

The Trinitarian DNA of Christian Worship: Perennial Themes in Recent Theological Literature

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One of the remarkable features of Christian theology in recent years is the resurgence of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity. One of the persistent features of this literature is the observation that Trinitarian theology has considerable implications for Christian worship—an observation that is often made, but less often developed.¹ On the assumption that doctrine and liturgy are inextricably intertwined, my interest is to isolate and clarify the links between the doctrine of the Trinity and the theology and practice of worship, and thereby to explore the basic "grammar" or "DNA" of Trinitarian worship.

Because my purposes are not primarily historical, but constructive, I will approach the recent body of Trinitarian theology thematically. This literature features what Robert Jenson describes as "several kinds of Trinitarian discourse."² It puts the doctrine of the Trinity to different uses, each of which arises out of a different motivation, aims at a different target, and speaks to a different antagonist. My procedure will be to identify briefly five unique though inter-related themes, five "kinds of Trinitarian discourse," and to explore the resonances or corollaries of those themes in work on the theology and practice of liturgy. By choosing to offer an overview, my goal is to present this material at a level of specificity that can best inform the work of musicians, artists, poets, preachers, and liturgists.³

1. Imago Trinitatis: Divine and Human Relationality

Arguably the most pervasive theme in recent Trinitarian literature is an emphasis on relationality as essential for understanding divine being and human personhood. The doctrine of the Trinity, the argument runs, depicts divine life as supremely relational, where "love-for-another" is seen to be the essential aspect of divine life and, consequently, the source and goal of human existence. Typical works feature rhapsodic descriptions of the "agapic other-regard, that divine reciprocity, the supreme mutuality that lies at the heart of the universe."⁴ Many of the works in the field argue, with John Zizioulas, that Being itself is communion. This is a vision that accentuates *koinonia* as a primary attribute of divine life, and contends that human communal life should model, embody, mirror, or be analogous to that deep communion. This vision nearly always draws on the metaphor of *perichoresis* or "indwelling"—an "in-ness" relationship among divine persons intimated in the Gospel according to John and developed by John of Damascus⁵—that envisions divine life as a dynamic dance, where God's unity is a function of active relations. When seen as a vision for human life, this vision protests any form of either ecclesiastical or societal individualism. Here the term "Trinitarian" is used as an antonym to the terms "individualistic" and "isolated."

Broadly speaking, there are two basic ways of conceptualizing and highlighting relationality in Trinitarian terms. One way follows Augustine and Barth, drawing on psychological analogies of the Trinity to conceptualize the divine being as unipersonal, but nevertheless self-giving. God is relational toward us: Christ is a perfect sign of God's essential self-giving posture. This Trinitarian vision is deeply relational, in contrast with deist views of a pristine and remote God, but it shies away from speaking of an interpersonal exchange within divine life.

A second way of conceptualizing divine relationality, much discussed in recent literature, draws

on the Cappadocian fathers (or at least the traditional understanding of them), and thinks tripersonally of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a communion, or even a community, of divine persons. This theme has been sounded most aggressively by proponents of the so-called social doctrine of the Trinity, influenced by the work of Jürgen Moltmann. A tripersonal or social view of God posits that God is best conceived as a community of divine persons, where "God is three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who exist in perichoretic union as one God."⁶ The accent falls on the threeness over against the oneness of God, in ways that favor not unipersonal, but tripersonal descriptions, metaphors, and images of divine life. This is a vision that corresponds visually with the famous Rublev icon of the Trinity. Musically, it is a vision perhaps best expressed in Messiaen's "Meditations on the Holy Trinity," with three unique musical motifs that weave together in profound polyphony.

Underneath these two approaches are complex discussions about the nature of personhood, and terminological nuances of the meaning of key Greek, Latin, German, and English terms for divine unity and personhood. Both ways, however, work up a robust enthusiasm for a view of God that protests any intimation of isolation.

And both find complementary allies in anthropological concepts developed in nontheological contexts, including philosophical anthropology and social psychology, which favor ecstatic and relational accounts of human personhood.⁷ This relational vision of divine life is transmuted to human, communal life through one out of several of what Christoph Schwöbel calls "bridging concepts" that span the doctrine of God and a socio-ethical vision. Two bridging concepts are especially prominent.⁸ The first is a notion that the doctrine of God describes something that human beings are challenged to mirror, model, imitate, or image. This set of metaphors emphasizes the perfection of divine life and the distinction between God and humanity. The second is the notion that the doctrine of God describes a reality that humans are called to embody or in which they are called to participate. This metaphor emphasizes the closeness, even the intimacy, of divine and human life. Either way, Trinitarian relationality is taken to provide a foundation for ethics, ecclesiology, political theology, and social theory—that is, for any area of discourse concerned with the ordering of human communal life, including its common worship.

This relational vision touches most closely on liturgy through work in ecclesiology. The church, to use a phrase of Jürgen Moltmann, is an "icon of the Trinity."⁹ Among recent theorists, one of the first to draw the connection between the doctrine of God and the doctrine of the church was the missiologist, bishop, and teacher Lesslie Newbigin: "The Church is called to be a union of [those] with Christ in the love of the Father whereby their separate beings are made one with that perfect mutual interpenetration in love, that perfect community which is the glory of God."¹⁰ Likewise, Letty Russell grounds her notion of "The Church in the Round" in the doctrine of the Trinity: "the partnership of God in the persons of the Trinity also provides an image of mutuality, reciprocity, and a totally shared life. The characteristics of partnership, or *koinonia*, may be discovered in their perfection in the Trinity, where there is a focus of relationship in mutual love between the persons and toward creation."¹¹

To see the implications here for Christian worship is not hard. Christian worship is one arena where a Trinitarian ecclesiology is most tangibly expressed. As Jean-Jacques von Allmen argued, worship is "pre-eminently the moment of true community. . . . Christian worship is the most emphatic contradiction of human solitude and abandonment."¹² At its best, Christian liturgy

embodies the mutuality and *koinonia* of a Trinitarian ecclesiology and thus prefigures the coming kingdom. In a public, concrete way, Christian worship is an icon of our union with Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. In a public, concrete way, Christian worship is an icon of the web of relationships that make up the Christian church, particularly in the sacraments, which are supreme moments for enacting gospel-shaped relationships.

In all of these discussions several temptations are to be avoided: the temptation to rethink the Trinity in light of prior social or political commitments; the temptation to apply our vision for relationality selectively to those liturgical practices we happen to like or that are politically expedient; and—perhaps most significantly—the temptation to think of divine life as only a model, and not also the source, for rightly ordered human relationships.

Nevertheless, this vision of corporate worship as a locus for *koinonia* calls for realization in tangible ways, in particular forms, institutions, rites, texts, and other liturgical practices. Recent literature has sought to ground any number of liturgical practices in a theology of Trinitarian relationality. Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity is often the lead doctrine that introduces discussions of architecture emphasizing human relationality, more egalitarian visions of Christian leadership, a greater liturgical ecumenism and unity, the corporate nature of Christian prayer, more communal ways of receiving the sacraments, sermons that aim at restoration of community, corporate almsgiving as a basic for another action of Christian *diakonia*, corporate processes for the creation of liturgical art forms (over against treating liturgical artists as solitary geniuses who work independently from worshipping communities), greater inclusion of children and persons with disabilities, language that is inclusive and accessible, to say nothing of ideas for deepening the practice of the passing of the peace. Concern for Trinity-like relationality thus grounds and inspires several community-building worship practices.

2. The "Divine Mediation" Theme

A second primary theme in recent Trinitarian literature is a recovery of active awareness of the action of Christ and the Spirit as fully divine persons who prompt and mediate human acts of prayer, praise, and sacramental participation. Here the term Trinitarian is used as an antonym of "Pelagian" or any other term that implies that human instrumentality brings about a divine-human encounter. Note that the use of the term "Trinitarian" brings a different, though not incompatible, emphasis from the relational theme described above (theme 1).

Consider this Trinitarian definition of Christian worship by Thomas F. Torrance: "In our worship the Holy Spirit comes forth from God, uniting us to the response and obedience and faith and prayer of Jesus, and returns to God, raising us up in Jesus to participate in the worship of heaven and in the eternal communion of the Holy Trinity."¹³ For Torrance (and for Moltmann, Colin Gunton, and dozens of other theologians) worship involves two directional movements—God's coming to the church and the church's response to God—both of which involve the action of each member of the Trinity. When Colin Gunton calls Ephesians 2:18 "a Trinitarian way of speaking," and when Vincent Brümmer speaks about the Holy Spirit's work of enabling the human response to God by saying that "God motivates us in a Trinitarian way to turn to him,"¹⁴ they refer not primarily to a notion of ecstatic relationality (theme 1), but to the divinity of the Son and Spirit as agents and mediators who act on or through us to make divine-human communication possible. The point here is that the agents that enable both God's coming to us and our response to God are not less than divine persons—whose work, as such, can be trusted

to be efficacious. As Gunton concludes: "the first and last thing we have to say about God the Trinity is that he is a God who enables us to worship him."¹⁵

Any number of theologians could be quoted to illustrate this conceptualization. One is J.-J. von Allmen, who argues that the first, initiatory movement in the divine-human relationship enacted in liturgy is God's. In preaching, von Allmen concluded, "Christian preaching cannot therefore be understood apart from the doctrine of the Trinity: on the basis of the past work of His Son, and in the perspective of the work He is yet to do, God the Father gives us today, through the Holy Spirit, faith in the salvation which has been accomplished and hope in the salvation yet to be revealed."¹⁶ Likewise, the sacramental movement of worship is neatly summed up in a Trinitarian formulation. "The sacrament is the means which the Holy Spirit uses to convey Christ and His salvation to us By the *sacrament*, the Holy Spirit binds the Christ to us"; and again, "The Christian place of worship is the assembly in which Jesus Christ, God's temple, is present, in the power of the Spirit."¹⁷ In short, in liturgy God comes to the worshiping community "in Christ, through the Spirit." These formulations suggest why the doctrine of the Trinity is so crucial: it ensures that both the content of Christian proclamation and the source for perceiving that content are not less than God.

The God-humanward movement is complemented by a movement from human beings to God, a movement of faith, prayer, worship, and sacrifice. This movement, too, is frequently conceptualized in a Trinitarian way. Worship, praise, and prayer are offered "to the Father, in Christ, through the Spirit." Von Allmen's Trinitarian description of this human response begins with his analysis of the "messianic cult": the worship of God offered by Jesus Christ. He emphasized that Jesus' whole life was an act of priestly worship to God: "the true glorification of God on earth, which is the perfect worship, has been fulfilled by Jesus Christ in his ministry." He also insisted that this act of worship is ongoing, and is now rendered by Jesus to God in heaven: "the present of the history of salvation is the heavenly offering which Jesus Christ renders to His Father in the glory of the Ascension."¹⁸ Both Jesus' earthly life and Jesus' ongoing life in heaven are priestly. Our participation in Christ's worship is only possible because of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a "liturgical agent" who makes possible and effects the worship of God. Christian worship "is born of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit." The Lord's Supper is only effectual because of the "quickening by the Holy Spirit"—"the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church means that worship is induced and brought into being." In sum, "the Holy Spirit brings us into communion with Christ."

Whether in von Allmen's writings or elsewhere, such Trinitarian descriptions of the inner workings of worship are marked with a certain rhetorical symmetry: worship consists in proclamation from the Father in Christ through the Spirit, and response in the Spirit through Christ to the Father—patterns that have been called the "chiastic meta-narrative of scripture" and "doxological summaries of the history of salvation."¹⁹ Yet to get lost in the symmetry of such formulations and to miss their main point is easy. The point is to accent the way in which both revelation and response, both sacrament and sacrifice, are gifts of divine grace. The point is to preserve and make luminous the patristic instinct that both God's revelation and our human response are gifts to be received rather than accomplishments to be sought.

The target of this assertion is a perennial temptation toward a kind of liturgical Pelagianism. So James B. Torrance, for example, is particularly concerned with theological schemes that correctly stress "God-humanward movement in Christ" but wrongly imply that "the human-

Godward movement is still ours." He contends that this tendency ignores the priesthood of Christ, so that "the only priesthood is our priesthood, the only offering our offering, the only intercessions our intercessions." Torrance maintains that this vision implies that "God throws us back upon ourselves to make our response" and ignores 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." Torrance argues that this distorted view of worship is functionally unitarian, operating apart from the work of the Holy Spirit and the mediatorship of Christ. Even though we sing Trinitarian hymns and observe Trinity Sunday, we approach God more like the pristine, isolated God of deism than like an active, mediating Presence. For Torrance the key thesis is that *both* "the God-humanward movement and human-Godward relationship" are "freely given to us in Jesus Christ."²⁰

A theology of worship that emphasizes that worship is a gift of divine grace has inevitable consequences for how liturgy is celebrated.²¹ First, Christian worshipers acknowledge the giftedness of worship by means of epiclesis prayers, prayers that express our longing for the Holy Spirit to work through liturgical actions to nurture and inspire faith; these are prayers typically offered at baptism and at the Lord's Supper, prayers for illumination prior to proclamation, and even prayers prior to our acts of praise, or in hymns like "Lord Jesus Christ, be present now." The epiclesis, concludes Hughes Oliphant Old, "is one of the basic acts of worship."²² It is a prayer, says Lukas Vischer, that "shows that the church must always appear before God with empty hands, even when she prepares and performs her worship in obedience to God."²³

Second, a theology of worship as a graced event calls for liturgical proclamation that is explicitly rooted in God's revelation in Jesus Christ through the Spirit. Just as the praise and prayer of the church is an act of acknowledgment, recognition, reception, and participation in the mediation of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, so too liturgical proclamation is best conceived as participation in, and grateful reception of, the gift of the Word of God. Liturgical proclamation does not require generating a new message, a new Word, a new gospel; it simply requires rehearsing the gospel given in Christ. As von Allmen argued, "We do not have to invent what we are to say, we have only to listen and pass it on." This occurs, he contended, through preaching that calls attention to God's work in Christ: "Preaching is none other than the preaching of Jesus Christ." Preaching that ignores what God has done in Christ elicits "an existential despair in which everything must be started afresh."²⁴

Third, a theology of worship as a graced event calls for acts that acknowledge the mediation of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. This occurs explicitly in Trinitarian formulas at the end of sung psalms or spoken prayers—and especially prayers offered *to* God *in* the name of Jesus *through* the Spirit, or *through* Jesus *in* the Spirit, a practice more thoroughly appreciated since Josef A. Jungmann's classic study *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer* appeared. As Donald Bloesch argues: "To pray in the name of Christ . . . means that we recognize that our prayers cannot penetrate the tribunal of God unless they are presented to the Father by the Son."²⁵ Trinitarian doxologies at the end of prayers, sermons, absolutions, and benedictions all attest that the action being completed is accomplished only as a gift of grace.²⁶ They emphasize, concluded von Allmen, that "the whole service is taking place in the presence, under the authority, and with the power of the Holy Trinity."²⁷ Such liturgical formulas are acts of recognition, reception, and participation; they are the explicit acknowledgment of a Trinitarian theology of worship as a graced event.

The challenge here is enacting these elements of liturgy in ways that bring the mediation of Son and Spirit into the consciousness of ordinary worshipers—who may otherwise live with the implicit feeling that the success of a worship service depends either on the prowess of the local preacher or musician or on their own mental efforts to make worship work. We who preach or lead music violate this principle every time we unwittingly promote a rather sacramental view of ourselves as the ones who engineer a spiritual experience for people. Rather, our goal should be, in the words of a well-known John Bell hymn, to help people sense the Trinity "round me, above and beneath, before and behind" in worship and in life.²⁸ Offering the faithful such an all-encompassing and grace-filled vision to supplant the rather vague and impersonal notions of deity that our culture perpetuates is an act of profound pastoral care.

3. The Divine Economy Theme

The third theme in recent literature is a renewed emphasis on the divine economy as the basis for our knowledge of God—a theme established by Karl Barth's claim "God is as God revealed himself to be" and Karl Rahner's rule that the "immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity," and vice versa. The Princeton theologian Daniel Migliore articulates the pay-off of these basic assertions in observing: "Classical Trinitarian doctrine . . . wants to say that there is no sinister or even demonic side of God altogether different from what we know in the story of Jesus who befriended the poor and forgave sinners. God is self-expanding, other-affirming, community-building love."²⁹ Here the term "Trinitarian" is being used as an antonym to theology that is speculative, abstract, ethereal, or vague.

From the start, the doctrine of the Trinity has rested on the high Christological claims of Colossians and Hebrews that Christ is the "image [or icon] of the invisible God" (Col 1:15), the "exact imprint of God's being" (Heb. 1:3). In contrast to the Greek inclination to define the concept of God on the basis of philosophically-derived ideals, the doctrine of the Trinity implies that human beings have a better, more direct and immediate source for knowledge of God in the person of Christ. And so, in contrast to Arianism, the doctrine of the Trinity argued that the real God was not a pristine higher power disconnected from the actions of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. In contrast to Sabellianism, the doctrine of the Trinity contended that God's actions in history are not mere shadows or masks of divine being, but are rather a reliable indicator of God's very nature. No—the doctrine of the Trinity boldly asserted that Christ and the Spirit are reliable signs of God's nature, for they themselves are truly divine. In Colin Gunton's words, the doctrine of the Trinity ensures that our thinking about God does not "float off into abstraction from the concrete history of salvation."³⁰ As Gunton concludes, this line of thinking "is based upon an insight of blinding simplicity: if Jesus Christ is God, then God is really given in him, and does not have to be sought behind or apart from him."³¹

Typically, extrapolations of this theme come with three large complaints: (a) that a lot of theological discourse historically has featured separate rather than integrated treatments of the oneness and threeness of God; (b) that a lot of theological discourse historically has featured separate rather than integrated treatments of the economic and immanent Trinity; and (c) that in all of this the influence of Plato and Hellenic thought patterns is vast and damaging. Extrapolations of this theme usually feature forthright methodological prescriptions, which aim at what Moltmann called "the theological remoulding of philosophical terms."³² The goal is that whenever we speak of God, describe God, invoke God, or call God to mind, we do so in terms of the concrete ways in which God has been made known rather than through abstract concepts

that are especially susceptible to being reshaped by culture's shifting intellectual climate. Thus this theme is a campaign against idolatry, whereby our worship is mistargeted toward a god of our own imaginations.

The liturgical corollary of this theme is simply that just as the Christian doctrine of God should be rooted in the divine economy, so too Christian worship should rehearse the divine economy. God's actions in history are the basis for *both* the knowledge and worship of the triune God. Liturgy, like theology, must not "float off into abstractions" about God. In other words, Christian liturgy is fundamentally an act of *anamnesis*, an act of rehearsing God's actions in history: past and future, realized and promised. Christians identify the God they worship by naming God as the agent of particular actions in history. Worship proceeds better by rehearsing eventful narratives of divine action—viewed iconically as reliable windows into divine life—than by restating rational deductions or abstract ideas. It is more like Masaccio's Trinity—in which we perceive God through the iconic cross.

This emphasis on God's actions in history is reflected in several theological definitions of worship. Jean-Jacques von Allmen insisted that "liturgy connects the Church with the history of salvation...it unites the Church of all places and times around the permanently decisive *magnalia Dei*."³³ John Burkhart posits that "true worship celebrates the most definite God of the covenant in Moses and Jesus, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel, and of countless others. Fundamentally, worship is the celebrative response to what God has done, is doing, and promises to do."³⁴ E. H. van Olst contends that in liturgy "people come together to celebrate the mighty acts of God . . . the basic structure of the saving acts of God [in which] the remembrance of Israel as well as the liturgical celebration of the church is rooted."³⁵

In this view, worship is not primarily ahistorical mystical introspection.³⁶ Donald Bloesch, for example, links ahistorical mysticism with an attempt "to transcend the Trinity by positing a 'God above God,' an infinite abyss that lies beyond personality and diversity," which he identifies as "incontestably other than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."³⁷ Neither is Christian liturgy merely a celebration of nature and natural cycles. Echoing an idea of Abraham Heschel, among others, Adrio König places great emphasis on the fact that ancient Israel changed its calendar of feasts from one "linked with nature, into one which was tied to history," and thus transformed what had been celebrations of natural cycles into celebrations of historical events. König argues that this shift in cultic practice corresponded to the theological commitment to conceive of God on the basis of God's action in history,³⁸ a pattern inherited by Christian worshipers, appropriate for a faith that adores a God who acts in history, especially in the incarnation.

This historical orientation is expressed concretely through several particular liturgical actions. First, Christian worship features the reading and preaching of scripture as a prominent liturgical action. It is, A. C. Honders argues, "the most direct way of testifying to God's great acts."³⁹ William Placher claims that "only in regularly reading scripture and reflecting on it in the gathered community can there develop a common language and a framework of shared stories and understandings of those stories within which we can live our lives together as Christians Sermons provide the space for inviting the community to reflect together in the context of the language of the scriptural texts, thereby at once learning to use that language and learning to think about the world in its terms."

He concludes, "The preaching of the Word, the telling of the stories of God's work with Israel

and of the crucified Jesus, plays its part in making a Christian community by issuing reminders of the sort of God Christians worship."⁴⁰ Just as needless speculation and untethered technical philosophical discourse must be rooted out from theology, so too they must be rooted out from liturgical language about God.

Second, in praise and prayer we identify God and specify God's character in terms of specific actions. Direct address to God in liturgical prayer proceeds best by identifying God in terms of God's actions in history. Large portions of Hebrew prayer, and especially the Psalms, are devoted to telling God what God presumably already knows, what God has done in history. In Christian euchology this pattern is preserved, for example in the structure of the collect. Before any petition that asks God to act in a particular way in the present and future, the collect form often (though not always) names a specific way in which God has acted in the past,⁴¹ for example, "O God, who by the leading of a star . . ." This pattern is also prominent in eucharistic and baptismal prayers, and in many hymn texts. A fitting example from the early church is the *Te Deum laudamus*. In the culture of the ancient world from which this text comes, it is not remarkable that God is praised as almighty and powerful. What is remarkable—and what makes it incipiently Trinitarian (or at least Binitarian)—is that praise is offered also for Jesus' birth and death, events that seem at first to be un-godlike. This orthodox prayer, which closely mirrors the Apostles' and Nicene creeds that were shaped during the same period, protests the picture of God as merely an Unmoved Mover, a solitary figure of power, and professes that Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, and coming again are "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Heb 1:1).

Third, the large structures that guide Christian worship over the course of the year call attention to God's action in history. This is why N. T. Wright, in a sermon at Lichfield Cathedral, could argue that the events of the Christian year "function as a sequence of well-aimed hammerblows which knock at the clay jars of the gods we want, the gods who reinforce our own pride and prejudice, until they fall away and reveal instead a very different god, a dangerous god, a subversive god, a god who comes to us like a blind beggar with wounds in his hands, a god who comes to us in wind and fire, in bread and wine, in flesh and blood: a god who says to us, 'You did not choose me; I chose you.'"⁴² This point underscores not just why the Christian year should be observed, but also suggests how. If the Christian year is valuable in its rehearsal of God's actions in history, then it should be celebrated in such a way as to make this point clear. A celebration of Christmas will have little "anamnetic value" if it merely celebrates the importance of gift-giving. A celebration of Easter will have little "anamnetic value" if it merely highlights the endless cycle of death and rebirth. These celebrations aim at recalling the ways in which God has acted in history, and to contemplating what these actions imply iconically about God's character.

Fourth, the *anamnesis* of God's actions in history is realized in the liturgy of the Lord's Supper. Anchored in Jesus' words, "This do in remembrance of me," the function of memorializing is arguably the most universal feature of the dominical feast (though it is only one of many key themes associated with the Lord's Supper). Every Christian theologian, from the most sacramental to the least, understands the Lord's Supper as an act of memory, an act that rehearses the decisive events of Jesus' passion and triumph. Von Allmen argues that "the Christian supper offers to those who participate in it, not the experience of being in communion with a myth, but participation in historical events."⁴³ That is why traditional eucharistic prayers, like many biblical Psalms, are shaped as bard-like, doxological history lessons—recounting the

history of God's actions from creation to new creation.

In all of these areas, of course, the challenge is not only to restore narrative recital but to look at narrative iconically, as a window into divine life. At Christmas we need not only Luther's narrative hymn "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks," which tells the story, but also Wesley's "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," which interprets what the nativity narrative means for our understanding of God and the salvation God provides. In the Eucharist we need not only historically-oriented eucharistic prayers, but also the adoration of the *Sanctus* and the strong petition of the *epiclesis*, which draw on this history to inform and deepen our vision for God.

In sum, in contrast with a deistic world in which praise is rooted in timeless attributes of pristine divine perfection, Trinitarian worship identifies God in terms of God's action in history. We constantly hone our ideas of God on the basis of meditation on the divine economy, and thus confront the inevitable idols that our culture may fabricate.

4. The Theme Of Balance And Integration

The fourth theme in recent literature is that of balance and integration. Consider Richard Mouw's quip, at the beginning of a recent chapter on Trinitarian ethics, that "Christians play favorites with the members of the Trinity."⁴⁴ Similarly, H. Richard Niebuhr contended, only slightly whimsically, that Christianity might well be characterized as "an association, loosely held together, of three Unitarian religions."⁴⁵ Niebuhr's point is that Christians have a persistent tendency to narrow their view of God's actions, and to separate, rank, order, and pit against each other aspects of the divine economy. In contrast, the doctrine of the Trinity calls for viewing God's actions as a comprehensive and unified whole. As Niebuhr argued, part of the value of the doctrine of the Trinity is that it serves as "a formulation of the *whole* Church's faith in God in distinction from the partial faiths and partial formulations of parts of the Church and of individuals in the Church." The doctrine, he continues, is valuable "to correct the over-emphases and partialities of the members of the whole not by means of a new over-emphasis but by means of a synthesized formula in which all the partial insights and convictions are combined."⁴⁶

Here "Trinitarian theology" is offered in contrast with a "christomonistic" or other partial or disintegrated approaches. Here "Trinitarian" becomes a formal construct, resulting in books with chapters on each divine person, or hymns with each divine person getting a stanza—a formal construct much more interested in symmetry than the New Testament, in which the Holy Spirit is always the shy member of the Trinity. Interestingly, in the popular Christian imagination this is what Trinitarian worship is assumed to be: worship in which each of the persons of the Trinity gets some airtime.

The theme is, of course, more nuanced and sophisticated than this. A representative theologian to illustrate this is Arnold van Ruler, who called for a theological worldview informed by the full scope of divine activity, advocating a "more catholic, that is to say, purely Trinitarian way" of interpreting the divine economy, which would examine much more than God's actions in Christ. Van Ruler noted that "God did not, after all, *only* become man in Jesus Christ, he also created a world. And he is not only present in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ in a veiled way but will once again reveal himself definitively in the full and great theophany of the eschaton." Van Ruler concluded that "God's presence in Jesus Christ is only an element, albeit a decisive element, in his total activity in the world," and called for theology and spirituality that are aware of the full scope of the divine economy, from creation to eschatological fulfillment.⁴⁷ Van Ruler

was most concerned to re-emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit, the "absolute necessity" of a vibrant and full pneumatology, in order that "the imperative of a Trinitarian theology would become apparent anew." He was especially critical of Barth's christocentrism, and lamented that pneumatology "remains impoverished" in twentieth-century theology.⁴⁸ Van Ruler stressed that a pneumatological framework makes two fundamental contributions to the structure of Christian theology. For one, it keeps our attention focused eschatologically, on the coming kingdom of God as the end or goal of creation and redemption. For another, it compels theologians to consider the full scope of the Spirit's work inside and outside of the church. An adequate pneumatic theology, he argued, points toward God's activity in all of creation. In this context "Trinitarian theology" means "a more comprehensive view than we otherwise might be tempted to take."

Yet this call for comprehensiveness is only one half of the argument. Recent work has argued that a fully Trinitarian theology is not only comprehensive but is also unified and integrated. The Augustinian formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity not only confesses that "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God," but also that "there are not three gods, but one God"—a confession of divine *unity*. The central claim here is that the works of God, attributed as they are in scriptural narrative and the Christian tradition to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are not in any way disjointed or at cross purposes. The divine economy is not only unimaginably full, but wondrously interrelated. Thus, van Ruler argued that a fully Trinitarian theology should be characterized by two movements: first, "Trinitarian thought is typified by the movement of mutually inter-relating the various aspects of theology"; second, this is followed by "the movement of distinguishing these aspects." Van Ruler argued that the various topics in theological discourse, such as soteriology or missiology, should be approached from both a "christological" and "pneumatological" point of view,⁴⁹ positing that a fully synthetic or complete theology "will be possible only within the framework of a Trinitarian perspective."⁵⁰

This calls for theological discourse that considers apparently paradoxical attributes together—thus Daniel Migliore: "In a Trinitarian context, the attributes of God are held together as mutually qualifying descriptions of the living God."⁵¹ And it calls for the treatment of individual theological questions in terms of each person of the Trinity. Thus, following Moltmann, Paul Jewett argues that "the cross must be understood not only in terms of the person and work of Christ but in terms of the God who is revealed in Christ, namely, the God who is a Trinity-in-Unity. While it is essential to view what happened at Calvary in terms of the Son who became incarnate, it is also essential to understand what happened there in terms of all members of the Godhead."⁵²

Typical markers of this Trinitarian integration are calls for a pneumatological christology and a christological pneumatology. A century ago Abraham Kuyper had already argued that "the Church has never sufficiently confessed the influence the Holy Spirit exerted upon the work of Christ."⁵³ Kuyper's assertion could well be the thesis statement of the last generation of work on Christology in several traditions. Jürgen Moltmann for one, and Yves Congar for another, call for a complete integration of Christology and pneumatology.

Other typical markers of this integration theme are calls to restore a creation and eschatology as the bookends of our theological and spiritual consciousness. Thus van Ruler calls for the interrelation of God's action of creation, redemption in Christ, and eschatological fulfillment, arguing that these are "*the* questions that arise in a Trinitarian theology," and that "it is only in a

fully Trinitarian framework that one is able to determine the meaning of reason, history, the state, art, and what it is to be human. To accomplish this, the doctrines of the creation and eschatology need to provide their own accents."⁵⁴ For van Ruler the pay-off is that redemption must be understood as the salvation *for* creation, not *from* it: "Regeneration is not a new creation (*nova creatio*) but a renewal of creation (*recreatio*)." Thus, every aspect of economy after creation refers back to it: "God does not create himself anew in Israel or in Jesus Christ. He [Jesus Christ] is not a new, strange God but the one who created the world. He is, thus, not estranged from the essence of things or from the depths of the human heart."⁵⁵

A commitment to a comprehensive and integrated view of the divine economy has inevitable corollaries for liturgical practice. First, it calls for liturgical practices that depict the divine economy as a comprehensive and integrated whole. Thus, Otto Weber argued that a deficient appropriation of the doctrine of the Trinity and an incomplete or unintegrated view of the divine economy has inevitable repercussions in prayer and spirituality: "It is only when we constantly keep the unity of God in his work in view that we can avoid an isolated 'theology of the first article,' or an isolated 'Christocentrism,' or an isolated 'Spiritualization' of theology." In fact, said Weber, "It can be said that at this point the Doctrine of the Trinity gains its most direct relationship to 'piety' . . . when the Doctrine of the Trinity falls apart or retreats in the consciousness of the Community, then piety becomes one-sided and, measured by the liveliness and the wealth of the biblical witness, is impoverished."⁵⁶

Weber's lament about "one-sided piety" easily translates into a central criterion for liturgical celebration: Christian worship and spirituality must rehearse the full scope and unity of God's actions. Many liturgical elements accomplish this: the grand hymns of the Christian tradition like the *Gloria*, the *Te Deum*, the liturgical creeds, the more comprehensive eucharistic and baptismal prayers, the (unabridged) Easter Vigil service, the Christian year. While most sermons, scripture readings, and anthems isolate one important narrative or theme, creeds, eucharistic prayers, and Easter Vigil services provide the entire context that helps us identify their significance.

Second, this vision calls for looking at each part of the divine economy in light of the whole. Each element in the gospel drama can be viewed through a Trinitarian lens. Take the festival of Christmas as one example. Despite significant references to the Holy Spirit in several appointed readings for the Christmas season, the Holy Spirit is the forgotten participant in the Christmas drama. We see this omission not only in the Christmas card selection at Hallmark but also in music for the season. Yet the juxtaposition of "Christmas" and "Holy Spirit" challenges our understanding of each. First, it anchors our understanding of the Spirit's work in the person of Jesus Christ: the Holy Spirit is not just any spirit we feel, it is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Second, it makes our understanding of Christmas more dynamic and personal: the Spirit that came upon Mary is the same Spirit that anointed Jesus to preach good news to the poor and raised him from the dead, and that has now been poured into *our* hearts. The Spirit makes us participants in the Christmas drama. A fully Trinitarian approach to Christmas will work to highlight and probe these themes.

Third and finally, an integrated view of the divine economy provides the logic that makes prayers of thanksgiving and intercession plausible. It commends prayer that explicitly confesses the unity of divine action. Intercessory prayer, for example, depends upon a confidence that God will act faithfully in the future, that God's past works are a clue or sign about the way God

will act. The past actions of God, says Colin Gunton, provide "the ground for believing that there are further divine acts to come, or that the ascended Christ is a living and active advocate with the Father, or that the Spirit works to perfect the creation." These past actions not only teach that God will act, but also point to what kind of divine actions the future is likely to hold. Gunton continues, "If God is the one who creates and redeems through Christ and the Spirit, and is made known as such by the incarnate, crucified, risen, and ascended Jesus, then that is the one he always is. Any new action, therefore, can be expected within the framework of this eternal revelation."⁵⁷

This logic commends liturgical prayers that seek the apt pairing of praise and intercession, as can be found in any good collect. For example, consider the collect "Eternal God, you have called us to be members of one body. Join us with those who in all times and places have praised your name, that, with one heart and mind, we may show the unity of your church and bring honor to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen." Here, the acknowledgment of God's act of gathering the church is the ground for a petition concerning the unity of the church. The tight logical structure of the collect is a liturgical outworking of the confession of the unity of the divine economy.

In sum, the doctrine of the Trinity is a doctrine that calls for presenting the themes of the gospel and the teaching of the church in balanced and integrated ways. It militates against partial and incomplete treatments of Christian teaching in preaching, hymnody, and prayer.

5. The Redefinition Theme

Suppose that we take the divine economy as the source of our knowledge of God (theme 3), and then provide a comprehensive and integrated interpretation of it (theme 4). If that is our methodological claim, then what is the material pay-off? A fifth theme in recent work has been to engage in Trinitarian redefinitions of the images and attributes used in theology proper.

The primary targets of this work are (a) vague, impersonal notions of distant deity, especially in popular piety, and a corresponding notion of worship as detached, disinterested, aloof contemplation; (b) unwittingly fearsome, tyrannical depictions of God's power, and corresponding notions of worship as fearful obeisance; (c) any unwitting depiction of God as a contractual deity of obligations (certainly a primary worry when it comes to liturgical piety); and (d) any view of God that is especially sentimental, a liturgical worry any time we get near Christmas. Arguably, the central thrust of this work is summed up by Jan Lochman when he argues that "the central intention of the Trinitarian dogma" is to convey "the personal, social, and compassionate character of God."⁵⁸

Recent work on the doctrine of the Trinity features five key metaphors, metaphors that depict divine life as personal, agential, relational, self-giving, and speaking. These fundamental images or root metaphors, in turn, influence every other adjective, attribute, characteristic, property, virtue, perfection, and predicate that is used to speak of God. As Daniel Migliore argues, "Our reflections on the triune reality of God point to the need for a thorough rethinking of the doctrine of the attributes of God, which have all too often been presented and debated without any reference to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ or to the doctrine of the Trinity."⁵⁹ As Paul Jewett suggests, the divine economy should be the "yardstick" against which any divine attribute is measured, so that, in Hendrikus Berkhof's words, theologians may "pour biblical content into these abstract concepts."⁶⁰

A representative effort at redefinition along these lines, the Trinitarian refashioning of the attribute of divine omnipotence, is a central aspect of the work of Daniel Migliore. Migliore argues that concepts of God's power must be revised in light of Jesus Christ, the "power of God" (I Cor 1:24):

The doctrine of the Trinity represents a revolution in the understanding of the power of God Christians do not worship absolute power. They worship that divine power narrated in the gospel story and symbolized in the doctrine of the Trinity. The power of God is shared power, power that makes for just and inclusive community. Here is a radically new beginning in our understanding of God and especially of God's power.⁶¹

The doctrine of the Trinity, Migliore concludes, provides the over-arching framework in which conceptions of divine power can be refined. It points to the work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as revelatory of God's very being:

The doctrine of the Trinity identifies God and the coming kingdom of his liberating, life-giving Spirit. It redefines the power of God and the presence of God. The power of God is defined as the self-imparting love of the crucified Christ and the presence of God is understood as the re-creating, liberating, reconciling Spirit of Christ at work in the world as the "first fruits" (Rom 8:23) of God's coming kingdom The primary function of the doctrine of the Trinity is to speak of God not as a lifeless absolute but as a living history which must be narrated.

In this way, Migliore concludes, the doctrine of the Trinity "safeguards against oppressive, sub-Christian conceptions of God."⁶²

Migliore's work clarifies the concept of divine omnipotence. God's power certainly entails the ability to accomplish unfathomable activity: to create a cosmos or to raise someone from the dead. The category of power is not to be abandoned altogether. What is crucial for Migliore is that God's power is not unleashed capriciously. This power is revealed on a cross. This power is directed toward particular ends: toward the establishment of right relationships and cosmic redemption. And it is power engaged through particular means: not through "terror, torture, destruction, or threat" (to use a phrase from John Bell's hymn quoted below). This power is worthy of praise *both* because of its magnitude *and* the way in which it is deployed.

The resonances of this Trinitarian redefinition effort in the area of worship lie primarily in the central concepts, images, and metaphors that describe and shape liturgical events. Central images and root metaphors in theology proper are inevitably linked with central images and root metaphors in the theology of liturgy. Metaphors of divine identity generate and ground metaphors for liturgical activity.

A Trinitarian doctrine of God posits that God is a personal, relational being who acts in self-giving love. This paradigm, root metaphor, or key conceptual model suggests that the worship of this God, as enacted in public liturgy, should be construed as a series of personal, relational actions. In this view, liturgy is not the contemplation of an impersonal, ubiquitous higher power, nor is it primarily an act of obeisance to a divine tyrant, nor an act of propitiation to a divine judge, nor, to use a phrase of Hughes Oliphant Old, "a sacred drama unfolding some sort of Neoplatonic ascent to divine reality."⁶³ As Colin Gunton suggests, "Worship is not an activity in which we contemplate or observe a being who is over against us—though in a sense God is that

also—but it is relational, something that happens between persons."⁶⁴ If the Christian God is best described by personal, relational, and dynamic metaphors, then so too is the liturgy of the Christian church.

This, too, has concrete corollaries in practice. First, these root metaphors suggest viewing each liturgical act as personal and relational. In this view, hymns of praise, sermons, sacramental celebrations, and corporate prayer do not exist for their own sake, but for the larger purpose of enacting a personal, relational encounter. They are means by which God speaks, and by which the gathered community responds. The various elements of worship are all functional; or, to use the language of speech-action theory, they are "illocutionary." We do things, interpersonal things, with the words and sounds of worship: namely, we enact the divine-human relationship.⁶⁵

Second, a theology of worship as a personal, relational encounter suggests a natural criterion for the form or deep structure of liturgy. As Hendrikus Berkhof suggests: "The point [of liturgy] is always the encounter with the same God whom we come to know in Christ through the Spirit. The liturgy is to structure the encounter and therefore must itself be structured as encounter."⁶⁶

Third, this calls for music and liturgical texts that are winsomely *subversive*. Consider John Bell's Advent hymn, with its nuanced treatment of the militaristic image of "Lord of hosts."

Lift up your heads, eternal gates, Alleluia!
See how the King of glory waits, Alleluia!
The Lord of Hosts in drawing near,
the Savior of the world is here. Alleluia!

But not in arms or battle dress, Alleluia!
God comes, a child, amidst distress, Alleluia!
No mighty armies shield the way,
only coarse linen, wool, and hay, Alleluia!

God brings a new face to the brave, Alleluia!
God redefines who best can save, Alleluia!
Not those whose power relies on threat, _
terror or torture, destruction or debt, Alleluia!

God's matchless and majestic strength, Alleluia!
In all its height, depth, breadth, and length, Alleluia!
Now is revealed, its power to prove,
by Christ protesting, "God is love," Alleluia!⁶⁷

Here is a text concerned with refining common assumptions about divine attributes. It uses the life of Jesus to reinterpret how we understand divine life, illustrating one of the main concerns in much of recent systematic theology.

Concluding Analysis

With respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, distinguishing these five themes highlights the ways

in which this single doctrine has been used to make so many different points. One way of sensing the breadth of the use of the doctrine of the Trinity would be to imagine a hypothetical entry for the term "Trinitarian" in a lexicon of modern theological terminology. Such an entry would require at least five distinct definitions. Perhaps that entry would read:

Trinitarian (adj.):

1. a communitarian approach to ordering human relationships in the church and in society as a mirror or icon of divine life; antonym: individualistic;
2. a formulation of the divine-human relationship that stresses that divine revelation as well as human faith, prayer, and worship are actions of divine agents, and as such are gifts of divine grace; antonym: Pelagian;
3. a theological system based on reflection on the historical actions of Jesus of Nazareth and the Holy Spirit as recorded in Scripture; antonym: speculative, abstract;
4. a self-consciously comprehensive, unified, and synthetic approach to theology; antonym: christomonistic, Unitarian;
5. a doctrine of God that insists that God is a transcendently and immanently personal, acting, relational, and self-giving Being; antonym: deistic, pantheistic.

In this way, the doctrine of the Trinity is directly linked with many doctrinal loci: theological methodology, hermeneutics, theology proper, soteriology, and ecclesiology. Trinitarian worship is about much more than appending a *Gloria Patri* at the end of a Psalm, singing the *Te Deum*, or not beginning a sermon on Trinity Sunday with an apologetic statement of regret. It is about reconceiving the purpose and meaning of the entire grammar of the liturgical event, reconsidering how we approach God, constitute communities, and imagine God and these communities interacting.

Further, these five themes travel rather well ecumenically (though this short paper can't adequately demonstrate this). Each of the five could be illustrated with phrases from the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy or Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*, or (as in this paper) primarily with theological voices from the Reformed-Presbyterian tradition. At least at this level of detail, these five themes appear in Barth, Balthasar, and Rahner; Calvin, Luther, and Wesley; Irenaeus, Augustine, and Gregory of Nyssa (albeit with instructive nuances in each case)—a very healthy sign that we are getting near themes that are fundamental to Christian practice.

This paper also provides a window into the relationship of theology and practice. First, it has established that a Trinitarian theology of liturgy has several concrete corollaries. Any observant cultural anthropologist who might attend a Christian assembly would notice the practices this paper has mentioned. Immanuel Kant was simply wrong when he lampooned the doctrine of the Trinity as entirely impractical. Second, it suggests that the rationale for a given liturgical action makes a big difference in how we practice it. Along the way I have described many traditional practices (traditional eucharistic prayers, epicletic prayers, collects), but suggested explicitly theological motivations or rationale for their adoption—which in turns affects how we practice them. If the Christian year is valuable in part because it at once concretizes and opens up our view of God, then it does little good to eliminate biblical historical narratives from these

observances (or, conversely, to focus exclusively on narrative).

The doctrine of the Trinity is not a liturgical constitution that generates a host of minor liturgical ordinances and statutes. It does not produce neat formulas and tidy liturgical recipes that are universally applicable. This paper has called for liturgy that rehearses the divine economy, but it does not say that regular adherence to the Christian year is the *only* way to accomplish it. This paper has described the logic that undergirds the collect form for Christian prayer, but it in no way justifies the *exclusive* use of the collect. Typically, particular doctrines invite a range of practices with which they cohere. This is why the doctrine is just as important—perhaps even more important—for a free, evangelical church without a significant liturgical tradition, as it is for an Eastern Orthodox congregation that is not likely to abandon Trinitarian worship any time in the next several centuries.

Another way to say it is that the doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation for several criteria that can be used to evaluate and prescribe liturgical practices in many contexts. These criteria can be phrased as simple questions: Does liturgy speak of God with reference to particular actions in history recorded in Scripture? Does corporate worship in a particular congregation rehearse the whole of the divine economy? Are its liturgical actions carried out as means for a personal relationship and encounter with God? Do these actions acknowledge the example and mediation of Jesus Christ and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? Does the community itself model the kind of intimate fellowship or *koinonia* that is central both to divine life and the Christian life?

One strength of these criteria is that they are not applicable only in rarified or culturally specific settings. These criteria have as much to say about corporate worship offered in a Central American barrio as in a wealthy, suburban congregation in North America or in a majestic European cathedral. They are as applicable to a worship service offered at a summer camp or in a mission congregation as in a denominational or ecumenical assembly or at a gathering of the North American Academy of Liturgy. While they are certainly formulated in a very culturally specific way, they are the kind of transcultural criteria that are useful for contextual ministry on any continent.

Another virtue of these criteria is that they are *theological* criteria. These criteria emerge not only out of historical study and aesthetic preference but out of reflection on the mystery of the gospel that Christians proclaim. The Christian church is deeply divided into communities that rehearse different histories and embody divergent aesthetic preferences. Any lasting cease-fire in these worship wars is not likely to emerge from a resolution of the so-called culture wars which feed them, or from large-scale conversions of taste, or from carefully buttressed historical arguments about ancient liturgical precedents. Finally, such a cease-fire can only issue from the depth and mystery of the gospel which Christians proclaim. Christian worship is strongest when it is integrally and self-consciously related to the person and work of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. The study of Christian worship is most helpful to Christian communities when it demonstrates how this has happened in the past and how it might happen in the future in more profound ways.

Another virtue of these themes is that they are pastoral. Though recent Trinitarian theology often feature soaring, rhapsodic passages on the beauty of Trinitarian life, and stirring summons to mirror this life in Christian community, such passages typically occur only after wringing

indictments of how the doctrine of the Trinity has been disregarded by the vast majority of contemporary Christians. Perhaps Karl Rahner said it best: "despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere 'monotheists.'"⁶⁸ Or consider this stinging indictment by William Placher: "In contemporary American society the dominant images of divinity and success and community are in some respects radically un-Christian. It cannot be taken for granted that Christians generally remember or ever understood the sort of God in whom we believe and the sort of people we are therefore called to be."⁶⁹ Even a good deal of popular Christian piety is characterized by an interest in the historical Jesus and in a vague, abstract notion of an invisible creator god. Who knows how many people stay away from church, or avoid participation in Christian worship, because they have no idea how compelling and beautiful a Trinitarian vision of God really is.

Beyond any other virtue these Trinitarian criteria have, the primary value that we find in the doctrine of the Trinity is the compelling picture it paints of the God Christians worship, the community that renders this worship, and the actions used to do so. Finally, this Trinitarian vision is a summons to worship the triune God of Jesus Christ. It invites artists, hymn writers, musicians, liturgists, and poets to create art works, music, and texts that convey more fully the wonder and mystery of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It invites liturgists and pastors to plan and lead worship that portrays the privilege of Christian corporate worship, and to teach and nurture their congregations regarding what this privilege is all about. It invites worshipers to experience the grace of a self-giving God, and to join with all the faithful of every time and place who forever sing to the glory of God's name: *Te Deum laudamus*.

ENDNOTES

1. The links between the doctrine of the Trinity and the theology and practice of worship have been the subject of a number of recent articles. See Philip Butin, "Constructive Iconoclasm: Trinitarian Concern in Reformed Worship," *Studia Liturgica* 19 (1989): 133–142; Daniel Meeter, "The Trinity and Liturgical Renewal," in *The Trinity: An Essential Faith in Our Time*, ed. Andrew Stirling (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Publishing House, 2002), 207–232; Bruce V. Rigdon, "Worship and the Trinity in the Reformed Tradition," in *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox and Reformed Churches*, ed. Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985–), 2:211–18; George W. Stroup, "The Worship of the Triune God," *Reformed Liturgy and Music* 17 (1983): 160–65; James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace* (Carlisle, Great Britain: Paternoster Press, 1996); Christopher Cocksworth, "The Trinity Today: Opportunities and Challenges for Liturgical Study," *Studia Liturgica* 27 (1997): 61–78; Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "Making the Most of Trinity Sunday," *Worship* 60 (1986): 210–24, and "Trinity and Liturgy," in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed. Peter E. Fink (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), 1293–96; H. B. Meyer, "Eine trinitarische Theologie der Liturgie und der Sakramente," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 113 (1991): 23–48; Frank C. Senn, "Trinity Sunday, Trinitarian Worship and the Trinity in the Church's Life and Mission," *Lutheran Forum* 28 (1994): 14–16; Bryan D. Spinks, "Trinitarian Theology and the Eucharistic Prayer," *Studia Liturgica* 26 (1996): 209–24; Geoffrey Wainwright, "Trinitarian Worship," *The New Mercersburg Review* 2 (1986): 3–11, and "Trinitarian Worship," in *Speaking of the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism*, ed. Alvin F. Kimel, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992); and Jonathan Wilson, "Toward a Trinitarian Rule of Worship," *Crux* 29 (1993): 35–39.

2. *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), xii. A similar topical approach is followed by John Thompson in *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), and by Ted Peters in chapter 2 of *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993). These five themes or kinds of discourse are a useful way of keeping track of how the doctrine of the Trinity functions in a given theologian's work. Many theologians will focus on some but not all of these themes. This paper will, then, give preference to articulating broad themes, rather than identifying the social location and conceptual angularities of particular theologians, and will isolate themes at a "landscape" level of detail that tends to ride above several areas of persistent tension, such as important discussions about inclusive language. I do not intend to suggest that these are unimportant tasks.

3. Several of the themes of this paper are developed further in my chapter "The Opening of Worship/Trinity," in *A More Profound Alleluia: Worship and Theology in Harmony*, ed. Leanne Van Dyk (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

4. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., "Introduction," in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical Essays* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 4. The prominence of this theme in recent Trinitarian theology has been analyzed in Faye E. Schott, "God is Love: The Contemporary Theological Movement of Interpreting the Trinity as God's Relational Being" (Ph.D. diss., Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1990).

5. See, for example, Cynthia Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the 'Imago Dei' in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Methodist University, 1981), 255–59; Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three, the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 13–166; Shirley Guthrie, *Always Being Reformed: Faith for a Fragmented World* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996), 40–42; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, trans. Margeret Kohl (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 104, 150, 174; Thomas Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), chapter 7.

6. Thomas R. Thompson, "Imitatio Trinitatis: The Trinity as a Social Model in the Theologies of Jürgen Moltmann and Leonardo Boff" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1996), 26.

7. Henry Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God* (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1995), 15; also 62.

8. Christoph Schwöbel, ed., *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Action* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 10.

9. *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, trans. J. Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1992), xii.

10. *The Household of God* (New York: Friendship Press, 1953), 140, 145.

11. *The Future of Partnership* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 35. It is important to acknowledge that while concern with relationality proceeds with great enthusiasm and is often simply assumed, work in this vein also features vigorous ongoing debates over the proper grounding and articulation of this relational vision: debates over the propriety of the social

Trinitarianism, over the definition of divine personhood, over appropriate exercises of human authority in light of worries about subordinationism, over how specific formulations of Trinity doctrine are translated into ecclesiastical structures, and over correct interpretations of both the Gospel according to John and Gregory of Nyssa. What seems universal, despite these areas of disagreements, is enthusiasm for ensuring that self-giving relationality is built into our fundamental idea of divine and human identity.

12. *Worship: Its Theology and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 198.

13. *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 250.

14. Colin Gunton, *Theology Through Preaching* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 2001), 56, and Vincent Brümmer, *The Model of Love: A Study in Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 223, 178. This formulation of the divine-human relationship is also central in Stephen Pickard, "The Trinitarian Dynamics of Belief," in *Essentials of Christian Community: Essays for Daniel W. Hardy*, ed. David F. Ford and Dennis L. Stamps (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 67.

15. *Theology Through Preaching*, 60.

16. *Preaching and Congregation* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1962), 8.

17. Von Allmen, *Worship*, 180, 242, 40.

18. *Ibid.*, 21, 35. Von Allmen continues, "the New Testament shows us the historical ministry of Jesus and hence His whole life, as a liturgical process and in fact as the liturgy, the life of worship, accepted by God" (23).

19. Thomas R. Thompson, "Imitatio Trinitatis," 293, and Benjamin Leslie, *Trinitarian Hermeneutics: The Hermeneutical Significance of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Trinity* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 36.

20. James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace* (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity, 1996), 18, 7, 43, also 50.

21. *Ibid.*, 72.

22. *Themes and Variations for a Christian Doxology: Some Thoughts on the Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 17, see 17–40.

23. "The Eiclesis: Sign of Unity and Renewal," *Studia Liturgica* 6 (1969): 35.

24. *Preaching and Congregation*, 7, 5, 10–11.

25. *The Struggle of Prayer* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 36–37.

26. The mediation of Christ is also acknowledged in the phrase "pleading his eternal sacrifice" in a number of Reformed eucharistic rites, particularly in Scotland. See John M. Barkley, " 'Pleading His Eternal Sacrifice' in the Reformed Liturgy," and Bryan D. Spinks, "The Ascension and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ: The Christology and Soteriology Behind the Church of Scotland's

Anamnesis and Epiklesis," in *The Sacrifice of Praise: Studies on the Themes of Thanksgiving and Redemption in the Central Prayers of the Eucharistic and Baptismal Liturgies*, ed. Bryan D. Spinks (Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 1981), 185–201.

27. *Worship*, 139; and H. O. Old, *Leading in Prayer: A Workbook for Ministers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 182.

28. "Lift Up Your Heads" (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2001).

29. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 63.

30. *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 34.

31. *Being and Becoming: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 129.

32. *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 148; and John W. de Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology: A South African Contribution to an Ecumenical Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 75.

33. *Preaching and Congregation*, 36.

34. *Worship* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), 17; also 31–33.

35. *The Bible and Liturgy*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), viii, 6.

36. The following criticism of mysticism is directed specifically against ahistorical forms of mysticism that seek an experience of God apart from historical time, and often posit a God beyond the divine economy. Commenting on mysticism in the interpretation of Paul, Lewis Smedes argues that "oriental mysticism could not tolerate dependence on specific historical events or concrete historical personalities. The one thing people need is to escape the concrete things of history and to be immersed into the divine life Mysticism and history were incompatible as foundations of religion" (*Union with Christ: A Biblical View of New Life in Christ* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 28). Donald Bloesch distinguishes ahistorical mysticism from acts of meditation that are "centered on the works and acts of God not only in creation but also and preeminently in Jesus Christ" (*The Struggle of Prayer*, 21).

37. *The Struggle of Prayer*, 21, 27. This is not to say that contemplative prayer has no place in Christian worship, but that contemplation is focused on historical events. Thus, Moltmann argues that "Christian meditation and contemplation are...at their very heart meditatio crucis," i.e., meditations on an historical event (*The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 8).

38. *Here Am I: A Believer's Reflections on God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 124; also 171.

39. "Remarks on the Postcommunio in Some Reformed Liturgies," in *The Sacrifice of Praise: Studies on the Themes of Thanksgiving and Redemption in the Central Prayers of the Eucharistic and Baptismal Liturgies*, ed. Bryan D. Spinks (Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 1981), 154.

40. *Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology, and Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 137, 139, 142.

41. See, for example, the prayer in Acts 4, and David Buttrick, "The Praise of Ordinary People," *Liturgy* 4 (1985): 22–23.
42. *For All God's Worth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 24.
43. *The Lord's Supper*, trans. W. Fletcher Fleet (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1969), 23.
44. *The God Who Commands* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 150.
45. "The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Unity of the Church," *Theology Today* 3 (1946): 372, 374, 376.
46. *Ibid.*, 372, 383. In fact, Niebuhr argues that regardless of any other merits, the doctrine of the Trinity is valuable if only as a heuristic device for maintaining a balanced theological vision: "Apart from any other considerations which may lead the church to the formulation of a Trinitarian doctrine, it must endeavor to do so because it must set forth the faith which is not the realized conviction of any of its parts but rather the common faith" (383).
47. *Calvinist Trinitarianism and Theocentric Politics*, trans. John Bolt (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 107.
48. *Ibid.*, 1, 11, 6, 60.
49. See especially the essay, "Structural Differences Between Christological and Pneumatological Perspectives" in *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 27–46.
50. *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 1–2, 11, 14, 16.
51. *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 74.
52. *God, Creation, & Revelation: A Neo-Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 410.
53. *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Henry De Vries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 37.
54. *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 1–3, 19.
55. *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 32, 181; also 82.
56. *Foundations of Dogmatics*, trans. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 1:393.
57. *A Brief Theology of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 80.
58. "The Trinity and Human Life," *Theology* 78 (1975): 183.
59. *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 72.
60. Jewett, *God, Creation & Revelation*, 412; Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith*, trans. Sierd Woudstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 141.
61. *The Power of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 77.

62. *The Power of God*, 66, 68.

63. *Leading in Prayer*, 362.

64. *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 5.

65. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 3, 184–85, 116. Wolterstorff develops this theory more comprehensively in his *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

66. *Christian Faith*, 377.

67. "Lift Up Your Heads" (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2001).

68. *The Trinity*, trans. J. Donceel (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 10.

69. *Narratives of a Vulnerable God*, 140.

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