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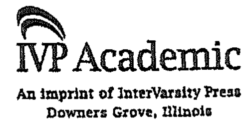
WORSHIP, COMMUNITY & THE TRIUNE GOD OF GRACE

JAMES B. TORRANCE



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Preface

It was a unique privilege to be invited to give the Didsbury Lectures in the Nazarene Theological College, Manchester, in November 1994, on the theology of worship. I have long thought and taught that the right road into Christian theology is taken by reflecting on Christian worship in the light of the Bible. The Bible is supremely a manual of worship, but too often it has been treated, particularly in Protestantism, as a manual of ethics, of moral values, of religious ideas, or even of sound doctrine. When we see that the worship and mission of the church are the gift of participating through the Holy Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father and the Son's mission from the Father to the world, that the unique center of the Bible is Jesus Christ, "the apostle and high priest whom we confess" (Heb 3:1), then the doctrines of the Trinity, the incarnation, the atonement, the ministry of the Spirit, Church and sacraments, our understanding of the kingdom, our anthropology and eschatology, all unfold from that center. If out of the confessional (kerygmatic) statements of the Bible

come doxological statements, Christian dogmatics unfolds from reflection on doxology. True theology is done in the presence of God in the midst of the worshiping community. The "two horizons" of the Bible and our contemporary church life fuse in worship, as at the Lord's Table, when we seek together in a life of communion to comprehend with the saints of all ages the triune love of God in Christ.

This is why it was a joy to offer these lectures in the Nazarene Theological College, which is such a warm-hearted, believing, worshiping community. The Wesleys sang their theology in their hymns:

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

True theology is theology that sings. Commenting on the words from Psalm 22:22 put into the lips of Jesus by the writer to the Hebrews, "I will sing your praise in the great congregation" (2:12), Calvin says: "Christ is the great choirmaster who tunes our hearts to sing God's praise."

These lectures seek to set out such an understanding of worship. They are not a study in liturgics—the how to worship—nor in the history of the shape of the liturgy, important as such disciplines are. They are based on the conviction that how we worship God must reflect who God is—the triune God of grace—and what he has done and is doing for us in Christ and by the Holy Spirit. As offered here, they are a slightly expanded form of the lectures I gave in Manchester, with an introduction and an appendix on human language for God. They incorporate material from lectures I have given in colleges and summer schools in different countries in recent years, some of which I have published in articles elsewhere: *The Forgotten*

Trinity in the British Council of Churches trilogy; on "The Place of Jesus Christ in Worship" in the *Church Service Society Annual* 1970, reprinted in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, ed. Ray S. Anderson, 1979, T & T Clark and Eerdmans, also in "Doctrine and Practice of Public Worship in the Reformed Churches," the Report of the Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1971; and on "The Vicarious Humanity of Christ" in *The Incarnation*, ed. T. F. Torrance, 1981, Handsel Press. I see these lectures as a call to the church to live out of her true center in Jesus Christ.

Introduction

The Place of Jesus Christ in Worship

GOD HAS MADE ALL CREATURES FOR HIS GLORY. WITHout knowing it, the lilies of the field in their beauty glorify God with a glory greater than that of Solomon, the sparrow on the housetop glorifies God, and the universe in its vastness and remoteness is the theater of God's glory. But God made men and women in his own image to be the priests of creation and to express on behalf of all creatures the praises of God, so that through human lips the heavens might declare the glory of God. When we, who know we are God's creatures, worship God together, we gather up the worship of all creation. Our chief end is to glorify God, and creation realizes its own creaturely glory in glorifying God through human lips.

But nature fails in its realization because of our human failure. Instead of singing songs of joy, the whole creation groans in universal travail, waiting for the fulfillment of God's purposes in human lives. Does God then abandon his purposes for humanity and for all his creatures? Does God leave all nature to be subject to vanity and futility—to be ruthlessly exploited and abused—and forget he has made us in his image for a life of communion and shared stewardship?

The good news is that God comes to us in Jesus to stand in for us and bring to fulfillment his purposes of worship and communion. Jesus comes to be the priest of creation to do for us, men and women, what we failed to do, to offer to the Father the worship and the praise we failed to offer, to glorify God by a life of perfect love and obedience, to be the one true servant of the Lord. In him and through him we are renewed by the Spirit in the image of God and in the worship of God in a life of shared communion. Jesus comes as our brother to be our great high priest, to carry on his loving heart the joys, the sorrows, the prayers, the conflicts of all his creatures, to reconcile all things to God, and to intercede for all nations as our eternal mediator and advocate. He comes to stand in for us in the presence of the Father, when in our failure and bewilderment we do not know how to pray as we ought to, or forget to pray altogether. By his Spirit he helps us in our infirmities.

As the head of all things, by whom and for whom all things were created, he makes us his body, and calls us to be a royal priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices. He calls us that we might be identified with him by the Spirit, not only in his communion with the Father, but also in his great priestly work and ministry of intercession, that our prayers on earth might be the echo of his prayers in heaven. Whatever else our worship is, it is our liturgical amen to the worship of Christ.

This is the "wonderful exchange" (***mirifica commutatio—admirabile commercium***) by which Christ takes what is ours (our broken lives and unworthy prayers), sanctifies them, offers them without spot or wrinkle to the Father, and gives them back to us, that we might "feed" upon him in thanksgiving. He takes our prayers and makes them his prayers, and he makes his prayers our prayers, and we know our prayers are heard "for Jesus' sake." This is life in the Spirit, worship understood in terms of *sola gratia*. This is the trinitarian nature of all true worship and communion.

Christian worship is, therefore, our participation through the Spirit in the Son's communion with the Father, in his vicarious life of worship and intercession. It is our response to our Father for all that he has done for us in Christ. It is our self-offering in body, mind and spirit, in response to the one true offering made for us in Christ, our response of gratitude (*eucharistia*) to God's grace (*charis*), our sharing by grace in the heavenly intercession of Christ. Therefore, anything we say about worship—the forms of worship, its practice and procedure—must be said in the light of him to whom it is a response. It must be said in the light of the gospel of grace. We must ask ourselves whether our forms of worship convey the gospel. Are they an appropriate response to the gospel? Do they help people to apprehend the worship and ministry of Christ as he draws us by the Spirit into a life of shared communion, or do they hinder? Do they make the real presence of Christ transparent in worship, or do they obscure it? To answer these questions, we have to look at the meaning, the content of worship, before we can decide whether our traditions and procedures are adequate. More profoundly, we have to consider our doctrine of God in worship. Is he the triune God of grace who has created us and redeemed us to participate freely in his life of communion and

in his concerns for the world or is he the contract-God who has to be conditioned into being gracious by what *we* do—by our religion? If our worship is to be intelligent, meaningful worship, offered joyfully in the freedom of the Spirit, we must look at the realities which inspire us and demand from us an intelligent, meaningful response. So the apostle says in Romans 12:1—after expounding the gospel of grace in the first eleven chapters—"With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers (and sisters), as an act of intelligent worship (*logike latreia*), to give him your bodies as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him" (J. B. Phillips).

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes our Lord as the *Leitourgos* (Heb 8:2), "the leader of our worship," "the minister of the real sanctuary which the Lord pitched and not man." As such the *leitourgia* of Jesus is contrasted with the *leitourgia* of men and women. This is the worship which God has provided for humanity, and which alone is acceptable to God. In Old Testament Israel, the priests sought to fulfill their God-given ordinances of worship (*dikaiōmata latreias*), but their worship only foreshadowed the true worship and self-offering of Christ on our behalf. "But now Christ has come . . . and offered himself without blemish to God, a spiritual and eternal sacrifice, and his blood will cleanse our conscience from the deadness of our former ways and fit us for the service (*latreuein*) of the living God" (Heb 9:11-15; 10:1-25). Our risen and ascended Lord is still "the high priest over the house of God," the minister of the sanctuary, the one true worshiper who leads us in our worship. The worship of Christ thus gathers up the worship of Israel, replaces it, and is the substance of all Christian worship. So Calvin expounded it at the time of the Reformation in the *Institutes* 2.9-11ff. and 4.14-17, and also in his commentary on the epistle to the Hebrews. At the heart

of his interpretation of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and of all worship, (1) Christ's baptism is our baptism—set forth in our water baptism—(2) Christ's sacrifice is our sacrifice—set forth at the table—and (3) Christ's worship is our worship—set forth in our worship and prayers. This is the heart of the Reformed doctrine of justification by grace, that Christ has become for us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that Christ's righteousness is our righteousness apprehended by faith.

It will be my concern in the following chapters to stress the need to recover this New Testament understanding of worship which recognizes that the real agent in all true worship is Jesus Christ. He is our great high priest and ascended Lord, the one true worshiper who unites us to himself by the Spirit in an act of memory and in a life of communion, as he lifts us up by word and sacrament into the very triune life of God. This is, therefore, not only the heart of our theology of the Lord's Supper but also of preaching. The Reformers spoke of the threefold office (*triplex munus*) of Christ as king, priest and prophet, and in these terms expounded not only the once and for all ministry of Christ, but also his continuing ministry. In our subsequent Protestant tradition we have stressed the continuing prophetic office of Christ in our very proper emphasis on preaching. We have also stressed the continuing kingship of Christ—"the crown rights of the Redeemer" as head over church and state—in confessing Jesus as Lord. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. But too often we have neglected the continuing priesthood of Christ, perhaps out of a negative reaction to rather Pelagian ways in which this has been interpreted in Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic theology. There a stress on the priesthood of the Church might be felt to obscure the sole priesthood of Christ and, therefore, the meaning of grace.

We can do the same with a one-sided stress on the priesthood of all (individual) believers. But it seems to me that we cannot have a true understanding of worship, prayer, baptism and the Lord's Supper without a New Testament understanding of the priesthood of Christ. It is he who calls the church into being as a royal priesthood to participate by grace in his continuing ministry, lifting us by the Spirit into the very triune life of God in wonderful communion.

Chapter One

Worship—Unitarian or Trinitarian?

AMONG THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES, THERE ARE MANY forms of worship deriving from different traditions—Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Pentecostal. And within these there are wide varieties. Today many churches and Christian groups are experimenting, wondering what are meaningful and relevant forms of worship in the context of a changing secular world. The urgent question therefore arises, How we are to evaluate these many forms? What makes worship Christian in whatever form it takes? What is the place of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in our worship and prayers to God our Father? As we reflect on the wide varieties of forms of worship among our Christian churches, it seems to me that, broadly speaking, we can discern two different views.[1]

Two Views of Worship

The unitarian view. Probably the most common and widespread view is that worship is something which we, religious people, do—mainly in church on Sunday. We go to church, we sing our psalms and hymns to God, we intercede for the world, we listen to the sermon (too often simply an exhortation), we offer our money, time and talents to God. No doubt we need God's grace to help us do it. We do it because Jesus taught us to do it and left us an example of how to do it. But worship is what *we* do before God.

In theological language, this means that the only priesthood is our priesthood, the only offering our offering, the only intercessions our intercessions.

Indeed this view of worship is in practice unitarian, has no doctrine of the mediator or sole priesthood of Christ, is human-centered, has no proper doctrine of the Holy Spirit, is too often non-sacramental, and can engender weariness. We sit in the pew watching the minister "doing his thing," exhorting us "to do our thing," until we go home thinking we have done our duty for another week! This kind of do-it-yourself-with-the-help-of-the-minister worship is what our forefathers would have called "legal worship" and not "evangelical worship"—what the ancient church would have called Arian or Pelagian and not truly catholic. It is not trinitarian. Bishop Lesslie Newbigin has commented that when the average Christian in this country hears the name of God, he or she does not think of the Trinity. After many years of missionary work in India among Eastern religions, he returned to find that much worship in the West is in practice, if not in theory, unitarian.

The trinitarian view. The second view of worship is that it is the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father. It means participating in union

with Christ, in what he has done for us once and for all, in his self-offering to the Father, in his life and death on the cross. It also means participating in what he is continuing to do for us in the presence of the Father and in his mission from the Father to the world. There is only one true Priest through whom and with whom we draw near to God our Father. There is only one Mediator between God and humanity. There is only one offering which is truly acceptable to God, and it is not ours. It is the offering by which he has sanctified for all time those who come to God by him (Heb 2:11; 10:10, 14). There is only one who can lead us into the presence of the Father by his sacrifice on the cross. This is why the Reformers, in their critique of certain medieval concepts of priesthood, stressed the sole priesthood of Christ, and reinterpreted the church as a royal priesthood participating in the priesthood of Christ. Is not the bread which we break our sharing in the body of Christ, and the cup which we bless our sharing in the blood of Christ? Our sonship and communion with the Father, are they not our sharing by the Spirit of adoption in his Sonship and communion with the Father? Our intercessions and mission to the world, are they not the gift of participating in the intercessions and mission of "the apostle and high priest whom we confess" (Heb 3:1)? Our baptism, is it not the gift of participating through water and the Spirit in the One Baptism, Christ's baptism for us in the waters of Jordan and in blood upon the cross, which alone washes away our sins? Is this not the meaning of life in the Spirit, of that important New Testament word *koinōnia*, which can be translated "communion," "fellowship," "sharing," "participation"? "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying,: "*Abba!* Father!" (Gal 4:6 RSV).

This view is trinitarian and incarnational. It takes seriously the New Testament teaching about the sole priesthood and

headship of Christ, his self-offering for us to the Father and our life in union with Christ through the Spirit, with a vision of the Church as the body of Christ. It is fundamentally sacramental, but in a way which enshrines the gospel of grace—that God our Father, in the gift of his Son and the gift of the Spirit, gives us what he demands—the worship of our hearts and minds. He lifts us up out of ourselves to participate in the very life and communion of the Godhead, that life of communion for which we were created. This is the heart of our theology of the Eucharist, of Holy Communion. So we are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit into the community, the one body of Christ, which confesses faith in the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and which worships the Father through the Son in the Spirit. We are baptized into a life of communion. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is the grammar of this participatory understanding of worship and prayer.

This view is both catholic and evangelical. Whereas the first view can be divisive, in that every church and denomination "does its own thing" and worships God in its own way, the second is unifying. It recognizes that there is only one way to come to the Father, namely through Christ in the communion of the Spirit, in the communion of saints, whatever outward form our worship may take. If the first way can engender weariness, this second way, the way of grace, releases joy and ecstasy. With inward peace we are lifted up by the Spirit into the presence of the Father, into a life of wonderful communion, into a life of praise and adoration in union with Christ. We know that the living Christ is in our midst, leading our worship, our prayers and our praises.

It was the concern of the Reformers to recover this New Testament and early Christian view of worship. The medieval

Church had tended to substitute the priesthood, the sacrifice, the merits, the intercession of the church—the vicarious humanity of the *ecclesia* (Mary and the saints)—for the vicarious humanity of Christ in a way which obscured the gospel of grace, the good news of what God has done for us in Christ. The Reformers saw clearly the significance of the Pauline teaching about justification—that we are freely accepted by God in Christ, not because of our "good works," but by God's grace received in faith. They also saw clearly that God does not accept us because we have offered worthy worship. In his love, he accepts us freely in the person of his beloved Son. It is he who in our name and on our behalf, in our humanity, has made the one offering to the Father which alone is acceptable to God for all humanity, for all nations, for all times. It is he who unites us with himself in the one body, in his communion with the Father and in his continuing intercessions. The real agent in worship, in a New Testament understanding, is Jesus Christ who leads us in our praises and prayers, "the one true minister of the sanctuary," the *leitourgos ton hagion*, (Heb 8:1, 2). He is the High Priest who, by his one offering of himself for us on the cross, now leads us into the Holy of Holies, the holy presence of the Father, in holy communion.

Whereas the unitarian view is in reality destructive of the sacraments, the trinitarian view sees the Lord's Supper as the supreme expression of all worship. It is the act in which the risen and ascended Lord meets us at his table, in the power of the Spirit, to bring his passion to our remembrance and to draw us to himself that we may share his communion with the Father and his intercessions for the world.

One of my famous predecessors in the University of Aberdeen during the seventeenth century was Professor Henry Scougal, the

author of the devotional classic *The Life of God in the Soul of Man.* This book had a profound influence on the rise of Methodism. George Whitfield, one of the founders of Methodism, tells us in his diary that it was the reading of this book which led to his conversion—the discovery that worship is not just something which we, religious people, do to please God, but that in worship Christ himself comes to live in our hearts by the Spirit and draws us into the very life of God. The title of the book might well have been "The life of humanity, lifted up into the very life of the triune God." John Wesley produced an edition of Scougal's work, which was studied in the Holy Club in Oxford. It is interesting to think that a Scottish Reformed Presbyterian theologian in Aberdeen had some influence on the rise of Methodism![2]

Three Theological Models Today

If this account of two views of worship in the church today is accurate, we must ask why we have drifted away from the trinitarian view of the great Greek Fathers for which the Reformers contended, into such a human-centered unitarian one. Could the dominance of the unitarian view of worship be one supreme reason why the doctrine of the Trinity has receded? If we take our eyes off Jesus Christ, the only one who can lead us by the Spirit into communion with the Father, do we not fall back on ourselves and our own religious efforts—with what Paul calls a false "confidence in the flesh" (Rom 10:3), that we can meet God's holy requirements, the ***dikaiōmata*** of the law?

Corresponding to these two different views of worship, we can discern three different contemporary theological models: the first avowedly unitarian, the second unitarian in tendency and practice, and only the third genuinely trinitarian.

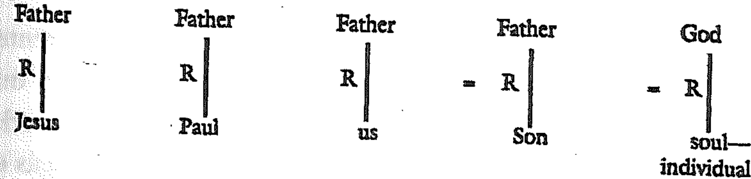


Figure 1. The Unitarian Model (Harnack, Hick—Liberal Protestantism)

Model 1: The Harnack (Hick) Model. The first model (see figure 1) is that of nineteenth-century Protestant liberalism, given classical expression by Adolf Harnack in his 1900 Berlin lectures *Das Wesen des Christentums*, or *What is Christianity?* Recently Professor John Hick has sought to revive it in an adapted form. According to this, the heart of religion is the soul's immediate relationship to God. What God the Father was to Old Testament Israel, he was to Jesus, and what he was to Jesus, he was to Paul and still is the same to us and all men and women today. We, with Jesus, stand as men and women, as brothers and sisters, worshiping the one Father but not worshiping any incarnate Son. Jesus is man but not God. We do not need any mediator, or "myth of God incarnate."

In Harnack's own words: "The Gospel, as Jesus proclaimed it, has to do with the Father only and not with the Son."[3] Jesus' purpose was to confront men and women with the Father, not with himself. He proclaimed the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of mankind, but not himself. "The Christian religion is something simple and sublime." It means "God and the soul, the soul and its God" and this, he says, must be kept "free from the intrusion of any alien element."[4] Nothing must come between the child and his heavenly Father, be it priest, or Bible, or law, or doctrine, or Jesus Christ himself! The major "alien element" which Harnack has in mind is belief in the incarnation, a doctrine which he regarded as emerging from the

hellenizing of the simple message of Jesus.

This view is clearly unitarian and individualistic. The center of everything is our immediate relationship with God, our present-day experience. The Father-Son relationship is generic, not unique. With this interpretation, all the great dogmas of the church disappear:

- The doctrine of the Trinity. We are all sons and daughters of God and the Spirit is the spirit of brotherly love.
- The incarnation. Jesus Christ is not "his only (*unicus*) Son, our Lord," but one of the class of creaturely sons of God. Sonship is not unique to Christ.
- The doctrines of the Spirit, union with Christ, the Church as the body of Christ and the sacraments. Jesus did not found a church. He proclaimed the kingdom of God as a fellowship of love.

This liberal reconstruction made deep inroads and accounts in measure for the moralistic view of Christianity—where Jesus is the teacher of ethical principles, and where the religious life is our attempt to follow the example of Jesus, living by the golden rule, "doing to others as you would be done by." With this moralistic, individualistic understanding of God and the Christian life, the doctrine of the Trinity loses its meaning, in fact disappears—and with it all doctrines of atonement and unconditional free grace, held out to us in Christ.

Model 2: The Existential, Present-day Experience Model. Here again faith means contemporary immediacy (see figure 2). God gives himself to us in grace in the present moment of encounter, and we respond in faith, in repentance and decision. The center is "God and me," today. But this response in faith is only made possible by the *work* of Christ on the cross.

According to this model, we are accepted by God as forgiven, as his children today, because of the death of Jesus on the cross

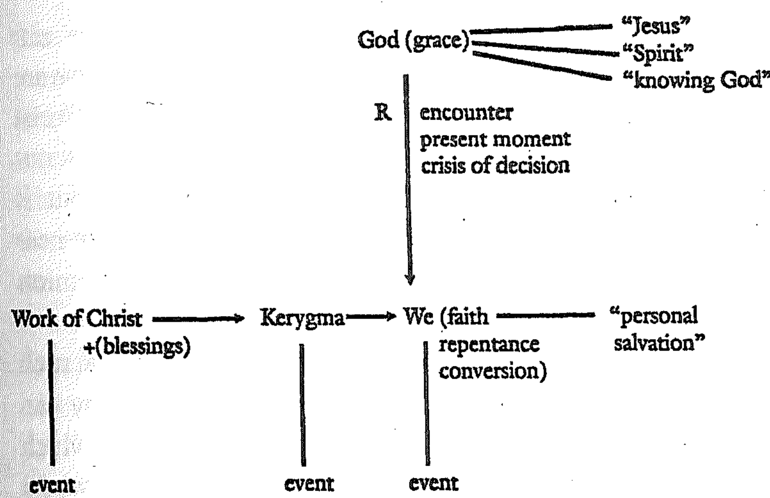


Figure 2. The Existential, Experience Model (early Barth, Bultmann, evangelical experience)

nineteen hundred years ago. The work of Jesus is instrumental in our present faith and experience of salvation. The event of the cross, through the event of preaching (the *kerygma*) gives rise to the event of faith. This can be interpreted in radical liberal (unitarian?) terms, as in Bultmann, or in more evangelical terms, as in the early Barth. For Bultmann, it is the event of the cross which through the *kerygma* gives rise to the self-understanding and authentic existence of faith. But this can apparently be asserted without any belief in the Trinity or the incarnation. For the early Barth, God in Christ, the living Word, meets us today in the crisis of decision, in the commitment of faith, on the ground of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. But this emphasis on the present moment of encounter can dehistoricize the gospel of the incarnation as Barth himself came to see, and as writers like D. M. Baillie in *God Was in Christ* were quick to show. Stressing the work of Christ at the expense of his person can reduce the gospel to "events"

with no ontology (separate act and being) and make our religious experience of grace central. As Bonhoeffer saw, we are then more interested in the blessings of Christ than Jesus Christ himself. It is a failure not to recognize that salvation is not simply through the work of Christ (*per Christum*), but is primarily given to us in his person (*in Christo*). We draw near to God our Father in and through Christ, in the communion of the Spirit.

Once again, as in moralistic approaches to the gospel, in such a "theology of experience," the doctrine of the Trinity can recede and be regarded as metaphysical speculation which cannot be verified by religious experience. At best it may be a way of describing in metaphorical language God's relationship to the world and our experience, not what he is eternally in himself. As such it is Sabellian, as in Schleiermacher, and in practice unitarian. Indeed the latent or explicit unitarianism of this approach is what gave rise to Sabellianism in the early church, and often again in nineteenth-century theology. I think we see this clearly in much Anglo-Saxon Christianity, both liberal and evangelical, in its preoccupation with individual religious experience, subjectively interpreted. We can, therefore, understand why Karl Barth in his *Church Dogmatics*, in his avowed concern to give central place to Jesus Christ, the incarnate Lord, and to interpret *Christus pro nobis* as prior to *Christus in nobis*, dealt with the doctrine of the Trinity in his *Prolegomena* (1932). We can also understand why Bonhoeffer in his *Christology* criticized the attempt to reconstruct theology from the starting point of "religious experience," as pioneered by Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Herrmann, Harnack and Bousset. He pleaded for following the biblical pattern of giving priority to the question of *who* over *what* and *how*—that we interpret the atonement and personal faith in terms of the incarnation

(the triune God of grace) and not the other way round. The pragmatic, problem-centered preoccupation with the question of *how* in our Western culture can so readily reduce the gospel to the category of means and ends. Bonhoeffer saw this in Ritschlian thought, and we see it often today in an over-concern for relevance. This culture Protestantism sees religion as the means to realize the ends of culture.

The existential model in its different forms seeks to do justice to *sola gratia, sola fide*, to "the form of the personal" (John Macmurray's phrase), but it is still too anthropologically centered. Although it stresses the God-humanward movement in Christ, the human-Godward movement is still ours! It emphasizes *our* faith, *our* decision, *our* response in an event theology which short-circuits the vicarious humanity of Christ and belittles union with Christ. For all that it may emphasize the vicarious work of Christ on the cross to bring forgiveness and make our faith a real human possibility, it fails to see the place of the high priesthood of Jesus Christ as the *leitourgos* (Heb 8:2). It is he who leads our worship, bears our sorrows on his heart and intercedes for us, presenting us to the Father in himself as God's dear children, and uniting us with himself in his life in the Spirit. To reduce worship to this two-dimensional thing—God and ourselves, today—is to imply that God throws us back upon ourselves to make our response. It ignores the fact that God has already provided for us that response which alone is acceptable to him—the offering made for the whole human race in the life, obedience and passion of Jesus Christ. But is this not to lose the comfort and the peace of the gospel, as well as the secret of true Christian prayer? The gift of sharing in the intercessions of Christ is that when we do not know how to pray as we ought, the Spirit makes intercession for us. Whatever else our faith is, it is a response to a response already

Figure 3. The Trinitarian, Incarnational Model (Nicaea, Calvin, McLeod Campbell, Barth)

made for us and continually being made for us in Christ, the pioneer of our faith.

Model 3: The Incarnational Trinitarian Model. This model (see figure 3) articulates the trinitarian view of worship—that worship is the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father. Indeed, we have suggested that the doctrine of the Trinity is the grammar of this view of worship and prayer.

At the center of the New Testament stands not our religious experience, not our faith or repentance or decision, however important these are, but a unique relationship (R1 on the diagram) between Jesus and the Father. Christ is presented to us as the Son living a life of union and communion with the Father in the Spirit, presenting himself in our humanity through the eternal Spirit to the Father on behalf of humankind. By his

Spirit he draws men and women to participate both in his life of worship and communion with the Father and in his mission from the Father to the world. "No one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Mt 11:27; Jn 1:18; 17:25-26). This unique relationship is described as one of mutual love, mutual self-giving, mutual testifying, mutual glorifying. Indeed there is a oneness of mind between the Father and the Son, revealed supremely in the cross, "to bring many sons to glory" (Heb 2:10), "that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal 4:5ff.)—that we might be drawn by the Spirit into that unique life of shared intimate communion. This is why Julian of Norwich could exclaim: "When I saw the Cross I saw the Trinity. . . . Where Jesus appears, the blessed Trinity is understood . . . The Trinity filled my heart full of the greatest joy, and I understood that it will be so in heaven without end."[5]

Likewise this unique relationship between Jesus and the Father is interpreted in terms of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is conceived by the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit, led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Through the eternal Spirit he offers himself to the Father on the cross and is raised from the dead by the Spirit. He receives the Spirit from the Father for us, vicariously, in his humanity, that out of his fullness he might baptize the church by the Spirit at Pentecost into a life of shared communion, mission, and service (R2 in the diagram).

A *twofold relationship* is thus established between the triune God and ourselves, through the Spirit. It is a relationship between God and humanity realized vicariously for us in Christ (R1), and at the same time a relationship between Christ and the church (R2), that we might participate by the Spirit in Jesus' communion with the Father in a life of intimate communion. In both, there is a bond of mutual love and mutual self-giv-

ing—of mutual "indwelling" (*perichōrēsis*, to use the word of the ancient church), of "perichoretic unity."

In virtue of this we can say with the apostle (1 Jn 1:13): "Truly our fellowship (*koinōnia*) is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." The early Fathers expressed this by saying that he who was the eternal Son of God by nature became Son of Man, our brother, that we "sons (children) of men" might become "sons (children) of God" by grace—in him and through union with him. Thus, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, "through Christ, we both have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Eph 2:18).

The patristic phrase "one in being (*homoousios*) with the Father," betokens here that communion with Jesus Christ is communion with God. Therefore, to participate by the Spirit in the incarnate Christ's communion with the Father is to participate in the eternal Son's communion—a relationship which is both *internal* to the Godhead and *externally* extended to us by grace, established between God and humanity in the incarnation. The prime purpose of the incarnation, in the love of God, is to lift us up into a life of communion, of participation in the very triune life of God. Conversely, using Henry Scougal's phrase, in our communion with God we experience "the life of God in the soul of man."

In this understanding of worship we can discern a double movement of grace—(a) a God-humanward movement, from (*ek*) the Father, through (*dia*) the Son, in (*en*) the Spirit, and (b) a human-Godward movement to the Father, through the Son in the Spirit. This double movement of grace, which is the heart of the "dialogue" between God and humanity in worship, is grounded in the very perichoretic being of God, and is fundamental for our understanding of the triune God's relationship with the world in creation, incarnation and sanctifica-

tion. What God is toward us in these relationships, he is in his innermost being.[6]

As we have seen, if the Father-Son relationship is not unique to Christ, but *generic* (as in the Harnack model where we are all sons and daughters of God), then all the great doctrines of our faith, the Trinity, incarnation, atonement, union with Christ, sacraments, etc. disappear. But conversely, if the Father-Son relationship given to us in Christ is ***unique and absolute***, then the very opposite happens. The Trinity, the incarnation, once-and-for-all atonement, the one mediator, union with Christ, church as body of Christ, baptism and the Lord's Supper all unfold, as the Nicene Fathers saw. Furthermore, each of these doctrines must be interpreted in trinitarian terms, as for example we see in Von Balthasar's *Credo*—his exposition of the Apostles' Creed.

I think we can see that these three models represent different kinds of churchmanship in most of our churches. Probably the experience model is the most widespread.

A few years ago when lecturing in California, I was asked by a student, "What is wrong with that model? That is me! I was converted two years ago and gave my life to Christ." I replied that, as I saw it, there was nothing wrong in it as a description of genuine evangelical experience. From New Testament times onward, whenever the cross of Christ has been faithfully preached by Paul, John Stott or Billy Graham, people have come to faith and conversion. But do not build your theology on it! For then so much can go wrong. For example, what happens to our understanding of the Lord's Supper in that model? It reduces it to being merely a memorial of the death of Christ. Luther, Calvin and Knox all vigorously rejected such an interpretation. Baptism then becomes an outward sign of my faith, my decision, my conversion, my dying and rising (my

subjective sanctification). But it is not my faith or my decision and conversion, my dying and rising which washes away my sins. It is Christ's vicarious baptism for us in blood on the cross, his death in which we, by grace, participate through water and the Spirit. Also the church, in this model, becomes simply the gathering of true believers with a common experience and less than a royal priesthood sharing in Christ's priesthood.

After one of my lectures in Seattle, an American Pentecostal minister, reflecting on the weakness of this model, said to me that for ten years he had been "whipping up" himself and his congregation to live out of their experience. He said: "I am weary and tired and have come to see that the center is all wrong. We feed upon Christ, the Bread of Life, not our own subjective experience." He resigned his ministry and came to Aberdeen to take a Ph.D., examining the trinitarian Christ-centered nature of authentic spirituality in the great saints of the church down through the ages. He described this discovery as his "conversion." More important than our experience of Christ is the Christ of our experience.

Our trinitarian model, as I see it, is a more authentic way of understanding genuine evangelical experience—experience grounded objectively in Jesus Christ, as in the evangelical hymns of Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts. In faith we look primarily away from ourselves to Jesus Christ, desiring to be found "in him," clothed with his righteousness (Phil 3:7-11).

In a remarkable way, much theology in the twentieth century has moved from model 1, through model 2, to model 3, to rediscover the centrality of the doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation. Beginning with Adolf Harnack's 1900 lectures—a unitarian quest for the historical Jesus—it has moved through the "dialectical theology" or "theology of crisis" of the 1920s under the influence of Kierkegaardian insights and triggered by

Karl Barth's early *Romans* (1919), to Barth's concern in his *Church Dogmatics* (from 1932) to ground theology on the Trinity and the incarnation, followed in different ways by Rahner and Von Balthasar in Roman Catholic theology, and by Moltmann, Jüngel, T. F. Torrance, Colin Gunton, John Zizioulas and many others.

In November 1983, the British Council of Churches (B.C.C.), representing all the main denominations in this country, set up a Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today, which met for five years. They came to the unanimous conclusion that we all need to recover the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity, and published three excellent booklets, each under the title of *The Forgotten Trinity*: (a) a report designed to be read by intelligent lay people, (b) a Bible study guide to be used in church study groups, and (c) a selection of papers on central trinitarian issues presented to the Commission.[7]

Why did the B.C.C. Commission feel so strongly that we must return to the great Christian doctrine of the Trinity? There were three main reasons:

1. We require a better doctrine of God. For too long, our concepts of God have been dominated by Plato, Aristotle, Stoic concepts of God as primarily the giver of natural law, the contract-God of Western jurisprudence who needs to be conditioned into being gracious by law being satisfied, static concepts of "substance," of God as an unmoved mover and an impassible first cause, etc. We need to recover a biblical understanding of God as the covenant God of grace, not a contract-God,[8] the God who has his loving Being-in-communion, and who has, in the freedom of his love, created us and redeemed us that we might find our true being in communion with him and one another.

2. We need to recover the doctrine of the Trinity for a better

understanding of worship—that all worship is the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father, a gift of grace. Christian worship is trinitarian in three main ways:

- We pray to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. In all the most ancient liturgies, prayer is primarily directed to God as Father—as in the Lord's Prayer.
- We pray to each of the three persons. We pray to the Father and to the Son ("even so come, Lord Jesus") and to the Holy Spirit (*Veni Creator Spiritus*) "who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified" (Nicene Creed). Here we see the significance of the Nicene "one in being" (*homoousios*). We only pray to one God, but we have a warrant in the New Testament and in the church's worship life to pray to each of the three persons. Only one who has "the being of God" (*ousia* of God) is creator, judge, redeemer, object of worship. The Nicene Fathers saw in the light of the New Testament, in their own experience in worship and in their debates with the Arians and semi-Arians, that these can be predicated to each of the three persons. Each has the *ousia* of God as creator, judge, redeemer, object of worship. Hence they coined the word *homoousios*, "one in being." Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three in their distinctiveness, but "one in being."
- We glorify the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit as when we sing the doxology at the end of the Psalms.

But fundamental to all three trinitarian forms of worship is the recognition that worship is the gift of grace. The Father has given to us the Son and the Spirit to draw us into a life of shared communion—of participating through the Spirit in the Son's communion with the Father—that we might be drawn in love into the very trinitarian life of God himself.

3. The B.C.C. Commission stressed that we need to recover

the doctrine of the Trinity for a better Christian anthropology—for a better understanding of the human person and community.

The Trinity and the Human Person

From the history of Christian thought, we can see that our doctrine of God reflects our understanding of humanity and, conversely, our understanding of the human being reflects our view of God. The counterpart of the rugged individualism of Western culture is the concept of a sovereign individual Monad "out there." The counterpart of the Protestant work ethic, as of much medieval Catholic piety, is the contract-God who rewards merit. The counterpart of Western concepts of the human person as an individual endowed with reason is a Stoic concept of God as the giver of natural law—engraved on the heart of the individual and discerned by the light of reason. The definition of Boethius (c. A.D. 480-525) which so influenced Western theology, *persona est individua substantia rationabilis naturae*, is historically a static concept of the individual as a substance possessing three faculties (reason, will and emotion), with primacy given to reason, which is identical in all individuals, governed by laws of non-contradiction and applied to all disciplines (be it the natural sciences, metaphysics or theology). Each individual has equal rights. Throughout, the dominating concept of God is, in practice at least, a unitarian one. God's primary purpose for humanity is legal, rational, individualistic. This concept of God and natural law—with the notions of "social contract," "contract of government," "contract of society"—was enormously influential in the rise of modern democracy.[9] The counterpart of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, the God who has his being in loving communion, is clearly very different. His primary purpose for humanity is filial,

not just judicial—we have been created by God to find our true being-in-communion, in sonship, in the mutual personal relationships of love. Here reason is understood, not statically or substantively, but dynamically and functionally, as the capacity of the whole person to respond to the other, of being true to the truth, of "being true to one another in love" (*alētheuontes en agapē:* Eph 4:15).[10]

What is needed today is a better understanding of the person not just as an individual but as someone who finds his or her true being in communion with God and with others, the counterpart of a trinitarian doctrine of God. The God of the New Testament is the God who has his true being as the Father of the Son, and as the Son of the Father in the Spirit. God is love and has his true being in communion, in the mutual indwelling of Father, Son and Holy Spirit—*perichōrēsis,* the patristic word. This is the God who has created us male and female in his image to find our true humanity in perichoretic unity with him and one another, and who renews us in his image in Christ. Jesus said: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you, so ought you to love one another" (Jn 15:9-13).

There is established for us in the gospel a threefold relation of communion, mutual indwelling, perichoretic unity: (a) between Jesus and the Father in the Spirit, into which we are drawn to participate (R1 in figure 3), (b) between Christ and his body in the communion of the Spirit (as in the Eucharist) (R2) and (c) between the members of the body by life in the Spirit (as in marriage, Eph 5:25-33) (R3). This is what Karl Barth has called "the analogy of relation," on which he sought to ground a theological anthropology of co-humanity (*Mitmenschlichkeit*) on the Trinity. As God has loved us and accepted us freely and unconditionally in Christ, so we must love and accept one another freely and unconditionally in him.

As in worship, so also in our personal relationships with one another, we are given the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father, in the trinitarian life of God. This means that perhaps we are never more truly human than at the Lord's Table, when Christ draws us into his life of communion with the Father and into communion with one another. God's purpose in Christ is "to create in himself a single new humanity" (Eph 2:15) to fulfill the purposes of creation and establish his kingdom.

In our modern world, in the tradition of Boethius and the Enlightenment, we usually equate the concept of "the person" with that of "the individual." But in a Christian understanding this is a mistake. Just as the words "father," "mother," "husband," "wife," "brother," "sister" are relational terms, so with the word "person." The human person is someone who finds his or her true being in relation, in love, in communion. For too long, Western theology has been dominated by a substance ontology of individuals with attributes in our interpretation of God, Jesus and ourselves as human beings. We need to recover, in the manner of the great Greek Fathers, Athanasius and the Cappadocian divines, a relational ontology to have a better doctrine of God and human personhood. John Zizioulas has argued strongly for this in his *Being as Communion.*[11]

This is a matter of great urgency in our culture where we witness, for example, the breakup of so many marriages. We have too one-sidedly interpreted the individual as someone with rights, duties (Thomas Jefferson), as the thinking self (Descartes), as endowed with reason (Boethius), as a self-legislating autonomous ego (Kant), as motivated by a work ethic, as someone with physical, economic, social, emotional, sexual and cultural needs. Two such individuals can legally contract together in marriage, but soon find their marriage on the rocks,

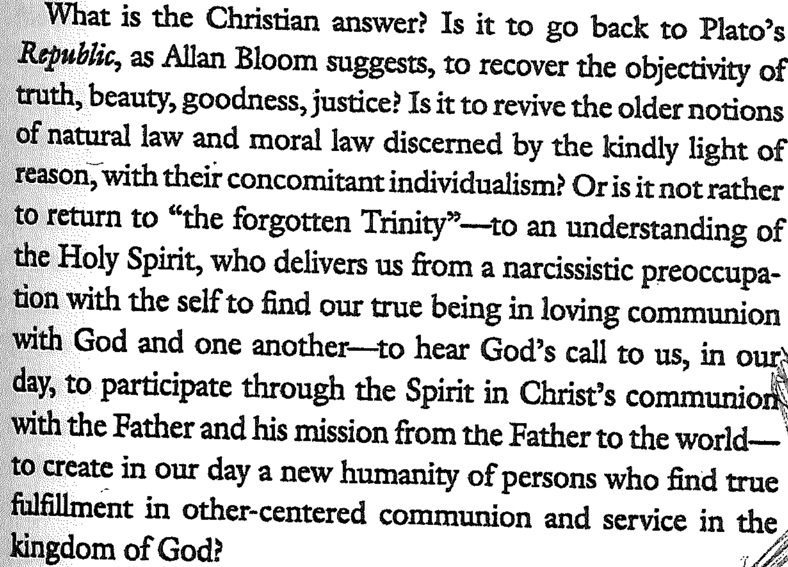
as they claim individual rights to realize their own potential or see the other as simply there to meet their own needs. The relationship disintegrates because there is no real covenant love, no mutual self-giving and receiving, no perichoretic unity, no deep intimate communion.

Corresponding to this distinction between "the individual" and "the person," Professor John Macmurray, my moral philosophy teacher in undergraduate days in Edinburgh, used to draw a distinction between "society" and "community." He defined society as a collection of individuals indirectly related to one another by law, by employment, by contract, to meet needs (economic, financial, physical, etc.). Community, on the other hand, he defined as a group of persons in relation, directly related by love. He used to say that the fallacy of both Marxism and much of capitalism is the pragmatic naive belief that if we can simply change the economic structures of society, we can produce community. "You don't!" he said, "You can destroy it." After 70 years of communism, Eastern Europe has thrown off its yoke, for the people have seen its failure to produce a free community, a classless society. We can see a similar result in forms of Western capitalism, which attempts to subordinate, everything to market forces. It can produce massive unemployment, polarize rich and poor, undermine health services and fail to show compassion in contexts where there comes the cry for justice and humanity from the poor and powerless. The concept of community, Macmurray contended, is a religious notion, deriving from a Hebrew Christian consciousness. From a trinitarian standpoint, God is in the business of creating community. We are, of course, social beings who live in society with our economic, financial and political needs, but a compassionate government should seek to make a loving, caring community possible.

It is significant that the older individualism grew out of a

belief in the objectivity of God—the Creator of natural and moral law, who created the individual, with rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (the American Constitution). But what happens in a secular culture where belief in the objectivity of God and of moral law recedes? Then, as Allan Bloom has argued so powerfully in *The Closing of the American Mind*,[12] everything goes into flux (Heraclitus), and we witness a closing of the (American) mind, with a resultant collapse into narcissism, a preoccupation with the self—my rights, my life, my liberty, my pursuit of happiness. Religion then becomes a means toward self-realization. All the interest is in self-esteem, self-fulfillment, self-identity, the human potential movement and possibility thinking, leading either to the nihilism of post-modernism[13] or to the neo-gnosticism of the New Age movement which identifies the self with God. Know yourself. Realize your own identity. Then you will know God in the depths of your own spirituality. Hence the cry for new images of God to express our own self-understanding and sexuality. We shall return to this later.

What is the Christian answer? Is it to go back to Plato's *Republic*, as Allan Bloom suggests, to recover the objectivity of truth, beauty, goodness, justice? Is it to revive the older notions of natural law and moral law discerned by the kindly light of reason, with their concomitant individualism? Or is it not rather to return to "the forgotten Trinity"—to an understanding of the Holy Spirit, who delivers us from a narcissistic preoccupation with the self to find our true being in loving communion with God and one another—to hear God's call to us, in our day, to participate through the Spirit in Christ's communion with the Father and his mission from the Father to the world—to create in our day a new humanity of persons who find true fulfillment in other-centered communion and service in the kingdom of God?



Chapter Two

The Sole Priesthood of Christ, the Mediator of Worship

WHILE LECTURING ON THE THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP for Fuller Theological Seminary in California, I was living in an apartment on the Balboa Peninsula, 200 yards from the sea. One day, as I was about to have a swim, I saw an elderly gentleman walking slowly, pensively, along the shore. I greeted him as I went into the sea. When I came out, he was just returning and came to ask me who I was and where I had come from. I told him I was from Scotland, a Presbyterian minister on a lecturing-preaching tour of the States. His face lit up and he said, "How astonishing that I should meet you just now!" Then he poured out his story.

After 45 years of happy married life, his wife was now dying of cancer. She had had serious surgery. "I've been walking up and down the streets of Newport Beach at night, desperate, because I do not know how to face the future without my

wife—and without faith," he added. Then he said, "My father was a Presbyterian minister, and I was brought up in a godly home. But I have drifted away from the church. When you spoke to me, I was remembering how my father was a man of prayer and had wonderful faith when my mother died. I wish I had that faith. I have been walking up and down this beach trying to pray, but I can't!"

What did I say to him? Did I tell him how to find faith and how to pray—throw him back on himself? No I did not. I said, "May I say to you what I am sure your father would have said to you? In Jesus Christ we have someone who knows all about this. He has been through it all—through suffering and death and separation—and he will carry you both through it into resurrection life. He has heard your cry for faith and is answering." I continued, "You have been walking up and down this beach, wanting to pray, trying to pray, but not knowing how to pray. In Jesus Christ we have someone who is praying for you. He has heard your groans and is interceding for you and with you and in you." Then I took him to Luke 22:31, where Jesus says to Peter in the hour of his temptation (see also v. 40), "Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail . . ." In spite of this, Peter denied his Lord. Jesus was taken away to be crucified. But the risen Lord came back to him and said, "Simon, do you love me?" Peter said, "Lord, you know I love you" (Jn 21:15ff.). He was upheld, even in his denial of Christ, by the intercessions of Christ. I also took my friend to some verses in Romans 8:26ff., where Paul says, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." I said, "None of us knows how to pray, but the Spirit knows all about us. He knows all about you and is

interpreting your desires and groans and your longing to know how to pray. He is interceding for you and leading you to the Father." Then I quoted the following verses in that chapter: "Who is he who condemns? Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us"—therefore "nothing shall separate us from the love of God"—not even death! I prayed with him there on the beach.

The next day he came looking for me and said, "I have been telling my wife what you told me! Tell me more!" The third day he came again: "Do me a favor! Come and speak to my wife!" "Of course," I said. He took me to her bedside. There she was, a frail, dying woman. What did I talk to them about? I spoke about the Trinity! I did not use that word. But I spoke to them about the loving God, our Father who has given us Christ and the Spirit to draw us to himself in prayer, and about Jesus Christ who died for us that we might be forgiven, receive the gift of sonship, and be led by the Spirit into eternal life. I spoke about Christ, our great high priest, touched with a feeling of our infirmities, interceding for us, opening our hearts by the Spirit. I prayed with them both. A few weeks later, he wrote to me to tell me that his wife had passed on—"safe in the arms of Jesus."

It seems to me that in a pastoral situation our first task is not to throw people back on themselves with exhortations and instructions as to what to do and how to do it, but to direct people to the gospel of grace—to Jesus Christ, that they might look to him to lead them, open their hearts in faith and in prayer, and draw them by the Spirit into his eternal life of communion with the Father. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is the grammar of Romans 8—the grammar of grace, the grammar of our pastoral work. The first real step on the

road to prayer is to recognize that none of us knows how to pray as we ought to. But as we bring our desires to God, we find that we have someone who is praying for us, with us, and in us. Thereby he teaches us to pray and motivates us to pray, and to pray in peace to the Lord. Jesus takes our prayers—our feeble, selfish, inarticulate prayers—he cleanses them, makes them his prayers, and in a "wonderful exchange" (*mirifica commutatio—commercium admirabile*)[1] he makes his prayers our prayers and presents us to the Father as his dear children, crying: "*Abba* Father."

The Interceding Christ

For a proper understanding of prayer we need to recover the New Testament teaching about the sole priesthood of Christ—that we have someone who stands in for us to do for us and in us what we try to do and fail to do—someone who lives forever to intercede for us (Heb 6:20; 7:25-28; 8:1-6) and who gives us the gift of the Spirit to share in his intercessions.

In the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which many of us were taught as children in Scotland, there is a statement on prayer:

> Q. What is prayer?
>
> A. Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will, *in the name of Christ*, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

We can only pray "in the name of Christ" because Christ has already, in our name, offered up our desires to God and continues to offer them. In our name, he lived a life agreeable to the will of God, in our name vicariously confessed our sins and submitted to the verdict of guilty for us, and in our name gave thanks to God. We pray "in the name of Christ" because of what Christ has done and is doing today in our name, on our behalf.

This finds vivid expression in what the New Testament says about the priesthood of Christ in his ministry of prayer and intercession—as in our Lord's high priestly prayer in John 17, and in the epistle to the Hebrews, which uses the liturgical symbolism of the worship of Old Testament Israel to interpret the ministry of Christ.

In Old Testament Israel, as in Israel to this day, the great central act of Jewish worship took place on the Day of Atonement (*yôm kippûr*). That was the day in the year which gathered up the worship of every other day. On that day, an offering was made to God which gathered up all the other offerings made daily in the sanctuary. On that day, the worship and intercessions of all Israel were led by one man, the high priest.

Consider for a moment the symbolism of that day. First, the high priest stood before the people as their divinely appointed representative, bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh, their brother, in solidarity with the people he represented, "the one on behalf of the many," the "leader of their worship."[2] All that he did, he did in their name. This was symbolized by the fact that he bore their names engraved on his breastplate and shoulders as a memorial before God. Secondly, he consecrated himself for this ministry by certain liturgical acts of washing and sacrifice, the blood sprinkled on his right ear, right thumb and right toe. Thirdly, there comes the great moment when he takes an animal, lays his hands on the victim and vicariously confesses the sins of all Israel in an act of penitence, acknowledging the just judgments of God. Fourthly, when the victim is immolated as a symbol of the just judgments of God (and the scapegoat is sent into the wilderness to symbolize the removal of guilt) the high priest takes the blood in a vessel, ascends into the Holy of Holies, and there vicariously intercedes for all Israel—that God will remember his covenant promises and graciously forgive

them. We can visualize the high priest in the sanctuary interceding for all Israel, and all Israel outside interceding—a great volume of prayer ascending to God, led by the high priest. Finally, he returns to the waiting people outside with the Aaronic blessing of peace:

The LORD bless you
  and keep you;
the LORD make his face shine upon you
  and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face toward you
  and give you peace. (Num 6:24-26 NIV)

The New Testament writers saw this as a foreshadowing of the mediatorial ministry of Christ. Firstly, he comes from the Father to be the true priest, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, in solidarity with all humanity, all races, all colors, bearing upon his divine-human heart the names, the needs, the sorrows, the injustices of all nations. He offers to the Father that worship, that obedience, that life of love in unbroken intimate communion, which we cannot offer. Secondly, he consecrates himself for this ministry of leading us into the presence of the Father. In our Lord's high priestly prayer, when he intercedes for his people, he says: "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (Jn 17:19)—the one for the many—"For both he who sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one, for . . . he is not ashamed to call them brothers (and sisters)" (Heb 2:11). Jesus' whole life of prayer and obedience and love, his whole life of communion in the Spirit, is his total self-consecration for us. Thirdly, he offers not an animal, but himself in death that he might be the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world, saying amen in our humanity to the just judgments of God. He does not appease an angry God to condition him into being gracious, but in

perfect acknowledgment of the holy love of the Father for a sinful world, seals God's covenant purposes for all humanity by his blood. Fourthly, on Easter day he says to Mary, "Do not hold on to me for I am not yet ascended to my Father, but go instead to my brothers and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (Jn 20:17). The high priest is on his way into the Holy of Holies to intercede for his people. Fifthly, on the same day at evening, as the disciples are met in prayer in an upper room, Jesus comes and says to them, "Peace be unto you" (v. 19ff.). It is the return of the high priest who now gives the gift of the Spirit that they might share with him his apostolic mission to the world (see also Heb 3:1) as a royal priesthood with the word of forgiveness.

When we think of the symbolism of the liturgy of Old Testament Israel on the Day of Atonement, we can make two statements, enshrining the biblical concept of "the one and the many":

□ When the high priest entered into the holy presence of Yahweh in the sanctuary, that he might present all Israel in his person to God, we can say, as Calvin puts it in his commentary on Hebrews,[3] all Israel entered in his person.

□ Conversely, when he vicariously confessed their sins and interceded for them before God, God accepted them as his forgiven people in the person of their high priest.

This double statement expresses how God's covenant dealings with Israel were established at the hands of a mediator.

In analogous fashion, we can make a twofold statement about Jesus Christ, in the light of the New Testament:

□ When Jesus was born for us at Bethlehem, was baptized by the Spirit in the Jordan, suffered under Pontius Pilate, rose again and ascended, our humanity was born again, baptized by

the Spirit, suffered, died, rose again and ascended in him, in his representative vicarious humanity. Now he presents us in himself to the Father as God's dear children, and our righteousness is hid with Christ in God—ready to be revealed at the last day.

□ Conversely, because Jesus has lived our life, offered himself through the eternal Spirit without spot to the Father in our name and on our behalf, as the one for the many, God accepts us in him. We are accepted in the beloved Son—immaculate in him, and only in him—"holy and blameless in his sight" (*sancti et immaculati*) (Eph 1:4).[4]

This is the significance when we pray "in the name of Christ." Because of what he has done and is doing for us in our name, we worship the Father *in Christ* as well as *through Christ*, *en Christō* as well as *dia Christou*. As Calvin said also of justification, we are righteous *in Christ*, as well as justified by faith *through* the work of *Christ*.[5] Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant, the one in whom God draws near to humanity in covenant love and the one in whom we draw near to God through the Spirit. In worship we offer ourselves to the Father "in the name of Christ" because he has already in our name made the one true offering to the Father, the offering by which he has sanctified for all time those who come to God by him (Heb 10:10, 14), and because he ever lives to intercede for us in our name. The covenant between God and humanity is concentrated in his person.

The One and the Many

This biblical thought of "the one and the many," of the all-inclusive humanity of Jesus Christ, must be carefully distinguished from the Platonic (or Hindu) concept of "the one and the many." In so-called Platonic realism "the one" is an idea, a generic class concept, a Platonic form, where the important

thing is "the one," not the many particulars which are what they are only in virtue of their participation (*methexis*) in "the one." Knowledge for Plato consists of ideas, the universal, the class concept, not of the particular, not of sense objects as such. Particulars, sense data, belong to the world of flux and change and temporality—here today, gone tomorrow (Heraclitus)—not, therefore, objects of knowledge. Universals are timeless, unchanging, abstract concepts (Parmenides)—the objects of knowledge.

For example, if I see a yellow flower on a bank in spring and ask, What is it? and the answer is a primrose, I know what it is by subsuming it under the class of primroses. My interest is in what it is, not so much in the particular instance as a sense object. But the biblical notion of "the one and the many," the thought of the all-inclusive humanity of Christ, is totally different, where the many participate (*koinōnein*) personally in the one. It is not just a Platonic concept of Jesus as an ideal embodiment of humanity. If it were, then the important thing would be not Jesus as an absolutely unique particular person, but the ideal, the principle he embodied. The New Testament is thoroughly non-dualistic about Jesus being not only a man, but the One Man, the one person in whom God has given himself personally to the world and for the world, that his purposes for all humanity might be brought to fulfillment. There is an absolute uniqueness to the person of Jesus Christ, deeply concerned for every single one of the many to bring every single one into personal union with himself, to share his personal union with the Father. Thus in Jesus Christ "the one and the many" means at once the one for the many, the one who stands in for the many, the many represented personally in the one, the one who comes by the Spirit to each one of the many whom he loves and knows by name to say: "It is for you,

John, and for you, Mary, and for you, Peter." Whereas the Platonic "one and the many" is impersonal and disinterested in the particular, the biblical "one and the many" is intensely personal.

It is this thought of an all-inclusive vicarious humanity which was developed by Irenaeus in his doctrine of *anakephalaiōsis* or recapitulation. Like Justin Martyr before him, he attacked Marcion's attempt to distinguish between the creator God of the Old Testament and the redeemer God of the New Testament. The Christ by whom all things were made is the same Christ who, for us and our salvation, assumed our humanity. In other words, the Son of God who created Adam for sonship and communion and immortality does not abandon his loving purposes for humanity, for every single human person. But in order to redeem humanity and to bring to fulfillment his purpose (his *telos*) for humanity, for everyone, he himself becomes a man that he might fulfill for us in his own person God's purposes of love and obedience and worship. Thus what is lost in the one man ("in Adam")—communion with God—is restored and fulfilled for each one of us in Christ ("the last Adam"), and held out for us by the Spirit in the Lord's Supper. This, of course, is the Pauline doctrine of Romans 5 and Ephesians 1—that God's great purpose is that "he might gather together in one all things in Christ" (Eph 1:10).

This concept of recapitulation, of the fulfillment of God's purposes for humanity in and through the inclusive and vicarious humanity of Christ, received fuller elaboration by Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and the Cappadocian divines in their statement that "the unassumed is the unredeemed" in reply to Apollinarianism.[6] The Greek Fathers, like Athanasius, asked what it means to speak of Christ as "the great physician of our humanity." Christ does not heal us as an ordinary doctor might, by standing over against us, diagnosing our sickness, prescribing medicine for us to take and then going away, leaving us to get better as we follow his instructions. No, he becomes the patient! He assumes that very humanity which is in need of redemption, and by being anointed by the Spirit in our humanity, by a life of perfect obedience, by dying and rising again, for us, our humanity is healed in him, in his person. We are not just healed through Christ, because of the work of Christ, but in and through Christ. Person and work must not be separated. That is why these Fathers did not hesitate to say, as Edward Irving, the Scottish theologian in the early nineteenth century and Karl Barth in our own times have said, that Christ assumed "fallen humanity" (i.e., our humanity) that it might be turned back to God, in him by his sinless life in the Spirit, and through him in us.

The God-humanward and human-Godward relationship (movement), both freely given to us in Jesus Christ. When we considered the existential model of worship, we noticed that the God-humanward movement of grace is given to us in Christ. In virtue of it, we are summoned to respond in faith, in decision, in repentance and obedience (see figure 2). But the weakness here is that the only human-Godward movement is ours. In other words, it does not do full justice to the meaning of grace, for it short-circuits the vicarious humanity of Christ. Grace does not only mean that in the coming of Jesus Christ, God gives himself in holy love to humanity. It also means the coming of God as man, to do for us as a man what we cannot do for ourselves—to present us in himself through the eternal Spirit to the Father. In other words, the human-Godward movement, in which we are given to participate (as in worship and communion), is given freely and unconditionally. Our response in faith and obedience is a response to the response

already made for us by Christ to the Father's holy love, a response we are summoned to make in union with Christ. This, it seems to me, was the great insight of the Greek fathers like Cyril of Alexandria, elaborated by John Calvin in his *Institutes*. He expounded grace in terms of the twin doctrines that "all parts of our salvation are already complete in Christ" in virtue of his obedience for us, and that we are summoned to a life of "union with Christ" to become in ourselves what we already are in Christ our head.[7]

Few distinctions in theology are more important for our understanding of worship than that discussed by Calvin in book 3 of the *Institutes*, between what he calls "legal repentance" and "evangelical repentance" in his critique of the medieval sacrament of penance.[8] Legal repentance says: "Repent, and if you repent you will be forgiven!" as though God our Father has to be conditioned into being gracious. It makes the imperatives of obedience prior to the indicatives of grace, and regards God's love and forgiveness and acceptance as conditional upon what we do—upon our meritorious acts of repentance. Calvin argued that this inverted the evangelical order of grace, and made repentance prior to forgiveness, whereas in the New Testament forgiveness is logically prior to repentance. Evangelical repentance, on the other hand, takes the form: "Christ has borne your sins on the cross; therefore, repent! Receive his forgiveness in repentance!" That is, repentance is our response to grace, not a condition of grace. The goodness of God leads us to repentance. The good news of the gospel is that "there is forgiveness with God that he might be feared," and that he has spoken that word of forgiveness in Christ on the cross. That word summons from us an unconditional response of faith and repentance.

What did Calvin mean by saying that forgiveness is logically prior to repentance? The point is of fundamental importance

in our personal relationships. If two people have the misfortune to quarrel, and one comes to the other and says, in all sincerity, "I forgive you!" it is clearly not only a word of love and reconciliation, but also a word (perhaps a withering word) of condemnation—for in pronouncing his forgiveness, he is clearly implying that the other is the guilty party! Indeed it can be very hurtful, if not self-righteous, to say to somebody, "I forgive you!" How would the other person be likely to react? I could imagine his immediate reaction as one of indignation. Sensing the element of judgment, of condemnation in the word, he might well reject the forgiveness, because he refuses to submit to the verdict of guilty implied in it. He would be impenitent. There would be no change of heart. But, suppose on subsequent reflection he comes back to his friend and says, "You were quite right! I was in the wrong!" Implicit in his acceptance of love and forgiveness would be his submission to the verdict of guilty. There would be a real change of mind, an act of penitence on his part (*metanoia*), conversion, reconciliation.

So it is with the gospel of the incarnation. God in Christ has spoken to us his word of forgiveness, his word of love which is at the same time the word of judgment and condemnation, the word of the cross. But implicit in our receiving of the word of grace and forgiveness, the word of the Father's love, there must be on our part, a humble submission to the verdict of guilty. It was for our sins that Christ died. That lies at the heart of the Reformation understanding of grace—of "evangelical repentance." But who can make that perfect response of love, that perfect act of penitence, that perfect submission to the verdict of guilty? What we cannot do, God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ stands in for us in our humanity, in our name, on our behalf, to make that perfect submission to the

Father. That is the wonder of God's grace! God not only speaks the word of forgiveness to us. He also provides for us one, in Jesus Christ, who makes the perfect response of vicarious penitence. So God accepts us, not because of our repentance—we have no worthy penitence to offer—but in the person of one who has already said amen for us, in death, to the divine condemnation of our sin—in atonement.[9]

Here again we see the significance of a biblical understanding of priesthood, and especially the significance of the priesthood of Christ, the mediator of worship. His twofold ministry of representing God to humanity and at the same time of representing humanity to God brings God's word of grace and forgiveness to the world, because he vicariously submitted for us, once and for all, to the divine judgment on our sins, accepting the verdict of guilty on the cross, not for himself, but for us. This was foreshadowed in the liturgy of the Old Testament. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest, in representing Yahweh to Israel and Israel to Yahweh, brought God's word of grace and acceptance to the people and, on behalf of all Israel, confessed their sins by bearing witness to God's judgment in offering the sacrificial victim and sprinkling the blood on the propitiatory. So in Jesus Christ we have one who, as the Word incarnate, brings the Father's word of grace and forgiveness to our fallen world, but who in our fallen humanity vicariously absorbs the Father's condemnation of our sins—being made a curse for us. Therefore, in our response, in our worship, we not only in faith receive that word of forgiveness so freely spoken, but we receive it in repentance, submitting humbly to the guilty verdict (which is repentance) before the cross. At the same time we know that by God's grace we have one in Christ, who has already submitted to that verdict for us long ago. Our repentance is thus a response to grace, not a condition of grace. It is the gift of the Spirit to participate in the vicarious penitence of Christ, in his priestly vicarious self-offering. It is our amen to the cross, our response to the amen spoken by Jesus Christ standing in our place before the Father. It is "evangelical repentance." It is the meaning of conversion.

It is significant that the Roman Catholic church today prefers to talk about the sacrament of reconciliation rather than the sacrament of penance. Is this not a recognition of the fact that repentance is not a meritorious act which conditions God into being gracious (legal repentance), but rather our receiving the word of grace and reconciliation in an act of humble faith and penitence—what Calvin called "evangelical repentance"? God's grace is unconditionally free, but it summons us to receive it unconditionally in faith and penitence, in love and obedience.

The fact that Jesus Christ is the leader of our worship, the high priest who forgives us our sins and leads us into the holy presence of the Father, is the central theme of the epistle to the Hebrews. It was written to Christians who had at one time looked to Jesus Christ in faith and followed him, but then had taken their eyes off Christ and fallen back into their former religious practices, with a false legalistic self-confidence in human institutions and ordinances. The Christians who had led them to Christ, whose example they once followed, were now dead (13:7). Instead of going on to become leaders and teachers themselves (5:12), they had drifted away from Christ, lost their vision of grace, and now needed again to be taught the elementary principles of the faith (5:12-14). By their unfaithfulness, like Israel in the wilderness, they were unable to enter into the "rest" of the promised land. They were in danger of sinking into apostasy. So the writer seeks to give them a fresh vision of Jesus Christ, our high priest, through whom alone we can find forgiveness and come into the holy presence of God.

Hebrews

He exhorts them to fix their thoughts exclusively on Christ, to hold on in faith, not to drift away in unbelief or rely on their own religious practices to cleanse them. They had apparently suffered persecution and reproach, and by yielding to the temptation to be unfaithful, had drifted away from Christ. The writer reminds them that Christ himself had suffered (12:2) and been tempted. He could, therefore, sympathize with them and lead them in their time of trial and need (4:14-16; 5:1-5). "Let us run with patience the race set before us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning the shame, and sat down at the right hand of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (12:1-4).

The epistle, in calling these lapsed Christians back to Christ, clearly expounds the place of Jesus Christ in worship, contrasting it with the old Levitical rites to which the people had apparently returned. The apostle Paul in the epistle to the Romans speaks about "the righteous requirements" (*dikaiōmata*) of the (moral) law—to love God and our neighbor—having been fulfilled for us only by Christ and now fulfilled in us by a life in the Spirit (Rom 8:1-4). Similarly, the writer to the Hebrews speaks about "the ordinances of worship" (*dikaiōmata latreias*, Heb 9:1) having been fulfilled for us only by Jesus Christ our high priest, so that we can draw near to God only through him. He alone can wash away our sins, who offered himself for us to God through the eternal Spirit. The apostle Paul contrasts life in the Spirit with a false confidence in the flesh (*sarx*). The writer to the Hebrews speaks about the other forms of worship, the external ritual of human gifts and sacrifices, food and drink etc., which can never cleanse the conscience, as the "requirements of the flesh" (*dikaiōmata sarkos*) (v. 10). In other words, as Paul expounds justification by faith by contrasting life in the Spirit—the way of grace—with false self-confidence in the flesh, so the epistle to the Hebrews contrasts two forms of worship: true worship, which means reposing on and participating in the self-offering of Christ who alone can lead us into "the Holy of Holies"—the holy presence of the Father—and false worship, with its false reliance on what we do by following our own devices or traditions. In other words, when we take our eyes off Jesus Christ and that worship and offering which God has provided for us in Christ, which alone is acceptable to him, we fall back on our "religion."

This seems to me to be relevant to the distinction we drew at the beginning of our study between the two views of worship—a unitarian view that worship is what we, religious people, do to try to please God, and a trinitarian one, where worship is the gift of grace to participate through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father—the way of joy and peace and confidence. The church which takes her eyes off Jesus Christ, the only mediator of worship, is on the road to becoming apostate. There is no more urgent need in our churches today than to recover the trinitarian nature of grace—that it is by grace alone, through the gift of Jesus Christ in the Spirit that we can enter into and live a life of communion with God our Father. We can understand why John Calvin made so much of the epistle to the Hebrews—of the doctrine of the once and for all, and continuing priesthood of Jesus Christ—in his exposition of worship, the Eucharist, and the doctrine of the church as a corporate royal priesthood participating by grace in the sole priesthood of Christ. This interpretation of worship and the church in terms of grace—of Christ as the sole mediator between God and humanity—is fundamental to the Reformed tradition and to our understanding of prayer (1 Tim 2:1-6).

According to a biblical understanding, from both the Old and New Testaments, worship is an ordinance of grace. It is false to interpret Old Testament worship as legalistic and only New Testament worship as the way of grace. As we have seen, there is always a double movement in worship—a God-humanward movement and a human-Godward movement—and both must be understood in terms of the gift of grace, the gift of the God of grace who provides for us a way of loving communion. In Old Testament Israel, the priest who represented God to Israel and Israel to God had a double function. Primarily, he was the one who brought God's word of grace to Israel. This was the word of the covenant with its promises and obligations: "I will be your God and you will be my people." Secondarily, he was the one who led the people in their worship, their response to grace. The liturgies of Israel were God-given ordinances of grace, witnesses to grace.[10] The sacrifice of lambs and bulls and goats were not ways of placating an angry God, currying favor with God as in the pagan worship of the Baalim. They were God-given covenantal witnesses to grace—that the God who alone could wipe out their sins would be gracious. God is always the subject of propitiation, never its object. He gave Israel forms of worship which testified to his holy love, that he would be gracious and propitious, and in their worship they were to acknowledge this. But so often the priests failed to fulfill their primary task of being bearers of God's word of grace. When this happened, their worship was no longer a response to grace, but became a form of legalized liturgy, a way of trying to manipulate God and curry favor—in the manner of the Canaanite Baalim. When this happened, God raised up prophets, many of them out of the priesthood, to bring God's word of grace, the word of the covenant with its solemn obligations, to the people of Israel. They exposed both the false

practices of the priests and the unrighteousness of the nation which had turned its back on the God of grace, on the covenant made with Abraham and renewed at Sinai. They exposed the paganism of the rituals and the legalism of their belief that their sacrifices were efficacious in themselves. So God can say to them, through Amos:

> I hate, I despise your religious feasts;
> I cannot stand your assemblies.
> Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,
> I will not accept them.
> Though you bring choice peace offerings,
> I will have no regard for them.
> Away with the noise of your songs!
> I will not listen to the music of your harps.
> But let justice roll on like a river,
> righteousness like a never-failing stream! (Amos 5:21-24)

In other words, where worship is no longer seen as an ordinance of and an obedient response to grace, it has become false worship—an abomination to God who says "Take it away!"

The same was true of the temple and its worship. When the temple was no longer a faithful witness to God's covenant purposes, and the priests failed to offer true worship, God permitted it to be destroyed, that he might, in the fullness of time establish true worship in the world—as in Ezekiel's visions of a new temple.

As with the temple so with the nation of Israel itself. Israel was elected from among the nations to be a "royal priesthood," a covenanted nation, living by God's grace, the servant of Yahweh, to be "a light to the Gentiles," to live as a righteous nation before God a life of undivided loyalty to him (Ex 19:4-8). But when Israel turned to worship in the manner of

the pagan nations around them, God permitted them to be taken into exile, that he might make a new beginning with the faithful remnant who would return from exile. So there emerged the visions of the suffering servant of the Lord, through whom God would fulfill his purposes of grace and provide one who would take away their sins and renew them in righteousness. God acts in judgment and in mercy in the history of Israel that he might fashion a faithful people who would offer true worship to the God of grace.

The same pattern is repeated dramatically and vividly with Moses, Aaron, and the golden calf. Moses went up the mountain into the holy presence of God—the Holy of Holies—to commune with God and bring back to Israel the word of the covenant with its summons to a life of faithfulness and obedience. His brother Aaron, as high priest, might then lead Israel in her worship to fulfill the ordinances of grace in a faithful response in love and obedience. But what happened? We read: "When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered round Aaron and said, 'Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him' " (Ex 32:1). Aaron listened to the people and they made a golden calf as assertion of their own nature worship, a fertility cult expressive of their own self-will and desire to escape from the living God. Instead of their worship being an ordinance of grace and a covenanted way of response, it becomes a rebellious, idolatrous form of self-expression and self-assertion. As a result they expose themselves to divine judgment. Miriam is struck with leprosy, the glory leaves the holy place, and a heartbroken Moses intercedes for his unfaithful nation. The people remain in the desert to die, and only a faithful few enter the promised land—used as a warning in Hebrews 3:12ff.

It is significant that in Christian history, when the medieval Roman Catholic Church too often neglected her prime function of being a minister of grace—bringing the word of grace, of the new covenant in Christ—the character of worship changed. With notions of merit and penance and an efficacious mass, the church was seen as a "treasury of merit" (*thesaurus meritorum*) with a legalized liturgy, a church claiming "the power of the keys." In response the Reformation emerged as a prophetic movement, with many of the Reformers, like Luther, coming from the priesthood itself to call the church back to her foundations in grace, and to reinterpret her worship, as in the Lord's Supper, as an ordinance of grace, seeing sacraments as signs and seals of the covenant of grace.

The very unfaithfulness of Israel and her priesthood in their worship, in failing to be custodians of grace, thrust up the messianic hopes of a faithful servant of the Lord, fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is, on the one hand, God's Word of grace to a faithless world, the one in whom God makes a new covenant, bringing forgiveness (Jer 31:31ff.). But on the other hand, he is the one whose whole vicarious life in our humanity is a faithful obedient response to the Father's purpose in electing him—in fulfilling the role of the suffering servant of the Lord, in being the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world—that through him Israel's destiny to be a light to the Gentiles might be fulfilled. Here is the one true priest, the one true worshiper, the leader of our worship (the *leitourgos*) in whom alone "the ordinances of worship" (*dikaiōmata latreias*) are perfectly fulfilled and through whom alone we can draw near to God. So worship is God's gift of grace to us in Christ. This is why all our worship (in baptism, Lord's Supper, etc.) must be seen as an ordinance of grace.

J. Jungmann, the Jesuit liturgical scholar, in his great work *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer*,[11] has shown that in the New Testament and the early liturgies of the church, Christ has a double role. On the one hand, prayer was offered to Jesus Christ as God. We pray to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. But on the other hand, Jesus Christ was seen as our great high priest, as man praying to the Father, the one who intercedes for us and leads our praises and prayers. Then, at the time of the Arian-Nicene controversy, one of Arius's main arguments against the deity of Christ was that Jesus could not be God because he was a man who prayed to God—as in the gospel accounts of Jesus praying at his baptism, on the mountainside, at the Last Supper, in Gethsemane and on the cross. He cannot be both God and a man praying to God! Athanasius's reply was: "Arius, you do not understand the meaning of grace!"

The God to whom we pray and with whom we commune knows we want to pray, try to pray, but cannot pray. So God comes to us as man in Jesus Christ to stand in for us, pray for us, teach us to pray and lead our prayers. God in grace gives us what he seeks from us—a life of prayer—in giving us Jesus Christ and the Spirit. So Christ is very God, the God to whom we pray. And he is very man, the man who prays for us and with us. The Nicene Fathers, with their study of the place of Jesus Christ in worship, won the day—and so we have the Nicene Creed. But, Jungmann points out, fear of Arianism and the Arian argument—pitting the praying humanity of Jesus against the deity of Christ—led the church, while asserting powerfully the deity of Christ, to play down the priesthood of Christ! What was the result? The church, the *ecclesia*, took over the vicarious role of being the high priest for humanity! While strongly asserting the divinity of Christ and his kingly, prophetic role,

the church assumed the role of being the mediator of grace, with the added vicarious roles of Mary and the saints. We can, therefore, understand the emphasis of Reformers like John Calvin. He called the church back to the sole priesthood of Christ as both the object of our worship and the leader of our worship. He reinterpreted the church as the royal priesthood that shares by grace in the priesthood of Christ. Only in this way can we understand our Christian worship as an ordinance of grace, where Christ is the only mediator. We come to God our Father both in Christ and through Christ, and only through Jesus Christ.

It is supremely in Jesus Christ that we see the double meaning of grace. Grace means that God gives himself to us as God, freely and unconditionally, to be worshiped and adored. But grace also means that God comes to us in Jesus Christ as man, to do for us and in us what we cannot do. He offers a life of perfect obedience and worship and prayer to the Father, that we might be drawn by the Spirit into communion with the Father, "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The two hands of God. A colleague of mine for many years, Roland Walls, lives in the Community of the Transfiguration in Roslin village, a few miles out of Edinburgh. One day I noticed in his garden a piece of sculpture I had not seen before. He told me about it. A young sculptor, brought up among the Exclusive Brethren, one day confessed to the fellowship that he was gay. As a result, he was asked to leave the Assembly. In his distress, he found his way to the Roslin Community, where Roland found him on his knees in prayer in the chapel. The young man poured out his story and unburdened his heart. At the end of their conversation, Roland simply put his arms around him and gave him a hug! That hug symbolized everything for the man. He knew he was loved, accepted, forgiven. He went back,

found a block of sandstone and carved out a figure of the two Adams. They are kneeling, embracing one another. Christ lays his head on the right shoulder of fallen Adam, and fallen Adam lays his head on the right shoulder of Christ, the second Adam. The only way in which one can distinguish between the two Adams is by the nail prints in the hands of Christ. That sculptor saw himself in fallen Adam, and in that symbolic hug he saw himself accepted in Christ, the second Adam. There one sees the Pauline theology of an Irenaeus—that what was lost in Adam has been restored in Christ. That is the biblical concept of "the one and the many"—that we, the many, can see ourselves accepted by grace in Christ, the one mediator, who fulfills God's purpose—to gather together all things in Christ, the head (*anakephalaiōsis*)—the doctrine of "recapitulation."

Irenaeus used the metaphor of "the two hands of God" in his criticism of the heretic Marcion. God our Father has two hands—the Word and the Spirit—by whom he created and redeemed the world. Marcion had taught that the creator God of the Old Testament was different from the redeemer God of the New Testament. No, according to Irenaeus, the God who created this world (and Adam) has redeemed this world (with Adam) by the same Word and the same Spirit. The one by whom and for whom all things were created has taken our humanity to redeem us—"to bring many sons to glory." It is by these two hands that God gives himself to us in love to bring us to intimate communion. We can extend that metaphor further. Think of a hug. When we hug somebody whom we love there is a double movement. We give ourselves to the beloved, and in the same act by putting our arms around the other, we draw that person close to our heart! That is a parable of the double movement of grace, the God-humanward and the human-Godward movement in the priesthood of Christ

and the ministry of the Spirit. In Christ, the Word made flesh, and in the Holy Spirit—his two hands—God our Father in grace gives himself to us as God. But in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, and in the Spirit we are led to the Father by the intercessions of Christ and the intercessions of the Spirit. We are lifted up by "the everlasting arms." As in the mediatorial ministry of Christ, the Spirit is the interceding Spirit, through whom Jesus Christ our ascended high priest presents us to the Father.

In the parable of the prodigal son, when the son returned from the far country, he was eager to buy his way back into his father's favor. He requested work: "Make me like one of your hired servants. But while he was still a long way off his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him (hugged him) and kissed him" (Lk 15:19-20). He received him back joyfully. I think we can hear the son's response: "Daddy, I love you! It is wonderful to be back home!" And then, "Dad, I have been a fool!" It is a parable of "evangelical repentance"—the response to a father's love, not a condition for it. Is that not the meaning of grace?