CHAPTER 6

Enlarge My Heart

Donald Allchin and the Exploration of Christian Traditions

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The great Anglican poet-priest of the seventeenth century, Thomas Traherne, wrote in his *Centuries of Meditation,* that "love has a marvellous property of feeling in another."[1] This was certainly true of Donald Allchin, who was himself an admirer of Traherne, and who regularly attended the annual Traherne celebration at Credenhill just outside Hereford, where Traherne had been the parish priest. With a deep sense of the ecumenism of the Spirit, Donald had an intuitive ability to enter into different Christian traditions, cultures and languages, and discover their riches and what they could contribute to a wider and deeper understanding of the Christian faith and the dynamic of tradition (the title of one of his books)[2] whereby that faith was handed on from one generation to another.

1. Traherne, *Centuries of Meditation,* 1 sec. 52
2. Allchin, *The Dynamic of Tradition.*

I have in my library a personally inscribed copy of *A Rapture of Praise,*[3] the anthology of the hymns of John and Charles Wesley which he edited with Herbert Hodges, then Professor of Philosophy at Reading University, and who shared with Donald a love for the Orthodox tradition. Donald wrote on the fly-leaf of this book words from one of the Wesley hymns:

> Enlarge my heart to understand
> the mystery unknown.

These are words which might be taken as summing up the theological and spiritual task in which Donald was engaged for the whole of his ministry. He would have rejoiced that Wesley's words had in an earlier generation resonated with Teresa of Avila, when she heard in the psalms of the daily office, the words *Thou hast enlarged my heart*—words that pointed her to a prayer that was not a mechanistic repetition of formulaic phrases but an allowing the Spirit of God to catch her into the spring of living water. As Wesley again put it much later in *Jesu, lover of my soul!*

> Thou of life the fountain art,
> Freely let me taste of Thee,
> Spring thou up within my heart,
> Rise to all eternity!

But my first encounter with Donald Allchin was not in the context of the Wesleys and their hymns—and particularly their eucharistic hymns—but of the first Newman Symposium to be held in Oxford in 1966. This was a significant event, growing out of the conferences which Abbé Nicolas Theis had organized from Luxembourg. It brought Newman back to England, to Oxford, and to Oriel, and was marked by the presence of Archbishop Michael Ramsey, coming straight from his significant meeting with Pope Paul VI in Rome, during which Pope Paul had taken the episcopal ring from his own finger and placed it on Archbishop Michael's in a dramatic ecumenical gesture. Donald edited the proceedings of the Symposium with the lay Catholic theologian, John Coulson, whose book, *Newman and the Common Tradition* had explored the literary roots of Newman's theology and reflected on the consequences of this for Catholic theology following Newman's conversion. It was published as *The Rediscovery of Newman,*[4] and in two major sections examined the sources of Newman's power and the

3. Allchin, *A Rapture of Praise.*
4. Allchin and Coulson, *Rediscovery of Newman.*

development of his influence—in continental Europe, in the Free Churches, and in the Second Vatican Council. Donald Allchin made a particularly original contribution in a major paper on "The Theological Vision of the Oxford Movement" in which he drew significantly on the unpublished *Lectures on Types and Prophecies,* which Pusey had delivered in 1836, and which Newman had attended. The manuscript of these *Lectures* is in the Pusey House archive, but they had lain there neglected, until Professor Alf Härdelin of the University of Uppsala had made use of them for his significant study of Tractarian sacramental theology, *The Tractarian Understanding of the Eucharist.*[5] Donald immediately recognized how important these *Lectures* were as providing a major key to the theological vision of the Oxford Movement, though he did not know Newman's later comment to Pusey that Pusey's patristic typological understanding of Scripture was the only real riposte to the subjective deconstruction of the New Testament by David Friedrich Strauss in his *Leben Iesu.* As Donald wrote in his paper, there were "two central elements in the Tractarian vision of the world and of God":

> First that *everything* created shouts the glory of its Maker, whence follows the need to bring all human knowledge, activity, and experience into relation to God's revelation of himself, and secondly, that at the moment of recognizing the utter transcendence of God we also experience his agonizing nearness, and that this nearness is such that though all the resources of the human mind and heart must be summoned to its apprehension, in the end no words can express it. It must be known in life. For a moment they saw the whole transfigured by uncreated light, and man in its midst caught up into an awe-full union with the divine. And that vision, which certainly owed much to Wordsworth, was understood by them finally in terms which they had learnt from the Fathers, and above all from the Greek Fathers, This meant that a vision of an aesthetic origin could be integrated into a larger view of things, which would do justice not only to man's perception of beauty, but also to his moral and intellectual apprehensions This was a view which centered upon the mystery of the Incarnation, seen as providing the key both to the sacramental understanding of the universe, and to an understanding of the Church wholly centered upon the person and work of Christ, the redeemer. In the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, in his death and resurrection, we see

5. Härdelin, *The Tractarian Understanding of the Eucharist.* See especially chapter 2, "The Sacramental Principle and the Nature of the Church," 60–107

> the full height and depth of the miraculous interchange between God and man, and the full extent and scope of the operation of God's glory, gathering together all things created, making them instruments and vehicles of the divine presence.[6]

Donald described the outstanding feature of Pusey's *Lectures* was "their romantic quality" and their stress on the imagination. He endorsed Härdelin's observation that the Tractarians "were fighting on a double front; on the one hand against rationalist anti-dogmatism, and on the other against the intellectualism of older orthodoxy."[7] As Donald goes on to comment on the major themes of Pusey's *Lectures:*

> There is the conviction that clarity and immediate intelligibility are qualities dearly purchased in reflection on divine things; that God reveals himself in images which strike us forcibly almost in proportion to our inability to capture or define them fully; that everything in this world can be a type or symbol of heavenly realities; and that the whole history of God's dealings with his people foreshadows and is prophetic of his revelation of himself in Christ. Finally there is the belief that to try to make a rationally intelligible and complete system of God's ways will inevitably lead to a narrowing and limiting of our apprehension of them.[8]

Pusey's conviction that "biblical revelation is given through the use of types, symbols and sacramental actions" anticipates, as the present Principal of Pusey House, Dr. George Westhaver, has argued in his in-depth study of Pusey's *Lectures,* the theology of later thinkers such as Henri de Lubac and Austin Farrer, as well as current rediscoveries of the significance of both patristic exegesis and the place of the imagination in human understanding.[9] As Donald presciently put it:

> One of the most important elements in the Tractarian vision of the Christian faith, and one which still has great relevance today, is the way in which it involved a rediscovery of the sense of Scripture and Tradition alike, a new insight into both sacrament and prophecy. For . . . Pusey is sure that without an understanding of the essential role played by type and sacrament in the process of revelation, we shall be false to revelation itself, losing our awareness of it as a gift

6. Coulson and Allchin, eds., *Rediscovery of Newman*, 53–54
7. Härdelin, *The Tractarian Understanding of the Eucharist,* 56
8. Ibid., 58
9. Westhaver, *The Living Body of the Lord.*

> from God, into which we are called to enter, and instead transforming it into a mere conceptual scheme of our own devising.[10]

Pusey's vision—and that of the Oxford Movement—was one to which Donald often returned, as we can see in the concluding lecture in *The Dynamic of Tradition*, where he writes of John Keble, and of Hooker (whose *Works* Keble edited) behind him, that in Keble we find "the patristic view of the world itself as the sacrament of God's providential care, a view which is not afraid to affirm that God is present in all things."

> He makes it clear that in this world we are not simply dealing with material copies of ideal archetypes. The picture is more dynamic than that. Objects and events are seen as meeting places; places where man can come out of himself in return to meet God, finding his daily life to be full of occasions for making over to God the happenings of everyday. The moral implications of this vision are as clear as its aesthetic consequences.[11]

Donald, like Michael Ramsey, was a theologian of transfiguration. The Christian faith was not just a set of ideas but a participation by grace in the Divine life. Our calling was to be transformed from glory into glory. He found this theme in the Fathers, in Orthodoxy, in the Tractarians, and in the Wesleys. In the introduction to the selection of Wesley hymns, *A Rapture of Praise,* published in the same year in which he delivered his lecture on Pusey's *Lectures on Types and Prophecies*, which he wrote with his fellow-editor, Herbert Hodges, he spoke of where we must begin, "with God's love for us." This is a love "which is infinite, inexhaustible, unfathomable, wholly undeserved, wholly generous and self-giving. It evokes in us a response of love, both towards God and towards one another for God's sake, so that in the end the true divine love, which only God can give, is more and more shed abroad in our hearts as our resistance to it weakens; until at last, being wholly freed from sin, we are wholly filled with pure love." "Love is not merely one of God's attributes, it is his very nature"—as John Wesley powerfully wrote in his hymn *Wrestling Jacob—Come, O Thou traveller unknown! His nature and His Name is Love.*

For men to be filled with love is to be fashioned into the image and likeness of God:

> Love, thine image, love impart!

10. Härdelin, *The Tractarian Understanding of the Eucharist,* 67–68
11. Allchin, *The Dynamic of Tradition,* 38

Stamp it on our face and heart!

It is to become partakers of the divine nature:

Heavenly Adam, Life divine,
Change my nature into thine.

It is to be re-created:

Thy creature, Lord, again create
And all my soul renew.

It is to re-enter Paradise:

My heart, thou know'st, can never rest
Till thou create my peace,
Till, of my Eden repossessed
From every sin I cease.[12]

Donald noted specifically amongst the Wesleys' hymns, their Eucharistic hymns, collected in their *Hymns on the Lord's Supper,* which was republished nine times after it first appeared in 1745. Allchin notes that these eucharistic hymns are "equalled perhaps only by the sacramental hymns of N. F. S. Grundtvig in Denmark," about whom he wrote a major study. But, if this was one parallel for him, he noted another, in Symeon the New Theologian, the Byzantine "Mystic of Fire and Light," at the turn of the first millennium. "There are indeed remarkable similarities between some aspects of [Symeon's] teaching and that of John and Charles Wesley. There is a strange similarity between the situation in which he [Symeon] lived and the response he made to it, and the situation of the Wesleys."[13] In writing of Symeon, Donald quotes a comment of Ernest Rattenbury on the Wesleys as equally applicable to Symeon: "His theology of is an account of truth realized in personal experiment and experience . . . his soul and mind are supplied, not from cisterns, but from springs; his teaching was not merely of a school, but of a genuine experience of life—the divine life."[14]

At the end of the introduction to the hymns that follow in *A Rapture of Praise* Donald notes that on the day of his conversion experience (May 28th, 1738) John Wesley had been reading from 2 Peter the words that

12. Allchin and Hodges, *A Rapture of Praise,* 20

13. Allchin, *The Kingdom of Love and Knowledge,* 39

14. Ibid., 50, citing Rattenbury, *The Evangelical Doctrine of Charles Wesley's Hymns,* 85, 87.

speak of God's "exceeding great and precious promises, even that we should be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1–4).

> This teaching, so basic to the whole life of the Eastern Church, seems to have been with John Wesley, consciously or unconsciously, throughout his ministry, and it is to be found in Charles Wesley's hymns with an insistence which is rare in Western Christendom. . . .
>
> Thy kingdom come to every heart,
> And all thou hast, and all thou art.
>
> These declarations that the end of man is to live in union with God are not incidental in his writings, nor are they literary exaggerations. They give us the clue to understanding his whole life, which was an ardent longing after a "perfect love," to which in this world he never attained. They are fundamental to the whole attitude revealed in his hymns with their eager expectation of the fullness which is yet to come, and their constant sorrow over the awareness of the sin which still remains. They go some way to explain the otherwise surprising fact that with very few exceptions his Ascension hymns are much finer than his Resurrection ones. For with him the meaning of Easter is swallowed up in the splendor of the Ascension, in which the King of Glory has with great triumph exalted his only Son to his kingdom in heaven. He prays that we too may ascend there in heart and mind, so that the Holy Spirit may exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before.[15]

If the hymns of the Wesleys were seen as expressing a theology which reflected that of the Eastern Fathers and of a Byzantine mystic like Symeon the New Theologian, the Danish theologian, educationalist and hymn-writer, N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783–1872) also kindled Donald's imagination, and led to a major study, *N. F. S. Grundtvig: An Introduction to His Life and Work* (1997).[16] There can be few who have become fluent in Danish, as Donald did, in order to study Grundtvig, whereas many have done so in order to read Kierkegaard in the original.

Donald had come to Denmark to stay with a Danish family as a seventeen-year-old schoolboy in 1947, and during that time not only had he learned some Danish and become acquainted with the Danish church and culture, he had also been taken to the Grundtvig Church in Copenhagen. This was clearly the beginning of a lifelong fascination with Grundtvig,

15. Allchin and Hodges, *A Rapture of Praise,* 48–49
16. Allchin, *N. F. S. Grundtvig*

whose thought Donald came to believe would have had a much greater influence had Grundtvig written in English or German and not his native Danish. He had first intended to write substantively on Grundtvig in 1960, out of the conviction that Grundtvig needed to be presented to the English-speaking world. In the end all that appeared were two articles in the *Eastern Churches Quarterly*, the first on "The hymns of N. F. S. Grundtvig," and the second on "Grundtvig's translations from the Greek."[17] But his interest in Gruntdvig continued and twenty years later, in *The Kingdom of Love and Knowledge*, with its concern for Orthodoxy and the West, he saw Grundtvig as important in this context, including in that book a chapter on Grundtvig—"N. F. S. Grundtvig: The Spirit as Life-giver."[18] In that chapter he wrote that it was Grundtvig's sermons and hymns that were at the heart of his teaching and theology. "His is a theology of praise and proclamation. He created a body of liturgical hymns, hymns for the festivals and for the sacraments, which are without parallel in Protestant Christendom. His is a theology, moreover which is expressed primarily in images and not in concepts."[19] As Donald had found in the Tractarians so also he found in Nikolai Grundtvig—"he came to think of the world around him as no more than a shadow, an image of an eternal and heavenly reality to which, occasionally the poet's genius might give him access. He felt, and was to feel all his life, an aching longing for that heavenly and eternal world which here we know only in shadows, shadows which are indeed most tantalizing when they are most beautiful and apparently real."[20] He noted how, as Grundtvig's Eucharistic theology developed, the Eucharistic gifts "precisely because parts of [the] material creation" were fitted "to partake of the glorious reality they convey." "It is the Spirit who brings together earth and heaven, human and divine in a new unity," so that "the chalice of human life and joy is also the chalice of God's love, which unites earth and heaven, and builds up the holy city into a union of love."[21] The Eucharist is not just a past remembrance, nor even simply a present reality, but is orientated to the future. "In the Eucharist the heavenly and the earthly are fused together in

17. Allchin, "The Hymns of N. F. S. Grundtvig," *Eastern Churches Quarterly* XIII (1959) 129–43; "Grundtvig's Translations from the Greek," *Eastern Churches Quarterly* XIV (1961–62) 28–44.

18. Allchin, *The Kingdom of Love and Knowledge,* 71–89.

19. Ibid., 72.

20. Ibid., 82

21. Ibid., 84

the power of the Spirit, as a sign that the whole earthly creation is called to share in the final transfiguration of all things, when the union of earth and heaven which here we know in faith will be fully and openly revealed."[22]

Donald's major study of Grundtvig was intended "to present Grundtvig to the English-speaking world." It was, he said, the first time that "someone neither Danish nor Scandinavian [had] attempted to make an extended presentation of Grundtvig's life and work." It was a major achievement, succeeding through the clarity of its presentation and the rich and well-ordered quotations from Grundtvig's sermons and hymns. Grundtvig's theology, as Donald summed it up was "a theology of praise and proclamation, a doxological and kerygmatic presentation of the faith, with ecumenical implications which need to be explored."[23] Grundtvig's theology was also an ecclesial theology. Christianity is not a theory derived from the Bible and then elaborated by professors. Christianity exists in the one church, "grounded in the apostolic confession of faith and in the sacraments of the Gospel. . . . We cannot build the Church on the Bible alone, still less on the interpretation of individual experts. It is in the life of the Church and in the sacraments of the Church, in which God is present and at work, that we hear God's word addressed to us and discover what true Christianity is."[24] For Grundtvig the life of the church is "not a thing which exists in this world alone, It includes the Church triumphant in heaven. The idea of the communion of saints is a vital aspect of this mysterious reality."[25] In this stance Donald notes Grundtvig anticipates Florovsky's affirmation that there the ecumenism in time is no less significant than the ecumenism in space.[26]

In his concluding epilogue, Donald identified what he called seven tentative conclusions, which are not only true of Grundtvig but of Donald himself, with his ability for "feeling in another" and for discerning a wider and deeper Christian perspective in Christian contexts and cultures different from his own Anglican roots. It is worth summarizing these briefly.

(1) Grundtvig's view of humanity "is radically collaborative and interdependent. . . . He sees the relationship society as the only truly human society, for human beings find themselves only when they find that their life is rooted in the life of God, three in one."

22. Ibid., 84.
23. Allchin, *N. F. S. Grundtvig,* 1.
24. Ibid., 106
25. Ibid., 110
26. Ibid., 111

(2) "He is man who speaks to the situation of a world which is deeply perplexed by the strength and persistence of feelings of national identity. We thought we had left these things behind, but they now come back to us to in frighteningly irrational and destructive ways." Grundtvig is a man who takes these questions of national awareness with the utmost seriousness. He knows how important these questions are, and how much human beings need the sense of belonging and identity which active participation in a national community can give. But he sees that nations, no less than individuals, only function properly when they function in a collaborative and interdependent way. The nations have need to work with one another and to respect one another's differences; they too discover themselves in discovering their neighbors.[27] (What Donald writes about Grundtvig has roots not only in the two Great Commandments, but also in the words of St. Anthony from the time of the Desert Fathers, "Our life and our death are with our neighbour.")

(3) Grundtvig saw the inseparable connection of national identity with the importance of language and the differences of languages. He believed passionately that "languages are among the greatest of God's gifts to humanity, and that each one has its own specific beauty and excellence" so that "it is saddening and perplexing to see how little time, energy and thought our society is willing to spend on learning to appreciate the languages of others, and to understanding the full meaning of their diversity and difference."

(4) Grundtvig not only valued differences between people and languages, but even more "values and affirms the possibilities of communion and unity within the human family."

> As a priest, a preacher and a pastor in the Church of Christ he is passionately concerned for the unity and integrity of the Church through time and through space. He is . . . one of the major ecumenical prophets of the nineteenth century. His insights could be of direct use in our problems today.
>
> His wonderful sense of the poetic, many-layered nature of language, his feeling for the living presence of the past, in and through the vicissitudes of history, point towards a church which is one in its freely accepted diversity. This "poetic-historic" view of things provides a sovereign antidote to temptations towards

27. Ibid., 308

> authoritarian and literalist systems of whatever kind, which seek to reduce all to unity by decreeing uniformity.[28]

(5) "The strongly poetic nature of Grundtvig's theology is also to be seen in his awareness that the whole living world, and not humanity alone, is involved in the drama of God's self-disclosure. For him the earth too is made in God's image. In opening themselves to the divine realm men and women find that their sense of bodily solidarity with the natural world is strengthened and not weakened. It is not only a solidarity in death; more deeply it is a solidarity in transfiguration and resurrection."[29]

(6) Grundtvig's vision, moreover, is one which takes up themes characteristic of the primal religions which have a significance for contemporary environmental dilemmas.

(7) "Grundtvig's view of the Christian faith is constantly crossing the barriers between Catholic and Protestant, and between East and West in the Christian world. It is highly unitive. His vision of God's purpose is not restricted to the drama of sin and redemption, however vital that may be. Rather, he thinks in terms of a purpose of love which begins in creation, grows through the transfiguration of the things that are made, and comes to the fulfillment of that purpose in the revelation of God's kingdom, or, as he loves to say, the union of human and divine through the marriage of heaven and earth."[30]As Nicholas Lossky comments in an Afterword, "This marriage of past and present in an encounter between time and eternity results in the fact that those who truly witness to their time, take their own time seriously, generally transcend their time: their witness becomes a witness for all times This is the case with the Fathers of the Church; this is the case for Grundtvig.'[31]—and, we might add, also for Donald Allchin.

If Grundtvig was a major figure in Denmark, whom Donald Allchin showed as a creative theologian with significant ecumenical and contemporary resonances, the same could not be said of Bernard Walke (1874–1941), a parish-priest in Cornwall, remembered, as Donald said in a memorial lecture in 2000, for only two things—his Christmas plays produced in the remote parish of St. Hilary, and the attack on his church for its "popish," ritualist furnishings by a band of ultra-Protestant vigilantes. Donald was always discovering (and re-discovering) people and places in whom he found

28. Ibid., 309
29. Ibid., 309.
30. Ibid., 310
31. Ibid., 317–17

particular expressions of "immortal diamond" forged by God's transfiguring grace, what Charles Williams called "diagrams of God's glory." Donald had come to Cornwall as a boy on a family holiday when Walke was still alive and had noted his parents' concern when Walke's name was mentioned. Years later he received an invitation to lecture at St. Hilary (and wrote me a characteristically enthusiastic letter saying he was rediscovering things Cornish and Walke in particular). His lecture, published as *Bernard Walke: A Good Man Who Could Never Be Dull*[32] is a cameo of a man who showed, in Donald's words, "a remarkable kind of goodness, not heavy and oppressive, but light and lively, liberating and enlivening." In meeting him "you felt that he gave you the courage, the freedom to be your own true self."[33] In Walke, a pacifist during World War I, and who had authority gained through suffering, Donald saw an attractive tolerance—"not the tolerance which cares nothing about conviction, nor the optimism which can see good in everything because it has not considered the evil which corrodes our human existence, [but] the optimism of grace."[34] In this brief lecture Donald spoke of Bernard Walke's deep love of the country, of his friendship with Gerrard Collier, the founder of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and their concern to establish a workers' co-operative for the Cornish tin miners. Walke's description of the participation of miners in prayer meetings clearly moved and impressed Donald. "Their amens and alleluias are sharp and incisive—as the ring of the pick against the naked rock . . . their prayers are often eloquent of the longing of the human hear for God, the cries of men who have spent their lives in darkness and whose souls long light and splendor . . . here was a people who unlike many industrial works, have never lost faith in God. The fire that John Wesley kindled was not altogether extinguished."[35] Donald saw in Bernard Walke, "Ber" as he was affectionately known, a priest with a sense of the transcendent, of a sacramental understanding of the world, eucharistically centred, and yet an ecumenical pioneer, with prayer for Ireland welcomed by the Roman Catholic priest in Truro and by Quakers and non-conformists. As Donald commented, for Bernard Walke, "the relation of the Eucharist to society as a whole was of fundamental importance." He quotes Walke's words:

32. Allchin, *Bernard Walke.*
33. Ibid.,7
34. Ibid., 8
35. Ibid., 16–17

> At the moment of his farewell, when the Son of God was to leave his friends he had gathered round him, he had set up a common table, where men might meet, and sharing his gifts of bread and wine, find him present with them. For those who share in the gift of the *Corpus Domini*—the body of God—there must be a way, I thought, in which they could share more complete in the daily things of life.[36]

As it was for Donald, it was also important for understanding, Bernard Walke that he and his wife, Annie, herself an artist, found warm friends and supporters in the Newlyn circle of artists. "This identification with what would then have been considered a very unconventional group of people, rather than with the local squirearchy, or indeed with the neighbouring clergy, was deepened during the years of the war when the Walkes found themselves particularly isolated on account of their pacifist stance." Bernard was himself not an artist in line and colour, but in words, of which his Christmas plays, broadcast from St. Hilary, with local actors speaking in local dialect, were a unique contribution. Once again in the scandal of particularity, the uniqueness of a small very remote Cornish community, and its priest, Donald found a reflection of a larger and wider catholicity, and of a transfiguring grace that over and over again creates unique diagrams of God's glory.

"Love has a marvelous property of feeling in another." I began with these words from Traherne's *Centuries of Meditation* as capturing something of Donald Allchin's unique ability to enter into a whole range of Christian tradition and experience and to draw out from the deepest wells patterns of Christian truth, pointing to how all Christian churches and traditions need each other for the realization of that catholicity which is at their heart. And all this—Donald would be the first to say—is rooted and grounded in love, in the perichoretic communion of the love of the Divine Trinity. As Traherne goes on in the same passage from the *Centuries*: "Love can enjoy in another, as well as enjoy Him. Love is an infinite treasure to its object, and its object is so to it. God is Love, and you are His object,. You are created to be His Love, and He is yours. . . . In Him you inherit all things."[37]

In the late 1980s the Church of England was torn by tension and potential division over the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood, with implications for the creation of new barriers to Christian unity

36. Ibid., 15

37. Traherne, *Centuries of Meditation,* 1. sec. 52

and raising significant questions about why in the tradition the Christian ministerial priesthood and episcopate had been confined to men. Donald, together with Bishop Stephen Verney, approached Wendy Robinson (a Christian psychotherapist, who had moved from the Anglican to the Orthodox Church), and they agreed to take an initiative to gather together an inter-church group to explore the deeper issues. I was privileged to be part of that group (which met twelve times over three years,) and was grateful that in the end we were able to produce a reflective report on our meetings together, with the title (taken from William Blake) *A Fearful Symmetry? The Complentarity of Men and Women in Ministry.*[38] It sought to traverse two separate avenues of exploration—one on the mystery of masculine and feminine, and one on the mystery of priesthood. In a foreword commending our discussions, Bishop John V. Taylor, formerly Bishop of Winchester, wrote that it was "a model of what should have been taking place in every diocese . . . in place of the campaign approach to decision-making," and suggested that "it should be required reading in the Church of England."[39] I am sure we ought also to have had a third strand in all of this, on the mystery of the church, and how in a divided church decisions of such significance were rightly made. But Donald's contribution to those meetings was, as one might expect, significant, as was his initiative in bringing the group into being. The original intention was not to produce a report—but at the end of our meetings together we thought we might have something of worth to share with the church as a whole.

The character of the report does not allow individual contributions to be identified, but some of the conclusions are worth summarizing, as they are so clearly of a piece with the vision of the church which Donald had so long espoused. There is first the recognition that "the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate is part of a larger complex of questions involving the way in which women and men relate to one another and to God within the family of the Church."[40]

> The idea of complementarity has become very important for us, not only with reference to the relationships between men and women, but also with reference to the differing ways of approach which are necessary for any at all adequate appreciation of the truth. The light which comes from the mystery of the Holy Trinity,

38. Rowell, ed., *A Fearful Symmetry?* 1
39. Ibid., vii
40. Ibid.,.52

> in which total unity and complete diversity are reconciled and at one, is of endless significance for a renewed understanding and living of the mystery of unity and diversity within the family of the Church. Is it possible to envisage a form of ministry which, while giving full scope to the gifts of women, would yet retain a sense of the way in which the gifts of women and of men fulfill each other?[41]
>
> The process in which all the Churches together are involved is, we believe, one of discovering what is the will of God for the complementarity of men and women in the ministry of the Church. It may perhaps be a long time before the Churches can come to a common mind on the issue. The gift of unanimity may come randomly and unexpectedly. We observe that different Churches have different perceptions of this. A move which to some in the West seems slow and hesitant, to others in the East seems swift and unrehearsed. But we are confident that the willingness to search together for a common mind is something which God will bless and indeed already blesses.[42]
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> For Christians who long to be at one in Christ, to fail to be united on an issue of this importance is both painful and humbling. No one should underestimate the pain which the controversy causes. But we believe that the pain and the humbling may themselves become a way towards growth. It is through our blindness and weakness that God's grace—which always heals what is wounded and makes up what is lacking—can be at work bringing healing, light and new life to humankind and to all creation.[43]

In his *Golden Epistle,* Abbot William of St. Thierry, writing to the Carthusians of Mont Dieu, brings his letter to an end by speaking of the time when "the understanding of the thinker shall become the contemplation of the lover, and the sharp sight of the one who thinks shall become the bliss of the one who enjoys.'[44] The vision of Donald Allchin, which suffuses all of his writing, is of this glory and love imparted by God, a love and grace which does indeed have the "marvelous property of feeling in another," and which gave him the eyes to see and know the other in the ecumenism of time, of which in this chapter we have looked at in the Tractarians, the Wesleys, Nikolai Grundtvig, and Bernard Walke-but there were many, many others.

41. Ibid., 53
42. Ibid., 54
43. Ibid.
44. McCann, ed., *The Golden Epistle,* 103 (Cap. xvi)