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Holding Together: Catholic Evangelical Worship in the Spirit

In his 2004 Michael Vasey Memorial Lecture delivered at St. John's College, Durham, Christopher Cocksworth provides a vision of evangelical, cross-centred, gospel worship that is held together with catholic instincts about the ecclesial character of worship and charismatic experience of the dynamic of the Spirit in worship. In describing this pattern of the church's worship he discusses the role of anamnesis, catechesis, epiclesis and prolepsis and offers practical implications in relation to the place of Scripture, liturgy and the eucharist in our worship.

Introduction: A Catholic form of Evangelicalism in the Spirit.

I was converted to Christ at the age of twelve. From the age of about twenty I have been searching, instinctively at first, more consciously in later years, for a *Catholic form of Evangelicalism in the Spirit*. 'Catholic-Evangelicalism' – to some, I suspect, that is a dangerous oxymoron. 'Catholic' and 'Evangelical' are at best parallel and at worst conflicting versions of the Christian faith that compete for allegiance and demand a clear choice in favour of one over the other. For my part, I have come to believe that talk of Catholic-Evangelicalism is more tautologous than oxymoronic. To be a Catholic Christian one must be *for* the gospel (the *evangel*) and to be an Evangelical one must be *with* (*kata*) the whole of the church (the *holos*) (that is, one must be a *katholikos*). 'No gospel without the church; no church without the gospel' could be said to be the rallying cry of *Catholic-Evangelicalism*. According to Paul Avis' classic study of the Reformers' ecclesiology, they believed that 'where the gospel is found Christ is present, and where he is present the church must truly exist'.¹ This is an amplification of Ignatius' dictum from the second century, 'where Jesus Christ is, there is the universal (the catholic) church'.² When Jesus comes to us through the gospel he comes to us *with* his people to unite us with himself and *with* his people.

I contend that it is time for Evangelicals – and for Anglican Evangelicals in particular – to reclaim not just the name *Catholic* but its inheritance. In so doing we will stand with Thomas Cranmer and other Reformers who saw themselves as protesting for the evangelical truths of the catholic faith. We will join hands with many Puritans of the likes of William Perkins who described himself as a 'Reformed

1 P. Avis, *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers*, Marshall, Morgan and Scott, London 1981, p 3.

2 St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, 8.2.

Catholic'.³ We will join our hearts with those of John Wesley, George Whitefield, John Newton and other eighteenth-century Evangelical Revivalists who were committed to a 'catholic spirit'.⁴

As the title of this paper suggests, I am looking for a form of Evangelicalism that is not only self-consciously *catholic* but also *charismatic* – gifted by the Holy Spirit. In fact, strictly speaking this is another tautology. There is no church without the Spirit. Ignatius' Christological definition of the church needs to be held together with Irenaeus' pneumatological version, 'where the Spirit of God is, there is the church and all grace'.⁵ And of course there is no gospel without the Spirit. Christ and his gospel come to us by the Spirit.

Catholic Evangelical methodology extends our sights and sources across the church, historically and geographically. It requires us to attend to the originating and continuing work of the Spirit across the centuries and the continents. Although, of course, it carries us *into* the Medieval West and Reformation to discern the Spirit's work and words, Catholic Evangelical ecclesiology takes us *behind* the Medieval West and the Reformation to the charismatic ministries of, for example, Aidan and Cuthbert. It invites us *around* the Medieval West and the Reformation to the emphasis on the Spirit in the dogma and devotion of Eastern Orthodoxy. It leads us *on* from the Medieval West and the Reformation into the spiritual and theological experience of Pentecostalism in all its many and varied international forms. A leading Pentecostal scholar has said, wisely, 'The Spirit is the relational medium that makes possible the incarnational and paschal mysteries'.⁶ I regularly find that the traditional Protestant – Catholic stalemates begin to look very different when viewed through the lens of the Spirit. The Spirit, who relates us to the gospel of Christ and, in so doing, to the church of Christ, reconciles the co-inherent truths of theological methods that emphasise what the *Common Worship Calendar* (devised while Michael Vasey was a member of the Liturgical Commission) understands as the 'incarnational cycle' and the 'redemptive cycle'.⁷

Catholic Evangelical Worship in the Spirit: what is it?

In the light of these general comments about Catholic Evangelicalism in the Spirit, what may we say about Catholic-Evangelical Worship in the Spirit? What is evangelical practice of the church's worship – and what does it mean for this to be *in the Spirit*? I would like to make two overarching comments and then explore matters in greater detail.

Worshipping the God of the gospel

First, evangelical worship is worship of the God of the gospel. It is worship according to the gospel of Jesus the Messiah, the one whom God calls and sends

3 See William Perkins, *Reformed Catholic*, University of Cambridge, Cambridge 1598.

4 On Wesley, see his sermon, 'Catholic Spirit'; on Whitefield, see *George Whitefield's Journals*, Banner of Truth, Edinburgh 1960, p 234; on Newton, see various references in 'Memoirs of John Newton' in R. Cecil, *The Works of John Newton*, Thomas Nelson, Edinburgh 1844, pp 3-66.

5 Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 3.24.1.

6 Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2002, p 30.

7 On these cycles see, The Church of England, *The Christian Year: Calendar Lectionary and Collects*, CHP, London 1997.

to the world to fulfil the divine mission. Because the gospel comes to us by the Spirit for life in the messianic community of Christ, the church, it is necessarily catholic and charismatic. It pertains to and participates in the life of the whole Church, the whole Christ, head and body, in and by the Spirit. It is orientated simultaneously to the God who sends the Messiah, to the people who follow the Messiah and to the world to whom the Spirit, through the messianic community, seeks to make the Christ known.

Essentially, evangelical worship is living *before* the God of grace and living *for* others in the God of grace. It involves the whole of life but it includes all that Christians do 'when they come together'.⁸ Hence, although an Evangelical understanding of worship extends to the expansive experience of living a gospel life before the presence of God, it includes all that happens when Christians gather for intensive expressions of their life of love before God.⁹ Likewise, evangelical worship refuses to reduce these intensive moments of worship to the modes of exaltation and adoration – what might be called 'the sacrifice of praise' – still less to particular feelings of worship experienced by the emotions or the spirit in the giving of thanks and praise. Evangelical worship, worship according to the gospel, embraces all the ministries of the Spirit in which the Word of the gospel is heard and seen,¹⁰ celebrated and received, expressed, embodied and enacted: the reading and preaching of scripture; the gathering, praying, singing and dismissal of the people; initiation, reconciliation, healing, ordaining, marrying, burying etc.

Holding gospel, church and Spirit together

Second, Catholic Evangelical worship in the Spirit seeks to *hold together* gospel, church and Spirit. As I have hinted at earlier, gospel, church and Spirit have a perichoretic quality – each implies the other. The gospel generates the church in the power of the Spirit. The church communicates the gospel through the Spirit. More specifically, Catholic Evangelical worship in the Spirit will have the capacities to *hold together* that which the flawed history of Christian worship and spirituality has forced apart: word and sacrament, prophetic and mystical, personal and communal, simple and ceremonial, ordered and spontaneous, exaltation and edification.¹¹

Put this way it could sound as if I am simply advocating a form of ambassadorial ecumenism which, at best, attempts to listen to the experience of

8 See, for example, John 20:19; Acts 1:4, 4:23-31; 1 Cor. 11:20, 14:23; Heb. 10:25.

9 On the relationship between a life of worship and intensive expressions of worship in communal gatherings, it is interesting to compare Vaughan Roberts, *True Worship*, Authentic Lifestyle, Carlisle 2002 with Matt Redman, *Face Down*, Kingsway, Eastbourne 2004. Despite very different emphases, they each acknowledge both dimensions of worship. See also David Peterson's detailed study (on which Vaughan Roberts draws), *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*, Apollos-IVP, London 1992.

10 On the place of 'seeing the gospel' in evangelical worship, see Philip Seddon, *Gospel and Sacrament: Reclaiming a Holistic Evangelical Spirituality*, Cambridge, Grove Books 2004.

11 On the relationship between exaltation (a traditional charismatic – and catholic – emphasis) and edification (a traditional evangelical emphasis), it is worth noting (and observing) Canon B1.2 of the Church of England: 'It is the minister's responsibility to have a good understanding of the forms of service used and he shall endeavour to ensure that the worship offered glorifies God and edifies the people'.

others and, at worst, levels the dramatically distinct traditions of the Church's worship into a flat liturgical fenland of no interest to anyone. That dreadful prospect is far from my mind. Diversity is a hallmark of the Spirit's work and nowhere more so than in the church's worship. However, a commitment to hold together what humanity divides belongs to the heart of the gospel. It is central to the mission of God. It belongs to the core identity and activity of Jesus Christ in whom, according to Colossians 1, 'all things hold together' – heaven and earth, divinity and humanity, the life of God and the life of the church. He is the word and sacrament of God, the prophet and the mystic, the one who could pray alone and with others. He broke bread simply with his friends and rode ceremonially into Jerusalem. He learnt the prayers of home and synagogue and spoke to God with radical freedom. On the same occasion he could switch from ecstatic exaltation of God to sustained edification of his disciples. Fundamentally, the case for holding together gospel, church and Spirit in worship is the cause of Christ. Let us now turn to a more detailed exploration of the marks of this sort of worship: it is gracious and cross-centred worship, communal worship, and spiritual worship in love.

Gracious, cross-centred worship

The first mark of Catholic Evangelical worship in the Spirit I would like to consider is *grace*. Catholic Evangelical worship in the Spirit is *gracious*, full of grace, the 'grace of our Lord Jesus Christ'. The grace of the gospel is proclaimed and received, expressed and manifested in evangelical worship. Evangelically speaking, although the grace of God stretches across the whole action of God from creation to consummation, its defining centre is the cross of Christ. Jesus says to the Samaritan woman, 'the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as those to worship him' (John 4:23). The one whose life was a life of worship, and who would enable others to offer worship in spirit and truth, stood before the Samaritan woman. In this sense, the 'hour' had come. But John is clear that the time, the *kairos*, the 'hour' culminates on the cross. This would be the 'hour' of the Son's glorification through his perfect worship of the Father (John 17:1). It is as we believe in him 'lifted up' that we share in his eternal life of worship (John 3:14-15). That is saving faith.

The cross, the saving death of Jesus Christ, therefore, stands at the core of evangelical worship. God in Christ addresses the incapacity of Jewish, Samaritan, Greek and Roman worship – the inadequacy of the worship of all the nations – to deal with the enslavement of the human heart to evil, to acknowledge the depths of human rebellion against God and to perceive the true nature of God. Through the cross, evil is faced and faced down, sin is acknowledged and judged, human nature is reconstituted by radical obedience, and divine nature is revealed as holy, Triune love. All the sacrificial instincts of human worship are fulfilled in the sacrifice of the Son of God. All the mediatorial attempts of humankind are subsumed in the priesthood of Christ. Jesus the perfect sacrifice and Jesus the righteous priest, who offered himself to the Father 'by the eternal Spirit' (Heb. 9:14), is the one through whom we can approach the throne of grace. All of this means that gospel

worship is Trinitarian. We offer ourselves to the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

Because the cross is core to the gospel and, therefore, to evangelical worship, it also, by definition, lies at the heart of catholic worship. The Roman Catholic Catechism puts it this way: 'From the first community of Jerusalem until the Parousia, it is the same Paschal mystery that the Churches of God, faithful to the apostolic faith, celebrate in every place'.¹² This is a profound definition of worship. The churches of God, inspired by the Spirit from Pentecost to Parousia, celebrate the cross of Christ. In so doing, of course, our celebration will extend across all the mighty acts of God – remembering and rejoicing in the grace of God displayed in the ministry of Jesus, proved in the resurrection of Jesus, made known in the history of Israel, and confirmed in the life of the early and continuing Church. But at the still centre of it all stands the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died, the cross which demands our soul, our life, our all.

How do we remember and rejoice in the cross and all that surrounds it? An answer is found in the Byzantine liturgy. Repeatedly the deacon exhorts the congregation – 'Attend!'. During the reading of scripture, the singing of the anaphora and at various other moments when concentration may be lagging, the deacon calls the people to attend to the grace of the gospel. Worship is a focussed opportunity for attention to the gospel of grace through a structured process of *anamnesis*, *catechesis*, *epiclesis* and *prolepsis*.

Anamnesis and eucharistic worship

I should like to explore two of these Greek liturgical terms in this section and two in the third and final section. Anamnesis, a much debated term in liturgical circles, involves remembering. Evangelicals have been suspicious, rightly in my view, of catholic approaches to anamnesis which talk in terms of making past events present through some form of ritual process. Evangelical instincts about the historicity, the once-for-all-ness, of the saving events are correct. On the other hand, catholic instincts about the corporate liturgical character of Christian remembering and on the need to connect with the past in the present, are also rightly placed. Both emphases can be held together by Charles Wesley's description of the Spirit as the 'Remembrancer Divine'. We cannot remember the events of salvation by ourselves. It is impossible. We were not there. But the Spirit of God can recall the words and works of Christ in the life of the Church and allow us to share in the continuing corporate memory of the Church which reaches back to the event itself. Through the reading, hearing and preaching of scripture, and through the performance of the scriptural story in liturgical action, the Spirit, as the 'Divine Interpreter', to use another Wesleyan name, reconnects us with the events of Christ's life, death and resurrection and declares their meaning to us (John 16:14).

I will say more about performing the gospel in worship later. Here I simply want to underline how a pneumatological approach to anamnesis takes us through and beyond at least one of the dichotomies that appear to separate Catholic from Evangelical understandings of the eucharist. Evangelicals and Catholics have disagreed sharply over whether the focus of the eucharist is the humiliated body of

12 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Veritas, Dublin 1994, pp 273-4.

Christ, his past and crucified body, or Christ's glorified body, his present and risen body. However, viewed pneumatologically, this is an unnecessary divide. The Spirit, using the scriptural story, takes us to the death of Christ but the Spirit does not leave us there. In remembering the historical Christ we are carried to the present and eternal Lord and, through the Spirit – and by means of all that the Spirit uses for this purpose – our fellowship with the risen Christ is renewed and deepened. Here we come to the heart of evangelical worship. *Essentially, worship according to the gospel is the celebration of the presence of the crucified Lord who comes to us by the power of the Spirit to take us deeper into his risen life and further into his messianic mission.*

Practical implication: Catechesis and scripture in worship

I should like to draw this section (and each of the remaining sections) to a close by suggesting one practical implication of gospel-centred worship for contemporary Evangelical practice. Effective *anamnesis* requires *catechesis*, the second of my Greek liturgical terms. We need to hear about the events of our salvation which we recall in the liturgy and to be taught about their significance. Without careful scriptural teaching through the systematic reading of scripture, expository preaching of scripture, and scripturally based liturgy and hymnody, our memories will become disconnected from the corporate memory of the Church and either hit a blockage and then boredom, or wander into fantasy and then apostasy.

One would expect careful attention to the reading and preaching of scripture to be a given in evangelical worship. Sadly, in my experience, this is not always the case. Frankly, I have become tired of readings – often only one in a service – read badly, to a congregation that appears to have little expectation of being addressed by God's word, followed by a sermon that pays little more than lip service to the passage as it launches from it into a talk on a theme. Michael Vasey was passionate about the place of scripture in worship. He believed his commitment to the Revised Common Lectionary to be an expression of solidarity with the evangelical principles of the Reformers and their vision to restore systematic attention to scripture in liturgically coherent ways to the worship of the Church.¹³

In a creative application of the Reformers' principles by an adaptation of their practice, Michael fought hard for the adoption of open and closed lectionary seasons. These unite the church around common readings during the incarnational and paschal cycles, and allow congregations to use alternative lectionary material at other times during the year to serve their particular pastoral or missionary needs.

Hence, partly thanks to Michael, the liturgy of the Church of England provides Evangelicals with a systematic structure for the catechetical reading and preaching of scripture, both in terms of the provision of patterns of readings and in the freedom to depart from them in responsible ways.¹⁴ Unless we hear the gospel

13 See Michael Vasey, *Reading the Bible at the Eucharist*, Grove Worship Series 94, Grove Books, Bramcote 1986; Vasey, 'Scripture and Prayer: Enriching the Revised Roman Missal', *Liturgy* 19 (1994/95), pp 57-71 and his 'Scripture and Eucharist', in David R. Holeton (ed.), *Our Thanks and Praise: The Eucharist in Anglicanism Today*, Anglican Book Centre, Toronto 1998, pp 147-161.

14 For very helpful advice on preaching systematically through scripture using the patterns and provision of *Common Worship* see Philip Tovey, *Preaching a Sermon Series with Common Worship*, Grove Worship Series 178, Grove Books, Cambridge 2004.

through the whole of scripture, read and expounded to us, our worship will not be evangelical and our capacity to connect with the great events of our salvation, and to live the new life they make possible, will be seriously thwarted (2 Tim. 3: 16-17).

Communal worship

The second mark of Catholic Evangelical worship in the Spirit I would like to consider is its *communal* character. The ‘grace of our Lord Jesus Christ’ is brought to us by the ‘fellowship of the Holy Spirit’. The Spirit, as Calvin liked to say, is the ‘bond of connection’¹⁵ who unites us with Christ and with his people. The Spirit connects us with the ‘historical church’, the continuous embodiment of God’s covenant with humanity, stretching across the centuries of Jewish and Christian tradition. The Spirit connects us with the ‘geographical church’, the present manifestation of God’s work in Christ across all the continents and among all the traditions, including those with whom we gather in our bit of history and geography through the ‘local church’. The Spirit connects us with the ‘heavenly church’, those who have gone before us in the faith and who wait in the nearer presence of Christ for the coming of the kingdom’s fullness. The Spirit connects us with the ‘eschatological church’, the community of the redeemed which includes not only the saints on earth and in heaven but also those whom the Spirit will draw into the people of God through the ongoing messianic mission of Christ. This is the catholic breadth of the Spirit’s work in our worship, to connect us with all those to whom Christ is connected, to bring us into fellowship with, as Luther liked to say, ‘Christ and *all* his saints’.¹⁶

This sort of fellowship is formational. In fact, it is transformational. To be connected with Jesus Christ and to be connected with his people and his mission is to be changed. Christ re-formed human nature from self-centredness and transformed it into other-centredness. Jesus’ capacity to live *before* the God of grace and to live *for* others in the God of grace – his obedient life of worship – is formed in us through our relationship with him in the Spirit. The worship of the church provides a sustained system for intensive encounter with Christ so that his ‘worshipping self’¹⁷ can be formed in us. This is a process that happens on at least two interconnected levels – relational and educational.

Relationship and education: Christ and the creeds

The opportunities for relating to Jesus Christ in worship are myriad. Jesus meets us in the other worshippers, ministers to us through the various members of his body, speaks to us through the scriptures, reveals himself in the breaking of the bread, gives us words to pray to his Father, baptises us with the Spirit of God, invites us to call him Lord and sing his praise, anoints us with gifts of the Spirit, ministers healing, brings us mercy, forgiveness and love, and sends us out with his blessing

15 John Calvin, *Institutes*, Bk IV: XVII.19 (J.T. McNeil (ed.), *Calvin: Institutes of Christian Religion*, Vol.2, Library of Christian Classics Vol. XXI, SCM, London 1951).

16 Martin Luther, ‘The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body and Blood of

Christ, and the Brotherhoods’ 18, in T.F. Lull (ed.), *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 1989, p 255.

17 See further, David Ford, *Self and Salvation*, CUP, Cambridge 1999, especially chapter 4.

for his work. As we said earlier, at the heart of evangelical worship is the presence of Christ calling us into deeper communion with him so that we may be changed and so that he may change the world through us.

Relationships involve education. As we grow in understanding others, so our fellowship with them deepens. The disciples' fellowship with the risen Christ on the way to Emmaus grew in intensity as they learnt more about the necessity of his death through his words and discerned, in his familiar actions at a meal, the reality of his resurrection. Worship provides this sort of Emmaus education. It is a structured context for the proclamation and enactment of the gospel.

The creeds of the Church explicate the historical and theological basis of the gospel. They evolved as words for worship defining the identity and describing the activity of the God whom the church worships. Worship according to the gospel will habituate the followers of Christ in the doctrines of creation, redemption and consummation articulated in the creeds. This involves far more (though not less than) reciting the words of the creeds. It requires a systematic programme of proclamation and enactment through prophetic word and liturgical action. Symbol, sacrament, sound and silence (through which the activity of God is seen, touched and felt), the rhythm of the liturgical year and the discipline of the lectionary (through which the mighty acts of God are rehearsed and retold) are all as natural and as necessary to this project as faithful preaching and teaching in which the graciousness of God is expounded and explained.

This process of liturgical education in the creedal teaching of the church involves certain essentials of the gospel in order to maintain scripturally faithful worship. For example, it requires at least the following. First, a proper expression of the relationship between God and creation which preserves the ontological difference between the Creator and the created but which rejoices in God's blessing of and involvement in that which God creates by grace. Second, a presentation of the true dynamics of salvation which preserve the priority of God's grace and the giftedness of any response which humanity, helpless of itself, makes to God. Third, an understanding of the kingdom which honours its presence in heaven and on earth but looks and works for the fullness of its coming in the new heaven and new earth of God's future. It is not for nothing that orthodoxy means right praise. The law of prayer is the law of belief. Evangelical theology, gospel truth, is nurtured through the repeated celebration of the gospel in worship.

The educational dimension of worship leads to a personal encounter with the risen Christ because it does not just speak about the gospel, it *performs* the gospel. It provides access to the reality of the gospel – to the gracious presence of the risen Christ through the persons, words and actions of his people in the power of his Spirit. Truth is told. Forgiveness is offered. Peace is shared. We are welcomed to God's table. We are lifted to heaven. We sing *Alleluia!* and we cry *Maranatha!*

The liturgical experience of the gospel is a communal experience. It happens with others, through others. It educates us into the corporate reality of our salvation – that there is no gospel without the church; that we are not only bound to other members of Christ in the gospel – *we rely on them for the gospel*. Evangelical theology

is rightly sensitive to any suspicion of instrumentalism in the life of faith. History has proved the ease with which the freeness and directness of the gospel is tethered or tamed by ecclesiastical device, even within evangelical practice. However, scripture's theology of the communication of the gospel involves God's use of human and material instruments or means of grace – 'for how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him' (Rom.10:14). 1 Corinthians 12-14 spells out how we are dependent not only on the preacher but on each member of Christ's body for the ministry of the Spirit of God. The danger comes when we are tempted to turn the economy of God's grace into an economy of our power, when we take the instruments of divine choosing and make them instruments of human control, when the servants of God's gift become managers of God's favour. The line between a gospel-serving instrumentality and a gospel-denying instrumentalism is a thin one, but fear of the latter should not deter us from recognising and rejoicing in the former.

Practical implication: Spirit-led liturgy

I should like to end this section as I did the last by identifying one practical implication for contemporary evangelical worship. I propose a confident, grateful, Spirit-led use of the church's liturgy. I worry about the passing of the older generation of Evangelicals who, though they might have been the architects of all-age worship, or the trail-blazers of charismatic worship, knew their Prayer Books and could draw on deep wells of liturgical formation. I am concerned about those Evangelicals who have not kept up with *Common Worship* and some of the revolutionary principles by which Michael Vasey, among others, sought to renew the worship of the Church of England. I grieve the two (false) choices that seem to be on offer in so many of the places I visit: 'traditional churches' with a lifeless form of liturgical worship or 'modern' Evangelical churches with a reductionalist, liturgy-less form of worship. I long to see planners and presiders of worship so understanding the structures of worship that they can move freely within them. I crave to see the classic texts of worship, which the Spirit of truth has given to the church, resting in the hearts and minds of Evangelicals and rising to their lips in worship. I yearn for sustained periods of sung worship, glossolalia, prophecy, healing woven into the movement of liturgical worship by Spirit-led leaders. I hunger for the biblical symbols of the grace of the gospel – bread, wine, water, oil, light – to be received with prayer and thanksgiving and used faithfully and joyfully. I desire all the good things God has given to the church – the wisdom of the liturgical inheritance, the enlivenment of the Spirit, the powerful teaching of scripture – all serving the grace of the gospel and helping us to celebrate the presence of the risen Christ with his people.¹⁸

Spiritual Worship in Love

A third mark of Catholic Evangelical worship in the Spirit is that it is *spiritual* – it is of and in the Spirit. Through the 'fellowship of the Holy Spirit', we know 'the grace of

18 An interesting example of this approach to liturgical worship can be found in Robert Webber, *Planning Blended Worship*, Abingdon Press, Nashville 1998. See also his *Worship Old and New*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1994.

our Lord Jesus Christ', by which we experience the 'love of God'. *Because evangelical worship is a celebration of the presence of Christ and a performance of his gospel among his people, it is an experience of the loving of God with and through others.* Worship is a personal and communal experience of being loved by God and expressing love to God. Worship does not just refer to the reality of God's love in Christ, it is a realisation of the love of God for the world in the present experience of his people.

Epiclesis and worship

The dependence of the church's worship upon the activity of the Spirit is acknowledged in the *epiclesis*, the third of my Greek terms. Liturgically, *epiclesis* is much more than a formula within a eucharistic prayer. It is a recognition of the Church's need for that which William Law in the eighteenth century called the 'perpetual inspiration of the Spirit'.¹⁹ Evangelically, it is a confession of our inability to approach God in worship by our own power and goodness. It is a profession of trust in God's provision of power and holiness. It is a recognition that the Spirit is the leader of our liturgy.

Prolepsis and the kingdom

The Spirit's ministry in our worship is to lead us to the presence of Christ and to the kingdom that Christ brings, so that we may participate in the eschatological love of God for the world demonstrated on the cross. In this way worship is (using my final Greek term) a *prolepsis* – a foretelling of the kingdom of God, an anticipation of the fulfilment of God's purposes for the whole of creation. The Spirit, the *arrabon* (pledge), the *aparche* (first-fruit), yearns within us for the renewal of creation. The Spirit manifests the coming reign of God's love among us now as we do that for which we were created and redeemed and that which we shall enjoy for ever. Of course, worship in this age remains a *prolepsis* of the eschaton, not the eschaton itself. It is always marked by lament for what is not yet here and by desire for the completion of God's purposes and the fullness of Christ's presence. But it is a real 'taste', as the letter to the Hebrews puts it, of the 'powers of the age to come' (Heb. 6:5).

Although our experience of God in worship is a direct experience of God (it is brought to us by the Spirit *of God*) it is nonetheless mediated through the material means that God chooses to use. I have already noted how such *mediated immediacy* has always been acknowledged by evangelical theology: God works through the 'prophetic writing' (Rom 16:26) of scripture and through the anointed preachers of its truth. Here I simply want to recognise the sacramental character of the Spirit's work throughout all of our worship.

The sacramental Spirit

The Holy Spirit inspires our *exaltation* of God in worship by affecting our spirits and by providing ways for us to express our adoration. Both movements of the Spirit are mediated through the material. Even the intensification of Spirit-inspired

¹⁹ William Law, 'The Spirit of Love' in P.G. Stanwood, *William Law*, The Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press, New York 1978, pp 355-498 (at p 402).

praise through glossalalia involves the physicality of the human body. The Spirit of truth enables the *edification* of the worshipping community by ‘renewing the mind’ (Rom.12:2) through a series of embodied ministries by which we are built up in the truth (Eph. 4:15, 2 Tim. 2:15, Rom. 15:14). Even the dramatic in-breaking of God’s word through a prophetic word in worship is mediated through the prophet’s voice. The Spirit of hope *empowers* us through our worship to take our part in the missionary work of Christ by equipping us with all manner of spiritual gifts which are communicated in very material ways. Even the overwhelming power of God that may be experienced in prayer ministry involves the prayers – and often hands – of those who are ministering the love of God.

In each dimension of our worship, God’s own Spirit is the source of our worship. God, through the Spirit, gifts the members of Christ’s body to minister the grace of Christ. God, through the Spirit, takes the ordinary things of human life to communicate the extraordinary life of Christ. God, through the Spirit, plays what the Desert Fathers and Mothers called ‘the five-stringed harp’ of our senses to awaken us to the mercy of Christ.

Practical implication: Reclaiming the eucharist

An implication for the practice of evangelical worship that arises from the recognition of the sacramental ministry of the Spirit is the challenge to root the Lord’s Supper in the hearts and souls of Evangelical congregations. Martin Stringer has recently written an important study of the *Social History of Christian Worship*. In his analysis of worship in the New Testament era he identifies ‘the meal’ and ‘Spirit-filled worship’ as two discernible givens of early Christian worship. He concludes his book with the following passionate plea ‘that if these two could ever be successfully reunited then Christian worship would be launched again in a round of renewal’.²⁰ Here is a mandate for Catholic Evangelical worship in the Spirit.

It is a theological and spiritual travesty that the eucharist is sidelined in evangelical spirituality. It is the most scripturally attested action of Christian worship. We are commanded by Jesus Christ to do it and Evangelicals in every century testify to the *encounter* with the presence of the risen Christ that lies at the core of the eucharist. Here, as Handley Moule loved to say, we have ‘a personal interview with the Lord’.²¹ The breaking of bread is a *performance* of the gospel in the Church by the Spirit. The self-sending, self-sacrificing, self-sharing²² God of the gospel gives his beloved Son to us as we remember his death and receive his life. The communion of the body and blood of Christ is an *experience* of the loving of God in which we taste the future that God has for the world – a kingdom of reconciled humanity and transfigured creation.

The Spirit of God has used the eucharist throughout evangelical history to celebrate the presence of Christ, perform the gospel and convey the love of God. Listen to Thomas Cranmer, John Owen, Charles and John Wesley, George

20 Martin Stringer, *Social History of Christian Worship*, CUP, Cambridge, forthcoming in 2005.

21 See H.C.G. Moule, *The Pledges of His Love*, Seeley & Co., London 1907 and *At the Holy Communion*, Seeley & Co., London 1914.

22 ‘Self-sharing’ is a term borrowed from Rowan Williams. See *Resurrection*, Morehouse, Harrisburg, PA, 1994, p 108 and compare with David Ford’s similar notion of the ‘unlimited self-distribution of God’ in ‘Why Church?’, *SJT* 53 (2000), pp 50-71 (p 59).

Whitefield, John Newton, Charles Simeon, Edward Bickersteth and Handley Moule, to name only a few of the faithful witnesses.²³ They – and many others with them – would agree with Thomas Haweis, one of the leading figures of the Revival, that those who avoid the Lord's Supper 'confirm that they have no friendship for Christ'.²⁴ As Philip Seddon has argued powerfully and persuasively in his recent study,²⁵ it is time to reclaim a holistic evangelical spirituality by reuniting the sacramental word of grace with the preached word. For too long Evangelicals have been *apophatic* in their eucharistic theology – saying what it is not, in order to say (eventually) what it is – and *reductionalist* in their eucharistic practice – doing the eucharist in ways that imply that the real locus of God's activity is to be found elsewhere. Let us do what the Lord commands and the Spirit speaks through scripture. Let us proclaim the cross in speech and actions through all the ministries of the Spirit.

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23 For a fuller account of evangelical eucharistic history, see Christopher J. Cocksworth, *Evangelical Eucharistic Thought and Practice*, CUP, Cambridge 1993.

24 Thomas Haweis, *The Communicant's Spiritual Companion*, Samuel Swift, London 1812, p 27.

25 Seddon, *Gospel and Sacrament*.

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