

# HOLY GOD, HOLY PEOPLE: BECOMING BY GRACE WHAT GOD IS BY NATURE

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## *A Reflective Query<sup>1</sup>*

Why the Holy Trinity? Why should we begin this Conference: “Holy God, Holy People,” with the Church’s central **credo** in a Holy Trinity? Why not simply begin with a Holy God and from there develop a doctrine of holiness that a Holy God demands for a Holy People? After all, has not the doctrine of holiness been our Nazarene *raison de etre* (reason for existence)?

Why should we consider the Trinity as the starting point of our thoughts on what it means to be a holy people in relation to a holy God? Is it not better to contend that God’s very nature is holy and thus, the Trinity is merely a doctrinal construct used to describe the holiness of God as depicted in the narratives of the Gospel? After all, has not the doctrine of the Trinity “functioned” more like doctrinal addendum in our Nazarene story?

Hopefully, you can already discern where I am going with this query. We **must** begin with the Holy Trinity, if we are ever to understand what it means to be a Holy People gathered up into the very life of a Holy God, and return God’s triune love *by* the Spirit through the Son back *to* the Father. We **must** start with the **necessary** “grammar of our faith” that not only identifies the very structure and pattern for a Holy People, but also confesses the very Name and Nature of our Holy God. The basic thrust of this address, therefore, is a hearkening back to the Church’s central confession of faith: God’s very Nature as revealed in God’s self-given Name is Triune; and thus, the holiness of God’s nature is love, a holy love that comes *from* the Father, proceeds *through* the Son and is effected *in* the Holy Spirit.

Allow me to continue this probe into our Nazarene Story. As we reflect on our past, were there “places” in our tradition where we envisioned the doctrine of holiness in the absence of triune love, and thereby, disconnected the very essence of holiness—holy love—from God? Would it be unfair to suggest that often our understanding of holiness has been more deeply ensconced in the doctrine of sin, rather than in the Name and Nature of God? Could it be that part of the failure in our tradition to communicate the “commanded promise:” “to be holy as God is holy,” is because the Subject of holiness has shifted from a Holy God to a Holy Individual? Is not the “goal” of a holy people doxological to the core? Since God is Holy and the People of God are made to be as holy as God is Holy, then why does the proclivity of our language for the holy life exploit, almost exclusively, “experiential” constructs of humanity and sin, in order to identify the life of holiness?

Adamantly, some have insisted that unless you know the **disease** you cannot know the **cure**. On the contrary, is it not better to suggest that unless one knows the ‘**purpose**,’ of the **image of God**, one could never understand the **cure**, not to mention the **disease**? Instead of always looking back to the **Fall** and its results, why not turn to the **purpose** (*telos*) of the whole Creation? Why not begin with the **purpose** of the image of God instead of the doctrine of original sin? Is it possible to become so bogged down in the doctrine of original sin—the **disease**—and default in the doctrine of holiness because one has not grasped that even the capacity to “revolt against God” arises out of the constant enabling love of God? Such a move misplaces the real meaning and purpose of our freedom and poses a terribly skewed understanding of the very “root and power of sin.”

Cured of the disease . . . but why? In other words, if “rightly” we begin with the Triune God and not with original sin, we will discover that the essence of holiness is not a cured disease, but triune love.

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<sup>1</sup> Although this assignment’s purpose is merely to “make an argument” rather than “sustain an argument,” I hope that there is enough cohesive description and rationale in the argument to give the Conference a “broad place” to “work and play” on what it means to be a holy people in relation to a Holy God. Following the rules of the Conference’s planning committee; I chose the following people and solicited their “feedback.” Rob Staples, Laurie Braaten, Andy Johnson, Alex Varughese (educators); Neil MacPherson (pastoral) Marcella Staples, Brenda Braaten and always one of my best critics, my wife, Tricia McCormick (laypersons). I owe my special thanks to their helpful insight and comments.

A Holy People is not simply a people cured of the disease, but rather a people restored and renewed in triune love. Once again, the goal of holiness is not just sinlessness but the glory of God. Our purpose for having been created in the image of the Holy Trinity is to be as holy as God is holy, to love as God is love.

Why we are made in God's image seems to be a better vantage point for our query, than what happened to us in the Fall and the necessary remedy. This contention is certainly not to suggest that the **disease** and **cure** for a holy people are irrelevant and have no "place" in the Conference's theme: "**Holy God, Holy People.**" Of course, the holy, healing, cleansing, enabling love of God poured into our hearts cures us of the disease so that we can love as God is love. Certainly the redemptive work of Christ makes "right" in justification, but one must always ask in light of the doxological goal of triune love: Why have we been forgiven? After all, is not the purpose of justification located in sanctification? This primary argument is to suggest, however, that our origin and **purpose** must always begin and end with "God the Father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth," and not with constant analysis of our defiant emancipation from God. Since God spoke the Word and brought all things into existence, why must we continue to usurp God of the last Word in what it means to be a Holy People?

### *The Soteriologic of the Holy Trinity*

It seems to me that the two underlying premises of this Conference's theme—"Holy God, Holy People"—rests on two pivotally driving questions: **Who is God? What is God's Will?** Drawing from these two basic questions, I will argue that God has Named Godself, and that self-giving Name of God is: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And in that very moment of God's self-giving Name, the very Nature of God is given. God's Love is poured into our hearts by the energy of the Holy Spirit, and we cry, Abba, Father. And this energy of triune love which is "the immediate cause of all holiness in us,"<sup>2</sup> gathers us together into the body of Christ, inscribing upon our hearts the vestiges of the Holy Trinity, so that "**we become by grace what God is by nature,**"<sup>3</sup> namely, "Transcripts of the Holy Trinity."<sup>4</sup> This is the **via salutis**—way of salvation—which is the **via trinitatis**—way of trinity. The **way** God is "for us and our salvation" is the **way** "we become by grace what God is by nature." This rationale depicting the congruous character and will of God is the soteriologic (logic of salvation) of the Holy Trinity.

Listening to our Church's past Story in this initial query, I would like to pose a simple thesis that contains and describes the soteriologic of the Holy Trinity: **The center of holiness is triune love. The center of a holy people is a Holy Trinity.** So, the constant interchange between these two axiomatic questions—Who is God? What is God's Will?—should serve as a way to expound, albeit briefly, on the soteriologic of the Holy Trinity as depicted in the constant interplay between the character of God and the will of God, a **Trinitarian description** and **Trinitarian participation**.

Not only does God have a *name* that God has "named" Godself, but God also has a *story* that God has told in God's self-given Name.<sup>5</sup> And the very character of God's self-given **Name** is Love. As God tells the **Story** in Word and Event, the character of God's self-given Name is given. The Love of God is not only "proclaimed" in the Story, it is "emptied out" in the Story. All of God's **Nature** is given throughout the entirety of God's **Story**. For it is in the Word(s) spoken that the narrative(s) and the name(s) of God are revealed. Long ago, God said to Israel that God's name is "I am who I am," (Ex. 3:14) and then in that very name, in one incredible Exodus story, God promised freedom from slavery

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<sup>2</sup> John Wesley, The Works of John Wesley, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1978). "A Letter to a Roman Catholic," p. 82. 10:80-86.

<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church. (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976, 65). Vladimir Lossky depicts a vision of salvation as consisting in grace and glory, a share in communion with the Holy Trinity: "The goal of orthodox spirituality, the blessedness of the Kingdom of Heaven, is not the vision of the essence, but above all, a participation in the divine life of the Holy Trinity; the deified state of the co-heirs of the divine nature, gods created after the uncreated God, possessing by grace all that the Holy Trinity possesses by nature."

<sup>4</sup> **BE** 7:88.

<sup>5</sup> Even though I am following Wesley's intentional Trinitarian vision of the Christian life with the Name and Nature of God being Love, I am indebted to Robert W. Jenson, "**The Triune Identity.**" (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982) esp. pp. 1-55.

and bondage and revealed God's nature as "unchangeably faithful." Later in the "fullness" of time, the very same God – "before Abraham was, I am" (Jn. 8:58) – would raise Jesus, God's Son, from the dead, and consequently, pour into our hearts God's love, (Rom. 5:5) by the very same Spirit that raised this Jesus from the dead (Rom. 1:4). The God of Exodus is the God of Resurrection, and this very same God who has "named" Godself in those "stories" has promised us hope in the future, by giving us in this present, the very gift of God's love, God's Spirit (Rom. 8:11). So, in God's **Story**, God's **Name** is: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And God's **Name** is God's **Nature**, and God's **Nature** as revealed in the **Story** is **Love**. This **Love** poured into our hearts is how we become as holy as God is holy; it is how we love as God is love. This triune love is not only how we come to know Who God is, but it is how we come to know and do God's Will. Once again, **the center of holiness is triune love. The center of a holy people is the Holy Trinity.**

Allow me to belabor in the **Story** this salvific interplay between Trinitarian description and Trinitarian participation just a bit longer. It could be said that God, who loves to tell a good story, **spoke** the Word and told one remarkable tale through the faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses, to name just a few. Oh, and do not forget the constant refrain of that Story sung through the faith of Israel: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one." Well, this "One," "almighty God," "maker of heaven and earth," is God the Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And Jesus, the eternal Son of God who became incarnate "for us and for our salvation," has given us his Spirit, whereby we presently cry, "Abba Father." Herein, we have a share in the name, and yes, in the very nature of God, (2 Peter 1:4) because we, like "all those who died in the faith without having yet received God's promise" (Heb. 11:13, 39-40) have been *included* and "*gathered up*" in God's Story. This is a story where the past is not "fixed" because the "finish" of the story is still being told through all that God has Spoken into existence through God's Triune Word, so that in the new creation, when God is "all in all" we will have "become by grace what God is by nature."

#### *Trinitarian Description – Trinitarian Participation*

Reverberating throughout the Story in Word and Event, the character of God is identical to the will of God. God's presence of character makes identifiably clear the will of God; we shall become by the energy of triune love emptied into our hearts, what God is by nature. It is the will of God that a holy people live "after the likeness of the Holy Trinity." Trinitarian description defines the content of our Trinitarian participation.

Do you see what I see? Do you hear what I hear? The **Story** that tells God's **Name** is not only **spoken** "for us," it is also **spoken** "in us." As "the whole Trinity descends into our praying hearts," we begin to catch a glimpse of the nature of God in all of this story telling. In that moment of condescending love, we discover that God's life is **always** open "for us and our salvation" because the very character of God is Love. This love poured into our hearts, to change metaphors, is like a *parabola*, in that it is always "thrown out." Triune love originates "from the Father, proceeds through the Son, and is effected in the Spirit." In the continued sweep of love, the Spirit gathers up the body of Christ, and with renewed and grateful hearts, the people of God respond in love, by the energy of the Spirit, through conformity to the Son, and back to the Father. So, by the energy of the Spirit, in this ecclesial movement of gathering, "the whole Trinity descends into our faithful hearts" and we are "filled with the energy of love." Here God's love, like that of a *parabola* is always open-ended "for us and our salvation." Love is always open because it always gives and receives. And finally, love is forever open because it must always be returned.

Not only is the character of God's life open because God's nature is love, but it is also in the name and nature of God to "*make room*"—**makom**,<sup>6</sup> to open space so that there is a habitable place to live "faithfully" in God's house. God the Father, sends the Son and the Spirit to "make room" for us in God's house, in God's very nature, in God's very life. So, the Word became flesh and God pitched a tent with us, opening up glorious "broad" habitable space "for us" to live in God's house.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Psalm 18:19; Psalm 31:9 and Job 36:16. I am indebted to Moltmann's use of **MAKOM** in the Hebrew which means "broad place." Here Moltmann reminds us according to Jewish tradition, that **MAKOM** is one of the secret names for God. Used in the context of the economic trinity, he interprets this secret name of God to mean "broad rooms." "*God's Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World*," chapter 8, pp. 137-151, esp. p. 141; in **The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis**, edited by: John Polkinghorne; (William B. Eerdmans, Publishing Co, 2001).

Now that we have been scripted into God's Story through the kenotic surrender of God's Son by the energy of God's Spirit, God's life is open to us. It is through the Son that the window of God's house is iconically opened to pattern and structure how we are to live and participate in the very nature of God. Here the identifiable presence of the "two hands of God" in the means of grace—the graced-patterns of triune love—make clear how we are to live in holy love. Through the kenotic surrender of triune love we have been given the "means of grace" in order to share in the "hope of glory."<sup>7</sup> This is the will of God that the people of God, love as God is love. This is the soteriologic of the Holy Trinity for a Holy People. The way of triune love is the way of holiness. This was the vision of both the Wesley brothers. We were made to become "transcripts of the Trinity."

Nowhere is this structure and pattern of triune love more visible than in the *perichoretic*—mutual indwelling—relations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Perhaps, Jesus' high priestly prayer in the Gospel of John is a good place to begin in our perichoretic doctrine of triune love. As in Jesus' prayer, our doctrine should always arise out of prayer. What we believe is what we give our hearts to; it is what we pray.

Jesus makes God's name known in that prayer so that the nature of God will be in the "sanctified" people of God, just as the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father. When God pitches tent and dwells with us, the whole Trinity descends and "makes room," "makes space," a "broad place" for us to be as one with God as Jesus is with the Father. The one is in the other, and yet the "*difference*" of the other is constituted by virtue of relation, a relation that requires space for "otherness in communion." Here we see in God's house, in all the economy of grace that God is communal and relational to the core; God's name and nature is love.

Visible in all of God's *oikonomia* is the structure and pattern of triune love. The way God exists in these perichoretic relations is the way we are to exist; the way God is for us in all the economy of grace is the way of salvation. Once again, the presence of God's character iconically patterns and structures for a holy people the will of God. Holy people live "after the likeness of triune love."

These mutually indwelling relations are relations of kenotic (self-surrendering, self-giving, self-sacrificing) love. These kenotic relations of mutual indwelling are the relations of ecstatic love. By ecstatic love, I mean a love that does not exist statically but exists out of itself—ek-statically—for the other. Hence, God's love for us is ecstatic, in that it exists out of itself in openness for us and our salvation. God *delivers* us because God *delights* in us. (Psalm 18:19) To say that God's nature is love is to say that God exists in this ecstatic way for us. God who delights over us is a God who exists ecstatically to deliver us, making room, opening space, a "broad place" for us to participate in the very life of God.

Here in the economy of grace is one divine community of ecstatic love. This divine community is not constituted by a single static substance or Subject, but rather by ecstatic love for and in the other. The one is in the other and the *difference* of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is constituted by virtue of the relation of love. As the Father is totally in the Son and totally in the Spirit communicating the Father's will to the Son, the Father opens up space for the Son totally in the Father and totally in the Spirit to become obedient to the will of the Father, while the Spirit is totally in the Father and totally in the Son making room, enabling and empowering the Son to do the will of the Father.

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<sup>7</sup> Perhaps a reflection on the prayer of General Thanksgiving that nurtured John Wesley in the Church's confession of God's Name and Nature is in order. Listen to the prayer of General Thanksgiving taken from the Book of Common Prayer:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the **means of grace**, and for the **hope of glory**. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of all your mercies that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

John Wesley took this soteriologic of ecstatic love and made interchangeable happiness and holiness.<sup>8</sup> To be holy is to be happy and to be happy is to be holy. We are most happy when we love and we are most holy when we love. This is because the nature of holiness is ecstatic love. Again, this is a love that does not exist *statically* in itself but exists out of itself—ek-statically—for the other. Here the old doctrine of aseity not only impugns the character of God but also confuses the will of God. God is ecstatically happy because God is love, and God is ecstatically holy because God is love. Hence, the nature of love is to exist not in oneself, but in relation to the other for the other. When we give of ourselves in the same kenotic way for the other that God has ecstatically loved us, then we will be holy, then we will be happy.

At the center of the Christian life, for both John and Charles Wesley, was this unshakable conviction that to be created in the image of God meant that we were made “capable of God;” we were made to “know” and “obey” and “love” God.<sup>9</sup> “Knowledge,” “obedience” and “love” of the “Three-One God” was so thoroughly “interwoven with all true Christian faith, with all vital religion,”<sup>10</sup> that when the Spirit of the “Three-One God” is poured into our hearts, both brothers were convinced that we will come to “know”, “obey” and “love” the God whose Name and Nature is love. This was the constant refrain of Wesleyan hymn and sermon alike that would shape their understanding at the deepest level, the means of grace as “graced-patterns” of triune love that not only enable us to share in our hope of glory, but are necessary to become “transcripts of the trinity.”<sup>11</sup>

### *A Continued Query—A Re-Traditioning of Tradition*

We began by asking why we must start with the Holy Trinity. By way of conclusion, we might continue in our query and ask how we may rethink and even “re-tradition” our own tradition with a distinctive message of holiness if we rethought, refit, and even rediscovered our doctrine of holiness in the glorious light of the Triune God? If we recover a lost doctrine by rediscovering forgotten doctrine, then let us begin with a renewed vision of the Triune God.

What new language, thought forms, images and metaphors are available to us as we revision the doctrine of holiness from Triune Love? What old language may we let go of if we re-tradition our tradition accordingly? For example, I have long believed that we probably would have avoided the entire baptism with the Holy Spirit debate if we had been thoroughly Trinitarian in our understanding

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<sup>8</sup> This Trinitarian pattern of ecstatic love as happiness is most pronounced in his sermon on *Spiritual Worship*. John Wesley comments on I John 5:11,12:

This eternal life then commences when it pleases the Father to reveal his Son in our hearts; when we first know Christ, being enabled to ‘call him Lord by the Holy Ghost’; when we can testify, our conscience bearing us witness in the Holy Ghost, ‘the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.’ And then it is that happiness begins—happiness real, solid, substantial. Then it is that heaven is opened in the soul, that the proper heavenly state commences, while the love of God, as loving us, is shed abroad in the heart, instantly producing love to all mankind; general, pure benevolence, together with its genuine fruits, lowliness, meekness, patience, contentedness in every state; an entire, clear, full acquiescence in the whole will of God, enabling us to ‘rejoice evermore, and in everything to give thanks.’

<sup>9</sup> John Wesley. *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 7, A Collection of Hymns For the Use of the People Called Methodists*, Franz Hilderbrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, editors (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), **BE** 7:398. Hymn 256: O all-creating God,/At whose supreme decree/Our body rose, a breathing clod, Our souls sprang forth from thee./For this thou hast designed,/And formed us man for this, To know, and love thyself, and find/In thee our endless bliss. Cf. also **BE** 2:439, “The General Deliverance.”

<sup>10</sup> John Wesley. *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 2, Sermons II, 34-70*, Albert C. Outler, editor. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), Sermon 55: “On the Trinity,” p. 385. **BE** 2:373-386. I would like to express my deepest gratitude and indebtedness to Geoffrey Wainwright who first helped me see the “deliberate trinitarianism” in John Wesley. Much of the substance of this study is greatly influenced by the earlier work of Geoffrey Wainwright, “Why Wesley Was A Trinitarian,” in *The Drew Gateway*, volume 59, Number 2, (Spring 1990) 26-43.

<sup>x</sup> **BE** 7:250-252.

of holiness.<sup>12</sup> Do we still need the language of “Spirit-baptism” to articulate a Trinitarian doctrine of holiness? How different would our metaphors be for how we talk about the doctrine of original sin if they pivot around the purpose of the image of God instead of the doctrine of the Fall? As we ponder such matters, how will we come to understand ourselves as the people of God, gathered up into the life of God? How different will our doctrine of holiness be if it is thoroughly grounded in an ecclesiology whose being and mission is “after the likeness of the Holy Trinity?”

For starters, if we allow the character of God to define the content of our lives as a holy people, we will begin not with the doctrine of sin but with the glorious ecstatic love of God that renews and restores us back into the image of the Holy Trinity. If the goal of holiness is the glory of God then we will stop fixating on the gift of holiness and what that means “for me” alone; instead we will move beyond our contradictory and deceptive selves and offer up our praise and thanksgiving for God and God alone. Holiness is *finally* about the glory of God. So our response as a *holy people* is finally ecstatic praise of our *Holy God*.<sup>13</sup>

Once again, we realize that “right praise” of God cannot happen in our self-conscious, self-willing, and individual isolation. Such thinking contradicts the very nature of holiness, not to mention what it means to be made in the image of the Holy Trinity. If our purpose is to become by grace what God is by nature then our purpose is to love as God is love. And as we have already noted, the very nature of love is communal and relational. It always takes the other to receive love and give love. It takes the whole people of God to become as holy as God is holy. It takes the whole people of God to love as God is love. It takes the whole people of God to “rightly praise” God: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As “transcripts of the Trinity”, our doxological reason of existence is to return love, God’s *ecstatic* love. And yet, we know that we cannot love unless we receive love, but we have eclipsed the doxological purpose of God’s kenotic love because we have lost the sense that what we return is ecstatic love, God’s love. That is the truest meaning of “praise and thanksgiving.” Simply put, this does not mean “finally” that we return our love to God, simply because of what God has done for us; instead, we return God’s love back to God because of who God is. In other words, all love comes from God the Father through the Son by the Spirit and returns back to the Father through the Son by the Spirit.

When we make the content of holiness merely the removal of sin we lose the teleological and doxological character of holy love. Right praise, therefore, is a response of loving in the same pattern and structure of triune love. Right praise is a response of love, as God is love. And that response is the glory of God. If our praise is “*only*” about what God has done for us then our praise of God is incomplete; our praise continues to be about ourselves. Remember, God’s nature is ecstatic love. Just as God the Father exists totally in the Son and the Spirit, because God is ecstatic love, so likewise, when God “throws out” love it must by virtue of its very nature come back to God. Ecstatic love by nature cannot exist in itself; it must exist totally in the other. So when the Father lives totally in and for the Son and the Spirit, the Son and the Spirit can only live totally in and for the Father, and so on, because God is Love and Love always exists in and for the other. This is why love must always come back. And what comes back to God is what originates from God and belongs only to God, namely Glory manifested as “right praise.” Right praise is the truest response to ecstatic love.

Love that throws out ecstatically means that God “needs our love” not because God is deficient in God’s nature—love, but because God is bountiful out flowing love. God exists “for us and our salvation.” God does not need creation to love but God needs creation in order for God’s ecstatically thrown out love to be returned. God cannot return God’s “thrown out love” God needs us to do that. Such is the will of God revealed in the character of God. And this is the essence of “right praise,” and “thanksgiving.” We praise God not simply for what God has done for us but we praise God for God and God alone.

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<sup>12</sup> To partition off one aspect of the work of salvation and relegate new birth to Christ and entire sanctification to the Holy Spirit is to ignore the whole Trinity at work in all stages of salvation.

<sup>13</sup> Although I am not fully persuaded of all that is happening in many contemporary forms of worship, I am convinced that what seems to lie at the “heart” of this ongoing proliferation of worship “style” is a profound and deep need to “rightly praise” God.

Make no mistake, in the sweep of triune love, in the ecclesial gathering, we do indeed sing God's praises on earth as it is in heaven. We do thank God now for what God has done "for us and our salvation," but precisely because the refrain of what we sing on earth as it is in heaven, *is* the glory of God; we need to keep our gaze fixed on the promise of the new creation, when God is "all in all", and all that "thrown out" love has returned to God the Father, we will with one voice, sing God's praise, because we will praise God for God alone!

A doctrine of "right praise" on earth as it is in heaven needs to be fused to all "aspects" of our doctrine of holiness. Too much of our language of hamartiology has been crafted in the absence of doxology. And such an uninformed doctrine of sin will naturally be shortsighted in eschatology. A doctrine of holiness void of a doctrine of the new creation eclipses the doxological purpose. So, if to be made as "transcripts of the Trinity," means that we are to become by grace what God is by nature, then perhaps we should revisit the legacy of Irenaeus: it will take a life time for the "two hands of God"—Christ and the Spirit—to mediate through the kingdom of this world the kingdom of our Lord. It will take the gift of a creation (human as well as non-human), a place of open space, a broad place, for us to learn how to love as God is love. It will take a gathered bodily life, a community of faith a life time of singing the *Te Deum* in the ecclesial choir on earth as it is in heaven to become as holy as God is holy, to love as God is love.

Since all holiness is derived from God then all holiness must be returned to God. Again, this is why Wesley saw the nature of holiness as happiness. To be truly happy is to exist ecstatically in and for the other. We are most happy when we love and we are most holy when we love. Since all Love comes from God then all love must be returned to God. When we make the focus of a holy people the removal of our Sin we continue to reverse the very axis of holiness and make the axis of a holy trinity a holy people; the axis of triune love is holiness. When the holiness of God is disengaged from the Holy Trinity, the doctrine of holiness will inevitably be more anthropological than theological, the moral will eclipse the ontological, and righteousness will be devoid of love. The righteousness of the holy life will inevitably result in a harsh moralism where justice overshadows mercy and crushes the very life of "happy-holy love" that describes not only the character of a Holy God, but defines the content of a holy people.

Perhaps, in closing, as we seek to "re-tradition" our tradition, we should heed the instructive words of the psalmist, "open your mouths and God will fill them with 'words' to speak as a "holy people." Open hearts, Open mouths, Open minds . . . only then can we "*re-ceive*," new words, new thoughts and new lives from which we can live as a 'holy people' in relation to a 'Holy God.' Only as we are gathered up into the life of God *by* the Spirit *through* the Son and back *to* the Father can we "rediscover" a new language that will "recover" the old doctrine of holiness that has always existed in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Let us be silent before the Lord and know that God is God (Ps. 46). Now, gathered in silence, with open hearts, open mouths, and open minds may we hear the Name and Nature of God. God is love.

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