

THE HOLY TRINITY AND CHRISTIAN WORSHIP¹

by Robert Letham

I. Recent Revival of Interest in Trinitarian Doctrine

AN ENCOURAGING FEATURE of the last twenty or thirty years is a renewed focus on the Trinity. Following Barth's brilliant but flawed treatment in his *Church Dogmatics* and the pervasive trinitarian structure he gave the work, and the seminal contribution of Karl Rahner in 1967,² in which he subjected Aquinas' division between *de deo uno* and *de deo trino* in his *Summa Theologica* to intensive criticism, an increasing stream of discussion has followed, books by the truckload. More recently the Trinity has been a major concern of T.F. Torrance, culminating in his masterly volume *The Christian Doctrine of God* (1996)³ and of Jürgen Moltmann, in successive works, especially *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (1980, ET 1991).⁴ In England, Colin Gunton has written extensively and edited symposia on the Trinity.⁵ These are but a few examples. For our part, we should not fail to appreciate the profound significance the Trinity must have. A God-centred theology (can theology be anything else?) must, by definition, give centre-stage to what is

¹Lecture delivered at Mid-America Reformed Seminary on Nov. 10, 1999.

²K. Rahner, *Mysterium salutis: Grundriss heilsgeschichtliche dogmatik*, vol. 2, *Die heilsgeschichte vor Christus*. Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendenter urgrund der heilsgeschichte (Einsiedeln: Benziger vorlag, 1967).

³T. F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996).

⁴J. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (London: SCM, 1991).

⁵C. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991); C. Gunton, *The Triune Creator* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

distinctive of Christianity, the high watermark of God's self-revelation in the Bible.

II. The Neglect of the Trinity in the Western church

Trinitarian theology has had a wider impact on the theology and piety of the Eastern church than it has in the West. Eastern liturgy has been permeated with trinitarianism. In the West the Trinity has in practice been relegated to such an extent that most Christians are probably little more than practical modalists. Colin Gunton suggests some reasons for this in his important article "Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West," *Scottish Journal of Theology* (1990), republished in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (T. & T. Clark, 1991). He points the finger at Augustine, the seminal trinitarian of the Western church. Augustine began from the premise of the unity of God. He had difficulty with the concept of theophany and incarnation. Thus he did not build his trinitarian thought on the basis of historical, Biblical revelation as the Cappadocians did. His famous psychological analogy was thereby, Gunton argues, flawed. It was ahistorical and failed to do justice to the persons. It has made the Trinity problematic in the West, a recondite mystery for the theologically advanced and has bred the atheism and agnosticism we see around us.

These criticisms carry weight. Moreover, they strike close to home. Consider some of the traditional works of systematic theology produced in the Western Reformed tradition. Charles Hodge ploughs through some 250 pages on the doctrine of God before turning his attention to the Trinity. Louis Berkhof follows the same pattern—page after page on the existence of God, the knowability of God, the being of God, the names of God, and the attributes of God. Only then does he consider the Trinity. On the more popular level, J. I. Packer's bestseller *Knowing God* (1973) has only seven pages out of 254 on the Trinity. He recognizes that for most Christians it is an esoteric mystery to which lip service may be paid once a year on Trinity Sunday. However, after his chapter is over he carries on as if nothing has happened. Contrast this with the great theologian of the Eastern Church, John of Damascus. His *De Orthodoxa Fidei* starts off on a trinitarian footing as early as 1:1-10.

A striking example of the muddle that prevails in Western Christianity (I use Western in both senses here) was seen in a letter

to *The Times* (London) in June 1992 by David Prior, a well-known evangelical Anglican vicar in London. Prior recounted how he was preparing a sermon for Trinity Sunday on the Trinity (good for him, I have only ever heard *at most* one or two sermons on the Trinity, other than by myself). He searched for some intelligible comparison to help his congregation, and found it watching cricket (a fruitful source for theology that Americans neglect to their peril!) on television, England versus Pakistan at Lord's. Ian Salisbury, the England leg-spinner (a type of pitcher) bowled successively a leg break, a googly, and a flipper (a top-spinner). There, said Prior, was a perfect analogy—one person expressing himself in three different ways! Before I had opportunity to send off a response to the editor, a half dozen or so others had pounced on the unfortunate Prior to point out that he had resurrected the ancient heresy of modalism. Modalism, simply put, claimed that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were merely ways God revealed himself and did not represent eternal antecedent realities in God himself. These were not eternal, personal, ontological distinctions. On the contrary, they were temporary guises, like an actor assuming different roles at different times. The problem with this, of course, was that if that were so, we would have no genuine knowledge of God, for he would be something other in himself than he had revealed himself to be.

Contrast this with Gregory Nazianzen who speaks of “my trinity” and who, in his *Oration on the Theophany*, states “when I say God, I mean Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”⁶ In the West, on the other hand, philosophers of religion who are also Christian customarily refer to a generic “God” all the time, the Trinity going without mention.⁷ Examine any hymn book or chorus book you can find and search for compositions that are clearly trinitarian. You won't find many. Ask yourself as you do so how many items could equally be sung by unitarians, orthodox Jews or Muslims. You will be surprised. Let's name a few—and these are traditional favorites that have stood the test of time and by dint of usage have established themselves as part of the canon of Anglo-Saxon hymnody. “My God, How Wonderful Thou Art”, “Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven”, “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise”,

⁶Gregory Nazianzen. *Oratio* 38, 8.

⁷Cf. the pertinent comments of N. Needham (1997). “The filioque Clause: East or West?” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 15: 161.

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation”, even (dare I say it?) “Great is Thy Faithfulness”—only theistic, at best very, very implicitly binitarian, “How great thou art” (at best binitarian). We could go on. Of course, we may bring to these texts trinitarian assumptions and so interpret them, although I daresay only a very few may do so, but this is not present in the text. In view of the integral connection between theology and worship, taught by the fathers,⁸ this is a serious matter.

III. Only God can Make God Known and Determine How We Relate to Him

Naming in the ancient near East denoted the sovereignty of the one who named over the one named. Thus, for example, Adam names the animals (Gen 2:19f.) in fulfilling the creation mandate of Genesis 1:28ff. to exercise dominion over the animal world. The striking point here is that only God ever names God. Never is a name given him by a member of the human race. Only he has the right to name himself, for he as the creator is not subject to the sovereignty of any other being. Moreover, the covenant community is to have no other gods than he (Exod 20:1-3). Contemporary feminists notwithstanding, human attempts to name god are figments of the imagination, idols made in a human image, without validity. *Thus, God is sovereign in his self-revelation.* This is seen notably in Exodus 33:18-34:7, where he refuses Moses’ request to see his glory due to its impossibility and instead affirms his utter authority, placing Moses in a cleft in the rock while granting him a new revelation of his name.⁹

Further, God is sovereign in granting us knowledge of himself by the Holy Spirit. If Moses had to recognize the gulf between the creator and creature insofar as God grants knowledge of himself freely according to his will, there is also the added factor of human sin

⁸See *inter alia* Prosper of Aquitaine’s famous formula *lex credendi lex statuat supplicandi*, in his *De vocatione omnium gentium*, 1:12, in J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia cursus completus: series Latina* 51:774; “Liturgy,” “Liturgy and Bible,” in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, edited by Angelo Di Berardino (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1:494-505.

⁹T. F. Torrance, “The Christian Apprehension of God the Father,” in *Speaking the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism*, edited by A. F. Kimel Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 120-43.

that further places us in total reliance on God to make himself known. Paul indicates we were dead in sin, helpless to do anything ourselves to put right our rebellion against God, besides being unwilling to do so, for a dead man can will and do nothing to change his situation (Eph 2:1f.). Elsewhere he says unbelievers are blinded by the god of this age so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of God in Christ (2 Cor 4:4). As Jesus taught, we trust him only as we are drawn by the Holy Spirit (John 6:44). The propensity of the human race to devise new objects of worship and new forms of worship demonstrates its inherent recognition of the need to worship, but also displays its ignorance, deepened and perverted by sin.

The God who has made himself known for our salvation has revealed himself to be triune. He unfolds progressively his revelation in covenant history. At each stage he names himself. In the Abrahamic covenant he made himself known as *El Shaddai* (God Almighty) (Gen 17:1). In the Mosaic covenant he named himself *ehyeh* (Exod 3:14, cf. *y'vah*, 6:3). At the apex of redemptive history, Jesus came to fulfil the promises of the Old Testament. Matthew records how Jesus inaugurated the kingdom of heaven, promised to Abraham long before. The locus of the covenant is no longer limited to Israel but extends to the whole world. Indeed, many Israelites would be cast out of the covenant community while the Gentiles would be part of it (cf. Matt. 8:11-12). As the Mosaic covenant was inaugurated with the sprinkling of covenantal blood, so the new covenant is founded in the blood of Jesus (Matt. 26:27-29). At the end of his Gospel Matthew recounts how the nations are to be disciples, through the new covenant sacrament of baptism. This baptism is into the one name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Thus, Jesus the Son names God as the one God who is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in connection with the new covenant sacrament, baptism. This is God's crowning self-revelation—to which all that preceded points. Retrospectively, it casts light on all that went before (like a detective mystery discloses in the final scene the clues that make sense of the entire story).

The triune God alone can grant us access to himself and determine how we relate to him and approach him. In the Mosaic covenant Moses was required to construct the paraphernalia of Israel's worship exactly as Yahweh told him. Jesus announced that no one comes to the Father except through him. Access to the

Father is exclusively through the mediation of the Son. These are terms laid down by the triune God.

IV. Christian Worship is Distinctively Trinitarian

When we look at the Godhead . . . that which we conceive is One; but when we look at the persons in whom the Godhead dwells, and at those who tirelessly and with equal glory have their being from the first cause¹⁰—there are three whom we worship.

(Gregory Nazianzen *Fifth Theological Oration*, 14)

. . . one essence, one divinity, one power, one will, one energy, one beginning, one authority, one dominion, one sovereignty, *made known in three perfect subsistences and adored with one adoration* . . . united without confusion and divided without separation.

(John of Damascus, *De Orthodoxa Fidei*, 1:8)

1. *Basis and ground of worship*

The worship of the church is grounded on who God is and what he has done. The Father has sent the Son “for us and our salvation.” This is prominent in John, chapters 5, 10 and 17, but Paul also directs attention to it in Romans 8:32. In turn, the Father together with the Son has sent the Holy Spirit to indwell the church. The focus of the Spirit’s ministry is to speak of Christ the Son.

This is summarized clearly in *Galatians 4:4-6*. When the fullness of time had come God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that they might receive the inheritance of sons. And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying “Abba, Father.” Here lies the basic premiss of all God’s actions: *from the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit*. As Cyril of Alexandria states in his *Commentary on John* “all things proceed from the Father, but wholly through the Son in the Spirit.”

2. *Our response*

¹⁰Here is the focus typically associated with the Cappadocians and, after them, Eastern trinitarianism on the Father as the principal or fount of deity.

Eph 2:18

“Through him [Christ] we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by the Holy Spirit to the Father.”

Access to God is ultimately access to the Father. This is through Christ, the one mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). Paul has pointed out that Christ made reconciliation by the cross (v. 14), tearing down the dividing wall between God and ourselves due to sin, and between Jew and Gentile due to the ceremonial law. Again, it is the Spirit who gives us life in place of death (cf. v. 1), raising us in and with Christ (vv. 6-7) and graciously granting faith (vv. 8-10). Calvin held that the principal work of the Holy Spirit is to grant us faith. Thus the Spirit enables us to worship God and so serve him in the world. It is a cardinal teaching of Scripture that saving faith is the gift of God, given by the Spirit (Jn. 6:44, Eph. 2:1-10, 1 Cor 12:3). Here is the reverse movement to that seen above—*by the Holy Spirit through Christ to the Father*. This encompasses the entirety of our response to, and relationship with, God—from worship through the whole field of Christian experience.

John 4:23-24

The question of Samaritan woman concerned the proper place of worship, whether it was Jerusalem (as the Jews held) or Mount Gerizim (as the Samaritans maintained). Jesus supports Jerusalem, for the Jews worshiped according to knowledge while the Samaritans did not. However, now the time had come when this distinction was to be superceded. True worshipers now worship the Father in spirit and in truth. This can hardly mean merely that a particular location is irrelevant, or that true worship can now occur anywhere, although that is without question true. Nor is the reference to spirit to be interpreted of the human spirit, as if true worship was purely inward and externals of no consequence. The rest of the New Testament makes clear that what is actually done is important. We are not disembodied spirits and what we do physically counts. Instead, we should bear in mind the extensive teaching Jesus gives in the fourth Gospel on the Holy Spirit, concentrated later in chapters 14-16. In this connection, Jesus means that true worship is directed to the Father in the Holy Spirit. In the words of Basil the Great:

It is an extraordinary statement, but it is nonetheless true, that the Spirit is frequently spoken of as the place of them that are being sanctified. . . . This is the special and peculiar place of true worship In what place do we offer it? In the Holy Spirit. . . . It follows that the Spirit is truly the place of the saints and the saint is the proper place for the Spirit, offering himself as he does for the indwelling of God, and called God's temple.¹¹

Again, when we ask what is meant here by "truth," do we have to look any further than John's record of Jesus as the embodiment of truth (14:6), as the true light coming into the world (1:9), "full of grace and truth" (1:14), who thereby brought grace and truth into the world (1:17)? Jesus here points implicitly, as Paul, to new covenant worship as trinitarian. We worship the Father in the Holy Spirit and in the fullness of truth, his incarnate Son.¹² In summary Gregory Nazianzen puts these passages in context with his comment, "This, then, is my position . . . to worship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, three persons, one Godhead, undivided in honour and glory and substance and kingdom."¹³

Putting it another way, from the other side as it were, *the worship of the church is the communion of the holy Trinity with us his people*. We are inclined to view worship as what we do, but if we follow our argument, it is *first and foremost* something the triune God does, our actions initiated and encompassed by his. The author of Hebrews refers to Christ offering himself up unblemished to the Father "in or by eternal spirit." Since our salvation is received in union with Christ, what is his by nature is made ours by grace. Thus in his self-offering to the Father, he offers us in him. We are thereby enabled to share in the relation he has with the Father (our Father in heaven, our Father by grace because he is firstly Jesus' Father by nature). Christ is, in reality, the one true worshiper,¹⁴ our worship being a participation in his. A focus on our worship, on what we do, is inherently Pelagian. Further, our worship is *by the Holy Spirit* in

¹¹Basil the Great, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 26:62.

¹²See Athanasius, *Ad Serapion*, 1:33 for a similar explanation.

¹³Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio*, 31:28.

¹⁴A. M. Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ* (Lodon: Longmans, 1949), 91ff.

Christ. As John Thompson puts it: “If one understands the New Testament and the view it gives of how we meet with and know God and worship him as triune, then worship is not primarily our act but, like our salvation, is God’s gift before or as it is our task.”¹⁵

The worship of the church is thus not only grounded on the mediation of Christ but takes place in union with and through his mediatorial work and continued intercession.

[B]eing still endued with human shape, he molds accordingly the form of his prayer, and asks as though he possessed it not . . . in him, as the first fruits of the race, the nature of man was wholly reformed into newness of life, and ascending, as it were, to its own first beginning was molded anew into sanctification. . . . Christ called down upon us the ancient gift of humanity, that is, sanctification through the Spirit and communion in the divine nature.¹⁶

Behind this lies the incarnation (the Son of God did not simply indwell human nature but came *as man*, permanently assuming unabbreviated human nature—sin apart), the vicarious humanity of Christ (he took our place in every way—including as a worshiper, since as man he owed it to the Father), his full and complete obedience to the Father by the Holy Spirit, and his continuing high priestly intercession as expounded in John 17 and Hebrews.

Therefore, since Christian worship is determined, initiated and shaped by, and directed to, the holy Trinity, *we worship the three with one undivided act of adoration*. I want now to say something, however tentative, about our worship of the three, at the same time remembering that the three coinhere, mutually indwell each other in the unity of the *undivided* Trinity. Gregory of Nazianzen provides a vital principle: “No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am illumined by the splendour of the Three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the One.”¹⁷

It is often said that the only distinction of the persons is the ineffable eternal begetting and being begotten, and the procession. However, this is not so. Only the second person became incarnate, not the Father or the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit came at

¹⁵John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 99-101.

¹⁶Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*.

¹⁷Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio*, 41.

Pentecost, not the Son or the Father. Only the Father, not the Holy Spirit, sent the Son. But are these not economic activities? Yes, of course they are. But if the incarnation could equally have taken place with the Father or the Holy Spirit as the subject would that not reduce the holy Trinity to arbitrariness? Is there something *appropriate* in the Son becoming incarnate? If so, will not this distinctiveness lend sharpness to our worship?

There are good grounds for believing that these profound economic distinctions rest on prior ontological foundations.

If it were not so, we would be veering towards modalism, and the revelation of God in redemptive history would have no bearing on who he is in himself. At best there would be in the background the question of whether there was some other God lurking behind that which he had revealed himself to be. Besides, if it was arbitrary that the Son became incarnate, the implications for the faithfulness and reliability of God would be far-reaching.

Philippians 2:5-11 connects the humiliation of the incarnate Christ with his refusal to use his status “in the form of God” as something to be exploited for his own advantage, unlike Adam in the garden. His refusal to use his status for self-seeking is expressed firstly in his determination to become incarnate, to take “the form of a servant.” His incarnate obedience, with his pervasive concern to do the Father’s will and not seek his own glory, reflects who he is in his pre-incarnate state.

Hebrews 5 points to Christ not taking on himself the honour of becoming high priest but instead following the appointment of the Father. His high priestly work began with his becoming man (cf. 4:14f., 5:7-8, 10:5f.) and thus his appointment as high priest must refer to intra-trinitarian realities antecedent to his incarnation in space and time. Thus, he does not glorify himself. Instead, he receives from the Father.

The Son has assumed human nature not for the years of time alone, then to discard it, but for eternity. This is not something restricted to the economic or of only limited effect. Therefore it implies and entails that there is something to the Son that rendered it appropriate that he, rather than the Father or the Holy Spirit, should become incarnate.

When his mediatorial kingdom is complete the Son will hand over the kingdom to the Father, according to 1 Corinthians 15. Hence, the Son’s self-abasement in his incarnate ministry points not

only backwards to his pre-incarnate existence but forwards to the end. Throughout the Son serves not his own interests but those of the Father. Even in his exaltation, the glory of the Father is his goal (Phil. 2:11).

In turn, the Father determined that his kingdom be established and advanced principally by the Son. In this sense, it is the Son who occupies centre-stage. This is entirely in accord with the purpose of the Father. “’Tis the Father’s pleasure we should call him Lord.”

Again, the Holy Spirit works in the background, so to speak, not speaking of himself or bringing glory to himself but testifying of Christ, the Son. He hears the Son and witnesses to this.

Thus, there are good reasons (both economic and ontological) for worshiping in one act of adoration the three in their distinct persons and relations with one another. A living relationship with God requires that each of the persons be honoured and adored in the context of their revealed relations with each other. The nature of our response in worship is to be shaped by the reality of the one we worship. At the same time, we must give equal attention to the reality that God is one, and that the Trinity is undivided. The three are mutually coinherent, the identical divine essence in each person individually, each person mutually containing each other.

As we consider this we must be struck by our ignorance. We haven’t got a clue what goes on in the ontological Trinity—it is completely beyond us. It is like the old illustration of dipping a teacup into the ocean. Besides the vastness of the Atlantic, the water in our teacup is infinitesimal. But yet—the water in the teacup *is* the Atlantic ocean, insofar as it is a true sample. It is true we don’t know the inner workings of the Trinity and can never know, and it may even border on sacrilege to talk about it. It may even have been better to remain silent. But we do know what the Son is like—Paul tells in his magnificent statement in Philippians 2:5ff. We also know that he created and sustains the laws of physics. We do know what the Holy Spirit is like, for we know that in the midst of the turmoil of everyday life love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, and patience are the fruit of the Spirit, hallmarks of his own character produced in us on a creaturely level. We know that the Father chose that his kingdom be initiated and advanced by the Son and the Spirit. We know, in Pannenberg’s words, that

as Jesus glorifies the Father and not himself . . . so the Spirit glorifies not himself but the Son, and in him the Father. . . . The

Father hands over his kingdom to the Son and receives it back from him. The Son is obedient to the Father and he thereby glorifies him. The Spirit fills the Son and glorifies him in his obedience to the Father.”¹⁸

We also know, as Calvin put it, that the will of the Father differs not in the slightest from what he has revealed in his word. And as we think of the three in their distinctness, we recall that they indwell each other in undivided union.

V. Specific Questions

1. *This should affect the way we treat people.* Worship and reconciliation must go together. Christian worship is focused on the holy Trinity and controlled by the Trinity. God is an undivided Trinity in which the three indwell each other in love, seeking the interests of the others. Worship entails the whole person submitting to, and becoming conformed to, the one worshiped. If Philippians 2 was true of Christ the Son at all times, it must become true of us too.

2. *Perichoresis and the charismatic movement.* Richard Gaffin, in a recent article on the charismatic movement, points to a tendency of Charismatics to separate the Holy Spirit from Christ. He counters this by pointing to the close connection Paul draws between Christ and the Spirit.¹⁹ I suggest this argument is undergirded by the patristic teaching on perichoresis, the mutual indwelling of the persons, all occupying the same divine space. The Father is *in* the Son, the Son is *in* the Father, the Holy Spirit is *in* the Son and the Father, the Father is *in* the Holy Spirit, and the Son is *in* the Holy Spirit. Thus to worship one person *at the expense of* the others is to divide the undivided Trinity.

3. *General theistic worship is defective worship.* We referred to the common focus on “God,” undefined and undifferentiated. How much of what passes for Christian worship falls into this category? If the hymnody is anything to go by, the vast majority. Still less does entertainment, or “worship” focused on human persons—seekers

¹⁸Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. G. W. Bromiley, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991-1993), 1:315.

¹⁹Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. “Challenges of the Charismatic Movement to the Reformed Tradition,” *Ordained Servant* 7 (1998): 48-57.

or otherwise—pass muster, for by definition it is not worship but idolatry.

4. *There is a need to refocus Western hymnody.* We need more trinitarian hymns. That is obvious from what I said earlier. As for the argument for exclusive psalmody – yes, we share in Christ’s use of the Psalter in praise to the Father, and so it should provide the backbone of Christian worship, but the Psalms do not reflect explicitly the full range of trinitarian revelation.

5. *Prayer is—inter alia—exploration of the holy Trinity.* Christian experience is pervasively trinitarian, prayer very centrally included. One wonders how much of the decline in appreciation of the Trinity is due to exclusively unguided extemporaneous prayer? At times of theological strength and spiritual vitality, this may be fine but when decline sets in there is nothing then to check it. Here Thomas Cranmer’s liturgical genius and ancient trinitarian prayers like the *Te Deum* can be guides and resources for the future.

6. *We need to recover Calvin’s and the Westminster Confession of Faith’s view of the Lord’s Supper and develop it further in a trinitarian direction.* An effective Zwinglianism has dominated American Protestantism, including (sad to say) Presbyterianism. Calvin and the Westminster Assembly focused on the faithful feeding on Christ in faith by the Holy Spirit, thus in union with Christ the Son sharing in his access to the Father. This is worlds apart from an act of mental recollection of the human Jesus.

7. *Chief of all, the Trinity must be preached and must shape preaching.* Preaching is the high point of worship. Not only must the Trinity be preached but *all* preaching must be shaped by the active recognition that the God whose word is proclaimed is triune. A trinitarian mindset must become as integral to the preacher as the air we breathe.

8. *We must work towards a correspondence between tacit and articulated knowledge and experience.* Michael Polanyi argues for the existence of what he calls “tacit knowledge,” a basic level of pre-articulated knowledge.²⁰ In short, he suggests, we know more than can be expressed. This explains how we can think and work towards a solution of a problem, the identity of which we cannot clearly put in words. In Polanyi’s terms, the experience of the Christian church *is* trinitarian, even if its assimilation into forms of teaching and

²⁰Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

worship is less than it might be. Our argument is that this needs to be brought to expression more thoroughly and pervasively so that it becomes part of the church's articulated consciousness. In time, there will then be a correspondence between the reality itself on the one hand (God the holy Trinity), what is confessed, believed, and taught on the other hand, and finally with what is tacitly believed and known.

9. *The effects of this may be far-reaching*, not only on theology but on worship, prayer, our worldview, our view of creation, the way we treat people, missions (evangelization of Islamic peoples) and all work for the kingdom of God.

We end with two trinitarian prayers, one from the West (from Cranmer) and the other from the East.

Almighty and everlasting God, who has given unto us your servants grace by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the unity. We beseech you, that you would keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who lives and reigns one God, world without end. Amen.

Through Christ, with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory is yours, Almighty Father, forever and ever. Amen.