerns, in a certain age, atrophied into a church that had forgotten that its worship takes place in specific contexts and time.

### 2.7 Methodism Moving Towards Change

Hempton's description of 'a harmony of values' in early Methodist worship between 'communication media, the communicators, and the content of the message' is supported through the writings of Westerfield Tucker, George, Wallwork, Wakefield, Davies and Burdon. Whilst, as time developed, Methodism may have moved from overtly evangelising new recruits toward more of a message of sanctification for the members, from chapel to church in its orientation, it retained its emphasis on evangelism and soteriology, based soundly on John and Charles Wesley's theology. Pratt has shown that this inherent conservatism remained in its hymnody into the 1980s even though '...another war had passed, that space had been conquered...'<sup>209</sup> However, change can be seen to occur in Methodist worship in the 1960s. Burdon, in *The Preaching Service*, touches on post 1960 development of worship and notes changes to style and content in worship. He does not discuss whether a changing ethos or theology is expounded in post 1960 worship. However, Burdon's chapter 'Forgiven, loved and free...', written in 1999, can be read as a plea to re-establish the 'evangelistic' purpose of past Methodism; which suggests that the historic purpose of evangelism and sanctification is not currently present or is at least lacking in emphasis in post-1960s worship.

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<sup>209</sup> Pratt, *O For A Thousand Tongues*, p. 226

Both the *1960 Conference Committee on Christian Worship Report* and the 1988 *Let the People Worship* report start from the premise that there is much disquiet about worship in the Church, indicative perhaps that shared values about the meaning, purpose and content of worship are not held across British Methodism; and *Let the People Worship* specifically notes the varied demands made by different groups of worshippers, for different styles of worship, or components of worship.

What needs to be recognised is that there was from the beginning of Methodism a pragmatic position in relation to the development of theology. A practical church, adapting to ‘...the on-going need to engage in God’s mission in the World’<sup>210</sup> has many advantages. But this Methodist church rapidly split into different sects after the death of John Wesley. After re-union some liturgical matters were never fully resolved, which left distinctions between the official positions of the Conference and local practices and desires – an example being the ‘two seemingly irreconcilable views’ in respect of ministerial only or lay presidency too at the Lord’s Supper.<sup>211</sup> In the post 1960s pluralistic world, even if Methodism’s constituency is less than representative of all sections of society, it appears there is now no clear vision or agreed purpose for worship, to replicate the ‘appeal to break free from more static and emotionally restrained worldviews’.

One of the proposition of this thesis is that there is no real ‘harmony of values’ that now exists across Methodism as a Church, and this can be seen in the

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<sup>210</sup> Anthony Reddie, ‘Dispelling Myths, Discerning Truths’, *Unmasking Methodist Theology*, p. 176

<sup>211</sup> Reddie, ‘Dispelling Myths’, p. 172



various types of worship offered, trying to meet the needs of a pluralistic membership, with different values in respect of the purpose of worship. This is not to say that there may not be some characteristics of style and purpose that do run across the Church. It may possible to identify a 'middle' way, a core form, content and style that predominate within the Church's worship patterns. But there are also distinct divergences that are apparent, in form, style and content of worship, theology expounded, and values or purpose of the worship delivered.

Turner, writing about changes in Methodist worship from 1932-1998, notes the 1960 *Conference Report on Worship*, which he describes as '...positive, though rather conservative'.<sup>212</sup> The report was very forthright in advocating a particular order for worship, with a specific rationale for worship underpinning it. The report does still emphasise salvation of the individual as it states that the preacher is '...stirring the heart of the congregation to respond in penitence and faith and the desire to offer their lives for God's service'.<sup>213</sup> But there is also a sense conveyed in the report that this is not the only purpose of worship and that it is the faithful, not 'unbelievers' who are the primary participants in worship. What Turner's writing points out, and this study will confirm is that from the 1960s an enormous amount of experimentation in worship practice developed. Turner describes various congregations in Methodism and discusses how they began to receive week by week different types of services.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, p. 55

<sup>213</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 12

<sup>214</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, p. 57-58

So from the 1960s onward to the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> Century there is evidence of variety in service orders and content in non-Eucharistic services.<sup>215</sup> This questions if we can describe what Methodists receive on a non-Eucharistic Sunday as a 'preaching' service, as it is still euphemistically called.<sup>216</sup> The major causes of this change are the altered society of the past 50 years during in which new questions have been asked about faith; new ideas presented about worship and of Scripture and Theology; different levels and patterns of church attendance; and greater options and choices that have been made available in the practice of worship, as 'preachers' and congregations have been exposed to other denominations' worship practices.

### 2.8 Cultural Change, Religious Change and Cultural Context

Phillip Tovey states: 'Inculturation is a somewhat flexible term',<sup>217</sup> and different authors can use the term in quite distinct ways. For example, Keith Pecklers, a Roman Catholic, defines inculturation as '...accommodating the Roman Rite to particular cultural circumstances and needs, producing a liturgy that exhibits and reflects the cultural ethos of that particular celebrating people'.<sup>218</sup> Susan White, in *Groundwork of Christian Worship*,<sup>219</sup> writing out of a Protestant background, where texts and rites are altered more often and easily, raises the issue of culture and worship in terms of language and image used, asking

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<sup>215</sup> For a fuller description see Appendices and Chapter 5

<sup>216</sup> Officially in 1975 with the introduction of the *Methodist Service Book* the title given to a non-Eucharistic service was 'The Sunday Service without the Lord's Supper'.

<sup>217</sup> Phillip Tovey, *Inculturation of Christian Worship – Exploring the Eucharist*, (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), p. 1

<sup>218</sup> Keith Pecklers, *The Genius of The Roman Rite – The Reception and Implementation of the New Missal*, (London and New York: Continuum, 2009), p. 8

<sup>219</sup> Susan White, *Groundwork of Christian Worship*, (Peterborough: Epworth, 1997)

'Should we not think about the ways we might inculturate our worship to the technological culture of which we are a part?'<sup>220</sup>

I want to explore what worship might be like in shape, content and purpose as it is inculturated by the specific time and culture in which it is set.<sup>221</sup> I develop these ideas later in this thesis but want to outline at this point how changing culture and cultural factors have already impacted on the content, shape and ethos of British Methodist worship during the second half of the twentieth century. What are the changes in society and culture that impact on worship and what impact have these changes had on worship?

The culture of Britain, from 1958 to today, changed enormously, for there has been major change in society, including the secularisation of the culture. The work of sociologists of religion, like Bruce,<sup>222</sup> Davey,<sup>223</sup> Brown,<sup>224</sup> and Taylor<sup>225</sup> provide information and details about a changing society, secularisation, and their impact on church life. Whilst their individual analyses are somewhat different from each other, and some dispute secularisation as the main causal factor that impacts on the church<sup>226</sup>, a key issue that emerges for all is the reality that the churches saw a very rapid decline in numbers in membership

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<sup>220</sup> White, *Groundwork of Christian Worship*, p. 191

<sup>221</sup> Inculturation should not be thought of solely as that which is forced on worship by the culture in which it is set. The most prominent Roman Catholic writer on the issue of inculturation is Anscar J. Chupungco. He says 'Liturgical adaptation is thus not an option, but a theological imperative arising from incarnational exigency'. 'The Theological Principle of Adaptation', Vogel, *Primary Sources*, pp. 245-260, p. 248

<sup>222</sup> Steve Bruce, *God is Dead – Secularization in the West*, (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 2002)

<sup>223</sup> Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945*, (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1994) and Grace Davie et al, *Predicting Religion – Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003)

<sup>224</sup> Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001)

<sup>225</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007)

<sup>226</sup> Jane Garnett et al, (Editors), *Redefining Christian Britain – Post 1945 Perspectives*, (London: SCM, 2007)

and attendance. Some sociologists want to still claim that there is a latent 'spirituality' in Britain.<sup>227</sup> But there has undoubtedly been a mass exodus from 'organised' Christianity. Chapter 6 of Callum Brown's book *Religion and Society in Twentieth Century Britain*<sup>228</sup> provides one perspective on the impact of the many changes in society in the 1960s that led to a new world-view/s to take effect in Britain. Brown notes:

There was a cultural revolution amongst young people, women and people of colour that targeted the churches, the older generation and government. In this maelstrom, traditional religious conceptions of piety were to be suddenly shattered, ending centuries of consensus Christian culture in Britain. In its place, there came liberalisation, diversity and freedom of individual choice in moral behaviour. In every sphere of life, religion was in crisis.<sup>229</sup>

Radical change in society was to have enormous consequences for the churches and their worship practice. Brown describes modern Britain as being 'De-Christianised' and says: 'For the majority, modern liberal culture has meant emancipation from ecclesiastical authority and the Christian state. Meanwhile, individuals reformulated secular moral identity for themselves. Without violence or rancour, the country's culture slid from religion'.<sup>230</sup>

Hugh McLeod in *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*<sup>231</sup> offers a somewhat different analysis of the causes of change in religion and religious life.<sup>232</sup> However, he also

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<sup>227</sup> Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution – why religion is giving way to spirituality*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005)

<sup>228</sup> Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth Century Britain*, (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006)

<sup>229</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 224

<sup>230</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 314

<sup>231</sup> Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, (Oxford University Press, 2007)

ends his work with a similar conclusion about Britain (and Western Europe and the United States) becoming de-Christianised. It is not so much secularisation (for he notes other faiths and other world views are held) that McLeod wants to emphasise but the end of Christendom. He states this was caused by: 'the indifferent and hostile (to Christianity) claimed the right to do things differently'; and then by legislators who made non-traditional Christian morals legal, ending the Church's monopoly over ethics and the law; and finally a new generation of people who were simply not socialised by Christian rhetoric and teaching.<sup>233</sup> Such processes simply meant that Christianity no longer had a central place in the life of individuals, the state or other institutions. Other 'options in matters of belief, life-path, or 'spirituality', were (now) open...'<sup>234</sup>

For Methodism with its ideas of 'personal' religion – of the doctrines of salvation, assurance, scriptural holiness, and social righteousness – the challenge presented by the 1960s was enormous. The question arose that salvation, as traditionally expressed, was not required anymore. Brown quotes the novelist David Lodge's book, *How Far Can You Go?*<sup>235</sup> 'At some point in the nineteen-sixties, Hell disappeared. No one would say for certain when this happened. First it was there, then it wasn't'.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Whilst McLeod's book has 'the 1960s' in its title, he wants to emphasise that religious pluralism began in a much earlier time - 'Religious heterodoxy was polarised in the 1790s, and it spread more widely from about the 1850's onwards...' p.24; and that all the changes in the 1960s can be traced back to other change in earlier centuries or decades. He says many of the sociologists of religion focus too narrowly on the causes of change in the 1960s without seeing behind the change. Nevertheless he also identifies the 1960s as a time of immense change when alternative world views become open to more people.

<sup>233</sup> McLeod, *The Religious Crisis*, p. 265

<sup>234</sup> McLeod, *The Religious Crisis*, p. 265

<sup>235</sup> David Lodge, *How Far Can You Go?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981)

<sup>236</sup> Lodge, *How Far Can You Go?* p. 113, cited from Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 248

Brown also notes how ideas about heaven were being challenged from inside the religious establishment,<sup>237</sup> as Bishop John Robinson declared that he thought the notion of heaven to be '...the greatest obstacle to an intelligent faith'.<sup>238</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, in *A History of Christianity*,<sup>239</sup> says:

The most notable casualty of the past century has been Hell. It has dropped out of Christian preaching or much popular concern...One might see this as a result of European secularisation: does a continent, arguably so far the world's most successfully based consumer society, need a Christian heaven and Hell? It has lived through its own self-made hells in two world wars, seen the folly of blindly following dogmatic belief, and now it has tried to build something less ambitious than paradise on earth, without the aid of sacred stories or absolutist ideologies.<sup>240</sup>

The idea of scriptural holiness, so often understood in Methodism to be about resisting and overcoming sins, many of which had become during the Victorian era sins of a sexual nature, would be made almost obsolete by the 'sexual' revolution of the 1960s for many in the secular society. Indeed this became true also for many members of the churches where views about contraception, divorce, sexuality and so on have all changed, often in advance of, or contra to, the official position of the churches.<sup>241</sup> The concept of righteousness came to be understood, by more and more people, as an issue of structural inequalities, which only structural change could overcome, as issues like sexism, racism,

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<sup>237</sup> Note also the changing emphasis in the 1983 authorised hymn-book *Hymns and Psalms*. In this hymn book Angela Shier Jones notes: 'A major change demonstrated ...between 1904 and 1983 is the disappearance of the separate sections on 'Death', 'Judgement, and the 'Future State'...These changes may reflect the questioning of Christian doctrine during the twentieth century...bringing into question the doctrine of the so-called 'Four Last things': death, judgement, heaven and hell'. 'Theology Sung and Celebrated', p. 50

<sup>238</sup> Cited from Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 232

<sup>239</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity*, (London: Penguin Books, 2009)

<sup>240</sup> MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity*, p. 1012

<sup>241</sup> MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity*, p. 973

nuclear proliferation and hunger and poverty became the concerns of many Christian people.<sup>242</sup>

These concerns, to understand the nature of sin and the concept of salvation in a 'new' world, have not been the concerns only of Methodists<sup>243</sup> or of the liberal or radical wings of the whole Church. Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, in *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*,<sup>244</sup> writing out of the American evangelical context, are concerned with how sin and salvation are understood and communicated today. They are interested in developing ideas of atonement based around the issue of relational sin – that is how the behaviours of people impact upon each other.

A gospel that allows me to think of my relationship with God apart from the larger human family and the whole cosmos created by God – can it be said that this is any gospel at all? ...Our first answer is that we must take seriously the social environment in which we seek faithfully to live and communicate.<sup>245</sup>

Britain from the 1960s onward saw enormous changes in many areas of life – in science and technology for example – with space exploration and moon landings as examples. Britain saw changes in the role of women in the work place and at

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<sup>242</sup> For example Christian Aid was formed in 1964 out of the post-war movement to reconstruct Europe – in its new form it was to concentrate on poverty in Africa and Asia.

<sup>243</sup> See David Clough, 'Theology Through Social and Political Action', in *Unmasking Methodist Theology*, pp. 41-47, especially p. 47 – There is a clear shift in the British Methodist Church during the twentieth century away from concerns with alcohol, gambling and Sunday observance, and towards broader issues of social and economic justice. Taken together with the liberalizing attitudes on issues of sexual ethics such as abortion and divorce, this shift indicates a decreasing emphasis on earlier conceptions of personal holiness and more focus on engaging with society, with greater attention to the social dimensions of what it means to be a holy people.

<sup>244</sup> Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross – Atonement in the New Testament and Contemporary Concerns*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2000)

<sup>245</sup> Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, p. 214

home.<sup>246</sup> Young people gained independence previously unknown and developed sub-cultures in the fields of music, fashion, and sexual mores changed radically.<sup>247</sup> In education new methods were pioneered, and comprehensive schools introduced.<sup>248</sup> In the cities of Britain immigrants from the Commonwealth arrived in greater numbers and the beginning of a multi-faith society was established.<sup>249</sup> The British Empire withered on the grapevine replaced by a different relationship between the 'Mother Country' and the colonial states with the Commonwealth.<sup>250</sup> As society grew more wealthy leisure became a pre-occupation of nearly all the people of Britain and Sundays became a day of leisure rather than a day of the Lord's observance.<sup>251</sup> The society in which the church was located was therefore changed in a remarkable way and in a relatively short time span, and the theological issues that became important to the churches also changed.

### 2.9 Changes in Theology and Biblical Studies

The church was also being influenced by changes in Biblical studies and theology. John Robinson's work, *Honest to God*,<sup>252</sup> published in 1963, put into the public arena 'radical' theological discussion, which had been taking place in seminaries for many years.<sup>253</sup> Martin Wellings, in the 2003 Fernley Heartley

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<sup>246</sup> MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity*, p.989

<sup>247</sup> Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory – Britain 1900-2000*, (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 290-293

<sup>248</sup> Martin Pugh, *State and Society – A Social and Political History of Britain 1870-1997*, (London: Arnold, 1999), pp. 305-307

<sup>249</sup> Pugh, *State and Society*, pp. 307-310

<sup>250</sup> Pugh, *State and Society*, pp. 315-320

<sup>251</sup> MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity*, p.986-987

<sup>252</sup> John Robinson, *Honest to God*, (London: SCM Press, 1963)

<sup>253</sup> See Mark Chapman, 'Theology in the Public Arena: The case of South Bank Religion', *Redefining Christian Britain*, pp. 73-81 for a brief account of 'South Bank' liberal theologies impact on religious thought in the 1960s.



Lecture,<sup>254</sup> claims that up until 1960 Methodism shared a broadly liberal-evangelical consensus in regard to theology, although there were, of course, still disputes and differences between Methodist leaders and theologians. He goes on to state that in 'the period of the 1960s and 1970s, the liberal evangelical consensus collapsed (and) Methodism became frankly pluralist'.<sup>255</sup> Robinson came to represent the 'radical' end of the theological spectrum in the mind of the general public, but Methodism also had its own radicals. In 1972 a new 'textbook' for Methodist Local Preachers was published, called *Doing Theology*,<sup>256</sup> edited by John Stacey.<sup>257</sup> The 1973 Methodist Conference received a memorial from the Northampton circuit which included this statement: 'It is questioned whether this book is in harmony with the beliefs and doctrines of the Methodist Church...'<sup>258</sup> The 'radicals' went on to form the Alliance of Radical Methodists, initiated by Dr John Vincent, who was '...the most consistent, and increasingly respected, leader of radical thought in Methodism...'<sup>259</sup> Wellings notes that others countered from the conservative evangelical end of the spectrum. Wellings notes the rise of conservative evangelicalism in the 1960s and 1970s, 'exemplified by the National Evangelical Anglican Conference at Keele, stiffened by the renewal of Reformed theology, associated with Martin

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<sup>254</sup> The Methodist Church of Great Britain, Fernley Heartley Lecture, 2003, Martin Wellings, 'Evangelicals in Methodism: Mainstream, Marginal or Misunderstood?' ([www.methodistchurch.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=openogod.conent&cmid=693](http://www.methodistchurch.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=openogod.conent&cmid=693))

<sup>255</sup> Wellings, 'Evangelicals in Methodism', p. 13

<sup>256</sup> John Stacey, (Editor), *Doing Theology*, (Local Preachers Department of the Methodist Church, London, 1972)

<sup>257</sup> An account of Stacey's work and in particular the issues raised by *Doing Theology* can be read in John Stacey, 'Local Preachers and Theological Change: the 1960s and 1970s, Geoffrey Milburn and Margaret Batty, (Editors), *Workaday Preachers – The Story of Methodist Local Preaching*, (Epworth: Methodist Publishing House, 1995), pp. 277-292. Stacey also quotes the work of Harry Williams, *True Resurrection*; John Robinson's *The Human Face of God*; Maurice Wiles, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine*; and John Hick, *The Myth of God Incarnate*, as other radical books of the early 1970s.

<sup>258</sup> Cited from George Thompson Brake, *Policy and Politics in British Methodism, 1932-1982*, (London: Edsall, 1984), p. 368

<sup>259</sup> Cited from Brake, *Policy and Politics in British Methodism 1932-1982*, p. 369

Lloyd-Jones and Jim Packer, and underpinned by thirty years of increasingly effective IVF (inter Varsity Fellowship) work in the university Christian Unions'.<sup>260</sup> One arena in which this pluralism within the church has been made evident is in the Methodist Church's approach to the Bible.<sup>261</sup> In the 1998 Methodist Conference Report on the Bible, *A Lamp to my Feet And a Light to my Path*,<sup>262</sup> seven different perspectives on the nature and authority of the Bible are given. McLeod notes that divergent ways of understanding and reading the Bible<sup>263</sup> led to emergence of four main areas of conflict that became apparent in the 1960s and continued to be so in the following decades: radical or Liberationist theology, sexual ethics, the role of women, and the Charismatic Movement.<sup>264</sup>

One of the key issues in theology and biblical studies has been a growing understanding of the influence of context. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century more theologians and biblical scholars (but not all) have seen context as important to the outcomes of study. David Ford, in *The Modern Theologians*,<sup>265</sup> shows how cultural context and change impacts on theology.<sup>266</sup>

The nineteenth- and twentieth-century historical and sociological insights urge theologians to take full account of the situation in which theology is done and for whom and by whom it is done. The history of

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<sup>260</sup> Wellings, 'Evangelicals in Methodism', p. 11

<sup>261</sup> See Stephen B. Dawes, *Why Bible-Believing Methodists shouldn't eat Black Pudding*, (Truro: Stoneleigh Publications, 1993) for an understanding of how reading the Bible might be understood in the modern world.

<sup>262</sup> *A Lamp to my Feet And a Light to my Path*, (Methodist Publishing House, 1998), p. 36

<sup>263</sup> The consequence of different interpretive approaches in the academic study of the Bible. See Paula Gooder, *Searching for Meaning – An Introduction to Interpreting the New Testament*, (London: SPCK, 2008)

<sup>264</sup> McLeod, *The Religious Crisis*, p. 100

<sup>265</sup> David Ford, (Editor), *The Modern Theologians – An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, (Blackwell Publishing, 1997).

<sup>266</sup> See also the preface to Hymns and Psalms which gives a similar list of twentieth century events that have changed the context in which hymns are written and sung.

ideas is not enough. Theology needs to be seen in relation to many forces and events helping to shape it through the centuries. The twentieth century has added its own conditioning...<sup>267</sup>

John Barton, in *Biblical Interpretation*,<sup>268</sup> a book that sketches out different methods of biblical interpretation,<sup>269</sup> writes in relation to biblical studies: 'Ancient texts require not only research, but also interpretation...In every age interpreters ask different questions, and so different aspects of the texts' meaning emerge'.<sup>270</sup>

In 1968 Richard Jones noted how new emerging world-views, created by cultural change, theological change and biblical scholarship, created a new situation for worship:

How are we to understand God's dealing with us and our world? The modern scientific world-view makes it increasingly difficult for us to conceive God as a great power encircling the world, able to inject his influences into it whenever possible 'from above'.<sup>271</sup>

The significance of such development led to '...a widespread (but often secret) abandonment of the practice of prayer, a disenchantment with traditional patterns of worship and spirituality, and a major theological turmoil'.<sup>272</sup>

Quite how widespread concern and discussion about the nature of God, and of theology in general, is to Methodist communities/congregations is difficult to

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<sup>267</sup> Ford, *Modern Theologians*, p. 12

<sup>268</sup> John Barton, *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, (Cambridge University Press, 1998)

<sup>269</sup> Amongst many other texts about contextual biblical studies see Susan. E. Gillingham, *One Bible Many Voices – Different Approaches to Biblical Studies*, (London: SCPK, 1998)

<sup>270</sup> Barton, *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, p.1

<sup>271</sup> Richard Jones, (Editor), *Worship for Today – Suggestions and Ideas*, (Epworth Press, 1968), p. 10

<sup>272</sup> Jones, *Worship for Today*, p. 11

ascertain. In 'Theology in Popular Methodism',<sup>273</sup> Jane Bates and Colin Smith explore, through the medium of memorials sent to the Methodist Conference and letters written to the Methodist Recorder, what issues dominated the agenda of the Methodist people. They tabulate the evidence for every fifth year, beginning in 1935 through to 2000. The overwhelming category that creates most comment is Methodist Church organisational issues – with the other areas being (in descending order of importance) – Public Issues, Private Morality, Doctrinal/Biblical Issues, Other. This evidence somewhat suggests that Methodists in general have not been too concerned to enter into debate about the nature of God and God's purposes, and other theological discussion.

Jones, convinced that the modern world and modern theology are important to the formulation of worship, offered *Worship for Today* and the orders of service within it, as

genuine attempts to break out of sterile patterns of worship and to experiment freely with forms that may enable worship to come alive for contemporary Christians...They have not been remote exercises in spirituality which may just as well have been concocted for people living on the moon in A.D. 300, but the appropriate offering of contemporary man in his glad celebration of the gospel, by which he must live today.<sup>274</sup>

So new ways of worshipping were offered and experimented with from the 1960s onward in the midst of, and because of, changing world views. This is in the period immediately after the 1960 Conference Commission offered the church a fixed order of service! The issue of how to worship within a particular context, where that cultural milieu has a radically different world-view/s, has

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<sup>273</sup> Jane Bates and Colin Smith, 'Controversy Essential: Theology in Popular Methodism', *Unmasking Methodist Theology*, pp. 5-16, p. 7

<sup>274</sup> Jones, *Worship for Today*, p. 14

not been easily resolved. In 1988 the issue was re-stated in *Let the People Worship* as it asked: 'How do we worship God in a secular, utilitarian society'?<sup>275</sup>

### 2.10 Worship and its Relationship to Culture

Frank Senn addresses the issue of the relationship between worship and its setting in *Christian Worship and Its Cultural Settings*.<sup>276</sup>

The history of Christian worship is the story of give and take between cult and culture. As the gospel was preached in different times and places, missionaries brought with them forms and styles of worship with which they were familiar. In time the local people found ways of indigenizing the imported liturgy by infusing it with their own ways of doing things and their own means of expression. When their own culture changed in response to various historical, social, economic and political factors, liturgical change was not far behind. This is because every generation of Christians has been concerned that its worship be relevant, at least to them.<sup>277</sup>

Whilst Britain was not a country trying to change worship patterns brought by overseas missionaries, it was a country with a radically altered culture and 'The question of relevancy is especially vexing during periods of periods of cultural transition...'<sup>278</sup> Such cultural transition, perhaps always occurring, but accelerated rapidly by change in the 1960s and proceeding decades, led many in the church to experiment with worship.

The 'inculturation' of worship practice takes place within this changing world and society. But it does so also against certain historical constraints of the traditions of the churches. Turner appeals for restriction to change as he wrote:

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<sup>275</sup> *Let the People Worship*, p. 1

<sup>276</sup> Frank Senn, *Christian Worship and its Cultural Setting*, (Eugene, Oregon: Wilf and Stock Publishers, 2004)

<sup>277</sup> Senn, *Christian Worship*, p. 38

<sup>278</sup> Senn, *Christian Worship*, p. 38

'The 1960s saw a clear desire for much more experiment in worship and alternatives to preaching. Wise leaders of worship refused to take an 'either...or' stance. Good preaching could exist alongside new styles of drama, films and dialogue'.<sup>279</sup> He goes on to say: 'If churches and worship-leaders exercise discrimination and common sense (in the choice of hymns and songs) division can be avoided'.<sup>280</sup>

Experimentation in worship became in vogue in the 1960s and 1970s even within Roman Catholicism.

The Church in the English-speaking world breathed the *bon aire* of liturgical experimentation with home masses, folk masses, home grown Eucharistic Prayers, and even liturgical texts sung to the tune of Bob Dylan's 'Blowin' in the Wind!'... Conservative scholars...referred to 'complete liturgical anarchy'... while few would contend that the period was unproblematic...<sup>281</sup>

Turner notes that in Methodism it is wise leaders of worship that regulate change; Pecklers notes that the Roman Catholic Church seeks 'control' from the liturgy itself.<sup>282</sup> This process of worship adapting to cultural situations, begun in the 1960s, has entered another phase in more recent times; taking place within the context of what is often called 'post-modernism'. Defining what 'post-modernism' means is problematic for '...post-modernity is as essentially contested a concept as it is an essential one – a sure sign of its importance for society and the academy alike'.<sup>283</sup> Post-modernism is, even if defined differently by different authors, about recognising that absolute truths and absolute

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<sup>279</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, p. 56

<sup>280</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, p. 56

<sup>281</sup> Pecklers, *The Genius of the Roman Rite*, p. 36

<sup>282</sup> Pecklers, *The Genius of the Roman Rite*, p. 28-29

<sup>283</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Cambridge Companion to Post Modern Theology*, (Cambridge University Press, 2003), Preface

realities cannot be defined or described. The articulation of 'truth' and 'reality' is always conditioned by the cultural setting in which it is articulated. So post-modernity impacts on worship in that the idea that many different positions or viewpoints or preferences in the form, content and style of worship are equally valid, for all are culturally determined, at least to a degree. The enormous impact of the communications industry has enabled people to see and hear of different patterns of worship from different parts of the world and different societies. One definition that points us toward this is offered by Kevin Vanhoozer:

Post-modernity is perhaps best construed as an "exodus" from the constraints of modernity, as a plea to release the other, as a demand to let particulars be themselves rather than having to conform to the structures of the prevailing ideological or political systems'.<sup>284</sup>

In many ways then, post-modernism authenticates the variety in worship that has developed. Martin Stringer, in much the same way as Frank Senn, has written: 'The form and pattern of worship is rooted in the social and political situation of the church at each specific time and place'.<sup>285</sup> Stringer makes the (post-modern) point that there is no wrong or right way that worship should be performed, although in his conclusion he does highlight his own unease that some contemporary forms of worship may '...verge(s) on the edge of a truly Christian discourse and even appear(s) to topple over it'.<sup>286</sup>

Senn suggests that it is the study of liturgy (not the same as the Roman Rite) that helps us measure our contemporary expressions with other historical

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<sup>284</sup> Vanhoozer, *Post Modern Theology*, Preface

<sup>285</sup> Martin Stringer, *A Sociological History of Christian Worship*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 237

<sup>286</sup> Stringer, *A Sociological History of Christian Worship*, p. 239

expressions of worship. A post-modern response might be to argue that the liturgy has held people captive, created, as it is seen by many, by a male priestly hierarchy, and, exactly what is needed is an “exodus”. However, Lathrop argues, to that post-modern charge of the liturgy being an historical construct and constraint, that the liturgical *ordo* is an ecumenical consensus; is present as a structure in the Gospels<sup>287</sup> themselves (that he argues are formative for Christians); and has been developed as an invitation to a worship form with specific content.<sup>288</sup> It is not, therefore, an imposed and prescribed *ordo*, devised and implemented by a male hierarchy. A major issue for British Methodist ‘preachers’ might then be what boundaries, what controls, do they put upon their own experimentation, their own attempts to inculturate, to make worship relevant in this post-modern age? Is this as simple as common-sense and wise discrimination as Turner suggests?

As well as change in the nature of the society affecting worship, and change and development in theology and biblical studies, other changes have also had their effect on worship practice and purpose.

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<sup>287</sup> I was very fortunate to be present at Charles Sturt University in Sydney in August 2009 to hear a series of lectures given by Gordon Lathrop. I understand it is his intention to produce these in a book form but at present they are not available as published documents. However in the lectures he drew on the idea that the actual shape of the gospels gives shape to Christian worship.

<sup>288</sup> Lathrop, ‘Reflections on Doing the Liturgical Ordo in a Postmodern Time’, p. 224-226



### 2.11 The Charismatic Movement

Several Methodist authors point to the influence of the charismatic movement on worship practice in British Methodism.<sup>289</sup> Michael Townsend, writes, ‘The charismatic experience has undoubtedly influenced most mainstream worship, not least through what we sing’.<sup>290</sup> However, these authors are giving their impressions, for there is no actual research on the influence of the charismatic movement on Methodism. Alistair Mann notes: ‘Most Latin American Protestantism is now charismatic’.<sup>291</sup> This is not so in British Methodism. It perhaps had a greater influence in the 1970s<sup>292</sup> where some churches had significant numbers of people of charismatic persuasion in their congregations.<sup>293</sup> There is little, if any evidence that speaking in tongues is a feature of worship today in British Methodist churches, although this is a common characteristic of charismatic worship. Perhaps we can say that some aspects of charismatic worship have been accommodated in Methodism. John Newton in *Heart Speaks to Heart – Ecumenical Studies in Spirituality*, speaks positively of the charismatic movement freeing up worship, giving it a sense of spontaneity. However he also recognises that this may also be the result of greater informality in society generally. He argues that the work of the Spirit has

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<sup>289</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, p. 56; David Carter, *Love Bade Me Welcome*, (Peterborough: Epworth, Press 2002), p. 121; Michael J. Townsend, *Worship*, (Peterborough: Epworth, 1997); Burdon, ‘Forgiven, loved and free...’, p. 66

<sup>290</sup> Michael J. Townsend, *Worship*, (Peterborough: Epworth, 1997), p. 87

<sup>291</sup> Alistair Mann, ‘Charismatic Movement’, Adrian Hastings et al (Editors), *The Oxford Companion of Christian Thought*, (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 107-108, p. 108

<sup>292</sup> In 1973 the Methodist Conference adopted the following resolution – ‘In view of the great interest throughout the Church in the Charismatic movement, the Conference asks the Faith and Order Committee for guidance regarding the experiences and insights involved, in light of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit’. Faith and Order were principally supportive of the movement, and Methodists were asked to ‘show tolerance in seeking to understand the claims and experiences of others, and so to avoid division within the Churches’. Cited from Brake, *Policy and Politics in British Methodism*, pp. 359-361

<sup>293</sup> One of the churches that I serve did indeed have a group of people within it in the 1980s that experienced the charismatic movement – and, sadly, after much difficulty within the local congregation, this group left to join the local Baptist Church.

been evident in and through the charismatic movement and that this has benefited the wider church.<sup>294</sup> Today, the charismatic movement, alongside evangelical groups, have changed the preference of some in their choice of the songs they wish to sing, and in the language of prayer they adopt.<sup>295</sup> My survey work shows there little evidence of major change in the shape of worship. The non-Eucharistic service has not changed to a 'worship' time of singing first, followed later by exposition of Scripture and perhaps a call to discipleship, an order of service present in some Free Churches more influenced by the charismatic and evangelical influences of the past decades.<sup>296</sup> However, there has been a change in the theology expressed in and through the words used in prayer, song and sermon, which has been influenced by charismatic and evangelical theology.<sup>297</sup>

### 2.12 Hymnody

Methodist worship is dependant on hymnody for much of its spirituality and the transmission of theology. Shier-Jones even chooses to use the '..last approved structure for a Methodist hymnal (*Hymns and Psalms*) as the framework for a coherent account of the theological work in progress of the Methodist people'.<sup>298</sup> That is, she locates the very teaching of Methodism, what she calls its *Kerygma*, as located in the hymns, and the ordering of those hymns, of the

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<sup>294</sup> Newton, *Heart Speaks to Heart*, p. 117

<sup>295</sup> Many authors conflate charismatic and evangelical influences. These constituencies are not the same however, and have different theological stances on many issues. See James Stevens, 'The Sprit in Contemporary Charismatic Worship', Teresa Berger and Brian D. Spinks, *The Sprit in Worship-Worship in the Sprit*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Training Press, 2009), pp. 245-259, for an account of modern charismatic influences on song and language.

<sup>296</sup> See Chapter 5

<sup>297</sup> See Chapter 5 and below

<sup>298</sup> Shier-Jones, *A Work in Progress*, p. 12

Methodist church.<sup>299</sup> But new hymnody from the 1960s onward has undergone a considerable change, and it is within the arena of hymnody that some of the contested theologies about worship can be seen most clearly.

It is fascinating...that 1963, the year of *Honest to God*, was also the year in which the Charismatic Movement began to be noticeable in the mainstream churches...Methodism was significantly influenced by the new movement in the 1970s when there was a resurgence of the 'religion of the heart', so despised by the radicals, and of an evangelicalism, conservative at heart and with a tendency toward Pentecostalism, which contrasted with the renewed Wesleyanism of the 1940s and 1950s. 'Worship songs' began to eclipse both Wesley and Sydney Carter alike!<sup>300</sup>

It is disputable that 'worship songs' eclipsed hymnody in Methodism. It partly depends on one's definition of worship song and hymn. Many of the evangelical offerings might be more considered to be hymns, given that they are more than one verse long. But put together, the influence of charismatics and evangelicals has been of some significance to Methodist worship. But Sydney Carter, no evangelical, was also writing hymns/songs that entered the worship of Methodism, alongside others of a more liberal tradition like Brian Wren and Fred Pratt Green. It is certainly the case, in terms of the number of hymns in *Hymns and Psalms*, that these 'liberal' writers have had more influence on the authorised hymnody of Methodism.

This is also the case with other Methodist hymnals. In 1969 Methodism introduced an authorised supplement to *the Methodist Hymn Book*, entitled

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<sup>299</sup> Note the similarity to Pratt's conclusions about the purpose and utility of the *Methodist Hymn Book*.

<sup>300</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, p. 24

*Hymns and Songs*,<sup>301</sup> ‘...containing contributions from twentieth-century hymn writers, though the pace of change in hymnody was so rapid that a new genre of worship songs in the 1970s meant it was soon out of date’.<sup>302</sup> In 1979 the Division of Education and Youth published *Partners in Praise*,<sup>303</sup> to encourage hymns and songs that put to words and music ‘what the theologians are discerning might be the special contribution of this last part of the twentieth century’.<sup>304</sup> There is little evidence in either of these publications that charismatic/evangelical style and content songs dominates. There is only one contribution from M. A. Baughen, the editor of *Youth Praise*, and one of the most prolific of the evangelical hymn/song writers – and this is a translation of a German composition. The one song to move from *Youth Praise* through to *Partners in Praise* through to *Hymns and Psalms* is ‘Spirit of the living God’.

*Hymns and Psalms* was published in 1983 and contains 823 Hymns plus 64 Psalms and Canticles. It contains approximately 175 hymns written in the twentieth century.<sup>305</sup> By contrast it contains 156 by Charles Wesley, some of which may have been written by John Wesley;<sup>306</sup> 17 by John Wesley, most of which are translations of other people’s work,<sup>307</sup> and 39 by Isaac Watts. Of the modern writers, Fred Pratt Green had 27 hymns, Albert Bayley 12, Brian Wren

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<sup>301</sup> *Hymns and Songs*, (Methodist Publishing House, 1969)

<sup>302</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 299-300

<sup>303</sup> Division of Education and Youth, *Partners in Praise*, (Stainer and Bell, 1979)

<sup>304</sup> *Partners in Praise*, p.iv

<sup>305</sup> *Hymns and Psalms* gives the birth (and death) dates of the authors. It is not always possible to tell when a specific hymn was written where the author’s life spans the nineteenth and twentieth century.

<sup>306</sup> See Index of authors, translators and sources in *Hymns and Psalms* about the dispute over the authorship of some hymns.

<sup>307</sup> Chapman says that in 1980 the hymn book was allowed to be further developed as long as it contained at least 200 hymns by Charles Wesley – prompting the withdrawal of the United Reformed Church who had hoped to work with the Methodists to create an ecumenical hymnbook. In the end there were less than 200 Charles Wesley hymns – and the book was given the sub-title, A Methodist and Ecumenical Hymn Book.

10, Timothy Dudley Smith 9 and Fred Kaan 8. Only Timothy Dudley Smith can be regarded as an evangelical hymn writer. In the collection as a whole there are really only 6 contributions that can be considered to be song/chorus – these are – ‘He’s got the whole world in his hands’ (25), ‘Spirit of the living God’ (295), ‘Praise Him’ (506), ‘Kum bay ya’ (525), ‘As your family’ (595), ‘Let us break bread together’ (615). Timothy Macquiban comments about the contents of *Hymns and Psalms*: ‘The centrality of Wesley hymns was preserved against all the odds in the ecumenical and evangelical climate of the modernising 1980s.’<sup>308</sup> One wonders if a study of *Hymns and Psalms*, similar to the one Pratt undertook on the *Methodist Hymn Book*, might also suggest that *Hymns and Psalms* was also a conservative book. The editors of *Hymns and Psalms* say in the introduction to the hymnal that the hymn book ‘[i]s rooted in denominational traditions, and (which) makes available to all Christians the riches of classical, evangelical, catholic, and charismatic hymnody of the past and the present.’<sup>309</sup> It is easier to see mainstream ecumenical and liberal influences on *Hymns and Psalms*, than it is to see any modern evangelical or charismatic influence.

Turner notes that 1983 was a bit early for the work of Graham Kendrick, one of the most prolific hymn/song writers from the evangelical tradition, to be included,<sup>310</sup> although he had already written songs in the 1970s.<sup>311</sup> But there were other evangelical and charismatic sources to draw from<sup>312</sup> – *Youth Praise*

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<sup>308</sup> Timothy S.A. Macquiban, ‘Dialogue with the Wesleys: Remembering Origins’, *Unmasking Methodist Theology*, pp. 17-28, p. 26

<sup>309</sup> *Hymns and Psalms*, p. xi

<sup>310</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, p. 56

<sup>311</sup> Hymnquest, *Authors and Sources*, (Stainer and Bell, 2010)

<sup>312</sup> See Pete Ward, *Selling Worship – How what we sing has changed the Church*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2005), for a historical description of the development of the evangelical youth hymnals/songbooks.

for example was published to the evangelical market in 1966. *Youth Praise* contains the hymn 'Lord for the Years', which featured in *Mission Praise*<sup>313</sup>, published in 1983, along with choruses like 'Turn your eyes upon Jesus' and 'Cleanse me'. *Sounds of Living Waters* followed in 1974, and included the popular hymn, 'Holy, Holy, Holy...and we lift our hearts before you', and the chorus songs, 'Father we adore you' and 'Praise Him'. These more modern evangelical hymns and short songs are missing from *Hymns and Psalms*. Since the 1970s and 1980s more songs and new hymns from the evangelical wing of the churches have appeared. The very first edition of *Songs of Fellowship*<sup>314</sup> was published in 1979, containing just 59 hymns/songs and was re-published containing 159 songs. In 1983 *Songs of Fellowship Book 2* was published and by the end of the year 90,000 copies of Book One and Book Two had been sold;<sup>315</sup> *Mission Praise*, an alternative source of new (and old) hymns and songs was published in 1983; followed by other books including *The Source*<sup>316</sup>, which was first published in 1998. *Mission Praise* and *Songs of Fellowship* are used as supplementary hymn books in many Methodist churches,<sup>317</sup> reflecting the decision of some communities to sing from a more evangelical genre. An issue that this raises is whether or not the theology contained in these modern evangelical songs is different from the traditional Wesleyan and classical Christian theology. Pete Ward, writing of the development of charismatic and evangelical songs, suggests this might be so: 'the shifting patterns in metaphor and imagery common in worship songs reveal

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<sup>313</sup> *Mission Praise*, (Harper Collins, 1990)

<sup>314</sup> *Songs of Fellowship*, (Eastbourne: Kingsway Music, 1979)

<sup>315</sup> Ward, *Selling Worship*, p. 68

<sup>316</sup> *The Source, Volume 1*, (Bury St. Edmunds: Kevin Mayhew Ltd., 1998)

<sup>317</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 300 and Appendices.

a gradual theological development. The observation that the theology of the church is being changed through the songs we sing is significant'.<sup>318</sup> Ward is reflecting principally on more modern worship songs than those that appear in *Mission Praise* and early versions of *Songs of Fellowship*. Those churches that keep up to date with new worship songs are more likely to need to consider if the theology they sing is changing.<sup>319</sup>

In other Methodist churches another hymnbook from a different tradition, *Common Ground*,<sup>320</sup> first published in 1998, is in use. It states that 'the main intention has been to provide material which is new, accessible and grounded in biblical truth rather than in individualistic experience',<sup>321</sup> with the implied criticism that too much modern charismatic/evangelical hymnody and song writing had become 'reflexive' – that is focused, almost solely, on the individual's worship experience.<sup>322</sup>

The availability to choose hymns and songs from a wide range of sources has increased dramatically toward the end of the time period being studied. Resources are available in the form of CDs, downloads from the internet, from multiple hymn and song collections and publications, and through

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<sup>318</sup> Pete Ward, *Selling Worship*, p. 5

<sup>319</sup> The Baptist Union of Great Britain has a paper on its web site called 'Real Life Worship: Songs'. In this paper it questions the overuse of the imagery used in worship songs of Jesus, stressing that the predominant metaphor used is that of Christ as King or Lord – at the expense of other images of Jesus as Priest and Prophet.

[www.baptist.org.uk/resources/resource\\_downloads/529.pdf](http://www.baptist.org.uk/resources/resource_downloads/529.pdf)

<sup>320</sup> *Common Ground*, (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1998)

<sup>321</sup> *Common Ground*, p. 4

<sup>322</sup> A point that Ward makes in *Selling Worship*, pp. 206-210

HymnQuest.<sup>323</sup> Such variety opens up the option of presenting through hymn and song different theologies; for as Martin Wellings points out, people often define their theological positions by reference to ‘...preferred styles of worship, and particularly music in worship’.<sup>324</sup>

### 2.13 Language and Prayer

There is much less written on the language and content of prayer in Methodism than on hymnody. Davies notes that by the end of the 1950s, ‘In too many churches the tradition of extempore prayer, which is dear to all generations of Methodists, had degenerated into the long-winded repetition of clichés, utterly remote from the needs of the people or the faith of the Church; and the friendly ‘togetherness’ of Methodist congregation, which is equally precious, had been made into an excuse for casualness and slovenliness’.<sup>325</sup> Gordon Wakefield wrote that the churches in the 1960s and 70s (through working together in the International Consultation of English Texts) moved towards the use of the second person pronoun<sup>326</sup> and this can be seen in the set text of the *Methodist Service Book*, where God is referred to as ‘You’, in contrast to the language of ‘Thee’, that was used in the *Book of Offices*. It is also the case that in the 1960s the extempore prayers of the preacher changed from Thee to You ‘although there was still argument about whether it was appropriate to address God as You’<sup>327</sup>. Given the tradition of extempore prayer in Methodism, one suspects that different preachers, from different generations and theological persuasions,

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<sup>323</sup> HymnQuest is a CD-Rom database, produced through the Pratt Green Trust, and published by Stainer and Bell, that contains over 22,000 hymns and songs. It was first published in May 2000.

<sup>324</sup> Wellings, ‘Evangelicals in Methodism’, p. 2

<sup>325</sup> Davies, *Methodism*, p. 171-172

<sup>326</sup> Gordon S. Wakefield, ‘The Methodist Service Book’, *Epworth Review*, 2.3, (1975), p. 21

<sup>327</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, p. 55



adapted at different rates to such change. But something else with more consequence for worship also happened to prayer. New publications of prayer books became available - an example of this would be Caryl Micklem's SCM publication, *Contemporary Prayers*, published in 1967,<sup>328</sup> in which the traditional style of prayer was changed to a more informal style.<sup>329</sup> Another example, perhaps the most famous, was *Prayers for Life*,<sup>330</sup> by Michel Quoist. Gordon Wakefield, supportive of the use of the term 'You' in liturgical prayer deplored the more informal approach to prayer: 'The language of some of the prayers composed in the 1960s (that) were deplorable, a bastard Quoistianism, chatty, colloquial, anthropocentric, self-absorbed'.<sup>331</sup> Methodism's own publications contained prayers that adopted modern language but remained shaped by more traditional liturgical patterns. The first of these was published in 1983 Epworth Press called *The Companion to the Lectionary: A New Collection of Prayers*.<sup>332</sup> Again, like the plethora of choice available to preachers in regard to hymns and songs, so too prayer books have multiplied over the time period, and are generated by authors with different theological and liturgical positions.

As time progressed past the 1970s the issue of inclusive language became more important within the Methodist Church. The *Methodist Service Book* was exclusive in its terminology about human beings, using the word man/men to

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<sup>328</sup> Caryl Micklem, *Contemporary Prayers for Public Worship*, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1967)

<sup>329</sup> For example: 'Father, we should find it hard to explain what has drawn us to worship today. We come to hear expressed those lofty thoughts and high yearnings which we begin to feel but by ourselves cannot formulate, and so cannot fully entertain. We are attracted by the friendliness, perhaps, or by the atmosphere of common purpose and idea...'

Micklem, *Contemporary Prayers*, p. 1

<sup>330</sup> Michel Quoist, *Prayers For Life*, (Logos Books, 1963)

<sup>331</sup> Gordon S. Wakefield, 'The Methodist Service Book', p. 21

<sup>332</sup> Neil Dixon, *A Companion to the Lectionary: A New Collection of Prayers*, (London: Epworth Press, 1983)

refer to humanity. Dixon shows how things changed by the time the *Methodist Worship Book* was introduced, for in that publication the use of man/men does not occur when humanity is meant.<sup>333</sup> However, there is little attempt in the *Methodist Worship Book* to portray God in feminine terms, a noticeable failure to respond to the concerns of contemporary society. Dixon does claim that the *Methodist Worship Book* uses 'gender neutral' terms to address God but the language of the *Methodist Worship Book* does not respond to the concerns of feminists in any great way.<sup>334</sup>

### 2.14 Preaching

For a church that has historically highly valued the sermon – Wakefield talks of Methodist piety being based on preaching<sup>335</sup> - there is surprisingly little written on preaching in British Methodism in the current era.<sup>336</sup> Wakefield and Chapman, along with Turner, say from the late 1950s the preaching tradition declined in Methodism,<sup>337</sup> recognising that from that time the sermon came under suspicion, for no-one could be considered as being 'six feet above contradiction'.<sup>338</sup> Calls were made for change in the style and length of sermons and a whole industry grew up around homiletics, describing different ways to preach. *In Church*, the Local preacher's training book, published in 1971, has chapters on Justification for Preaching; The Authority of the Preacher; Sources of Sermons; Preaching Technique; and Visual Aids. Jones says in *Groundwork of*

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<sup>333</sup> Dixon, *Wonder Love and Praise*, p. 20

<sup>334</sup> Dixon, *Wonder Love and Praise*, p. 19

<sup>335</sup> Wakefield, *Methodist Spirituality*, Chapter 12, pp. 51-53

<sup>336</sup> Chapman discusses the type and ethos of early Methodist preaching but presents no information at all on current trends in preaching. Chapter 2, 'The Preaching Service', *Born in Song*, pp. 40-62. Most recently George Lovell and Neil Richardson in *Sustaining Preachers and Preachers*, (London: Continuum, 2011) have written an apologetic for preaching.

<sup>337</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, p. 54

<sup>338</sup> David Day, *A Preaching Workbook*, (London: SCPK, 1998), p. 117

*Worship and Preaching* that 'Most of the standard textbooks (on preaching) suggest that there are at least five types of sermon, and many of them suggest at least five different sorts of structures'.<sup>339</sup>

Wakefield notes the difficulties of preaching in the modern era, and comments that a certain pulpit style and language led to many sermons being '...hollow, meaningless, irrelevant and ineffective'; and that 'sermonising' was even lampooned by programmes like *Beyond the Fringe*.<sup>340</sup> David Day writes: 'In terms of communication, the 1960s saw the widespread marginalization of the sermon, precisely because monologue seemed a grossly inadequate tool of communication. Experimental forms took centre stage'.<sup>341</sup> Turner relates that different forms of communication, other than monologue, became more prevalent. New ideas entered the 'preaching slot' as dialogue sermons, overhead projection, slides shows and discussion groups were introduced.

But sermons did not disappear altogether, although there was a general trend toward shortening their time span. In 1983 Christina Le Moignan wrote in *Worship and Preaching*: 'Radio and television, where as much as 5 minutes uninterrupted talking is rare, are little preparation for listening to a 15 minute sermon'.<sup>342</sup> 15 minutes is much less than the reported one to two hour sermons of William Shuttleworth in the nineteenth century<sup>343</sup> or the twenty to thirty

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<sup>339</sup> Richard J. Jones, *Groundwork of Worship and Preaching*, (London: Epworth Press, 1980) p. 130-131

<sup>340</sup> Wakefield, *Methodist Spirituality*, p. 52

<sup>341</sup> David Day, 'Six Feet Above Contradiction? An Overview', David Day, Jeff Astley, Leslie J. Francis, (Editors), *A Reader on Preaching – Making Connections*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 1-8, p. 1

<sup>342</sup> *Worship and Preaching*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1983

<sup>343</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 51

minutes that I remember in my teenage years in the 1970s. Sermons are still part of worship in Methodism, but do not seem to have recovered their previous prominence. John Haley and Leslie Francis provide the most up to date information on preaching today in British Methodism through their survey work of what Methodist ministers believe.<sup>344</sup> They report that ‘...under half (46%) of Methodist ministers felt that Methodist ministers are generally good preachers...’<sup>345</sup> and ‘...only a quarter of ministers express confidence in the quality of this (local preachers) preaching...’<sup>346</sup> This dissatisfaction is also evident in a survey of congregational members in the Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent circuit, conducted in 1987/88. It reports that too many sermons were too long and boring; too clichéd; not scholarly enough; not thought-provoking. Indeed respondents rated sermons as the least liked aspect of worship. Congregations placed above them, fellowship, hymns, feeling close to God, joy of celebration, giving praise, feeling peace, prayers.<sup>347</sup> Even more extraordinary, for a church with such a strong history of preaching, the 2001 Church Life Profile indicates that the most valued aspects of church life is Holy Communion.<sup>348</sup>

Walter Brueggemann suggests that the issues facing evangelistic preaching are much greater than simply cultural modes of speech and listening. Recognising the change that has occurred in society over recent decades he says that preaching ‘...finds itself now in a quite new cultural and epistemological

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<sup>344</sup> John M. Haley and Leslie J. Francis, *British Methodism – What Circuit Ministers Really Think*, (Peterborough: Epworth, 2006). Their work is a survey of Methodist Ministers. Not all responded. The percentages quoted are therefore percentages of those who responded to the survey.

<sup>345</sup> Haley and Francis, *What Circuit Ministers Really Think*, p. 91

<sup>346</sup> Haley and Francis, *What Circuit Ministers Really Think*, p. 95. As ministers rarely hear local preachers or other presbyters preach it is difficult to know how these assessments are made!

<sup>347</sup> Pauline Jones, ‘A Brave Attempt’, *Worship and Preaching*, 18.3, (June 1988), pp. 86-89, p. 86

<sup>348</sup> Phillip Escott and Alison Gelder, *Church Life Profile 2001: The Methodist Church* (CIM, 2002)

context'.<sup>349</sup> Brueggemann acknowledges that the context in which the sermon is given has changed, including noting that 'Ours is a changed preaching situation, because the old modes of church absolutes are no longer trusted'.<sup>350</sup> This raises questions about the very purpose of the sermon today. More is at stake here than simply better means of the preacher communicating with the congregation. The very task, the purpose of preaching began to be challenged. *In Church*, in a retreat from evangelistic purpose, simply suggested that preaching could 'put the Christian case' in the face of popular media presenting alternative options.<sup>351</sup>

### 2.15 Children, Young People and All-Age Worship

One of the major influences on worship has been the greater inclusion of children and young people, leading to the introduction of family or all-age worship.<sup>352</sup> Turner notes the move from pre-second world war times when Sunday Schools met in the afternoons to morning Sunday Schools and family worship that developed between the 1960s and 1980s.<sup>353</sup> This move had several consequences for the traditional 'preaching' service as it was practised at the end of the 1950s. At first, and relatively easy to accommodate, was the introduction of the children's address, because, given before the children departed for Sunday School, it did not affect the rest of the service. However, many preachers were not trained and competent to give such short addresses to

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<sup>349</sup> Walter Brueggemann, 'Preaching as Reimagination', *A Reader on Preaching*, p. 17

<sup>350</sup> Brueggemann, 'Preaching as Reimagination', p. 17

<sup>351</sup> Stacey, *In Church*, p. 139

<sup>352</sup> As noted in the 1994 Conference Report *All Age Worship*, terminology is used by different people in different ways – some use the term Family Service, some all-age worship. Both relate to worship where children and/or young people are present in the worshipping community for part or all of the service.

<sup>353</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, p. 55

children. But whole service family worship also came into existence fairly quickly and this was even harder for many preachers to lead. As John Lampard wrote ‘The development of all-age worship has proved one of the most challenging and difficult changes required for all preachers...’<sup>354</sup>

As early as 1968 *Worship For Today* said it ‘...will not argue the merits of family worship. They are known by now’.<sup>355</sup> The church hurried to publish resource material to assist preachers to lead better family worship. For example, *Together in Church: Orders of service for family worship*<sup>356</sup> was published by the Division of Education and Youth in 1971. Wellings notes the publication of *Partners in Learning* as a resource for children and youth in the 1960s; but he also makes an important point about its reception, saying that there was, from the evangelical side of Methodism, ‘...an anxiety expressed at the introduction of *Partners in Learning* in the 1960s on the grounds that the new material was insufficiently Bible-based’.<sup>357</sup> By 1980 the Local Preacher’s textbook, *Groundwork of Worship and Preaching*, contained a section on family worship,<sup>358</sup> providing guidance to local preachers in training about the requirements of family worship. Further publications were produced – for example, by the Methodist Church, *New Directions in Worship*<sup>359</sup> by Wilfred Tooley, and *Family*

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<sup>354</sup> John Lampard, ‘Today and Tomorrow’, *Workaday Preachers*, pp. 119-142, p. 130

<sup>355</sup> Jones, *Worship For Today*, p. 51

<sup>356</sup> *Together in Church: Orders of service for family worship*, (Methodist Church: Division of Education and Youth, 1971)

<sup>357</sup> Wellings, ‘Evangelicals in Methodism’.

<sup>358</sup> Jones, *Groundwork of Worship and Preaching*, pp. 202-206

<sup>359</sup> Wilfred Tooley, *New Directions in Worship*, (Division of Education and Youth: Methodist Church, 1981)

*Worship in Theory and Practice*<sup>360</sup> by John Barrett; and ecumenically, *Know How to Encourage Family Worship*, by Howard Mellor.<sup>361</sup>

When Jones wrote that the merits of family worship are well known, he added 'So are the difficulties'.<sup>362</sup> A rather bleak assessment of the practice of all-age worship is given by Neil Dixon in 1993, illustrating that these difficulties and issues do not easily get resolved.<sup>363</sup> Dixon criticises all-age worship as too often trivialising the act of worship, where the atmosphere created is one of 'bright and breezy', rather than of joy in the celebration of the gospel.<sup>364</sup> He claims that all-age worship reduces the amount of Scripture read, introduces hymns and songs and prayers which are banal, and takes the focus of the service from Cross and Table to overhead projector. The sermon then is restricted to an illustrative and simplistic talk and an educational model takes over from a proclamatory model. Dixon identifies a major motivation for these changes to worship to the desire to fill church pews, although others would argue that they are trying to find ways for all ages to worship together. Dixon then asks, 'What is worship for?' He responds by saying it is for God and therefore must be a something that is worthy and to the glory of God.<sup>365</sup> Dixon acknowledges that this theocentric model is not a 'popular view'. Dixon does little in his article however to explain what good all-age worship would be other than to practise traditional worship

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<sup>360</sup> John C. A. Barrett, *Family Worship in Theory and Practice*, (London: Epworth Press, 1981)

<sup>361</sup> Howard Mellor, *Know how to encourage family worship*, (Scripture Union, 1984)

<sup>362</sup> Jones, *Worship For Today*, p. 51

<sup>363</sup> Neil Dixon, 'All-Age Worship: Usage and Abusage', *Epworth Review*, 20.2, (May 1993), pp. 40-52

<sup>364</sup> See also Beryl Underhill, 'All-Age Worship', *Epworth Review* 14.1 (Jan 1987), for examples of this trivialisation of worship, and in particular the problem of making child participants into performers who need thanking for their contributions and Barrett, *Family Worship* for a critique of family worship on the grounds of educational and psychological child-centred approaches.

<sup>365</sup> This approach is somewhat similar to that of Pecklers – quoting *Sacrosanctum concilium* 34 – 'The rites should be marked by a noble simplicity', *The Genius of the Roman Rite*, p. 28

with better quality. He suggests that the only hymnody required can be found in *Hymns and Psalms*. He refutes the idea that worship is for the benefit of worshippers; although he does concede that it is ‘...an important ingredient in our spiritual development’. David Gamble responded in the same article to Dixon’s critique of all-age worship saying that Dixon’s view is ‘...too dependent on words and too passive’<sup>366</sup>. Gamble, a keen exponent of all-age worship, stresses that whilst worship is not an educational activity, in worship all learn together the Christian faith. Gamble also stresses the elements of worship that can be more creative. Dixon’s response to Gamble is to re-state that there is a ‘worthiness’ to worship that needs to be maintained; that not all acts of creativity are worthy; and to stress that learning is only a secondary outcome of worship, not a primary concern.

Don Pickard, in his response to Dixon’s article in the same edition of the *Epworth Review*, presents an alternative way of looking at all-age worship, utilising the insights of the liturgical movement. He emphasises the need to examine how in worship the congregation contributes and participates in worship, in doxology, rather than having things given to them that they can understand.<sup>367</sup> What Pickard is beginning to do is to re-shape the question about for whom is worship, and what is worship for? The dichotomy between worship for God, or beneficial for children and adults, can be revised when asking questions about what authenticates worship. Whilst Dixon claims that he is in agreement with Pickard the theocentric model that Dixon presents is too often

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<sup>366</sup> David Gamble, ‘All-Age Worship: Usage and Abuse’, *Epworth Review*, 20.2, (May 1993), pp. 46-48

<sup>367</sup> Don Pickard, ‘All-Age Worship: Usage and Abuse’, pp. 449-50



used, as Dixon does in this article, to preserve the status quo of the current form being used. Pickard is actually suggesting change to the ways Methodists do all-age worship by promoting a form of worship shaped by (the) liturgy.<sup>368</sup>

An enormous amount of resources continues to be published to aid those leading all-age worship. In response to the perceived difficulties, one Methodist minister, Mike Bossingham, created a Trust called 'Family Friendly Churches', dedicated to enabling churches find ways to undertake Family Worship better.<sup>369</sup> Bossingham recognises that for him there are two key issues in developing Family Friendly Churches and Family Worship; one revolves around all the practical issues. The other is about attitude: 'I am amazed that Christian people, who preach tolerance and putting the needs of others before their own, can suddenly throw all this out of the window as soon as worship is mentioned. I am astonished that anyone can go to a church and expect everything on a Sunday to be to their personal taste'.<sup>370</sup> But he does not raise at all the central issue of 'what worship is for', that is central to Dixon's critique of much all-age worship, nor does he address Pickard's views about participation and doxology. What the development of all-age worship has thrown up in terms of issues and change since the 1960s has had a consequence on all worship. All-age worship might highlight or emphasise issues around language and hymn/song choice – but these are also issues within the realm of 'adult' worship. All-age worship may highlight or emphasise how the gospel can be communicated – does it

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<sup>368</sup> There is more work and writing on this subject matter in other traditions/denominations. See for example, Rebecca Nye, *Children's Spirituality – what it is and why it matters*, (London: Church Publishing House, 2009) and Gretchen Wolff Pritchard, *Offering the Gospel to Children*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Cowley Publications, 1992)

<sup>369</sup> [www.familyfriendlychurches.org.uk](http://www.familyfriendlychurches.org.uk)

<sup>370</sup> Mike Bossingham, *Building Family Friendly Churches*, (Peterborough: Inspire, 2004), p. vi

require new forms of communication other than the sermon – but this is an issue in ‘adult’ worship. All-age worship has brought up the issue of the balance between worship and learning – again issues raised in adult worship.<sup>371</sup> Indeed the question arises not just how the gospel is communicated, but what is it, for children, young people and adults in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries; that is, what is the theology contained in worship, as well as what is the theology of worship. The issue of ‘what theology’ was clearly seen in the controversy over the content of *Partners in Learning*.

### 2.16 Ecclesiology

The development of all-age worship can be ascribed to ‘...a response to declining numbers at adult worship or in Junior Church or Sunday School...the difficulty in recruiting leaders for children’s work...as a means of outreach...deeply held theological convictions about the church, its worship and the place of children’.<sup>372</sup>

All these issues revolve around ecclesiology, either as a theological matter or a practical response. One of the major changes in church that has affected its worship is the declining size of the church. In 1960 membership was at 728,589; in 1970 at 617,018; in 1980 at 487,972; in 1990 at 424,540.<sup>373</sup> The decline in membership then between 1960 and 1990 totalled 304,049, a drop of 42 per

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<sup>371</sup> David Gamble has continually championed the need for worship to include learning. In a small book, the first of a series published by the Division of Education and Youth, entitled *One*, Gamble states that worship must include ‘what it means to be a Christian’. The issue of learning in worship does not necessarily require however a direct teaching methodology – one learns what it means to be a Christian through participation in the liturgy.

<sup>372</sup> *All Age Worship*, p. 6

<sup>373</sup> David Hempton, *Methodism*, p. 214

cent. By 2007 membership had dropped to 267,300.<sup>374</sup> Average weekly attendance at Sunday worship in 2007 was 194,000.<sup>375</sup> So, the British Methodist Church in 2007 is simply much smaller than in 1960 and the size of congregations and the number of children and young people in them are smaller.<sup>376</sup> This change to a smaller church has been progressive throughout the time period.<sup>377</sup> There has been much pressure within the church to change worship, hoping to bring more people into the church. As time has gone on, and such strategies have not worked, in certain places reversion to more 'traditional' patterns of worship has occurred, as there are simply no new recruits to whom to appeal.

But what about the stated ecclesiology of the Methodist church and how might this impact on worship? David Carter gives in *Love Bade Me Welcome*<sup>378</sup> an account of Methodist ecclesiology. Carter notes that until a working party of the Faith and Order Committee began to consider ecclesiology in 1990 little attention had been given to the matter since the 1930s. He notes that this is in spite of the fact that Methodism had considered unity with the Church of England, and '...sea changes (had occurred) in theological method and denominational self-confidence in comparison with the 1930s'.<sup>379</sup> Carter uses the report issued by the working party of the Faith and Order Committee, *Called*

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<sup>374</sup> 'Statistics For Mission 2005-2007',

[http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/Conf08\\_55\\_Statistics\\_for\\_Mission.pdf](http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/Conf08_55_Statistics_for_Mission.pdf)

<sup>375</sup> 'Statistics For Mission'. It is worth noting that attendances used to be higher than membership.

<sup>376</sup> Bossingham, *Building Family Friendly Churches*, p. 2-4. Between 2005-07 attendance by Under 13's dropped by 28 per cent, (Statistics for Mission 2005-2007)

<sup>377</sup> It is worth noting that membership of all types of Associations dropped in this time period not just those of Churches. McLeod notes this in relation to falling membership of political parties. *The Religious Crisis*, p. 77

<sup>378</sup> David Carter, *Love Bade Me Welcome – A British Methodist Perspective on the Church*, (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2002)

<sup>379</sup> Carter, *Love Bade Me Welcome*, p. 108

*to Love and Praise*,<sup>380</sup> to reflect on worship and ecclesiology. *Called to Love and Praise* offered a short section specifically on Worship and Spiritual Life in Methodism,<sup>381</sup> noting that ‘If Methodist ecclesiology is to be fully understood, it is important to explore the distinctive features of its spiritual life and worship’.<sup>382</sup> The report notes Methodist hymnody, the value placed on the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, the reading of the Scriptures and preaching, as essential features of Methodist worship. It states that it is the way these elements are combined – in formal and informal ways, with lay leadership and participation, seeking experience in and through worship, and offering participants both evangelism and fellowship – which establish the character of Methodist worship. For Methodists, the report emphasises, worship is firstly to God in adoration and praise; but leads to holiness in worshippers, and mission by the church. Carter notes:

*Called to Love and Praise* has been criticised for not saying enough about Methodist worship, a criticism that seems unfounded in view of the fact that there is a clear statement of certain key balances within the Methodist worshipping tradition, most notable the balance between the more formal ‘liturgical’ style, inherited originally from Anglicanism, and the emphasis on the more lyrical celebratory nature of Methodist worship, as well as the more informal and extempore elements in it.<sup>383</sup>

Carter does point out that the report makes no mention of the growing use of ‘alternative’ hymn books like *Songs of Fellowship* and *Mission Praise*.<sup>384</sup> But he does not point out, as I have above, that the report makes no mention of the impact of all-age worship; nor of the changing sizes of Methodist congregations.

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<sup>380</sup> Trustees For Methodist Church Purposes, *Called to Love and Praise – A Methodist Conference Statement on the Church*, (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 1999)

<sup>381</sup> *Called to Love and Praise*, p. 36-39

<sup>382</sup> *Called to Love and Praise*, p. 36

<sup>383</sup> Carter, *Love Bade Me Welcome*, p. 120

<sup>384</sup> Carter, *Love Bade Me Welcome*, p. 120-121

What *Called to Love and Praise* does is to note changes in society, in biblical studies, in theology that affect the nature of the church; but it does not directly relate these to worship. Indeed the section on worship seems to be very much a traditional restatement of Methodist practice, relying heavily on quotations from Charles Wesley hymns and John Wesley sermons. He does note the comment of one former Chair of the London District that some churches now refused to accept certain ministers with certain theological positions.<sup>385</sup>

My own view is that the depleted numbers of members, in smaller congregations, in a less confident church, in a more secular society, has a greater impact on worship than *Called to Love and Praise* suggests. Overall, as Clive Field points out 'Methodists are not representative of the adult population...they are disproportionately female, old, married or widowed, white and home owners'.<sup>386</sup> The statistics illustrate that Methodism is, and is still becoming, a progressively older church. In certain congregations there may be other demographics that come into play.<sup>387</sup> For example the existence of a non-white constituency in a congregation may increase its size.<sup>388</sup> In other congregations there may be significant numbers of children, young people and younger adults that impact on the kind of local church that exists and the worship it. The impact of these differences may well affect the forms of worship offered in different Methodist churches and make it less easy to describe Methodist worship.

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<sup>385</sup> Carter, *Love Bade Me Welcome*, p. 121

<sup>386</sup> Clive Field, 'The People Called Methodists: Statistical Insights for the Social Sciences', *Epworth Review*, 36.4,(2009), p. 24

<sup>387</sup> McLeod, *The Religious Crisis*, p. 120 in relation to non-white congregations

<sup>388</sup> Reddie points out in 'Dispelling Myths,' that some of the post-colonial black constituency in Methodism prefer the 1933 *Methodist Hymn Book*. However, it may be that younger 'Caribbean' Methodists or more recent arrivals from countries like Zimbabwe have other preferences. Any categorisation is liable to stereotyping.

*Called to Love and Praise* does not suggest any change has happened, or is required in Methodist worship, either to accommodate its different constituencies or to realise the statements it makes about its vision for the nature of the Church. But *Called to Love and Praise* calls the church toward an ecclesiology, to a 'What kind of community might a church be'? It does so by making 11 short statements – all of which might have a bearing on the worship the church offers. These statements are:

- A community which celebrates and proclaims Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour in the power of the Holy Spirit
- A community of all-ages, different races, varying backgrounds and occupations – richly diverse, but united around the Lord's Table
- A community which praises God
- A community nourished each week by great songs of faith, by prayers steeped in the wealth of Christian tradition and contemporary experience, and by preaching that engages with contemporary life and with the Bible at depth and with integrity
- A community whose warm fellowship is matched by the warmth of its welcome, offering 'a home from home for all' who will come
- A community bearing, but not bowed down by, particular acts of service to which it has been called in its particular time and place
- A community resilient with the hope inspired by a vision of God's kingdom
- A community committed to working for peace and justice
- A community the daily lives of whose members make it easier for others to believe in the goodness of God

- A community gentle with each others' failures, as each sustains and is sustained by others through forgiveness, love and prayer
- A community characterised by joy.<sup>389</sup>

Every statement begins with the words 'A community'. Such phraseology suggests a church that is moving toward seeing itself as a corporate body more than as a group of individuals seeking salvation and offering salvation to others. Whether its worship reflects this corporality is open to question.

### 2.17 Conclusion

This chapter on a general introduction to Methodist worship in cultural context noted Westerfield Tucker's assertion that there are several poles or tensions that characterise Methodist worship worldwide. Chapman, who has said 'British Methodism (has) something of a schizophrenic approach to worship and liturgy',<sup>390</sup> identifies what he calls dialectical tensions in British Methodist worship.<sup>391</sup> These are between *Book of Common Prayer* and Puritan worship – that is between fixed and formal, and extempore and informal. He notes a tension between emotional and intellectual, stating 'Methodist worship continued to be characterised by an unconscious mixture of Enlightenment

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<sup>389</sup> *Called to Love and Praise*, pp. 54-55

<sup>390</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 4

<sup>391</sup> Anthony Reddie in 'Dispelling Myths', points out that these tensions exist across much Methodist theology and polity, not just in the area of worship. Further he says that this creates 'discrepancy between the assertion of Methodist theology and contemporary local practice...' The exercise of local practice in worship and liturgy over and against 'official' norms is a key issue in this thesis. As Reddie points out Methodism is a Non-Conformist Free Church but with a desire to be 'accepted as worthy and legitimate in society at large'. That tension can also be seen in Methodism as some who wish to see worship as essentially free and extempore and decided at local level to meet practical aims and ends, and others who see worship as being ordered by theological and liturgical norms.

rationalism and evangelical revivalism'.<sup>392</sup> This is the tension that Tabraham also comments upon.<sup>393</sup> He notes a tension between sacramental and subjective, saying that there are periods of time when the sacraments are downplayed and emphasis laid on the spiritual experience of the individual believer. Most of Chapman's 'dialectical tensions' can be fitted into Westerfield Tucker's scheme of poles or tensions. In the course of my review of the development of Methodist worship in cultural context it has also been noted that there are some other tensions apparent. One major issue is that of the theology conveyed in and through the worship – to what degree is this soteriological and evangelical or is it now shaped differently, perhaps even in myriad ways? I have also noted two tensions that emerged in all-age worship – those of worship and/or learning; and worship and entertainment. Another issue that emerges in modern times is the issue of language – how formal should it be and what theology does it convey?

Chapman states

the Methodist preaching service has changed considerably...from a simple vehicle for the proclamation of the gospel into a sophisticated act of public worship ordered on liturgical principles. There is nothing in the *Methodist Worship Book* to suggest the service has an evangelical purpose'.<sup>394</sup>

So far I have not identified what change to Methodist worship has been made by the liturgical movement or how Methodist 'preaching' services are conducted today. The question remains whether or not, as Chapman proposes, Methodist

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<sup>392</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 336

<sup>393</sup> Barrie Tabraham, *The Making of Methodism*, (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1995), p. 90

<sup>394</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 61



non-Eucharistic worship is ordered on liturgical principles. This is what I now move on to explore. Recognising that much change has been influenced by the contemporary age, I will seek to understand what influence the liturgical movement has had on the changing practice of the British Methodist 'preaching' service, and to seek to identify if there are ideas and lessons that Methodism has not learned that might be beneficial to Methodist congregations. But it should be noted that the liturgical movement has also developed within the same post-Christian milieu. So it too is affected by cultural change.

CHAPTER 3 – THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LITURGICAL MOVEMENT AND  
LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

3.1 Liturgical Renewal and Restoration

The liturgies of the Christian Church have been subject to change throughout the whole time period of Christianity. Certain periods of time see explicit and wide-ranging change occur. Geoffrey Wainwright identifies six main eras of liturgical history – the apostolic; the patristic; the medieval; the reformation and beyond; the counter-reformation; and the modern and contemporary.<sup>395</sup>

Significant changes in political, economic, social, intellectual, scientific and theological conditions come to bear on the Church at certain historical times and these lead into change in liturgical norms and practice, as well as wider theological and ecclesiological change. Chapter 2 showed how the Enlightenment impacted on John Wesley and the development of Methodism, including its worship; and how secularisation and post-modernism have impacted on worship since the 1960s.

This chapter explores change in worship practice brought about through the liturgical movement, examining the key liturgical and theological concepts that have been promoted by this movement. Donald McKim states that the liturgical movement ‘...has sought to make the liturgies of divine worship more congruent with church tradition, more appealing to new or different groups, or for other reasons’.<sup>396</sup> Frank Senn, however, suggests that a distinction should be made

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<sup>395</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, ‘The Periods of Liturgical History’, Cheslyn Jones et al, (Editors), *The Study of the Liturgy – Revised Edition*, (London: SPCK, 1992), pp. 61-67

<sup>396</sup> Doanld K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p.162

between the study of liturgical restoration, which aims to make the liturgy more congruent with church tradition, and the study of liturgical renewal.

The liturgical renewal movement may be distinguished from the liturgical restoration movement in this way: liturgical restoration sought to recover the order, texts and rubrics of historical liturgical rites and put them in place; liturgical renewal sought to recover the liturgy's essential character as the public work of the people. The primary agenda, therefore, was then to give the assembly an essential liturgical role. The congregants could not be bystanders; they had to be participants...<sup>397</sup>

In practice it is not simple to separate the work of liturgical restoration from liturgical renewal. Liturgical renewal has encompassed the work of liturgical restoration, and much attention has been given to the content of the liturgy, with liturgical scholars appropriating texts from the patristic period on which to model the revised liturgies of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>398</sup> Indeed the *ordo* is based upon study of the early liturgies and tradition of the Church. The liturgical movement and liturgical renewal seeks to explore the *ordo* in many and varied ways so that actual liturgical practice may be informed by it and other core principles that the liturgical movement has (re) discovered – for example, as Senn says above, participation.

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<sup>397</sup> Frank Senn, *The People's Work – A Social History of the Liturgy*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), p. 305

<sup>398</sup> A classic example of this is the work of Gregory Dix who in *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: A & C Black, 1945) developed his idea that the Eucharist first had a seven fold shape, modified early in church tradition to the four fold in shape – Take, Bless, Break, Give – based on the command of Jesus as seen in the New Testament accounts of the Last Supper and on the practice of the early church. This model is explicitly used in the *Methodist Service Book* as explained in Dixon, *At Your Service*, pp. 28-34. Such 'standardisation' has been critiqued in more recent years, particularly by Paul F. Bradshaw in *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, (London: SPCK, 2002) and *Eucharistic Origins* (London: SPCK, 2004)

### 3.2 Liturgical Renewal in and through the Liturgical Movement and the Ecumenical Movement

The beginning of the liturgical movement<sup>399</sup> is usually credited to the Benedictine, Dom L. Beauduin in 1909,<sup>400</sup> and his address on “The True Prayer of the Church” given to the Congress of Catholic Works, held in Malines. Beauduin called for the active participation of congregations in worship,<sup>401</sup> and this has been one of the primary themes of liturgical renewal ever since. Beauduin published *The Piety of the Church* in 1914, in which he stated that it is in gathering for worship that Christian people are formed in the faith of the Church and as a community of the faithful.<sup>402</sup>

A complex historical process has formed and shaped the liturgical movement. Liturgical renewal within the Roman Catholic Church took place primarily within the confines and constructs of that Church. Some of its ideas and understandings were shared with other scholars and liturgists in other churches, but not in organised and approved ecumenical organisations. The Roman Catholic Church stood outside the ecumenical movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. But an ecumenical movement did develop through the World Missionary Conference (becoming the International Missionary Conference in 1921) and discussed within its membership (mainly churches of the Reformed traditions and some Orthodox churches) many ideas relating to liturgical renewal.

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<sup>399</sup> Sometimes this is referred to as the second liturgical movement, with the first being in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century – this movement was more concerned with the restoration of ancient liturgies. Alfred Shands, *The Liturgical Movement and the Local Church*, (SCM Press, 1965), p. 26

<sup>400</sup> Wainwright, ‘The Periods of Liturgical History’, p. 66

<sup>401</sup> Virgil C. Funk, ‘The Liturgical Movement, 1830-1969’, Peter E. Fink, (Editor), *New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), p. 699

<sup>402</sup> Cited in Wainwright, ‘Ecumenical Convergences’, p. 725

The beginning of the ecumenical movement is dated to 1910 from the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh. As this movement pondered missionary strategies, both at home and abroad, it was aware that the divisions between churches, that were reflected in doctrines, ecclesiology and liturgical norms, impacted on their ability to mission. Both the first World Conference on Faith and Order held in Lausanne in 1927 and the second held in Edinburgh in 1937 discussed matters relating to worship, although at this point it was the differences in worship, and in the understanding of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper that dominated proceedings. However, the participating churches showed a desire to come to a fuller understanding of different positions and a willingness to work towards removing barriers that divided churches in the Protestant tradition.<sup>403</sup> This movement grew into the World Council of Churches and 'For half a century...provided the main framework for multilateral ecumenism, and a way of reading liturgical history during that time runs from the comparative study "Ways of Worship", prepared for the World Conference on Faith and Worship at Lund in 1952, to the Lima text "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" of 1982'.<sup>404</sup> Similar ideas emerged in the Roman Catholic Church's liturgical movement. Wainwright notes that 'The similarities may be chiefly accounted for as responses to common challenges and opportunities and as a gradual reversion to common resources'.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Wainwright, 'Ecumenical Convergences', p. 732

<sup>404</sup> Wainwright, 'Ecumenical Convergences', p. 724-725

<sup>405</sup> Wainwright, 'Ecumenical Convergences', p. 724

At the 1952 Third World Conference of Faith and Order,<sup>406</sup> ecumenical convergence amongst Protestants, in relation to liturgical renewal, is reported in *Ways of Worship: The Report of a Theological Commission of Faith and Order*, as worthy of being called a “liturgical movement”.<sup>407</sup> The report stresses areas of convergence, not least the growth in belief that worship should include both Word and Sacrament.

One outstanding fact to which our evidence directs attention is the widespread growth, however tentative in some parts of the Church, of a Liturgical return. It should not be overlooked that the new understanding of liturgical values has been fostered by exegetical, historical and theological study within separate communions, widened after the war by the renewed possibility of international contacts. The development is further due to the experiences of ecumenical thinking and personal contacts during a growing series of ecumenical gatherings, both large and small. We may feel that the values of the *grande tradition* had worked silently, and were now beginning to come into their own in places where such renewal might have seemed least likely, even if long desired. Under these various influences the contrast between Word and Sacrament has become at least a carefully studied comparison, and at best a new realisation of a needed integration in our total worship of God in the wholeness of His Church.<sup>408</sup>

Wainwright notes that it was only after Vatican II in 1962 that the Roman Catholic Church ‘somewhat belatedly’ joined the liturgical renewal movement;<sup>409</sup> but he also notes ‘...the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Liturgical Movement owes its initial thrust to figures in the Catholic Church, and liturgical scholars and

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<sup>406</sup> Faith and Order was an ecumenical gathering of representatives of the churches. The Conference had no official status, but given that its representatives are officially nominated by the constituent churches its findings may have a bearing on the thinking of the individual churches.

<sup>407</sup> Peter Edwall, Eric Hayman, William D. Maxwell, (Editors), *Ways of Worship : The Report of a Theological Commission of Faith and Order*, (London: SCM, 1951), p. 16, cited in John Fenwick and Brian Spinks, *Worship in Transition – The Twentieth Century Liturgical Movement*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), p. 37

<sup>408</sup> Peter Edwall et al, *Ways of Worship*, p. 11 cited in Wainwright, ‘Ecumenical Convergences’, p. 734

<sup>409</sup> Wainwright, ‘Ecumenical Convergences’, p. 721

practitioners in other churches have usually kept an eye on developments in Catholicism and have often – at first warily but then perhaps increasingly – drawn inspiration from them'.<sup>410</sup> The Roman Catholic Church, with an ecumenical spirit, admitted observers from other churches to Vatican II.<sup>411</sup> The first ecumenical liturgical publication was produced in 1962 entitled *Studia Liturgica*, and then an ecumenical liturgical organisation, 'Societas Liturgica', was founded in 1967.<sup>412</sup>

The development of liturgical renewal, in and through the liturgical and ecumenical movements has been, then, a complex process. Whilst the term liturgical movement is used often in the literature – and writing in 1965 Alfred Shands can say, 'The liturgical movement has come of age'.<sup>413</sup> It is simply not possible to talk of one liturgical movement. There have been liturgical movements in both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches – and within the Protestant churches individually there have been authors and organisations that have encouraged those churches to think about the renewal of worship.<sup>414</sup> After Vatican II there was co-operation across the Roman Catholic and Protestant divide. But perhaps the best way to think is in terms of core concepts that liturgical renewal has promoted through the movement/s.

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<sup>410</sup> Wainwright, 'Ecumenical Convergences', p. 722-723

<sup>411</sup> The British Methodist observer was A. Raymond George, who became the main author of the *Methodist Service Book*, published in 1975.

<sup>412</sup> Wainwright, 'Ecumenical Convergences', p. 741

<sup>413</sup> Alfred Shands, *The Liturgical Movement and the Local Church*, p. 9

<sup>414</sup> The Orthodox Churches have not been engaged with the ecumenical and liturgical movements in the same manner or to the same degree. There has been a degree of cooperation in the ecumenical Faith and Order Conferences; the liturgies of some Orthodox churches have been translated into the vernacular; Alexander Schmemmann has been a significant Orthodox contributor to liturgical theology – but Orthodox liturgical practice has not taken the ecumenical convergence route that has been taken by Roman Catholics and many Protestant churches.

### 3.3 The Outcomes of Liturgical Renewal through the Liturgical Movement/s

The Roman Catholic Church initiated significant liturgical reform when the Bishops of the Second Vatican Council, on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1963, promulgated their first conciliar document – the Liturgy Constitution, *Sacrosanctum concilium*. This instructed that the Mass be translated from Latin into vernacular languages so that the laity could understand the Mass. However the concerns of *Sacrosanctum concilium* were wider than this issue. The structure and indeed the theology contained in the Mass, concelebration, the role of the laity and the place and purpose of music were all areas of discussion and debate.<sup>415</sup> Virgil Fink states that ‘What was central to the liturgical movement (in the Roman Catholic Church) was a desire to make the liturgical prayer of the church more meaningful to the participants. Full, conscious and active participation led to the realization that the rite itself needed to be revised...’<sup>416</sup> So the Mass was not simply translated but re-written in a reformed rite: ‘The process was to produce a Latin *edition typical* of the reformed rite. It was then translated into vernacular languages’.<sup>417</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright notes that all participants in the field of liturgical renewal made pastoral interests and ministry key principle. Worship was to be the ‘work of the people’, in a language they understood and through rites in which they could participate.<sup>418</sup> Wainwright also notes that the Eucharist was seen to be the ‘focal expression’ of the liturgy – the ‘source and summit’ of the Christian life. Most importantly, as Giuseppe Alberigo comments, Vatican II’s whole ethos revolved around new and emerging understandings of the Church as ‘...the community or the home of all the faithful, which was

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<sup>415</sup> Funk, ‘The Liturgical Movement’, p. 715

<sup>416</sup> Funk, ‘The Liturgical Movement’, p. 714

<sup>417</sup> Senn, *The People’s Work*, p. 312

<sup>418</sup> Wainwright, ‘The Periods of Liturgical History’, p. 66



contained within the goals of liturgical reform'.<sup>419</sup> Such a position was discovered and founded within a cultural context of reaction against fascism and centralised communism and the growing belief that the Church was of and for the people, and not a monarchical establishment.<sup>420</sup>

Vatican II also promoted the reading of Scripture and preaching as necessary reforms: 'The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly so that a richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's word...'<sup>421</sup> The consequence of this assertion was the production of a three-year lectionary for Sundays and festivals by the Roman Catholic Church that, further refined by the Ecumenical Consultation on Common Texts, developed into the Revised Common Lectionary that has been widely adopted by many Protestant churches.<sup>422</sup>

Whilst liturgical revision was happening within the Roman Catholic Church, other churches were also studying worship and promoting change: 'Meanwhile other churches...had also been engaging – in their own fashions and without necessarily using the term – in a "liturgical movement" that brought together historical, theological and pastoral interests'.<sup>423</sup> This was true of churches in Europe, Great Britain, the United States of America and Australasia. But the first and earliest example of liturgical revision of text is found in the Church of South

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<sup>419</sup> Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2009), p. 59

<sup>420</sup> Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, p. 34. Not all Roman Catholic scholars are in agreement with Alberigo and other pro-Vatican II authors. See for example, David Torvell, *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity and Liturgical Reform*, (T and T Clark, 2001)

<sup>421</sup> *Sacrosanctum consilium*, Austin Flannery (Editor), *Vatican Council II: Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, (New York: Costello Publishing Co, 1977), p. 14

<sup>422</sup> Senn, *The People's Work*, p. 312

<sup>423</sup> Wainwright, 'Ecumenical Convergences', p. 729

India formed in 1947. The four participating denominations first used the new liturgy in 1950 during their Synod, and it was authorised in 1954 for use throughout the Church.<sup>424</sup>

In Britain,<sup>425</sup> in the Church of England, Henry de Candole wrote in the 1930s:

Christian worship is the Christian community offering its life and work to God through our Lord. Liturgy means the activity of the people of God, which is primarily a corporate common activity of the whole fellowship. That action is one offering, and most clearly set forth and illustrated in the Eucharist, which is the heart of Christian worship.<sup>426</sup>

And in 1949, again within the Church of England, the Parish and People Movement<sup>427</sup> was founded. Its aims were ecumenical and liturgical:

The object of the Parish and People Movement is to help members of the Church of England and its sister Churches in and beyond the Anglican Communion to understand better:

- (a) The Bible, in particular what it makes known about God and His people, the Church;
- (b) Worship, especially as it is corporately offered by the People of God in Holy Communion;
- (c) Christian Action, as the People of God are sent to live in the world in order to transform the world.<sup>428</sup>

In British Methodism J.E. Rattenbury founded in 1935 the Methodist

Sacramental Fellowship 'to restore to Methodism the sacramental worship of

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<sup>424</sup> M. Thomas Thangaraj, 'South India, Worship in the church of', *The New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, pp. 445-446

<sup>425</sup> See Jenkins and Spinks, *Worship in Transition*, and Wainwright, 'Ecumenical Convergences', for more examples of churches and individuals within churches, in Britain and elsewhere, writing to influence the official texts and positions of their denominations.

<sup>426</sup> Peter Jagger, *Bishop Henry de Candole: His Life and Times, (1875-1971)*, (Leighton Buzzard, Beds: Faith Press, 1975), p. 119 cited from Wainwright, 'Ecumenical Convergences', p. 728

<sup>427</sup> The formation of the Parish and People Movement owed its origins to the work of the Anglican, Father Gabriel Hebert. He was the interpreter of the Continental Liturgical Movement and he leaned much of his liturgical theology from the Swedish Church. His main work was *Liturgy and Society: The Function of the Church in the Modern World* published in 1935.

<sup>428</sup> Wainwright, 'Ecumenical Convergences', p. 728-729

the Universal Church and in particular the centrality of the Eucharist'.<sup>429</sup> In 1961, J. C. Bower wrote *The Lord's Supper in Methodism 1791-1960*,<sup>430</sup> in which he stated that Methodists needed to embrace the changes being propagated in recent scholarship and should see the Lord's Supper as an act of corporate worship; be unafraid of ceremony; make more use of a full service of Holy Communion; replace individual communion cups with a common chalice and make use of a free-standing communion table. Raymond Billington, in 1969, wrote *The Liturgical Movement and Methodism*,<sup>431</sup> in which he advocated that the Eucharist be the central Christian act of worship, and that Methodism needed to recognise the Church as a corporate body that engaged in congregational participation, rather than a collection of individuals who seek individual salvation. He stated: 'The belief dies hard that being a Christian is essentially having a personal faith'.<sup>432</sup> The adoption of the corporate nature of the Church in Protestant churches is then in reaction to other past distortions rather than those distortions in the Roman Catholic Church – yet both came to promote the Church as the people of God celebrating God's saving activity as fundamental to the liturgy.

The centrality of the Lord's Supper has been a key component in the work of the liturgical movement; but so too, especially within the Roman Catholic Church, was the recovery of the Scriptures and preaching as an essential component of worship. In the latter part of the twentieth century, in many denominations, the

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<sup>429</sup> Wainwright, 'Ecumenical Convergences', p. 730 See also John Newton, *Heart to Heart*, for an account of the on-going work of MSF within Methodism to restore the sacrament of Holy Communion, pp. 68-84

<sup>430</sup> J. C. Bower, *The Lord's Supper in Methodism, 1791-1960*, (Epworth Press, 1961)

<sup>431</sup> Raymond J. Billington, *The Liturgical Movement and Methodism*, (London: Epworth, 1969)

<sup>432</sup> Billington, *The Liturgical Movement and Methodism*, p. 142

work of liturgical revision and renewal has led to new service books that ‘...have recognised that Christian Sunday worship, in its fullness, includes both word and table’.<sup>433</sup> But this has not been the only contribution of the liturgical reformers. John Fenwick and Bryan Spinks in *Worship in Transition – The Twentieth Century Liturgical Movement*, summarise the key characteristics of the movement as: the Church as a community; worship as requiring active participation of the laity; the re-discovery of pre-reformation and early church models of worship; the rediscovery of the centrality of Scripture and Preaching to worship; the rediscovery of the Eucharist as key to worship; and the use of the vernacular and modern language as the medium of the liturgy.

#### 3.4 Methodism and Liturgical Renewal

Billington stated that ‘There seems no reason why the Liturgical Movement should not have an impact upon Methodism. Our system and our theology are not inherently alien to a great deal the movement suggests; the only real obstacle is the ostrich-like attitude which is too often manifested’.<sup>434</sup> With the publication in 1975 of the *Methodist Service Book*, British Methodism introduced its first service book influenced by the liturgical movement. It had a major effect on the celebration of the Lord’s Supper in Methodism, providing a new text and increasing the frequency of the Lord’s Supper toward a monthly morning event.<sup>435</sup> Methodism adopted in the *Methodist Service Book*

‘...the recovery of the four-fold pattern which comes down from the Early Church, the stripping away of fussy and sentimental words and practices

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<sup>433</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, ‘Renewing Worship: The Recovery of Classical Patterns’, *Worship with One Accord: Where Liturgy and Ecumenism Embrace*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 127-140, p. 136.

<sup>434</sup> Billington, *The Liturgical Movement and Methodism*, p. 179

<sup>435</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, p. 5, and, Maizel-Long, ‘Theology Sung’, p. 52

to gain simplicity, the combination of theological truth with relevance to contemporary needs, and the up-dating of language, not into modern jargon, but into direct and dignified speech...and above all, the active participation of the congregation is at all points invited'.<sup>436</sup>

Most importantly the *Methodist Service Book* Eucharistic prayer moved away from the penitential nature of the *Book of Offices* to '...the Liturgical Movement's very different emphasis on celebration and joy, shared by the whole congregation'.<sup>437</sup> But even more than saying that it is a service that is celebratory, one has to say, again taking reference from the liturgical movement, it celebrates the salvation God offers in Christ in a more holistic and corporate way, widening the actual belief of the church about the very nature of salvation. The *Methodist Service Book* also included a lectionary and therefore encouraged the reading of scripture and sermons based on weekly readings.<sup>438</sup>

This is the liturgical movement's impact on Eucharistic worship. What influence did the liturgical movement have for the church's practice of non-Eucharistic worship? Billington's point about the corporate nature of the church might still be emphasised in non-Eucharistic worship, given that participation in Methodist worship occurs through the singing of hymns; but his critique of the ethos of Methodist worship, focused as it was on justification by faith, assurance and Christian holiness,<sup>439</sup> led him to say about sermons that '...too many sermons are centred on the theme of redemption, salvation from sin and conversion'.<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> Davies, *Methodism*, p. 173

<sup>437</sup> Maizel-Long, 'Theology Sung', p. 52

<sup>438</sup> However it should be noted that some Methodists understand and celebrate Holy Communion primarily as a memorial meal. The wide variety of understanding about the significance of Holy Communion is set out in *His Presence Makes the Feast*.

<sup>439</sup> Billington, *The Liturgical Movement and Methodism*, p. 156

<sup>440</sup> Billington, *The Liturgical Movement and Methodism*, p. 160

This might well be applied to some of its older hymnody, and some of the ‘new’ songs, that still focus on individual salvation and the road to heaven. Billington also said that other factors in Methodist liturgy nullified some of the central emphases of the liturgical movement. He states that Methodist worship needed to pay more attention to movement in liturgy, with more emphasis on times of quiet and louder participation, lament and commitment. He said that worship needed to make more links between worship and witness and that the architecture of churches needed to change to reflect the corporate nature of worship. Chapman suggests that Billington’s view that the liturgical movement could impact on Methodist worship has come to fruition because ‘There is nothing in the *Methodist Worship Book* to suggest the service has an evangelical purpose.’<sup>441</sup> But this view can only be supported if one has a limited understanding of what liturgical principles are, and if the only evidence studied is the *Methodist Worship Book*; for his analysis relies on thinking that liturgical principles are embodied in the text. The text of the *Methodist Worship Book* contains ‘...two services which (follow) are complete orders of worship for use at any time’<sup>442</sup> – that is when a Eucharistic service is not being celebrated - called Morning, Afternoon, or Evening Services. They do contain some of the lessons of the liturgical movement but the evidence in this thesis suggests that the service book is very rarely used in preaching services.<sup>443</sup> It is necessary to look beyond the use of the worship book to see how much Methodism has adopted a preaching service ‘ordered on liturgical principles’ and whether or not Methodist worship continues to have an evangelical emphasis on personal

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<sup>441</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 61

<sup>442</sup> *Methodist Worship Book*, p. 26

<sup>443</sup> See Chapter 5 and Appendix 4 – only 3 preachers out of 90 claim to use *The Methodist Worship Book* in a Preaching Service.

salvation that negates the corporate nature of the church; or indeed has adopted other forms and emphases.

Judith Maizel-Long supports Chapman's position, claiming that 'The Liturgical Movement has thus led to essentially 'Free Church' patterns of worship being transformed by 'ecumenical' norms sourced in the historic period of the early centuries of the Church'.<sup>444</sup> To assert this claim Maizel-Long notes how Methodism has drawn on the liturgical movement to move from the theology and language of the Book of Common Prayer to new kinds of theological emphasis and new language patterns contained in both *Hymns and Psalms*, the *Methodist Service Book* and the *Methodist Worship Book*. She notes the greater frequency of the sacrament of Holy Communion and the ethos of worship as celebration. She also notes that *Hymns and Psalms* varies in its theological emphasis from the *Methodist Hymn Book* with 'The focus of *Hymns and Psalms* (is thus) on the Church, not on salvation'.<sup>445</sup> She notes also the influence of the liturgical movement on creating a greater awareness of the Church Year and the more frequent use of the lectionary. But she presents little evidence about the impact on non-Eucharistic worship, and how it has been transformed by ecumenical norms, with her focus mainly on the Eucharist. Even in her analysis of Eucharistic services she relies on text – not actual performance of services. So, for example, in both Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic services, whilst *Hymns and Psalms* may have a focus on the Church, it is not known if the actual hymns sung and chosen are still predominantly about the salvation of the individual. In both forms of service it needs to be asked, as the aims of the liturgical

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<sup>444</sup> Maizel-Long, 'Theology Sung', p. 52-53

<sup>445</sup> Maizel-Long, 'Theology Sung', p. 50

movement have been to transform theology and language and to introduce an ethos of worship as the corporate celebration of the Church of the saving work of God in Christ, whether this can be evidenced? She herself does recognise the problem in relation to non-Eucharistic services:

In British Methodism, most Sunday worship is not formally liturgical. Worship in Methodism is authorised through being led by authorised persons... All these authorised persons may write their own prayers, pray extempore, or use published material. Consideration of such material therefore must allow for the fact that although authorised texts set out norms and standards, and though other sources are used, printed materials represent only a part of the pattern of worship.<sup>446</sup>

The question remains then, without further evidence being supplied – what order and content and theology does a Methodist non-Eucharistic service, whether a ‘preaching’ service or an all-age service, follow? Further, what prayers and hymns are chosen? What Scripture is read and what is the ‘message’ contained in the sermon or other form of proclamation? Is a non-Eucharistic service focused on the celebration of God’s saving work in Christ? Is it the case that Methodism no longer practises essentially ‘Free-Church’ style of worship or is it shaped and influenced by the liturgical movement?

Billington, Chapman, and Maizel-Long begin to point toward the relationship between Methodism and the liturgical movement and liturgical theology – but the issue encountered in any analysis of the changing nature of Methodist non-Eucharistic Services means that analysis of texts is not enough, for the written texts of the service books have not necessarily shaped non-Eucharistic services or provided its theology. An examination is required of content, in terms of

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<sup>446</sup> Maizel-Long, ‘Theology Sung’, p. 48-49



hymns, readings, prayers and sermon; and of the style of worship practised, the theological emphasis contained in worship and the relationship between the two. In other words analysis must be nuanced by the local performance of worship.

### 3.5 The Dynamics of Worship and Theology in Methodist non-Eucharistic worship

A key liturgical principle is that worship is the primary source and focus for the proclamation of the story of God and God's people, the setting forth of the faith of the Church, and the development of the faith of communities. The worship of a community has that vital role in the life of that community. David Fagerberg states that it is the liturgy that enables people to learn theology, or as he calls it, a Christian grammar: 'Liturgy creates a Christian grammar in the people of God who live through the encounter with the paschal mystery...'<sup>447</sup> The liturgy of a community is more than just the text. It includes all that happens within and around the worship service. It is a living dynamic event. Every act of worship is different. As Fagerberg says '...liturgy is a practical thing; that similarities in architecture, prayer book structure, and musical form do not prove identity in meaning; that theory and praxis are related, but not synonymous...a common inventory does not prove the same liturgy is taking place any more than the serving of the same food at both a wake and a wedding proves the same event is taking place'.<sup>448</sup> Yet communities with set texts and rituals for liturgy consistently put forward the faith of the church for their congregations to hear

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<sup>447</sup> David W.Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima – What is Liturgical Theology*, (Chicago/Mundelein, Illinois: Hillenbrand Books, 2004), p. 3

<sup>448</sup> Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima*, p. 219

and affirm. John Baldovin notes a specific liturgical principle - that it is through the repetition of the rite that the liturgy supports and solidifies the individual and the community in its faith identify and development.<sup>449</sup> Methodist understanding of Holy Communion has undoubtedly changed, been more thoroughly understood and had a deeper impact on congregations, through its more regular practice in Methodism since 1975, using ecumenically shaped texts given in the *Methodist Service Book* and the *Methodist Worship Book*.<sup>450</sup> All churches however operate with these polarities. The individual and unique act of worship that occurs each time a community gathers, alongside the regulation of that worship through repeating words and actions. The theology of a Church cannot be completely known from its written liturgy. This is to ignore the other actions, words and symbols present in all acts of worship, and the actual presentation of and participation in the liturgy in any particular place. In British Methodism with its inherent opportunity for variations in non-Eucharistic services it is very difficult to state what theology is being promulgated and learnt by specific communities.

Where there is very little set text (the only exception perhaps being the Lord's Prayer); where Methodist churches have different preachers each week and the preacher chooses the hymns and the scripture readings and expounds theology through the hymn and prayer texts and the sermon; where the preacher generally determines the order of the content of the service, and may influence

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<sup>449</sup> John Baldovin, 'Must Eucharist Do Everything?', Robin A. Leaver and Joyce Ann Zimmerman, (Editors), *Liturgy and Music: Lifetime Learning*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Training Press, 1998), pp. 117-127, p. 120

<sup>450</sup> See *His Presence Makes the Feast* for the most recent research into how Methodists have come to understand and appreciate Holy Communion

how much the congregation participates in the service, creates a real problem in identifying what ethos, what purpose, underpins Methodist worship.

Consequently to come to an understanding of British Methodist worship presents a real methodological problem. Answering the World Council of Churches question about the understanding and practice of non-Eucharistic worship in British Methodism is therefore extremely difficult other than to say it is pluralistic.

### 3.6 (The) Liturgy

By telling the narrative of the history of the liturgical movement, the key themes of the movement have been identified. In the Roman Catholic Church the historical narrative told by Keith Pecklers in *The Genius of the Roman Rite* states that there were three fundamental issues in the reform of the Roman Rite as a consequence of Vatican II. The first was a desire to restore the simpler rites of the fifth to eight centuries, before they became encumbered by the Gallican rite. The second was the restoration of the Paschal Mystery and the impact this bears on the church as it perceives itself as the whole People of God to be participants in the liturgy and to be the body of Christ in the world. The third is that all the laity should have 'full, conscious and active participation' in the liturgy.<sup>451</sup> These concepts certainly are central to much liturgical theology across the ecumenical spread. As noted above Fenwick and Spinks identified the core ideas of the liturgical movement and they add to Peckler's list the rediscovery of the centrality of the Scriptures and the use of modern and vernacular language.

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<sup>451</sup> Pecklers, *The Genius of the Roman Rite*, pp. 28-30

Introductory texts on liturgy<sup>452</sup> and liturgical worship and the service books of many mainstream denominations emphasise many of these common characteristics.<sup>453</sup>

Lying behind these common core characteristics and assertions about worship and liturgy is a vast amount of research and writing. This thesis is not an attempt to reflect on all liturgical theology. It is an exploration of the impact and potential impact of the liturgical movement on Methodist non-Eucharistic worship. Its aim is, consequently, practical and pastoral in nature. Its aim is to explore how, by moving beyond understanding liturgy only in very narrow terms as a set formal type of worship, the study of liturgy might enable the British Methodist Church to understand movements that have taken place in our own and other Churches worship practices, and then, to reflect critically on these changes.

The concern then is with ‘...actual liturgical celebrations in real liturgical assemblies’.<sup>454</sup> A practical and pastoral approach to liturgical theology entails an examination of ‘...that prayer that informs belief and that practice influence on profession (of faith)’.<sup>455</sup> The focus is to identify those issues that have emerged from liturgical theology that do or might impact on worship practices; and to

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<sup>452</sup> Mark Earey’s introductory text identifies ‘true liturgy’ as that which empowers all God’s people, not just leaders; connects with the past, and the wider Church; engages the senses and uses symbolism and action as well as words; structures time and space to reflect the truths and priorities of God’s reign. *Liturgical Worship*, (London: Church Publishing House, 2002), p. 25

<sup>453</sup> See, for example, The Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Gathering For Worship – Patterns and Prayers for the Community of Disciples*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press 2005), p. xv that acknowledges the centrality of preaching and sacraments in worship; the communal nature of worship; the Trinitarian nature of worship.

<sup>454</sup> Frank C. Senn, ‘Surveying the Landscape’, Blair Gilmore Meeks, (Editor), *The Landscape of Praise – Readings in Liturgical Renewal*, (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996), pp. 1-3, p. 2

<sup>455</sup> Senn, ‘Surveying the Landscape’, p. 2

ask if these issues, when translated into texts, rubrics, and lectionaries; and also hymn choices, symbolic actions, enacted rites, architectural design, and so on have impacted on British Methodist worship.

So the task is twofold in nature and practice – to identify the learning that has taken place in the British Methodist Church as revealed in its service books, Conference reports and training programmes; and to assess what actual change in enacted worship has occurred.

But another step is also necessary in understanding liturgical reform and renewal. Steps need to be taken to explore how (the) liturgy has been explored, interpreted and understood. This is a difficult process for 'liturgy does not lend itself to definition...'<sup>456</sup> This difficulty enables Methodism to hold a reductionist view of liturgy – that it is a fixed and formal type of worship service.

*Sacrosanctum consilium* did not define liturgy but '...offers several descriptions of liturgy, each of which illuminates a different aspect of this most important activity of the church'.<sup>457</sup> The Roman Catholic Church does understand that liturgy must be under the official regulation of the church<sup>458</sup> and to the extent that Methodism accredits preachers to lead worship it believes that its worship must also be regulated. The question raised, however, is what boundaries exist, what control mechanisms are in place, to undertake this regulation. Within the arena of liturgical theology it is (the) liturgy itself that exercises this control. But

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<sup>456</sup> J. D. Crichton, 'A Theology of Worship', Cheslyn Jones et al, *The Study of the Liturgy*, pp. 3-30 p. 28

<sup>457</sup> Lawrence Madden, 'Liturgy', Peter Fink, (Editor), *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, p. 740

<sup>458</sup> Lawrence Madden, 'Liturgy', p. 741

that control is not created and regulated by simple rules and rubrics or by one single text. It is created by a deep appreciation of what (the) liturgy is – even if we cannot precisely define it! One liturgical theologian, David Fagerberg, in *Theologia Prima – What is Liturgical Theology*, sets out on this journey of understanding (the) liturgy by uniting with other liturgical theologians to ‘join the opposition’<sup>459</sup> to the trivialisation of (the) liturgy - so that he might ‘...dilate our Christian grammar of liturgy until our Christian doctrine and our Christian life find their rightful home there’.<sup>460</sup> It might be said then, that essentially, liturgical theologians understand much of what passes for Christian worship as inadequate and trivial.<sup>461</sup> It is (the) liturgy that resists trivialisation; liturgy has shape, content, meaning, ethos, and purpose – liturgy is the *ordo* in this sense - a grammar in Fagerberg’s terminology - that resist its diminution. Different liturgical theologians approach the issue of what makes (the) liturgy authentic Christian worship through their own specific context and interests, although much of what they say overlaps and difference is often in what they stress and not in what they deny. In the space available this thesis flags up the ideas, concepts and issues that many and different people state are inherent within (the) liturgy and the *ordo* that enable it to be the authentic worship of the church.

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<sup>459</sup> Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima*, p. 2

<sup>460</sup> Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima*, p. 2

<sup>461</sup> See Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down – A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1995), for a book that highlights the trivialisation of much contemporary worship.

I have organised, under three sub-headings<sup>462</sup> - theological, pastoral/ecclesiological, and historical and ecumenical - some of the most pertinent of the ideas, issues and concepts in the current study of (the) liturgy.

1) Theological considerations: (the) liturgy is the arena in which God is the Subject and Object<sup>463</sup> of the worship offered; where the church undertakes its *theologia prima* – that is primary theology, where the liturgy in speaking, in words and sign-acts about God, sets forth its faith in the very presence of God. God is understood and perceived to be present in and through scripture read and Word proclaimed and in the sacrament of Holy Communion. This is the mystery of God, the continuing incarnation/presence of God in the world, once seen in the human life of Jesus, now made manifest in Word and Sacrament, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Liturgy is essentially then Trinitarian, even as it focuses on and makes specifically present Christ's saving work, called the paschal mystery. Liturgy makes real and available salvation now to its participants as the Church meets the risen Christ. (The) liturgy then is an event in which the church meets God in Christ through the Spirit and through which salvation is proclaimed and claimed. As the church understands liturgy to make God in Christ present, and that in and through this presence, the church benefits

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<sup>462</sup> These headings roughly correspond to three of the most widely read introductory texts on the liturgy. The first, focusing on theology is Dwight W. Vogel, (Editor), *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology – A Reader*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2000). The second, focusing on pastoral concerns is Blair Gilmer Meeks, *The Landscape of Praise – Readings in Liturgical Renewal*, (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press, 1996). The third focusing on historical study of the liturgy is Cheslyn Jones et al, (Editors), *The Study of the Liturgy*, (London: SPCK, 1992, Revised Edition). See the Bibliography for other texts on (the) liturgy.

<sup>463</sup> Whilst there may be some theological objection to understanding God as 'an object' – for God is Being not 'thing' – I take this expression from Marva Dawn – who capitalises the O of Object – to indicate that God is kept central to the act of worship when God is 'talked to' and God is 'talked about' in the liturgy. Marva Dawn, *A Royal "Waste" of Time – The Splendour of Worshipping God and Being Church for the World*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999).

from the very grace of God, liturgy is by very nature doxological – that is the church is engaged in the praise of God for the salvation that God offers - and because liturgy is doxological this means and requires that all theology be doxological, for all further reflection on God is comprehended as reflection on the very goodness of God.

Whilst regarded as a doxological event, liturgy is also the locus of faith learning and development. Reflection on the words and sign-actions of the liturgy are inevitable and necessary as the church ponders on the full significance of God's creating, saving and sustaining work. The liturgy generates faith and the church therefore engages in *theologia secunda* – secondary theology. What the actualisation of, the consequence of, the paschal mystery, through the act of proclamation, is the generative question. This reflection is already shaped by the doxology of the liturgy but is also shaped by other disciplines that reflect on God – scripture, tradition, experience and reason. But this is not merely an academic exercise, for the maxim *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* (meaning “the law of prayer grounds the law of belief”), often shortened to read *lex orandi lex credendi*, draws attention to the relationship between prayer and belief. Within liturgical theology the exact relationship between prayer and belief is debated – but all agree that one does not exist or operate without the other. What attention is drawn toward is that the liturgy is theologically pregnant, returning to where this section began – God is the Object and Subject of worship.



2) Pastoral/Ecclesiological considerations: (the) liturgy is the work of all the people of God. All are, by the grace of God, saved and must know and claim this salvation made present through the paschal mystery, by participation in the liturgy. All declare God's grace; all are saved through God's grace, enacted in the corporate liturgical act. In and through the liturgy, by performing *leitourgia* together, the church becomes what it is ordained to be – the Body of Christ. The liturgy is a gift from God to bring salvation to the corporate community.

Consequently all are invited to participate in liturgy; not simply as readers, or musicians, or preachers or priests, but as people being transformed. Prayer, song, scripture, sacrament are given to enable the People of God to praise God, with God's intention being the transformation of individuals adrift in the world into a community that deeply understands, accepts and acknowledges God's being and plan – to realise, in the here and now, the Kingdom. The liturgy then is deeply ethical – it leads to and inspires *lex agendi* – the law of living. As it reveals God and humanity's true nature so it acts in judgement of the believer(s) and the world and inspires prayer and action for the Kingdom to come.

In order for (the) liturgy to be effective, which is revealed in changed affections<sup>464</sup> of worshippers, God gives to the Church, central things – Scripture, Baptism and Holy Communion, prayer and Psalm and song – that the Church places alongside each other – that are juxtaposed, so that the meaning and mystery (that is the very present saving presence of God in Christ, through the

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<sup>464</sup> In using the term religious affections I am borrowing from the work(s) of Don Saliers and more recently Kendra G. Hotz and Matthew T. Mathews who define religious affection as 'a deep, abiding feature of human personality that grounds and orientates us in all we know, do, and feel. The religious affections form our fundamental dispositions and attunement to the world around us'. Hotz and Mathews, *Shaping the Christian Life – Worship and the Religious Affections*, (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), p. 9

power of the Spirit) are made evident. God gives the Church people with gifts of prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, healing, wisdom, knowledge, and faith – but above all love of God and humanity. God gives to the Church other symbols and signs that utilise the senses - icons, candles, stained glass, incense, music – to add to the liturgy for the praise of God and the visioning of the Kingdom. God gives to the church liturgical language and the Christian year so that God may be spoken to and about in all of God's fullness. God gives to the Church art and architecture to create spaces in which God may be encountered. The Church combines these gifts, more through the application of art than science, to create ritual, in specific contexts and times, as befits the local, national, geographical, and denominational preferences and understandings of the people – to enable the people of God to celebrate together the saving work of God.

3) Historical and Ecumenical considerations: These two considerations need to be taken together. In the historical search for the origins of (the) liturgy, scripture is searched and early church patterns of worship examined. The classic text most widely quoted from the early church is the account given of a church's liturgy in Rome by Justin Martyr, dated to around AD 150. This text, along with readings of the Emmaus Road resurrection appearance in Luke 24, early fellowship meetings in Acts 2, and Last Supper narratives in the synoptic gospels and 1 Corinthians have led some scholars to see the centrality of the scriptures and the Eucharist, surrounded by gathering and sending rites. There are theological traces in scripture of eschatological themes and 'presence of Christ' theology. Yet many scholars also say that it is closer to the truth to say

that there were multiple and varied ways that early Christian communities worshiped. Those who see more unity are called 'lumpers' those who see variety are called 'splitters'! It can be confidently stated that it is not possible to write of a fully developed and universal liturgy in the early years of Christianity.

However, the search for patterns and theological emphases that led into more universal rites in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries has been pursued by scholars who aim to recover the insights of a pre-schism church (the split between East and West) and pre-Reformation splits. It is seen that this process may enable ecumenism. In the historical development of different churches' worship practices some see that accretions have been made that have hidden the essential nature of the liturgy, and other churches see that the rejection of some elements of tradition has led to the devaluing or loss of parts of the liturgy. The common texts of the churches today are based upon investigated and interpreted texts of the early centuries of church life. To borrow the title of one of Geoffrey Wainwright's books, this is the place 'Where Liturgy and Ecumenism Embrace'.<sup>465</sup>

### 3.7 Questions for Methodists about (the) Liturgy

From this understanding of (the) liturgy it is possible to create a series of questions that can then be used to question British Methodism's adoption of liturgical principles – in its service books and by its preachers:

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<sup>465</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Worship With One Accord – Where Liturgy and Ecumenism Embrace*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

In what ways is the liturgy experienced as a celebration, specifically in recognition of God's saving work in Christ, through which the assembly is transformed through that salvation and orientated to the world and its needs?

In what way is the liturgy understood to provide the theology of the people of God, through crafted prayer, scripture readings, Eucharistic prayer, songs sung, sign-acts undertaken, and roles performed?

How are all the elements of the liturgy combined - word, symbol, silence, posture, space, table, font and language to enact the liturgy and to make it real, in the sense of the liturgy enabling the assembly to acknowledge the presence of God in their midst?

How do we approach worship? Do we come into the assembly recognizing that it is God who has called us, God who is present, and that we are there to offer praise and adoration because God is worthy of that?

How do Methodists understand the liturgy as the work of the people of God, in which they play a full, conscious and active role, using all the gifts that God has given to the People of God, thereby participating in liturgy and acknowledging that which is offered as their own?

How does our worship inform us of faith and lead us into transformation as the Body of Christ, realising in daily living the ethics of the liturgy and the demands of the Kingdom?

What approach will we take to the use of the worship book – or at least its norms – as that which gives shape, content and ethos to our worship?

Do we accept the central things of (the) liturgy and open ourselves up to other symbols and signs that play on our senses?

Do we recognize any need for ecumenical consensus in our liturgy? Do we understand that our tradition may have expunged important and historical elements?

How do we get the right balance between worship as doxology, praise addressed to God, and the service time as an hour for being instructed about God?

These are the types of questions that can be asked of the worship of Methodists. They can be used to examine the official responses Methodism has made to the whole area of liturgy and worship over the last 50 years. But more importantly, perhaps, they can also be applied to the enacted rites of the Methodist church, its congregations and preachers. The question that emerges is how much, officially in the texts of Methodism, and locally in the actual practice of Methodist worship, has liturgical renewal and liturgical theology impacted on Methodist worship? This thesis will continue to explore these questions in relation the Methodist worship in proceeding chapters.

CHAPTER 4 – REPORTS, SERVICE BOOKS AND TRAINING MATERIALS AND  
THEIR ENGAGEMENT WITH LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

4.1 The 1960 Conference Committee Report on Worship

At the time of British Methodism's Commission on Worship report to the 1960 Conference, the key issues being articulated by the liturgical movement within the Protestant Churches were the centrality of the Eucharist to worship, the corporate nature of the church and its worship and the missiological implications of worship. The report aligned itself to the ecumenical and liturgical reform movement, stating: 'The study of worship is occupying the thoughts of all churches today...churches can learn from each other, and in so doing come to value more highly the best elements in their own traditions'.<sup>466</sup> The immediate concern of Methodism that the committee was asked to address was '...criticism of the ordering and conduct of worship in many Methodist churches'

However, having aligned itself with the study of worship occupying the thoughts of many churches, it said that '...the recommendations we make about form and content of our worship seem to us to be required by doctrine and principle. Nothing has been suggested for the sake of being different from what we have always been, or out of a desire to imitate the ordering of worship of other communions.'<sup>467</sup> The Commission's report makes no mention of the liturgical movement's exploration of the worship patterns in the patristic period. To make recommendations it turned to the Scriptures: 'The study of the biblical message

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<sup>466</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 6

<sup>467</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 3

has given new insights which need to be embodied in public worship...'<sup>468</sup> and to '...certain principles derived from the Reformation and the Evangelical Revival'.<sup>469</sup> These were; 1) the proclamation of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament; 2) the priesthood of all believers, which presupposes that every Christian has the right of direct access to God and that Christian worship is the worship of the redeemed community, who, united in fellowship of the Holy Spirit, have the power to appear before God for others; 3) the predominance of the notes of intimacy and joy, so often expressed in the hymns of the Wesleys, charged as they are with doctrine, celebrate the triumph of divine love in the hearts of human beings; 4) freedom in worship and the use of language understood by the people.

From its biblical reading and from the principles derived from the Reformation and the Evangelical Revival the committee stated that 'The proper response of man to God as Creator and Redeemer is to offer himself in joyful loving obedience and in adoring gratitude'.<sup>470</sup> This led the committee to emphasise that 'The interaction of proclamation and response is characteristic of public worship'.<sup>471</sup> The report set out what the committee regarded as all the necessary content of a service, and a recommended order, so that a complete service be undertaken, recognising that Methodist preaching services previously lacked some important content, and to ensure that proclamation was followed by response.

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<sup>468</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 6

<sup>469</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 29

<sup>470</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 10

<sup>471</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 12

...many of our services lack structure, that is, they consist of a number of unrelated items devoid of any unifying principle...This would not happen if those who arranged the service took note of structure, theology and devotion, and observed that there is a natural and necessary progression in an act of worship.<sup>472</sup>

George<sup>473</sup> and Burdon<sup>474</sup> give accounts of the typical order of worship in the period 1932-1960.

Raymond George's Order	Adrian Burdon's Order <sup>475</sup>
Possibly an introit sung by the choir Possibly a sentence of scripture as a call to worship	
Hymn	Hymn
Prayer and Lord's prayer	Prayer and Lord's Prayer
Hymn or possibly a psalm sung	Hymn or Psalm
Old Testament Lesson	Old Testament Lesson
Hymn	Hymn
New Testament Lesson	
Children's address	
Possibly an anthem sung by the choir	
Prayer, sometimes called the "long" prayer	Prayers
Notices	Notices
Collection, during which there is an organ voluntary, after which the collection is received by the preacher, placed on the communion table and dedicated with a short prayer	Collection
Hymn	
Sermon	Sermon
Hymn	Hymn
Benediction	Benediction

<sup>472</sup> Conference Committee, para. 30

<sup>473</sup> George, 'From the Sunday Service', p. 35-36

<sup>474</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 36

<sup>475</sup> There may be an error in this stated order – for there is no mention of a New Testament Reading – and in his text Burdon says that 5 hymns was normal practice, but only 3 hymns are listed.



George's main critique of this order was that the '...sermon is placed so far from the lessons'.<sup>476</sup> Burdon's principal points about the nature of 'preaching' services are:

- The primacy of the sermon, highlighted by an order of service that leads up to the sermon.
- The importance of hymns.
- The lack of reference to or use of the lectionary.<sup>477</sup>

The divorce between the sermon and all else occurred because the primary aim was to 'preach the gospel' to the congregation. The committee report recommended this order:

Private prayer as worshippers enter the church, asking for the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit.

Hymn of praise or adoration.

Prayer of adoration and confession, followed by a declaration of God's forgiveness to those who are sorry for their sins and trust in Him.

Hymn of thanksgiving for the forgiveness which has just been received.

First Lesson.

Hymn about the particular Lesson which has just been read or the Scriptures in general.

Second Lesson.

Affirmation of Faith, the Apostle's or Nicene Creed. (Some prefer this follows the sermon).

Hymn asking for a responsive mind, so that we might hear God's voice in the sermon.

Sermon.

Hymn applying the sermon. During the singing of this hymn the offering is received.

Prayer of dedication of both the offering and ourselves, thanksgiving, petition, and intercession, followed by the Lord's Prayer to gather all into one. (some prefer the thanksgiving should precede the dedication).

Hymn of confidence or praise.

The Blessing.<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> George, 'From the Sunday Service', p. 36

<sup>477</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 39

<sup>478</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 35

Although this order of service was recommended, the Committee also, somewhat ambiguously, lent support to the 'order generally observed today', whereby the sermon retained its place at the end of the service; in the process refuting almost all that had been said previously in the report. It does state that 'We do not pretend these orders are the same, or that the views on which each is constructed can be harmonised.'<sup>479</sup> One is left with the suspicion that the report was unanimous because deep divisions on the ordering of worship, and in effect the ethos of worship, were overcome by the presentation of two different orders; only one of which was justified by the content of the report itself.

When the report sought areas of ecumenical agreement it looked for those that Methodism already possessed within its doctrine and theology, rather than enabling Methodism to learn new insights from the liturgical reforms of other churches.

In Methodism we rightly lay great stress on personal religion, but this is combined with a love of fellowship; we can therefore gladly welcome a movement which sees the worship of a congregation not as the action of a mere individual led by another individual, but as a joint activity of a body of people in which all alike have their part to play.<sup>480</sup>

Therefore the report was able to accentuate participation as a shared understanding with the ecumenical movement. However, in relation to the centrality of Holy Communion in worship, the report did not recommend a move to weekly Holy Communion, although it does recommend its increased frequency. There was not agreement between the members of the committee

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<sup>479</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 36

<sup>480</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 6

that 'usual' Christian worship should include Holy Communion every Sunday, even though it can state, 'There is proclaimed in the Church, by Word and Sacrament, the whole Gospel, for the whole world'.<sup>481</sup> The report did say:

We are all agreed that all our Sunday Services, whether or not they are Communion services, should emphasise, as both Communion services and evangelical services do, the remembrance of Christ's death for our sins, communion with the crucified and risen Christ, and the offering of our souls and bodies to Him. The structure of the service of Holy Communion and the structure of the service where there is no Communion bear a certain relation to each other. . . In this way our people may come to see that there is some correspondence between what is done on Communion Sundays and what is done on other Sundays.<sup>482</sup>

So, in 1960, the Methodist Conference adopted a report that emphasised the corporate and participatory nature of worship; it hinted at the celebratory nature of worship; understood worship as an activity in which the mighty acts of God are acknowledged; and, to a limited degree, adopted an understanding that all worship is shaped by both word and sacrament; although the stronger emphasis is on ordering focused by proclamation and response. It did recognise that in all services the saving work of Christ is celebrated - but the report is not sacramental, in the sense that it does not discuss how God in Christ is present and effecting salvation. It noted that worship leads to ethics and that ethics are incorporated in worship. To achieve these aims the report recommended that a specific order and content of worship is required and it is the ordering of service structures that is the principal concern of the 1960s.

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<sup>481</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 29

<sup>482</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 40

Carol Noren,<sup>483</sup> points out that the movement of the sermon from the end to the middle of the service does not make a 'preaching' service liturgical and sacramental. Noren notes that the sermon, instead of being the climax of worship of a worship service, simply becomes the centre. Other moves need to be made in relation to preaching to suggest the service is shaped by (the) liturgy, including linking the sermon to the lectionary readings so that the sermon expresses God's speech into the congregation; recognising the Christian year so that the whole Gospel is heard; enabling participation; ensuring the sermon and service are doxological in nature, thereby ensuring that the service and sermon are not didactic. These liturgical principles are not included in the report. Indeed, in the 1960 report, even the need to follow a lectionary scheme and to observe the Christian year appears in only one paragraph and with little justification.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Carol Noren, 'The Word of God in Worship: Preaching in Relationship to Liturgy', Cheslyn Jones et al, *The Study of the Liturgy*, pp. 31-51

<sup>484</sup> *Conference Committee*, para 38

#### 4.2 The Methodist Service Book

Following on from the Conference Committee report, Methodism began a process to produce a new service book.<sup>485</sup> The *Methodist Service Book* was published in 1975 and received praise from a variety of quarters, including Ronald Jasper, the founder of the Joint Liturgical Group,<sup>486</sup> and then chair of the Church of England's Liturgical Commission.<sup>487</sup>

The *Methodist Service Book* was less defensive about the influence of the liturgical movement than the 1960 committee report:

The ecumenical movement has brought Methodists into close contact with the worship of other communions; and though this book resembles the Book of Common Prayer less than any of its predecessors, it will serve not only as a link with the Church of England but with other communions also, for the investigations of liturgical scholars into the origins and basic structures of liturgical rites have caused a remarkable convergence in the forms of worship used in various churches.<sup>488</sup>

The position of Raymond George as the convenor of the Faith and Order committee, which had responsibility for the *Methodist Service Book*, is in itself significant because he was deeply involved in ecumenical relationships, attended Vatican II as the Methodist observer, and was a member of the Joint Liturgical Group. Raymond George himself comments that 'I consider the principal achievement during my time (as member and chair of the Faith and

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<sup>485</sup> The process is described in Raymond George, 'The Changing Face of Methodism', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* Vol. XLI, Oct. 1997, pp. 65-72, p.69

<sup>486</sup> JLG was established in 1963 to serve British churches in the renewal of worship – developing liturgical thinking and texts. ([www.jlg.org.uk](http://www.jlg.org.uk))

<sup>487</sup> 'This is altogether an excellent book; and I heartily endorse the hopes expressed at the end of the Preface – "May the fruit of all this endeavour be to the glory of God and the building up of his people in love" '. Ronald Jasper, 'The Methodist Service Book', *Epworth Review*, 13.2 (1976), pp.53-55, p.55

<sup>488</sup> *Methodist Service Book*, Preface

Order committee)...the *Methodist Service Book* of 1975.<sup>489</sup> The biggest influence of the service book was undoubtedly on the practice of Holy Communion in Methodism, making it a monthly celebration in many churches.<sup>490</sup>

The *Methodist Service Book* introduced into Methodism an order of service for use when the Lord's Supper was not being celebrated. Indeed it can be said that this was a new form. It was not a 'preaching' service as traditionally understood. This new form was 'The Sunday Service without the Lord's Supper'.<sup>491</sup> Its order was based upon a three-fold shape – that of Preparation, The Ministry of the Word and the Response, thereby placing the readings and sermon together, along with the Apostles' Creed; and, in the Response section introduced prayers of thanksgiving to be said alongside prayers of intercession and dedication. The *Methodist Service Book* also contained a lectionary.

George's critique of post-1975 Methodist non-Eucharistic worship notes that the lectionary was followed very patchily; the Apostles' creed almost never said; and that although prayers of intercession were moved to after the sermon, 'What has unfortunately not been well accepted is that it (prayer after the sermon) should include thanksgiving and dedication...Preachers generally have not grasped the concept of a "dry" anaphora'.<sup>492</sup> For George the dry anaphora<sup>493</sup>

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<sup>489</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, (Editor), *A. Raymond George – Memoirs Methodist and Ecumenical*, (Buxton: Church in the Market Place Publications, 2003), p. 115

<sup>490</sup> Max Thurian, (Editor), *Churches Respond to BEM Vol. II – Official Responses to the "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" Text*, (Faith and Order Paper 132: World Council of Churches, 1986), p. 215

<sup>491</sup> *Methodist Service Book*, p. B18

<sup>492</sup> George, 'From the Sunday Service', p. 48-49

<sup>493</sup> An anaphora being a prayer of thanksgiving and offering of self in praise, as found in the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving in the Eucharist; and a dry anaphora when there is no distribution of bread and wine.

altered the traditional preaching service to give the Sunday Service without Holy Communion a similar structure and ethos to that of a Eucharistic service. But the idea that non-Eucharistic services and communion services should be similar to each other in structure and ethos did not fully work its way into Methodist practice as George had hoped.

Others in Methodism attempted to support the changes sought by the *Methodist Service Book. About Worship*,<sup>494</sup> gave Raymond George an opportunity, prior to the official recognition of the *Methodist Service Book*, to interact with Local Preachers, but at a point when the draft services had been printed and were available to preachers. In this chapter he explained and encouraged the use of the new form. This was almost certainly a radical suggestion to most Local Preachers who, having no previous book to order a preaching service (unless perhaps they used a form of Morning Prayer), simply would not think about re-ordering a service or using set prayers. So Raymond George has to “spell it out” when he writes: ‘It (The Sunday Service) concerns ‘ordinary’ preaching services as well as the Lord’s Supper, and some of the prayers for use at preaching services are contained only in the full edition; so it is important for Local Preachers to have the Sunday Service, and to have it in the full edition.’<sup>495</sup>

George uses this opportunity, as he does in all his articles on the *Methodist Service Book*, to draw attention to the introduction of the three-fold shape to

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<sup>494</sup> John Stacey, (Editor), *About Worship – Preacher’s Handbook New Series Number 4*, (The Division of Ministries of the Methodist Church, 1973)

<sup>495</sup> A. Raymond George, ‘Worship and the Book of Offices’, *About Worship*, pp. 68-86, p. 69

worship – Preparation; the Ministry of the Word and the Response – and how this shape is different from past practice. He writes:

The chief difference from the order which has on the whole been followed in the past is that the sermon comes nearer to the lesson which it expounds, and the ‘long’ prayer which used to come between the lessons and the sermon is now put at the end, after the sermon. This is surely right, for in the sermon God speaks to us, and the prayer is our reply.<sup>496</sup>

Frank Godfrey’s chapter, ‘Ordering Services,’ in *In Church – An Introduction to Worship and Preaching*<sup>497</sup> promotes the *Methodist Service Book* order, affirming the ‘official’ position of the day:

Though our traditional order of Methodist Worship...has been a means of grace for many years its weakness is that in placing the sermon at the close of the service there is no adequate opportunity for congregational response to the Word preached in the sermon.<sup>498</sup>

Epworth Press assisted in promoting the *Methodist Service Book* to a wider audience through the publication of a Cell Book,<sup>499</sup> called *At Your Service – A Commentary on the Methodist Service Book*.<sup>500</sup> The author, Neil Dixon, suggests that there were two prominent reasons for the introduction of the new service book. Firstly, along with other Christian churches it is the result of liturgical scholarship, that ‘...has emphasised important aspects of worship that the *Book of Offices* does not adequately express...,’ making available ‘...new insights into how worship should be structured’.<sup>501</sup> Secondly, that it updates language that is

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<sup>496</sup> George, ‘Worship and the Book of Offices’, p. 71-72

<sup>497</sup> John Stacey, (Editor), *In Church – An Introduction to Worship and Preaching*, (London: The Local Preachers’ Office in the Division of Ministries of the Methodist Church, 1971 and 1975)

<sup>498</sup> Frank Godfrey, ‘Ordering Services’, *In Church*, p. 72

<sup>499</sup> A series of small books produced specifically for study by house groups – each chapter ends with a series of questions for the group to discuss.

<sup>500</sup> Neil Dixon, *At Your Service – A Commentary on the Methodist Service Book*, (London: Epworth Press, 1976)

<sup>501</sup> Dixon, *At Your Service*, p. 12



used in church, moving the church away from the use of archaic language.<sup>502</sup> On the issue of Holy Communion he writes: ‘The Lord’s Supper is not an optional extra. It is the central act of Christian Worship’.<sup>503</sup> He goes on, however, to state:

However much importance we attach to the Eucharist, we must recognise that there is no prospect of its weekly celebration becoming the norm in Methodism in the near future. This is partly because less frequent celebration has been common practice for so long that many people would resist change; and partly because of the simple administrative difficulty in many circuits of supplying enough ministers to preside.<sup>504</sup>

In respect of the Sunday Service without the Lord’s Supper, Dixon recognises that the service is shaped by the idea of a service of Word and Table, without much explanation. He provides an outline of the service and notes some of the issues that the liturgical movement have raised – the use of the Collect; recommendation of the use of the lectionary and the creed; ensuring that the sermon is an integrated part of the whole service; ensuring that the notices and/or collection are not placed between the readings and the sermon; noting the prayers of thanksgiving in the long prayer and the placement of the Lord’s Prayer towards the end of the prayers rather than at the beginning of the service. He justifies why the Lord’s Prayer should be said, as it is given in the service book, at the end of the last set of prayers.<sup>505</sup>

Most of the comments Dixon makes relate to the ordering and content of worship. He does point out the concept of worship as celebration, but does nothing to explain the link between changes in worship engendering the

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<sup>502</sup> Dixon, *At Your Service*, p. 13

<sup>503</sup> Dixon, *At Your Service*, p. 21

<sup>504</sup> Dixon, *At Your Service*, p. 6

<sup>505</sup> Dixon, *At Your Service*, p. 42-43

corporate nature of the church. The arguments for changing worship practice are primarily framed in relation to the structure of worship and to the language of worship.

Overall, however, the suggested changes to Methodist worship, being introduced through the *Methodist Service Book* were threefold:

- 1) The underlying theology of worship was seen to be one of praise and prayer,
- 2) The structure of worship was to be patterned by proclamation and response, and;
- 3) The development and promotion of a lectionary sought to introduce more continuity, both week by week but also within each service.

These points are given by Raymond George:

The worship of the Church is the offering of praise and prayer in which God's Word is read and preached, and in its fullness it includes the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion. But the full service is followed by "The Sunday Service without the Lord's Supper", which the Puritans would have called a directory rather than a complete liturgy. But "one way of using this outline" is given, which includes a Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication. By loose analogy with the term *missa sicca*, this might be called a "dry anaphora", and the appendices contain alternative thanksgivings and intercessions. Thus the lack of organic relationship between the ordinary "preaching service" and the Lord's Supper, which troubled Methodism from the beginning, has been overcome, and the unification of the Lectionary is consistent with this. Previously the Public Lessons appointed annually by the Conference stood in no relationship with the Epistle and Gospels in the "Book of Offices". "Collects, Lessons and Psalms" have overcome this difficulty'.<sup>506</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> George, 'The Changing Face of Methodism', p. 71

### 4.3 Groundwork of Worship and Preaching

In 1980, *Groundwork of Worship and Preaching*,<sup>507</sup> was introduced as the textbook for new Local Preachers. The author, Richard Jones, supports the underlying theology of worship advocated by the liturgical movement, writing: 'The nature of Christian worship, what it is really all about, and the most useful concept will turn out to be celebration. . . Worship is thus an ascribing of worthship to God, an ascription that leads to praise and thanksgiving and joy'.<sup>508</sup>

*Groundwork* introduces those being trained as Local Preachers to the liturgical movement in Chapter 3.<sup>509</sup> It explains the main convictions of the liturgical movement, emphasising how the Eucharist or Holy Communion is seen as being of central place in Christian Worship, whilst also noting that '...preaching matters profoundly. As the Protestant reformers said loudly and often, the Word must never be divorced from the Sacrament (of Holy Communion)'.<sup>510</sup> Jones notes that the liturgical movement adopts the Christian year, using the lectionary and collects; emphasises worship as offering of self; and seeks that language be used that relates to modern idiom. What Jones does not quite do is to show how all these matters link to one another, so that the idea that it is the whole people of God that worship in a language and through rites they understand, celebrating together the paschal mystery that is shown forth in the liturgy through the celebration of Holy Communion. Jones critiques the central place of the Eucharist afforded by the liturgical movement for Christian worship, noting that the free churches, including those that are non-

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<sup>507</sup> Richard G. Jones, *Groundwork of Worship and Preaching*, (London: Epworth Press, 1980)

<sup>508</sup> Jones, *Groundwork*, p. 17

<sup>509</sup> Jones, *Groundwork*, pp. 41-64

<sup>510</sup> Jones, *Groundwork*, p. 45

sacramental, the Society of Friends and the Salvation Army, have 'been schools for saints'.<sup>511</sup> Hence Jones notes what has already been apparent above – Methodism is not really sure if the Eucharist is an essential part of Sunday public worship; if a dry anaphora can be a suitable substitute; or if other forms of worship are equally valid. Jones does say that '...any Local Preacher can conduct a service which is Eucharistic in its general structure, by following the first two parts fairly closely and then concluding with the prayers of thanksgiving, dedication and intercession as outlined in *The Methodist Service Book*, pp. B18-21. This provides a very satisfactory shape for such a service, and it is assumed throughout the rest of this book that this is the norm we shall use'.<sup>512</sup>

Despite this endorsement of a non-Eucharistic service taking the shape of a Eucharistic service, Jones's review of the influence of the liturgical movement, challenges some of its assumptions, asking if freedom of the Spirit is constrained by liturgical worship; asking if liturgists are more concerned with technically correct worship than with inspiration.<sup>513</sup> Overall, however, Jones is sympathetic to the influence of the liturgical movement,<sup>514</sup> and points beyond content and structure of worship being the concern of liturgists to the deeper concern for liturgical renewal:

The Liturgical Movement has helped force the church to reconsider her whole worship life, its forms and purposes. It has thus raised some of the

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<sup>511</sup> Jones, *Groundwork*, p.54. This idea of saints being developed through different worshipping traditions is also set forth by James White as I quoted in the previous chapter.

<sup>512</sup> Jones, *Groundwork*, p.48

<sup>513</sup> Jones, *Groundwork*, pp. 53-60. Indeed this may be true! The benefits of (the) liturgy sometimes seem to be presented by liturgists as being concerned with good order. The task of the liturgical theologian is to reveal the benefits of liturgy to a worshipping people in terms of their faith development.

<sup>514</sup> Jones, *Groundwork*, p. 59

most crucial problems about the nature of the church, and, along with them, questions about its missionary life and the character of the congregation.<sup>515</sup>

Jones's text is generally supportive of the *Methodist Service Book* form. However Jones does offer an alternative ordering of the service saying that prayers of thanksgiving can come in the first set of prayers, in the Preparation section; and that The Lord's Prayer might also come in the Preparation. He also offers different places for the Collect of the day to be prayed and different places that the creed may be said. These last two are hardly ever said in non-Eucharistic services; but the possible move of the prayers of thanksgiving and the Lord's Prayer does undermine the theology of the *Methodist Service Book*, which stresses the commonality between Eucharistic services and non-Eucharistic services. What Jones does do is to make the link between the nature of the church and the shape, content, and ethos of its worship – the first time this is seen clearly and strongly in Methodist writing. Jones adopts the deeper purposes of the changes in worship required by the liturgical movement in order to enable the church to be corporate, to be the body of Christ, not simply a collection of individuals that participate together in worship. So, in giving advice on hymn choice for worship, Jones states that hymns should be chosen where the meaning of the words is clear to the singer; that hymns should not be too individualistic; nor should they be built on personal religious experience.<sup>516</sup> This contrasts with Raymond George's words that '...it is the shape rather than the actual words that is recommended in the service book'.<sup>517</sup> George's words are applied to prayer - but prayer in archaic language, or that is too individualistic

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<sup>515</sup> Jones, *Groundwork*, pp. 59-61

<sup>516</sup> Jones, *Groundwork*, pp. 184-194

<sup>517</sup> George, 'Worship and the Book of Offices', p. 70

in content, would not support the aims of the liturgical movement. What Jones allows is choice of readings and content of sermons. He is less concerned with following the lectionary and understanding that the liturgical sermon comes out of those texts.<sup>518</sup>

#### 4.4 The Response to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*

In 1982 the World Council of Churches published *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.<sup>519</sup> This WCC report says, 'It is affirmed that the Eucharist always includes both word and sacrament'; and that, it is 'The central act of the Church's worship';<sup>520</sup> and 'As the Eucharist celebrates the resurrection of Christ, it is appropriate that it should take place at least every Sunday'.<sup>521</sup>

The response of British Methodists to this report came through a report submitted to Conference in 1985,<sup>522</sup> replying to questions the Lima text asked the churches to consider:

1. The extent to which your church can recognise in this text the faith of the church through the ages.
2. The consequences your church can draw from this text for its relations and dialogues with other churches, particularly with those churches which also recognise the text as an expression of the apostolic faith.
3. The guidance your church can take from this text for its worship, educational, ethical, and spiritual life and witness.
4. The suggestions your church can make for the ongoing work of Faith and Order as it relates the material of this text on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry to its long-range research project "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today".<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> Jones, *Groundwork*, pp. 161-165

<sup>519</sup> World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, World Council of Churches Faith and Order Report 111, (WCC 1982)

<sup>520</sup> Wainwright, 'Methodism through the Lens of Lima', p. 307

<sup>521</sup> Wainwright, 'Methodism through the Lens of Lima', p. 308

<sup>522</sup> Thurian, *Churches Respond*, p. 210

<sup>523</sup> Thurian, *Churches Respond*, pp. 212-215

The British Methodist Church emphasised its historical commitment to ecumenical dialogue. Notwithstanding this position, British Methodism's response noted some key issues of the report in respect the issue of Eucharist and Sunday worship. Firstly, these revolve around issues of theological methodology, both in the Methodist Church and in the production of the Lima text itself. British Methodist theological methodology, the response says, is determined more by '...a common life of worship, fellowship and service, rather than by a subscription to a series of articles. Consequently, when we speak of confessing the faith, we think primarily of a community addressing God in worship or a preacher proclaiming the Gospel to the world'.<sup>524</sup> Such a response is natural and understandable from a community that does not practise weekly Holy Communion but that sees its own historical worship practice as efficacious.

In relation to the theological methodology of the Lima text the response noted:

The second difficulty concerns the theological method adopted by the text. Nowhere is this defined, and it is not clear what authority the text wishes to accord, say, to reason and tradition. Neither is it clear what authority and use of scripture is being adopted.<sup>525</sup> The authority of the New Testament over church life today may be accepted in principle, but what kind of authority this is, how it is to be applied, and how it is related to our understanding of the continued work of the Holy Spirit, are questions that need to be addressed.<sup>526</sup>

British Methodism's own theological methodology is, of course, and in this case in relation to its liturgical and Eucharistic theology, also subject to scrutiny!<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>524</sup> Thurian, *Churches Respond*, p. 217-218

<sup>525</sup> See Paula Gooder's chapter 'according to the Scriptures...the use of the Bible in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry', in Paul Avis, (Editor), *Paths to Unity: Explorations in Ecumenical Method*, (Church Publishing House, 1994) for a discussion on the use of specific and selected texts in Lima.

<sup>526</sup> Thurian, *Churches Respond*, p. 218

<sup>527</sup> Methodist theological methodology is one of the subjects of *Unmasking Methodist Theology* and in particular Chapter 5, 'Theology Sung and Celebrated'.

In specific relation to the issue of worship practice, Methodism claimed it places a significant emphasis on ‘...the use of a common hymn book, a common service book and common patterns of worship’,<sup>528</sup> alongside the 1932 Deed of Union and the decisions of Conference to establish and maintain doctrinal standards. But this raises the issue of how much the hymn book, service book and patterns of worship are common, and, if indeed, they do truly shape doctrinal understandings amongst members; and in relation to worship practice how much they shape that practice?

In relation to the specific issues that the text raises for Methodist practice of Sunday worship the key issue revolves around the relationship between word and sacrament. Wainwright notes that through historical circumstances and practice the preaching service is the ‘...most characteristic form of specifically Methodist worship...’<sup>529</sup> British Methodism, noting that the Eucharist is celebrated more often than in the past, but still, usually only once a month in most churches, makes two comments. The first is that the infrequency might actually heighten the sense of importance given to the Eucharist;<sup>530</sup> the second is that the preaching service of British Methodism is now shaped by the Eucharistic pattern as set out in the *Methodist Service Book*.<sup>531</sup> This response begs the question that this study explores. Is it the reality that these elements are present or is it that they are in a service book that is not widely used and whose norms are not followed? Certainly Raymond George, as we have

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<sup>528</sup> Thurian, *Churches Respond*, p. 217

<sup>529</sup> Wainwright, ‘Methodism through the Lens of Lima’, p. 312

<sup>530</sup> This comment is never made about sermons!

<sup>531</sup> Thurain, *Churches Respond*, p. 222



previously noted, did not believe that the element of thanksgiving was being celebrated widely; but the BEM response suggests otherwise.

#### 4.5 The 1988 Report – *Let the People Worship*

*Let the People Worship* was the product of another Conference Committee. This report sold over 15,000 copies, giving it a very wide readership within Methodism.<sup>532</sup> The 1960 report had identified the content and ordering of services as the key issue in respect of Methodist worship. The *Methodist Service Book* consolidated the ordering of worship into a new form. The response to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* stressed that Methodism had altered the shape and content of non-Eucharistic worship to more fully reflect a Eucharistic service. The 1988 report reverses this trend, reflecting that the cultural situation had now changed. It shows all the signs of a pluralistic church discussing its worship within a pluralistic society. So it states:

The form which this (worship) takes has varied greatly in Christian history. Some forms have become fixed: others by nature are free. It is not the intention of this report to commend any one style of worship. Rather it seeks to reflect on the practice of worship in Methodist services today; so that as a church, we may encourage the recovery of worship as central in our common life.<sup>533</sup>

*Let the People Worship* stated that that 1960 report had assisted the renewal of worship, especially through ‘...understanding of the structure of an act of worship, as...Preparation, Word, Response’,<sup>534</sup> and yet, reflected on why ‘...there is so much disquiet about the quality of our worship, and how we can

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<sup>532</sup> John Lampard, ‘Today and Tomorrow’, *Workaday Preachers*, p. 129

<sup>533</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 13

<sup>534</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 10

experience meaning in worship'.<sup>535</sup> The report noted that the disquiet reported to it came from a variety of sources, noting that those influenced by the ecumenical movement and those by the charismatic movement have different aspirations. The report notes that the church tries to meet the needs of a wide range of people; those with different theological positions; those who come to worship God; those who come to church simply seeking God; and children who now attend worship through the development of all-age worship.<sup>536</sup> The report also recognises that more is at issue than plurality within the church. *Let the People Worship* also attempts to address the changes that occurred in world/society/theology that were highlighted in Chapter 2 of this work. So the report asks: 'How do we worship God in a secular, utilitarian world?'<sup>537</sup> All of these issues affect peoples' hopes and desires about worship and their consequent disaffection with its performance. In the midst of all of this the report makes the denominational claim that 'We cherish certain traditional and distinctive emphases in our worship'<sup>538</sup> - those being singing our faith, simple styles of service and the valuing of fellowship that reflects a sense of belonging to the body of Christ.

Against this background, the report identifies four areas for attention, in order that local congregations might worship more fully. These are:

- 1) A sense of the presence of God;
- 2) A balance of teaching and worship;
- 3) The preparation of worship;
- 4) An understanding of what it means to participate in worship.<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>535</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 11

<sup>536</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 3

<sup>537</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 2

<sup>538</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 5

<sup>539</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 27

These areas are identified for thought and action against a wide-ranging affirmation of what worship is - of the Triune God; central to Christian life; a statement of faith of the love and grace of God; related to the whole of life; an act of thanksgiving and praise. It goes on to say that in worship God's word is read and preached; worship is participatory; the preacher is both pastoral and prophetic; worship inspires mission; worship has an evangelical/converting element; local worship is caught up in the worship of all the church on earth and in heaven.<sup>540</sup> In all these aims and hopes there is a sense of trying to meet everyone's needs.

The report suggests that a sense of the presence of God in worship needs to be understood as enabling congregations to be more aware of God, who is always present. The report affirms the need for worship to be understood as beginning with God and God's offering to us and then our response to God in love and praise. But people need to bring to worship an awareness of God; present in everyday life; transcendent and imminent; the giver salvation. For as the report says: 'There is no point in worshipping a dead God, one who was once alive in the stories told in scripture but is no longer alive today'.<sup>541</sup> This issue is about the very nature of God and ways of speaking about and to God that have been questioned by modern theology. The report says that '...some people choose not to join in Christian worship because the image of God which we project is simply not worth worshipping'.<sup>542</sup> What the report does not directly address, but which is fundamental to why those who do choose to attend worship make different

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<sup>540</sup> *Let the People Worship*, paras. 12-24. In this report there is no reference to Scripture or the principles of the evangelical revival that featured so strongly in the 1960 report.

<sup>541</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 33

<sup>542</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 34

choices about preferred style and content is that the very nature of God, including the action of salvation, is understood very differently by different traditions within the faith. The basic tenet of faith about the nature of God is stated as the recognition of God's essential nature as one of loving-kindness; of self-offering of God in Christ, in the gift/s of creation and as experienced through the Holy Spirit.<sup>543</sup> But the way this nature and these experiences of God are expressed by those within the church can be very different. This problem is not addressed directly. There is an underlying assumption that much that is learnt about God is subjectively learnt through experience. What is stated in the section on teaching and worship is that it is in and through worship that '...we discover more about ourselves, our faith, and our God'.<sup>544</sup> Without stating it directly, the issue of *lex orandi lex credendi* is being addressed here. Methodism traditionally relies on the authorised hymn book and the 'orthodoxy' of the preacher to ensure that what is being sung and said about the very nature of God, the activity of God and the correct and right response of disciples is within the bounds of faith. The report recognises the differences in worship style practices in Methodism but does not fundamentally address the deeper issue of the content of prayers, hymns and sermon as they express the faith.

The report does comment on the balance between teaching and worship and identifies that in worship learning should happen, not because worship is teaching, but because through worship 'the faith' and 'faith' are learnt. It says that preachers have a role in '...renewing the apostolic faith from one generation

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<sup>543</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 30

<sup>544</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 44

to the next'.<sup>545</sup> The problem is that liberals, evangelicals, radicals and charismatics have different understandings of what constitutes this apostolic faith. Within the content of Holy Communion services there is set prayer that unites the church in the authorised text of that service. In non-Eucharistic services there is no specified text or content. Within the service of Holy Communion doxological theology is dominant – in non-Eucharistic services, whilst the report emphasises that all worship is '...a celebration of our love and gratitude, in response to God's love and generosity',<sup>546</sup> there is no specified way in which this celebration of the paschal mystery is assured of being achieved. The report begs the question - what is 'acceptable doxology'.<sup>547</sup> In liturgical theology the idea of orthodoxy is understood to be not just 'right thinking' or 'right belief' but also 'right glory to God', or 'right worship'.<sup>548</sup> The more that worship leans toward a didactic model the more it is likely to become specifically dogmatic; the more that it is left to subjective feeling means that more effort is required to create these feelings, and worship can become manipulative.

The report then turns its attention to the issue of participation. In spite of the affirmation of fellowship in Methodist worship, the report, noting the increasing individualism of society and the stronger preferences of individual worshippers says: 'Our appreciation of the importance of the church as the whole people of God still needs to be worked out in the context of our worship'.<sup>549</sup> This report

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<sup>545</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 47

<sup>546</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 16

<sup>547</sup> Wainwright, *Worship With One Accord*, p. 1

<sup>548</sup> John Stacey, (Editor), *About Faith – Preacher's Handbook, New Series Number 3*, (Local Preacher's Department of the Methodist Church, 1972), 'Faith and the Creed', pp. 55-73, p. 62

<sup>549</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 9

suggests that British Methodism understands participation in a quite pragmatic way and not as fully as liturgical theology would suggest. *Sacrosanctum Conciliar* stated that pastors needed to instruct their congregations in the meanings of the rites so that they can participate in the worship of the church. *Let the People Worship* does start from the position that the congregation '...being there and offering (themselves) to God is participation'. But it mainly focuses on the encouragement of participation, in what may be regarded as practical matters, rather than theological reflection on the nature and purpose of participation in worship by the congregation. There is a suggestion that those that are asked to participate may learn to understand the purpose of worship more and thereby enhance their own worship life. There is a criticism of any prayer that is too private and individualistic in nature and a concern shown that public prayer should enable a congregation to pray together. Earlier in the report, in the section 'An Introduction to Worship', there is a recognition that this kind of public prayer and public worship goes beyond the local congregation as 'Each act of worship is caught up in a life much wider than that of the members of the congregation.'<sup>550</sup> The report, in its reflection on participation, would have benefitted by returning to this point, that worship is caught up in the life of the whole church, to show its readers how the worship of individual congregations is joined with all worshipping congregations – of how worship is always ecumenical in this sense – and that participation is not just within the context of the local church but within the context of the universal Church. Further reflection on the nature of participation might enable congregations to understand what they do in worship and what each rite sets

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<sup>550</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 24

out to achieve. Such reflection might remove some of the perceived need to make worship subjective. Such a development of understanding worship to be joining in the worship of the whole Church might counter much of the need for individuals to claim individual preference.

The report suggests that aesthetics are important in enabling people to be drawn into God. The era has changed and this report is written within a context of a Methodist church that is more relaxed about church adornment and ritual acts. Within this context the report also places hymns as ‘They unite the intellect, the emotions, the will, and the voice, in the human response of God’s grace’.<sup>551</sup> So music’s purpose is ‘...to stimulate and express religious imagination and to help worshippers to express themselves to God’.<sup>552</sup> The report recognises that music and other forms of aesthetics will always be complemented by words in services, but says of words that they need aesthetic quality, ‘...more related to poetry than prose’.<sup>553</sup> Indeed, a primary emphasis of this report is on what may be loosely termed issues of spirituality, rather than the 1960 report whose focus was much more on form and content.<sup>554</sup>

What is quite clear from the report is that its preoccupation is with ‘dynamics’, over and against form and content. It is clear through the report that Methodism has many congregations that use different styles and different content in their worship. The report seeks to encourage worship that is ‘alive’, although quite what this might be is not defined! The report points toward an ethereal quality

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<sup>551</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 38

<sup>552</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 41

<sup>553</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 43

<sup>554</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 88

of worship experience, ‘...for more satisfying worship’,<sup>555</sup> which it states the ‘modern’ person seeks. The report is aware that it puts forward a rather elusive hope and aspiration, for it tries to resolve the issue of meeting so many different people’s needs by identifying ‘...two intentions and an important affirmation of our corporate nature, which taken together might help us to determine on more objective grounds whether the service has worked, and worship has taken place.’<sup>556</sup> The two intentions of worship are stated as 1) adoration of God, so that worship ‘...is filled with awe and wonder, praise and a deep sense of mystery’,<sup>557</sup> and 2) transformation of the worshipper/s, as a ‘...proper consequence of worship’.<sup>558</sup> The affirmation is that worship is corporate in that ‘We meet in his name to worship the God whom he reveals’.<sup>559</sup>

Reflecting on the position of the Methodist Church in 1988, as revealed in *Let the People Worship*, it is apparent that the Church moved away from the recommendation about set order and specific content that was advocated by the 1960 committee report, and which took shape in the *Methodist Service Book*. There is a much stronger emphasis on identifying ways of meeting ‘modern needs’. There is recognition that the historical tradition of the non-Eucharistic service is being influenced by ideas from the liturgical movement and from the charismatic movement, but it provides no criteria for discerning truth/s, or setting measurable criteria to order worship. The report does conclude with the affirmation that it is in the Lord’s Supper that all the actions of worship and all

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<sup>555</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 25

<sup>556</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 25

<sup>557</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 93

<sup>558</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 95

<sup>559</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 99



the intentions of worship are clearly seen and evidenced.<sup>560</sup> But the report does not endorse this pattern of worship as the pattern for non-Eucharistic services, aware as it is of the plurality of preferences in Methodism.

#### 4.6 The 1994 Report – *All-Age Worship*

In many ways the 1994 report, *All-Age Worship*, is simply a pragmatic document, seeking to explain how all-age worship might be done well. It reads *Let the People Worship* to be saying that in worship people come together:

- affirming that they are in the presence of God;
- knowing that they belong to God and to each other; and
- sharing in the purpose of responding to God.<sup>561</sup>

The report re-affirms that worship is for God, centred on God and directed toward God, and acts as a means of grace through which God transforms. It lacks the assertion of *Let the People Worship* that worship might be judged by the element of adoration, but stresses again the corporate nature of worship, affirming the participation of the whole people of God in worship.<sup>562</sup>

The report suggests that all-age worship may be difficult to do well, but that this is not a reason not to do it. It affirms that learning should not be the focus of a service. It, contrary to *Let the People Worship*, affirms the three-fold shape of worship as ‘our usual shape’.<sup>563</sup> It suggests that all-age services need to be visual, interactive, with uncomplicated language and appropriate music. As the report says:

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<sup>560</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 102

<sup>561</sup> Conference Report 1994, *All-Age Worship*, (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House), para. 2.9

<sup>562</sup> *All-Age Worship*, para. 2.10

<sup>563</sup> *All-Age Worship*, para. 2.9

An act of all-age worship is more likely to be distinctive in its content than its structure...In general terms, however, good all-age worship will be visual and interactive, with language and music that is appropriate for everybody. They can be effectively used in adult worship: in all-age worship they are vital.<sup>564</sup>

The issue that arises once the content of worship is changed from predominantly set text is that of *lex orandi, lex credendi*. The report suggests new and different hymns and songs might be used.<sup>565</sup> The report says that language should be '...simple without being simplistic'.<sup>566</sup> But who is to judge the orthodoxy of prayers and hymns and songs in relating the faith? The accredited preacher is given this responsibility to carry in Methodism, but may not have sufficient theological knowledge to do so.<sup>567</sup>

#### 4.7 The Methodist Worship Book

In 1990 the Methodist Church began work on a new service book. Having noted that the *Methodist Service Book* had aided Methodism to increase the frequency of Holy Communion, introduced modern liturgical language and helped change the shape of non-Eucharistic worship, Neil Dixon<sup>568</sup> sets out in an *Epworth Review* article<sup>569</sup> the reasons for the development of a new service book. Firstly, this was to include ecumenical common texts, like the creeds and Lord's Prayer; secondly, to respond to criticism about the exclusive language of the *Methodist Service Book*; thirdly to provide for more variety of texts, particularly for

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<sup>564</sup> *All-Age Worship*, para. 4.11 – 4.12

<sup>565</sup> *All-Age Worship*, para. 4.16

<sup>566</sup> *All-Age Worship*, para. 4.15

<sup>567</sup> Writing in 1995 Lampard says that preachers in the face of theological and liturgical change have had to decide their own positions and to ask if they can conduct worship in congregations that express different inclinations in worship styles – but he does not address the issue of the role of the preacher as arbiter of orthodoxy. Lampard, 'Today and Tomorrow', p. 134

<sup>568</sup> Neil Dixon was chair of the Faith and Order Committee at this time.

<sup>569</sup> Neil Dixon, 'Towards a New Methodist Service Book', *Epworth Review*, 17.3, 1990

Eucharistic worship; and, finally to provide texts for other services, for example Baptism and Marriage services.<sup>570</sup> It took 9 years from its inception to the publication of the *Methodist Worship Book* in 1999.<sup>571</sup> The length of time taken to produce the book was influenced by the working practices and procedures which were implemented to develop the book that included work by the Faith and Order Committee itself, liturgical sub-committees, public consultation and experimentation of draft services.

*The Methodist Worship Book* contains a very wide range of services. These are: Daily Prayer; Morning, Afternoon or Evening Services; Entry to the Church; Holy Communion; Holy Week Services; The Covenant Service; Ordination Services; Admission, Commissioning and Welcome Services; Marriage and the Blessing of a Marriage; Pastoral Services; Healing and Reconciliation Services; Funeral and Related Services; Blessing and Dedication Services. The *Methodist Worship Book* also provides a section on Calendar, Collects and Lectionary.

One of the most notable aspects of the *Methodist Worship Book* is that the ecumenical four-fold shape<sup>572</sup> of a full worship service is used throughout the book, for all the services, replacing the three-fold shape of the *Methodist Service Book*. The four-fold shape in Methodism is indicated by the general use of these terms: The Gathering of the People of God; The Ministry of the Word; The Holy Communion or the Response; and Prayers and Dismissal. However, in the orders of service for non-Eucharistic worship, called Morning, Afternoon or

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<sup>570</sup> Dixon, 'Towards a New Methodist Service Book', p. 55-56

<sup>571</sup> Dixon, *Wonder Love and Praise*, pp. 5-15

<sup>572</sup> Replacing the three-fold shape by making the Dismissal a separate section rather than part of the Response as it was in the *Methodist Service Book*.

Evening Services, the first element is called The Preparation and not The Gathering. It is not clear why this is so; if there is any theological justification; or if it is simply the result of different liturgical sub-committees working on different services and this issue of the use of language not being picked up in the final editing process.

The Introduction to the Morning, Afternoon or Evening services<sup>573</sup> comments that the two orders of services are 'complete orders of worship' for use at any time a preaching service is conducted. It states that these orders share a common four-fold shape and are models on which other forms may be based. Options are given to place the Lord's Prayer in different positions – but no option is given to move the prayers of thanksgiving to the beginning of the service. The options that are given are set out in the table below. One of the most significant differences is the option to move the prayers of penitence to the Response section in the second service. In the first service an affirmation of faith is given; in the second service The Peace is included.

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<sup>573</sup> *Methodist Worship Book*, p. 26

FIRST SERVICE	SECOND SERVICE
THE PREPARATION	THE PREPARATION
Opening sentence/Call to Worship	Opening sentence/Call to Worship
Hymn	Hymn
Prayer of approach	Prayer of approach
Prayer of adoration	Prayer of adoration
Prayer of confession and declaration of forgiveness	
The Collect of the Day or other suitable prayer	The Collect of the Day or other suitable prayer
The Lord's Prayer (option)	The Lord's Prayer (option)
Hymn or song or canticle of praise	Hymn or song or canticle of praise
THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD	THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD
Two or three readings from scripture. There may be psalms, canticles, hymns or periods of silence between the readings.	Two or three readings from scripture. There may be psalms, canticles, hymns or periods of silence between the readings.
Sermon	Sermon
Affirmation of Faith	
Hymn	
THE RESPONSE	THE RESPONSE
Prayers of thanksgiving	Prayer of confession and declaration of forgiveness
Prayers of intercession	The Peace
The Lord's Prayer (option)	Offering and prayer of dedication
	Hymn
Offering and prayer of dedication	Prayers of thanksgiving
The Lord's Prayer (option)	Prayers of intercession
	The Lord's Prayer (option)
THE DISMISSAL	THE DISMISSAL
Hymn	Hymn
Blessing	Blessing
Dismissal sentence	Dismissal sentence

Like the *Methodist Service Book* before it, the *Methodist Worship Book's* Morning, Afternoon and Evening Services are still given into the situation of whether or not Methodists accept and adopt a recommended order. Further, the Guidance notes only say that the outlines provide content that 'should or may' be used. So it is quite possible to leave out some content altogether. Then there is also the consideration of how much the given text of the prayers form a norm. The Introduction's permissive stance is evident, stating: 'Those leading prayer may pray in their own words or use other resources'.<sup>574</sup> Dixon's 1990 article articulated the need that prayer should reflect a different understanding of God's nature. There is no direction in the *Methodist Worship Book* to encourage such an approach. What is stated is: 'It is always important, especially in all-age worship, to use language which is appropriate for the particular congregations'.<sup>575</sup> But nothing is said that the prayers should follow the model of the prayer texts offered and reflect similar content. The freedom given then can lead to prayers being offered in a non-Eucharistic service which do not reflect the modern liturgical shape and the content of these 'model' prayers.

The section called 'Guidance for Ordering a Morning, Afternoon, or Evening service'<sup>576</sup> does reinforce the shape of the service but does little else. It does not recommend use of the Collect of the day or explain how this helps to gather the community. It makes no comment about the use of the lectionary, although the service book contains the Revised Common Lectionary. It does not indicate that when preachers choose to pray in extempore form they should model their

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<sup>574</sup> *Methodist Worship Book*, p. 26

<sup>575</sup> *Methodist Worship Book*, p. 26

<sup>576</sup> *Methodist Worship Book*, p. 51

words on the patterns given in the text. The service book does contain additional resource materials supplied for opening sentences; prayers of thanksgiving and blessings, all based on the seasons of the Christian year, but there is no specific value given to the Christian Year in the book itself.

Key issues arise when a new service book is published. What is its purpose? How is it to be understood and evaluated? What criteria lay behind its creation and adoption? There was very little published in Methodism to aid the reception of the new service book. Neil Dixon published a short article in the *Epworth Review*<sup>577</sup> in April 1999 just as the *Methodist Worship Book* was being published. This article does not mention the four-fold shape as a key component of Methodism's understanding and promotion of worship. All it says in relation to Sunday non-Eucharistic worship is that the services can be used from the book, or '...they can be regarded as resource material from which prayers of adoration or intercession, for example, can be drawn'.<sup>578</sup> The longest section, in the short article, is on understanding the nature of God and language used, to include more imagery of God '...as loving, gracious, self-emptying, suffering and self-giving'.<sup>579</sup>

It took a further four years for the companion to the *Methodist Worship Book* to be published. It is in *Wonder Love and Praise* that Dixon offers further thoughts on the purpose and use of the *Methodist Worship Book*. Dixon addresses the issue of language in worship extensively. Firstly, he addresses the issue of

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<sup>577</sup> Neil Dixon, 'The Methodist Worship Book', *Epworth Review*, April 1999, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 6-9

<sup>578</sup> Dixon, 'The Methodist Worship Book', p. 8

<sup>579</sup> Dixon, 'The Methodist Worship Book', p. 8

modern liturgical language. He writes of the work of the English Language Liturgical Consultations and how since 1975 they had produced new ecumenical texts ‘...with the result that the *Methodist Service Book* versions seemed somewhat out of date’.<sup>580</sup> New ecumenical texts were adopted in the *Methodist Worship Book* in a continuation of British Methodism’s more general support for ecumenism.<sup>581</sup> Secondly, and in greater detail, Dixon addresses what the *Methodist Worship Book* did that the *Methodist Service Book* did not, reflecting the age in which it was developed. That is, it addressed the issue of inclusive language.

Concern about inclusive language was not as widespread in the early 1970s as it is today, and as it had already become by 1990 (though it is only fair to add that the 1974 Conference rejected an impassioned plea for the removal of sexist terms from proposed services, sensitivity in this area being then restricted to relatively few representatives). But, as the present writer insisted in the *Epworth Review* (September 1990): It would be unthinkable today to present the Conference with a service that included the words, ‘...that they may seek peace and justice for all men’, yet those words appear on page B7 of *The Methodist Service Book*.<sup>582</sup>

In relation to language used of God the *Methodist Worship Book* took as its reference point another Conference report, *Inclusive Language and Imagery about God*, the result of the work of the Faith and Order Committee published in 1992. Dixon notes how:

From the time of its publication in 1975 onwards, *The Methodist Service Book* was criticized by some people on the grounds that it presented an image of God in which concepts like omnipotence and lordship

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<sup>580</sup> Dixon, *Wonder Love and Praise*, p. 2

<sup>581</sup> Somewhat caustically Dixon writes: ‘Unlike some denominations, which it would be discourteous to mention by name, the Methodist Church believed it right to use the current English Language Liturgical Consultation translations, unaltered, for the major common texts – *Angus Dei*, ‘Glory to God in the highest’, the Nicene Creed, the Apostles’ Creed, *Sursum Corda*, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus Qui Venit*, *Gloria Patri*, *Te Deum Laudamus*, *Benedictus*, *Magnificat*, *Nunc Dimittis* and the Lord’s Prayer’. Dixon, *Wonder Love and Praise*, p. 26

<sup>582</sup> Dixon, *Wonder Love and Praise*, p. 2



dominated. Masculine power images, it was said, occurred altogether too frequently in prayers ('Almighty God', 'King of the Universe', 'Lord'). The collects were cited particularly in this respect. But this was not simply a matter of masculine terms: the book, the critics suggested, did not adequately portray God as fundamentally loving, fundamentally gracious, fundamentally self-emptying. There was far too much about power and kingship, glory and lordship. There was far too little that reflected the suffering, self-giving God revealed in Jesus.<sup>583</sup>

In order to widen and broaden the use of language in relation to God, Dixon says that two strategies were deployed in the writing of the *Methodist Worship Book* – these being to use many more, although still biblical terms, that have been used in the Jewish and Christian traditions and to adopt a more poetic style of prose for prayer texts. Thus the language used of human beings and of God is considerably changed in the *Methodist Worship Book*. The most commented on change, in relation to the language about God, was the inclusion of the term 'God our Father and Mother' in one of the services of Holy Communion; although this is the only occasion when God is referred to in the feminine, in contrast to God being named as Father over 400 times.<sup>584</sup> The discussion about the use of the word Mother for God, may have contributed to a somewhat jaundiced view of the new book being taken by many in Methodism.

Dixon does stress, as Raymond George had done with the publication of the *Methodist Service Book*, that '...the most neglected element of prayer in Methodist 'preaching service' are prayers of thanksgiving,'<sup>585</sup> going on to say that '...the absence of thanksgiving is to be regretted'.<sup>586</sup> Dixon hoped that by

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<sup>583</sup> Dixon, *Wonder Love and Praise*, pp. 16-17

<sup>584</sup> Dixon, *Wonder Love and Praise*, p. 16

<sup>585</sup> Dixon, *Wonder Love and Praise*, p. 50

<sup>586</sup> Dixon, *Wonder Love and Praise*, p. 50

providing model prayers of thanksgiving this would lead to their greater use in non-Eucharistic worship.

There is one other source of commentary on the *Methodist Worship Book* and that is found in a fact sheet.<sup>587</sup> This fact sheet states that the service book provides texts that can be used to glorify God. It also states that it provides a 'norm and a standard'. But, as has been noted, the service book is not often used for preaching services and therefore how its texts are useful for glorifying God or providing norms and standards can only be shown if 'preachers' do indeed use these texts or, at least model their own texts on them. The preface to the *Methodist Worship Book* itself states: 'These forms are not intended to curb creative freedom, but rather to provide norms for its guidance. Within our heritage, both fixed and freer forms of worship have been, and should continue to be valued'.<sup>588</sup> This is the on-going tension that is paramount in the Methodist preaching/non-Eucharistic services – the relationship between text, norms and standards and the very ethos they contain and promote. Methodism's ideas of freer worship can mean the almost complete abandonment of set text, creating the possibility of very different 'grammars' being articulated in worship about God and faith.

The fact sheet turns to the heart of liturgical theology to offer more reasons for a liturgical, official service book, in Methodism. Much of this relates to other

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<sup>587</sup> This was published in February 1990 and can be found at [http://www.methodist.org.uk/static/factsheets/fs\\_worshipbook.htm](http://www.methodist.org.uk/static/factsheets/fs_worshipbook.htm)

<sup>588</sup> *Methodist Worship Book*, Preface.

services where the set text is more likely to be used – for example, that the book expresses the faith of the Methodist church about baptism or ordination.

#### 4.8 Faith and Worship – Local Preacher Training

At the same time as the *Methodist Worship Book* was beginning to be prepared, a new training programme,<sup>589</sup> *Faith and Worship*,<sup>590</sup> was introduced into Local Preacher training. Taking into account the changes sought through the introduction of the *Methodist Service Book* and then the *Methodist Worship Book*, the *Faith and Worship Local Preacher's Training Pack* is a vital component in the reception of new ways of practising worship.<sup>591</sup>

Unit 2 examines the nature of worship and identifies three characteristics of worship – adoration; celebration and transformation. The unit goes on to stress that worship is corporate and that ways need to be found to involve the congregation 'to realise that they are more than a collection of individuals worshipping God in the same place. They are part of the Body of Christ in that place: they are one with each other and are one with all other worshipping communities both on earth and in heaven'.<sup>592</sup> The text then acknowledges the historical/ecumenical four-fold shape of worship; discusses the main items of a service; the liturgical year; the use of the lectionary; the role of preaching; and

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<sup>589</sup> In personal correspondence Lampard says that he drew up the materials in *Faith and Worship* and as such directed it in a way that ensured the messages and praxis of the liturgical movement were fully incorporated.

<sup>590</sup> This was a modular and continually assessed training programme. It has not been without criticism and change, but Lampard says: 'Faith and Worship has been widely accepted in the church as a method for training a new generation of local preachers'. John Lampard, 'Today and Tomorrow', p. 127

<sup>591</sup> Although there is an on-going debate in Methodism as to the training of Local Preachers through Faith and Worship it remains the method through which new Local Preachers are introduced to the four fold shape of worship and other liturgical matters.

<sup>592</sup> *Faith and Worship*, Unit 2, p. 5

considers the nature of the congregation and their location and needs. The Unit also includes sections on choosing hymns, songs and choruses, and shaping prayer. Unit 2 also notes that there are other structures of worship in use in the church, noting as *Let the People Worship* did that there has been an influence from charismatic worship into Methodism.

Unit 7 is titled 'The Origins of Christian Worship'. It examines Jewish worship in the Old Testament, Worship in the New Testament, Worship in the Early Church and the Christian Community today. Unfortunately when it describes, what it calls liturgical worship, it does so as services that use printed text. Non-liturgical worship is described as services that do not use printed text. It notes also the development of alternative worship giving as an example, 'installation worship'. It states that the worship life of the Church today is diverse and that it is now difficult to describe 'a typical Methodist service'.

Unit 8 returns Local Preachers in training to develop skills in '...leading worship in a variety of styles, which is worthy of God, meaningful and satisfying'. Unit 8 very much concentrates on developing a clear structure for worship, supporting the *Methodist Worship Book* four-fold structure for a corporate act of worship; and further discussing how hymns, prayers and readings and the liturgical year help to shape and develop the worship of the Church.

On the whole, *Faith and Worship* is supportive of many of the main concerns and messages of the liturgical movement, and, as a consequence, the services as set out in the *Methodist Worship Book*. For example, and in line with Raymond

George, the *Methodist Service Book* and the *Methodist Worship Book*, it is stressed in *Faith and Worship* that prayers of Thanksgiving are vital to worship and are best placed in the Response section of the service.

#### 4.9 Reviewing Methodism's Understanding of Worship and Liturgy

In Chapter 3, three categories for analysing and reading liturgical theology were suggested: 1) Theological considerations 2) Pastoral/Ecclesiological considerations and 3) Historical and ecumenical considerations. The task of all three is to formulate and explain (the) liturgy so that the worship of the Church honours God, praises God's own self-giving in Christ and through the Holy Spirit, empowers worshippers to understand and participate in worship and to ensure that worship is neither trivial or didactic. In reading Methodism's appropriation of liturgical theology in its Conference reports, service books and training materials, it becomes apparent that the main hermeneutic that has been used is the historical and ecumenical, supported somewhat by pastoral and ecclesiological considerations. The Methodist Church has moved to shaping worship as proclamation and response; it has participated in discussion with and learned from Church history and other Churches; it has emphasised the celebratory and corporate nature of worship; it has discovered the participatory nature of the liturgy and begun to embrace sign-acts and symbols as part of worship.

However, in reading Methodism's appropriation of liturgical theology it also becomes apparent that there has been less focus on theological considerations. In specific terms there is only one reference to the idea of *lex orandi lex credendi*,

which appears in the fact sheet on the *Methodist Worship Book*. Worship as the site of the community being formed in 'the faith' and 'faith' is not a concept addressed in the literature. The idea that (the) liturgy is the site in which God in Christ is present in and through word and sacrament, and in which salvation is made known, is not explored. And it seems to be the case that these issues are not addressed because some of the other pastoral and ecclesiological considerations are not given enough prominence, in particular how the nature of participation is understood. Methodism minimises this idea – its focus has been on giving some people, other than the preacher, a role in worship. And yet the concept of participation is much deeper. Participation in liturgical theology is about the whole church being engaged in all the actions of (the) liturgy as it offers up its doxology and receives the transforming gift of Christ's salvation. It is this deep reading of liturgical theology that is not present in Methodist reports and training materials.

In Methodism several issues act to hinder (the) liturgy forming its worship. These issues are both pragmatic and theological. The Methodist Church is moving from its historic norm of a 'hymn-sandwich', aperitif and main course structure of worship that concentrates almost exclusively on the sermon to the more 'liturgically sympathetic'<sup>593</sup> proclamation-response model of worship – but at the same time acknowledges that other forms of worship may be used. Methodism's portrayal of liturgical worship, as 'set and formal', acts to devalue (the) liturgy. In consequence this ambivalence about the purpose and value of (the) liturgy allows other forms of worship to be legitimate within Methodism.

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<sup>593</sup> Noren, 'The Word of God in Worship', p. 44

This means that worshippers experience week by week different forms of worship, as individual preachers are free to make choices about the shape, content and ethos of the worship they conduct. The liturgical idea that (the) liturgy works through ritual repetition is consequently absent from Methodist worship practice. The issues however run deeper. As Noren states:

Analysing the relationship of preaching to liturgy presents a special challenge when worship does not have the two foci of word and sacrament. Where the word alone is the centre, there may be superficial and deceptive similarities in the pattern of such a service among traditions that have quite different theological or pragmatic reasons for doing what they do. The relationship between preaching and liturgy in this worship pattern may be strong and deliberate, or it may be virtually non-existent'.<sup>594</sup>

The word is the centre of worship even in a 'liturgically sympathetic' structure. Whilst Methodism has emphasised, in recommending the four-fold shape of worship and all its component parts, that services must be complete acts of worship, the sermon still plays the prominent part in 'preaching' services. But for these services to be liturgical; to be informed by and given a hermeneutical continuum<sup>595</sup> by (the) liturgy, supplying its thematic guidelines, they must also use the Scripture of the lectionary and the sermon itself must be shaped by the same principles that shape the liturgy – that is doxological, Trinitarian, Christological and eschatological. A liturgical word service seeks to enable worshippers to meet, hear and respond to God in Christ in and through Scripture and proclamation. (The) liturgy understands preaching to be sacramental, as '...in that through proclamation of the word God discloses

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<sup>594</sup> Noren, 'The Word of God in Worship', p. 43

<sup>595</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology – The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 175-177

himself, (and) also effects a change in the recipient'.<sup>596</sup> It is this form of preaching that elicits 'The appropriate responses to God's revelation...prayer, praise and dedication'.<sup>597</sup> In antithesis to this position is that preaching at the centre of worship that is based on '...disregard for the liturgy or the belief that the sacraments are not essential for the Christian life'.<sup>598</sup>

This may take more than one form. Firstly, when preaching is not understood to be sacramental, but rather is seen to have a primary function of teaching the core doctrines of the Church, then such preaching and its accompanying acts of worship are not without the bounds of Church life – but they are not informed by (the) liturgy. Such an approach is essentially didactic and not latreutic, that is concerned primarily with the praise and adoration of God. As a consequence the danger of didactic forms of worship is that they are also more '...prone to creeping doctrinalization - a tendency to mistake theological positions for the church's doctrinal affirmations'.<sup>599</sup> Here (the) liturgy is not regarded as *prima theologia*. This tendency seems to be unrecognised in Methodism's official reports. The latitude that Methodism gives to its preachers to adopt different forms of worship also potentially allows them the latitude to present specific theological doctrines – indeed other forms of worship are often predicated on different theological positions. So some word-centred worship is primarily didactic and its inherent danger is that it becomes dogmatic.

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<sup>596</sup> Noren, 'The Word of God in Worship', p. 42

<sup>597</sup> Noren, 'The Word of God in Worship', p. 42

<sup>598</sup> Noren, 'The Word of God in Worship', p. 46

<sup>599</sup> John F. Baldwin, *Reforming the Liturgy – A Response to the Critics*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2008), p. 139



Other word-centred worship, also not informed by (the) liturgy, can be characterised as thematic. The service then is dominated by the theme or text chosen by the preacher. All or most of the components of a four-fold worship may ostensibly be in place but all refer to the same theme. Here the lectionary and the Christian year play no part in determining the content of the worship. These themes may be the 'pet' themes or texts of the preacher or may be the special Sundays of the Church or the local congregation. One danger in these services is that the scriptures are violated as they are forced to fit the theme rather than being read for what they say about God and God's activity. Another danger is that the people of God are not presented throughout the year with the whole Gospel story. Theme based worship can lead away from the important component parts of worship, and be concerned to develop a service that is more about God, rather than addressed to God.

Another model of word service that is not informed by liturgy, but is the underlying historical purpose of Methodist worship, is that of evangelical revival. Here the primary purpose of the whole service, but particularly the sermon, is to bring about conversion of the individual. Its ethos is that promoted by Burdon as we saw earlier in this text.

This does not exhaust all possible forms, motivations or expressions of word-services. As Noren points out:

The variety of ways of making the proclaimed word the centre of worship, as well as the diverse theological and ecclesiological reasons for having this as the normative Sunday service, make it impossible to make

blanket statements about the degree to which preaching in this worship pattern is Trinitarian, eschatological or doxological.<sup>600</sup>

In consequence, teaching about the nature of the scriptures and the purpose of the sermon/proclamation needs to be considered alongside other liturgical matters. The general direction of Methodism has been to encourage word-services based on and shaped by historical/ecumenical consensus. But it has not fully explored how other liturgical principles – theological and pastoral/ecclesiological – also underpin (the) liturgy, including the Ministry of the Word. As Ramshaw notes the failure to read all three lectionary readings

results in scriptural minimalism (that) opens wide the door to fundamentalist-type preaching and simplistic thematic liturgies', or enables preachers to '...find in the Bible warrant for whatever the planners and the preachers wanted to say anyway.<sup>601</sup>

#### 4.10 The Lectionary and Preaching

The 1960 Conference report stated that the lectionary '...might with advantage be followed'.<sup>602</sup> *Let the People Worship* stated: 'The use of the lectionary has enriched our worship and helped the church to rediscover the Christian year as a pattern for our worship'.<sup>603</sup> *Groundwork of Worship and Preaching and Faith and Worship* are also both generally sympathetic to and supportive of the use of a lectionary, again pointing out that they help the church follow the Christian year; help prevent individual preachers from sticking to pet themes; and link to teaching schemes in Junior Church material. However, both also find reasons why the set texts might not be used. These include those times designated a

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<sup>600</sup> Noren, 'The Word of God in Worship', p. 46

<sup>601</sup> Gail Ramshaw, 'The Gift of Three Readings', *Worship* 73, 1999, p. 2-12

<sup>602</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 38

<sup>603</sup> *Let the People Worship*, para. 35

special Sunday by the Church or local congregation. More significantly, however, both texts suggest that a dependency on the lectionary will restrict the type of sermons that might be prepared. Both support the idea that modern congregations may need to hear sermons that begin from modern issues, so that these sermons need to find the text that fits the issue. This approach may be contrasted to a more liturgically informed understanding of Scripture and preaching. Gordon Lathrop says that,

Preaching that belongs to the essentials of Christian worship is a freely composed address, juxtaposed to appointed readings, that opens up the appointed readings to the assembly in such a way that their Christian intention is clear.<sup>604</sup>

Gerard Sloyan answers the criticism that sermons need to be issue based to meet modern needs by stating:

The saving grace in all this is that the Bible, the very spine of liturgical preaching, is interested in every aspect of human life. If it were only concerned with something called religion, or even faith, it could be meaningless to modern ears. The scriptures of Jews and Christians, mercifully, are books about family-life and neighbourhoods, economics and politics, the noblest self-effacement and the meanest self-promotion. In a word, they touch on every mood and tense of the human psyche, corporate and individual.<sup>605</sup>

Liturgical theology, then, adopts a specific approach to scripture, and to the sermon: "The sermon presses the texts to function as the "living creatures" around the living God. When preaching does not play this role, an essential element in the Christian Sunday or festival worship is missing and the assembly much diminished'.<sup>606</sup>

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<sup>604</sup> Lathrop, *Central Things*, p. 42

<sup>605</sup> Gerard Sloyan, 'What is Liturgical Preaching?', *The Landscape of Praise*, pp. 228-234, p. 233

<sup>606</sup> Lathrop, *Central Things*, p. 43

*Faith and Worship* says many strong things about preaching which, on the whole, are not linked to an evangelical hermeneutic of worship as the place of salvation for the individual, and, as it describes preaching as rehearsing before God and the congregation the saving acts of God, it accords with much modern liturgical theology. And yet, it is because the Conference reports and Local Preacher training materials back off from a full endorsement of preaching arising out of Scripture, they cannot quite say what Lathrop and others affirm: 'The two forms of the word – reading and preaching set next to each other and together making up that "word" (that) is essential...'<sup>607</sup>

In some ways this seems strange for a church that believes that its own doctrines '...are based upon the divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures'.<sup>608</sup> Modern scholarship has played a significant part in causing scepticism about the nature and role of the Bible.<sup>609</sup> But Methodism's reluctance to see the Bible as the primary source of the sermon is also reflected in the worship books' rubrics about their use. Both the *Methodist Service Book* and the *Methodist Worship Book* use different rubrics for services of Holy Communion from those of a non-Eucharistic service. In a Eucharistic service there is given the opportunity for the congregation to say before the reading of the gospel, 'Glory to Christ our Saviour,' and after the gospel reading, 'Praise to Christ our Lord'. This option is not given for non-Eucharistic worship. In the *Methodist Worship Book* there is a rubric that the reader may say after any of the scripture

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<sup>607</sup> Lathrop, *Central Things*, p. 44

<sup>608</sup> Methodist Church Deed of Union, No. 4 Doctrine

<sup>609</sup> Methodism's own struggle with this issue is set out in another Conference Report – *A Lamp to my Feet and a Light to my Path – The Nature of Authority and the Place of the Bible in the Methodist Church*, (Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes: Methodist Publishing House, 1998)

readings, 'Thanks be to God'. In other communions the reading of scripture would be accompanied by more 'ceremony'; and, in particular, it is now common in many churches to stand for the reading of the Gospel. There is no rubric in Methodist service books to suggest this as an option.

The importance of the Scriptures to a liturgically informed non-Eucharistic service is also downplayed by Methodism in the amount of Scripture that it deems should be read. The *Methodist Worship Book* says that there can be two or three readings from Scripture, but does not in Morning, Afternoon or Evening Services stipulate that one of these should be from a Gospel. Dixon, in *Wonder Love and Praise*, also passes over the Ministry of the Word very quickly and says nothing about how the lectionary may be used, or how the readings may be linked to each other. There has been an almost complete lack of explanation within Methodism then about the lectionary, its usage, its relationship to preaching and so on. For example, a Psalm is appointed for each Sunday. The service book rubrics simply say it may be used, as does Dixon. But no mention is made of why any Psalm is chosen and why a particular Psalm for a particular set of readings. But Psalms are given because they are part of the historic song of the Church. A particular Psalm is given, not as a reading, but because it acts as a communal response to the Old Testament reading,<sup>610</sup> and, consequently, if used, should be used in that location. More importantly, there is no explanation given on how the Old Testament lesson relates to the Gospel. But as Gail Ramshaw explains<sup>611</sup>: 'The Old Testament reading is chosen for one of three reasons: to

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<sup>610</sup> Gail Ramshaw, *A Three-Year Banquet – The Lectionary for the Assembly*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), p. 65

<sup>611</sup> In Ramshaw's work it is the Revised Common Lectionary that is being cited.

reference a citation in the gospel reading, to deepen our understanding of the gospel reading, or to provide a contrast to the gospel reading. Only by tasting first the Old Testament are we ready to savor the new'.<sup>612</sup>

Within a liturgically informed service Scripture is a source; indeed the primary source for enabling God to be present in Christ and to speak through the lectionary readings that are juxtaposed with each other and with the sermon – ‘Liturgical preaching strives to convince hearers of their solidarity in faith – or tragically, unfaith – with the people of the Bible’.<sup>613</sup> And finally, the Ministry of the Word operates as part of the whole service - that has as its ethos the enabling of the People of God to praise God through the self-offering of praise and thanksgiving. The Ministry of the Word is done ‘...in order to move them (the congregation) to action within the framework of the service. Choices in the spirit of the Gospel come later, but for now, the word is spoken as part of the immediate deed’.<sup>614</sup> This contrasts quite directly with the evangelical and soteriological agenda, and with the political/radical agenda, both of which seek to change the beliefs and behaviours of the listeners. The Ministry of the Word is but part of (the) liturgy, which in its wholeness, through repetition in the lives of congregations, shapes the affections of worshippers over time; and with other Christian disciplines of prayer, bible-study, fellowship and service acts to bring about the holiness of communities and their members.

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<sup>612</sup> Ramshaw, *A Three-Year Banquet*, p. 50. Note that this pattern works during the Festival Readings and if the related readings are used in Ordinary Time.

<sup>613</sup> Sloyan, ‘What is Liturgical Preaching?’, p. 234

<sup>614</sup> Sloyan, ‘What is Liturgical Preaching?’, p. 234

## CHAPTER 5 – CHANGE IN METHODIST WORSHIP PRACTICE

### 5.1 The Practice of Methodist Worship – Changing Text and Ritual Action

Toward the end of Chapter 3 I gave a series of questions that could be used by those who would want to evaluate Methodist worship through the principles of the liturgical movement. Methodism has since 1960 accepted that liturgical scholarship and the liturgical movement has a role in shaping Methodist worship, although as shown in Chapter 4 there is a fair amount of ambivalence within the Church and by its preachers to the liturgical movement. In this chapter I seek to ascertain what changes have actually occurred in the practice and ethos of Methodist worship since the 1960 Conference Committee report that was so critical of so much Methodist worship.

Undoubtedly much change has occurred in Methodist preaching services in the last 50 years. To make a full and accurate comparison of difference over the time period is not possible because of Methodism's practice of extempore worship. That is worship that is not prescribed by set text. One would need to have a large number of services, recorded on video tape, to see the conduct of worship as well as hear differing text, from various decades and from different churches, to even begin such a process. So the task of describing the actual liturgical celebrations of Methodist churches is very difficult. What is available is limited written testimony of various authors commenting on the type and nature of worship practiced during the period.

To this evidence I add the information that I collected that I believe helps show what is actually happening in Methodist worship. I present evidence that I collected in in 2006/2007 and 2010

- 1) 10 services in 8 different churches were audited to reveal their content and the ordering of the content; and the auditors were asked some supplementary questions about the services. The churches were in different parts of the country and had different sized congregations. All the services were non-Eucharistic. See Appendix 1
- 2) The preachers leading 20 services conducted in one circuit in the period September to November 2007 gave me their service orders (this period was chosen as there are no major festivals in this period except Harvest Festival which I have excluded – one gets, therefore, services that are ‘regular’ Sunday fayre). See Appendix 2
- 3) The hymns and songs sung at the 20 services noted above were analysed – see Appendix 3 and 4.
- 4) 15 letters were received form preachers who responded to a request published in the Methodist Recorder inviting preachers to inform me of the change they believed had occurred in Methodist worship over the last 50 years. See Appendix 5
- 5) 90 responses to a questionnaire that I devised were received from individual preachers, both lay and ordained. The questionnaires were completed by some preachers attending a District Synod and by other preachers attending a connexionally sponsored conference on worship. In these questionnaires I asked them to indicate what changes had



occurred in their leading of worship; what influenced these changes; and what the content of their services was and how they structured this content. See Appendix 6

- 6) I undertook some further work in 2010 on the hymns and songs sung at a Family-Friendly church. See Appendix 7

In undertaking this research I wanted to examine what actually happened in Sunday worship in relation to the content and shape of worship offered. I also wanted to ascertain why worship was offered in certain ways. I wanted to try to understand what those responsible for leading worship were trying to achieve and what motivated them to conduct worship in certain ways. The scope of my research is clearly limited. The surveys could have included more preachers; more services could have been audited; more preachers questioned. However the research adds significantly to our current knowledge of Methodist worship practice.

Overall it is generally acknowledged by Methodist writers that Methodism today is a very broad church; that worship has become more pluralistic since 1960 and that differing styles exist in locally enacted worship. My evidence confirms such a reading. What has not been so widely recognised is that lying behind this change has been the loss of a determining ethos of Methodist worship.

## 5.2 The Order and Content of Preaching Services

Notwithstanding the assertion that differences in styles of presenting non-Eucharistic worship do occur in Methodism, it is possible to set out the main content and ordering of Methodist worship today. This allows us to compare typical service orders in 2006 with those of the period around 1960.<sup>615</sup> Whilst some change is notable in content and order, this change does not affect the overall shape of a Methodist worship service which seems to have been protected by what Westerfield Tucker calls non-identical repetition.<sup>616</sup>

In the first column, in the diagram below, I set out the 1960 order. Columns 2, 3 and 4 relate to current practice. In column 2 are those items that are almost always present in a worship service and the fairly fixed order in which they appear. In column 3 are those items that are often present but which different preachers/churches determine to be at different points in a service. In the column 4 are items that are sometimes present in a service that are more likely to occur in all-age worship.

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<sup>615</sup> As given by George and Burdon, reported in Chapter 4

<sup>616</sup> Westerfield Tucker, *American Methodist Worship*, p. 274, previously referenced on page 44

1960 Service Order	Fixed/Constant	Moveable but nearly always present	Additional items in some services
Possible Introit			Stewards welcome
		Notices	
Call to worship	Call to worship		
			Introit
Hymn	Hymn or song		
			Song
			Song
Prayer and Lord's Prayer	Opening prayer - adoration		
	Prayer of confession		
		Thanksgiving prayer	
		Lord's Prayer	
		Offering (Notices)	
			Children's address
Hymn or Psalm	Hymn or song		
		Offering (Notices)	
Reading	Reading		
Hymn		Offering (Notices)	
Reading	Reading		
Possible children's address			Drama sketch, dramatic scripture reading or other source reading
			Split sermon interspersed with readings and hymns or songs
			Other forms of proclamation or information about themes
			Anthem
			Psalm
		Offering (Notices)	
	Hymn or song		
	Sermon		
	Hymn or song		
			Affirmation of Faith
		Offering (Notices)	
			The Peace
Prayer	Intercessions		
Notices		Thanksgiving prayer	
Collection		Lord's Prayer	
Hymn			Children return to tell of Sunday school work
Sermon		Offering (Notices)	
Hymn	Hymn or song		
Benediction	The Blessing or the Grace		
			Dismissal

The most noticeable change between 1960 and today is the move to place the intercessions after the sermon. 85% of respondents stated that their sermons came before the intercessions, 4% after intercessions, and for 11% it depended on the type of service. Other notable change is revealed in Column 3 which shows the development of variations of ordering content, and the singing of songs as alternatives to hymns, within the general structure; and column 4 that there is inclusion of additional and sometimes new content.

Prayers of thanksgiving are placed in the third column, as most respondents claim to have prayers of thanksgiving, but more preachers place them in the opening prayers - 54% compared to 21% in the last set of prayers and 25% it dependent on the service being conducted. A more detailed analysis of the type of thanksgiving prayer offered would be required to ascertain if they were of the nature of the 'dry anaphora' that Raymond George suggests. My own experience and analysis of those personally heard would suggest that they are not 'dry anaphora' prayers, but more general thanksgiving for creation, family, friends and other daily blessings.

Prayers of confession seem always to appear in the opening set of prayers, although the *Methodist Worship Book* offers the opportunity to place them in the second set of prayers.<sup>617</sup> My own experience of hearing these prayers is that they often exclude words of assurance and forgiveness.

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<sup>617</sup> *Methodist Worship Book*, p. 41

There was general agreement that the offering should be in the Response section, but local circumstance often means that it appears near the beginning of the service; principally caused by the presence of children at the beginning of worship, and a desire for them to take up the offering. 62% of the questionnaire responses revealed that the offering was taken towards the end of a service, whereas 38% said it was taken up in a place determined by the type of service being conducted. However, the offering can also be taken up at other points, as for example in between readings (see service 5 Appendix 2). Almost universally the offering remains a separate item in Methodism, contra to the 1960 report which proposed the prayer of dedication be included within the 'long prayer'.<sup>618</sup>

The *Methodist Service Book* placed the Lord's Prayer after the prayers of intercession as part of the Response. The *Methodist Worship Book* relaxed this approach, giving an alternative option of placing it in the first set of prayers. This indeed is a common practice, again often reasoned by the presence of children in this early part of the service.<sup>619</sup> In the questionnaire responses 40% said they placed the Lord's Prayer in the first set of prayers, 40% in the last and 20% moved it depending on the service being conducted.

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<sup>618</sup> *Conference Committee*, p. 11

<sup>619</sup> Neil Dixon argues against this common practice, however, even if it is officially approved. 'It was the Faith and Order Committee's intention that the First Service should indicate that the Lord's Prayer should follow either the prayers of intercession or the prayer of dedication. In the Second Service, it was to follow the prayers of intercession. Thus the Lord's Prayer would always be in the Response. An amendment came before the Conference Revision Committee, however, that urged that provision be made for the Lord's Prayer to be included in the Preparation in both services, and this was approved by the Revisions Committee. Thus the First Service suggests three possible positions for the Lord's Prayer; the Second Service suggests two. Much the best policy, nevertheless, is to include the Lord's Prayer as an act of Response. It is the greatest of all prayers and deserves to come as the climax of prayer in response to the proclamation of God's word'. *Wonder, Love and Praise*, p. 50

In the *Methodist Service Book* the Apostles' Creed is included as an item for worship after the sermon. In the *Methodist Worship Book* in the first service (but not second) for Morning, Afternoon or Evening Services, an Affirmation of Faith is given. There is little indication that either a Creed or Affirmation is a normal part of worship.

In the second service in the *Methodist Worship Book* the Peace is given as a component of that service. There was little indication that this action is undertaken.

There is little indication that a dismissal sentence is used. Rather the Blessing or the Grace is said without the words of dismissal.

### 5.3 The Primacy, Purpose and Place of the Sermon

Adrian Burdon points out that the sermon in a pre-1960 preaching service was regarded as of primary importance.<sup>620</sup> It came right at the end of the service.

The 'expression of Methodist piety' was seen and heard through an 'evangelical' sermon supported by hymn singing. No examination of the practice of Methodist worship can be undertaken without giving regard to preaching. Over the time period in question then certain questions might be asked. Have the emphases of Methodist preaching and worship changed? Has Methodist piety changed? Or has denominational conservatism restricted change in the ethos of worship alongside limited change in the shape of worship?

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<sup>620</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 36

Perhaps representing the 4% of preachers who retain the 'traditional' position of the sermon as coming after the sermon, Dr. Kellett wrote:

How did this (the placing of the sermon in the middle of the service) happen? Did somebody (or some body) authorise it – and on what ground? The traditional structure meant that the preacher could round off and drive home his or her “message” with an appropriate hymn, giving the congregation something spiritual to take away with them. The fashion of having the intercessory prayers at this point diverts attention to different topics and minimises the impact of the sermon. I think it is a most unfortunate change and refuse to accept it. After 50 years of preaching I am not going along with trendies who want to tone down the sermon!<sup>621</sup>

Kellett reflects Burdon's comment about the primacy of the sermon. The primacy of the sermon was not only recognised by its place in the order of service, but by the emphasis placed on it by congregations. So Burdon tells of Gordon Wakefield's recollection that '...the prim ladies, upon leaving the chapel, thank the preacher heartily for an “excellent discourse” ...'<sup>622</sup> Sermons then, in Methodist piety, had been regarded as the highlight of services. As noted in Chapter 2 there has been increasing disquiet about sermons since the 1960s. What has happened to them in recent years?

Sermons have not disappeared as a method of communication, but as a form of communication they have come under scrutiny. In my survey work many respondents commented that sermons had become shorter. Out of 91 responses given to a question about length of sermons only 5 preachers suggested that they preached for longer than 20 minutes; 4 said they preached for less than 10 minutes; 27 for between 11 and 15 minutes; and 55 for between 15 and 20

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<sup>621</sup> Arnold Kellett, *Icthus*, (Local Preacher's Mutual Aid Society, Spring 2004), p. 10

<sup>622</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 36

minutes. One of my respondents wrote to me that 'Preaching styles have changed because congregations are used to the very short punchy presentations done in the media. People are used to plenty of visual aids and I feel sure we shall use more and more power point presentations...I have also presented sermons in two or three short sections in order to break the message up for the congregation'.<sup>623</sup> Such shortening of sermons and variety of delivery methods was, however, already being promoted in Methodism by 1971. 'Justification for Preaching'<sup>624</sup>, advocates sermons of no more than one point (in contrast to the old, but often still current, adage of three point sermons) and of fifteen minutes duration; and discusses alternative ways of proclaiming including the ideas of dialogue sermons, congregational participation in the sermon, directed meditation and silence, and guided discussion.<sup>625</sup> The change in style of preaching has also reflected changes in ideas about purposes of sermons.

Strong evangelical preaching, as presented by Burdon as characteristic of Methodism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, was intended to produce an immediate effect on the listeners. In the 1980s Jones was advocating that sermons were not able to bring about sudden and lasting change in people, but had a purpose to reinforce in people what they already knew. Jones said about the purpose of sermons: 'It needs to be expressed in one simple sentence at the top of a piece of paper. Do not aim to present complex argument, to inspire new action, nor to change people's basic attitude'.<sup>626</sup> This enabled and encouraged different methodologies, different styles of preaching to be developed, as the

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<sup>623</sup> Personal correspondence – see Appendix 5

<sup>624</sup> Brian A. Greet, 'Justification for Preaching', *In Church*, pp. 129-142

<sup>625</sup> Greet, 'Justification for Preaching', pp.134-138

<sup>626</sup> Jones, *Groundwork of Worship and Preaching*, p. 123



correct model was sought that would enable the purpose to be delivered.<sup>627</sup> Historically, however, Methodist theology, or at least Methodist emphasis, that was to be preached and was preached, was that of evangelical and personal faith. Michael Townsend in *Our Tradition of Faith*<sup>628</sup> says that there are four major doctrinal emphases in Methodist tradition: All men can be saved; All men can be saved by grace through faith; All men may know they are saved; All men may be saved to the uttermost.<sup>629</sup> Timothy Macquiban states that ‘The most distinctive feature of Methodist theology and practice has been Wesley’s doctrine of Christian Perfection.’<sup>630</sup> Wellings states that a form of this evangelicalism still existed in 1960 in worship.

Methodism at connexional level shared in the liberal evangelical consensus from the 1920s to the 1960s. For staunch conservatives, this consensus was often perceived and experienced as far more liberal than evangelical....On the other hand, what may strike us is the strength of the evangelical consensus...The vocabulary of conversion was still present...and Methodist hymnody, with its loyalty to a corpus of Wesley hymns, continued to provide a drip-feed of evangelical theology...<sup>631</sup>

However, Wellings states that Methodism moved post-1960 to theological plurality, but notes that evangelicalism has retained a place in Methodism, as one theological grouping among others.<sup>632</sup>

Haley and Francis seek to establish how much this evangelical theological emphasis continues to be held, in their survey of Methodist ministers. They asked ministers: ‘Historically, the call to personal faith and Christian

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<sup>627</sup> Jones, *Groundwork to Worship and Preaching*, p. 120

<sup>628</sup> Michael J Townsend, *Our Tradition of Faith*, (London: Epworth Press, 1980)

<sup>629</sup> Originally given as a summary of Methodist emphases, in 1903, by William B.Fitzgerald.

<sup>630</sup> Timothy S. A. Macquiban, ‘Dialogue with the Wesleys: Remembering Origins’, *Unmasking Methodist Theology*, p. 20

<sup>631</sup> Wellings, Fernley Heartley Lecture, 2003

<sup>632</sup> Wellings, Fernley Heartley Lecture, 2003

commitment has been an important emphasis in Methodist preaching. Do ministers regard the call to personal faith and commitment as a vital part of preaching?'<sup>633</sup> They established that 96% of Methodist ministers, even in 1997/98, agreed that the call to personal faith was a vital part of preaching. Given then the historical emphasis of Methodism and the results of this survey, one might expect that many, if not the majority of sermons, would still be on the call to faith and/or on the consequences of living by faith, even if Jones and others were advocating a different perspective, and Welling's belief that the Church has become more pluralistic.

David Blackley in 'An Audit of Worship at a Methodist Church',<sup>634</sup> undertaken in 2001 states that 'Tt]he majority (of sermons) were mainly devotional in character. . . the primary objective was to deepen spiritual awareness as Christians'.<sup>635</sup> He also states when sermons were evangelistic the '...emphasis was on the need for us to proclaim Christian faith to others, rather than on an appeal for commitment to Christ ourselves'.<sup>636</sup> It is unfortunate that Blackley does not state what he means by deepening the spiritual awareness of Christians for this might include the call to personal commitment, which might be regarded as part of the Methodist emphases. In another survey by John Trapnell it was revealed that out of 48 sermons audited 6 were evangelistic calls to faith; 9 sermons were doctrinal; 17 were 'devotional and practical'; and 9 were 'Christian talks'. He then says that there was '...a residue of 7 addresses,

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<sup>633</sup> Haley and Francis, *What Circuit Ministers Really Think*, p. 90

<sup>634</sup> David Blackley, 'An Audit of Worship in a Methodist Church', *Epworth Review*, 30.4, (Oct 2003), pp. 45-52

<sup>635</sup> Blackley, 'An Audit of Methodist Worship', p. 49

<sup>636</sup> Blackley, 'An Audit of Methodist Worship', p. 49

where even with careful note taking and the most close attention, it was not possible to detect any clear message at all'.<sup>637</sup> Because Trapnell and Blackley use different categories to classify sermons comparison is difficult. However, both suggest that there was a 'mixed bag' of sermon offerings, and that evangelical and/or soteriological sermons are not the norm.

David Burfield's PhD<sup>638</sup> comes to a somewhat different conclusion. Burfield's survey asked preachers, both ministers and local preachers, to self-declare their aim/intention for their preaching. Burfield asked an open question to allow preachers' to self-declare their aims for their sermons. He categorised a 'wide variety of answers' under twelve main headings,<sup>639</sup> although he said this was not an easy task as so many different words and phrases were used by preachers to describe their intentions. He concludes though that the first concern or aim of preachers was 'the proclamation of the gospel and the preacher as the herald of the Gospel confronting people with the call of Christ', with 38% of ministers and 55% of local preachers claiming this as an aim of their preaching. Burfield's analysis of the responses leads him to conclude that '...preaching is essentially evangelistic and is by far the dominant concern of local preachers'.<sup>640</sup> There is then discrepancy between Burfield's survey and the audits undertaken by Blackley and Trapnell. But it should also be noted that preachers gave Burfield more than one motive for their preaching. The 38% of

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<sup>637</sup> John Trapnell, 'A Sermon Audit from a Methodist Circuit', *The Local Preachers Magazine*, 1999, 149(4), p. 7

<sup>638</sup> David Burfield, *Identifying Pastoral Care in Contemporary Methodism*, Ph. D. thesis, (University of Nottingham, 1995)

<sup>639</sup> 1. Proclamation 2. The Faith 3. Personal Faith 4. Daily Christian Living 5. Presence of God 6. Discipleship 7. Bible/Scriptures 8. The Local Church 9. Personal Holiness and Growth 10. Enable Worship 11. Share Personal Faith 12. Fulfil Call

<sup>640</sup> Burfield, 'Methodist Preaching: Circumstances and Aims', p. 4

ministers and 55% of local preachers who claim that their sermons are intended to be evangelistic also have other motives. Different sermons by the same preacher may be dominated by one reason and other sermons by other motives.

What my work indicates is that, for some, sermon content, and therefore purpose, has been changed by a perceived need to be make the Gospel relevant to daily life. This is, perhaps, because those of faith have become the minority in society, and what was once assumed to be the norm, is no longer. Now Christian faith, and its relevance, needs to be spelt out, even to members of the church. But further, as discussed in Chapter 2, there has been a loss of belief in heaven and hell. Preaching about salvation has either been lost or its focus has changed. This is a departure from traditional thinking and emphasis on evangelism and soteriology and can be illustrated by these two quotes from correspondents who wrote to me:

One local preacher in my circuit, long since dead, is memorable for always preaching on the same text: “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from sin”.<sup>641</sup>

All my sermons have aimed to show the relevance of the life and teaching of Jesus for people’s lives, their communities and the world today. The Guardian, local newspapers and news on television provide topical material for sermons’.<sup>642</sup>

The idea of the need for sermons to be relevant to daily living has been promoted in Methodism since the 1970s. Local Preachers in particular have been seen to have a vital role in relating life and faith issues. Wallace White in

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<sup>641</sup> Personal correspondence – see Appendix 5

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'Sources of Sermons'<sup>643</sup> says: 'The major source of sermons for a local preacher is his secular life';<sup>644</sup> and

The preacher...should be well informed, using modern mass media, as well as broadening and deepening powers of biography, history, drama, poetry and the great novels, in addition to the technical studies of his own specialised calling. If he cultivates an alert mind he will be spared the incessant search for sermons, and will find ideas coming as he watches a television programme or walks down the road on a spring morning or sympathises with an anxious friend.<sup>645</sup>

Donald English also highlighted the role of the local preacher in linking life and faith: 'The strength of the lay woman or man who preaches is precisely that they spend their days in the places where most members of the congregation also spend them'.<sup>646</sup> White's contemporary sources for a starting point for sermons are supplemented with the comment that the preacher '...will always turn to his Bible'.<sup>647</sup> English notes that '...the theological training of local preachers will need to include more of what has traditionally been called 'apologetics' – that is how to make sense of the world in the light of Christian faith, and how to make sense of our faith in the light of the world around us'.<sup>648</sup> His concern was that the great issues of the (his) day needed to be linked with the biblical theology of creation and redemption, and that the role of preaching was to link these issues with Christian faith.<sup>649</sup>

*Groundwork of Worship and Preaching* continued to advocate preaching that linked life issues and faith. It described preaching as being the linking of

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<sup>643</sup> Wallace H. White, 'Sources of Sermons', *In Church*, pp. 157-172

<sup>644</sup> White, 'Sources of Sermons', p. 158

<sup>645</sup> White, 'Sources of Sermons', p. 161

<sup>646</sup> Donald English, 'Local Preacher's and the Church's Mission', *Workaday Preachers*, p. 3

<sup>647</sup> White, 'Sources of Sermons', p. 161

<sup>648</sup> English, 'Local Preacher's and the Church's Mission', p. 9

<sup>649</sup> English, 'Local Preacher's and the Church's Mission', p. 7

scriptural and Christian theological themes to experience of the Christian life 'as being like traffic on a two-way bridge'.<sup>650</sup> It reflects English's idea that much preaching focuses on apologetics and on the need to enable congregations to know what it means to live as Christians. It said the Bible or ordinary life may be starting points for sermons, and goes on to say that '...every preacher who wishes to respond to the urgent concerns of the Church should set out to engage in this type of (topical) preaching'.<sup>651</sup> Most strikingly however, it said that sermons '...aim to reinforce what people already believe or attitudes already held, and to promote Christian growth by offering persons the next stage in their understanding, that which they are already groping after'.<sup>652</sup> This is preaching for the already converted to offer something for their journey of faith.

*Faith and Worship* continues to support the idea that sermons may be topic based, although the topics suggested are somewhat less 'secular' than those promoted by English, being '...prayer, bible study, giving, worship, the sacraments, national tragedy or event'.<sup>653</sup> In my survey work preaching to themes/topics was mentioned as a mode of preaching. David Burfield's survey work suggested that 16% of preachers regularly addressed topical issues. So theme/topic preaching is a mode of preaching in Methodism. In my survey work, themes that received attention were mainly 'church/faith' based issues, with the topics of sermons being peace and justice; other social issues like the environment; Special Sunday themes e.g. Action for Children, Methodist Homes; and the mission of the church. Many preachers also consider that the topic

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<sup>650</sup> Jones, *Groundwork of Worship and Preaching*, p. 90

<sup>651</sup> Jones, *Groundwork of Worship and Preaching*, p. 100

<sup>652</sup> Jones, *Groundwork of Worship and Preaching*, p. 123

<sup>653</sup> *Faith and Worship*, Unit 2

controls the whole of the service, not just the sermon, and so choose hymns, say prayers and give information that relate specifically to the topic theme.

Methodist training materials have emphasised that there must be a link between topic and scripture; and that a sermon has not been preached if a topic is chosen that is not related to scripture and/or Christian theology. Sermons are not ‘...a chat about modern life, nor a study of problems in the Bible or the creeds, but preaching, spoken theology’.<sup>654</sup> David Blackley’s audit suggests that three quarters of all sermons were based on a bible passage or individual text, which leaves a quarter of sermons when the bible was not the basis of the proclamation. Trapnell’s audit also states that 25% of sermons did not directly use scripture.<sup>655</sup> But Blackley also goes on to say that ‘The Bible was frequently used in a tangential manner; although the activity was usually true to its Bible basis, the approach was not as direct as it might have been’.<sup>656</sup> The use of the Bible in preaching then must at least be questioned.

To move away from evangelical sermons as the norm seems to have been the aim of training materials produced for local preachers. As well as encouraging life and faith related sermons, training materials aimed to introduce Methodist local preachers in training to contemporary theology, including the ‘radical’ theology of the 1960s. Written in the early 1970s, *Doing Theology: An Introduction for Preachers*<sup>657</sup>, was scripted by 5 Methodist scholars who wrote

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<sup>654</sup> Jones, *Groundwork of Worship and Preaching*, p. 124

<sup>655</sup> This is a judgement made by Trapnell. The preachers may have felt that they were being scriptural.

<sup>656</sup> Blackley, ‘An Audit of Methodist Worship’, p. 49

<sup>657</sup> John Stacey, (Editor), *Doing Theology: An Introduction for Preachers*, (Local Preachers Department of the Methodist Church, 1972)

from their own predominantly 'liberal' perspective. *Doing Theology* proved unpalatable to many; yet is illustrative of changing theology in the 1960s and 1970s. John Stacey notes that there were deep divisions between conservatives and radicals in their responses to this book (and, no doubt to wider disputes about Christian faith in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century). He notes that in his eighteen years as connexional Local Preacher's Secretary he '...met local preachers of all theological persuasions, from flaming radicals to rock hard conservatives, and, believe it or not, of no theological persuasion at all'.<sup>658</sup> The existence of such a wide spectrum of theological views within the ranks of Local Preachers suggests that when preaching focuses on theological issues, on matters of faith and doctrine, for example, a variety of positions will be evident. But in responses to my questionnaire no-one mentioned modern radical scholarship as an issue that impacted on their conduct of worship. Reddie makes an observation, through his experience in Methodist circuit life, which leaves him '...asking to what extent any of the creative developments of the twentieth century (in theological training) have brought a measure of change to the contemporary experience of preaching within Circuit and local church'.<sup>659</sup> Such is my own experience!

Commenting on preacher's training resources, including John Stacey's *Groundwork of Theology*, that was written to replace the controversial *Doing Theology*, Thomas Langford states that 'What appears to be the case...is that distinctly Wesleyan or Methodist theological interests have yielded to more general and commonly accepted Christian theological themes...Little explicit emphasis is given to such traditional Methodist doctrines as sanctification. In

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<sup>658</sup> Stacey, 'Local Preachers and Theological Change', p. 291

<sup>659</sup> Reddie, 'Dispelling Myths', p. 173



the course of this change, special Wesleyan and Methodist theological traditions play no significant role'.<sup>660</sup> Indeed Stacey placed the doctrinal emphasises of Methodism in an appendix in *Groundwork of Theology*. In a similar vein, Wellings and Wood say that the theological training that has been given to local preachers has been to '...synthesize the mainstream theology of the day and to communicate it to local preachers;' and they continue 'Explicit reference to Methodist emphases, traditions and sources played a comparatively small role in this enterprise (writing texts for local preacher training), a role which diminished steadily as the century unfolded.'<sup>661</sup> Wellings and Woods' observation that connexional training programmes have focused preachers' attention on the theological issues of the day raises the question of how much such training affects preaching. Quite how much modern scholarship does or does not impact on preaching may be a key issue in understanding what Methodist preaching is actually like today. How much of it addresses modern theological dispute and debate? Burfield states that only a third of ministers, and one-fifth of local preachers, believe that their sermons should, 'feed the mind, explain doctrine and enable people to think about Christian faith'.<sup>662</sup> Blackley states: 'Activities that had a strong doctrinal element were rare';<sup>663</sup> whilst Trapnell claims that only one-fifth of his audited sermons were doctrinal. It seems that there is some, but a limited, element of addressing theological and doctrinal matters in preaching.

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<sup>660</sup> Thomas A. Longford, *Methodist Theology*, (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1998), p. 85

<sup>661</sup> Martin Wellings and Andrew Wood, 'Facets of Formation: Theology through Training', *Unmasking Methodist Theology*, p. 77

<sup>662</sup> Burfield, 'Methodist Preaching', p. 5

<sup>663</sup> Blackley, 'An Audit of Methodist Worship', p. 49

Turner's chapter in *Modern Methodism*, 'Methodist Scholarship',<sup>664</sup> reviews the contribution of Methodist scholars to theology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Turner believes that general Methodist scholarship focuses on mainstream Christian theology, even if with some bias to soteriology, but that its focus is '...theology as plain truth for plain people and believing in the transformation of individuals and society, (and) makes a distinctive contribution free from sectarian bias. And in doing so, it holds worship and theology together.'<sup>665</sup> If this is what Methodist scholars offer – another example of Methodism's pragmatic and practical approach to theology - might it be that many preachers, no longer convinced that what they say should aim to have an instantaneous effect on people; unwilling or unable to address theological and doctrinal matters; unsure about the authority or relevance of the Bible in the modern era; and/or recognising that they are mainly preaching to established church members, have as their aim the desire to give people 'something spiritual' or something practical. If preachers are not students too the depth of their offerings might be somewhat limited. It seems that one, possibly the major, trend in preaching is toward an apologetic interpretation of the faith so that something practical may be offered.<sup>666</sup> If one adds together the categories that Burfield identifies that seem to relate to daily living of faith by Christian people – Personal Faith; Daily Christian Living; Discipleship; Personal Holiness and growth – a considerable percentage of sermons may be seen as addressing practical applications of faith.

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<sup>664</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, pp. 80-88

<sup>665</sup> Turner, *Modern Methodism*, p. 87

<sup>666</sup> Trevor Pitt, in 'The Conversation of Preaching and Theology', *The Future of Preaching*, (London: SCM Press, 2010) writes rather despairingly about modern trends in preaching, describing it as 'increasingly trivial'. p. 68

As Burdon identified, the lectionary was not regarded as important pre-1960, but it has taken on increasing significance within the church since the publication of the *Methodist Service Book*. Does the lectionary now significantly affect the content and purpose of sermons? My research shows some discrepancy with that of Burfield. Overall my respondents indicated that 13% regularly used all the lectionary readings; 75% said they used most of the lectionary readings and 12% some of the readings. Burfield's survey revealed that only 43% of preachers regularly used the lectionary. However, Burfield's work was undertaken in the 1990s before the publication of the RCL in the *Methodist Worship Book*. This publication may well have increased the use of the lectionary.

What indication of the use of the lectionary do we have? One local preacher, who was accredited in 1953, wrote to me about preaching before the lectionary was published in the *Methodist Service Book*:

There was no set lectionary to be a guide to services and sermon themes, with interesting results. I remember one Easter Sunday when the preacher made no reference whatsoever to the Resurrection in either hymns, prayers, Bible readings or the sermon.<sup>667</sup>

Another local preacher, who has been active throughout the time frame of this study, wrote about how he now embraces the lectionary:

I always use the lectionary as a starting point in service preparation although in a minority of cases I do not follow it because another theme is more appropriate. There is a much greater inclusion of the whole of the Christian year and doctrine today than fifty years ago.<sup>668</sup>

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<sup>667</sup> Personal correspondence – see Appendix 5

<sup>668</sup> Personal correspondence – see Appendix 5

Another wrote similarly:

I always follow the lectionary. The lectionary provides good discipline: it is all too easy to fall into the habit of choosing favourite bits of scripture.<sup>669</sup>

These respondents sum up much of what is said about the use of the lectionary by all my respondents. There was a very strong recognition of the value of the lectionary, both to provide discipline for the preacher and to ensure congregations hear a wide range of scripture and subsequent message, preventing the past Methodist preaching practice of ignoring the Christian year and always preaching 'evangelical' sermons. And yet it is also clear that the lectionary is used in a somewhat haphazard way. It is clear from the responses received that preachers do find reasons not to use the lectionary. For a very few this is a matter of principle for them. For most other reasons are given - the lectionary of the week did not speak to them; they were conducting a special Sunday that required a different theme; with honesty some admit to not having enough time to do a new sermon. But, even if the lectionary is used, few preachers seem to use all of it. The Psalm is the most often neglected element;<sup>670</sup> but the Old Testament or Epistle is often disregarded and, even on occasions, the Gospel is not read. And, very noticeably, as Burfield shows, the lectionary readings are not used in a sacramental way. That is to allow God to speak through Scripture.

The responses I have received about the lectionary suggest misunderstanding/s about its purpose; and therefore the ability to accept its guidance. In particular

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<sup>669</sup> Personal correspondence – see Appendix 5

<sup>670</sup> Although technically the Psalm is not a lectionary reading it is given to be sung or spoken responsively by a congregation in response to the Old Testament lesson.

there grew up an assumption that the lectionary provided a theme for the day. When the first Joint Liturgical Group lectionary was adopted in Methodism, with the publication of the *Methodist Service Book*, each Sunday was given a theme e.g. the ninth Sunday before Christmas was entitled The Creation. In the old lectionary there were also controlling lessons, and unsurprisingly for this Sunday they are for Year 1, Genesis 1:1 – 2:3; and for Year 2 Genesis 2:4b – 9, 15-25. The idea, therefore, that the lectionary provided a theme became commonplace and is still often thought to be the case today. But this was never meant to be the case. As George says of the *Methodist Service Book* lectionary ‘...lessons were chosen, not themes. The Bible is still providing the agenda. The thematic titles are explicitly said to be no more than indications of emphases’.<sup>671</sup>

The Revised Common Lectionary has no thematic titles. Dudley Coates says about the RCL: ‘The lectionary is designed to allow the Bible to speak for itself, rather than to put the Bible into the straight-jacket formed by human themes. Preachers will need to work harder on the actual lessons’.<sup>672</sup> RCL provides for an Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel reading for each Sunday. The lectionary is designed to allow Scripture to be read, whether or not the sermon is linked to any or all the readings. The provision of semi-continuous readings, that are not intended even to be related, emphasise this point. The Church simply understands that the Church in its assembly hears Scripture read as part of the liturgy, as part of the work of the people. A sermon may be developed from one of the readings alone. However, when the related readings are read then there is

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<sup>671</sup> *Worship and Preaching*, Vol. 12., No. 3, 1982

<sup>672</sup> Dudley Coates, ‘Issues Arising from Using the New Lectionary’, *Worship and Preaching*, July-Sept, 1998

a connection between the readings; this is the case in the seasonal readings. Here the Scriptures invite the preacher to 'work hard', so that the preacher might discover the connections between the texts, and therefore to speak from the texts. For, although there are no human straight-jackets of themes imposed on the preacher, 'It is the intention of the liturgy that the sermon be based on the readings'.<sup>673</sup> What might well be occurring is that preachers who choose to use the lectionary still do not use the readings as they are intended to be used by the lectionary compilers. Instead preachers find a theme; or they use the texts to meet their own intention of what sermons are for. This would mean that research can show that the lectionary is used but that sermons' purpose and content are not controlled by the lectionary. It is very notable that only 16% of ministers and 13% of local preachers 'desire to interpret the Bible, to make it interesting and relevant to the hearer, to enable the congregation to hear God speaking to them through 'the Word'.<sup>674</sup>

It appears from all the available research that there is a wide range of purposes that different preachers have for their sermons but a leaning toward making the gospel relevant and practical; but that there is no overall determinant that provides Methodism with an ethos for its sermons. Methodist preachers are simply too plural in their theological positions, interest, and beliefs to be united by any underlying ethos, including the traditional Methodist bias toward evangelical and soteriological preaching. One of Blackley's comments seems germane: 'A great variety of main theme was evident. There was no discernable pattern. The overall impression of the diet of teaching and preaching on offer

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<sup>673</sup> Ramshaw, *A Three-Year Banquet*, p. 69

<sup>674</sup> Burfield 'Methodist Preaching', p. 5

was one of fragmentation'.<sup>675</sup> If this comment is taken alongside Burfield's survey which revealed 12 different categories of the aims of preachers, and Haley and Francis analysis of the wide range of theological positions held by Methodist presbyters,<sup>676</sup> we gain an impression that preaching in Methodism varies widely in its content and motivation. However, we might also postulate that the majority of preaching leans toward matters relating to what it means to live a Christian life, but perhaps also more in relation to be a Christian and a member of church than in relation to social, political and economic life. Of more concern is Trapnell's observation that some sermons seemed to have no discernable aim.

#### 5.4 Hymnody

The majority of Methodist worship services, as my survey work confirms, contain 5 hymns, interspersed throughout the service order. David Blackley confirms this pattern of worship apologetically, saying that 'Most of the services were of the types which have often been despairingly or dismissively described as 'hymn-sandwiches' or 'hymn-prayer-reading' sandwiches. Such descriptions are unfair, partly because inevitably something always follows something else; all that is at issue is the nature of the various layers'.<sup>677</sup>

This perhaps is not quite true if one looks at service orders in some other traditions – most notably the Baptist/Evangelical/Charismatic traditions where it is a reasonably common practice to sing several hymns and songs

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<sup>675</sup> Blackley, 'An Audit of Methodist Worship', p. 49

<sup>676</sup> Haley and Francis, *What Methodist Ministers Really Think*, esp. Part 3 'Doctrinal Diversity', pp. 99-166

<sup>677</sup> Blackley, 'An Audit of Methodist Worship', p. 47

continuously, in what is often called the 'worship' time. Then a sermon is preached and this is followed by a response time. However, although one service in my survey work revealed three hymns/songs being sung continuously, there is no indication of Methodist worship changing its basic pattern.

What is apparent from my survey work is that there are a growing number of sources from which 'preachers' choose their hymns and songs. The most common alternative sources to *Hymns and Psalms* are *Songs of Fellowship* and *Mission Praise*. However, there is some evidence of the 1933 *Methodist Hymn Book* still being in use, but more commonly many other more modern sources being accessed. These include *Common Ground*, *The Source*, *The Church Hymnary* <sup>4678</sup>, Taizé material, Spring Harvest material, other Iona songbooks and HymnQuest. My own experience suggests that there is also growing evidence of musical instruments other than the organ supporting congregational singing. Whilst I did no specific analysis of choirs, there are very few examples of anthems in the service orders received, suggesting this contribution to worship has declined; but the use of bands with guitars and drums and keyboards has increased. Blackley makes this comment about hymnody: '*Hymns and Psalms* was overwhelmingly the hymn book used. *Mission Praise* (1983 edition) and *The Methodist Hymn Book* found occasional use, usually as ancillaries to HP. In over one quarter of the services, hymns from other sources were used'.<sup>679</sup>

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<sup>678</sup> *The Church Hymnary 4*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2005)

<sup>679</sup> Blackley, 'An Audit of Methodist Worship', p. 47-48



Therefore there seems to be little change in Methodist worship in relation to the use of hymnody – the same number is still sung, interspersed with other elements of the service. There is change, however, in the sourcing of hymns. This alternative sourcing of hymns has been evident at least since the 1970s – at the end of that decade *Partners in Praise*<sup>680</sup> was published, followed by *Mission Praise* in 1983 and *Songs of Fellowship* in 1985.

Because hymns are such a common and staple part of Methodist worship it is easy to look no deeper at change in any analysis of their place in worship other than the frequency with which they are sung. However, Judith Maizel-Long says of hymns in Methodism:

Hymns have generally had a greater significance for Methodists than service books. If you ask a Methodist about the incarnation of Christ, you will often hear the reply, ‘Our God contracted to a span’ (H&P 109), or about the work of Christ: ‘Died he for me, who caused his pain?’ (H&P 216). Successive hymn-books were the way in which Methodists learned Christian doctrine, expressed the liturgical response of the congregation in public worship, grounded their daily devotions, and grew in faith and understanding.<sup>681</sup>

Don Saliers emphasises the place hymn singing has in shaping faith and understanding: ‘While singing may teach or inform faith about theological doctrine, its primary drive is to form and express faith in the realities about which worshipping congregations sing’.<sup>682</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> *Partners in Praise*, (Stainer and Bell and the Methodist Church Division of Education and Youth, 1979)

<sup>681</sup> Maizel-Long, ‘Theology Sung’, p. 48

<sup>682</sup> Don E. Saliers, *Music and Theology*, p. 61

The question that emerges then is what hymns and songs are being sung which in turn shape the faith of worshipping communities? Do hymns and songs used still reflect traditional Methodist emphases? Maizel-Long suggests that *Hymns and Psalms*, whilst it still retains many hymns from the *Methodist Hymn Book*, contains a different theological emphasis:

By the late twentieth century, the dominant theological issue for the Methodist Church appears to be 'What does it mean to be the people of God?' The greatest difference between *Hymns and Psalms* and all preceding Methodist hymn books is its different theological focus. Salvation was the main concern of the Church in earlier Methodist hymn books. In 1983, there is a tripartite order of 'God', 'World' and God's People. The focus of *Hymns and Psalms* is thus on the Church, not on salvation.<sup>683</sup>

But what hymns are actually sung, rather than are available to sing in the hymn book? Blackley's audit identified that 'There was a strong tendency to overuse some hymns, most notably HP66, HP 86, HP216, HP463, HP559, HP673, HP739 and HP746'.<sup>684</sup> These hymns are, Great is thy faithfulness; Tell out my soul; And can it be; To God be the glory; What a friend we have in Jesus; Dear Lord and Father of mankind; May the mind of Christ my saviour; One more step. All these hymns, apart from Dear Lord and Father of mankind, are framed in the first person singular. There is little in these choices to indicate that the focus is on the church and its corporate being, work and journey.

In my own audit work (that surveyed services taken in Ordinary Time, and therefore will exclude Festival hymnody) a more balanced choice of hymnody appears. 89 different hymns from *Hymns and Psalms* were chosen in 28 different

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<sup>683</sup> Maizel-Long, 'Theology Sung', p. 50

<sup>684</sup> Blackley, 'An Audit of Methodist Worship', p.48

services. Only two hymns were chosen more than three times – 1) Immortal, invisible, God only wise (H and P 9) and 2) The first day of the week (H and P 576). Eighteen of the hymns chosen were Charles Wesley compositions and 30 from twentieth century authors. Hymns and Psalms is organised in three main sections – God’s Nature containing 328 hymns; God’s World containing 103 hymns; and God’s People containing 390 hymns. My audit revealed 34 hymns chosen from God’s Nature section; 13 from God’s World section; and 42 hymns from God’s People section. The range is 10% to 13% of hymns chosen from each major section, suggestive of a good balance. At sub-section level 5 out of 12 (42%) possible hymns on God’s patience and guidance were chosen; 5 out of 29 (30%) on Growth in Grace and Holiness were chosen; 5 out of 20 (25%) on God’s Being and majesty; 5 out of 21 (25%) on Christ’s Work of Salvation; 4 out of 16 (25%) on Justice and peace; and 5 out of 21 (25%) on the Mission and Unity of the Church. But it should also be noted that 28 hymns or songs were sung that were not taken from *Hymns and Psalms*. Five were from the *Methodist Hymn Book* (one service at one church), two from *Common Ground* and the others from either *Songs of Fellowship* or *Mission Praise*, making a total of 23% from sources other than Hymns and Psalms.

I also had recorded all the hymns and songs used at a ‘family-church’ over the period of five months (June to November 2007). This shows a great variety of sources for hymns and songs. In total one hundred and thirty six different hymns and songs were chosen. Of these seventy nine were from Hymns and Psalms (58%). Five came from the Iona Community; 23 from the modern worship song genre; the rest from various other sources. The most used hymns

or songs (five times) were – All heaven declares (Mission Praise 14); Be bold be strong (Mission Praise 49); God forgave my sins (Mission Praise 181); Father I place into your hands (Mission Praise 133); Give me joy in my heart (H and P 492); Born in Song (H and P 486). This church has an all-age service once a month; it has a band that plays at this service; and a minister who is planned there for an average of 8 services a quarter (13 Sundays). The greater use of alternative hymn and song sources (42%) would seem to reflect these factors when compared with the other churches audited (23%).

So it is not simply a question of how many hymns are chosen when we examine how Methodist worship has changed – we note that there is a wider variety of hymns and songs available and, whilst all of these may help to enable congregations to make liturgical responses and all may feed the religious imagination and teach theology, we also need to ask what the imagination is being fed and what the brain is being taught.

Pete Ward illustrates in *Selling Worship*<sup>685</sup> that in some evangelical churches the explosion of new hymns and songs has had a profound effect on worship patterns, the theology of worship and the theology expressed in worship. He ‘...sets out to explain how evangelical Christians in Britain came to embrace popular music, and how this has affected the practice and the theology of worship’.<sup>686</sup> He goes on to say:

The shifting patterns in metaphor and imagery common in worship songs reveal a gradual theological development. The observation that the

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<sup>685</sup> Pete Ward, *Selling Worship – How what we sing has changed the Church*, (Paternoster Press, 2005)

<sup>686</sup> Ward, *Selling Worship*, p. 4

theology of the church is being changed through the songs that we sing is very significant. If we add to this the realisation that the changing patterns in theology are related to the way that popular music markets and sells itself, then some important and perhaps less than positive observations can be made.<sup>687</sup>

Given that *Songs of Fellowship* is one of the most used alternative sources in Methodism it is instructive to read what Ward has to say about the theology of *Songs of Fellowship Volume 1*.

In *Songs of Fellowship*, the Christian story is arranged around this central vision of the people of God gathered in the temple. Jesus is Lord enthroned on high on his people's praises. It is a continuing theme that believers find safety and security within this temple environment. The city and temple imagery are associated with escape from a threatening outside world. Dwelling in the courts of the Lord offers the worshipper refuge. Outside, many may fall to the right and to the left, but God is our shelter. So good is it in 'Thy House' that a believer may desire permanent residence. Sheltering under the wings, it is possible to imagine living in the temple for ever.<sup>688</sup>

This kind of theological emphasis is not traditional, historical, mainstream Methodism of personal salvation and holiness; nor is it the theological emphasis that Maizel-Long points toward as focused on the church. Whilst most of Methodism does not use *Songs of Fellowship* or other worship songs as their staple diet, other issues are identified by Ward and others, of the theology contained in these songs, particularly the lack of reference to the historical Jesus, his incarnation, life and death. As Ward says:

There is an important theological issue at stake here. We know about God because he is revealed in Jesus Christ. The dynamic of the gospel as God's welcome rests on the life, death and resurrection of the historical Jesus...It is in Jesus that we know and are known by God's grace. God's goodness does not just rely on these events. We experience God's

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<sup>687</sup> Ward, *Selling Worship*, p. 5

<sup>688</sup> Ward, *Selling Worship*, p. 139

goodness as we see God revealed in Jesus. In other words, we cannot simply take the experience and disconnect it from Jesus who is the revelation of God'.<sup>689</sup>

Much of Ward's critique of modern worship songs is that they are too 'reflexive' – that is they focus on the experience of the worshipper and not on the nature of God.<sup>690</sup> He also warns, as does Nick Page, that it is not just the theology of the song itself, but the theology of worship, that lies behind this genre.

Fundamentally, the problems with so much modern worship song writing stem, I believe, from a serious misconception of what worship actually is. Worship is much more than singing a few songs. It's much more than getting in a good mood. It's much more than chanting a few verses from the Bible'.<sup>691</sup>

Both Ward and Page would support the idea that some songs can be reflexive but that these should not be the staple diet of worship. All hymn and song writers have their own theological biases and agendas, not just modern, charismatic song writers. As song writers have theological biases and agendas so too do preachers who choose what hymns and songs are sung. In Methodist worship much has changed in relation to the hymns and songs sung, especially in local contexts, as more sources than *Hymns and Psalms* have become available. It would require a thorough analysis of what music is sung in a church, not simply the number of hymns or songs, to know what theology is being learnt by specific congregations through singing. We can say that currently in Methodism, in most places, the evidence points toward the use of hymns to intersperse a worship service, rather than to create 'worship times'.

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<sup>689</sup> Ward, *Selling Worship*, p. 208

<sup>690</sup> See also Steven, 'The Spirit in Contemporary Charismatic Worship', for a critique of reflexive songs in worship.

<sup>691</sup> Nick Page, *And Now Let's Move Into A Time of Nonsense – Why Worship Songs are Failing the Church*, (Milton Keynes: Authentic, 2004), p. 22

We can also say that the theological content of many new hymns and songs has changed over the past 50 years or so – some are individualistic and reflexive, others are radical and corporate and all other types in between. To know what Methodists learn through singing really requires us to remember and understand that worship and liturgy is locally enacted.

### 5.5 Prayer

Burdon reports that prayers in 1960 ‘...were nearly always extempore, had expanded to resemble those of the office and, at their best included adoration, confession, intercession and thanksgiving.’<sup>692</sup> This stands contra to Davies’s comment that extempore prayer was often ‘long-winded repetition of clichés’. Jones notes that the speech of preachers, presumably also including prayer, was ‘grave speech’, and adds that there was ‘...excessive grovelling of our confessions of sin...’<sup>693</sup> No doubt the quality of prayer was dependent on the skills and graces of the preacher. The older Local Preachers that wrote to me all noted the move away from extempore prayer, with preachers using a wide variety of book sources for prayer, recognising that this sometimes allowed ‘technically better’ prayers. But also, depending on the source, they note that some extempore or read prayer in public worship picks up and uses some of the language of charismatic/evangelical style and theology, with phrases such as ‘I just want to thank you Jesus’ being used by some preachers and worship leaders. They confirm that more informal language was introduced, including the change to God being addressed as You rather than Thou. George notes that ‘During these years (1960s) the custom of addressing God as “you” grew with

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<sup>692</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 36

<sup>693</sup> Jones, *Worship For Today*, p. 10

unexpected rapidity'.<sup>694</sup> It was also noted that congregational responses and the use of pictures and objects as prayer aids have sometimes been introduced. One preacher informed me that in the 1960s he never used a prayer of confession, regarding this as a 'popish practice'! My own reflection is that many preachers do not model prayers on the traditional prayers of adoration, confession, intercession and thanksgiving.

The 1960 Conference Committee noted that the ordering of services was wrong, saying that prayers of adoration and confession should come at the beginning of a service, and intercession, thanksgiving, dedication and Lord's Prayer toward the end and after the sermon. In relation to liturgical revision, however, the main issue that reports and training have addressed is that of thanksgiving prayer. This was done within the context set out in the 1960 Conference report that said that services of Holy Communion and 'evangelical preaching services' should bear a certain relation to one another that led to the recommended order of including thanksgiving prayers after the sermon. *In Church* supported this move saying that 'A prayer of Thanksgiving...should be included in every complete act of Christian worship'.<sup>695</sup> What is clear from a review of the literature and from the responses that I received is that preachers have not changed service orders to place prayers of thanksgiving, dedication and Lord's Prayer, alongside the intercessions in the response section of the service. The Lord's Prayer and the offertory and dedication prayers can appear anywhere in a service as can a form of thanksgiving prayer – indeed these are often said in the opening prayers and confused with prayers of adoration.

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<sup>694</sup> George, 'The Methodist Service Book', p. 69

<sup>695</sup> David Blatherwick, 'Readings, Prayers and Hymns', *In Church*, p. 100



In the *Methodist Worship Book* 'Morning, Afternoon, or Evening Services', the position of the thanksgiving, intercessions and dedication is retained (various options are allowed for the Lord's Prayer). However, Wainwright states that 'There is now no explicit attempt to give a Eucharistic shape to the principal service'.<sup>696</sup> This assertion has been confirmed by the Rev. Donald Pickard<sup>697</sup>, who was a member of the group that developed these services. Nevertheless, if it was the group's intention not to give an explicit Eucharistic shape to the service, it still retains a very close resemblance to the 1975 service order. The 1999 service is clearly marked as having a four-fold shape. The third section is The Response. That section includes prayers of thanksgiving, intercession and dedication. Additionally, whilst the style of the 1999 prayers of thanksgiving is not as closely aligned to the style of the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving as they are in the *Methodist Service Book*, the actual content of the prayers of thanksgiving given in the *Methodist Worship Book* are still Trinitarian and declare the paschal mystery, two vital components of the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving in most modern and revised Eucharistic liturgies.

It remains the case, as stated by George, that it is prayers of thanksgiving, shaped by a Trinitarian theology and which declare the paschal mystery, that remain the least used part of Methodist worship services. Often when thanksgivings are used they appear in the opening prayers and thank God for creation and the blessings of daily life, but do not declare Christ's passion or

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<sup>696</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, 'The Ecumenical Scope of Methodist Liturgical Revision', James F. Puglisi, *Liturgical Renewal as a Way to Christian Unity*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Training Press, 2005), pp. 35-60, p. 50

<sup>697</sup> From personal conversations with Don Pickard who acted as my mentor during my placement programme.

recall the whole work of the Trinity. Shier-Jones, writing years after George, also makes this point:

Thanksgiving should be a natural response of humanity to God's gracious gifts of life and salvation. God is thanked . . . for all that God has done and continues to do. . .

In worship it is generally held that thanksgiving is part of the congregation's response to hearing the great and mighty acts of God proclaimed in the ministry of the word. . . the church knows that thanksgiving is often overlooked completely, or mixed up with adoration and all too often the prayers in the response consist of nothing but intercession.<sup>698</sup>

Shier-Jones goes on to say that preachers are taught that '...any service that does not contain thanksgiving is seriously deficient'.<sup>699</sup> Then, in the very next sentence she negates the preceding sentence by saying 'This would be particularly true of a service of Holy Communion'<sup>700</sup> – leaving the interpretation open that it is not vital to a non-Eucharistic service.

## 5.6 Other Significant Change in Methodist Worship Practice

### 5.6.1. The Conduct of Worship Services

One of the most notable changes that my respondents, especially those who had been leading worship and preaching for the longest period of time, recognised was the growing element of participation in worship of the congregation – away from the 'One-Man Band' led worship.<sup>701</sup> My respondents were almost universally accepting of increased participation in worship. It was reported that participation included both planning worship with others to participation in the

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<sup>698</sup> Shier-Jones, *A Work in Progress*, p. 224

<sup>699</sup> Shier-Jones, *A Work in Progress*, p.224

<sup>700</sup> Shier-Jones, *A Work in Progress*, p.224

<sup>701</sup> Also see David G. Deeks, 'Shared Ministry in Worship', *Epworth Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1, January 1977

actual service, with drama, dance and other creative arts mentioned as activities that were undertaken. Yet, a word of caution is required at this point. For there were responses that suggested that, for a variety of reasons, this form of participation is on the wane, perhaps with the exception of congregation members reading the lessons, which is still a very common occurrence. What seems clear in Methodism is that there are many churches and chapels where the congregation is small and where the number of children has declined rapidly. This has meant less all-age worship, and as congregations get older, fewer experimental aspects to worship, including participation in the creative arts. Some churches have moved to train and appoint specific worship leaders who will regularly plan and participate in worship with the appointed 'preacher'. But there are huge numbers of churches where the 'preacher' will lead all the worship. We therefore have a mixed picture across the Connexion in respect of congregational participation. I also note that in my survey work there was no mention at all of Worship Consultation groups, and this may suggest that these are not as active as they were 10 or 15 years ago. In some places what now seems to be occurring is that more participation occurs in alternative worship practice – for example in Messy Church and café church worship.

It is very evident from my survey work, however, that many 'preachers' understand participation to be enabled through other ways and means, most notably from an informal style of leading worship, including the use of 'modern' language. This may also be the reason for another trend that seems to have developed in Methodism, where the preacher instructs the congregation in what to do, or what is about to happen, or what the prayers will contain.

### 5.6.2. The Issue of Language

In the preface of *Worship for Today* John Stacey wrote, 'Any situation which compels a section of the Methodist Establishment at Westminster to join hands with the organised *avant garde* must be reckoned a serious one. The need for the renewal of Methodist worship in the direction of more effective communication and greater relevance to the life of the secular world is such a situation'.<sup>702</sup> A preacher wrote to me and helps to explain at least part of the reason why this change took place:

For forty years I have tried to use language that most people will be able to understand. One of the most painful comments made to me after a service was one of the most helpful – she hadn't understood a word of my preaching. That was a shattering experience but I went home and read the sermon through that lady's eyes. I saw the long words.<sup>703</sup>

Dixon notes how language usage changed in the late 1960s and early 1970s saying 'Quite spontaneously, many preachers have started to express themselves in a style which is simpler and more direct than was in vogue forty years ago'.<sup>704</sup>

This use of a different kind of language has been an evident response in my questionnaires. Stacey's comment about the renewal of worship requiring effective communication finds, at least a partial answer, in Dixon's comment about simpler and more direct language usage. The move to a more modern form of language was also reflected in the new translations of the Bible that began to appear and be used for public worship in the 1960s and 1970s e.g. The

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<sup>702</sup> Jones, *Worship for Today*, p.7

<sup>703</sup> Personal Correspondence – see Appendix 5

<sup>704</sup> Dixon, *At Your Service*, p. 13

New English Bible; the Good News Bible; and in the production of new hymns and songs in modern language e.g. "I danced in the morning", by Sydney Carter<sup>705</sup>.

Another major issue about language which emerged and developed over this time period has been that of inclusive language in relation to humanity and God.

In 1980 Jones wrote in relation to the preparation of a new hymn-book:

Then there is the problem of sexism. Hymnody is one of the most powerful forces for maintaining the view that the Godhead is to be understood mainly in masculine terms....Should a major effort be made to ensure that God can be regarded as embracing the feminine as well as masculine qualities?<sup>706</sup>

But my auditing work of services reveals that no great change has occurred in preachers' speech about God in relation to inclusive language. I asked those who audited services to listen for any attempts made by 'preachers' to use words and images of God of a feminine nature; there is little, if any, wrestling with the issues raised by feminists in using words like Lord; and, whilst the questionnaires revealed some who referenced usage of inclusive language this usually points towards inclusivity about people, not being dynamic with words about God.

The other issue to consider in reference to the use of language and change is the difference between using modern language and using modern liturgical language. Dixon claims for liturgical language: '...good liturgical language

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<sup>705</sup> © 1963 Stainer and Bell Ltd. Published in *Partners in Praise*, (Chester House Publications, 1979)

<sup>706</sup> *Worship and Preaching*, Vol 19, No.4, 1980, p. 8

creates a sense of mystery (rather than merely mystification) and may help even those who do not understand every word to worship. An attempt to produce services in a style which is immediately accessible to everyone would run the risk of impoverishing worship by depriving it of the faith that underlies Christian worship'.<sup>707</sup> Liturgical language, whilst it may be in a modern idiom, cannot be reduced to everyday language – 'Indeed it can be argued that the language of prayer should be more akin to poetry than to prose'.<sup>708</sup> The respondents in my survey say that they access prayer materials from a variety of sources, as well as writing their own prayers. Some still claim to pray in an extempore manner; but prayer in public worship is distinctly different in its language and content than from 50 years ago – it is not dominated by 'long-winded clichés'. But in non-Eucharistic services, with prayers not being used from the service book, the language of prayer is often likely not to be the liturgical language<sup>709</sup> that Dixon speaks of, and, indeed, can come in multiple forms and styles, as determined by the preacher.

So, in respect of the use of language in worship we can say that there has been a move to a use of a more informal type of language in general; that inclusive language is commonplace in referring to human beings, but Methodism is not 'radical' or 'progressive' in its talk of and to God; and that prayer forms are multiple.

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<sup>707</sup> Dixon, *Wonder Love and Praise*, p. 22

<sup>708</sup> Dixon, *Wonder Love and Praise*, p. 22

<sup>709</sup> See also Ruth Duck, *Finding Words for Worship*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995)

### 5.6.3. Informality and Flexibility – The Dynamics of Worship

It is without doubt that the strongest, most notable change that my respondents report is the move to a more informal approach to worship. I have already noted how this has been expressed in the type of language used. The change of language reflects other change – for example that of informality in the style of the preacher and the demeanour of the congregation. So, one respondent wrote:

A preacher recently took the service in full motor-cycle gear and brought his powerful motor bike into the chapel, as a visual aid. It might have been a good idea, but it wasn't really used as an aid. The Kids loved to see the machine – but what was the point? But if a joke is made today's congregations like it and laugh.<sup>710</sup>

In the audit work I undertook I asked participant observers to identify the style of the 'preacher' – formal, informal or a mixed approach. Informality was the predominant style – and even when formal was identified as the style of the 'preacher' this was still seen to be relative to current times – that is, even today's formality is less formal than those of days gone. One example of informality is the very wide spread practice of welcoming congregations informally at the beginning of a service. It is a serious question to ask of Methodist worship today as to why so many believe that an informal and relaxed approach should be taken. Is this an example of the trivialisation of worship?

Respondents also noted that there is more flexibility in worship patterns and practice. This quote illustrates how some preachers understand and use the flexibility Methodism affords them:

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<sup>710</sup> Personal correspondence – see Appendix 5

My preaching and services have often made use of youngsters and though my church was a fairly middle-of-the-road affair I often used local soloists to contribute stuff from Roger Jones and things like Jesus Christ Superstar. As soon as Wild Goose and Songs of Fellowship came out I tried to introduce these into worship...I almost always use the lectionary and if the Spirit is moving me I almost always find that I can preach to it. If nothing "comes up" I go elsewhere. I have boxes and boxes of resource material...I am a very chatty preacher, love to involve the congregation and get them on their feet, doing and involved. I love all-age worship...My prayers are mainly now from books, including Nick Fawcett's *Prayers for all Seasons*. Short prayers, soundbites, I don't do world tours for intercessions!! Informal is my middle name...<sup>711</sup>

Flexibility also occurs because of local church preference – primarily influenced to alter most from the 'standard' pattern because an all-age or family service is being held (see Appendix 2 Service 18) , or a special Sunday e.g. Missions Sunday, Homelessness Sunday, National Children's Home (see Appendix 1 Service 8). Some churches have also moved to a model of dual-services, where congregations gather at different times to worship in what is described as traditional and contemporary worship; they may spend some time together in fellowship over coffee between services (see Appendix 2 Service 19). I have also recently been informed of a church that offers three alternative services at the same time. Some differential will be when children are present for part of a worship service. This type of church is more likely to include the Lord's Prayer and the offering at the beginning of a service whilst the children are still present. In other churches children may come into church only for the last part of the service and report on what they have done in their Sunday school. All these different kinds of non-Eucharistic services have slightly different shapes, content and style of delivery.

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<sup>711</sup> Personal correspondence – see Appendix 5



Such changes have been happening since the 1960s as illustrated previously by my reference to *Ideas for Worship* and have continued throughout the time span of this study. In 1983 June Lunn was advocating the use of music, slides and pictures in worship. In some places it may actually be that change has reduced as congregations have got older and periods of stability are called for. But in many situations, perhaps particularly in those churches that have multiple generations present, change has occurred and a whole new set of resources is being brought to worship. This includes the ability to access more modern technology as projectors and screens replace OHPs; but also a more informal, chatty-style of worship.

Sometimes individual ideas are brought to worship that do not radically alter service structures – for example new hymns, visual aids, periods of silence, meditations, use of candles and so on (see Appendix 2, Service 20). These are introduced to attempt to enhance existing patterns of worship. They are introduced as people have experienced them in other, often ecumenical settings, but they do not remove from Methodist worship some of its traditional style, particularly the sermon and hymn-singing. In other settings much more wholesale change is made to worship – if not for every service then for all-age worship or for a ‘contemporary’ service. Here the introduction of modern technology has played a significant role as projectors are used to project words and images; as has the use of a wide range of musical sources that has changed the nature of hymn singing especially when a worship band is employed. In these contexts the sermon may not be encountered as one whole event, rather

bits' of proclamation will be given throughout the service, as preachers aim to meet the different learning needs of members of congregations.<sup>712</sup>

There are, no doubt, many examples of such services being conducted around the Methodist Connexion, and the current emphasis in Methodism on Fresh Expressions<sup>713</sup> seem to be encouraging such approaches. But this is not new. In 1980 Michael Fielding started '...a new integrated scheme of worship/church family education at Swaythling Methodist church in Southampton'.<sup>714</sup> I was a student at Southampton University when this change occurred and attended some of these services. One of Fielding's concerns was that where young people transferred from regular Sunday School attendance to Sunday worship they found 'the whole thing a crushing bore'. Swaythling Methodist Church therefore developed a service where all members of the church broke off into small groups to discuss Scripture as part of their overall pattern of worship rather than listen to a sermon. The idea at Swaythling was to make the service more informal and engaging.

The desire of Methodist preachers to enable participation; to be relevant to modern concerns; to meet the perceived short attention span syndrome of the congregation; to cope with different age groups being present – all has led to individual preachers attempting to do something different. But the effect of this is that congregations receive week by week the product of the individual

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<sup>712</sup> A good example of this influence and the motivation for change can be found in James H. Ritchie Jr., *Always in Rehearsal – The Practice of Worship and the Presence of Children*, (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2005)

<sup>713</sup> see [www.freshexpressions.org.uk](http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk) for an understanding of this development in the worship and mission of the church. This 'scheme' is a joint piece of work between the Methodist Church and the Church of England.

<sup>714</sup> *Worship and Preaching*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Feb 1980

preacher. The idea that worship is God-centred and that the rites of (the) liturgy should be simple yet dignified seems to have been lost, if ever this approach was there, to Methodist worship.

### 5.7 Theology and Ethos in Methodist Worship

David Hempton's analysis of Methodist worship in its early days as having a harmony of values, with its close fit between 'theology, style and practice', is striking. But the question arises - is there any sense of a harmony of values that guides and directs the denomination's worship practice emerging in modern Methodism?

In respect of theology it is clear that there exists a wide variety of theological positions held by Methodist preachers. Burfield categorised, and gave a percentage of Methodist presbyters, in the following groups: Traditional Methodist 32.6%; Pluralists 20.3%; Open Evangelical 16.7%; Other 14.5%; Conservative Evangelical 9.4%; Catholic 6.5%. 69% of the Conservative Evangelical group had the aim of evangelism in their preaching; compared with 22% of the Catholic group. Haley and Francis reveal many theological differences amongst Methodist presbyters. For example, they note that 90% of ministers declare that 'Jesus died on the cross in atonement for sin'; but that the theory of penal substitution was held by 54%, with 34% disagreeing and 12% being uncertain. The theology of preachers is plural then, both in general application and in specific doctrinal understanding.

There is, however, a continuing desire by some leading Methodists to promote evangelical and soteriological emphases, as seen in the work of Shier Jones and Reisman. The Introduction to *44 Sermons to Serve the Present Age* uses the concept of DNA to suggest that John Wesley's theology, as conveyed in his *Sermons on Several Occasions*, establish and convey '...theological and doctrinal identity from one generation to the next'.<sup>715</sup> The DNA of Methodism, the editors suggest, is to preach evangelical Arminianism, but to avoid antinomianism, ensuring that the right balance is struck between faith and works. Shier-Jones and Reismann reference this intention of John Wesley: 'I have set down...what I find in the Bible concerning the way to heaven'. Preaching then in Methodism has as its historical origin the intention of enabling people to know God in the present and to find the path to the after-life. As Shier-Jones and Reisman state, '...the journey of the saved sinner was to grow in holiness and to practice social holiness; acts of piety which reflect an inner relationship with God were to lead to acts of mercy for the transformation of the world'.<sup>716</sup> There is a major emphasis in this Methodist DNA, as described by Wesley, that Christian faith is a personal discovery and journey. Further, 'the way to heaven' is the very phrase that Burdon uses as he states 'Salvation's story must still be proclaimed and the people still encouraged to search for the way to heaven'.<sup>717</sup> There is then presented a strong sense of personal faith as central to Methodist DNA and its preaching.

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<sup>715</sup> Shier-Jones and Reisman, *44 Sermons*, p. 1

<sup>716</sup> Shier-Jones and Reisman, *44 Sermons*, p. 5-6

<sup>717</sup> Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved and free..', p. 68

*44 Sermons to Serve the Present Age* is a collection of sermons by leading Methodist preachers and theologians, so it will not reflect what most British Methodists hear week by week. Nevertheless Shier-Jones and Reisman see in the texts provided a continuation with the Wesleyan DNA, even if they understand that Methodist doctrine may have been culturally adapted and/or interpreted.<sup>718</sup> Supporting this idea of Methodist continuity they write:

When John Wesley preached in the open fields to miners and others who had come to feel excluded from the institutional church of their day, he would often shout 'God's grace...for all!' which would elicit joyful cheers from the crowd. Several years ago a United Methodist minister was preaching in Cuba at Christmas, and began his sermon by saying, 'God's grace...para todos!' (for all). The ensuing joyful celebration made it unnecessary for him to preach any further.<sup>719</sup>

The story begs the question of what would happen if a preacher today in Britain shouted out, 'God's grace...for all!' The answer, one suspects, is either very little or hostility. Even in many churches this sentiment may not be understood or accepted. This might be for theological and sociological reasons. Wesley preached in the midst of, and helped to continue, an 'evangelical' revival. Belief in God was assumed – the evangelical revival and Methodism allowed a newer and more enticing comprehension of God, God's nature and God's intentions. The cultural context of Britain today is vastly different. Belief in God is not as prevalent. Further, notions of what it means that 'all men need to be saved' have changed. But a further question surely arises – if John Wesley was to read the Bible today, in the light of modern scholarship, would he still find in the Bible 'the way to heaven', in the same way?

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<sup>718</sup> Shier-Jones and Reisman, *44 Sermons*, p. 3

<sup>719</sup> Shier-Jones and Reisman, *44 Sermons*, p. 4

Stacey points out in *Groundwork of Theology* that the salvation theology of Wesley is based on the idea of original sin. Stacey points out that notions about sin and sinning have changed. Anthony Reddie's chapter<sup>720</sup> in *44 Sermons* '...thoroughly rejects the theological concept of original sin that Wesley would have held and places himself seemingly at odds with Wesley'.<sup>721</sup> Shier-Jones and Reismann want to (re)claim Reddie as a true Methodist, with the right DNA, as they say 'His Methodist identity is nonetheless still recognisable in his assertion that there is a very real presence of sin in the world'.<sup>722</sup> One wonders if many theologians, from any denominational background, deny sin. But Reddie is significantly shifting traditional Methodist understanding of sin. Reddie writes: 'I do not subscribe to Wesley's notion of original sin and have no great regard for its unworkable formulations...'<sup>723</sup> He does not deny sin, but his formulation of what it is, means that one then has to re-work what one needs to be saved from, and what it might mean, even if it is possible, to live a life of personal and social holiness. Reddie is clear that '...sin is that which separates us not from God, but rather from each other'.<sup>724</sup> Reddie's concept of sin relies equally, if not more so, on the idea of corporate sin, not individual sin. The sin that separates us from each other is unjust and exploitative systems that deny others humanity – and Reddie can justify that this form of sin is testified to and against in Scripture.

The life of obedience and faith that God asks of the people he has set apart, the Children of Israel, whose stories and experiences we see recounted in what we call the Old Testament, is one of a constant battle between trying to follow God and the selfishness and a form of 'insider's

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<sup>720</sup> Anthony Reddie, 'Original Sin', *44 Sermons*, pp. 232-241

<sup>721</sup> Shier-Jones and Reisman, *44 Sermons*, p. 5

<sup>722</sup> Shier-Jones and Reisman, *44 Sermons*, p. 5

<sup>723</sup> Reddie, 'Original Sin', p. 239

<sup>724</sup> Reddie, 'Original Sin', p. 239

culture' that prevents them from being the selfless, inclusive God-centred people they were called to be.<sup>725</sup>

So, significant theological difference is seen being promulgated by a leading Methodist theologian.<sup>726</sup> Reddie is responding to and reflecting other theologies that exist within the Methodist Church and indeed within the whole Christian church; both historically and in modern theological thought. These relate to more issues than just the nature of sin. But if sin is understood differently, so is salvation, and so is the usefulness of the idea of the 'road to heaven'. As Langford points out, '...there is theological diversity among Methodists...British Methodist theology still recalls its Wesleyan heritage, but with caution. The Wesleys are appreciated, especially John Wesley's social concern and organisational ability and for the invigorating contributions they made to evangelism, hymnody and worship. Less attention is paid to their theological frame of reference'.<sup>727</sup> Langford is writing about leading Methodist theologians. But what he says may apply also to those that preach regularly in Methodist churches up and down the country Sunday by Sunday. As has been seen from the work of Blackley, Trapnell and Burfield congregations receive different types of sermons, based on different intentions; and these same preachers have different theological frameworks within which they operate. These preachers may have a great love of Wesley or very little knowledge of his theology; they may have accepted or rejected, intentionally or unintentionally, his idea of original sin; they might read Methodist theologians, charismatic theologians,

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<sup>725</sup> Reddie, 'Original Sin', p. 238

<sup>726</sup> Other 'radical' Methodist theologians might also be subjected to the same processes that Shier-Jones and Reismann adopt toward Reddie. That is trying to claim them as within their own understanding of Methodist doctrine, without truly hearing the difference they bring to text and doctrine.

<sup>727</sup> Langford, *Methodist Theology*, p. 78

liberal theologians, or no theology at all. Further they may have very different ideas of what sermons are for – they may subscribe to Jones’s view that sermons are not useful vehicles for conversion – or think the exact opposite. Whether they are aware of Brueggemann’s belief that ‘...evangelical preaching now finds itself in a quite new cultural, epistemological context’<sup>728</sup> or not, they might agree that preaching in the current age is a completely different proposition to preaching in the past.

Susan Johnson undertook some research into the theological beliefs of Methodist members.<sup>729</sup> No doubt belief systems are formed by a whole range of factors. But one must surely be the theology purveyed in weekly worship and preaching. Johnson shows that the dominant idea about God that exists in Methodist congregations today is formed by an incarnational spirituality and an empiric world-view. Johnson means by incarnational spirituality that ‘God is to be found in the everyday, in worship, in play, in work, in social action’ and ‘...life experience is firmly rooted in the world, on what can be seen and understood’;<sup>730</sup> and means by empiric theological worldview that which ‘There is reliance on data objectively verifiable through your own senses and realism about the way things work and a rejection of the supernatural.’<sup>731</sup> Johnson writes that for Methodists ‘...coming to meet with God, to give and to receive from him in worship, did not seem to be part of the package of worship’,<sup>732</sup> and she quotes John Vincent in her summary, who wrote in reviewing the *Church*

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<sup>728</sup> Brueggemann, ‘Preaching as Reimagination’, p. 17

<sup>729</sup> Johnson, *Methodist Spirituality*, (Unpublished Masters University of Sheffield – Urban Theology Unit, 2006)

<sup>730</sup> Johnson, *Methodist Spirituality*

<sup>731</sup> Johnson, *Methodist Spirituality*

<sup>732</sup> Johnson, *Methodist Spirituality*



*Life Profile* that ‘...we (Methodists) are a crowd of not very spiritual, rather sceptical, critical people who enjoy each other’s company, look after each other, take responsibility for the local church’s life, get on with the practical do-gooding in the world and don’t expect too much from the church or worship’.<sup>733</sup>

This view of the nature and purposes of God seems to be predicated on a liberal/secular/domesticated gospel, which on the evidence supplied by Johnson, appears to be the predominant theology in Methodist worship. As George wrote, reviewing the texts of services in *Worship for Today*, ‘The theology of many (of these) services is more concerned with creation and (to some extent) incarnation than with cross and resurrection. There is some danger that the new secularisation may be the old liberalism writ large...’<sup>734</sup> Indeed Johnson says that the cross, death and resurrection of Jesus were rarely mentioned by people in discussing their spirituality.<sup>735</sup>

Lying behind changes in Methodist worship, are significant influences that have emerged throughout the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, that have led both society and the church to become increasingly pluralistic, and to offer more choice in every area of life, including in worship. Significantly, actual beliefs held about God, by preachers and congregations (and non-churchgoing people), have changed. As Jones said ‘The modern scientific world-view makes it increasingly difficult to conceive of God as a great power...’<sup>736</sup> and as

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<sup>733</sup> Johnson, *Methodist Spirituality*, citing John Vincent, ‘Character Profile of Today’s Church’, *The Methodist Recorder*, (August 5, 2004)

<sup>734</sup> Raymond George, ‘A Final Comment’, *Worship For Today*, p. 155

<sup>735</sup> Johnson, *Methodist Spirituality*

<sup>736</sup> Jones, *Worship for Today*, p. 10

Brueggemann notes ‘...enlightenment reductionism...has worked long and hard to expel agency from religious affection’<sup>737</sup> – that is God is not conceived of as an active agent with whom people can meet and be changed through such communing.

Such a theology, however, is certainly not consistent with traditional evangelical Methodism; nor would it be with those Methodists that Davies identifies as a large minority, who ‘...attend Easter People, Spring Harvest, Cliff College events and Charismatic renewal meetings (and who) are those people that prize freedom and spontaneity in worship...who would contend for the right to be nonconformist, so that if led by the Holy Spirit to worship with complete spontaneity, exercising spiritual gifts not normally witnessed in Methodist worship...’<sup>738</sup> Davies, displaying the modern tolerance of plurality in the style of worship offered, writes that ‘Providing Methodist doctrine is adhered to and not contravened by anything done in an act of worship, there is no pressure to conform in any way...Methodists are free to be liturgical and sacramental and equally free not to be so’.<sup>739</sup>

But there is a serious question to be addressed, and that is, do different styles of worship actually contain different doctrine/s, and is this at variance with Methodist doctrine? According to Wainwright, Wesley’s own theology was a generous orthodoxy, ‘...wherein theological opinions might vary as long as they

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<sup>737</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *An Unsettling God – The Heart of the Hebrew Bible*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), Preface

<sup>738</sup> William R. Davies, ‘Reflections on Trends in Methodist Worship’, *Epworth Review*, 29.1, 2002, pp. 59-67, p. 63

<sup>739</sup> Davies, ‘Reflections on Trends in Methodist Worship’, p. 66

were consistent with the apostolic teaching'.<sup>740</sup> But for Wainwright, Wesleyan theology was theology based on historic Christianity, based firmly on Scripture and the historic creeds of the Church. But, he states, referencing the work of Wolfhart Pannenberg, that the liberal modern churches are '...wavering in their Christian identity, if not actually surrendering the substance of the Christian faith, thus being unable to present an alternative to the spiritual emptiness of erosive secularism'.<sup>741</sup> In contrast, those who are evangelical and/or charismatic also hold and proclaim theology, which as Ward suggests in *Selling Worship*, is changing the theology of the Church.<sup>742</sup> Style of worship and theology are inter-related, and it is too simplistic to say that style doesn't matter in the life of the church.

David Chapman has written:

It is evident...that the Methodist preaching service has changed considerably in the course of 250 years, transformed almost beyond recognition from a simple vehicle for evangelical proclamation of the Gospel into a sophisticated act of public worship ordered on liturgical principles.<sup>743</sup>

What has been shown in this thesis, and particularly this chapter, is that it is not possible to claim that Methodist preaching services have become 'a sophisticated act of public worship ordered on liturgical principles'. Indeed I want to suggest that all the factors discussed above – the content, language and style of Methodist worship often leads Methodist worship away from liturgical

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<sup>740</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Methodists in Dialog*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Kingswood Books, 1995), p. 283

<sup>741</sup> Wainwright, *Methodists in Dialog*, p. 281

<sup>742</sup> See also Spinks, 'Praise and Worship Songs', *The Worship Mall*, pp. 91-123, for a critical review of how worship songs change the theology of the church.

<sup>743</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 61

principles. The style and practice of Methodist worship, as well as its theological content, can be extremely diverse.

Throughout this thesis I have been indicating that Methodism could learn more from the liturgical movement in the renewal of its worship. I am challenging the assumption made by Chapman that preaching services are based on liturgical principles. Further, I am challenging the British Methodist response to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* that suggested that changes in Methodist preaching services had brought them closer in liturgical pattern to services of Holy Communion. However, I do not want to take a simple approach to renewal – to suggest that Methodist worship simply needs to become a weekly Eucharist. Recognition of Methodism's own liturgical history needs to be valued, and, further, the practical aspects of its ecclesiology recognised. So in the final chapter I want to suggest that there might be some marks of authenticity that Methodism might more fully embrace from liturgical theology and that could be made real within a specific tradition.

## CHAPTER 6 – AUTHENTICATING BRITISH METHODIST WORSHIP

### 6.1 Introduction

Chapman describes Methodism's historical approaches to worship and liturgy as 'schizophrenic'.<sup>744</sup> It has been pulled between the Prayer Book tradition and Puritan worship; between prescribed and extempore worship; between stress on the emotional or intellectual; and between sacramental and subjective understanding of the grace of God. Yet in relation to non-Eucharistic worship, in the modern period, he claims that preaching services are ordered on liturgical principles. But as has been shown, this reading can only be maintained if the norms of the *Methodist Worship Book* are used as evidence, rather than the actual liturgical celebrations of local congregations. The information contained in this study shows that Methodist non-Eucharistic worship is pulled in many ways; in shape, content and style, creating a variety of forms and ethos. It is better, and more accurate, to describe the actual current practice of Methodist non-Eucharistic worship today as idiosyncratic and confused. It is idiosyncratic in that it is peculiar and inconsistent as experienced week by week. It is confused because it currently has no specific agreed ethos. It is not sufficiently understood in Methodism, that different forms of non-Eucharistic worship, contain specific content that is shaped in certain ways, and delivered in certain styles, which give each form a distinct ethos. Discussion that takes place often focuses on matters of style or content, not recognising that these combined in certain ways give a specific ethos to worship. There has been little sustained attention given to the ethos, the purpose, of worship today in the Methodist church.

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<sup>744</sup> Chapman, *Born in Song*, p. 335

## 6.2 The Idiosyncrasy of Methodist worship

British Methodist worship is led by an accredited preacher.<sup>745</sup> The preachers of the church are authorised by the circuit preachers meeting, after having undergone a period of training and examination. They are charged ‘...to lead worship and preach with knowledge, conviction and competence’ and assent to ‘...preach nothing at variance with our doctrines’.<sup>746</sup> Given that the *Methodist Worship Book* sets norms and standards; *Hymns and Psalms* provides authorised hymnody; that preachers are trained using connexional training materials and tested by the circuit meeting; and that nothing at variance with Methodist doctrines may be preached, there appear to be a number of criteria that will regulate worship and authenticate its performance. But as previously noted the *Methodist Worship Book* is hardly ever used to provide norms; other sources of hymnody are regularly employed, raising the issue of what theology is being learnt through hymnody; connexional training materials are themselves pluralistic in their values and teaching about worship practice. They still describe liturgical worship in terms of fixed text and say that other forms of worship are legitimate in Methodism.

The doctrines of the Methodist Church are extrapolated from ‘...divine revelation in the Holy Scriptures’.<sup>747</sup> *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* says that Wesley’s ‘Notes on the New Testament and the 44 sermons are not intended to impose a system of formal or speculative

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<sup>745</sup> The exception to this being services that are held by ‘local arrangement’. In these instances no sermon may be preached but hymns and songs may be sung, along with prayer and other ‘liturgical’ expressions. But if there is no sermon, as well as no Holy Communion, can this even be described as a Sunday service?

<sup>746</sup> *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, Volume 2, No. 563.

<sup>747</sup> *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, Volume 2, p. 13.

theology on Methodist preachers, but to set up standards of preaching and belief which should secure loyalty to the fundamental truths of redemption and ensure the continued witness of the Church to the realities of the Christian experience of salvation'.<sup>748</sup> But as Wellings and Wood<sup>749</sup> have shown, Methodist preachers are no longer trained with an eye to Wesleyan emphases, but '...attuned to the general theological climate of the day'.<sup>750</sup> Further, it is clear from the work of Haley and Francis<sup>751</sup> that a wide range of theological positions are held by preachers.

The criteria then, that might act as regulators of Methodist worship, in its shape and theological content, are surprisingly loose markers. Preachers, often constrained in the past by the traditional practices of Methodist worship, now have remarkable latitude in leading worship, and so, the worship practice of the church has become increasingly pluralistic. Their values and ideas are influenced by a wide range of options made available to preachers through a number of different media. Each preacher, being able to exercise considerable autonomy in their presentation of worship, the hymns and songs chosen, the theology presented, contributes to the idiosyncrasy of current Methodist worship practice.

Most importantly in Methodism, the circuit plan system, used to send different preachers to different congregations week by week, contributes to

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<sup>748</sup> The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church, Volume 2, Section 2, No. 4.  
p. 213

<sup>749</sup> Wellings and Wood, 'Theology Through Training'

<sup>750</sup> Wellings and Wood, 'Theology Through Training', p. 78

<sup>751</sup> Haley and Francis, *What Circuit Ministers Really Think*

congregations receiving different and sometimes vastly different liturgy and theology week by week. In other Churches there might develop a form and style of worship that varied from the denominational historical norm, but because the same 'preacher' led week by week it would become an established local expression of worship. In Methodism it is the variety of preachers that contributes to the idiosyncrasy of worship.

### 6.3 The Confusion of Methodist Worship

The confusion for Methodists about their worship practice stems from no longer being sure what worship is (for); at whom it is primarily aimed; what content it should contain; how to understand the scriptures; what communication methods should be employed.

In the past the sermon became the most important ingredient of the service, and all else acted as an aperitif. For many years this was the staple diet of Methodism, and, along with its evangelical theology, this gave Methodism its own distinctive form. Then it was stated by the 1960 Conference Committee that such worship was not adequate for the Methodist Church in the second half of the twentieth-century. Since that report, and the development of the *Methodist Service Book* and the *Methodist Worship Book*, the Church has, at least officially, attempted to change the shape of worship, moving the sermon to an earlier point in the service, influenced among other issues by a belief that historic Methodist worship focused too much on the individual, and that liturgical scholarship pointed toward the corporate nature of worship. In post-1960 Methodism worship was to be corporate and involve the congregation in



hearing the proclamation of the Gospel and in responding to it with praise and thanksgiving. But the reality of the expression of this form of worship has not found full acceptance in the church, for at the same time worship also came under other influences and pressures. The requirement to accommodate children in Sunday worship led to the development of all-age worship, which has sometimes been too didactic, or succumbed to the temptation to provide entertainment, or accommodated a 'liberal', or some would say, 'dumbed-down' approach to theology. Some of this also applies to worship that does not accommodate children. Many experiments have been undertaken to make services more varied and less boring. Some people in Methodism took from charismatic and evangelical worship songs and prayers, and style and theology, and placed them into Methodist worship. In recent years, some preachers and local churches have been experimenting with 'alternative worship' or 'emergent worship' and other 'Fresh Expressions'. Whilst my research establishes that for many, if not most Methodists, Sunday worship is a mix of hymnody interspersing prayers, readings and sermon, the case is that on some Sundays congregations will receive different theologies, different styles of leading worship, and different content, because different preachers, with different agendas are planned in that Methodist tradition of the circuit plan.

If then, a visitor walked into a Methodist church for a Sunday morning service, what might they encounter? There is no simple answer to this. They would almost certainly sing a fair amount – more probably hymns from *Hymns and Psalms*, but they might also sing songs from *Songs of Fellowship*, or from other sources. There would be two sets of prayers – one at the beginning and one near

the end – but the Lord’s Prayer might be said at either point. The service would probably be described as relaxed, maybe even informal. There would be little ritual, except they would almost certainly have to stand up when the offering was brought forward. There would almost certainly be some Bible reading, but it would be unlikely that all the lectionary texts were read. It would be very unlikely that the Psalm would be said or sung; or that they would be invited to share the peace; or that they would be asked to say the creed or an affirmation of faith. There would probably be a sermon; but it might be split up into sections; and a discerning visitor might say it was a ‘Christian talk’ more than a sermon. The visitor might be able to see a connection with the reading/s, but it is possible that the preacher will not directly refer to the texts read. It is more likely it will be evangelical and aimed at the individual in tone, but they might visit on a day a more ‘radical’ preacher was leading worship. It is possible that they may turn up to an all-age service and find different activities offered to different age groups. They might turn up and be offered the opportunity to go to two or three different services taking place at the same time. Indeed there are so many variables that it would be difficult to tell any visitor what to expect. And if they returned the next week they would find someone else leading worship and they might find something completely different. Whether visitor or regular worshipper in a Methodist church, it is unlikely that they would perceive a close harmony of values over the weeks of attendance. If it was a smaller church, with no children present, they would probably see and experience more similar routines week by week, but might still be amazed at the variety of preaching that occurred.

All the above simply leads to a conclusion that Methodists have very few, if any, ways to evaluate and authenticate the actual local liturgical act on any given Sunday. The confusion that exists in Methodist worship is not however just about content and style – it is really about the very purpose given to the liturgical act. It raises the question of what informs personal/group preferences. That is, what ethos lies behind, what purpose is ascribed to acts of worship, by different preachers and groups?

#### 6.4 The Purpose of Sunday Worship

Methodism has a history of doing theology, including liturgical theology, in a practical and pragmatic way. The preaching service developed as a pragmatic response to an historical situation to reach sinners, to bring them to repentance and a more intimate knowledge of God. In time the preaching service became the principal form of worship that Methodists used, not just to convert the ‘unconverted’, but as the staple diet for its members. But the question was posed in 1960 as to whether the preaching service of the church was adequate for Sunday service? The same question applies today to all forms of worship being offered. Do they provide worshipping congregations with an authentic form of worship, in this post-modern age, and in the light of liturgical scholarship, for the principal service of the Church?

The argument presented below, and as set out in the opening chapter, assumes that other forms of worship, for devotional or outreach purpose, may be developed at certain moments in history, for regular church-goers and for ‘seekers’. But, I argue that the primary service, the Sunday Service for

Methodism, should now be based on the ecumenical *ordo* and the principles of (the) liturgy. The primary service of the Church is, as the 1960 Conference Committee report and *Let the People Worship* accepted and acknowledged, a service of Word and Table. My task has been to illustrate the authenticity of (the) liturgy, the service of Word and Table, as the primary Church service. John F. Baldovin, states that ‘...once the liturgy becomes instrumental for other ends (i.e., cannot be appreciated in and of itself), then it loses its fundamental *raison d’être*’.<sup>752</sup> How and why does this liturgy have a fundamental *raison d’être* and how can it be seen to be the primary form of worship for Methodists?

Wesley regarded the preaching service to be ‘essentially defective’ as a Church service as it lacked ‘the four grand parts of public prayer: deprecation, petition, intercession and thanksgiving’, and ‘Neither is it, even on the Lord’s Day, concluded with the Lord’s Supper’;<sup>753</sup> for Wesley considered regular participation in Holy Communion as an essential part of the liturgy. For Wesley the preaching service was not a full Church service as it was meant as a supplement to attending Church service that included Holy Communion, not to become the staple diet of Methodism. As Wainwright says, Wesley ‘...found in the Lord’s Supper a sacramental sign of the fellowship graciously bestowed by the Triune God and the responsive sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving on the part of those who glorify God...’<sup>754</sup> The choice made by Wesley, and the liturgical movement, is that for a ‘full’ service to take place, for the liturgy to be performed, a service that contains both Word and Table, where the weekly

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<sup>752</sup> Baldovin, ‘Must Eucharist Do Everything?’, p. 119

<sup>753</sup> *Minutes of the Methodist Conference*, Vol. 1, (London: The Conference Office, 1812), p. 58

<sup>754</sup> Wainwright, *Methodists in Dialog*, p. 284

celebration is informed by the liturgical year, the lectionary and preaching, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and the essential parts of the churches' prayer, is required. This liturgy is the most historic form of the Churches' worship practice and contains what Lathrop calls 'the essentials of Christian worship'.<sup>755</sup> It is the case that the service of Word and Table in the *Methodist Worship Book* is different from that which Wesley knew in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Liturgical scholars do not aim to preserve historic styles of the practice of the liturgy but seek to reform and renew the liturgy. Indeed the very theologies of these two service books differ. Wesley was engaged in reform and renewal of the liturgy. When Wesley provided the travelling preachers in North America with his *Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*, he set out, in the context of his own age, to '...provide a service book for Methodist corporate worship'.<sup>756</sup> This book edited the text of the *Book of Common Prayer*, and allowed for extempore expression and hymn singing within the services set out, but it gave Methodists '...an established form for their worship'.<sup>757</sup> The *Methodist Worship Book* sets out to achieve the same for Methodists today – to provide a reformed and renewed liturgy that provides a form of worship in which is contained theology that is doxological praise to the Triune God in celebration of the paschal mystery.

Burdon writes that 'Some Methodists would too readily turn their backs on the Preaching Service in favour of a heightened Eucharistic piety. They fail to

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<sup>755</sup> Gordon Lathrop, *What are the essentials of Christian Worship?* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress, 1994)

<sup>756</sup> Westerfield Tucker, 'Form and Freedom', p. 17

<sup>757</sup> Westerfield Tucker, 'Form and Freedom', p. 17

recognise that to do so would be to cut themselves off from what has made them distinctly Methodist'.<sup>758</sup> But this is one particular way to read Methodist liturgical history. The acceptance of a service of Word and Table, as the full form of Christian worship, is part of Methodism's own history, even if it sometimes seems to be forgotten. But because of its history and its inability to celebrate this full act of worship week by week, it has adapted its practice of worship. It did so by adopting the free-church, non-conformist preaching service. Even when it did celebrate the Lord's Supper this became 'tacked-on' to the preaching service. Since 1960 Methodism has been trying, influenced by the liturgical movement, to adapt its historic practices. But a different way to approach the task is to find ways that best enable that community, which cannot celebrate Holy Communion weekly, to develop a new form of non-Eucharistic service, that said positively, is the best reflection of (the) liturgy, and said negatively, the 'least defective'. But it is the case that many Methodists do not accept that the Sunday Service should be of Word and Table. Simply arguing that Wesley thought it should, or that the official reports of the Church say it should, is not enough.<sup>759</sup> So a re-statement of the case for this form of Sunday Service is required. It is this case that was never fully made by Methodism's liturgical reformers from the 1960s to 2000s. No fully developed liturgical theology was offered to the Methodist people to accompany new texts.

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<sup>758</sup> Burdon, *The Preaching Service*, p. 5

<sup>759</sup> The Methodist Sacramental Fellowship also faced this problem in the 1930s when they attempted to renew Methodist worship. They were accused of sacramentalism and a Conference Committee was established in 1937 to investigate MSF. The division in Methodism over MSF appears to have been more to do with allegiances to 'Primitive' Methodism and 'Wesleyan' Methodism than to reasoned liturgical and theological debate. For an account of this episode see John Newton, *Heart Speaks to Heart*, (London: Darton, Longman Todd, 1996)

#### 6.4.1 Historical and Ecumenical Matters

In 1960 the Conference Committee primarily used the historical and scriptural case for shaping Methodism's worship differently, saying 'Christian worship begins in the mighty acts of God; it is completed by the adoring response which those mighty acts evoke'.<sup>760</sup> Raymond George confidently asserted in 1977: 'The worship of the Church is the offering of praise and prayer in which God's Word is read and preached, and in its fullness it includes the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion'.<sup>761</sup> This case was made through historical reconstruction of Christian worship from earliest times, including evidence from the New Testament, and from Justin Martyr's *Apology I*.<sup>762</sup> Some liturgical historians argue that such a case is based on historical naiveté. Indeed most liturgical theologians would say today that no precise and determined liturgy can be recovered from biblical study and early Church history.<sup>763</sup> However, what liturgical theologians have done is, with '...a remarkable consensus...(given) the preferred basic order for the Sunday assembly...across a very broad confessional spectrum'.<sup>764</sup> Such liturgical renewal through the (re) forming of the *ordo*, is not simply a response to historical enquiry. It is also an ecumenical approach, with an ecumenical agenda. This has led to this consensus view emerging. A challenge is then set before Methodism to evaluate the overall importance of ecumenism, as well as historical research, to the life of the church and in relation to worshipping together with other Christians.

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<sup>760</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 7

<sup>761</sup> George, 'The Changing Face of Methodism', p. 71

<sup>762</sup> Wainwright, 'The Church as Worshipping Community', *Worship With One Accord*, pp. 19-33

<sup>763</sup> See the work of James White and Paul Bradshaw.

<sup>764</sup> Wainwright, 'The Church as Worshipping Community', p. 30

Scott Haldeman states: 'Protestant traditions with their proclivity toward schism allow for substantial and frequent innovation and reform'.<sup>765</sup> Methodism innovated its worship practices in its early days, emphasising an evangelical theological bias, but in doing so it moved itself from a movement within the Church of England to a church in its own right. It developed the preaching service as its primary form of worship, but for a significant period of time its worship practice stagnated; and over the last 50 years it has been subject to much pressure to change and to re-invent its practice. Indeed it can now be stated that Haldeman does not go far enough in his analysis. It is not simply that Protestant denominations move toward schism and innovation and reform. In the current era individuals move away from their own historic denominational traditions as they innovate their own denominations' worship practices. Sometimes this is very significant as individuals set up new churches in their own name.<sup>766</sup> At other times, and what occurs in Methodism today, is that individual preachers adopt from other traditions – charismatic praise and worship, the Celtic tradition, alternative and emergent worship, and seeker service worship – certain aspects and content from those forms of worship.<sup>767</sup>

In recent years, an intense soul-searching struggle has been developing within some quarters of Methodism, in relation to Methodist identity and ecumenical co-operation, and how much this should influence its theology and worship.

Brueggemann, discussing biblical interpretation, says that '...an enduring imperative of ecumenism (is) to recover from others what one's own

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<sup>765</sup> Scott Haldeman, *Towards Liturgies that Reconcile*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2007), p. 4

<sup>766</sup> For example one of the founders and leaders of the Willow Creek Church, Bill Hybels, was ordained in the Christian Reformed Church.

<sup>767</sup> Spinks, *The Worship Mall*



interpretive focus has rendered unavailable'.<sup>768</sup> Here the emphasis is on learning from another. But there has been a desire in Methodist circles to find the distinctive emphases of Methodism to give to other confessions. For example, Burdon writes in *Methodism and the Future*, which itself is a book on 'what Methodism contributes to British Christianity.'<sup>769</sup>

'The purpose of this Chapter is to identify the distinguishing characteristics of our worship and to suggest what Methodism might contribute to contemporary Christianity's understanding of worship'.<sup>770</sup>

But the primary search of the liturgical reformers has not been to distinguish the distinctive characteristics of specific churches, but to discover the ecumenical *ordo*. The ecumenical movement is predicated on the belief that a more credible witness to the Gospel takes place if Christians can be reconciled themselves in their worship. If we read that the purpose of developing an ecumenical *ordo* is simply for the sake of ecumenism, however, then we return to an instrumentalist view of worship, and the liturgy cannot be 'appreciated in its own right'. For Baldovin the (reformed) liturgy is appreciated in its own right because it is the liturgy, the recovered *ordo*, made new for the current age, that is the 'corporate activity of an assembly' that celebrates in this age the Eucharist, which has always been the central act of Christian worship as the Church celebrates '...the profound mystery of the dying and rising of Christ for the life of the world'.<sup>771</sup> For Wainwright, there is a scriptural *raison d'être* for embracing the liturgy within an ecumenical context. That is the text "have the same mind among you according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one heart

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<sup>768</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *An Unsettling God*, p. 66

<sup>769</sup> Recorded on the back cover page

<sup>770</sup> Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved and free...', p. 56

<sup>771</sup> Baldovin, 'Must the Eucharist Do Everything?', p. 118

and one mind glorify God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:5-6). So Wainwright writes that ‘...right worship can only occur when Christians are united in faith and life...Thus ecumenism’s goal becomes not only evangelism but an acceptable doxology’.<sup>772</sup> The pursuit of an ‘acceptable doxology’ is not undertaken solely to enable us to be more ecumenical. It is not worship based on each church compromising their own traditions to find a middle ground. It is a search undertaken through the ecumenical and liturgical movements to discover and to recover an

ecumenical *ordo* (that) is not proven by history, though it may involve a critical and interpretive re-reading of history, a re-reading claimed by the readers. The ecumenical *ordo* is rather one current, communal and faithful reading of the gospels, and it is a commitment to go the way of those gospels...the invitation to the ecumenical *ordo* is not an invitation to submit to anyone’s historical reconstruction. It is an invitation to find bath, word, prayer and table the places of Christ’s local presence today and here. It is an invitation to say, with faith, these things are a gift of God.<sup>773</sup>

The actual adoption of the ecumenical *ordo*, in many worship books across many denominations, is a testimony to how much the liturgical movement has discovered the liturgy of the Church; and then impacted on the official forms of worship promulgated by service books. As the *Methodist Worship Book* says in its own Preface, ‘The orders of worship printed here...take account of recent liturgical and ecumenical developments...’<sup>774</sup>

One essential purpose of Methodism might then be to practise in its Sunday worship, with some commonality with other confessions, based on the ecumenical *ordo* and in the search for Christian unity; which is itself a response

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<sup>772</sup> Wainwright, ‘Where Liturgy and Ecumenism Embrace’, p. 1

<sup>773</sup> Lathrop, ‘Reflections on Doing the Liturgical Ordo’, p. 225

<sup>774</sup> *Methodist Worship Book*, Preface

to developing a 'credible witness' to the world. In this process Methodists can affirm what Wesley contributed in his 'vision, program, and praxis',<sup>775</sup> which Wainwright identifies as being commitments to Scripture, Evangelism, Generous Orthodoxy, Sanctification of believers, social concern for the world and The Lord's Supper as the sacramental sign of fellowship. This does not mean defending the preaching service as the primary form of Church worship. What Wesley did, in his time and culture, was to practice what Westerfield Tucker calls, Ressourcement. That is he used new knowledge gained in his time, through the study of the ancient church's worship practices, to shape his community's own practice as he adapted the current practice of the church.<sup>776</sup> Today we might choose to value the Ressourcement work of the liturgical movement and to recognise that the ecumenical *ordo*, as the historic primary form of the Church's worship, is a witness to, and sign of the whole church witnessing to God's saving work in Christ.

#### 6.4.2 Pastoral and Ecclesiological Matters

Burdon's recognition that renewal of Methodist worship is required, leads him to a desire for '...a wider appreciation of the different elements of worship and a greater expression of the balance between preaching and other aspects of worship';<sup>777</sup> but always with the proposal that Methodist worship has as its distinctive and underlying ethos '...to express the great truths of salvation and to bring men and women to an acceptance of them'.<sup>778</sup> To achieve such an aim,

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<sup>775</sup> Wainwright, *Methodists in Dialog*, p. 283

<sup>776</sup> Karen Westerfield Tucker, 'Wesley's emphases on worship and the means of grace', Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers, *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 225-241

<sup>777</sup> Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved and free...', p. 62

<sup>778</sup> Burdon, 'Forgiven, loved and free...', p. 58

Burdon says that Wesley ‘...adopted and adapted a variety of liturgical practices in the hope they would lead the people called Methodists into a living relationship with one another and with God’,<sup>779</sup> and, therefore, Burdon would have modern Methodist worship do the same – that is to appropriate both old and new, catholic and evangelical traditions, which will ‘show people the road to heaven’. In effect what Burdon is attempting to do is to renew the ethos of the ‘preaching service’. The concern of much liturgical reform and renewal has also been to ensure that worship is renewed for the age in which it is performed. But this renewal is of (the) liturgy that is fundamentally understood to have always been the corporate act of the church engaged in ‘...the communal celebration of the Church, which is Christ’s mystical body, and in which the Holy Spirit is active...’<sup>780</sup> The ecumenical *ordo* is not adopted or adapted liturgical practice for the purpose of achieving a specific aim of any church, individual or group. Rather the liturgy, historically developed and ecumenically shared, is understood as ‘...the corporate activity of an assembly of baptised Christians, celebrating the profound mystery of the dying and rising Christ for the life of the world’.<sup>781</sup> The liturgy will give benefits to those that participate in it, but it is not firstly designed for this purpose. It is given so that the church may celebrate the paschal mystery. This is the ethos of worship that has been so difficult to explain to Methodists. As George said:

The very word “liturgy” suggests to many people something printed, fixed, and compulsory, rather than extemporaneous, spontaneous, and free. But, as its derivation from Greek words meaning “the work of the people” implies, it stands for the conception of worship as a corporate act, not performed by an individual priest on behalf of – still less instead

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<sup>779</sup> Burdon, ‘Forgiven, loved and free...’, p. 60

<sup>780</sup> Crichton, ‘A Theology of Worship’, p. 28

<sup>781</sup> Baldwin, ‘Must the Eucharist Do Everything?’, p. 117

of – the people, nor yet performed solely for the edification of individuals, but as an act in which God in Christ speaks to and listens to and indwells Christ's body, the Church. This idea runs counter to some of the ideas of pietistic individualism (in Methodism)...<sup>782</sup>

The corporate nature of the liturgy, and acceptance of such, is of paramount importance. The liturgy is essentially an act for the members of the church to celebrate what God has done in Jesus Christ. In the early Church those who had not been baptised, the catechumens, were required to leave the service before the Lord's Supper was celebrated. Here the 'mysteries' of the faith were considered to be too weighty for the uninitiated to participate in. The liturgy was for the baptised, developed to enable the community to celebrate the paschal mystery, the saving work of Christ, and to praise God for this work of redemption. As Methodism has tried to use worship as an evangelistic opportunity it has moved away from the idea of celebrating the mystery of Christ. It has begun to practise an open table policy at Holy Communion, justifying such an approach through claiming that for Wesley the Eucharist could be a "converting ordinance". But Wesley would have assumed that most Methodists had been baptised in the Church of England and that those coming to receive communion were believers who sought a more intense and earnest faith. In other words, in his cultural context those seeking communion were already baptised believers – it was not an open table to all. The liturgical movement assumes that the full service of word and table is for those who are baptised, who are part of a faith community.

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<sup>782</sup> George, 'The Changing Face of Methodism', p. 65-66.

Further, the liturgy is not to meet the specific needs of individuals or groups. It is not undertaken with the express aim of converting or edifying the individual. Denominations, or specific groups, designing worship liturgies to achieve specific aims, deny the authenticity of (the) liturgy, for '...the corporate worship of the Church is not that of an assembly of people who believe the same things, and therefore unite in doing the same things. It is real in its own right; an action transcending and embracing all the separate souls taking part in it. The individual as such dies to his separate selfhood on entering the Divine Society'.<sup>783</sup>

For this liturgy to be 'real in its own right', the Church agrees what it is that enables the people of God to perform its act of worship to God. Lathrop proposes that this is '...focused on strong central signs and not on individual personal decisions...'<sup>784</sup> where those central signs are understood to be the core component of the ecumenical *ordo* that compose the liturgy of the Church that is 'God's gift to us: an activity God ordains out of a knowledge of our needs that runs deeper even than our own self-knowledge'.<sup>785</sup> The liturgy then is the corporate life of worship of the Church which has '...an importance far exceeding the salvation or blessedness of the individual worshippers, or the devotional opportunity which it gives to them'.<sup>786</sup>

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<sup>783</sup> Evelyn Underhill, 'The Principles of Corporate Worship', *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology*, pp. 48-50, p. 49

<sup>784</sup> Lathrop, 'Reflections on Doing the Liturgical Ordo', p. 221

<sup>785</sup> Elaine Ramshaw, *Ritual and Pastoral Care*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p. 16

<sup>786</sup> Underhill, 'The Principles of Corporate Worship', p. 48

Such an approach, the acceptance of this liturgical principle, that the local church participates in the corporate worship of the whole church, becoming more widely accepted within the church, would underpin, and be in harmony with, Methodism's own stated ecclesiology, set out in *Called to Love and Praise*; for in this Conference statement the church is called to be 'A community of all-ages, different races, varying backgrounds and occupations – richly diverse, but united around the Lord's Table'.<sup>787</sup> Of course, discussion still has to occur as to what hymns and songs are to be sung; of course, discussion still has to take place about how much ritual there is to be; will we stand for the gospel; how will the offering be taken up and received; how long will sermons be; and so on. But the basic form of worship, shaped on the ecumenical *ordo*, will be understood to be the service that the local assembly participates in at its main Sunday service. As it does so the local community is united in one corporate act; as it does so the local community is united with every other Methodist community in the Connexion; as it does so each local community is united with other Christian communities that are also meeting on the Lord's Day, to celebrate what God has done in and through Jesus Christ. Churches that provide alternative services for different audiences deny the centrality of the corporate nature of the church.

It is the very ethos of the liturgy of Word and Table, as (re) discovered by the liturgical movement, then, that is different and distinct. The liturgy of Word and Table, the ecumenical *ordo*, is a corporate activity that enables '...a group of people (to) become something corporately they had not been as a mere

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<sup>787</sup> *Called to Love and Praise – A Methodist Conference Statement on the Church*

collection of individuals. In this case, believer's become Christ's body'.<sup>788</sup> There are numerous texts, by multiple authors, across different churches, which attest to this reading of the liturgy – that is the gathered community of the Church celebrating the liturgy and in the process becoming the people of God. What needs to be understood by Methodists who want to understand the ethos of the ecumenical *ordo* is, that although contrary to Methodism's 'ideas of pietistic individualism', the ethos of the liturgy is a corporate activity undertaken together because '...however personal and private the life of faith is, especially in times of trial, temptation and torment, at bottom, faith is an experience of commitment, nurtured in community and finally tested there, by word and sacrament.'<sup>789</sup>

#### 6.4.3 Theological Matters

The liturgy's fundamental purpose is to gather the People of God so that they can praise God and celebrate God's act of salvation, testifying to the salvation given by God to the whole created order, in and through Christ. Much worship, developed since the Reformation, and in this (post) modern time, has had an instrumentalist ethos – that is, it is devised to create a specific outcome. Nevertheless, although Baldwin states that the liturgy must not become instrumental for other ends, he acknowledges that in and through the people participating in worship something happens to them, for as he says, '...the Eucharist is both formative and transformative'.<sup>790</sup> Allen notes that 'Faith

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<sup>788</sup> Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima*, p. 222

<sup>789</sup> Horace T. Allen, 'Liturgy as the Form of Faith', *The Landscape of Praise*, pp. 7-10, p. 8

<sup>790</sup> Baldwin, 'Must Eucharist Do Everything?' p. 127



takes...liturgical shape, which in turn will inevitably shape that faith'.<sup>791</sup> That is, because the liturgy is the proclamation of the paschal mystery and the celebration of it, this is the faith in which the people of God are schooled.

The worship of the Church is the site where 'faith' and 'the faith' is learnt. When the Church practices worship that is informed by (the) liturgy, the very heart of the whole Christian faith is communicated in word and deed, and practised by the community as it listens to Scripture, participates in praise, embraces each other in sharing the Peace, and learns to give away to the poor that which it does not need. The liturgy then acts as liturgical catechesis for '...in our enactment of the liturgy we are presenting ourselves and the world with a worldview which is already partially seen and understood and which we, as the Church, are intent upon actualizing in the present'.<sup>792</sup> In contrast, other forms of worship which forget the essentials of (the) liturgy, are '...essentially reductionist',<sup>793</sup> and are liable to misshape the Christian community. Anderson notes that Protestant resistance to (the) liturgy means that Protestant worship '...has resulted in liturgical practices consistent with our intellectual roots in the Enlightenment. Here the individual expression of autonomous and private experience displaces the corporate work of the Body of Christ'.<sup>794</sup> The worship of the church, for each individual believer, and for the Church as a whole, is vital to the learning and appropriation of the faith of the Church, for as '...members and the faith communities as a whole participate more intentionally and fully in

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<sup>791</sup> Allen, 'Liturgy as the Form of Faith', p. 9

<sup>792</sup> E. Byron Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity – Practicing Ourselves*, (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2003), p. 192

<sup>793</sup> Martin, 'Education and the Liturgical Life of the Church', p. 43

<sup>794</sup> Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, p. 191

the practices of the Christian discipleship',<sup>795</sup> they learn the faith. In worship it is *theologia prima* is learnt. The liturgy is the '...generative source and basic expression of belief'.<sup>796</sup>

The liturgy is always much more than words – it is all the liturgical action, in a specific architectural setting,<sup>797</sup> undertaken with and by a specific community. Nevertheless, the theology expressed in the words of the assembly is vital in shaping the faith of that community. The “law of prayer, law of belief” maxim, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, is therefore, to be properly considered in authenticating Christian worship. The precise nature of the relationship between the liturgical expression of prayer (which includes hymnody, and other speech acts), and what is (to be) believed is widely and variously discussed amongst different theologians. But taken simply the maxim reminds the church that what it expresses in worship it is saying it believes. The prayers given then in the *Methodist Worship Book* and hymns authorised by the Methodist Conference, may act, for each preacher, as a guide to the faith of the Church. They provide a measure of orthodoxy. Those in the Church with responsibility for determining norms bear that responsibility on behalf of all preachers. When (the) liturgy of the Church is ‘healthy’ the Church is confident that it is being formed correctly. Those responsible for leading individual acts of worship should feel obligated to follow such norms. But there is always the danger of the liturgy straying from

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<sup>795</sup> Martin, ‘Education and the Liturgical Life of the Church’, p. 46

<sup>796</sup> Vogel, *Primary Sources*, p. 7

<sup>797</sup> Methodist churches have been dominated by the pulpit, emphasised over and above the Lord’s Table and the Font. Jones, in *Groundwork of Worship and Preaching*, sketches out Methodist architectural change and its impact on the worship of the Church. In Richard Giles, *Re-Pitching the Tent*, (Norwich: Canterbury, 1996), the liturgical movements influence and ideas about church design are set out.

'good' theology. As Wainwright notes '...the reformation was a striking example of doctrinal critique upon current worship'.<sup>798</sup>

However, he also goes on to say immediately that '...an unfortunate result of the doctrinal thrust has been the preponderance of the didactic over the laudatory in Protestant services'.<sup>799</sup> For Wainwright there is always a limit to the use of theology in critiquing the worship of the Church, for '...reflection runs into mystery'.<sup>800</sup> Nevertheless, if (the) liturgy is a corporate activity, the individualism of many hymns and prayers must be assessed. If Christian worship is essentially doxological, didactic formulation will be resisted. If Christian worship is essentially praise offered to a Trinitarian God, then worship that is Jesus centred will be rejected. If worship celebrates the saving work of Christ, then that saving work should be understood in all its fullness, not be portrayed through out-dated, culturally irrelevant, biblically suspect and theologically questionable metaphors. Because hymnody has been, and remains, such an important part of the transmission of faith for Methodists, the continuing critique of hymnody must be a priority for Methodism. As Anderson states: 'The primary purpose of (these) texts is the expression and celebration of Christian faith'.<sup>801</sup> And this returns the discussion of authenticating Methodist worship to ecumenism. It is not just the form of worship that may be authenticated by ecumenical co-operation but also the theology expressed therein. Of course this is not an easy task, for there is a wide range of theological

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<sup>798</sup> Wainwright, 'The Praise of God in the Theological Reflection of the Church', *Primary Sources*, pp. 112-124, p. 124

<sup>799</sup> Wainwright, 'The Praise of God in the Theological Reflection of the Church', p. 124

<sup>800</sup> Wainwright, 'The Praise of God in the Theological Reflection of the Church', p. 124

<sup>801</sup> Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, p. 26

opinion held within Methodism and across the churches. The ecumenical task of the current age applies to the recovery of all that unites Christians in faith.

Again, referencing Wainwright: 'As Methodists we should not jettison what we already hold in common with other Christians, either for the sake of emphasising a "specific difference" or for the sake of a new will-o'-the-wisp that might bring us closer to other revisionists while severing the ties that bind us to the continuing historic Tradition'.<sup>802</sup>

The liturgy of the Church, in its public worship, in the main Sunday service, can be understood to be essentially conservative. Its theology tends toward that which is most widely held, that which is most commonly agreed by the Church, that which is 'orthodox'. For, one assertion of the liturgy is that no particular interest groups or individual preferences are served and the liturgical texts of the church '...represent normative theological statements' of the church as Christians '...pray, sing, and perform, they represent normative doxological practices of the church'.<sup>803</sup> But this is not to say that the concern of marginalised and discriminated against groups cannot and should not challenge the normative texts and sign-acts of the Church. This is part of the process of inculturation that is never ending as the liturgy is reformed to be a relevant expression of the historical truths of the Gospel in the age in which the church celebrates those truths. Such a process enables the church to continue to evaluate its normative texts and practices. Much of this process needs to be conducted at official levels. But local congregations that can be informed by competent and knowledgeable pastors and may well renew some of their

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<sup>802</sup> Wainwright, *Methodists in Dialog*, p. 193

<sup>803</sup> Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, p. 166

liturgical practice at local level. Churches that are served by pastors that are sensitive to particular issues, say for example sexism and the exclusion of women from church hierarchy and liturgy, may engage in dialogical exchanges between feminist critiques and liturgical reform.<sup>804</sup> This is a difficult and sensitive process where generosity and graciousness is required as one listens to another in the on-going process of reform and renewal. But it is not difficult for preachers to train themselves to stop calling God 'He' all the way through their prayers and sermons. Burns, writing about the insights of feminist theologians on the art of presiding at the worship of a community enquires into different ways that feminist theology might inform actual liturgical celebrations. He considers that much of what the feminist movement has said is actually congruent with many of the insights of the liturgical movement. The vital issue here is that when discussing the ecumenical *ordo*, (the) reformed liturgy, we are not talking of any one tradition and their way of practising it. We are discussing a liturgical performance that is grounded not in any one tradition but in the principle of the liturgical movement. These are reflected in modern worship books like the *Methodist Worship Book*, but must actually be performed in specific ways to fulfil their purpose. So Burns quotes Gail Ramshaw, to illustrate good practice in liturgical theology and in feminist insight of the liturgy.

Much of what the 20<sup>th</sup> century liturgical movement advocates corresponds to feminist concerns. Both movements value many of the same goals: circular rather than rectangular space; participatory rituals rather than passive attention to leaders; a re-evaluation of the role of clergy; multiplicity of voices in the assembly...In fact it can be argued, not that feminists have been influenced by the liturgical movement, but the opposite: that is the ecumenical liturgical movement is yet another demonstration of the rise of feminist consciousness.<sup>805</sup>

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<sup>804</sup> Marjorie Procter-Smith, *In Her Own Rite*, p. xi

<sup>805</sup> Gail Ramshaw, 'Christian Worship from a Feminist Perspective', *Worship Today*, p. 212

Kevin Seasoltz notes that in Sunday worship, because it is the Trinitarian God who is offered a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, the liturgical celebration, reflecting the very nature of God, is one of solidarity with each other:

...as we are drawn together, not because we share the same views and not because we enjoy one another's company, but rather because we give thanks and then praise God in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Spirit. We proclaim a common creed and share one bread and a common cup in response to God's invitation to embrace the gift of God's own life. It (the Trinity) is imagined as a communion of persons who draw us first of all to share in God's own life and who then draws us toward one another in solidarity, in empowering us to share one another's joys and sorrows.<sup>806</sup>

It is the Trinitarian God, drawing people together into solidarity with each other that means that the authenticity of the churches liturgical acts must indeed be ethical and point and lead people into ethical living. The church, which claims it gathers in the name of Jesus, is formed into the Body of Christ, and in the reception of bread at communion can say 'Be what you see, receive what you are',<sup>807</sup> is a community that reflects the life of God, who freely gives the Son, through the Holy Spirit; and that reflects in its humanity the Son whose life of love, peace and justice-making reflects the very life of God. The American Methodist Don Saliers says that 'Participation in the symbolic action (of the liturgy) requires more than participation in the phenomenon of worship; it requires participation as a living community in the struggle to show how in life what is implied in the gathering.'<sup>808</sup> More is required because the liturgy, in and through which the Trinitarian God is praised, demands of its participants,

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<sup>806</sup> R. Kevin Seasoltz, *God's Gift Giving – In Christ and Through the Spirit*, (New York and London: Continuum, 2007), p. 78-79

<sup>807</sup> St. Augustine, Sermon 272

<sup>808</sup> Don E. Saliers, 'Afterword: Liturgy and Ethics Revisited', *Liturgy and the Moral Self*, pp. 209-224, p.224

through its content and shape, engagement with the life of the world. Haldeman summarises this position well when he says that liturgy ‘...forms us into a community and form(s) our way of relating to each other and the world. Liturgies create a time and space in which Christians can experience God’s grace, or, better, God’s reign. The “liminality” of rites, this quality of standing outside the constraints of daily life and offering an opportunity to perform alternative social relationships, enables them to contribute to the ethical formation of Christians’.<sup>809</sup>

The churches that have participated in the liturgical renewal movement, even those that traditionally celebrated the Eucharist weekly, renew and continue to renew their liturgical practice. Throughout the process, all the churches engaged in liturgical renewal, have given great prominence to the key issue of enabling congregations to be given ‘full, conscious and active participation’ in the liturgy. Worship has been seen then to be the corporate act of all the people of God, who, shaped and formed by the liturgy, know that ‘...the glory of God is shown both in right praise and in the servant hood of those who worship in the name of Jesus Christ’.<sup>810</sup>

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<sup>809</sup> Haldeman, *Towards Liturgies that Reconcile*, p. 4

<sup>810</sup> Don Saliers, ‘Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings’, *Liturgy and the Moral Self*, pp. 15-38, p. 28

## 6.5 Authenticating non-Eucharistic Worship

### 6.5.1 Context

The liturgical movement has developed this reading of worship – that it is formed by (the) liturgy, as the corporate act of God’s people, praising God in the name of Christ and the power of the Spirit, and, in that process, becoming communities of love, peace and justice, serving the world. In its fullness the people gather to adore God; to hear Scripture read and the gospel proclaimed; to pray for God’s world; to celebrate the Lord’s Supper; and are sent to continue the liturgy – ‘the work of the people’ – in daily life as service to the world. The liturgy repeats itself week by week. There is no need to explain what worshippers are to do or are doing. In the same time period others have developed an ethos of worship that is different and distinct, which, at its worst, is worship dominated by ‘...secularism, cynicism and individually orientated spiritualities, (or) charismatically preoccupied assemblies with their collapse of intentional form into mindless repetition, or that final indignity to committed local community, the living room presence of neither word, sacrament, prayer or praise but the domination of demanding, even “evangelistic”, entertainers’.<sup>811</sup> Most Methodist worship does not descend to these worst excesses. But it also has not been reformed and renewed to be the corporate work of the people of God. Rather it has maintained the basic structure of the preaching service and that service’s individualistic ethos, whilst taking some account of some of the principles of the liturgical movement; whilst also being influenced by other religious and cultural factors. Its presentation and quality is influenced not only by the gifts of the preacher but also by their ideas of what worship is for.

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<sup>811</sup> Allen, ‘Liturgy as the Form of Faith’, p. 10



The World Council of Churches asked what needs to be done to renew worship. The question for Methodism is what needs to be done today to renew the worship of the British Methodist Church? Recognising that the context of Methodism today is distinctly different than from its early historical location raises the question of its purposes. I would postulate that today, in a post-Christendom society, Methodism does not have as its primary purpose, to be a movement to bring sinners to salvation. Today, Methodism is a Church not an evangelical movement. Methodism exists in an environment where the very existence of God, let alone the nature and purposes of God are questioned. Whilst there are some who argue that there is a latent spirituality in society that the church (simply) needs to tap into<sup>812</sup> it can be argued that we now live in a post-Christian age, where the worldview of Christianity is simply unknown – or the assumed worldview of (past) forms of Christianity is unloved.<sup>813</sup> Charles Taylor's massive work, *The Secular Age*, finds that this age is one where there is no sign that '...the declines in belief and practice of a secular age shows any sign of reversal'.<sup>814</sup> At least part of the reasoning of different people's approach to the renewal of worship practice lies in their analysis of societal attitude to Christian faith. Some attempt to make worship more interesting, more entertaining or more relevant in the belief that this is all that is required. They postulate that people will be drawn into church life and faith if worship changes. Change in worship practice is then dominated by an instrumentalist view of worship. My own view is that this is wrong liturgically but also is simply wishful

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<sup>812</sup> Dave Tomlinson, *Re-Enchanting Christianity – Faith in an Emerging Culture*, (London: Canterbury Press 2008)

<sup>813</sup> David Tracey, *The Spiritual Revolution: The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*, (Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2004)

<sup>814</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 534

thinking! Evangelism begins today in a new form of apologetics. It begins with simply affirming belief in the very existence of God before it postulates that God has been revealed in Christ and that the Church worships a Trinitarian God who creates, redeems and sustains. However, it is without doubt that this analysis is not shared amongst all Methodism. As has been shown Burdon has an agenda for worship that remains both soteriological and evangelical. The General Secretary of the Methodist Church writes in such a way to suggest that other issues, rather than liturgical principles, will determine the future forms and styles of worship:

Today we can decide again to what extent Methodist worship enables discipleship and disciple-making. If so, how varied and flexible shall it be? What levels of participation and ownership do we want and need? Do we encourage worship to become more 'local' or more 'circuit' led, with all sorts of implications for the deployment of local and ordained ministers and the role of local musicians and worship leaders? And if we take seriously the conviction that our special contribution to the wider church is as a discipleship movement, how does our public worship relate to the worship of other Christian groupings in our area?'<sup>815</sup>

My position is that the environment, in which the church is located, is for the first time in many centuries, using Brueggemann's metaphor, in 'exile'; by which he means the Church exists in a society that is no longer defined by Christian faith. Indeed, it exists within a context where the 'dominant script' is defined by the other assumptions.<sup>816</sup> The Methodist Church exists in a Post-Christendom age. As a church with a history of mission and evangelism Methodism rightly continues to seek in this age for those who are 'believing without belonging'.<sup>817</sup>

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<sup>815</sup> Martyn Atkins, *Discipleship...and the people called Methodists*, (Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, 2010)

<sup>816</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Mandate to Difference – An Invitation to the Contemporary Church*, (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007)

<sup>817</sup> A term coined by Grace Davie in *Religion in Britain since 1945*

But so do many other churches continue to seek new disciples. This is neither a special privilege nor task of Methodism today. Methodist worship, however, has been susceptible to changing and adapting its Sunday morning worship since the 1960s with the express aim of attracting new recruits. It is now exploring 'alternative church'; it is a principal partner in the 'Fresh Expressions' movement. In and through such work it seeks to start up new forms of church. For example, café church which is '...coffee with a conscience. It's the fresh expression of community on the high street. It brings communities into the relaxed café atmosphere (of Costa Coffee) and other coffee shops to deal with issues from a faith perspective'.<sup>818</sup> Such activity needs to be evaluated by other criteria than that provided by the liturgical movement. Acts of worship, fellowship and evangelism are required to invite people into discipleship. What must be recognised is that such 'expressions' should not replace the worshipping life of the baptised, who meet Sunday by Sunday, to worship God. The issue, which confronts the church today, is that Sunday worship currently received by Methodists has become befuddled by the difficult context in which they live and pray; and by the multitude of options that they are given to adopt. Methodist non-Eucharistic worship is both idiosyncratic and confused, and needs renewing in its very ethos, so that it may, as it has indeed be given by God to do, form the people of God in Christian faith.

#### 6.5.2 Re-naming Worship and Changing Ethos

One response to this situation is simply to call for the principal Sunday service to include the celebration of the Lord's Supper. To achieve such an outcome

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<sup>818</sup> [www.cafechurch.net](http://www.cafechurch.net)

would require circuit plans to be overhauled so that an ordained minister could preside at every Sunday service – or to take the radical step of ordaining ‘local ministers’, who would not be under the usual condition of itinerancy of Methodist presbyters. But such a response does not guarantee that Sunday worship is then regulated by and practised through liturgical principles, for these principles are wider and deeper than just celebrating the Lord’s Supper. Any hope for the development or renewal of worship can only be predicated on a long-term education process, so that liturgical principles are understood within the church by the ordained, the preachers and the people. Unfortunately the church has not done this well. But such a process primarily requires educating Methodists that Sunday worship is of the whole community; that it is not practised for the sake of any one group; and that it is practised, in and through the ecumenical *ordo*, that may be suitably inculturated in a Methodist style and in local contexts.

Such a process might begin by returning to the terminology adopted in the *Methodist Service Book*. Here the term used for the worship of the church was The Sunday Service. This was changed, in the *Methodist Worship Book*, to Morning, Afternoon or Evening worship. The *Methodist Worship Book* says of these services that ‘The service orders...are complete orders of worship for use at any time’.<sup>819</sup> But, recognising that there are different needs, particularly for ‘seekers’, means that other forms of services may be required at other times. The ecumenical *ordo* is not meant to be a one-fit service for all situations. But for Sunday worship, for the main time that the church gathers together, it

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<sup>819</sup> *Methodist Worship Book*, p. 26

should submit to the wisdom of the best ecumenical liturgical practice of the day. Therefore we might begin our process of education by naming the time when the whole community of the baptised is called together, **The Sunday Service**.<sup>820</sup>

However, confronted with the problem of some Sundays being a time when Holy Communion is celebrated, and other Sundays when it is not, some differentiation is required. The *Methodist Service Book* named the Sunday Service that included Holy Communion as **The Sunday Service**. But when it contained no celebration of Holy Communion it was called The Sunday Service without the Lord's Supper. The use of bold type, in the *Methodist Service Book*, suggests that only a service which contains Holy Communion is a complete and full service, and such a reading was supported by a General Direction that stated 'In its fullness it (the Sunday Service) includes the Lord's Supper...'<sup>821</sup> Such a reading, that worship should include Holy Communion, is the normal and usual reading given by the liturgical movement. But the Methodist Church simply cannot adopt this position and practice. If it is recognised that other communions, that have kept the tradition of always celebrating Holy Communion, do not base much of their actual liturgical celebrations on the best liturgical scholarship, on the ecumenical *ordo*, on liturgical principles as they relate to the Gathering, Ministry of the Word and Sending, it can be immediately acknowledged that all churches, are always working toward the fulfilment of the liturgy in all its fullness. The perfect liturgy is never performed. Therefore the

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<sup>820</sup> I put this title in bold to stress the use of such a term to describe and define worship based on the ecumenical *ordo*.

<sup>821</sup> *Methodist Service Book*, p. 45

Methodist Church should not be embarrassed or apologetic about the place it occupies within the range of responses that have been made to the renewal of worship. Each church begins where it is at and processes renewal that is possible at that point in time.

The first move then that Methodism could make, in the process of 'critical liturgiology'<sup>822</sup>, is to call the main service, **The Sunday Service**, recognising that as it does so it sets out a specified ethos for this service. All four parts of the *ordo*, gathering, word, response and dismissal need to be understood more fully and liturgically developed. This act of worship is to be the place where all are called to offer praise and prayer to God. All meet together in the name of the Lord; not for their own benefit or to meet personal preference, but to be the people of God, being formed into the Body of Christ. Jesus' prayer 'that they may be one' applies to each liturgical assembly as well as to the churches overall. Then, on some Sundays Holy Communion will be part of the celebration of the local church. But on other Sundays this will not occur. But every Sunday people will gather in the name of Jesus, and God will be praised; the Christian year will be fully adopted; Scripture will be read and expounded, according to liturgical principles, to build up the Body of Christ; the people of the church will be ethically challenged and formed by (the) liturgy to be sent into God's world to continue to do the 'work of the people'.

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<sup>822</sup> Kevin W. Irwin, 'Liturgical Theology', *New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, pp. 721-733, p. 731

### 6.5.3 Re-evaluating Scripture and Preaching

One main consequence of adopting the ecumenical *ordo* will be that the Scriptures will gain a more prominent place in the worship of the church, and the full use of the lectionary be adopted. For the lectionary is designed to serve to 1) unite the Church, within and across denominations; 2) ensure that the breadth of scripture heard in church is wide; and 3) that the full meaning of God's purpose and redemption is heard through the church.<sup>823</sup> This shift in emphasis – to the lectionary, the biblical readings – being the controlling characteristic of Sunday worship then '...permeates the entire service with its spirit, guiding much that happens throughout the assembly's worship.'<sup>824</sup>

This is a seismic liturgical shift that Methodism seems not to have embraced. It is not that the sermon is not important to worship – it is that it is the reading of Scripture that is central and that this is what controls the sermon and service.<sup>825</sup> The Scriptures are the source, not a resource for worship.

Whilst the lectionary does not suggest a theme that should strait-jacket the preacher it does provide the word of God - about God, salvation, the human condition, the church, the kingdom - for that Sunday. This has become problematic for many preachers, aware as they are of various forms of biblical criticism, most notably historical criticism, and the belief that the text does not

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<sup>823</sup> Ramshaw, *A Three-Year Banquet*, pp. 10-11

<sup>824</sup> Ramshaw, *A Three-Year Banquet*, p. 65

<sup>825</sup> It is acknowledged that there are major problematic issues raised by this position in relation to the nature of Scripture and the selection of specific texts in the lectionary. However this stated position assumes that the Scriptures as a whole are canonical and that the lectionary choice of readings creates another canon of text deemed suitable for public reading. Whilst it is right and proper that the lectionary continues to be examined for flaws and omissions, the lectionary works to allow Scripture to be the source, rather than a resource, for Sunday worship.

simply provide 'The Word of God'. But, as Brueggemann says 'The sermon is not an act of reporting on an old text, but is an act of making a new text visible and available'<sup>826</sup> so that 'The purpose of the sermon is to provide a world in which the congregation can live'.<sup>827</sup> To enable this to happen, to facilitate the move from text/s to proclamation requires the church to inform and inspire preachers anew about the purpose of the sermon, the issues of biblical criticism and new ways of approaching the Scriptures; what Brueggemann calls 'The Textual Approach'. This requires preachers to know, as an act of faith, that textual process is an act of formation, interpretation and reception. The Scriptures that are given to us are the theological cannon of the Church. They are other communities, the Jewish and the early Church's, communication of their encounter with the Divine. These encounters produced a text of faith and of testimony. The preacher then encounters these texts and attempts to interpret them for the age in which the preacher speaks to the congregation. The preacher, with the congregation, attempts to hear and speak of the same God who might be encountered this day as people of faith of the past encountered and spoke of God. There is no denying, in the age in which we live, that all the forming and interpreting of the text, both the ancient process that created the written text and the new process that creates the spoken text, is 'an act of vested interest'.<sup>828</sup> Nevertheless the preacher speaks into a new community of testimony and faith, so that the hearers may consume both the ancient text and the new text presented by the preacher, and begin to process

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<sup>826</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Word Militant – Preaching a Decentering Word*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), p. 85

<sup>827</sup> Brueggemann, *The Word Militant*, p.87

<sup>828</sup> Brueggemann, *The Word Militant*, p. 86



these meanings, as a new world, a new vision of how things are with and under God, is proclaimed. As Brueggemann states:

The entire process of the text, then, is an act of production and consumption whereby a new world is chosen or an old world is defended, or there is transformation of old world to new world...Anyone who imagines that he or she is a benign or innocent preacher of the text is engaged in self-deception. Preaching is always a daring, dangerous act, in which the interpreter, together with the receivers of the interpretation, is consuming a text and producing a world.<sup>829</sup>

So the 'word' is discovered by the preacher in his/her context from the text/s that includes both ancient scriptural texts and new interpretations of that text. But preaching is based on scripture, on interpreting, evaluating and proclaiming text. Preaching liturgically is not about presenting a theme; nor, however, is it about preaching the same systematic and/or dogmatic theology, as has been traditional Methodist concentration on evangelism and soteriology.

In addition, as Aidan Kavanagh writes:

Liturgical ministers sometimes forget what retailers know well and wholesalers live from, namely, that times and seasons are both artefacts and shapers of the human psyche. Seasonal change changes people individually and in groups; they buy, think, and live differently. Christian liturgy, with its profound sacramentalism, has traditionally exploited this fact to its fullest. It is difficult to understand why some ministers think it is a peculiar Christian relevance to compromise or wipe out liturgical times and seasons in favour of themes which concentrate on doctrinal or ideological exploitation of current issues.<sup>830</sup>

Liturgical time is protected by the use of the lectionary. The full story of God is protected by liturgical time. The interpretive act, each Sunday, by each preacher,

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<sup>829</sup> Brueggemann, *The Word Militant*, p. 87

<sup>830</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, *Elements of Rite*, (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1982), p. 79-80

of proclaiming the text for the day can then ‘...provide great relief to the preacher (who does) not to have to utter a universal truth with each utterance’.<sup>831</sup>

Different responses are evident in Methodism to this thought pattern. Blackley, writing in relation to the liturgical year, the introduction of lectionary readings and the colours of the seasons, writes in a resistance mode:

As regards the liturgical year, I was not aware of much notice being taken of it, apart, of course, from the major festivals. Thankfully, as far as I could see, liturgical colours for different seasons of the year were completely ignored. One aspect of the liturgical year as currently organised which baffles me is the division of the year into Special Seasons and Ordinary Time. I am at a loss to understand what benefits accrue from this. If any notice at all is taken of it by most members of Methodist congregations (which I doubt), all it seems to achieve is to give the unfortunate and slightly depressing impression that a considerable part of God-given time is not special!<sup>832</sup>

Blackley writes specifically about the lectionary: ‘Omission of these (the lectionary readings) would liberate worship leaders from any impression that they ought to be using particular readings and planning services appropriate to the particular time of year’.<sup>833</sup> Judith Maizel-Long suggests that this critique is not complete in Methodism, noting that Methodism has begun to learn something of the ‘varying moods of the (liturgical) seasons’.<sup>834</sup> In relation to the lectionary, she states: ‘...the introduction of ecumenically agreed lectionaries has radically altered the worship and preaching in the Methodist church, linking

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<sup>831</sup> Brueggemann, *The Word Militant*, p. 28

<sup>832</sup> Blackley, ‘An Audit of Methodist Worship’, p. 51

<sup>833</sup> Blackley, ‘An Audit of Methodist Worship’, p. 51

<sup>834</sup> Maizel-Long, ‘Theology Sung’, p. 52

it into the days and the seasons of the Church Year, and providing for systematic expository reading and preaching of Scripture'.<sup>835</sup>

The situations I have encountered, in several different circuits, are that the circuits produce a plan with the lectionary readings made available, and encourage preachers to use the lectionary readings. However, it is not compulsory and some preachers ignore the direction. Further, however, even those that use the lectionary often do so in a truncated form. In doing this, however, it is possible, as Gail Ramshaw writes, to ignore the complexity of the Scriptural witness:

The ways the biblical readings complement one another and lead us through the Bible remind us not to oversimplify the word of the triune God and the call to Christian life. Because the bible records so many different voices, nearly any ethical position can be supported by citing one short sentence from somewhere in the Bible. But if one keeps reading, one discovers that it is highly likely that the opposite position can also be supported, by citing a different passage from the scriptures. Three readings each Sunday acknowledge the magisterial complexity of the word of God.<sup>836</sup>

The liturgical movement's understanding of preaching is linked to this understanding of the Christian year and the full use of the lectionary. The message that arises is the link between liturgy, the corporate nature of the Christian congregation and preaching and their common purpose: 'Both preaching and worship are acts of faith, acts of the Spirit, and both upbuild the body of Christ'.<sup>837</sup> And, further, 'The liturgical homily is an integral part of the worship celebration. To open up the mysteries of redemption in such a way that

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<sup>835</sup> Maizel-Long, 'Theology Sung', p. 52

<sup>836</sup> Ramshaw, *A Three-Year Banquet*, p. 21

<sup>837</sup> John Melloh, 'Worship and Preaching', *The New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, p. 385

God's power and mercy is present to the body of believers is central to liturgical preaching. Like the liturgy itself, preaching is a necessary source of nourishment of the Christ-life'.<sup>838</sup>

Added to a fuller use of the lectionary and the Christian year more work needs to be done by liturgical theologians, to enable those churches that cannot celebrate Holy Communion weekly, to learn the shape of worship, to understand worship as the corporate act of the people in praise of the Trinitarian God, and to find words and sign-acts that fulfil the principles of (the) liturgy. Neil Dixon has provided some new words for prayers, including thanksgiving prayers, in a 'liturgical' style in *Praying With The Scriptures*.<sup>839</sup> It would be useful for a guide to the *Methodist Worship Book* to be produced that explained the liturgical theology behind the book and that made more practical suggestions for implementing a corporate approach to worship.<sup>840</sup>

#### 6.5.4 Offering Prayer and Praise

Another area that needs addressing is the third part of worship that Methodists have called 'The Response' in non-Eucharistic worship.<sup>841</sup> The United Reformed Church names this part of worship as 'Responding to God's Word',<sup>842</sup> and the

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<sup>838</sup> John Melloh, 'Preaching, Liturgical Ministry of', *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, p. 991

<sup>839</sup> Neil Dixon, *Companion to the Revised Common Lectionary, Volume 10 – Praying With The Scriptures*, (Peterborough: Epworth, 2004)

<sup>840</sup> See the UMC book *Worship Matters* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999) as a possible example/model

<sup>841</sup> A recent attempt to provide 'an Alternative Response to the Word' has been given by Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect – A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2010)

<sup>842</sup> *Worship: from The United Reformed Church*, (United Reformed Church, 2003)

Church of England names this section, 'Prayer'.<sup>843</sup> The 1960 Conference Committee recognised that 'The interaction of proclamation and response is characteristic of the service of public worship. The whole service, including the proclamation of the sermon, is a response to God's goodness and action in Christ, for the very fact that a sermon is preached at all is a response to what God has done, and the preaching of it is clearly a proclamation of those mighty acts'.<sup>844</sup> The whole of worship is of God's people both receiving and giving. It is so in the proclamation, and it is so in the Eucharist as the people give thanks to God and God gives to the people the transforming gifts of bread and wine. Naming the third section of a service 'The Response' is problematic, and may suggest that the people don't need to have 'full, conscious and active participation' in other parts of the liturgy.

The intention of the 1960 report was to enable '...the structure of Holy Communion and the structure of a service where there is no Holy Communion to bear a certain relation to each other...in this way our people will come to see that there is some correlation between what is done on Communion Sundays and what is done on other Sundays'.<sup>845</sup> A Church today, in the light of more recent liturgical reform, which although unable to celebrate Holy Communion every week, but wanting to adopt in its Sunday Service as full an ecumenical *ordo* as possible, needs to revise its liturgy, for this intention to be fulfilled. How might churches, that don't celebrate weekly Holy Communion, order and structure their worship?

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<sup>843</sup> *New Pattern For Worship*, (Church Publishing House, 2002)

<sup>844</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 14

<sup>845</sup> *Conference Committee*, para. 40

One move would be to re-name the third section. But the choice of what to call this section needs to be determined by what it actualises in a service. For George, as the *Methodist Service Book* was developed, it meant including prayers of thanksgiving.<sup>846</sup> Might it also be possible to examine the other words and actions that take place in Holy Communion to see if these words and acts might also be included in a Sunday Service without Holy Communion. This would involve examining the presentation of the gifts, which will not include bread and wine, but might include gifts for the poor. It might include the more regular sharing of the Peace as a sign-act that unites the congregation. It might also include an affirmation of faith being said together. It might also examine how congregations could engage in *anamnesis*, in remembrance of the passion of Christ, when they do not use the words of The Institution. If we recognise that *anamnesis* is practised in baptism as the death and resurrection of Jesus is recalled we might also find other formulae that could recall the paschal mystery in a Word service. Further an examination might take place of how the *epiclesis* might be practised, when there is no bread and wine to transform, but there are still the people of God in need of transformation. Again we might remember that an *epiclesis* is practised in baptism as the Holy Spirit is called upon to sanctify the water and those baptised.<sup>847</sup> How might the Holy Spirit be called upon to sanctify the people of God in a Word service? We might then seek to develop a newer form of dry anaphora than that given to us by Raymond George. This might allow us to be faithful to the ecumenical *ordo* when unable to celebrate Holy Communion weekly. Such a task would need to be worked on by ecumenical liturgists to identify issues it might create; but it may well enable

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<sup>846</sup> George, 'From the Sunday Service', p. 48-49

<sup>847</sup> *Methodist Worship Book*, p. 66

Protestant churches to give to local assemblies' liturgical prayer and sign acts, in a common and corporate language, that reflected and enhanced the very ethos of the liturgy. This section of worship might then be called 'The Offering of Praise and Prayer', reflecting more accurately the actions of the people of God in a celebration of Holy Communion. Additionally hymn writers might turn their attention to proving suitable texts to support these intentions.<sup>848</sup>

### 6.6 Concluding Remarks

Local assemblies and the preachers of the church are still left with options in the actual liturgical performance that takes place if they adopt liturgical principles to direct their worship practice. Two liturgical principles are continually held in creative tension with each other. One is respect of historical and ecumenical norms. The other is the need to inculturate worship in specific times and contexts.<sup>849</sup> Given these principles the following may be said:

The issue of specific wording of prayers and hymns need not be prescribed in Methodism as set text, but would be judged on their merit by their contribution to the ethos of the liturgy. The majority of Methodists will have some commitments to specific styles of worship – as *Let the People* suggests, a simple style, with hymn singing prominent, and fellowship encouraged; but will seek to accommodate other preferences in a spirit of love and inclusivity. Some change has already occurred here as churches accept, for example, chorus singing, candles and the sharing of the Peace. The question to be asked is do these

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<sup>848</sup> See Appendix 8 for my first attempt!

<sup>849</sup> See Anscar J. Chupungco, 'The Theological Principle of Adaptation, *Primary Sources*, pp. 247-252 for a classic exposition of inculturation

changes enable the liturgical principles of active participation in corporate worship, enabling a primary ethos of celebration of the very nature of God as revealed in and through the paschal mystery?

Methodist preaching does not need to become less pluralistic in its theology and it might often be infused with Arminian evangelical theology. There will remain theological differences and dispute about all kinds of theological issues; but all preachers will need to ask themselves if they are communicating gospel truths that are meaningful to their congregations. Have they recognised the difference that preaching in a post-Christendom society necessitates? But preaching will primarily be measured and judged by how it engages with the readings given by the lectionary; is faithful to the historic traditions of the Church and to new ways of understanding and communicating the faith; is more laudatory than didactic or dogmatic; all contributing to the liturgy that forms the people of God in the faith of the Church.

Methodist liturgical practice certainly does not need to be regressive if it listens to liturgical principles. Those who understand God as committed to the oppressed and marginalised can find in Scripture many ways of talking about and to God in language that respects the dignity of all human beings. A continuing conversation will no doubt be held in relation to how the language of the Church, its sign-acts and its architecture, are ethical in themselves, in that they do not oppress the marginalised; and contribute to the formation of the Body of Christ, as an ethically God-formed people, engaged in and performing 'alternative social relationships' that the Gospel itself demands. Such an



approach is called for in Methodism's own ecclesiology as expressed in *Called to Love and Praise*.

But all choices will be informed by liturgical principles including *lex orandi lex credendi*, as preachers recognise their responsibility in providing the congregations they serve with their *prima theologia*, and as they contribute to the formation of the people of God, through the corporate worship of the church, in the faith of the Church.

A new 'harmony of values' may then emerge that directs and guides the principal service of the Methodist Church. If, and only if, Methodism accepts that its principal worship service is not designed to primarily be an agent of evangelism but is the act in which the People of God give praise for God's creating, redeeming and sustaining work, can it truly begin to learn from and embrace liturgical reform. To this end Methodism needs to (re)learn that its worship is directed to God and in the presence of God. In *Let the People Worship* the question was asked 'How do we worship God in a secular age?' Today the question that needs to be seriously considered by all is how do we imagine, understand, talk and listen to God? Do we only pursue the subjective route to God in and through emotions; or do we also perceive that God is present in scripture and preaching, prayer and sign-acts, as well as in Holy Communion? If we can perceive again 'means of grace'; learn to become again more sacramental; we might perceive God in and through God's mystery/ies once more. Such perception will remove any desire to trivialise our worship. Such perception will lead us away from a didactic approach to worship and towards

doxology. Such perception will lead us away from too great an emphasis on emotions and direct our attention towards the development of our affections. Our worship might then be dignified, without being stilted, full of praise without being jocund, deep in meaning without being incomprehensible. God will then be honoured as the Holy One who creates, redeems and sustains, and who in love makes known both God's own nature and purposes through the incarnate Jesus Christ and the on-going presence of the Holy Spirit as we worship together.

APPENDIX 1 – SERVICES AUDITED BY PARTICPANT OBSERVERS

Service Number	Service advertised as	Number in congregation	Date of service
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Service 1	Preaching Service	34 + 5 Children	October 2006
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Notices
Call to Worship
Hymn – H and P
Prayers – Adoration/Confession
Children’s Address
Reading – Old Testament
Hymn – H and P
Reading – Epistle
Hymn – H and P
Sermon
Hymn – H and P
Collection
Intercessions
Hymn – H and P
The Grace

Service 2	Harvest Festival	100 + 20 Children	September 2006
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Notices
Welcome
Call to Worship
Hymn - MP
Prayers – Adoration/Confession
Baptism
Hymn - MP
Psalm 111
Talk using a quiz
Collection
Intercessions
Hymn – MP
Blessing

Service 3	National Children's Home Sunday	Congregation 94 + 14 children	July 2006
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Call to Worship – Psalm 117
Hymn – H and P
Prayers
Children's address
Hymn – SOF
Reading - Old Testament
Reading - Gospel
Hymn – SOF
Sermon
Hymn – H and P
Intercessions
Collection
Hymn – SOF
The Grace

Service 4	Preaching	95 + 9 children	June 2006
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Steward's opening including Welcome, Notices and Opening Song
Hymn – H and P
Prayer – Adoration and Confession
Lord's prayer
Children's address
Hymn – H and P
Collection
Psalm 121
Gospel
Hymn – H and P
Recording from Sound of Music
Sermon
Hymn – H and P
Intercessions
Hymn – H and P
Blessing

Service 5	Family	16 + 4 children	August 2006
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Call to Worship
Hymn – H and P
Prayers – adoration/thanksgiving/confession/Lord’s Prayer
Reading – Gospel
Hymn – H and P
Reading – Old Testament
Talk – aimed primarily at children
Hymn – H and P
Notices
Collection
Children leave – Blessing
Reading – Epistle
Prayers – Intercession
Hymn – H and P
Sermon
Hymn – H and P
Children return and share work
Blessing

Service 6	Preaching	100 + 30 children	August 2006
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Call to Worship – Psalm 100
Hymn – SOF
Hymn – SOF
Prayer – adoration/confession and Lord’s Prayer
Hymn – SOF
Children’s address
Collection
Reading – Psalm
Hymn – SOF
Reading – Gospel
Intercessions
Sermon
Hymn – SOF
The Grace

Service 7	Preaching	32	October 2006
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Introit
Hymn- H and P
Prayers – adoration/confession and Lord’s Prayer
Reading – Psalm
Hymn – H and P
Reading – Old Testament
Reading – Gospel
Song – In Christ alone
Reading – Epistle
Sermon
Hymn – H and P
Intercessions
Collection
Hymn – H and P
The Grace

Service 8	Special Sunday – World Church	160 + 20 children	October 2006
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Stewards welcome and prayer
Introit
Scripture Verse
Song with actions
Prayer
Song from Sri Lanka
Children’s address
Song
Children dismissed with prayer
Anthem
Talk about Mission work in Sri Lanka
Slides about effect of Tsunami
Intercessions
Hymn – H and P (collection)
The Grace

Service 9	Preaching	70 + 5	
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Hymn - H and P
Prayers - Adoration/Confession
Children's address
Hymn - H and P
Reading - Epistle
Hymn - H and P
Reading - Gospel
Sermon
Hymn - Printed on Notice sheet
Prayers - Intercession and Lord's Prayer
Collection
Hymn - H and P
Blessing

Service 10	Radical	61 + 3	
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Welcome
Hymn - Meekness and Majesty
Monologue
Musical meditation with powerpoint pictures
Hymn - When I needed a neighbour
Reading - Old Testament
Reading - Gospel
Hymn - Jesu Jesu
Intercessions
Hymn - Brother Sister
Blessing

## Further Information

In addition to recording service orders the participant observers were also asked to record:

- A description of how the collection was done
- If there were any prayers of thanksgiving – as a specific item and if modelled on the *Methodist Worship Book*
- If prayers were extemporary or scripted
- The 'style' of the presiding preacher – Informal to More Formal
- Other participants in the service other than the preacher
- Any use of inclusive language

The results of this information show:

### Collection

In 6 services the collection was taken up as a separate item and prayed over.

In 2 services the collection was taken up as a separate item, but by the children, and prayed over.

In 1 service the collection was taken up during (the Last) hymn and prayed over with the Grace being said immediately afterward.

In 1 service (the Radical one) no collection was taken up. The service is aimed at non-members.

### Prayers of Thanksgiving

In none of the services were prayers of thanksgiving specifically offered modelled on the *Methodist Worship Book*

### Prayers – Extemporaneous or Scripted

4 services were reported as almost exclusively using extemporaneous prayer

2 services were reported as having a mixture of extemporaneous prayer and scripted prayer

4 services were reported as having scripted prayer alone.

### The Preacher's Style

3 services were reported as being formal

3 services were reported as being informal



4 services were reported as being a mixed approach of formal and informal

### Other Participants

In 7 of the services the Bible readings were done by congregation members.

In 2 of the services prayers were led by a congregation member.

In one service the quiz was undertaken by all.

In one service a monologue was given by a congregation member.

In one service the children's address was done by a congregation member.

Only one service had no congregation members taking part.

### Use of Inclusive Language

In one service the words of a hymn were altered to make the hymn more inclusive. No other note was made of any use of inclusive language.

ORDERS OF SERVICE FROM THE BROMSGROVE CIRCUIT – SUBMITTED BY THE  
'PREACHER'

Service 1	Preaching	Children	Local Preacher
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Call to Worship
Hymn – H and P
Prayers – praise, thanksgiving and confession and Lord’s Prayer
Children’s address
Hymn – H and P
Collection
Children dismissed
Old Testament – Lectionary No
Gospel – Lectionary Yes
Hymn - H and P
Sermon
Hymn – H and P
Intercessions
Hymn – H and P
Blessing

Service 2	Mission Praise/Preaching	Children	Local Preacher
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Call to Worship
Hymn – MP
Prayers and Lord’s Prayer
Children leave
Hymn – MP
Old Testament – Lectionary – Yes
Hymn – MP
Gospel – Lectionary – Yes
Hymn – MP
Sermon
Hymn – MP
Collection
Intercessions
Hymn – MP
The Grace

Service 3	Preaching	No children	Local Preacher
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Call to worship
Hymn - H and P
Prayers
Hymn
Old Testament - Lectionary - Yes
Epistle - Lectionary - Yes
Hymn - H and P
Sermon
Prayer
Hymn - H and P
Intercessions
Collection
Hymn - H and P
Blessing

Service 4	Preaching	No children	Local Preacher
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Prayer of approach
Hymn - MHB
Prayer of Adoration
Hymn - MHB
Psalm 51 (as confession)
Old Testament - Lectionary - Yes
Gospel - Lectionary - Yes
Epistle - Lectionary - Yes
Hymn - MHB
Sermon
Hymn - MHB
Notices
Intercessions and Lord's Prayer
Collection
Hymn - MHB
The Grace

Service 5	Preaching	No children	Local Preacher
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Call to worship - Psalm
Hymn - H and P
Prayers - adoration, praise, thanksgiving, confession and Lord's Prayer
Hymn - H and P
Old Testament - Lectionary - Yes
Gospel - Lectionary - Yes
Collection
Hymn - H and P
Sermon
Hymn - H and P
Intercessions
Hymn - H and P
Blessing

Service 6	Preaching	No children	Local Preacher
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Call to worship
Hymn - H and P
Prayers - adoration and confession
Psalm 41
Hymn - H and P
Gospel - dramatic reading - Lectionary - No
Sermon
Prayer
Hymn - H and P
Intercessions and Lord's Prayer
Collection
Hymn - H and P
Benediction
The Grace

Service 7	Preaching	Children	Local Preacher
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Call to Worship/Welcome by Steward
Hymn – H and P
Prayers – adoration, confession and thanksgiving
Children’s address
Hymn – H and P
Children dismissed
Collect
Old Testament – Lectionary – Yes
Gospel – Lectionary – Yes
Hymn – H and P
Sermon
Hymn- H and P (collection taken up during)
Intercessions and Lord’s Prayer
Hymn – H and P
Blessing and The Grace

Service 8	Preaching	No Children	Local Preacher
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Opening sentences
Hymn – MHB
Prayers
Hymn – MHB
Old Testament – Lectionary – Yes
Psalms – Lectionary – Yes
Gospel – Lectionary – Yes
Hymn – MHB
Sermon
Hymn – MHB
Notices
Prayers and Lord’s Prayer
Collection
Hymn - MHB
The Grace

Service 9	Preaching	No children	Local Preacher
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Prayer of approach
Hymn - H and P
Prayer of adoration
Psalm 84 - Lectionary - Yes
Hymn - H and P
Gospel - Lectionary - Yes
Hymn - H and P
Sermon - Par 1
Epistle - Lectionary - No
Sermon - Part 2
Prayer of confession
Hymn - H and P
Intercessions and Lord's Prayer
Collection
Hymn - H and P
Blessing and Grace

Service 10	Preaching	No children	Local Preacher
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Hymn - MHB
Psalm - Lectionary - Yes
Prayers - adoration, praise, confession and petition
Hymn - MHB
Old Testament - Lectionary - Yes
Sermon - Part 1
Hymn - MHB
Gospel - Lectionary - Yes
Sermon - Part 2
Epistle - Lectionary - Yes
Sermon - Part 3
Hymn - MHB
Collection
Prayers - thanksgiving, dedication and intercession and Lord's Prayer
Hymn - MHB
Benediction

Service 11	Preaching – Remembrance Sunday	No children	Local Preacher
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Call to worship
Hymn – H and P
Prayers – approach and confession, thanksgiving for the lives of the departed and Collect for All Saints Day and Lord’s Prayer
Hymn – H and P
Psalm – Lectionary – Yes
Collection
Prayers of dedication
Gospel – Lectionary –Yes
Hymn – H and P
Sermon
Hymn – H and P
Intercessions
Hymn
Benediction

Service 12	Preaching	No children	Local Preacher
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Call to worship
Hymn – H and P
Prayer – adoration and thanksgiving
Old Testament – Lectionary – No
Hymn – H and P
Prayer – confession
Gospel – Lectionary – No
Hymn – H and P
Collection
Epistle – read together (affirmation of faith)
Hymn – H and P
Sermon
Intercessions and Lord’s Prayer
Hymn – H and P
Benediction and The Grace

Service 13	Preaching	No children	Local Preacher
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Call to Worship
Hymn – H and P
Prayer – with a sung alleluia
Psalm – read responsively from H and P
Hymn H and P
Gospel – Lectionary – Yes
Hymn – H and P
Sermon
Hymn – H and P
Intercessions, Lord’s Prayer
Offering
Hymn – H and P
The Grace

Service 14	Preaching – Week of prayer for peace	5 children present for 1 <sup>st</sup> part of service	Local Preacher
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Call to worship
Hymn – H and P
Prayer and Collect
Psalm read responsively form H and P
Hymn – Hand P
OT Reading – Lectionary – No
Gospel – Lectionary – No
Hymn – The Vision of Peace (Pratt Green)
Sermon
Hymn/Song (offering taken up)
Intercessions/Lord’s Prayer/Dedication
Hymn/Song
Blessing



Service 15	Preaching	No children	Local Preacher
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Call to worship
Hymn H and P
Prayers
Hymn – H and P
Old Testament – Lectionary – No
Epistle – Lectionary – No
Hymn – H and P
Gospel – Lectionary – No
Sermon
Hymn – H and P
Prayers
Lord’s Prayer
Offering
Hymn – H and P
Benediction

Service 16	Preaching	No children	Local Preacher
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Call to worship
Hymn – H and P
Psalm – congregationally read
Hymn – H and P
Epistle – Lectionary – Yes
Offering
Prayers
Hymn – H and P
Gospel – Lectionary – Yes
Sermon
Hymn – H and P
Prayers
Lord’s Prayer
Hymn – H and P
Benediction

Service 17	Harvest Festival	No children	Supernummary
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Call to worship - selection of verses from the Psalms
Hymn - H and P
Prayer with taped music
African song
Drama of creation reading
Words re: Christian Aid
Iona song
Old Testament
Gospel
Hymn - H and P
Reflective reading
Iona song
Reflective reading
Prayers
Hymn - H and P
Collect and Blessing

Service 18	All-Age	Children	Presbyter
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Band - song - Speak to me Lord
Call to worship
Introit
Hymn/Song - Meekness and Majesty
Epistle - Lectionary - Yes
Hymn/Song - I'll go in the strength
Prayers
Hymn/Song - Lord I come to you
Hymn/Song - Father I place into your hands
Gospel - Lectionary - Yes
Talk
Offering
Hymn/Song - Beauty for Brokenness
Talk
Prayers
Hymn/Song - Be bold
Talk
Hymn/Song - I the Lord of sea and sky
Benediction

Service 19	Dual Praise – NB Service in two parts but everyone encouraged to attend both halves	Children into Junior Church	Presbyter
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Welcome and Introduction
Song
Song
Prayers
Song
Spiritual matters
Song
Reflection
Song
Prayers
Talk
Song
Benediction
Coffee Break
Welcome
Hymn – H and P
Prayers
Hymn – H and P
Gospel – Lectionary – Yes
Sermon
Hymn – H and P
Offering
Hymn – H and P
Prayers
Hymn – H and P
Benediction

Service 20	Preaching	No children	Local Preacher
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Call to worship and introduction to theme
Hymn - H and P
prayers
Psalm - congregationally read
Hymn - H and P
Dialogue - from Iona material - Made in God's Image
Hymn/Song - The Love of God comes close
Story Telling
Gospel - Lectionary - No
Hymn - We cannot measure how you heal
Sermon
Hymn - H and P
Story telling
Intercessions and Lord's Prayer
Collection
Hymn/Song - I the Lord of sea and sky
An affirmation - We say yes
Blessing

APPENDIX 3 – HYMNS SUNG FROM HYMNS AND PSALMS

	Hymn Number	Charles Wesley	20th Century	Hymn Book Section	Sub-Sections (Number of hymns in sub-section/Number of Hymns Used)
				GOD'S NATURE	
1	1			God's being and Majesty	(20/5)
2	7				
3	8 x 2				
4	9 x 3				
5	19				
6	25 x 2		*	The Eternal Father	God's Creating and Transforming Power (8/1)
7	31				God's Revealing and Transforming Love (19/4)
8	36 x 2		*		
9	45		*		
10	46	*			
					God's Justice and Perfection (13/0)
11	63				God's Patience and Guidance (12/5)
12	64		*		
13	66		*		
14	68				
15	73				
16	84		*	The Eternal Word	The Eternal Glory of the Word (7/1)
					The Promise of the Messiah (9/0)
					Christ's Birth (31/0)
					The Epiphany (9/0)
					Christ's Baptism and Temptation (4/0)
17	134		*		Christ's Teaching (9/2)
18	139		*		

19	145		*		Christ's Ministry (13/2)
20	152		*		
					The Transfiguration (4/0)
21	178				Christ's Passion and Cross (27/1)
22	209				Christ's Resurrection and Ascension (29/1)
23	215				Christ's Work of Salvation (21/5)
24	221 x 2				
25	222				
26	225				
27	232				
28	238				Christ's Coming in Glory (14/2)
29	244				
30	251		*		The Praises of Jesus (29/3)
31	257				
32	268				
				The Eternal Spirit	The Giver of Life (17/0)
					In the Church (18/0)
33	314		*		For the World (15/2)
34	318	*			
				GOD'S WORLD	
35	330			The Natural World	Delight in Creation (12/1)
36	353		*		Living Faithfully in God's World (13/1)
37	359				The Seasons (10/3)
38	362				
39	363				
40	371		*	The Social Order	Marriage and Family Life (11/1)
41	386		*		Life and Work (14/1)
42	395		*		Healing (10/1)
43	402		*		Justice and Peace (16/4)
44	404		*		
45	411		*		

46	414		*		
47	427		*	The Human Condition	(18/1)
				GOD'S PEOPLE	
48	436			A Pilgrim People	Covenant and Deliverance (11/1)
					Patriarchs and Prophets (11/0)
					People of the Light (11/0)
49	474		*		The Holy Scriptures (18/2)
50	475				
51	486 x 2		*	The Worshipping People	Praise and Adoration (33/2)
52	501	*			
53	525		*		Confession and Supplication (28/6)
54	533				
55	536 x 2	*			
56	538				
57	539				
58	542	*			
59	551				Petition and Intercession (16/2)
60	557				
61	566				Thanksgiving (14/2)
62	569	*			
63	576 x 3	*			The Lord's Day (4/1)
					Baptism (13/0)
64	597				The Lord's Supper (38/1)
					Morning (8)
65	645				Evening (11/1)
66	650		*		Occasional Services (12/1)
67	678			The Christian Life	Faith and Confidence (29/1)
68	692				Conversion and Commitment (17/5)
69	694	*			
70	698	*			

71	699		*		
72	704				
					Suffering and Conflict (16)/0
73	732		*		Growth in Grace and Holiness (29/5)
74	737	*			
75	739 x 2				
76	744	*			
77	745	*			
78	753	*			Fellowship (12/1)
79	763	*			
80	764	*		The Calling of the Church	Mission and Unity (21/5)
81	767	*			
82	770		*		
83	776		*		
84	784				
85	785	*			Witness and Service (23/4)
86	792				
87	799	*			
88	804 x 2				
89	814				The Church Triumphant (16)/2
89		18	30		823



APPENDIX 4 – HYMNS AND SONGS FROM OTHER SOURCES

Number	First Line	Author	Source
1	Meekness and majesty	Graham Kendrick	Mission Praise
2	I'll go in the strength of the Lord x 2	Edward Turney	Mission Praise
3	Lord I come to you	Geoff Bullock	Mission Praise
4	Father I place into your hands	Jenny Hewer	Mission Praise
5	Beauty for Brokenness	Graham Kendrick	Mission Praise
6	Be Bold	Morris Chapman	Mission Praise
7	I the Lord of sea and sky x 2	Daniel Schutte	Common Ground
8	The love of God comes close	John Bell	Mission Praise
9	We cannot measure how you heal	John Bell and Graham Maule	Common Ground
10	All heaven declares	Noel and Tricia Richards	Songs of Fellowship
11	As we are gathered	John Daniels	Songs of Fellowship
12	I will enter His gates	Leona von Brethorst	Songs of Fellowship
13	There is a redeemer	Melody Green	Songs of Fellowship
14	Give thanks with a grateful heart x 2	Henry Smith	Songs of Fellowship Mission Praise
15	Come on and celebrate	Patricia Morgan and Dave Bankhead	Songs of Fellowship
16	Lord the light of your love	Graham Kendrick	Mission Praise
17	In my life be glorified	Bob Kilpatrick	Mission Praise
18	Let it be to me	Graham Kendrick	Mission Praise
19	Open our eyes O Lord	Timothy Dudley-Smith	Mission Praise
20	Change my heart	Eddie Espinosa	
21	Rejoice, rejoice		Songs of Fellowship
22	In Christ alone x 2	Stuart Townsend and Kath Getty	Mission Praise
23	Jesus put this song	Graham Kendrick	Songs of fellowship

## APPENDIX 5 – WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE

In August 2006 I requested the Methodist Recorder (Methodism's own newspaper) to run a piece to ask for responses from Methodist preachers about their own perceptions of change in worship over the past 50 years. The text of that request is given below. It appeared in the 'On The Grapevine' column.

Mr Andy Lyons writes: "I am about to start my PhD on the influences on Methodist worship practice since 1960. I would like to ask via the Recorder for presbyters and local preachers to write or to e-mail me on what has influenced them and changed their practice of leading worship over the last 45 years. I am interested in preaching services rather than services of Holy Communion. Have preachers adopted the use of the lectionary? Have they changed the way they pray and preach? Have they changed the order of service they use? Do they change their choice of hymns? Do they use more visual effects than previously? Are they more informal in their leadership style? Contact Andy Lyons..."

I received 15 responses to this request. In addition to these responses I conducted a conversation with the preachers from the Bromsgrove circuit during one of the preacher's meetings.

## APPENDIX 6 – SURVEY WORK

The following questionnaire was distributed to preachers at a Methodist seminar – The Heart of Worship – held in May 2007 and at the Birmingham District Synod in September 2007. I received 91 responses. I give the figures from the responses within the questionnaire

### WORSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

#### FOR METHODIST MINISTERS AND LOCAL PREACHERS

This questionnaire has been produced by Andy Lyons. I am a probationary presbyter in the Bromsgrove Circuit. I am working on my PhD, through the Queen's Foundation and Birmingham University. My subject area is The Changing Practice of Methodist Worship 1957-2007.

I would be most grateful if you would take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. **Please relate your answers to 'preaching' services not services of Holy Communion.** Thank you.

---

1) Are you a Methodist Presbyter?	Yes/No	34				
2) Are you a Local Preacher?	Yes/No	57				
3) What is your age?	20-30: 1	31-40: 2	41-50: 25			
	51-60: 28	61-70: 28	71-80: 4	80+ 3		
4) How long have you been leading worship?	Less than 10 years: 17	10-20 years: 26	21-30 years: 21	31-40 years: 16	41-50 years: 6	More than 50 years: 5

---

Please describe the most notable changes you have made to your conducting of worship during your time of leading worship e.g. service orders/language/formality/hymns and songs etc.

*The most notable changes described are:*

*Informality*

*Style of language – informal/modern/inclusive*

*Participation of congregation*

*Flexible orders of service dependent on type of service being conducted*

*Wider use/choice of hymns/songs sources*

*Visual aids/powerpoint*

*Microphones/Lecterns not pulpits*

*Short attention spans/shorter sermons etc*

*Use of lectionary*

*Preaching themes*

*Relevance – cultural*

---

Please indicate what has influenced you most to make the changes you have described above.

*The most notable influences noted are:*

*Experiences – of Greenbelt/Taize/Easter People/Conferences etc.*

*Ecumenism/Liturgical Renewal*

*Availability of resources – hymns and prayers etc*

*Changing world/culture/needs of congregations incl. generational issues*

*Technology*

*Music styles*

*Theological change – immanence of God/incarnation theology*

---

Do you use the lectionary?

All the time 13      Most of the time 67      Some of the time 11

Occasionally 0      Never 0

---

How do you usually use the lectionary?

All of it e.g. Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel 20

Mainly Old Testament and Gospel 34

Just the Gospel 11

*Note – the rest did not answer directly but stated that they used Scripture differently depending on the service to be taken.*

Do you use the appointed Psalm? – *Note - including those who said sometimes* 45

---

Where do you usually place the Lord's Prayer in your service?

In the first set of prayers. 32

As the last prayer, after intercessions. 33

Somewhere else? State. 26

---

Where do you place the collection in your service?

Towards the end of the service 56  
Dependant on type of service 35

---

From what sources do you choose hymns and songs to be sung by the congregation?

*Note – a very wide selection of sources are used. The majority of preachers use different sources.*

---

For prayers do you (you may answer yes for more than one option)

Write your own? Yes 55 /No 35

Pray extempore? Yes 26 /No 64

Read out other people's written prayers? Yes 66 /No 25

Use the Methodist Worship Book prayers? Yes 18 /No 63

*Note – the majority of respondents used more than one of these styles/forms*

---

When leading a non-eucharistic service do you include prayers of thanksgiving?  
Yes/No

If so where do you place them in the service order?

In the first set of prayers. 50

In the last set of prayers. 19

Somewhere else? State. 22 – *Dependent on service*

---

Have you ever used the Methodist Worsip Book – Morning, Afternoon or Evening  
Service – for a preaching service? Yes 44 No 47

If so, did the congregation use the book or did you simply use it as guidance/template to  
structure the service? – *Only 3 responses indicate that they use the service book with the  
congregation*

Congregation use/As guidance

---

Where do you normally place the sermon in your service order?

Before prayers of intercession? 77

After prayers of intercession? 3

Dependent on type of service? 11

---

How long do you normally preach for? 5-10 minutes 4 11-15 minutes 27  
16-20 minutes 55 More than 20 minutes 5

---

Do you ever conduct 'alternative' forms of worship e.g. Café Church: Taize style: Mission Praise etc

What do you conduct?

*Note – more presbyters than LPs are involved in leading different types of services. Taize, Café Church, Healing, Songs of Praise and others are mentioned.*

---

How do you involve members of congregations in worship?

Through planning groups? Yes/No 47

Through leading prayers? Yes/No 74

Through reading Scripture? Yes/No All

Other? 30

---

Please return this questionnaire to:

Andy Lyons

68 Golden Cross Lane

Catshill

Bromsgrove

Worcestershire

B61 0LG

[andylyons239@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:andylyons239@yahoo.co.uk)

## APPENDIX 7 – HYMNS AND SONGS SANG IN A ‘FAMILY-FRIENDLY’ CHURCH

Title	Author	Uses
A charge to keep I have	Charles Wesley	1
All creatures of our God and King	William Henry Draper, based on St Francis	1
All heaven declares	Tricia Richards	5
All I once held dear	Graham Kendrick	2
All things bright and beautiful	Cecil F. Alexander	1
All things praise thee	George William Condor	1
Amazing Grace ROUND Version	John Newton, alt.	1
At the name of Jesus HYMNS & PSALMS VERSION	Caroline Maria Noel	4
Be bold be strong	Morris Chapman	5
Be thou my vision HYMNS & PSALMS Version	Ancient Irish, tr. Mary Byrne	4
Beauty for brokenness	Graham Kendrick	2
Bill's Prayers 1		1
Born in song!	Brian R. Hoare	5
Brother, sister let me serve you	Richard Gillard	2
Christ is made the sure foundation	John Mason Neale	1
Christ is the world's Light	Fred Pratt Green	2
Christ is the world's Redeemer	Ascribed to Columba, tr. Duncan MacGregor	1
Christ reigns triumphant, worldly splendour pales	Michael Forster	1
Christ triumphant	Michael Saward	1
Come on and celebrate	Patricia Morgan	4
Come thou long expected Jesus	Charles Wesley	2
Come, let us join our friends above	Charles Wesley	1
Come, let us sing of a wonderful love	Robert Walmsley	2
Come, we that love the Lord (Sankey style!)	Isaac Watts	1
Come, ye thankful people, come	Henry Alford	1
Come, ye that love the Lord (We're marching to Zion)	Isaac Watts	1
Dear Lord and Father of mankind H&P Version	John G. Whittier	3
Emmanuel, God with us	Greg P Leavers	1
Eternal, living Word of God	From Verbum supernum prodiens a Patre	1
Faithful One, So Unchanging	Brian Doerksen	1
Father I place into your hands	Jenny Hewer	4
Father of Jesus Christ - my Lord	Charles Wesley	1
Father, we love You	Donna Adkins	1
For the beauty of the earth	F. S. Pierpoint	2
For the fruits of his creation	Fred Pratt Green	1
For the healing of the nations	Fred Kaan	1
Forth in thy name HYMNS & PSALMS Version	Charles Wesley	1
From all that dwell below the skies	Isaac Watts	1
Gathered by a greater purpose	Brian Wren (born 1936)	1
Give me joy in my heart HYMNS & PSALMS Version	Anonymous	1
Give me oil in my lamp	Anonymous	1
Give me the wings of faith to rise	Isaac Watts	1
Give thanks with a grateful heart	Henry Smith	2
Give to me, Lord, a thankful heart	Caryl Micklem	1

Go forth and tell MISSION PRAISE VERSION	J E Seddon	1
Go forth and tell HYMNS & PSALMS VERSION	J E Seddon	2
God forgave my sin	Carol Owens	5
God in his love for us	Fred Pratt Green	2
God is here! As we his people	Fred Pratt Green	1
God is Love: let heaven adore him	Timothy Rees	1
God is our strength and refuge	Richard Bewes	1
Guide me, O thou great Jehovah	William Williams	2
Hark the glad sound!	Philip Doddridge	1
Head of thy church triumphant	Charles Wesley	1
He's got the whole world	Traditional	3
Holy Spirit, come, confirm us	Brian Foley	1
Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty! MP Version	Reginald Heber	1
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest	Carl Tuttle	2
I am a new creation	Dave Bilbrough	3
I need thee every hour	Annie Sherwood Hawks	1
I the Lord of sea and sky	Daniel L Schutte	4
I will hide Your word inside my heart	Paul Field	1
I will sing the wondrous story H&P Version	Francis Rawley	2
I'll go in the strength of the Lord	Edward Turney	1
In Christ alone	Stuart Townend	3
In heavenly love abiding MISSION PRAISE Version	Anna L. Waring	1
Isaiah the prophet has written of old	Joy F Patterson	1
It Is a Thing Most Wonderful (H&P)	W. W. How	1
It is God who holds the nations in the hollow of his hand	F. Pratt Green	1
It only takes a spark	Kurt Kaiser	1
Jesu, Jesu	Tom Colvin	1
Jesus calls us here to meet him	John L Bell and Graham Maule	1
Jesus Christ, bread of life		1
Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it	David J. Mansell	3
Jesus, Name above all names	Naida Hearn	1
Joy to the world HYMNS & PSALMS Version	Isaac Watts	2
Know that God is good		1
Kum ba ya	Anon	2
Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us	James Edmeston, alt.	2
Let all creation sing		1
Let there be love shared among us	Dave Bilbrough	2
Let us break bread together with the Lord	Based on a Negro Spiritual	1
Longing for light		1
Lord for the years	Timothy Dudley-Smith	3
Lord I come to you	Geoff Bullock	4
Lord make me a mountain	Paul Field	4
Lord the light of your love	Graham Kendrick	5
Lord thy church	Hugh Sherlock	1
Lord, bring the day to pass	Ian Fraser	1
Lord, that I may learn of thee	Charles Wesley	1
Lord, Thy Word abideth MISSION PRAISE Version	Henry Williams Baker	1
Lord, we have come at your own invitation	Fred Pratt Green	1
Lord, we've come to worship You	Ian Smale	1
Love divine HYMNS & PSALMS Version	Charles Wesley	3
Make way	Graham Kendrick	1
Meekness and majesty	Graham Kendrick	5



Meet and right it is to sing	Charles Wesley	1
Morning has broken	Eleanor Farjeon	1
Moses, I know you're the man	Estelle White	3
Now bless the God of Israel	Ruth Duck	1
Now let us from this table rise	Fred Kaan	1
O Christ, the Healer, we have come	Fred Pratt Green	1
O God, our help in ages past	Isaac Watts	1
O let the Son of God enfold you	John Wimber	1
O Lord my God! (How great Thou art)	Stuart K. Hine	1
O risen Christ, still wounded	Carl P Daw, Jr	1
O the valleys shall ring	Dave Bilbrough	1
O the valleys shall ring (Congregation)	Dave Bilbrough	1
O what shall I do my Saviour to praise	Charles Wesley	1
Offering		1
Oh where are you going?	Iona Community	1
One more step	Sydney Carter	3
One shall tell another	Graham Kendrick	1
Peace be to this habitation	Charles Wesley (1707-1788)	1
Rejoice in God's saints	Frederick Pratt Green	1
Rejoice, the Lord is King!	Charles Wesley	1
Seek ye first the kingdom of God H&P Version	Karen Lafferty	1
Sing praise to God on mountain tops	Iona Community	1
Sing we the King who is coming to reign	Charles Silvester Horne	1
Sing we the song of those who stand	James Montgomery	1
Speak to us, Lord		1
Teach me to dance	Graham Kendrick/Steve Thompson	1
Thanks be to God, whose Church on earth	Caryl Micklem	1
The Church of Christ, in every age	F. Pratt Green	1
The first day of the week	F. Pratt Green	1
The king of glory comes	Willard F Jabusch	1
The kingdom of God	Bryn Rees	3
The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want	Stuart Townend	2
The Spirit lives to set us free	Damian Lundy	2
The strangest of saints	The Iona Community	1
Thine be the glory	Edmond L Budry	2
This is the body of Christ	John L Bell (b. 1949)	1
This is the day this is the day	Les Garrett	2
Through all the changing scenes of life	George T Smart	1
Thy hand, O God has guided H&P Version	Edward Hayes Plumptre	1
Thy hand, O God has guided MP Version	Edward Hayes Plumptre	1
To God be the glory MISSION PRAISE VERSION	Frances Jane van Alstyne alt.	1
We are marching in the light of God	African origin, ed Anders Nyberg	1
We have a gospel to proclaim	Edward J. Burns	1
We plough the fields and scatter	Matthias Claudius. Tr. Jane M	1
We turn to you	Fred Kaan	1
What does the Lord require	Albert F. Bayly	1
When we walk with the Lord H&P VERSION	John Henry Sammis	1
Ye holy angels bright	Richard Baxter and others	1
You laid aside Your majesty	Noel Richards	2

APPENDIX 8 – A HYMN OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING FOR THE ‘RESPONSE’ SECTION  
OF A NON-EUCHARISTIC SERVICE

Raise up your hands, heart, voice and mind,  
To God sing thanks and praise;  
For it is right and we so bind  
Ourselves within God’s reign.

The Holy One made the first day,  
The sun, the moon, the stars,  
And then to us God gave a way  
For us to dwell on earth.

And loving us and guiding us  
The Law and prophets spoke,  
And when in time we did regress  
Came Jesus Christ, the Word.

He healed the sick, he raised the dead,  
He fed all those in need  
And to his friends he gave the bread  
That signals life and death.

Remember him, you Church of Christ,  
For he did come to save;  
And in his death did pay the price  
To bring us home again.

And even death did not destroy  
His life of hope and love  
The Spirit came and we enjoy  
Our life within his life.

Bring shouts of joy, O sing our souls  
Come Spirit in our hearts,  
Come Christ and help us God extol  
With all the saints in heaven.