

If the first temptation had focused on the nature of humanity, what it is to be human; and the second on the nature of salvation, that there is only one God and only one way to him; the third temptation concerns the nature of grace, that God must always have the initiative.

Jesus was taken to a pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem, and invited by the devil to take part in what Giles Walter once described as a sort of spiritual bungee jumping: *‘ . . . throw yourself down from here, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,” and “on their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.” ’*

Now the issue, again, is not whether Jesus could have done this or not, but who would have been in the driving seat if he had done it? To put God to the test in this way would have been to take control of the relationship between them. That’s what verse 12 means: *‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’* It is true that if Jesus doubted that God would save him he might think he was trying to exercise faith rather than to test that faith out — but that is not the point at all. God is not on probation — neither his power nor his faithfulness needs to be tested.

Later on in the chapter, after Jesus preached in the synagogue at Nazareth we read: *‘When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.’* Have you ever heard of a lynching mob losing the person they have assembled to lynch?

There is no doubt that Jesus was absolutely safe in God’s hands. He knew that. That wasn’t the temptation at all. But he was also absolutely determined not to take the initiative away from God in their relationship.

As and when he chooses to, God shows his power to protect his servants. Grace is a God-initiative word. It’s about God choosing to do kind and merciful things to undeserving people like you and me. Try to take the

initiative away from God, and grace can no longer be the basis of our relationship with him. And Jesus would not command God to perform a miracle at his behest. He would not take charge of the relationship.

I wonder if some of us are trying to take charge of the relationship between us and God. It’s not confined to the non-Christian. I don’t know what the nature of your prayers are, day by day: whether you pray at all, or where those prayers centre. I don’t know what your world-view is like. I don’t know how you see your relationship with God. But ask yourself now who is in the driving seat of that relationship. Is it grace-centred? Or is it in one way or another me-centred? Beware!

I once heard a shrewd comment on the difference between the world-view of dogs and the world-view of cats. You will have to have kept a dog or a cat (preferably both, and preferably a Siamese cat) to fully understand the ‘insightfulness’ of this next remark. With a dog, you see him, give him plenty of affection, take him for walks; and he thinks, ‘This person must be a god.’ With a cat, however, you feed him, love him, care for him; and he thinks, ‘I must be a god.’ We must be dog-like, and not cat-like, in our faith.

There may be someone reading this who is saying, ‘You prove yourself to me God, and I’ll believe in you.’ You would be wiser to reverse those steps. We are always trying to take the initiative: to take centre stage.

As I conclude I want you to remember, we are here having a privileged glimpse provided for us, presumably by Jesus himself, of the titanic moral battle behind the universe. Notice what is at stake. Firstly the nature of humanity: what it is to be a human being. To be human is to live by more than bread. Secondly it is the nature of salvation: that there is only one God and there is only one way to him. And thirdly the nature of grace: that God must be in control from beginning to end of any relationship we can have with him.

And now a final little footnote, that we noticed in passing: that it is all there for us in his word!

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# Worship — What do we think we are doing?

MARK EAREY

There was a time when people chose the sort of church they attended according to time-honoured principles: doctrinal or church order considerations (for instance,

whether or not it is right to baptize infants), or family history (‘church’ or ‘chapel’).

All this has changed. No church leader can avoid

noticing this change. Shaking hands with a new worshipper he or she would once have been told, 'We are Baptists [or whatever] and have recently moved into the area'. People are now just as likely to choose a church according to its attitude to children and provision of children's work, or its style of worship and type of music and the minister will find newcomers saying, 'We're new to the area', (or, just as likely, 'we've been worshipping at St Peter's but we feel God is moving us on') 'and we're looking for something lively/more traditional/with biblical teaching/with good youth work . . .' (delete as applicable). I well remember leaving University with a check list from the Christian Union of things to look for in a new church, which covered all the areas deemed important (biblical preaching, welcoming, attitude house groups, etc) but which never mentioned anything about my responsibility to be part of a worshipping and serving community, whatever their style and whether I happened to 'fit in' or not. I can see the point of steering young Christians in the direction of a church where they will be helped to grow: it seems much more worrying when the same principle is applied to mature Christians.

### ***'Here we are — now entertain us'***

The reason for this change is not hard to discern: we live in a consumer culture (and, more significantly, an entertainment culture) and we all assume that we choose our place of worship in the same way we would choose a place to shop or to see a film — that is, we give it a try, and if we don't like it we try somewhere else. The Free churches are more used to this principle — they have been working with what are effectively eclectic congregations for centuries, while the Anglican and Roman Catholic denominations have tended to cling to a vision of worship which is based on the local 'parish', where those in a locality who are believers worship together — a vision which is rarely realized in practice, but which is still the governing way of thinking and structuring church life.

However, the last forty or so years have seen changes in the way this eclecticism works: so much so that it is now endemic among Anglicans and RCs as much as among Free Church Christians. One change is that the advent of mass car ownership has made it easier for all of us to 'shop around'. A second is that the basis of the decision has changed: nowadays it is much more likely to be about preferences regarding worship-style than it is to be about doctrine. This is the point at which we see how these cultural changes in society are affecting the way we think about what worship is. People today change denomination in the same way as they change their car: this, in turn, is changing the denominations themselves because any congregation today is likely to

contain ex-members of other denominations, who tend to ask the awkward 'why?' questions and to challenge denominational assumptions. They may well stay put and act as thorns in the side of the leaders over any number of doctrinal or church order matters — but ask them to put up with hymns instead of songs (or vice versa) or to have all age worship instead of communion (or vice versa) and they will be off, seeking solace at another worship centre. The most significant aspect of all of this is that though we may feel *sad* to lose a church member or a family to another church, none of us sees the basis of the decision as in the slightest bit *strange*. We think of worship in the same way as we approach everything else: it's about our rights rather than about our responsibilities.<sup>1</sup> I wait eagerly for the first reports from the USA about church leaders being sued for failing to provide the worship which is demanded by members of the congregation.

### ***What's on the menu?***

The result of all of this is both a divergence and a convergence. There is divergence in that churches are expected to 'provide' (interesting term) a menu of different and diverging worship styles and experiences: something traditional, something family friendly, something informal and 'free', perhaps something contemplative, with quiet Taizé or Iona chants, and in some cases something 'alternative' — all smoke machines, slide projectors and dance music.

At the same time there is convergence in that *all* churches, of whatever denomination, are coming under increasing pressure to provide *all* of this. The alternative is a polarisation: different churches for different styles. This seems like a good idea at first, but it brings its own problems. The principle of 'homogeneous units' (gather all the young people into a 'youth church' or 'youth congregation', similarly the young marrieds, the elderly, and so on) has proved to be effective for church growth, but it begs the question of what sort of church we are building. Churches which focus on the needs of a niche group can have problems of viability unless they quickly grow to be particularly large and successful. This is obvious in the case of those churches that get a reputation for catering mainly for the over-60s (where most members may be financially constrained and many will be frail), but it can equally be a problem for youth churches (where, again, the members may not have a lot of disposable income) and for churches which focus on families (where members may be at a time in their lives where not only is money tight, but energy and time for things beyond family and work is also restricted). This tendency either to become a niche church, or to develop niche congregations within one church usually uses the style of public worship as its key tool.

Is this divergence and convergence a good or bad thing? No-one seems to be sure. Certainly it's good to have variety in worship, but in niche worship there seems little scope for Christians to be challenged or enabled to consider other perspectives. The worship 'market' has so much variety that it is theoretically possible to find, somewhere geographically close, something which almost exactly matches our individual worship preferences. Who needs to learn to give and take, or to grow and develop, when we can simply find something that feels comfortable and settle down? And if we do not demonstrate in our worship the willingness to learn and to grow and to consider others before ourselves, then our worship has become completely disengaged from principles which are intrinsic to a proper understanding of what it means to follow Christ.

***We don't talk anymore!***

So, where will worship be in the next decade as we enter the new millennium? A lot will depend on which (if any) of the competing models of worship in this 'worship market' emerges as the dominant one. I mention models of worship because it seems that most of our divisions over different worship and music styles and our inability to listen to one another is to do with the fact that we are working with different understandings of what our task is. Battles between ministers and musicians, or between different musicians, or between the church deacons or church council and the minister, or between different factions in a congregation, seem to be an expected part of church life in all denominations. These battles seem to be about two groups of people who speak to each other but are unable to hear one another because a different language is being used. We have two options. We can agree to differ, to live and let live (as long as we don't have to live together), to 'still be friends' but not to try to understand each other. The result will be further divisions in the Christian church, this time over worship style. Alternatively we could learn to listen to each other, to attempt always to submit our preferences to the needs of others and to the word of God, and to look to long-term goals such as spiritual and doctrinal depth rather than the short-term issues of 'do I like this, does it help me, am I comfortable here?' It will already be clear that I believe we should take the latter course and that will involve our taking a step back to look at the different ways of understanding worship which are battling for our allegiance in the church today and to see what they may have to teach us.

***Models of worship***

**1. Worship as Duty**

It must be said that this is not exactly the most popular or common model of worship in the minds of modern worshippers, though it was a large part of the understanding of worship for previous generations. There has been a reaction against a rather heavy-handed approach to the duty of worship which was instilled into many Christians as children and then as adults, and which they have (quite rightly) rejected.

The Thanksgiving (or 'Eucharistic') Prayer in the Church of England service of Holy Communion speaks of praise and thanksgiving to God as 'our duty and our joy', and this reflects the Old Testament pattern for religious festivals. Such religious observances were a duty for the Israelites (in that there was no question of them choosing not to bother to attend or participate) and yet at the same time they were also an opportunity for joyful celebration and feasting.<sup>2</sup> However, 'joy' (or our pleasure) rather than duty, seems to be a far more common criteria today for evaluating worship and choosing a church. To our Christian ancestors this would have seemed bizarre. They were far more at home with the idea of worship as something which we owed to God simply because he is the Creator and we are his creatures. Worship was the natural way to relate to God. They worshipped, not because they felt like it, or thought that they needed to, or that it would help them cope with life, but simply because God was God, and they were not.

This is very much the pattern of the Old Testament teaching on worship, and particularly about sacrifice. Sacrifice is meant to cost the sacrificer something.<sup>3</sup> In secular terms this is something which, as a society, we have lost the ability to do. We give to charity, but for most of us this is something we contemplate only if we feel we will receive something in return. We want to be entertained, to have our heart strings tugged, before we will part with our cash. Comic Relief and Band Aid are classic examples of this.

Sacrifice, similarly, is also a model of worship with which we are not very comfortable. Particularly for evangelicals there is something about the language of sacrifice which makes us very uneasy unless it is referring solely to the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The self-offering of Jesus is indeed the ultimate fulfilment of the sacrifices of the Old Testament, and nothing that we can offer to God can add to that in terms of our salvation. But that does not make the category of sacrifice inapplicable to the response of our hearts and lives to God. All that we have comes from him (salvation and life itself) and we have nothing but that to offer back to him, but that does not mean that God is not interested in receiving such offerings.

Christians in the West need to discover again the idea

of worship as duty, not to make worship deliberately unenjoyable or restrictive, but in order to put the focus back where it belongs: on what God thinks about it, not what we think about it. And those few who still see worship primarily as duty may need help to see that 'duty' is not the *only* way to understand worship.

## 2. Worship as Intimate Encounter

Christians have always seen their times of worship as in some sense a focusing on the presence of Christ in their midst. Jesus himself promised that he would be present wherever and whenever even a few of his people gathered in his name,<sup>4</sup> and the church ever since has expected (and found) that this is true. This is not because Jesus is not with us when we are on our own, for surely he is, but because the Christian most truly discovers what it is to follow Jesus when in company with others. Christianity is essentially a 'team' event. We can practise on our own, our salvation comes to each of us individually, and God knows each of us by name: but to walk in the way of Christ is essentially to join a new family and work out one's salvation in the company of fellow-believers.<sup>5</sup>

In some parts of the church this focusing on the presence of Christ has come to be especially associated with the service of Holy Communion (and for some, particularly focused in the bread and wine themselves). Both Calvin and Cranmer looked for the believer to be specially united with Christ in that service — though not by Christ coming down to the altar by consecration of bread and wine, but by the believer being lifted to heaven where Christ dwells at the right hand side of the Father.

Evangelical Christians have tended to eschew the idea of Jesus' presence being experienced primarily in the Communion service, but rather expect his presence to be made known in the prayer meeting and in the exposition of Scripture, through which (by the Holy Spirit) Christ still speaks.

The Charismatic movement has brought a new sense of the presence of Christ, focused not in prayer, Word or Sacrament but in the act of praise and worship itself. The word 'worship' itself has been redefined to mean the intimate encounter of an individual with God. It is for this reason that many of the worship songs that have come out of this movement (particularly in the USA and from those churches associated with John Wimber and the Vineyard network — though not exclusively so) are unashamedly emotional and speak, with a candour which sometimes sounds inappropriate to British ears, of a close loving relationship with God.

However, this association of the presence of God with an impact on the emotions is not limited to the charismatic movement. The same desire and effect is evidenced in those who attend Cathedral evensong because of the sense of the peace or majesty of God

which they find there, or who flock to hear a particular preacher whose style particularly stirs them.

Much of this is a reaction against a sort of worship which seems dry and which distances God, but there are tremendous dangers in a view of worship which is so dependent on producing certain feelings as a way into God's presence. It subtly shifts the meaning of worship from being something which we offer to God, to something of God which we experience, and a place where we encounter him. There is a danger that encounter with God is then restricted to 'times of worship', and we fail to encounter him in other ways and at other times in our lives (such as at work or at home). At its worst, this leads to worship becoming an escape from reality, rather than the offering of our reality to God in order that he may transform it.

It is not surprising that those for whom this model is normative and who assume that it is for everyone else as well, find that when they try to discuss worship with someone who sees worship as a duty, what they hear is incomprehensible. It is not just that it sounds like a different sort of worship, it doesn't sound like worship at all!

## 3. Worship as Therapy

Healing has always been a key way of understanding what Christ does for us — he makes us whole. The very name 'Jesus' means 'God is salvation', and Jesus spent much of his ministry not only preaching about the kingdom but bringing God's rule into people's lives by healing them, forgiving them or casting out unclean spirits from them.

Healing is also an important part of western culture: we expect great things from the medical profession (far more than our great-grandparents would have dared to hope for) and when they are perceived to have let us down we are quick to blame them and we look around for alternative means of finding wholeness. We expect to live out our days and to be healthy for the majority of our lives, and when this is not the case we react with anger and resentment, rather than with resignation to the will of God, as previous generations would have done and as many of our contemporaries around the world still do.

Today we especially expect wholeness not only in our bodies but in our minds and emotions as well. This is largely due to the explosion of interest and knowledge in the field we know as psychology. Many are looking to worship experiences to bring them the emotional wholeness for which they long. They speak of worship which 'meets my needs', and if they don't find it they will go elsewhere in search of a church where their 'needs' are met.

This is not to say that worship is *never* a healing experience. Indeed, if to worship is to see God more rightly and to meet with him more closely (see above),

# WORSHIP • • • WORSHIP • • • WORSHIP

then we should expect that we will emerge from worship changed, until that day when we see Jesus as he is and are changed into his likeness.<sup>6</sup> As the old sermon illustration says, a church service is like a car service — if what comes out is the same as what went in then something has gone wrong.

However, to enter worship *expecting* healing, and to do so with healing as the prime motive for worship is to make worship itself a means to an end. Whenever we find ourselves using worship for some 'greater' purpose we are in great danger of using God rather than giving to him. This is the case not only when worship is seen as primarily therapeutic, but also when worship is designed to be purely evangelistic, or purely educational. Which brings us to the next model. . . .

## 4. Worship as Edification

This is the model most natural to evangelicals (John Leach has written elsewhere in this edition of *Evangel* on the emphasis of the conservative evangelical in worship compared with that of the charismatic).

I.H. Marshall, the New Testament scholar, wrote a very influential article entitled 'How far did the early Christians *worship* God?',<sup>7</sup> in which he contended that the first Christians met together not solely to worship in the sense in which we generally use the term, but to be edified and to build one another up. There is much truth in this, of course. The first Christians saw in Jesus the fulfilment of the Temple, of sacrifices and of priesthood — so what worship could there be? They saw worship as being the offering of the whole of their life to God,<sup>8</sup> living in obedience to his will: worship was not time out from daily life, it *was* daily life. The teaching of Jesus seems to back this up. He spoke of a new era in which worship would no longer be tied to particular places, but would be 'in spirit and in truth'.<sup>9</sup> This verse has often been misunderstood to mean that outward forms, words and actions are therefore no longer necessary (as if worship in spirit meant cerebral worship only). Jesus, however, probably meant something more like, 'you can't pin God down or keep him in a box' rather than implying that songs, psalms and prayers were no longer necessary. In fact, when asked to teach his own disciples how to pray, he chose to give them a form which was short and easy to remember, and which assumed a corporate setting ('Our Father' rather than 'My Father').

Much evangelical worship has chosen to focus on the 'truth' aspect, and tends to treat singing and prayer as mere preliminaries to the 'real' purpose of the gathering which is to hear the Scriptures expounded. Marshall's article, however, points to a three-way dynamic in the meetings of the early Christians: God to human; human to God; human to human. Worship therefore took its rightful place as one part of that dynamic, focusing the praise and adoration which were being offered to God.

Evangelicals have sometimes ignored this and made singing and prayer a mere warm-up act for the preaching. Indeed, the songs themselves are often viewed as primarily didactic, and hence there is dislike of songs which do not work in this way and which, from this perspective, are seen as merely 'shallow'.<sup>10</sup> Such an approach sounds God-centred (focused on hearing his word to us) but can become self-centred as the focus shifts to what I receive from the teaching (and therefore what I receive from the service).

The edification model is a useful corrective to a view of Christian gathering which is completely other-worldly and focused on what we have to offer God. However, on its own without the balance of human response to God in praise and adoration, it becomes earth-bound and cerebral, and can repress the proper emotional response of the human heart as praise and thanks of the human heart to God.

## 5. Worship as Ongoing Offering

Cathedrals are not really understood by evangelicals (even though many Anglican evangelicals find themselves in Cathedral jobs these days). Partly this is because Cathedrals are monuments to excess (notably in art, decoration and music), which modern evangelicals find hard to understand or to appreciate. Partly though it is because Cathedral worship can seem insincere: led by robed individuals with monotone voices chanting from a distance, seemingly oblivious to whether or not anyone is there; choirs lead the song worship and the congregation seems to be at worst a hindrance (spoiling the perfection of the choristers' voices) and at best a dispensable extra. Added to all that, the service may be taking place while curious tourists still huddle in front of huge marble tombstones, oblivious to the act of worship taking place. Daily worship usually takes place without the all-important sermon.

The incomprehension, and even distress, which most evangelicals feel in cathedral worship is once again largely to do with a clash of models. Cathedrals do not work on the individualistic assumptions of the local church. They base their worship on a different model, an inherently corporate model which sees the worship offered daily in cathedral services as just part of an ongoing offering of worship which is going on day and night the world over, and indeed beyond this world in the heavenly places.<sup>11</sup>

We thank thee that thy Church unsleeping,  
While earth rolls onward into light,  
Through all the world her watch is keeping,  
And rests not now by day or night.  
As o'er each continent and island  
The dawn leads on another day,  
The voice of prayer is never silent,  
Nor dies the strain of praise away.<sup>12</sup>

The focus of such worship is not the individual and the effect of the worship on that person, but God. Worship is offered for God's sake and for his pleasure, regardless of the impact on the human worshippers. Hence it does not matter overly if there is no congregation, for the task in hand is not the instruction of believers but the adoration of God, and that will be done to the best of the ability of clergy and choir present. Prayers are offered on behalf of the community, even if most of the community is absent.

To evangelical ears this can sound like the vain repetition which Jesus criticized.<sup>13</sup> However, such worship (which is, of course, not limited to cathedrals) is not repetition for its own sake, and it is not done out of a belief that God will be persuaded to act because of the number of words piled up (which is what Jesus was actually attacking). On the contrary, such a model of prayer springs from a very deep sense of the grace of God: that prayer is a gift which he has given, not a 'work' which we must struggle to do in order to be acceptable to him. It is an understanding of worship which is profoundly corporate, in which my individual prayer is just a part of the prayer and worship of all God's people. This is a very different understanding from that of the average evangelical church where the stress is on every act of worship engaging every individual fully. Instead the worshipper is part of something much bigger, and the act of worship doesn't depend on you as an individual: it is seen as efficacious and useful and glorifying to God whether you were concentrating throughout or not. It can be, of course, a way for people to hide and to avoid responsibility for personal engagement in worship and in the body of Christ, and that is its appeal to some, and its greatest danger. But it is a profoundly trinitarian model of worship because it takes seriously the teaching of St Paul, that prayer is an activity of God's Spirit working in and through our spirit, drawing us into the life of God himself, rather than something that we do to God.<sup>14</sup> It would be crazy for every local church to behave as if it were a cathedral, but there are insights from this way of understanding worship which we would all do well to ponder.

### Conclusion

Where is worship going in the next ten years? The answer seems to be that it is going in many different directions, not all of them easily compatible, and driven largely by a 'consumer-led' desire to keep or attract worshippers by meeting their perceived needs (or demands) in worship. It is not so much that it is wrong to be consumer-led, it is more that we may have failed to identify the key consumer — God. We worship for his pleasure, not ours.

It is the contention of this article that the understanding of worship in the church, and particularly in the evangelical world is in danger of becoming polarized. This is not just because some acknowledge the truth and others don't, nor because of differing preferences for worship style and practice, but because of a fundamental clash of models of what worship actually is — the 'what do we think we're doing question'. This means that we need not only to listen to what each other is saying, but also to hear what we are *not* saying, the unspoken assumptions that form our understanding and theology of what worship is all about. This will become increasingly important within local churches, between leaders, congregations and musicians, and it is important in the wider church scene as we teach and instruct others in what worship is.

The reason for this is not so that we can settle cosily into worship which we can enjoy, but so that we grow into the full stature of Christ, seeing the bigger picture and being enriched in our understanding of scripture by all who follow Christ as Lord.

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### Footnotes

1. In the Roman Catholic Church there is an organization known as the Latin Mass Society which is dedicated to restoring the pre-Vatican 2 Latin mass to a position of equality with the modern vernacular Catholic services. It has recently published a booklet in which it laments the way that the church as a whole has denied its people their 'right' to the Mass in Latin. What is disturbing is that a publication which, on the surface, is about a return to an era of deeper reverence and devotion should base its argument on disturbingly secular notions of 'rights'.

2. 1 Samuel 1:1-20 gives an example of a family going to worship and make sacrifice, yet being able to enjoy the food of the sacrifice themselves as part of the accompanying feast.

3. 2 Samuel 24:24 'How can I offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing?'

4. Matthew 18:20 'For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.'

5. Philippians 2:12

6. 1 John 3:2 'But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

7. Churchman Volume 99 Number 3 (1985), pp. 216ff.

8. Romans 12:1 'Therefore, . . . in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship'.

9. John 4:23f.

10. See John Leach, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, (Grove Worship Series, No. 132, 1995) for more on the way that different sorts of songs and hymns have different functions (and different musical roots) which makes it inappropriate to judge them on the basis of identical criteria.

11. Revelation 4:6–11 'Day and night they never stop saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty . . ."'

12. 'The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended', J. Ellerton (1826–93).

13. Matthew 6:5–15. Jesus is attacking those who sought to draw attention to themselves by ostentatious praying, and who thought that they could grab God's attention by similar means.

14. Romans 8:26f 'In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.'

# Scripture and Spirit in Worship

JOHN LEACH

Whether we like it or not, it looks as if Charismatic worship is here to stay, at least for a while longer. Many people do not like it, and much ink has been spilt over accusations of banality, heresy, emotionalism and manipulation. As is often the case in such controversies, it is the easiest thing in the world (for both sides) to set up Aunt Sallys only to knock them down, or simply to miss each other because we neither talk the same language nor share the same concerns. A friend of mine whilst in an Anglican parish in Yorkshire spent a careful evening explaining to several hopeful families all about the theology of baptism, the symbolism of the liturgy, the need for parental faith and the serious nature of the promises they were to make. Finishing his talk, he asked for any questions, to which one young mum said 'Do we 'ave to take t'baby's hat off?' Sadly much discussion between different groups of Christians is rather like that: we miss each other totally.

So is there a heart of charismatic worship, which differs from that of more conservative Christians? And are there differences of concern and emphasis which mean that the two sides don't really talk to each other? And as we look to the future of worship in the British church, are there issues about which we could usefully acknowledge our differences and begin discussions? I believe there are several.

Let us begin with the caricatures. In a nutshell charismatics are those who leave their brains in the umbrella stand when they come to worship and don't worry about the Bible as long as it feels good, while conservative evangelicals are those who don't believe in the Holy Spirit and leave their bodies, particularly their arms, outside when they come to church. At least we

now know who we're talking about, and we also know how ridiculous caricaturing can be. We now need to go further below the surface than this and discern what some of the issues may be which divide people over worship according to which of these two positions they tend to take? As we do so, let's remember that any use of titles is a lumping together of individuals who are somewhere near each other along a spectrum, not a neat description which pigeonholes people into one group or another. Within the terms 'charismatic' and 'conservative' there is a huge diversity, but for our purposes we'll carry on with the lumping: there is still a recognizable and identifiable problem which needs addressing.

## *Worship*

What is this thing called worship? Here may be found a fundamental difference between the two groups in question. For the charismatic, worship is primarily about relationship and intimacy. Our role in worship is to get as close as we can to God, so that we may 'feel his presence', 'hear his voice', 'touch his heart', and be generally blessed by him. What this actually means is that worship is to do with what I feel or experience of my relationship with God. For non-charismatics, on the other hand, the emphasis is on an intellectual knowledge of God rather than on a felt experience of him. The most important thing is that we have heard truth proclaimed and expounded, and have consciously taken on board new knowledge and insights. Thus the sermon and readings, which for the charismatic can be rather