

WORSHIP, BAPTISM, EUCHARIST

Worship

Within the Anglican and Reformed communions there is a wide variety of forms of worship and liturgical practice. But behind all these there is a common understanding of the meaning of worship. Worship is the gift of participating through the Holy Spirit in what Christ has done and is doing as he unites us with Himself, both in His communion with the Father and His mission to the world. Thus both worship and mission are trinitarian in character - participating by the Spirit corporately, and personally, in the Son's communion with the Father and the Son's mission from the Father to the world. This is why in prayer we are led by the Spirit to pray to the Father in the name of Christ and why in mission in the power of the Spirit we face the world in the name of Christ. In this New Testament understanding, the real agent in worship as in mission is Jesus Christ, "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession" (Heb.3,1) who gives to the Church the gift of the Holy Spirit to share in his once and for all self-offering and victory on the Cross and in His continual intercession to the Father for the world, as well as in His mission from the Father to the world. The Church as the Body of Christ is thus a "Royal Priesthood" as she participates in the life and ministry of Christ, the one Mediator between God and Man, who gave himself a ransom for all (1 Tim.2,1 ff), and who represents the world to God the Father and God the Father to the world.

Christ unites the Church with Himself by the Spirit through Word and Sacrament, and it is in these terms that we must understand preaching, baptism, the eucharist and the gift of the ministry. Baptism is the gift of participating through the Spirit in the Baptism of Christ - His once and for all vicarious Baptism for the World in the waters of Jordan and in blood on the Cross and His Baptism of the Church by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost - that we might receive forgiveness and newness of life as members of His Body, and share in His victorious conflict with the powers of evil. The Lord's Supper is the gift of participating through the Holy Spirit in His once and for all self offering on the Cross for the world and in His risen life of communion with the Father, as members of His Body, sharing in His reconciling mission to the world. So the apostle writes to a divided Church, "the bread which we break, is it not our sharing in the Body of Christ? The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not our sharing in the blood of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we who are many, are

one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Cor. 10,16ff). Likewise the Ministry (in all its forms) is God's gift to the Church of participating by the Spirit, corporately and personally, in the Ministry of Christ, who is uniquely Apostle, King, Priest and Prophet.

Baptism

According to St Matthew, the risen Lord sent his disciples into the world to make all nations His disciples, and to baptise everywhere in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So in all ages, and in our two traditions, people have been baptised by water in the Triune name into the one Church which worships the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit, and which professes faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - the faith formulated in the Creeds.

It is significant that the Christ who commanded the disciples to baptise all nations and who baptises us by the Spirit into His own Body was Himself baptised for us by the Spirit in the waters of the Jordan in our humanity and acknowledged by the Father to be the Son. The Trinitarian character of baptism is grounded therefore not just in His command, but in His own personal vicarious baptism on behalf of all nations. John the Baptist said, "I baptise with water, but He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire". In baptism, He gives us the Spirit of adoption whereby we too can cry "Abba, Father". There is thus one baptism common to Christ and the Church, in virtue of a shared anointing by the Spirit.

The meaning of Baptism

Behind our answer to the questions Who should be baptised? infants, adults or both? or how should baptism be administered? By sprinkling, pouring or immersion? or May it be repeated? there is the more fundamental question, What is signified by baptism? Only in the light of the meaning of baptism can we answer the other questions.

(a) Baptism signifies that our salvation is from beginning to end the work of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the Church we confess that we are what we are because of the eternal love of the Father, because of what He has done for us in Christ, and because of the work of the Holy Spirit in us. The Church is a divine society called into being and created by God, not a man-made institution nor a religious club. It is in recognition of this fact that we can say in joy and assurance with Luther Baptizatus sum - "I have been baptised".

(b) Baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace made for us and our children in Christ, 1900 years before we were born. It is not a sign and seal of anything we have done, of our faith, or our repentance or our decision, important as these are in our response to grace. It is not our faith, or conversion, or dying and rising with Christ (our sanctification) which washes away our sin, but Christ alone who bore our sins in His own body on the Cross long ago, and who now by the Holy Spirit forgives and cleanses and renews.

(b) Our baptism in water in the life of the Church signifies the One Baptism of Christ. The concept of "the One Baptism" is not derived simply from Eph. ch 4 v. 5 or the Nicene Creed, although it is enshrined there. It signifies the Gospel itself as set forth in the act of baptism. It holds together three things:

- i. The Baptism of Jesus for us in our humanity, commencing in the waters of Jordan and consummated in His atoning death and resurrection. According to all our records the 'beginning of the Gospel' was the baptism of Jesus by John, when Jesus went down into the waters of Jordan in solidarity with sinners, acknowledging John's message of the imminence of Judgement and call to repentance, that he might vicariously submit to the verdict of guilty for sinners. Christ is thus at once the Coming Judge, and the man judged for sinners, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world". His baptism as the servant is thus a baptism into death, and He subsequently speaks of His coming death as His "baptism", which he alone can accomplish for the remission of sins (Luke 12.50) as the anointed Messiah, in fulfilment of the promises given to Israel. It is in these terms that the Apostle spoke of Christ's death as his "circumcision" and "baptism" with which we are identified in our baptism (Col. 2:9ff). The water used as a symbol of cleansing sets forth the cleansing of sins which we have in Christ by the shedding of His blood, in the reconciling work He accomplished for the world in His one body. This is why our baptism must be seen as a sacrament of reconciliation. Furthermore, this Baptism was not just for adults. It was for us and our children.
- ii. The Christ who was baptised for us, the one on behalf of the nations, is the One who baptised the one Church by the one Spirit at Pentecost, and who continues to baptise men and women and children out of all nations by the Spirit into His One Body. Thus the

"baptism of the Spirit" must be seen both in terms of His vicarious baptism by the Spirit, as the One on behalf of the many in Jordan, and His continuing out-pouring of the Spirit upon the Church. In our water baptism, we both set forth Christ's once and for all Baptism for the nations, for us and our children, and claim that Baptism of the Spirit.

- iii. Baptism means, therefore, participation by the Spirit in what Christ has done for us and continues to do for us as He shares with us His communion with the Father and His mission to the world. It is thus incorporation into Christ, into a life of dying and rising with Christ (Romans 6), sharing with Him His ministry as the Servant in the fellowship of His sufferings and the power of the Resurrection, immersed in His liberating death where our sins are buried, where the "old Adam" is crucified with Christ and the power of sin is broken. In baptism we are identified with Christ in His conflict over the powers of evil, His ministry of reconciliation, in the confidence that we shall be one with Him in the Final Resurrection. The One Baptism is therefore our common incorporation into Christ, into this common life of shared worship and mission in Him.

Baptism thus logically ante-dates the Church and is constitutive of it. It is an event, a happening which makes faith possible and creates the Church. As Jesus was baptised, anointed by the Spirit from the Father, and declared to be the Son, so we are incorporated into the Church in the triune name, and this One Baptism constitutes the Church. We cannot separate Word and baptism. We are commanded to preach to all nations and baptise all nations in the name of the Word made flesh who died for all nations, that He might pour out His Spirit on all nations. Baptism is therefore never an uninterpreted action. The voice from heaven proclaimed its meaning, so in preaching we proclaim in the power of the Spirit that "this Jesus is the Christ", and in every baptism proclaim His Name. Word and action are inseparable.

Baptism and Mission

Jesus' baptism by John in the Waters of Jordan was proleptic. As John saw, he was anointed by the Father to be both the Judge who would triumph over the powers of evil and at the same time the Man who would

vicariously take Judgement to Himself on behalf of the nations. So from his baptism Jesus is driven by the Spirit, first into the desert, then into the towns and villages of Galilee and Judea "to bind the strong man" (Mt. 12,24) and to release those who have been captives. He presses on to the Cross where judgement is complete, where the "ruler of the world" is finally cast from his usurped throne (Jn 12,31) and where in death He makes the final vicarious submission to the verdict of guilty, not for Himself, but for the nations. The one baptism which He alone can fulfil is the entire event begun in Jordan and completed on Calvary. Until the event is complete "the Spirit is not yet given" (cf Jn 17,36), for Pentecost presupposes Calvary. It is when His victory is complete, he can return and bestow on His disciples the gift of the Spirit so that they in turn can become part of His movement of liberation from the power of sin (Jn 20,21f). Therefore to be baptised in water by the Spirit, is to be baptised into a life of shared mission, of conflict with the powers of evil, of reconciliation and liberation.

The apostolic writers speak of baptism with the utmost realism (eg Rm.6,3f, 1 Cor.6,11, Gal 3,27, Col. 3,12, Tit.3,5). Something irreversible was done when we were baptised. But, like the baptism of Jesus, our baptism is proleptic. It is not an end but a beginning. It is a commitment to follow Jesus in His engagement with the prince of this World. It is to be completed, as His was, by going the way of the Cross. This is true whether we are baptised as adults or as infants. Baptism always looks forward to its completion in following the way of the Cross. It is therefore possible to fall away from our baptism, to become apostate. It is not possible either to undo it or to repeat it.

Baptism and Faith

The Gospel calls from us the response of faith and repentance. When Christ vicariously submitted for us to the baptism of repentance, and vicariously submitted to the verdict of guilty for us on the Cross, it was not to exonerate us from the need for personal faith and repentance, but to bring us to joyful faith and repentance, in the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Hence we must not separate baptism from faith and repentance. But our faith and repentance are not conditions of forgiveness but an acknowledgement in word and daily living of what God has done for us and the world in Christ. In faith we acknowledge

and confess that Christ was baptised for us and our children, and in our daily life of repentance we seek with our children to die to those sins from which Christ died to deliver us and to walk in newness of life. We have been baptised by the Spirit into a life of faith and repentance, but baptism is not the sign of our faith and repentance. This is the ambiguity in the phrase "believers baptism". Failure to recognise this has led many to question infant baptism and call for a second baptism as a sign of subsequent conversion. But this can make baptism a sign and seal of our conversion, rather than the sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace. The frequent call for a second baptism however often arises in protest against malpractice and indiscriminate baptism, as well as from a failure to recognise the true meaning of baptism. There is need in all our communions to seek the fruit of baptism - the fruits of the Spirit - in personal faith and repentance.

The one and the many

At the heart of the New Testament teaching about baptism lies the biblical concept of the "One for the many" and "the many in the One" - that the one Christ gave his life for the many - the doctrine of the vicarious humanity and sacrifice of Christ for the world.

In the Old Testament, God elected the one nation of Israel to be a "royal priesthood" on behalf of all nations, that in Abraham all nations might be blessed. Likewise within Israel, the one tribe of Levi vicariously fulfilled the office of priesthood on behalf of all Israel. This election of Israel to be the royal priest found its fulfilment in the Incarnation, in Christ's anointing by the Spirit to be the High Priest of humanity, that God's purpose for all nations might be brought to fulfilment in and through Him. God's purpose in the Gospel is to restore to mankind our lost humanity in Christ, that what was lost "in Adam" might be restored in "Christ", as the Head of the race, the Head of a new humanity. When Christ therefore calls the Church to be a "Royal Priesthood" and baptises the one Church by the One Spirit at Pentecost, it is that the Church might be the one people of God for all nations, sent out to preach the Gospel and baptise all nations, that God might call the whole of humanity to become God's people, be we Jew or Gentile, male or female, black or white.

It is in these terms that we understand baptism, the Baptism of Christ for us, and our common baptism into Christ. When Christ was baptised for us in the waters of Jordan and in Blood on the Cross, we

buried, we were buried in Him, when He rose we rose in Him and now our righteousness is hid with Christ in God. "The love of Christ leaves us no choice, when once we have reached the conclusion that one man died for all and that therefore all mankind has died. His purpose in dying for all was that men, while still in life, should cease to live for themselves, and should live for Him who for their sake died and was raised to life" (2 Cor.5:14,15). This Christ, the "one for the many", baptises the Church by the Spirit, that as one Body we might participate with Him in His ministry of reconciliation, to restore to all nations their lost humanity.

The Practical Implications of our common baptism

In our two communions, we recognise each others baptism. Christ has baptised us all by the One Spirit into the one Body, to participate together in His communion with the Father and His mission to the world, that together we might be a Royal Priesthood in Him. Why then do we so often deny in practice, what we already are in Him, when he calls us to be in ourselves what we already are in Him? Why are we not together seeking, in worship and mission, the fruits of our one Baptism?

There are likewise important social, cultural and political implications in this understanding of the Baptism of Christ as "the One for the many" and "the many in the One". In virtue of Incarnation, Atonement and Pentecost, we acknowledge that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, black nor white but we are all one in Him. Does this not mean that we are all, be we Jew or Gentile, male or female, black or white, meant to see in the One Man Jesus our humanity and our neighbours' humanity assumed, sanctified and handed back to us by the Spirit through Word and Sacrament? In Him we see the dignity of our humanity in the purpose of God, whatever our race or sex. In Him our true humanity is restored. Does this not mean that there can be no divorce between humanisation and evangelism, between the call to personal and social holiness? To hold out Christ to the world, is not only to hold our personal salvation and eternal life. It is to give to all their God given, God created and God redeemed humanity. Does this not mean that in baptism, we are together committed in Christ to conflict against all that dehumanises the nations, be it poverty, violence, apartheid or unemployment?

The Eucharist

Baptism and Eucharist together constitute the Church. There is an

is rooted in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and in both the mutuality of word and act is revealed in their celebration within the community of faith. As in Baptism Jesus incorporates us into his own Baptism begun in the Jordan and completed on the cross, so in the Eucharist he nourishes us and renews our participation in the common life of the Church. As we eat and drink the bread and wine over which the eucharistic prayer has been proclaimed, Christ gives us communion with himself.

In its union of word and act, the Eucharist is the heart of our common life in the body of Christ, and the source of the mission of the Church in the world. It proclaims by its nature (as eucharistia) that the corporate life of the baptized is characterized by thanksgiving to God the Father for the new creation initiated in Christ whose purpose is the unity of all people in the life of God. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that Christians are sent forth from the eucharistic meal strengthened to do the work God sets before us. In the most pervasive sense, the Eucharist is thus an act of worship to the Trinity, as thanksgiving to the Father for creation and redemption, as the memorial (anamnesis) of Christ, in whom the words and actions of the Eucharist are spoken and done, and by invocation (epiklesis) of the Holy Spirit who is the agent both of Christ's presence and of the unity of the faithful through the outward sign of the eucharistized bread and wine.

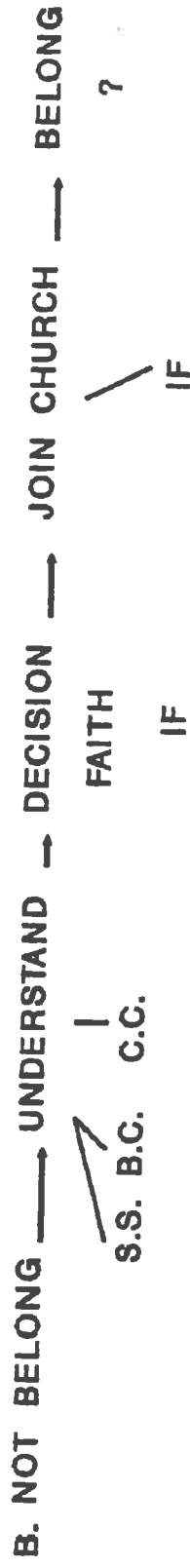
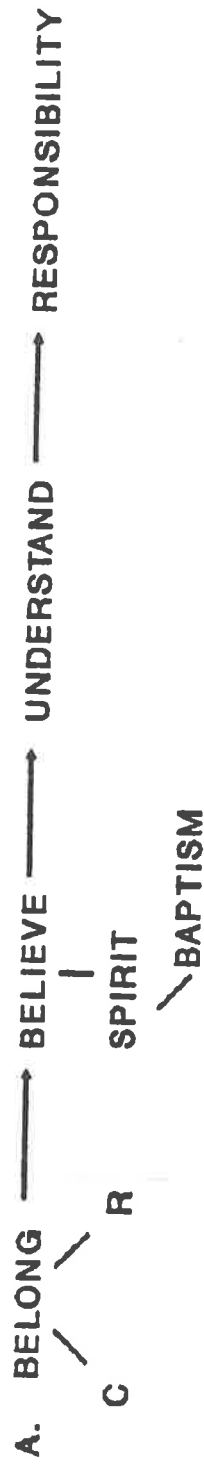
The presence of Christ in the Church is revealed in various ways in the eucharistic liturgy. It is the risen Lord who presides at every assembly of his people, for he has promised that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them". It is Christ who is proclaimed in the reading of scripture and who prays to the Father in the prayers of his people. It is Christ who is represented in each of the baptized ('alter Christus') and who is at the same time their priest and servant through the ministry of the ordained. Finally, in a wonderful gift of himself to be our food and drink, Christ offers himself to us and lifts us united in him in sacrifice to the Father.

By partaking of the eucharistic gifts, the community of the baptized is manifested as the body of Christ in and for the world, and is empowered to live a godly life. Because of its important role in the nurture of God's people through word and sacrament, the Eucharist has always been seen to have a special importance at the assembly of God's people on Sunday, the day of the Lord, the day of resurrection. In both the Anglican and Reform traditions, recent decades have seen a recovery of this integral relation

between Sunday worship and the celebration of the Eucharist, where we are reminded of our call in Christ to be the children of God and are strengthened to serve the world in his name. The Eucharist manifests our unity in Christ and at the same time anticipates the fulfilment of the whole creation in him.

BAPTISM - SIGN OF BELONGING

**-BELONGING - NOT CONDITIONAL ON BELIEVING.
-WE BELIEVE THAT WE BELONG.**



"JESUS IS LORD" - NOT CONDITIONAL ON OUR BELIEVING.

WE BELIEVE + CONFESS (SPIRIT) -

THE LORD'S SUPPER

