

“THE THINGS OF GOD TO MAN AND THE THINGS OF MAN TO GOD”:

WORSHIP AND THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST

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Summary:

This paper develops a theology of worship using the mediation of Christ as its primary theme. Its thesis is that to maintain an authentically Christian tension between God's transcendence and immanence, the church worship must reflect and confess the Christological reality that both God's "man-ward" movement in revelation and man's "God-ward" movement in response happen in the person of Jesus Christ.

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Introduction: Worship of the Wholly Other, Wholly Present God

The paradox that God is at once wholly other and apart from his creation, while at the same time wholly bound to and engaged with it, is a theological word that speaks to the very essence of Christian worship and belief. Scripture itself bears witness to this paradox in a variety of places with a variety of images. God is both transcendent, the one whose ways are above our ways (Isa. 55:9-10), whose glory cannot be contained by even the highest heaven (2 Chr 6:18)—and at the same time, God is near to his people “whenever we call upon him” (Deut 4:7) and inexorably present, even “if I make my bed in the depths” (Psa 139:8). In the actual worship of any given church on any given Sunday, we are likely to see various signs pointing symbolically in one or the other of these two directions. In one, liturgical vestments, incense censors or candle-lit sanctuaries combine in effort to create an other-worldly experience of God’s distance; in another, impromptu invitations to “reach out and touch Christ,” invocations for a “manifestation of the Holy Spirit,” and incantations of highly affective song lyrics combine in effort to create a sense of God’s tangible presence among his people. While on an aesthetic level these various efforts can function in profoundly evocative ways that merit careful consideration when planning worship services, on a theological level, such practices do not, in and of themselves, appropriate and express an authentically Christian understanding of God’s transcendence and immanence.

To handle this tension theologically, we must move beyond identifying texts that speak about God’s transcendence or immanence, and begin to ask how these concepts are best understood. Because the Western mind so consistently tends to conceive of its world in geometric categories—what Torrance calls the “age-old habit of the mind... [to] persist in speaking of things as *in space* or *in time*”—the temptation to conceive of God’s immanence and

transcendence in spatial terms is almost unavoidable.¹ Indeed, this spatial imagery is built into the biblical texts cited above, which employ the language of distance (God’s ways are “above” and “beyond”), measure (he is unfathomably “deep” and gloriously “uncontainable”), and movement (he “comes near” when we call). However, if we are to avoid an essentially deist picture of a God who stands removed from creation, whom we approach in worship and move away from again with our “amen,” we must grapple with the inherently analogical nature of this spatial language. God’s transcendence, presupposing as it does a necessary independence of space and time, is better understood ontologically than spatially: it is in the very nature of his being as Creator, not the distance of his throne from creation, that God is transcendent.² Thus God can be ontologically “other” and at the same time spatially “close,” covenanting with and bound to his creation. This is important to affirm in constructing a theology of worship because it suggests that we do not authentically respond to God’s transcendence through efforts to create a sense of disequilibrium in the worship experience with ethereal candle-light or sonorous organ tones (or indeed abstract power-point slides and rumbling kick-drum rhythms). Candles, chants and cathedrals may aesthetically transport us out of the everyday in important and helpful ways, but on their own they cannot convey the sense in which God’s “otherness” is inherent, not in his distance, but in his being. However far we are transported experientially, we have come no closer to God’s unapproachable transcendence, which is itself ontologically other than any space-time experience.

Lest I be misconstrued, let me stress a third time that this is not to suggest that aesthetic considerations—the effect of space, sound, atmosphere and architecture on the senses of the worshiper—are insignificant. They are profoundly so. It is, however, to insist that the transcendence-immanence tension is maintained in worship not by aesthetic means but

¹ Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 22.

² See *ibid.*, 61-2.

theological—by confessing, representing and entering into the reality that the transcendent God has become immanently “with us” in Jesus Christ—not primarily in spatial terms (Creator coming close) but ontological (Creator becoming creature). In Torrance’s words,

As both God of God and man of man Jesus Christ is the actual Mediator between God and man and man and God in all things, even in regard to space-time relations. He constitutes in Himself the rational and personal Medium in whom God meets man in his creaturely reality and brings man without, having to leave his creaturely reality, into communion with himself.³

Thus, we must look especially to the theology of the incarnation and the mediation of Christ in order to express and experience the tension between the transcendence and immanence of God in our worship. When these issues are viewed through a Christological lens, a clear thesis comes into sharp focus: to maintain an authentically Christian tension between God’s transcendence and immanence, the church’s worship must reflect and confess the Christological reality that *both* God’s “man-ward” movement in revelation *and* man’s “God-ward” movement in response happen in the person of Jesus Christ.

Christ’s Role as Mediator of the Wholly Other, Wholly Present God.

Our effort to discuss God’s transcendence and immanence as it relates to worship must begin by examining the vibrant and vital truth that there is only one mediator between humans and the ontologically-other God—the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2:5). As Dany Charland puts it, it is only in discussing the “immediate mediation” of Christ that we can comprehend “le mystère d’un «Dieu» à fois transcendant et émiement immanent aux expérience humaines dans la contingence du monde,” for only here can we pay full honour to this paradox.⁴ Indeed, Christ’s role as mediator answers the paradox inherent in very act of worshipping a transcendent God—

³ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 52.

⁴ Dany Charland, “Immédiateté médiatisée des expériences chrétiennes de Dieu: une grille d’interprétation,” in *Studies in Religion* 30.3-4 (2001): 314. “The mystery of a God at once transcendent and eminently immanent in human experiences in the events of the world.”

that we, as naked and empty-handed creatures, could ever presume to offer anything to the all-sufficient Creator. Feeling this paradox deeply, John Piper suggests that any worship which presumes to “give to God” is essentially blasphemous, a “coming to God to give rather than get” that sinfully “positions [one] as God’s benefactor.”⁵ Piper rightly notes the problem, but his solution only throws humans back on themselves, arguing that God can therefore be glorified only by our hedonistic quest for pleasure in him, and that worship “can only be done when spontaneous affections arise in the heart.”⁶ Though we might note how Richard Mouw offers a number of specific alternatives to Piper’s equation of God’s glory with our pleasure in Him,⁷ for our present purposes we must insist that his model has only escaped the problem of the Creator’s all-sufficient transcendence by pointing more ardently at the creature, making the individual’s selfishness the solution, with an ironic logic that essentially argues “worship must be so much about God that it must be all about us.” Because of their focus on individual subjectivity, models like Piper’s are not far from those routes to God that “begin with us, and [seek] to move upwards from the earth to the heavenly realm.”⁸ To be sure, the ladder of “our feelings” has replaced the ladder of rote liturgical acts or mystical experience here, but the movement—climbing towards a “spatially” removed God—has not changed.

Theologically, a more faithful response to these paradoxes must seek to confess God as both the object *and* the subject of our act of worship. Marva Dawn, for instance, stresses that the church must constantly remember not only that God has graciously called us as his people, but that “our ability to respond to that call in worship and life is totally the gift of God.”⁹ This picture of worship as God’s gift, she claims, requires a model of worship in which he is both actor and

⁵ John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996), 97.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁷ Such as a *shalom*-ordering “in which peaceful, just, and truthful relationships obtain, and that the full and proper display of this ordered state of affairs constitutes the glory of God.” Richard Mouw, *The God Who Commands* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 34.

⁸ Colin Gunton, “One Mediator...The Man Jesus Christ,” in *Pro Ecclesia* 11.2 (Spring 2002): 147.

⁹ Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 77.

receiver: “the gifts of God flow from God the subject and return to God as the object of our reverence.”¹⁰ Because we might misunderstand “subject” here generically as “subject matter,” we must stress that the terms “subject” and “object” are meant more strictly in their grammatical sense. God is not the “subject” of worship as “worship” is the subject of this paper. Rather, as “Dale” is the grammatical subject and “paper” the object of the verb “writes” in the sentence “Dale writes a paper,” so God must ultimately be both the subject and object of the verb “worship.” While saying, in effect, that the final sentence on worship must read “God worships God” obviously rescues us from the problem of the creature presuming to offer worth to its glorious Creator, it is not immediately clear how to “make sense” of this sentence as an actual picture of Christian worship.

This, then, is where the mediation of Christ becomes central to our understanding of worship, for it is through Christ’s mediation of the human and divine that God both approaches humanity *and* enacts humanity’s approach to him. As Dany Charland puts it: “Conjugant en plénitude les dimensions humaine et divine, la médiation christique offre la possibilité et liberté d’accéder immédiatement à Dieu.”¹¹ But this is not simply a matter of Jesus making our own, independent and immediate approach to God possible; our access to God is immediate only to the extent that our humanity is united with Christ our mediator, who alone has immediate relationship with the transcendent God. There is, then, a “Godward” ministry in the work of Jesus Christ which must be held together with his “manward” ministry as an “inseparable wholeness in the oneness of our Lord’s person as God and Man”.¹² Himself the true image of God (εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀοράτου, Col 1:15), Jesus not only reveals the unseen God to humans, he also acts before God as representative of all image-bearing humanity (cf. Paul’s use of εἰκὼν in

¹⁰ Ibid., 80.

¹¹ Charland, “Immédiateté Médiatisée,” 315. “Bringing together in fullness the human and divine spheres, Christological mediation offers the possibility and freedom to access God immediately.”

¹² Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1992), 73.

Colossians to Gen 1:27 LXX, κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ ἐποίησεν αὐτόν). Indeed, to call Christ “mediator” is to speak a word not primarily about his divinity but about his humanity, a point inherent the language of 1 Timothy 2:5 (εἷς ... μεσίτης θεοῦ και ἀνθρώπων, ἄνθρωπος Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς), which juxtaposes ἀνθρώπων and ἄνθρωπος in such a way as to stress the “community of being between Jesus and ourselves.”¹³ Through this community of Christ with our humanity, the transcendent God becomes ontologically immanent, among us and like us as “very man of very man,” thereby not only enabling our worship, but receiving it from Jesus Christ as our mediator who is *himself* “very God of very God.” Only when it fully confesses and appropriates the Christological tension between Christ’s humanity and divinity can our worship authentically reflect the tension between God’s immanence and transcendence. Likewise, it can maintain the subject-object grammar necessitated by God’s transcendence only in Christ, who as incarnate God receives our worship (God as object) while as the recapitulated human being, offers worship on our behalf (God as subject). As Emmanuel (Μεθ’ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός, Matt 1:23), Jesus enacts the transcendent God’s ultimate “man-ward movement” in revelation while at the same time, as the eschatological Adam (ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ, 1 Cor 15:45) he enacts our ultimate “God-ward movement” in response. James Torrance puts it succinctly: “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.”¹⁴ Less succinct but perhaps more precise is Thomas Torrance:

With its actual fulfillment in the incarnate life and self-offering of the Son of God, Jesus Christ embodied in himself in a vicarious form the response of human beings to God, so that all their worship and prayer to God henceforth became grounded and centred in him. In short, Jesus Christ in his own self-oblation to the Father *is* our worship and prayer in an acutely personalized form, so that it is only through him and with him and in him that we may draw near to God.¹⁵

¹³ Gunton, “One Mediator,” 149.

¹⁴ James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 15.

¹⁵ Torrance, *Mediation*, 87.

“The Things of Man to God”: Worship as Man’s “God-ward” movement in Christ

Because a full development of the various ministries of Christ lies beyond the scope of this paper, and because the claim that Jesus Christ ministers “the things of God to man” is probably more easily accepted, we will look specifically here at how Jesus “ministers the things of man to God.” We must emphasize that when the dust of the preceding argument is allowed to settle fully, what remains is the fundamental truth that Christian worship of God is never immediate, but only ever mediated through Christ. Our worship is always a participation in Christ’s worship, who perfectly performs our acts of response to God on our behalf. This is not only a general theological axiom, it is the concrete foundation of all Christian acts of worship: our faith participates in Christ’s faith, our prayer in Christ’s prayer, our praise in Christ’s praise.

The faith of Jesus

Christ’s role as mediator of our worship becomes especially evident when we examine the theological foundation of our first and most vital response to God—that response without which it is impossible to please him—faith (Heb 11:6). Because of the deeply engrained protestant heritage that conceives of faith primarily as the means whereby the individual human being appropriates the saving benefits of Christ to himself, it might ring somewhat discordantly in our ears to talk about Christ “believing for us.” However, when we examine what the biblical authors mean when they describe “the faith of Christ” (πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), it is evident that even our faith itself should be understood as a participation in Christ’s faithful response to God on our behalf.

In a survey of Paul’s use of this expression in passages like Gal 2:20, 3:22, or Rom 3:22, Richard Hays suggests that πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ “signals that the death of Jesus is

simultaneously an act of human fidelity to God and an act of divine fidelity to humanity.”¹⁶ Though a thorough exploration of the exegetical and theological questions at play in the key texts is impossible here, the fundamental issue concerns whether we are to read the genitive construction πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ objectively or subjectively.¹⁷ While the phrase is typically translated objectively (hence, “faith in Jesus” NIV, NASB), πίστις followed by an objective genitive is a rare usage, especially in Hellenistic Jewish sources.¹⁸ In relation to the particular texts cited above, we might note the following. Rendering τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ as a subjective genitive in Gal 2:20 (i.e. “I live by *the Son of God’s faith*”) better reflects Paul’s broader argument and makes better sense of his immediate point—that it is no longer he who lives but Christ, “the Son of God” who “gave himself for [him],” who lives in him.¹⁹ Similarly in Rom 3:22, a variety of grammatical and rhetorical considerations suggest that this passage, too, points to a righteousness revealed by God through Christ’s *own* faithfulness—the fact that the righteousness of God is said to be revealed (presumably by God) *through* the πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, the rhetorical and linguistic parallels between ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ (4:16) and ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ, and the “ponderous redundancy” of adding εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας (3:22b, “to all who believe”) if 22a already signifies the faith of those who believe.²⁰ Ian Wallis examines seven key Pauline texts, suggesting that “in each case Paul had Christ’s own faith in mind,” and offering a reading of these texts that emphasizes the role of Christ in mediating our faith: “Christ...mediates soteriological possibilities not only by providing a channel for God’s

¹⁶ Richard Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 151.

¹⁷ For an overview, see Morna Hooker, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ,” in *New Testament Studies* 35.3 (July 1989): 321-42. In an objective genitive, the genitive substantive forms the object of the verbal idea implicit in the head noun (thus faith of Jesus=“the faith which has Jesus as its object”); in a subjective genitive, the genitive substantive forms the subject of the verbal idea in the head noun (faith of Jesus=“the faith which Jesus himself believes”).

¹⁸ Richard Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), xliv.

¹⁹ See Hays, *Faith of Jesus*, 155.

²⁰ See Hays, *Faith of Jesus*, xxxi.

covenant faithfulness, but also by establishing an existential continuity between Christ's faith and the faith of believers."²¹ He further suggests that this paradigmatic understanding of Christ's faith played a central role in the early Church's understanding of salvation as mediated through Christ.²²

When we translate πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ appropriately as a subjective genitive, we see that Christian faith is best understood as a participation in Christ's own representative faith on our behalf. As the fundamental basis and primary act of worship, then, our faith is not our autonomous and un-mediated response to God, but depends on Christ's role as mediator, enacting the pattern of faithfulness before God to which our own faith responds and in which it participates.²³ Thus can Torrance claim, "if we think of belief, trust or faith as forms of human activity before God, then we must think of Jesus Christ as believing, trusting and having faith in God the Father on our behalf and in our place."²⁴ In this way the necessary subject-object grammar of worship, as necessitated by God's immanence and transcendence is maintained whole.

The prayers of Jesus

If we consider prayer as another vital act of our response to God, we see that here too our approach to God is not immediate but is mediated by Christ in his "God-ward" movement as our mediator. As with Christian faith, Christian prayer should be theologically understood as having Christ himself as its ultimate subject—Christ, who gathers up our prayers into his own prayer and offers it to the Father, and who thereby acts as intercessor, standing "in for us to do for us

²¹ Ian Wallis, *The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 124.

²² *Ibid.*, 190.

²³ Hays, *Faith of Jesus*, 211.

²⁴ Thomas Torrance, *Mediation of Christ*, 82-3.

what we try to do and fail.”²⁵ Christ’s intercessory role in prayer can be directly linked to his office as the eternal high priest (Heb 6:20, 7:25-28, 8:1-6), whose ministry was prefigured by the intercessory prayer and sacrifice of Israel’s high priest.²⁶ In turn, we might look to Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer” in John 17, for a general example of this ministry, where Christ sanctifies himself and in turn prays for his followers’ sanctification (17:17-19).

Matthew’s handling of the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9-13), however, offers a more concrete illustration of how our prayers can be understood as a participation in Christ’s own prayer. Here Jesus instructs his followers to pray specifically to their Father (Πάτερ ἡμῶν 6:9) in Heaven that his will be done (γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου 6:10). This prayer will echo allusively as it finds its direct fulfillment in Gethsemane, when Jesus himself prays precisely these words (Πάτερ μου... γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου 26:42) in his agony. When we compare this to the Markan version of the prayer (οὐ τί ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλὰ τί σὺ, 14:36), we see that Matthew has chosen words that point back to 6:10, underscoring the fact that by his submission to the Father’s will, Jesus himself has perfectly prayed and indeed perfectly fulfilled the very prayer he has instructed his followers to pray.²⁷ The representative nature of Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane can be drawn out further along similar lines. In Mark’s account, which probably reflects the earliest version of the Gethsemane tradition, Jesus cries out “Αββα ὁ πατήρ” (14:36), and fully submits himself to the Father’s will. Paul may well be pointing back to this tradition in Romans 8:26-7 when he affirms that, though we do not know what we ought to pray for, the Spirit—the spirit of Christ (8:9-10), by whom we cry “Abba Father” (Αββα ὁ πατήρ 8:15)—intercedes on our behalf “in accordance

²⁵ James Torrance, *Worship, Community, and the Triune God*, 46.

²⁶ See *ibid.*, 47ff. for a discussion of this in relation to the Day of Atonement.

²⁷ For the parallels between Matthew 6:10 and 26:42, and their significance, I am indebted to Wes Olmstead, in a class lecture on Matthew 6:1-14.

with God” (“will” is implied by *κατὰ θεὸν* in v.27).²⁸ Thus Christ’s Spirit, whom he asked the Father to send (cf. John 14:16), enables us to utter Christ’s own cry of “Abba Father!”, thereby to pray in submission to the Father’s will as he himself did: “[Christ] sends his Spirit into our hearts and puts his prayer on our lips . . . So in the communion of the Spirit in the communion of the saints our prayers on earth are an echo of his prayers in heaven.”²⁹

The praise of Jesus

There are, to be sure, a variety of other important ways in which we might discuss Christ as the mediator of our worship, such as the way in which his self-offering on the cross forms the perfect act of sacrificial worship required by the Old Testament cult,³⁰ or the way in which Christians are equipped *through* him (Heb 13:21) for those good works which are their act of sacrifice (Heb 13:16). However, because it relates so closely to the human responses of faith and prayer discussed above, we will look here at how our specific acts of praise to God—in word and song—are included in the mediatory ministry of Jesus. Given the highly ego-centric and subjective acts of praise that form the core of Evangelical worship, the notion that Christ himself actually praises God on our behalf in his role as the recapitulated human being may seem foreign to us at first. Yet when we look to the most specifically praise-oriented book of the bible—the Book of Psalms—we see that it is indeed the anointed king, the Messiah of Israel, who sings God’s praises on Israel’s behalf. Bonhoeffer points to the specifically Davidic, and thus intensely Christological nature of the Psalter, insisting that we read it first and foremost as the “Prayerbook of Christ.” Of its prayers and songs he asserts, “The same words that David spoke, therefore, the future Messiah spoke. . . . It is none other than Christ who prayed them in Christ’s

²⁸ See Julie Lu, “The Spirit’s Intercession in Romans 8:26-27: An Exegetical Note,” in *Expository Times* 105.1 (October 1993): 13.

²⁹ James Torrance, *Worship, Community, and the Triune God*, 84.

³⁰ See, for a representative discussion, David Peterson, *Engaging with God* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1992), 172ff.

own forerunner, David.”³¹ This Christological reading of the Psalter does indeed reflect the way in which the New Testament writers put David’s songs of praise to God in Jesus’ mouth. For instance, in Romans 15:8-9, Paul applies Psalm 117:1 directly to Jesus: “I will praise you [God] among the Gentiles; / I will sing hymns to your [God’s] name.” Specifically here Christ’s “hymn of praise” is “sung” to the tune of his servanthood among the Jews, whereby the Gentiles “glorify God for his mercy” (15:9b). In a similar way, the author of Hebrews puts a psalm of praise on Christ’s lips: “I will declare your name to my brothers / in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises” (Psa 22:22). Here Christ’s “praise” takes the form of his willingness to identify as “brother” with those whom God has brought to glory through his suffering. This goes beyond merely reading individual psalms as messianic prophecy. The Psalter as a whole gathers together in itself all the lamentations and celebrations—“every need, every joy, every thanksgiving, and every hope”—of the God’s people; and Jesus, as the Messianic “Son of David” whose psalms they are, gathers them together in himself and offers them in his own self-offering to God, on behalf of his brothers and sisters.³² This is why Hebrews 13:15 insists that our “sacrifice of praise” can only be offered “through him,” and must be an acknowledgement of his name, for as with all our responses to God, our praise must participate in the praise of Christ our mediator.

Participation in the Worship of the Mediator: From Theology to Theopraxy

Being primarily a theological and exegetical study, this paper must leave many vital questions related specifically to practice and ministry for future inquiry. However, the mediation of Christ has a number of implications for worship that may be noted in closing. If Christian worship is to reflect the reality that all our acts of worship are mediated by Christ, it must replace

³¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 5, trans. James H. Burtness (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 159.

³² See *ibid.*, 157.

an increasingly pervasive anthropocentrism with a profound Christocentrism. In our hymnody, corporate prayer, and other liturgical acts, we must consistently point to, declare and represent, not primarily our own subjective, immediate response to God, but above all the response to God that Christ enacts on our behalf. Hence, the highly subjective, ego-centric focus in so much of what we say, sing, pray and do, must be strictly subordinate to more declarative, Christ-focused, God-centred forms.

Further to this, the acts and content of our worship must reflect a profoundly biblical awareness of the various ways we participate in Christ's worship, bringing them to the centre of what we do, and practicing them with a deliberate and conscious sense of their participatory nature. Confessions of Jesus as Lord, for instance—reciting traditional creeds, reading the creedal passages of Scripture (such as Phil 2:6-11, or 1 Tim 3:16), praying the Lord's Prayer, singing songs with confessional content—must be given a vital place in our worship, acknowledging that our confession of faith is fundamentally a confession of “the author and finisher of our faith,” and therefore a participation in his own faith (cf. Heb 4:14, 13:15, Phil 2:11, 1 John 2:23, 2 John 1:7-9). Similarly, our practice of the Lord's Supper needs to find a central place in our worship, and be acknowledged for what Scripture claims it is, a participation in the blood and body of Christ (κοινωνία 1 Cor 10:16). Even if we belong to a Zwinglian tradition that insists on talking about the “merely symbolic” significance of communion, our teaching on and service of the Lord's Supper must acknowledge the fact that biblical “remembrance” (ἀναμνησις) is not a mere nostalgic “recollection,” but it “means remembering in such a way that we see our participation in the past event and see our destiny and future as bound up with it.”³³ Likewise, rather than discussing and performing baptism in ego-centric terms of a “public declaration of a personal decision to accept Jesus as personal Saviour,” it

³³ James Torrance *Triune God of Grace*, 85.

should be reclaimed and proclaimed in more biblical terms, as a participation in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ (Col 2:11-13, cf. Eph 4:4-6).³⁴

With biblical sensitivity and liturgical creativity, other acts of worship can be used to more concretely express the reality that our worship is a participation in Christ's worship on our behalf. This is more than worship-novelty. This goes to the heart of what it means to worship as Christians. For worship can maintain the tension between God's transcendence and immanence, it can keep God as its object and subject, only when it concretely reflects and declares the truth that Jesus, the only mediator between God and humans, ministers both the things of "God to man" *and* "the things of man to God."

³⁴ For further on the vicarious participation in Christ through sacrament, see Torrance, *Mediation of Christ*, 89-92.

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