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Creative Tensions in Baptist Worship

Christopher J. Ellis

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- *Chris Ellis, pastor of West Bridgford Baptist Church, Nottingham, was principal of Bristol Baptist College when he gave this Benjamin Henton Lecture to the Annual Meeting of the Baptist Historical Society on 20 May 2006*
 - *The liturgical theologian considers the tensions always present and helping to determine the nature of Baptist worship. He identifies these as relevance and identity, representation and participation, structure and freedom, expression and impression, being and becoming, in and out.*
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INTRODUCTION

I Christian worship has always been a part of my life and I am delighted to have been invited to address this subject. I have to confess, however, that I am not a professional historian. Trying to work on the theology of Baptist worship, I went to see in turn Roger Hayden and Morris West. I explained that I wanted to work on the theology of Baptist worship and I would like them to supply me with a reading list on its history. 'But there isn't anything!' they said, so the liturgical theologian had also to become the amateur historian.

I could not understand how so much could be written about the development of the Baptist movement, its organizational development and its theological controversies, without any significant attention being paid to the central event of church life – its worship. This silence seemed to imply that either this worship was pretty much the same in all periods and so not worthy of mention in an historical account, or else worship

was not as important as I thought it was. Of course, the amateur historian soon discovered another reason for the silence: historical writing is based on the piecing together of the evidence. Because it is notoriously difficult to find evidence of worship practices in a Free Church tradition, the history had not been written.¹ What I eventually wrote was far from a comprehensive account and I wonder whether an accurate and joined-up account can ever be written. But I believe there is sufficient to identify some trends and to enter a dialogue between our contemporary situation and the worship of our forebears.

‘Baptist Worship’ as a title is itself not without its ambiguities. Do we mean some kind of reality which we might, at least subconsciously, think of as normative or ‘proper’ Baptist worship, or do we mean the more descriptive ‘any worship undertaken by Baptists’? And which Baptists are we talking about anyway? Here are further tensions which we cannot evade. Nor should we, for what Baptists do, whether in worship or elsewhere, needs to be in continual dialogue with what we believe Baptists *ought* to do and that, in turn, must involve a dialogue with both church history and Christian theology. Identity involves memory as well as contemporary choices.

Yet choices have always appeared to be present, even though the historian and the contemporary pastor may want to emphasise the weight of cultural pressures. As I began to reflect on some contemporary trends I could see how those trends were prefigured in developing practices in earlier generations. Yet the more I reflected, the more it seemed to me that the language of trends and developments presented too linear a picture of worship and that underneath these developments there were certain recurring patterns worthy of exploration. These patterns I have identified as a series of bi-polar opposites: it is in the tension between these poles that we are called to struggle creatively in our worship.

Before we explore these polar fields of struggle, I make some preliminary remarks about method. As I have argued elsewhere,² I believe that the theological convictions of a community are embodied in their worship and that to study that worship is to gain insight into what that community values. This undergirds all I do in relation to worship, whether it is preparing worship resources, reflecting theologically on

what we do in worship or leading worship. The academic discipline which engages with this embodied theology is, not surprisingly, called 'liturgical theology' and its early inspiration came from the work of the Russian Orthodox émigré, Father Alexander Schmemmann.³

What I plan to do, then, is initiate a discussion which reflects upon the meaning of what has happened in Baptist worship now and in the past and relates our liturgical and historical reflections to pastoral, ecclesiological and other theological themes. So - *Gathering Struggles: Creative Tensions in Baptist Worship*. I have six areas of bi-polar tension which I believe offer some insights into the dynamics of worship amongst Baptists. They need to be seen in the light of our worship convictions and, like those convictions, they are not restricted to Baptist Christians but may well take particular forms amongst them.

1. RELEVANCE AND IDENTITY

In his book *Crucified God*, Jürgen Moltmann suggests that the church is called to live in the tension between two poles - relevance and identity - and that different circumstances will result in different responses to this challenge.⁴ This is a constant dialectic where the temptation is to embrace one pole at the expense of the other, yet both are required to ensure ecclesial health and faithfulness. If relevance becomes the dominant value, then church identity may be at risk which, in turn, will threaten its actual relevance. If identity is safeguarded at the cost of relevance, then even that identity is put at risk.

In certain periods, Baptists have appeared to be primarily concerned with their identity over and against other Christians and over and against the world. This is not a judgement so much as an observation and reflects a concern for the purity of the church, a concern which is likely to be near the forefront of attention for any ecclesial group with a gathered-church ecclesiology. Thus, in the opening chapter of *A History of the English Baptists*, A.C. Underwood remarks that in the sociological categories of Ernst Troeltsch, Baptists 'belong unmistakably' to the Sect-type rather than the Church-type of Christian community.⁵ The Reformation project of searching for a pure church was undertaken

through biblical exegesis, devotional challenge and church discipline in the ‘walled sheepfold and watered garden’ of the *First London Confession* of 1644.⁶

The clear boundary which such an ecclesiology draws around the circumference of the church, separates the community sharply from the wider world, and many visitors to Baptist worship may well have judged it esoteric, with its biblical metaphors, and far from exciting with its passive role for the congregation and long passages of speech by one or two voices. It might almost seem as if the pole of identity has attracted and captured Baptist churches but, nonetheless, struggle there has been.

The obvious place to begin to identify that struggle is in the emerging commitment to mission. Debate surrounds the movement which led to the stirrings in Northamptonshire. The work of Andrew Fuller has been seen as crucial in providing the theological foundation upon which the vocational commitment of William Carey to the great commission could be established and shared. However, the previous view of historians that Fuller needed to transform a High Calvinism which held Baptists in a mindset that was antipathetic to mission has been challenged by Roger Hayden in his doctoral dissertation now recently published.⁷ He argues persuasively that evangelical Calvinism can be traced back well into the seventeenth century, especially in the West of England, and that this tradition was particularly expressed and nurtured within the Bristol Academy. My primary concern here is not to debate whether Fullerism was a form of modified Calvinism or the flowering of a form which had existed for over a century. My concern is rather to see Hayden’s argument as a pointer to encourage us to look for such tensions, or contradictory evidence, from within the worship of the period.

Preaching is a good place to begin. The High Calvinists saw the offering of Christ as theologically suspect, a challenge to the sovereignty of God. On the other hand, Benjamin Keach, ‘regularly and effectively pleaded with his congregation to put their trust in Christ.’⁸ While it might be thought that as an ex-General Baptist he did not offer uncontaminated evidence, we should remember that *The First London Confession*, though a Calvinist document, presents the necessity of preaching the gospel to all people.⁹ In 1721, the congregation at the

funeral of Andrew Gifford senior, minister of the Pithay church in Bristol, was reminded that during his ministry, 'at the close of his sermon, which was generally the most excellent part, he would offer Christ to sinners, and invite them to embrace him as offered in the most affectionate and pathetic manner.'¹⁰

Each generation has envisaged worship where unbelievers are present. We may find evidence for this in, for example, the seventeenth and eighteenth-century General Baptist concern for not singing in a mixed congregation, and in the nineteenth-century references to the presence of unbelievers in what by then was called 'public worship', such as in the letter of 'an unworthy worshipper' in *The Freeman* in 1857.¹¹ The nineteenth and early twentieth-century practice of viewing the Sunday evening service as an evangelistic opportunity is a further example of a gathered church which planned and practised worship which would invite and include those who had not yet crossed the boundary into the community through baptism and church membership. A contemporary expression of this concern for relevance is the concern to be 'seeker sensitive' in worship. Here is a creative tension which remains unresolved and with which we are called to continue to struggle.

2. REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

In the few places where I found an attempt to offer historical perspectives on Baptist worship, I was surprised that the account of the worship of the Amsterdam congregation under Smyth and Helwys was given such prominence. I assume this was partly because the congregation had historical priority as the proto-General Baptist congregation, and partly because in the worship account there was unusually good and clear evidence of what took place. The worship was open and spontaneous, with several people preaching at length and not even the Bible being read in the service proper, only in the preceding preparation.¹² However, this spontaneous and egalitarian style did not seem to last very long amongst the General Baptists, and does not seem ever to have been a significant characteristic of Particular Baptist worship. Seventeenth-century association records suggest clear

leadership roles as churches ask advice on the selection and recognition of preachers, or who may or may not administer baptism.¹³ Certainly by the end of the century the unusual amalgamation of a General and a Particular congregation at the Barbican in London offers clear structure and designated roles: a leader of worship and a preacher.¹⁴ As far as can be deduced from the description in the church book, the only participatory opportunity for the congregation was a sung psalm at the end of the service.

This pattern of representative leadership soon dominated Baptist worship, with only one voice, that of the minister or preacher, being heard. In truth, two voices may have been normal in the eighteenth century and I do not know when the practice of a second person leading worship gave way to the preacher taking the whole service.¹⁵ While theology affirmed the priesthood of all believers, the body language of worship has seemed to deny the doctrine. It is only, I would judge, in the last fifty years, with the dual influence of the liturgical movement and charismatic renewal, that this has significantly changed. Now it is as common as not that visiting preachers will only be invited to preach and, indeed, the use of local people in the leading of worship has contributed to a reduced use of itinerant lay preachers.¹⁶

Yet struggle there remains between the poles of representative leadership and congregational participation. That participation has primarily found a voice through the increased use of congregational singing. This is where the worship trajectory through Particular Baptists is clearest and, of course, a contributory factor to the separation from the General Baptists of those who formed the New Connexion.¹⁷ Congregational participation increased in a denomination which had no prayer book and soon had a sufficiently formalized structure that open prayer was unusual.

Though quite varied practices are in evidence in the first half century of the Baptist movement, the second half of the seventeenth century suggests a picture of one sung psalm amongst Particular Baptists and only individual singing on the part of Generals. Benjamin Keach in the last quarter of the century introduced a hymn at communion and then, later at the end of each service. While persecution might have curtailed

an increase in the amount of singing, psalm singing still took place despite the dangers, probably because such singing was seen as obedience to a divine ordinance of praise.¹⁸ The eighteenth century saw one metrical psalm sung and a hymn sung congregationally as the norm and the nineteenth century saw an increase to three hymns, though one might be a psalm.¹⁹ It was probably late in the nineteenth century that the fourth hymn arrived to complete the 'hymn sandwich', which many Baptists in my lifetime have claimed was 'traditional Baptist worship'. It was ever thus. In contemporary Baptist worship congregational singing may well comprise fifty per cent of the service. My point is this: we should interpret this increasing proportion of singing in worship as the congregation finding its voice - evidence of the struggle between representation and participation.

This struggle will continue and I make two observations on it. First, those leading worship should reflect on the spirituality of leading worship - or representation. Leadership is for the sake of those being led and this should have an effect on the way leadership is exercised. The leader may well, on reflection, attempt to offer a leadership which enables participation, or which at least consults the members of the congregation so that genuine representation may take place.

Secondly, the late James White, American Methodist historian of worship, made a very helpful distinction between 'passive' participation in worship, in which members of the congregation hear or see someone else do something, and 'active' participation, which means 'people doing things themselves: praying, singing, shouting, dancing'.²⁰ Such a distinction does not place higher value on either passive or active participation but merely provides a helpful tool for nuancing our interpretation of what is happening. However, passive participation is not the same as passivity and the responsibility of the leader remains that of ensuring that genuine worship is enabled. Growing ecumenical contacts have encouraged and provided resources for greater variety in vocal congregational participation and in the last thirty years technology has played its part with duplicators, photocopiers, overhead projectors and now data projectors. Yet we must still acknowledge that, though hymn texts and responsive prayers are uttered by the congregation, they

are still usually and almost inevitably chosen by the leader. The struggle between representative voices uttering prayers on behalf of the congregation and the congregation having its own voice continues.

3. STRUCTURE AND FREEDOM

In liturgical theology, structure is considered to be a carrier of meaning. Schmemmann used the word *ordo* to refer to that pattern of liturgical components and their interrelationship which embodies what it is that the congregation believes. I have argued elsewhere²¹ the cautionary word that this will not happen in the same way for Free Churches. Yet we can see that, intentionally or unintentionally, the way in which a congregation organizes or a leader plans a particular service will tell us things about the priorities of that congregation and that leader.

Hughe and Anne Bromhead's letter of 1609, describing worship in the Amsterdam congregation, reported a service in which there was considerable spontaneity. Yet they described a pattern which we must assume was a regular pattern. In other words, they had liturgical structure even amidst the freedom, and such structures have remained in place to this day. The content of Baptist worship services are at the mercy of the leader, but there is hardly ever a service which has not been planned at all. Martin Stringer, in his ethnographic account of the worship of congregations from various denominations in Manchester in the 1980s, describes the worship of an independent charismatic congregation at a particular point in the development of charismatic renewal. The worship he describes is free-flowing, yet there is still a planned pattern to the worship.²²

However, the vast majority of Baptist churches today do not resemble this, except that some of the songs may be in common. Baptist Sunday worship will normally be planned. It may be badly or inadequately planned, but it will almost always be structured in advance. In turn, that structure will usually be a variant of only a handful of possible patterns:

1. *A service of interspersed hymns* usually known as 'the hymn sandwich' which dates from the late nineteenth century and is simply

a development of what went before but with more hymns. There seems to be little progression through the service but rather a bundle of things which need to happen. The one exception is the sermon where there is significance in placing it at the climax of the service.

2. *A service of word and response* in which a tripartite structure offers development from opening worship to reading and preaching the word to responding in commitment, intercession and offering. Here the priority will be meaningful development with the dynamics of praise, confession, proclamation, thanksgiving, petition and dedication being to the fore. Remember that we are only referring to structure and the media employed in such a service of word and response may be little different from the hymn sandwich. However, those who employ such a structure are more likely to use responsive material and liturgical resources from the wider church. They may also celebrate the Lord Supper more frequently.
3. *A service of worship sequence, preaching and ministry time.* Although often associated with the charismatic movement, this form of worship is far more widespread and is best seen as an example of the influences of the culture of renewal rather than of renewal itself. It takes various forms, but may be described as 'praise and worship' or as having 'a contemporary worship style'. It is the norm for many Baptist and other evangelical churches today and arguably the tripartite structure itself dates back through revivalism to Charles Finney and before him to the Kentucky camp meetings. It will usually employ what leaders perceive to be culturally relevant music, will be informal in tone and relational in its kerygmatic appeal.

I have not mentioned the Lord Supper in this outline of structures. There is an ecumenical debate about the centrality of the Eucharist and in that debate I would want to argue that such claims need to be qualified in Free Church worship. While our theology might say otherwise, our spirituality evident in our worship is more spirituality of the word than of the table. This means that, unlike more liturgical traditions, the structure of a Baptist communion service tends to be a modified service of the word - rather than a service of the word being a truncated service

of the supper.²³ The recent publication of *Gathering for Worship* has offered the model of a journey in which the congregation is gathered around the word and then sent back into the world, a model which I believe has much to commend it.²⁴

In the struggle between the poles of structure and freedom the perceived opposites will often be structure versus spontaneity. The challenge for the worship leader is to dig deeper and to enable free worship on the part of the congregation while ensuring that the freedom of some does not destroy the worship of others. A pessimist would say that there are two trajectories in contemporary Baptist worship, one leading to ecumenical cooperation and increased order in worship, and the other to an engagement with the songs of evangelicalism and renewal metamorphosed as 'praise and worship'. This later worship does not necessarily mean less order imposed by the leader but it does offer opportunity for greater outward, and often exuberant, participation by the congregation.

As we have seen with the issue of participation, data projectors and other media are making possible greater crossover between liturgical resources and pan-evangelical worship. Similarly, the use of ministers' manuals or resource books for worship leaders has an impact on the planning and leading of worship. Yet the key issue remains the same as it did in the seventeenth century. How can we worship in spirit and in truth? How can the words chosen by one person make possible the genuine, and therefore free, worship of others? To explore this further we must move to the next polarity.

4. EXPRESSION AND IMPRESSION

John Bunyan, in *I will pray with the Spirit and with understanding also*, reflected in Bedford jail on the nature of prayer and of true worship. While parts of the work are inevitably a stinging critique of liturgical worship in general, and *The Book of Common Prayer* in particular, it remains a classic of devotion which deserves to be far more widely known. Bunyan offers a definition of prayer:

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul

to God through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the holy Spirit, for such things as God hath promised, or, according to the Word, for the good of the Church, with submission, in Faith, to the Will of God.²⁵

This offers what I call an ‘expressive’ model of prayer in which, prompted by the Holy Spirit, prayer flows from the heart and results in spontaneous utterances. Bunyan seems to make no distinction between private prayer and public worship and this has remained a feature of evangelical spirituality with its emphasis on extempore prayer. In this view, the one praying is open to the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the prayer which is uttered is an expressing of that which is deeply felt and believed. The prayer comes outwards expressing that which is within.

In contrast to this, I have previously suggested a second model, that of ‘impressive’ prayer.²⁶ This is where something from outside, such as words written on a page or the spoken words of another person, impress on the worshipper and make possible their offering of prayer. Thus the term ‘impressive prayer’ is not prayer which astounds or impresses us by its eloquence or spiritual quality, but prayer made possible by external influences. Bunyan could attack Prayer Book worship, and we must remember that it was linked to the reason for his being in prison, but his claim that true prayer always comes from the heart cannot be sustained without further qualification. He might well stand in front of his congregation, open to the Spirit and uttering that which expresses what is in his heart, but what of his congregation? They are first of all hearers of his prayer and the impression it makes on them enables them in turn to pray. Thus Bunyan’s expressive prayer becomes impressive prayer for the congregation, and I suggest that this dynamic stimulation is little different from the relationship of the words of a written prayer to the one using it. We could ask, ‘What constitutes the prayer?’ Is it the word on the page, words on the lips, that offered by each individual or some corporate reality of unison spirituality in the congregation?

There is work to be done here, but for the moment we may note the struggle between the concern for sincerity in prayer and the pastoral need for people to be led in prayer. I believe this is best presented as a struggle between these two poles and different individuals, groups and

traditions will place themselves on different points between. One of the challenges for Free Church participants in charismatic renewal has been to experience the spirituality of liturgical traditions, such as those of Anglicans and Roman Catholics, as they engage with the freedom of the Spirit from within liturgical structures.²⁷

The increased use of visuals in evangelical worship is partly a reflection of an increasingly visual secular culture. But it is also a discovery of the creative possibilities of impressive media in enabling a deeper engagement in worship on the part of the congregation. Thus banners, icons, crosses and video clips are all examples of impressive worship. This may not be surprising when we remember the pragmatic nature of evangelicalism when it is seeking for relevance. This is simply a contemporary expression of Charles Finney's 'new measures' where, in a culture used to the validation of worship components as ordinances, new means are permitted to make possible the engagement of the worshipper with God.²⁸ Further, we might see this use of impressive media as a liturgical parallel to the rediscovering by evangelicals of the classic traditions of Christian spirituality. In this movement writers such as Richard Foster, John Houston and Eugene Peterson have had considerable influence.²⁹ But the breakthrough has been to enable evangelicals to see previously suspect methods of prayer as not a human attempt to manufacture spiritual experience but as a means of preparing the person for the work of the Spirit and the operation of divine grace. This means that the worshipper is open to being changed through the disciplines and practices of worship. This leads to our next polarity.

5. BEING AND BECOMING

A continuing theme in Baptist, and indeed evangelical, spirituality which finds expression in worship, its ordering and its practice, is the concern for sincerity. From the establishing of a believers' church, through the limiting of baptism to believers, to the concern of some to avoid 'promiscuous singing' where unbelievers join in hymn singing in a local congregation, the concern has been to avoid the sin of hypocrisy. In the 1845 Northamptonshire circular letter, Thomas Gough, commenting on

John 4:23f., declared, 'In every case, therefore, personal piety must be deemed an essential characteristic of a worshipper of Christ.'³⁰ This is an honourable tradition even if sometimes it is debased by fallacious arguments and questionable practices. So the argument against trained ministry or written sermons has claimed the importance of inspiration, while often assuming that such inspiration will only take place in the moment of delivery. Similarly, the contemporary adoption of a culture of informality seems to be based on an attempt at sincerity - as does a dogged persistence in a form of extempore prayer punctuated with innumerable 'Lords, 'justs' or 'woulds' - the evangelical subjunctive.

Yet the issue of sincerity is a complex one. 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief' is a prayer which all of us at different times will want to make our own. It is a particular kind of spiritual scrupulosity which argues that I can only pray words which I unreservedly mean when they are uttered. Contemporary worship leaders are beginning to discover the liturgical and pastoral value of lament³¹ and a renewed interest in the psalms in worship can encourage this exploration. We are often caught in the tension between what is and what will be, between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of God. In prayer we can question and interrogate almighty God, as well as fall silent in awe and wonder. We are called to become who we really are in Christ, and the image of journey can be a helpful one for framing the eschatological process of becoming, rather than accepting a static vision of truth and belief. Geoffrey Wainwright observes,

For the Christian community, meaning is in the making: life is oriented towards God's ultimate purpose... the most characteristic Christian rituals are therefore predominantly transformative in character, actions that signify divine grace coming to begin and continue the shaping of active recipients into the people God is calling them to become. Christian ritual is thus marked by eschatological tension.³²

There is renewed ecumenical interest in the formational nature of worship, where young Christians are shaped by the shared worship practices of the Christian community and where the community itself is shaped by continual engagement with the gospel and with scripture. In

very different contexts, David Stancliffe, Bishop of Salisbury, and Robert Webber, North American Evangelical, return to the catechumenate of the early centuries as inspiration for developing the formative and evangelistic potential of participation in Christian worship.³³

John Wesley was able to see communion as a converting ordinance, though as a clergyman in the Church of England he would have assumed the person to have been baptized. More generally, we may see participation in worship as something which has converting potential as well as formational value. Otherwise there would be little logic in preaching evangelistic sermons in Christian worship, though we should acknowledge the important way in which evangelistic preaching does address the whole church not only unbelievers.³⁴ In recent years I have observed a change in the way that those coming to faith view their first reception of Holy Communion. When I was baptized in 1962 I decided that I would not receive communion until after I was baptized and received into membership. This gave great meaning to my reception into church membership for it was also the first occasion when at the Lord's Supper I received bread and wine. During my ministry at Sheffield in the nineteen-nineties, it became the custom that people tended to receive communion first soon after coming to the point of a personal faith or when they had decided to seek baptism. This happened naturally in a congregation which was welcoming and in which people were becoming believers and where they were being encouraged to prepare for baptism over a period of time. I did not discourage the practice for it seemed to have its own integrity, though I acknowledge that it requires more theological reflection than is possible in this paper.

Sincerity and who you are, as well as eschatological untidiness and who you are called to be: these are deep theological themes as well as sensitive pastoral issues, and pastoral leaders and congregations will need to continue to struggle over matters of honesty and hope, of inclusion and good order. Some struggles arise from the interface of worship and the wider world as inclusive congregations renegotiate the nature of public worship and the transition from gathered to gathering church.³⁵ It is the relationship of church to world that provides the final

bipolar tension which I want to highlight.

6. IN AND OUT

It is well established that the conviction which led to the extant Baptist movement was a conviction about the nature of the church as a fellowship of believers,³⁶ the baptism of believers and the practice of immersion coming later.³⁷ Yet in the struggle between identity and relevance, this ecclesiology can result in a tendency to avoid the world rather than seek its transformation. Avoidance of the world can find liturgical expression in the failure to take our sinful humanity seriously by confessing our sins, by the absence of intercessions and the reduction of testimony to a stereotypical pietistic story rather than engagement with God in the realities of daily living. In particular, there is the danger of treating the church as the real centre of attention, when in fact it is the needs of the world which led to the incarnation and our redemption.

This struggle calls for a re-interpretation of discipleship in which daily living, family, society and workplace are seen as the arenas of faithfulness, and worship is seen as the place where we rehearse this faithfulness. Worship is then seen as the true north where bearings are found for the journey of faith. The journey itself occurs mainly outside the church and worship should equip the saints for the life and witness of the church as a dispersed people. There is a dichotomy between much Baptist worship and the world, a divorce which leaves the world secularized and the church ghettoized.

My own definition of worship sees this communal activity as both devotional and eschatological:

Christian worship is a gathering of the church in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit in order to meet God through Scripture, prayer, proclamation and sacraments and to seek God's Kingdom.³⁸

This worship engages with God but in doing so seeks God's will for the world. This may find expression in worship in various ways, not least confessions, intercessions, dedication and blessing. I mention two in

particular. First, preaching, as the announcing of good news and as the breaking open of God's word, should address the context in which the hearers are called to be faithful disciples and witnesses. Worldly preaching should make clear the connections between the worldly God, who is the creator and redeemer of the world, and the world which is in such need of hope and forgiveness. Secondly, the dismissal and blessing, at the close of the service, in turn offers a moment of transition where all that has been articulated in worship is turned to face the world and where the members of the congregation are commissioned and assured of God's presence wherever they go.

CONCLUSION

We have returned to where we began – the struggle between the poles of identity and relevance. This struggle is not primarily for the sake of the church but for the sake of the world for which Christ died. It is a struggle which will not end and it is a struggle which, if we are to be faithful to the gospel we cannot avoid. At stake is not only the life of the world, but the heart of the church and the integrity of its worship.

NOTES

- 1 The best available attempt at the time were the Free Church sections of the multivolume work of Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Watts and Wesley to Martineau, 1690-1900*, 1961; *Worship and Theology in England: The Ecumenical Century, 1900 to the Present*, 1965; *Worship and Theology in England: From Cranmer to Baxter and Fox, 1534 - 1690*, 1970, all published by Eerdmans, Grand Rapids MI & Cambridge; and *The Worship of the English Puritans*, London: Dacre Press, 1948. Even these magisterial volumes do not present a connected narrative of the development of Baptist worship.
- 2 C.J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition*, London: SCM, 2004.
- 3 See especially A. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1966; *For the Life of the World*, Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973; *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988; and T. Fisch, 'Schmemmann's Theological Contribution to the Liturgical Renewal of the Churches', in T. Fisch, *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann*,

- Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990, pp. 1-10. For liturgical theology, see also D.W. Fagerberg, *What is Liturgical Theology? A Study in Methodology*, Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992, A. Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1984 and K. Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*, Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1990.
- 4 J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, London: SCM, 1974 7-28, especially 25.
 - 5 A.C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1947 15ff.
 - 6 W.L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, Valley Forge PA: Judson Press, 1969 166.
 - 7 Presented to the University of Keele in 1991 and published as R. Hayden, *Continuity and Change: Evangelical Calvinism among eighteenth-century Baptist ministers trained at Bristol Academy, 1690-1791*, Chipping Norton: Baptist Historical Society, 2006.
 - 8 Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* London, 1986, 73.
 - 9 XXI, Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, p.162. Although clearly Calvinistic, 'That Christ Jesus by his death did bring forth salvation and reconciliation onely for the elect, which were those which the Father gave him', it nonethe-less continued, '& that the Gospel which is to be preached to all men as the ground of faith...'
 - 10 Quoted in Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, London, 1811-30, 2, 549.
 - 11 Letter published on 24 June 1857.
 - 12 See C.J. Ellis, *Gathering*, 46f.
 - 13 See B.R. White, *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660*, London: Baptist Historical Society, 1971, 25, and S.L. Copson, *Association Life of the Particular Baptists of Northern England 1699-1732*, Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1991, 95, respectively.
 - 14 See C.J. Ellis, *Gathering*, 39, 51f.
 - 15 It may be that as instrumental accompaniment and, especially from the middle of the nineteenth century the organ, replaced a precentor lining out or leading the singing that a second worship leader was deemed redundant. I would be interested to receive suggestions as to how and when this particular transition in worship took place.
 - 16 This may well have been a significant factor in the change of emphasis in the Baptist Union national organization for lay preachers and in the corresponding association bodies in the nineteen-nineties. The change was from primarily supporting the ministry of lay preachers to the wider support of lay ministries in general.
 - 17 See especially the exchange of pamphlets (1785-87) between Dan Taylor and Gilbert Boyce.
 - 18 The Association meeting at Bridgwater in February 1655 declared, 'that singing of psalms is an ordinance of Christ, to be performed in the Church of Christ by the saints'. See B.R. White, *Records* 58.
 - 19 Yet William Brock, minister of St Mary's Baptist Church, Norwich, and then first pastor of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church 1848-72, seemed normally to select only two hymns. See W. Brock, *The Behaviour Becoming the House of God*, Norwich: The Norfolk and Norwich Association of Baptist Churches, 1845, 13-15, and *Bloomsbury Chapel Year Book*, London: 1850.
 - 20 J.F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition*, Louisville

- KN: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989, 17.
- 21 *When the Ordo has Wheels*: an unpublished paper presented to the biennial conference of the Society for Liturgical Study 2004.
 - 22 He distinguishes between 'order' and 'sequence' in order to acknowledge a sense of patterning which allows for considerable spontaneity. M.D. Stringer, *On the Perception of Worship: The Ethnography of Worship in Four Christian Congregations in Manchester*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 1999, especially 141-144.
 - 23 See *When the Ordo has Wheels* and J.F. White, *Protestant Worship*, 14.
 - 24 *Gathering for Worship: Patterns and Prayers for the Community of Disciples*, Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2005 4-11.
 - 25 J. Bunyan, *I will Pray with the Spirit and with Understanding also*, Oxford University Press, 1663, 3, 235.
 - 26 C.J. Ellis, *Gathering*, 172.
 - 27 The Northumbria Community would be a good example of how evangelical spirituality has interacted with liturgical forms of worship: *Celtic Daily Prayer from the Northumbria Community*, London: Harper Collins, 2000. For a discursive discussion of the issues, see R.E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1999.
 - 28 C.G. Finney, *Revivals of Religion*, London: Morgan and Scott, 1835.
 - 29 R.J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980; R. J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992; J. Houston, *The Transforming Friendship*, Oxford: Lion, 1989; E. H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction*, Grand Rapids MI: Christianity Today and William B. Eerdmans, 1989. See also I. Stackhouse, *The Gospel-Driven Church: Retrieving Classical Ministries for Contemporary Revivalism*, Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004.
 - 30 T.T. Gough, *Christian Worship*, The Circular Letter from the Ministers and Messengers of the several Baptist Churches in the Northamptonshire Association assembled at Olney, 1845, 5.
 - 31 See W. Brueggemann, 'The Costly Loss of Lament' in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 36, 1986, and the relevant section in *Gathering for Worship*, 120.
 - 32 G. Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life - A Systematic Theology*, 1980, 121.
 - 33 See D. Stancliffe, *God's Pattern: Shaping our Worship, Ministry and Life*, London: SPCK, 2003, and R.E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*.
 - 34 For evangelistic preaching as a rehearsing of the Paschal Mystery, see C.J. Ellis, *Gathering*, 66.
 - 35 For the notion of 'gathering church', see K.G. Jones, *A Believing Church: Learning from some Contemporary Anabaptist and Baptist Perspectives*, Didcot: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1998, 38f, 64.
 - 36 E.A. Payne, Henry Cook and W.T. Whitley each argue this. E.A. Payne, *The Fellowship of Believers: Baptist Thought and Practice Yesterday and Today*, London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1952, 12; H. Cook, *What Baptists Stand For*, London: Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, 1947, 17; W.T. Whitley, *A History of British Baptists*, London: Kingsgate Press, 1923, 4.
 - 37 See C.J. Ellis, *Gathering*, 203.
 - 38 *Gathering for Worship*, xivf.