

some are the risk-takers whilst others play it safe, some prefer their 'thinking' function while others work more with 'feelings', some are neurotic about details and accuracy whilst others are careless, slapdash and so laid back they're almost horizontal. Some are 'extrovert' and let their spirituality all hang out, whilst for others it is all much more internal and private. Some are 'right-wing', authoritarian and controlling while others are 'left-wing' and laissez-faire.

It is clearly nonsense to claim that every last charismatic is an extroverted, feelings-orientated manic-depressive: I find it fascinating that Anglican Renewal Ministries has appointed a new Director who is an introverted thinker with a terminal problem over feelings! But what is clear is that much of what we put down to theology is actually much more about psychology than we like to admit. My approach to things like truth, scripture and my own body will both come out of and lead me towards a particular way of seeing both this world and the spiritual realm, and I will tend to find like-minded kindred spirits in one particular branch of the Body of Christ, and so sign up, as it were, with their churchmanship and spirituality, not so much because it is more 'true' than any one else's, but because it feels more comfortable and right to me. However, this feeling of comfort, of being 'at home' with a particular position, can, and sadly often has, led to the labelling of others in different positions as 'wrong'. They might well be, of course: there is after all absolute truth and absolute error. But then again they might not be wrong, just different.

I could go on, but I hope you've got the gist of my argument. Most of the discussions and arguments about

worship between charismatics and conservatives are conducted on the level of whether or not we should raise our hands, speak in tongues, preach only expositively, fall over and laugh, and whether or not John Wimber has made any mistakes. But if there are much deeper differences in the way we see things within the two groups, it is not surprising that we so often fail to connect. So to argue about whether 'laughing in the Spirit' is biblical, for example, is a waste of time if we disagree about the whole nature of scripture and the way we should interpret it. The discussion needs to take place at a deeper level, and this article has, I hope suggested a few possibly fruitful areas for dialogue.

Deeper discussions are needed, but perhaps above all we need deeper trust. We can so easily fall into the trap of seeing those who are different as those who are subversive. The two sides need to see in one another groups of people who are, to use the famous phrase, 'Bible people and gospel people', each trying to work out what it means to worship in Spirit and in truth, and attempting to do so to the best of their abilities and to the greater glory of God. I don't raise hands in worship in order to upset conservatives, I do it to express my gratitude to God. If we could stop seeing one another's beliefs and behaviour as a slight on our own, we would be in a good place to begin the dialogue we so badly need.

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## Doctrine and Worship

COLIN BUCHANAN

Many synods or assemblies of churches throughout the world have a committee or board labelled 'Doctrine and Worship'. The coupling of the two subjects is not a mere convenience, a joining of two disparate tasks (as would be the creating of a Whitehall ministry of the Navy and the Environment); the phrase is rather an expression of the siamese-twin-status of the two subjects; that is, they are genuinely discernible as two entities and yet, because of common organs, are actually indivisible! It is my task here to address the relationship. It is beautifully encapsulated in some words of the apostle Paul:

Let the word of Christ have a rich indwelling among you, through your teaching and instructing one

another with all wisdom in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, as you sing to God with grace in your hearts (Col. 3:16).

If we gently scrutinize this verse, starting at the end and working back towards the beginning, we find this logical chain of thought:

(a) Conscious of being loved by God ['grace'] you sing together to God ['together' arises from the plural participle and from the context, where the readers are to 'instruct one another']

(b) As you sing these songs [to God], you are teaching and instructing each other in wisdom.

(c) The upshot will be a corporate and shared

experience of the 'word of Christ' being ministered to each other, in such a way that that word then indwells your corporate life — richly. [The 'word of Christ' may be the basic good news embodying and conveying the knowledge of Christ Jesus — or it may be the word from Christ, embodying and conveying his teaching.] Here we find our classic 'worship' situation — a corporate addressing of God in the presence of each other and addressing of each other in the presence of God. The New Testament words translated 'worship' refer very specifically to God-directed self-abasement and adoration, but the usual English-language usage is wider, and it corresponds more to the Greek phrase 'when you come together' (as, e.g., in 1 Cor. 11:18 or 14:26) — for the very quotation from Col. 3:16 above shows that the believers were not simply to be addressing God, but were to be thereby instructing each other as they addressed God. Similarly our own use of the word 'worship' refers (like 'come together') to a width of activities, including what we would now call word and sacrament, prayer and song, sharing meals, arranging poor relief and engaging in a 'holy kiss'. So we join together at an event we call 'worship' — and even study a subject we call 'worship' — implying by the term all that is the distinctive agenda of believers when they meet.

This Colossians passage well illustrates that — for, marvellously, singing to God and instructing each other are one and the same activity!\* We are singing our 'teaching' to each other, even whilst grammatically addressing God, and this, as I have suggested above, is parallel with singing which grammatically addresses the people around, but in fact is a hymn to God.

My purpose in quoting the Colossians 3 passage (closely matched by Ephesians 5:18–21) is not simply to draw attention to the multi-directionality of the communication, which, I infer, is at the core of the assembly's worship, but also to draw attention to the separate activities which the passage asserts to be happening all at the same time. It is as simple as this — the singing is 'to God', the instructing is instructing each other. The singing to God earmarks this as a 'worship' activity — but the process involves at the same time 'teaching' each other — and the Greek and Latin word-stems for the 'teach' word give us, in their respective languages, the cognate words for 'doctrine' (note the Latin verb '*doceo*', leading on to 'doctrine', 'doctor', etc.). To put it another way — that which we need to learn of the Christian faith (and, make no mistake, we do need to learn) will in the first instance come through our worship agenda. Our doctrine — to borrow a word — is eucharistical, i.e. expressed in prayer.

Good evangelicals may raise an eyebrow, for they had always thought they learnt from the scriptures direct — and some do. But the church, as a church, whether local or international, finds its corporate belief through

its activities when it meets. There is of course a great variety of these activities, and the source of such learning will sometimes be scripture in song, sometimes exposition, sometimes prepared or half-prepared texts scattered around the worship programme. And these are forming the corporate expression of the church, and as it prays, so it believes — and as it believes, so it prays. Scripture, of course, still has supreme authority — but the actual dynamics are that people, as they come to faith, are coming into a doctrinal stream throughout history sustained and fostered by the actual practice of worship. Few are converted by first of all bringing a blank enquiring mind to the Bible, by then finding faith in Christ, and by then, full of doctrine, going off to join in worship somewhere. A much more likely scenario is one where an initial quest of some sort leads through some human contact into attendance at worship — and then, ideally, a complex set of developments occur. Our enquirer is received with love by the believers, is drawn into the whole event of worship, within that event finds the good news in song as well as in sermon, encounters the living Christ in a growing way, and, once becoming a fully-committed disciple, starts to grapple with the Bible.

Let me illustrate this relationship of doctrine and worship from the history-encrusted Church of England. When I was first ordained three and a half decades ago, I subscribed to the doctrine of the Church of England in the following, fairly fearsome, form:

'I, [Colin Buchanan], do solemnly make the following declaration:

I assent to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, and to the Book of Common Prayer, and of the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons.

I believe the Doctrine of the Church of England as therein set forth to be agreeable to the Word of God, and in public prayer and administration of the Sacraments I will use the form in the said book prescribed and none other, except so far as shall be ordered by lawful authority.

The Declaration made today is slightly different, but still enshrines the notion that the doctrine of the particular church is to be found in part in its forms of worship — in the case above being 'set forth' in both formal doctrinal statements and liturgical forms, and then measured against the word of God.

The doctrinal nicety that *liturgical* forms will not usually reveal is the negative or warning notes — thus, for instance, the Thirty-Nine Articles give warning that sacraments received 'unworthily' (i.e. without the requisite repentance and faith) will not benefit the recipients nor convey the 'inward and invisible grace' which they signify. This is needed in the strictly doctrinal field, but is appalling in the liturgical one — thus, at the

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distribution of the bread and wine of communion, we say words like 'The body of Christ, which was given for you, keep you in eternal life', and that serenely assumes the recipients are believers. It would be, as I say, 'appalling' to write the conditions into the liturgical text and say 'The body of Christ, given for many, keep you in eternal life, unless you are hard-hearted or stiff-necked, in which case may it be for your condemnation'. That word may be true, but it is quite inappropriate — the liturgical forms, including the hymnody, must function virtually all the time on the assumption that they are being used by people to whom they appropriately apply. The principle can be easily tested. But severely doctrinal statements may well stand alongside or behind such forms in an interpretative role.

Far, far back in history, the theologians developed a maxim as follows: *Lex orandi, lex credendi*. This Latin tag meant, 'The way you pray is the way you believe'. Now 'the way you believe' is, in simplest terms, your doctrine, your theology. That is what the Declaration above enshrined — that if the people of England learn to worship *this* way, they will duly also believe this same way. The Church of England, of course, has been very committed to its prose forms — but in another denomination, as e.g. the Methodist Church, it might be its hymnbook which fulfilled that role. And the worship forms then begin to create a denominational identity, and, within the limits set out above, become a public statement of that denomination's doctrinal stance.

There have been times in history when 'the way you pray' has actually been determinative of a confessional stance. I often try to illustrate the relationship between scripture and tradition by asking people how they became Trinitarians. Quite often, the answers are hesitant and uncertain, but, by some cross-questioning, I tend to discover an analysis something like this: 'Well, I have been brainwashed by receiving a Trinitarian blessing at the end of worship service; and also by regularly hearing the baptismal formula; and also by saying the grace together; and there are also all those three verse hymns; and we have the chorus "Father, we adore you . . . Jesus . . . Spirit . . ."; and I suppose I now pray that way — so I suppose I have been indoctrinated, and Trinitarianism is my doctrine.' Tradition in worship forms passes on the faith (still under the judgement of scripture) and the individual of any generation is brought into that stream of faith. But, at the origins of the definition of the Trinity in the fourth century, the ways of worshipping were, it appears, determinative of the doctrine. When minds recoiled from the notion that Christ is God (though the Father also is God, yet there are not two gods, but one . . .), the people nevertheless recovered their nerve to state the paradoxical as doctrine, *because they were already worshipping Christ as God*. In the last analysis the

scripture must decide, but practice tipped the scales towards understanding scripture aright (just as, I suppose, I would want to suggest that practice in the Roman Catholic Church in relation to seeking the intercession, and even the mediation, of the Virgin Mary has tipped the scales towards understanding the scripture wrongly). The doctrine of the Trinity has been securely anchored in the worship patterns of the church on earth ever since those early centuries, and so (to return to my earlier question) it is the tradition of worship which has turned minds into believing Trinitarianly. Of course the scripture is still supreme — and serious students of scripture would indeed reckon that, with a detailed knowledge of scripture and a readiness to put the different parts together, the Trinity formula is far and away the most satisfactory way of stating the complex doctrine of God.

There has also been an exercise that happened the other way round. Since the first half of the eighteenth century until the present time there has been a tremendous output of hymnody — hymnody meant to be sung from the heart. Any creation of new forms of worship (including the rush of new lyrics and new prayer texts in the second half of the twentieth century) has had to keep an eye on the credal and confessional material of the church or churches in which it is to be used — and, because of the status of such forms, if new writing is incompatible with the doctrinal standard, it will have to be either scrapped or rewritten, lest it otherwise start to shift the doctrine of the particular church, simply through its sheer existence.

An excellent example of this genre is to be found in Charles Wesley's hymns, which are devotional in tone and address, but wonderfully doctrinal in content. At Christmas we sing:

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!  
Hail the incarnate Deity  
Pleased as man with man to dwell,  
Jesus our Immanuel.

There is, within the richness of adoration, a very precise scriptural content to such a hymn, and its employment sustains the orthodoxy of the singers as well as stirring their hearts — or, to be strictly accurate, it sustains the singers in the Christian life by stirring their hearts with thrilling orthodoxy. Even the technicalities of the conciliar definitions can be sung with poetry and emotion, as in:

Consubstantial, co-eternal.  
While unending ages run.

One fears that less critical exactness has fired more recent chorus-writers, and, for what my judgement is worth, to be asked to sing a decontextualized 'Peace is flowing like a river' is not far distant from the old cartoon CSSM chorus

I'm H-A-P-P-Y  
 I'm H-A-P-P-Y  
 I know I am, I'm sure I am  
 I'm H-A-P-P-Y.

So-called Christian songs which are simply about how we *feel* and lack all Christ-reference are going to damage our structure of belief, and it is arguable that a diet of choruses with minimal content, and of extemporary prayers with little or no more — let alone where there is a dearth of scripture reading and solid exposition — is likely to strand whole congregations on the rocks of subjective religious experience. And I notice that my friends who serve congregations which are reliant upon the chorus diet confess they are ill-provided at great feasts, and that suggests a thinness of doctrinal content also.

But then there is a question not only as to whether the doctrinal content of modern worship-song-writing is very thin; there is a question as whether the doctrinal content of modern Christian lives is not also very thin. And, if *that* is the case, is the one thinness connected to the other? And which is cause and which result?

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**Footnote**

\*I do not want to stay on the question of terminology, but I would suggest we should continue with the regular English use, and use 'worship' inclusively to cover the whole agenda. If we do not, we shall need another word for the whole event (a 'service'? or 'liturgy'? or even 'meeting'?). And the wide use may save us from the over-narrow use of the term to mean (in outward terms) the church singing modern songs, a use crisply illustrated by the cartoon, but oh-so-frequent, words, 'after this prayer, we will go into a time of worship'. There is also a further, literally esoteric, use of the word to mean a subjective experience ('after singing the chorus three times, I felt I was really worshipping' . . .), but that use will also muddle counsel.

# Worship and the Bible

MICHAEL VASEY

Many Christians today apply the term worship primarily to a period of extended corporate singing that often follows a recognizable emotional movement from exuberant praise through to an intimate mood associated with emotional release and a sense of openness to the divine power. An interesting study by James Steven notes the way in which certain passages in 1 Chronicles and the Psalms are sometimes taken into service to describe or justify this understanding of worship.<sup>1</sup> The recent tide of strong emotion released in Britain by the death of the Princess of Wales bears an intriguing relationship with this common understanding of worship; both have in common the release of a corporate emotion that is experienced as healing and the sense of an imperious self-authenticating authority.

This demanding form of worship can be responded to in a number of ways. Some may question whether it represents a genuine response to the good news of Jesus Christ or is simply emotional manipulation. However, similar charges can easily be levelled against good preaching or good liturgy in other Christian traditions. The evaluation of worship in any Christian tradition has to attend not only to the emotional and aesthetic experience but to its outworking in *agape*, justice and mission.<sup>2</sup>

Others make the criticism that this tradition of worship operates on a highly restricted emotional and doctrinal range. Significant modern voices point to the strong scriptural tradition of lament and ask where this major strand of the life of faith is to be found in the worshipping life of the church. It may be present in a subterranean way in the tradition of prayer ministry to individuals and it is interesting that the Church of England's Liturgical Commission proposals to resource such ministry, currently before the General Synod, begin to explore the use of lament psalms in public worship. The question of the doctrinal range of such songs is addressed elsewhere in this issue of *Evangel*.

A more fundamental challenge asks how such worship relates to the traditional structure and dynamics of worship as identified in the classic Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox traditions. These traditions have often been articulated in terms of Word and Sacrament. This formulation may falsely associate the cerebral exclusively with Word and the symbolic with Sacrament. It also risks obscuring that worship is simultaneously the activity of the Christian assembly and of the triune God. A more nuanced account appears in the recently adopted constitution of the British interchurch body the Joint Liturgical Group: